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Pastoral Care and Gerontological Needs in Africa

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Introductory Demographics

The 20th century witnessed an increasing awareness of the needs of the elderly and the necessity for the provision of care which would sustain their well-being. Concern has been expressed world-wide for the elderly; and statutory and voluntary organizations, including churches, are being encouraged and challenged to provide care and welfare facilities to enhance the quality of life of the elderly. This concern for the well-being of elderly people has been intensified since the beginning of the 21st century, leading to many millennium conferences being organised to address these issues at both national and international levels.²

Demographics

Contributing to this consciousness of and passion for gerontology is the recognition of the growing population of people aged 65 years and above; and the increase in general life expectancy. The ‘United Nations Plan of Action’ on ageing discussed this population phenomenon and stated explicitly that:

From 1975 to 2025, the number of persons aged 60 years and over throughout the world would increase from 350 million to over 1,100 million, or by 315% compared with the total population growth of 102%. By 2025, the ageing would constitute 13.7% of the population.³

² For example in commemoration of the Tenth Annual International Day of Older Persons, the NGO Committee on Ageing in collaboration with the UN Programme on Ageing, Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Department of Public Information held its conference at the UN Headquarters on October 5, 2000. The Conference was held under the theme: ‘Towards a Society for All Ages-Continuing the Mission at the Second World Assembly on Ageing.’

³ United Nations Yearbook, 1982, New York, UN, page 1184.

Between 1990 and 2025 the rate of increase in the population of older adults in developing countries is expected to be 7 to 8 times higher, but in some developing countries there is an expected increase of between 200% and 300%.⁴ There are, however, over 30 million people in sub-Saharan Africa who are estimated to be over 60 years old. In fact figures from International aid organisations indicate that the number will double by 2030. In Africa, despite the fact that the population of people aged 60 years and older constituted only 5.1 percent of the total population by the year 2000, this percentage translates to a very large number of people. Specifically, the United Nations (1999) medium-variant projection estimates show that 38.9 million Africans are aged 60 years and over (with females accounting for 21.3 million of the total) by the year 2000. It is expected that by 2025, this figure will rise to 80.3 million (with females outnumbering to the tune of 43.2 million).

The implications of ageing therefore affect all countries, especially those in less developed countries where social welfare facilities and policies for ageing are not developed.⁵

Demographic Implications

The opening discussion on population growth in relation to the elderly inevitably carries implications which have both positive and negative consequences for the elderly and society as a whole. It should be noted however that ageing affects society and vice versa.

The plight of the elderly, apart from its economic consequences, has social, health, psychological, spiritual and cultural consequences which demand action by family, government and non-governmental agencies such as the churches to provide the optimum condition to enhance the quality of life of the elderly.

The situation of elderly people in Africa can be better perceived using the modernization theory of Cogwill and Holmes. They proposed in 1972 that the status of elderly people can be understood if

⁴ Benoit Kalasa, Population and Ageing in Africa: A Policy Dilemma? page 3 (Posted on the Internet).

⁵ Only few countries in sub-Saharan Africa provide a universal pension system for the elderly. These nations include Mauritius, Lesotho and Botswana. The pension scheme in South Africa and Namibia are means-tested, and provided for only those elderly who fall below the poverty line. (See William Eagle, Activists for the Aged Press for Greater Care, Pensions in Africa; Voice of America, February 20, 2007, pages 1-4).

we focus on different features of social organization evident in traditional societies and those related to modern industrial societies. They suggested that as society becomes more modern and industrial, and where there is a high rate of residential mobility, older people become less important and less useful to society, and their skills also become obsolete.⁶ Many elderly people in Africa seem to have been abandoned or neglected by the continent's rush to be modern and economically independent. The once valuable, respected and productive elderly people who were cared for by the extended family, and supported and protected by the social structures of traditional society now seem to be aliens in the new world of modernization. Formal education, the industrial market economy and being youth are now dominant issues which have displaced and relegated the elderly to the periphery of social life and left them to struggle with poverty, ill-health and loss of status.

With longevity and an increasingly high proportion of the aged above 65 years, the concept of ageing and becoming old evoke anxiety and fear among both young and old. Lack of social welfare systems⁷ and viable government policies for older adults⁸ coupled with the weakening of the extended family support system pose the

⁶ See Cowgill, D. O. and Holmes, L. D., (eds.) 1972, *Ageing and Modernization*, New York, Appleton. See also Markides, K. S. and Mindel, C. H., 1987, *Ageing and Ethnicity*, Vol. 163, New Delhi, SAGE Publication Inc., pages 28-29.

⁷ An assessment of Social Security Systems in sub-Saharan Africa for the period of 1960-1972 has confirmed that only seven countries had a social security system covering the elderly. These countries were South Africa, Burundi, Guinea, Mauritius, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo. Twelve years later an additional 19 countries introduced social insurance for retired persons. These countries include Ghana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Uganda, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia. It must however be mentioned that the proportion of persons who retire at 60 years and above from formal employment and so benefit from the social insurance system are in the minority compared with the majority of older persons who are self-employed or peasant farmers and do not benefit from such social security retirement schemes. An additional problem is that the income and allowances received from such retirement social insurance schemes are low. (See Kalasa, B., op. cit., page 8).

⁸ Susanne S. Paul and James A. Paul authors of the book *Humanity Comes of Age* made special reference to the neglect of older adults in many developing countries. They argued that: "In many poor countries of the South, transition to long lives proceeds much more swiftly and under far less promising circumstances. As governments grapple with international debts and domestic economic problems, resources for every social need are terribly scarce. In some regions, such as Africa and Latin America, poverty has grown dramatically, even though a few have grown very rich. No wonder, then, that many national leaders have ignored the special challenges that life poses, content to affirm that in their societies and cultures, older people are effectively taken care of by families, friends or other local networks of solidarity." (Paul, S. S., and Paul, J. A., 1994, *Humanity Comes of Age: The New Context for Ministry with the Elderly*, Geneva, WCC Publications, page xiii).

questions: What can be done to help and care for elderly people in African society?; How can we encourage elderly people to utilize the potential within them to contribute to society and thereby to assert their usefulness and functionality?; What insights can be gained from other cultures (Western) to enlighten any method adopted to care for elderly people in Africa?⁹; Can the churches which have pioneered many development programmes in Africa since the missionary period initiate this attempt to address the problems of ageing on the continent? Could Africa possibly revive and share its family-oriented practices of elderly care with Western nations who need to re-discover the role of family in the care of elderly people?

The premise upon which this paper is based is that:

(1) the Church in Africa which was at the forefront of the continent's development during the missionary era and still exercises considerable influence in society, can develop relevant pastoral care programmes which are informed by pastoral and gerontological theories and also by insights obtained from the experiences of 'partner' churches in Britain involved in pastoral care of elderly people;

(2) any method of or insight into pastoral care 'imported' from any Western culture ought to be contextualised to make it relevant to address the African pastoral and gerontological problems;

(3) contextualization requires the careful consideration of the African cultural context in three main areas:

- i. The religious ontology and world view of traditional society;
- ii. The sense of community which African society upholds;
- iii. The contemporary socio-economic situation in Africa.¹⁰

With these three factors under consideration, the task of this paper will therefore be to construct a communal pastoral care model for the care of elderly people in Africa. The methodology will also involve

⁹ A Population and Development Strategist, Benoit Kalasa, has re-echoed the concerns and recommendations of many International Organisations that "In light of the developing countries' experience in institutional arrangements for coping with old age needs, it is important to explore the context or conditions enabling their replication, on a sustainable base in African countries... Africa does not need to reinvent the wheel because we have a great deal to learn from the developed world." (Op. cit., page 12).

¹⁰ J. S. Pobee, an eminent Ghanaian theologian has suggested in his ground-breaking book 'Toward an African Theology' that African theology need not ignore African concepts and beliefs if Christianity is to become relevant in Africa. He pointed out that: "The concern of African theology is to attempt to use African concepts and African ethos as vehicles for the communication of the gospel in an African concept...There will be an anachronistic irrelevance unless it is pitched at the wavelength of the addressee as a person, in his ideologies, moods, and needs." (Pobee, J. S., 1979, *Toward an African Theology*, Nashville, Abingdon, pages 39-40).

the use of insightful theoretical concepts from John Patton's 'Communal Contextual' paradigm and James W. Fowler's 'Faith Development Theory'. The aim of this approach is to provide data which is comparative and inter-cultural in nature and which will inform the development of the African pastoral care paradigm.

In constructing this model of pastoral care, this paper recognizes that pastoral care is the vocation of the whole people of God- both clergy and laity- and it is within the context of this *sanctorum communio*¹¹ that communal pastoral care can be effective and relevant to the issues of ageing in Africa and the World as a whole.

The methodology will therefore highlight both anthropological and theological approaches in order to develop a contextual framework for the construction of a communal pastoral care model for Africa.

The research reported in this paper has been broad-based, integrating theoretical principles from other disciplines such as psychology and sociology because as Mervin Koller indicated, "the study of ageing and its socio-psychological problems, after all, cuts across numerous fields of enquiry."¹²

I. John Patton's Theory of Pastoral Care

A. Patton's Human Care Reflects God's Care

John Patton's theory of pastoral care is based on the theological assumption that human care and communities are an analogical reflection of God's care and relationship with us through the act of remembering. The communal contextual paradigm therefore postulates that pastoral care is:

a ministry of the Christian community that takes place through remembering God's action for us, remembering who we are as God's own people, and hearing and remembering those to whom we minister.¹³

¹¹ I use Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concept of the Church as a community of Christian persons who are in an immediate community of service and love with God and with one another. (See his doctoral thesis published as: Bonhoeffer, D., 1963, *Sanctorum Communio: A Dogmatic Inquiry into the Sociology of the Church*, London, William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., especially page 40.

¹² Koller, M., op. cit., pages 23-24.

¹³ Patton, J., 1993, *Pastoral Care in Context- An Introduction to Pastoral Care*, Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press, page 15.

The central theme in Patton's theory of pastoral care is that members of caring communities express their care analogically by hearing and remembering others as reciprocity of God's hearing and remembering created beings. In this perspective on pastoral care, the relationship between God and humanity is emphasised. It is in this relationship that the idea of community becomes meaningful. But before one can understand Patton's theory from the perspective of the relationship between God and created beings, the tension between Martin Buber's *I - Thou* relationship and Karl Barth's concept of *analogia relationis* needs to be solved. If according to Patton *being* (I) is able to express care analogically to reflect the care of *Being* (Thou), then *being* representing vulnerable and sin-prone humanity can be seen as capable of co-creating or co-maintaining the created order. Karl Barth is sceptical about the ability of *being* to act on its own except only when it is in a relationship. Thus, emphasis on *being* shifts to *being with*; and we consequently resemble God only in our relationships. In this case our relationship with God in the *analogia entis* (analogy of being) becomes the foundation upon which we build relationships with others and can fully express an *analogia relationis* (analogy of relationship). The concept of community emerges from this premise and becomes the body which authorises, sanctions and regulates pastoral care. The idea of the community, however, does not lessen the importance of the individual. Patton was quick to draw a balance between the individual and the corporate by stating that the Christian life has always emphasised both individual and corporate actions.¹⁴ For example God's dealings with individuals (such as Abraham, Moses and the prophets) and Israel as a community in the Old Testament on the one hand and His relationship with individual Christians (such as Peter and Paul) and the church in the New Testament on the other.

Patton clarified the meaning of community in pastoral care by employing William Willimon's description of community. Willimon characterised community into: common identity, common authority, common memory, common vision, common shared life together, and common shared life in the world. In the light of this definition, the communal contextual model of pastoral care encourages the sharing

¹⁴ See Patton, *op. cit.*, page 70.

together of the gifts of fellowship and the abilities endowed to both lay and clergy to achieve a common vision: pastoral care among members and for people outwith the church. But what is also important is the communities' discernment of contextual issues which characterise people needing pastoral care. Patton defined this context as the whole background which is relevant to a particular situation. For example, contextuality implies the social, spiritual, psychological, physical, economic and even political background which informs the direction of care. Thus communal contextual paradigm is an approach towards pastoral care which involves the whole people of God, understanding the whole situation of care in order to respond by remembering and reflecting on God's dealings with the community.

The recent re-emergence of and emphasis on the *communal contextual* approach highlights the significance of pastoral care as a mission of the whole Christian community (involving both clergy and laity) and focusing on the holistic or **contextual** dimensions of human beings. Being a ministry of the whole people of God, pastoral care is facilitated by the minister who is seen by Patton to be a "participant/consultant for the ministry of all those involved in the community's caring."¹⁵

Patton's approach to pastoral care may not be widely different from the approaches of other scholars. For example Clebsch and Jaekle's definition of pastoral care stresses the goal of care, whilst Patton's communal contextual describes the nature of care and emphasises the participation of the whole Christian community. Clebsch and Jaekle's analysis of care during past historical eras seems to have closer theoretical similarity with Patton's classical and clinical paradigms. J. T. McNeil's 'History of the Cure of Souls' might have been a source of insight for both Patton and Clebsch and Jaekle's work. At any rate, Patton goes beyond the current Western theological emphasis on clinical and therapeutic methodologies which lean heavily on psychotherapy, depth psychology and the social sciences to emphasise a traditional approach which is not person-centred but communo-centric.

To the modern Western individualistic and secular society, Patton's work adds a new dimension to care. However, from a

¹⁵ Patton, page 87.

theological perspective it can be seen as an appeal to classical and more traditional Judaeo-Christian community-centred approach to pastoral care.

B. Patton's Theory and African Christian View of Community

From an African Christian perspective in pastoral care, Patton's work brings renewed emphasis on the essence of the church as the new community in which relationships between members, responsibility and commitment towards one another, the sharing of life and the participation in common liturgical rituals and vision replace the fast weakening structures of traditional social relationships and support in the face of modernisation and urbanisation. Another important contribution of Patton to pastoral care in the African situation is his stress on how particular contexts inform the method and goal of care. Although much as there are commonalities in all cultures, for the African theologian, the unique historical experiences, culture and cosmology of the people serve as contexts which require the application of appropriate pastoral methodologies.

While Patton's paradigm of the community contextual is being examined for its relevance for the construction of an appropriate pastoral care model for the elderly of Africa, James W. Fowler's Faith Development Theory also offers an additional resource for understanding the developmental stage and characteristics of elderly people as they construct meaningful ways of adapting to self, others, and the world through their awareness of relatedness to the ultimate conditions of life.

II. Practical Theology and Communal Pastoral Care

In recent writings on pastoral care, there has been a tension between various approaches to the pastoral ministry. There is the classical or traditional approach which is held in tension with the modern clinical approach of leadership which utilises psychotherapeutic techniques in individual and group counselling and interactions. The more recent communal, socio-anthropological approach invests much in context and cultural inputs. Representatives of the classical tradition, as I see them, include William Willimon and Thomas C. Oden. Thomas Oden for example lamented in his article 'Pastoral care and the unity of Theological Education' that pastoral care:

has become almost irretrievably captive and embarrassingly indebted to reductionistic psychological and psychotherapeutic methods. Often these methods, if taken consistently, would rule out the fundament of Christian pastoral care: that God cares for humanity in Jesus Christ.¹⁶

The psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and the schools that they founded, together with the schools associated with Gestalt theory are examples of the sources of clinical paradigms in pastoral care. Also included in this clinical group is Carl Roger's 'Client-centred therapy' which focused more on the individual person engaged in a reflective give and take with another in a helping relationship. The primary focus in many of these psychological approaches is not community but individuality, and the basic constituent structures within the individual such as the spirit and soul are not given much attention, especially in psychoanalysis. Carl Jung was however an exemption even though he did not believe in God. He pointed out the relationship between religiosity (including belief in life after death) and well-being in the second half of life. He described belief in life after death as hygienic:

I have observed that a directed life is in general better, richer, and healthier than an aimless one, and that it is better to go forward with the stream of time than backwards against it... As a physician doctor I am convinced that it is hygienic-if I may use the word - to discover in death a goal towards which one can strive and that shrinking away from it is unhealthy and abnormal which robs the second half of life of its purpose.¹⁷

At this point it is becoming evident that pastoral theology has undergone a gradual reshaping from a purely classical model to the influence of the psychological methods, and to a new awareness of social and cultural impact on the theological discipline which aims at making us real humans in our relationship with the centre of power and value as we progress through the stages of life. At this juncture we bring in James Fowler's contribution to our understanding of pastoral care as we gain insights from his Faith development theory which, in short, is the process of one's apprehension of socio-cultural and religious realities which give human life its identity, meaning and destiny.

¹⁶ Oden, T. C., 1985, 'Pastoral Care and the Unity of Theological Education' In *Theology Today*, April, 1985, page 35.

¹⁷ Jung, C., *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, London, Kegan Paul and Co. Ltd., pages 128-129.

In the communal approach to pastoral care, we conceptualize an interplay between the various disciplines in theology and social sciences as sources of insight in enlightening our understanding of the socio-cultural realities and experiential situations (context) of the communal and individual life which is characterised by shared responsibilities, identity and destiny.

I emphasise here the very important role of socio-cultural and anthropological insights in helping our understanding of the human context within community in order to develop appropriate pastoral care paradigms to meet the crisis and challenges of groups within the community, which for the purpose of this paper, will centre on elderly people.

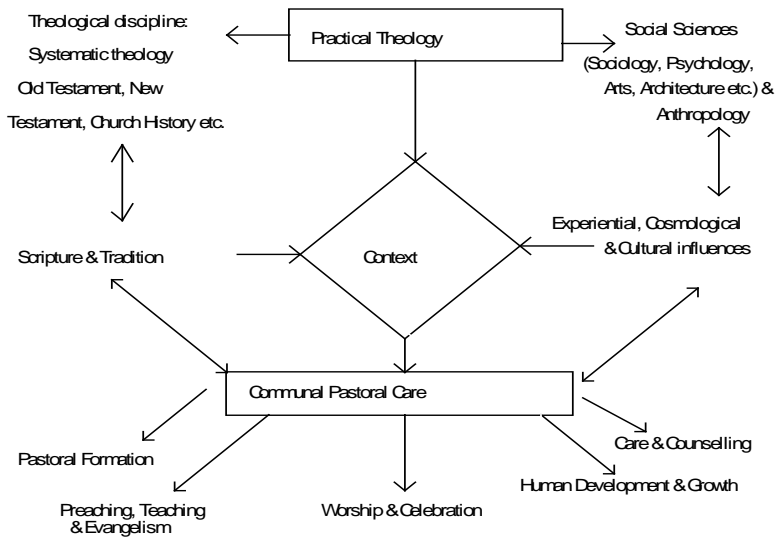


Figure 1: Relationship between Practical Theology, Context and Communal Pastoral Care

The ‘external’ work of communal pastoral care really shows that emphasis is placed on the development of the human person as Christ would want him or her from the context of community. Thus within the Christian community, worship and celebration, preaching, teaching and evangelism, care and counselling, human development and enhancement together with pastoral formation are intertwined to give a communal and holistic approach to growth in all areas of communal and individual lives. The methodology employs the participation of both clergy (as facilitator) and laity in a shared

relation in which love and neighbourliness inspired by scripture and human experience become the central pillar of communal pastoral care.

III. Pastoral Ministry and the Elderly in Africa: A New Paradigm of Care

In this section, an attempt will be made to focus on the pastoral ministry as related to elderly people within the African context. From the theories dealt with in the previous chapters, it has been shown that from Fowler's 'universalising stage', Erikson's 'integrity' and even Carl Jung's 'second half of life', there is great potential within this later adulthood stage, and that if a proper ageing ministry based on a communal oriented background is established within churches in African, older adults will benefit greatly from the churches' pastoral care and be a great resource for ministry within the church, and also in the larger community of human and divine relationships.

A. Pastoral Care: Community Approach

Previous comment in this paper on the impact of social change and modernisation on ageing has established the fact that with the dispersal of co-residents into other localities or residences, the aged who traditionally exercise leadership and guardianship in families and communities tend to be disadvantaged in the new context. Consequently their sources of family support become depleted and their opportunity for self-actualisation (through productive exemplification) become limited. It is the argument of this section that within the context of current socio-economic and cultural realities in Africa, the church is to be the new community which offers its members and the elderly in particular reflective opportunities for mutually beneficial pastoral care. In this regard, community pastoral care implies the reflective participation of members of the Christian church (both laity and clergy) in any helping relationship which results in mutually beneficial consequences and which ultimately promotes growth, self-acceptance, healing and joy.

B. Pastoral Visits of the Elderly

I propose in this section a contextual approach to visiting elderly people in the Ghanaian context. First I must re-state that a communal pastoral care approach involves both clergy and laity in a shared vocation as they participate in God's praxis to bring love and the

eventual realisation of the Kingdom of God in people's lives. In this approach, participants are trained and adhere to basic principles of establishing rapport and maintaining helping relationships. It is a reflective action guided by the minister whose 'after visit' engagement with the pastoral carers includes sharing of feedback so as to develop new strategies and goals for future visits.

C. Concept of Visits in Ghanaian Culture

The late Professor Kwasi Dickson stated clearly that: "It is a commonplace that the sense of community is strong in Africa".¹⁸ This sense of community, evident in the interconnectedness and strengths of relationships, is always maintained and expanded by the human activity called visitation by which I mean the movement of people into other people's contextual situations (their places of living or where they can be found, and within their experiences). The goal of these visits is always to maintain relationship by promoting the well-being of the visited whilst the visitor is also enriched by the positive outcome of the visit.

The Akan word for visiting is *Kɔ sra* (to visit). *Kɔ sra* literally means to go to anoint, an indication that within the Ghanaian community, visiting implies bringing to another person blessings in the form of nourishment, healing, spiritual strength and sometimes guidance and correction in the person's life-journey. Thus *Kɔ sra* literally implies going into a person's situation to bless him or her.

In about eighty two references in the Bible to the word *visits*, *visitation*, and *visited*, only in a few instances is the meaning connected to visiting for the purpose of punishment. The rest of the visitations are for good-will or blessing; even those related to punishment are for correction in order to restore and maintain the relationship between God and man, and between persons. This is also beneficial. The clearest picture in the Old Testament which matches with the Akan view is the story of Samuel going from Ramah to Bethlehem to anoint Jesse's son (David) as king in place of King Saul (1 Sam 16: 1-15). Verse 13 is the climax of the visitation:

Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. (1 Sam 16:13)

¹⁸ Dickson, K., 1984, *Theology in Africa*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, page 62.

This visit of Samuel to anoint David is simply a human participation in the working of God to bring blessings to another being. The ecclesial praxis has its reference point in God's praxis, and the individual pastoral carer is equipped with the church's authority in the name of God. Therefore whatever benefit is derived is seen as coming from God.¹⁹

The mutuality in pastoral care very often manifests itself within the context of visitation. In this nourishing experience of the receiver, the giver (visitor) is also blessed by the visited. In Ghana most people show their appreciation by thanking God and then thanking the human person supposedly used as a divine instrument of blessing. The word 'thank you' has a deeper meaning than is apparent. The Larteh people in Akwapim express its meaning better than the Ashantis: "*mkpe gyi wu le*" (life be to you). This word of thanks depicts the understanding that whatever is received in the course of visitation or any goodness done has the ultimate aim of promoting life and well-being, and the best way to express gratitude is to share the life received with the giver. In this sense the visitor and the visited share the fruits of the labour. Below are some contextual guidelines for visiting the elderly during general visitation.

IV. Quality of Pastoral Carers

Without elaboration, I wish to state that the quality of a person's character can make or break a relationship in African society. Pastoral visitors need not be perfect saints but at least must exhibit the following characteristics:

A. Having a Sense of Community

African communities are not homogeneous. Within a small area there may be two or more different communities comprising different ethnic or tribal groupings. To mediate love and be able to work in all these communities, pastoral visitors ought to be representatives of the Christian community, not ordinary members of their tribal faction otherwise any tension between tribes could be projected on to them. It is therefore sensible to recruit people (lay and clergy) who exhibit wisdom and tactfulness, and who are trustworthy and honest, always

¹⁹ In Akan world-view, there is a similar belief that people could be visited by the ancestors and other spirit forces from the supernatural world. Such visits are welcomed and result in blessings if only a good relationship had existed between the living human community and the spiritual world.

being Christo-centric rather than tribalistic. By having a sense of community, one can lead these tribal communities to appreciate one another in the light of the Christian Gospel. Butler and Orbach gave a similar warning:

a visitor without this sense of community can be a liability because he or she is in a position of trust and standing as a representative of the Church to which that person belongs.²⁰

B. Having a Capacity to Listen

Active listening, coupled with ‘unconditional positive regard’ for the elderly, is a sure way to be empathetic and to be able to understand the meaning-making world of the elderly. Certain repressed emotions which might be causing anxiety states such as depression, projection (blaming others for one’s faults and weaknesses), other defence mechanisms (ways of shielding the ego) and some mental health problems may even surface from the unconscious, giving the pastoral visitor an opportunity to arrange counselling sessions with the elderly person or with his or her family.

C. Trustworthiness and Integrity

To work with an elderly person, one ought not to be a novice but a person who can be trusted and who has the integrity to enable him or her to interact meaningfully with an older person who is traditionally acclaimed as a wise person. An Akan proverb says ‘*Se abofra hu ne nsa hohoro a one mpanyinfo didi*’ - literally meaning a child who displays a sense of maturity can participate with adults in any activity -even eating together. This proverb is grounded in the belief that child play is not in the domain of wise elderly people. A pastoral carer- either young or old - needs to possess the quality of integrity and be found to be trustworthy. Young persons going on visits need much of Paul’s advice to Timothy: “let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4: 12). In short, Paul’s exhortation could be re-phrased: ‘Timothy demonstrate integrity and trustworthiness and no one (whether old or young) will despise your youth!’ This is the secret for effective pastoral work with elderly people in Ghanaian communities.

²⁰ Butler, M., and Orbach, A., 1993, *Being Your Age – Pastoral Care for Older People*, 106.

D. Community-Based Programme of “Shared Support”

The community based ‘shared support’ programme is an innovative system of care to be established within various centres of the local community. Its aim is to mobilise and utilise resources within the community to provide basic care, encourage and stimulate the elderly and empower them to re-assert their ‘usefulness’ and independence within their families and local communities. It is therefore not a programme designed in the church and imposed on the community, but a joint church and local community initiative which is based on the needs and contexts of the community. It is ecumenical in both the theoretical and practical sense because members of local communities may belong to various denominations, and the dominance of one denomination might evoke antagonism, apathy and withdrawal by other participants belonging to a different denomination. The programme is therefore an ecumenically organised system of providing care in local communities with the involvement of volunteers, families, the elderly and local traditional leaders. The goal is to promote the well-being and social identity of older adults, intergenerational interaction and to provide a basis for education on ageing.

This system of self-help derived from the concept of partnership and group involvement, involves contributing and sharing the fruit of labour. It has many advantages over ‘foreign’ imposed programmes because:

1. It is communal, that is it is locally based, using local resources, and involving the local people who have the same identity, shared history and destiny and who are bound by the same moral and religious ethics.

2. It is contextual in the sense that apart from its sense of identity, there is easy access to people’s experiences of grief, illness, poverty, victory and potentialities.

3. It is informal, not formal and bureaucratic. Since many people associate ‘formality’ and bureaucracy with literacy and government, the illiterate people would withdraw their participation since ‘formality’ would have exposed their lack of ‘civilisation’, ‘enlightenment’ and formal schooling. In an informal atmosphere of sharing, the wisdom, experiences and history of each person are

harnessed for the common good of the community, especially elderly people.

4. It revives and strengthens community ties, the extended family system and companionship. With the current immigration of most of the young educated people into various job centres, some families are depleted of potential day-to-day care and support givers- in both domestic duties and farming or fishing work. The effects of the gradual weakening of the extended family system are counteracted by this new ‘family community’ in which each one is related to one another with respect to family, community alliance, and shared vision. Needs are addressed at local level and met. Migrant family members can also support the group efforts through financial sponsorship and other logistic support.

5. It is ecumenical and inter communal: – that is, it involves churches of different denominations. This ecumenism is in itself ‘a bridging of gap’ between denominations who had hitherto been separated from one another by a competition to make the most converts of the indigenous populations. The ecumenicity also bridges the gap between the Christian community and the purely traditional society. These two communities were separated from each other in the wake of the advent of Mission Christianity in Ghana (in the latter part of the 19th Century). Much has been said on this in the previous chapter.

6. It is intergenerational: By bringing people together, both young and old, there is an opportunity for each generation to provide mutually beneficial resources for the well-being of the other. For example, for elderly people living alone without grandchildren to help with domestic duties, younger members of this programme can offer these services such as fetching water from the well and riverside, doing shopping, sweeping the compound of the house and even helping on the farm. Older adults can also meet with the younger ones in the evening (usually when the moon is up to provide light, or around a fire, or in a spacious and lighted house) and tell *ananse* stories, educate them on the history and culture of the community and answer any questions posed by the young. Usually the direction of communication in such situations is monological, but efforts should be made in this programme to develop a dialogical base for interaction and communication.

E. Leadership

Leadership is the process by which the actions and behaviours of persons or organisations are influenced to achieve a planned goal through interaction. The type of leadership involved in the community programme is not the formal type which allocates to a person a certain power to influence another person towards punishment or positive reinforcement. It is a shared responsibility through interaction. One of the thoughtful and well articulated articles in the Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling is ‘Leadership and Administration’, written by A. J. Lindgren and G. H. Asquith, Jr., who explained the important characteristics of leadership, and repeated often the inseparability of true leadership from the involvement of others in goal achievement. Lindgren and Asquith made it clear that leadership is not confined to one person alone, but it involves the achievement of goals through persons. The understanding is that leaders cannot function without the involvement of members and without a good relationship between leaders and members.

Through this interaction, members are influenced to increase their involvement and support toward achieving the desired end.²¹

Based on this working definition, the relationship proposed in this programme would basically be a team work of shared relationship in which interaction from one point of leadership to the other is open, dialogical and ‘person enhancing’. It aims at bringing together the resources within the church (Christian Community) and the local community. Always the Chief (traditional leader) is considered part of the team for the purpose of representing the shared destiny and world-view of the people in all their communities. See the figure below.

²¹ Lindgren, A. J., and Asquith, G. H., ‘Care and Counselling as Leadership and Administration’ In Hunter (ed.) *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling*, 634.

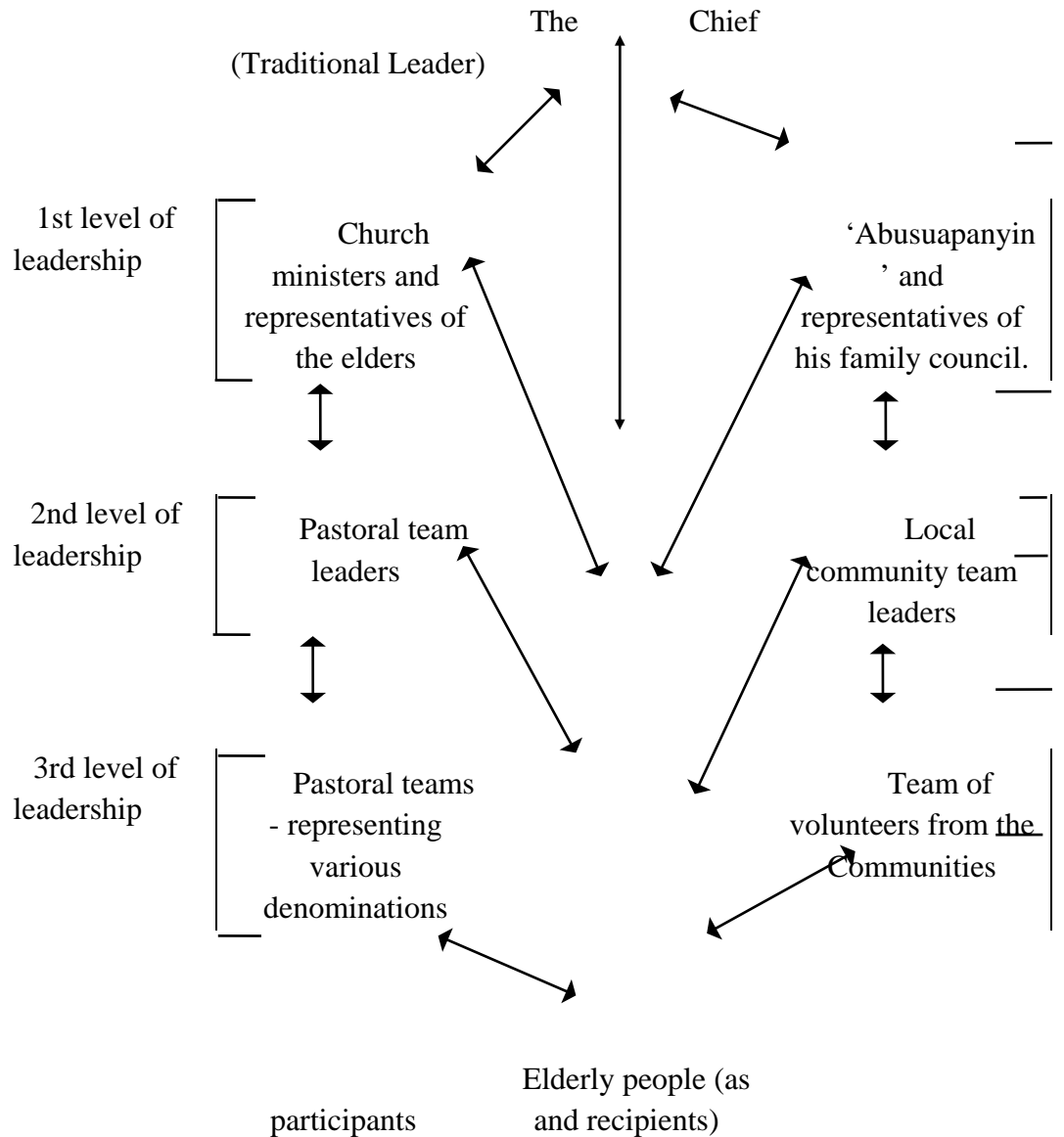


Figure 2 : Dailogical and Leadership Structure in the Community 'Shared' Support System.

From the diagram, it is evident that there is always an open, dialogical interaction between levels of leadership. However, since elderly people in traditional society occupy an important position, there is a

direct interaction between them and the Chief, the 1st level leaders, and the 2nd level leaders. It is openness in communication, characteristic here, which allows for this multidirectional interaction. Dialogue is the means through this multidirectional pattern of interaction by which the elderly can increase their social functionality by influencing all levels of the organisational structure and vice versa.

V. Implications for Pastoral Care

1. The communal pastoral care programme offers the church an opportunity to move out from the church into the local community to witness to the saving grace of God through acts of love (Matt. 25: 31-45).

2. There is always healing, growth, guiding and reconciliation occurring as two communities, hitherto separated by religious orientation, interact and reflect on their relationships.

3. Individuals within the communities would receive encouragement and counselling as they progress through the developmental cycle and experience crisis and anxieties.

4. The churches' participation in God's praxis is always an opportunity for reflection and renewal.

5. Pneumatological presence, hitherto thought of as operative in hermeneutics and missions, is evident as the reviving and empowering force from God.

6. The Kingdom of God, as taught by Jesus Christ will hopefully be established in the 'hearts' of people, and anticipated (in life and after death) as the culmination of God's saving acts through Christ.

VI. Gerontology in Theological Education in Africa (Gitea)

The new concept of community in which Christians identify themselves as the people of God called to participate in God's creative acts through Christian vocation, has implications for ministry with, for and by the elderly. It offers the church an opportunity to utilise the gifts and talents of both laity and clergy in a shared and responsible ministry. For the care and empowerment of elderly people, the community of believers brings together a rich variety of resources which can be organised to promote pastoral care of elderly people. But despite these resources, if appropriate training (and formation) of persons- both laity and clergy- does not take place, the aim of pastoral care would not be attainable. Below is a proposed

guideline/ curriculum for the training of ministers at Seminary level. It is the hope of this thesis that a 'Gerontology In Theological Education for Africa' (GITEA) would eventually be developed to streamline and co-ordinate the organisation of gerontological courses in theological institutions in Africa where both the laity and clergy would receive appropriate training and formation for ministry with the ageing.

A. Ministerial Training

The purpose of this course is to equip ministers in training with a basic introductory course in gerontology to prepare them to minister to ageing people and to be eventual trainers of the lay people in their congregations for ministry with older adults. Thus the aims of the course are:

1. To provide a curriculum base for training ministers (and later lay people) in gerontology;
2. To equip ministers (and lay people) with the methodology in crisis intervention- illness; dying, death and bereavement; mental health; and to introduce them to the different types of care and counselling methods suitable for ministry with older adults;
3. To enable ministers to be able to develop short courses for lay people, and to co-ordinate and supervise ministry with ageing people at parish and community levels;
4. To introduce ministers to social policies and legislation on older people, and to enable them develop their advocacy skills.

B. Course Content

The course designed for ministry with the ageing ought to adopt a multidimensional approach to reflect the holistic nature of ministry. Writing on 'Education for Ministry with the Aging' Melvin A. Kimble, a pastoral theologian who has contributed to many journals and books, emphasised this multidimensional approach in training for ministry with older adults. He wrote:

First of all, aging is a multidimensional reality that demands an interdisciplinary approach. A segmental approach to the aging process would result in a reductionistic, one-dimensional caricature of the aged person.²²

²² Kimble, M. A., 1989, 'Education for Ministry with the Aging' In *Ministry with Aging*, 211.

The first section which could be one semester or more would be an introductory course to cover the multidimensional nature of ageing, and discuss contemporary trends and concepts in ageing. This would include the following topics:

a. Definition of Ageing: What it was, and what it is in contemporary society. Attempt would be made to define ageing from a cross-cultural perspective, and to discuss some myths, prejudice and also the potentials of ageing.

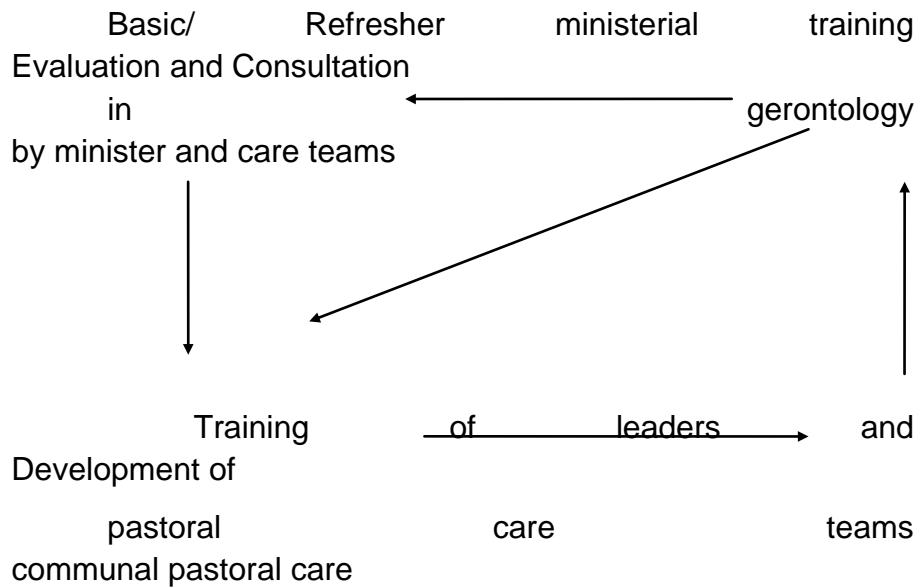
b. Introduction to Gerontology: This would cover gerontology as a multidisciplinary subject. It would include:

i. Psychology of ageing: developmental psychology, personality, motivation, perception, and intelligence;

ii. Sociology of ageing: culture, socialisation, interpersonal relationships, family, marriage, widowhood and divorce;

iii. Biology of ageing: maturation and biological changes.

Figure 3: Evaluation and Supervision in Gerontological Training



programmes

C. Lay Training in Pastoral Care for the Elderly

Lay gerontological training in a communal pastoral care perspective is in many respects as important as the ministerial training because *ecclesial praxis* in whatever form it takes involves the whole community of faith: clergy and laity designated as the *communio sanctorum*. Furthermore, the involvement of non-Christian participants in the communal care programme requires a considerable amount of training and supervision. The curriculum for lay training will differ from that of the ministerial programme only in depth of content and the length of period for study.²³

²³ Whilst ministerial gerontological training could be built into the normal ministerial formation course (except in the re-training or in-service training course specially designed for those already ordained), lay training could vary according to the range of training required for the different groups of laity, such as Christian lay leaders, general congregational training, community leader training.

The foregoing ministerial and lay training programmes underscore the importance of both clergy and laity tackling the challenges of ageing and promoting the potentialities of elderly people within the Christian and traditional communities. It is also hoped that the training programme will not only benefit elderly people but prepare adults and young people to understand, prepare for and appreciate ageing. Moreover, this ageing awareness training programme will have many implications for social policy and will serve as the basis for statutory and non-statutory (voluntary) action in care provision for elderly people.

VII. Implications of Research for Practical Theology

One of the aims of this paper has been to inform and direct action-oriented models of pastoral care within the Christian community and in its mission to the wider social community. The development of the communal pastoral care model in this paper has therefore emphasised two points: that the critical reflection characteristic of practical theology will be relevant 1) in contextual form²⁴; 2) if it demonstrates an intention to develop particular action-oriented programmes to stimulate growth and solve problems (such as those related to ageing).²⁵

This paper has shown that critical reflection in practical theology ought to be balanced with an action-oriented ‘practice’ in pastoral care. Action in practical theology, as opposed to critical reflection,

²⁴ Stephen B. Bevans in his book ‘Models of Contextual Theology- Faith and Cultures’ has defined contextual thinking as “a way of doing theology in which one takes into account: the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change in that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice, and liberation.” (Page 1) Bevans further explained that theology that is contextual recognises the important place of culture, history, contemporary thought forms along side scripture and tradition as *loci theologici* for theological expression. (Bevans, B. S., 1992, *Models of Contextual Theology*, New York, Orbis Books, 1-2).

²⁵ In Africa and other Third-World countries, the relevance of practical theology as an academic discipline can be shown if it is geared towards practical action within communities. The 1976 Third-World Theologians meeting at Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, produced very challenging affirmation of the above point. In its ‘Final Statement’ the conference were unanimous in appending that: “We reject as irrelevant an academic type of theology that is divorced from action. We are prepared for a radical break in epistemology which makes commitment the first act of theology and engages in critical reflection or praxis of the reality of the third world.” (Ecumenical Dialogue of Third-World Theologians, 1976, ‘Final Statement’, August 5-12, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, In Torres, S., and V. Fabella (eds.), 1978, *The Emergent Gospel*, Mary Knoll, New York; Orbis Books, page 269).

can be termed 'praxis'.²⁶ Examples of this concept are discussed under pastoral visitation, community 'shared' support system, the transformation of *Kerygma*, *diakonia* and *koinonia* as vehicles for the promotion of well-being and empowering the growth of elderly people in their communities, and the development of skills and training to facilitate and enhance such practical actions. These actions, in my opinion, depict the actualness of the Kingdom of God in the lives of people because as Jungen Moltmann wrote in his inspiring christological work 'Jesus Christ for Today's world':

God's kingdom is experienced in the present in companionship with Jesus where the sick are healed and the lost are found, where people who are despised are accepted and the poor discover their own dignity, where people who have become rigid and fossilised come alive again, and old tired life becomes young and fruitful once more- there the Kingdom of God begins...²⁷

Of course, practical action cannot be divorced from the task of contextualisation. They are inseparable pair which makes relevant any critical reflection. In this paper the need for contextualisation has been repeatedly stressed, and it has been shown that pastoral care can benefit as a sub-discipline under practical theology if only the tension between the theological disciplines and social sciences are balanced by 'context'- thus the emphasis on culture, anthropology, experiential situations and historical factors are explicit.²⁸

Without appropriate contextualisation of pastoral care in Africa, any Western-oriented methodology will lead to what J. S. Pobee referred to as 'working misunderstanding': a situation where foreign pastoral methods are used on local people who accept them even though they do not understand their meanings and implications.²⁹ Perhaps this last point needs to help us to locate contextual pastoral

²⁶ Bevens has given a working definition of praxis. He defined it as "a way of doing theology that is informed by knowledge at its most intense level- the level of reflective action. It is also about discerning the meaning and contributing to the course of social action, and so takes its inspiration neither from classic texts nor classic behaviour but from present realities and future possibilities". (Bevens, B. S., 1992, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 63-64.)

²⁷ Moltmann, J., 1994, *Jesus Christ for Today's World*, London, SCM Press Ltd., 19-20.

²⁸ Refer to the discussion on 'Context' above.

²⁹ See Pobee, J. S., 1979, *Toward an African Theology*, 59.

care in African theology. This will rescue many western-oriented pastoral practices from their ‘irrelevant usefulness’ in Africa.³⁰

Dr. Samuel Ayete-Nyampong Profile

The Reverend Dr. Samuel Ayete-Nyampong is a Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. His interest in pastoral care of the Elderly was aroused during the early years of his ministerial career when he had to visit many elderly people as part of his responsibilities as a Parish Minister. The ageing of his own parents, with all the associated problems and opportunities, was also a learning experience for him.

After his first degree at the University of Ghana, Dr. Ayete-Nyampong was awarded the British Government Overseas Development Administration Shared Scholarship (ODASS) to do a postgraduate study in Pastoral Care and Counseling at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, UK. Later, his course was upgraded to a PhD programme. His research interest at the PhD level was in Pastoral Gerontology – (Pastoral Care of Elderly People). The title of his thesis was: “*A Critical and Comparative Study of Pastoral Care Provision of the Elderly in Britain and its Implications for Contextualization in Ghana: A Cross-Cultural Study with Focus on Selected Mainline Churches*”. Upon the successful completion of his PhD Studies, Dr. Samuel Ayete-Nyampong returned to Africa (Ghana) and founded the “Christian Action on Ageing in Africa (CAAA) to which he became its first Executive Director”. He also established the “Mission 50 Plus” Programme.

Dr. Ayete-Nyampong serves as the Chairman of the Presbyterian National Committee on Ageing in Ghana; the Chairman of the African Partnership Consultation; the General Coordinator of the African Continental Assembly of Mission 21 and the Vice President of the African Association of Pastoral Studies and Counseling

³⁰ For example if black clothes depict funeral occasions or sorrowful moments in Ghanaian traditional society, why should African clergy visiting the sick and elderly sometimes wear black gowns or suits in the hot sun during such visits? What meaning would be derived from such pastoral visits? Do they want to declare to the sick and old an anticipated funeral? It is analogous to a doctor who is visiting a sick patient on his or her bed to discuss the results of a thorough medical test taken to diagnose the cause of a disease. The low countenance and the mood of the doctor when he arrives would be enough to inform the patient of the content of the results of the test. (Cf. Bryant, C., 1995, ‘Pastoral Care and Counselling in a Cross-Cultural Context: The Issue of Authority’, In *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, Fall, 1995, Vol. 49, No. 3, pages 329-333).

(AAPSC). Dr. Ayete-Nyampong lectured in Practical Theology at the Central University College, Ghana, where he still serves as an External Examiner and sometimes Principal Supervisor for MPhil thesis in Practical Theology. He is also a Supervisor at the Trinity Theological Seminary in Ghana, and he has taught short courses on Ageing and Pastoral Counseling at the Special Ministerial Training Programmes of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Dr. Ayete-Nyampong has since 2001 served as the first Chairman of the Institutional Review Board (Ethical Review Board) of the University of Ghana Noguchi Medical Research Institute in Accra where he reviews research protocols for the College of Health Sciences (including the Medical School).

Rev. Dr. Samuel Ayete-Nyampong has participated in several International Conferences. These include: The Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America (San Francisco, USA 1999), Governors Conference on Ageing (Chicago, USA 1999), Conference on Independence and Quality Care (Washington D.C., USA 1999), Annual Scientific Meeting of the Southern Gerontological Society (Raleigh, North Carolina, USA 2000), Annual conference on Ethnics and Biomedical Research (San Diego, USA, 2000), Conference on Ethnics and Biomedical Research (Boston, MA, 2001) Conference on family care (Arlington, USA 2002) Conference on Ethnics in Biomedical Research (Washington, USA, 2003). Dr. Ayete-Nyampong also attended the Valencia forum as Ageing in Spain (2004) and the NGO Forum on Ageing in Madrid, Spain, during the UN International Conference on Ageing in 2004.

Dr. Ayete-Nyampong was until recently, a member of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) and the American Society on Ageing (ASA). He has written several Papers for conferences and for the Media. He has also written five books including “Pastoral Care of the elderly in Africa”, “Ageing in the 21st Century in Ghana” and “Ageing Gracefully.”



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