

THE NATURE AND DYNAMICS OF CULTURE AND ITS SOCIAL, MORAL AND RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS

K. Effa-Ababio
*Protestant Chaplaincy,
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi*

ABSTRACT

The scope of the nature and functions of culture is very wide and its components are many and varied. It is a complex phenomenon which can be defined to cover almost every aspect of life. For this reason, no exhaustive and conclusive definition of the subject has ever been put forward, although many definitions have been offered in attempts to show what culture means. The complex nature of culture notwithstanding, many people view it as a simple subject and define it from the angle at which they see any of its many components. Some people look at culture from its aesthetic perspective and thus define it in terms of drumming and dancing while others present it in the picture of certain aspects of religion. This situation does not only bring about misrepresentation but also confusion and conflict especially on the religio-cultural frontiers. The object of this article is to elucidate the nature and the dynamics of culture and its various dimensions and to indicate that it is the product of human achievement in the control of nature. It is a body of learned behaviours which is dynamic and adaptable. It is a social heritage which evolves from generation to generation. It is a factor of unity, pluralistic and a teleological enterprise which has a biblical basis.

Keywords: *Cultural Dynamics, Nature, Achievement.*

INTRODUCTION

Culture is very important in human life and living and the scope within which it operates is very wide. Thus there is much disagreement about the concept and meaning of culture. Many attempts have been made to give the exact statement of the meaning, nature or limits of culture but none of these attempts have been successful.

What is the reason for these unsuccessful attempts? It is because culture deals with human beings who are not just physical but spiritual and complicated. This situation has resulted in a long period of debate on the subject of culture and the debate is still an ongoing enterprise.

A few examples of these attempts at defining culture will suffice to show the magnitude of the controversy over the definition of culture. Arnold (1993) asserts that culture is the love of

perfection and a study of perfection. Culture is everything. Culture is the way we dress, the way we carry our heads, the way we walk, the way we tie our ties – it is not only the fact of writing books or building our houses (Cesair, 2005). No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive and culture of the mind must be subservient to the heart (Ghandhi, 2002). This shows the inclusive nature of culture and the fact that it is the heart that conceives culture while the mind executes it.

Education plays a vital rule in the evolution of culture. Culture is but the fine flowering of real education, and it is the training of the feeling, the tastes and the manners that makes it so (Kellogg, venus.windsor.ca/courses/edfac/morton/culture-quotes.htm).

A cultivated mind is one to which the fountains of knowledge have been opened, and which has been taught in any tolerable degree, to exercise its faculties (Mill, 2005) From the intellectual point of view, culture is an instrument wielded by professors to manufacture professors, who when their turn comes will manufacture professor (Weil, 1949).

The development of the concept of culture can be traced from four perspectives: culture as a general state or habit of mind with close relations to the idea of human perfection, culture as a general state of intellectual and moral development in a state as a whole, culture as the general body of arts and intellectual work, and culture as the whole way of life, mental, intellectual and spiritual of a given society (Williams, 1967).

These are just a few of the many examples of the numerous attempts made by scholars at elucidating the nature and functions of culture and ipso facto finding a universally acceptable definition of culture. This very difficult enterprise is ongoing and nobody knows when and how it will be accomplished. The attempt in this article is part of the enterprise

THE NATURE AND DYNAMICS OF CULTURE

Culture is the result of the response and the creative reaction of a people to nature. It is the product of the proper utilization of the gifts of nature to create healthy environmental conditions and social organization for the well-being of the members of a society, a traditional area or a nation. To put it simply, culture is the result of human achievement in nature and it involves the whole of life. It manifests itself in its constituent parts which are language, ideas, customs, traditions, inherited and studied artefacts, belief systems and their expressions, moral values, art forms, social organization and institutions, occupations and habits of various types, progress and development in science and technology and others. All these constituent parts of culture are the product of the people's achievement in nature, and they help to organize people into groups and societies and nations. It is an integrated system of all these segments.

Learned Behaviour and Meaning Systems

Culture can be said to be a learned phenomenon and this is an essential feature of culture. What a new baby does cannot be said to be cultural. For instance if it cries for food, it is natural and not cultural. On the other hand, if a Ghanaian adult takes *fufu* for his dinner and a British adult takes roast potatoes or mashed potato and fish for his dinner, what the two people are doing is not natural but cultural. The Ghanaian has learnt to have *fufu* for his dinner while the British has learnt to have potatoes and fish for his dinner. Culture is a body of learned behaviours within given societies and may be passed from generation to generation because it is dynamic. If learning is an essential feature of culture, then teaching, knowledge, experiences and environment are important characteristics of culture.

Important elements in the processes of teaching and learning are systems of meaning. In these systems, language plays a crucial role. These processes of teaching and learning constitute an

essential component of culture. It is the system of meanings that governs the way a society understands its learned behaviours. Culture is seen in the meaning system and not in the behaviours, and the distinction between the two is very important. In this context, learned behaviour can mean almost everything we do, for instance, the way we dress, our systems of organization and production, the type of food we eat, our attitude to child birth, death and marriage. When we greet people in the street, welcome people to our homes, watch a football match, attend a funeral or a marriage ceremony, have a bath or dance we are practising learned behaviours which form a part of our culture. These behaviours do not tell us much about culture. It is the meaning attached to the behaviour that shows the culture. For example, in a European society, thumbs up is an expression of victory, satisfaction or approval, but in an Akan society in Ghana, it is an insult. Similarly, there is nothing wrong with giving or receiving something with the left hand in European societies but it is an offence in some Ghanaian societies especially in an Akan society. Hunting in some communities is done as a game or for pleasure while in others it is done as a means of earning a living. Culture is seen not so much in the learned behaviours as in the meaning systems.

Culture as Human Achievement

Culture is what your butcher would have if he were a surgeon (Poole, 1938). Looking at culture in relation to the ingenuity of the first couple (Adam and Eve), as related in the Bible, it can be said that culture is as old as creation. Its evolution started with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of which the Lord God commanded them not to eat, their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons (Genesis 3:7). Until they ate of the tree and their eyes were opened, they were naked and that was natural. When their eyes were opened, they realized they were naked and so they sewed fig

leaves together and made themselves aprons and that was culture. They made use of nature and achieved the aprons with which they covered their nakedness and that achievement in nature became their culture at that time. Culture is not only a social heritage, it is also seen as human achievement. Culture can be distinguished from nature by the evidences of human achievement upon nature and the efforts made by human beings to make the best out of nature. In other words, man's purposiveness and endeavours in his encounter with nature distinguish culture from nature.

A few illustrations will make this point clear. A river is nature, while systems or methods of irrigation are culture. A piece of wood or a log is nature, while a stool or a chair or a piece of furniture is culture. A sound is natural, but music or words are cultural. Culture is the product of the utilization of man's intellectual, spiritual and physical resources in relation to nature.

Cultures are evolved not by accident but by design, and those who bequeathed them to the later generation laboured to evolve them with intention and purpose. The elements of culture such as maxims and axioms, science, technologies, philosophy, law, beliefs, folklore, folk tales, forms of government, rites, customs, inventions, art forms etc. are all handed down from generation to generation. They are all past activities which must be learned by the later generation. For example, a child of English parents would naturally speak English, but he cannot speak the language automatically just because he is born of English parents. He has to learn to speak it both at home and in school. Supposing that the child was born outside England, in a non-English-speaking country, and was left there by the parents soon after his birth, under the care of a local couple, the child would grow to speak the local language and English would become a foreign language to him. He would have to learn English (his mother tongue) to be able to speak it. Culture is the product of human activities and

achievements, which evolves from generation to generation. But its evolution is the result of human efforts and achievement.

Culture is evolved and conserved for posterity. The Almighty God created the world and created man and placed at his disposal, the world of nature, his environment, and gave him the power and ability to utilize nature to facilitate and enhance his life and what he achieves from his encounter with nature becomes his culture.

Traditional medicine has been in practice among peoples of all nations from time immemorial and in Ghana the culture of using traditional medicine represented the main health care system for centuries before the European presence in the country. For example, the first batch of four Basel missionaries who arrived in the Gold Coast on 18 December 1828 and started the missionary work which resulted in the planting of what is now the Presbyterian Church of Ghana all died within a short time. They were Karl Ferdinand Salbach, Gottlieb Holzwarth, Johannes Gottlieb Phillip Henke and Johannes Gottlieb Schmidt. The second batch of three missionaries who arrived in the Gold Coast in March 1832 were: Peter Peterson Jager, Christian Frederich Heinze (a medical doctor) and Andreas Riis. The first two, including the medical doctor died leaving only Andreas Riis who fell seriously sick and was *in extremis*. He was cured by a native herbal medical practitioner. Commenting on the report which Riis wrote about his long period of sickness the Secretary of the Mission Committee noted the series of diseases which afflicted him and cured by an African doctor who prescribed cold ablutions and rubbing in of lime, and added that he was recovering on the Akwapim hills where Riis went on the 24 October 1832. (Riis, 1832). This happened in 1832 when traditional medicine was the main health care system.

Today there are two main health care systems in Ghana, the orthodox medicine and the traditional medicine. In spite of the tremendous role the

former plays in meeting the health needs of the people, the latter provides the health care needs of majority of the people. The achievement must be sustained and developed for the good of the Nation and the universities have a vital role to play in this cultural development. They can do this by carrying out research into herbal medicine so that herbs can be used as the basis for therapy in our health care system as it is in the health care systems in India and China.

It is gratifying to note that the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, has taken a bold step in this direction. It has introduced the herbal medicine degree programme. For almost four decades the Faculty of Pharmacy has been investigating traditional medicine in Ghana, particularly those areas of the practice that submit to scientific verification. Some of the areas of research have been studies into the constituents of medicinal plant, case studies into the practices of traditional medicine, validation of claims of traditional healers and the search for the local sources of raw materials for the development of drugs. As a result of these research activities, the Faculty initiated the development of curriculum for a degree programme in Herbal Medicine which was finalised with the co-operation of the School of Medical Sciences (Fleischer, 2004)

According to the Head of Department, the 4-year programme which leads to the award of a B.Sc. Herbal Medicine degree, provides the students with knowledge in human and plant sciences, clinical and diagnostic skills and the scientific basis for the treatment of diseases with plant medicine. The programme started in the September 2001/2002 academic year. In this way, the University is immensely helping the Nation to evolve and promote its culture as human achievement in the field of medicine. The foregoing are great achievements which will enhance the socio-economic life of the country and accelerate its development and this is the object of culture on this level.

Culture as a Teleological Enterprise

Culture is the habit of being pleased with the best and knowing why (van Dyke, 2005). It has been noted that culture is the product of human achievement in nature. But the activities or efforts which brought about the achievement were not without motives or desired ends. They were designed to achieve certain ends. Therefore no element of culture can be explained without reference to the purpose for which it was designed. It must be stressed that the teleological character of culture must be looked at in relation to "the good of humanity" The driving motive behind human efforts and human achievement in this respect is the "good" of humankind both present and future.

It has been observed that culture is human achievement and that it is designed for the good of humanity and it passes from generation to generation. It follows from this that culture must be preserved. What people in one generation expended their energies to accomplish must be preserved by the other if learning, development and further achievements are to be possible. Let education and training lapse for one generation, and the whole grand structure of past achievements fall into ruin. Culture is social tradition which must be conserved by painful struggle not so much against nonhuman natural forces as against revolutionary and critical powers in human life and reason. But whether customs or artefacts are in question, culture cannot be maintained unless men devoted a large part of their efforts to the work of conservation (Niebuhr, 1951).

Universities are established to fulfil a purpose and they are therefore teleologically oriented. They focus mainly on teaching and research and these are designed to produce scholars on whose services the nations depend for development and progress. They also offer the necessary pieces of information and expert advice which facilitate the development of science and technology which are the foundations upon which the struc-

tures of advanced socio-political and economic life in the global village are built. It is reassuring that the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi and the Columbia University of the State of New York in the USA are to collaborate in the area of research and culture to strengthen the knowledge base of their products (Graphic, 2004). This teleological enterprise will contribute immensely to the evolution and promotion of the cultures of the two countries.

The Pluralism of Culture

In its teleological character, culture seeks to achieve certain values. The values which a culture seeks to achieve are many. Culture is concerned not only with men but also with women, not only with adults but also with young people and children. It is concerned not only with people of special and various vocations but also with the common interests of the members of an entire society and so on.

Furthermore, individuals in a given society may have their individual interests and special claims. Even the individual in himself is a complex being who has his own desires in relation to his body, mind and soul, with things which affect him as an individual, and with the things that affect others. What is more, the individual stands in relation not only to other people in society but also in relation to nature and supernatural or spiritual beings. He stands in relation to God his Creator and the Creator of all things. It is when one realizes the need for culture to take into account all this multiplicity of needs and the variety of interests and cultural phenomena that one sees the pluralism of culture more clearly. The situation becomes more complicated when one talks not only about "a culture" but about "cultures" – when one moves from one cultural area or society to another. It is from this perspective that cultural relativity is clearly seen.

The modern emphasis on cultural relativity acquires a critical importance. The emphasis on

relativity is most marked in work done since the 1920s. It is a reaction against both a theory and ethnocentrism. It was evidently wrong to interpret all cultural phenomena in terms of categories acceptable to European societies and it was arbitrary and dangerous to attempt to evaluate very diverse cultures by reference to a fixed value system that was likewise derived from European tradition. The terminological transition from "culture" to "a culture" was thus very important. A particular complex whole should be studied as far as possible in its own terms, rather than assimilated to the observer's terms (Williams, 1967).

Culture as Dynamic and Adaptable

Culture is not and should not be static. It should be dynamic, and as society changes there should be a continuous process of change in its culture. The need for meaningful changes in culture can be seen from the nature of culture itself. Culture is the product of human achievement in nature and a phenomenon which passes from generation to generation, but generations and their times are not the same. Different generations live in different worlds and so there are bound to be changes and as people change their ways of life as a result of human achievement in the control of nature, culture has to change and adapt itself to changing situations.

Furthermore, no society or nation is an island of its own. Inter-regional and international relations and interdependence bring about contact with foreign cultures and therefore some cultures get influenced by other cultures. This process of change as a result of cultural contacts is itself "cultural". This is because all human beings share the same world of nature and they are to make the best of the gifts of nature, which they do in different ways.

It should be emphasized that the change must be a "meaningful" and "purposeful" change. It must be a change for the better. The change must not be arbitrary but must be done with a tremendous

care and a sense of responsibility. It must take into account and pay attention to what the people have received from the past through the achievements of the past generations. It must also pay attention to what the people have now as a result of the proper use they have made of the gifts of nature, and what they can pass on to posterity. It is worth noting that the worse penalty for anyone who rebels against his culture and refuses to get involved in the meaningful and desirable changes of his culture is expulsion from the culturally defined social community.

Culture is dynamic and adaptable and as society changes, culture changes and adapts itself to the changing situations. In this regard, institutions of higher learning especially universities, must constantly undergo a process of change if they are to continue to have impact on the life of the rapidly changing society and be able to respond positively to the demands of contemporary society. Universities should intensify their research work and make pragmatic use of the results of the research. This will keep them abreast of current global trend of development and enable them to meet the needs of the global village in the twenty first century.

SOCIAL DIMENSION OF CULTURE

Culture is a social heritage which is handed down from generation to generation. As a social heritage, culture will not admit anything which is so private that it neither originates from nor seeks to enter social life. One of the characteristic features of human societies is that they become increasingly organized as they advance. They are organized into small units like lineages, families, co-operative groups and other micro systems. As societies become larger and more advanced, macro systems or large-scale systems are developed. As people live together in large groups their relationships become important. The need for such people to live in peace and harmony necessitates the making of rules to govern peoples behaviour toward one another to ensure unity among the people.

Culture can thus be seen as a factor of unity. It holds, a people together over a span of time. Culture is handed down from generation to generation, but this is not a process of natural inheritance which operates naturally and automatically. It has to be learned afresh by each generation. The learning is done in various ways – in the home, in institutions by direct instructions, in some societies by initiation rites and through other means.

Furthermore, culture governs actions of the members of a society. It governs such actions as the practice of religion, law and the administration of justice, social actions such as dances, games and others. Culture serves as a unifying factor which provides people with sense of belonging, identity, dignity and security. It does not only make the members of a society or a nation feel that they belong to a larger whole, but it also generates in them a sense of sharing in the life of past generations. Through their culture, people are able to relate the past to the present, and this makes for rich experiences, development and progress. With the experiences from the past, they can understand the present and with the understanding of the present they are able to project into the future with vision and sense of direction.

MORAL DIMENSION OF CULTURE

Another segment of culture is the system of values, beliefs, hope and aspirations. These are beliefs about what is true and what is false, what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, what is desirable and what is undesirable, what is commendable and what is abhorrent. Furthermore, there are beliefs about what is normative and acceptable – statutory law, (eg. one should pay one's tax to the government), moral laws (eg. one should keep one's promises), conventions (eg. among the Akan, greet, give or receive with the right hand), virtues (e.g. kindness, patience, love, hospitality, etc.)

The system of values find expression in such institutions as government (central and local), House of Chiefs (national and regional), Traditional Councils and courts, Churches, schools, colleges, families and clans. Right feelings, thoughts and behaviour are differentiated from wrong feelings, thoughts and behaviour. Value systems can grow out of belief systems and very often moral actions are dictated by religious beliefs. It is from this perspective that the close relationship between morality and religion can be clearly seen. One of the great expressions of religion is the action of the will with regard to moral ideas. In many ways and in various situations and circumstances, motives that incline human beings to choose the right or the wrong course are derived from religious beliefs. The moral dimension of culture indicates how human beings ought to behave in relationship to other people. It is concerned with human behaviour and actions. It includes social sanctions, obligations and responsibilities in a society.

Hope, being confidence in God's goodness tempered by fear of His Justice, is opposed to both despair and presumption (Cross, 1974). Hope is the fruit of believing in the ceaseless creative activity of God even when living seems no more than being tangled in conflict with others and within oneself, between and within groups (Browne, 1975). Hope and aspirations play a crucial role in the evolution of culture. Religious beliefs may dictate moral actions and these actions are taken in the hope that society will benefit from them. Culture is dynamic and so it keeps changing and the changes are made in the light of the aspirations of the people and in the hope that things will change for the better for the society.

RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF CULTURE

Belief systems involve stories or myths, whose interpretation can give people insight into how they should feel, think or behave. They can affect the daily life of the members of a society and play an important role in giving significance

to people's actions. The most prominent systems of beliefs tend to be those associated with formal religions, nevertheless, any system of belief in which the interpretation of stories affect the behaviour of people can be an important component of the culture of a society.

In the Christian context, supposing that a mission body in Western Europe sends a missionary to Africa to work in a remote area in Ghana in an Akan society where the name Jesus Christ has never been heard. How can he present the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the people? The Apostle Paul deals with this problem in his letter to the Romans – But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? (Romans 10:14). The missionary must use the language of the people, and what words is he going to use to proclaim and present Jesus Christ as King, Lord and Saviour? Is he going to use such words as *Ohene* (King or Chief), *Otumfuo* (His Majesty), *Agyenkwa* (Saviour), *Owura* (Master), *Awurade* (Lord), *Oyaresafo* (Healer) and others? The problem is that these titles are used for kings or chiefs and certain individuals. Does this mean that Jesus Christ should be regarded as one of these people? No, but he must still use some of these words. Language is the soul of every culture and occupies a very prominent place in the people's worldview. The giving of these titles to the people concerned is a dimension of their worldview. Thus in the process of communicating the gospel to the people, the missionary becomes aware of how the worldview of the local culture can reshape the gospel. This is true of all cultures including the European culture. People are shaped by their cultural stories and the gospel is received and presented in one's own culture. The way that the missionary receives and understands the gospel is shaped by the culture of which he is a part. One's perception of things around himself/herself is informed by his/her worldview. However, this perception may be

challenged by another culture through one's interaction with that culture.

Another area of this dimension is the authority and power of the Bible and its influence on the cultures into which the gospel is sent. Again, using the European and African scenario, the gospel is sent from Britain to Ghana. The missionary, who is a European brings the gospel to Africa in his own culture. The Bible is translated into Ghanaian languages and so members of the Church read the Bible and understand the gospel in their Ghanaian worldview or context. They find that in certain areas, their worldview is incompatible with the gospel. The Ghanaian Church can offer the missionary some avenues through which he can reflect on the Western worldview in relation to the gospel in the light of the Ghanaian experience and see the areas in which the Western worldview is incompatible with the gospel. The rapid growth and expansion of the Church in Africa provides a challenge to the Church in Europe to have a critical look at the position it occupied in the 19th and 20th centuries and the position it occupies in the present century in relation to the Western culture and the Christian religion.

Cultural Estrangement and Cultural Captivity

Religion is an awareness of and a response to the "Transcendent" in whom individuals and societies believe and upon whom they absolutely depend. It is both objective and subjective, it is both personal and social, it is intensive and comprehensive and involves and affects the whole of life (Ababio, 1985). It operates in a cultural milieu and can influence and transform culture. On the other hand, culture can collaborate with, accommodate, estrange or capture religion.

One can distinguish between two different forms of missionary witness. The missionary situation in Europe and North America on the one hand, can be distinguished from the missionary situation in Africa and Asia on the other. While the central missionary problem of the Churches in

Africa and Asia is the experience of cultural estrangement, that is to say the gospel is regarded as a foreign phenomenon that frowns on and disregards cultural traditions, the central missionary problem of the Churches in Europe and North America is the cultural captivity of the gospel. In other words, in Africa and Asia, the problem is for the gospel to be at home in culture. In the West the gospel has become absorbed and co-opted onto culture (Raiser, 1994). The Churches in the West must not only have an inner missionary consciousness, they must also recover an outer missionary encounter with the culture in which they operate. They must rethink their stance on the Western worldview and its encounter with the gospel (Shark, 1995). They must reflect on and reconsider the fundamental assumptions of culture to enable the Church to resist the temptation to compromise on matters of faith.

The process of cultural captivity of the Church can be outlined as follows. When a Church is established, missions take the responsibility for its nurture and growth. At this stage, the infant Church embarks on vigorous evangelization of the culture in which it was established. As the Church grows in number and strength, it moves from being missionary to being pastoral, taking care and spiritual oversight of the new converts. The Church engages in dialogue with the authorities and institutions of society to mitigate tension and conflict between the gospel and culture, as the gospel permeates the culture. At this stage the Church must be very careful and focus on its mission of transforming culture, otherwise, the tendency is to compromise. If the Church compromises with the authorities and institutions of society on matters of faith, it is ipso facto domesticated and absorbed into the culture resulting in cultural captivity (Goheen, 1999).

Cultural Estrangement

Cultural captivity is one side of the coin, and the other side is cultural estrangement. This takes

place where the gospel is regarded as a foreign phenomenon that disrespects and disregards the cultural traditions of the host society. For instance, during the period of the missionary enterprise in Ghana, the Church frowned upon drumming and dancing which were some of the important aesthetic elements of African culture on the grounds that they were often associated with certain elements of traditional life which were considered to be incompatible with the Christian faith and Christian living. For this reason, drums were forbidden on Church premises. The presupposition was characteristic of the *modus operandi* of the machinery of the missionary enterprise and continued among the African leaders of the Church. For example, the Basel missionary Adolf Mohr was pleased with the progress of the evangelisation ministry and the impact which Christianity had already started to have on the life of the people. He reported that positive belief in fetishes was declining and that two fetishes were actually brought to him in the course of the year 1881 by their owners to whom they had become useless after their conversion. In the same report Mohr wrote "But Christianity demands too much for many of them. For example the Begro people have a number of public festivals in which dancing plays an important part, which are led by "clubs" and it is very difficult for the people to break away from them" (Mohr, 1881). In the thinking of the missionary, Christianity demanded the breaking away from customs and traditions which involved dancing. This belief was implanted in the minds of the Christians and among the African leadership of the Churches, the tendency was to hold on to it. For instance, the Synod of the Scottish Mission (Presbyterian) Church, in August 1919 "took a firm stand against dancing whether connected with band or ball. It led to immorality and looseness, and we went against it by admonition, suspension from the Lord's Supper and exclusion" (Ababio, 1991).

The traditional authorities claimed in their complaint that the Church did not permit Christians

to hold offices which were connected with chieftaincy. For instance, a Christian could not hold an office which involved the bearing of State emblems or paraphernalia. For example, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast declared that "Christians bearing insignia from the Chief's Courts are exposed to grave temptations. These insignia are connected with sacrifices, purifying with blood, swearing, abstinence, calling upon departed men; no true Christian can carry or perform matters connected with such insignia without hurting his Christian conscience" (Ababio, 1991). Reacting to this stance of the Church, the authorities of the Akyem Abuakwa State stated, "We suggest that there should be general relaxation of the policy of the Church whereby Stool Functionaries, that is, those of the people who are holders of various offices connected with a Stool are debarred from becoming Christians until they cease to hold such offices by resigning or throwing down the emblems or paraphernalia attached to such offices" (Ababio, 1991). There are many examples to show the cultural estrangement between the Church and the traditional States in Ghana which, in certain places, led to the separation of Christians from non-Christians which was known as the "saalem system" or Christian Quarters separated from the communities in which the Churches operated.

The Biblical Basis of Culture

God created human beings and endowed them with distinctive human faculties, namely: intellect, will and emotion. From these human faculties emerge such human capacities as rationality, morality, spirituality, creativity and sociability. The Bible says that God commissioned the human beings He had created to produce children to fill the earth and to subdue it (Genesis 1:26-28). Culture has been defined as the product of what human beings have achieved and continue to achieve in nature. The gifts of nature are placed at the disposal of human beings and they must make the best out of nature for the good of humankind. Human beings must control and

utilize nature to create healthy environmental conditions in which humans can live. Thus culture is the result of the control of human beings over nature – it is the product of the utilization of nature by humans. So it can rightly be said that the control over nature given to human beings by the Creator of all things who is the Almighty God, is the origin of human culture.

In this physical and empirical world, there are two main factors which determine human existence. These are: the environment and human beings. Both are necessary conditions for human existence and human life depends on the environment. This is evident in the two creation stories of the Priestly writer and the Yahwist. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1, Genesis 2:4b). Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26). It is clear from these biblical quotations that the Lord God created the environment before He created man. This formed a very important part of the created order. The Almighty God knew that man could not live without the environment and so He created the environment which was absolutely conducive to healthy and sound human habitation. When the Lord God had created everything necessary for man's healthy and happy living, He created man and woman and commissioned them to be fruitful and multiply- to procreate and occupy the earth and to control it. This means that man should take responsible, appreciative, constructive, beneficial and grateful control over nature and this is stewardship. Man is a steward over God's creation and he has the divine mandate to use nature to evolve his culture. This is the beginning of cultural development.

Since cultural development is an essential part of creation which God has entrusted to humanity, the Church must take its share of responsibility

for the cultural development of the society in which it fulfils its mission. It is part of the mission of the Church to take an antithetical stance against any distortion of culture. During the first three centuries of its life and work, the early Church could not take its responsibility to participate in the development of Roman culture with sufficient seriousness. With the conversion of Emperor Constantine into Christianity, the Church was established as part of the culture. From that time, the Church started to take its responsibility for cultural development seriously (Goheen, 1999). As the Church is the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-14), it must exercise its saltiness in the cultural development of society and provide its light to guide society's cultural evolution and promotion. This will ensure proper stewardship of God's creation.

CONCLUSION

The object of this article was to examine and elucidate the nature and dynamics of culture and its social, moral and religious dimensions. The examination has revealed that culture is the product of human achievement in nature. From its various segments, culture can be seen as an integrated system of beliefs, values, customs and traditions. Looking at its various components, culture can be defined as an inheritance. It is like the sum of special knowledge that accumulates in any large united family and is the common property of all its members (Huxley, 2005). Culture is human achievement, a teleological enterprise and a pluralistic phenomenon with a biblical basis. It is a factor of unity among the members of a society and it is dynamic and adaptable. It changes and adapts itself to changing situations. One of the essential features of culture is that it is a learned phenomenon. It can accommodate and collaborate with religion but it can also estrange or capture religion. Nevertheless religion can reform or transform culture which can be seen as a general state or habit of mind with close relations to the idea of human perfection. It is a general state of intellectual

and moral development in a state as a whole, the general body of arts and intellectual work and a whole way of life, mental, intellectual and spiritual of a given society.

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