

‘LEGON DAY OF PRAYER’: A CONTESTED RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY IN THE ACADEME

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ABSTRACT

The Pentecostal wave is ubiquitous in the University of Ghana, Legon, palpable in the numerous banners and on vehicles with labels of a variety of groups, announcing religious services and visits of various evangelists. These events are mainly organized by students. Although they bring pastors to their communities on campus and belong to campus branches of a plethora of churches in the city of Accra, students are generally their own leaders in what is termed ‘campus ministry’. They organize teaching sessions on various social and religious topics, courses on the Bible, and crusades on open fields of the university, in Hall chapels and even in lecture theatres. One of the most contested aspects of this development is students’ Lunchtime prayer service, the ‘Legon Day of Prayer’ (LDOP) that can be quite noisy, and is contested by the university community. This paper examines the nature of this religious activity in relation to University discipline.

RÉSUMÉ

La vague Pentecôtiste est omniprésente dans l'Université du Ghana, Legon, palpable dans les nombreuses bannières et sur des véhicules avec les étiquettes d'une variété de groupes, annonçant la visite d'évangélistes divers et des services religieux. Ces événements sont principalement organisés par des étudiants. Bien qu'ils amènent des pasteurs à leurs communautés sur le campus et appartiennent aux branches de campus de pléthore d'églises dans la ville d'Accra, les étudiants sont généralement leurs propres dirigeants dans

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ce qui est nommé "le ministère de campus". Ils organisent des sessions d'enseignement sur des sujets sociaux et religieux divers, des cours sur la Bible et croisades sur les lieux ouverts de l'université, dans les chapelles des résidences universitaires et même dans les salles de conférences. Un des aspects les plus contestés de ce développement est les services de prière de Midi des étudiants nommés "Legon le Jour de Prière" qui peut être tout à fait bruyant, contesté par la communauté de L' Universitaire. Ce travail examine la nature de cette activité religieuse par rapport à la discipline Universitaire.

Keywords

Pentecostal activity, Religious activity, Lunchtime prayer service, University discipline.

Introduction

Student lunchtime prayer service in Legon Hall belongs to a long tradition of students' religious activity at the University of Ghana. The presence of the Pentecostals at the university has augmented the said activity. Pentecostalism itself continues a trend in religiosity that forms part of scholarly research in Ghana going back to the 1960s. Baëta (1962) paved the way for the study of indigenous African Christianity with his seminal work, which continues to be a reference point for many such academic pursuits. While Baëta's work is essentially a theological study, it points to religious innovation in the indigenization of Christianity in Ghana, an activity that has sociological import. Assimeng (1986), in the spirit of sociologists and anthropologists such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, Edward B. Tylor, James G. Frazer, and Bryan R. Wilson, has established the link between 'saints and social structures'. Assimeng provides the sociological and cultural setting for the contemporary religious phenomena in Africa. Departing from the over concentration of scholarly works on the 'larger' or 'established' denominations he delineates the role of several European and American groups (Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, The Moral Re-Armament, Salvation Army, and the Plymouth Brethren) in the acculturative process in Africa.

Thus, Omenyo (2006: 256) states quite clearly that it is this kind of acculturative process, or the innovation Baëta envisages, that makes the Pentecostal movement find

.. fertile ground in Africa because most of its practices take the African worldview seriously..., the Pentecostal experience is compatible and observable and has relative advantage for most Africans. Therefore, it will continue to be popular and spread among them.

This development in itself is characteristic of a society in transition.

Assimeng (1989: xiv) presents “a sociological way of studying religion” and an “analysis of religious systems in transitional societies”. Given the transitional nature of the societies studied by Assimeng, credit is given to him for not prophesying about the state of religion in West Africa in future (Mbon, 1992) for the religious landscape is still awash with great change. Dovlo (2005: 629) argues that although “Ghana was conceived as a secular state, Christianity became the primary religion during the era of colonial rule, and English common law (with its Judeo-Christian foundations) underpinned many new laws that have guided the State since that period”. Colonialism, thus, bequeathed Ghana with the historic Christian churches that would wield overriding influence on the Ghanaian public sphere, particularly through the schools they established, thereby gradually eroding Traditional African Religion. However, as Dovlo (2005: 644) points out, many “new religious movements, especially ‘charismatic’ Churches”, would begin to proliferate “in Ghana beginning in the late 1970s”, drawing “their membership mainly from the older churches”, thereby changing the religious scenario remarkably. These new churches too would use education as an important tool for expansion. For example, according to Assimeng (1986), education has been a great priority on the missionary programme of Seventh-day Adventists. Their initial belief was that children who were trained in the Adventists schools would later serve as ‘labourers’. He cites Ellen White, wife of fellow Adventist Joseph White, as having remarked that all “the youth should be permitted to have the blessings and privileges of an education at our schools, that they may be inspired to become labourers together with God” (Assimeng, 1986: 37).

Assimeng (1989) was right in pointing to this transition. Not only has the entire Ghanaian society been caught up in the fascination religion offers such transitional societies, in fact, university campuses in Ghana, the intellectual cradle of Ghanaian society, have become hotbeds for religious practice and innovation. Many a student comes to university already attuned to some form of religious bent from home that is heavily influenced in the second cycle institution, and matures into a drift to a different religious persuasion or confirmed in one’s original religious group at

university (Okyerefo, 2011). The religious imprint on a student's character, thus, influences his/her social worldview. In this vein, Atiemo (2013:92) discusses how during the third republic students on University Campuses had different perspectives on change for the better in Ghana. According to him, while some students "believed that the best path to change was 'scientific socialism' ... others, "made up of 'born again' Christians" "believed that evangelical Christianity offered a better remedy to the ills of the nation", while yet another insignificant group "was inclined towards political Islam". So, particularly since the 1980s, religion has been taken seriously on university campuses and the student lunchtime prayer service in Legon Hall at the University of Ghana emanates from this tradition.

Today, however, it is hard to draw parallels between University of Ghana Hall Chapels and Oxbridge Colleges Chapels that inspired the former in terms of the kind of religious activity that has developed in University of Ghana Hall Chapels and beyond their frontiers. The incorporation of chapels in all the traditional halls of residence points to the fact that the university has always had room in its administrative structure for religious activities. However, religious innovation, wrought through indigenizing Christianity in Ghana (Baëta, 1962), has developed alongside this society in transition (Assimeng, 1989) into a flourishing Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, which characterizes religious worship in Ghanaian University Hall Chapels. Consequently, while the hall chapels reflected the English university college chapels in the past largely in a tradition of religious activity that blends into the serenity of the academe, the Ghanaian ones have today embraced religious worship that their members term "making joyful noise to the Lord". This mode of worship, however, as the case of Legon Hall Chapel shows, is contentious in the University of Ghana. This is mainly because the students gather between 12noon and 1pm for prayers and praises while lectures are still in progress. This study delves into the dynamics of this religious activity and the friction it provokes in the academe.

The Legon Academic Environment

University discipline, broadly defined, regulates academic and social life in the institution. The governance of the University of Ghana, with its various hierarchical arrangements — the vice-chancellor as its chief executive at the apex, the pro-vice chancellors, registrar(s), provosts and deans, departmental heads, senior members

(academic and senior administrative and professional staff), hall masters (warden in in the case of Volta Hall) and tutors, junior staff and junior members (students) — are a blend of academic and non-academic facets of an institution that should ensure a disciplined coexistence (University of Ghana, 2004). The hierarchical arrangement this entails is manifest in a political community that needs the kind of governance and discipline necessary for the university to execute its primary goal of study. The hierarchical arrangement, however, subsists in a democratic polity of the academe, which is realized in the university being run essentially through Boards, Committees and Councils, whose members are usually drawn from the array of members of the university community spelt out above. The Chaplaincy Board, for example, “coordinates the activities of religious groups” in a university that is “primarily residential”, believing “in community living as an essential part of student life” (University of Ghana, 2005: 24). Accommodation is provided in halls of residence for students, with flats and guest rooms for senior members and guests. Hall chapels, a mosque and now some larger church buildings constructed by various denominations serve as demarcated places of worship in this academic polity of the University of Ghana².

Pentecostal activities of students of the university (Okyerefo, 2006/7), however, do not confine religious activity to the sacred spaces and places demarcated for the purpose. The numerous Pentecostal groups particularly account for the ubiquitous religiosity on the university campus, providing space for expansion and channels of expression for the many enormously religious University of Ghana students. The students organize midday prayers amidst singing in hall chapels in the middle of busy weekdays. They gather on open fields from about 4.30am to 6.30am and 6pm-8pm praying loudly and sometimes hooting at the devil. The Mensah Sarbah Hall field³ is a

² The physical lay-out of the University of Ghana consists in a harmonious blend of both residential and academic facilities; a self-contained entity verging on a university city.

³ The first quarter of 2013 has seen senior members of the University of Ghana engage in a long debate on their internal email system regarding the noise generated by prayer groups in open spaces on Campus, particularly the Sarbah Field. The University security has had to be deployed to curb the activity, which is thought to have been infiltrated by outsiders from the city of Accra. Consequently, the university has had to issue a formal statement on 18th February 2013 entitled “Use of Academic Facilities for Religious/Social Functions” in which the expectations of the university are expressed while providing some confined interim space for religious purposes.

favourite venue, which is why students have ‘christened’ it the ‘New Revival Grounds’. They pitch camp on the same fields for crusades some evenings but especially at weekends, bringing ‘renowned men of God’ to preach to them. These activities intensify when examinations are approaching; raising questions about the amount of time students invest in their studies.

This display of religiosity by university students, culminating in a caption on a doorpost of an examination hall of the university in May 2004: ‘if you have not studied, don’t worry, trust God’ led to my earlier study of the religious expression in the University of Ghana (Okyerefo, 2006/7). Indeed, Dutton’s (2008) in-depth study of universities in six countries reveals that students’ evangelism is a common, enormously significant and controversial phenomenon in universities around the globe. In the African context, Kalu (2006: 143) has argued that the “spiritual radicalization of students in both secondary schools and universities provided the midwives for the birth of born-again”. This phenomenon of students’ evangelism, which picked up momentum in the 1970s at the University of Ghana, served as roots for some of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana today which continue to evangelize among students. The Lighthouse Chapel International and the Royalhouse Chapel International are examples of descendants of University of Ghana students’ evangelism created in 1985 and 1984 respectively (Okyerefo, 2011).

Students’ evangelism cannot be viewed without reference to the political culture of the academe. It is particularly interesting to consider how university campuses in much of Africa used to be hotbeds for political agitation, but now seem increasingly to be places of religious expression. Obadare (2007: 519) advances some of the reasons for this shift as pertaining to “larger upheavals in the entire university system”, fomenting “upsurge in cultism and cultist-related violence ..., incessant strikes by academic and non-academic staff of the universities, and the general collapse of academic infrastructure”. According to Obadare (2007: 521), the failure of the state “to provide social services and guarantees”, for example the crisis in accommodation for students, creates a vacuum which religion rises up to fill by providing “moral and material refuge”. The shift in political activism of university students, largely from overt conflict with state and university authorities has merely been transformed into a covert confrontation with the institution’s laws and regulations in the face of heightened Pentecostalism in the academe. The social space in citadels of learning can, thus, be conceptualized as crystallizing into pronounced religious spheres. This

development in an academic public sphere questions the contention of the secularization theory.

Swatos and Christiano (1999: 1) argue that Max Weber bequeathed to us the term secularization, which was taken on by his associate, Ernst Troeltsch. Later, Bryan Wilson, Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, and Karel Dobbelaere became its principal proponents. These “were products of a European Christian intellectual heritage and educational system” that “romanticised the religious past of their nations”. The intellectual heritage and education generally propel secularization in societies across the globe. The immediate impression this conception creates is that the speed at which societies are being secularized predicts decline in the public importance of religion. Such thinking is, however, challenged by various contemporary social and political trends in Africa. Indeed, Meyer and Moors (2006: 1) assert that “religions are thriving” as a public force “all over the world”. The proliferation and diversity of religious forms, particularly within Christianity and Islam, exert a major influence on public culture in many parts of Africa. More challenging for analysis is the frequent blurring of boundaries between religious and secular spheres. In fact, religion makes inroads into spheres purportedly dominated by the secular order in a modern bureaucratic society. For example, some bankers in Ghana gather in the bank for morning devotion before opening to the public; the Sociology Department, University of Ghana, sometimes begins departmental meetings with a prayer, creating mixed feelings among members of faculty of various religio-ideological leaning.

The development of secularization can be analyzed through affiliation to religious groups, as the situation in Ghana portrays. Such foundation allows for a comparative analysis of the sociology of religion with reference to theses from Durkheim (1912) and Weber (1930) to the phenomenological studies of Berger (1963), (1967), as well as Berger and Luckmann (1966). The examination of these theses assists in interpreting the different changes in religious expression in a secularizing African environment, changes that are advancing the increasing presence and influence of the Pentecostal-Charismatic brand of Christianity in African public life. These changes confound secularization theorists or even those skeptics who doubt the rational expression of this kind of Christianity. What is more, the increasing mediation of religion in the public sphere also challenges the attitude of consigning religion strictly to the private life of individuals. Certainly the American experience, i.e., the religiosity of this modern industrialized nation that has gone through the European

historical process of enlightenment challenges the contention that secularized society will stifle or even kill religion. Not only the Pentecostal-Charismatic wave; even traditional Christianity of the historic churches and individuals who profess belief in God without any institutional affiliation point to the fact that religion is simply not disappearing from human society.

In this vein, the Ghanaian experience today generally points to a growing influence of the Pentecostal-Charismatic wave of Christianity in the nation's public sphere. Statistics from the 2010 Population & Housing Census indicate that the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches together form 28.3% of the population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012: 40). The rest of the Christian groups in Ghana constitute 13.1% Catholics, 18.4% Protestants, and 11.4% other Christians in a country whose Christian population in 2010 was 71.2% of its 24.6 million inhabitants.

Scholars on the new religious movements in the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition generally assert that members and leaders of such churches are "young, professional, dynamic and educated. The churches are mega-sized, urban centred, and the medium of communication is mostly English" (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005: 1). Meyer (1995: 236) contends that most "of the pentecostal Churches" in Ghana "have headquarters in Accra and are multi-ethnic and multilingual". Adherents tend to be intent on their upward mobility, hence the great appeal its gospel of prosperity has for such social group. Students belong to the upwardly mobile group in society. Englund and Leach (2000: 481), however, caution against researchers' exclusive focus, as a matter of convenience, on "middle-class Pentecostals and Charismatics" who "are often fluent in English, French or Portuguese". According to them, such a disproportionate analytical approach loses out on other expressions of Pentecostalism. This caution notwithstanding, this paper concentrates exclusively on students of the University of Ghana, one such socially mobile group, not for the sake of convenience but to add the Ghanaian case to the plethora of literature in the corpus on students' Pentecostalism in Africa, works emanating particularly from Nigeria (Ojo, 1998; Obadare, 2007).

Methodology

The specific objective of this paper then is to investigate the dynamics of some University of Ghana students' unceasing midday prayer activity and the contention it

generates in the academe by breaking the university's main daily business of academic work. The study examines a particular prayer activity of Pentecostal students in the university, popularly referred to as the 'Legon Day of Prayer' (LDOP), which takes place on weekdays and in the middle of the working day. The prayer session runs through many days and times of the day, particularly in the examination weeks, since students write exams at different times of the day. Notices are served throughout the university community inviting students to the prayer sessions. Apart from the fact that the said activity occurs on weekdays it tends to be loud, thereby infringing upon non-adherents' right to work and study. While focusing on this specific activity, the paper makes reference to other such religious pursuits of students on the university campus such as the 'dawn broadcast' where individuals or a group of students parade around students' halls of residence at dawn to preach to residents or pray for them through megaphones. Extending the discussion, thus, is meant to fulfill the general objective of espousing the religious climate at the University of Ghana.

The study, therefore, deployed participant observation at students' midday Lecture-Hour prayer and praise sessions in the Legon Hall⁴ of the university. I had in-depth interviews with 17 adherents of LDOP, 14 non-adherents residing in the Hall, the Hall Master and the Dean of Students. Data from these various sources were gathered as part of an ongoing study since April 2008.

The mixed methods provide a revealing outcome that posits LDOP and dawn broadcasts as contentious religious activism that poses a challenge to university governance and discipline, thriving on an apparent systemic failure in the said governance and discipline.

Results

The Pentecostal-Charismatic wave in Ghana owes much of its growth to higher education in the country as well as to the work of individual preachers with no connections to the academe. The Scripture Union, which evangelical Protestantism introduced into secondary schools and universities in the country in the early 1970s, has largely been the galvanizing force of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. Evangelism has a great appeal to students who organize non-denominational or inter-

⁴ Other halls such as Akafo Hall have gatherings during the same hours.

denominational religious activities, but largely serves as the genesis and seminal basis of Pentecostal-Charismatic groups that in turn intensify the said evangelism on campus. This mutual symbiosis has led to a stepped up religious activity of students who find in Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity a platform to express themselves with “warmth, freedom and a spontaneity in worship” (Ojo, 1998: 142). This self-expression within the ambience of religion is rife in the LDOP sessions in which some University of Ghana students participate.

The Miracle Hour

As mentioned already, in Legon Hall Chapel, the LDOP sessions are organized on weekdays between 12noon and 1pm. While the official meeting times allotted for religious groups in the Hall do not include the said hour, except in two cases (Lighthouse Chapel International Church [LH] on Wednesday and Methodist, Presbyterian Union [MPU] on Thursday), some students notoriously hold loud prayer and praises sessions during that period. For example, according to students interviewed in the Hall, the Methodist, Presbyterian Union (MPU) meets between 12noon and 1pm during term time, while in the examinations week(s) the University Christian Fellowship (UCF) meets at the same hour, praying for students’ success in exams. Table 1 spells out the official meeting times of the various groups.

Despite the above scheduling of worship hours and fees collected by the Hall, the Master⁵ of Legon Hall in 2008, the first instance of authority ensuring discipline in the Hall (although he does not work in isolation of the “hall council or management”, in view of Statute 46, paragraph 4 of *The Statutes of the University of Ghana*) did not know of this LDOP session in his Hall Chapel. The Dean of Students⁶ also said he was unaware of this activity. His office, however, administers “the non-academic student disciplinary system and student grievance procedure” (University of Ghana, 2005:

⁵ Interview with the Hall Master on 2nd June 2008. The Hall Master at the time was Dr. **Abraham** Akrong, himself a Presbyterian minister.

⁶ The Dean of Students said, in an interview with him on 3rd June 2008, that although he has the overall oversight on student discipline on campus, the Halls are properly speaking the domain of the Hall Masters, in view of the principle of subsidiarity. This explains why he is not aware of the anomaly of Lecture-Hour prayers and praises in Legon Hall. However, he gave me examples of students’ disturbances which he and other members of the Resident Board of the university were currently dealing with. Some of these are referred to later in the paper.

30). The Midday Prayer session continues year on year and can hardly go unheard or unnoticed in a Hall where the Chapel is centrally located near the Hall's administrative offices. No one who goes to the Legon Hall dining hall for lunch can escape the noise generated by this activity.

Table 1. Religious Groups Meeting Times, Legon Hall

Group	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Total hours	Payment GH¢
UCF		5-6a	5-6a; 8:30-11p			6:30-9p		7	14.00
LH	6:30a-1p			12:30-2p; 5:30-10p			7-10p	15.05	30.00
HCC			5:30-8:30p		6-7:30 p			4.05	10.00
CCF				4.30-6a		9-11p	3-7p	7.05	15.00
MPU	4:30-8p	8:30-11p			5-6a; 12:30-1:30p 7:30-10:30p			11	22.00
MC					10:30p- 12a			1.05	10.00
GCCI		6-8:30p						2.05	10.00
DL						4:30-6p		1.05	10.00
UGCB	2-5p							3	

Source: Legon Hall Office

Key:

- UCF = University Christian Fellowship
- LH = Lighthouse Chapel International Church
- HCC = Harvest Community Church
- CCF = Campus Christian Family
- MPU = Methodist Presbyterian Union
- MC = University of Ghana Mass Choir
- GCCI = Great Commission Church International
- DL = Deeper Life Faith Ministries
- UGCB = University of Ghana Chaplaincy Board

The entire atmosphere is charged with singing and praying. While most university students and members of faculty continue their daily academic activity normally those attending the LDOP sessions pray loudly with great expectation that God miraculously would transform their lives by crowning their studies with success. The prayer session, thus, is a far cry from the serenity of the academe, crossing the line between freedom of worship and the right of students and faculty members to a tranquil atmosphere within which to pursue their academic endeavours. To this end, the university's political culture whose governance and disciplinary structures should ensure the kind of atmosphere commensurate with academic work is compromised.

LDOP, Governance and Discipline

The contestation regarding LDOP, therefore, bears directly on governance and discipline in the academe. Governance relates to states but also to communities or organizations within states. Such a broad understanding of governance is spelt out as the systems and processes that are concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organization (The Governance Hub, 2006). State or society governance cannot be effective if it merely pontificates on defective organizational governance within the state or society. The university as an organization, which at once administers academic and social life, is obviously a subset of Ghanaian society that requires the effective governance necessary to socialize the society's youth into skilled, useful citizens and more so future leaders. Both communities (university and Ghanaian society) by nature are thereby affectively intertwined in a symbiosis between life in the University of Ghana community and the larger Ghanaian society. Consequently, religious associational life in the public sphere of university life and how it affects university governance can have an impact on life across society. The increasing religious activity of students is a constant reminder that religion cannot be assumed to belong to the private sphere in the construction of the Ghanaian university system. How the interplay between the private and public spheres are managed, however, regarding the religious expression of students, for example, is paramount in ensuring a tolerant Ghanaian public sphere that does not stifle individual religious expression while at the same time leadership and legitimacy, which society needs to develop, are not compromised.

To ensure good governance in all its facets of life, the University of Ghana, has created a Chaplaincy Board, for example, which coordinates "the activities of

religious groups” (University of Ghana, 2005: 24) on campus. This echoes what has been said already that the university is ‘essentially run by Boards, Committees and Councils’. Thus, the “hall council or management committee has the responsibility for the management of the Hall or residential facility and is responsible for taking disciplinary action against a junior member with respect to breaches of discipline of the Hall or residential facility” (University of Ghana, 2004: 46,4).

Monday 14th April, Sunday 25th May, Tuesday 27th May, and Friday 30th May 2008 were some of the days I spent in participant observation at LDOP sessions in the Legon Hall Chapel. All the dates in May are spelt out here because they fell within the examination week, the period when the prayer meetings are most intense. The prayer sessions were organized by the UCF as an ecumenical activity and held from 6 am to 7 am and 12 noon to 1 pm each day including Saturdays and Sundays, since examinations are written on these days as well. It has also been mentioned already that during term time the only groups whose official meeting times coincide with the 12 noon – 1 pm hour in question are Lighthouse (Wednesday, 12.30 pm – 2 pm) and MPU (Thursday, 12.30 pm - 1.30 pm). On my very first visit on 14th April the participating students were elated at my presence, thinking I had come as chaplain in the university to participate in the service as such. In fact, the student leading the prayers on that day introduced me heartily, asking if I had a word to share with them. I thanked them for the rousing welcome and explained that I was participating as sociologist to observe their religious activity. They welcomed me to stay and were willing to be interviewed at the end of the hour of prayer.

The order of service essentially consisted in the prayer secretary, who is usually the MC, inviting the gathering to what is termed praise and worship, i.e., rhythmic songs, followed by a session of spontaneous prayer. One of the students was then invited to preach the word of God. The theme on 27th May, for example, was “breaking unproductiveness”, which the preacher based on Isaiah 22:14 and Isaiah 32:15. The preacher admonished members who did not carry bibles to the religious service, comparing them to students who forget to take pens to lectures. The message emphasized the need for members to break their “unproductiveness” if they wanted to succeed. The approximately 20-minute preaching was followed by another session of *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues), loud singing aided by drums, percussions, and an electric organ, while participants danced frantically. The noise in the small chapel was intense but the worshippers seemed to enjoy it. Since this service was in the

examination week, special prayers were then said over those participants on their way to write papers that afternoon. The leader prayed over them to conquer the “frustrations of lecturers and the intimidation of invigilators”, assuring them that they would not know failure.

An average of 90 students attended a prayer session. In in-depth interview with 17 of them, all but one did not think their activity was a disturbance to residents of the Hall. They also pointed out that they had the permission of the Hall authorities to use the chapel for prayer and praises at that hour of the weekday, a claim the Hall Master refuted when interviewed. Table 1 above, however, vindicates the students’ claim since it spells out the official times of prayer the Legon Hall authorities have allotted the various groups. The non-participants I interviewed were, however, unanimous on the subject of the noise so generated and how it distracted them from their work. I had an in-depth interview with 14 students in Legon Hall who were non-participants of the LDOP. I spoke with them randomly at the end of prayer sessions when the participants had left. All of them were livid about the prayer sessions, some even claiming to have complained to participants but to have given up since anyone who complained was simply branded “an agent of the devil”.

Clearly, the prayer meeting at that hour of the day contravened university regulation, according to the Dean of Students. He confirmed that some lectures take place through the hour concerned. Thus, his position was at variance with that of the Legon Hall authorities who granted official permission to Lighthouse and MPU to meet on Wednesday, 12.30 pm - 2 pm and Thursday, 12.30 pm - 1.30 pm respectively. Such official permission signals a defective political culture in the governing and disciplinary chain of the university.

Both the Master of Legon Hall and the Dean of Students admit there are problems associated with students’ religious practices on campus, sometimes even requiring disciplinary action to be taken by the Resident Board or the Dean of Students. The Master of Legon Hall challenged the apparent view among some members of the university community that freedom of religious expression connotes uncontrolled religious activity, implying that performing religious activity means an absolute right without reference to other people. According to him, “it would seem that in the mind of these religious activists their religious practices have a right that supersedes every earthly power”. Being a minister of religion himself, the Master of the Hall said he was aware of the mindset of a broad segment of University of Ghana members that

religious activities should not be restrained. He attacked such thinking as fundamentally flawed, arguing that university regulations be applied to restore order. He said “for the sake of social cohesion in a generally religious society like Ghana, opponents” of LDOP “are unable to stick their heads out to challenge the infringement on their space, even in a secular environment like the University of Ghana”. His view corroborates the finding of this study that 93% of non-adherents of LDOP interviewed, who feel their work is disrupted by the midday prayer session, do not complain anymore, let alone confront the participants, for fear of being labeled devils. The Master emphasized that the main core of university life, which is academic work, should not be disrupted by the institution’s facilitation of religious activities. A case in point is the phenomenon of ‘dawn broadcast’⁷, a matter the Resident Board was addressing at its meetings at the time that this research was in progress, as the Dean of Students confirmed.

The Master of Legon Hall was of the view that many Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are exerting tremendous pressure on students to found branches of their churches in academic institutions. Many of the said churches are focusing on tertiary students to make inroads into their campuses. Some of those recruited begin this duty by preaching loudly in front of university halls of residence at dawn, when most students are still resting, earning the appellation ‘dawn broadcast’. This activity in the University of Ghana has tested the tenacity of university discipline and governance. In view of reasons advanced above in relation to non-participating students’ inaction to resolve the problem, only international students of the university have lodged a formal complaint with the university authorities about this activity and its infringement on their right to a restful sleep. The complaint prompted a swift action by the university.

Minutes of the Resident Board Meeting of 21st November 2007 indicate that the Board had been concerned by the outdoor religious activities of students in recent times and their disciplinary import for the university. ‘Crusades’, which various religious groups on campus organize in the open field, form the main example of such activities. In order to keep this activity in check, the Dean of Students and the

⁷ ‘Dawn broadcast’ is the term used in the Minutes of the Resident Board Meetings of 21st November 2007 and 20th February 2008 to describe the action of some students who, by means of megaphones, preach in front of halls of residence at dawn. The dawn of the day is particularly cherished by such preachers who seem to think that waking students from their sleep would make them attentive to the message preached.

Chaplaincy Board had agreed to permit only one crusade each semester. Even then, permission is to follow the strict adherence to the necessary regulations guiding this activity. According to the Dean of Students, this arrangement had worked well in 2006 until the UCF flouted the rule in 2007 by “illegally connecting electricity to the field to hold an equally illegal meeting”. The incident generated an intense discussion at the 21st November 2007 meeting, culminating in four regulations to guide any future religious activity on campus:

- a) Religious activities are to be scrutinized to ensure that only ‘true religion’ that positively affects the morals of students is encouraged.
- b) The Resident Board is to sanction any religious group, which violates university rules.
- c) Religious groups are to seek permission from both the Chaplaincy Board and the Dean of Students before holding meetings.
- d) The Chaplaincy Board has to register all clubs, societies and associations.

While the first regulation, for example, is vague on the subject ‘true religion’, the real question is whether the university can follow the restoration of order through to the end as the challenge hinges on the ‘systemic failure’ of the institution in addressing such issues.

The same meeting decided to write to the Head of the university security to clamp down on dawn broadcasters while student leaders would be tasked with the duty of ensuring that right procedures are followed. The 20th February 2008 meeting of the Board reviewed discussions on the problem.

Clearly, the contention surrounding the religious question, as depicted in these activities, has been addressed even at the level of the Chief Executive of the university. The Vice-Chancellor’s letter of 29th May 2008 to the Chairman of the Chaplaincy Board regarding the ‘policy on control of public activities of churches on campus’ referred to specific policies to be tabled to address the problem. In the interim, the letter maintained that the statutes of the university mandating the Chaplaincy Board to advise on religious activities be adhered to, while the permission of the Dean of Students was to be sought in writing in the regard of any outdoor religious activity.

The Dean of Students’ own view was that permission for weekend programmes,

Saturday to Sunday, was possible but not for Friday to Sunday or even Thursday to Sunday, as has happened in the past. If the Dean has responsibility over what religious activities take place in the university's public space, then the Hall authorities have oversight over their respective halls. The challenge was to what extent both powers could cooperate to seal any lacuna between them to preempt students taking advantage of any gap in the regulations.

Obviously, the infringement of the regulations on religious activities has not come to an end. On 19th August 2008, at 6.43am, the morning silence at Mensah Sarbah Hall was broken with a loudspeaker. The voice behind it was preaching a message of repentance and reception of Jesus Christ as one's personal saviour. Evidently, this action is an indictment on university regulations on public religious activities and noise-making in general. If infringement has anything to say about enforcement then it is the fact that the culprits are confident that what the Resident Board of the University of Ghana, The Dean of Students, and ultimately the university administration, do best is talk about the problem without confronting it head-on, a yawning chasm between law and enforcement. Perhaps the students involved have been right in this thinking until the reaction of senior members in the first quarter of 2013. As Ghana continues in its path of transition (Assimeng, 1989), the religious innovation in the indigenization of Christianity that Baëta (1962) observed has entered uncharted waters.

Conclusion

Firstly, this paper situates student lunchtime prayer services in Legon Hall in a long tradition of students' religious activity at the University of Ghana, which the presence of the Pentecostals at the university has intensified. The pervasive religious activity of students in the university challenges the false assumption of secularization theory that religion will recede into the private domain or disappear entirely from the public sphere the more society becomes secularized. Secondly, and following from the first, the paper opines that the intense religiosity of students, particularly in its peculiar form of LDOP sessions, is contentious in the challenge it poses to university governance and discipline. LDOP sessions implode the university's main business of entrenching a rigorous academic culture in a modern-rationalist world. The infringement of university regulation points to a systemic failure in the governing

structure of the academe itself.

Evidently, the excess in religious practice of students in the University of Ghana has disciplinary implication for the university community. The paper argues that although LDOP or ‘dawn broadcast’ are ostensibly religious activities, it is their activism that gives cause to the frantic effort of the university’s governing structure to gain control in discipline. In Nigeria, for example, the fact that campus ministries have collided with other religious groups is well-known (Ojo, 1998: 148). Youth riots over suspicions of occult practices and ritual murders alleged to have been perpetrated by members of Pentecostal groups have also been documented (Gaiya, 2002: 23). On 27th July 2008, Choice FM, a private radio station in Accra, reported on the concern expressed by the Ashanti Regional Director of Education, Mr. Joseph Kwabena Onyinah, on “alleged occult practices and other deviant religious behaviour in schools in Ghana”. He noted that “if the trend is not checked it would lead to a general breakdown of discipline in schools with consequential poor academic performance of students”. All these may not be a problem regarding students’ religious practice at the University of Ghana at the moment but the activities do point to the academe being in uncharted waters.

In the University of Ghana, public and even private spaces are gradually overridden by some individuals’ religious expression. In such an atmosphere it is not surprising that university authorities are concerned. Militant Christianity in the university can only be counterproductive to the realization of the educational and democratic values of the academe. The continued growth of religious groups and the large number of students, which assures anonymity, are likely to compound the problem, unless careful understanding with hard-headed realism, the hallmark of university governance and discipline, holds sway.

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