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## THE IMPACT OF DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES ON THE CHURCH

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### **Abstract**

Doctrinal differences have become a topical issue in Ghana and the world as people tend to ask questions about what exactly the Bible expects from us. The posture of some church founders mostly Bishops, Apostles, Archbishops and presiding Elders among others have made it somewhat difficult for their followers to associate with other believers as they are made to perceive other churches as running the wrong race. All these challenges come as a result of the different sources of doctrines, our understanding and interpretations of the scriptures as individuals, self-exaltation, strategies to have more members or the thirst to distinguish one's ministry from others. These have brought about doctrinal differences among congregations and followers of Christ in general. These differences are apparently creating a crack in the body of Christ. Pragmatic steps must therefore be taken to curb if not eradicate the negative impacts of doctrinal differences on the church. It is apparent in the conversations of some believers that they long to mingle with other believers but their pastor will be angry if they are seen. Some of these statements have gingered my enthusiasm to research into the impact of doctrinal differences on the church. The researcher will delve into factors that birth doctrinal differences, the positive and negative impact of doctrinal differences on the church in Ghana and the diaspora and how to address the challenges identified in the research. The researcher will use interview and observation to collect data. The researcher will make conclusion and recommendations.

**Key words:** doctrinal differences, church, Ghana, impact, christianity

## Introduction

Doctrinal differences have become very delicate and thought-provoking issue among Christians. These have given rise to many denominations with varying practices which have generated arguments from the theological point of view where some of the practices of some denominations are subjected biblical scrutiny as well as individual confrontations.

Herbst, N. (2023) stated that ‘within Christianity, there are three primary divisions: Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. Some of the doctrinal challenges come from the transitions from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Some section of Christians believes the some of the Old Testament practices such as removing one’s sandals before entering a place of worship, as Moses was instructed to remove His sandals (Exodus 3:5), not going to the temple when one sees or touches a dead person, ‘Whoever touches the dead body of anyone and fails to purify...’ (Numb 19:13- NIV) and considering some animals as unclean for consumption, ‘you must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you...’ (Lev 11:8-9; Deut.14:3-22- NIV) among others must come to an end once Jesus died and the curtain divided. The old covenant has been broken (Mat 27: 45, 50-51), and the scripture says we are no longer under the law, ‘Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone that believes’. (Rom 10:14). Whereas another group believes that the Old Testament remains relevant as al scriptures were inspired by God (2Tim. 3:16), and also Jesus has not condemned the Old Testament in any of His teachings, ‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the laws of Moses or the writings of the prophets...’ (Mat 5:17). This division in thoughts and beliefs keep giving rise to many denominations on the bases of disagreements on doctrines. Cole, S.J (2017). Consolidates this by indicating that Protestant Reformation, centred on several important doctrinal disputes that the Roman Catholic Church refused to correct. He stated that although some now are calling for an end to the division that happened then, the doctrinal division between the Catholic Church and the Reformers was and still is primarily over the gospel.

Demars, D. (2018). states that the extra biblical traditions and corrupt practices of the medieval Roman Church and sought a return to Scripture alone for doctrine. Trevin, W. (2022), also stated that ‘before the split between East and West in 1054, there were seven ecumenical councils accepted by most churches in the world as correctly defining Scriptural teaching on the nature of the triune God and the divinity of Jesus Christ.’ Another major debate in the Christendom is which day is the actual or right day of worship and this is also a doctrinal issue as some section worship on Saturday and believe that those who worship on Sunday are worshipping the sun god. Cole, S.J. (2017), indicated that doctrinal differences are crucial but truth matters. This means that in our effort to bring transformation or reformation within our denomination, the truth which is the undiluted word of God which serves as a measure for all followers must be keenly considered so as to align with the mission of Christ for the church. Encyclopedia Britannica (2012), indicates that the course of doctrinal development is crucially affected by the occasional emergence of profound and powerful thinkers who have gathered up scattered elements in their various traditions in freshly relevant syntheses, altering thereby the subsequent history of that tradition. Some of these doctrinal developments have contributed to some degree of disunity.

Whereas some doctrines are absorbed from the scriptures, some are as a result of the beliefs or the faith of the founders of some of the reformed churches. Hansen, H. (2019), consolidates this when she stated that most denominations have additional sources of doctrine in addition to Scripture. Lutherans have the Lutheran Confessions, Catholics have their own ancient writings, and most denominations have creeds and confessions they hold to. Fairchild, M. (2020), in her

comparative analysis of seven major Christian denominations (Anglican / Episcopal, Assembly of God, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic) pointed out trinity, confession of faith, the Apostles creed, the inerrancy and inspiration of the scriptures, the nature and resurrection of Christ, the nature or status of Angels among others as factors that contribute to doctrinal differences. She however acknowledged that these seven denominations agree on similar teaching at some point. These differences arguably are more perilous to the church than a blessing since the holy scriptures indicated that a house that is divided cannot stand. (Mat 12:22-28).

## **Literature review**

### **Definition of Terms: The Meaning of Doctrine**

Doctrine refers to a set of principles or beliefs that guide an organization, institution, or individual's actions and decisions. It serves as a framework for establishing standards, policies, and practices within a specific context. Doctrine plays a crucial role in shaping the overall strategy, operations, and culture of an entity. Cook, A.O. (2012), indicates that 'doctrine in theology which originates from Latin 'doctrina'; Greek 'didaskalia', didachē) is a generic term for the theoretical component of religious experience. It signifies the process of conceptualizing the primal—often experiential or intuitive—insights of the faith of a religious community in support of rationally understood belief.' According to Cook, doctrine definitely has a source of inspiration.

### **The Meaning of Doctrinal Difference**

Doctrinal differences refer to disagreements or variations in beliefs, practices, or interpretations of religious or philosophical doctrines within a specific theological framework or tradition. These differences arise due to diverse perspectives, historical context, cultural influences, or the interpretation of sacred texts. These discrepancies often lead to distinct denominations, sects, or schools of thought within a religious tradition or philosophical system. Doctrinal divergence can relate to various aspects such as theology, ethics, rituals, or the understanding of ultimate reality. It is a critical area of study in religious and philosophical scholarship as it influences the development and evolution of faith traditions and facilitates the exploration of diverse perspectives within a broader intellectual discourse. Hindson, Ed. & Dobson, Ed (1983) indicated that cooperation among Christians despite denominational differences emphasize unity based on a common commitment to Christ but the understanding of this matter has varied greatly with different ecclesiastical and theological movements. This means that although to some extent Christians may have one understanding of the scripture, there is always a basis for doctrinal differences. Putman, R.R (2022) explains that we could have common conviction about the authority of the scripture, but there is still argument over its application in unique challenges. This implies that how we apply the scriptures matters a lot. Same scriptures could be applied differently by different people in different situation. This sometimes serves as the basis for the emergence of doctrines. It should be stressed that Christians should interpret and apply the scriptures only under the guidance of the Holy spirit.

## **The Meaning of Church**

The concept of the church can have varying meanings depending on one's religious beliefs and cultural background. However, the church is often considered a religious institution or a sacred gathering place for believers. It is a place where people come together to worship, pray, and deepen their relationship with a higher power. Many view the church not only as a physical building but also as a community of individuals sharing common faith, values, and goals. Verlade, R. (2009), indicates that it is derived from the Greek word 'ekklesia' that is a general term referring to a gathering or assembly. He further indicated that the church is not a building, but a body of believers with a specific nature and purpose. McCallum, D & DeLashmutt, G. (2023) argues that the word 'ekklesia' means 'the called out ones.' They further argue that the word 'church' is rather from the word 'kuriakon' which means 'dedicated to the Lord'. McCallum & DeLashmutt indicated that:

the word church is a poor translation of the word ekklesia since it implies a sacred building, or temple. A more accurate translation would be "assembly" because the term ekklesia was used to refer to a group of people who had been called out to a meeting. It was also used as a synonym for the word synagogue, which also means to "come together."

In Christianity, the church is seen as the body of Christ or the bride of Christ. It is considered a spiritual family and a place of refuge and support. Tripp, P. (2020), explicates that the church is the gifts in relationship to the people of God. Within the church, believers gather to participate in religious ceremonies such as worship services, baptisms, and communion, which are believed to connect individuals with God and the teachings of their faith. The church also plays a significant role in providing guidance and spiritual leadership, offering pastoral care, and promoting acts of charity and goodwill in the community. Moreover, church goes beyond mere religious obligations and rituals. It serves as a place of fellowship and unity, where individuals can find companionship, encouragement, and inspiration. The church community often engages in various activities such as Bible study groups, youth programs, outreach initiatives, and social events that foster a sense of belonging and create opportunities for personal growth and spiritual enrichment. Church can also act as a catalyst for social change, advocating for justice, compassion, and equality within society.

## **The Impact of Doctrine on the Church**

Doctrinal differences have impacted the church positively and negatively. The church (body of Christ) has experienced so many issues in Ghana most especially criticisms from unbelievers and believers who do not believe in the doctrine of others. Tripp, P. (2018), explains that doctrine has brought about transformation in the church. He further indicated that the bible is a book that gives life and understanding the doctrines in the bible no longer makes it a separate and institutionalized religion. Nielson, K, (2020), indicated that 'the benefit of doctrine handed down through generations of faithful believers, in clear statements like the Apostles' Creed has helped the church.' This implies that biblical doctrines in themselves have positively imparted the church positively by helping members grow spiritually. Tim (2017) posits that the doctrines of God, creation, human nature, Christ, redemption, the church, and the consummation of Christ's kingdom shaped the church and without such doctrines there is no Christian faith. This implies that the foundations of the church are the aforementioned doctrines that the church upholds so much. This has grounded them in their beliefs about God and His nature. According

to Nielson, doctrines guarantee the Health of God's Church. The church has experienced expansion by winning souls with its doctrines in Ghana. Over the years, the church is held up by the doctrines of Jesus and the Apostles and that is what keep the followers of Christ matching forward with hope. Our ability to sustain the health and peace of the church is dependent on the ability to teach sound doctrines. Nielson, (2020) consolidates this by stating 'sound doctrine, rooted clearly in the trustworthy word of God, makes for a healthy church. It is the job of church leaders to know and teach sound doctrine, for the health of the church.' Tim, C. (2017), also states that Bible's truth that sustains, strengthens, and guides us.

Every good reflection that emanates from the church is anchored on doctrines ranging from lifestyle of living in terms of marrying only one wife, living alcohol free life, breaking away from idolatry, frowning on same sex marriage, among others are as a result of the sound doctrines taught in the church. Tim, C. (2017), supports this by stating that 'there is, in fact, no Christian ethic without a foundation of Christian doctrine. The daily practice of this faith is the daily living out of its doctrine.' This means that the Christian ethic demonstrated by the church is hinged on the Christian doctrines and this helps the church to be appreciated by society and God. The various doctrines of the church have helped the church to teach the will of God and lead souls unto salvation which is notable in the country though there are some challenges faced by the church. Curtis, A. (2013), states that doctrines help the church to avoid errors by not practicing what is unbiblical. Doctrinal differences have also contributed to the growth of the body of Christ and expansion of the gospel across Ghana. different denominations have different doctrines based on their conceptions. Henson, H. (2019), consolidates this by indicating that 'three main factors distinguish Christian denominations from one another. These are: the Source of Doctrine, the Way of Salvation and the Importance of Sacraments.' It should be indicated that Another respondent who is a leader and a pastor's wife, indicated that: 'doctrinal differences have generated conflicts and separation or misunderstanding.' It can be interpreted that the body of Christ which is supposed to demonstrate love to the world as commanded in 1cor.13, has turned against itself, fighting and undermining one another over doctrinal differences. Believers can hardly coexist in peace and harmony. Christians cannot comfortably walk into the gathering of other believers to listen to the gospel of Jesus Christ and pray together with other believers in another denomination because of differences in doctrines.

### **Doctrines that Differentiate one Church from the Other**

The study found that churches/denominations feel unique in their ways of service to God due to the doctrines they practice that makes them different from others, in an interview with the founder of the End Time Christian Tabernacle, which is a charismatic church, spelt that they uphold the following:

'The deity of Jesus (the only God); Baptism by immersion; Purity and Holiness at all times Maintaining our natural looks without any attachments or artificials (makeup, nails, eyelashes, artificial hairs). Women must not minister in the church'

Another minister who doubles as the founder of Synagogue Prayer Fellowship, a charismatic church also indicated that they uphold: 'Speaking in tongues, prophecy, prayer and deliverance at every gathering for worship by the church.; They also believe that humans can beautify themselves with ornaments, inviting a minister of God who is a non-member to come and share the word of God with them.' Church leaders from Global Evangelical church indicated that they uphold: 'Speaking in tongues and manifestation of the Holy Spirit, prophecy, prayer, healing and deliverance, adornment of oneself, annual pastors' appreciation.' Some

respondents indicate that it is true they consider churches who observe special festive seasons like Christmas and Easter. Those celebrations are considered abomination and unbiblical they are very unique. Some leaders from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana (EPCG) and Roman Catholic (RC) church which are orthodox churches indicated that speaking in tongues and prophecy have not been part of the church from the onset but it is currently being practiced but not during Sunday services. They also, uphold divine healing, and self-adornment. Although both churches are orthodox, their doctrines are not entirely the same. Whereas the EPCG administers the eucharist to its members once a month by taking both the wine (blood) and the bread (flesh), the RC administers it at any service time with congregants taking only the bread (flesh) and the priest taking both the wine (blood) and the bread (flesh). It can be interpreted that the doctrines of the charismatic/Pentecostal churches and that of the orthodox churches are not totally different though not the same. It can also be interpreted that most charismatic/Pentecostal churches have similar doctrines but each denomination has its unique way of observing its doctrine. The orthodox churches are deemed to be group of believers who practice ancient rituals in the name of worship. For example, Harnack, (1997), as cited above stated that the orthodox church "in her entire structure as alien to the Gospel and a perversion of the Christian religion, its reduction to the level of pagan antiquity'. Charismatic/Pentecostal churches tend to look down on orthodox churches because the latter does not embrace the ways of worship of the former. Mather, A. (2008), consolidates this that people who have received baptism of the holy spirit are often deemed charismatic and better equipped. This has generated unhealthy competition in the body of Christ.

Two respondents who are members of Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's witness indicates that they do not believe in the existence of any other Prophets after the death of Jesus. They also indicated that the bible forbids swearing and for that matter they do not recite the national pledge or sing anthems.

It can be interpreted that the views of the respondents are entirely different from what is practiced in most churches and most congregants and it is a reflection that our understanding of the scriptures are definitely not the same which has contributed to differences in doctrines as well.

Two respondents from the Apostles Revelation Society indicated that their church does not frown on marrying more than one wife (polygamy). They also stated that they observe removal of sandals before entering the chapel as Moses did on Horeb. (Exod 3:5)

It can be interpreted that there are variations in doctrines among denominations because some denominations uphold some Old Testament practices whereas others think some of those practices are not needed after the death of Christ.

**The Table shows some Doctrines of various Denominations.**

Denominations	Doctrines
Salvation Army Church Source: (NewsMax, 2023)	Baptism is Not Required; Do Not Partake in Communion, Military Hierarchy, Acceptance of women preachers, Core beliefs (Godhead)
Roman Catholic Church Sources: Köstenberger, A. (2023),	Priestly Celibacy; The Virgin Mary, ((Luke 1:26-38); Papal Infallibility – Teaching of the Pope; Grace v. Works, (Eph. 2:8-9);

	intercession of Mary for believers, penance, prayer for the dead for God's forgiveness etc.
Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witness Source: Christianity.com	No believe in trinity; no celebration for Christmas and Easter; no service in politics or military; No blood transfusion (Acts 15-20). Etc.

### **Some problems doctrinal differences have created between Orthodox and Charismatic/Pentecostal churches.**

Doctrinal differences have created a vast gap between the charismatic/Pentecostal churches and the orthodox churches in Ghana. The orthodox churches are deemed as group of believers who do not understand the manifestations of the Holy Spirit or the power of God because of the way both the charismatic/Pentecostal and orthodox churches perceive the service of God to be. It is clear that the variations in practices are grounded by the doctrines of the various churches. Fairchild, M. (2020), explains that 'Christian denominations differ in what they use for the basis of their doctrines and beliefs. The biggest split is between Catholicism and the denominations that have roots in the Protestant Reformation.' Due to this split, some charismatic/Pentecostal churches in their utterances and actions look down on the orthodox churches. One major issue against the orthodox churches is speaking in tongues which they seem to either be against or they don't seem to believe the originality of the tongues people speak. Harnack, V. A. (2013) indicates that 'Orthodox Church is totally determined by the 'natural forces of history' and that it has lost its divine, its supernatural character.' This implies that the orthodox church hinges its beliefs and practices on historical antecedents and their unwillingness to adjust to some charismatic practices that could inure to its growth is a challenge. Harnack, V.K. (1997), also states that the orthodox church 'in her entire structure as alien to the Gospel and a perversion of the Christian religion, its reduction to the level of pagan antiquity'. This kind of unpleasant descriptions have characterized the orthodox church among both unbelievers and some charismatic /Pentecostal church members. For instance, a practice where Catholics believe and pray to Holy Mary to intercede on their behalf, bowing before her statue which cannot be found in the Bible makes it difficult for come charismatic/Pentecostal churches to associate with members of the Catholic church. Parson, S. (2021) indicated that 'the Charismatic/Pentecostal church leader's claim and use of power and use of text-quoting to appeal to spiritual incident is likely to be unhealthy'. These different practices due to doctrinal differences have caused disunity amongst the churches (the body of Christ) since one denomination is tempted to appear better than the other. Putman, (2022) states that Such behaviour is as destructive to the church as false teaching and heresy. EduBirdie, (2022) indicates that concerning the difference between evangelicalism and Roman Catholicism, the evangelist, Billy Graham said, "I don't think the differences are important as far as personal salvation is concerned.' This could be interpreted that Christians must not subject themselves to worries about doctrines and doctrinal differences and risk personal salvation. To the astute evangelist, personal salvation is the most important.

### **How the church can solve doctrinal challenges**

This question appears simple but delicate and difficult for respondents to provide any suggestion. A respondent who is a male stated:

‘This is a very complex issue and to solve it will really take time but I think the church can look at enforcing doctrines that are clearly stated in the Bible other than giving attention to individual understanding of the scriptures.’

It can be interpreted that subjecting the scripture to individual understanding is a source of doctrinal differences.

Another respondent who is a female indicated that church founders and preachers must avoid creating the impression in the minds of their followers that what others are doing is wrong and theirs is right. They should rather stand in the gap and pray for one another for the spirit of the Lord to direct them in ministry.

A minister of the gospel who is a male indicated that:

This is an age-long canker that needs to be approached tactfully and with prayer and the direction from the Holy Spirit. I also suggest that the Ecumenical bodies, Local Council of Churches and other organizations should consider organizing conferences on doctrines where Pastors, Apostles, Bishops, Archbishops and other leaders put their views together and discuss them to encourage some level of uniformity in doctrinal practices as more attention is shifted to salvation other than uniqueness.

It can be interpreted that dialogue, conferences and focus on salvations messages can help the church stand together.

A respondent who is an elder and a leader of a group and a male stated that:

The scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit. (II Tim.3:16). Hence ministers should allow the spirit of God to lead them because God is not an utter of confusion and so it is difficult to come to terms with the fact that His words can create confusion. Ministers should also think of upgrading themselves through theological education which will enhance their understanding of the origin of doctrines, purpose and practices. You see, some ministers depend so much on their spiritual gifts and along the line commit some mistakes when pride begin to set in so mentorship is equally not bad.

It can be interpreted that, there are some lapses in the Christendom. Overdependence on one’s spiritual gifts thereby making ministers to seek mentorship or attend theological schools is creating challenges and this must be addressed. It can also be interpreted Some ministers tend to create their doctrines once they begin to have large following and so the Holy Spirit is no longer the primary source of inspiration or revelation.

A respondent who is a congregant in a charismatic church indicated:

If the body of Christ must stand, pastors and church leaders must emphasize the fact that, the differences are not meant to separate denominations or members. It is only various beliefs of different followers of Christ that are put into practice based on the understanding of various groups or denominations.

Putman, (2022) argues that our theological conversations should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.

The researcher observes that leaders and or pastors whose practices vary in terms of worship hardly get along. Most orthodox church leaders tend to speak ill of charismatic church leaders and even sometime allude to the fact that some of the charismatic pastors do not undergo any



proper ministerial training. Some congregants of orthodox churches have been brainwashed that miracles, signs and wonders are deceptive means to lure them and that most churches that focus on prophecies, miracles, signs and wonders are using charms. This claim has utterly put fear in congregants. The charismatic church members on the other hand sometimes make mockery of the orthodox churches that their way of worship and prayer during services does not carry power. These discriminatory comments are hinged on doctrinal differences as both parties see themselves to be of separate world. The researcher has also observed that during festive seasons and funerals where there is the need for a charismatic and orthodox church to run the program or have service together, there is always a challenge as both parties are not ready to compromise their doctrines. EduBirdie, (2022) states that ‘Christians are to love one another, but not to compromise on the verity of scripture in the name of that love’

### **Research Methodology**

The researcher obtained his data from both primary and secondary sources. Whereas secondary data were gathered from books, and articles, primary data were collected mainly from the field. Additionally, data and findings of the study were gathered from the field. Thus, data gathered from the field were analyzed. The main data collection techniques adopted by the study were in-depth interviews and observations. One-on-one interviews were conducted. This was done consciously to obtain detailed first-hand information so as to ascertain the respondents’ understanding of how doctrinal differences has imparted the church. The researcher interviewed twenty (20) participants. This includes both males and females who are believers from both orthodox and Charismatic/Pentecostal churches. Among them are leaders in their denominations, founders of churches and some congregants. Eight (8) of them are females and twelve (12) are males. The respondents are from the ages of 30-60. Five of the respondents are 30-34 years. Six of them are from 35- 45, five are 46- 51 and five of them are between 52- 60 years. This is done to have respondents who really understands the subject matter and can share their views maturely. The researcher used English language and a local language (Ewe) since some respondents do not have formal education. The researcher recorded some of the responses with the permission of respondents where needed and later translated into writing and some were written directly.

### **Discussions**

The study has found out that doctrinal differences have both positive and negative impacts on the church. It has found out that many churches sprung due to differences in our beliefs and how we think God should be served. Hence doctrinal differences have contributed to proliferation of churches and that has helped in propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ far and wide. These new churches which are mostly Charismatic/Pentecostal churches have added to the existing orthodox churches to touch lives through the provision of social amenities, scholarship scheme to the less endowed as well as health facilities. (Benyah, F. 2020 cited Burgess, 2012) explains that Pentecostal churches are showing sensitivities by responding to the social needs of their members.

Also, the church has helped shaped the society and its members with its varying doctrine since every doctrine is believed to have a driving force. Tripp, P, (2018), explains that doctrine has brought about transformation in the church. Tim, (2017) posits that the doctrines of God, creation, human nature, Christ, redemption, the church, and the consummation of Christ’s kingdom shaped the church and without such doctrines there is no Christian faith. This implies that the foundations of the church are the aforementioned doctrines that the church upholds so much. The research has also found that doctrinal differences have created platforms forms for

people to use their spiritual gifts where they are comfortable. Hence it has solved the problem of people fighting the gifts of others out of jealousy or someone operating in a dimension that will seem to be introducing new doctrines to the church

However, doctrinal differences have brought some challenges to the church in Ghana. In interview with respondents, it has been established that doctrinal differences have affected the church negatively. Doctrinal differences have brought about name calling or mockery. Due to differences in our practices as Christians, issue arose between the Charismatic/ Pentecostal churches and orthodox churches. Doctrinal differences have also brought about disunity among churches and members as every church tends to claim uniqueness and assume to be teaching the right doctrine. As a result of this, most churches in Ghana do not invite ministers of the gospel who are non-members of their churches to preach due to the fear of indoctrinating their members. This has generated anxiety and tension among believers who are conscious of making it to heaven.

### **Conclusion**

The researcher concludes that doctrinal differences have affected the church both positively and negatively. The church has experienced proliferation due to differences in doctrines and this has helped the gospel to get to deprived areas. It has also contributed to ushering many who have the gift of God in them in to ministry either due to a break-away or joining another church. These churches that added to the existing orthodox churches have impacted societies in areas of social interventions as well as providing spiritual supports and contributing to the growth of morality amongst societies.

However, since society knows that the church is supposed to be a place of love, peace and refuge, they tend to measure the attitude to church members as well as pastors. Hence the church has suffered heavy criticism both from believers and unbelievers as they least expect the church to engage in fights or any form of disunity. Doctrinal differences have actually created disunity among churches, pastors and leaders. As a result, love cannot be felt among churches as Christ expects from us. This disunity has brought about unhealthy relationships among members of different denominations and as such dented the image of the body of Christ. It is therefore concluded that doctrinal difference is causing more harm to the growth and unity of the church than good.

### **Recommendations**

a. There should be frequent inter-denominational services to foster unity and love among churches. When different denominations meet frequently for common programs in their localities under the leadership of their local council of churches, there will invariably be unity and love among congregants and church leaders.

b. The Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) should hold joint periodic conferences for ministers of the gospel these conferences will birth togetherness and enlighten founders and leaders of the various denominations on how needless it is to create differences with doctrines.

c. Theological institutions must focus on courses that will give in-depth understanding of doctrines to their students. Establishment and explanations of doctrines needs enough knowledge and the leading of the Holy spirit hence theological institutions must focus more efforts on training prospective ministers to be well grounded in doctrines.

d. Christians in general must learn to pray, fast, read the scriptures and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit to circumvent deceptions in the name of doctrines. This is one sure way to check whether doctrines that are taught are true and biblical or not.

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### **Notes on Contributor**

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