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Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in Video films: Audience Reception and Appropriation in Ghana and the UK

Kofi Asare

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Abstract

Religion has become one of the central themes in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video film industry. The portrayal of religious elements which mirrors the religious dynamics of the audience has been attributed partly to the success and popularity of the films. The video films have also excited religious passions as well as criticisms.

The heart of the debate, as the existing studies indicate, is how the various religious traditions (often, Christianity and Indigenous religions) are represented in the video films. Whereas some scholars opine that Christianity, especially Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches are frequently privileged, others contend that the religious delineation in the video films reflect experiential issues; the churches are portrayed in line with the niche, positive or otherwise, that they have created for themselves which is well known to producers and the consumers. This study examines the religious constructs in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films phenomenon. The main focus is an investigation into audience reception of the video films, particularly among the members of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in Ghana and the UK. It also explores the appropriation of the religious elements in general and Pentecostal-Charismatic narratives in selected video films.

An ethnographic research method, comprising mainly of textual analysis of selected video films; participant observation and qualitative interviews, was used to draw comparative insights from a cross section of members of Action Chapel International and Word Miracle International churches in Accra and London.

This thesis contributes to the on-going discourse on the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films and Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity partly popularized by Birgit Meyer and Afe Adogame. Hall's Encoding/Decoding theoretical framework is used to explore the reception while the

Uses and Gratifications theory is also adopted to examine the appropriation of the religious constructs in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films.

Notwithstanding the fluid representations of various religious traditions in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, the findings show that the reception and uses of the religious narratives in the films by the audience comprise of a synthesis of full embrace on one hand and scepticism on the other. It was found that beyond entertainment, majority of the audience who were members of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity focus on the religious significance of the video films. Yet, most pastors and leaders in these churches were not comfortable recommending the video films as a good partner in the religious lives of their members. As this thesis focused on only Pentecostal-Charismatic audience, further research on members of other Christian denominations or religions regarding their self-representation in the video films is recommended. This will help to establish if the reception pattern of other religious groups is complex or linked directly with the portrayal trend of one's religion.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this PhD thesis is my own original research. It has not been submitted to any University for any other degree or qualification. All materials used, both primary and secondary, have been cited in line with the University of Edinburgh research regulations.

Name…Kofi Asare…… Date: August 20, 2013…….

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Dedication

To my late father Kwabena Mprah

and to

The Unsung Heroes of the Ghanaian/Nigerian Video films-The Audience!

Abbreviations

ACI-Action Chapel International

AICs-Africa Initiated Churches

AIDS- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

BAFTA- British Academy of Film and Television Awards

BCFU- British Colonial Film Unit

BSPG- Bible Study and Prayer Group

CAC- Christ Apostolic Church

CAFMI- Christian Action Faith Ministry International

CCCS-Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

CCR- Catholic Charismatic Renewal

CMs- Charismatic Ministries

CoP- Church of Pentecost

DVD- Digital Video Disc /Digital Versatile Disc

FESPACO- Pan-African Film Festival

FGBMFI- Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International

FOMIC- Fresh Oil Ministry International Church

GCFU- Gold Coast Film Unit

GES- Ghana Evangelical Society

GFIC- Ghana Film Industry Corporation

GO- Gratifications Obtained

GS- Gratifications Sought

GTV- Ghana Television

HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus

HOVCEA- Hour of Visitation Choir and Evangelistic Association

ISKCON- International Society for Krishna Consciousness

LCI- Lighthouse Chapel International

LFGM- Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries

MMC- Miracle Ministerial College

MPRP- Methodist Prayer and Renewal Programme

MZFMI- Mount Zion Faith Ministries International

NAFTI- National Film and Television Institute

NCPMs-National Council for Public Morals

NEA- National Evangelistic Association

NFVCB- National Film and Video Censors Board

NT-New Testament

PCC-Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity/ Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches

PNDC- Provisional National Defence Council

POGEM- Power of God Evangelical Ministries

SAP- Structural Adjustment Policies

SU- Scripture Unions

TVs-Television Stations

UK-United Kingdom

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

USA- United States of America

VCD-Video Compact Disc

VCRS- Video Cassette Recorders

VHS- Video Home System

VVF- Vesico Vaginal Fistula

WMCI- Word Miracle Church International

YAFCA- Youth Ambassadors For Christ Association

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 An Introductory Chapter

1.1 Background to the study

Ghana, one of the British colonies then known as Gold Coast, located in the West Africa's Gulf of Guinea, a few degrees north of the equator is ingrained in religious beliefs and practices.[1] Religion plays pivotal role in various aspects of Ghanaian society and culture. One sphere of the Ghanaian culture where religious beliefs and practices are striking is the local video film industry. From its birth to date one main theme that has been pivotal in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video film industry is religion. The type of religious themes and how they are portrayed in the video films correlates with everyday religious life in the society. Such representations of religious practices of the audience have been attributed partly to the success and popularity of the films. However, the video film industry presents a paradoxical outcome to religious sentiments. The audio-visual medium has also excited religious passions as well as criticisms.

At the forefront of the debate is how the various religious traditions (often, Christianity and Indigenous religion are represented in the video films. Whereas some scholars like Onookome Okome and Esi Sutherland-Addy opine that Christianity, especially Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, is frequently privileged, John McCall and Ebere Uwah hold a contrary view.[2] I contend that the religious delineation in the video films reflects experiential

[1] See Appendix D for West Africa and Ghana maps.

[2] Onookome Okome, 'The Popular Art of African Video-Film', *New York Foundation for the Arts*, summer 2001. http://www.nyfa.org/archive_detail_q.asp?type=3&qid=45&fid=6&year=2001&s=Summer&print=true, Retrieved on May 16, 2012; Esi Sutherland-Addy, 'The Ghanaian Feature Video Phenomenon', in Kofi Anyidoho and James Gibbs (eds.), *Fontomfrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 273-77; Innocent Ebere Uwah, 'The Representation of African Traditional Religion and Culture in Nigerian Popular films', *Religion, Media and Politics in Africa',* V.1 (2011): 94; John McCall, 'The Pan Africanism We Have: Nollywood's Invention of Africa', *Film International,* 28, 5.4 (2007): 92.

issues; the churches are therefore portrayed in line with the image, positive or otherwise, that they have created for themselves. Producers and the consumers are well aware of the notion of self projected by these churches.

The intention of this study is to push the discussion further by broadening the scope. This attempt at opening another dimension on the discourse of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video film industry and religion has been necessitated by the lacuna in the reception of the films. What is conspicuously missing is the input from the audience of the video films. Although it has long been acknowledged in media studies in general and films in particular that the place of the audience in the reception of the media is essential, this admission has largely remained a lip service. Heikki Hellman, for instance, posits that when it comes to the relation between the media and the consumer, 'the audience is the new king'.[3] Hellman attributes this status of the audience to the 'paradigmatic change', which resulted from the deregulation of the media and liberalization of viewers since the 1980s.

Nonetheless, scholars such as Margaret Miles and John Lyden who strongly advocated for audience reception approach to the study of religion and films did not put those words into action.[4] In *Seeing and Believing,* Miles begins the book by stating: 'it seemed to me imperative to extend the discussion of religion and films to include an analysis of the values circulated in films with box office appeal. It seemed important to find a way to assess the influence of those values on the popular audiences that consume films'.[5] Such an approach, she argues, limits the unacknowledged perspective of critics who confidently address their readers as: 'we', 'we feel', 'we know', 'we almost gasp', [and] and 'we wonder'.[6] Yet throughout the book audience inputs were strikingly absent. Lyden, who calls for more

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[3] Heikki Hellman, 'Legitimations of television programme policies', in P. Alasuutari (ed.), *Rethinking the Media Audience: The New Agenda* (London: Sage, 1999), 112.
[4] Margaret Miles, *Seeing is Believing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); John Lyden, *Film as Religion* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003).
[5] Margaret Miles, *Seeing is Believing,* xii.
[6] Ibid, xiii.

ethnographic studies to be carried out for deeper insights into audience reception of films, also did not include the input of the audience in the book, *Film as Religion*. He justified his inability to incorporate the views of the audience with an excuse 'that the lack of information available has made some speculation about audience reaction unavoidable'.[7]

In recent times however, scholars of religion and films are focussing more on the audience and the intricate ways they participate in the interpretation of the films. This development is what Mitchell Jolyon referred to as *the participative turn*.[8] Studies conducted by Christopher Deacy, Clive Marsh, Martin Barker and Ernest Mathijs are some of the notable works on audience reception of the religious symbolisms in films.[9] Films used in these studies hardly go beyond Hollywood and European films.

Particularly, the audience of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films is rarely included in the studies on religion and films. The contribution of this research lies in this lacuna created by the previous studies, which have accorded little or no attention to audience reception of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, specifically in relation to their religious narratives. In line with discussing the religious connotations, selected video films were used in this study including, *Living in Bondage (2002*), *God Loves Prostitutes (2003*), *The Last Prophet 1&2 (2002)*, *Expensive Vow (2007)*, *Deliverance from the Powers of Darkness (1992)*, *Captives of the Mighty (2001)*, *Evil Heart (2008), Wasted Years (2000), Ghost Tears (1992)* and many more which are listed in the filmography.

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[7] John Lyden, *Film as Religion,* 47 &135.
[8] Jolyon Mitchell, 'Emerging Conversations in the Study of Media, Religion and Culture', in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, ed. Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 337-350.
[9] Clive Marsh, *Cinema and Sentiment: Film's Challenge to Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004); Christopher Deacy, *Faith in Film: Religious Themes in Contemporary Cinema* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Martin Barker and Ernest Mathijs (eds.), *The Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's World Audiences* (New York; Peter Lang, 2008).

1.2 Research Objectives

The principal attempt in this research was to give the audience the opportunity to have their say on the on-going discussion about the religious contents in the video films. The two main aims of the thesis are:

- To interrogate the reception of Pentecostal-Charismatic narratives in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films among the members of these churches in Ghana and the United Kingdom.
- To examine the various ways in which the Pentecostal-Charismatic contents of these films are appropriated by the members of these churches in their Christian lives.

This type of film audience study 'can open up new perspectives for analysis of structural debates' on the religious constructs in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films.[10] But in order to better understand the religious beliefs and practices of the audience, the members of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, and how the various religions are implicated in the video films, I provide the religious scenery in Ghana within which the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity (PCC) is situated.

1.3 The Ghanaian Religious Landscape

Religious pluralism and fluidity of religious affiliations pertain in most African countries. As a result of the numerous religions in Ghana, some researchers have described Ghana as 'religious Gold mine'[11]; 'Religious Zoo manifesting all manner of religious wild life[12]; and 'rainbow'[13] among others. It is not surprising therefore that a mere response to 'how are you'

[10] P.Meers, 'Is There an Audience in the House? *Journal of Popular Film and Television'*, 29.3 (2001):140.
[11] Gerrie ter Haar, 'Standing up for Jesus: A survey of new developments in Christianity in Ghana', *Exchange*, 23 (1994): 221.
[12] Max Assimeng, *Salvation, Social Crisis and the Human Condition* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1995), 14.
[13] J.G. Platvoet *et al* (eds.), *The Study of Religion in Africa Past, Present and Prospects. Proceedings of the Regional Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions Harare, Zimbabwe, 1992*. (Cambridge: Roots & Branches, 1992), 47.

in the Ghanaian context will be impregnated with theological connotations. In the normal everyday response one would have expected the straightforward answer 'I am fine or otherwise'. But one hears 'by God's grace', 'I am alive because of God or Christ' and the one that is common with my Nigerian friends goes like this 'Thank God oh my brother or sister' depending on the gender of the one being greeted. In most cases, one will not even hear whether the person is doing well or not. This also attests to the assertion by J.S Mbiti that Africans are notoriously religious.[14] According to Mbiti, where the individual is, there is religion, for he is religious. It is this that makes Africans so religious: religion is in their whole system of being.[15]

1. 3.1 Traditional Religion

One of the Ghanaian theologians even describes a Ghanaian as *homo religiousus* because he has a religious ontology and epistemology.[16] Pobee again contends that 'in Ghana, to be is to be religious'.[17] Religious traditions, which command significant number of followers in Ghana, can be identified as Traditional religion, Islam, and Christianity. Nevertheless, there are host of other new religious movements or fellowships with eclectic features traceable from Traditional religions, Islam or Christianity as well as of foreign import. Religion is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned.[18]

However, the multiplicity of religions in the country in particular has been partly attributed to the traditional belief in the physical and invisible worlds where it is believed malicious spirits serve as impediments for the full enjoyments of life by the people. Most individuals are therefore open to any religion which claims to have the power to help them to overcome these

[14] J.S Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 1.
[15] Ibid, 3.
[16] John S. Pobee, 'Religion and Politics in Ghana, 1972-1978: Some case studies from the rule of General I.K Acheampong', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, XVII. 1 (1987): 44.
[17] John S. Pobee, *Skenosis*: *Christian Faith In An African Context* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1992), 62.
[18] J. S Mbiti. *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1.

malevolent spirits for which will eventually pave the way for them to enjoy their peace in life on earth. It is therefore imperative to begin mapping the religious landscape in Ghana by looking first at Traditional religion.

1.3.1.1 Akan Religion

Traditional religion in Ghana fits into those described by Mbiti as belonging to tribes, ethnic groups or the nation. There is no one Ghanaian Traditional religion. Ghana is multi-ethic country with about four major ethnic groups and numerous subdivisions. The Akan for instance is further divided into the Ashanti, Akyem, Akuapim, Fanti, Akwamu, Kwahu, Ahanta, Bono, Nzema and Safwi Wassaw. The complex nature of various traditional religions makes it difficult to find one traditional religion in Ghana to generalize for the whole nation. Nevertheless, the Akan traditional religion will be used in this research to represent the Ghanaian traditional religions because they form the majority of the Ghanaian population. The population and housing census carried out in the year 2010 which categorised the population into nine main ethnic groups showed the population along the ethnic line as Akan 47.5%, Mole-Dagomba 16.6%, Ewe 13.9%, Ga 7.4% with the rest each constituting less than 6% of the total population.[19]

Besides, the Akan traditional religion becomes more relevant in this research as most Ghanaians irrespective of their religious affiliations speak or understand Twi, the local language for the Akan ethnic groups. The Twi is also one local language that is commonly used in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Majority of the Akan traditional religious beliefs and practices are also found in the traditional religions in the other ethnic groups.

[19] Phenomena Nyarko, *2010 Population and Housing Census* (Accra: Sakoa Press for Ghana Statistical Service, 2012), 34.

Akan religion is an undifferentiated number of rites and practices, enunciating beliefs, which are statements and not creedal formulae.[20] Akan religion like most of the indigenous religions is also written not on paper but in people's hearts, minds, oral history, rituals and religious personages like the priests, rainmakers, officiating elders and even the kings.[21] It is also important to reveal that the fact that Akan religion does not have systematic theological statements, or coherent philosophical propositions, though indeed there is no more than a variety of religious beliefs and practices without interpretation, there is no evidence that his attitude to life and his world lacks an integration of its own which to him, within his own sphere, is intellectually, morally, and personally satisfying.[22] It is difficult if not impossible to separate the life of an Akan from his or her religious beliefs. However, the key elements of Akan religious beliefs central to this thesis will be categorised as the Supreme Being (*Onyame*), gods (divinies) and charms (*abosom* and *asuman*), the spirit-ancestors (*asaman*), and numerous types of evil spirits (such as Satan (*Sasabonsam),* Fairies or 'dwarfs'-*mmoatia*, witches (*abayifoɔ*).

1.3.1.2 The Supreme Being

Two names often times used for the Supreme Being are *Onyame*, the only great one and *Onyankopɔn*, the shining one. In the Akan society like most of the African societies, people have a notion of God as the Supreme Being. It is very difficult for one to get atheists in traditional life if the popular proverb in Ashanti that '*ob*i nky*ɛrɛ akwadaa Nyame*' is anything to go by. This translates literally as everybody knows God almost by instinct, and even children. Such beliefs in the Supreme Being are expressed not only in proverbs but also in songs, prayers, names, myths stories, religious festivities as well as titles given to God. Rattray in his studies in the 1960s among the Ashantis claimed to have seen temples raised in

[20] S.G Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian faith: A Comparative Study of the impact of two Religions* (Accra, Ghana Universities Press, 1965), 85.
[21] J. S Mbiti. *African Religions and Philosophy*, 4.
[22] S.G Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian faith,* 86.

honour of the Supreme Being almost in every Ashanti compound and 'Nyame dua', God's tree, a triple forked branch set upright in the ground, serving as an altar; on this is a bowl for offerings.[23] Indeed such sacred structures can still been seen in Ghana but rarely except the king's palace or shrines of the indigenous priests.

The belief in the Supreme Being can also be inferred from the titles and attributes of him in the Akan society. One of the titles Akans give to God is *Bɔrebɔre,* which means the creator, Originator and the Architect. It is believed that he made the universe alone. This is why Akans speak of God as '*Ahemfo mu Hene*', that is the King of Kings; some also call him '*Ohene Kesεε'*, the great King or surpassingly Great Spirit. The incomprehensible nature of his Spirit has also earned him the title 'the fathomless Spirit'. He who knows and sees all, *Amosu*, the giver of rain; *Amowia*, the giver of sun, *Abommubuwafrε*, the God of comfort in times of trouble are among some appellations attributed to God to show how indispensable he is in the lives of the Akans.

The significant place of the belief in the Supreme Being in the lives of the indigenous people in Ghana challenges scholars who underestimate such influence. Westermann, touching on African religion in general, writes, 'Belief in God is a philosophy rather than a living faith. He is a God who is neither loved nor feared. His qualities and demands are willingly admitted, but they exercise little if any influence on practical life'.[24] Miss Clarke even went further to suggest that *Onyame* was neither a Supreme God nor a source of moral law, but a sky God concerned with fertility.[25] However, the titles and attributes of God and much evidence among the Akans indicate that Akans never doubt the power of *Onyame.* He is man's final help and succour; all things originate in him, hence without him man is helpless;

[23] R.S Rattray, *Ashanti Proverbs: The Primitive Ethics a Savage People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 139-42.
[24] Diedrich, Westermann, *Africa and Christianity* (London, Oxford University Press, 1937), 65.
[25] Cited in S.G Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian faith,* 86.

in the midst of change he is permanent, and to him man appeals when all else fails.[26] Generally, it is agreed that God can do all things; people do not hesitate to seek his help through the gods and other related spirits.

1.3**.1.3 Abosom (gods) Divinities**

The gods are principal divinities, who are non-human spirits commonly linked with natural forces such as the sea, rivers, rocks, trees and earth among others. They are called *Abosom* or *Obosom* (singular) in Akan and believed to be deriving their powers from God. Peter Kwasi Sarpong, has classified the *Abosom* into three groups: Deities of an entire state; Deities of towns, localities, and traditional areas; and Clan, lineage or family deities.[27] *Tano*, *Prah*, and *Bosomtwe* are some of the rivers gods of Akans. Others include the *Antoa,* the gods of *Nkoranza*, *Wenchi*, and *Techiman*; have become tribal gods because of the spectacular annual festivals organized to honour them.[28]

Abosom are believed to be not only as 'sons' of *Onyame* but spokespersons as well. In the words of Busia, 'a god is the mouthpiece of the Supreme Being (*Onyankopɔn kyeame)*, a servant acting as intermediary between Creator and creature.[29] Most people think the gods are near and faster in providing solutions to their problems particularly when it comes to the issue of other malevolent spirits like witchcraft. The reverence and respect given to gods depend heavily on their efficacy and the ability to provide the needs of their adherents. It is believed that the gods have their area of specialisation in terms of providing solutions to their clients. However, issues commonly dealt with by the gods revolves around providing

[26] S.G Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian faith,* 100.
[27] Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspect of Ghanaian Culture* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), 15.
[28]K.A Busia, 'The Ashanti of the Gold Coast', in Daryll Forde (ed.), *African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for IAI, 1954), 193.
[29] Ibid.

existential needs in all practical forms such as good health, procreation, success in all spheres of life-business, education, travelling abroad, prosperity and above all protection from malicious spirits.

Religious functionaries who are the custodians of the gods on behalf of the family or the tribes are called *Abosomfoɔ* and those who patronise their services are referred to as *Abosomsomfoɔ*.[30] Some *Abosomfoɔ* can be possessed and enter into trance while others also have priest and priestess who can be possessed by the deities known as *Akomfoɔ*. As part of their contribution to the society, the *Abosomfoɔ* or the *Akomfoɔ* interact with meta-empirical beings on behalf of devotees for the purpose of sacral mediation, prophecy, healing, exorcism, diagnosis, the restoration to wholeness of ill and disturbed persons, and general pastoral care.[31]

It must be noted that there are also costs for seeking the services of the gods especially when one flouts their conditions or refuses to pay back homage required of him or her. The disastrous consequences can either affect the person who made the consultation directly or even any member of his or her family. This point about the Abosom is very useful in this work because it plays pivotal role in the narratives of most Ghanaian/Nigerian video films and it has been expanded in chapter three.

Related to the *Abosom* are *Asuman* (charms or talismans) even though they are two distinct entities. That is, the *suman* (singular) as has been defined Rattray is: An object which is the potential dwelling place of a spirit or spirits of an inferior status, generally belonging to the vegetable kingdom, this object is also closely associated with the control of the powers of evil or black magic, for personal ends, but not necessarily to assist the owner to work evil, since it

[30] Some *Akomfo* even claim the gods came to them as a gift from God; such is the case of Kwaku Bonsam, indigenous priest based at Akomadan Afrancho along Kuamsi-Techiman road. He claims the gods came to him directly.
[31] Cephas N. Omenyo, 'Akan Religion', in Stephen D. Glazier (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of African and African-American Religions* (New York/London: Routledge, 2001), 28.

is used as much for defensive as for offensive purposes.[32] They differ in terms of their sources of power. Whereas *Abosom* derive their potency directly from God, the power and the spirit in *Asuman* originate from plants or trees, and sometimes directly or indirectly, from fairies, forest monsters, witches or from some sort of unholy contact with the dead. However, the point still remains that the Akans believe that the *Asuman* possess powers thanks to some supernatural beings.[33]

Asuman may take so many forms like beads, or medicine balls carried on strings in a sheep's horn or a gourd, amulets, and a cow's tail among others. These objects are worn around the waist, neck or the wrist; may be hanged in front of houses or at the parlour, in a car; place under bed or office seats depending on the motive for the use of the *Suman*. In most cases those who use these repositories of spirits from the *Asuman* do hide them. Those few supplicants who display their charms or the talismans are either for fashion or show of power or both. For instance, during festivals and other occasions, Kings, Chiefs and indigenous priests put on smock, known in Ghana as *Batakari* with talismans and charms stitched to them. These are enough signs to warn would-be malicious spirits that they are protected spiritually and that they can also be harmful when challenged. Tourists, some cultural Anthropologists, Artists and other groups of people also overtly use talismans, which may not necessarily have *Asuman* for spiritual security.

1.3.1.4 The Spirit-Ancestors

Also central to the Akan religious beliefs is the contribution of the *nsamanfo*, the ancestors in the lives of both the individuals and the society. Mbiti prefers to call them living-dead to 'ancestors' or 'ancestral spirits' as in his words these terms imply only to those spirits who

[32] R.S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 23.
[33] Ibid.

were once the ancestors of the living.[34] According to him, these concepts have the tendency of excluding spirits and the living-dead of children, brothers, sisters, barren wives and other members of the family who were not in any way the 'ancestors'. However, among the Akan before one becomes a well-respected and revered ɔ*saman* (singular of an ancestor), he or she must fulfil certain requirements. For example, the person must have died a natural death, given a befitting burial, had children, and must have lived as an outstanding member of the family or the society. Ancestor will be used in this work because living-dead is ambiguous in Akan society. It also means an unhealthy person you could die with the least sickness or slightest touch.

It is believed that the ancestors who have lived among the people prior to departure would be in a better position to present needs of the people to the spirits and of God, whom they are drawing nearer ontologically. To this end, people call on the ancestors more often for their petty needs than they approach God.[35] The most important ancestral customs among the Akans are the festivals such *Odwira*, *Akwanbo* held in honour of the ancestors. That of the Ashanti is called *Adae*, which means 'a place of rest or lying down'. This also explains why any form of work is forbidden during the festivals. The *Adae* is held twice in forty-three days, the *Akwasidae* Kesɛ*e,* which is the big one, is held on a Sunday and *Wukudae, t*he other one is held on a Wednesday. Failure to perform some of these rituals to the ancestors may offend the ancestors and consequences on individuals responsible or the entire society could be disastrous.

Beliefs in the ancestors may also go beyond their significant intermediary role between man, the spirits and God to include providing the framework for moral discipline in the society as K.A Busia aptly stated:

[34] Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 85.
[35] Ibid, 84.

> In every Ashanti village stories are always circulating about the ancestors… The ancestors are believed to be the custodians of the laws and customs of the tribes. They punish with sickness or misfortune those who infringe them… Constantly before the Ashanti, and serving to regulate his conduct, is the thought that his ancestors are watching him, and that one day, when he joins them in the world of spirits, they will ask him to give an account of his conduct, especially of conduct towards hid kinsmen. This thought is a potent sanction of morality.[36]

1.3.1.5 Satan (Sasabonsam), Fairies (Mmoatia) and Witches (Abayifoɔ)

Among the Akans, it is believed that the Supreme Being is seen as having unconditional benevolent spirit but that of the *abosom* and *asumen* tend to be good only when one abides by their terms and conditions. However, certain spirits are believed to be more evil and dangerous than they can be of any good to individuals and societies. Chief amongst these malicious spirits are *Sasabonsam*, the Satan, *Mmoatia*, the Fairies and *Abayifoɔ,* the witches.

In Akan society, the *Sasabonsam* is described as a terrifying monster with long hair, has large blood-shot eyes, long legs and feet pointing both ways. The thick forest is his place of abode where he sits on high branches of an *odum* or *onyina* tree and dangles the legs touches the ground which sometimes hooks up the unwary hunter. It is believed that he is in enmity with human beings and therefore is blamed for the disappearance of people especially hunters in the forest. *Mmoatia*, literally means 'short animals' but in the Akan cosmos refers to small human beings in nature with magical powers and two feet facing backwards. It is said that their colour, that is black, red or white indicates whether they are good or not. The black fairies are more or less innocuous, but the white and the red *mmoatia* are up to all kinds of mischief, such as stealing housewives' palm-wine and the food left over from the previous day.[37] One of the main features of the *mmoatia* is that they communicate by whistling. One group of supernatural powers that in most cases militate against human beings emanate from

[36] K A. Busia, *The position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti*: *A study of the influence of Contemporary Social Changes on Ashanti Political Institutions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 24-5.
[37] R.S. Rattray, *Religion and Arts in Ashanti*, 26.

the *abayifoɔ.* It is believed that the *abayifoɔ* know themselves spiritually and are accused of being responsible for misfortunes in the lives of people. The ultimate goal of a witch, it is believed, is to suck the blood of victims in the spirit but such a prey must come from the clan or the family of the *ɔbayifoɔ*. Notwithstanding, certain blessings in form of intelligence and any form of natural gifts may also be attributed to the *abayifoɔ,* the witches.

1. **3.1.6 Akan Religion and Family Life**

Akans believe that any human is made up of body and soul. The soul is further divided into three elements namely: *Kra,* the life-soul from God; *Sunsum,* the personality soul from the father and *Mogya*, the blood also from the mother. However, Margaret Field prefers to call the *kra* "soul" and the *sunsum,* "mind, spirit".[38] The kra is said to take its *nkrabea*, the destiny to be accomplished on earth from God and until that commission is achieved, the individual cannot go back to God but reincarnate until the fulfilment of those divine missions. The *kra,* it is believed returns to God when the person dies. Therefore the *Kra* cannot leave the person without causing defects, illness or even death to the person. It is the *kra* that witches attack spiritually which may cause the victim ill luck and even physical bodily harm as Margaret Field aptly puts it. She states:

> If the witches steal away a man's *kra* and cut it up, he becomes mortally sick. If they then relent, reassemble the parts and restore them to him, he recovers. If however, they have already eaten, say a leg, and hence cannot restore it, he recovers except for a permanently useless leg. If the witches steal only that part of the *kra* corresponding to the womb or the penis, the victim becomes either barren or impotent.[39]

However, when the *kra* is perturbed spiritually or emotionally, *okraguare,* the cleansing of the soul, is needed in order to bring back the *okra* to normalcy.

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[38] Margaret Field, *Search for Security: An ethno-psychiatric study of Rural* (Accra; London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 36.
[39] Ibid.

Unlike the *kra,* the *sunsum* may leave the body and wandering without causing any physical or spiritual disturbances to the person. It operates in dreams and also assumes the role of a witch. It is believed the *sunsum* connects one to the *ntoro,* the patrilineal clan that is being protected by the main Akan gods. According to the Akan cosmology, the *sunsum* is a repository of the person's character, disposition intelligence and knowledge. The personality soul helps the person to withstand spiritual disturbances. This also means that one's braveness depends on the strength and ability of the personality soul. It is believed one is brave if he or she has a strong *sunsum* or has heavy *sunsum.* On the other hand, a person is not brave if he or she has weak sunsum or light personality soul.

The Akan society has matrilineal inheritance system. This is linked to the *mogya,* the blood of the mother and enables one to be part of the matrilineal extended family and the *abusua*, the clan. The *abusua,* is composed of all its members, both the living and the dead and is traceable about ten to twelve generations to a common ancestress who becomes the central figure of ancestral rituals for the clan. *Abusuapayin,* the head represents the abusua on the chief's council, the chief himself also serve as the head of the royal lineage. In a sense, the family system becomes the foundation of and logically prior to the State system.[40] Once a member of the family, the individual is incorporated into the *ɔman,* the political unit, whose chief occupies the stool of the spirit-ancestors. The place of the spirit-ancestors in the life of the individual in Akan society is phenomenal. In the Ashanti conception, the ancestors sustain the tribe.[41] The community has the extended family as its unit that is grandparents, blood relatives, in-laws, who work in concert to ensure the socialisation of children and security and comfort of all members in all aspects of life. [42] Individuals are united through

[40] Busia, *The position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti,* 25.
[41] Busia, *African Worlds*, 204.
[42] J.S Pobee, *Skenosis: Christian Faith In An African Context,* 66.

rituals and practices through which they make meaning of their lives not as individuals but within the context of the community.

1.3.1.7 Dualistic worldview and Nkwa (Life)

Akans have dual view of the world. The physical and the spiritual but they are intricately linked. This dualistic worldview is also common across most West African countries. Okorocha in writing about Igbo cosmos divides the world into two inter-penetrating and inseparable, though distinguishable parts: that is, the world of men, the existential here and now; and the world of spirits 'from above', which are usually the major divinities including the Supreme Being, the Almighty Creator, and *Ala*, the Earth Goddess, the custodian of morality and social decorum, the traditional ethical code.[43] It is within this religious setting, that Max Assimeng argues that 'until the sphere of the African's conception of spiritual "darkness" is reckoned with, one cannot claim that one is studying the religious consciousness of the traditional peoples of West Africa'.[44]

Among the Akans, more emphasis is put on the supernatural in every sphere of life than explaining events from any scientific point of view. It is virtually impossible to turn in any direction and say of any matter that the gods and spirits-ancestors and malicious *suman* have no hand in it.[45] Such belief makes the services of diviners and traditional priests as well as other functionaries who claim to have the power to protect people spiritually become essential. Diviners for instance are revered for their supernatural power and ability to

[43] Cyril Okorocha, *The Meaning of Religious Conversion in Africa: The Case of the Igbo Nigeria.* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1987), 52.
[44] Max Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in West Africa* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1989), 64-5.
[45] S.G Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian faith,* 97.

diagnose diseases, misfortunes and other maladies that are believed to have been orchestrated by the evil spirits.[46]

It is the belief in the supernatural and the fear that evil spirits impede the individual from enjoying of *nkwa*, life to the fullest that instigate people to move from place to place in search of succour. To the Akan, though reference is often made to the transcendence but life is existential. Life embodies enjoyment of long life in vitality, vigour and good health; it means life in happiness and felicity.[47] Life also means *ahonyade* (possessions or properties of all forms), wealth, riches, and substance.[48] For the purpose of inheritance and continuity of the family and others in the traditional life procreation is also central in the life of both men and women even though the latter put premium on children in life. Life also includes *asomdwei*, peace of mind and tranquillity, and life devoid of perturbation.[49]

These aspects of life dominate prayer requests of the Akans during festivals and other religious rituals and practices. One example each of the prayers offered by Chiefs of Akyem in the celebration of *Odwira,* the annual festival and *Adae,* the annual festival by the Ashantis will shed more light on the scope of life for the Akans. Busia writing on the prayers of *Akyem*, offered to the ancestors' states:

> Here is food; all you ancestors receive this and eat; the year has come round again; today we celebrate it; bring us blessing to the chief who sits on your stool; health to the people; let women bear children; let men prosper in their undertakings; life to all; we thank you for the good harvest; for standing behind us well (i.e. guarding and protecting us); Blessing, blessing, blessing.[50]

Another instance from the prayers of an Ashanti King at an annual festival also envelops other dimensions of life in Akan society. Rattray writes:

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[46] Max Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in West Africa*, 64.
[47] J, G Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language called Tshi (Twi*) (Basel: Evangelical Missionary Society, 1933), 277.
[48] Ibid, 186.
[49] Ibid, 468.
[50] Busia, *African Worlds,* 204.

The edges of the years have met, I pray for life.

May the nation prosper.

May the women bear children.

May the hunters kill meat.

We, who dig for gold, let us get gold to dig, and grant that I get some for the upkeep of my kingship.[51]

At this point, it will be useful to recap what has been discussed so far about Akan Religion. The discussion on the Akan religion in this fit into what S.G Williamson succinctly documents in his work *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith:*

> In the first place, there is the Akan's firm belief that his life is dominated by the presence of 'spirits' activity at every level. Out of this belief issue, secondly, beliefs and practices which have a life-affirming quality and direction: the concern of the Akan is so to manage his world of spirit-powers that vital forces will increase and not diminish. Thirdly, this belief in 'spirit' activity and its wise management has the end of providing practical benefits of this-worldly kind, the desirable minimum (money, children, good crops, etc.) for the maintenance of traditional society. This basic minimum is however, conceived as within the power of spirit-ancestors and gods to grant or to withhold. It can suffer at the hands of witches and evil spirits. Finally, the society within which such beliefs are held and such ends sought is characterized by corporateness, a feature of Akan life which requires no extensive illustration.[52]

The search for every avenue among the Akan to have life full of happiness does go beyond seeking assistance from within the traditional religions. Religion, it is believed must be capable of providing spiritual and practical needs of the adherents. People do not hesitate to consult other spiritual powers irrespective of the faith provided they can bring practical solution to their existential problems. This has been affirmed by the historical studies of African primal religions, that 'far from being "passive traditional cosmologies", have in fact been dynamic institutions, able to adapt and respond to new situations and human needs in society.[53] Akan Traditional Religion and other indigenous religions in Ghana also fall into this category of primal religions, which are very accommodating, adaptable and highly

[51] R.S. Rattray, *Religion and Arts in Ashanti,* 138.
[52] S.G Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian faith,* 110-11.
[53] Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 212.

dynamic.[54] This characteristic of the indigenous religions has created the room for the influx of more foreign religions such as Islam, Christianity and many religions into Ghana and other Sub-Saharan countries. In the next section, I examine some of these 'imported' religions into Ghana and how they have shaped the religious landscape.

1.3.2. Islam in Ghana

Islam is probably the oldest religion among those religions which have their origin from outside Ghana. Although the available information on the specific period is sketchy, the link between Islam and trading in general and gold in particular is clear. As far back in the eleventh century, there were indigenous Muslims from North Africa particularly those from Tokrur on the Senegal River, the Gao on the Middle Niger and Kanem to the north of Lake Chad to trade in West Africa. Some of these Muslims can still be found in Ghana.

Islam arrived in Ghana through the main routes of trade and caravan links in the Sahara west and central Sudan *about* Thirteenth and Nineteenth centuries. Areas that trade routes missed, for example the territory of the family-and-clan-group people in the north-west of the Volta Basin, remain almost untouched by Islam except in one locality. That was Wa, which lay on the route to the Lobi goldfields, where Islam took root and thrived because it was nourished by the continual influx of Muslims drawn to the area by the trade.[55]

The penetration of Islam into Gold Coast, the present Ghana came through the trade from the northern part of the country particularly western Gonja.[56] Gonja therefore was the scene of vigorous missionary activity in the late sixteenth century, especially, when Malam Ismailia and his son Muhammad Labayiru succeeded in converting the ruling family to Islam in the

[54] J.G Platvoet, 'The Religions of Africa in their historical order', 55.
[55] Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London: Longman, 1982), 304.
[56] Jack Goody, *The Ethnography of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast of the White Volta* (London: 1954), 16.

reign of Mawura Sa'ara alias Imoru Kura, on the best available authority 1595/6-1614/15, there are grounds for believing that this conversion effected from Begho.[57] Goody has noted the role of Mande-speaking peoples, and especially of the Dyula traders, in the spread of Islam southwards along the 'great trade route from the Niger down to Begho in the north-west corner of present-day Ashanti'.[58]

1.3.2. 1 The Spread of Islam in Ghana

The spread of Islam in Ghana however is not limited to the direct link to the trade. People such as theologians, scribes, astrologists, charm-makers, physicians, and other professionals also contributed immensely even though inadvertently. Ryan, for instance has pointed out how *ulama,* the Muslim scholars trained in Islam and Islamic laws, who had no obvious connection with trade may have been influential in bringing Islam to the Yoruba capital of Old Oyo by the eleventh and sixteenth centuries.[59] He also shows that Muslim Hausa slaves of non-Muslim Yorubas helped to spread Islam in Yoruba land during the twelfth to thirteenth centuries and the eighteenth century.[60]

Again, prior to the commencement of the Saharan trade to ancient Ghana, Islam had been introduced in Ghana through conquest. The Almoravids had allegedly conquered the state of Ghana bringing about conversion to Islam when tenth and sixteenth centuries mounted warriors from Mali swept into Volta region and set up their kingdoms there.[61] The introduction of Islam into Ghana even though has been mainly connected to the trade, the contributions by way of militancy and literacy cannot be ignored.

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[57] Quoted in Ivor Wilks*, The Northern factor in Ashanti History* (Accra: Institute of African Studies, University College of Ghana, 1961), 10.
[58] Jack Goody, 'A Note on the Penetration of Islam into the West of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast', in *Trans*. *Gold Coast and Togoland Hist. Soc*., I, (1953): 45-6.
[59] Patrick Ryan, 'Islam in Ghana: Its Major Influences and the Situation Today'*, Orita,* 28 (1996): 129.
[60] Ibid, 129.
[61] Hiskett, *The development of Islam in West*, *Africa,* 302.

1.3.2.2 Ashanti and the Establishment of Islam in Ghana

It was therefore the Mandingo influence that first brought Ashanti in touch with the Moslem world to the north. One King who is known to have played central role in the establishment of Islam in wider circles of Ashanti society and by extension across Ghana was Osei Tutu Kwame. Osei Tutu Kwame who started his reign as an avowed enemy to the religion of Islam did not only tolerate it later on in his rule but became a strong adherent which finally cost him the throne. The justification for his destoolment was his attachment to the Muslims and, as it is said, his inclination to establish the Koranic law for the civil code of the empire. The powerful chiefs in the capital feared,

> that the Moslem religion, which they well know levels all ranks and orders of men, and places them at the arbitrary discretion of the sovereign, might be introduced, whereby they would lose that ascendency they now enjoy. To anticipate the calamity they dreaded, a conspiracy was entered into.[62]

The king, it was reported, 'does not neglect to supplicate the Moslems for their prayers, particularly when oppressed with anxiety, when the state council is convened on business of emergency, or when the national priests or necromancers are unable to solve any problem to the satisfaction of majesty'.[63] Such fears by the chiefs which led to the disposition of Osei Kwame Tutu were based on the assumption as *Khalifa* Muhammad Bello, wrote that 'it is well-known that the government of a country follows that of its chief. If the chief is a Muslim then the country is *dar-al-Islam*, if a pagan then it is a pagan country'.[64] One indication of the widespread of Islam in the Ashanti kingdom was seen from the great, and commercially important, and demand on 'sophies' charms in the form of amulets and talismans filled with the parchments inscribed with the Arabic characters usually verses of the Koran.[65] It is believed these amulets and talismans just like those used by the indigenous religions

[62] Quoted in Ivor Wilks, *The Northern Factor in Ashanti History*, 22.
[63] Ibid, 25.
[64] Ibid, 14.
[65] Jack Goody, *The Ethnography of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast of the White Volta,* 21.

particularly among the Akan protect the supplicants from both physical and spiritual attacks. The 'sophies' were however considers powerful on the battlefield especially against bullets.

Even though after the overthrow of Osei Kwame Tutu, the position of Moslems worsened to the point that their head became 'a prisoner in his own house, chained to a log of wood', the spread of Islam in Ashanti and other parts of Gold Coast did not stop.[66] Islam has been part and parcel of the religious culture in Ghana. The diffusion of Islam in modern Ghana parallels the stages proposed by Humphrey Fisher in relation to the conversion to Islam in the societies of the west and central Sudan. He suggests three stages namely, quarantine, mixing and reform.[67]

Quarantine, or isolation refers to the period during which foreign Muslims such as those from North Africans, Egyptians, and Berbers enter Sudanic Societies but live apart from the local people, in their own quarter, having little, if any intellectual contact with them. In Ghana such residentially isolated quarters where migrant Muslims live is known as *Zongos* and it is still common in almost every town or city in the southern part of the country.

Mixing period is when the first stage, starts to fall apart; local people begin to adopt Islamic ideas and Muslim clothes; the court begins to celebrate Islamic festivals as well as traditional ones. Nonetheless, Islam is not fully established; the traditional religion retains its hold on the common people and ruler is compelled to recognise this fact. Big smocks worn by traditional rulers in most festivals and indigenous priests in Ghana have 'sophies' stitched to them. Formerly it was associated with those supplicants who patronise the charms from the Islamic spiritualists known in Ghana parlance as *mallams* particularly from the northern part of the country. This situation in Ghana also mirrors some societies and Muslim culture described by J. O Hunwick. He writes:

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[66] J.Beechem, *Ashanti and the Gold Coast* (London: John Mason,1841), 93.
[67] H. Fisher, 'Conversion Reconsidered: Some Historical aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa', *Africa*, XLIII. I (1973): 31.

> There are societies which have adopted some facets of Muslim culture without formally adopting the faith. There are others which have formally adopted the faith but maintained custom which are in contradiction to it. Above all, there are many which have adopted Islam and maintained many of their practices and beliefs while giving them an Islamic (in the broadest sense) colouring.[68]

Reform is the final stage in the conversion process. It usually reaches a violent climax, namely, *jihad,* the holy war, although there can also be degrees of peaceful reform. The aim of the reform stage is to abandon the mixing and enforce the full observance of the Sunna. In certain cases such violent approach manifests itself in some areas in Ghana but not to the point of getting the apex, which is *jihad*.[69] Fisher model of Islamic conversion is similar to the situation in Ghana. The difference is that in Ghana, all three stages of conversion observed by Fisher happen concurrently.

Two categories of Muslims in Ghana are the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. However, the Sunnis dominate Islam in Ghana. Sunnis envelops all the four *madhahib*, the ways or schools namely: the Maliki, the Shafi, the Hanafi and the Hanbali. Most of the Muslims who came from North Africa as traders were solidly Maliki, that is, the followers of Malik Ibn Anas (c.711-793). This is one of the reasons why majority of Ghanaian Muslims are affiliated to the Maliki tradition. Some of the main hallmarks of the Maliki are a denial of any translation of the Quran and its teachings to infidels; the summary execution of heretics; the obligation of jihad under certain candidates and not to be afraid to die a martyr because martyrdom puts one in paradise.[70] The presence of few Shafi, named after al-Sahfi'e (AH 150-204), is also

[68] J.O Hunwick*, Islam in Africa; Friend or Foe*. (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1976), 14.
[69] In some cases, high ranking members of the Muslim communities' use *Jihad* for their parochial interest without any connection to conversion to Islam. For instance Baba Jamal, a Minister in the Mills led-government in August 2009 asked the Muslim community in his constituency in Akwatia, Eastern region of Ghana to wage *Jihad* on re-run of election in six polling stations.
[70] John Pobee, *Religion and Politics in Ghana*, 18.

felt in Ghana. Their basic principle is that nothing may supersede what is properly authenticated *Sunna,* the 'Tradition' of the Prophet.[71]

Shi'ites Muslims can also be found in Ghana. They are the members of the Islamic group who believe that the succession to the caliphate, the office of *khalifa,* caliph, the supreme ruler of the whole Islamic community, belong exclusively to the descendants of the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali b. Abi Talib. This group also looks for a Mahdi, an Islamic Deliverer who shall come at the End of the Time, from Ali's line.[72]

There are also orders or confraternities among Muslims of which some of them are in Ghana. These orders are Qadriyya and Tijaniyya. They seemed to have had their roots from the individual Sufis, the Muslim mystics from North Africa. They believe there were things in religion that could not be understood by the human mind but simply had to be accepted as divine mystery. Qadriyya is one of the orders founded by Qadir al-Jilani, a learned Sufis in the sixth and twelfth centuries. This attracted a lot of minor Qadiri groups together within their organisation, thus giving greater unity *to tariqa*, the 'Paths'. Qadriyya was however elitists form of Sufism. As a result of this a populist order, Tijaniyya *tariqa*, also emerged. They took their name from Ahmed al-Tijani, an eighteen-century Algerian Berber.

The religious and social activities of Ahmadiyya Muslims in Ghana also need to be acknowledged. The ahmadis take their name from their Indian Leader, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. They established in Southern Ghana in 1921 with Saltpond as the initial headquarters but later moved to Accra. Ahmadiyya Muslims are very strong in most part of Central region and Northern region especially Wa. Majority of their orthodox Sunni counterpart however do not recognise Ahmadis as true Muslims because of their teachings. The fundamental feature of Ahmadiyya doctrine is the assertion that the founder, Ghulam Ahmad,

[71] Quoted in Ibid.
[72] Hiskett, *The development of Islam in West*, *Africa*, 4.

is not just a holy man but fully a prophet, in the sense that that term is applied in Islam to the Prophet Muhammad. On the contrary, Sunni Muslims believe that Muhammad was the 'Seal' or the last of the Prophets.[73] Again, Ahmadis unlike the Sunnis teach that the Mahdi will not be a warrior but a man of peace and that his mission will be to bring peace on earth. Notwithstanding the diverging views on the Prophet and other doctrines, Ahmadis still insist that they are Muslims. It is within this context that I have classified them as Muslims in the thesis. Ahmadiyya Muslims are well known in Ghana through establishments of Schools-primary up to the tertiary level, hospitals and the provision of other supports in the societies.

In recent years, Muslims in Ghana have been collaborating with their brothers and sisters in the North African and the Arab world through the celebration of the annual religious festivals. A classic example is the annual participation in the *hajj,* annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Even though there have been organizational hitches associated with the Ghanaian Muslim communities' participation in the annual rituals to the Holy Places, members who are able to embark on the spiritual journey return feel happy for fulfilling one pillars of the faith. Among the five pillars of Islam, *Hajj* is the only one that is undertaken outside Ghana. The other four are: Shahadah, properly reciting the Muslim faith; Salat, praying five times daily; Zakat, generously giving alms especially to the poor; Swam, taking part in fasting during the Ramadan. Participants also become popular in their various communities with some even assuming leadership roles on their return from Mecca.

Some of these religious events have contributed to the growth and popularity of Islam in Ghana. Kwame Bediako also points to the attractiveness and growth of Islam in Ghana to the fact the people perceive it as not a Western religion. According to him, Islam does not insist on a sudden break with the African past regarding some social practices such as polygamy.[74]

[73] Ibid, 291.
[74] Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non Western Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 27.

One factor that has been encouraging the indigenous people to join Islam especially the Ahmadis is their flexibility and willingness to translate the Koran into English and other local languages which has in a way open the door for both educated and uneducated members in society.

We however need to note that Islam first caught eyes of the adherents of indigenous religion because they identified 'sophies', the Koranic charms, which have the ability to provide succour physically and spiritually with that of charms and amulets of the *Asuman.* This suggests that the spread of Islam is not a challenge to only traditional religion but any religion it comes into contacts with. For instance, over a decade ago, an in-depth study among Muslims in Ghana revealed that out of the 353 Muslims who were interviewed, as much as 56% had been members of Christian churches.[75] Which Christian churches did they come from? How many Christian denominations exist in Ghana? Since when did Christianity arrive in Ghana? Is this spread of Islam a threat to all Christian traditions? Are Islamic activities overshadowing that of Christianity in the entire country?

1. 3.3 Christianity

Christianity is akin to the Akan proverb about the Biblical Paul. *Paul a ma wo ntem, wo sen adikanfo*. This means even though Paul joined Christianity late he overshadowed the earlier Christians. Christianity was first introduced in Ghana also alongside with trading in the late 15th century.[76] That is, Ghana had a taste of Islam as a foreign religion before Christianity. However, Christianity has not only been instrumental but powerful force permeating every sphere of life. Christianity in Ghana can be said to be dominating the religious scene in terms of the number of members and its expansion. For instance, like most previous population

[75] Gerrir ter Haar, 'Stand up for Jesus: A survey of new developments in Christianity in Ghana, *Exchange*, 23 (1994): 238.
[76] R. H Wiltgen, *Gold Coast Mission History* (Illinois: Divine Word Publications, 1956), 22.

census since 1960, the Population and Housing Census in 2010 stated that 71.2% of the population claimed to be Christians, 17.6% as Muslims and 5.2 % described themselves as Traditionalists.[77] It is in light of this Christian dominance in other spheres of life that Paul Gifford concludes that Ghana's ethos is recognisably Christian.[78] Various brands of Christianity in Ghana emerged at different periods claiming to have the power to meet the spiritual and material needs that traditional religion, Islam as well as some Christian groups have failed to deliver.

1.3.3.1 Brief Historiography

Despite the difficulty associated with its initial establishment in the 15th century, permanent religious activities by the missionaries from the Basel Society commenced in Gold Coast in the mid-nineteenth century. Other missionaries followed them from Europe and North America. And in recent times, the missionaries have been joined by the indigenes themselves. The nationals establish churches in Ghana and open branches across the globe. Some Ghanaians are also actively involved in reverse mission, thus they start the churches outside the country and spread to other parts of the world including Ghana. In short, this is a brief chart of Christian activities in Ghana in chronological order: 1482-1816 (First Christian contact but unsuccessful); 1828-1906 (Foreign Missionaries-Christianity established); 1914-1920s (Impact of African Prophets on Christianity); 1930s -1970s (Foreign Pentecostals established) and 1979-Date (The Reign of African Pentecostal-Charismatics). This thesis is based on the African Pentecostal Christianity.[79]

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[77] Phenomena Nyarko, 2010 *Population and Housing Census*, 40.
[78] Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hurst, 1998), 110.
[79] For more Christian History in Ghana see C.K. Graham, *The History of Education in Ghana: From the earliest Times to the Declaration of Independence* (London: Frank Cass, 1971), 1; C.P Groves, *The planting of Christianity in Africa* (London and Redhill: Lutterworth, 1948), 123; C. P Groves, *The planting of Christianity in Africa,* 151; Ogbu Kalu (ed.), *General Introduction to the History of Christianity in West Africa* (London: Longman), 1-2.

When the missionaries finally established, it took the indigenes almost a century before playing leading roles in establishing more churches. The three Prophets worth mentioning in the history of African initiated churches are Harris, Swatson and Oppong. Their evangelistic campaigns converted so many people within a short period of time compared to the mission churches. One of the reasons was taking the indigenous spiritual orientation seriously. Another point was the inability of the mission churches to cope with the manner in which their independent prophetic gifts were exercised without submitting to structured authority of the missions churches. More particularly, these independent prophets wanted to preach with zeal and power as directed by the spirit without too much rules and restrictions characterised by the mission churches. The following years, especially from the 1920s witnessed the establishment of numerous local independent churches led by Ghanaians.

The resulting Churches which emerged from the African initiatives often characterised by claims of 'Pentecostal experiences', visions and angelic visitation are often called the AICs, an acronym which may have multiple representations such as: African Independent Churches, African Initiated Churches, African Instituted Churches, or African Indigenous Churches. This means, with the exception of the 'I' that changes, 'African' and 'Churches' remain the same. They therefore qualify to be referred to as the pioneers of African Churches or African Christianity. However, since the case studies for this study are taken from one of the renewal groups in African Christianity, they are discussed in details in chapter five.

1.3.4 Other Religions in Ghana

At this stage, it is germane to point out that in addition to traditional religion, Islam and Christianity as three major religions in the country influencing one another in various ways, there are other new religious movements. Most of these new religious movements either pick

certain religious practices and rituals from traditional religions, Islam and Christianity or they are of foreign imports. By situating his typology on the roots and origins of the belief systems of these groups, Elom Dovlo classifies the new religious movements into five main groups.[80]

The firsts among these religious movements is the new African traditional movements, which evolved within the matrix of Traditional religions as a result of the clash of African religion and culture with Christianity and Western civilisation. Notwithstanding their differences, according to Dovlo, new African traditional movements take certain religious practices from Christianity. There were some functions provided by these religious movements, which were at the margins in the activities of mission churches. Some of them were succour of members from witchcraft; settling of interpersonal squabbles swiftly and supernaturally and provided and enforced codes of moral conducts within the changing environment of the post war West Africa.[81] Prominent among them were *Tigare, Nana Tongon*, *Senyon*, *Kundi* and most of them were also derogatorily called 'Medicine drinking cults' and 'Anti-Witchcraft cults' because of their initiation practices and main functions respectively. They used to pose a serious threat to the mission churches at that time. A report from F.W.K Akuffo at end of a pastoral tour at Akyem Kotoku in the Eastern region of Gold Coast (now Ghana) detailed the problems of the churches. He writes: 'At every meeting the chief problem facing the congregation was Christians going back to the Tigare cult…At many places the members and even the Presbyters were votaries of the cult'.[82] These concerns were expressed after the Christian Council of the then Gold Coast had come out with a pamphlet entitled *Tigare* or *Christ* as a reaction to the emergence of the new African traditional movements. Although the overt heydays for the new African traditional movements came to a halt in the 1950s due to

[80] Elom Dovlo, 'The Church in Africa and Religious Pluralism: The Challenges of New Religious Movements and Charismatic Churches', *Exchange*, 27.1 (199): 53.
[81] Ibid, 54.
[82] F.W.K Akuffo, *'Preach the Word' The Christian Way*, (July/August, 1948):49-50.

'internal weakness'[83] and their greed and avarice[84], their presence and influence are still a reality in Ghana. A good example is Afrikania Mission with the former Roman Catholic priest, *Osofo Okomfo* Damuah as the founder and the first leader. The Current and third leader of Afrikania Mission since its inception in 1982, is *Osofo Okomfo* Atsu Kove.[85]

The second type of new religious movement is the Oriental New Religious Movements. These movements are either established by Ghanaians after their encounter with the religions from the East particularly in Burma and India through literature, studies, religious experience and embarking on pilgrimage to these places or branches of international movements in the country founded by foreigners. Some of these religious movements initiated by Ghanaians include the 'Larteh Mystical Prayer and Meditation Healing Home' founded in December 1946 by Nana Awua Amoh II, a sub-chief of Akwapim Larteh, *Arcanum Nama Shivaya Mission* established by Rev. Guru Janankananda Ramachanddra Amankwa and the Hindu Monastery in Africa with Guru Swami Ganand Saraswati affectionately called Guide Essel or Kwasi Ninson. Among the Oriental new Religious movements of foreign origin but with branches in Ghana are Sri Satya Sai Baba Sevan, Satsung, International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Nichiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai, Ananda Marga Ghana and Transcendental Meditation. There are also other movements, which combine Eastern ideas with Western Psychotherapeutic teachings such as Eckankar, Theosophical society, and other New Age Movements in Ghana and most of Africa.[86]

New Religious Movements from the African Diaspora have also been making their presence felt on the Ghanaian religious scene. And this is the third of the religious movements

[83] H. W Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana: A Study of Belief in Destructive Witches and its Effects on the Akan Tribe.* (Kumasi: Presbyterian Book Depot, 1959), 131.
[84] M. J. Field, *Angels and Ministers of Graces: An Ethnopsychiatric Contribution to Biblical Criticism.* (London: Longman, 1971), 122.
[85] See Marleen De Witte 'The Spectacular and the Spirits: Charismatics and Neo-Traditionalists on Ghanaian television', *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief*, 1.3 (2005): 314-334.
[86] Elom Dovlo, 'The Church in Africa and Religious Pluralism', 55.

identified by Dovlo.[87] He links the proliferation of the New Religious Movements from the African Diaspora into the country to Ghana being the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence as well as the Pan-African and Black Liberation ideals of Ghana's first President, Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah. These religious movements therefore see their coming back to Ghana as coming to the 'Promised Land'. They preach that economic and political emancipation of Blacks can only be achieved if Africans recapture their true religious heritage. They all have the Bible as scriptures but they see Christianity as a corruption of pure religion by the West. Prominent among these religious movements from the African Diaspora in Ghana are the African Hebrew Foundation of Ghana and the Rastafarian Movement.

Islam, which is the oldest foreign religion, has not been experiencing the emerging new religious movements in Ghana until recently. One of the main Islamic new Religious movements is the *Nation of Islam* which often times are in conflicts with Christianity. However, the arrival of *Ahl-ul Sunna* into the country has resulted in intra-Islamic tension, which has overshadowed their opposition with Christianity.

These new religious movements have been mentioned here because some of their elements also do feature in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. However, the focus of this research is on Christianity in general with special reference to Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, which are frequently portrayed in the films. In the next chapter, I look at the methodologies used to pursue the goals of the current thesis stated earlier on in this chapter. Before that, let us have a look at how the whole thesis is structured.

[87] Ibid, 56.

1.4 Chapter Outline

This thesis consists of six main chapters and a concluding chapter. In the first chapter, I give a brief background to the discourse on audience reception of religion and films and point out the lacuna, which this study sets out to address. The research objectives, the Ghanaian religious scenery within which the audience, members of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity (PCC), is situated as well as the outline of the thesis are provided in chapter one. I devote Chapter two to the discussion of the methodologies used in the research. Merits and challenges associated with the methods, particularly the ethnographic approach, are pointed out. In chapter three, I focus on the context of the study in relation to film and religion with special reference to the Ghanaian/Nigerian video film phenomenon and Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. I provide detailed accounts of the theoretical underpinnings of this study in chapter four. I do this by first reviewing the existing frameworks taking note of their strengths and weaknesses, which informs the choice of the theoretical frameworks used. In chapter five, I draw upon two case studies- Action Chapel International and Word Miracle Church International and examine their beliefs, theologies and doctrines which are often implicated in the media as a whole and the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films specifically. In chapter six, I discuss the reception of the religious video films based on the ethnographic research. In the concluding chapter, I reflect on the key findings and the implications of this study on the scholarship in the field of religion and film especially PCC and Ghanaian/Nigerian video films.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Research Methodology

2.1 **Introduction**

The choice of methodology in the present study was informed by the lack of audience inputs in relation to the religious constituents of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. This lacuna became apparent after extensive reading of the available literature on religion and Ghanaian/Nigerian films as indicated in chapter four of this thesis. In contributing to addressing the dearth of studies on audience reception of religion in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, this study used a combination of research techniques under the umbrella of qualitative research method. Qualitative research has been defined in so many ways by scholars detailing its essential features. Denzin and Lincoln have provided one classic definition of qualitative research under this rubric as follows:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.[88]

David Silverman also situates the definition of qualitative research in what the method does by stating that it 'tries to use first-hand familiarity with different settings to induce hypotheses'.[89] Although none of these definitions was strictly adopted, what they all have in common such as the notion of inquiring into, or investigating something in a systematic manner, was prevalent in the current thesis.[90] This research is therefore in agreement with

[88] N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* 3rd edn. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), 3.
[89]David Silverman, 'Research and Social Theory', in Clive Seale (ed.), *Researching Society and Culture,* 2nd edn. (London: Sage, 2004), 53.
[90] Sharan Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 3.

James Lull that 'research is an interpretive enterprise'; because synthesis of different techniques was applied in order to 'grasp the meaning of the communication by analysing the perceptions, shared assumptions and activities of the social actors under scrutiny'.[91] The method also proved to be not only insightful and appropriate but also suitable for research questions that seek to understand the nature and essence of social processes.[92] Principally, the focus in this study was to understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences in line with the religious aspects in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films.[93]

In order to create the room for the greatest potential for accurate description and explanation of the significance of communication in all contexts, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods of research is recommended but I have used mainly the qualitative approach in this research. The qualitative method was appropriated because it takes extremely seriously the interpretations of the media as constructed by the consumers in their everyday routines.[94] Unlike the previous studies on Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, as discussed in chapter four, where the religious experience of the audience is side-lined, the approach adopted in the present study placed the attitudes and understandings of the audience at the centre. The current thesis was therefore carried out using what Sara Delamont refers to as 'proper ethnography' as the main method.[95]

2.2. Ethnography

Even though ethnography has been defined in the *Dictionary of Anthropology* as 'the systematic description of a single contemporary culture', there is no uniformity among the

[91] James Lull, *Inside Family Viewing: Ethnographic Research on Television Audiences* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990) 183-4.
[92] Jane Ritchie, 'The Applications of Qualitative Methods' in Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers (*London: Sage, 2003), 26-38.
[93] Sharan Merriam, *Qualitative Research,* 5.
[94]Shaun Moores*, Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption* (London: Sage, 1993), 5.
[95] Sara Delamont, 'Ethnography and Participant Observation' in Clive Seale *et al* (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice* (London: Sage, 2006), 206.

scholars in the field on the definition of the concept.[96] For example, John Brewer also defines ethnography as 'the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities'.[97] Indeed, ethnography as a social research method does not have standardized definition because 'there is a considerable overlap with other labels such as 'qualitative inquiry', 'fieldwork', 'interpretive method', 'case study', and participant observation.[98] The meaning of ethnographic research is best conveyed when the various processes involved in the in-depth study of the social world of a group of people are outlined, and its distinctive features are identified. There is a greater consensus among researchers in detailing the procedures involve in an ethnographic research. One of such processes entail in ethnography has been provided by Hammersley and Atkinson who regard the term as referring primarily to a particular method or set of methods. According to them, 'In its most characteristic form its [ethnography] involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions- in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research'.[99]

According to Brewer, ethnography is a style of research rather than a single method because it uses variety of techniques in the collection of data.[100] Although multiple techniques were involved in exploring the reception and appropriation of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films among some members of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, ethnography was still used as a method. The ethnography embarked upon in this research falls into what Clifford Geertz

[96] Thomas Barfield (ed.), *The Dictionary of Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 157.
[97] John Brewer, *Ethnography* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 10.
[98] M. Hammersely and P. Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice,* 3rd edn. (London: Routledge, 2007),1.
[99] M. Hammersely and P. Atkinson. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice,* 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.
[100] John Brewer, 'Ethnography' in Catherine Cassell and Gillian Symon (eds.), *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research* (London: Sage, 2004), 312.

refers to as 'thick description'.[101] Geertz argues that what the ethnographer is confronted with 'is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render'.[102] Geertz is chiefly referring to traditional anthropological ethnography in which researchers move to the fieldsite and spend their whole time with the subjects for two or more years. This type of fieldwork is called total immersion. But the kind of fieldwork adopted in our case is the partial immersion because both in Accra and London, a good deal of the twenty-four-hours was spent with the churches participating in and observing the activities of the subjects but I returned to my home at night. The fieldwork also lasted for six months.[103] Despite the differences, this research can still be referred to as proper ethnography as Delamont rightly points out: 'In both total and partial immersion fieldwork, being fully engaged in another culture is a *sine qua non*. When the research is done, the result is ethnography: a theorized account of the culture studied with ethnographic methods'.[104] In order to achieve the aim of examining how the audience make sense of the religious narratives in their natural settings, a numbers of techniques were employed. They include negotiating access into the research field, conducting qualitative interview, spending time in the field making observations, establishing field relations, writing field notes, using audio recording, reading documents, recording and transcribing data as well as textual analysis of selected Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. But before discussing the research processes used in details, I first point out the specific audience at the centre of the study.

[101] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 10.
[102] Ibid.
[103] The field research took place between April to October 2010 in Accra and London.
[104] Sara Delamont, 'Ethnography and Participant Observation', 207; Shaun Moores, *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption* (London: Sage, 1993), 4.

2.2.1 The Audience in this Study

Who are then the audience for the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films central to this current work? The audience with what Pierre Bourdieu calls 'cultural competence' to understand the religious narratives in the films become the ideal target audience for the research.[105] Here the investment in the cultural competence goes beyond explaining how and why different audience consumes different cultural products such as the video films in different ways. Cultural competence include the 'forms of skill and knowledge which enable one to make sense' of the Pentecostal-Charismatic narratives in the video films.[106] It is in the light of such required skills that the members of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches were selected for the research.

Audience as a concept has gone through various stages in media studies- from disappearance to discursive construct to reality. Indeed, communication studies, especially the critical traditions, were once labelled as having the 'problem of the disappearing audience'. Moores have described the conditions and boundaries of audiencehood as inherently unstable.[107] These uncertainties surrounding the concept have been evident in the field with some scholars claiming that the 'audience' is a discursive construct. Martin Allor for example, argues against the usefulness of a unified conception of audience effects. For Allor, 'The audience exists nowhere; it inhibits no real space, only positions within analytic discourses'.[108]

Ien Ang agrees with Allor but also adds one further impetus to the concept. That is, the social world of actual audiences. According to Ang, the term is used nominalistically, as a provisional shorthand for the infinite, contradictory, dispersed and dynamic practices and

[105] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital' in John G Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (London; New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).
[106] Andy Willis, 'Cultural Studies and Popular film', 183.
[107] Shaun Moores*, Interpreting Audiences,* 2.
[108] Martin Allor, 'Relocating the site of the Audience', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 5.3 (1988): 228.

experiences of television audiencehood enacted by people in their everyday live-practices and experiences that conventionally conceived as 'watching', 'using', 'receiving', 'consuming', 'decoding', and so on…'.[109] She however complicates the concept by arguing that the fixing of meanings of 'television audience' is always by definition unfinished. For Ang, this is because the world of actual audiences is too polysemic and polymorphic to be completely articulated in a closed discursive structure.[110] But as Moores points out, there would be no sense in denying that, as academic researchers, reception ethnographers also have some degree of personal investment in delimiting a category they can investigate. Though not perfect but an ethnographic approach is 'nevertheless preferable to industry techniques precisely because it holds out the hope of representing consumption practices from the virtual standpoint of actual audiences'.[111]

The position of the present researcher is in line with the argument that the notion of audience cannot be deprived of 'its strong connotation of people sitting, watching and listening' to a specific medium.[112] The standard meaning provided by Denis McQuail is more useful in this thesis. He states;

> The classic meaning of the audience term has always been message related, while theory and experience have come to recognize the near-equal significance of behaviour and also the social, emotional, and affective aspects of the media use- the intrinsic pleasures and satisfactions of the process of using media in in various contexts.[113]

It is within such broader context in which the audience consume Ghanaian/Nigerian video films that the whole thesis was situated. Even here there is the need to select manageable audience of the video films because the audience for the audio-visual medium is still too large and disperse to be contained in a single work such as this. Scholars in the field have

[109] Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 13.
[110] Ibid, 14.
[111] Shaun Moores, *Interpreting Audience*, 3.
[112] Denis McQuail, *Audience Analysis*, 149.
[113] Ibid.

already identified a number of audiences of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. For instance, in studying the local audience of Nollywood, Onookome Okome identifies two main types of what he calls the 'street audiences': the 'street corner' and 'video parlour' audiences.[114] The street corner audience are the consumers who assemble in front of the shops for the rental of the video films and watch the free screening there. Video parlour audiences comprise of avid consumers of the video films who converge in a small room or a hall in order to enjoy the films. Each member of this category of the street audience pays a small amount of fees. Indeed, these two groups audience do exist in Ghana as well but the difficulty is how to locate them after watching the films. This problem of locating the audience makes it virtually impossible to target such consumers of the video films identified by Okome. Afe Adogame also uses another group of audience of the video films in his recent study.[115] And these are viewers who post their opinions about the films on the websites of the Pentecostal Christian groups who produce the films for evangelization. These audiences were also either virtual or spread across not only the globe but also affiliated to different brands of Christianity or religions.

With ethnographic research like the current one incorporating face-face interviews and participant observations, audiences used by Adogame will not be applicable here. This is because the audiences are scattered around the globe, which makes it difficult to locate them, and are made up of people of different religious orientations. But with such a study looking into the reception of specific religious representations in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, certain factors such as age, gender and most of all the basic knowledge for the audience to decode the encoded messages in the video films become crucial. With their impact on

[114] Onookome Okome, 'Nollywood: Spectatorship, Audience and the Sites of Consumption', *Postcolonial Text*, 3.2 (2007): 6.
[115] Afe Adogame, 'To God Be the Glory! Home Videos, Art Symbology and Religio-Cultural Identity in Contemporary African Christianity', *Critical Intervention: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture*, 2 (Spring 2008): 148-157.

Christianity in general and popular culture, especially the video films, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches became the obvious choice for this study.

2.2.2 Selection of Churches

In selecting the cases to be investigated, consideration was given to the various types of case studies in order for a suitable one to be adopted in our research. Robert Yin technically defines case study as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident'.[116] Robert Stake also identifies three types of case study: Intrinsic study is where one seeks better understanding of a particular phenomenon; collective case study provides insights into other interest and collective study has to do with undertaking multiple cases jointly in order to explore the phenomenon, population or general conditions.[117] Collective case study was adopted because it does not only allow for generalization but also a single project can be designed in the mould of similar ones in different fields so that comparisons can be made across them and a body of cumulative knowledge built up.[118] I must point out here that case study has been criticised for providing little basis for scientific generalization.[119] Any analytical generalization in this study is limited to expanding theory but 'not to populations and universes'.[120] Besides, as Stake notes, case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied.[121] Thus, collective case study informed the choice of the research field settings.

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[116] Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* 4th ed. (Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2009), 18.
[117] Robert Stake, 'Case Studies', in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: Sage, 1998), 88-89.
[118] John Brewer, 'Ethnography' in Catherine Cassell and Gillian Symon (eds.), *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*, 315.
[119] Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 15.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Robert Stake, 'Case Studies', in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds.), Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry, 86.

The fieldwork sites for the study were provisionally selected from three of Ghana's Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity, Action Chapel International (ACI) and World Miracle International (WMCI), Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI). The choice of these three churches was informed by their history in relation to media and evangelization. Although the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches initially selected for satisfying these conditions were three, only two were fully used in the research. ACI and WMCI became the obvious choice because, as anticipated, at some point there was a problem of getting access into the branch of LCI in London initially selected for the study so LCI as a whole was dropped. More details have been provided below in discussing the problems relating to gaining access to the research field settings.

Action Chapel was chosen because it is the first of Ghana's Pentecostal-charismatic Churches to be established in Ghana.[122] More importantly, one of their pastors is an active player in the production of the films. He plays crucial role in the Christian video films produced by non-Pentecostal groups. I must emphasise, as I discovered during an interview with the pastor, that ACI as a church is not directly involved in the production of the films.

World Miracle Church International (WMCI) became the obvious choice because of the founder's claim to have received his ministerial call through a video preaching. Charles Agyin-Asare calls the first year of his full time ministry as a year of desperation in which he cried to God in prayer. According to the founder, his prayer was answered through a video preaching by Evangelist Morris Cerullo aired in Ghana in 1983. In the words of Agyin-Asare:

> God answered my hearts' cry in a Morris Cerullo School of Ministry to Accra. Dr. Cerullo did not come himself but on a video cassette. On the last day of the conference, Dr. Alex Ness his senior associate, anointed us with oil, when I went

[122] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Anointing Through the Screen: Neo Pentecostalism and Televised Christianity in Ghana, *Studies in World Christianity,* 11.1 (2005):14; Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatic: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 98; E.K Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 298-9.

> to my seat, I knelt down to pray and I heard the audible voice of the Holy Spirit say to me *"My boy Charles, I send you out as I sent Moses, Go and I will put my words in your lips and reach the world for me"* I got shocked and confused at this, so I sought for a place to fast and pray after the conference. On the third day of my fast, the Holy Spirit spoke to me audibly once more saying, "*My boy Charles, I give unto you power over demons and principalities, heal the sick, raise the dead, preach the kingdom"* since then in 49 nations of the world, I have seen God confirm His word with signs and wonders following.[123]

Moreover, WMCI is one of the Pentecostal-charismatic Churches involved in the promotion of Christian video films through their bookshop.

In order to do the fieldwork in the settings that reflect the global or the international status of the churches, the headquarters of the ACI and WMCI in Accra, Ghana and London, United Kingdom were used. Two reasons also accounted for the choice of United Kingdom in addition to Ghana as the geographical sites for this comparative study. These reasons can best be described as historical and demographic factors. The introduction into Europe of a brand of Christianity largely influenced by African culture can be said to have started from the 1960s, first in Great Britain and afterwards in continental Europe.[124] In the European continent, the foundation of African led churches has been a development of only the last few years, which can be largely ascribed to Christian believers from Ghana.[125] This new development has however attracted researchers who have embarked on more studies on the new churches established by Ghanaians in other European countries such as the Netherlands[126] and Germany[127] than their counterparts in United Kingdom.

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[123] See: http://www.wordmiracle.com/2007/viewpage.php?page_id=4 Accessed on 18th July 2009.
[124] Afe Adogame, 'Globalization and African New Religious Movements in Europe' in Ogbu U. Kalu and Alaine Low (eds.), *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities,* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 301.
[125] Gerrie Ter Haar, 'The African Diaspora in Europe: Some Important Issues and Themes', in Gerrie Tar Haar (ed), *Strangers and Sojourners: Religious Communities in the Diaspora* (Leuven; London: Peeters, 1998), 38.
[126] RijkVan Dijk, 'From Camp to Encompassment: Discourses of Transsubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 27.2 (1997): 135-159; RijkVan Dijk, 'Time and Transcultural Technologies of the Self in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora', in A. Corten and R. Marshall-Fratani (eds.), *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (London/Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 216-235; RijkVan Dijk, '"Beyond The Rivers Of Ethiopia": Pentecostal Pan-Africanism and Ghanaian Identities in the Transnational Domain', in W. van

Official German statistics showed 20,000 Ghanaian passport holders residing in Germany as of the end of 2004, whereas the Netherlands was also home to 18,000 Ghanaians in 2003.[128] Meanwhile, available statistics indicate that Ghanaians represent the largest and longest-standing African community in United Kingdom due mainly to colonial ties between the two countries. In the 2001 census of England and Wales, 55,537 people who were born in Ghana were counted, an increase of seventy-two percent from the 32,277 in 1991.[129] Due to historical and numerical advantages in relation to the establishment of Ghanaian initiated churches in the diaspora, UK was chosen.

I now return to the various techniques employed in the ethnographic research. There was no strict sequence followed in the research designed. But here I discussed some of the main activities, which guided the ethnography. This research began with request for permission to carry out a study of this nature which was sought from three main levels: the University of Edinburgh Ethics in Research Committee, the churches involved and the individual participants. So the first authorization was Research Ethics clearance, which was sought from the University of Edinburgh. I carried out self-audit for the Research Ethics Assessment. Even though no risks were identified, because there were possibilities that some of my informants might include minors, I furnished further information to the Committee regarding

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Binsbergen and R. van Dijk (eds.), *Situating Globality: African Agency in the Appropriation of Global Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 163-189; Gerrier Ter Haar, Who Defines African Identity? A Concluding Analysis, in James L. Cox and Gerrie Ter Haar (eds.), Uniquely African? : *African Christian identity from cultural and historical perspectives* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2003), 261-274.

[127] Boris Nieswand, *Ghanaians in Germany – Transnational Social Fields and Social Status.* Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Report 2002-2003: 126-131; Boris Nieswand, 'Charismatic Christianity in the Context of Migration: Social Status, the Experience of Migration and the Construction of Selves among Ghanaian Migrants in Berlin' in Afe Adogame and Cordula Weisskoppel (eds.), *Religion in the Context of African Migration* (Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 2005), 243-265; Afe Adogame, 'To be or not to be? Politics of belonging and African Christian Communities in Germany', in Afe Adogame and Cordula Weisskoppel (eds.), *Religion in the Context of African Migration* (Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 2005), 95-112.

[128] Micah Bump, 'Ghana: Searching for opportunities at Home and Abroad', *Migration Information Source,* 2006. http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=381 , Retrieved on 29th September, 2009.

[129] Ibid.

the handling of the data and issues of confidentiality.[130] Based on the additional clarifications that I provided, the Ethics committee approved my Research Ethics Assessment.

The second permission was asked at the administrative level of the selected churches. The study was overt in that my identity as a researcher was disclosed and for that reason access was negotiated and permission sought from the churches. Michael Hornsby-Smith distinguishes open and close access to the research field.[131] But access to the churches was relatively open because there were no formal barriers in place. Appointment was booked with the heads of various ministries particularly those in charge of public relations for the discussion of the research. Pertinent issues regarding the purpose of the research, how confidentiality and anonymity were going to be maintained and how the final results would be used among others, were discussed with the gatekeepers in charge of the churches. Consent forms for participation and how personal data were going to be handled and used were also presented to the gatekeepers for perusal. Permission was finally granted but it was only Action Chapel International (ACI) where I was issued with a letter indicating that I have the backing of the church authority. The gatekeepers, pastors who deal with public relations issues, at World Miracle Church International (WMCI) and Lighthouse Chapel International headquarters in Accra, asked me to give their contact details to any member of their respective churches for clarification when the need arose. This arrangement worked perfectly well with the branches of ACI and WMCI in Accra and London without any problem.

2.2.3 Problems of gaining access to the research field settings

As has been characteristic of studies into the experiences and meanings of individuals and institutions, gaining access to the churches was met with some level of challenges. But with

[130] For confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout the field research unless stated otherwise. See Appendix B for the demographic information on the respondents.
[131] M. Hornsby-Smith, 'Gaining Access', in Nigel Gilbert (ed.), *Researching Social Life* (London: Sage, 1993), 53.

patience and diplomacy through negotiations with the gatekeepers of these three churches, permission was granted to me to carry out the research in any of their branches across the globe. However, despite the openness of the research, the gatekeeper (the pastor in charge) at the London branch of LCI denied me access even though the pastor in charge of public relations at their headquarters in Accra had given me the permission to use LCI and the study had been conducted at Qodesh, the headquarters in Accra. As already hinted, in all the three churches, which were initially picked, it was only Action Chapel International (ACI) that I was issued with a note indicating that the church authority has sanctioned the research exercise.

Although this arrangement worked perfectly well with the branches of ACI and WMCI in Accra and London as well as LCI in Accra but the pastor in charge of LCI in London asked me to wait for him to confirm from the headquarters first before considering my access to the branch. Before then, he suggested to me that prior to returning to his church I should seek feedback from the pastor in charge at their headquarters. The gatekeeper of LCI in Accra assured me that he would get back to me once my approval from the headquarters is attested to the host pastor in London. After several contacts including phone calls to Accra yielded no response throughout my three months stay in London, LCI was dropped from the research. But the data gathered, especially from interviews conducted and participant observations, from LCI headquarters in Accra were put aside (not disposed of or erased), to be used in the future when the need arises.[132]

This incidence clearly shows that the difficulty of access into research settings is a possibility in both overt and covert methods of research. One of the classic examples of covert study in which termination occurred in the middle of the research is that of Roy Wallis' work on

[132] Janice Morse, 'Designing Funded Qualitative Research', in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 229.

Scientology.[133] Wallis' situation was slightly different because he did not want his identity as a researcher to be known to the subjects. Neither did he want to pretend to be a member of the group under study. He did not ask for permission but took a communication course at the movement's headquarters. After just two days into the course, Wallis withdrew because 'he found it impossible to continue with the course without having to lie directly about his acceptance of its content'.[134] It was unclear, in our case, what might have accounted for the turn of events because no reason was specifically given for the refusal of access into the London branch of LCI. But I recall very well the recurrent questions all the other pastors and the host pastor of LCI in London asked me. The first was whether I am a member of the church of which I said no but a member of the Catholic Church. And the other question was why the Catholic Church not chosen for the research instead.

If the refusal of permission was connected to the last chat with this host pastor (of which I strongly believe so based on his gestures), then this methodological challenge of access to this particular research field was that of insider and outsider divide. Even though I do not intend to rehearse the issues of insider and outsider in the study of religion here, there is one point to be made. During the access negotiating stage, I observed that in addition to researchers, gatekeepers and informants also negotiate the insider and outsider problems before granting permission to researchers. But it seems literature on the problems of insider and outsider in the study of religion follows unidirectional approach. Up to date, the debate seems to focus on the complexity and the levels of the concept from the perspectives of 'researchers' with other external factors such as the attitudes of the host individuals or

[133] Roy Wallis, *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1976), 7.
[134] Ibid.

institutions at the margins.[135] The link of insider and outsider problem to gaining access into the practices and meanings of informants is hardly interrogated.[136] In my case, as someone who is a member of the Catholic Charismatic renewal and as a Ghanaian, negotiating the insider and outsider positions in the conduct of the research was not the issue as I did in the other fieldwork settings successfully. The challenge had to do with the problem of insider and outsider as negotiated by the pastors in charge of the churches. My religious affiliation as a Catholic was well known by the church officials at the headquarters of all the three churches including that of the London pastor yet I was granted access into the churches in Ghana and the branches of ACI and WMCI in London. But the London pastor in charge of LCI was able to overrule the decision taken by the church authority at the headquarters because I am not a member of the church. However, the process of gaining access is not merely a practical matter, as Hammersley and Atkinson note, but the discovery of obstacles to access, and perhaps of effective means of overcoming them, itself provides insights into the social organization of the setting.[137] As already intimated, I envisaged some of these problems in the study which were catered for prior to arriving at the research field. It should be said however that the denial of access was enlightening to me because I actually prepared for low patronage by starting with three churches in order to get reasonable number of participants befitting a study of this nature.

2.2.4 Participant Observation

After fully securing the permission needed to enter the three fieldwork sites and establishing good quality relation with the church members, I started my observer roles among the

[135] Some of the works I have in mind include: Russell McCutheon (ed.), *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London: Cassell, 1999); Afe Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel (eds.), *Religion in the Context of African Migration* (Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 2005).
[136] For one of the exceptions, see Cordula Weissköppel, 'Doing Ethnographic Research in a German-Sudanese Sufi Brotherhood', in Afe Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel (eds.), *Religion in the Context of African Migration* (Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 2005), 113-132.
[137] M. Hammersely and P. Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice, 2nd edn*., 53.

branches of ACI and WMCI and the LCI in Accra. Buford Junker divides observer roles into four groups: complete participant, complete observer, participant as an observer and observer as participant.[138] Complete participant and complete observer were however not applicable in this study because the former is chiefly used in covert research, and complete observer does not include social interaction with the subjects. With participant as an observer, the researcher does more participation than observation while the role of observer as participant puts more weight on observing the activities of the subjects. The observer roles assumed in this research were the combination of participant as an observer and observer as participant. Church members were aware that my participation in their activities was purely for the purpose of research but I occasionally shifted to the roles of doing more observation than participation. Thus, I took the roles of what David Walsh refers to as *marginal native* because I placed myself 'between a strangeness that avoids overrapport and a familiarity that grasps the perspectives of people in the situation'.[139]

At a certain stage during the participant observation in the research field settings, there were so many issues in connection with the place of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films in the churches in general and in the lives of members in particular which needed to be probed further and clarify. The observation and participations were not able to provide me with such responses on meaning making, experiences and their understandings regarding the religious elements in the video films. The question that quickly came to mind which was asked by Steinar Kvale was 'if you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them?'.[140] The aim of qualitative research interview is 'to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover

[138] Buford Junker, *Fieldwork* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 10.
[139] David Walsh, 'Doing Ethnography', in Clive Seale *et al*, (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice (*London: Sage, 2006), 233.
[140] Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Los Angeles, Calif.; London: Sage, 2009), xvii.

their lived world prior to scientific explanations'.[141] I therefore conducted interviews for in-depth views from the members particularly those who are also avid consumers of the video films.

2.2.5 Qualitative Interviews

According to Bridget Byrne, Interviews are not only a form of communication but also a means of extracting different forms of information from individuals and groups.[142] Described as 'predominant technology of social research' by Atkinson and Silverman, interview with its face-to-face character is able 'to reveal the personal, the private self of the subject'.[143] Indeed this advantage of the technique as a research method, Atkinson and Silverman believe of which I agree with them, accounts for the reason why interview has come to occupy so central a place in contemporary sociological discourse.[144] In the words of Tim Rapley, interviews are by their nature, 'social encounters, where speakers collaborate in producing retrospective and prospective accounts or versions of their past or future, actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts'.[145] The participants were allowed to share their views on variety of religious elements found in the video films.

2.2.6 Selection of Participants for the Interviews

As noted earlier, the choice of the audience was highly influenced by the skills and knowledge needed for viewers to decode the encoded religious messages in general and the narratives of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in particular in the video films. Selection

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[141] Ibid, 1.
[142] Bridget Byrne, 'Qualitative Interviewing', in Clive Seale (ed.), *Researching Society and Culture, 2nd ed*, (London: Sage, 2004), 180.
[143] P. Atkinson and D. Silverman, 'Kundera's Immortality: The Interview Society and the Invention of the Self**',** *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3.3, 1997:309.
[144] Ibid, 313.
[145] Tim Rapley, 'Interviews', in Clive Seale *et al* (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice* (London: Sage, 2006), 16.

of manageable number of participants was necessary because of the large memberships of the two churches.

In Ghana, I was introduced to the church members and given the opportunity to tell them more about my research. I therefore asked the members who were willing to be part of the study to let me know after the church service. I selected my informants from those members who were willing to participate in the study. In the case of London, I was again introduced to the members just like in Ghana at Word Miracle Church. However, at Action Chapel I was not introduced to the whole church members but the bishop in charge introduced me to some members of the congregation he thought could be of great help in the research. I must say here that the host pastor's decision to help in the selection of participants was in good faith. This is because this mode of introducing me to the church members also happened to be very helpful in getting people who could provide incisive answers to the questions regarding the religious representations in the video films.

The method used to select the subjects from both contexts, which is the willingness and the readiness of the informants to be part of the study, enabled me to get people who have the skills to decode the religious themes treated in the video films. It was also evident that the participants who came forward voluntarily consume the films and have the 'cultural competence' to discuss them. Demographics such as age, gender and occupation or profession of the informants were taken into consideration when selecting participants for the interviews. But the target for equal representation of male and females was not achieved. Males were slightly more than the females. Fifty-five percent were males and forty-five percent were females.[146] Interestingly, one woman who agreed to take part in the interview invited me to her place only to ask the husband to respond to the questions. Again, when it

[146] The interviews were conducted in Accra between April 26, 2010 to June 25, 2010 and in London from July 2, 2010 to 28 September, 2010.

came to the involvement of female pastors, apart from the fact that they were few, those female pastors I discussed the research with were also not willing to take part. Due to the voluntary nature of the study and in pursuance of the ethics governing the research, I decided to select members who volunteered to participate in the research irrespective of their gender. However in both churches, the geographical distribution of the participants however mirrors the numerical strength of their members in Accra and London. As shown in figure 2.2, more members got involved in the research in Accra than London. Indeed, anyone who got selected is a good participant. A good informant as Janice Morse rightly notes, 'is one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be interviewed, and is willing to participate'.[147]

At the end, a cross section of the members of the Action Chapel International and Word Miracle Church International made up of ordinary members, pastors and parents took part in the study. In all, the total number of participants for the interviews was sixty. Even though the age range was between sixteen to fifty-three years, most informants were within the age group of twenties and thirties. This twenties and thirties age group constituted sixty-two percent of the total interviewees. Below is the detail graphical representation of the various age groups and geographical distribution of the interviewees from the two churches:

Figure 2.1 Age Distribution of Informants

Age Group	**Percentage of Informants**
Under 20	10%
30-40	62%

[147] Janice Morse , 'Designing Funded Qualitative Research', in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* 228.

Over 40	28%

Figure 2.2 Geographical distributions of Participants

Geographical Location	ACI Members	WMCI Members
Accra	21	24
London	7	8
Total	**28**	**32**

2.2.7 Semi-Structured Interview

Unlike the survey-based interviews which tend to follow structured format in the form of questionnaire, the interview type followed in this research was the semi-structured one which involved loosely planned open-ended questions in relation to religious narratives as a whole with special focus on the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian and the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. The semi-structured interview questions were therefore used as a guide to gather the primary data needed to explore the reception and appropriation of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. The questions were designed in such a way that certain demographic information could be obtained for analytical purposes.[148] In order not to assume the reception pattern or the various motivations for the consumption of the audio-visual medium usually associated with closed ended questions, open-ended questions were administered to the respondents. The open-ended questions allowed the respondents to feel free to express their views on the reception of the films particularly on the religious aspects. Indeed, if closed ended questions associated with formal interviews had been used, there were certain areas, which would not

[148] For a copy of the semi-structured guide questions see Appendix A.

have been included in the questions. But some of the responses from the open-ended questions enriched the study by bringing in certain areas on the reception of the films for further interrogation.

With the exception of one respondent in Accra who objected to the use of tape-recording during the interview, all the respondents granted me the permission to record the interviews. The tape recording device was very useful in helping to obtain the accurate responses provided by the subjects. The tape recording also helped in the preservation of the data and facilitated cross-checking of most important information. In addition to the tape-recording, hand written notes were taken to augment the tape-recoding which also helped to ensure the exact information provided by the informants were gathered. In order to ensure the precise opinions expressed by the participants are obtained, I relied on the tape-recordings and the hand written notes in transcribing the data. Each interview section took at least thirty minutes. Apart from copies of the consent forms and the semi structured questions guide, which were presented to the public relations pastors in each church, all research materials including the recorded gadgets, were securely kept. I uploaded the raw data on my computer and secured it with a password. I personally did all the transcriptions to make sure that the views articulated by the participants are properly accounted for in the analysis.

I returned from the field research with voluminous materials made up of interview transcripts and notes taken during the observation process among others, which needed organization for understanding of the data to be made. Coding was resorted to in order to organize the data into meaningful patterns.

2.2.8 Coding of the Qualitative Data

A code in qualitative inquiry as defined by Johnny Saldana is ‘most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative

attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data'.[149] A distinction however has to be made about how code and category are used in this research. Following the recommendation made by Saldana, the concepts are used here as related but not synonymous. In his words, 'qualitative codes are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity – a pattern – they actively facilitate the development of categories and thus analysis of their connections'.[150]The codes developed from the qualitative data reflect the two main aims of the thesis which were:

- To interrogate the reception of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity narratives in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films among the members of these churches in Ghana and the United Kingdom.
- To examine the various ways in which the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches contents in these video films are appropriated by the members of the churches in their Christian lives.

The codes generated especially from the interviews data resulted in both deductive and inductive analysis of the categories that emerged. *Deductive analysis* refers to data analyses that set out to test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by an investigator.[151] In our case, the application of Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model yielded three dominant codes for discussion. These codes were developed from the data on the responses to the question 'what is the central message you take from the representation of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in the video films?

Good = the video films recommend the churches as good for the audience.

[149] Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (London: Sage, 2012), 3.
[150] Ibid, 8.
[151] David Thomas, 'A General Inductive Approach for Analysing Qualitative Evaluation Data', American *Journal of Evaluation*, 27.2, (June 2006): 238.

Evil = the video films admonish viewers to be cautious about the evil activities in the churches and if stay away from them.

Paradoxical = the films present the churches as being paradoxical because they possess dual qualities of good and evil.

The codes were therefore: 'good', 'evil' and 'paradoxical' dominant messages about the narratives of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in the video films which were decoded by the respondents. Below are some examples of qualitative interview data coded as 'good', 'evil', and 'paradoxical' dominant messages:

- The churches are positively portrayed in the video films by stressing on the positive signs in the churches which are leading people to Christ-Good
- Individual Pentecostal Christians or the churches are seen in the video films as not preaching the good news according to the Bible but for their selfish interests. They are seen in the films as not promulgating the Gospel but their personal ideals-Evil.
- The members of Pentecostal Christianity are portrayed as more prayerful and seriousness towards church. But some who call themselves pastors but do ungodly things are also exposed in the films- Paradoxical.

The three dominant messages that emerged from the qualitative interview data is unrelated feature of the encoding/decoding theoretical framework, which proposes sole dominant message fixed in the media text. However, there were codes generated from the data, which corresponded to the three options of decoding dominant messages, by the audience proposed in the encoding/decoding framework.

The inductive analysis of raw data also refers to approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made

from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher.[152] Here the coding scheme applied was in line with the Uses and Gratification theory, which posit the audience as active and selective in terms of the consumption of media content. Drawing analogy from indexing of a book, Clive Seale describes coding as a situation 'whereby the analyst is marking sections of text according to whether they look like contributing to emerging themes'.[153] The following were the categories of themes developed from the responses data on the question of the specific religious elements in the video films which are used by the audience: Christian characters, education, moral and ethical values, biblical texts, contemporary religious issues, and challenging and motivational Christian narratives. The themes, which emerged from the data in relation to the various uses of the religious construct in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films by the audience, were categorized for analysis and discussion. The following are some figures showing the outline of the details of the reception and the uses of the religious narratives in the video films.

Figure 2.3 Summary of the Reception of the dominant messages in the video films

Category	Number of Participants	Percentages
Good	17	28%
Evil	6	10%
Paradoxical	37	62%

[152] Ibid.
[153] Clive Seale, 'Coding and Analysing Data', in Clive Seale (ed.), *Researching Society and Culture, 2nd ed*, (London: Sage, 2004), 313.

Figure 2.4 Overview of the appropriation of the religious dimension of Ghanaian/Nigerian Video films

Do you use Ghanaian/Nigerian Video films in your religious life?	Percentage of users
Use the religious aspects in the films	88%
Do not use the films in my religious life	5%
Do not know or not sure whether the films are used in my religious life	7%

Figure 2.5 Religious constituents in the video films respondents use

Theme	**Number of Users-ACI**	**Number of Users-WMCI**	**Total Users**
Christian characters	6	4	10
Educational values	5	6	11
Biblical texts	4	2	6
Moral and ethical values	6	7	13
Contemporary religious issues	2	2	4
Challenging and motivational Christian narratives	3	2	5

Figure 2.6 Respondents' Access to the Video films

How do you access the video films?	Number of Informants	Percentage of Informants
Watch on Television	43	71.6%
Buy DVD/VCD	16	26.7%
Rent from Video shop	1	1.7%
Total	60	100%

2.2.9 Textual Analysis of Religious Ghanaian/Nigerian Video films

The last technique to be considered in this ethnographic research is textual analysis of selected Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. In approaching empirical studies on audience decoding of media text, Wren-Lewis proffers certain steps, which cannot be ignored here, particularly, the point which states that:

> The analysts' task is to construct a series of 'preferred readings' from the material gathered after interviewing has taken place. This will enable her/him to gauge the scope of possible readings the text allows (scope limited only by the range of decoders), and to identify the points at which the text allows/limits plurality. At this point, textual analysis will be necessary in the quest to identify the textual aspects/forms that determine certain meanings at certain points.[154]

The video films selected for the purpose of analysis were informed by the three preferred readings which were constructed from the interview data. So in order to enhance the understanding of video films regarded by the respondents as containing 'good', 'evil' and 'paradoxical representations of religions in general, especially Pentecostal-Charismatic

[154]Justin Wren-Lewis, 'The Encoding /Decoding Model: Criticisms and Redevelopments for Research on Decoding'**,** Media, *Culture and Society*, 5, (1983):195.

Christianity, films drawing on such discourses are selected and analysed. It needs to be noted that though each of these video films may have some overlapping attributes of these three dominant messages, the overriding meanings of the film as 'good', 'evil' and 'paradoxical' are distinct.

In Chapter three, certain Ghanaian/Nigerian video films are either cited or briefly analysed to substantiate an argument in relation to religion and the video film phenomenon in Ghana. For example, films such as *Zinabu I&II (1987)* and *Time (2000)* are mentioned to make a point that representation of religions in the video films resonates with popular religious events or activities in the society.[155] During the field research the respondents from all the churches selected for the research kept on mentioning these three films, *Expensive Vow* (2007, dir. T. Meribe)*, God Loves Prostitutes* (2003, dir. A. Salem),and *Evil Heart I,II & III* (2008, dir. R. Afrane) as examples of some of the types of video films they were taking their central messages from. Upon further investigation, it was also discovered that the films are popular with the audience for a number of reasons. Three of these rationales for the popularity of these video films are pertinent in this thesis. They are: the narratives of the films revolve around the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity; the protagonist or the pastor in two of the films is also pastor in real life at Action Chapel International in Accra and he is well known by the audience; and finally, the representations of the church inform the dominant message the audience reception of the audio-visual medium is based. As has been discussed in Chapter six, the informants interpreted the church as being portrayed as good, evil and, in most cases, represented paradoxically. It is against this background that these three films are analysed as

[155] *Zinabu* was produced at a time when the economic situation in Ghana was so bad that there were widespread rumours that people made pact with cults to sacrifice a relative or something valuable in return for wealth. These were the common religious worldviews prevailing and this was taken over by the films industry. But from the late 1990s the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches started making inroads into the religious landscape and the popular culture. The activities of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity have since been pivotal in the storylines of most video films produced in Ghana and Nigeria.

part of the methodologies in the audience reception and the appropriation of the religious aspects particularly Pentecostal connotations in the video films.

Here *God Loves Prostitutes I &II (2003)* falls into what the audience referred to as good representation of the Pentecostal groups in the films. The import of the film, *God Loves Prostitutes II &II,* a title which was changed to *The Chosen One* when the film got to Nigeria, is about a prostitute (Sandra) who abandons the vice to become a spiritual head of one of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. Pastor Henry, who is attending a conference in Accra from Kumasi, helps her. Pastor Henry's continuous stay in Accra to help Sandra to convert to Christianity gets him into trouble with his church and parents. Sandra goes to prison because of her association with drug dealers. But while behind bars, she hears a voice saying 'Sandra do not be afraid for you are my chosen vessel to carry the gospel to the world…' After the encounter, Sandra starts reading the Bible and preaches to fellow inmates, interests she continues after her released from prison. Pastor Henry also returns to restore his relationship with the church and the parents all to the Glory of God, as the epilogue confirms. The epilogue reads: 'To God Be The Glory'. There are number of Ghanaian/Nigerian films in circulation in which the pastor at the CAFMI has either acted or helped produced. All his films have Pentecostal-Charismatic undertones. In my conversations with him, the pastor stressed that if the film is not about preaching the gospel, he will not be party to it.

He is not the only Pentecostal-Charismatic pastor or member who has been appearing in the local video films. In Ghana, other pastors or Christians are either overtly or indirectly involved in the production of video films with religious implications. The issue is that most of the video films produced outside the Pentecostal circles also constantly feature the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. Independent film producers like the sympathisers crying more than the bereaved, draw more on the issues of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in the films. The reason is that film producers know very well that putting the

issues of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity on the silver screen serves as a marketing hype because of its popularity.

In such video films, the members and usually the Pastors are depicted as converting the lost on the street into born-again Christians. Some converts, as in the case of Sandra seen in *God Loves Prostitutes*, are shown as rising up to level of heading a church. Prayerful pastors or members, mega-size churches, Christians with Bibles, steadfast Christians emerging as victors at the end of the film, Christians conquering the evil forces-in most cases linked with indigenous religious functionaries, and a lot of Biblical quotations emerging from individual characters or appearing on the screen are staple in the story lines of most Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Some of these Christian features display in the video film become valuable resources in the religious lives of the Christian audience.

Expensive Vow I&II (2007) is the second case study of popular video films, which can throw more lights on the negative imaging of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity as presented in the video films. Here Pastor Moses is a younger pastor in an established church. He commits himself to cult group in return for power to found his own mega church. He succeeds in forming the church and even manages to draw more members from his old church. However, he is unable to fulfil his part of the agreement with the cults. Pastor Moses gets into serious troubles with the cult members and in the end he goes mad. The message of *Expensive Vow* to the audience is boldly written on the screen in the epilogue. 'Watch out for that deadly anointing, it may be the devil disgusting himself as angel of light'- a quote from the second letter of Paul to the church at Corinth chapter eleven verse four. This is common characteristic of the popular video films irrespective of the genre, films are concluded with either biblical text or phrases such as 'To God Be the Glory!', 'Trust In God'

The third video film, which throws more lights on the dominant message of evil representation of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, is a three-part video film *Evil*

Heart. Many video films, which are critical on the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, go beyond the churches involvement in the indigenous religious rituals, as demonstrated with *Expensive Vow I&II*, to link them to most of the social vices in the society. The churches are sometimes portrayed in the video films as contributing to economic and societal problems such as frauds, bribery and corruption as well as divorce among others. The central message in *Evil Heart* however points to the interconnected nature of various scandals common in some of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. In this particular video film, the focus is on how a single act of adultery committed by the head, pastor Amoah (played by Ecow Smith Asante) leads to broken homes and multiple murders. *Evil Heart* opens with the church congregation dancing to the tunes a Ghanaian Christian music known in the local parlance as 'Gospel Music'. The real musician of the song, Christina Love, also features in the film and she is the wife of the head pastor of this church. Holding the microphone and bursting out the lyrics of the song, *Memma me wirenfi* (I will never forget what the Lord has done) to her best, the members of the congregation cannot help but join her in singing and dancing. The camera also pans to show the large members of the church including other pastors and the head pastor dancing during the 'praises and worship' session.

Pastor Amoah is ready to do everything possible to protect such a glamorous image of the church. But he impregnates Mabel, his secretary, who is also the wife of one of the junior pastors. Pastor Ben, the junior pastor is in charge of the church's branch in Italy where he resides. So pastor Amoah takes advantage of the absence of his junior pastor to entice Mabel with a night out with the pretence of awarding her dedicated service. He ends in bed with Mabel, an act which hunts him throughout his life. His first predicament comes when a daughter of one of the church members possessed with demonic spirit he is praying for, known in Pentecostal circles as deliverance, accuses the pastors of hypocrisy. He does the deliverance with Pastor Moses, the one in charge of the youth at the headquarters in Kumasi.

During the deliverance prayers, the pastors command the evil spirit to come out of Faustina, the possessed daughter but the demonic spirit retorts 'you hypocrite, you hypocrite ah… how dare you command me to leave! Go home and pray for yourself all day. Are sure you can cast me out … you, you are a candidate for hell'. Pastor Amoah goes to his house still lamenting on what the demonic spirit told them by saying: 'Oh God! This is unbelievable. Is the demon going to reveal everything I did? Am I going to be exposed everywhere I go? God I really feel bad for this whole situation'.

After complaining to God about his fears of being uncovered for his moral failings, he receives a phone call from Mabel for an urgent meeting. She delivers the news for the first time to pastors Amoah that she is pregnant. Mabel follows this terrible news with persistent phone calls in the middle of the night demanding from the pastor a quick solution to the problem. The pastor's wife also becomes suspicious about the relationship between Mabel and the pastor but the later keeps on lying to his wife insisting Mabel's concerns are entirely related to official duties. Any time pastor Amoah keeps on thinking about the whole issue, a background song 'Worship God in truth… In truth… in your spirit… Worship God' is heard sometimes intersperses with voice over 'God is the most high. He is the living God. He is watching you. He is watching your steps. God is watching you. God is watching you'. However Mabel puts more pressure on pastor Amoah through phone calls to his house and visits to his office demanding instant solution to the pregnancy. The family members of Mabel especially, her elder sister Judith (starred by Nana Ama McBrown), is suspecting there is something terribly wrong. The husband in Italy also gives a hint of his imminent return to Ghana.

Pastor Moses also comes to his head pastor's house still pondering about what the possessed daughter accused them of. Below is an excerpt of their conversation:

Pastor Moses: Emm… Papa (that is how pastor Amoah is affectionately called by the church members) there is something that I really don't get. Why did the spirit tell us we are also hypocrites and we should go and ask for forgiveness before following other issues?

Pastor Amoah: Pastor Moses you should know the devil by now. The devil will always play tricks on us. The devil is cunning, funny, is a trickster, will make sure we are always destabilised when he knows that we are against him. All we need to do is to keep on praying, fast, pray, pray, pray...everything will be well. God is with us. Pastor Moses it shall be well. Pastor Moses responds to the mini-sermon with a resounding Amen!

Mabel comes to pastors Amoah office again this time round threatening to expose him if nothing is done immediately about the issue at stake. Pastor Amoah determined to cover up such a scandal swiftly arranges a place for discussion. Mabel rejects his first suggestion for the husband, who left over three months before the pregnancy, to assume the responsibility outright. Pastor Amoah then suggests abortion that is also met with rage and insults.

Judith confronts Mabel, after observing her disturbing state for a while. Judith pleads with Mabel to confide in her whatever is worrying her but to no avail. Even their mother's visit is not able to convince Mabel to openly share her problems. Mabel rather confesses to God in prayer by admitting: 'Heavenly father, your daughter has sinned. How on earth did I put myself into this mess? Had I known has always been the philosophy of a fool like my type. God please have mercy on me and forgive me'. Within this prayer she pauses and in a flashback, recalls how the whole affair began. She ends the prayer gazing into the photo of her husband to offer unqualified apology before finally deciding to determinate the pregnancy. Pastors Amoah gets this decision while reflecting on a dream he had where Mabel was asking him to confess to the congregation what has happened. So he says 'thank you Jesus' and heap a big sigh of relief for hearing Mabel has eventually accepted to do the

abortion. Unfortunately, complications develop after the abortion that results in the death of Mabel.

Pastor Ben, Mabel's husband returns to Ghana to grief the death of his wife. He expresses disappointments after learning the cause of the death of his wife. But showing complete innocence pastor Amoah is able to encourage Pastor Ben to be strong in the Lord and also apologises on behalf of the church for what has happened. Ben decides to leave for Italy in order to stay away from the embarrassing situation and rather go back to focus on the church activities in abroad. As if the woes of Pastor Amoah are over with the passing on of Mabel. Judith, who is also a Journalist by profession, chances on the diary of her sister with full details of the whole affair and starts threatening pastor Amoah of exposure. Pastor Amoah comes back to his distress state that affects his wife and three daughters. One of their daughters dies through car accident. But when his wife confronts him, he pretends of mourning the loss of a dedicated worker like Mabel.

Fearing that this embarrassing situation will come to the public domain, pastor Amoah arranges for a meeting with Judith without any delay where the former admits everything and asks Judith to name her price after delivering a passionate speech by saying: 'Judith I am a human. So I am imperfect. Meaning I can make mistakes. Whatever I have done I cannot cancel. I am sorry but I can't undo it. So I am begging you. I will give you good money so you forget about this secret for life with your life. Name your price'. In a dramatic twist, the price that starts from ₵5000 (five thousand Ghana cedis) reaches ₵ 8000 (eight thousand Ghana cedis) but they all agree on the latter figure.[156] However, not able to organise the agreed amount of money, Pastor Amoah deposits ₵5000 in the accounts of Judith insisting that that is what she deserves, an action which infuriate her to intensify the warnings. She

[156] With the exchange rate of 1 GBP = 3.14971 GHS, this amount to 2,539.92 in British pounds. http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=8000&From=GHS&To=GBP, Retrieved on Thursday, 25 July 2013.

makes matters worse for Pastor Amoah by giving him extra ten days to again credit her bank accounts with the settled amount of ₡ 8000.

In an attempt to end his troubles once and for all, Pastor Amoah hires thugs to kill Judith and take the evidence from her. He plans to meet Judith at a location to pay the money with the intention to lure her for the hoodlums to do their job but she is given an assignment by her boss to cover an event elsewhere on the appointed day. The first trap fails. But Judith returns from the trip and books a hotel to meet Pastor Amoah for the deal. Before calling the latter, she invites Pastors Moses also to be present but both Pastors are not aware that they are attending the same meeting. Fully conversant with the evil deeds of Pastors Amoah, she hides video camera in the hotel room where the meeting is going to take place. Pastor Amoah did not honour the invite but sends the murderers to move to the location and execute the plot to perfection without any traces. One of the assassins takes the identity of Pastor Amoah to outwit the receptionist to enter the hotel room of Judith and knife her to death when she refuses to handover the evidence. Pastor Moses goes to the venue to see Judith alone in a pool of blood but Judith manages to show the former the hidden camera and evidence relating to the death of Mabel before finally giving in the ghost. Pastor Moses shock by the scale of evidence and the level of cruelty perpetuated by Pastor Amoah accuses the latter on the phone and threatens to take the matter up. Determined to cover up his wicked plans, Pastor Amoah again orders his thugs to his junior Pastor's house for both his life and the evidence. Pastor Moses however escapes to show the evidence to Mama Evelyn, his senior Pastor's wife before heading to the police station. Her husband confirms the whole incidence to Mama Evelyn when he is heard arguing with one of the gangsters over money. He is heard saying he is not going to pay them because they could not eliminate Pastor Moses or take the evidence from him. The police arrive to pick both the thug and the pastor away amidst wailing from the family of the latter. Pastor Moses in the concluding part of the films summarizes the

whole point of the video film in line with some of the views extracted from the interview data. In his words, 'You now see how the world is. The world is so wicked you can't even trust anybody not even a man of God, a pastor'.

The case of *Expensive Vow* is however different; here some Churches and individual members are portrayed as not being faithful to their God. Christians and even pastors, as illustrated with Pastor Moses, are portrayed as exhibiting double standards. *Evil Heart* even associates some of the serious crimes in the society to the churches. In most narratives of such video films, the churches or the Christians become villains. Some of these video films, as exemplified with *Expensive Vow* and *Evil Heart*, challenge one of the regular criticism levelled against the film industry. The films are criticized for depicting negative stereotyping of traditional African religious functionaries and positive stereotyping of pastors or leaders from the Pentecostal -Charismatic churches.[157] The fact that the portrayal of various religious traditions in the films is varied makes some of these arguments debatable and even renders the textual analysis as the sole method of research insufficient.

As has been discussed in chapter four, such approach to audience reception is no longer popular because the assumption is that the meaning reside in the filmic text for the audience to absorb. The textual analysis of films does not leave room for the complex ways in which the audience decode the media texts. This is one of the reasons why the cultural perspective is adopted because it goes beyond the textual analysis of the film. In this thesis, textual analysis is used as part of ethnographic study. According to Peter Horsfield, cultural studies approach conceives of a variety of constructed 'realities', which serve particular purpose for those who hold them and which continually contest with other constructions for access to social

[157] Jolyon Mitchell, 'From Morality Tales to Horror Movies: Towards an Understanding of the Popularity of West African Video Film', in Peter Horsfield, M. E. Hess, and A. M. Medrano (eds.). *Belief in Media: Cultural Perspectives on Media and Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 113; Esi Sutherland-Addy, 'The Ghanaian Feature Video Phenomenon', 271.

recognition and resourcing.[158] In order to accommodate the diversity of realities and differences of opinions regarding the films, audience ethnography is used in the study that includes the content analysis of video films. The textual analysis of the filmic texts enhances understanding of the various dominant messages identified by the subjects. Audience ethnography does not only observe the place of the media in the lives of the audience but goes further to compare what is observed with what the audience say they do with the media text and in our case the filmic text. In the next chapter, we turn our attention to the context of religion in Ghanaian/Nigerian video, which has necessitated this research.

[158] Peter Horsfield, 'Theoology, Church and Media-Countours in a Changing Cultural Terrain', in Peter Horsfield, M. E. Hess, and A. M. Medrano (eds.), *Belief in Media: Cultural Perspectives on Media and Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate , 2004), 28.

CHAPTER THREE

3. 0 Religion and Ghanaian/Nigerian Video Films in Perspective

3.**1 Introduction**.

The indigenous film industry is flourishing but it is one of the most criticised art forms to have emerged from the West Africa sub-region. The film industry has earned descriptions such as 'boom', 'explosion', and 'revolution' because of the rate at which the film industry is growing. The Ghanaian/Nigerian video film industry is one art form that continues to dominate popular culture of Ghanaians and Nigerians in the continent and abroad. Haynes and Okome describe the video film phenomenon as one of the greatest explosions of popular culture the continent has ever seen.[159] Ghanaian/Nigerian video films are popular to the extent that they have not only sustained the loyalty of the core cinema audience in their respective societies- mainly, urban and working class aficionados of Kung Fu, Hollywood, and Indian imports- but have also attracted new audiences from the middle class *nouveaux riches*.[160]

It is no more news to talk of the local video films displacing Hollywood films from the film shelves in most homes in Ghana and in the diaspora but how the latter is strategizing to register its presence without disappearing totally. Some filmmakers in America and Canada writing and producing for Hollywood are now making video films featuring Ghanaian and Nigerian film actors and actresses alongside American film professionals. *Ties That Bind (2011)*, written and directed by the renowned Leila Djansi, who has recently been recognized by the British Academy of Film and Television Awards (BAFTA), featured Hollywood actress Nia Long, Ghanaian actor John Dumelo and Nigerian actress Omotola Jalade. Other

[159] Jonathan Haynes and Onookome Okome, 'Evolving Popular Media: Nigerian Video Films', *Research in African Literatures,* 29.3, (Fall 1998): 106-28.
[160] Frank Ukadike, 'Video booms and the manifestations of "first" cinema in the Anglophone Africa', in Anthony Guratne and Wimal Dissanayake (eds.), *Rethinking the Third Cinema* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 140.

Hollywood producers also sometimes use all African cast in their films. An example is the *Punctured Hope (2009)*, written, directed and produced by Bruno Pischiutta and Daria Trifu, which featured all African cast of professional actors and actresses including five Ghanaians.[161] These are some of the limited traces of the foreign contribution in the fast growing video film landscape.

The audience for these local films have not only scattered across most African countries but are also available to the increasing African populations in the diaspora. Although there are varying genres such as melodrama, comedy, satire, musical, adventure and horror employed by the film producers, they all draw attention to topical vices bedevilling the society. Some of these problems highlighted in the films border on privacy and confidentiality which would have been extremely difficult if not impossible to reveal off screen or in real life. The advantages of replicating these social, economic, religious and other vices in the films stems from the fact that they do not only encourage discussion of the issues but also contribute to redressing those tendencies that are considered inimical to society. Birgit Meyer aptly states the inseparable nature of film narratives of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films and everyday life as:

> It would be inadequate to approach video-films as artistic products to be viewed in their own right, from the perspective of the distant spectator. Rather it has to be taken as a point of departure that these films impinge on everyday life as much as they claim to represent it. In the video-film industry… the cinema and TV screens do not function as window through which spectators look at the world from distance. In the same way, those who make the film perceive what happens in front of the camera as to be fully entangled with real life, rather than occurring in a virtual space, within the safe confines of artistic production. Ghana popular cinema, with regard to production as well as consumption, blurs the boundary between everyday life and its representation.[162]

[161] They are Belinda Siamey, Ruffy Samuel Quansah and Joyce Akagbo as well as renowned and widely celebrated Actors such as Fred Amugi and Gavinina Tamakloe.
[162] Birgit Meyer, 'Occult Forces on Screen: Representation and the Danger of Mimesis in Popular Ghanaian Films', *Etnofoor*, 15.2 (2002): 224.

Applying Homi Bhabha concept of negotiation to the understanding of video films production in Ghana and Nigeria, Ukadike argues that video has changed the industry's outlook not because of its merit but because of the manner in which the producers negotiate the parameters of the hybrid spaces in the popular imagination in conjunction with the question of video marketability and reception, marketing strategies hitherto not attempted by its predecessor, the celluloid film.[163]

Yet, Ghanaian/Nigerian video films have not been spared their fair share of criticisms. Generally speaking, one hears more negative expressions than positive ones about the burgeoning film industry. In most cases, depending on the age, educational or religious background of the person one talks to, details of their reservations emerge spontaneously. Majority of the shortcomings with the local films can be broadly traced to issues of morality, artistic and aesthetic qualities. Indeed, some of the local videos lack these ingredients. The way audience and critics vividly describe the films and the particular scenes, which they claim to abhor, are clear indications that these films are either watched or discussed regularly.

The attention of the negative aspects of the local film industry seems to have focused more on what some media houses referred to as 'soft porn' syndrome. In 2011, an actress protested over the exposure of her privacy in certain scenes of the film they were working on. But the producer was bent on releasing the films without further editing. This is how the actress then put it:

> I went to Socrates' [the producer] office in New Town to watch some parts of the movie while they were editing, and what I saw is not good at all for my fans, the general public and myself. The editing has really changed what we shot on set. It

[163] Frank Ukadike, 'Video booms and the manifestations of "first" cinema in the Anglophone Africa', 127-8. Bhabha's notion of negotiation states that 'appropriation is negotiation, and negotiation is all what politics is all about…political negotiation is a very important issue, and hybridity is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them'.

> is too much. I told Socrate I don't agree and I can't allow this to come out, so he should take that scene out because, I mean, it will tarnish my image.[164]

Interestingly, both actors and actresses shift all the blame of nudity in the films on the producers. This is against the backdrop that actors negotiate for high pay taking into consideration the nature of their roles. John Dumelo, Ghanaian actor who acted in Hollywood film, *Ties that Bind (2011)* alongside Nia Long, conceded that though actors and actresses have contributed to the promotion of nudity in Ghanaian movies, the onus lies on the movie makers who are to ensure that extreme nude scenes are edited before the movies are brought to the market.

Few people, who have access to the Internet, even though they do not necessarily consider themselves film critics, waste no time in registering their distaste of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Recently, one of those comments appeared on the Ghanaweb, which encapsulates the views of many others within and outside of the country on the Ghanaian films in particular. Ghanaian video films are criticised by using Nigerian video films or Hollywood films as yardstick. Konrad Kodjo Djaisi, the blogger writes:

> Ghana's industry is just 'aping' the Nigerian film industry with the heavy slant towards the metaphysics. Gory images of witch doctors, 'medicine men' and juju portrays a very negative image of Africa depicting wrongly that that is all African cultures are based upon. Imagine for a minute that an African film should inadvertently fall into the hands of a foreigner whose knowledge of the continent and its people is very scant, either by design or by accident, or perhaps by visiting an African friend who is mired in watching a typical Ghanaian film with a heavy slant on the super-natural? The first impression is a people who are backward, superstitious and unscientific. Box office movies that come out of Hollywood have a basic story to tell that is captivating, well written, spectacularly produced and superbly edited. On the contrary, our industry seems to focus on themes that lack substance and are boring, to say the least.[165]

[164] http://www.citifmonline.com/mobile/index.php?id=1.347564 , Retrieved on Monday, 10 March 2011.
[165] http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/artikel.php?ID=204102 , Accessed on Wednesday, 13 April 2011.

African film critic Olivier Bartlet describes popular video as a 'monster'.[166] In recent times even some of the producers and as well as actors and actresses have been adding their voices to the condemnation of certain aspects of the film industry. Kwaw P Ansah, veteran film director, sees some of the religious depictions in the video production as a very dangerous trend.[167] Other religious communities and individual religious practitioners have also been protesting their depiction in the films.

Yet, recent study by Akpabio found 'that respondents have a largely favourable attitude to Nigerian home video productions even though they expressed the view that there is too much emphasis on themes such as sex, violence, prostitution, sibling rivalry, evils of polygamy, devilish spiritualism and related themes'.[168] It must be stressed that religious video films genre central to this study do not fall under the films, which feature explicit or extreme nudity, and other forms of immoral acts. But it will be difficult for the Christian video films to be excluded from the supply of negative themes such as juju and certain rituals that involve violence in one way or the other.

3.2 Ghanaian/Nigerian films in context

African video films touches on a wide range of issues in the socio-economic and political spheres. Religious discourses undoubtedly occupy disproportionate space in the narratives. Apparent in the earlier studies about the budding local film industry is the pivotal role religion plays in how the audience perceived it in the Anglophone African communities within and without the continent. This may be due to the ambient in which the video film industry evolves and the issues it continues to raise. The Ghanaian video film industry

[166] Olivier Barlet, *African Cinemas: Decolonising the Gaze* (London: Zed Books, 2000), 238.
[167] Kwaw Ansah, 'On Ghanaian Theatre and Film-Interview', in Kofi Anyidoho and James Gibbs (eds.), *FonTomFrom: Contemporary Ghanaian literature, theatre and film* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 312.
[168] Eno Akpabio, 'Attitude of Audience Members to Nollywood Films', *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* 16.1 (2007): 99.

emerged out of the initiative of individuals without formal training in the field to cater for the entertainment vacuum created by the inability of the national governments to support the celluloid film industry. Ghana, as noted by Manthia Diawara, is better equipped than all of the other West African states, and it is capable of turning out more than 12 features a year[169], could no longer support the film industry. Such a statement was made in respect of the fact that during the period 1957 and 1966, Ghana's first national government built very sophisticated film production infrastructure including facilities such as editing studios, and 16mm and 35mm processing laboratories. With the assistance of the Federal Republic of Germany, the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) was set up. Nkrumah regime also took over the facilities of the old Gold Coast Film unit established by The British Colonial Film Unit (BCFU) in 1948 with the aim of disseminating and implementing its policies in the colony.

In spite of all these facilities at the disposal of the nation, the film industry suffered a major setback after the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966 by the military and all the documentaries, newsreels and propaganda films produced since 1957 were seized as they were criticized by then military regime for encouraging the Nkrumah personality cult[170]. Sam Aryetey, a film filmmaker was then put in charge of Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC), a change of name from the Gold Coast Film Unit after independence. Aryetey emerged as the director of Ghana's first feature film, *No Tears for Ananse* (1968), based on the old Ghanaian folk tale and made in a style akin to filmed theatre. GFIC under the administration of Aryetey also had to its credit films such as *I told you so* (1970), directed by Egbert Adjesu, *Do your own thing (1971),* by Bernard Odjidja. Nevertheless, the policy of co-production with foreign countries in Europe pursued by Aryetey at the expense of local filmmakers was a major drawback to GFIC. As Ukadike wrote in 1991, the results of his involvement with the Italian director

[169] Manthia Diawara, *African Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 118.
[170] Olivier Barlet, *African Cinemas: Decolonising the Gaze*, 23.

Giorgio Bontempi in the making of *Contact* (1976) and Mike Fleetwood in the making of *The Visitor* (1983) were financially catastrophic.[171] This failure of the co-production policy rendered GFIC incapacitated for over a decade, producing no feature films either on its own or in partnership with foreign producers though would continue to produce documentaries. A study by Sakyi in 1996 reveals that, Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC) were able to produce only thirteen celluloid films in over thirty-five years due to lack of funds.[172]

Individual Ghanaians who were trained at the NAFTI and abroad then put their professional expertise in the production of films into practice. The facilities of GFIC were available to those who could raise the needed investments for the production of films. The first person to have made a ground-breaking film was Kwaw P. Ansah and his first feature-length film *Love Brewed in the African Pot* (1980), was shown not only in Ghana but other African countries where it was well received.[173] However, the financial burden of Ansah's second film, *African Heritage* (1988), which would take nearly a decade before completion, resulted in him being hospitalised as he disclosed to Kofi Anyidoho in an interview:

> At one stage I felt alone, that enough help was not coming from anywhere, and I broke down twice. Especially the last film, *African Heritage* really got me into hospital for quite a period of time… Of course, when I was going through it, doctors told me that it had to do with having gone to the banks to borrow so much money at about 37 percent interest.[174]

The economic crisis and political instability which the nation experienced from 1966-1981 coupled with the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) implemented by J.J Rawlings, the

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[171] Frank Ukadike, Anglophone African media', *A Review of Contemporary Media*, 36 (1991): 77-80. http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC36folder/AnglophAfrica.html Retrieved on 20th September 2009.

[172] Kwamina Sakyi, 'The Problems and Achievements of the Ghana Film Industry Corporation and the Growth and Development of the Film Industry in Ghana', *Thesis* (Accra: University of Ghana, Legon, 1996), 96.

[173] Diawara, *African Cinema*, 118; François Pfaff, *Twenty-five Black African Filmmakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 11.

[174] Kwaw Ansah, 'On Ghanaian Theatre and Film: Interview by Kofi Anyidoho', in Kofi Anyidoho and James Gibbs (eds.), *Fontonfrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 301.

then military leader and his Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government, accounted for the crippled nature of the national film industry and its associated facilities.

The transformations associated with the end of national film production in Ghana in a sense have a global dimension, a trend that has been well noted by media scholars. Sinclair and colleagues have shown that since the 1970s, in the Third World the denationalisation and privatisation of state industries, set beside trade liberalisation and the global availability of new media technologies such as the Video Home System (VHS) standard and satellite television, have resulted in dramatic transformations in local media 'cultural ecologies'.[175] Brian Larkin's work, *Hausa Dramas and the Rise of Video Culture* in Nigeria also sheds light on the link of the SAP with the shrinking state sponsorship of the video industry in the sub-region. As he aptly noted, 'The World Bank's insistence on privatization as a precondition for financial aid has combined with the savage economic effects of its Structural Adjustment Programme to decimate the funding, authority, and morale of older state-based mass media'.[176] In Ghana, much as in Nigeria, the 1980s witnessed the social importance of electronic mass media, the publics they create, the social worlds they make meaningful to Nigerian audiences, the spaces of political and religious communication they foster, are being formed in arenas outside state intervention.[177] The discovery of video films as a cheaper alternative for making films by private film enthusiasts provided the opportunity for the talents of film professionals to be harnessed.

3.**3 From Celluloid Films to video films**

The success chalked by Kwaw P. Ansah's films inspired many young artists to enter into film production. However, they could not do so immediately because of the high cost involved in

[175] J .Sinclair, E. Jacka, and S. Cunningham, *New Patterns in Global Television: Peripheral Vision* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 170.
[176] Brain Larkin, 'Hausa Dramas and the Rise of Video Culture in Nigeria', in Jonathan Haynes (ed.), *Nigerian Video Films* (Athens: Ohio University Centre for International Studies, 2000), 211.
[177] Ibid.

celluloid film production and the difficulty in getting funds for such projects. William K. Akuffo is credited as the first person to shoot video film in Ghana. Akuffo, who was a cinema projectionist, decided to work on his own after various filmmakers ignored his suggestion to opt for video which is far cheaper than celluloid. With determination and hard work, he was able to show his first Ghanaian video film, *Zinabu (1987)* directed by himself and Richard Quartey to the audience in Accra. Akuffo was quoted as saying: 'I was quite scared because I didn't know how people were going to receive it because of how the professionals were going about it, and to my surprise they [the audience] clapped, they laughed and everything'.[178] Akuffo was again able to produce and direct *Zinabu* 2 & 3 (1989) with Richard Quartey. From 1991 to 1994, Akuffo directed another set of Ghanaian video films *Diabolo I-IV* series. Another Ghanaian film, which was popular in the early 1990s, was *Ghost Tears* (1992) produced and directed by Socrate Ibrahim Safo.

The films of Ansah were fairly straightforward and familiar melodrama, one that could be found almost anywhere in the world. But the video films in the late 1980s and early 1990s centre on the belief in witchcraft and the existence of the spirit of the dead. *Zinabu I-IV* (World Wide Motion Pictures 1987), *The Cult of Allata* (World Wide Motion Pictures 1989) and *Witches* (Alexiboat 1992) were some of the popular video films narrated along the activities of witches. *Diabolo I-IV* series also revolved around the 'rumour about snake-money and about Nigerian businessmen who were accused of having abused the bodies of Ghanaian migrant women to produce money'.[179]With the help of television sets and VCRs, feature films started to occupy significant entertainment space in the life of many Ghanaians. While some have the opportunity of watching films in the parlour of family members and

[178] Cited in Jolyon. Mitchell, 'From Morality Tales to Horror Movies: Towards an Understanding of the Popularity of West African Video Film', in Jolyon Mitchell and S.Brent Plate (eds.), *The Religion and Film Reader* (New York; London: Routledge, 2007), 110.

[179] Tobias Wendl, 'Wicked villagers and the mysteries of reproduction: An exploration of horror videos from Ghana and Nigeria', *Postcolonial text,* 3.2 (2007):13.

neighbours others go to the nearest video theatres to watch them for a small fee. The liberalisation of the media after 1995 resulted in the birth of more television stations. Televisions that give more room for telecasting of local films tend to attract more audience as issues raised in the films dominate discussions among friends, family members and colleagues.

The Censorship Board established during the First Republic, which is supposed to check any imported or locally produced film before it is shown in a cinema or video theatre, has been struggling to control the explosive plethora of images.[180] When the government realised that strict control on the booming video film industry was almost becoming impossible, it came out with a draft of National Film and Video Policy in 1995. The policy, which states that the boom in the video industry needs to be encouraged and assisted in the national interest, aims at strengthening the role of the public and private sectors in the production, marketing, promotion, distribution and exhibition of film videos in Ghana. The policy hopes to achieve this by evolving a dynamic, economically self-sustaining and culturally-conscious industry, which will among other things make film and video a vehicle for public enlightenment, education, entertainment as well as promoting national pride and unity and sense of patriotism'.[181] The creation of a favourable investment climate in addition to the requisite infrastructure, training and appropriate administrative machinery, according to the policy, will ensure the attainment of the set objectives.

With the producers relying on the success of their films at the box office, it is very difficult for such aspirations of the draft policy to be achieved. In short, filmmakers are severely constrained by the expectations of their local audiences on whose approval they depend while at the same time, they have to live up to the requirements of the Film Censorship Board and

[180] Manthia Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics & Culture*. No. 707 (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), 118-9.
[181] Draft of the *National Film and Video Policy for Ghana* 1995: 3.

compete with Nigerian films.[182] Akuffo for instance, revealed to Wendl in an interview that his film *Zinabu 3* was rejected several times by the censorship board.[183] Yet film producers continue to visualize the elusive rumours, heart-breaking stories and dramas of everyday life — all of which usually imply occult forces — circulating in town.[184] As Mitchell argued 'from studying particular films and listening to audience responses it is clear that many of these videos are popular because they enact, in highly realistic forms, the horror that evil forces can bring and their ultimate demise in the face of the Christian God'.[185] Capitalising on popular religion and views of the people as has been the case with the Ghanaian films, filmmakers therefore project onto the screen the expressions of religious faith in general with particular emphasis on Pentecostal Charismatic churches which revolve around spiritual warfare. These religious organisations are currently extremely popular in Ghana and within the immigrant communities abroad and claim to have the capacity to reveal what is going on in the realm of the spiritual.[186]

As Ghanaian and Nigerian video producers depend largely on how their films perform at the box office, they do everything possible to come out with films that intersect with the audience expectations. These local film producers therefore try to offer concrete description and insights into contemporary uncertainties bedevilling the populace. And the economic hardships and income polarisation resulting from the world-wide economic recession of the 1970s and 1980s coupled with the failure of the SAP reforms, poor harvest due to bad weather, expulsion of over one million Ghanaians without documents from Nigeria, were all

[182] Jonathan Haynes, *Nigerian Video Films: Revised Edition*. No 73 (Athens; Ohio University Press, 2000), 35.
[183] Tobias Wendl, 'Wicked villagers and the mysteries of reproduction: An exploration of horror videos from Ghana and Nigeria', 7.
[184] Birgit Meyer, 'Popular Ghanaian Cinema and the African Heritage', *Working Paper 7*. The Hague: WOTRO-Project 'Globalization and the Construction of Communal Identities', 1999.
[185] 'From Morality Tales to Horror Movies: Towards an Understanding of the Popularity of West African Video Film', 113.
[186] Birgit Meyer, '"Make a Complete Break with the Past". Memory and Post—Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse', *Journal of Religion in Africa,* XXVII .3 (1995):316-49; Paul Gifford, *Paul, African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hurst, 1998); Paul Gifford, 'Ghana's Charismatic Churches', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 64.3 (1994): 241-65.

themes that could be exploited by filmmakers. The period witnessed scarcities of foreign exchange, fuel and spare parts. Ghanaians faced an endemic shortage of consumer goods and foodstuffs, and cuts of more than two-thirds in the average wage.[187] The popular usage of the term 'Rawlings chain' an allusion to the way in which the collars bone was exposed through hunger was the order of the day.[188] The considerable negative impact of "hunger" on morality, morale, and economic productivity, according to Maxwell Owusu, was evident everywhere.[189] During this period, as a result of currency devaluation, the Ghanaian cedi and the Nigerian naira became valueless in international monetary exchange, thus making hard currency inaccessible to filmmakers for the importation of filmmaking equipment, the purchase of raw film stock and the accomplishment of postproduction tasks.[190] Desperate filmmakers with no formal training in film production experimented with the video format, which is cheaper. The initial video filmmakers did not only succeed in appealing to the audience but sparked mass production of video films in the Ghana and Nigerian in particular. Some of the video pioneers in Ghana include William Akuffo, Socrates Ibrahim Safo, Richard Quartey, Sidiku Buari as well as veteran film professionals including Kwaw Ansah who views the prevailing video boom as a 'Stopgap measure reluctantly joined the production of films on videos measure.[191] And in Nigeria, the success of an Igbo businessman Kenneth Nnebue's Igbo-language film, *Living in Bondage (1992),* subtitled in English and the subsequent English version video film, *Glamour Girls (1994)* triggered massive production of videos in that country. Amaka Igwe, Richard Mofe-Damijo and Ego Boyo are some of the pioneers in the production of video films in Nigeria.

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[187] See Paul Nugent, *Big Men, Small Boys and Politics in Ghana: Power, Ideology and the Burden of History*, 1982-1994 (London: Pinter, 1995).
[188] Ibid, 108.
[189] Maxwell Owusu, 'Tradition and transformation: Democracy and the Politics of Popular Power in Ghana', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34. 2 (1996): 310.
[190] Frank Ukadike, *Black African Cinema*, 128.
[191] Francoise Pfaff, 'Conversation with Ghanaian Film Maker Kwaw Ansah', *Research In African Literature*, 26.3 (1995):190.

Although Haynes refers to the Ghanaian video film industry and the Nigerian one as twins with the Ghanaian industry being the *Ata Paynin* or *Taiwo* – the firstborn [of twins], the Nigerian one has developed into more complex industry.[192] The Nigerian video film industry has dominated the market in the sub region and beyond. The Nigerian film industry, according to the *Forbes Magazine,* is now an $800 million industry, providing employment for about 300,000 people as actors, directors, marketers and distributors. After Hollywood, it is the second largest in the world – even bigger than India's Bollywood on per-capita basis.[193] The Nigerian video film has also attracted a lot of scholarships more than that of Ghana. As far back as a decade ago, books devoted specifically to the Nigerian video films started emerging. The first among them is the *Nigerian Video Films*, edited by Jonathan Haynes, *Nollywood* written by Pierre Barrot as well as numerous articles in books and journals touching on the various angles of the industry such as political, infrastructural, gender and religious facets have been written by academics from within and outside Nigeria. The staggering numbers of conferences that have been organized from 2001-2009 with collaboration from certain arms of the Nigerian government, universities and Nigerian academics at home and abroad attest to the seriousness they attached to the video film industry. Haynes has itemized some of those significant conferences in chronological order as:

> Modes of Seeing: The Video Film in Africa' (2001), organized by Onookome Okome and Till Forster at Iwalewa Haus, University of Bayreuth, Germany; the 'First International Conference on Hausa Films' (2003), organized by the Center for Hausa Cultural Studies in Kano; 'The Nigerian Video/DVD Film Industry: Background, Current Situation, and International Prospects' (2007) at the Open University in the UK… with support from the British Film Institute and the Nigerian High Commission, London; 'African Film: An International Conference' (2007), organized by Mahir Saul and Ralph Austen at the Institute of African Studies, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; 'African Video Film

[192] Jonathan Haynes, 'A literature review: Nigerian and Ghanaian videos', *Journal of African Cultural Studies,* 22.1 (2010): 108.
[193] See http://blogs.forbes.com/mfonobongnsehe/2011/04/19/hollywood-meet-nollywood/ , Retrieved on Friday, 13 May 2011.

> Arts Festival' (2007) and 'The 2nd Ife International Film Festival' (2009), both organized by Foluke Ogunleye at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria; and 'Nollywood and Beyond: Transnational Dimensions of the African Video Industry'(2009), organized by Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome at Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany.[194]

On the Ghanaian video film industry, workshops and conferences are limited. The workshop on 'Popular Cinema in Ghana and Nigeria: Producers, Films, Audiences' held at Universiteit Gent, 25-27 January, 2001 was one of the fora which specifically focused on the Ghanaian film industry. The Consultation on Religion and Media in Africa sponsored by International Study Commission on Media, Religion and Culture which was held in May 20-27, 2000 in Accra also brought together academics, religious functionaries and film producers, perhaps for the first time, to discuss the shape and direction of the industry. Notwithstanding the scanty nature of major academic gathering to deliberate on the Ghanaian video film industry, there have been a number of academic works equivalents to the size and marketing strength of the industry in Ghana. Cultural Anthropologist, Birgit Meyer has been very instrumental in the scholarly work on the Ghanaian film industry; Tobias Wendl has done a documentary on the film industry, *Ghanaian Video Tales* and written articles as well; Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Jolyon Mitchell, Ave Africanus, Esi Sutherland-Addy, Wisdom Agorde and many others have been involved in researching about the budding video film industry in Ghana. Besides, most of the video films produced in English in Nigeria with the new coinage 'Nollywood' and those produced in Ghana are sometimes very difficult to distinguish by outsiders because of the coproduction.[195] Most of the video films from the south countries tend to focus on issues in the society with supernatural inclination. The narratives of the films in both contexts are situated in African spirituality such as witchcraft attacks by family members, consultations with diviners about fertility problems, guardian spirits enforcing the

[194] Jonathan Haynes, 'A literature review: Nigerian and Ghanaian videos', 107- 108.
[195] Coproduction is the featuring of popular films stars from Nigeria and Ghana in the same video films. In the early 2000, co-production between Ghanaian and Nigerian video film professionals was initiated as a marketing strategy in order to attract as much audience as possible from the two countries.

traditional morality of communities, businessmen and politicians seeking wealth and power through human sacrifice, and Bible-wielding pastors combating the forces of darkness. It is therefore germane to talk of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films in the Ghanaian context because of their identical nature regarding the use of similar stars and indigenous religious practices and themes. It is important to add here that it is more likely for actors and actresses in the secular video films to feature in the video films produced by the Pentecostal groups in Nigeria. However, it is rare for film stars in the Christian video films to act in the secular films. In Ghana, pastors or 'born again' Christians may take part in the making of films, they prefer to play the roles of Christian characters such as pastors, prayer warriors and among others.

3.4 Religion in the Context of the video films

Religion and religious themes feature prominently in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Irrespective of the genre, religious content is more likely to appear on screen before the film ends. In most cases one is more likely to see in the epilogue "To God Be the Glory" or a similar phrase.[196] It could also be biblical text indicating the central message in the film. Some of these religious indicators are narrow and tilted to one specific religious tradition-Christianity. However, the frequent manner in which other religions and religious beliefs and practices especially indigenous religion appear in most of the films require broader definition of religion in this thesis.

In the Ghanaian context, it is even more interesting when it comes to the definition of religion. Ghanaians like many other Africans do not have a word equivalent to 'religion'. However, 'there are a number of terms in African languages that describe activities, practices,

[196]Afe Adogame, 'To God Be the Glory! Home Videos, Art Symbology and Religio-Cultural Identity in Contemporary African Christianity', 148-165.

and a system of thought that corresponds with what most westerners mean by religion'.[197] The availability of certain activities and worldview to describe religion render Jonathan Smith's suggestion that, 'There is no data for religion. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study' untenable in our context'.[198] Yet, one of the issues in the field is how to find generally acceptable definition of religion. The definition of religion provided by Paul Tillich as 'ultimate concern' would have been appropriate for this study but it does not cater for the situation where people turn to different gods for different motives as it often occurs in the Ghanaian context.[199] I however find the definition put forward by Clifford Geertz as useful and comprehensive for analysing the religious dimension of cultural phenomenon such as the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Geertz's definition of religion is very important and fitting for the study of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films because all the five features of religion he outlines are evident in the films.

In following Parsons and Shils from cultural dimension of religion, Geertz defines religion with five facets as:

> (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.[200]

Since Geertz proposed this definition of religion in 1966, it has received both positive and negative reactions from scholars. Nonetheless, the strengths of Geertzian definition of religion, as can be inferred from some of the available reviews, eclipse the flaws. On the critique of Geertz, regarding his definition of religion, I join Daniel Pals in acknowledging

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[197] Robert Baum, 'African Religions: An Interpretation', in Anthony Appiah and Henry L Gates, (eds.), *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American experience* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 31.
[198] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi.
[199] Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (New York: Harp and Row, 1965), 8.
[200] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90.

that 'His critics are few; his admirers legion'.[201] Even though many critiques have been written on Geertzian definition of religion such as those provided by Frankenberry and Penner, Bruce Lincoln, and Wiltold Wolny but the one found in Talal Asad's *Genealogies of Religion* will be used as a point of reference in this thesis.[202]

Asad's criticisms of what he terms Universalists definition of religion championed by anthropologists such as Geertz will be condensed to two cardinal points here. First, Geertzian definition of religion is attacked as being situated in the post-Enlightenment Christian perspective. [W]hat appears to anthropologists today to be self-evident, namely that religion is essentially a matter of symbolic meanings linked to ideas of general order (expressed through either or both rite and doctrine, Asad argues, is in fact a view that has a specific Christian history… which is itself part of a wider change in the modern landscape of power and knowledge.[203]However, the basis of this criticism is questioned when one considers the broad scope of religious symbols regarded by a people as sacred cited by Geertz. These include:

> Elaborate initiation rites, as among the Australians; complex philosophical tales, as among the Maori; dramatic shamanistic exhibitions, as among the Eskimo; cruel human sacrifice rites, as among the Aztecs; obsessive curing ceremonies, as among the Navaho; large communal feasts, as among various Polynesian groups- all these patterns and many more seem to one people or another to sum up most powerfully what it knows about living.[204]

This notwithstanding, there is a point in Asad problem with the 'essentially cognitive', if Geertz suggests it goes beyond, the aesthetic, experiential, ritual and ethical dimension of

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[201] Daniel L. Pals. *Seven Theories of Religion* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 259.
[202] Nancy Frankenberry and Hans Penner. 'Clifford Geertz's Long-Lasting Moods, Motivations, and Metaphysical Conceptions', *The Journal of Religion*, 79.4 (October,1999):617-640; Bruce Lincoln. *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Wiltold Wolny. 'What, How, and Why: The Geertzian Definition of Religion and Neurotheological Project on Meta and Megatheology', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2.5 (March, 2012):32-37; Talal Asad. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, Md.; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
[203] Talal Asad. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 42-43.
[204] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays,* 132.

religion to include necessarily finding a distinctive and nonreducible experience.[205] But by stressing that religions are interested in teaching worldviews, Geertzian definition of religion seems to depart from such empirical modernist position.[206]

The second problem Asad finds with Geertzian definition of religion is by describing it as a distinctive mental state and a verbalizable inner condition.[207] This issue has however been defused, as Schilbrack notes in some of Geertz's declarations such as 'Culture …does not exist in someone's head…Culture is public because meaning is … Cultural acts, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms, are social events like any other'.[208] Nevertheless, Geertz attempt to treat religious symbols as independent from the social context is indefensible and that is where Asad is right.

This failing does not however weaken the efficacy of religious symbols espoused by Geertz because by not distinguishing the meaning of religious symbols from the socio-cultural context in this study of religion in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films; this flaw of Geertzian definition of religion has been revised. Geertz statements which regard religious symbols as the 'the most specific requirements of human action in the most general contexts of human existence'; 'most comprehensive ideas of order'; 'mediat[ing] genuine knowledge, knowledge of the essential conditions in terms of which life must' are useful in this research.[209]

But before we continue, I would like to look at how Geertz unpacks the five aspects of the definition of religion in connection with the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films.

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[205] Kevin Schilbrack. 'Religion, Models of, and Reality: Are We Through with Geertz?', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 73.2 (June 2005): 437.
[206] Ibid.438.
[207]Talal Asad. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 48.
[208] Kevin Schilbrack. 'Religion, Models of, and Reality: Are We Through with Geertz?', 438.
[209] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays, 126, 127 &129;* Kevin Schilbrack. 'Religion, Models of, and Reality: Are We Through with Geertz?', 433.

The first which is, a set of symbols, denote any object, act, event, quality, or relation that serves as a vehicle for conception- the conception is the symbols' "meaning".[210] Using the cross and other symbolic elements as examples, Geertz, explains that they are tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgements, longings or beliefs. As cultural patterns, the models *of* reality and models *for* reality would refer to as "doctrines", "melodies", or "rites" instead of theories.[211] The Ghanaian/Nigerian video films predominately feature sacred symbols as well as systems of values associated with the dominant religious worldviews of the audience.

The second, the motivations and moods, are induced by the sacred symbols. Motivations are continuous inclination to undertake certain acts and experience certain moods such as "reverential", "solemn", or "worshipful" in direction reactions to the situation.[212] There are traces of religious symbols in the form of moods such as narratives or biblical texts as well as the motivations. For instance, in most narratives, villains are never unpunished. Films with contrary endings, that is, where the evil triumphs over good do not meet the expectations of the audience. Such religious portrayal may give assurance to do certain things in accordance with moral standards of the society and instigate in the people to avoid unnecessary evil acts.

Third, the motivations and moods induced by symbol systems become "religious" only when they spring from entertaining a conception of all-pervading vitality; seen as symbolic of some transcendent truths and directed towards the achievement of an unconditioned end. According to Geertz, if sacred symbols did not at one and at the same time induce dispositions in human beings and formulate, however obliquely, inarticulately, or unsystematically, general ideas of order, then the empirical differentia of religious activity or religious experience would not

[210]Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 91.
[211] Ibid, 93.
[212] Ibid, 97.

exist.[213] He explains that in the midst of disorderliness and chaos in the world, religious symbols offer a sense that life is comprehensible and orderly. Three areas in which chaos threatens to break in upon man are: at the limit of his analytic capacities, at the limits of his powers of endurance, and at the limits of his moral insight.[214] The existence of chaos, he prefers to call the problem of evil, raise the suspicion that perhaps the world, and hence man's life in the world has no genuine order at all. The religious response to this suspicion is:

> the formulation, by means of symbols, of an image of such a genuine order of the world which will account for, and even celebrate, the perceived ambiguities, puzzles, and paradoxes in human experience. The effort is not to deny the undeniable- that there are unexplained events, that life hurts, or that rain falls upon the just-but to deny that there are inexplicable events, that life is unendurable, and that justice is a mirage.[215]

At the beginning of most films of which the Ghanaian/Nigerian films are not exception, audience are presented with the world of chaos such as wars, hunger, poverty but these problems are eventually resolved at the end of the films. The world presented by films tends to be neater, more orderly, and has satisfactory endings (usually) in which vice is punished and virtue rewarded, families reunited, and lovers mate for life.[216] These films support the religious response provided by Geertz that even though there may be inexplicable events order and justice would still prevail.

Fourth, clothing these conceptions with such aura of factuality that…, means that symbolic activity of religion does not only deepen what is "really real" but to producing, intensifying, and so far as, possible, rendering inviolable by the discordant revelation of secular experience. Conceptions of how the world is and the ideal world meet and reinforce one another in ritual. In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world. For the participants,

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[213] Ibid, 98.
[214] Ibid, 100.
[215] Ibid, 108.
[216] John Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003), 45.

such religious ritual involves not only models *of* what they believe, but also models *for* the believing of it. In these plastic dramas men attain their faith as they portray it.[217] In the Ghanaian context, audience of the video films also engage in such rituals during the film watching experience by joining some characters who may be, shouting 'Jesus', praying or performing religious activities in reactions to the event in the film.

Fifth, the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic, explains the fourth aspect of Geertz's definition further. That is, after the ritual, the religious person returned changed and the ordinary world is 'seen as but the partial form of a wider reality which corrects and completes it'.[218] Even though the film in the ordinary sense is 'make-believe' or not real, audience taking part in the prayer or shouting during film watching lump the imagined world and real world together. It is not unusual to hear from some audience in Ghana that what the films depict parallel what actually pertains in the spiritual world. This view was expressed by some of the respondents during the interview. Religion does not simply describe the world, and arts [such as the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films] do not simply provide imaginary illusions-both are involved in the complex relationship between the ideal and the real, in that both offer a worldview as well as an ethos.[219]

It is worthy to note here that in an attempt to offer explanations to problems people face in everyday life, in echoing the African belief in spiritual dominance, filmmakers in Ghana and Nigeria prefer to dwell more on supernatural causes with little or no reference to logical explanations of the problems in the society. Occultism then becomes a pivot through which most video film narratives revolve. This issue fit into an emerging wider Tran-African cultural complex that has been referred to by Jean and John Comaroff as "an economy of the occult". They explain further that the:

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[217] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures,* 114.
[218] Ibid, 122.
[219] John Lyden, *Film as Religion,* 48.

> Occult economy may be taken, at its most general, to denote the deployment of magical means for material ends or, more expansively, the conjuring of wealth by resort to inherently mysterious techniques, techniques whose principles of operation are neither transparent nor explicable in conventional terms. These techniques, moreover, often involve the destruction of others and their capacity to create value.[220]

These video film narratives of witchcraft and the occult register perplexity at the enigma of wealth, of its origin and the capriciousness of its distribution of the opaque even occult, relation between means and ends embodied in it.[221]

3.4.1 Pattern of religious portrayal in the video films

The dynamics of such religious portrayals however, resonate with religious issues in vogue such as rumours, gossips and discourses circulating at any point in time. Even though not mutually exclusive, the engagement of the supernatural forces in the local video films can be categorised into three main patterns. First, the encounters with the supernatural forces in the narratives of these films occur where the protagonists out of desperation to escape their present predicaments commit themselves to terms and conditions of the occults. These occults can be the agencies of such powers as witches, the *juju man* also known as 'native doctor' or *Mallam* (Muslim Cleric). The first Ghanaian video film *Zinabu (1987)* directed by William Akuffo and the latest most talked about film, *Sakawa Boys(2009)* with Socrates Safo as the director fall into this category.[222] In *Zinabu,* poor auto mechanic Kofi, one of the main characters, decides to enter into relationship with Zinabu who is struggling with a cult. Zinabu promises to submit to Kofi and make him the head of her mansion on condition that he foregoes any sexual intercourse with any woman including Zinabu herself. Before

[220] Jean Comaroff and John L, 'Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction. Notes from the South African Postcolony', *American Ethnologist, 26*.2 (1999): 297.
[221] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, 'Alien nation: zombies, immigrants and millennial capitalism', *South Atlantic Quarterly,* 101 .4 (2002):782.
[222] *Zinabu,* Worldwide Productions, Ghana, 1987 and *Sakawa Boys,* Movie Africa Productions, 2009.

accepting this offer, in several flashbacks, Kofi recalls the insults, ridicules and humiliations he had received from women because he is poor without decent accommodation. This compels him to agree with the intention of travelling abroad with the money when the condition proves too difficult to keep. As has been the norm with such narratives of the local videos films, Kofi flouts the rule given by Zinabu that cost him his life through car accident. The storyline of *Sakawa Boys (2009)* is not different from Zinabu, in terms of people promised solutions to their problems but with a string attached. A group of young boys who are having financial problems in their families are introduced to Mallam Isakawa by one of their old school friends. Mallam Isakawa agrees to help them make money but demands from the young boys that the money will not be used for acquiring any property for themselves or any of their family members. One of the characters, Ato incurs the wrath of Mallam Isakawa by breaking the rule when he acquires a mansion for his parents. Not only does he lose the extravagant house but the parents are caught up in a blaze as well. Even though there are numerous ways in which those who consult the occults fall into troubles, the two most frequent ones orbit the quest for money and sexual immorality. As Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu has demonstrated with the *Last Prophet (2002)*, even Christian pastors who go for harmful supernatural powers have money and women as their main troubles. [223]

The second pattern of entanglements in occults are found with video films where the villains who kill for their parochial interests or whose actions end the life of others are also punished or killed by the ghost of the victim. In some cases, with the help of the ghost of the victim, the perpetrator is exposed. Situating the films in the realm of afterlife, the film narratives suggest that if one is able to hide undercover to commit any crime at the dark side of the living, they cannot escape the eagle eyes of the spirit of the dead. Two of such Ghanaian

[223] J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Blowing the Cover': Imaging Religious Functionaries in Ghanaian/Nigerian Films, in Lynn Schofield Clark (ed.), *Religion, Media and Marketplace* (New Brunswick; New Jersey; and London: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 236.

video films, which made a box office, hit and generated prolonged debate, are *Ghost Tears (1992)* and *Sika Sunsum (1991)*.[224] *Ghost Tears* tells the story of a happy family Kwesi and wife Diana, their daughter Yaakwa, as well as Esi the niece of Diana. Kwesi has a secret affair with Esi who becomes pregnant and refuses to terminate the foetus. When Diana finds out about their affair and scolds them, Esi sensing exposure kills her auntie and marries Kwesi. She also maltreats Yaakwa who does not know anything about her biological mother to the displeasure of Kwesi. Diana's ghost reveals to her daughter the cause of her death in a dream. Esi hears Kwesi downstairs confessing to Yaakwa her true identity as well as the cause of her mother's death. Esi hits and kills Kwesi with a bottle. With the help of her mother's ghost Yaakwa also strangles Esi to death. In the film *Sika Sunsum,* Rose who is the wife of Agya Ntow, is introduced to Jimmy as a niece for financial consideration. Jimmy starts dating Rose which results in divorce between Agya Ntow and Rose. Jimmy marries Rose, which cost him his dear life. The main character, Agya Ntow, is forced by the ghost of Jimmy to confess to murdering the later. Agya Ntow then commits suicide. Most of the occult video film narratives cast in line with ghost follow similar patterns. Local video films such as *Step Dad* (1993)*; Avengers* (1994)*; Whose fault*? (1995); *A Mother's Revenge* (1994); *Meba* (1993) are some of the films which thread similar narrative within this pattern of occult representation.

The final pattern of occult accounts in the local video films usually have at their climax the protagonists, by virtue of their affiliation or association with the powerful supernatural forces, are saved or protected from the destruction of other supernatural spirits with limited powers. Indeed, the majority of video films that implicate the issues of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity come under this pattern of occult portrayals in the local popular video films. This

[224] *Ghost Tears,* Hacky Film and Movie Africa Productions, 1992 and *Sika Sunsum,* directed and produced by Kofi Yirenkyi, 1991.

is a reflection of the contemporary Christian beliefs and practices. In contrast to older mission churches, Christianity in recent times, especially Charismatic Ministries, appears to have a point of intersection with indigenous religious systems in the idea of the potency of and operation of evil spiritual forces, even though the former still regards the latter as the site and domain of demonic operations.[225]

Significant numbers of these local video films circulating in Sub-Saharan Africa and the African Diaspora have been inundated with such indigenous religious practices and beliefs. These religious elements in the films are however dynamic resonating with the popularized religious themes familiar with the audience at any point in time. Even though there are multiple religious traditions in Ghana, those religions often portrayed and re-enforced in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films are Christianity, Islam and the traditional African religious spirituality. However, the plethora of the religious symbols in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films oscillates around the African religious worldviews and Christianity particularly Pentecostal-Charismatic brand. It must be emphasised that the indigenous religious beliefs and that of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity (PCC) operate on similar grounds in terms of the belief in the existence of supernatural forces albeit the latter sternly criticise the former on their modes of operations.

Unlike the earlier mainline or mission churches which demonised and rejected the African beliefs in the supernatural, Charismatic Ministries (CMs) or churches do admonish their members 'to make a complete break' from those traditions they do not throw over board the belief in the existence of the most feared spiritual forces in the life of the people. Charismatic Ministries rather assured their members that the war against those principalities and powers can be won through spiritual warfare waged with the blood of Jesus. The study of

[225] Obododimma Oha, 'The Rhetoric of Nigerian Christian Videos: The War Paradigm of The Great Mistake, in Jonathan Haynes (ed.), *Nigerian Video Films* (Athens: Ohio University Research in International Studies, African Series; No.73, 2000), 192-193.

Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity (PCC) can therefore be said to be incomplete without acknowledging their emphasis on the invisible spiritual powers as the cause of humanity's problems on earth. That is the point of intersection between the adherents of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and indigenous religions. Yet members of PCC will hardly accept having certain things in common with indigenous religion. CMs describe the means of worship such as pouring libation, slaughtering of animals for sacrifice and many other rituals performed by the followers of indigenous religion as demonic. Indeed, the claim of the CMs to have the power to break or destroy the evil plans of the malicious spirits in the lives of the supplicants 'through the blood of Jesus' has been one of the main reasons which account for the appeal and popularity of these churches among many Africans.

3.5 Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in Video Films

The impact of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity has not only affected other brands of Christianity but the content of the secular media as well. The mass media has become a vehicle through which the Pentecostal charismatic churches express their theologies and praxis far beyond the churches and their communities. Such *modus operandi* has even become part and parcel of their self-definition. David Maxwell observed that what is new about African Pentecostalism is its recent growth, enormous vitality and its appropriation of the electronic media to the point that this has become part of Pentecostal self-definition.[226] Paul Gifford has even described Ghana's new Christianity [Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches] as a media phenomenon.[227] The popularity of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity as a result of their appropriation of the modern mass media has undoubtedly impacted not only on Christianity but also popular culture particularly the content of secular media

[226] David Maxwell, 'Editorial', *Journal of Religion in Africa,* 28.3 (1998):255.
[227] Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (London: Hurst, 2004), 32.

programmes. Most of the secular media incorporate the culture of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity by regularly featuring what Asamoah-Gyadu describes as their supernaturalistic hermeneutics.[228] But the most outstanding media, which cannot evade the attention of any visitor to Ghana and Nigeria, have been those found in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Interestingly, the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches have acquired and converted most of the major cinema houses in Accra, into places of worship. The practice of watching films has shifted from the cinema halls to sitting rooms because of the availability of the films on TVs, VCD/DVD or on the Internet. Occasionally, people do go out to watch films premiers at the various regional or national theatres. Nonetheless, the Ghanaian/Nigerian video film industry is still growing stronger and continues to occupy the public sphere. Meyer rightly argues that Pentecostalism and video-films come together and contribute to carving out a new public space for the articulation of alternative imaginations of modernity.[229]

3.6 Shared features of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and the Video Films

Indeed, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films have been impacting significantly on the religio-cultural landscape in recent years. Not only did both evolve around the same period particularly Charismatic Ministries, but Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and local video films also have many features in common. The first among these traits is the facts that both are growing at a faster pace and have become popular with their potency of appealing to the majority of the masses. Many scholars have noted that this new brand of Christianity represents the fastest growing form of Christianity as well as the dominant in the public sphere in the Africa continent.[230] In the same vein, the popularity

[228] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Blowing the Cover, 232.
[229] Birgit Meyer, '"Praise the Lord": Popular Cinema and Pentecostalite Style in Ghana's new Public Sphere, *American Ethnologist*, 31.1 (2004): 95.
[230] Birgit Meyer, 'Money, Power and Morality: Popular Ghanaian Cinema in the Fourth Republic', *Ghana Studies,* 4 (200)1: 65-84; Dijk Van, 'Contesting Silence: The Ban on Drumming and the Musical Politics of

of and the pace at which video film industry is occupying the entertainment space is evident in the ubiquitous nature of these films and the lost dominance of the sector by Hollywood in Ghana and Nigeria.

Secondly, services of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and local video films have come to assume global phenomenon in the sense that they are discernible among the African communities in the Diaspora. As Van Dijk aptly remarked, 'in many cities in Western Europe but also in the US and even in Israel and Japan, these new Pentecostal churches have been able to establish satellite congregations, and cater to the needs of the Ghanaian migrant in the Diaspora'.[231] In the case of the popular video films, VCDs, DVDs, of these films are easily seen in the African shops and saloons in the Diaspora in general and the United Kingdom in particular. The availability of satellite televisions and the numerous internet websites have also made it possible for the audience of the Ghanaian/Nigerian films around the globe to access them irrespective of their geographical location. Femi Awoniyi also notes that video film as an entertainment medium is becoming a bulwark against the much-feared cultural repercussion of globalisation… the home video culture in Nigeria is transcending the whole continent.[232] According to him, apart from having inspired a similar industry in Ghana and the Gambia, films released in these countries find their way to the other English-speaking countries on the continent and to the African Diaspora worldwide.[233]

Again, the activities of both the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and Ghanaian/Nigerian Video films also go beyond competing on the screens. Billboards and the internet have also become places where these two cultural products compete for space. On the streets of Lagos,

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Pentecostalism in Ghana', *Ghana Studies,* 4 (2001): 31-64; Ruth Marshall-Fratani, 'Mediating the Global and the Local in Nigeria Pentecostalism', *Journal of Religion in African* 28.3 (1998): 278-315.

[231] Rijk van Dijk, '"Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia": Pentecostal Pan-Africanism and Ghanaian identities in the transnational domain' in Wim van Binsbergen and Rijk van Dijk (eds.), *Situating Globality: African agency in the Appropriation of Global Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 173.

[232] Femi Awoniyi, 'Video film Uniting Africa', *The African Courier*, 3 .6 (April/May, 2003): 9.

[233] Ibid, 26.

Abuja, Accra and Kumasi, any visitor is greeted with the posters of Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches and newly released films on billboards or any available spaces.[234] In the diaspora, African shops and saloons are common places where the advertising materials of both the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches and upcoming video films are displayed. Websites have also contributed in no small way in giving space for both the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches and video film producers to advertise themselves. It is however not common to see films being advertised on the churches' websites except those produced by the churches or films from churches that share their beliefs.

More importantly, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and the local popular video films appeal to the various audiences mainly because they do not only reaffirm the existence of supernatural forces which most Africans believe are responsible for the successes or the failures in the life of individuals but they claim to have the capacity to expose them. The recurrence of the belief in the supernatural forces such as 'witchcraft, as a weapon in domestic or neighbourly antagonisms, mysterious fates that can only be elucidated by a diviner, selling one's soul to dark occult power for the sake of wealth-all are stock elements in the videos.[235] Asamoah-Gyadu has also argued elsewhere that the new African video films sell because the supernatural ideas propounded in them resonate with African religio-cultural worldview of the power of supernatural evil and the roles of the religious functionaries as mediums of both intervention and deception.

For the purpose of clarity, it is imperative to distinguish the various categories of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films that are overwhelmed with religious undertones. This however does not mean the genres are mutually exclusive. Adogame has grouped them into four genres of which the first refers to films or religious drama that are written and produced

[234] See Appendix C.
[235] Jonathan Haynes, *Nigerian Video Films* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 3.

by religious organizations and churches.[236] The second category involves those video films that are secular in nature and outlook but are overtly suffused with religious symbolisms and connotations. According to Adogame, another interesting genre are the religious musical videos, which can be further classified into independent local gospel artistes, gospel singers or choirs within existing religious groups, musical videos of foreign gospel singers, and lastly what may be termed "cross-over" (secular) gospelers. The last but not the least type of video films can be found in the increasing video documentation and commodification of religious festivals, revivals, services, ritual ceremonies, and other events for both public and private consumption.

The use of 'video films' in this study refers to the films inundated with religious narratives written and produced on the cheap video technology by Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal filmmakers. Ghanaian/Nigerian video films therefore fall into the combination of the first two categories of films identified by Adogame. Particular attention is paid to the reception of the films and the importance the audience attached to them. How the audience appropriate the religious aspects of the films in their everyday lives is also central in this research. The interest here is in the content of the films and if the audience necessarily consider the sources or the intention of the producers. The reason is that both filmmakers from within and outside the Pentecostal churches sometimes use the same actors and actresses as well as stressing on strong religious themes. Also, it is virtually impossible for one to draw the line between those films made by religious organizations from those films produced by private individuals whose primary goal is far from advancing specific religious ideology.

Contrary to the assertion made by Brent Plate that many of the video films in Nigeria and other parts of West Africa are made by Pentecostal religious groups so far none of the

[236] Afe Adogame, 'To God Be the Glory! Home Videos, Art Symbology and Religio-Cultural Identity in Contemporary African Christianity', 2007:150.

religious groups in Ghana, to the best of my knowledge produce such films for evangelisation[237], not even the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity whose theological orientations and praxis are implicated in these films in recent years.[238] However, some Pentecostal groups produce video films as instrument for evangelisation in Nigeria. A significant number of 'secular filmmakers also carve the Pentecostal market niche for themselves through the production of videos with strong Christian themes'.[239] Further, the total number of films that have been produced by all of the different Pentecostal groups in Nigeria is fewer than those video films produced by the secular filmmakers in a single year. Available statistics indicate that in 2006 alone, 1535 films were registered with the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVB) and this figure exclude those films which find their way to the black market.[240] Meanwhile Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries, one of the pioneers in the Christian Video films industry which started producing such video films over a decade ago with the first film *Magic Money* (1998), has produced less than twenty films. Again, as at the end of 2008, Mount Zion Faith Ministries International with twenty-two years of acting in faith through film productions had produced only forty (40) films. This number even includes TV serials and home videos all put together.[241]

The concern of media critics is that most video films caricature indigenous religions and other brands of Christianity while the Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity is presented with positive images. Such portrayals, which started with the inpouring of Christian video films

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[237] Brent Plate, 'Religion and World Cinema' in William Blizek (ed.), *The Continuum Companion to Religion and Film* (London: Continuum, 2009), 96.

[238] In Ghana, the production and distribution of Video films are in the hands of private individuals. Nevertheless, some Christian leaders or individual Christians can be seen playing diverse roles in some of the secular films. *God Loves Prostitutes I &II*, A Venus Film Production, 2003, is a befitting example. Jake Aernan who is a pastor at the Christian Action Ministry International (Affectionately called Action Chapel) plays the role of a pastor in *God Loves Prostitutes I &II.* Some Charismatic Churches also sell some of the Christian video films at their bookshops but only those produced by the Christian groups from Nigeria.

[239] F-K Asonzeh-Ukah, 'Advertising God: Nigerian Christian video films and the power of consumer culture', *Journal of Religion in Africa,* 33.2 (2003): 203-231.

[240] Pierre Barrot (ed.), *Nollywood: The Video Phenomenon in Nigeria* (Oxford: James Currey, 2008), 33.

[241] See http://www.mzfm.info/film.php , Accessed on December 3, 2009.

from Nigeria to compete with Ghanaian video films, stimulated the positive portrayal of the Pentecostal charismatic churches in local movies. Video films such as *Captives of the Mighty* produced by Mount Zion Faith Ministries International (MZFMI) and *Wasted Years* also written by Helen Ukpabio, an evangelist and founder of Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries (LFGM) were enmeshed in the depiction of Pentecostal positive images. Christian video films that 'reflect the media theology of the institution' are important tools of evangelization and have provided Pentecostals with lucrative vehicles for projecting such ideas and images.[242] In her book, *Unveiling the Mysteries of Witchcraft*, Helen underscores a two-fold divine mandate through films and also through her church: to unveil the secrets of witchcraft and to deliver those who are under the oppressive burden of demon possession.[243]

The narratives of the independent video films, especially the majority of those produced by the combination of Ghanaian and Nigerian actors, resonate with the religious practices and opinions that dominate contemporary public discourses. The 'discourse' here refers to what Fiske defined as any 'language or system of representation that had developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic area'.[244] Birgit Meyer shows with one Ghanaian video film, *Nkrabea* (destiny)*,* based on a true story, how the rumors and stories about the involvement of powerful people with occult forces have been taken up by the film industry.[245] With reference to local video films, *The last Prophet 1&2,* Asamoah-Gyadu also demonstrates that closely tied to the prominence of religious specialists as persons of sacred powers is a widespread notion that religious mediation is at the same time open to abuse and charlatanry, and certain Christian pastors resort to occult in

[242] Jaakko T. Lehikoinen, *Religious Media Theology: Understanding Mediated Faith and Christian Applications of Modern Media* (Jyvaskyla, Finland: University of Jyvaskyla, 2003), 34.
[243] Helen Ukpabio, *Unveiling the Mysteries of Witchcraft*. 2nd ed. (Calabar: Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries, 1999).
[244] John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), 14.
[245] Birgit Meyer, 'The Power of Money: Politics, Occult forces, and Pentecostalism in Ghana' *African Studies Review*, 41.3 (1998): 19.

order to enhance their supernatural powers.[246] The recent film *Sakawa Boys,* which was hatched out of rumors and stories about the involvement of the youth in occult originating from internet fraud to sleeping in coffins all in an attempt to become rich overnight also fit into this trend. Serving as 'super religion' or a watchdog on various religions, local video films serve as a satire of the society. The films expose clandestine activities carry out by some religious functionaries but in a more dramatic and practical manner by means of humour.

Nevertheless, in the last decade, the discourse that some Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches resort to indigenous priests and occults for supernatural powers have been central in the video films produced by independent filmmakers. Contrary to the views expressed by producers of Christian videos who, in most cases paint positive images of these churches, the independent filmmakers are critical in their narratives. The story lines of the recent video films also deviate from the previous films where critics opine that in majority of these local popular films only traditional religion was negatively stereotyped. This development substantiates the point that the religious representation in video films has been dynamic more particularly in line with vogue religious discourse. Some Pentecostal Charismatic leaders are even portrayed in the new breed of films as having link with occult forces and traditional priests.[247] *Expensive Vow I&II* and *Serious Calamity I&II* are examples of popular local video films dominated with messages aimed at cautioning the general public particularly members of

[246] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Blowing the Cover, 226.

[247] Story lines of popular movies along the link of the new churches with the spiritual powers of traditional priests are reflection of religious discourses which have been appearing in the print and the electronic media in the sub-region. *Expensive Vow 1 & II* for instance was carved out of a juju (charm) scandal involving a charismatic pastor and traditional religion priest in Ghana in April 2008. One of the indigenous priests in the country, Kwaku Bonsam went to Mr. Agyei Yeboah, the founder and leader of Vision Charismatic Chapel at Kato near Berekum in the Brong Ahafo region, Ghana to recover his charm because the pastor refused to pay the remaining fee of GH¢350. This happened on April 2, around 12 mid-day, with the first service just over and church members were in a queue to attend counselling session.
See: http://dailyguideghana.com/portal/modules/news/article.php?storyid=4993 .

Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches about the charlatans among the emerging brands of Churches.[248]

Characteristically, most of the films produced by either secular organizations or individual religious groups with overt religious symbolisms, though become popular with the audience, they are also met with criticisms and recommendations. Of course, this is not peculiar to the video films in Ghana and Nigeria. On the global front, Mel Gibson's $30 million production budget film, *The Passion of Christ* 2004, which stirred controversies in the religious and academic circles, was a blockbuster hit raking in worldwide lifetime gross of $611,899,420.[249] Ghanaian/Nigerian video film industry has not been an exception in the portrayal of religious elements in films and its ensuing provocation of religious passions and disagreements. However, these films do not only represent the satire of society but 'continue to serve as instruments for blowing the cover of culprits and sensitizing the public against overdependence on other people's charismatic abilities'.[250] This is one of the reasons why despite all these controversies engendered by the modes of religious display in the local video films, 'Ghana has been able to cultivate an indigenous film and video culture'.[251]

What is not known about the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films is how the audience respond to the religious portrayal in general and the representation of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in particular in the local films. Do the depictions of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in the films assist or challenge the religious lives of their members? In what ways do the members of these churches appropriate the film narratives in their everyday life? Responses to these and other related questions about the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches as

[248] *Expensive Vow 1&2,* Toronto Pictures Production, 2007; *Serious Calamity 1&2,* Crystal Movies Productions, 2007. Also, see Appendix C for some of the films scenes.
[249] See http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=passionofthechrist.htm. Retrieved on 18th September 2009.
[250] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Blowing the Cover, 241.
[251] N. Frank Ukadike, 'African Cinema' in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.), *World Cinema: Critical Approaches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 186.

seen in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films have not been sufficiently answered, especially from perspectives of the audience.

This study is focusing on both the audience reception and use of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films in their religious lives. Religious themes in the video films are some of the aspects of the video film industry, which has attracted the attention of scholars. In the next chapter, I consider the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study as a whole and ethnographic research in particular.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Theoretical Frameworks

4.1 Introduction and Clarification of concepts

This chapter highlights some of the reception theories that have been frequently used in film studies. Some of these theories especially, Stanley Fish's interpretive community, will form part of this study.[252] Again, some selected traditions of media reception theories will be reviewed which would essentially pave the way for the approaches I am proposing in this research.

In this thesis, I intend to differ from the existing approach to the study of religion and the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films where the filmic 'text' has virtually become the epicentre of interpretation. Most of the existing reception theorists on the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films fit into earlier reception theorists labelled by Janet Staiger as 'text activated' groups.

Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Steven Mailoux, Meir Sternberg and Wolfgang Iser are among some of the proponents of the text-activated group.[253] For them, as Staiger notes, 'the text exists and will set up what the reader will do, that the reader is constituted by the text or by social and literary conventions, and that meaning or significance is "in" the text for the reader to interpret'.[254] Within this category, the scholars argue that the media text is enough to produce meaning but there is no consensus on how the individual receivers will extract the meaning from the text. Whereas some consider the text as complex parts of various structures to be interpreted holistically, others emphasise on the sequence by which viewers engage or

[252] Stanley E. Fish, 'Interpreting the "Variorum"', *Critical Inquiry*, 2.3 (Spring 1976): 465-485.
[253] Roland Barthes, *S/Z 1970*, Trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill wang, 1974); Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (London: Hutchinson, 1979); Steven Mailloux, *Interpretative Conventions: The Reader in the Study of American Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); Meir Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Pros Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).
[254] Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Film: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 35.

interact with the materials provided in the text for interpretation. Mailloux for instance, who belong to the group espousing general experience of the media text, describes consumers of media text as trying to consider how the various parts of the text 'cohere into a total meaningful pattern'.[255]

Most of the studies on the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films such as Jonathan Haynes and Esi Sutherland-Addy follow this line of text-activated method particularly those who take the generalized experience as the focal point.[256] They all assume either negative or positive effect of the media on the audience through the text. Nonetheless, as Eco states, 'an "open" text cannot be described as a communicative strategy if the role of its addressee (the reader, in the case of verbal text) has not been envisaged at the moment of its generation *qua* text'.[257] With such line of argument, it is clear that the reader who is at the centre of reception studies is totally rendered passive. This is one of the areas where I depart from most of the previous reception studies on the Ghana/Nigerian video films. Not only the place of viewers that is considered but also the context in which the films are interpreted as well. Reception studies considering the individual perceiver do acknowledge the relevance of the text but posits that the reader, as an individual, can redo or appropriate that text, that the reader is constituted by social or literary conventions or psychologies, and that the meaning or significance is 'in' the readers interpretation.[258] However, unlike the textual approach theorists who consider the reader as inert, the reader is described as having the capacity to choose their own interpretation that may conform or conflict with the intent of the author infused in the text. Reading cultural product, such as literary works or the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films 'is not akin to using a can opener to reveal a meaning hidden in a message but rather a consequence

[255] Steven Mailloux, *Interpretative Conventions: The Reader in the Study of American Fiction*, 67.
[256] Jonathan Haynes, ed, *Nigerian video films* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000); Esi Sutherland-Addy, 'The Ghanaian Feature Video Phenomenon', in Kofi Anyidoho and James Gibbs (eds.), *Fontomfrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).
[257] Umberto Eco, The *Role of the Reader*, 3.
[258] Janet staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 35.

of interactions between texts and audiences'.[259] As Walter Michaels rightly puts it 'The most we can say is that we can choose our interpretation [of the text] but we can't choose our own range of choices'.[260] The implication here is that both the text and the reader do not have a causative relation but a 'special form of an interrelationship, whose two constituents mutually permeate each other'.[261]

Neither the interaction between the text and the reader is also independent as they are influenced by other determinants in the ambient where the communication takes place. Manfred Naumann and Peter Heath who label these factors 'mediating organs' or 'regulative indications' list such determinants as the reader's 'world view and ideology; by his membership of a class, stratum, or group; by his material situation (income, leisure, living and working conditions, and general way of life); by his education, knowledge, and level of culture, his aesthetic needs; by his age, and even by his sex, and not least by his attitude to the other arts, and especially to the very literature that he has already given a reception to'.[262] Shaun Moores also argues that in the interaction between text and subject, other discourses are always in play besides those of the particular text in focus-discourses…brought into play through "the subject's" placing in other practices-cultural, educational, institutional'.[263] Janet Staiger prefers to refer to these external historical circumstances as 'contextual factors'. For Staiger, the self-images and personal associations constructed by the reader in the reading event and the relation of those self-images and associations to abstract categories of

[259] John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, 2nd Edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 164.
[260] Walter Michaels, 'The Interpreter's Self: Peirce on the Cartesian "Subject"', *The Georgia Review,* (1977): 383-402.
[261] Manfred Naumann and Peter Heath, 'Literary Production and Reception', *New Literary History,* 8.1 (Autumn 1976):117.
[262] Ibid, 121.
[263] Shuan Moores, *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption* (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 16.

determinations matter more than any theoretical array within which a researcher might be inclined to posit the reader'.[264]

Thus, the text of the films, the viewer's role in the interpretation process and the other general factors and religious factors in particular are shaping the interpretation process. 'Interpretation' is in most cases considered as part and parcel of the broader category of 'reading'. For instance, George L. Dillon regards 'interpretation' as an aspect of reading by suggesting that 'Reading has at least three levels, which we will call*, perception, comprehension, and interpretation*'.[265] Staiger also builds on Dillon's levels of reading to succinctly capture interpretation within the ambit of reading. For Staiger, interpretation is an act of using frames to make inferences about extratextual meanings, with one possible extratext that of an inferred "author" and his or her "constructive intension"'.[266] She insists that interpretative frames and inferences influence, and perhaps determine, perception and comprehension. For Staiger, "comprehension" involves using frames (or codes or conventions) to make inferences about textual meanings. She therefore argues that inferences established prior to any specific act of reading are determinants to the perception, comprehension, and interpretation that occur during reading.[267] Indeed, while working alongside such interconnectedness in reading, this assertion will also be tested. That is, in exploring the reception of the religious elements in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, with special reference to Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, how religious factors such as doctrines, rituals and practices established by the members will influence their interpretation of the films will be interrogated.

[264] Staiger, *Interpreting Film*, 47.
[265] George L. Dillon, *Language Processing and the Reading of Literature: Toward of Model of Comprehension* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), xvii. All the italics are in the original work.
[266] Staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 20.
[267] Ibid.

I am not oblivious of the contention of applying 'reading' which was first used by reader-response criticism in the linguistic model to audio-visual medium such as the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Perhaps, one of the most notable critics who opposes the use of linguistic theory to moving images is David Bordwell. In *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Bordwell devotes a whole paragraph to make clear his opposition to choosing 'reading' in film viewing. He writes:

> It will come as no surprise that I do not treat the spectator's operation as necessarily modelled upon linguistic activities. I shall not speak of the spectator's "enunciating" the story as the film runs along, nor shall I assume that narrative sense is made according to the principles of metaphor and metonymy. It is by no means clearly established that human perception and cognition are fundamentally determined by the processes of natural language evidence runs the other way, toward the view that language is an instrument of and guide for mental activity. For such reasons, I do not call the spectator's comprehension "reading" a film. It is, moreover, needlessly equivocal to speak of the spectator's activity as reading when the same word is applied to the abstract propositional arguments characteristic of critical analysis and interpretation. Viewing is synoptic, tied to the time of the text's presentation, and literal; it does not require translation into verbal terms. Interpreting (reading) is dissective, free of the text's temporality, and symbolic; it relies upon propositional language. This chapter and book try to explain viewing.[268]

However, the adoption of linguistic model to moving images has been defended and tested by some scholars to be compatible. In a sharp rebuttal to the position of Bordwell, Staiger quotes scholars such as Katherine Nelson, Ulric Niesser, Michael Cole among others to argue that films or moving images tend to be treated just as literary works because films are "read" by spectators who use codes to interpret the texts'.[269] Even though these arguments are based on theories but such a stand has been affirmed by empirical evidence.[270]

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[268] David Bordwell*, Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 30.
[269] Staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 59.
[270] See Ellen M. Shull, 'The Reader, the Text, the Poem—And the Film', *The English Journal*, Vol.78 (Dec.1989), 53; Richard Maltby, "'A Brief Romantic Interlude': Dick and Jane go to 3 ½ seconds of the Classical Hollywood cinema." Reprinted in Bordwell, David, and Carroll Noël (ed.), *Post-Theory* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 434-59; Peter Ruppert, "Applying Reader-Response Analysis in Literature and Film Classes." *Die Unterrichtspraxis*/*Teaching German*, Vol.14, and No.1. (Spring, 1981), 20-26; Donald Crafton, "*The Jazz Singer's* Reception in the Media and at the Box Office." Reprinted in Bordwell, David, and Carroll, Noël (ed.), *Post-Theory* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 199), 460-80.

With interpretative community in mind, the best literary work which has been adopted in most film studies and which will be worth revisiting is that of Stanley E. Fish's 'Interpretive communities'. Interpretative communities, for Fish, 'are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intensions. In other words, these strategies exist prior to act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way round'.[271] The idea of interpretive communities was a result of answering the stability and variety in interpreting texts. Thus, for Fish, the two questions which informed the notion of interpretive community are first, why is it that 'the reader will perform differently when reading two "different" (the word is in quotation marks because its status is precisely what is the issue) texts'. The second question is how come 'different readers will perform similarly when reading the "same" (in quotes for the same reason) texts.[272] Fish suggests that both the stability and the variety are functions of interpretive strategies rather than of texts. Interpretative community model by Fish has been absorbed into film studies by applying the main thrust of the notion, which suggests that individuals approach any text based on the convention and values of that particular group. In fact, most of these works will be visited and situated into the current study.

Before then, there are a few differences to be noted with the addressee or the perceiver of the text. The individual addressee of literary works with few exceptions such as 'narratee', most of the analysts labels him or her as the 'reader' and sometimes distinguish each reader from the others by virtue of the relation or assumed function of the reader in the reading process. In most literary works, irrespective of the theoretical background of the theorists, the naming of the perceiver is derived from the authors' 'attitudes towards their readers, the kind of readers various texts seem to imply, the role actual readers play in the determination of literary

[271] Stanley E. Fish, 'Interpreting the "Variorum"', *Critical Inquiry*, 2.3 (Spring 1976): 483.
[272] Ibid,481.

meaning, the relation of reading conventions to textual interpretation, and the status of the reader's self.'[273] That is how various types of readers are identified in reader-response theories. Some of these readers as has been listed by Staiger are 'actual, authorial, coherent, competent, ideal, implied, mock, narrate, necessary, programmed, real, resisting, super, virtual, zero-degree 'and many other related functional names for readers.[274]

The case is however different with the perceiver or addressee of audio-visual media such as films. The readers of filmic text are called by theorists as 'viewers', 'spectators', 'fans', 'Film-goers or movie-goers', 'reader' as well as the notable description 'audience'. All these labels will be considered as replaceable with the exception of 'movie- goers' or 'film-goers', which are becoming unpopular with the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films audience. This is partly because the availability of the films on DVDs or VCDs and on the numerous television channels both free view and pay per view renders the use of 'movie- goers' or 'film-goers' limited to those individuals who attend the video film premiers. As can be seen from figure 2.6, having access to the video films by going to the film theatre or the cinema hall never appeared. Rather, majority of the audience claimed they watch the video films on various Television channels with just a quarter of the respondents declaring that they access the video by buying the DVDs/VCDs. A few people who cannot afford to buy their copy also rent films from the video shop.

It is within the triangulation of text, reader and the context in the reception of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films that the whole thesis is situated. Attention will now be turned to the theories, which have dominated the field of reception of the media in general, and films in particular. I review some of these theories in order to lay the foundation for the theoretical frameworks underpinning this research.

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[273] Jane P. Tompkins, 'An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism', in Jane P. Tompkins (ed.), *Reader-Response: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1980), ix.
[274] Staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 24.

4.2 Media Reception

There is no definite or simple way to define or explore reception of the media but it is studied in line with the interest of each scholar. For Terry Eagleton, reception study is described as 'a social and historical theory of meaning'.[275] Henry Jenkins prefers to address reception studies from the fundamental question they ask: how we make sense of the movie and what they mean in our lives.[276] Jonathan Culler indicates that reception studies 'is not a way of interpreting works but an attempt to understand their changing intelligibility by identifying the codes and interpretive assumptions that give them meaning for different audiences at different periods'.[277] But the definition provided by Janet Staiger in her seminal work, *Interpreting Films*, is more appropriate in this work. For Staiger, reception study does not end at the interpretation of the text; rather, it tries to understand the process of textual interpretation as they are produced historically by the audience. She writes:

> [R]eception studies tries to explain an event (the interpretation of the film), while textual studies is working towards elucidating an object (the film). Both activities are useful in the process of knowledge, but they explore different aspects of the hermeneutics of cultural studies. This does not mean, however, that the reception studies worker escapes the difficulties of interpretation, for studying interpretations will, necessarily, involve interpretation on the part of the researcher.[278]

Reception of the media by the audience has been polarised into two strands. The first to have greeted media studies has to do with the control the media has over the audience while the second group of scholars also touch on the multiple ways in which the audience relate to the media. Kevin Williams puts the scholarship on the relation between the media and audience into two different camps: one emphasising the effects the media have on their audiences, the

[275] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 107.
[276] Henry Jenkins, 'Reception Theory and Audience Research: The mystery of the Vampire's Kiss', in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds.), *Reinventing Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 166.
[277] Quoted in Janet Staiger, *Media Reception Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 2.
[278] Janet Staiger*, Interpreting Films*, 9.

other stressing the variety of ways in which different audiences make use of media output.[279] Yet, there are no strict laid down rules in which various approaches to media reception studies have been compartmentalised. Indeed, the difficulty in finding generally accepted traditions of reception studies has compelled academics in the field to categorise the available studies of reception studies into varying number of trajectories to suit the need of each scholar. Sonia Livingstone for instance who called for resistance of the canonization of the field, identifies six traditions based on their central arguments and core concepts. For Livingstone, media audience reception studies can be grouped into: Encoding and decoding; uses and gratification; resistance audience; post-structuralism; feminist approaches and ethnographic turn.[280] Jensen and Rosegren had earlier distinguished five categories in their work, *Five traditions in search of the Audience* as: effects; uses and gratification; literary criticism; cultural studies; and reception analysis.[281] But for the purpose of studying the religious representation in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, media audience and reception studies will be reduced to three main groups: effects; the cultural turn and uses and gratifications strands.

4.3 Media Effects theories

The bulk of current state of scholarship on religion and the video films can best be described as fitting into the effect theories principles. The effects (the negative) of the media on people especially young people have been and continue to be a major concern for many parts of the world. Even though there has been no unitary agreement on the level of effects of the media on people, fears about the degrading effects have greeted virtually any new form of media invention. There is ample evidence to suggest that break-down of morals and high crime rates

[279] Kevin Williams, *Understanding Media Theory* (London: Arnold, 2003), 165.
[280] Sonia Livingstone, 'Relationships between media and audiences: Prospects for audience reception Studies', in T Liebes and J. Curran (eds.), *Media, ritual and identity: Essays in honour of Elihu Katz* (London: Routledge, 1998), 237-55.
[281] Klaus Jensen, and Karl Erik Rosengren, 'Five traditions in search of the audience', *European Journal of communication,* 5.2 (1990): 207-238.

have been linked with the media. Jane Root provides brief account of the blame game on the media from eighteenth to the twentieth century as follows:

> Seduced by moving images, the working class young will fail to show sufficient respect for their elders and betters. Chaos will prevail, if not revolution. It is not poverty and class bitterness, those old and entrenched tensions, which are the cause of the unrest, but theatre or comics or noisy television programmes. Get rid of the offending programmes they reassuringly tell their middle-class readers, and a whole range of awkward social problems will evaporate overnight.[282]

Carrying out their studies in such an environment of negative perception about the media, it is therefore not surprising that most of the academics from the evolution of mass media to date have been focusing on the various powerful, perhaps negative, effects of the media on the recipients. Theories emphasizing on the influence the media have on the individual members have approached the issue from different angles however. One of the first media effect theories has been labelled as the 'hypodermic' or 'magic bullet' or 'transmission belt'. The central argument of this theory has been summarised by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach as 'media messages are received in a uniform way by every member of the audience and that immediate and direct responses are triggered by such stimuli'.[283]

But the effects theories in general have been deplored for treating the audience as passive and isolated to be directly influenced by the ideological meaning of the media texts and ignoring the possibility of differences between audience members in making sense of media messages.[284] For instance as far back in 1960, Joseph Klapper's seminal work on media effects studies criticised this line of argument that the media has direct effects on the audience. Rather Klapper concluded that the 'mass media does not ordinarily serve as a necessary or sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions through a nexus of mediating factors.[285] Yet, most of the scholarship on reception of religion in films especially,

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[282] Ibid, 16.
[283] Quoted in Kevin Williams, *Understanding Media Theory*, 171.
[284]Kevin Williams, *Understanding Media Theory*, 195.
[285] Joseph Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication* (New York: Free Press, 1960), 8.

Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, as illuminated ahead, use this approach by extensively relying on meaning encoded in the media texts.

4.3.1 Reception of Religious films

Literature on religion and film in the western contexts rides on universal Judo-Christian themes such as Jesus or Christ figures; biblical narratives; metaphors of God in films; eschatology and redemption.[286] African video films however often deal with general African religious themes. These themes are however likely to be connected with religious institutions, members of certain religions as well as their religious beliefs and practices. The topics are rarely allied to Jesus or God directly unlike those that pertain in most studies in the western world. Thus, in the case of the local video films, the religious themes even though may be Christian; they are inextricably linked with the indigenous religious worldviews. The replete of the indigenous themes is not peculiar to the video film phenomenon but, as Frank Ukadike notes, 'since the inception of African celluloid filmmaking, indigenous themes have sustained the narrative patterns of African films'.[287]

Notwithstanding some of the weaknesses associated with the effect theories, they have been extensively applied by scholars in the field of Ghanaian/Nigerian films to explore these religious themes. For instance, the effects theories have been deplored for treating the audience as passive and isolated to be directly influenced by the ideological meaning of the media texts and ignoring the possibility of differences between audience members in making

[286] Lloyd Baugh*, Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ Figures in Film* (Kansas City, Mo: Sheed &Ward, 1997); Adele Reinhartz, *Jesus of Hollywood* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Larry Kreitzer, *The New Testament in Fiction and Film: on Reversing the Hermeneutical Flow* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993); Robert Jewett, *Saint Paul at the Movies: The Apostle's Dialogue with America Culture* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993; Robert Jewett, *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies: Triumph over Shame* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999); Andrew Bergesen and Albert Greeley, *God in the Movies: A Sociological Investigation* (New Brunswick, NJ.: Transaction Publishers,2000); Christopher Deacy 'The Final Verdict: Theological Perspectives on Justice and Film', in Christopher Deacy and Gaye Williams Ortiz (eds.) *Theology and Film: Challenging the Sacred/Secular Divide* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).
[287] Frank Ukadike, *Black African Cinema*, 131.

sense of media messages.[288] In this section, I look at some of the existing literature on religion and film that are situated in the effects theories. Two approaches to be considered here in relation to Ghana/Nigerian video films are the religious worldview of the producer (auteur approach) and general religious themes inscribed in the filmic text.

4.3.2 Auteur Approach

Auteur, French word for author was coined by Francois Truffaut claiming that film expresses the personal ideas and visions of the director. Truffaut therefore suggested that film director should be regarded as an author. These views expressed in an article, *A Certain Tendency in French Film*, which appeared in the French film magazine, *cahiers du Cinema*, Notebooks on Cinema, advocated for analysing of film by considering the artistic vision and worldview of the filmmaker encoded in the films. Here, film is regarded as dominant and influential art form in contemporary society providing theological resources materials. Cooper and Skrade argue that 'If we ask after the art form which dominates our own period, we cannot answer without a consideration of the cinema. Ours is an age dominated by moving images and immediate experience, lights and shadows on the silver screen'.[289] And the content of this paragon art form is fused with the theological vision of the director that the audience can draw on in their religious lives. Many theologians have taken up auteur theory, which is one of the oldest approaches to the study of religion and film.[290] These scholars however have different ways of gleaning the theological resources from the filmic texts.

But the issues still remain as to how viewers with little or no idea about the worldview of the filmmaker may grasp the intended religious message contained in a film. It is even more

[288]Kevin Williams, *Understanding Media Theory* (London: Arnold, 2003), 195.
[289] J. Cooper and C.Skrade, *Celluloid and Symbols* (Pennsylvania: Fortress, 1970), 2.
[290] Some of the leading exponents of the auteur theory include: Neil Hurley*, Theology through Film* (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1970; James M.Wall, *Church and Cinema: A Way of Viewing Film.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971); Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (Berkeley: University of California Press; Reprinted DaCapo Press, 1988) and Gerard Loughlin, *Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology* (Maiden Mass; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

complex with those viewers with fair knowledge about the artistic and religious orientation of the filmmaker. Whose religious beliefs will dominate the film watching experience then? Is it the theological vision of the filmmaker or the audience? Some of these issues raise another question about the independent nature of the vision of the filmmaker encoded in the film.

And with the recent approaches where film is being considered *as film*, 'the more the balance has already started to shift from what a director intended to what a viewer makes of a film'.[291] The pitfalls of the approach nevertheless, auteur theory, has been a very influential tool in the analysis of theology and film since early 1950s when the concept emerged. Auteur theory, which began in Europe and taken up seriously first by film critics in North America, was developed in a context where the secularisation or the 'death of God' debate was one of the greatest concern to theologians and church leaders. The aim of the earlier film critics was to meet the religious aspirations of the younger generations by developing secular theology from the secular structures most likely to draw the attention of the faithful to complement those of conventional religions. This was evident in the reason assigned by James Wall from his sceptical stance on films to that of optimism. The transition from a purely religious concern for film to a broader concern for film as a film was made possible, in the words of Wall, by a theological climate in which the reality of God came to be sought within secular structures as well as within the conventional religious structures.[292]

Although secularization remains contentious subject in Europe and North America and auteur theory is saddled with a lot of methodological deficiencies, it is still been used in film criticism across the globe. In *Reading Stanley Kubrick: A Theological Odyssey*, Jeffery F. Keuss traces theological themes of Kubrick in his life journey as a film director from *Day of the Fight, 1951* to *Eyes Wide Shut, 1999*, to submit that 'reading Kubrick's films shows a

[291] Clive Marsh, 'Theology and Film', in William L. Blizek (ed.), *The Continuum Companion to Religion and Film* (London: Continuum, 2009), 64.
[292] James Wall, *Church and Cinema*, 8.

director who invokes an experience of the numinous and the predestined… which ultimately draws us as viewers into this experience of the holy as well'.[293] Craig Detweiler also uses films of Wim Wenders, the celebrated German film director, to demonstrate how Christian theology continues to drive the poetic vision of modern day filmmakers.[294]

The auteur theory would have been less interesting in the analysis of films in the situation where the Christian vision or message of the director infused in his or her films becomes clear and the intended message is espoused not only by the producer but also well received by the audience. This seems to be the case for Wim Wenders. He disclosed to his fellow filmmaker, Scott Derrickson, 'it was seeing what the film did in other people, how the film affected them, that changed my mind. These figures that I created, my angel creatures, started to work on me and my spiritual life'.[295] But some of the limitations of the directorial worldview or Christian message in the film come to light when the aim of the filmmaker is to challenge the Christian theology. Noted film directors in this category are Roberto Rosselini and Luis Bunuel. Again, there is also the problem of whose vision will reign in a situation where an atheist like Pier Paolo Pasolini makes overtly Christian film such as *The Gospel According to St. Matthew (1964).* Or how do the audience digest the message in the case where filmmakers who identify themselves as belonging to different religious traditions continue to advance Christian theology in their film narratives. In principle, that is the case with the Ghanaian situation.

With the Ghanaian context, religious portrayals in the local video films also follow the global film narratives where Christianity prevails. Unlike the cases of the most renowned Hollywood and European filmmakers who portray Christianity as a devotion or challenge to

[293] Jeffery F. Keuss, 'Reading Stanley Kubrick: A Theological Odyssey', in *Eric S. Christianson et al. (eds.), Cinéma divinité : Religion, Theology and the Bible in Film* (London : SCM, 2005), 83.
[294] Craig Detweiler, 'Christianity', in John Lyden (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009).
[295] Qtd in Detweiler, *Christianity,* 124.

the faith, Christian theology in most Video films in Ghana and Nigeria is used as a marketing strategy or tribute or both. Onookome Okome succinctly captures the master plan of video filmmakers for survival as follows:

> These filmmakers and video makers have been able to negotiate their vocational calling in an economy that is at best patronizing, while at the same time providing a space for the discussion of the city. Film and video producers know this social fact. They know what their urban audiences prefer. They go all out to make these popular preferences possible and available in their films. They know too that this is the only way to assure success at the box-office, which makes further productions possible.[296]

In order to attract as much audience as possible, filmmakers furnish the audience with popular religious tradition likely to have large following. With its currency among Ghanaians and Nigerians across the globe, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity surpasses any other single religion in general and particular brand of Christianity to be tapped by filmmakers. Again, most of the Protestants churches and the Catholic Church have charismatic group among them. Kwame Bediako has even pointed out that the 'Pentecostalising process occurring within some of the mainline churches should alert us to the fact that any hard divisions of that sort are unhelpful'.[297] This development has been well captured by the detailed research undertaken by Cephas Omenyo in *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism,* where he has demonstrated how the members of the mainline churches are influenced by various kinds of Pentecostal type movements both within and outside their framework.[298]Omenyo's work was limited to how Pentecostalism shapes the phase of the mainline Christianity in Ghana. This study is a departure from that of Omenyo to examine how Pentecostalism is impacting on popular culture, especially the ways in which the narratives of the local video films are also affected by the theology and praxis of Pentecostalism.

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[296] Onookome Okome, 'Video Film in Nigeria: Preliminary Notes on African Popular Art'*, Voices: The Wisconsin Review of African Literatures*, 2 (1999): 52.
[297] Kwame Bediako, 'African and Christianity on the threshold of the third Millennium: The Religious Dimension', *African Affairs*, 99.395 (2000): 312.
[298] Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2006), 291.

4.3.2.1 Producing Without Believing?

What is interesting is that most of the video films featuring Pentecostal theology are produced outside the Pentecostal circles. Christian theology display in the films in this group is chiefly for marketing purposes, albeit other religious reasons cannot be ruled out. Majority of the video filmmakers in this category are affiliated to religions other than Christianity or none. Such is the complex nature of religious narratives in general and Christianity in particular implicated in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films and the religious orientations of filmmakers. Most of the renowned video film producers or directors in Ghana are Muslims. Hammond Mensah is affiliated to Muslim Ahmadiyya group, Sidiku Buari, a veteran media mogul in Ghana and Abdul Salam Mumuni, the director of *God Loves Prostitutes/The chosen One I and II (2003)*, are among some of the well-known Ghanaian film producers or directors who Muslims. But these Muslim producers in Ghana see nothing wrong with producing films with Pentecostal-Charismatic narratives. Hammond, for instance, has no problem with making such Christian films. To survive in the video-film business, in the words of Hammond, one has to make Christian films and in his opinion, Islam and Pentecostal Christianity teach the same sort of morals and he does not feel the need to advertise Islam.[299]

Some of the filmmakers in Ghana with no affiliation to any specific religion also see filmmaking as divine gift from God. To these filmmakers, as Meyer has observed, 'filmmaking is a domain of vision production in its own right'.[300] Samuel Ankrah, the producer of *Deliverance from the Powers of Darkness (1992)*, a film about the superiority of the Holy Spirit over witchcraft and satanic spirits, claimed to have received the script 'image after image' in a dream.[301] Most filmmakers see the art of framing video films as a revelation,

[299] Quoted in Birgit Meyer, '''Praise the Lord' 'Popular Cinema and Pentecostalite style in Ghana's new Public sphere', *American Ethnologis*t, 31. 1 (2004):101.
[300] Birgit Meyer, 'Visions of Blood, Sex and Money: Fantasy Spaces in Popular Ghanaian Cinema', *Visual Anthropology: Published in cooperation with the Commission on Visual Anthropology*, 16 .1 (2003): 18.
[301] Ibid.

vision and prophecy in line with the Pentecostal repertoire not only a way of meeting the expectations of the audience but also as divine providence that can be executed out of the church. Such filmmakers therefore decline any invitation by some pastors to join their churches. Pentecostal pastors praise some of the independent filmmakers because their film structures are accolades that they have been 'chosen by God to reveal the hidden machinations of the "powers of darkness"'.[302] There are even some producers in Ghana and Nigeria producing majority of the local video films from neo-pentecostalite perspective who do not approve of the Pentecostal-Charismatic theology. Akuffo, one of the first innovators of the Ghana video industry and President of the newly established film Academy in Ghana, known as Ghallywood, is one of them. Even though he advances Pentecostal theology in most of his films, Akuffo does not only have different worldview but denigrates the very Christian theology he displays in his films. Akuffo disclosed to Mitchell in an interview that his films:

> don't reflect my belief at all. They've got nothing to do with my belief because to start with I don't believe in all the Christian crap that is going on around me, although I don't believe in this [Afrikania Mission, the neo-traditionalists] thing so… I am not atheist; but I believe there should be a supreme being somewhere but since I haven't seen him, I don't bother myself very much about him. I don't think my films reflect what I think at all.[303]

It is important to point out that the situation where filmmakers worldview differ from those religious narratives infused in their films is not new to African films in general. Certain names of African cinema directors who expressed dissimilar religious position from those found in their films are worth quoting here: Pascal Abikanlou of Benin says: 'I am a practising Catholic, but for us people from Benin, voodoo is sacred'. Ousmane Sembene is quoted as saying: 'I respect all believers, but all religions are opiums. I am Marxist and without faith'. Gnoan M'Bala the director of *Au nom du Christ,* says simply: 'In my family, I

[302] Ibid.
[303] Quoted in Jolyon Mitchell, 'From Morality Tales to Horror Movies: Towards an Understanding of the Popularity of West African Video Film', in Jolyon Mitchell and S.Brent Plate (eds.), *The Religion and Film reader (*New York; London: Routledge, 2007), 116.

am considered *faithless*'.[304] In situations where filmmakers distance themselves from the religious worldviews in their films, as I have illustrated here with some Ghanaian/Nigerian video film producers, the director's vision alone will be inadequate to analyse the reception of the film.

4.3.2.2 Pentecostal Video film Producers

There are a few filmmakers of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films who are situated within the Pentecostal circles. Video films in this category are christened as Christian Video films. Filmmakers here are Pentecostal-Charismatic churches or individuals using the medium primarily as devotion. To the best of my knowledge, there are no Pentecostal groups producing films as part of their evangelical drive in Ghana but Ghanaians have access to video films produced by Nigerians including those emerging from the Christian Ministries. Within the many Pentecostal churches engaged in the production of video films as part of their ministries in Nigeria, certain names stand out. The Power of God Evangelical Ministries (POGEM), The Mount Zion Faith Ministries International (MZFMI) and Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries (LFGM) are good examples. In both Ghana and Nigeria, Pentecostal ministries, which are not involved in the direct production of video film, also use their bookshops and other churches programmes to distribute or advertise the Christian video films produced in Nigeria.

In most cases, Christian theology found in the Christian video films reflects the vision and the worldview of the organization or the founder of the church. At the heart of the Christian theology or worldview in the Christian video films is the founder's conversion experience (which in most cases is situated in the spiritual realm). With its numerous advantages, the audio-visual medium is used by the churches to concretise and reinforce the abstract and

[304] Francois Vokouma, 'Recent Developments in the Religious Film in Africa', in John R. May (ed.), *New Image Of Religious Film (*Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997), 271.

invisible experience in the spiritual realm that the leader may claim to have been involved or experienced. It is the ability of the Christian video films to quench the curiosity of the African audience about the invisible spiritual activities that the appeal of the films resides. Ukah Asonzeh, for instance, attributes part of the appeal of the video films of Helen Ukpabio, the founder of Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries (LFGM) to the poignant story of her past association with the Lucifer. Ukah states:

> Helen Ukpabio makes great capital from her own biography as one who has 'worked with Satan and has served Lucifer before' and now can diagnose and offer deliverance services through her films for those in bondage. Her films often locate their appeal and potency in the conflict between agents of Lucifer and children of God. Her comments and personal story create anxious expectations from an eager audience obsessed with the occultic.[305]

Other individual Christian filmmakers also employ the films to showcase their fascinating 'Born-Again' Pentecostal-Charismatic persuasions. Ogunjiofor is one of the pioneers in the video industry in Nigeria and the producer of *Living in Bondage I and II*, a film coloured with strong neo-Pentecostal rhetoric of having the solutions to both spiritual and material problems of people. According to the producer, *Living in Bondage* and the sequel was to make public his neo-pentecostalist religious orientation after his pastor had ministered to him to return to his first love.[306] Indeed, the films made by the Charismatic ministries 'reflect the media theology of the institutions', and the 'born-again' religious orientations of the individual filmmakers.[307] Regarding the identical vision of the filmmakers and those displayed in their films, the Christian video filmmakers of the Ghanaian/Nigerian films fit into the foundation on which the auteur theory was built. Andrew Sarris, who first applied the auteur theory, suggests three premises on which the theory revolves. According to Sarris:

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[305] F-K. Asonzeh-Ukah, 'Advertising God: Nigerian Christian video films and the Power of Consumer Culture', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33.2 (2003): 225.
[306] Quoted in Ibid, 212.
[307] Jaakko T. Lehikoinen, *Religious Media Theology: Understanding Mediated Faith and Christian Applications of Modern Media* (Jyvaskyla: University of Jyvaskyla, 2003), 34.

> The first premise of the auteur theory is the technical competence of a director as a criterion of value. A badly directed or an undirected film has no importance in a critical scale of value, but one can make interesting conversation about the subject, the script, the acting, the colour, the photography, the editing, the music , the costume, the decor and so forth. That is the nature of the medium. You always get more for your money than mere art… The second premise of the auteur theory is the distinguishable personality of a director as a criterion of value. Over a group of films, a director must exhibit certain recurrent characteristics of style, which serve as his [or her] signature. The way a film looks and moves should have some relationship to the way a director thinks and feels…The third and ultimate premise of the auteur theory is concerned with interior meaning, the ultimate glory of the cinema as an art. Interior meaning is extrapolated from the tension between a director's personality and his [or her] material.[308]

Thus, unlike independent film directors in the independent filmmakers, religious vision of the Christian film producers is in line with those found in their films. The films produce by the Pentecostal groups are what Onokoome Okome calls 'Hallelujah video films'.[309] In these videos, Christian rhetoric of the battle between the forces of evil and a benevolent God is supported with audio-visual evidence. The hero or heroine is almost always identified with the Christian God and malevolent characters are synonymous with indigenous religious belief systems. Obododimma Oha observes that 'the videos that promote this view are becoming important instruments of evangelization in Nigeria and are shaping attitudes in a social context of fear, uncertainty, helplessness, and hopelessness'.[310]

The aim of the Christian video films, especially those produced by the Pentecostal ministries, is clearly stated on their websites and in some cases, in their books. For instance, any visitor to the website of Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries is greeted with spiritual warfare rhetoric of the church through their various ministries including that of the video films. It reads:

> Our Vision is to help liberate mankind from every yoke and bondage of the enemy through teaching of God's word in a clear and direct way and exposing the

[308] Andrew Sarris, 'Notes on Auteur Theory in 1962', *Film Culture*, No. 27 (Winter 1962-3):562.
[309] Onookome Okome, 'The Popular Art of African Video-Film', New York Foundation for the Arts, summer, 2001. http://www.nyfa.org/archive_detail_q.asp?type=3&qid=45&fid=6&year=2001&s=Summer&print=true, Retrieved on May 16, 2012.
[310] Obododomma Oha,' The Rhetoric of Nigerian Videos: The War Paradigm of The Great Mistake', in Jonathan Haynes (ed.), *Nigerian Video Films* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000), 193.

> works of the devil and his deceptions in these last days… Liberty Films has become a household name within Nigeria and globally attracting different awards in the Film industry internationally. Liberty films deliver the truth of the Gospel in a fresh and exciting way and [have] led to the deliverance and salvation of many.[311]

The welcome messages on the websites of many Pentecostal-Charismatic churches affirm the religious worldviews inscribed in their video films. Some Christian producers in North America and Europe have been using films to praise or criticise their childhood Christian faith. Ingmar Berman for instance, praised his childhood religious upbringing through films. Luis Bunuel and Roberto Rossellini on the other hand used films to denounce their religious upbringing.[312] On the contrary, Christian video film producers in Ghana and Nigeria, though sometimes appear critical, use their films to aid the wholesale promotion of the Christian faith.

Notwithstanding the parallel relationship between the visions of the Christian video film directors and the Christian theology in their films, it will be inadequate to use the auteur theory as the sole analytical approach in the reception of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. The first reason is that, with the Christian video film producers, consistency of the worldview, which is one of the central tenets of analysing films through the vision of the producer, could be achieved. Undoubtedly, such congruity of Christian theology displayed by Christian filmmakers is evinced in the doctrines of the neo-Pentecostal churches as expressed in their books, sermons and in recent times, their websites. But even here the declaration by these religious groups to use the film for religious purpose is not conclusive. A recent study by Afe Adogame also indicates that even in a situation where some of the Pentecostal churches intend to use the video films as a form of evangelization, there is no evidence of any success

[311] http://www.libertyfoundationgospelministries.org/about_us.html, Retrieved on September 27, 2012.
[312] Craig Detweiler, 'Christianity', 110.

in this direction.[313] It was however clear that some of the audience were not in favour of Christians using the audio-visual forms.[314]

Secondly, the compatibility of religious worldview in the films and that of the filmmakers outside Pentecostal churches will be very difficult to achieve with the independent films producers. Yet as has been already intimated, the volume of video films released by the independent video filmmakers with overwhelming Christian theology is far more than those produced by Christian filmmakers themselves. Apart from the fact that most of the secular video film producers may not have literary masterpieces for comparisons, their primary motives is not to show regular patterns of narratives but to tap any interesting topic that will appeal to the audience. Christian theology, outstandingly, the popularity of the Pentecostal-Charismatic culture is appropriated by film producers in order to meet the expectations of most of their audiences. The unparalleled religious affiliation of some of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video film producers with their film narratives makes the auteur theology approach to the study of Christian theology in the video films insufficient. The question that still remains unanswered is, if most of the independent video filmmakers distance themselves and some even denigrate the Christian faith in their film narratives, whose religious worldview will be at work in the film reception experience? The inability of the auteur theory to deal with some of these issues of reception of religion in films has necessitated the consideration of the next perspective that is the theological themes, also centred on the filmic text, which indeed have been dominating in the present literature on Ghanaian/Nigerian video films.

4.3. 3 General Religious Themes

[313] Afe Adogame, 'To God Be the Glory! Home Videos, Art Symbology and Religio-Cultural Identity in Contemporary African Christianity'*:*147-59.
[314] Ibid.

There are a lot of theological themes scholars often discuss from Ghanaian/Nigerian video film texts but the three most common ones will be discussed here. These are false prophets or charlatans, rituals and representation of religions. Two notable works highlighting the theme of false prophets or charlatans in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films are Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu's *Blowing the Cover* and *Nnebue* written by Jonathan Haynes. Asamoah-Gyadu cites films, which resonate with the fascination of people with the spiritual realm and their penchant to resort to all manner of supernatural powers to address their day-to-day practical problems. This, according to him land unsuspected clients into the arms of religious functionaries whose sources of power are questionable. With special reference to the video film, *The last Prophet*, Asamoah-Gyadu summarises the message the audience will take home as 'first, to expose the prophet as a charlatan and, secondly to warn those who follow signs and wonders about the occult and dangerous sources from which such prophets are believed to obtain their powers'.[315] Haynes, who believes that films, which often times feature false prophets, are the flourishing genre of Christian videos, describes the scenery that the video films reflect in the following words. He writes:

> The Christian world has become a boiling cauldron. Pastors, Prophets and pseudo seers are the key players in this stormy arena. And the church council is the boardroom of power play, conspiracy and looting of God's treasury. Every church now serves a divided kingdom against itself. Young pastors break away to set up their own churches; backed by monstrous business moguls with misty agenda.[316]

For Haynes, the video film *Endtime,* is a Mirror, a Billboard for one to peep into this stunning tempest within the Christian world. By reading the title, theme song that accompanies the whole narration, he believes the film imply that what we are seeing are the epiphenomena of

[315] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Blowing the Cover': Imaging Religious Functionaries in Ghanaian/Nigerian Films, in Lynn Schofield Clark (ed.), *Religion, Media and Marketplace* (New Brunswick; New Jersey; and London: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 240.
[316] Jonathan Haynes, 'Nnebue: the Anatomy of Power', *Film International',* 28, 5.4 (2007): 38.

the last days before the Christian apocalypse: false prophets, abounding iniquity, worship of money.[317]

Again, another theme in the local video films, which has been appearing in some of the scholarship in the field, is rituals. Even though there are varied types of ritual such as dancing, eating, mourning, celebrating and worshipping, the bone of contention reflected in the works of scholars is whether aesthetics of ritual enactment in the films will enhance or hinder the message intended for the audience. Focusing on rituals of human sacrifice and other diabolic rituals intended to help people achieve their parochial goals in life as quick as possible depicted in the films, Jenkeri Okwori contends that 'The stated moral intent of the films is to present a form of bad behaviour in order to discourage people from engaging in it, yet more than anything else the video-films validate the efficacy of rituals in the way and manner that the characters in the filmed 'rituals' are portrayed: fabulously rich and successful.[318] For Okwori, the morale of the films is to place ritual sacrifices as inimical to society but the films prove otherwise. He states:

> In the video-films it is not the rituals that fail, but, as we have seen, the people who engage in them. Nor do people fail because they engage in murderous rituals, but because they take wrong steps or indulge in excessive demands. Even when failure is recorded, scapegoats are made of only some characters, while the majority of the criminals and ritualists go free or are allowed to enjoy their ill-gotten wealth and the social luxuries attendant upon it.[319]

Drawing on the narratives from, *Living in Bondage (1992)* and *Rituals (1999)*, he notes that the ritual techniques enacted in film try to capture the real life executions of rituals and to this extent can very well be tantamount to demonstrating a path for the more fickle minded to follow. Okwori therefore concludes that 'far from negating the rituals and their efficacy, the

[317] Ibid.
[318] Jenkeri Okwori 'A Dramatized Society: Representing Rituals of Human Sacrifice as Efficacious Action in Nigerian Home Video Movies', *Journal of African Cultural Studies,* 16.1 (2003):7.
[319] Ibid, 22.

genre of video-films actually endorses and legitimizes them'.[320] Interestingly, Hyginus Ekwuazi cites the same video film, *Living in Bondage (1992)* and many others to give a thumb up for films and argues that a deeper examination reveals their cultural underpinning. Ekwuazi posits that: 'If the odium with which the community associates these criminals has not rubbed off on the films, it is, obviously, because the films have managed to remain trenchant in their criticism and/or objective in their presentation, or both; in no instance have the films emerged as an endorsement or legitimisation of the state of anomie in which the characters operate'.[321]

Another issue connected to the featuring of rituals as a theme in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films is the representation of various religious traditions in the films. In Asamoah-Gyadu's words '[t]hrough video films and screen drama, producers attempt to "blow the cover" of such religious specialists prescribing immoral rituals and confirm growing negative public perceptions of these religious operatives as exploiting their supernatural connections for private gain'.[322] From these works, negative or grotesque ritual presentation in the films is frequently aligned with indigenous religion and good ones are associated with Christianity. Okome observes that 'traditional belief systems are often pitted against Christian doctrine, with the narrative order emphasizing the Manichean duality between good and evil. The Christian God represents all that is light and good, whereas traditional beliefs are portrayed as darkness'.[323] The position of Esi Sutherland-Addy in relation to over simplified dichotomy of good Christian belief and the evil African worldview also affirms the observation made by Okome. Sutherland-Addy demonstrates that custodians of traditional spirituality are depicted in the films as, 'purveyors of atrocious crimes such as the infliction of incurable diseases…

[320] Ibid.
[321] Hyginus Ekwuazi, 'The Igbo Video film: Glimpse into the cult of the Individual' in Jonathan Haynes (ed.), *Nigerian Video Films* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000), 146.
[322] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu 'Blowing the Cover', 235.
[323] Onookome Okome, 'The Popular Art of African Video-Film', New York Foundation for the Arts, summer,2001,http://www.nyfa.org/archive_detail_q.asp?type=3&qid=45&fid=6&year=2001&s=Summer&print=true, May 16, 2012.

and the offering of human sacrifices…They are often also in and of themselves evil'.[324] Birgit Meyer's point regarding the portrayal of traditional religion as the heart of 'the power of darkness' and Christianity particularly Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity as the 'divine power' in the video films is more useful here. She writes:

> Thus, films usually evolve around a struggle between ''the powers of darkness,'' on the one hand, with their firm grip on irresponsible husbands, loose girls, selfish businessmen, greedy mothers-in-law, bad friends, or ritual murderers, killers, and members of secret cults and, on the other hand, divine power, which always supports the pious housewife, the innocent child, and, of course, the Pentecostal pastor. In the end, in such films good must overcome evil just as in Pentecostal sermons God is asserted to be stronger than the devil.[325]

Contrary to the concerns raised by some scholars about the binary representation of traditional religions as bad and Christianity as good, Innocent Ebere Uwah, looks at religion in the films from a broader perspective to argue that they rather 'reinforce the values of the people and are the visible features by which social identities and worldviews are maintained and defined'.[326] In following Barber to explore the representation of culture and traditional religion in the films, Uwah posits that it is 'celebrating the traditional', which is an affirmation of self-worth for the people as well as a demonstration of their progress and modernity.[327] He therefore submits that 'In them [video films] as in real life religion, the transitory and the eternally sacred meet in the dynamics of ritual celebrations and strongly therefore signal oscillations between viewing and using religion in Nollywood as panoply of cultural identity construction'.[328] John McCall also sees the video film phenomenon as a 'highly productive node of African popular culture'.[329]

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[324] Esi Sutherland-Addy, 'The Ghanaian Feature Video Phenomenon', in Kofi Anyidoho and James Gibbs (eds.), *Fontomfrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 273.
[325] Birgit Meyer, ''Praise the lord': Popular Cinema and Pentecostalite style in Ghana's new Public Sphere', *American Ethnologist*, 31. 1 (2004):103.
[326] Innocent Ebere Uwah, 'The Representation of African Traditional Religion and Culture in Nigerian Popular films', *Religion, Media and Politics in Africa',* V.1 (2011): 94.
[327] Ibid.
[328] Ibid.
[329] John McCall, 'The Pan Africanism we have: Nollywood's Invention of Africa', *Film International,* 28, 5.4 (2007): 92.

Indeed, in recent publication by Birgit Meyer, she revises her position on the depiction of tradition and heritage in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Analysing films mostly from the epic movies, Meyer shows that it is no longer tenable to hold the view that Ghanaian/Nigerian video films have negative attitudes towards tradition and heritage.[330] However, as the focus of this thesis indicates, it is not only the view on the portrayal of traditional religions in the films that needs to be re-examined, but that of Christianity as well. Such critical depiction of religions in the films cut across all religious traditions. As can be interpreted from some video films such as *Expensive Vow, Evil Heart* as well as Kwaw Ansah's recently released video film, *Praising The Lord Plus One (2013),* the portrayal of the most celebrated contemporary Christianity, the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, is not always positive as opined by some film critics.

The depiction of Christianity in the video films is also fluid. Interestingly, such nuanced representation of Christianity in general and pastors in particular in the video films do not only emerge from the private or independent video film producers but within Pentecostal circles as well. As Oha has pointed out, 'this kind of narrative serves as internal response to the exposition of pastors and evangelists in the mass media for living scandalous lives of sexual immorality'.[331] While saving faces, Oha argues, some church leaders who also dabble in other evil activities such as murders and conniving with spiritual forces for powers are exposed. Masculinity and Ghanaian occult video films;[332] Feminism and Evangelical video films;[333] Magical realism;[334] sex and violence;[335] Juju, justice and vigilantes;[336] Vision and

[330] Birgit Meyer, '"Tradition and Colour at its best": "Tradition" and "Heritage" in Ghanaian video-movies', *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22.1 (2010):20.
[331] Obododimma Oha, 'The Rhetoric of Nigerian Videos: The War Paradigm of The Great Mistake', 194.
[332] Wisdom Agorde, 'The Triad of Men's Violences in *Time*: A Ghanaian Occult Video Film', *Postcolonial Text*, 3.2 (2007): 1-19.
[333] Ogaga Okuyade, 'Women and Evangelical Merchandising in the Nigerian Filmic Enterprise', *Kemanusiaan,* 18.1 (2011):1-14.
[334] Hope Eghagha, 'Magical realism and the "power" of Nollywood home video films', *Film International*, 28, 5.4 (2007): 71-6.

Revelation;[337] as well as Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity and renegotiation of Masculinity in video films;[338] and many other religious themes have been interrogated by scholars in the field of religion and Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. The main method used in these studies is the textual analysis of the filmic texts that falls into media effects theories. I argue that focusing mainly on the textual analysis of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films; these studies do not reflect on the complexities of audience reception of media texts.

Although these studies enrich the discussion of religion and Ghanaian/Nigerian video films with their divergent fields of expertise, they all 'offer the same reductive approach that treats film as an empty placeholder for the previously established themes congruent with their method'.[339] As Joshua Furnal observes, each of these scholars has 'a particular system of thought in hand and allow the categories of that system to overly determine the interpretation of a film. This reductive approach treats each film as a further illustration of, indeed a testimonial to, that system in hand'.[340] Stephen Mulhall calls such treatment of film a 'parasitic mode' where the philosopher of film 'inserts herself into another domain of human practical activity and raises questions about its grounding assumptions or basic conceptual presuppositions of a kind that the practitioners within this domain are not capable of answering, since anything they offer in response will presuppose the very categories that are in question'.[341] The central issue raised by Mulhall in opposing this kind of approach is the assumption that the film is silent and could not conceivably adopt a more active or

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[335] Frances Harding, 'Appearing fabu-lous: from tender romance to horrifying sex', *Film International,* 28 .5.4 (2007): 10-19.
[336] John C. McCall, 'Juju and Justice at the Movies: Vigilantes in Nigerian Popular Videos', *African Studies Review,* 47.3 (December 2004): 51-67.
[337] Birgit Meyer, 'Religious Revelation, Secrecy and the limits of Visual Representation', *Anthropological Theory*, 6 .4 (2006): 431-53.
[338] Wisdom Agorde, 'Creating the balance: Hallelujah Masculinities in a Ghanaian Video film', *Film International,* 28, 5.4 (2007): 51-63.
[339] Joshua R Furnal, 'On the Hermeneutics of Religious Film Criticism', *Literature and Theology*, 26.1 (March 2012): 85.
[340] Ibid, 78.
[341] Stephen Mulhall, XI—Film as Philosophy: The Very Idea. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society (Hardback),* 107 (2007): 280.

questioning relation to its own conditions of possibility…that it excludes this possibility a priori, and treats this exclusion as somehow beyond question.[342] Mulhall therefore uses what he calls 'My counter-proposal' to explore whether or not the real content and qualities of any particular films might put this assumption in question, by being best understood as themselves reflecting upon (let us say) aspects of the nature of film. Of course, whether or not they are best understood that way cannot be settled in general or a priori terms; it cannot be settled in advance of, but only by, a detailed examination of the specific films.[343]

He believes it is only such concrete details of our experience of particular films that we can hope to evaluate the claim that there are such possibilities of the cinematic medium. Yet, analysing this kind of religious experience gained from film watching is incongruent with literary approach. To borrow the words of Jolyon Mitchell, the danger is that the attempt to "read" a film turns it into something that is not: a written text. Films cannot be reduced to mere words to be analysed. Other skills, such as visual sensitivity, are required to analyse a film.[344] Steve Nolan, who also opines that such a method is inherently flawed, indicates that 'film is not literature- and a literary approach is not sympathetic to film'.[345] It is well noted, as Brent Plate rightly stated, that 'The deeper implication for a religious study of the cinema is that films are not simply verbal narratives'.[346]

The literary approach pursued by most scholars, as I have shown with the case of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films and other contexts, 'is more concerned with meaning and cognition, than it is with having a particular kind of experience'.[347] But there is also enough

[342] Ibid, 281.
[343] Ibid, 282.
[344] Jolyon Mitchell, 'Theology and Film', in David F. Ford with Rachel Muers (eds.) *The Modern Theologians*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 745.
[345] Steve Nolan, 'Understanding Films: Reading in the Gaps', in Anthony J. Clarke and Paul S. Fiddes (eds.), *Flicking Images: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2005), 26.
[346] Brent Plate, 'Filmmaking and World Making: Re-creating Time and Space in Myth and Film', in G. J. Watkins (ed.), *Teaching Religion and Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 230.
[347] William Blizek, 'Religion on the Screen', *Journal of Religion & Society*, Supplement 8 (2012): 173.

evidence to the effect that films 'can generate some kind of religious experience in their audiences (rather than merely providing cognitive information about the religion)'.[348] A good portion of the millions of people who watch movies are affected or changed in some way and those films can exert influence on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.[349] Nonetheless, the audience who are at the centre of the religious experience have been at the periphery of religious film studies with scholars serving as spokespersons for the audience. The point made by Robert White on the marginal role given to the audience in religious film studies is insightful:

> The typical analysis moves from the text-the central evidence- 'back' into the likely artistic and cultural intentions of the producer/director and 'forward' into the likely interpretations of the audience. The audience is assumed to be seeking to understand and re-experience as closely as possible what the author has experienced and 'written into' the text, and the text is the point at which the audience and author meet. ..It is assumed that the audience has little to say; instead, it needs to be educated and lifted by the great artists.[350]

Such line of approach to religious representation in the video films ignores multiaccentuality and the complex contexts in which the audience construct meaning. In short, such method treats the video film 'as a container, holding immanent meaning'.[351]

With the Ghanaian context, as I have demonstrated above, there are three main reasons which make it is imperative for the audience to be given the opportunity to respond to how they will approach such religious narratives in the video films. First, the incompatibility of the religious affiliations or worldviews of filmmakers and those expressed in their filmic texts render the texts as primary sites for reception studies uncertain. Secondly, even where the religious visions of the video film producers match with the religious constructs in their

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[348] Ibid, 175.
[349] Conrad Ostwalt E. Jr., 'Religion, Film and Cultural Analysis', in Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Oswalt Jr. (eds.), *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth and Ideology in Popular American* Film (Boulder/Oxford: Westview, 1995), 157.
[350] Robert A. White, 'The Role of Film in Personal Religious Growth', in John R. May (ed.), *New image of religious film* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1997), 197.
[351] Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 7.

filmic texts, there is evident in the available studies to suggest that there is no census among the audience, particularly the members of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, on the place of the video films in their religious activities. Besides, where there is full admission by the church founders of the central role of the video films in their proselytization drive, there is no input from the audience to back the success or not of this assertion. Finally, the inconclusive state of discourses on the religious narratives in the video films by scholars necessitates the audience to be part of the equation in reception studies on the video films.

At this point, I argue that the effects theories undermine the activeness of the audience and are no more appropriate to be used as the sole approach in reception studies. But the discussion of the effect theories has helped us to know the lacuna in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films studies that this study intends to draw attention to, and possibly help to address. In this chapter, even though textual analysis is considered useful, a case is made for the audience to be at the heart of reception studies on the religious dimension of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Particularly, a greater focus on the members of various religious groups in reception studies regarding their self-representation in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films becomes necessary. In this thesis, I favour cultural turn as well as Uses and Gratifications perspectives because they are open to the complex ways of interpretations and appropriations of the media by the audience. Therefore, the theoretical frameworks underpinning this thesis are the cultural turn and uses and gratifications principles, which we now turn attention to.

4.4 The Cultural Turn-Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model

The critiques of the powerful media effects and the way forward for media audience reception were prominently advanced by the Media Group at the Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). This phase of media reception studies has been referred to as the 'The Cultural Turn'. In the 1980s, reception studies witnessed what Stuart Hall referred to as 'the growing 'centrality of culture'. This he explained as:

> The astonishing global expansion and sophistication of the cultural industries; culture's growing significance for all aspects of social and economic life; its reordering effects on a variety of critical and intellectual discourses and disciplines; its emergence as a primary and constitutive category of analysis and 'the way in which culture creeps into every nook and crevice of contemporary social life, creating a proliferation of secondary environments, *mediating* everything.[352]

While members of the effects theories see the media as a site of simplistic domination over the audience, the CCCS scholars think the relation is more complex and characterized with a struggle between groups. Notwithstanding the pivotal contribution of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and E.P Thompson recognized by many academics as the founding fathers, it is the weighty work of Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding (1973)*, which has dominated cultural studies. Hall began by proposing that the process of communication must be considered as a more 'complex structure in dominance' rather than conceptualising it as 'circulation circuit or loop' which is carped for 'its linearity- sender/message/receiver'.[353] The formulation is premised on the 'dominant or preferred meanings' fixed in the media text by certain complex codes. But the preferred meanings are 'neither univocal nor uncontested' because of 'its polysemic values'.

Making reference to how the variant televisual discourse can be articulated, Hall offered three hypothetical positions in which the Encoding/Decoding analysis of the media text is likely to take place. For him, the first which is the *dominant-hegemonic position* is when the viewer takes the connoted meaning from, say, a television newscast or current affairs programme full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference code in which it has been encoded. The second option identified by Hall in which the construction of meaning may ensue between the encoder and decoder is that of a *negotiated code or position.* This version according to him contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements: it acknowledges

[352] Stuart Hall, 'Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy and the cultural turn', *International Journal of Cultural Studies,* 10.1 (2007): 39.
[353] Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding', in Stuart Hall *et al* (eds.), *Culture, Media, Language* (London Hutchison, 1980), 128.

the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations (abstract)' while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules – it operates with exceptions to the rule.[354] In short, the audience may well understand the 'preferred' meaning encoded in the media text, which an aspect may be accepted, but the other rejected depending on the position of the receiver. The final but not the least conjectural position the audience may take in relation to the encoded meaning in the televisual text, in Hall's module, is that of *opposition code or position*. The message in this case is perfectly understood by the viewer but decodes it in what he referred to as 'a globally contrary way' based on 'some alternative framework of reference'.[355]

The gist of Hall's proposition is that a 'prefer reading is inscribed in the media text'. This 'preferred' or the hegemonic meaning is known by the receivers but may be interpreted in varying ways. Hall defined the hegemonic meaning in the media text in two ways. First, it demarcates 'within its terms the mental horizon, the universe, of possible meanings, of a whole sector of relations in a society or culture' and with the second, the meaning 'carries with it the stamp of legitimacy- it appears coterminous with what is "natural", "inevitable", "taken for granted" about the social order'.[356]

However, it is this central concept of 'preferred reading' in the module, which has attracted criticisms in the field. By treating text as producing consolidated hegemonic ideology, Janet Staiger, argued that the numerous appeals of the 'polysemy' of the text has fallen into deaf ears. Also, apart from class, there are other factors such as gender, race, ethnic, religious identities which have the power to influence the production and consumption of meaning of the media text by the audience. Staiger contended that 'If texts are contradictory and in an

[354] Ibid, 137.
[355] Ibid, 138.
[356] Hall, Encoding/Decoding, 137.

uneven relation to the mode of production, identities that may be represented may be other than class'.[357]

Another criticism levelled against Hall's Encoding/Decoding model is the ambiguity surrounding the 'social context' of the audience in the framework. Thomas Austin described the uncertainty of the social class in the Encoding/Decoding module as 'One of the damning criticisms'. He has set out this problem more clearly:

> [T]he 'social' implicitly has a prophylactic function in the model, mitigating textual influence, and thus audiences effectively cease to be socially situated (their readings inflected by social conditions) when they take up the preferred reading of the text. This is deeply problematic, as audiences' social locations may precisely encourage them to endorse a 'preferred reading, while still of course negotiating with it.[358]

Despite these shortfalls associated with Hall's notion of Encoding/Decoding, it continues to be popular and influential in social sciences. One of the reasons is that the concept has gone through series of revisions with Hall modifying some of the concerns raised by critics. For instance, the dominant and oppositional components have been classified by Hall as two ends of a spectrum, with a proposal 'that the majority of the readings fall into the negotiated space'.[359] Hall's model though one of the most referred to in the field of cultural studies did not go beyond speculative level. But various scholars have subjected the Encoding/Decoding conjecture that the relationship between the audience and the media is more complex than previously assumed to empirical studies.

David Morley, one of the leading scholars to put the Encoding/Decoding framework into practice first defended the module by stressing that 'The point of the preferred reading model was to insist that readers are, of course, engaged in productive work, but under determinate

[357] Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 74.
[358] Thomas Austin, *Hollywood Hype and Audiences: Selling and Watching popular film in the 1990s* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 18.
[359] Quoted in Ibid, 17.

conditions. Those determinate conditions are of course supplied both by the text, the producing institution and by the social history of the audience.'[360] Morley's work *Nationwide*, the BBC news magazine programme which was aired in the early evenings in the 1970s, aimed at finding out how people from different socioeconomic backgrounds decoded the 'preferred meaning' from the programme. He did find out more intricate relation between the audience and the messages in the *Nationwide.* For example, most viewers from different backgrounds understood the dominant meaning in the programme but that did not lead to automatic opposition of the preferred message. Morley also discovered that social position of the audience is 'no way directly, or unproblematically, correlates with decoding'.[361] It was established that audiences of the television programme from similar social class (working class) did not decode the message based on their social statuses. Instead the decoding, the audience of *Nationwide*, in the words of Morley, was 'inflected in different directions by the discourses and institutions in which they are situated'.[362]Many researchers have replicated Morley's work on Halls notion of active audience and their ability to negotiate the meanings in media text. Their point of departure is that they have not been concentrating on the social position but gender and ethnic factors have been dominating the extra-textual determinants of the meaning-making process.[363]

Hall's encoding/decoding notion is used as one of the theoretical frameworks in this thesis. The focus is on the religious meanings in Ghanaian/Nigerian video filmic text. But, there is a slight departure from one of the fundamental problems with the position of the 'preferred or dominant meanings' in the model. David Morley has highlighted this issue as follows:

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[360] Ibid, 18.
[361] David Morley, 'Cultural transformations: The Politics of Resistance', in Howard Davis and Paul Walton (eds.), *Language, Image, Media* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 117.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Some of the works include Dorothy Hobson, '*Crossraods': The Drama of a Soap Opera* (London: Methuen, 1982); Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes, 'Interacting with "Dallas": Cross cultural readings of American TV', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 15.1 (1990): 45-66.

> Is the preferred reading a property of the text per se? Or is it something that can be generated from the text (by a 'skilled' reading) via certain specifiable procedures? Or is the preferred reading that reading which the analyst is predicting that most members of the audience will produce from the text? In short, is the preferred reading a property of the text, the analyst or the audience?[364]

In this regard, I consider the response it 'must inevitably be the audience' provided by Justin Wren-Lewis as the appropriate.[365] Of course, the first option does not exist, since a readerless text has no meaning at all, while the task of the analyst can only be…not to reduce the text to a signified, whatever it may be ... but to hold its significance fully open'.[366] The openness of the connotative codes has also prompted calls for the concept of preferred reading to be replaced with another notion 'which admits a range of possible alternatives open to audience'.[367] But irrespective of a term one chooses to replace 'preferred meaning', it must encapsulate the privilege for the audience to determine the specific sets of preferred meanings inscribed in the media text. This is the sense in which encoding and decoding model was used in the ethnographic study in chapter six.

As the subtitle of the thesis indicates, the reception and appropriation of the portrayal of PCC in Ghanaian/Nigerian video film, and having discussed the theoretical underpinnings of the reception aspect, attention is now turned to the Uses and Gratification theoretical framework which guide the uses dimension of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films.

4.5 Uses and gratifications theory

The birth of Uses and Gratifications approach is attributed to the interest of scholars in exploring the reasons for not only great appeal but also attraction of certain media contents to the audience. The Uses and Gratification theory turns the question 'what do the media do to

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[364] David Morley, *Television, audiences and cultural studies* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), 122.
[365] Justin Wren-Lewis, 'The Encoding/Decoding Model: Criticisms and Redevelopments for Research on Decoding', *Media Culture Society*, 5.2 (1983): 184.
[366] Ibid.
[367] Kathy Myers, 'Understanding Advertisers', in Davis, Howard & Paul Walton (eds.), Language*, Image, Media* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 216.

people' associated with the effect theories to 'what do people do to with the media'.[368] Uses and Gratifications theory does not deny the effect of the media on the audience but argues that any influence of the media on the perceived consumer is a matter of choice. It suggests that individuals have needs, wishes, motives or problems that the media may be used to satisfy. Regarded as a distinctive subtradition of media effect theory, with the 'Uses and Gratifications' approach the, 'emphasis is on the social origins of media gratifications and on the wider social functions of media'.[369] The initial foundation of the uses and gratification approach as stated by Elihu Katz was laid on the premises that:

> The messages of even the most potent of the media cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no "use" for it in the social and psychological context in which he lives. The "uses" approach assumes that people's values, their interests, their associations, their social roles, are pre-potent and that people selectively "fashion" what they see and hear to these interests.[370]

It is against some of these principles that most of the studies along the uses and gratifications approach were carried out in the 1940s. The application of uses and gratifications perspective is however based on some basic assumptions. It is very difficult to find generally accepted number of assumptions underlying the approach. These assumptions vary from scholar to scholar. Kevin Williams for instance, prefers to abridge the presuppositions into three but Katz and others propose five suppositions with Denis McQuail stating four.[371] But all the early researchers applying the uses and gratifications approach made similar hypotheses which can be grouped into five main points as: a) the active and goal-directed nature of the audience; b) media choice and its connection with the needs gratifications are sole responsibility of the audience member; c) media is not the only needs satisfying resources, it

[368] Elihu Katz, 'Mass Communications Research and the Study of Popular Culture: An Editorial Note on a Possible Future for this Journal', *Studies in Public Communication* (1959): 2.
[369] Denis McQuail, *Audience Analysis, 18.*
[370] Elihu Katz, 'Mass Communications Research and the Study of Popular Culture: An Editorial Note on a Possible Future for this Journal', 2-3.
[371] D. McQuail, J. Blumler, and J. Brown, 'The television audience, a revised perspective', in D.McQuail (ed.), *Sociology of Mass Communications* (Harmondsworth; Penguin, 1972); Kevin Williams, *Understanding Media Theory* (London: Arnold, 2003); Denis McQuail, *Audience Analysis* (Thousand Oaks; Calif: London: Sage Publications, 1997).

competes with other needs fulfilling ways; d) people are fully aware of their interests and motives for using a particular media and e) audience orientation is central with cultural significance of the media temporarily postponed.

However, the critics of the uses and gratifications have raised issues with the very assumptions on which the whole perspective is premised. Ruggiero has succinctly captured some of the critiques that are directed towards the assumptions. The approach as Ruggiero puts it:

> (a) relied heavily on self-reports, (b) was unsophisticated about the social origin of the needs that audiences bring to the media, (c) was too uncritical of the possible dysfunction both for self and society of certain kinds of audience satisfaction, and (d) was too captivated by the inventive diversity of audiences used to pay attention to the constraints of the text.[372]

This theory is perhaps the most single perspective in media reception, which has gone through series of revisions since its emergence. For some various reasons but two of them are apparent from the development in the field: first as a response to several criticisms levelled against the approach and two, is an attempt to legitimate it as a theory. In response to the inability of the approach to establish interrelationships of the various gratifications of the media, proponents of Uses and Gratifications later made the attempt of reviving the approach by considering certain aspects of audience motivations. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch proposed seven aspects of motivations which studies on uses and gratifications are concerned with as:

> (1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones.[373]

[372] Thomas Ruggiero, 'Uses and Gratifications Theory in the 21St Century', 5.
[373] Elihu Katz; G Blumler and M Gurevitch, 'Uses and Gratifications Research', 510.

Some of the proponents of uses and gratifications scholars aiming to establish theoretical framework within the field have carried out numerous studies in an attempt to find specific audience motivations to the media.[374]After the study they also suggested a model of what they called 'media-person interactions' that envelops the four most important media satisfactions. The proposed typology of media-person interactions are: (1) Diversion: escape from routine or problems; emotional release (2) Personal relationships: Companionship; social utility (3) Personal identity: self-reference; reality exploration; value reinforcement and (4) Surveillance (forms of information seeking).[375]

William McGuire based on both humanistic and cognitive direction carried out a more psychological systematic study of audience motivation towards the media. McGuire first classified human motives into cognitive and affective types. Both cognitive and affective are again subdivided into 'equilibrium' versus those that deals with person's needs for further growth. The psychological pattern is complicated with further subdivisions of motives, which end up yielding sixteen motives. He continued:

> Putting these two dichotomies (the cognitive-affective and the preservation-growth) into conjunction yields four classes of motives; we divide each of these classes on the basis of two further dichotomous dimensions. The third basis for division is whether the person's behaviour is actively initiated or represents passive response to circumstances. The final, fourth dichotomy is based on whether the motives are directed toward achieving a new internal state or a new external relationship to the environment. These four dichotomies generate a matrix of 16 cells.[376]

In the nature of psychological theory of this kind, the media user is unlikely to be conscious of the underlying causes of motivations.[377] It is even worrying when there has been some

[374] Quoted in Denis McQuail, *Audience Analysis*, 71-2; D. McQuail, J. Blumler, and J. Brown, 'The television audience, a revised perspective', 135-64.
[375].Ibid.
[376] William J. McGuire, 'Some Internal Psychological Factors Influencing Consumer Choice', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 2 (1976): 315.
[377] Denis McGuire, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory, 4th edn.* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), 388.

studies establishing 'a relationship between the McGuire factors and different motivational patterns of television use'.[378]

The indeterminate nature of the existing conceptual foundations further led to perhaps one of the last attempts to reshape some weaknesses associated with the varying suggestions to uses and gratifications theory. In reviewing the previous works, Philip Palmgreen, Lawrence A. Wenner and D.J Rayburn applied the expectancy value theory to media gratifications and developed Gratifications Sought (GS) and Gratifications Obtained (GO).[379] For McQuail, the expectancy-value theory is probably the most useful theoretical framing of the uses and gratifications system. The model posits that 'media use is accounted for by a combination of *perception* of benefits offered by the medium and the differential *value* of these benefits for the individual audience member'.[380] Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn explored the link between gratifications sought (GS) from television news and (GO) from network evening news programmes. They established that each GS correlated moderately to strongly with its corresponding GO for the audience frequently watched programme.[381] Accordingly, where (GO) is noticeably higher than (GS) we are more likely to be dealing with situations of high audience satisfaction and high scores for appreciation and attention.[382]

The gratifications sought and obtained differ from medium to medium and also depend on so many factors such as the contents of the media, which may motivate the use, or avoidance of a particular medium by the audience. Uses and gratifications theory is therefore positioned 'within the larger context of individual social habits and routines and suggest ways in which motivations and traits lead consumption of the media over other avenues, for the fulfilment of

[378] Ibid.
[379] Philip, Palmgreen, Lawrence A. Wenner, and Jay D. Rayburn, 'Relations Between Gratifications Sought and Obtained A Study of Television News', *Communication Research,* 7.2 (1980): 161-192.
[380] Denis McQuail, *Audience Analysis*, 74.
[381] P. Palmgreen, Lawrence A. Wenner, and D.J Rayburn, 'Relations Between Gratifications Sought and Obtained: A Study of Television News', 161-92.
[382] Denis McQuail, *Audience Analysis*, 74.

individual needs'.[383] With the inclusion of all these conceptual foundations about the uses and gratifications theory, particularly, expectancy-value model, reformulated version of the basic propositions of the theory has been put forward.

Even at this point, over four decades of its emergence with numerous revisions, exponents of uses and gratifications approach do not have specifics scope or propositions to work with. McQuail who emphasises on the connections between social background and experience, which will inform the GS and GO, revises the basic propositions into six points. For McQuail, new statement might now read:

> (1) Personal social circumstances and psychological dispositions together influence both (2) general habits of media use and also (3) beliefs and expectations about the benefits offered by media, which shape (4) specific acts of media choice and consumption, followed by (5) assessments of the value of the experience (with consequences for further media use) and, possibly, (6) applications of benefits acquired in other areas of experience and social activity.[384]

Rubin also refines the existing assumptions and argues that contemporary uses and gratifications theory is situated in the ensuing five assumptions;

> (1) Communication behaviour, including media selection and use, is goal-oriented, purposive, and motivated; (2) people take initiative in selecting and using communication vehicles to satisfy felt needs or desires; (3) a host of social and psychological factors mediate people's communication behaviour; (4) media compete with other forms of communications (i.e., functional alternatives) for selection, attention, and use to gratify our needs or wants; and (5) people are typically influential than the media in the relationship but not always.[385]

4.5.1. Shortcomings of Uses and Gratifications Theory

As has been evident in the above discussion, the first criticism raised against the theory is that it consists of numerous theoretical foundations. Even though some of these developments of

[383] Zizi Papacharissi, 'Uses and Gratifications', in Michael Salwen and Don Stacks (eds.), *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*, 2nd *Edn* (New York: Routledge, 2009): 138-9.
[384] Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* (London: Sage, 1994), 319.
[385] Quoted in Zizi Papacharissi, 'Uses and Gratifications', 139.

varying theories were aimed at responding to the various attacks from scholars but the very attempts have become part and parcel of the existing problems these theories intended to resolve. There has therefore been little successful prediction or causal explanation of media choice and use as a result of research based on these theories.[386]

Again, Ruggiero argues that the theory is too compartmentalised, and its end up yielding separate typologies of motives. Such a practice has the potential to hinder conceptual development because separate research findings are not synthesized.[387] Moreover, related to the compartmentalization is the issue of the method of soliciting for the gratifications from the audience. Christian Shrøder for instance argues that the gratifications lists used determine the results. He writes:

> In general terms this demonstrates an unavoidable feature of questionnaire-based studies, namely that their findings are necessarily limited by the researchers' imagination or judgement of relevance when compiling the questionnaire. No matter how exhaustive the lists[s] there are always going to be potential gratifications that are not included. This poses a serious threat to the validity of gratifications studies, as we cannot be sure that the research results adequately reflect the real-life phenomena we wish to explore.[388]

Further, some critics also point to the lack of clarity of central concepts underpinning the theory. Not that terms such as social and psychological backgrounds, needs, motives, behaviour, and consequences are not clearly defined but different meanings are associated with them leading to what Ruggiero refers to as 'fuzzy thinking and inquiry'.[389]

Uses and Gratifications researchers have again been accused by critics of overstating the goal-oriented nature of the audience. The model takes as starting point that the audience have specific purpose in mind that motivates them to watch, read or listen to a particular media programme or avoids it. But Williams contends that activities such as watching television are

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[386] Denis McQuail, *Audience Analysis*, 72.
[387] Thomas Ruggiero, 'Uses and Gratifications Theory in the 21St Century', 12.
[388] K. Christian Schørder, 'The Best of Both Worlds? Media Audience Research between Rival Paradigms, in P. Alasuutari (ed.), *Rethinking the Media Audience: The New Agenda* (London: Sage, 1999), 41.
[389]Thomas Ruggiero, 'Uses and Gratifications Theory in the 21St Century', 12.

reflex and unplanned. For Williams, there are many motives for attending to the media, the reputation of the programme for instance, as well as unavailable alternatives rather than specific goal to be gratified from the media.[390] McQuail also does not only point out that the approach overestimates the rationality and activity of audience use behaviour but argues that 'There is little empirical evidence that media use does in general begin with an experience of a problem or lead the solution of one'.[391]

Further, the uses and gratifications paradigm has been criticised for focusing extensively on the individual audience's internal social and psychological compositions and ignoring other factors, which may influence the media experience. Even here not including the external social factors involved in the person and some critics have called media interaction into questions. Williams, for example, stresses that by excluding other social actors in the life of audience, the approach tends to lose sight of the social dimension altogether.[392] Consuming the media, such as television viewing, Williams continues, can be a social activity undertaken with others, such as family members, and making sense of media of the media content is often done in conversation with friends, family and workmate.[393] Meanwhile Katz and Blumler have suggested elsewhere that 'for some individuals the substitute companionship function may involve use of the media to replace real social ties, while for others it may facilitate an adjustment to reality'.[394] But these antecedents of catering for the social and psychological needs are ignored in the uses and gratifications system.

In summary, the uses and gratification theory is blamed for emphasizing on the individual audience at the neglect of the wider social and cultural contexts in which people are located.

[390]Kevin Williams, *Understanding Media Theory,* 178-9.
[391] Denis McQuail, *Audience Analysis,* 73.
[392] Kevin Williams, *Understanding Media Theory,* 178.
[393] Ibid.
[394] Elihu Katz; G Blumler and M Gurevitch, 'Uses and Gratifications Research', 519-20.

Two points made by Shrøder who prefers to brand these shortfalls of the theory as 'cardinal sins' is worth recalling. He states:

> The cardinal sins of the [uses and gratifications] research, as seen from the other side, have consisted, on the one hand in ignoring the everyday *social* context of media use, which the platform hides away as a parenthetical 'engagement in other activities' and a ragbag category of 'other consequences'; and on the other hand, in [uses and gratifications] researchers' complete separation of need gratification' from cultural meanings derived by audiences from media content.[395]

Notwithstanding these limitations associated with the uses and gratifications theory, it still has some strengths and usefulness in exploring the appropriation of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Unlike some ethnographic researchers, like David Morley, who fiercely reject the uses and gratifications perspective especially on grounds of its emphasis on the psychological dimension of consumption, it will play a vital role in this thesis. For Morley, 'uses and gratifications is essentially a psychological field, relying as it does on mental states, needs, and processes abstracted from the social situation of the individuals concerned […] we need to break fundamentally with the "uses and gratifications" approach'.[396]

Indeed, this thesis is looking at the reception and the use of the films. But having applied the critical cultural studies approach located in the context in which the consumption of the media takes place, the weakness of the uses and gratification, especially its focus on the individual, has been taken care of. Most of the issues raised against the uses and gratifications model by critics revolve around its methodology. One methodology used by uses and gratifications model, which has received the majority of the attacks, is the quantitative surveys. According to Keith Roe, the exponents of 'uses and gratifications' have been too concerned with the (very important) task of assessing reliability, at the expense of the still important issue of validity.[397] Shrøder also argues that validity depends on number factors,

[395] K. Christian Schørder, 'The Best of Both Worlds? Media Audience Research between Rival Paradigms, 40.
[396] Quoted in Ibid.
[397] Quoted in Ibid, 42.

including adequate theoretical foundations for the field of investigation and conceptual clarity, but most of all it depends on methodological reflection about the data collection stage.[398]

Most of the recommendations put forward by Walter Gantz, one of the critics, to correct what he termed 'the bias in the research methods employed up until now' have been dealt with in the ethnographic research. Gantz suggested:

> The research agenda is likely to require alternative, if not innovative, methods of data collection. Interviews will need to be interactive, a mix of open- and closed ended questions. Probes will be critical; interviewers will need to ask respondents what they (the respondents) mean what they say, for example, that they turn to television to be entertained or they watch out of habit […] gratification scholars will need to be creative and as needed, supplement survey research […] with depth interviews, where respondents are given ample opportunity to reflect and describe the nature of their relationship with the media content.[399]

Besides, the uses and gratifications perspective is adopted in this thesis as a theoretical framework rather than a methodological approach. Once issues hovering around the question of the validity of the basic foundations of the framework have been addressed, the strengths of the uses and gratifications theory are tapped in this research.

The uses and gratifications theory is still useful in offering certain practical significance. At least the perspective has created the awareness that how messages and media are used constitutes an intervening variable in the process of effects.[400] The theory also facilitates comparisons among different media and types of media content in audience related terms rather than in technological, ideological, aesthetic or other(s) elitist terms. [401]

The paradigm is strong not only its emphasis on the activeness of the audience in the media experience but 'its ability to describe, explain, and expect media uses and consequences'.[402]

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[398] Schørder, 'The Best of Both Worlds?, 42.
[399] Quoted in Ibid.
[400] Bernard Emenyeonu 'Media Uses and Gratifications: A Review'**,** *Africa Media Review*, 9.3 (1995): 109.
[401] Ibid, 108.
[402] Zizi Papacharissi, 'Uses and Gratifications', 146.

The flexibility of the perspective it proposes progresses from motives and individual dispositions to patterns use and possible cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural effects.[403]

In the case of adopting the uses and gratifications perspective to the video phenomenon in the Ghanaian context, a point made by Bernard Emenyeonu in relation to the relevance of the theory is very insightful. According to Emenyeonu:

> [I]n so far as the theory simply aims at explaining the way in which individuals use communication among other resources to satisfy their needs or to achieve their goals, uses and gratifications studies offer highly instructive lessons to media managers and information policy-makers. Realising that audiences are active, these communication designers cannot but strive to give the audience what will be of benefit or utility to it. The need to do this has been all the more accentuated by the present climate of sporadic privatisation of the media in developing nations and the corresponding competition.[404]

By taking up the model, some of the principal assumptions are also made in the study. First, choices the audience of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films make are purposive and goal-directed. It is again assumed that audience are mindful, aware of their needs and motives, and are able to report them.[405] As has been characteristic of the uses and gratifications paradigm, the basic foundations also generate controversies. And as the current study aims to move away from the existing studies on the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, which seem to operate in the media effect model presenting the audience as passive, to active audience, the issues of the 'activeness of the audience' in the field need to be pointed and clarified. George Gerbner *et al,* for instance, started their study of the media with two main assumptions, which question the activeness, or selectivity of the media by the audience. These assumptions which they called 'Cultural Indicators' posits that the media, particularly television, offer the audience similar content in line with societal values and specifications. This is followed by the second assumption that audience do not watch by selecting a programme but 'by the clock rather

[403] Ibid.
[404] Emenyeonu Bernard 'Media Uses and Gratifications: A Review', 108.
[405] R. B. Rubin, E. M Perse and C.A Barbato 'Conceptualization and Measurement of Interpersonal Communication Motives', *Human Communication Research*, 14.3 (Summer, 1988): 607.

than by the programme'.[406] Kippax and Murray, on the other hand in their study established contrary views, thereby confirming the activeness of the audience. They 'found viewers to be goal-directed, selecting television programs, to some extent, on the basis of their needs'.[407] The position of Alan M Rubin 'that the audience "activeness'' is not an either-or matter and that the concept could have a range of meanings, including utility, intentionality, selectivity, and imperviousness to influence' is also pivotal in this study. This array of meanings, Rubin further points out, also might indicate that the audience is more active on some occasions or in relation to some motivations for media use rather than others.[408] All these views on the activeness of the audience in the consumption of the media are put to test in the second part of Chapter six.

[406] G. Gerbner, L. Gross, N. Signorielli, M. Morgan, and M. Jackson-Beeck, 'The Demonstration of Power**:** Violence Profile No. 10', *Journal of Communication*, 29.3 (Summer 1979), 80.
[407] Quoted in Alan M Rubin, 'Ritualized and Instrumental Television Viewing', *Journal of Communication*, 34.3 (September, Summer 1984): 67.
[408] Alan M Rubin, 'Ritualized and Instrumental Television Viewing', 68.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Pentecostal –Charismatic Christianity (PCC): ACI and WMCI as Case Studies

5.1 The Contours of indigenous Pentecostal Christianity

Churches established by the natives of Ghana in the 1920s and 1930s were in no doubt influenced by the revival campaigns embarked upon by Prophet Harris and the Ghanaian duo: Swatson and Oppong. Christianity in Ghana since then has gone through series of changes and innovations with the initiatives coming from the natives. Our case studies belong to this brand of Christianity. These innovations and creativity introduced by the indigenes in Ghanaian Christianity may be categorised into three main phases.

According to Asamoah-Gyadu, the first wave of indigenous Pentecostal Christianity were the *Sunsum* sore, the 'spiritual churches', which began in spontaneous response to the meteoric rise and parallel activities of a number of African prophets whose magnetic personalities and campaigns of revival and renewal drew masses into Christianity.[409] The name of the churches indicates that in their services, the churches engage in certain rituals, which are meant either meant to invoke the Holy Spirit of God, or are to be interpreted as signs of his descent upon the worshippers.[410] In addition to burning of pleasant- smelling incense and candles, some of the ritual activities undertaken by AICs have been listed by Baeta as:

> Rhythmic swaying of the body, usually with stamping, to repetitious music (both vocal and instrumental, particularly percussion), hand-clappings, ejaculations, poignant cries and prayers, dancing, leaping, and various motor reactions expressive of intense religious emotion; prophesyings, 'speaking with tongues', falling into trances, relating dreams and visions, and 'witnessing', i.e. recounting publicly one's own experience of miraculous redemption.[411]

[409]K.Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 19.
[410] C.G Baeta*, Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some 'Spiritual' Churches* (London: SCM, 1962), 1.
[411] Ibid.

Second development on Ghanaian Christianity was the western mission-related Pentecostal denominations, which have their roots in indigenous initiative but became linked quite early with foreign Pentecostal missions.[412] Classic example is the Church of Pentecost (CoP), which is the single largest Protestant Church in Ghana.[413] At the start of 2011, CoP claimed to have membership of 1,741,143 worldwide out of which 1,503,057 are in Ghana; 13,772 congregations across the world of which 10,867 can be found in the home country; 96 Basic Schools, 6 Senior Secondary Schools, 1 University, 7 Clinics all in Ghana. CoP is also available in 70 countries excluding Ghana.[414]

The third wave of Ghanaian Pentecostal churches is the Neo-Pentecostal Movements.

Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu has classified neo-Pentecostal Christianity into three strands of Christian groups.[415] The First was the rise of non-denominational associations and fellowships across the country Some of the notable associations which surfaced in the southern part of the country were Enoch Agbozo's Ghana Evangelical Society (GES); Youth Ambassadors For Christ Association (YAFCA) founded by Rev. Owusu Afriyie; The Hour of Visitation Choir and Evangelistic Association (HOVCEA) led by Isaac Ababio and National Evangelistic Association (NEA). Scripture Unions (SU), which was common with the youth in the second cycle institutions, and the University Christian Fellowships with Pentecostal colourings were also formed for the tertiary institutions. Town fellowships were also prominent in various cities and towns in order to provide places for both students and town members the opportunity to fellowship.

The second development occurred when some of the members of the mission churches who were participating in the fellowships even though touched by the Pentecostal spirituality

[412] Ibid, 23.
[413] Ghana Evangelical Committee, *National Church Survey Updated: Facing the Unfinished Task of the Church in Ghana* (Accra: GEC, 1993).
[414] http://thecophq.org/ Retrieved on Wednesday, 06 April 2011.
[415] Kwabean Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics,* 27.

decided not to leave their mainline churches but put the Pentecostal experiences into practice in the existing churches. The activities of certain new Christian movements in the form of interdenominational fellowships such as Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International (FGBMFI), Women's Aglow International, the Ghana Congress of Evangelicals, Ladies Fellowships in the 1980s instigated the regularisation of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in the mission churches. In essence, the Catholic Church and most Protestants churches in Ghana have introduced Pentecostal and Charismatic renewal movements or groups into their Churches. Examples include the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR), Methodist Prayer and Renewal Programme (MPRP), that of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana is the Bible Study and Prayer Group (BSPG) among others.[416]

Finally, the Pentecostal revival activities also provided the opportunity for some of the participants to become founders and overseers in the Pentecostal circles. Some of the adherents who attended the revival campaigns and all night prayer meetings especially the one led by Agbozo 'took the fire from there' to establish their own fellowship groups which metamorphosed into ministries or churches.[417] These resultant autochthonous churches are generally referred to as 'Charismatic Ministries' (CMs) in Ghana. However, since the main focus of the dissertation will be on Charismatic churches, what will be worthwhile to mention is that their practices, theologies, enormous growth and ubiquitous nature have been impacting not only on the Christian landscape but that of the media particularly Ghanaian/Nigerian video films as well. Sample population for the study has been taken from Action Chapel International (ACI) and Word Miracle Church International (WMCI).

[416] See Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism* for more details on renewal movements within the mainline churches.
[417] Quoted in E.K Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity.* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 297.

5.2 Action Chapel International (ACI)

Most of the information about Action Chapel International (ACI) and the founder, Nicolas Duncan-Williams are taken from the book, *Destined to an Impact* written by the founder.[418] ACI is the trailblazer among the Charismatic Ministries in Ghana. Archbishop Nicolas Duncan-Williams founded ACI in May 1979.

For Charismatics, there is virtually, no converts who will not be able to pinpoint the sequence of their conversion. Such religious experience is shared with fellow Christians in the newly found community of believers as testimonies. Most of the founders of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches do not limit their testimonies to the confines of their church buildings but publish them on their websites, pamphlets, or as books. The case of Duncan-Williams is not different. In his book, *Destined to Make an Impact*, there is a section dedicated to personal testimony. He writes:

> You will read for the first time in print, the amazing testimony of my life. Every step of the way, you will stand with me to glorify God for the spectacular deliverances, miraculous healings and the divine grace and favour He has demonstrated in my life, even before I was born. The blessings and prosperity of God in my life are no secret, and I am a living testimony to His faithfulness.[419]

Among the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, testimony that is characteristic feature serves so many purposes. The first, it offers them the opportunity to 'keep their humble beginning' to borrow the words of Duncan-Williams 'into proper perspective' by recounting their journey from the 'world', the ways of life which separate humans from God to new 'born again' status. Testimony also serves as an evangelical tool of assurances that no matter your circumstances; you can also become 'somebody' if you give yourself to Christ. Regarded as a way to berate the devil, testimony also provides the opportunity for converts to express their refuge in the Lord. It is believed that

[418] Nicolas Duncan-Williams, *Destined to Make an Impact* (Accra: Combert Impressions, 2006).
[419] Ibid, 98.

conversion is a victory for Christ and a defeat for the devil. Indeed, among the Charismatics, every misfortune or problem in life is the machinations of the devil.

That is, exactly the pattern of religious experience of Duncan-Williams which led to the establishment of ACI. He recounts how the devil initiated schemes to destroy his life from conception. Duncan-Williams lays the divorce of his parents, which negatively affected his adolescent life to the doorsteps of the devil. According to him, some of the attempts he made to overcome the financial constraints of his early life included newspaper vending and truck-pushing in Bolgatanga Market, selling 'P.K', a certain brand of chewing gum, to afternoon cinema goers; carrying foodstuff for fixed fees; gambling; self-appointed travel agent in Accra and two unsuccessful stowaway to Europe. Duncan-Williams upon second thought realised that there must be 'God-factor' in the affairs of men. His first attempt was to seek help from traditional priests. But he was told nothing could be done for him.[420] Further visits to spirits churches yielded no better results.

Then came the turning point in 1976, He narrates:

> Some of the evil spirits I had consulted in various places began to torment and hunt me every night… One night, I could hardly sleep because of the demonic attacks. I was under great strain and stress and I suffered hallucinations. A voice commanded me to light a candle in my bedroom; and so I did. The voice once again commanded me to stick my right palm in the blazing flame of the candle. For some reason, I momentarily lost all consciousness of pain as my fingers roasted in the flame…My sense of resistance was lost as I yielded completely to the evil voices. Then suddenly, I came to myself. Sharp, painful sensations ripped through my heart. The pain was unbearable, almost excruciating. I could not believe my eyes-the three middle fingers of my right hand were burnt and became like minced meat. Blood oozed out profusely from the stumps of my fingers. With all the energy left in my body I shouted from my room, 'Help me! Help me! I am dying'...The sound of footsteps approached my door, and someone forcefully flung it open. I passed out. I awoke to discover that I was firmly strapped to a bed in Ward 8 of the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra.[421]

[420] Ibid, 113.
[421] Ibid, 115-6.

According to Duncan-Williams, the Christian nurses at the hospital took very good care of him therapeutically and spiritually. They shared the gospel with him, which he accepted and converted to the Church of Pentecost.[422] After the conversion his commitment to evangelism and mission work in the Church of Pentecost increased. Mission in the words of Taylor is 'to recognise what the Creator-Redeemer is doing in the world and try to do it with him'. What God is doing in the world in terms of mission in the context of Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatics, Asamoh-Gyadu argues, includes freeing those bound by Satan and the demons that enslave them to alcoholism, gambling, sickness and other debilitating conditions and circumstances.[423] Duncan-Williams found most of these qualities of mission in the *Redemption Hour*, a television programme in Ghana hosted by the famous Nigerian international evangelist, the late Rev. Dr. Benson Idahosa. According to Duncan-Williams, Idahosa concluded the sermon with an invitation to Ghanaians who wished to be trained in a Charismatic-orientated Bible School and the Lord said immediately to his heart, 'apply and go, for I have opened a door for you' which he did and studied between 1977-1978.[424]

After successfully graduating from the Archbishop Benson Idahosa's All Nations Bible School in Benin City in Nigeria, he returned to Ghana in 1978. When the Church of Pentecost refused to engage him as an evangelist, he started to organize Saturday prayer meetings using his father's residence. The fellowship meetings metamorphosed into church because as Duncan-Williams puts it 'the traditional churches could not accommodate the anointing that the young people had received, there was no place for them… so I gave the people going through the Holy Spirit experience a place to worship and use their gifts'.[425] The location of the church kept on changing in response to the sturdy growth the ministry was experiencing. The ministry, he recounts, attracted many young people from schools and colleges as well as

[422] Ibid, 117.
[423] Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 143-4.
[424] Duncan-Williams, *Destined to Make an Impact*, 117.
[425] Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 112-3.

adults from the mainline churches because of the visible miracles, healings, and great teachings on faith and prosperity.[426] The growth, influence and the imports of ACI has been succinctly summarised in *Destined to Make an Impact*, as follows:

> Today, the Christian Action Faith Ministries has churches in almost every continent of the world. He is also the Presiding Bishop and General Overseer. The 'mega' church at its headquarters, attracts crowds close to 5,000 and above in a typical Sunday service. Many lives have been transformed, given purpose and direction, and God has used Rev. Duncan-Williams in several miracles, healings, and signs. He has seen the power of God move in diverse ways. He also wields much influence in the governmental circles. Affectionately called the 'People's Bishop' one can confidently say that Bishop Duncan-Williams is one Neo-Pentecostal minister who literally 'junkets' the world with the gospel message, holding several meetings outside the shores of this country.[427]

Faith in the name of the church has theological meaning and forms one of the central doctrines of ACI. Faith according to the founder goes beyond the physical realm to encompass supernatural faith. He explains that supernatural faith is God-ward and stands solely upon the Word of God regardless of any natural influences. God–kind of faith, which a born-again Christian lives by, is supernatural.[428] Quoting extensively from the Bible, Duncan-Williams argues that ones' works must be related to his or her works because faith is not only a fact; faith is an act. That is, no human being will really be successful in the affairs of this life unless he or she puts the Lord's Word into action.[429]

Linking faith with actions is what the church believes leads to one of their dominant theologies. That is the prosperity gospel. The teaching and preaching about success, miraculous healing and wealth have been the hallmark of ACI. For as the Archbishops opines, God never planned for you or any human being to have sickness, fear, inferiority, defeat, or failure.[430] Four out of nine chapters of his book, *Destined to make an Impact*, with

[426] Duncan-Williams, *Destined to Make an Impact*, 119.
[427] Ibid, 120.
[428] Ibid, 29.
[429] Ibid, 32.
[430] Ibid, 90.

headlines such as 'Success-mindedness', 'Foundations For Success', 'Destined For Success and 'God's Man Must Succeed' have been devoted for explicating the stand of the ministry on the prosperity gospel. In addition to the Bible, Duncan-Williams cites most of the charismatic pastors worldwide like Dr.T. L. Osborn, Mark Twain, Casey Treat, Dr. Yonggi Cho, Dr. John Avanzini and many more who espouse the teaching of faith gospel of success. Duncan-Williams teaches that once a believer discovers and accepts the image of God in his or her self and abides by His Word, all sort of amazing miracles will come into the believer's life. This is because human beings are replica of God who is the most successful Being in the world.[431] He specifically quotes Casey Treat to back his argument: 'In all truth, God is the most successful Being in the universe. He's the only One who's never had to cut back, lay people off, take out a loan or lease, and has never rented anything. God is successful'.[432]

However, adherents aspiring to enjoy God's success have a role to play. That is to follow God's Spiritual laws. On spiritual laws Duncan-Williams cites from the Avanzini, who said, 'God did not predetermine who would be rich and who would be poor. He simply created His spiritual laws and freely gave them to everyone. Every person then has a choice to implement the laws of poverty or to implement God's spiritual laws of prosperity'.[433] According to the Bishop, the devil wrote an old concept and engraved it in gold saying: 'Get all you can get, hold on to it, and keep the lid tight on the can', but 'God's spiritual law says if you scatter your money, it will increase and you will be prosperous. Hoard too much of it, more than is necessary, and you will be poor.[434] He therefore recommends 'Giving' to those believers who want to remain under the miraculous provision of God. In Pentecostal-Charismatic circles 'Giving' also known as sowing and reaping include offerings and Tithing which is usually

[431] Indeed, during the field research in both Accra and London, I took part in most of the activities organised by the church. On two occasions, Duncan Williams led the service in Accra and London, and this message of a successful God and his followers who are the image of God are also sure of succeeding was recurrent.
[432] Duncan-Williams, *Destined to Make an Impact*, 65.
[433] Ibid, 123.
[434] Ibid, 131.

out of one's income; gifts for specific purpose for the pastor and believers voluntarily sponsoring long term projects (in most cases building or media programmes) of the leader or the church as a whole.

One critic of the prosperity gospel of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches argues that in thinking this way, the prosperity exponents challenge not only the principles laid down in the Bible concerning evangelism, but also the basic right of the unbeliever to own wealth.[435] If 'giving' really brings prosperity Asamoah-Gyadu wonders why the churches themselves do not cater for the poor in their midst in order to be beneficiaries of God's prosperity.[436] Most Charismatic churches including ACI are fully aware of some of these criticisms directed towards them by a cross section of the society regarding their teachings on prosperity. In an allusion to some of these criticisms levelled against the CMs on their teachings about prosperity and the poor in their midst, Duncan-Williams makes reference to John 12: 5-6 and interprets the biblical texts as, 'In essence, the full implication of What Jesus Christ meant was that whether the alabaster oil was poured on Him or given to the poor, it would not make the poor poorer or rich, so they should stop bothering her'.[437]

He attributes the problem of teaching of sowing and reaping to the early missionaries. After acknowledging that the missionaries did very good work in Africa, Duncan-Williams writes:

> But, sad to say, the missionaries erred tragically by not teaching Africans God's Word on prosperity, especially where it had to do with the laws regarding sowing and reaping. The reason is not hard to trace. Churches overseas, more often than not, support the missionaries who work in Africa and elsewhere. Money, clothing and other essential necessities are sent frequently to them. Other missionaries have monies paid into their home accounts to guarantee a comfortable future. With this background, many missionaries did not have grounds to justify preaching the full counsel of God regarding prosperity through giving, sowing and reaping… As a result of this negligence to preach God's prosperity along with other revealed truths, Africans came to assume erroneously that to be a

[435] Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 217.
[436] Ibid, 218.
[437] Duncan-Williams, *Destined to Make an Impact*, 129. This phenomenon of referring to biblical texts to defend one's position on any issue is rife in both Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and the video films.

> preacher was to be poor. Thank God it all has to end! He has called us to declare His full counsel to our generation. I preach and teach prosperity like any doctrine of the Bible.[438]

He believes that the assertion that poverty is piety is the devil's lies to impede the spread of the gospel. According to Duncan-Williams, Satan knows that if he keeps the saints shaking in hole-ridden shoes, in rented houses, with unpaid bills, and hardly enough to eat or to get by, then he can effectively stop the spread of the gospel through books, equipment, international crusades and by satellite, radio, television and other means.[439]

Indeed, the messages of the ACI through the teachings of its founder seem to have been well received by their believers. As noted by Debrunner, 'the ordinary man in the street and in the bush expected four things from religion: Social fellowship; emotional experiences; healing and security against real or imagined evil forces'.[440] From my observation, all these expectations of the ordinary man outlined by Debrunner are fully incorporated into the theologies of ACI. In essence, they will be able to enjoy life to the fullest without thinking about diabolic machinations in the spiritual realm orchestrated by the malicious spirits. Majority of the adherents do not really care so much about the price they have to pay in the form of 'sowing and reaping' for their total freedom. Some ardent members are even ready to give more than expected by the church. The acceptance of the church and their teachings is evident in the expansion of ACI both within and beyond Ghana. At the Prayer Cathedral, the headquarters of ACI in Accra, for instance, in order to accommodate the ever-growing number of worshippers and to cater for the needs of certain groups of workers, the ministry has been holding four services on each Sundays. This new development has also gradually

[438] Ibid, 129-30.
[439] Ibid, 127.
[440] Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 117.

shortened the service hours. Each of the four services at the Prayer Cathedral is conducted under less than two hours.

The youth are also given the opportunity to exercise their spiritual gifts by actively taking part in their services specially organized for them. The three groups of the younger generations are the pre-youth, the youth and the young adults. But one age group with a separate service held simultaneously with the main adult service is the youth. It is called the Youth Chapel. Even though pre-youth school is made up of children in the ages between 2-13 years who are engaged in various age-appropriate activities including art & craft, playing percussion instructions, learning verses scripture, songs and rhymes, they are actively assisted by their trained Sunday school teachers. The young adults (20-30 years) also join the main adult church services, which run simultaneously with the youth chapel.

With the exception of the Youth pastor and a few adults who help as teachers, all the activities from reading the Bible to playing of instruments at the Youth chapel are undertaken by the youth ages between 14-19 years themselves. By affording the youth the chance to get involve in churches, according to the youth pastor, they are able to discover and nurture their God given talents not only for the church but for the entire society as well.[441] The mission statement of the youth chapel, also states that the Youth chapel is to 'provide fellowship and training through the preaching of the Word of God to produce mature Christians for the adult church, the body of Christ, family, the society at large and being a model for other churches'. Nevertheless, the Performing Arts department brings the entire three young groups of young generations together. Described as the most attractive department for the children, youth and young adult in the church, the Performing Arts department operates as Drama, Choreography and Rap Poetry groups. Usually, scripts for these performances are ideas, concepts and stories

[441] Ebo Nhyirah, Action Chapel International, Accra. Personal Interview, May 16, 2010. The name is his real name because he asked me to quote him. So to be fair to him, I have to do exactly that.

extracted from the Bible. Performing Arts department aims at ministration with salvation, healing and deliverance through the acts that are carried in school and conferences.[442]

The growth and changes occurring in ACI has not been limited to Ghana. Within the Sub region, ACI can be found in Togo, Benin, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast and some African communities in the diaspora. Affiliates and branches of ACI have also been established in North America and Europe with plans far advanced for planting more churches in Asia and Australia. United Kingdom is one of the geographical contexts for the study. There are three branches of ACI in the UK. They are located at Milton Keynes, South London and Middlesex, Station Road, Edgware. The research was conducted at Middlesex because the branch assumes the role of headquarters in the UK. The Bishop at the Edgware also doubles as the Co-ordinator for ACI branches in Europe, which include Italy, the Netherlands and France. In all these branches, which are extensions of the mother church, the theologies of deliverance, miraculous healing, divine grace and prosperity take centre stage in their activities. However, the dominant teachings in ACI are success, wealth and prosperity.

5.3 Word Miracle Church International (WMCI)

The second case study is the Word Miracle Church International (WMCI). Even though WMCI also teaches faith gospel of prosperity, the principal theology is miraculous healing. 'Miracle' in the name of the church therefore encapsulates the theological direction of WMCI. According to the founder of the Church, Bishop Charles Agyin Asare, man craves for the supernatural, God also knowing this crave in man made sure he provided a package of the supernatural with the GREAT COMMISSION. That is CAST OUT DEVILS, HEAL THE

[442] http://actionchapel.net/performing-arts/ , Retrieved on Monday July 12, 2010.

SICK AND RAISE THE DEAD.[443] Asare believes when God sent his son Jesus Christ to come and reconcile the world unto himself, [God] gave Jesus power to heal the sick. His [God's] credentials or approval for publicity and acceptance is miracles. By making references from the Bible and from North American Pentecostal pastors such as Kenneth Hagin and Morris Cerullo, Agyin Asare states that 'there can be no visitation of God without signs and wonders'.[444] He believes the situation where people of God respond to the preaching of the Word in eloquent and good orators without embarking on healings, driving out demons and other sings and wonders makes it to prove that they are being sent by God. He writes: 'Our generation has accepted "Go ye" but not the signs or confirmation. Being surrounded by the witness of the early church we cannot and must not do less, we are bound to just do better for less would be sin. We are commanded to heal the sick let us arise and do likewise; when we go they would follow us, thus signs and wonders'.[445] The 'we' here is not limited to only ordained men and women, but in the words of Agyin Asare, the current generation who are prepared to go to towns, villages, cities and by-ways, and judging from their works (miracles, signs and wonders), people would believe and say 'God has visited his people'.[446]

As has been the norm with Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians, their life stories prior to accepting Christ as Lord and personal saviour, pattern that of Pauline conversion. One Bright Blewu has succinctly summarized that of Agyin Asare after reading his biography as 'it simply reveals how amazingly God can lift one from the bottomless pit of sin to serve him in amazing grace'.[447] The youthful years of Agyin Asare could best be described as somebody who was deep seated in the 'world'. That is, engaging in behaviours unwittingly to harm not

[443] Charles Agyin-Asare, *Miracles, Healings, Signs and Wonders*, Vol. 1 (Accra; Power Publications, 1992), 8. The capital letters are in the original.
[444] Ibid, 10.
[445] Ibid, 11-12.
[446] Ibid, 10.
[447] Quoted in Charles Agyin-Asare, *Celebrating The Pilgrimage of Life: The first 40 Years* (Accra: Heritage Graphix, 2002), 60.

only the individual concerned and those close to him or her but severing ones relationship with God as well. In his testimony, Agyin Asare narrates how he got into smoking of all kinds of illegal drugs such as marijuana, Indian hemp, pot, fabi, drinking, stealing, womanizing and sneaking from school to enjoy at the cinema halls and the discotheques.[448]Unlike Duncan-Williams who attributes the struggles in his adolescent years to the designs of the devil by attacking the parents leading to their divorce, Agyin Asare blames bad habits copied from his seniors at the secondary school as well as Catholic priests and clerics. His seniors because of his age and small size favoured Agyin Asare who entered the secondary school at the tender age of eleven. The seniors therefore used to send him for errands of which lighting their cigarettes was not an exception. He gradually learnt their smoking habits because as he puts it 'lighting it [cigarette] for them made it tasty for me'.[449] On the influence of Catholic priests and clerics on his smoking and drinking behaviours, Agyin Asare recounts:

> My school was a Roman Catholic school and so there was the opportunity to be recruited as a priest if you were interested. Those of us who desired to be priests in the future were 'candidates'. At the candidates meeting we had access to the kitchen of priests and their winery and since a lot of the priest and clerics in the school smoked and drank alcohol we could also drink and smoke when we got there only we were not supposed to do it in public at school.[450]

His association with people of questionable character puts him into many troubles with the school authorities. He even had to write his final examination while on suspension, a situation that incurred the wrath of his father. He disowned him. However, after showing signs of seriousness and securing teaching job after school, Agyin Asare reconciled with his father. He also dropped some of the bad behaviours except the smoking of Indian hemp and womanizing. In responding to his insatiable sexual

[448] Charles Agyin-Asare, *Celebrating The Pilgrimage of Life,* 3.
[449] Ibid.
[450] Ibid.

desires, he approached one Lady by name Dorcas. But according to Agyin Asare, Dorcas wanted to introduce him to her boyfriend-Jesus first before considering his proposal.[451] Even though Agyin Asare took it as a joke, when they got to the Church of Pentecost in Tamale, he responded to an altar call. Altar call is the time when the preacher in most cases getting to the end of the service, invites members new or old to come forward and give their lives to Christ after hearing the Word of God. Prior to this encounter, Agyin Asare had been seeking spirituality leading him to practise Buddhism and contemplated of becoming a Muslim but all these did not stop him from the 'worldly' living. The situation however changed after giving his life to Christ at the Church of Pentecost in Tamale with Kees Goedhart from Holland as a visiting preacher. All the old ways of life smoking, courting women, bad friends could not fit without anybody telling him so.

After a few weeks of conversion, he got baptised in water and also received Holy Spirit baptism. According to him, not too long after his conversion, he sensed God's call to be a preacher. But prayed to God that he did not want to enter into the ministry and end up a pauper because men of God he knew could not win more than two souls after preaching for long hours. This is how Agyin Asare puts it:

> At [that] time the evangelists I saw would preach forty-five minutes and make a thirty-minute altar call and perchance one or two people would come out 'to please God' so to say. I abhorred it. I would pray and tell God I do not want this kind of ministry if after I have preached he could not convict the sinners like it happened after Peter had preached when the people were cut to the heart and asked 'men and brethren what shall we do' *sic*.[452]

This strong desire to have a healing and miracle ministry was fulfilled in 1983 when at a 'School of Ministry' hosted by Evangelist M Morris Cerullo, Agyin Asare received those

[451] Charles Agyin-Asare, *Miracles, Healings, Signs and Wonders,*4.

[452] Charles Agyin Asare, *Miracles, Healings, Signs and Wonders*, 5-6.

spiritual gifts.[453] Cerullo did not come in person but Dr Alex Ness showed a video of his preaching. As already noted, this was when Agyin Asare said he heard the voice of the Holy Spirit after watching the video recording of Morris Cerullo. This happened after the anointing of his ears, thumbs and toes by Alex Ness, the ambassador of Cerullo. According to Agyin Asare, when he asked God to repeat the message, the voice came again saying, 'My boy Charles, I give unto you power over demons and principalities, heal the sick, raise the dead, preach the Kingdom'.[454] The mission, which Agyin Asare claims to have been received from the Holy Spirit, is akin to that of his mentor, Cerullo. In the averment of Cerullo, God gave him specific call in 1962 in Porte Alegro, Brazil when he said 'Son build me an Army'. This army is made up of Nationals trained to take the Gospel to their villages, cities, states, and nations with the same anointing that rests upon Dr. Cerullo's life and ministry.[455] Interestingly, the vision of Miracle Ministerial College, belonging to WMCI seems to fit into that of Cerullo's. The mission statement from the President of the College, Agyin Asare reads: 'Miracle Ministerial College (MMC) is borne out of the Word Miracle Church International, whose vision is to raise up an army to carry the gospel of Christ to the four corners of the world, with miracles, signs and wonders following'.[456]

Indeed, WMCI inspired by the video preaching of Cerullo has taken the Gospel to villages, towns, cities and nations within the African continent and beyond.[457] The church started with miracle crusades, which include preaching and healing of the sick across southern Ghana. WMCI was first established as Word Miracle Bible Church in March 1987 in Tamale, northern part of Ghana. In 1996, the name of the church changed to Word Miracle Church International (WMCI) and now has many branches in most regions in the country. Since its

[453] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Anointing Through the Screen: Neo Pentecostalism and Televised Christianity in Ghana, *Studies in World Christianity*, 11.1 (2005): 18.
[454] Charles Agyin-Asare, *Celebrating The Pilgrimage of Life,* 6.
[455] http://www.mcwe.com/about_mcwe.php, Retrieved on Wednesday, 29 June 2011.
[456] http://www.wordmiracle.com/perezdome/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=342&Itemid=158 , Retrieved on Thursday, 30 June 2011.
[457] Charles Agyin Asare, *Miracles, Healings, Signs and Wonders,* 7.

establishment, miracle crusades have been embarked on by WMCI in other African countries, Middle East and Asian countries. Branches of WMCI have been established in some countries in Europe and North America. There is one in Maryland, United States of America (USA). Majority of the foreign branches of WMCI have however scattered across Europe with Germany having the highest branches of three with Belgium and the Netherlands having a branch each. Italy and United Kingdom also have two branches in each country.

With regard to reaching out to other nationalities', the church also considers those living in Ghana. For instance, in order to cater for the French nationals or speakers in Ghana, two services are held in French language at the headquarters in Accra. There is one French service on Sundays at 10:30am and another one on Fridays at 6:00pm. With the use of the French language, WMCI is able to minister unto the French nationals in Ghana with the gospel. The use of French language has become one of the global images of WMCI. Other international traits of the church include the display of various countries' flags; establishment of churches in other countries; the use of 'International' in the name of the church as well as having networks with their counterparts in other countries.

As one of the organizational features of the most Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana, WMCI also has a youth service which runs concurrently with the adult one. There are youth pastors who lead the service but all other activities such as reading of the Bible; playing of the musical instruments; and any other duties for conducting services are fully undertaken by the youth. The mission of the youth ministry is to 'train, equip, motivate, guide and build today, an army of dedicated, responsible and anointed youth in church, who will be responsible for advancing both the present and future cause of the Church, and ensuring the continuity of reaching the nations with the demonstration of the power of God through the

working of miracles, signs and wonders'.[458] Although, the youth ministry is an integral part of WMCI, the idea of the youth wing service is to serve as the main centre to 'guide and counsel the youth in order not to fall into the drugs and other social vices the founder got embroiled in during his youthful years'.[459]

In order to fulfil these objectives of the youth ministry, the church has put in place annual youth programme dubbed 'Youth Xplosion'. This is where the youth gather in big halls to be addressed by not only Bishop Agyin Asare but also host of church leaders in the country most of them with Pentecostal-Charismatic orientations. Through the programmes, the youth also have the opportunity to discuss their social and spiritual problems with the speakers. The first Youth Xplosion organized by WMCI was held in Accra in 2006. But the success of the conference in the subsequent three years at the headquarters instigated a call for the programme to be extended to other regions of the country.[460] Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana hosted that of 2010, which was the first to be held outside Accra. Among the speakers at the conference leading names in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Ministries in Ghana such as Dr. Mensa Otabil of International Central Gospel Church; Rev. Eastwood Anaba of Fountain Gate Chapel as well as Albert and Comfort, motivational speakers for the younger generation in Ghana, and many more youth choir groups from within and outside Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. The impact of the programme on the church and youth was evident in the extension of the programme to two more regions in 2011. Youth Xplosion 2011 with the theme 'Wisdom to win in life' took place in two regions. Kumasi was home to the conference

[458] Mission of the Youth Ministry, Word Miracle Church International, Accra. See http://www.wordmiracle.com/perezdome/index.php/ministries/yout hministry.html, Retrieved on Tuesday, December 14, 2010.
[459] Personal Interview with the Youth pastor, Accra June 8, 2010.
[460] It is worthwhile to mention here that from 2007, the programme started attracting political leaders as well. In 2007, the former vice President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency Mahama Aliu attended the programme. During the electioneering campaign in 2008, candidates of the various political parties took advantage of Youth Xplosion to explain their policies to address social issues confronting the younger generations.

for the second time from 13th to 16th July and Takoradi, western region of Ghana for the first time hosted the programme in the month of August 3rd to 6th 2011.

Within the WMCI, there also exist ministries to cater for various age groups and other needs. Apart from the youth and French ministries, there are children, men and women ministries also attending to the special needs of the members depending on their ages and gender.

5.4 Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and the Media

Although the relationship between Christianity and the media has been fluid, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches have the enthusiasm to adopt the modern media than their historic mission denominations. Ogbu Kalu has noted that, 'While missionaries concentrated on oral communication, education, and charitable institutions, [Pentecostal-Charismatic churches] exploited magazines, tracts, and radio because of their mass exposure, simultaneous coverage, and penetrative power'.[461]

The Pentecostal-Charismatic churches' embracing available media is not unique to Ghana. It is a worldwide phenomenon. As has been pointed by Quentin Schultze, 'The evangelical church throughout the ages and around the globe has always depended on communication to catechize its youth, evangelize the unsaved, defend the faith, and organize religious institutions'.[462] What is edifying in the Ghanaian context is that, unlike in the American situation where there is love-hate relationship between some evangelicals and the media like to 'recommend burning records, smashing television sets, and boycotting movies theatres', there has not been such loathing of the media by the churches but rather a mixed of

[461] Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*, 106.
[462] Quentin Schultze (ed.), *American Evangelicals and the Mass Media: Perspectives on the Relationship between American Evangelicals and the Mass Media* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Academie Books/ Zondervan, 1990), 25.

suspicions and full acceptance.[463] One notable media that the Pentecostal-Charismatic leaders are not comfortable to openly recommend to their members is the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. However, majority of their members, as has been shown in chapter six, also like the films. But because the whole thesis is about the video films, it will only be stated here that the churches are sceptical about the video films helping members in their religious lives. Interestingly, some Pentecostal-Charismatic churches have converted over eight cinemas halls in Accra into places of worship.[464]

It needs to be clarified that the Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity do negotiates with the modern cultures including the media. Emerging at the period when electronic media usage became very popular and easily accessible to the ordinary people, Pentecostal-Charismatics wasted no time in appropriating the media. The use of both the old and new media by the churches has become a constant feature in defining or describing them. David Maxwell observed that what is new about African Pentecostalism is its recent growth, enormous vitality and its appropriation of the electronic media to the point that this has become part of Pentecostal self-definition.[465] One commentator even described Ghana's new Christianity as a media phenomenon.[466] Andrew Walls also ended his comprehensive description of the new Christianity in Ghana and Nigeria with their entanglement in the media. Walls described the religious scene as follows:

> Until recently prophet-healing churches could be held the most significant and the fast-growing sector of the indigenous churches. This is no longer certain. Nigeria and Ghana… are witnessing the rise of another type of independent church…Like the prophet-healing churches, they proclaim the divine power of deliverance from disease and demonic affliction, but the style of proclamation is more like that of American Adventist and Pentecostal preaching. Gone are the African drums and

[463] Ibid, 24.
[464] See Birgit Meyer, 'Impossible Representations. Pentecostalism, Vision, and Video Technology in Ghana', in Birgit Meyer & Annelies Moors (eds.), *Religion, Media and the Public Sphere* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 295.
[465] David Maxwell, 'Editorial', *Journal of Religion in Africa,* 28.3 (1998): 255.
[466] Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (London: Hurst, 2004), 32.

> the white uniform of *Aladuras*; the visitor is more likely to hear electronic keyboards and amplified guitars, see a preacher in elegant *agbada* or smart business suit and a choir in bow ties. Yet these radical charismatic movements are African in origin, in leadership, and in finance. They are highly entrepreneurial and are active in radio and television and cassette ministry as well as in campaign and conventions.[467]

The extensive use of the media by Pentecostal-Charismatic churches therefore projects them far beyond their bases. This means that apart from their sensitivity to indigenous worldviews, the media enable them to have a wider coverage. This is because the media has the capacity to enhance the presence and popularity of the pastors and their new churches. As has been put forward by Hiebert and others 'the mass media bestows prestige and enhances authority of individuals and groups by legitimizing their status. Recognition by the press or radio or magazines or news reels testifies that one has arrived, that one is important enough to have been singled out from the large anonymous masses, that one's behaviour and opinions are significant enough to require public notice'.[468]

In Ghana at both ACI and WMCI, the media is extensively used to extend their theologies and the praxis far beyond the geographical limits of the churches. Media often used among the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches vary from those advertising the church's programmes to the regular broadcasting of their ritual activities. Religious media that can be categorised under the advertising programmes are the roadside or street overhead banners, giant billboards, handbills, glossy wall posters and advert on radio or placed in the national newspapers among others. However, the regular religious media are their radio and television ministries. WMCI, for instance, has two radio and three television broadcasts in Ghana. 'Miracle Time' is live on Happy FM 98.9 from Tuesday to Friday 13:30 each day and 'The Word of His Grace' aired on Sweet Melodies 94.3FM at 5:00am every Saturday. 'God's

[467] Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 92-3.
[468] R. E. Hiebert, D. F. Ungurait, and T. W. Bohn, *Mass Media IV: An Introduction to Modern Communication* (New York: Longman, 1985), 246.

Miracle Power' is also shown on TV Africa and TV3 on Saturdays at 11:30am and 17:30 respectively and again broadcast on GTV, the national television on Sundays at 5:00am.[469] Most of these broadcasts are excerpts from sermons or crusades held in the country or abroad. With the exception of 'The Word of His Grace', which is hosted by Bishop Hansel Adjei Frimpong, the speaker for all the broadcasts is the founder, Bishop Agyin Asare. In 2010 during the field research, the following were the media of ACI I observed: a thirty-minute radio broadcast; 'Time with Bishop Saah' on Adom FM from Tuesday to Friday starting at 1330. Bishop Saah is the Presiding Bishop at the Prayer Cathedral in Accra. One of the oldest media programmes of ACI is 'Voice of Inspiration', a thirty-minute television programme shown on GTV, usually on Sunday mornings starting from 7:00am. Most of the audio-visual programmes and other information about the churches are also uploaded onto the well-designed websites by the churches to be used by the adherents in their religious lives or to be consumed by any interested parties.

The question some scholars and Ogbu Kalu in particular, asks is whether the intensive use of the media is effective tool of evangelisation. Such as

> 'to raise a new society of persons unconditionally committed to the Lordship of Christ in every aspect of life while exchanging the values of the surrounding society as well as the world at large for the standards of God's kingdom; a new breed without greed, and a radical opposition to corruption; an alternative society and counterculture to the kingdom of Babylon; a new social, economic and political reality which reveals the true nature of God's reign and the likeness of Christ through its renunciation of the world's definitions and tactics'.[470]

The issue is whether the expansive of use of the media will help the churches to accomplish such aims.

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[469] http://www.wordmiracle.com/perezdome/index.php/media/broadcast-schedule.html Retrieved on Monday, December 27, 2010.
[470] Kalu Ogbu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 103.

Scholars in the field of religion and media however, do have divergent views on whether the mass media will effectively facilitate evangelisation work or not. Berit Brethauer for instance argues that 'televangelism is hardly an effective way to provoke change in religious identity. Nor do religious media often bring about a radical personal transformation from a born-again experience'.[471] In *Impossible Representation*, the assertion made by Birgit Meyer on Pentecostalism in Ghana affirms the doubts on the immersion of Christian message in the mass media. By going public, in the words of Meyer, Pentecostalism recasts Christianity as distraction, both in the sense of deliberately adopting an entertainment format and dispersing the message without bounds. In doing so, she posits that the Pentecostal message is dismembered into mediated religious forms and elements displayed everywhere in public urban space. Her concern lies in the way the authority of the message would be undermined or the message could be distorted. She writes: the difficulty to ensure that those encountering these elements interpret them in line with Pentecostal understanding pinpoints that by spreading into the public sphere, religious authority over practices of mediation is, to some extent, undermined.[472] Other scholars have challenged such positions in relation to the Christian message and the media.

By focusing on the use of posters by the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, Asonzeh Ukah believes the power in their media design has the potential of converting the target audience. Ukah asserts that:

> The aesthetics of the poster, therefore, reflects the underlying doctrines of the new religion with its thematic emphasis on an expansive God whose wealth is located in the market place of commercial practice; its design is partly governed by local practice of exhibiting one's best as a way of seeking notice, of symbolically communicating one's worth to a public that recognizes and desires wealth and grandiose. Part of the proselytizing potential of the poster thus is located in its design to appeal to an audience that understands the logic of its

[471] Berit Brethauer, 'Televangelism: Local and Global Dimensions', in Dwight Hopkins, Lois Lorentzen, Eduardo Mendieta, and David Batstone (eds.), *Religions/Globalizations: Theories and Cases*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 206.
[472] Birgit Meyer, *Impossible Representations*, 300.

> image, a public willing and desirous of sharing in the wealth of God displayed in the life of the pastor whose image proudly gazes out from the poster. The power of the gaze to focus, channel and organize attention is generally recognized therein.[473]

The end results of the appropriation of the mass media in Pentecostal-Charismatics for evangelisation is more complex as demonstrated by Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu with their use of visual media in Ghana. He takes more critical view on the relevance of the mass media as an evangelical tool. Asamoah-Gyadu concludes that 'the media have great benefits as evangelistic tools but the reconfiguration of Christian values to meet their requirements remains a challenge that invites Christian leadership to negotiate and renegotiate the terms so that the message of salvation does not exclude or marginalize some, simply because it is now "made for The Media"'.[474]

Indeed, the double-edge sword nature of the mass media in relation to religion is nothing new. It dates back to the Reformation period and the invention of the print (it may even go back further) as Edwards notes:

> The printing press played far more than just an assisting role in this many-sided contest over authority. It broadcast the subversive messages with a rapidity that had been impossible before its invention. More than that, it allowed the central ideological leader, Martin Luther, to reach the 'opinion leaders' of the movement quickly, kept them all in touch with each other and with each other's' experience and ideas, and allowed them to 'broadcast' their (relatively coordinated) programme to a much larger and more geographically diverse audience than has ever been possible before. Yet, paradoxically, printing also undermined central authority because it encouraged the recipients of the printed message to think for themselves about the issues in dispute, and it provided the means- printed Bibles especially-by which each person could become his or her own theologian.[475]

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[473] Asonzeh Ukah, 'Seeing Is More Than Believing: Posters and Proselytization in Nigeria', in. R. I. J. Hackett(ed.), *Proselytization Revisited: Rights Talk, Free Markets and Culture Wars* (London: Equinox, 2006), 13.

[474] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Of Faith and Visual Alertness: The Message of 'Mediatized' Religion in an African Pentecostal Context', *Material Religion*, 1.3 (November 2005).

[475] Mark U. Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 7.

Rather, what is new with Pentecostal-Charismatics is that the difference between the secular media and those produced by the churches themselves is unclear. A situation, which has further complicated the relevance and seriousness members of the movements, may attach to the message. Edwards point is more relevant in the present study because issues hovering on Pentecostal-Charismatics in Ghana have the tendency to attract attention. This has triggered its appropriation by commercial producers, as was the case during the reformation. He points out that religious ideas of Martin Luther, in contrast to most of his Catholic opponents, were actively encouraged and promoted by commercial printers throughout Europe because they were so profitable as publications.[476] This does not insinuate that the commercialisation of the religious strategies and ideas of the Pentecostal-Charismatics is limited to the private media. They have a diffuse presence in the various sectors in the society. De Witte aptly points out:

> In this new public sphere religion intertwines with both national politics and commerce and entertainment. Charismatic Pentecostalism is part and parcel of the business and entertainment culture of the commercial media, just as entertainment, business, and marketing are integral to charismatic churches. Its impact, then, lies not only in its institutional forms and rapidly growing number of followers, but also in more fluid forms of consumer culture and entertainment business. Through the media, it has widely diffused influence on general popular tastes and styles that may not be religious per se, but are clearly shaped by charismatic-Pentecostal discourse and practice.[477]

However, the private media seem to have dominated in projecting the ideals and theologies of the movement through video films. Unlike the Nigerian video film industry, which has been impacting immensely on Ghana's film industry, where some Ministries or Church organizations are actively engaged in the production of Christian Video films for evangelization, Ghana, is yet to witness such a move from the established religious bodies. In Nigeria, it is not uncommon to see movies or religious drama that are written and produced by religious organizations and church ministries

[476] Ibid.
[477] Marleen de Witte, 'The Holy Spirit on Air in Ghana', *Media and Development* 52.2 (2005): 22-26.

for public consumption. The Power of God Evangelical Ministries (POGEM) and The Mount Zion Faith Ministries International (MZFMI) are good examples. POGEM has boldly written at its website homepage that 'the Power of God evangelical ministries, operating under the call letters POGEM is an African media evangelism ministry based in Abeokuta, Nigeria. POGEM TV is also a full-time Christian film production outfit'[478]. As noted earlier, the infusion of Pentecostal rhetoric in the narratives of the video films in Nigeria was started by some of the independent film producers who wanted to demonstrate their new status as a 'born-again' Christian through the film.[479] Pentecostal groups soon discovered the religious and business potentials of the medium.

Pentecostal-Charismatics in Ghana are not directly involved in the production of films for evangelisation. They are nonetheless, implicitly using the video films in fundamental ways. One Pastor and a member of one of the Charismatic ministries told me that they have been writing some of the film scripts in order to correct what they called 'the wrong impressions about Charismatic churches and the distortions of the gospel in the films'.[480] Individual members or leaders may also act in films even though not necessary promoting praxis and doctrines of their churches (which cannot be entirely ruled out). Some bookshops of the Pentecostal-Charismatic are also stocked with the video films. I must be quick to add that only video films, which are produced by their Nigerian counterparts for evangelisation, are available at the bookshops of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana. The volume of video films produced by the independent filmmakers with strong Pentecostal themes, practices and religious

[478] One is welcome to the POGEM webpage with the Mission Statement, which POGEM aims 'to evangelise the world through the media'. See http://www.pogem.tv/films.htm for the films produced by POGEM for evangelization.
[479] Ukah Asonzeh, Advertising *God*, 225.
[480] Fiifi Adarkwah, Action Chapel International, London, August 6, 2010.

worldviews outweigh those produced by the Pentecostals themselves. On the surface, it is virtually impossible to draw the line between those films produced primarily for religious purposes and those responding to the popular culture purely for profit motive. To borrow the words of Quentin J. Schultze, religion and popular culture have a reciprocal influence on each other in creating a Christianity wherein it is difficult to distinguish popular entertainment from religion.[481]

My intention here is to go beyond the content analysis on whether the mediated religion among the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity will be able to achieve results or not. Central to the current work is to incorporate the inputs from the consumers on the Pentecostal culture in the media. Although the medium and effects approaches are a step in the right direction, they are not adequate to reflect on the complexity of audience reception of religiously mediated information. Such methods tend to present the audience as 'blank slate' on to which meaning and significance could be written with the right combination of medium and message.[482] Hoover argues further that such notion defies much received and current scholarship on the package of symbols, values, structures, practices, and ideas that we call 'religion'.[483] Again, the focus has so far been on manner in which the churches appropriate the media to disseminate religious messages and their intended goal. Little or nothing is known about how members of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches respond to how their theologies, practices, rituals and the movements themselves have been represented in the media. Of immediate interest is the presence of the features of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in the increasingly growing Ghanaian/Nigerian video films.

[481] Quoted in Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 109.
[482] Steward M. Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 34.
[483] Ibid.

Broadening the study of the Pentecostal culture and the media to include the audience and the secular media becomes indispensable. One of the main reasons is that the boundaries between churches produced media and religious elements in the secular media are blurred. On the dynamic web of people and the media culture relationship, Hoover aptly states that 'This relationship between people and media is entirely a volitional one…People live on the media 'map' because they want to, and more importantly, because that map is an authentic one for them'.[484]

In the Ghanaian context, the media particularly the video films made for general consumption are regarded by some Pentecostal-Charismatic members as authentic because the majority of films celebrate Pentecostal ideals. The observation made by Horsfield is more perceptive:

> The media as the agent of convergence present a significant alternative source of religious information, sentiment, ethical guidance, ritual, and community, not only for the broader population, but also for those who are members of religious institutions. Religious organizations may no longer be the main source of religious information, truth, or practice, even for their own members.[485]

Significantly, the narratives of most of the video films watched by many including their adherents are overwhelmed with Pentecostal views. As has been pointed out earlier, Pentecostal groups in Nigeria as part of their media ministries produce some of the video films circulating in Ghana. There is also ample evidence in which both ACI and WMCI are directly promoting the religiously motivated video films from their Nigerian counterparts. Miracle Bookshop at the WMCI is stocked with video films produced by Mount Zion Faith Ministries International (MZFMI) and Power of God Evangelistic Ministries (POGEM) all in Nigeria. But majority of the video films available to Ghanaians at home and in the diaspora

[484] Quoted in Peter G. Horsfield, 'Changes in Religion in Periods of Media Convergence', in Stewart Hoover and Knut Lundby (eds.), *Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1997), 178.
[485] Ibid.

do come from secular or independents producers of various faiths and none who also appropriate the Pentecostal culture primarily for profit motive.

Interestingly, the pastor who is also the Co-ordinator of the Performing Arts at ACI at the headquarters in Accra is an influential player in the production of local video films infused with Pentecostal culture. He is not only an actor but also a writer and producer for Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. In Ghana, other pastors or Christians are either overtly or indirectly involved in the production of video films with religious implications. It must be noted that in most cases, the churches may have nothing to do with individual pastor's involvement in the films. In an interview, the pastor at ACI told me that one of his films was even produced by Abdul Sallam Mumuni, who is a Muslim.

However, it will be near impossible to say that the members of the Pentecostal-Charismatic groups select and watch only films produced specifically for evangelisation or those films, which feature well-known Christian characters. The issue is that most of the video films produced outside the Pentecostal circles also constantly feature the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. Independent film producers draw more on the practices, beliefs, theology and doctrinal understandings of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in the films. The reason is that film producers know very well that putting the image of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity on the silver screen serves as a marketing hype because of its popularity.

It is against this backdrop of the abundance of religious symbolisms in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films that this study is situated. With the televised programmes of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches evidence abounds in the available studies on the audience reception and the use of such mediated religious programmes.[486] For instance, in his work *Anointing Through the Screen*, Asamoah-Gyadu pointed out that the WMCI secretariat receives

[486] See Marleen De Witte, 'Altar Media's Living Word: Televised Charismatic Christianity in Ghana', *Journal of Religion in Africa,* 33.2 (2003): 172-202.

hundreds of letters from TV viewers who testify to having been healed or giving their lives to Christ after they had watched televised programmes, *God's Miracle Hour* and *Your Miracle Encounter* hosted by bishop Agyin Asare.[487]

To the best of my knowledge, the religious elements in the mass media particularly the video film phenomenon in Ghana and Nigeria have not been studied except those produced by religious groups. However, in the Ghanaian context, it will be virtually impossible for one to say that the members of the Pentecostal-Charismatic groups select and watch only films produced specifically for evangelisation. Quebedeaux's point that 'religion produced for consumption by the mass media is 'popular' because it is fashioned for everyday people with the aim of helping them meet everyday problems', is relevant in our context.[488] In relation to the Ghanaian/Nigerian films, one may ask: what is the place of the popular video films in the religious lives of the audience? It is within this context of providing answers to this and other related questions on the video films that the study sought to investigate the reception of the video films. Selected members of ACI and WMCI in Accra and London were used as case studies to explore the reception and appropriation of what Ukah calls the forest of religious symbols and values in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films.[489] In the next chapter, I discuss the reception and the use of the religious aspects in the video films by selected members of ACI and WMCI.

[487] Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Anointing Through the Screen, 19.
[488] Cited in Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Of Faith and Visual Alertness, 353.
[489] Ukah, *Advertising God*, 205.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 Audience Ethnography of Ghanaian/Nigerian Religious Video Films

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on the analysis of the data, which emerged from the ethnographic research, especially the qualitative interviews. In analysing interviews, Rapley argues that *'[the researcher] should analyse what actually happened*-how [the researcher's] interaction produced that trajectory of talks, how specific versions of reality are co-constructed, how specific identities, discourses and narratives are produced'.[490] I therefore use the interview material by both treating the *interview-data-as-resource* and the *interview-data-as-topic*.[491] As Byrne points out, *interview-data-as-resource* is when interviews are analysed by what interviewees say about their lives and experiences while *interview-data-as-topic* looks at how the information is communicated and the accounts are told.[492] However, the ways of understanding, experiencing and talking about that specific topic, and in our case the religious aspects of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, are contingent on the specific local interactional context and should be analysed, at least initially, from the circumstances of their production.[493] And these local circumstances of gaining clear insights were factored into the interview preparation. The semi-structured questions were designed in such a way to check consistency and accurate accounts of the interview data. For instance, as is cleared from the semi-structured interview topic guide, a question on whether the films *challenge* or *assist* the respondent is immediately followed by another question about how the films are *appropriated*.[494] Even though 'it is not always possible to completely sidestep issues of truth

[490] Tim Rapley, 'Interviews', in Clive Seale *et al* (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice* (London: Sage, 2006) 16. The Italics is in the original text.
[491] Bridget Byrne, 'Qualitative Interviewing', in Clive Seale (ed.), *Researching Society and Culture, 2nd ed*, (London: Sage, 2004), 183.
[492] Ibid.
[493] Tim Rapley, 'Interviews', in Clive Seale *et al* (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice*, 16.
[494] See Appendix A.

and reliability' there was the need to probe further if a respondent claimed that he or she is assisted or challenged but answered that the films are not appropriated at all.[495] This way of conducting the interview proved to be useful in ensuring the accurate accounts of the data is presented as indicated in some of the analysis below.

It must be emphasized that the opinions expressed by the audience are the reflection of average of video films watched featuring overt religious narratives as a whole with particular focus on Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, and how these churches have been portrayed in the films. The three views below expressed by some of the respondents during this study envelop the multiple and intriguing interpretations the audience adduce to the religious narratives in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. It is also worth noting here that because of confidentiality and anonymity, all my informants are protected by pseudonyms unless stated otherwise.

> 'They [video films] are good, very educative and making a lot of impact in the church and in the body of Christ. Even those who do not believe in the power of God, it is helping most people to grow in their faith. The usual central message that victory triumphs over evil can help people to stand firm in their lives'.[496]

> 'Even though sometimes the romance and sex acts become embarrassing when watching with children we cannot ignore the good aspects of the films. It educates, entertains and keeps one in company. Those video films revolving around the word of God, teaches that there is nothing that God cannot do. I always challenge my children to let whatever they learn in the film reflect in their Christian lives'.[497]

[495] Bridget Byrne, 'Qualitative Interviewing', in Clive Seale (ed.), *Researching Society and Culture, 2nd ed*, 183.
[496] Eric Nti, Action Chapel International, Accra, May 31, 2010. He is thirty-eight years of age and a pastor with three children.
[497] Issac Marfo, Action Chapel International, Accra, June 5, 2010. He is a forty-eight year-old father of three children.

'Christianity is all about salvation and morality. After learning certain tenets of Christianity there are certain video films Christians are not supposed to watch especially those films featuring explicit sex and other immoralities. Such negative themes may have the inclination to negatively affect Christian lives, relationships and the basic ideals of Christians. There are certain video films we don't allow our children to watch'.[498]

These lines of reception of the video films also affirm that the effect approach, which renders the audience as passive, is no more tenable. The opinions are answers to the two main questions guiding the current research. The first major question was, what is the central message audience take from the religious narratives particularly Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in the video films? And the second inquiry borders on how the religious dimension in the films are appropriated, if they are, in the religious lives of the audience. The manners in which the responses were articulated and the deep knowledge demonstrated during the interviews clearly indicate that the audience are more familiar with the religious video films genre. Genre is used here to refer to a 'system of codes, conventions, and visual styles, which enables an audience to determine rapidly and with some complexity the kind of narrative they are watching'.[499] The findings are also in consonance with the point made by Graeme Turner that 'Film provides us with pleasure in the spectacle of its representations on the screen, in our recognition of stars, styles, and in our enjoyment of the event itself.[500]

In this chapter, the qualitative interview data is analysed in line with the two theoretical frameworks underpinning the whole study. As Rapley noted, 'how you analyse interviews is *always* inextricably linked to your theoretical interests. And your theoretical interests will, in part, define what sorts of questions you ask in interviews, what sort of questions you ask of

[498] Francis Akomea, Word Miracle Church International, Accra, June 12, 2010. He is forty-two years old.
[499] Graeme Turner, *Film as a Social Practice*, 3rd edn (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 97.
[500] Ibid, 3.

the data, what sort of level of transcription you feel is necessary'.[501] Accordingly, this chapter is divided into two parts conforming to the two theoretical frameworks cardinal in this thesis. With the first, the cultural turn or critical reception theory particularly Hall's model of Encoding/Decoding is used to analyse the data which followed inquire about the reception of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video film. Embracing the Uses and Gratifications theory as a springboard, the second part of the current chapter centres on the appropriation of the religious facets in the video films in the religious lives of the audience.

6.2 PART I: The Reception of Religious Constructs in Ghanaian/Nigerian Video Films

In this part, I analysed the responses provided by the audience of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films at Action Chapel International and Word Miracle Church International. After affirming that they do watch the video films featuring overt religious narratives, especially the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, I put this question to the informants: What is the principal message you take from the portrayals of these churches in the films and why? The responses to this question were discussed using the basic tenets of the cultural reception theory suggested Stuart Hall.

After identifying the dominant message, the three suggested readings audience make of the media text contained in Halls' Encoding/Decoding framework are reading in 'preferred or dominant mode', 'Negotiated position' or the viewer decoding the text in 'oppositional' code. This trio proposed readings assumed that there is a unique dominant message, which has been enciphered in the media text. This dominant worldview in general and especially religious worldview in our present discussion, is described by Hall as hegemonic 'precisely because

[501] Tim Rapley, 'Interviews', 27.

they represent definitions of situations and events which are "in dominance", (global)'.[502] These dominant definitions, according to Hall, 'connect events, implicitly or explicitly, to grand totalizations, to the great syntagmatic views-of-the-world: they take "large views" of issues: they relate events to the "national interest" or to the level of geo-politics, even if they make these connections in truncated, inverted or mystified ways'.[503]

The dominant message in relation to the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity as encoded in the video film text varies from one audience to the other. In all, three main dominant messages were gathered from my respondents: good, paradoxical and evil representation of the church in the video films. This development collaborated with critics of Hall who 'question whether it is possible to see the content of the media as a coherent and unified set of ideas, beliefs and practices'.[504] The encoded content in the text 'allow us to see the media as containing contradictory messages, some articulating the "dominant ideology" of the groups [the Christian groups in our case] but others to a greater or lesser extent challenging the dominant worldview'.[505]

The earlier studies along the active audience research model proposed by Stuart Hall focused on particular television programmes thereby making it in some way easier to identify a particular 'preferred reading' associated with the dominant ideology. The variant interpretations- preferred, negotiated or oppositional and other ways in which the audience decoded media text was then compared to the one encoded in the media text. Even here, there were cases where the audience read different meanings to the dominant one fixed in the media text. For example, the dominant message contained in the studies undertaken by Kate and Liebes on *Dallas*, the American soap opera was clear – that the rich are unhappy. However, the cross-cultural audiences interpreted the encoded messages morally,

[502] Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding', 137.
[503] Ibid.
[504] Kevin Williams, *Understanding Media Theory*, 153.
[505] Ibid.

ideologically and aesthetically in contradiction with the intended message. The programme was therefore used as a 'forum' to reflect on the ethnic identities of the overseas audiences instead.[506]

When placed alongside with Halls' notion of Encoding/Decoding, the data from the interviews of audience, resident in both home and abroad, also seems to slightly depart from the sole 'preferred reading' advocated by Hall but consistent with the three categories of positions of decoding the filmic texts. In the case of the audience of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, after gathering the materials from the interview, three preferred readings were constructed using discourse analysis. Discourse as already noted by John Fiske, refers to a way of representing a coherent set of knowledge and meanings about a specific topic.[507] When views about the religious aspects of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films are articulated using 'a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed'.[508]

First, I discuss the three dominant religious messages fixed in the Ghanaian/Nigerian filmic texts, which were identified by the respondents. In the Ghanaian context, as pointed out earlier, the respondents were of the view that the films are embedded with different dominant messages about the churches especially Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. The reception of the video films is analysed in details according to the three dominant messages on Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity indicated by the audience. In sum, as graphically represented in chapter two, seventeen informants suggested that the churches are portrayed as good in the video films; six respondents claimed messages relating to the churches in the

[506] Kate and Liebes, 'Interacting with "Dallas": Cross-Cultural Readings of American TV', 45.
[507] Also see Stuart Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power', in B. Gieben and S.Hall (eds.), *Formations of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 290.
[508] Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power', in B. Gieben and S.Hall (eds.), *Formations of Modernity,* 290.

video films are evil and thirty-seven informants said the narratives about churches as seen in the video films are paradoxical.

6.2.1 Good Representation of PCC in the Video Films

The first encoded dominant message present Pentecostal Christianity as religion maintaining not only good values and morals but also promulgating what count as desired, enlightened, civilized and modern religious worldview. They are imaged as making significant impact on Christianity as a whole, society through transforming lives or converting and taking people engaged in all sorts of social vices into Christianity. In relation to other religious traditions, they represent all that is good and other non-Christian religions especially indigenous religion is aligned with evil deeds. Indeed, as already pointed out, such is the view of scholars like Onookome Okome and Esi Sutherland-Addy on the representation of Christianity and indigenous beliefs in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. This perspective was also common among some of the respondents. For instance, this is how Yaw Addo, an eighteen-year old male respondent put it: 'I see their [the films'] depiction of the church as very good to the outside world as compared to non-Christian religions. But we ought to note that there shouldn't be discrimination among the religious narratives'.[509] This view is referred to as 'good' representation of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in the video films. This is how the respondents chose to describe such narratives as indicated in the coding scheme in Chapter two. Below are some of the representatives opinions put forward by the respondents on the good depiction of the churches in the video films:

[509] Yaw Addo, Action Chapel International, Accra, May 18, 2010. Addo is eighteen year-old student.

Anarfi: The churches are shown as providing solutions to all kinds of problems. In fact, the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films promote positive image of the church – as a means to salvation.[510]

Asabea: The churches are positively portrayed in the video films by stressing on the positive signs in the churches, which are leading people to Christ.[511]

Afriyie: Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is represented as shaping the lives of members in the right direction.[512]

Dovi: The churches are depicted as standing for good morals in the video films.[513]

6.2.2 Evil Portrayal of PCC local video films

The second dominant messages rather portray the Pentecostal Christianity as evil. The church as a body and individual members are presented not only as superficial but leading all sort of double lives as well. In some of the video films, they are depicted as involving themselves in all manner of clandestine activities such as fraud, abusing women and above all exposing the questionable sources of power of the churches to perform miracles. That is, the films explicitly or implicitly link the Pentecostal Churches to the same indigenous religious traditions and their rituals the churches openly criticise and admonish their members to stay away from. Here, the churches are portrayed as hypocritical and involved in all manners of evils deeds. According to the respondents, the good aspects of the churches are totally ignored in some films. Such presentation of the church in the video films is described as 'evil' by the respondents as deduced from the interview data. The following statements

[510] Kwaku Anarfi, Action Chapel International, London, July 20, 2010. He is a parent of two children.
[511] Comfort Asabea, Action Chapel International, Accra, May 8, 2010. She is twenty-seven year old single mother of one child.
[512] Mike Afriyie, Word Miracle Church International, Accra, May 11, 2010. He is an eighteen year old student.
[513] Agnes Dovi, Word Miracle Church International, London, September 5, 2010. She is fifty-three and single mother of two children.

capture typical descriptions of the church in the context of the video films given by the respondents in this category:

Brew: People go to these churches for help. Instead, in the video films the churches are portrayed as rather adding more problems to their members by taking the little money and other valuables belonging to the members. Some pastors are then seen as leading extravagant lives with the churches' resources.[514]

Nyame: Individual Christians particularly those with Pentecostal orientations are depicted in the films as leading all sort of lives contrary to the tenets of peace and love expected of Christians. But in the video films, once a Christian confesses, that is the end of the story. As a born–again Christian he or she starts enjoying whatever property or wealth which was acquired through immoral means.[515]

Mensah: Double life styles of Christians or the churches are vividly exposed in the video films. The films draw the lines between good churches who follow the tenets of the Bible and bad ones. The bad churches preaching one thing and secretly doing other things are revealed through the films.[516]

Abrokwa: Individual Pentecostal Christians or the churches are seen in the video films as not preaching the good news according to the Bible but for their selfish interests. They are seen in the films as not promulgating the Gospel but their personal ideals.[517]

6.2.3 Paradoxical Depiction of PCC in the films

[514] Ama Brew, Action Chapel International, London, August 16, 2010. She is twenty-five years and a student.
[515] Kwaku Nyame, Action Chapel International, Accra, June 3, 2010. He is thirty-one years old Mason and a father of one child.
[516] Gorge Mensah, Word Miracle Church International, Accra, May16, 2010. Mensah is thirty-nine years old and a student.
[517] Comfort Abrokwa, Word Miracle Church International, London, September 12, 2010. She is forty-six year old married mother of two and a carer.

For some audience, the dominant message encoded in the video films imaged the Pentecostal churches as having both good and bad postures at the same time. They see the churches as mirrored in the films as possessing good attitudes while others are represented as posing serious threat not only to the Christian community but also to the entire society. Unlike, the negative representation, the paradoxical depiction acknowledges both the good and bad deeds of the churches in the films. This view vividly narrated by most of the informants has been coded as 'paradoxical' depiction of the churches in the video films. The following are some of the characteristic details provided by the respondents in this category:

Anima: The members of Pentecostal Christianity are portrayed as more prayerful and seriousness towards church. But some who call themselves pastors but do ungodly things are also exposed in the films. For example, pastors having affairs with church members and telling lies are put to shame before the films end.[518]

Boakye: The video films represent the church as possessing the ability and the skills to give the right teachings of the Bible. Some pastors and churches are also shown as quoting the Bible out of context to achieve their parochial interests.[519]

Adom: In the video films, positive ideas about religious lives of the members of the Pentecostal groups are well demonstrated. But the films also reveal negative attitudes within the churches.[520]

The films let us see what is going on in these churches. Some are bad such as exploitations of members by the church leaders and good activities such teachings

[518] Adwoa Anima, Action Chapel International, Accra, May 2, 2010. She is twenty-three years old and Sales Personnel.
[519] Nana Boakye, Action Chapel International, London, July 26, 2010. He is thirty years old and self-employed.
[520] Rose Adom, Word Miracle Church International, Accra, June 1, 2010. She is twenty years old and a student.

about prayer life and better presentation of sermons. But in all, the good dominates in the films.[521]

The reception of the video films from these three perspectives by the audience in this study is in sharp contrast with binary stands of good Christian representation and the bad portrayal of indigenous beliefs in the video films espoused by some scholars.[522] Here Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity from the lens of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films is not interpreted by the audience only as good or positive appearance but evil and paradoxical as well. In fact, the overall picture from the data indicates that most respondents see paradoxical portrayal of Pentecostal groups in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films than any other representation. As illustrated in chapter two, majority of the audience from both Action Chapel International and Word Miracle Church International selected for the study, thirty-seven respondents representing sixty-two per cent of the subjects for the research indicated that their reception of the of portrayal of Pentecostal Christianity in the films is paradoxical. In terms of casting the churches in the good light, only seventeen respondents denoting twenty-eight per cent responded yes. Only six respondents, which signify ten per cent, reported as seeing the churches as being portrayed evil in the video films.

When the data from the two churches are analysed further from the Ghanaian and the United Kingdom contexts as well as from the standpoints of other demographic variables such as gender and age, the trend of reception of the various dominant messages about the churches in the video films is identical. That is, most respondents agreed that the churches are presented paradoxically in the video films followed by good representation with few reporting their reception of the depiction of the Pentecostal group in the films as evil.

[521] Afua Eshun, Word Miracle Church International, London, August 22, 2010. She is forty-eight years old single mother of four children. Eshun is a trader.
[522] See Chapter four for more details on the binary debate on the representations of religion in the video films.

With Action Chapel International, the figures were sixty-eight percent, twenty-one percent and eleven percent representing paradoxical, good and evil portrayal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in the video films respectively. Responses from Word Miracle Church International also showed that fifty-six percent, thirty-four percent and nine percent considered the imaging of the churches in the video films as paradoxical, good and evil respectively. The pattern of reception of the presentation of the church is not different when the data is examined along the gender of the respondents. Sixty-five percent, twenty-three percent and twelve percent female respondents reckoned the depiction of the churches in the films as paradoxical, good and evil respectively. The only change in the direction of reception emerged from the responses from members of Word Miracle Church International, London branch. From the data, fifty percent indicated that the churches are portrayed paradoxically but twenty-five percent suggested good imaging and another twenty-five percent indicated evil representation of the churches in the films. Even here the view that the video films are paradoxical in their portrayal of the Pentecostal churches stands out from the good and evil ones.

The sources of the video film narratives and context in which they are produced, in the view of the respondents, account for the varied religious representations and the Pentecostal-Charismatics in particular in the films. Three major sources of the script of the video films were identified by the subjects as: media theology of the religious institutions partaking in the production of the video films; stories emerging from the churches' activities in general and particularly through testimonies; and religious events circulating in the society and mostly carried by other media houses such as the print and other electronic media. The audience are familiar with these events so failure of film producers to satisfy the curiosity of the avid viewers will end in financial disaster. The producers attempt to provide the audience with religious narratives, which are generating interests and discussions in the society. Most of

these stories bordering on the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are not all that favourable neither are they all that negative. That partly explains why most of the respondents believe that the films reflect on real issues currently pertaining to religious expressions including the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and for that reason they are worthy of attention.

The findings though depart from one of the theoretical foundations of the Encoding/Decoding notion, which is multiple dominant messages cropped up instead of a single dominant meaning; some of the basic principles of Encoding/Encoding model were also supported in this thesis. In all the three representations of the churches in the films, the individual respondents themselves decoded the intended messages encoded in the filmic text. Regardless of how the respondents interpreted the portrayal of the churches in the video films- good readings, paradoxical position or evil representations, Hall's three suggested ways of decoding the dominant messages by the audience were apparent in our analysis. However, there was a group of respondents who did not fit into the three options of decoding media audio-visual texts proposed in the encoding/decoding framework. These findings further support the argument by the proponents of cultural turn that the audience are not passive. Here, the audience do not only independently make sense of the filmic texts but also have the privilege to decide the dominant messages to be decoded.

For instance, the twenty-eight percent of the respondents who read the films as representing the Pentecostal group as good, virtually all of them admitted that in one way or the other, the narratives are not treated unilaterally. The narratives though help them to have confidence in their churches; they are also called upon to live up to certain Christian standards. In a sense, the message is read in the dominant mode, which is the church seen as a good place to be, but also open to both evil and paradoxical readings. Asked whether in her view the good reading of the church in the films will be of any help, this is how Esther Boafo, a member of Action Chapel in Accra, responded 'it prepares me to stand firm in my Christian life but I am [also

being challenged to] be careful as a Christian'.[523] In the case of Word Miracle International, even though most respondents who interpreted the portrayal of the church in the good light said they are assisted and challenged by such developments there were two members who said otherwise. To the later, the favourable imaging of the church in the films does not assist or challenged them in their Christian lives in any way. Two most common reasons cited were, first, the narratives are already known and do not add anything new; and the second is that there are a lot of comedies in the films which do not help in conveying the serious message. Even here there were nuances in responses to the subsequent question about how the films are used in their everyday Christian lives. Daniel Adu, a twenty-year old student in Accra, claimed the 'narratives of the video films are appropriated' but earlier he said the films do not assist at all in his Christian life.[524] Interestingly, the affirmative representation of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity does not necessarily initiate only one-sided reading among the church members but multiple meanings are read into the religious narratives in the films. But all the respondents who acknowledged that the church is depicted as good in the video films also reported negotiating the religious narratives in their Christian lives by changing certain life styles. Some informants also rejected the religious depiction in the video films outright.

In a similar vein, the evil portrayal of the church in the films does not instigate the respondents to abandon their church or unilaterally affect the believe audience have in their religious bodies. The respondents do understand the dominant message as warning the audience about charlatans in the religious circles. But most of the audience said they are rather challenged and assisted by what they termed as 'so much negativity about the church found in the video films'. Half of those respondents who interpreted the films as portraying churches as evil told me they are assisted and challenged by the exposition of evil deeds

[523] Esther Boafo, Accra June 8, 2010.
[524] Daniel Adu, Accra, May 27, 2010.

among some of the churches and Christians as depicted in films. The filmic texts in this instance are read in the opposite or negotiated mode. One of the reasons they gave is that such narrative is a reflection of some of the events in the society and for that matter it is an objective move. Again, there was nuanced answer provided by one of the respondents. The only member of Action chapel who claimed he is not assisted or challenged by the evil representation of the church responded 'yes' to the use of the films in his Christian life. Kwaku Nyame, a thirty-one year old father of one child said 'such films even motivate me in my Christian life'.[525] One out of three respondents in Action Chapel and two out of four members at Word Miracle Church also disclosed that they do maintain affiliation with their churches irrespective of the evil depiction of the churches in the films. For them, their religious lives have no relationship with the representations of the church in the films. However, two respondents each from the two churches admitted that they do sometimes negotiate their religious lives through the evil imaging of the churches. But all the respondents in this category and the two groups (those who believe the churches are portrayed as good and paradoxical) stated clearly that no matter the image of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity presented in the video films, their belief in their current church is intact.

On the paradoxical portrayal of the Pentecostal-Christianity in the video films, the responses from Action Chapel (from both contexts- Accra and London) indicate that eighty-nine percent of the members who said the churches are presented paradoxically in the video films declared that they are challenged or assisted or both by the representation in their religious lives. But the remaining eleven percent of the respondents at Action Chapel who responded 'no' to the question about being challenged or assisted by the films were consistent in the answers to the follow up question on the place of the films in their lives. In the same way, all

[525] Kwaku Nyame, Accra, May 19, 2010.

of them declared that film do not play any role 'Not at all' in their Christian lives. At Word Miracle Church International, also responses from Accra and London, the data showed ninety-four per cent of members who interpreted the depiction of the churches as paradoxical confirmed that they are assisted or challenged or both in their Christian lives. There was however variation with the response of only member at this church who said 'no' to the films challenging or assisting her religious experience. On the appropriation of the films in her Christian life, Agatha Owiafe, a twenty-one year old female student in Accra admitted, 'I learn a lot from the video films both secular and Christian ones because they act as preaching the Gospel through drama'.[526] Apart from one respondent in Action Chapel and two with Word Miracle church who said the films do not play any role in their lives, all the interviewees pointed out that they do maintain their affiliation with the church but they do sometimes negotiate or use the video films as model in their religious lives.

As has been demonstrated with the analysis of the data, there were subtle differences in views on the place of the films in the religious lives of some of the audience. Especially the development that respondents who claimed the films do not assist or challenge them in any way but later admitted that they learn a lot from the films needs to be pointed out. They were oblivious of the point that by learning a lot from the films, the films are assisting them in their Christian lives by providing an opportunity for self-assessment or reflection.

This discovery is close to an observation made by Charlotte Haines Lyon and Clive Marsh in the United Kingdom context.[527] They found out that it was the *research project itself,* which both helped viewers to discern how they were using the films, and encourage them to do more with what they watched.[528] The Ghanaian situation presents a nuanced scenario. This is because some viewers who were expressing incompatible opinions know exactly what they

[526] Agatha Owiafe, June 13, 2010.
[527] Clive Marsh, 'Audience Reception', in John Lyden (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009).
[528] Ibid, 269.

are using the video films for. For some viewers, however, they do not see the films as more challenging in their religious lives. Other respondents however seem to fall into the category of Haines and Marsh. When a further question was put to Owiafe, one of the respondents who gave nuance responses, that by learning a lot from the films, in a way, the films are assisting her Christian life, she answered in the affirmative. This turn of event also fit into a point made by Clive Marsh on audience reception of film. He writes:

> [R]itual practices in which people choose to participate for multiple reasons, and complex results, are worthy of attention on more than sociological or even psychological terms alone. It can be shown that whatever audiences *declare* they are doing when they watch films is significant. But if it can also be shown that what happens to them goes beyond their declared intention but that they are happy to accept that what happens coheres with what they intend, then this is important on many levels.[529]

In the Ghanaian situation, it is worth noting that the respondents who provided subtle responses or those who were not aware of the value of the films in their religious lives were very few. But regardless of the depiction of the church in the video films the majority of respondents were consistent as to the role of the films in their religious lives. In a nutshell, notwithstanding the dominant messages in relation to various religious traditions especially, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, there were multiple and intriguing readings of the filmic texts. Three positions were taken by the respondents on the religious constructs in the video films. The first group of informants indicated that the films are used as resource-materials in their religious lives and this is where all the three readings proposed by Hall were evident. Secondly, some respondents also disclosed that the films are not relevant at all in their religious lives. For this group of informants, again regardless of the dominant religious message, there was a total rejection of the message contained in the filmic texts. The readings of the message were not done in neither the dominant modes nor negotiated position. Finally, last group of respondents claimed that *they do not know* or *not sure whether* the religious

[529] Ibid, 260-1.

narratives in the video films influence their lives. It is fascinating to note that this group of respondents do not fall into any of the options suggested in Hall's encoding/decoding framework. Attention is now turned to the second part of this chapter where I discuss in detail the various ways in which the religious elements in the video films, as indicated by the respondents, are appropriated.

6.3 PART II- Appropriation of Religious Facets in the Video films

6.3.1 Introduction

The uses of the video films in the religious lives of the audience are examined in line with the main principles of uses and gratifications theory discussed in chapter four. Among the tenets of Uses and Gratification, which are of great interest in this section, are assumptions that the audience is goal-oriented, purposive and active in their media use. The activeness of the respondents in engaging the video films to achieve their desired satisfaction was evident in the responses they provided. Indeed, all the three dimensions: selectivity, involvement, and utility proposed by Levy and Windahl in relation to audience activity were also patent in the results. For Levy and Windahl, the involvement aspect of the audience activity is 'first, the degree to which an audience member perceives a connection between him or herself and mass media content; and, second, the degree to which the individual interacts psychologically with a medium or its messages'.[530]

The conscious attempt by the audience to get involved in the film during the viewing experience is what is referred to as involved reception. Involved reception, as Peter Vordere puts it, is 'the attitude of reception in which the recipients are so cognitively and emotionally involved in the fictive events (in this case, the film narrative) that they are no longer aware of

[530] M.R Levy & S. Windahl, 'The concept of audience activity', In K. E. Rosengren,L. A. Wenner, & P. Palmgreen (eds.), *Media Gratifications Research: Current Perspectives* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985), 112.

the reception situation itself, but "live" in what they are perceiving, as it were'.[531] Certain conditions are however needed in order to facilitate such involvement in the film by the audience. Mikos Lothar and others identified the three main factors affecting the involvement process as the viewers' relationship to the characters; Narratives and dramaturgy of the film, and Action and special effects. For them, these elements have direct relationship to audience involvement in the film. Mikos and the group write:

> Recipients' relationship to characters…partly determine how fully audiences are absorbed into and "go along with" the film's event: the stronger the bond with one or more characters, the stronger the involvement in the film…The dramaturgy and narrative of a film can – with the support of the aesthetic design- further the process of involvement… Action and special effects, for instance, can draw viewers into the action on the screen, overpowering audiences with visual attractions and increasing visual pleasure: viewers are so spellbound by the visual attractions on the screen that they forget the world around them.[532]

In the current study of the reception of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, all these determinants were all instrumental in the involved reception process by the audience except the action and special effects which did not appear often. For instance, during the interview, I asked Asabea if the place or the environment in which the films are watched affect the reception. She responded in the affirmative by saying 'Yes, it does. I pray with the film characters when I am watching alone but I am unable to do so when watching with friends'.[533]

It is within these processes of involved reception associated with the Uses and Gratifications theory that most of the respondents in Accra and London spelt out the various uses into which the films are put.

6.3.2 Video films as Religious Resource-Materials

[531] Cited in Lothar Mikos *et al*, 'Involvement in The Lord of the Rings: Audience Strategies and Orientations', in Martin Barker and Ernest Mathijs (eds.), *The Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's World Audiences* (New York; Peter Lang, 2008), 114.
[532] Lothar Mikos et al, 'Involvement in The Lord of the Rings: Audience Strategies and Orientations', 114.
[533] Comfort Asabea, Action Chapel International, Accra, May 8, 2010.

The audience for the research interpreted the video films as portraying Christianity especially Pentecostal-Charismatic brand in diverse ways. While some said the churches are depicted as good, others were of the opinion that they are represented as evil and with the majority indicating that the video films image the churches paradoxically. Notwithstanding how any brand of Christianity is presented in the video films majority of members in Action Chapel International and Word Miracle church International interviewed said those narratives are extensively appropriated in their religious lives. One of the main attractions to Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, according to the subjects, is their religious content especially identification of certain shared religio-personal attributes in the filmic text. The data analysed points to the respondents' recognition of overt characteristics about their personal and Christian lives. Most of these features stocked in the video films, according to the respondents, mirror features of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches where they worship as well as their everyday experiences. Some of the most mentioned hallmarks of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity which usually appear in the video films as gleaned from the responses in Accra and London in both Action Chapel International and Word Miracle International have been summarised as follows:

Aggressive prayer sessions amidst speaking in tongues and with song ministration at the background; smartly dress congregation (usually with suit and tie) ; mega size churches with well attended services and ceremonies such as wedding; Loud contemporary music accompany by exhilarating dance; Charismatic teachings or sermons by eloquent preacher or pastor occasioned with note taking and interspersed with shouting of 'Amen'; the use of the anointing oil; members of the congregation very active in their worship; internal decoration-simple pulpit with flags of nations; City centred or urban based and the use of English language ; and Characters giving confessions or testimonies as well as performing other rituals such as deliverance aggressively.

Most of these traits of the churches found in the video films by the audience fit into the features identified by Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu about the Charismatic Ministries noted earlier.[534] In fact, it was lucid from the respondents during the research that their familiarity with the everyday religious experiences in the video films motivates Christians to appropriate the religious contents. This observation collaborates with the point made by Mikos and others that 'the stronger the bond with one or more characters, the stronger the involvement in the film' by the audience'.[535] The blurring of the features of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in real life situations and that displayed in the video films has significant implications for any other use of the films. The recognition of the self-representation of their churches in the video films contributes immensely to the appropriation of the religious narratives by the respondents. However, the religious narratives in the video films, which the respondents claim they use in their lives, go beyond those associated with the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches.

Among the respondents selected for the study, only three respondents representing five per cent of the informants interviewed claimed that the video films do not play any role in their religious lives. Four members or seven per cent also said either they are not sure or do not know whether they use the religious narratives in the video films. But the remaining 53 respondents denoting eighty- eight per cent of the informants were emphatic about the vital contribution the religious elements in the films play in their everyday lives.

In line with the responses, which emanated from the interview guide semi-structured questions on the appropriation of the religious facets of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, diverse range of themes were identified. Themes here refer to 'consistent phrases,

[534] See Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 30.
[535] Lothar Mikos *et al*, 'Involvement in The Lord of the Rings: Audience Strategies and Orientations', 114.

expressions, or ideas that were common among research participants'.[536] But for analytical purposes, these themes have been put into seven main rubrics. They were: Christian characters, education value, moral and ethical values, biblical texts, contemporary religious issues, and challenging and motivational Christian narratives. These were the thematizing statements from the subjects that dominate what Steinar Kvale calls 'the natural meaning units'.[537] The themes appear as major findings in the qualitative interviews and they are used to create headings in the findings section. They display multiple perspectives from individuals and are also supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence.[538] The remaining of this section is therefore devoted to discussing these meaning units in connection with the religious uses of the video films by the informants. It must be said that in some cases, responses provided by some audience touched on so many themes or uses of the films as religious resources. This means that these categorisations of themes provided here are not mutually exclusive.

6.3.2.1 Christian Characters

Christian Characters in the films demonstrating strong faith through prayers, spirit of endurance, and perseverance as well as steadfastness were extensively cited as motivations for appropriating the video films in the lives of the respondents. In this instance, the identification of characters by the audience goes beyond knowing them as mere film professionals performing their roles in the video films. Most actors and actresses in the video films produced by the Pentecostal groups in Nigeria are well known Christian pastors or active Christians helping to advance the theological orientation of their various ministries.

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[536] Daniel W. Turner, III, Qualitative Interview Design: A practical Guide for novice Investigators. *The Qualitative Report*, *15*.3 (2010): 759. Retrieved from www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-3/qid.pdf on Tuesday, July 3, 2013.
[537] Steinar Kvale, *Doing Interviews* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007), 107.
[538] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches,* 3rd edn. (Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage, 2009), 189.

For instance the cast of, *Enemy of my soul (2003)* produced by Mount Zion Faith Ministry, are made up of members of the church including Mike Bamiloye, the founder and the head pastor of the church. Even some of the actors in the video films produced by non-Pentecostal groups with strong Pentecostal undercurrents are prominent pastors or born-again Christians. The protagonist who is also one of the pastors in the films, *Expensive Vow I&II* and *The Chosen One I& II* analysed in the methodology section is also a pastor in real life at Action Chapel International, Spintex Road in Accra. In recent times, there have been reports that some actors or actresses have been converted to the Pentecostal churches. A classic example is Eucharia Anunobi, one of the actresses of Nigerian video films. Anunobi joined a Pentecostal church in Nigeria and was later ordained as a church minister. She announced her ordination to the general public via her Facebook. It reads:

> 'Dearly beloved, having being anointed last year, I'm now being officially ordained with ministerial licence and collar. Giving me the right to carry out episcopal duties as a minister of God under the fold of the ministry as an evangelist. This is happening this morning, Sunday, the 5th of February 2012, at the fresh oil ministry int'l church. This is really the Lord's doing and it's amazingly wonderful! God is awesome.[539]

Even though in February, 2012, Anunobi became the first Nollywood actress to be ordained as a Christian minister in Fresh Oil Ministry International Church (FOMIC) in Idimu, Lagos, there are other Ghanaian/Nigerian video film professionals who have also been involved in the activities of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. Liz Benson and Pat Atta are some of the Nollywood stars who have mounted the pulpit to preach the word of God as evangelists.[540]

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[539] Cited in Joseph Akahome and Osagie Alonge, 'Eucharia Anunobi Ordained Church Minister', *Nigerian Entertainment Today*, (February 5, 2012). Retrieved from http://thenetng.com/2012/02/eucharia-anunobi-ordained-church-minister/, Friday, 23 November 2012.

[540] http://pmnewsnigeria.com/2012/02/07/nollywood-actress-eucharia-ordained-pastor/, Retrieved on Wednesday, July 11, 2012.

As converts, most of the actors and actresses then use the new identity as ordained pastors or 'promoters of the kingdom' as well as their film professional skills to spread the message of God. That seems to connect well to the answer provided by Anunobi after her ordination when asked if she was going to abandon acting in the video films. She responded: 'Definitely not, we are going to break more grounds, with about three hundred movies behind me, we can only be aiming for thousands more'.[541] Even those Christian characters in the video films whose status as born-again are not clear, their religious roles in the films are interpreted by the audience as reflecting on what is actually happening in everyday life situations. However, with the popularity of the film stars who have converted into Pentecostal Christianity, their presence in the films, as Christian characters are more likely to have implications for the reception and appropriation of the video films.

In all, the respondents indicated that they used the practices and actions of Christian characters -such as prayer life, steadfastness, and perseverance, strong spirit of endurance and expression of strong faith in God in the video films. At Word Miracle Church International the following responses were adduced by the respondents on the use of Christian characters in the video films:

> Afriyie: I follow the examples of born-again characters such as fasting and praying hard. In the films, these characters show that churches shape the lives of members in the right direction.[542]

> Bentum: They [Christian Characters] teach that a Christian can be a savior in the family.[543]

> Adomako: Most cases I use the decent language, mode of dressing, life styles of the Christians character.[544]

[541] Ibid.
[542] Mike Afriyie, Accra, May 11, 2010.
[543] Stephen Bentum, Accra June 3, 2010. He is twenty-three year-old student.

Agbo: Faith expressed in the video film is strong. I like those characters. They use the films to express the power of God.[545]

The following were the ways in which the informants at Action Chapel International Church also said they use the characters in their religious in the lives.

Anima: I use the prayer life and the word of God from the quotes of the characters in the films. Some of the characters teach us to learn good Christian lives.[546]

Asabea: Yes, it does. I pray with the film characters when I am watching alone but I am unable to do so when watching with friends.[547]

Asamoah: I take a lot of cues from the prayer lives of some of the actors. I do not encourage my child to watch any other films except Christian local films. The characters are ok.[548]

Nti: First, sometimes the way they go about- perseverance, steadfastness, the power of God over evil.[549]

Brew: They are encouraging –women characters in the video films do pray a lot.[550]

Akrong: There more are good examples in the films for me to emulate For example, I see that people in the films go through difficult times but they still hold on to their faith.[551]

From the responses on the use of Christian characters, it was obvious that some of the audience do not only identify with Christian personae in the films but also take note of their specific religious roles. As has been evident from the above responses, some viewers select

[544] John Adomako, Accra, May 16, 2010. He is eighteen years old and a student.
[545] Eric Agbo,, Accra, May 12, 2010. He is twenty-three years of age and self-employed.
[546] Adwoa Anima, Accra, May 2, 2010.
[547] Comfort Asabea, Accra, May 8, 2010.
[548] Dora Asamoah, Accra, May 8, 2010. He is thirty-eight years of age and a female evangelist.
[549] Eric Nti, Accra, May 31, 2010.
[550] Ama Brew, London, August 16, 2010.
[551] Grace Akrong, London, September 4, 2010. She is thirty-four year-old mother of one child.

certain religious practices enacted by the characters and use them to improve their religious lives. The findings support the assumption that audience are active and purposive which inform their choice of certain media to achieve these goals. In our case, it is the selection of varied roles of Christian characters in video film to enhance the religious lives of Christian viewers.

6.3.2.2 **Films as site for religious Education**

The video films provide both physical and spiritual insight for audience use. Learning from the religious narratives that fit into the dual worldview dominated the reasons why the films are appropriated. In the understanding of the African belief, which is common with both Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and indigenous religions, whatever happens in real life situations or on earth has spiritual connections in the spiritual world. This central belief in the African cosmology plays crucial role in the narratives of most video films touching on direct religious issues. Education here goes beyond one-way imparting of knowledge to the audience as has been criticised by Clive Marsh. In the words of Marsh:

> The education model suggests that when people use media, or interact with art, they are receiving something they did not have before. They are being informed about something. The implication here is that viewers are 'empty vessels' waiting to be filled. The 'knowledge transfer' occurring here is clearly one-way: from medium to receiver. In the case of theology/religion and film, then, two scenarios are possible. In films, which are explicitly religious, or contain religious elements, viewers are being informed about a specific religious tradition or about themes with which religions deal. More generally, films can be deemed to offer 'universal values' or 'spiritual themes' which unite all religions and which operate as a putative undercurrent of all attempts to make meaning and shape meaningful human behaviour.[552]

This is contrary to the observation made in this research. The video films, according to the subjects, offer well-known religious beliefs and practices as well as providing virtual images to support them. The narratives therefore create the platform for the audience to engage the

[552] Clive Marsh, 'Audience Reception', 258.

religious elements in the films. The respondents disclosed that the films serve as a site for religious learning and education to augment that of their churches.

The following are some of the various ways in which the members of Word Miracle Church in Accra and London indicated how they used the video films to complement their religious community's education:

Adom: They bring about negative attitudes within the church.[553]

Owiafe: The Christian video films are like preaching the gospel through drama. We learn a lot from the secular films as well.[554]

Manu: If you teach your children the right way, they will not depart from it. So for the films I will allow them to watch but will caution about some of them. In fact, some of them are very good and educative. They demonstrate that the word of God is one and the good will always triumphs.[555]

Asante: The films are good but I think the younger Christians may need some help. They can watch the films but the parents must advise them to take lessons from the films. The younger ones may even be encouraged to learn from the bad films as well by not entering into those problems themselves.[556]

Laryea: Most of these films talk about sex, romance, and love among many others things with little good values inculcated into our youth. But most of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films devote sometime at the end of the film for religious lessons. I always tell the youth to take the films as preaching. It affects our lives so we can also teach our children through the film.[557]

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[553] Rose Adom, Accra, May 5, 2010.She is twenty years old and a student.
[554] Agatha Owiafe, Word Miracle Church International, Accra, June 4, 2010. Owiafe is twenty year-old student.
[555] Adwoa Manu, Accra, June 11, 2010. She is fifty years of age.
[556] Bernard Asante, Accra, May 12, 2010. He is forty-one year-old father with two children.
[557] Albert Laryea, Accra, June 19, 2010. He is forty-nine years old.

Eshun: The films let us see what is going in these churches-bad and good but good ones dominate.[558]

On education or the films as a supplement to religious learning and educational resources of the respondents, the following answers emerged from members of Action Chapel International in Accra and London:

Anima: I use the video film by learning the word of God from the 'quotes' in the films. The biblical texts teach us to learn good Christian lives.[559]

Nti: They [the video films] are good, very educative and making a lot of impact in the church and in the body of Christ. Even those who do not believe in the power of God, it is helping most Christians to Grow in their faith. Victory triumphing over evil can help people to stand firm in their lives. These are some of the messages in the video film such as *Wasted Years.*[560]

Addo: I learn endurance from the films. I see their depiction of the church and Christians as very good to the outside world-non-Christian.[561]

Henewa: There are some video films if the younger Christians watch fine, educative but others are no go area. We the parents just have to educate and if possible monitor the younger Christians about the religious narratives in the video films.[562]

Even though sometimes the romance and sex acts become embarrassing when watch with children we cannot ignore the good aspects of the films. It educates, entertains and keeps one in company. Those films revolving around the word of God, teaches that

[558] Afua Eshun, London, August 22, 2010.
[559] Adwoa Anima, Accra, May 2, 2010.
[560] Eric Nti, Accra, May 31, 2010. Also, see the opening quotes.
[561] Yaw Addo, Accra, May 18, 2010.
[562] Akua Henewa, Accra, May 16, 2010. Henewa is forty-three year-old mother of two children.

there is nothing that God cannot do. I always challenge my children to let whatever they learn in the film reflect in their Christian lives.[563]

Some respondents stated clearly that even though they are not comfortable with some aspects in the video films, their educative value make them irresistible. Such views about the video films as the results indicated cuts across all ages, contexts and religious or doctrinal leanings. The educational value of the films also touches on numerous religious matters such as attractive ways of preaching the word of God, good morals and right Christian living.

6.3.2.3 Biblical Texts

Biblical texts or 'quotations', as often used in Ghanaian parlance, which appear in the films, were also mentioned as some of the religious elements in the video films, which are appropriated by the audience. There are two most commons ways in which Biblical texts feature in the films. First, the text is either written on screen usually at the beginning or end of the film, and the other mode of sourcing the biblical text is through citation of a verse of the Bible by the characters, which normally starts with ' the bible says' or the book in the Bible where the message can be found.

According to two respondents at Word Miracle Church International, the following were how they used the Biblical texts in the video films:

Marfo: I particularly use the bible quotations in the video films. Some of them teach that a Christian can be a saviour in the family.[564]

[563] Isaac Marfo, Accra, June 5, 2010, See the opening quotes for more details.
[564] Stephen Bentum, Accra June 3, 2010. He also uses the characters.

Mensah: They [the video films] deal with Christian issues according to the tenets of the Bible. These messages or issues in the Bible are provided in the film, which I often use. Especially Christians leading double life styles.[565]

The responses in relation to how some informants at Action Chapel used the Biblical texts in the video films were:

Obeng: I appropriate the video films by learning from the biblical citations, which are written on the screen or supplied by the characters.[566]

Agyapong: I use the quotations that enhance spiritual life.[567]

Asabea: Video films with quotations from the Bible that stress on the positive signs leading to Christ, I even write them down when watching the film and use them later.[568]

Nti: The films affirm the realities in the Bibles. They give all the Bible quotations of these realities in the film. I will even recommend the films to children to watch in their Christian lives.[569]

The respondents proved beyond doubt that most religious elements in the video films are very important to them. One of such elements is biblical texts or the Bible as a whole. The various responses on the place of the Bible in the films are testimony that the issues raised in the films are understood as confirming what has been written in the Bible. The audience take any aspects of the Bible, which appear in the films, seriously. Such biblical texts in the video films are written down during the viewing by the audience and used them later. In this case, in addition to Bible teachings in their various churches, the films are used by some of the audience to do their Bible studies homework.

[565] Gorge Mensah, Word Miracle Church International, Accra, May16, 2010.
[566] Lydia Obeng, Accra, May 23, 2010.Lydia is a twenty year-old student.
[567] Kwasi Agyapong, Accra, June 10, 2010. Agyapong is thirty-three year-old pastor.
[568] Comfort Asabea, Accra, May 8, 2010.
[569] Eric Nti, Accra, May 31, 2010.

6.3.2.4 Ethical and Moral values

Majority of the respondents mentioned the moral and ethical lessons they get as reasons for using the film. According to the respondents, the video films demonstrate that the fruit of good and impeccable Christian living is a handsome reward not only in heaven but also on earth. For them, in the narratives of the films, good always triumphs over evil before the films ends.

Moral uses of the video films as indicated by respondents who were members at Word Miracle Church International were as follows:

Sasu: By demonstrating the consequences of bad actions or decisions in the films, the video films help me to know what to do and what not to do. The moral values in the films are good especially as a Christian.[570]

Maame: The video films are objective because they reflect on the reality in society. So I take dos and don'ts in life from the film.[571]

Mawuena: Sometimes those advice from the film especially those dwelling more on the teachings of Christ or the Word of God, I do take them seriously.[572]

Adom: They help me to stick to my positive ideas about religious life. The video films also bring out negative attitudes within the church so try as much as possible to stay away from some these behaviours as well.[573]

Agyare: The moral lessons abounding in the video films positively influence my life in general and nourish my Christian life in particular.[574]

[570] Agnes Sasu, Accra, May 24, 2010. Agnes is a sixteen year-old student.
[571] Maame Ama, Accra, June 2, 2010. She is twenty-seven year-old unemployed.
[572] Ursula Mamuena, Accra, May 4, 2010. She is twenty-year-old student.
[573] Rose Adom, Accra, May 5, 2010.
[574] Daniel Agyare, Accra, May 30, 2010. Daniel is twenty-two year-old Information Technology (IT) Specialist.

Mawutor: Advices on Christian faith found in the video films do alert me on certain challenges facing modern day Christians. I therefore use those messages contained in the films, which are in line with the tenets of the Gospel.[575]

Dovi: The video films are good for good morals. They also improve my Christian faith as well as my relations with people of different faiths or none.[576]

The following were the moral uses indicated by the respondents at Action Chapel International:

Anima: The video films teach us to learn good Christian lives. Encourage me in my Christian life; negotiate: Through the moral lessons in the video films, I am encouraged to stay focused by moving away from wrong behaviours.[577]

Baah: What is going on in society is exactly what is portrayed in the films. For example, in most of the films they show that any evil or bad of ways becoming rich within shortest possible time also has serious consequences. These messages in the film help to strengthen my faith by doing certain things right.[578]

Boafo: The moral messages in the film help me to stand firm in my Christian faith.[579]

Agyapong: Yes I use the advice in the films in life as a Christian by following the good morals of the characters and staying away from the bad ones.[580]

Mills: I am motivated to use the films by putting the good Christian values shown in the video films into practice.[581]

[575] Evans Mawutor, Accra, May 23, 2010. He is twenty-three year old student.
[576] Agnes Dovi, London, September 5, 2010.
[577] Adwoa Anima, Accra, May 2, 2010.
[578] Diana Baah, Accra, May 2, 2010. Diana is twenty-six year-old nurse.
[579] Esther Boafo, Accra June 8, 2010.
[580] Kwasi Agyapong, Accra, June 10, 2010.
[581] Gifty Mills, Accra, June 1, 2010. She is forty-three year-old Civil Servant.

Boakye: I use the messages particularly the good moral lessons to stand firm in the Christian faith. That is both in good and bad times I do my best remain firm in my Christian live.[582]

Not only the large number of respondents who cited moral reasons but the varied responses on the moral issues presented in the films are a pointer to the worth that the respondents placed on the moral narratives. Just like the educational importance of the video films, the moral dimension is one of the main reasons cited by Christians in general, as our case studies have affirmed, for the use of the films. This point will be revisited in the concluding chapter, particularly in connection with the gender of the respondents.

6.3.2.5 Challenging and Motivational narratives

As already noted with the varying representations of the churches in the video films, the evil and paradoxical depictions of the churches were considered by majority of the respondents as the video films that are the most challenging. For the respondents, such storylines reflect on reality, which assist and motivate them to use the video films to enhance their Christian and everyday lives. This point is directly related to the next one- the relevance and the types of issues which are often advanced in the films.

For the subjects at the Word Miracle Church International, some of the challenging and motivational narratives, which they use, were given as:

Sasu: I use the films that portray the real current situation about the church. That is both bad and goods things the churches are doing in our society. I use those current

[582] Nana Boakye, London, July 26, 2010.

challenges revealed in the film as reference point to be very careful in my life especially as a Christian.[583]

Mensah: I like the films that expose the hypocritical lives or Christians leading all kinds of doubles lives such as Christians going to juju man for powers or help. Those storylines serve as a challenge to me because they deal with Christian issues according to the tenets of the Bible.[584]

Responses on the use of the challenging religious issues in the video films indicated by the informant at Action Chapel International were as follows:

Boafo: If you see from the films certain churches and Christians dealing with all sorts of evil rituals or spirits, you are being alerted to be very careful as a Christian. For me, I see those films as a challenge in my Christian life.[585]

Nyame: The video films that motivate me in my life as a Christian are those films, which uncover the negative attitudes of certain churches and individual Christians. They are real stories, which are also very useful and challenging to well-meaning Christians.[586]

Akrong: Yes some video films do challenge me in my faith. If I see what people go through in times of difficulties, as demonstrated in some video films, but they still hold on to their faith, I think these are some of the steadfastness in faith for me to emulate.[587]

These insights from the respondents indicate that the relevance and kind of narratives of the films are vital to the audience. The films that are situated in the current issues especially those films, which are critical on religious matters, are deemed by the Christians as

[583]Agnes Sasu, Accra, May 24, 2010.
[584]Gorge Mensah, Accra, May16, 2010.
[585] Esther Boafo, Accra June 8, 2010.
[586] Kwaku Nyame, Accra, May 19, 2010.
[587] Grace Akrong, London, September 4, 2010.

challenging. Audience in this regard show a sense of familiarity of the issues in the films. These responses also affirm the assumption of the Uses and Gratifications theory, as pointed out in chapter four, that the audience are not only active but will consume more of the media when the gratification actually gained (GO) exceeds that of the expected satisfaction (GS).

6.3.2.6 As a reflection on Contemporary Issues

Everyday Christian issues are not only raised for reflections but clues of how one must face those problems are provided in the video films. Some of these interesting stories, which end up on the screen, are either rumours or contemporary religious topic generating keen interest among the general public. These important themes, which are widely carried in the print media and other electronic media, become staple ingredients in the script of the video films. Incidentally, most of the important issues or problems, which provoke long debates in the society, do have religious imports and sometimes they are directly related to the Pentecostal groups. The respondents at Word Miracle Church International proffered the following answers:

> Sasu: The video films assist with currents issues. I am very careful in my faith because of the revelations in the films about Churches and Christians.[588]

> Addae: They help us to know what is happening practically. I see them as the mirror of daily invisible occurrences. Some of these films help to be alert and prayerful.[589]

Responses on contemporary issues provided by adherents at Action Chapel were:

> Anima: Nowadays one hears Pastors who call themselves pastors but do ungodly things such as having affairs with church members, telling lies among others. These are some

[588] Agnes Sasu, Accra, May 24, 2010.
[589] Florence Addae, London, August 26, 2010. She is a thirty-seven year-old nurse and a mother of three children.

of the things we see in the films so they are real. But the films rather help me in times like this to be more prayerful in order to lead good Christian life.[590]

Asamoah: They are interesting and encouraging. It helps us to know what happens in the country. Even if one has not being to Ghana before he or she will have a fair idea about our religious activities and life styles. I take a lot of cues from the Christian video films. They are helpful in my faith journey.[591]

The last point on the use of the video films as resource –materials in Christian lives centre on the ability of the film producers to raise interesting and pressing religious issues in the society. In most cases, some of these issues are contentious and virtually impossible to be raised in ordinary way of communicating in society. The capacity of the films to make concrete some of these sensitive but crucial religious matters for the avid consumers, as indicated here, contributes to the enjoyment and the use of the video films. As can be deduced from the above responses, the films are used by the respondents as resources for reflection on contemporary issues.

Interestingly, there were some uses for which the respondents claimed they put the films into that did not fit into any of the headings discussed above. For instance, One twenty year-old female informant at Action Chapel International in Accra disclosed that she uses the films as a starting point 'to research more to know the truth about some of the religious narratives because of the abundance of exaggerations in the films'.[592]

Although the above categories of uses of the religious contents of the video films have been discussed separately, there are some relationships among them. The Christian characters, biblical texts, and challenging and motivational Christian narratives as themes are somehow related in that they are common religious elements unique to Christianity as a whole and

[590] Adwoa Anima, Accra, May 2, 2010.
[591] Dora Asamoah, Accra, May 8, 2010.
[592] Lydia Obeng, Accra, May 23, 2010.

Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity specifically. Whereas the other themes such as religious education, moral and ethical values, and contemporary religious issues are general themes associated with Christianity as well as other religious traditions and spirituality.

6.4 Non-Use and Concerns on the Video films

It is worth noting here that not all religious viewers use religious or Christian films in their everyday religious lives. In this research for instance, there were a couple of respondents who claimed the films are not appropriate in nurturing their Christian beliefs. It must be emphasised that the respondents in this category of finding the video films unsuitable were few but goes to support the basic tenets of Uses and Gratification theory, discussed earlier in chapter four, that audience are not only active but goal-oriented selecting media programmes which satisfy their various needs, and in our case religious needs. Those who said they do not use the films were only three people representing five per cent of the subjects interviewed. All of them were members of Action Chapel International in Accra.

> Frimpong: Most of the video films can have bad influence on the audience because there are a lot of sex and juju scenes. I do not use them at all neither will I encourage my children to use them in their Christian lives.[593]

> Sam: I do not use them. Just for entertainment. Even for entertainment, I watch them when there is nothing to do. This is because they make Christianity looks fake in the films. In the films, they make Christianity looks like being in prison.[594]

> Gyamfi: The films are not good for Christians who are not strong. For the young people, they are not good at all. My reason is that they may have the tendency to direct them to immoral behaviours such as occultism, homosexuals among others.[595]

[593] Yaw Frimpong, May 17, 2010. Yaw is thirty-four year-old father of three children.
[594] Abena Sam, May 22, 2010. She is nineteen year-old student.

Age-old themes of sex and violence have long been some of the major reasons for religious viewers in general and Christians in particular to denounce films. But as it can be noted from the above discussion, in addition to themes of sex and violence, a religious reason has been cited by some viewers as one of the key explanations for the disuse of the films. That is, the abundance of juju or charms and occult rituals in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films.

These concerns were raised not by only those who do not use the films but also some of these worries were apparent in the responses of those who said they appropriate the video films as well. Most of the respondents who expressed uneasiness about the video films along the themes of sex and juju were parents. Below are some of the views expressed by some of the members of Word Miracle Church International:

> Akomea: Christianity is all about salvation and morality. After learning certain tenets of Christianity there are certain video films Christians are not supposed to watch especially those films featuring explicit sex scenes and other immoralities. Such negative themes may have the inclination to negatively affect Christian lives, relationships and the basic ideas of Christians. There are certain video films we don't allow our children to watch the.[596]

> Laryea: Most of these films talk about sex, romance and love with little good values inculcated into our youth. But of the Ghanaian/Nigerian films they devote sometime at the end of the film for religious lessons. What I can tell the youth to take the films as preaching. It affects our lives so we can also teach our children through the film.[597]

The responses provided by the audience and the members of Action Chapel International in particular relating to the concerns on the themes considered by their fellows in Word Miracle Church were identical:

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[595] Kwasi Gyamfi, June 7, 2010. He is forty-nine year-old father of three children.
[596] Francis Akomea, Accra, June 12, 2010. It is one of the opening quotes.
[597] Albert Laryea, Accra, June 19, 2010.

Marfo: Even though sometimes the romance and sex acts become embarrassing when watching with children we cannot ignore the good aspects of the films. It educates, entertains and keeps one in company. Those films revolving around the word of God, teaches that there is nothing that God cannot do. I always challenge my children to let whatever they learn in the film reflect in their Christian lives.[598]

Mills: The religious aspects are just too small. For me, I put the good Christian values in the film into practice. But I think the presence of parents will be good for children. I will not encourage my children to make it their lifestyle. The answer is simple: because there are too much juju, rich people and kissing.[599]

However, the respondents in London from both churches seem not to bother so much about some of these themes or depictions. According to the results, they were more interested in more challenging Christian narratives and aesthetics.

Some of the complaints raised by the respondents in London on the video films were:

Two of such concerns from some of the members of Word Miracle Church International were:

The video films are good but there is little Christian stuff.[600]

The general approach to Christian films, which is preaching through drama, is missed in most of the video films.[601]

And those issues with video films raised by two members at Action Chapel International were:

There is too much emphasis on money-making business in the churches.[602]

[598] Isaac Marfo, Accra, June 5, 2010.
[599] Gifty Mills, Accra, June 1, 2010.
[600] Rosemary Brobbey, September 5, 2010.
[601] Eric Amoako, August 27, 2010.

'Presentation is key-the video films will be very useful if target audience is well addressed by good packaging of the message.[603]

The religious use or the place of the religious narratives in film in the lives of viewers is gradually attracting attention of scholars. From the findings, the recurring ways in which the respondents appropriate the religious attributes in the films share certain affinities with some of the discoveries made by Charlotte Haines Lyon in the UK, and Jorg Herrmann carried in Germany about religious use of film.[604] In examining how viewers use film to make meaning- to reflect on their life, their worldview, their values, Haines Lyon noted five main types of responses: affirmation of social taboos, personal identification with characters, using a "what if" scenario, reflecting on specific issues (such as betrayal, love and revenge), and entertainment.[605] Herrmann also found seven ways in which his informants used what he termed as 'religious dimension' of film. They are: the provision of role models; engagement with significant themes pertinent to understanding self and the world; handling life issues; searching for authenticity; enhanced aesthetic experience; encounter with transcendence; and ethical reflection.[606]

However, these two studies differ from the present research on multiple grounds such as the types or genre of films used and the religious affiliation or orientation of their subjects. But what is significant here is the place accorded to religion in the society and the individual audience. From the findings and conclusions of the studies by Haines and Herrmann, it was apparent that the media in general and films in particular are taking over the roles or functions hitherto performed by institutional religions. In short, more and more turn to a

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[602] Ama Brew, London, August 16, 2010.
[603] John Amakye, July 24, 2010.
[604] Charlotte Haines Lyon, 'Kill Bill Volume 2: A Film Worthy of Meaning Making?' *Particip@tions*, 5(1), 2008. Retrieved from http://www.participations.org/Volume%205/Issue%201%20-%20special/5_01_haineslyon.htm, Friday, November 4, 2011; Jorg Hermann, cited in Clive Marsh, 'Audience Reception', 269.
[605] Charlotte Haines Lyon, '*Kill Bill Volume 2*: A Film Worthy of Meaning Making?
[606] Cited in Clive Marsh, 'Audience Reception', 269.

range of sources, including films in order to shape their worldview because institutional religion has lost power in the lives of the people. The conclusion of Haines Lyon even though pertains to the UK context captures the place of institutional religions in the western contexts where some of these studies were conducted:

> Fewer and fewer people in UK use the church in any direct way of meaning making but do so in a variety of settings including the cinema. It is not just a one off process but one of continual reflection. I am not claiming that film should take undue credit for providing a place for reflection or meaning making. However we do need to recognise in a multimedia age and at a time when the church is losing its influence, film does have a role to play.[607]

It is in similar setting that Martin Baker made an observation that it is a very small group of viewers who are likely to talk about their commitment to the film, *Lord of the Rings* as a 'way of life' or as 'a second Bible'.[608] The results from the audience of Ghanaian/Nigerian present a reverse picture. This is because the films in question here do have manifest religious implications; the respondents are also members of specific churches (religious viewers), and above all religion plays significant role in the lives of the audience. Indeed, these conditions partly explain why in our case majority of the respondents in the study expressed their engagement with the religious aspects in the video films.

To sum up, the unsettled nature of the reception of the religious dimension in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films does not end at the doorsteps of filmmakers and scholars in the field. As has been discussed in chapter three, some filmmakers express divergent religious views in relation to those portrayed in their films making it difficult for reception studies to be approached from the religious vision of the filmmaker. While scholars in the field also hold different views regarding the audience reception of the religious contents, particularly the representation of certain religious traditions in the video films. It was against

[607] Charlotte Haines Lyon, '*Kill Bill Volume 2*: A Film Worthy of Meaning Making?'
[608] Martin Baker, 'The Functions of Fantasy: A Comparison of Audiences for The Lord of Rings in Twelve Countries', in Martin Barker and Ernest Mathijs (eds.), *The Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's World Audiences* (New York; Peter Lang, 2008),170-1.

this backdrop of the uncertainty on the reception of the religious narratives in the video films that a case was made for audience to be at the centre of reception studies of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films starting with the current thesis.

One obvious pattern, which emerged from the audience reception of the video films, was that the reception of the films by the informants was not directly linked with the three dominant messages, encoded in the filmic text. Similarly, the meaning units or themes which accounted for either the appropriation or non-use of the video films were all religious but unrelated to how ones religious tradition is portrayed in the video films. Indeed, the audience reception, particularly the responses from the qualitative interviews, has provided insights into the complex nature of the reception of the religious features of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. The audience reception espoused in this thesis has provided clear answers as to how the audience make sense of the religious facets of the video films. However, there are still certain areas in the reception of the religious video films, which remained undetermined such as attitudes of certain church leaders towards the films as compared to the reception of the films by most of their members and how audience from other religious traditions will engage the religious narratives in the films. These points will also be expanded and forcefully made in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 General Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This research sought to explore the religious narratives, specifically those linked with Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. It was apparent from the ethnographic research that religion is a dynamic but staple ingredient in the video films. It is therefore submitted that religious portrayal in the video films is in tandem with everyday lived religious experiences in society. This in part, explains the changeable nature of the religious narratives in the local films. The current ethnographic study on the religious dimension of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films was conducted using selected audience from Action Chapel International and Word Miracle Church International in Accra and London. The present ethnographic research, particularly the participant observation and textual analysis of video films such as *Expensive Vow I &II (2008)*, *God Loves Prostitute* I& II *(2002)* and *Evil Heart I, II &III,* also proved useful in enhancing the understanding of various dominant messages decoded by the audience. Notwithstanding the fluid representations of various religious traditions in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, the findings show that the reception and uses of the religious narratives in the films by the audience comprise of a synthesis of full embrace on one hand and scepticism on the other.

In this chapter, I shall discuss the synopsis of the key interesting findings, which emerged from this research. The findings part is divided into two headings. In the first part, I discuss the findings, which mostly appear from the synergy of the qualitative interviews and the participant observation. This is followed by the second part of the findings that comprise of the current developments in relation to the nexus between the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and Ghanaian/Nigerian video films that were observed during the entire

ethnographic study. The contribution of this study to scholarship of religion and media, particularly Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and the Ghanaian/Nigerian video film phenomenon is also highlighted in this section. The last part of this concluding chapter has to do with proposal for further studies on the reception of religion and Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. I would recommend for further research into the representation of other denominations or religions in the video films and the reception of the self-representation by their followers. Such studies may have the potential of helping to establish the reception pattern of religious expressions in the video films. But before expanding on these points, I intend to recapitulate the main areas of religion and film, which have been covered in this research.

7.2 Summarization of the Central Points in the Thesis.

I started this research by pointing out the entangled nature of the religious beliefs and practices in the popular culture of the people from the global south. I indicated that one sphere of popular culture in Ghana where religious narrative is remarkable is the local video films. Among the religious aspects of the video films, which engender regular exposition, are how varied religious traditions and their rituals have been portrayed in the video films. In this regard, I argued that the previous studies on religion in the context of the video films have mainly been engaging the filmic texts with the audience at the periphery. As intimated in chapter two, this approach of examining the religious constructs in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films neither reflect on the activeness of the audience nor the intricate levels of consumption. Although in recent times some scholars have been turning attention to the audience in the study of religion and film, this development has not gone beyond films produced in the western contexts. In an attempt to help address this paucity of audience reception, in relation to the religious aspects of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, this research was situated in ethnographic method.

To the best of my knowledge, such approach to the study of religious elements in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films is novel, particularly using the members of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity as audience to explore the reception of their self-presentation in the films. In chapters three and five, I looked at the affinity of the local video films and religion with special reference to Pentecostal-Charismatic narratives. The place of the media especially how these churches have been ensnared in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films was also considered. Even though the theologies and praxis of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches feature regularly in the video films, in terms of the place of the films in the lives of the informants, there were two distinct groups. Whereas most of the church members see the films as useful resource materials, most of the leaders were incredulous about the significance of the video films and for that reason were reluctant to recommend the films for the church members. This point has been expanded in the current developments section blow. But now I turn to the various positions on the reception and appropriation of the video films found in chapter six which form the bulk of the principal findings section.

7.3 Key Findings

In the analysis chapter of this thesis, several fascinating findings emerged which must be noted at this stage. The first intriguing finding arose when the qualitative research data was analysed using the central tenets of Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding framework. This model is premised on a sole dominant message fixed in media text to be deciphered by the media consumers. However, my informants identified three dominant messages infused in Ghanaian/Nigerian video filmic texts. These dominant messages were 'good', 'evil' and 'paradoxical' religious narratives in connections with the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. The discovery of three dominant messages in our case cohere the arguments of critics such as Kevin Williams, Shaun Moores, John Corner, Justin Wren-Lewis and Kathy

Myers among others on the notion of the 'preferred reading' in Hall's model.[609] Particularly, this research agrees with the suggestion made by Myers that 'The openness of connotative codes may mean that we have to replace the notion of "preferred reading" with another which admits a range of possible alternatives open to the audience'.[610] How, where, who and one of the media texts for the establishment of the preferred readings have also been answered in response to the questions: 'Where is it and how do we know if we've found it? Can we be sure we didn't put it there ourselves while we were looking? And can it be found by examining any sort of text?' Moores posed these questions on Hall's encoding/decoding model.[611] In this research, the dominant messages were found in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video filmic texts by the audience themselves through an ethnographic study. It needs to be noted that the three dominant messages found in our study is a departure from the encoding/decoding framework. However, there were certain findings typical of the approach, particularly the three suggested options in which viewers read audio-visual texts. These developments are also discussed below.

The second main finding to be emphasised is related to the current scholarship on religious representation in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. In chapter four, it was demonstrated that the debate on the religious dimension of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films is anchored on the negative portrayal of indigenous religions and favourable representation of Christianity as a whole, especially Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. So one of the three dominant messages indicates that indeed the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is depicted positively but it was

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[609] Kevin Williams, *Understanding Media Theory* (London: Arnold, 2003); Shaun Moores, *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption* (London: Sage, 1993); John Corner, 'Textuality, Communication and Power', in Davis, Howard & Paul Walton (eds.), *Language, Image, Media* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 266-81; Justin Wren-Lewis, 'The Encoding/Decoding Model: Criticisms and Redevelopments for Research on Decoding', *Media Culture Society*, 5.2 (1983): 179-197; Kathy Myers, 'Understanding Advertisers', in Davis, Howard & Paul Walton (eds.), Language*, Image, Media* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 205-233.

[610] Kathy Myers, 'Understanding Advertisers', in Davis, Howard & Paul Walton (eds.), Language*, Image, Media,* 216.

[611] Shaun Moores, *Interpreting Audiences,* 28.

further established that these churches are also portrayed as evil and in some cases, they are portrayed paradoxically. Besides, unlike the previous studies with regard to Ghanaian/Nigerian video films, where the centre of gravity was on the negative or favourable presentation of indigenous religion as compared to privileged depiction of Christianity, the attention as evident in this research was on the manifold portrayal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in the video films.

As hinted above, there were certain findings typical of the encoding/decoding approach especially in connection with the three suggested options of readings. These developments constitute the third main findings to be highlighted. Hall offered three possible readings in which mediated texts may be constructed as: operating inside the dominant code when the viewer takes the message full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference code in which it has been encoded; negotiated position is where the viewer privileged the dominant definitions of events while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to the message and the oppositional position is where the message is read in a reverse mode. In a similar vein regardless of the dominant message identified by the respondents, each dominant message fixed in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video filmic texts was decoded in 'dominant', 'negotiated' and 'oppositional' positions. For example, most of the subjects who considered the films as portraying the churches as 'evil', understand the messages as warning them to stay away or be very cautious of these churches. The respondents rather declared their unflinching support to their various churches because they regard such narratives as resource materials to enhance their Christian lives. However, there were some respondents whose reading of the filmic texts did not fit into any of the three readings suggested in Hall's framework. According to them, they do not know or not sure if the message in the video films has any relation on their membership or attitudes towards the churches. This group of media consumers may or may not fall into any of the Hall's

suggested options of reading audio-visual texts. In this instance, not knowing or not sure of the specific reading in relation to the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films emerged as one of the options of reading media texts by the audience.

Another major finding in this research relates to how the respondents claimed they use the religious narratives in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. Unlike scholars in field of religion and the local video films who are concerned about the representations of certain religious traditions in the films, the responses provided by the informants indicate that they rather focus on the religious elements they deemed useful. I must point out here that though some respondents raised the issue of indigenous religions in the films, it was not about how they are represented but their mere presence in the video films is a big worry to some members of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. This situation where members of the Pentecostal groups claim to be aggressive or abhor indigenous religions is a reflection of reality.[612] Nevertheless, the ability of the respondents to negotiate the religious elements in the video films even with the presence of the indigenous religious narratives supports their claim to be active, selective and goal-oriented in the consumption of the video films. These three principles are cardinal in the Uses and Gratifications theory used to analyse how the respondents appropriate the religious aspects of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. The religious features in the films, which the subjects indicated they use, were: Christian characters, educational value, moral and ethical values, biblical texts, contemporary religious issues, and challenging and motivational Christian narratives. These findings collaborate with those uses of films identified by Haines Lyon and Marsh as well as Jorge Herrmann, mentioned in chapter six, which suggest that 'film is a primary vehicle for both the

[612] For more details on the hostile attitudes of Pentecostal groups towards indigenous religions see: E.K Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001); Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 1999).

interpretation and construction of religious meaning'.[613] Where this study differs, from those discovered by Haines Lyon and Marsh in the UK and Herrmann in the German contexts, is the theological climate in which these religious narratives are selected and used by the audience. In the western context, the reality of God is more likely to be sought within secular structures than the conventional religious institutions.[614] The universal theological themes such as using a "what if" scenario, encounter with transcendence, engagement with significant themes pertinent to understanding self and the world among others mirror the secular societies in which the audience are located. On the contrary, the institutionalised religions are still significant in the lives of the people in Ghana. This partly explains why the themes cited by our informants, who were members of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, appeared to be aligned to the Christian tradition.

7.4 **Current Developments in PCC and Video Films**

This section is a continuation of the intriguing findings but unlike the previous section which was mostly related to chapter six, this part touches on the entire research hence the caption, the current developments in relation to link between Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. In the Ghanaian context, apart from the various video documentations of their church programmes, the Pentecostal groups do not directly produce video films.[615] But I found very interesting and intricate developments in the production, distribution and the consumption of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films in relation to Pentecostal-Charismatic churches.

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[613] Christine Kraemer, 'From Theological to Cinematic Criticism: Extricating the Study of Religion and Film from Theology', *Religious Studies Review*, 30.4 (October, 2004): 243.
[614] James Wall, *Church and Cinema: A Way of Viewing Film* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971), 8.
[615] It is worth noting that in Ghana, there is a media policy that bars religious and political parties from owning the electronic media (radio and Television included). But the individual leader in his or her personal capacity can own any media company.

The first development in the video film industry in connection with the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches studied has to do with the actual producers of the video films with strong Pentecostal beliefs and practices. An independent film producer produced *Living in Bondage,* which according to Ukah ushered in the production of video film with Pentecostal images and messages.[616] Pentecostal groups soon discovered the potential of the video films to facilitate their evangelisation drive, and most of them have been tapping on it. This is evident in the creation of special ministries responsible for the production of religious video films in some of these churches in Nigeria. Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries (LFGM), The Power of God Evangelical Ministries (POGEM) and The Mount Zion Faith Ministries International (MZFMI) are some of the notable churches with film ministries. Interestingly, independent filmmakers are now actively involved in producing more films with Pentecostal symbolisms. For instance, the three main video films-*Expensive Vow I&II* (2007), Evil Heart I, II, III (2008), and *God Loves Prostitutes I &II* (2003), used in the current research were produced by non-Pentecostal film producers.

However, upon close scrutiny, it was apparent that there are some individual 'born again' Christians who are behind the production of the so-called 'secular' video films with Pentecostal undertones. In the case of *Living in Bondage* for instance, the film was meant to showcase the 'neo-pentecostalist religious orientation' of the producer.[617] A similar observation was also made in the course of this research. In addition to the pastor in Accra, who has been featuring in video films for over a decade, one pastor of Action Chapel International in London also told me he has been writing some of the film scripts to correct what he termed as the 'distortions of the Gospel' in the video films.[618] Notwithstanding some of these developments, I think it is still too early, if not oversimplification, for anyone to

[616] Ukah Asonzeh, *Advertising God*, 214.
[617] Ibid, 212.
[618] Fiifi Adarkwa, London, September 12, 2010.

suggest that many of the video films with Pentecostal images are produced by Pentecostal groups.

The second development is about the distribution of the video films within some of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches I observed. The position of the members of Action Chapel International (ACI) and World Miracle International (WMCI) and individual pastors or leaders on the distribution or marketing of the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films was intriguing. For instance, at WMCI in Accra, pastors do not act in video films but there were Christian video films on sale at the bookshop of the church.[619] One of the pastors I interviewed told me he has no problem using or recommending the films as part of the numerous resources to enhance Christian living.[620] Meanwhile, at CAFMI where there is at least one pastor who acts in some of the video films and none of the pastors or leaders I spoke with at the church opposed the use of films, but here some pastors told me they are not fans of the video films. No video film was also found at the church's bookshop. The situation at LCI, the Pentecostal-Charismatic church I visited but unable to include in the case studies, was even more interesting.[621] More Christian video films were available at the church's bookshop. But none of their pastors do feature in the video films. The youth pastor had even warned the young members of the church not to patronise the video films because, as one trainee pastor who likes the films confided in me, they would be inviting demons into their lives. In my interview with the youth pastor, though he did not use such strong words but insisted that he would not change his stand until he sees people giving their lives to Christ through film.

In short, it was established that there was no consensus on the production and distribution of the video films among the Ghanaian Charismatic Ministries. As has been illustrated here, there was enough evidence to suggest that the churches are involved in one way or the other

[619] By Christian video films, I mean the films produced by the Pentecostal groups in Nigeria, which they claimed, are meant primarily for evangelisation purposes.
[620] Kwame Adu, Word Miracle International, Accra, May 18, 2010.
[621] See chapter two for the reason why this church was dropped.

in promoting the Christian video films but there were ample signs also of diversity on the religious uses of the films even within individual Pentecostal-Charismatic groups. Such initial varied relationship of the churches towards the video films is understandable and nothing unusual considering the diversities among the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. It is also not new when it comes to churches and their relationship with films or cinema. For example, the early Catholic response to films in Europe in particular 'was more positive, including an interest in distribution and exhibition of good films... and even the desire to make films'.[622] What was not clear or is not known is how the attitudes of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches towards the film will evolve especially now that some film stars are converting into Pentecostalism and continue to act in films. And in some cases pastors are also acting in films. With the other traditions of Christianity their approach to films which can be traced to their official statements and letters range from extreme caution to dialogue and appropriation depending on one's religious leanings. Bryan Stone described the responses of Protestants to film as representing a range of 'possibilities including those that exhibit a primary concern for whether a film upholds traditional religious and moral values to more dialogical, transformative, or even sacramental approaches that seek to learn from or appropriate the insights and aesthetic vision of a *film'*.[623]

7.5 Attitudes of PCC towards the Video Films

At the moment, the attitudes of the members of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity towards the video films can best be described as laissez-faire as demonstrated in the ethnographic study. The approach or responses to the films then becomes the personal decision by

[622] Peter Malone, 'The Roman Catholic Church and Cinema (1967 to the Present)', in John Lyden (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 53.
[623] Bryan Stone, 'Modern Protestant Approaches to Film (1960 to the Present)', in John Lyden (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 73.

individual members of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches as illustrated in Chapter six. I do not intend to repeat the findings here but there were certain patterns in relation to the responses to the video films by the informants of ACI and WMCI, which fit into the discussion here.

7.5.1 Caution.

The first attitude of the members towards the video films identified in this study was that of caution. The responses in this group of members showed what Peter Malone described as 'the protective attitude against morally dubious material' in the films.[624] Majority of members who indicated such approach to the films were parents and church leaders. The main concern raised on the video films by parents and most of the adults in the church centred on what they described as the 'excessive portrayal of sex scenes and nudity'.[625] Citing sex as a theme to oppose films is not new to religious groups. From the early stages of the film industry moralists of every religious and political persuasion, according to Andrew Quicke, became convinced that since films could portray taboo subjects like sex and politics, they would powerfully influence the moral and political behaviour of their viewers, and particularly their younger viewers.[626] Even though studies have shown that the effect on the audience including children is not automatic; parents still expressed disquiet about the video films because they feared the bad influence the motion picture will have on their children.

Church leaders' reluctance to open up on the video films, as I gathered, was as a result of the predominance of Juju, charms and occults in the films. In my interactions with some of the Pentecostal-Charismatic pastors in Accra and London, video film as resource in religious life was new to them. Indeed, all the two pastors I approached at ACI in the process of seeking

[624] Peter Malone, 'The Roman Catholic Church and Cinema (1967 to the Present)', 54.
[625] See chapter six for more details.
[626] Andrew Quicke, 'The Era of Censorship (1930-1967)', in John Lyden (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 33.

permission to carry out the present research were surprised to hear the main aim of the research: the reception and appropriation of the religious elements in Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. The one in Accra asked me 'how can you say such a thing? How can they use juju juju in their lives?' The pastor in London even asked me to share the outcome of the thesis with them. This request was made after he had referred to the films as juju juju.[627] They see the video films as synonymous with juju because there is overabundance of evil spirits, ghost, witches, and demons portrayed in the films. Interestingly, throughout the research apart from the two leaders mentioned earlier, only one respondent from the two churches mentioned juju as a concern. This is an indication that despite the negative themes, the respondents have a largely favourable attitude to the video films.[628] This leads to the second approach to the video films by the members of ACI and WMCI.

7.5.2 Appropriation.

The second category of responses to films by the members of ACI and WMCI is the appropriation of the film. Most of the members use some of the religious beliefs, rituals and practices in the films to enhance their Christian lives. The details of such uses of the video films by the members of ACI and WMCI have been provided in Chapter six. I must however emphasise two principal uses of the video films by the audience in relation to gender. As already indicated in chapter two, majority of the informants who volunteered to take part in the study were males. But females provided most of the responses particularly when it came to the moral uses of the films. At the WMCI, out of the eight respondents who said they use the moral and ethical lessons in the film, five of them were females. Four out of the six informants at ACI who indicated the moral values of the film as the most important resource

[627] I must say here that irrespective of the views expressed by these two pastors on the video films, they were exceptionally helpful throughout the field research.
[628] See Eno Akpabio, 'Attitude of Audience Members to Nollywood Films', 199.

were females. This finding is in agreement with the studies carried out by Birgit Meyer. Meyer argued that:

> Women are especially fond of watching films, and they often take the initiative in convincing their boyfriends and husbands to go to the movies or to buy a particular home video. Because films usually portray the character of the pious mother and wife, many women encounter significant role models, and even more importantly, regard video-films as educational devices that will teach good moral lessons to their partners.[629]

The importance of the video films to the members of ACI and WMCI, as evidence in the responses to the uses of the video films, go beyond the moral and educational values. According to the informants, the narratives of the films touch on real life stories pertinent to their religious lives. In this regard, the importance of films articulated by Robert Johnson in the book, *Reel Spirituality* is instructive here. He aptly argued:

> Movies function as a primary source of power and meaning for people throughout the world. Along with the church, the synagogue, the mosque, and the temple, they often provide people stories thorough which they can understand their lives…There are of course, places of worship that are vibrant and meaningful. But people both within the church and outside it recognize that movies are also providing primary stories around which we shape our lives…Presenting aspects of their lives both intimate and profound [real and imagined], movies exercise our moral and religious imagination.[630]

The insights gathered from the appropriation of the Ghanaian/Nigerian religious video films cohere to the point made by Johnson, which the scholars in the field cannot afford to ignore. This view forms the basis of the recommendations from the research. But first I outline how this study contributes to the scholarship of religion and film.

7.6 Contribution to Scholarship.

The major contributions of this thesis to religion and film studies can be traced to the context of the study; the approach used and the methodologies employed in the research.

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[629] Birgit Meyer, '"Praise the Lord": Popular Cinema and Pentecostalite Style in Ghana's New public Sphere', *American Ethnologist*, 31.3 (2004): 98.

[630] Quoted in Robert Johnson, 'Introduction: Reframing the Discussion', in Robert Johnson (ed.), *Reframing Theology and Film: New Focus for an Emerging Discipline* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 16.

I pointed out at the beginning of the thesis that the discourse on audience reception of religion and films rarely go beyond the European and the Hollywood films. This has resulted in little attention accorded to the emerging film industries such as the video films industries in Ghana and Nigeria. However, it can be said that the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are the main actors in the changing face of Christianity in Asia Latin America and Africa as well as the immigrant communities in the diaspora. The place of film in these emerging churches deserves more attention to reflect on the important contribution the churches are making on global Christianity and popular culture. Peter Horsfield, Mary Hess and Adan Medrano's edited work, *Belief in Media*, *The Religion and Film Reader* authored by Jolyon Mitchell and Brent Plate as well as Lynn Schofield Clark's edited book, *Religion, Media, and the Marketplace* provide the lead in addressing this neglect of the emerging world cinema.[631] This thesis is in a way contributing to the attempts to include the world cinema into religion and film scholarship. Specifically, it is an extension to the on-going audience ethnography on Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films popularized by Afe Adogame.

Secondly, studies in religion and film in most cases have been approached too narrowly, ignoring key critical partners such as sociology, religious history, and cultural studies among others.[632]This thesis was approached through cultural perspective thereby adding another discipline into the conversation between religion and film. This research is therefore following the steps already taken by Gordon Lynch in his book, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture* and *Sanctuary Cinema* also, a book written by Terry Lindvall, in broadening

[631] Peter Horsfield, Mary Hess and Adan Medrano (eds.), *Belief in Media: Cultural Perspectives n Media and Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Jolyon Mitchell and Brent Plate, *The Religion and Film Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007); Lynn Schofield Clark (ed.), *Religion, Media and the Marketplace* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2007).
[632] Robert Johnson, 'Theological Approaches' in John Lyden (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 323.

the approach to the study of religion and film.[633] The thesis also questioned the tenability of the notion of sole dominant message, as proposed by Stuart Hall, encoded in the media text and in our case filmic text. The respondents identified three dominant messages which are good, evil and paradoxical images encoded in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video film text in relation to the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches.

Lastly, the contribution of this research to the field of religion and film is the departure from one of the main methods used in the studies of religion and film. Filmic 'texts' has been the main focus in most audience reception studies of religion and film. Inputs from the audience or the viewers have been marginal to the studies of religion and film in general, especially those on Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. By situating this thesis in ethnographic approach, it serves as an addition to the initiatives taking by Adogame on the Ghanaian/Nigerian film industry in addressing the marginalisation of the audience in religion and film studies.[634]

7.7 Recommendations.

The importance of the video films to the audience, as demonstrated with two Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana, lies in the 'revelational potential of the medium', to borrow the words of James Wall. The point made by Wall over four decades ago is still relevant in the Ghanaian context. For him, 'The filmmaker is an artist who presents a vision of reality in his work, a vision that can enrich our own, *whether or not we share it*. And the churchgoer needs to be alerted and attuned to his source of revelation'.[635] From the findings, it was

[633] Gordon Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Terry Lindvall, *Sanctuary Cinema: Origins of the Christian Film Industry* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).
[634] Afe Adogame, 'To God Be the Glory! Home Videos, Art Symbology and Religio-Cultural Identity in Contemporary African Christianity', 2007: 148-165.
[635] James Wall, *Church and Cinema: A Way of Viewing Film* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), 13. The italics are in the original work.

evident that the majority of Christians are fully aware of the didactic and moral potential of the video films in their everyday religious lives.

However, some pastors and leaders were still not comfortable with the audio-visual medium as a good partner in the religious lives of their members. Peter Horsfield provides an explanation to the reluctance of leaders to open up on the use of the media based on his experience from the Australian context. He writes:

> A persistence issue I have found in working with church leaders around the subject of electronic media is their fear that engaging with electronic media seriously will compromise Christian faith…For most church leaders, Christianity is a distinct body of ideas and practices, defined and defended most effectively in theological books and journals. In this common view, electronic media are seen as more than just another form of mediation: their very structure as well as common content are seen as significant threat to Christianity.[636]

In the Ghanaian context, it can be added that the doctrines and practices of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are also defined and defended efficaciously through VCDs and DVDs produced by these churches. But there is gradual progress of the Pentecostal groups in one way or the other tapping the video films for evangelization. As Kalu observes, Pentecostals have invested heavily into this industry by producing films that critique the ethics of contemporary society, by dramatizing how and why the audience should seek Christ as the solution to many life problems.[637]

It is germane for researchers to go beyond the representation of certain religious traditions to pay more attention to the religious constructs as a whole now that the secular or independent film producers in both Nigeria and Ghana are promoting the production of video film with strong Pentecostal culture. With this development, it is clear that 'religious aspirations and motivations are no longer seen as located largely within specific institutions and ecclesial

[636] Peter Horsfield, 'Electronic Media and Past-Future of Christianity', in Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage (eds.), *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 276.
[637] Kalu Ogbu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 119.

organizations' and their religiously produced materials but beyond.[638] Religious elements in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films are some of the examples of such external sources of materials to reinforce, assist and in some cases challenge Christians in their religious lives.

Focusing on the educational value of the films, on the part of scholars, would be beneficial not only in broadening the scope of the study of Ghanaian/Nigerian video films but also to give the audience the opportunity to tell how the educational value of the films compliments those of the resources materials from their religious institutions. From the earliest days, as Jolyon Mitchell and Brent Plate noted, film was used for many religious purposes, including as an aid to teaching, a memorable way of presenting familiar stories, a tool for proselytism, a focal point for moral censor, a catalyst for expressing pastoral concerns, and a way of simply attracting a crowd.[639] For such numerous results to be achieved there is the need for stakeholders, especially scholars, to show practical and theological interest in the video films. But in order to successfully establish the pedagogical values of the video films, the study must 'situate itself on the side of the viewer', in this case the majority of church members who have already shown interest in the religious films.[640] Such an approach when carried out with other religious traditions will help to find out whether the video films can also serve as, 'documents and artefacts for teaching about religious values and worldviews', as some scholars have already established elsewhere.[641]

The research has drawn insights from selected members of ACI and WMCI on the religious symbols and images in the Ghanaian/Nigerian video films. However, due to time and other resources constraints the study could not include the views of majority of the members from

[638] Robert White, 'Religion and Media in the Construction of Cultures', in Stewart Hoover and Knut Lundby (eds.), *Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture* (London: Sage, 1997), 39.
[639] Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage, 'Introduction', in Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage, eds., *Religion and Film Reader* (London and New York, 2007), 10.
[640] Robert Johnson, 'Theological Approaches', 318.
[641] Terry Lindvall, 'Religion and Film Part II: Theology and Pedagogy', *Communication Research Trends*, 24.1(2005): 15.

the Christian tradition. Particularly, a few pastors and leaders in ACI and WMCI were included in the research. More studies drawing on insights from pastors and leaders will be helpful to know how their position on the use of the video films will unfold now that it has been established that the members of their churches are regular consumers of the films. New research interrogating how the gap between the suspicious attitudes of religious leaders and the favourable response of their members on the video films will be negotiated by both groups will be necessary.

Again, the research concentrated on Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, more research on other denominations of Christianity will be needed to chart the pattern of film reception among other Christian groups. As has been apparent, this thesis did not 'consider questions about religions other than Christianity in film, nor how non-Christians [such as Muslims, Traditionalists and other religious members as pointed out in chapter one] might understand the religious significance of the medium'.[642] In this regard, studies focusing on the reception of the films by the audience affiliated to other religious traditions will have the potential to enrich the scholarship on religion and film.

[642] Christine Kraemer, 'From Theological to Cinematic Criticism: Extricating the Study of Religion and Film from Theology', 243.

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African Heritage (1988, dir.K.Ansah).

Avengers (1994, dir. A. Sagoe).

Captives of the Mighty (2001, dir. H.Okpabio).

Contact (1976, dir. G.Bontempo).

Deliverance from the Powers of Darkness, (1992, dir.N. N.).

Diabolo (1994, dir. I. Safo*).*

Do your own thing (1971, B. Odjidja).

Expensive Vow (2007, dir. T. Meribe).

*Flatliner*s (1990, dir. J Schumacher).

Ghost Tears (1992, dir. I. Safo).

*Glamour Girls (*1994, dir. O Ogunjiofor).

God Loves Prostitutes (2003, dir. A. Salem).

Gospel According to St. Matthew, (1964, dir. P.Pasolini).

I told you so (1970, dir. *E* Adjesu).

*Living in Bondage (*1992, dir O. Ogunjiofor).

Love Brewed in the African Pot (1980, dir. K. Ansah).

Magic Money (1998, dir. H. Okpabio).

Meba (1993, dir. S.Buari).

Nkrabea (1993, dir. B.Bonnie).

No Tears for Ananse (1968, dir. S Aryetey).

*Punctured Hope (*2009, dir B. Pischiuta).

Rituals (1999, dir. A. Amenechi).

*Sakawa Boys (*2009, dir. I.Safo).

*Serious Calamity (*2007, dir. E. Wadewor)

Sika Sunsum (1991, dir. Yirenkyi).

Step Dad (1993, dir I.Safo).

The Cult of Allata (1989,dir. W.Akuffo).

The last Prophet 1&2 (2002, dir. NN).

The Lord of the Rings (2001, dir. P Jackson).

*The Passion of Christ (*2004, dir.M.Gibson).

Ties that Bind (2011, dir. L.Djansi).

Time (2000, dir. I. Oyeabor).

*Wasted Years (*2000*,* dir. H.Okpabio*).*

Whose fault? (1995, dir. Robertson).

Witches (1992, dir. O. Ansah).

Zinabu (1987, dir.W.Akuffo).

Appendix A

Draft Semi-Structured Interview Topic Guide

Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in Video films: Audience Reception and Appropriation in Ghana and the UK.

For statistical purposes, I would be grateful if you could please provide me with the following information:

Personal Data

1. Age……. 2. Gender ……..

3. Place of Abode …….

4. Profession…….....

5. Motive for Migrating……

6. Marital status……

7. Number of Children (If applicable)…….....

Church Information

1. What is the Name of your Church……

2. Do you hold any position in the Church?……..

3. How long have you been a part of this church?.....

4a. Were you in different church before joining this church?.....

4b. If yes, in which denomination?

4c. If no, what was your religion?

5. How did you get to know your current church?

6. How often do you attend church?

7. Do you use any Christian or church memorabilia in your religious life?

For example, Artwork, Crosses, Books, Music, Videos.

Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in Local video films (the core of the research).

1. How often do you watch the local video films featuring Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches?

2. How do you recognize them?

3a. Do you own some of these films? If yes, how do you access them?

3b. if no, where do you watch these films and with who?

4. In what ways do the environments (home, cinema, theatre) contribute to the reception of the films?

5. What is the central message you take from the religious narratives particularly Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in the video films?

6. In your Christian life, are you challenged or assisted by these portrayals and how?

7. In what ways do you appropriate the films in your everyday life?

8. Do you in any way maintain, negotiate or reject your faith through the films and why?

9. What impact do you think such presentations can have on the local and global images of your church? Is it positive, negative or both, can you explain further?

10. In your opinion, is such depictions of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in local video films a blessing or a threat in future expansion of these churches and why?

11. Give your general comments about the religious dimension of the local video films:

God richly bless you.

Principal Researcher: **Kofi Asare.**

Appendix B (List of Informants)

Gender	Place of Abode-Church	Age	Profession	Pseudonym
Female	Accra-ACI	23	Sales Personnel	Adwoa Anima
Female	Accra-ACI	26	Nurse	Diana Baah
Male	Accra-ACI	34	Marketer	Yaw Frimpong
Female	Accra-ACI	37	Unemployed	Esther Boafo
Male	Accra-ACI	33	Pastor	Kwasi Agyapong
Female	Accra-ACI	29	Student	Ola Mantey
Female	Accra-ACI	27	Finance Officer	Comfort Asabea
Male	Accra-ACI	31	Mason	Kwaku Nyame
Male	Accra-ACI	23	Student	Kwabena Agyei
Female	Accra-ACI	38	Evangelist	Dora Asamoah
Male	Accra-ACI	38	Pastor	Eric Nti
Female	Accra-ACI	20	Student	Lydia Obeng
Female	Accra-ACI	19	Student	Abena Sam
Male	Accra-ACI	18	Student	Yaw Addo
Female	Accra-ACI	45	Civil Servant	Gifty Mills
Male	Accra-ACI	49	Army Officer	Kwasi Gyamfi
Male	Accra-ACI	39	Civil Servant	Albert Mensah

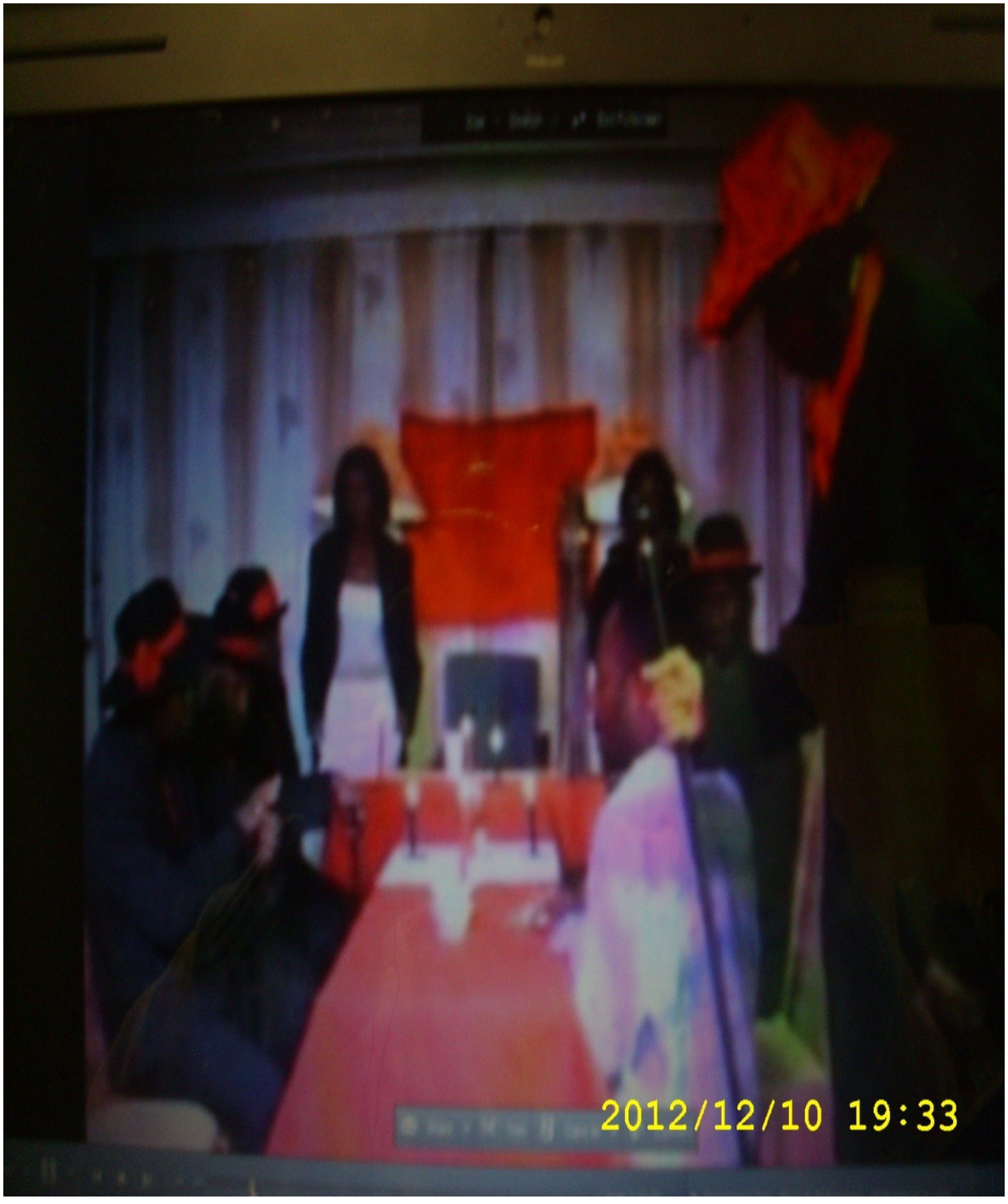
Female	Accra-ACI	43	Trader	Akua Henewa
Male	Acccra-ACI	48	Businessman	Isaac Marfo
Gender	Place of Abode-Church	Age	Profession	Pseudonym
Female	London-ACI	25	Student	Ama Brew
Male	London-ACI	35	-	James
Male	London-ACI	34	Rev. Minister	Fiifi Adarkwa
Male	London –ACI	42	Self-employed	John Amakye
Male	London-ACI	30		Nana Boakye
Female	London –ACI	34		Grace Akrong
Male	London-ACI	35	Student	Kwaku Anarfi
Male	Accra-ACI	42	Pastor	William Danso
Male	Accra-ACI	43	Pastor	Moses Kohia
Female	Accra-WMCI	16	Student	Agnes Sasu
Female	Accra-WMCI	23	Student	Yaa Kyerewa
Male	Accra-WMCI	16	Student	Seth Boakye
Female	Accra-WMCI	27	Unemployed	Maame Ama
Female	Accra-WMCI	20	Student	Ursula Mawuena
Male	Acccra-WMCI	18	Student	Afriyie Mike
Male	Accra-WMCI	23	Student	Stephen Bentum
Male	Accra-WMCI	18	Student	John Adomako

Gender	Place of Abode-Church	Age	Profession	Pseudonym
Male	Accra-WMCI	21	Student	Jonathan Obeng
Male	Accra-WMCI	23	Self employed	Eric Agbo
Male	Accra-WMCI	21	Student	Richard Amoafo
Female	Accra-WMCI	20	Student	Rose Adom
Female	Accra-WMCI	20	Student	Agatha Owiafe
Male	Accra-WMCI	39	Civil Servant	George Mensah
Male	Accra-WMCI	22	IT Specialist	Daniel Agyare
Male	Accra-WMCI	30	Accounts Officer	Peter Tagoe
Male	Accra-WMCI	23	Student	Evans Mawutor
Female	Accra-WMCI	50	Banker	Adwoa Manu

Gender	Place of Abode-Church	Age	Profession	Pseudonym
Male	WMCI-Accra	41	Teacher	Bernard Asante
Male	WMCI-Accra	42	Trader	Francis Akomea
Female	WMCI-Accra	42	Nurse	Gina Odei
Female	WMCI-Accra	42	Civil Servant	Margaret Domena

Male	WMCI-Accra	49	Business man	Albert Laryea
Female	WMCI-London	48	Trader	Afua Eshun
Female	WMCI-London	36	Service Manager	Anna Baafi
Female	WMCI-London	46	Carer	Comfort Abrokwa
Female	WMCI-London	32	Nurse	Rosemary Brobbey
Male	WMCI-London	39	Architect	Erica Amoako
Male	WMCI-London	38	Cleaner	Yaw Agbeko
Female	WMCI-London	37	Nurse	Florence Addae
Female	WMCI-London	53	Caterer	Agnes Dovi
Male	WMCI-Accra	40	Pastor	Kwame Adu

Appendix C (Scenes from *Expensive Vow* and Some posters of PCC and the Video films)



This is a scene from *Expensive Vow* I and II Showing Pastor Moses in the middle of the cult's members. He is pleading with the members to accept a cheque of any amount instead of his son, the initial agreed vow.


2012/12/10 19:32

The cult members visit Pastors Moses during church Service to put more pressure on him to honour his vow. The point here is that churches are sometimes portrayed negatively, positively or critically depending on the image they carve for themselves.

These are posters of newly released Ghanaian/Nigerian video films and Charismatic churches competing for space to advertise their services. This photo was taken at the central market in Kumasi but they are common in most cities in Ghana.

Appendix D (Maps of West Africa and Ghana)

Map of West Africa

Map of Ghana


Ghana
International boundary
Region boundary
National capital
Region capital
Railroad
Road
0 25 50 75 Kilometers
0 25 50 75 Miles
Lambert Conformal Conic Projection, SP 8N 32N
BURKINA FASO
UPPER EAST
UPPER WEST
NORTHERN
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
TOGO
BENIN
BRONG-AHAFO
ASHANTI
VOLTA
EASTERN
WESTERN
CENTRAL
GREATER ACCRA
Lake Volta
Akosombo Dam
Gulf of Guinea
Bight of Benin
Cape Three Points
Accra
Kumasi
Tamale
Sunyani
Techiman
Wenchi
Kintampo
Bolgatanga
Wa
Navrongo
Lée
Pô
Tumu
Bawku
Wulugu
Mango
Gaoua
Bouna
Sawla
Bole
Bondaukou
Bamboi
Yeji
Salaga
Yendi
Bimbila
Djougou
Kara
Bafilo
Bassar
Sokodé
Blitta
Savalou
Dumbai
Kete Krachi
Kwadjokrom
Berekum
Ejura
Mampong
Gawso
Konongo
Nkawkaw
Bekwai
Obuasi
Bibiani
Awaso
Kade
Koforidua
Kpandu
Hohoe
Ho
Badou
Atakpamé
Notsé
Kpalimé
Bohicon
Lokkosa
Tsévié
Aného
Lomé
Keta
Dunkwa
Oda
Nsawam
Tema
Teshi
Swadru
Winneba
Aboisso
Prestea
Tarkwa
Newtown
Cape Coast
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