CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Reinterpreting Purity Laws in Akan Society and Churches in Ghana

In this study, we have attempted to demonstrate that the idea that menstrual blood is impure infuses not only Jewish religion but Akan religious culture as well. Both Judaism and Akan religious culture define woman as impure based on their cultural perception of menstrual blood. This idea about menstrual blood has partly accounted for women being excluded from church leadership due to perceived “ritual impurity” associated with menstruation. For example, according to the Jewish tradition, a woman’s monthly flow of blood put her regularly into a state of ritual defilement.646 Some denominations in Akan society in Ghana also do not ordain women, and in churches that do ordain them, some church members are still not comfortable with women administering the Holy Communion. The negative attitude of these Akan Christians (male and female) to women in church leadership and their subtle subordination and marginalization if not checked, will damage women’s capacity to contribute fully to church development and the propagation of the inclusive community that Jesus instituted. The church will also find itself in deep theological difficulty in the areas of preaching and teaching if it fails to maintain the inclusive nature of Jesus’ gospel message.

Holloway in *Who Needs Feminism? Men Respond to Sexism in the Church* has stated the following:

> Once the point of consciousness has been reached that recognizes that there are no longer reasons why a given group may not be admitted to a particular institution, to continue to deny the group access becomes a culpable unjust act. Before the moment of awareness was reached the denial was unjust but not culpable. The oppressor was in a state of ignorance and could not be held responsible for his actions. But once the moment of illumination has been achieved, to deny access to the right under disrepute on prudential or expedient grounds is no longer a moral or theological calculation. It has become a worldly institutional

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646 Leviticus 15, 19-30.
In the light of the above observation, it is appropriate to reinterpret purity laws and menstrual taboos in both Akan religious and Judeo-Christian cultures from Jesus’ perspective, an interpretation of purity laws in search of an empowering hermeneutics to include women fully in all aspects of cultic leadership. This research therefore focuses on providing an understanding of the Akan religious culture and biblical culture through the lens of church members in order to generate a positive interpretive theory of menstruation in Akan and by extension Ghanaian churches. It describes aspects of the broader religious and cultural context of menstruation and church leadership. The study addresses the question why menstruation – the natural flow of blood – is associated with ritual impurity and taboos and whether there are positive aspects both in the Jewish, Christian and Akan tradition that could serve as a basis for the re-interpretation of the relation between menstrual blood and ritual impurity?

In chapter 2 of this research the Akan is found to be very religious and that the cult of the ancestors is the most powerful aspect of the religious life in traditional Akan society. In connection with this cult is the belief that it is through one’s mother (who the Akan believe is connected to a common ancestress in the spiritual world) that one has his or her spiritual connection. The Akan’s identity is therefore traced through the mother-bond since children are gifts from this common ancestress. However, menstrual blood which is highly associated with child bearing (something that is highly valued and at the same time coming from the ancestors in Akan culture) is considered impure, potent and dangerous in the Akan religious culture.

We have suggested in this research that menstrual blood can be viewed as something positive, something that should be of better value to the ancestors than animal blood that the Akan use as sacrifice in order to have a connection with the ancestors. The ancestors who were once human, we suggest, need human blood to come alive and communicate with the living and not animal blood. Menstrual blood which is human blood and also

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connected with child bearing can be the blood that the ancestors need. We reason that, menstrual blood and ancestors from this perspective have one thing in common, both are linked to childbearing, something that the Akan value above all else because it ensures the continual survival of the Akan society. When ancestors receive menstrual blood as a sacrifice from a woman, they in turn bless her with children. Therefore menstrual blood cannot be associated with impurity and danger.

Again, since blood is of great importance in Akan religious culture as it is used to make sacrifices and to sanctify or purify people, objects and communities, menstrual blood which flows naturally can be seen as nature’s way of making sacrifices on behalf of the whole community to pacify the ancestors and gods in case they have been offended through any sin of omission or commission so that the community can continue to enjoy their blessings. If it is women whose blood connects both men and women in a family to a common ancestress, (the mother-child bond is the blood bond)\textsuperscript{649} then it should not be out of place to believe that women shed blood regularly to make sacrifices for the well being and for the continual survival of the community. Viewed this way, the state of the menstruating woman should rather render her more fit for cultic leadership than any other time of her life as it is at this time that she can connect with the common ancestress in the spiritual world to receive children from her. The menstruating woman would thus be playing a mediating role during this period of her life.

In addition, Akans believe that it is during the period of their ritual seclusion at puberty rites that young girls are brought closely to the supernatural forces which are supposed to ensure their protection, blessing and fertility during their period of motherhood. The researcher suggests that, this period is the first time that Akan women make a connection with the common ancestress in the spiritual world. If that is the case, then it can be deduced that it is the shedding of a woman’s blood through menstruation that makes this very important connection with the common ancestress possible since the Akan usually approach the ancestors through the shedding of blood. It then stands to reason that menstrual blood cannot be viewed as dirty since it is needed in a woman’s life before she can make a connection with the spiritual world. The ancestors are venerated or

\textsuperscript{649} See Chapter 2 of the research for more information on mother-child bond.
worshipped and so they cannot be connected with anything that is filthy or impure. Therefore, if menstrual blood is seen to be needed before this very important connection can be made, then it can no longer be viewed as dirty. Menstruating women can also not be viewed as “impure” just because she has to handle or touch menstrual blood that is supposed to connect the spiritual and physical worlds. They should rather be seen as pure as they will be communicating with the ancestors at this time. If purity is what is required to participate in cultic leadership, then the best time for women to engage in it is when they are menstruating.

In Akan religious culture, menstruating women in the olden days were secluded from society and put in “menstrual huts” till they were through with the menstruation. The researcher suggests that this period of seclusion which has been associated with the fact that menstrual blood is dirty and dangerous can be interpreted as a period when women needed time alone to meditate and commune with their ancestors. This time alone with the ancestors help menstruating women to receive unborn babies in advance from the ancestors which would be turned into babies later on in the women’s lives. The seclusion of menstruating women can therefore be seen as something positive and as a recognition and appreciation of the special role that women play in childbirth.

This menstruating woman’s mediating role in the Akan religious culture can also be extended to the church in Akan society. Both the Jewish religion and Christianity consider childbearing as something that is sacred in which God himself plays a role. Since menstruation has something to do with childbearing, the menstrual woman can be viewed as a medium through whom God continues with his work of procreation. During menstruation, a woman can be seen as being in touch with God or partnering with God through the shedding of blood as a sacrifice. This sacrifice is to receive and bring babies into the physical world just as Jesus Christ, through the shedding of his blood brought spiritual “children” into the Kingdom of God. Since we found in chapter 3 of this study that in the Jewish tradition it is the pure that determines the boundary of the holy, a menstruating woman in touch with God for God’s work to be done through her, must be seen as pure but not impure. Blood through which God accomplishes his work cannot be seen as dirty as both the Jewish and the Akan religious cultures categorize menstrual blood. Once God who is holy is in touch with a menstruating woman, suffice to say she is
pure at this time of her life to handle the things of God and so very fit to fully participate in church leadership.

With the availability of proper sanitary towels which is easily accessible even to women living in the villages in Akanland, we argue that the ominous and dirty nature of menstrual blood is a thing of the past. If the practice of poor personal hygiene, the bad odor and offensiveness of menstrual blood (some of the reasons that respondents gave as why menstruation has been associated with “impurity”) have virtually been eliminated with the availability of proper and effective sanitary towels, we suggest that the Akan disregard the impurity associated with menstruation sanitary towels, we suggest that the Akan disregard the impurity associated with menstruation and relegate it to the category of hygiene since the taboos and its associated impurity on menstruation does not serve any purpose in the Akan societies today.

Culture is dynamic so we do not have to follow tradition, rituals and norms as unchangeable givens. We need to seek to uncover the messages of cultural codes and rituals and analyze our experiences not only for their historical, social and ethical implications, but also for their capacity to create what grows to become cultural norms.

5.2. Menstrual Impurity from Judeo-Christian Context

Since the concept of purity is ambiguous, chapter three (3) focused on anthropological concepts of purity and impurity laws in ancient Judaism in The Old Testament, the Talmud Micah, and Later Judaism for better understanding of the meaning and functions of “ritual purity” and “ritual impurity.” The idea of purity in Mark’s gospel was also studied in this chapter so as to compare Jesus’ idea of purity with that of the Jews of his day. The anthropological studies revealed that the ancient Jews held to a belief in the dangers of female blood discharge that grew gradually, and became even stronger in later Judaism. The Mishna, Tosefa, and Talmud are even more concise than the Old Testament on this topic. The words “purity” and “impurity” in the Jewish culture occur chiefly with reference to the cultic acts. If you are “impure” you cannot enter the Temple or participate in certain cultic acts. If you are “pure,” you may do so. For the ancient Jews, purity was a state of being required by the presence of God or gods in the land and not therefore an abstraction. “Purity” in the Jewish tradition defines the boundary of the holy.
“Purity” and “impurity” are also not hygienic categories and do not refer to observable cleanliness or dirtiness. The words refer to a status in respect to contact with a source of “impurity” and the completion of acts of purification from that “impurity.” “Purity” in Judaism also is “wholeness” which demands that every individual should be a complete and self-contained specimen of its kind, and there should be no mixing of kinds. “Purity” therefore means clear lines and firm borders. Pollution refers to what crosses those boundaries or what resided in the margins. Thus bodily discharges, childbirth, menstruation, semen and disabilities all cause the state of uncleanness because the wholeness of the body is violated. As a result, the menstruating woman has always been associated with “impurity” in the Jewish culture even at the time of Jesus. This “impurity” of women due to menstruation has been used to exclude women from cultic leadership in Jewish cultures.

However, this belief finds no justification in a sound theological anthropology. This is precisely so because Jesus transforms the “purity” laws of Judaism in favor of a more compassionate view that eschews any form of social and cultic exclusion based on “purity” or gender. Jesus’ idea of purity is therefore contrary to that of the Jews of his day. Because “purity” defines the boundary of the holy in Jewish tradition and because Jesus is found in the gospel of Mark to be the holy one of God, he has moved the boundary of the holy to include the “ritually impure.” He has made the menstruating woman pure and so she has the right to be included in all aspects of church leadership. The church following Jesus’ example of substituting compassion for the structure of boundaries between “clean” and “unclean” should be able to move beyond the most esoteric of these “purity” requirements in the Levitical code. The church no longer would officially tolerate dealing with race, disability, poverty, or femaleness as evidence of being “unclean.” If the issue is an issue of “purity,” then Jesus’ idea of “purity” is instructive for us. The church should no longer tolerate dealing with menstruation as evidence of women being “impure” and not fit for church leadership. For this inclusive religion of Jesus, the Apostle Paul has said, ‘there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, there is neither male nor female.’ (Galatians 3: 28). Jesus’ purity system is exclusive and at the same time inclusive. Jesus’ purity system excludes only those who refuse to have faith in him as the Only Way
to God. In Jesus’ ministry, no one is “impure.” The menstruating woman and all are welcome at any time into God’s kingdom and fit to serve and worship God at all levels of church leadership. Jesus in his ministry has made all members of his group, the Christian community ‘royal priests’ (1 Peter 2: 9). This priesthood includes male and female, menstruant and non-menstruant and no one is to be considered “impure.”

It is our observation that although many “purity” laws have become more or less theoretical with the destruction of the Temple, relationships between man and woman are still determined by it. Menstrual impurity must be seen in the context of the biblical “purity” system, a “purity” system which involved the Temple, sacrifices and priestly gifts, all of which had to be guarded from “ritual impurity.” Now that we are in a new dispensation and there is no Temple where God resides so to speak, there is no need for “purity” laws to guard anything against “ritual impurity.”

It is also remarkable that in the Christian tradition, in spite of the strong opposition of the “purity” laws by Jesus from its beginning, the concept of “purity” has not been abandoned altogether and this was clearly depicted in the results of our research as a significant percentage (36%) of respondents both male and female, highly educated and those with little or no education, young and old, rural and urban dwellers still maintain that menstruation makes women “impure.” The fact that this negative attitude toward menstruation and the menstruating woman continue to thrive in Akan churches was also reflected in the number of congregants (55%) who responded that women leaders do not handle every aspect of church leadership in their churches. We therefore draw the conclusion that as a religious and a moral metaphor, “impurity” associated with menstruation still plays an important role in the exclusion of women from full participation in church leadership in Akan churches in Ghana today.

5.3. Systematic Reflection on the Views of Contemporary Members in Akan Churches on Menstruation and Church Leadership

In chapter four (4), structured questionnaires and interviews were used to solicit church members’ opinions on menstrual blood and its associated “impurity” and taboos. Additional church members subjective data such as church members perceptions on the
relation between menstruation and impurity, biblical passages on purity laws, menstruating woman and the Holy Communion, women administrators, women’s perception of other women in the church helped the research to delve deep into peoples’ opinions about menstruation. The research data was analyzed by creating a spreadsheet in windows Excel of all questionnaires with variable data. Each respondent was given a cell in this spreadsheet. The questions were indicated on the horizontal level of the spreadsheet. See the appendix. The findings were that people in the olden days, (before the 1960’s) and even to some extent in today’s world, attached “impurity” to menstruation and there are diverse reasons why menstruation was and is still considered by some to be “impure.” This belief according to the research is irrespective of gender, age, educational background, church denomination and one’s place of dwelling.

It also came out strongly in respondents’ answers to the questionnaires that Christians in Akan society in Ghana strongly believe in the vicarious death of Jesus Christ with its accompanying salvific value of the blood of Jesus. Most respondents were of the opinion that the blood of Jesus which is extremely powerful can virtually purify and cleanse human beings and objects from all spiritual defilement even defilement from menstrual blood (blood that is believed to be potent, dangerous and dirty in Akan religious culture). Therefore majority of respondents (64%) answered that because Jesus shed his blood to cleanse the human race from sin and defilement, the menstruating woman is free from all menstrual taboos and so is fit to participate fully in church leadership. Again, as much as 64% of respondents accepted to receive Communion from a menstruating woman.

Akan Christians come from the background of traditional religions where use is made of animal sacrifices for both pacification and for cleansing from defilement, and in which the efficacy of blood sacrifices is a central belief. One can therefore understand the significance of the belief of Akan Christians in the “blood of Jesus” and their overt use of the notion. It is common to hear in the prayers of most Akan Christians the phrase: Yede Yesu mogya te ho (we cleanse it in the blood of Jesus).650 Walter Hollenweger states that: ‘In hundreds and thousands of prayers the blood of Jesus is called down to sprinkle the

650 C. Omenyo, Pentecost, 227.
meeting room and purify the hearts and minds of those present." Hollenweger's observation also applies very well to Akan Christians. For the Akan Christian, the blood of Jesus is superior because it is royal blood (adehye mogya). It is more efficacious than any other blood. This is to say that the Christian teaching that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin resonates very well for Akan Christians. The emphasis on the "blood of Jesus" is not just theory for them but a living reality. The Akan strong belief in the efficacy of the blood of Jesus therefore can easily be used to develop a theology of blood that can help change church members’ negative attitude toward menstruating women, help foster female development and their full participation in church leadership.

In the gospel of Mark a woman who had suffered for twelve years from a flow of blood came close to Jesus seeking a cure. Contact with her in the Jewish and Akan traditions, made Jesus “ritually unclean.” However, Jesus rather cured her condition and made her “clean” but Jesus was not defiled. Again, Jesus decided to touch the leper who begged him to heal him and Jesus did not become defiled but rather the “defiled” became clean. In our discourse in chapter 3 of this research, we found out that in m. kelim, the uncleanness of a woman exceeds that of the uncleanness of a leper. If Jesus touched the leper whose “uncleanness” exceeds that of a menstruating woman, if an “unclean” woman also touched Jesus and in both cases Jesus was not defiled, then from the Christian faith, Christ makes the “impure” “pure”. This is in consonance with the contemporary Akan Christian belief that the blood of Jesus makes the menstrual woman pure and so she is fit for full participation in church leadership.

For the Akan Christian then, the blood of Jesus is able to raise menstrual blood from its negative connotation to a positive one. The dangerous and dirty nature of menstrual blood disappears in the Christian community where Jesus is believed to have cleansed every member from all that is impure. The shed blood of Jesus on the cross therefore accounts for the high percentage of respondents in Akan society that do not consider the menstruating woman to be impure for church leadership. Akan church members’ attitude

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654 Mark 5: 25-34.
655 Mark 1: 40-45.
toward menstrual blood is therefore changing very fast. Thus if proper education on menstruation is given to church members, people will no longer associate women in church leadership with “impurity” and the disparity between male and female church leaders will be a thing of the past in Akan churches.

Some denominations in Akan societies in Ghana still bind women by practicing the “purity” laws concerning menstruation. For example, in the Apostle Revelation Society, women either ordained or not ordained are not allowed into the church when they menstruate. They worship with other church members but they stand outside the church building and so do not attend Holy Communion with the rest of the church members.

5.4. The Role of the Church in Sensitizing People to the Positive Aspects of Menstruation in Akan Society

The role of the church in the emancipation of women from menstrual taboos and their full participation in church leadership is of capital importance for the rediscovery of the true face of the church in Akan society. In this regard, the researcher is of the view that the positive view of menstruation in Akan religious culture where the menstruating woman can be seen as the one who supplies human blood to the ancestors as sacrifice can also be extended to the church. In Christian theology, Jesus Christ shed human blood as a sacrifice to God in order to reconcile God and man. At the Lord’s Supper, Christians do celebrate the shedding of Jesus’ blood which was poured on the ground as a sacrifice to God on behalf of all humanity to make spiritual life possible. Christians also believe that it is God who gives physical life. Thus physical life in Christian theology is sacred. Menstrual blood which is also human blood can thus be viewed as a natural sacred phenomenon as well as a sacrifice which make connection between God and women possible for procreation to take place. The shedding of Jesus’ blood gives us spiritual life and the shedding of menstrual blood and by extension blood from childbirth brings about physical life. From the above, the period of menstruation can be perceived by Akan Christians as a period when a connection between God and a woman as co-partners in the process of procreation occurs. If the menstruating woman is in touch with God during menstruation to receive a human soul and body, then she can be viewed as pure instead of
impure since she is connected with the holy. A woman is therefore more fit to administer the Holy Communion during menstruation since she will be in contact and in tune with God at this period in her life.

Again, the researcher proposes that the church should make it a policy to adopt the puberty rites (onset of menstruation where certain rites are performed to purify the young Akan woman) for young women and combine it with the period during which they are prepared for their confirmation in the church every year. This time should be a special period for the confirmation candidates as well as church members when congregants (men, women, boys and girls inclusive) are educated on the important role that menstruation plays in the lives not only of young girls and women but also in the life of the whole church, community and the society in general. Members should be educated on the fact that menstruation is the beginning of and a symbol of fertility, motherhood and the ability to nurture. Therefore, since these elements are considered most important for the continuity of human existence on earth, menstruation should also be seen as something very important in our lives as human beings (both men and women). This can be one way of demystifying menstruation and bringing it out into the open so people can freely speak about it, rather than keep it still lurking in the dark thus making people to continue to see it as an “impure,” dangerous and shameful thing. Church members – men, women, boys and girls – should undergo gender sensitization programs to help them understand the cultural basis for negative attitudes to menstruation and to women in general. This way they will realize that these attitudes can and must be changed. This will help raise the self-esteem of women and empower them to take up leadership positions in the church.

It is also important for the church to find ways to disabuse church members’ minds of the negative perception about menstruation and the sacred. One way to help disabuse church members’ minds about menstrual impurity and the Holy Communion and other sacraments is for the church to select young women who are in their productive years and so do menstruate, to be in charge of the pouring and sharing of Communion Wine and the distribution of Communion Bread. These women should do this whether they are in their periods of menstruation or not. Again, churches could think of supplying sanitary pads in church for women who might need them while in church and take a further step to even
announce in church that sanitary pads are available for women who would need any while in church.

Menstrual taboos and women in church leadership is an issue that comes up whenever the gospel gets into a primal culture, and it is through proper education that people gain understanding and attitudes are changed. In the western world, issues as to whether menstruating women should be permitted to attend church or receive Holy Communion, were regularly disputed until well into the Middle Ages. When Bishop Augustine of England, in the 6th Century, faced similar problems, he sought directions from Pope Gregory the Great. The questions Augustine asked the Pope on menstruating women are captured as follows:

And may a woman properly enter church at the time of menstruation?
And may she receive Communion at these times?656

Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604) answered:

But a woman should not be forbidden to enter the church during this time; for the workings of nature cannot be considered culpable, and it is not just that she should be refused admittance; her condition is beyond her control... If it was a laudable presumption in the woman who, in her disease, touched our Lord’s robe, why may not the same concession be granted to all women who endure the weakness of their nature.” ...For while the Old Testament makes outward observances important, the New Testament does not regard these things so highly as the inward disposition, which is the sole true criterion for allotting punishment. For instance, the Law forbids the eating of many things as unclean, but in the Gospel our Lord says: ‘Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.’ He also said: Out of the mouth proceed evil thoughts.’ Here Almighty God clearly shows us that evil actions spring from the root of evil thoughts. Similarly, Saint Paul says: ‘Unto the pure all

Pope Gregory the Great did not consider menstrual blood as something that is
evil or something that should be used to bar women from holy things even in the
6th century. Pope Gregory the Great’s response should be instructive to churches
in the 21st century that it is about time for leaders of churches to give proper
education to church members in order to free women from the bondage of
menstrual “impurity” in order to tap their full potential to enrich the church.

5.5. A New Perspective on Menstruation and Women in Church Leadership

Within some protestant denominations, the ordination of women to ministry is so well
established that it no longer calls for comment. Sometimes however, a wide gap remains
between theory and practice. For example, many Pentecostal churches have always
assumed that as the Holy Spirit is given by God irrespective of the sex of the recipient,
the ministries conferred by the Spirit are to be exercised irrespective of sex of the
recipient. This principle, however, is not always reflected in the statistics of the church
structure as most of these churches like the Church of Pentecost and the Apostolic
Churches do not ordain women neither are women allowed to preach nor teach the Bible.
In churches that ordain women, female pastors face many challenges. Rev. Dora Ofori
Owusu who had obtained Masters of Divinity (M. Div.) was commissioned in 1976 as the
first woman pastor in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Even though she was
commissioned, her status and functions in Ghana were deferred to a later date. She was
therefore posted to work for the Atlantic Presbytery in the U.S.A. In 1979, three years
after the church’s decision to ordain women into the ministry, two women (one
commissioned and the other ordained) were also accepted into the ministry. These were

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657 L. Sherley-Price, Bede’s Ecclesiastical History, 84-85.
Rev. Alice Kyei Anti and Gladys Amelia Maku Nyarko. Although women were accepted into the ministry, they were denied full ministerial powers and responsibilities that go with ordination. It was not until the 52nd Synod held at Abetifi in 1981 that Synod finally agreed that women should be ordained and appointed as district pastors when they were due. It is sad to say that this decision of Synod to ordain women and accord them full recognition as such did not change the perception of many people that only men could be ordained as ministers. Therefore in the first 15 years that the church decided to ordain women, women ministers were posted to chaplaincy.659

However, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has seen a steady increase of female ministers after 1979. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana can now boast of one former Presbytery Chairperson in the person of Rev. Alice Kyei-Anti in the West Akim Presbytery who also contested for the position of the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church in 2004. This indicates that women can hold higher leadership positions and that the perception of the church people toward female church leadership is changing. It is gratifying to note that the Presbyterian Church has become more gender sensitive and so has the designation “Presbytery Chairman” changed to “Presbytery Chairpersons” to make it more inclusive. This also points to the fact that the church anticipates that very soon more women ministers will become Chairpersons of Presbyteries, a position which puts women as heads of the entire Presbytery where majority of the ministers are men. If education on the whole issue of menstruation and church leadership is intensified and the changing attitude of church members as well as women being given positions in the church continues, the difference between male and female church leaders will be a thing of the past in a few years time.

Female leaders in Akan churches are often portrayed by their opponents as remote from church members, proud, lazy and unproductive. The opposite was true for the survey from this research. Most respondents (69%) said female leaders are very effective. However, in practice many congregations refuse to accept women ministers. To compound the problem, women in the church themselves, do not trust and have confidence among themselves as leaders. Hence the majority of them still prefer men’s

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leadership. Confidence building between and amongst women themselves must be encouraged and promoted so that women will vote for female candidates in church leadership ballots.

This research has showed that Jewish, Christian and Akan religious cultures attach “impurity” and taboos to menstruation and this has contributed to the exclusion of women from cultic leadership. Diverse reasons were given and are still being given for this negative view of menstruation. Among these are biblical passages on menstruation and women and church leadership, Akan religious beliefs about menstruation, the Akan paternalistic society that see leadership as only the domain of men and the nature of menstrual blood. Menstruation and its associated “impurity” and taboos remain an integral and important part of the mental and cultural make up of Akans who are firmly rooted in Christian practice. Again, we found as an answer to the second research question that yes, we can find building blocks in Jewish, Christian and Akan religious cultures that can help in the development of a hermeneutics that will set women free from “purity” laws and taboos so that they can fully be included in all aspects of church/cultic leadership. The building blocks out of the Akan, Jewish and Christian traditions are:

- Creating the awareness that in the Akan traditional religion, it is possible to see menstruating women as mediators who in the sacrifice of their blood are in contact with the divine to receive babies to be born for the perpetuation of the Akan community and not as dangerous or impure. In the traditional Akan religion women serve as traditional priestesses and healers where they function as intermediaries between their communities and the deities into whose service they have been called. Their close contact with the spirit world places them in an extraordinary position, their persons being regarded as sacred.660 Women can therefore be given a role in the Christian liturgical tradition as well.

- In the Jewish tradition it is purity that clarifies the boundary of the holy. Hence it is extremely important that people be made aware that it is Jesus’

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apparent intention to return the “impure” to a state of “ritual purity” in order to connect them again with the holy. He touched and was touched by the “defiled” but he was not defiled but rather made the defiled pure.

- The blood of Jesus can purify and cleanse human beings and objects from all spiritual defilement. Therefore Christians need not be afraid of the “dangerous” “potent” and “dirty” nature of menstrual blood that can “defile” them. Women and even menstruating women are free in Christ from menstrual “impurity” that could be used to bar them from full participation in church leadership.

It is evident that there are encouraging trends in many denominations to fully include women in church leadership. But in all the selected denominations for this research, there are still issues to be addressed. Since theological schools are the heart of any endeavor to foster and facilitate new directions for future ministries, these institutions must be willing to evaluate their present goals in the light of the contemporary. Because it is the task of ministers to educate church members and implement policies on women marginalization, seminary faculty have the responsibility of so training future ministers of the gospel that they will be competent to redress the problem of menstruation and its associated impurity that lead to women subordination. Seminary faculty should consequently provide openness to specialization that will allow diversity of programs both on the academic and pastoral levels as well as in the formation of pastoral life-style. In this way, women would have access to training and formation programs for personal and spiritual development, as men generally have at the present time.

We conclude by stating that the purity laws in the Bible and the menstrual taboos and rituals in Akan religious culture were not wrong. They were right for the time and place. But Jesus has brought a new era. He has come to make the “unclean” clean and the “impure” “pure.” Jesus reformed Judaism into an ongoing inclusive community where all people regardless of gender, age, and race, physical ability, “pure” and “impure” are called into the kingdom of God because, inclusiveness is an aspect of the justice of God which Jesus restored in his concern for those on the fringes.
The gospel proclaims that all barriers which separate God from people and people from each other are removed through Jesus Christ. The realistic needs of such an inclusive community like the church demands an inclusive but not an exclusive leadership structure as it was in the unreformed state. The church demands a leadership that does not depend on “purity” laws. The church must therefore take seriously the inclusive nature of the person and work of Jesus Christ. This idea of an inclusive religious community is congenial with Jewish midrashic theology which perceives God’s word to be a dynamic, unending source of new disclosures, a timeless word which is relevant to changing times, an open-ended, ongoing revelation. The church must therefore be ready to sever itself from the accretions of former times if these accretions are no longer of value in serving the needs of the community of the present. The church must be courageous enough to create, if necessary, a new leadership structure, one which is consistent with the teachings of Jesus and geared positively to the situation in which the church finds itself today.

If now, the church allows menstruating women (who are ‘impure”) to enter the church buildings and receive Holy Communion with the rest (“pure”) of the church members, if male ministers eat food prepared by their menstruating wives and then the ministers attend church to administer the Holy Communion, then my argument is why can’t women become priests or administer the Holy communion when they are menstruating? As the research attempts to show, many church members are ready for women church leaders who will administer the sacraments especially Holy Communion and Baptism. So the question is why should the issue of menstruation continue to be a stumbling block for some Akan Christians in fully accepting women’s role in the administration of the sacraments? What stops the denominations that do not ordain women from ordaining them or what keeps the denominations that ordain women from involving them in all aspects of church leadership whether menstruating or not menstruating? Is it the small minority that still believes that menstruation renders women “impure” or is it the clergy who are at the forefront of opposing the inclusion of women in church leadership positions? These are questions that further research can find answers to. Further research should be conducted on other topics such as alleged biblical mandate not to allow, women to take leadership positions in the church, the general belief in traditional paternalistic societies which allow men the monopoly in leadership, perception of women
as the weaker sex leading to the negative attitude to women in church leadership to
determine whether the option for an exclusive male ministry in the denominations in
Akan/Ghana is rooted in some other reasons other than the concepts of gender-connected
“purity.”

The inclusive time of Jesus is upon us. If this nonviolent world of mutuality and
partnership that Jesus advocates is to emerge, it will need the energies of both men and
women. The good news is that traditional expectations are inverted in the face of the in
breaking kingdom of God. Life and death are mysteriously intertwined, “purity” and
“impurity,” outsiders become insiders as the insiders become outsiders, power comes
from silence, words speak only betrayal, and gender barriers are shattered.