

## Religion and Sanitation in a City in Ghana: A Conundrum?

**Samuel Adu-Gyamfi & Emmanuella Elikplim Awuku**

Department of History and Political Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi-Ghana. Email: [mcgyamfi@yahoo.com](mailto:mcgyamfi@yahoo.com)

---

### **Abstract:**

The current state of sanitation in Ghana is not a sudden development. The issue of poor sanitation stems from the poor management of waste in communities principally because of the attitude of the people towards it. The issue of religion comes to light in considering the factors that play a role in dealing with sanitation because of the confidence people have in religion. It is necessary to explore this possibility in dealing with the issue of poor sanitation in the society. This study therefore seeks to uncover the relationship between sanitation and religion in Ghana from the second half of the twentieth century to contemporary times.

**Key Words:** Religion, Secularism, Sanitation, Ghana, Kumasi

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The momentous increase in waste that characterizes our contemporary society is not a recent phenomenon. The issue of poor sanitation therefore, stems from poor management of waste in communities and the general attitude of the people. The issue of religion comes to light in considering the factors that play a role in dealing with sanitation and waste management as a subject pertaining to society. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), sanitation generally refers to the provision of facilities and services for the safe disposal of human urine and faeces. It also refers to the maintenance of hygienic conditions, through services such as garbage collection and wastewater disposal.<sup>1</sup> In Africa and all over the world, the problem of sanitation and waste management is a major concern and Ghana is not an exception. It includes the dumping of refuse, limited access to clean water, toilet facilities, poor hygiene practices among others. For instance in 2008, Ghana was ranked forty-eighth in Africa out of fifty-two countries and fourteenth out of fifteen West African countries by Joint Monitoring Programme of WHO and UNICEF.<sup>2</sup> Again statistics in recent past ranks Ghana as the seventh dirtiest country in the world, three places up 2014's performance. Ghana, with sanitation coverage of fifteen percent, was ranked right after South Sudan which has seven percent coverage, Niger with eleven percent, Chad, Madagascar and Togo with twelve percent each and Sierra Leone with thirteen percent. The measuring standard used for ranking was access to household toilets.<sup>3</sup> It further discloses that in 1990 when Ghana had seven percent sanitation coverage, Ethiopia had only three percent but currently Ethiopia has progressed with about twenty-eight percent coverage.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Ethiopia has

---

<sup>1</sup>Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015," Sanitation". <http://www.who.int/topics/sanitation/en/> Accessed 28th October 2015.

<sup>2</sup>Edmund Smith-Asante, "Ghana world's 7th dirtiest country". <http://www.graphic.com.gh/features>. Accessed 22nd July 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Smith-Asante, "Ghana world's 7th dirtiest country".

overtaken Ghana with Guinea also improving from eight percent to twenty percent coverage. Comparing Ghana to some countries dominated by war such as Syria and Afghanistan, we realize that these countries have been rated as having better sanitation coverage with ninety-six percent and thirty-two percent respectively.<sup>5</sup> Significantly, little has been done to improve the situation; rather it has deteriorated.<sup>6</sup> Whereas access to water under the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (UNMDG)<sup>7</sup> has made some headway, the indicators for sanitation are not promising. According to the Target Seven of the UNMDG subsection three, “Worldwide, 2.1 billion people have gained access to improved sanitation. Despite the progress, 2.4 billion are using unimproved sanitation facilities, including 946 million people who are still practicing open defecation.”<sup>8</sup> Ghanaians are dying from diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera which are as a result of poor hygiene and sanitation.

On the other hand, religion has been defined as a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.<sup>9</sup> Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines it as an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods.<sup>10</sup>

The population of Ghana according to the 2014 population demography is estimated at 25,758,108.<sup>11</sup> Studies conducted showed that Traditional religion accounted for 5.2 % of the total population, Christians including Roman Catholics, Baptist, Protestants, etc. account for 71.2% of the total population, 17.6% being Muslims chiefly located in the northern part of the country. The remaining number of people in the country who did not subscribe to any form of religion or one that is not well known is however not mentioned. Religion, therefore, permeates every facet of the Ghanaian society to the extent that almost everything hinges on it, including sanitation as these various sects are strong advocates of sanitation and hygiene.

The role of religion is a relevant theme because of the deeply rooted beliefs of citizens and the leaders alike. Whether the belief stems from Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religion, or any other religion, traces of it is evident in individuals, such that, very often, majority of the decisions they make is a reflection of these convictions. Indeed, Africans are very religious people and it stands to reason that Ghanaians are not an exception. It is therefore, important to explore the question of how freedom of association with a particular religion, affects peoples’ thinking towards sanitation. In South Africa, it is known that the church is the most influential non-governmental organization (NGO). Neither the government nor any other NGO can influence the public more regularly and consistently than the religious authorities.<sup>12</sup> Also, in rating social institutions in South Africa, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) in the year 2000 found out that, the public's view of the church received the highest percentage of trust with seventy-four percent. After the church was the Electoral Commission with fifty

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> “Target 7.c: halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation”. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/enviro.html>. Accessed October 28, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> “Religion”. <http://www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/religion>. Accessed October 28, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> “Religion”. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/religion>. Accessed October 28, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> “Ghana Demographics Profile 2014”. <http://www.indexmundi.com/ghana/demographicsprofile>. Accessed June 30, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Johannes C. Erasmus, “A Case Study from South Africa”, *Transformation*. Vol 22, no. 3. Christianity and Change (2005) Pp. 139-148. Sage Publications, Ltd. Accessed on November 27, 2015. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43052914>)

percent, indicating that churches enjoy significant credibility.<sup>13</sup> Generally, the well being of communities depends largely on harnessing the contributions of the citizens. In these communities, majority of the residents are people of faith. It is therefore imperative to state that the development of the community is very much dependent on their ability to live by their religious standards.<sup>14</sup> Religion then is important for development and so is development important for religion. It is therefore important that the dialogue on these are encouraged.<sup>15</sup>

In Ghana, the manifestation of Christianity is evident almost everywhere, from their mode of dressing to a ride in a commercial bus popularly known as “tro-tro”. In accordance to Proverbs 3:6 which states that “In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your path”.<sup>16</sup> Ghanaian Christians are literally applying this principle in their lives. Even when religious gatherings are held, there is a higher patronage in comparison to general gatherings held for other purposes such as voting.

In the book of Leviticus, God taught the Israelites some legal and moral practices. The chapter 14:8 states that “He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that, he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent for seven days.” The entire chapter was about the treatment of leprosy.<sup>17</sup> Other laws were set for virtually every aspect of human life from dealing with sickness to personal hygiene and the environment, establishing the fact that God paid detailed attention to personal hygiene.

In Australia, a review of studies showed the relationship between religious beliefs, practices and health. In this study, Donald G. King, emphasized that religion does play a role in achieving better health.<sup>18</sup> It also includes church attendance and its relation to drug use. It is stated that religious beliefs have been closely related to health practices throughout history. For instance, in the Judeo-Christian ethic many of the religious teachings were based on health and wellness rationale. Principles of diet, rest and sanitation were all based on religious values.<sup>19</sup> For many years, Moses is still considered the world’s first sanitation specialist.<sup>20</sup> A study of 30 Christian males and 30 Muslim males by Jalali-Tehran<sup>21</sup> found a positive correlation among religious commitment, the purpose of life and personality integration.<sup>22</sup> Thus, individuals who were genuinely practicing or committed to their religious beliefs also had a higher degree of the purpose of life and possessed more integrated personalities.<sup>23</sup> This implies that religion holds a legitimate place in the formation of mental health. Further studies conducted among some selected Christian ‘sect’ revealed lower rates of cervical cancer among Jewish women, 35 percent lower mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases among Old Order Amish, Seventh-day Adventist, and Mormons.<sup>24</sup> Also, lower incidences of high blood pressure were experienced among Adventist. Again,

---

<sup>13</sup> Johannes C. Erasmus, “A Case Study from South Africa”,

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> Katherine Marshall, “Development and Religion: A Different Lens on Development Debate”. *Peabody Journal of Education*, vol. 76, No. 3/4, Global Issues on Education (2001), pp. 339-375. Taylor & Francis, Ltd. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1493254>. Accessed on November 27, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Holy Bible. New King James Version (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

<sup>18</sup> Donald G. King, “Religion and Health Relationships: A Review”. *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol29 n0. 2 (summer, 1990), pp. 101-112. Springer Accessed on November 27, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27506057>.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*

less depression, sleeplessness and use of sedatives and tranquilizers were found among Australians who were either Mormons or Adventists.<sup>25</sup> In Islam, sanitation encompasses keeping the body and its surroundings sane and serene. A major indicator of appearing clean is ablution. This is as a result of the believe that the seat of the body should be purified through outward parts of the body that are washed frequently every day and sanitized in accordance with the dictates of the law of Islam. The Quran states this in Chapter 2 verse 222:

When they ask you about menstruation Say, 'it is harm, so keep away from wives during menstruation. And do not approach them until they are pure. And when they have purified themselves, then come to them for Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.

To Muslims, cleanliness is said to be part of their faith; hence it stands to reason that some amenities such as toilets, bathrooms and a good sewage system should be found in various Muslim communities. Unfortunately, this is not so in practice. A visit to Muslim communities such as Nima, Mamobi, Sodom and Gomorrah among others tells a repugnant story. There is no place of convenience in the homes of the people, bathrooms are eyesore and waste disposal posts or sites are virtually non-existent.

In the traditional setting of Ghana, there are taboos governing every aspect of the indigenous Ghanaian. Such measurements are put in place to govern society and safeguard the general wellbeing of individuals and this encompasses every aspect of the individuals' lives. However, the belief in witchcraft dominates the beliefs of the African Traditionalist. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans to the Gold Coast, indigenous societies attributed diseases, sufferings and disasters to an act of disobedience against the deities.<sup>26</sup> These mishaps were believed to have been instant in most cases, striking them down with all forms of afflictions. Others attributed such instances to the activities of witches.

According to Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, and Owusu-Ansah, final authority in the traditional setting was vested in the Indigenous Priest Healer, who also doubled as the Chief Priest. As the liaison between the gods (deities) and the people, "his ministrations were as effective as that of the Pope" himself and as such could not be accused of falsehood.<sup>27</sup> This then demonstrates the power the priest has over the people in passing judgment on issues brought before him. It raises questions such as: "Who was responsible for the physical needs of the people and what measures were put in place to ensure that proper sanitation was maintained? Were there any laws or punitive measures that ensured that the indigenous people were keeping their environment clean? The physical needs in this context are the health and wellbeing of the people. It seems that some of the sicknesses that afflicted the people could have been avoided by practicing personal hygiene. It is no wonder that the British authorities embarked upon closure of so-called witch-finding shrines in Asante in order to redirect the attention of the indigenes to a more scientific approach to life. Comparatively, the Latin Americas are another group of religious conscious people. Using Brazil as a case study, the author of the article 'Law, Religion and 'Public Health' in Brazil', Paul C. Johnson, has evaluated the strategies by which limitations are placed on religion and its effect on public health. According to Johnson, the religious practices of former slaves, to

---

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, W. J Donkoh and Daniel Owusu-Ansah" A Historical narrative of the British Colonial Administration's Clamp down on Witch finding Shrines among the Asante People of the Gold Coast". Online International Journal of Arts and Humanities. Vol 2. No. 9 (November 2013). pp. 228-234. <http://www.researchgate.net/publications/279447812>. Accessed on March 4, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*

an extent, allowed for religious freedom, which was transferred into the new republic even as freedom of all sorts, were constrained by the state.<sup>28</sup>

Citing the case of Brazil and more particularly the Afro-Brazilian religion called Candomble, Johnson argued that limits on religious freedom have been most powerfully constructed through the isomorphic, i.e. identical relation of the law and scientific discourse of “public health”.<sup>29</sup> Candomble over the course of two centuries had moved from being regarded as officially prohibited slave “sorcery” to a legally regulated dangerous ‘public health’ issue and finally to the status of a legal religion valued as an integral part of the national identity Brazil presents to the world.<sup>30</sup> The problem of hygiene and public health was that newly emancipated slaves were socially, biologically, spiritually and morally deficient and they also lacked good health especially as they were known to have been plagued with diseases like syphilis.<sup>31</sup> This was however as a result of the people’s negative disposition towards the slaves. Religion in the long run regulated the conduct of the newly emancipated slaves and it served as the binding fabric of the society as seen in most countries.

In his law and religion, Christopher failed to highlight how religion propagated the importance of maintaining a clean environment or personal hygiene even though he makes mention of regulations that prevent harming individuals or rites that are injurious to the members. Though the world of religion is a vital force, its contributions usually go unnoticed.<sup>32</sup> This can easily be explained by the hard-worn traditions of separation of state and religion. It is on this premise that religion and its role seems to have been marginalized and almost ignored.<sup>33</sup>

One shared belief among the above-named groups is the belief in the existence of evil forces. Adu-Gyamfi asserts that from the 1940s, cocoa farmers in Asante had begun seeking refuge in spiritual churches such as the Twelve Apostle Churches and the Cherubim and Seraphim Churches.<sup>34</sup>

The problem of sanitation and waste management includes the dumping of refuse, limited access to clean water, toilets facilities, and poor hygiene practices among others. It is equally a significant factor in a nation’s quest to groom its human resource. It is also important to maternal, new-born child health and child nutrition. Though there are measures in place to address the problem, there has been no significant improvement. Measures such as the provision of rubbish bins in households and refuse containers in public places have also done little. An evolving phenomenon has been the participation of the private sector in waste management. In 2006, Accra, the capital of Ghana was demarcated into six waste collection zones. These zones were later awarded to private waste collection companies for fees, which were charged according to the specific contractual agreement they had with the City Authority.

In low-income areas, the central container system was in operation, where the entire community dumped their waste at a common dump site for collection.<sup>35</sup> However, this initiative seems to be

<sup>28</sup> Paul Christopher Johnson, “Law, Religion, and ‘Public Health’ in the Republic of Brazil”, *Law & Social Inquiry*. Vol. 26, no. 1 (2001) Pp. 9-33. Wiley on behalf of the American Bar Foundation. Accessed on November 27, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/829041>.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*

<sup>32</sup> Paul Christopher Johnson, “Law, Religion, and ‘Public Health’ in the Republic of Brazil”

<sup>33</sup> Katherine Marshall, “Development and Religion: A Different Lens on Development Debate”. *Ibid*

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, “Spiritual and Indigenous Healing Practices among the Asante People of Ghana: A Testimonial from Twenty-first Century Practitioners and Recipients in Kumase” *Journal of Basic and Applied Research International* 12 (1) 2016. 39-50

<sup>35</sup> “Sanitation and Environment”. [http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=1&\\_=3&sa=3027](http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=1&_=3&sa=3027). Accessed May13, 2016.

unproductive in the attempt to improve upon sanitation in Ghana. The consistent use of certain tools of education such as seminars, advertisement using media channels and sensitization tools to try and shape the attitudes of citizens have not yielded any much results either. With religious institutions, in particular, having great power to support social change because of the confidence members of society have in them, much cannot be said about their contribution towards better sanitation in Ghana. This leads to the question: "has religion played any relevant role in this context where secularization seems to have failed?"

Again, there is little or no research focusing on religion's impact on sanitation; the focus has been on the role of government and the respective agencies within the public sector. It is essential therefore to further engage the existing literature and also do an empirical study on the subject.

Though Ghana has about 88% of its population being religious; religion has not affected much change especially concerning sanitation. This notwithstanding, Ghana continues to see exponential growth in churches; especially the charismatic and the neo-Pentecostal movements.<sup>36</sup> It is also necessary therefore to take a closer look at the existing structure of government institutions in order to make functional analysis. Based on this notion, it is necessary to indicate that Ghana's institutions are secular because even though its human resource is largely religious, the laws that established them are not.

The word 'Secular' originates from the Latin word "Saecularis". Its original meaning was connected to eternity and not religion. In Christian thought, it is denoted as the 'world'. The Oxford Dictionary gives it meaning as "not connected with religious or spiritual matters". Secularity according to Ahdar, refers to the condition of being secular.<sup>37</sup> This is implied in three folds: the first is the secularization of public spaces, where public spaces are allegedly of God. The second is the decline in personal religious belief and practices and the third being an environment where there is a shift in an unchallenged belief in God to one where it is understood as to be an option, among others.<sup>38</sup> Secularism can be seen as the absence of religion. However, there is more to this definition; it could be seen as a political philosophy, benevolent or passive and finally hostile or assertive. It should be noted that because there are not enough studies on this subject in Ghana it is difficult for the institutions in Ghana to be seen operating in that light.

The objective of this study however, is to attempt to establish a link, if there is any, between the average Ghanaian's approach in relation to his (her) devotion to a deity and how that influences his or her attitude with respect to issues pertaining to sanitation. In a sense, the study attempts to juxtapose the attitude of the Ghanaian towards sanitation with religion through the past years and draws valid conclusions as well as makes feasible suggestions in dealing with the sanitation menace.

To investigate this research problem, the authors used the qualitative approach. For the purpose of this study, primary sources such as books, newsletters, and articles published in academic journals and newspapers and archival documents were consulted. Also, secondary sources like research reports and collected data as well as the internet were studied for relevant information. Also, archival documents were consulted in the course of the research. The major source for the collection of information was by interview. Interviewees were randomly selected from all over the Kumasi metropolis of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Also, the language used alternated between English and the local dialect of the people which is Twi. The study centres on the role of religion hence leaders of some religious bodies were consulted.

---

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, "Spiritual and Indigenous Healing Practices among the Asante People of Ghana: A Testimonial from Twenty-first Century Practitioners and Recipients in Kumase"

<sup>37</sup> Ren Ahdar, "Is Secularism Neutral?" Wiley Online Library 26 no.3. (2013): 404-429.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

Sources that were accessed from the internet were much easier to attain but were mostly inadequate. For interviewees that were unavailable, other willing respondents were consulted for the interviews. Those that requested anonymity yet contributed to the study were given pseudo names in the study. Secondary documents whose credibility was questionable were crosschecked with other documents to ascertain their validity before being used in this study. Inferences were also made where the information contained in the documents seemed ambiguous and were further juxtaposed with other records.

The study covered the second half of the twentieth century to date. The reason being that the problem at hand did not emerge suddenly and it is essential to revisit the past so as to take a critical look at sanitation and waste management and follow its gradual deterioration. This will help to identify what had been missed along the line as the past is constantly exhibited in the ever-changing present. The area of study is Kumasi, one of the metropolitan cities in Ghana, which was formerly known as the Garden City of West Africa, due to its once flourishing green environment.

## DISCUSSIONS

This article has been organized into four themes. The first theme contains the introduction. The second theme covers the nature of religious activities in the colonial era and explores whether it was a tool used by the Colonial Authorities for their own good or for the benefit of the people. The third theme encapsulates the empirical aspects of the paper; it entails data collection, analysis, and discussion. The last theme comprises conclusions and suggestions for policy makers.

### 2.0 THE NATURE OF RELIGION IN COLONIAL GHANA

Religion has become a potent social force in every facet of Ghanaian life, from family life, economic activities, occupation and health to education. Religious practices and beliefs have important consequences for the economic development of a community or nation. According to White, the rise of industrial capitalism can be traced to the Protestant work ethic that instilled in its adherents the values of thrift, trust, integrity, honesty, hard-work, and fairness.<sup>39</sup> In fact, the relationship between religion and development is likely to be complementary as long as religious beliefs and practices promote 'moderation'. National development can, therefore, be described as the overall development or a collective socioeconomic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation.<sup>40</sup>

According to Ellis and Ter Haar, Africans just like most people on the planet, understand and interpret the world partly through the prism of religion.<sup>41</sup> Prior to the arrival of the British, the indigenous Ghanaian's religion was the African Traditional religion. The concept of God to the African was depicted in how he was worshiped which was mainly through rendering worship and sacrifices to divinities and ancestors, pouring libation as well as the adherence to taboos. Another depiction of God in the Traditional Ghanaian society was the belief in divinities. Far from being the object of idolatry, the divinities were also traditional gods that had a "father-son" relationship with God.<sup>42</sup> Whereas

<sup>39</sup> Peter White, 'Religion, Mission, and National Development: A contextual Interpretation of Jeremiah 29:4–7 in the Light of the Activities of the Basel Mission Society in Ghana (1828–1918) and its Missiological Implications', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36(1), Art. #1419, (2015) pp. 6. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v36i.1419> Accessed March 16, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Stephen Ellis and Gerrie Ter Haar, "Religion and Politics: Taking African Epistemologies Seriously", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 45, 3 (2007). Cambridge University Press. Pp. 385-401. Accessed March 10, 2016. <http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/Schwartzberg/ps855>

<sup>42</sup> T.N.O. Quarcoopome, "West African Traditional Religion", African University Press. P.M.B. 5617, Ibadan. (1987) P.169

Christianity and Islam taught that the divinities were agents of the devil and therefore were demonic, the traditional religion taught that the divinities were the children of God who were brought into being through divine ordering of the universe.<sup>43</sup> They were believed to have derived powers because they derive their existence from the Supreme Being and were, therefore, only functionaries in the theocratic governance of the world.

Also, the traditional religious leaders who were chiefly connected with the divinities were the traditional priests, medicine men, and diviners. The position and function of these three religious personalities were very important in the life of the Ghanaian in the context of the African traditional religion.<sup>44</sup> Also, festivals served as a key feature in the traditional religion; these were times when the community came together to give thanks to God, the divinities, and ancestors. Most of the festivals were (and still are) agricultural and were held to mark the end of the agricultural year and also usher in a new one.<sup>45</sup>

This was the general outlook of the traditional religion in Ghana before the arrival of the Europeans on the coast. It is quite obvious that there were (and this is not different today) several similarities between the African traditional religion and Christianity most especially. However, because of the negative preconception the Europeans and other non-Africans had towards the African and his environment, only a negative representation of him and his (the African's) society were portrayed. European view of the African traditional religion was that, it was fetish worship and that the Africans themselves were uncivilized savages whereas Christianity was the standard. This was the reason it became the responsibility of the Europeans to embark on a civilizing missions to Africa.

Christianity was first introduced into the Gold Coast by the Portuguese in 1471. However, its activities were limited. It was not until 1828 that Christian missionary activities were reintroduced into the territory with much interest at the arrival of the Basel missionary. According to Samwini, these missionaries were initially chaplains to the Danish merchants and traders in the Christiansburg castle.<sup>46</sup> However with time, constant friction between the missionaries and the merchants was on the subject of them (missionaries) maintaining their position as chaplains to the merchants.<sup>47</sup> One missionary by name Andreas Riis managed to reach Akuapem Akropong in 1835 and opened the first mission station and subsequently another mission in 1847 at Aburi with the help of David Rochester and Joseph Moor.<sup>48</sup> This was the beginning of the Christian missionary success in Ghana.

The missionaries with the introduction of formal education, vocational and technical training were able to convert a large portion of the Ghanaians. This was a gradual process and was not without challenges. With the aid of the colonial government, they were able to withstand several of the challenges. There is no doubt that Christianity played a major role in the education of the Ghanaian. This was evident in the several schools and vocational and technical institutes that had the names of churches (and still does). Indeed, a large portion of the development experienced in the Gold Coast was pioneered by the Christian missionaries with support from the colonial government.

Between 1800 and 1950, Ghana experienced more Muslim and Christian missionary encounters than in the earlier centuries.<sup>49</sup> According to Samwini, there are many similarities in the ways in which Islam

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> Nathan Samwini, "The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950. Its Effect upon Muslim and Muslim-Christian Relations", Zugl. Birmingham, Univ., Diss., (2003). P.62

<sup>47</sup> Nathan Samwini, "The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950", p. 44

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Nathan Samwini, "The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950", p. 22

became identified with the various ethnic groups and northern kingdoms from the sixteenth through to the eighteenth centuries, as well as various stages of incorporation into the societies that were found there. In his paper, Weiss states that although a general process of 'Islamization' had been seen to take effect in the twentieth century, it cannot be linked to any colonial or postcolonial policies that would have intended to favor Muslims and Islam in Ghana.<sup>50</sup>

The whole process of 'Islamization' in the northern part of contemporary Ghana was rather steady, dating back to the eighteenth century.<sup>51</sup> The process is believed to have begun with the confinement of Muslim traders and scholars to their allocated settlement and the local rulers they were closely linked to. Their initial place of settlement was the Volta-Basin where the Gonja and Dagbon states were located.<sup>52</sup> No attempts were made by the Muslim community to establish Islamic governments in the Volta-Basin, unlike in the other parts of the Sudan savannah. However, with time, these states developed into multi-religious states similar to some of the pre jihadist states like the Malian empire where the king was Muslim whereas the political and religious structures of the states remained non-Islamic.<sup>53</sup>

In the northern territories which later became known under the British colonial era as Protectorate, initial British attitude could be described as 'pro-Muslim' principally because the British demarcated a large portion of the north to them to exercise their authority without having to compete with the Christian missionaries. It is for this very reason that Christianity was unable to get to the north as at the time the south had been 'won for God'. During the first years of colonial rule under A.E.G. Watherston who was then the Chief Commissioner of the northern territories between 1905 and 1909, Islam was deemed a religion 'eminently suited to the native'.<sup>54</sup> As a sympathizer of Islam, Watherston was of the view that Islam helped spread civilization, encouraged decent living and provided a stimulus for trading.

However, it can be said that British attitude toward Islam took a negative turn largely due to fear of Islamic militancy. There was no structured British policy for Muslims during this period; they also did not take Islam into consideration when formulating policies in all their West African colonies. The only time they allowed room for Muslim personnel and institution was when their existence was found suitable for the administration of the colonial dependencies.<sup>55</sup>

In this light, a British-Muslim alliance was formed between the colonial government and the various northern states where Muslim scholars were allowed to serve in the local courts as clerks. They kept records of all the cases tried by the chief. Also at certain point in time, the Muslim community was allowed to express their views on certain subjects. Again, by 1931, the official census in eastern Gonja district reflected "improvement in the general moral tone of the people especially with the spread of Mohammedanism".<sup>56</sup>

There was considerable improvement in the general sanitary conditions of most towns especially in the protectorate when there were revival and spread of Islam. Nevertheless, the arrival of itinerant Muslim preachers posed a new threat to the colonial authority as they had not taken into account the existence

---

<sup>50</sup> Holger Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, ca. 1900-1930", Working Papers on Ghana: Historical and Contemporary Studies 2 (January 2004) p. 2 <http://www.helenski.fi/projet/wopag>. Accessed march 30, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Holger Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana",

<sup>53</sup> Ibid p. 2

<sup>54</sup> Holger Weiss, "Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana" p.2

<sup>55</sup> Ibid p. 3

<sup>56</sup> Ibid p. 11

of the different interpretations of Islam. Mahdism, Pan-Islamism, and Islam among others have been identified as posing threat to the colonial order; words such as 'alien' and 'native' were used to differentiate between Muslims from outside the protectorate and those already living there respectively. The 'aliens' were believed to be negative and were menaces, threatening the peace of the native people. The reason had been that, the local people were accommodative of the colonial order whereas the aliens were not.

By 1935, Islam was no longer considered as a positive example by the colonial authorities; although there was no official policy that was drawn against them, Muslims were gradually ignored by the British. The religion, after it was used to establish indirect rule in the northern territories was no longer favored after several attempts of insurrections which were not limited to the Gold Coast alone. After forming these 'political alliances' with several of the northern states, the British sought to strengthen their position by putting non-chiefly groups in the administrative section thereby further neutralizing the effects of Islam in the governance process.

Though traces of Islam could be found in the south, by 1840s it was in Asante and the coastal areas in by the early 1900s. Under the colonial period activities of Muslims were largely concentrated in the northern part of Ghana.<sup>57</sup> The African traditionalist believed in the power of the divinities to heal. In view of this, the treatment of diseases through methods involving magic, healers, and animal sacrifices was quite prevalent.<sup>58</sup> Infirmities could also be attributed to punishment from deities for breaking a taboo or going contrary to a directive or even through the activities of witches and malevolent spirits.

Notwithstanding, several diseases that were prevalent in the Gold Coast could be traced to poor sanitation in the colony. The lack of a form of sanitation systems was noted as widespread and both human and domestic waste was poorly disposed of. There was also no proper method of dispensing clean water to the people. As a result, aside malaria and yellow fever carried by mosquitoes, dysentery, hookworm, and roundworm were also common.<sup>59</sup> For instance in 1908, the colonial government received information about a number of deaths in New Koforidua which was on the Kumasi-Accra road.<sup>60</sup> The affected houses in the village were inspected to ascertain the cause of the deaths and upon tracing the history of the cases from the neighboring hospitals where the victims were sent for treatment, it was gathered that Typhoid was responsible for a major part of the ordeal.

The inspection in the village disclosed that there were three major problems the village faced which caused the epidemic. This includes; poor water supply, poor nature of refuse disposal and the nature of excreta disposal. From the findings, there was hardly any provision for drinking water as the inhabitants were compelled to drink from a ditch since their only source of drinking water was defunct. On the issue of the disposal of refuse and excreta, it was noted that there was no organized system for refuse disposal and no sanitary sites for refuse collection and therefore the inhabitants dumped refuse indiscriminately. Again the use of pit latrines marked their places of convenience but there was poor maintenance as there was only one sanitary laborer who was responsible for New Koforidua and another town two miles away. The houses where the patients came from were over-crowded and the

---

<sup>57</sup> Nathan Samwini, "The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950", p. 58

<sup>58</sup> Randolph Quaye, "Underdevelopment and Health Care in Africa", Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press (1996) p. 22. Accessed March 16, 2016.

<sup>59</sup> David K. Patterson, "Health in Colonial: Disease, Medicine and Socio-Economic Change 1900-1955", Waltham, MA: Crossroads Press (1981) pp. 23-24. Accessed March 16, 2016.

<sup>60</sup> PRAAD (Public Records and Archives Administration) Kumasi, ARG2/14/11, Re-Sanitation of New Koforidua. Accessed April 8, 2016.

sanitary conditions there were nothing to write home about. It is no surprise that the disease could spread fast.<sup>61</sup>

General health care largely consisted of primary healthcare or decentralized such that any type of sickness or disease had the home as its first call for treatment rather than the health centers that had been set up by the Europeans. The outbreak of diseases was rampant and as a measure to protect the Europeans living in the various British Colonies from becoming infected and dying from tropical diseases, the Sanitary Branch was formed as a branch of the Medical Department of the Gold Coast. It was established in 1910, along with the Sanitary Legislative Ordinances.<sup>62</sup>

The British influence in Ghana can be said to have marked the commencement of a planned health care system, tracing it to the late 1800 and early 1900s.<sup>63</sup> Notwithstanding, its original purpose was to see to the welfare of the Europeans who had settled here by the twentieth century. Later, its activities were extended to include the indigenous people as well. Some of their activities included provision of clean and drinkable water, combat the infestation of mosquitoes, increase awareness about the maintenance of good health as well as deal with the outbreak of epidemics. The ordinances were also passed which resulted in laying the foundation for the progress that would follow during the 1900s.

At the initial stages of colonization, the British Authority saw the need to allow the indigenous people to continue to practice their various beliefs such as spiritual healing and home therapy. However, where there were reports of certain extreme activities such as witch-hunting, the authorities realized the need to put an end to some selected practices they considered primitive. For instance, the various processes for presumably curing witchcraft which consisted the drinking of a concoction prepared by the priest and undergoing some kind of 'ritual purification' were considered dangerous. According to Adu-Gyamfi, the priests claimed that the rituals connected with their practices were done out of the volition of the accused rather than under duress. Indigenous Priest Healers who were marked as proponents of this act were usually tried and their shrines were shut down.<sup>64</sup>

Aside putting a stop to such practices they deemed as 'inhumane', the authorities realized that most of the health conditions faced by the people could easily be explained and treated using science, without having to go through the cumbersome process of seeking a faith-healer or priest. This stems from the Eurocentric view of the African and his beliefs, which did not have any scientific basis. With the steady penetration of new ideas especially in terms of health, the power of the traditional priest diminished drastically.<sup>65</sup> However, it should be noted that not all witch-finding shrines were closed by the colonial authorities. Those shrines that were found to endanger the lives of votaries were the ones that were closed. Nevertheless, the local people were not alienated from belief in the spiritual in the sense that, patients who were taken to the various government hospitals were allowed to go home and seek spiritual assistance if the nature of their disease were deemed spiritual.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Stephen Addae, "History of Western Medicine in Ghana 1880-1960", Durham, United Kingdom: Durham Academic Press (1997). P.97. Accessed March 15, 2016.

<sup>63</sup> David K. Patterson, *ibid*.

<sup>64</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, "Spiritual and Indigenous Healing Practices among the Asante People of Ghana: A Testimonial from Twenty-first Century Practitioners and Recipients in Kumase", *Journal of Basic and Applied Research International* (September 2015) p.5 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281748186>. Accessed on March 4, 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, "Spiritual and Indigenous Healing Practices among the Asante People of Ghana" P. 5

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

Indeed, the twentieth century Gold Coast permitted anti-witchcraft cults and Christian churches whose activities sometimes were friendly, suggesting that different problems mandated different solutions.<sup>67</sup>

A brief look at the post-colonial era shows positive strides which were made in the battle for better sanitation. In 1977, Local Governments were set up as part of the decentralization process. Prior to this in Kumasi, there was no proper cohesion in tackling environmental issues. This was a result of apathy among the various officials such as the Health Inspectors and Council of Clerks. With regards to setting up of the local governments, with time, the people witnessed an improvement in the administration and general performance duties of the health personnel and sanitation. In Ashanti Region, ten districts were established.<sup>68</sup> They are represented in the table below.

Table 1.0. A representation of the newly formed districts in 1977.

No.	NAME OF DISTRICT COUNCIL	HEADQUARTERS
1	Kumasi City Council	Kumasi
2	Amansie District Council	Bekwai
3	Adansi District Council	Obuasi
4	Sekyere District Council	Mampong/Ashanti
5	Offinso District Council	Offinso
6	Ejisu-Bosomtwe District Council	Ejisu
7	Asante-Akim District Council	Konongo
8	Atwima District Council	Nkawie
9	Ahafo-Ano District Council	Tepa
10	Kwabre-Sekyere District Council	Agona

Religion saw the emergence of various sects even in contemporary times. By the 1950s, several religious sects both Christian and Muslim had made headway in the country and had even taken root in the northern part of the country. Spiritual churches like, The Church of the Twelve Apostles had also taken root and Protestantism had also gained roots with a considerable number of followers.<sup>69</sup> The Islamization of some parts of contemporary northern Ghana can be said to be a recent development. This was as a result of the conscious effort of Muslim societies such as Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in the 1960s and the indigenous people who still clung to the “old ways” were allowed their freedom to worship.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid*

<sup>68</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, AG/20/S.5, The Technical Services; Environmental Health Services.

<sup>69</sup> Nathan Samwini, “The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950”, p. 55

Generally, it can be deduced that a pattern of "indirect rule" was established. The policy of indirect rule as it is known refers to the use of the various indigenous leaders to administer a territory; in this context the Gold Coast by the British Crown. Usually, this is found in the political settings, however due to circumstances like the inadequate funds at their disposal, the Colonial Administration found it expedient to apply this policy in the other part of the Ghanaian's environment, religion being one of the tools that was used.

In trying to establish authority over a people, it is necessary to get their cooperation and one way to achieve that is through religion; just as Karl Marx puts it in his work "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" in 1843, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of the soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people". All throughout history, religion has been a tool used by leaders all over to dominate or oppress people and this was no different from the nature of religion and politics in Gold Coast in the twentieth century.

To sum it up, religion in the Gold Coast could be seen as a tool that was used to colonize the people. The purpose of religion did not necessarily aim at the development of the territory but rather meet the various needs of the Crown. In practice, development was concentrated in the areas where the Europeans lived. Places such as Cantonments in Accra were designed to house the government officials, military and police officials to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in the drains and cause malaria. The drains that were constructed were designed to meet this requirement, whereas the rest of Accra and the Colony as a whole struggled to keep up in terms of development. Those parts of the country that experienced some form of development were usually those areas that were rich in resources like minerals and timber.

Also, as stated earlier, the sanitary branch that was set up was aimed at meeting the needs of the expatriates and not the indigenes. However, the Colonial Authority later kept measures such as the passing of ordinances (laws that outlined basic sanitary practices) and remained effective until 1950. The setting up of mosquitoes brigades (which later became the town council), was made up of inspectors who went about inspecting homes to ensure that families maintained cleanliness of their homes (and fines for people who default) in place to address the issue of sanitation.

### **3.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERVIEWEES**

The study was conducted in two sessions. For first the session, interviewees were purposively selected with their ages ranging from forty-five (45) to sixty (60). Two reasons accounted for this. The first was that the study targeted majority of respondents who can compare the current nature of sanitation in Kumasi against an earlier period in their lives when the situation looked different. The second reason was that as religious leaders, those who have been and those who are still "spiritual shepherds" of people in the society; they would be able to give many concrete responses relating to the subject being studied.

The other section of the study required a random sampling technique. Majority of the interviewees were between the ages of forty (40) and sixty (60). The study focused on this age group since the study is more anthropological than historical. Therefore, it merits the thoughts and views of those who were present during the turn of the decade. Also, it is important that the views of those who grew up closely after them be sampled. Expatriates or foreigners living in Ghana for not less than five years were also considered for this study. This was done to elicit responses from foreigners with little sentimental attachment to the area of study. The interview was conducted in relation to the research questions that were asked in the study. Responses from interviewees have been thematically and ethnographically presented.

### 3.2 Poor Waste Management and Sanitation on Both Institutional and Community Level

Generally, respondents expressed regret at the poor attitude towards sanitation in Kumasi and Ghana large. According to an associate minister (who wanted his name to be withheld and therefore been pseudo-named Rev. Quame) of a branch of the Lighthouse Chapel International in Kumasi, discussion on sanitation in Kumasi is relative to individuals.<sup>70</sup> He intimated that Kumasi has a wide variation in terms of sanitary conditions; hence, a cursory look at it would not suffice. He also stated that Kejetia is the poorest area in sanitation management. He said the premises of his church, its offices and immediate surroundings are maintained by the church members. However, as to if the members keep this attitude at home, he could not tell. He admitted to the fact that the situation of sanitation in Ghana is a national menace.

Rev. Samuel K. Frimpong of the Ramseyer Memorial Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana discussed sanitation is in two parts; the first was in relation to the church as an institution and the second was at the community level.<sup>71</sup> For the first part, he explained further that, private individuals who may or may not work for private waste management companies are responsible for keeping the church premises, offices and mission houses clean. He stated that the church adopted this approach after the members failed to keep the premises clean when it was previously in their care. He added that the collection of rubbish was poor until the private waste management organization was engaged.

On the second part, which is the community level, Rev. Frimpong disclosed that the various groups in the church on their week-long celebrations embarked on sanitation exercises. He cited the Young Adults Fellowship (YAF) as one of the groups in the church that usually conduct such activities in service to the community. However, he indicated that the church as a whole was not conducting or taking part in such activities for the community until in 2014 when the Moderator of the Presbyterian church of Ghana at that time, Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Martey, issued a statement asking all Presbyterian Churches across the country to embark on a clean-up exercise once a month in their environment.<sup>72</sup> According to Rev. Frimpong, his branch of the Church has not followed the instruction to the letter.

When asked if the church extended its sanitation activities to the community, Rev. Quame disclosed that, to the best of his knowledge, his church had never embarked on any clean-up activities that went beyond the immediate surroundings of the church. Usually, the congregation focused only on the immediate areas surrounding the church and the usual cleaning involved weeding overgrown grass and cleaning drainages to allow water flow through freely.

Madam Esther a resident of Kumasi and a food seller commented that sanitation in Kumasi has, over the years, deteriorated.<sup>73</sup> According to her, Kejetia, which is the commercial center of Kumasi, was much better than what it is now. She was of the view that, the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) is not performing well in discharging its duties. She said previously there were officers whose duty was to tax the market women for rubbish collection and made sure that the rubbish was collected by the close of each day. However, it seemed to her that KMA collects the taxes but does not use it to perform the required task thereby contributing to the deterioration of the standard of sanitation.

---

<sup>70</sup> Because the name of this respondent has been withheld, a pseudo name has been used in this study, that is, Rev. Quame. This name was used in the rest of the study.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Rev. Samuel K. Frimpong (2nd Minister of the Ramseyer Memorial Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Adum) at his office on 21st April 2016.

<sup>72</sup> Rev. Frimpong was not certain as to the specific year, however, it can be inferred that two years ago was 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Madam Esther on 18th April 2016 at her business stand at Ayeduase. The interview was done in Twi.

Rev. Frimpong stated that there use to be officers known as “saman-saman” or “tankas”.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, Rev. Quame’s church could not boast of a regular clean-up exercise for the community. He said whenever the church undertakes sanitation activities, it is usually in the immediate surroundings of the church. Mr. Moses Nti, a retired teacher agreed with Rev. Frimpong that the saman-saman was as once an effective tool for maintaining a clean environment in households.<sup>75</sup>

He narrated:

“I remember growing up when my grandmother and aunties would wake up early in the morning and try to clean the house. They made us children carry the rubbish out of the house, scrub the bathroom and wash the dishes and pack them. This was because they feared the town council. In fact, in our neighborhood everybody tried to do that because when the town council officers come by and your house was not clean, you knew you were in trouble.”

Similarly, Madam Esther shared that the saman-saman came around to inspect people’s houses to make sure their homes were clean and those who were found with an unclean environment were fined. She said the shame that came along with it was quite unpleasant; however, there were people who did not care about maintaining their environment clean and such people usually run out from their houses when they heard the inspectors coming around. When asked about the activities of the church in the community towards sanitation, Madam Esther did not point to any specific activities in her community. Nonetheless, she did mention occasional clean up exercises by some groups from her church. She however indicated that certain groups in her community like the keep-fit clubs organize occasional clean-up exercises. She could not recall the last time she witnessed such an activity.

Usman Nuamah, a petty trader at Adum and a practicing Muslim described his experience growing up in Kumasi. According to him, he could attest to the fact that sanitation in Kumasi has worsened.<sup>76</sup> Also, he indicated that this is not a sudden event but was rather a gradual process. He said the deplorable situation of sanitation is a collective guilt; the negligence by KMA and individuals alike.

Mr. Nuamah blamed his own poor waste management attitude on growing up in the zongo.<sup>77</sup> Even though efforts were made by the residents to improve their sanitary conditions, several factors have hindered its progress. Among such factors is the fact that these communities are not well planned; therefore, there cannot be a proper way of constructing drainages or setting up a rubbish post for waste collection without affecting human settlements. When asked about his view on the current state of sanitation not only in zongo, he agree with the other respondents that the city authorities have shirked their responsibilities. He continued that the people of Kumasi have simply ignored sanitation, citing the location of his shop as an example. Indeed, the location of his shop is a depiction of the poor waste management.

Concerning the efforts his mosque makes in his community to maintain sanitation, he was unable to mention any concrete activities except that occasionally, that is during festivities such Ramadan, the zongo youth come together to clean the neighborhood. Generally, his response towards sanitation situation was one of a regret. He mentioned that in the mosque the subject of sanitation pertaining to the maintenance of a clean environment is discussed though not as frequently as in relation to

---

<sup>74</sup> Twi term for local officials who went around making sure people kept their households and their environment clean. They were charged with summoning defaulters who were then fined. Another term was the Town Council which was corrupted to be Tankas.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Mr. Moses Nti on 15th April 2016 at his residence at Asafo. It was done with English and Twi.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Mr. Usman Nuamah on 15th April 2016 at his shop at Kejetia. The interview was conducted in Twi.

<sup>77</sup> “Zongo” is the term for slummy areas which have are largely occupied by Muslims.

spirituality. He also mentioned that occasionally, health personnel were invited to address the congregation about issues of general wellbeing.

Again, Alhaji Is-hak was of the view that the general outlook of sanitation in Kumasi is an unacceptable condition.<sup>78</sup> He stated that even though he lived in Accra, he moved to Kumasi about fifteen years ago on work transfer and so could comment on the current issue on sanitation. Even though he was of the view that certain parts of Kumasi were generally clean, he did not mention any specific locations. Citing Kejetia as an example, he was of the view that fifteen years ago, the sanitary conditions in this business hub of Kumasi was far better than what it is now. He attributed the situation to migration. He believes that the officials in Kumasi did not make any provisions to take care of the large inflow of migrants especially from the northern part of the Ghana. He stated:

“There are several unskilled workers in Kumasi, who largely work and live in the market. This means that whereas every other person goes home after work, these people stay in the marketplace because it is their home. That means they do everything in the market. And I'm sure you know what I mean by that. It makes sense that with time the nature of their activities would contribute to the general deterioration of sanitary conditions in Kumasi.”

He pointed out that this is one major factor for the decline in the standard of sanitation. He also cited the city authorities as less effective machinery in managing waste because its efforts are often times not recognizable. Miss Rodrigue Ayih, an Ivorian who has been living in Ghana for about six years, was of the view that sanitation in Ghana is poor.<sup>79</sup> According to her, the nature of sanitation was disproportionate to the religious zeal of Ghanaians. She continues that, if Ghanaians were hygiene-conscious as they were about religion, Kumasi, in particular, would probably be named the "Garden City" once again.

Joseph Kwabena Bio, a self-employed resident of Kumasi, shared similar sentiment.<sup>80</sup> According to him, though he was raised a Christian, he could not call himself one because he found modern day religion to be very confusing. He was of the view that, Christianity especially, has come to replace the aspects of our culture that were very beneficial to the Ghanaian society. He stated that, Kumasi was the hub of culture and therefore certain incidences such as poor sanitation should not be associated with the city. He attributed this to modern religion. According to him, traditional religion made room for maintaining hygiene in the form of taboos. However, because Ghanaians now profess Christianity as their choice of religion, they have such blatant disregard for tradition.<sup>81</sup>

From the above, it is obvious that the respondents are concerned with the situation of sanitation in Kumasi. From the responses of the religious leaders and community members, various suggestions were made about the causes of this problem of sanitation. The respondents usually recounted stories of how local authorities upheld sanitation and what they thought of their efforts.

The responses of the leaders seem to be congruent with community members that not much effort has been done towards sanitation. They agreed that the religious authorities could do more than what they are doing now, especially in their communities. Few touched on the fact that the government agencies were no longer as effective as they used to be. They made mention of roles sanitation officers played in household hygiene. To them, it seem the whereabouts of these officials are unknown.

Whereas others mentioned the poor work of the government institutions, the majority of the respondents agreed that the worsening sanitary conditions in Kumasi is being perpetrated by individuals

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Alhaji Is-hak, an Islamic cleric on 21st April 2016 at Asafo.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Rodrigue Ayih on 20th March 2016 after church service at Bomso.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Joseph Kwabena Bio, on 21st April 2016 at his shop at Ayeduase.

<sup>81</sup> Joseph Bio did not mention any concrete sources.

themselves due to the lack of personal means of waste management. Even though respondents are aware that they are at fault, they apportioned much of the blame on public institutions and agencies.

### **3.2.2 The Role of Religion in the Ghanaian Society and its Influenced on the Ordinary Ghanaian in His Relation to the Environment**

According to Rev. Bonsu Opoku Agyemang, the senior minister of the Ramseyer Congregation of the Presbyterian Church, “the Lord is concerned with everything in the world, creatures, and plants alike”.<sup>82</sup> Citing Psalms: 24:1 and Romans 8:19-20 and 22, he said it borders on Christians to protect God’s creation. Again, Rev. Frimpong disclosed that for a nation with about seventy percent Christian population, sanitation should not be a national burden.

Rev. Quame pointed out why the church has less impact on the sanitation in communities. He said the family is the first point of socialization, with the church being the second. In this regard, where the family failed to give the children the proper education, it was not likely that the individual would be formed by just attending church. He said his church makes efforts to educate the people but because of their individual backgrounds, some members embrace the teachings whereas others do not.

Rev. Frimpong affirmed this by saying that “charity begins at home”. For him, the church attempts to sensitise its members on sanitation but do not achieve maximum success. For instance, he said, one division of the Presbyterian Church focuses on sanitation and once a year the division talks about sanitation during their week-long celebration. Also, depending on the theme for the Sunday service, the message of sanitation is incorporated. He bemoaned the fact that sanitation is an individual religious responsibility and yet most of the church members even litter the church premises with their food wrappers, gum and sachet water. It is least surprising to him then that they will continue this act in their private lives.

Rev. Frimpong disclosed that sanitation is an eyesore when he pays visits to some church members. This, he intimated, is probably because of improper parenting at the learning stages of their lives. According to him, in households where parents do not pay attention to or consciously teach children about sanitation, the children most likely develop ill attitude about it. This means that even though it is the responsibility of the church to shape the lives of its members, it can only effectively discharge this duty if households have paved the way.

One problem that was raised during the interview session was the fact that the church’s attempts to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of the people were disproportionate. Rev. Frimpong indicated that in principle the church is a holistic ministry; the ministry of Jesus Christ. According to him, Jesus Christ preached to the people, healed the sick among them, and then fed them with food too. In doing this, He fulfilled the two-part ministry, which is meeting the spiritual (salvation) and the physical needs of the people. He said this, in modern times, is what the Church should emulate. He continued that the Church, nevertheless, has been unable to meet this standard because the emphasis of the Church is usually on the spiritual needs of the people and not on their physical needs.

Rev. Quame explained that there were two types of Christians; the “literate” and “illiterate”. According to him, the literate Christians are, on the average, balanced in their lives; the “illiterate” Christians may not be as balanced as the “literate” may. He further stated that:

---

<sup>82</sup> Rev. Bonsu Opoku Agyemang is also the District Minister for the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in Adum. The interview was conducted in his office at the church premises on 21st April 2016.

“However, there are exceptions where there are leaders with the right “stuff” found in their midst. There are far less educated Christians than illiterate Christians. It is the church’s responsibility to shape the life of every Christian. However, life starts from the house”.

He also did not agree that Christians constitute about seventy percent of the current population of Ghana.<sup>83</sup> According to him, the fact that many people bear English names does not mean they are Christians. Again, he said the many people who troop into church services are not necessarily Christians since a greater percentage of them do not live according to the Bible.

He added that, the church is made up of human beings and so nothing can be deemed absolute. In this vain, he said, every stakeholder has a role to play; if they allow themselves to be guided then, the goal of better sanitation can be attained. Alhaji Is-hak added that sanitation should not be an issue in a country where a larger proportion of the populations profess some sort of religious association. According to him, it is the individuals that need to work and develop themselves if any change can be effected.

Citing the zongo as an example, Alhaji Is-hak declared that the fact that there are several Muslims living in zongos and cannot maintain a clean environment speaks volume about the human nature. To him, even though the zongo does not constitute Muslims only, they are the dominant group that is why it borders on Muslims to uphold the tenets of Islam even with issues pertaining to sanitation. He also stated that for religion to play any role in society, it is the members of that religion that must live and practice what it professes; only then can religion be said to have played a substantive role in the affairs of the society. He further said, as Christianity has established certain required habits on cleanliness in the Old Testament, so does Islam outline certain guiding principles in the Quran and Hadith in relation to sanitation and good health. According to him, there are a number of verses in the Holy Quran that shed light on the importance of cleanliness both spiritual and physical, citing such examples as;

"Truly, Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure (Al-Baqarah 2:222)."

"In it (mosque) are men who love to clean and to purify themselves. And Allah loves those who make themselves clean and pure. (Al-Baqarah 9:108)"

Commenting on the subject, Muhammad Bashir<sup>84</sup> stated that, “in one Hadith, it is stated: ‘Cleanliness is half of faith’ (Sahih Muslim Book, Number 0432)”

This implies that Muslims who practice cleanliness can be deemed as true Muslims. He again explained that there are two kinds of cleanliness; physical and spiritual. He said the physical involves two aspects: the human body and the environment. He continued that sanitation in terms of the latter includes water, house, road, and public places in general. He considered cleaning the streets and disposing of filth as charity. He said the Quran references three acts that cause others to curse people: relieving one’s self in a watering place, on footpaths or shaded places. Therefore, to him, religion’s role can be effective only if the society is willing to be practical about doctrines.

Joseph Kwabena Bio, sharing his thought, stated that religion which was in the form of African Traditional Religion did play a role even in the pre-colonial era, which means that it can and still play a role in modern society. However, when individuals are misguided or are not balanced, they tend to ignore certain basic roles they can play in the name of religion.

<sup>83</sup> “Ghana Demographics Profile 2014”.<http://www.indexmundi.com/ghana/demographicsprofile> Accessed June 30, 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Muhammad Bashir at his office on 20th April 2016.

The respondents generally agreed that religion had a role to play in society. They agreed that religion should be the main tool for dealing with this issue principally because all the various religions emphasize cleanliness in spirit and body. This is because all religions believe that the body of an individual is a temple that needs to be kept clean and undefiled like the places of worship.

In this luminosity, certain religious groups and sects have banned the ingestion and use of certain products deemed harmful and/or unclean. It is, therefore, imperative that the environment of a religious person be kept clean as well. If God does care about His creation, then human beings must protect all of the creation and this means keeping a clean environment. The various religious leaders were of the view that religion can only play a functional role if only individuals are willing to practice it and not bear the names or titles. According to them, the main agent of socialization is the family and the religious bodies are secondary. The religious bodies can only transform their members if they will practice what they are taught.

### **3.2.3 Religion as a Tool for Salvaging the Problem of Sanitation and Environmental Health and Safety**

On the above subject, all respondent held the view that religion can be used as a tool. Rev. Bonsu Opoku Agyemang cited Psalms 24:1 again as a biblical indication Christianity's role in sanitation. Pastor Kwaku Appiah of the Resurrection Church also cited John 8:12 to agree with Rev. Bonsu. He continued that, as Christians our light must shine wherever we find ourselves. Again, he said, as the salt of the earth, we are required to live the life worth emulating since a tasteless is worthy nothing than being trampled upon. He noted that, the way forward for sanitation in Ghana is that the individuals and the Church both have their roles to play and only performing them can ensure good sanitation practices.

Rev. Frimpong was of the view that religion alone would not be able to deal with this problem. He explained that the state is made up of people from different religious and cultural backgrounds, including those who do not believe in the existence of any deity. He said all these people have rights that need to be respected. Therefore, working towards developing the nation would certainly require the cooperation of all those present in the country. And he believes that when a section of the population attempts to embark on sanitation exercise without the cooperation of others, it may face several challenges which may in the long run fail. He then suggests religion must work hand in hand with the already existing secular state in order to achieve sanity.

Rev Quame agree with Rev. Frimpong. He stated that already existing structures need to be involved in solving the problem of sanitation. He was of the view that religion was only a part of the whole picture and so individuals must not lose sight of this. Again, if individuals come together to undertake such activities like clean-up exercises with propaganda in mind, then it can be assumed that their work would have no lasting effects. He believes that it is not the lack of clean-up exercises that has caused the sanitation menace we see but human attitude.

Rev. Frimpong, said church members are excited when social responsibilities like clean-up exercise is mentioned. However, after the church leadership prepares adequately towards it, members find several excuses to absent themselves. He stressed that among the people that show up, a significant amount would be reluctant in doing the work. They then suggest that the church hires private sanitation workers or people who would be willing to work for a fee. He said even when gutters are desilted, collection of the rubbish becomes another burden since provision is not usually made for collecting the rubbish.

The respondents unanimously agreed that religion can be used as a tool for sanitation. However, they indicated that foreseen challenges include secular governance at the national level and section of the society might want the state to separate its activities from religion. They also suggested that religious bodies must partner the government insitutions so that the necessary steps to take proactive steps in addressing the issue of saintation.

### 3.2.4 Secularism as the Only Way or Tool in Dealing with the Situation

Whether secularism is the only way, Rev. Appiah did not lay blame on the government institutions. He noted that it did not matter if the state is secularized or that its institutions are. However, the individuals that occupy those institutions are the ones that have to bear the blame for not doing their part. He believed that the human resource is what makes an institution and not the other way, just like how rules are made for human beings and not the other way round.

Similarly, Rev. Quame suggested that the various institutions can only function with its human face. This means that where the individuals in these offices are sanitation conscious, then there would be a better chance at fighting the problem of sanitation. Again, he said the already existing institutions according to him are not functioning to their fullest capacity. He mentioned that even in these offices, they are unable to maintain some level of cleanliness as it is expected of them. He questioned the measures that have been put in place to give them enough authority. He was of the view that the ineffectiveness of these institutions stems from mediocrity and complacency. He was very unhappy with the way even private waste management companies disposed of rubbish. He shared that very often, the waste management vehicles transporting the garbage overload their trucks, polluting the environment on the job, with unbearable stench and littering the roads. Asked if secularism is still an option, Mr. Nti hastily declared that only religion can help with the situation. For him in all his life, he had come to realize that true worshippers, irrespective of their religion practice their faith in all aspects of their lives and do not compromise. He stated:

If we are able to develop our beliefs, it doesn't matter if you are a Christian or a Muslim, it doesn't matter. What is important is that we do not leave what we are taught in church or the mosque when we come home. All these religions teach us so many things we can use in life but because we want quick miracles, we forget about all those teachings and lessons we are given in church and live differently. That is our problem as a people. Secularism doesn't have a place in our society as Africans as and such we need to hold on to our beliefs. If we do that, we have hope. There is hope for us.<sup>85</sup>

Madam Esther, however, was of the view that if the government introduced a strict measure for both the office-holders and the rest of the citizens, then the situation might get better. She also mentioned that the attitudes of Ghanaians have to change. She said:

We are our own enemies. We know that we are not to dump refuse just anywhere yet we do so. We know that we could be fined and could cause sicknesses yet we still do so. So if we can just change our attitude, it will really help. The fault is ours. We do not need any sanitation workers (zoom lion) to come around every time. When we clean our households, sanitation workers can take care of the streets and then we will not be faced with this problem of sanitation.

Mr. Kwabena Bio said African Traditional Religion was able to maintain sanity among Ghanaian's before contact with the Europeans. It therefore makes sense that religion is used to solve the sanitation problem. Similarly, Miss Ayih, was of the view that only the cooperation among the various religious authorities and the government will make significant impact in solving the sanitation problem.

The previous theme established the fact that the standard of sanitation in Kumasi has deteriorated. This was attributed to a number of factors such as migration, poor planning of settlements, shirking of responsibilities by government agencies and the general neglect of the environment by individuals. One key problem that became known was, however, the attitudes of the people especially in the Church. From the interviews, it was revealed that the church members were not eager to clean the church

---

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Rev. Nti

environment. This raises the question about if Christians really imbibe the teachings of their church. The fact that church leaders encounter unhygienic environments when they visit their members confirms that sanitation is a problem even at the household level.

In the Old Testament, the book Leviticus was the source of the laws given to Moses and the Israelites by God. It contains among other things, descriptions of sacrificial rituals and purity laws which had to do with cultic purity (also known as cleanliness) and this was concerning diet, skin diseases, bodily discharges, among others.<sup>86</sup> People who were found to be unclean were not allowed inside the camp since it was required that only holy (clean) people could come before God. Many explanations have been offered as the rationale behind the purity laws found in Leviticus and one common interpretation is that God was protecting the health of the Israelites.<sup>87</sup>

A comparison can be drawn between Christianity and African Traditional worship here. Unlike the incidences occurring in modern day churches, it is unheard of that worshippers litter the shrine with their waste. The church's premises these days have been taken over by the sale of food and snacks. This means that littering are bound to occur. In the shrines, taboos are used to curb vices against the deities and they vary based on the divinity.<sup>88</sup> Worshippers are expected to observe them and failure to do so was contemptuous to the deity. Propitiatory sacrifices then have to be performed by the individual or sometimes the community at large in order to avert likely repercussions.<sup>89</sup>

Another key issue was the poor management of the waste generated. This issue was discussed in two parts; the first was the lack of proper or sanitary ways of disposing waste and the second was the lack of personnel available to empty garbage cans. Besides, when vehicles are contracted to convey waste to landfills, they usually carry more than they can contain. The result of this is that as they drive through towns, the excess falls off and litters the streets. In the end, the people responsible for cleaning the environment rather contribute to its pollution.

Again, the issue of poor hygiene habits cannot be ignored. Respondents admitted that the Ghanaians needs to improve hygiene consciousness. Basic personal hygiene practices like the washing of hands frequently, bathing and cleaning of teeth two times daily, among others are sometimes overlooked and this has the tendency to influence environmental cleanliness.

#### **4.1 Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study revealed that religion can be an effective and efficient tool to deal with issues of sanitation if only religious people will be faithful in the teachings of their religion. This implies that no matter the amount of fasting, prayers and declaration of faith, individuals will be unable to effect changes in their environment if they do not change their attitude. Again, religion alone cannot be functional without the cooperation of state institutions. In the long run, it comes down to the citizenry to make a conscious effort in maintaining a clean environment.

There should be a conscientious effort to encourage the cultivation of the habit of recycling refuse. In Ghana the most common source of littering is polyethylene bags and plastics. Rather than discard them after use, they could be kept and reused. Recycling can also be in the form of using waste to produce energy and fuel such as biogas and other useful forms. This would drastically reduce the waste

---

<sup>86</sup> Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, "Introduction to The Old Testament", Zondervan Publishing House, (1994) p.76.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> T.N.O. Quarcoopome, "West African Traditional Religion", African University Press. P.M.B. 5617, Ibadan. (1987) P.169

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

management problem faced by the country. To achieve this goal, the government as well as religious authorities must educate the general public as well as their congregations respectively. Indeed, education is a vital tool that needs to be made use of and all expenses should not be spared to achieve this. Even though there have been such campaigns on maintaining personal hygiene, adequate provisions should be made by supplying clean water, tissue papers and soap/detergents at vantage points in both private and public institutions. In schools, these should be found in all washrooms, corridors of classrooms, dining halls and canteens and playgrounds in order to inculcate the habit of personal hygiene in the children and the youth at a young age. Dustbins should be provided at vantage points and these should be properly maintained. Likewise, churches, mosques and various places of worships should provide such amenities in order to promote personal hygiene.

Secondly, there is the need for the government to develop and implement strict measures for sanitation. The sanitation officials who inspect the homes of individuals as part of measures to maintain a clean society should be empowered and supported with the requisite logistics. Also, measures should be put in place to ensure that individuals participate in the monthly clean up exercises commenced by the government of the Republic of Ghana since 2015. It should be noted that better sanitation can be achieved if only the human resource is available and willing. There is the need for available and well drilled human resource that is not complacent and would always act with some commitment to deal with the issue of filth within the Kumasi metropolis in Ghana in particular.

## REFERENCES

- Addae, S. (1997). *History of Western Medicine in Ghana 1880-1960*. Durham: Durham Academic Press .
- Adu-Gyamfi, S., Owusu-Ansah , D., & Donkoh,W. J. (2013). A Historical Narrative of the British Colonial Administration's Clamp down on Witch finding Shrines among the Asante People of the Gold Coast . *Online International Journal of Arts and Humanities* , 228-234.
- Adu-Gyamfi, S. (2015). Spiritual and Indigenous Healing Practices among the Asante People of Ghana: A Testimonial from Twenty-first Century Practitioners and Recipients in Kumase. *Journal of Basic and Applied Research International* .
- Ahdar, R. (2013). Is Secularism Neutral. *Wiley Online Library* , 404-429.
- Dillard, R. B., & Longman III, T. (1994). *An Introduction to the Old Testament* . Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Edem Cudjoe Bensah, Antwi , E., & Ahiepkor, J. C. (2010). Improving Sanitation in Ghana-Role of Sanitary Biogas Plants. *Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences* 5 , 125.
- Ekanem, E. E., Akitoye, C. O., & Olufunke, A. T. (1991). Food Hygiene Behaviour and Childhood Diarrhoea in Lagos, Nigeria: a Case—Control Study. *Journal of Diarrhoeal Diseases Research* , 219-226.
- Ellis, S., & Haar, G. T. (2007). Religion and Politics: Taking African Epistemologies Seriously. *Journal of Modern African Studies* , 385-401.
- Erasmus, J. C. (2005). Religion and social transformation: A case study from South Africa. *Transformation* , 139-148.
- Ghana Districts*. (n.d.). Retrieved March 14, 2016, from [http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=1&\\_=3&sa=3027](http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=1&_=3&sa=3027)
- Holy Bible: New King James Version (NKJV). (n.d.).
- Hoy, S. (1986). Public Health and Sanitation in an Indiana Community: The Garbage Disposer and Jasper. *Indiana Magazine of History* , 139-160.

- Hull, B. B., & Bold, F. (1994). Hell, Religion, and Cultural Change. *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics (JITE)* , 447-464.
- interview with Rodrigue Ayih. (2016, March 20). after church service at Bomso.
- Interview, R. B. (2016, April 21). at his office at Adum.
- Interview, w. A.-h. (2016, April 21). at Asafo.
- Interview, w. M. (2016, April 18). at her place of business at Ayeduase.
- Interview, w. M. (2016, April 15). at his home.
- Interview, w. M. (2016, April 20th). at his office .
- Interview, w. M. (2016, April 21). at his shop at Ayeduase.
- Interview, w. R. (2016, April 21). at his office at Adum.
- Interview, w. U. (2016, April 15). at his shop at Kejetia market.
- Johnson, P. C. (2001). Law, Religion, and "Public Health" in the Republic of Brazil. *wiley* , 9-33.
- King, D. G. (1990). Religion and Health Relationships: A Review. *Journal of Religion and Health* , 101-112.
- Marshall, K. (2001). Development and Religion: A Different Lens on Development Debates. *Peabody Journal of Education* , 339-375.
- Nations, U. (n.d.). *Target 7 c:half, by 2015 the proportions of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation*. Retrieved October 28, 2015, from <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/environ.shtml>
- Organization, W. H. (n.d.). *Millenium Development Goals and Beyond 2015: Sanitation*. Retrieved October 23, 2015, from <http://www.who.int/topics/sanitation/en>
- P. R. (n.d.). Re-Sanitation of New Koforidua. *ARG2/14/11* . Kumasi.
- Patterson, D. K. (1981). *Health in Colonial: Diseases, Medicine and Socio-Economic Change 1900-1955*. MA.: Crossroads Press.
- PRAAD. (n.d.). The Technical ServicesEnvironmental Health Services. *AG/20/S.5* . Kumasi.
- Quarcoopome, T. (1987). *West African Traditional Religion*. Ibadan: African University Press.
- Quaye, R. (1996). *Underdevelopment and Health Care in Africa*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Religion*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 28, 2015, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/religion>
- Religion*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 28, 2015, from <http://www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/religion>
- Samwini, N. (2003). *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: Its Effects upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations* . Birmingham: Birmingham Univ., Diss.
- Smith-Asante, E. (n.d.). *Graphic Online: Ghana world's dirtiest country*. Retrieved July 22, 2015, from <http://www.graphic.com.gh/features>
- Weiss, H. (2004). Variations in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana,ca. 1900-1930. *Working Papers on Ghana :Historical and Contemporary Studies 2* , 2.
- White, P. (2015). Religion, Mission and National Development:A Contextual Interpretation of Jeremiah 29:4-7 in the Light of the Activities of the Basel Missionary Society in Ghana (1828-1918) and its Missiological Implications . *Verbum et Ecclesia* , 6.