

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE USE OF MIRACLES
FOR CONVERSION: A STUDY OF THE WORD MIRACLE
CHURCH INTERNATIONAL, NOW PEREZ CHAPEL
INTERNATIONAL (ACCRA, DZORWULU BRANCH),
GHANA.

GEORGE ANDERSON JNR.

2014

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BY

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Thesis submitted to the Department of Religion and Human Values of the Faculty of Arts, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Religion and Human Values.

JUNE, 2014

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Signature:.....Date:.....

Candidate's Name: George Anderson Jnr.

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Signature:..... Date:

Principal Supervisor's Name: Rev. Prof. Benjamin A. Ntreh

Signature:..... Date:.....

Co-Supervisor's Name: Rev. Dr. Simon Kofi Appiah

ABSTRACT

The study examined the ethical implications of the use of miracles for conversion in the Word Miracle Church International, now Perez Chapel International in Accra, Dzorwulu Branch. The motivation for the study was the heightened and seemingly competitive activities of different Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in their bid to win members to their fold. The research chose to focus on miracles because they form one of the most important attractions, which appeal to Ghanaian Christians. The study adopted the religious market theory as the theoretical framework on the basis that it offers a good paradigm for understanding current activities among some Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches, the products and services they put on offer and the individuals that go in search of such products and services. The study was qualitative, using the simple random sampling procedure to select eight church members comprising four males and four females for interviews and focused group discussion.

The major findings of the study were that the occurrences of miracles in the WMCI attracts majority of the people. Miracles occur free of charge. Miracles are used by the WMCI to solve some pertinent problems of its church members. The term 'miracle' is surrounded by negative controversies for which reason the church changed its name. The study, therefore, recommends that miracles should not be used as a pretext by Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian churches in Ghana to accrue wealth, compete, manipulate and to win membership.

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DEDICATION

To my loving Mummy, Alice Abena Otsiwah and my co-supervisor, Rev. Fr.
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ABBREVIATIONS

IGRW	Indigenous Ghanaian Religious Worldview
PCI	Perez Chapel International
WMCI	Word Miracle Church International

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

There are many new religious movements in Ghana today and all of them yearn for membership (Assimeng, 1989, & Asamoah-Gyadu 2005). The yearn for membership has made the new religious movements to use diverse strategies to make themselves attractive to prospective members. Gooren (2010) asserts that religious organisations can compete against each other by using their particular unique histories, core beliefs and doctrines, rules of conduct and morality, theologies, miraculous healings and their special missionary programmes and agents.

In the Ghanaian context, new religious groups make the above elements of their organisation concrete by using them to respond to specific needs of the people. Among the needs expressed by these prospective members are successful marriages, attractive jobs, praying to get visas to travel abroad and the crave for miracles. Miracles have however caught the greatest attention of both members and prospective members. This is especially in the area of the restoration of physical, spiritual and psychological wellbeing. Since miracles attract much attention in the Ghanaian religious context, it has therefore characterised the competition for membership. In this competition, prospective members get involved with these religious organisations in an exchange

process. On one hand, these prospective members aim at paying less to receive their desires from the religious organisations. The religious organisations on the other hand, also aim at producing the social, psychological and religious needs of the focus group to win their commitment.

The theoretical framework that best supports the study of this ‘exchange process’ of using miracles to address the desires of people is the ‘religious market theory’. This theory’s central idea is that religious organisations compete for membership. Such members are identified as people who make choices from the available religious products that serve their needs in a metaphorical “religious market” (Gooren, 2010).

Here, the ‘religious market theory’ is not used to define the phenomenon of religion as such. Rather, it is used as a framework firstly to explain the exchange process that take place between prospective members and religious organisations and secondly, the competition that goes on among religious organisations in their quest to get members by using miracles. This explanation is important in view of the weakness of the theory. The study adopted the religious market theory as the theoretical framework on the basis that it offers a good framework for understanding current activities among some Penteco-Charismatic Churches in Ghana, the products and services they put on offer and the individuals that go in search of such products and services.

Statement of the Problem

New Religious Movements are growing rapidly in Ghana today (Asamoah-Gyadu, 1998). As a result, each of these religious groups is applying attractive strategies to win converts into their respective religious

organisations. The use of miracles happens to be one of the most attractive strategies employed by some churches in Ghana to get members. There are reasons to argue that Christian religious organisations are under pressure to deliver miracles one way or another. The feeling of religious competition hangs in the air, billboards advertising “breakthroughs” increase by the day and conspicuously occupy all vantage points in cities and towns alike. In this situation, the question of what could be the risk of misuse of religion also looms bigger. The problem of this study is how does the Word Miracle Church International as a church of the Penteco-Charismatic tradition use miracle?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study rested in the study’s ability to examine and establish the ethical implications of the use of miracles for conversion (getting membership).

Objectives of the Study

The study had the following as its objectives. They included, finding out;

1. Some of the possible ethical risks associated with the use of miracles for conversion (getting membership).
2. Whether there is, a relationship between rationality and the choice prospective members and church members make before they belong to the WMCI.

Research Question

Below are the research questions that guided the study.

1. What are the ethical implications of the use of miracles as a means of conversion in the WMCI?
2. Do prospective members and church members choose freely to become members of the WMCI?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate into some of the possible ethical risks associated with the use of miracles for conversion (getting membership) and the relationship between rationality and church choice making using the Word Miracle Church International, Accra, Dzorwulu Branch as a study area

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the “religious market theory” as its theoretical framework. This theory as proposed by Erik Sengers (2006) explains the idea that religious organisations compete for membership. Such members are identified as people who make choices from the available religious products that serve their needs in a metaphorical “religious market”. The principal operation that takes place in this market is an exchange process. The individual gets involved in this exchange process and aims at paying to receive from these religious organisations. The religious organisations also aim at producing the social, psychological and spiritual needs of the focus group so that they can win their commitment.

Sengers (2006) links conversion with the religious market opining that individuals rationalize before they choose to belong to a particular religious organisation. With this background, these religious organisations supply the social and spiritual demands of the people to win more people and retain the existing ones. Sengers contends that one has to understand what the religious market and its functions are before one would understand the process of conversion in modern, liberal and domestic societies even though it is not broadly accepted idea. He assumes that the religious market works like the commercial market where religious organisations sell their versions of religious products to people who need those products.

The theory has the following components; the rational actor, the religious market, religious marketing, conversion and critique. The study focused on the rational actor, religious market and religious marketing.

The *rational actor* according to Sengers, is the person who is assumed to make goal-oriented decisions for rewards. The decisions for the rewards involve looking out for the best of the rewards. Again how to get these rewards without incurring much cost are considered likewise. These rewards are acquired through exchange. By exchange, people give out rewards that are less valuable for rewards that are more valuable in order to get what they want.

Another important component of the theory is the *religious market*. The religious market is a place where the rational actors look for both religious and social satisfactions in an exchange process. To Sengers this ‘market’ does not limit its confines only to the vicinity of the religious organisations. It also

refers to any other place where religious transactions or exchange process can take place between a person and a religious organisation.

The religious market is made up of two groups of actors. On one hand, the people (customers), whose needs are described under the concept of 'religious meaning' or 'spirituality' and on the other hand, the religious organisations that produces and provides or 'sells' religion. The church as a religious organisation specialises in providing religious and social products with guidelines. Again, they exchange the products with religious customers who are in need of them.

The basic model of the religious market is the willingness of customers to give out something in fulfilment of their needs while religious organisations also ask for something from customers for the provision of more religious products to customers. The core products of the religious market are rewards of a religious nature supported by supernatural explanations. For example, salvation, eternal life, kingdom of God, miracles, guidance and counselling, religious artefacts (like anointing oil, 'pure water', etc) which are accepted on the basis of faith. Actually, the religious market theory does not posit that everyone has the same need as others have.

The final component of the theory that is of much relevance to the study is *religious marketing*. Religious marketing involves the exchange of rewards. This exchange process is guided by the rules of the religious market. An important aspect is the need to identify the relevant target group, research into and find out the group's social and religious needs. It is also important to

evaluate the progress of exchange in order to make services better for the market in order to satisfy the needs of customers.

There is also the need to increase publicity to create awareness and interaction with the religious market effectively. Religious marketing has some specific characteristics that make it different from commercial marketing. This depends on the specific theology, the target group of the religious organisation and how to make the religious message plausible to be accepted by the target group. Hence, the clergy plays a very important role in the marketing of religion.

In the religious market, internal and external forces disturb the exchange process. The external force comes from the government who puts pressure on the exchange process by way of suppressing and subsidizing the religious commodities in situations where it supports the operations of the religious organisations. The internal forces come to play when churches operating on a market make appointments about how to deal with each other. This might be done through fierce competition and oppositions amongst suppliers of religion (Sengers, 2006).

Literature Review

This section reviews published and unpublished academic materials on Miracles, Ethics and Conversion for the purpose of this study. The review, which centres on the three terms, provides a better understanding of their usage and the way they relate to the thesis of this thesis.

Miracles

Several scholars have approached the term miracle. The approaches are either from the theistic or atheistic viewpoints. In this work, the works of renowned scholars on the term miracle are reviewed. The study thus proposes a working definition of the term miracle to situate the study better. Corner (2005) writes of the etymology of the term miracle. For him, the word miracle “comes from the Latin ‘*miraculum*’ meaning an object of wonder (cf. ‘*mirus*’, wonderful and ‘*mirari*’, to wonder)” (Corner 2005, 3). Miracle as a phenomenon has always been with human beings since pre-biblical times through to biblical times. It is also very much alive and common in present day Ghanaian Charismatic and Pentecostal churches.

According to Mbiti (1989), Sarpong (1976) and Idowu (1973) for one to understand the term miracle, there is the need to understand magic. These scholars distinguish between the two terms. For them, whereas magic is an event caused by a person’s own might to get a desired result (either good or bad) accomplished by using the mind, spells, candles, and other implements, a miracle is not personal-based and is devoid of the use of spells, candles, incantations and the like to bring out a desired effect. The efficacy of magic is short-lived in its effect while a miracle is lasting in its effect. Magic involves

manipulating or controlling the mind of the supernatural to get the desired effects but a miracle involves supplication and petitioning the will of the supernatural to cause an effect. Whiles magic is private, involving secrecy and mysterious acts carried out mainly for individual gains, miracle is open and it serves the entire society. Magic is stereotyped as being used to fulfil bad ends whiles miracle aims in its essence to fulfil good ends. Magic involves a person learning a technique for its performance whereas miracle performance is devoid of apprenticeship and techniques.

Hume (1975) argues from a sceptical viewpoint concerning the authenticity of miracles in his work *Enquiries concerning human understanding*. To him a miracle is “a violation of the law of nature.” He further moves on to say that, a miracle is also “a transgression of the law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent”. Hume holds the view that it could never be reasonable to believe in a miracle. He continues by saying that, no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood will be more miraculous than the fact, which it endeavours to establish (Hume 1975, 99-116).

Swinburne (1996) seems to be in concordance with Hume. He also sees a miracle as ‘a violation of a law of nature by a god’ (Swinburne 1996, 114-139). Mackie (1982) sides with Hume (1975) and Swinburne (1996) when they consider miracles as a violation of the law of nature by a deity’s intervention. To Mackie, a miracle is ‘a violation of a law of nature’ brought about by ‘divine or supernatural intervention’. The laws of nature, Mackie adds,

describe the ways in which the world including human beings work when left to itself, when not interfered with. Mackie further writes that a miracle occurs when the world is not left to itself, when something distinct from the natural order as a whole intrudes into it (Mackie 1982, 190).

The scholars posit that, for a miracle to occur there should be a violation of the law of nature. An impersonal being without the intervention of human being should do the violation of this law of nature. An example of this type of miracle is found in the Christian biblical narrative, “*And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed ...*” (Joshua 10:13, New King James Version). If that is the case, then one can argue that these scholars’ understanding of miracles deviates from what miracle is perceived to be in the light of Ghanaian Pentecostal and Charismatic religiosity. This is because, in Ghanaian religiosity, healing of the sick from either physical or spiritual related problems is particularly performed by a ‘minister of the gospel’ but not left to nature to take its course. However, if a person can be either healed from his or her sickness or if a particular problem beyond that person is solved it is tagged a miracle.

With the issues raised above, Wallace (1875) raises objection to Hume's (1757) definition of a miracle, which exhibits unfounded assumptions and false premises. Wallace considers Hume’s two definitions of miracle as bad or imperfect. The first assumes that all the laws of nature are known; that the particular effect could not be produced by some unknown law of nature overcoming the law we do know; it assumes also, that if an invisible intelligent being held an apple suspended in the air, that act will violate the law of gravity.

The second is not precise; it should be “some invisible *intelligent agent*,” otherwise the action of galvanism or electricity, when these agents were first discovered, and before they were ascertained to form part of the order of nature, will answer accurately to this definition of a miracle. To Wallace, the two words “violation” and “transgression” as employed by Hume are improperly used and really beg the question by the definition. He then defines a miracle as “Any act or event necessarily implying the existence and agency of superhuman intelligences” (Wallace 1875, 35-51).

Holland (1965) takes on board a lot of what Hume argues and agrees that if there were several reasonable witnesses, then the laws of nature will have to be revised or falsified as non-existent. This, Holland agrees that it will not be a simple thing to do. Holland therefore sees miracles not as violations of laws of nature, but rather as coincidences. For him, miracles are a remarkable and beneficial coincidence that is interpreted in a religious fashion (Holland 1965). Spinoza (1951) also sees a miracle as an event that is impossible to violate natural laws since natural laws are immutable. His argument rejects Hume’s first definition of miracle. He disputes the possibility of miracles with reference to the fact that an event called a “miracle” can violate the natural laws. To him natural laws are immutable in that they cannot be changed, they are always fixed (Spinoza 1951, 1:83, 87, 92).

Hick (1973) also sides with Spinoza (1951) with his ideology concerning the immutability of the law of nature. Hick argues that the laws of nature are, quite simply, that they are laws that under no circumstances can be broken. For him, the laws of nature are those rules that are conceptualised by humans as

they look back at what has happened in the universe. These laws explain what happens in the world as these happenings conform to general formulae (Hick 1973).

Mary Douglas (1966) disagrees with Hick (1973) and Spinoza's (1951) impossibility view on the occurrence of miracles based on the immutability of the law of nature. Mary Douglas argues, "The possibility of the occurrence of miracles always existed and did not necessarily depend on any law of nature and rites. Miracles can be expected to erupt anywhere at any time in response to virtuous need or the demands of justice" (Douglas 1966, 58-59).

Hunter (1974) defines miracles as "extra-ordinary intervention of God in history, not breaches of what is called 'natural law' but exceptional occurrences bringing an undeniable sense of the presence and power of God" (Hunter 1974, 29). St. Augustine also holds the view that a miracle is not contrary to nature, but only to our knowledge of nature; miracles are made possible by hidden potentialities in nature that are placed there by God (St. Augustine XXI. 8.2).

Thomas Aquinas, expanding Augustine's conception, said that a miracle must go beyond the order usually observed in nature, though he insisted that a miracle is not contrary to nature in any absolute sense, since it is in the nature of all created things to be responsive to God's will. By this, Aquinas defines miracles as "those things, which are done by divine power apart from the order generally followed in things". He further goes on to say that those events are done by God that which nature could never do (Aquinas *Summa Contra Gentiles* III: 101).

In a way, Geisler (1992) seems to agree with Aquinas by also defining miracles as “a divine intervention into the natural world”. He further adds that a miracle is a supernatural exception to the regular course of the world that will not have occurred otherwise (Geisler 1992, 1-5). Corner (2005) writes that the term miracle is “a special or immediate act of God, as opposed to God’s continuous work of creating and sustaining the world. Doubtless this definition has its faults, but at least it enables us to have some instrument for assessing the arguments that have emerged in the philosophical, biblical and religious traditions which we will now consider” (Corner 2005, 1-17).

Macquarrie (1966) also sees miracles as “not normal, but extraordinary features of life”. To him, God is in the event in some special way, that God is the author of it and intends to achieve some special end by it (Macquarrie 1966, 225-232). Finally, to Wittgenstein (1980) a miracle is, “as it were, a gesture that God makes” (Wittgenstein 1980, 45e). To him, as a man sits quietly and then makes an impressive gesture, God lets the world run on smoothly and then accompanies the words of a saint by a symbolic occurrence, a gesture of nature. It will be an instance if, when a saint has spoken, the trees around him bowed, as if in reverence.

From the literature on miracles as discussed above, to some extent, the study tends to disagree with the views posited by Hume, Spinoza, Swinburne and Mackie. This is because firstly they tend to discredit the occurrence and validity of a miracle. The fact is that the natural laws are immutable and impossible to be violated. Secondly, they assert that there is no much evidence to show the validity of a miracle.

The kind of disagreement that comes to the fore is that if these scholars believe that miracles do occur by the volition of a god or a deity, then one can argue that the scholars beg the question by the claims they make. By virtue of the fact that this “deity” or “god”, as they refer to has the power to allow things to happen and misshapen, one can agree to the fact that miracles can occur since that “deity” is believed to control nature. For this reason, the law of nature can be mutable.

The study sides with the arguments raised by Aquinas, Corner, Geisler, Macquarrie and the others as stated above. This is because these scholars unlike Hume, Spinoza, Mackie and the others argue that the laws of nature are mutable since the divine controls nature, therefore miracles occur. The study’s working definition of the term miracle is that a miracle is an unusual and extraordinary event that occurs resulting from God’s volition and intervention in nature, which beats the intelligence and understanding of human beings in time and space. This definition of miracle is in line with the WMCI understanding of miracle.

Some Typologies of Miracles

There are many typologies of miracles. For the sake of this thesis, the following four types are mentioned. They are healing miracle, restoration miracle, nature miracle and miracle of exorcism. Healing miracle is that type of miracle that centres on curing physical impairments and illnesses. Some of the curable illnesses are blindness, deaf and dumb, asthma, epilepsy and stroke. Restoration miracle aims at bringing back something into existence or into being. Examples of restoration miracles are but not limited to bringing back to

life the dead, and restoring an amputated part of a human being. Miracle of exorcism is the type of miracle that deals with casting out malevolent and unclean spirits from a possessed person. Nature miracle is that type of miracle that transcends over natural things. Some notable examples of nature miracle are the ones performed by Jesus Christ: calming storms, feeding the multitudes, changing water into wine, and the withered fig tree (Corner, 2005).

Ethics

Many scholars have written on the term 'ethics'. MacKinnon (2011) posits, "ethics is a branch of philosophy, called moral philosophy" (MacKinnon 2011, 3). Ozumba (2001) writes, "the term ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning customary" (Ozumba 2001, 4). According to Fagothey (1959), the "Latin word for custom is *mos*; its plural, *mores*, is the equivalent of the Greek "*ethos*". From *mores*, we derive the words *moral* and *morality*, which means the rightness or wrongness of human acts. By derivation of the word, then, ethics can be considered as the study of human customs" (Fagothey 1959, 20-22). Appiah (2000) posits, "the term *ethos* describes the total construct of a people's way of life. It is the fruit of a complex structure of processes - experiencing, reflecting, planning, experimenting, judging, deciding and acting. The term regards a socially worked out pattern of behaviour in relation to 'the good' or 'the bad' in a given society. He then defines ethics as a 'hermeneutic of behaviour', that is, an operation in which people and their moral actions are apprehended and interpreted as 'texts'. Appiah argues that these 'texts' are not written but are actions and behaviour" (Appiah 2000, 1).

Ethics as a branch of philosophy embraces three sub-branches. The branches as according to Pojman and Fieser (2012) are “descriptive morality, moral philosophy (ethical theory) and applied ethics. Descriptive morality refers to actual beliefs, customs, principles, and practices of people and cultures. Moral philosophy—also called ethical theory—refers to the systematic effort to understand moral concepts and justify moral principles and theories. It analyses key ethical concepts such as “right,” “wrong”, and “permissible”. It explores possible sources of moral obligation such as God, human reason, or the desire to be happy. It seeks to establish principles of right behaviour that may serve as action guides for individuals and groups. Applied ethics deals with controversial moral problems such as abortion, pre-marital sex, capital punishment, euthanasia, and civil disobedience” (Pojman and Fieser 2012, 2-3). In this research, the term ethics is being used in the general sense. Here, it means the sense of value judgement, i.e. deciding on the rightness and wrongness of the use of miracles for conversion (getting membership).

Ethics is also used to refer to “a set of standards of right and wrong. This is established by a particular group and imposed on members of that group as a means of regulating and setting limits on their behaviour” (Boss 2008, 6). Kizza (2010) argues that ethics not only helps in distinguishing between right and wrong but also in knowing why and on what grounds judgment passed on human actions is justified. To him, ethics, therefore, is “a field of inquiry whose subject is human actions, collectively called human conduct, which are performed consciously, wilfully, and for which one can be held responsible” (Kizza 2010, 33).

Kunhiyop (2008) argues that, every society is influenced by its history, beliefs and values. Similarly, there is the need to understand the ethical values and beliefs that guide moral actions in Africa if we are to develop an ethical system that is both African and Christian. To him, ethics is “the definitions, principles and motivations for conduct and behaviour” (Kunhiyop 2008, 1-5). Fagothey (1959) defines ethics as “the practical normative science of rightness and wrongness of human conduct as known by natural reason”. To Fagothey, there is the need to distinguish ethics from other disciplines. This is because it relates to all the human and social sciences. He further argues that the distinctive nature of ethics is the ‘ought’ of human action (Fagothey 1959, 28).

In *Morality and the good life*, Solomon (1992) gives a traditional philosophical definition of ethics as “a set of theories of value, virtue, or of right (valuable) action”. He further on sees ethics as the study of a way of life, its values, its rules and justifications (Solomon 1992, 1). Johnson (1994) elaborates on Solomon’s definition by defining ethics as a set of theories that provide general rules or principles to be used in making moral decisions and, unlike ordinary intuitions, provides a justification for those rules (Johnson 1994).

Sharma (2006), in *Introduction to ethics* defines ethics as the science of the ideals related to human life. To him ethics discusses the good and bad qualities of human behaviour by comparing it to these ideals. Therefore, it informs man of the differences between good and bad, right and wrong, evil and virtue (Sharma 2006, 4). To Oruka (1990), ethics is an intellectual or philosophical study of the principles that govern or should govern the conduct of moral agent in society. He talks of ethics as a branch of philosophy, which

deals with the theories of value and the application in human life (Oruka 1990, 3, 39).

In their book *Ethics: Discovering right and wrong*, Pojman and Fieser (2012) define ethics as “that branch of philosophy that deals with how we ought to live, with the idea of the good, and with concepts such as “right” and “wrong” (Pojman and Fieser 2012, 2). Frankena (1973) also sees ethics as “a branch of philosophy or philosophical thinking about morality, moral problems and judgements. To him, the thinking that relate to morality is categorised into three ways. The first, which he calls descriptive morality, deals with explaining the phenomenon of morality or to work out a theory of human nature which bears on ethical questions. There is also the normative type of morality. This asserts a normative judgement and gives reasons for this judgement. Finally, he talks about the analytical, critical or the meta-ethical thinking. This sort of morality asks and tries to answer logical, epistemological or semantical questions” (Frankena 1973, 4, 5).

Conversion

The term conversion has several connotations coupled with diverse usages and understanding. However, for the sake of this study, the term is used in its religious sense. According to Sengers (2006), conversion means taking over of one religious faith in place of another by an individual. It is adhering to one religious organisation instead of another because that individual finds this faith or the religious organisation more convincing. This is as a result of both the religious and social rewards they provide to satisfy his needs (Sengers, 2006). Considering Sengers’ view on conversion, it must be added that

conversion would not only involve an individual, groups of people can undergo conversion (Lamb & Bryant 1999, 7).

Taking a step further from what Sengers (2006) refers to as conversion, Rambo (1993) states that conversion involves that act of:

“Turning from and to a new religious groups’ ways of life, systems of belief, and modes of relating to a deity or the nature of reality. Conversion is a process of religious change that occurs in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations and orientations. The effects of these factors are interactive and cumulative over time. Thus, conversion in its largest sense is best seen as a complex process not an event” (Rambo 1993, 3, 5).

In considering Rambo’s line of thought, the study points to the fact that there are two significant ways involved in religious conversion. That is, religious conversion is either a sudden phenomenon or processual. The study posits that conversion is sudden because on one side of the coin, in the conversion process, there are some individuals and groups of people who will choose to belong to a particular religious faith or church based on their knowledge of the immediate benefits they will receive.

On the other side of the coin, the study argues that religious conversion is a process because for some individuals and groups of people, they would only become a member of a religious faith or church only when they have received what they expected. Conversion is a process because it involves a period for

some individuals or groups of people to adjust to the traditions of the new religious faith or church found. Taking cues from Rambo (1993), one finds McGuire (1997) agreeing to, if not all, some of the views of Rambo. For McGuire (1997), conversion is a 'process of religious change which transforms the way the individual perceives the rest of society and his or her personal place in it, altering one's view of the world' (McGuire 1997, 71).

Having discussed the works of the scholars on conversion, the working definition the study adopted for the term conversion as far as the findings on the field are concerned is, conversion is the act of getting church membership. It also meant the act of belonging to a particular religious faith or the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) and adhering to all the church's doctrines, beliefs and practices.

Research Methodology

The issues under research methodology discussed were; research design, research instruments, population and sampling procedure, procedure for data collection, and method of data analysis.

Research Design

This study was qualitative. Mutch (2005) sees this type of research method as that which focuses on stories and description of individuals' experiences, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations and behaviours. For Mutch (2005), qualitative research approach enables the researcher to get relevant responses on the topic under research. By using this method, the research aimed at investigating the ethical implications of the use of miracle for

conversion. In other words, finding out some of the possible ethical risks associated with the practice. The research used the descriptive design. This is because the design allows describing the characteristics of a phenomenon like miracle, which is a fluid variable.

Research Instruments

The researcher used participant observation, focus group discussion and personal interview schedule. With the participant observation, the researcher attended the weekday and Sunday church services. The visits allowed interactions with members of the church. The focused group discussion helped the researcher to put the respondents into groups to reason and bring out thoughts on the issue under discussion. According to Glesne (2011) focus group discussion “helps the researcher to better understand how a group would discuss some issue and elicit multiple perspectives in the process” (Glesne 2011, 131). Interviews formed part of the research instruments because in dealing with a topical issue like ‘miracle’ and investigating into the ethical implications of the use of miracles for conversion, there was the need to personally interrogate people thoroughly to get more information. To Osuala (2005), an interview is “a conversation carried out with the definite aim of obtaining certain information. It is designed to gather valid and reliable information through the responses of the interviewee to a planned sequence of questions” (Osuala 2005, 255-256).

The interviews were structured and unstructured in format. Cohen (2006) and Kothari (2004) throw more lights on what structured and unstructured interviews are. For Cohen, unstructured interview is a method involving extended and open-ended interaction between an interviewer and

interviewee. Kothari (2004) argues that structured interview is that type of interview that involves the use of a set of predetermined questions and of highly standardised techniques of recording. Thus, the interviewer in a structured interview follows a rigid procedure laid down, asking questions in a form and order prescribed.

Population and Sampling Procedure

Nine interviewees from the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) were purposively sampled for the study. Five out of the nine interviewees, including the founder of the WMCI (Charles Agyin-Asare) were males, while the remaining four of the interviewees were females. The age of the majority of the interviewees except Bishop Charles Agyin-Asare was between twenty and thirty years. Three of the interviewees were Senior High School leavers while six were university graduates. Out of the nine interviewees, six (6) of the interviewees were Ga/Dangme whereas the remaining three were Akan (Fante and Asante speaking people of Ghana). All of the interviewees were Christians.

The justification of the total number of sample size in connection with this study in terms of studies in qualitative research is in line with what Creswell (1994) says. According to Creswell, a small size sample is appropriate in the qualitative research since it aims at providing an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under investigation and not just interested in exposing statistical truth. The respondents that formed the population size were, Agyin-Asare (the founder and presiding Bishop of WMCI, Accra, Dzorwulu branch) and eight members from WMCI (four males and females).

The research used the simple random sampling procedure in selecting its respondents for interviews. According to Kothari (2004), simple random sampling refers to that “method of sample selection which gives each possible sample combination an equal probability of being picked up and each item in the entire population to have an equal chance of being included in the sample” (Kothari 2004, 60). The research used this sampling procedure because, this sampling procedure gives each element in the population an equal probability of getting into the sample; and all choices are independent of one another. It gives each possible sample combination an equal probability of being chosen.

Procedure for Data Collection

The data collection phase of the study was spread over a period of three months. This was because, firstly, the researcher wanted to familiarise himself with the church’s activities and some members of the church to ease his research work. The researcher visited the church for a month before conducting interviews. In the course of the visit, the researcher initially got three of the church members as friends. These three friends knowing the intention of the researcher linked up four other friends who become friends to the researcher. In the second week of visit, the researcher happened to find another member of the church who was willing to grant an interview.

After establishing contacts with the eight members of the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch), an interview was scheduled for the following Sunday. It was purposely to obtain information for the research work. In the course of the third week of visit to the church, the researcher had lengthy interactions with two of the church members who granted interviews. The

entire procedure of data collection was by writing. This is because the interviewees did not want to have their views recorded on a tape recorder.

During the fourth week of visit, three other interviewees granted the interview. Apart from separate interviews, there was a group discussion. Interviewees answered the question of how they became members of the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch). They also answered other questions like assessing the ethical implications of the use of miracles for conversion (most particularly on spiritual healing and the aftermath of a person who has received his/her healing) and some strategies and Christian religious products used to cause growth in church membership were discussed.

The fifth week of visit to the church allowed interaction with a new set of three interviewees. The three new interviewees also responded to the questions of membership, spiritual healing and the aftermath of a person who has received his/her healing. Before the sixth week of visit, the researcher arranged with all the eight interviewees by phone call to make themselves available for a group discussion to conclude the period of field work.

Eventually, all interviewees responded favourably and attended the discussion. The discussion centred on assessing whether the use of miracles for getting membership belongs to good or bad religious practice. The respondents also expressed their views on whether they agreed or disagreed that miracles are or are not used in a competitive, manipulative and commercialising way by the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) to get membership. Following this, the researcher booked an interview appointment to meet Agyin-Asare. The appointment was purposely for getting concise information about the history of

the church. Fortunately, Agyin-Asare granted the interview after two weeks. In order not to forgetfully skip some important information from the interview, the entire interview was recorded on a tape recorder.

Method of Data Analysis

The data was analysed by relating the emerging responses and views from the respondents to the theory (religious market theory) that guided the research work. By so doing, the analysis confirmed most of the theory's propositions. Moreover, some of the claims the theory made that do not relate to the responses and views of the respondents were noted.

Limitations of the Study

In gathering the data, the following limitations were encountered. Initially, the interviewees were unwilling to grant the interview. This was because they felt that if they did grant the interview, their voices and photos would be recorded and published. Secondly, some of the interviewees could not fulfil the scheduled dates for the interview and this delayed the time scheduled for the collection and analysis of the research data.

Organisation of the Study

This study comprised five chapters. Chapter one was an overview of the research study. It comprised the introduction, background to the study, statement of problem, significance of the study, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology, research design, population and sampling procedure, research instruments, method of data collection, method

of data analysis, data analysis, limitations of the study and organisation of the study.

The second chapter was divided into two sections. The first section presented the history of the Word Miracle Church International now Perez Chapel International (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) from the year 1987 to 2013. The second section dealt with the religious market theory into details. Chapter three of the study dealt with assessing the use of miracles in the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch). Chapter four presented and analysed the data collected from the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch). Finally, chapter five presented the summary, conclusions, key findings and recommendations made from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF THE WORD MIRACLE CHURCH INTERNATIONAL (WMCI) NOW, PEREZ CHAPEL INTERNATIONAL (ACCRA, DZORWULU BRANCH) FROM THE YEAR 1987 TO 2013 AND THE RELIGIOUS MARKET THEORY

Introduction

Chapter one gives an overview of the research. It briefly discusses the theoretical framework (religious market theory) with which the study was conducted. It also reviews relevant themes on miracles, ethics and conversion in relation to the Ghanaian context and understanding.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents the history of the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) from the year 1987 to 2013. The second part throws more light on the theoretical framework (religious market theory) of the study. By so doing, works by renowned scholars on the market theory are discussed.

**HISTORY OF THE WORD MIRACLE CHURCH INTERNATIONAL
(WMCI) ACCRA, DZORWULU BRANCH FROM THE YEAR 1987 TO
2013**

According to Charles Agyin-Asare, Bishop of the Word Miracle Church International (WMCI), now Perez Chapel International, the church started with a crusade on March, 1987 in Tamale, the Northern Region of Ghana. After the crusade, eighteen (18) cripples, twenty-one (21) blind persons, twenty-three (23) deaf and dumb persons and people with other sicknesses that could not be numbered were healed.

As a result of the turn-up for the crusade, there was the need for putting up a structure that would serve as a starter for church establishment. However, the desire to put up a structure to serve as a permanent place for worship was hindered because there were no funds. Greater amount of money used for the crusade was from honoraria the Bishop got from preaching in the International Central Gospel Church (during their camp meeting in December 1986), Victory Christian Centre Accra (now Victory Bible Church) and some other programmes he attended and preached.

Agyin-Asare added that as time advanced, the few people that showed commitment during the crusade teamed up with him to form a church. The church initially founded in Tamale became known as World Miracle Bible Church and by the year 1996, its name was changed from World Miracle Bible Church to Word Miracle Church International. According to Agyin-Asare, when the church got started in Tamale, it began to grow by leaps and bound. All the churches within the region were supported with finances within and

outside Ghana but Word Miracle Church had no such financial support. All this while, the church had no permanent place for worship. The meeting place was in front of the Tamale Cultural Centre, the church was later displaced.

For three weeks, members gathered under a tree for worship and we later got a classroom for worship. The church was later displaced from the classroom and moved to the Tamale Catering Rest House. Within six months, it went to eight different places. The displacements were coupled with series of accusations levelled against the founder of the church. Some folks in the town accused him of robbing the members of the church of their finances for his enrichment.

At the Tamale Catering Rest House, the number of church attendants began to grow. This necessitated the need to run a double service on every Sunday. After a year of the establishment of the World Miracle Church in Tamale, Agyin-Asare moved to Accra and joined Mensah Otabil in the International Central Gospel Church for two months. Whiles in Accra, Agyin-Asare had the conviction to go back to Tamale to rekindle the church least it collapsed.

Two weeks before he returned to Tamale, news reaching him from Afriyie Boateng, his Associate Pastor was that the population of the church had drastically reduced, some of the committed and elderly members in the church had left. By the close of May, 1988 Agyin-Asare returned to Tamale to restart the church. In the year 1992, the members of the church started putting up a permanent place for worship with the little resources they had. The zeal to have a permanent place for worship coupled with limited funds propelled Agyin-

Asare to sell his car while some of the members sold their properties to raise funds for the construction of the new church building.

In that same year 1992, Agyin-Asare was privileged to visit America. It was there that he had an inspiration from the Holy Spirit to move the headquarters of the church from Tamale to Accra, the southern part of Ghana. Initially, he did not heed immediately because firstly he wanted to pray about it to be certain. Secondly, he felt so established in Tamale and did not want to move. However, per the instruction from the Holy Spirit coupled with an ethnic war that ensued between the Konkomba and Nanumba people and in some parts of Tamale and its surrounding areas, he moved to Accra to establish a branch of the church in the year 1994 while the Tamale church was in operation.

In Accra, there was a problem of finding a place for worship. Eventually, Kanda Cluster of schools became the place the church got to hold its first official meeting. It recorded a total number of thirty-two (32) attendants at Kanda Cluster of schools. Like the displacement experiences encountered in Tamale, the church moved from Kanda Cluster of schools and had to find another place. From Kanda Cluster of schools, it moved into an old warehouse that belonged to the late S. K. Mainoo.

The church got the place renovated and fixed it into an auditorium. The first Sunday morning service held in the auditorium recorded a total number seventy (70) attendants. From that time, the church launched into miracle service once a week of every month. During such services, many miracles took place the church was nicknamed the “Azusa Street of Ghana”. Some blind

persons received their sights, people who complained of various illnesses testified that they were healed while three people who were in wheel chairs stood up and walked.

The sermons Agyin-Asare preached coupled with God's manifestations of his undeniable power gave unprecedented growth in the total number of church attendants. By the end of the year 1995, membership had grown from seventy (70) to over three thousand (3,000) and by the end of the year 1996, the membership had increased from three thousand (3,000) to over five thousand (5,000) people. Owing to the increase in the number of membership, there was the need to find a bigger place to accommodate the growing population.

For this reason, the dilapidated Head Office of the former Meat Marketing Company was bought to start the construction of the church's new headquarters in Accra. In March 1998, there was a great move from the old warehouse where it was converted to an auditorium at Accra, Circle to Dzorwulu, which has become the new Headquarters of the church. Currently, the name Word Miracle Church International that has been changed to Perez Chapel International has over fifty-thousand (50,000) members with over three-hundred and fifty (350) branches globally with forty-eight (48) branches in the Accra area of Ghana.

According to Agyin-Asare, the change of name from Word Miracle Church International to Perez Chapel International was adopted from the book of Genesis 38:29. The meaning of the word "*Perez*" which is of a Hebrew etymology means "breakthrough" or "broken forth". He added that the change

of name was not because the church had gone bankrupt or done anything wrong, it is a scriptural in that in the Bible, we the stories of God changing the names of people.

Agyin-Asare said the change of name became necessary because of impediments with the registration of the church in some countries due to the word “Miracle” that was contained in the previous name. He however explained that because the church does not want to limit the spreading of the gospel but want to reach out to different people, it accepted the forethought to change its name.

Agyin-Asare, maintained that the change of name is a statement of purpose. It is a step to fulfil destiny, send the good news to many, heal the sick, chart new paths for the lost and transform generations. He said the change of name would reinforce the significant milestone the church had chalked and reach people to experience the spiritual impact derived from God and embrace its message. The church’s core mission has not changed, it is the identification name and that has changed (personal communication with Agyin-Asare on 23rd June, 2013).

THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORD MIRACLE CHURCH INTERNATIONAL (WMCI)

The Church's Mission Statement

We are a family church, raising believers to glorify God and to reach our world with compassion and the Power of God.

The Church's Orientation

This organization has a Pentecostal and Charismatic orientation and believes in the totality of the Bible.

The Church's Objectives

1. To approve all scriptural teachings, methods and conducts; and disapprove unscriptural methods and conducts.
2. To encourage and promote the evangelization in Ghana and overseas with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. To provide a basis of fellowship among Christians of like-faith.
4. To establish and maintain churches and missions in Ghana and overseas.
5. To train, ordain and license candidates for the work of the Gospel Ministry.
6. To establish and maintain secular schools, Bible Training Institutes, clinics, farms, orphanages, homes and any welfare institution.

The Church's Leadership Structure

The Leadership structure of Word Miracle Church International comprises; the General Church Council, Executive Council, Divisional Church Council, District Church Council and the Local Church Council.

General Church Council

The General Church Council is the highest policy making body in the church. It has the power to institute disciplinary proceedings against any member of the General Church Council. The Council also receives and approves the reports by various Boards and Committees. The council operates as the final interpreter of all ecclesiastical and doctrinal issues of the church. Its membership includes all active Ministers of the Church, National/Regional/Divisional/District Accountants, Presiding and Representative Elders, Trustees, Chairmen of Boards and Committees, Leaders of Various Ministries, Two (2) members from churches with membership over five- hundred (500) and a specialist that may be invited by the Executive Council to attend as observers.

Executive Council

The Executive Council is responsible for the day-to-day running of the church. It executes policies and decisions of the General Church Council, may be delegated by the Presiding Bishop to ordain Ministers, license Ministers, lay hands on Exhorters, ordain Elders, Deacons/Deaconesses and to examine all applications for Church Affiliation. Its membership comprises the Presiding Bishop, the General Secretary, the International Missions Director, the

International Women's Director and a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of five (5) members from among the Senior Ministers to be nominated by the Presiding Bishop and ratified by the General Council.

Divisional Church Council

The Divisional Church Council operates in the Northern, Middle and Southern belts of Ghana. The Council comprises, the Divisional Overseer, Divisional Accountants, Ministers, Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses within that Division. It is in charge of discussing, deciding and forwarding important matters and the matters that affects the Church in the Division to the Executive Council.

District Church Council

The District Council exists in every District. It is composed of Ministers, Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses of a number of Local Assemblies in that district. It discusses and decides on matters affecting the welfare of the local assemblies in that District.

Local Church Council

This Council is made up of five (5) to seven (7) members. The members comprise the Pastor(s), Church Secretary, Church Accountant and duly elected Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses and members of the Local Assembly. The Council is the policy-formulating organ of the Local Church (personal communication with Agyin-Asare on 23rd June, 2013).

Having presented the history of the church, the next section of the chapter discusses the religious market theory. The theory serves as the theoretical framework offers a good understanding for the current activities among new Christian movements.

THE RELIGIOUS MARKET THEORY

Background of the Theory

The Religious Market Theory as it stands now evolved from the Rational Choice Theory which is an approach used by social scientists to understand human behaviour. The approach has long been the dominant paradigm in economics. In recent decades, it has become more widely used in other disciplines such as sociology, political science, anthropology and religion (Green 2002, 2).

The main propositions of the rational choice theory are that “humans are purposive and goal oriented who have sets of hierarchically ordered preferences, or utilities. In choosing lines of behaviour, humans make rational calculations with respect to the utility of alternative lines of conduct with reference to the preference hierarchy, the costs of each alternative in terms of utilities foregone and the best way to maximize utility” (Turner 1974, 354). The theory uses a specific and narrower definition of ‘rationality’ simply to mean that an individual acts as if balancing costs against benefits to arrive at action that maximizes personal advantage.

In the study of religion however, the theory is known as the ‘religious market theory’. The main proponents are Rodney Stark and Roger Finke. Other

collaborators of the theory are Laurence Iannaccone and William Bainbridge. These scholars assert that religion reflects the rational, inevitable, infinite and constant needs of human beings (Ellway, 2005). The central idea of the theory assumes that there is a religious market in which religious firms compete with each other to attract or maintain adherents by means of providing religious products and services. Such adherents are identified as people who make choices from the available religious products that serve their needs in this market. The principal operation that takes place in this market is an 'exchange processes'. By exchange process, the theory refers to how the individual gets into contact with religious organisations (churches) with the aim of paying an amount of money or rendering some services to the religious organisations to receive something (miracles, social, psychological, emotional or financial help) in return to satisfy his/her wants (Stark and Finke, 2000).

It must however be established that there are some scholars who reject and others who accept the religious market theory's approach in getting people into their fold (conversion). Some of the scholars who accept the theory's approach to conversion are Erik Sengers, Henri Gooren, Laurence Iannaccone, Rodney Stark and Roger Finke. Anton Houtepen rejects the theory's approach to conversion. In the paragraphs below are reviewed works by renowned scholars who have dealt with the Religious Market Theory and its application to practical ways employed by religious organisations to get church memberships. These scholars include; Henri Gooren, Anton Houtepen and Bernice Martin.

Henri Gooren and the Religious Market Theory

Gooren gives a critical overview of the religious market model. In doing so, he tries to assess the theory's usefulness for analysing religious conversion in local contexts characterised by increasing pluralism. He also discusses the views, contributions and shortcomings of the theory at three different levels of analysis. The levels are *micro*, *meso* and *macro*. These levels are discussed against the background of how people interact with a particular religious organisation on the religious market before they become members. Gooren is of the view that in the religious market model, pluralism and religious freedom are the essential conditions that make religious competition between religious organisations possible. In turn, this religious competition is supposed to form the foundation of strong individual religious commitment and thus also of conversion to another faith.

Gooren fails to define the *micro*, *meso* and *macro* levels in his discussions. However, he opines that the micro-level "involves the supposed rational actor" (Gooren 2010, 54). In the study of economics, the term micro level refers to the behaviour as well as decisions of people and businesses concerning the allocation of prices and resources for goods and services. In this explanation however, one can argue that the micro level is characterised by rationalisation and decision making by the individual before choices are made. In applying this level to the religious market, the micro level is the level that the individual puts him/herself into thinking before interacts with a particular religious organisation. Gooren would seem to allude to this view in relation to the religious market model but then questions 'rationality'. In trying to answer

the question of rationality, he discusses the concept of a 'rational actor'. His discussion of the concept lies in the difficulty of determining a person's rationality. Stark and Finke on their part, define rationality as that 'within the limits of a person's information and understanding, restricted by available options and guided by their preferences and tastes' (Stark and Finke, 2000 cited in Gooren 2006, 3).

The next level Gooren refers to is the meso-level. The meso-level in the study economics refers to the "phase where the individual 'behaviours' that are embedded, constrained and enabled by practices are in turn shaped by material and infrastructural contexts and the specific technological architecture of individual products, often without individuals being aware of this" (Guy & Shove 2000; Shove & Warde 2002; Southerton et al. 2004). This level is characterised by decision making by the individual before he/she interacts with the religious organisations.

Coming back Gooren, he points out that, at this level, religious organisations put in place ready strategies to compete amongst themselves. It would seem that Gooren believes that the strategies these religious organisations put in place would seem to be based on their knowledge of the rational actor's readiness to make choice(s) from the available religious products they (religious organisations) have put on board in the religious market to attract people. Gooren points out 'exploitation' as one of the main strategies religious organisations may use to compete amongst themselves for membership. For him, religious organisations exploit a particular level of

tension with the surrounding society. This exploitation can be done through ‘culture politics’.

By culture politics, Gooren (2010) refers to Houtepen and Droogers who argue that “culture politics is the position and strategy taken and adopted with regard to the local, social and cultural environment based on religious views” (Droogers, Gooren & Houtepen 2003, 4). Moving away from Gooren, there is evidence to argue that in Ghana, it would seem that there is such competition for membership. Members report their faith in sacred oils that they may readily buy voluntarily or at the recommendation of pastors. If such sacred products work efficaciously to meet the intended purposes, these members stay in that church, else vice versa.

The final level Gooren (2010) discusses is the macro-level which in economics it generally traces the outcomes of interactions, such as economic or other resource transfer interactions over a large population. According to Gooren, this level deals with the ‘religious market’ as part of a greater ‘religious economy’. The term, ‘religious economy’ as Gooren (2010) cites Houtepen (2006) “consists of all the religious activity going on in any society” (Houtepen 2006, 25 cited in Gooren 2010, 59-60).

We may understand Gooren (2010) to be saying that the macro-level is characterised by vibrant interactions and exchange of rewards between both religious organisation(s) and rational actor(s). At this level, the religious organisations promise prospective members all forms of metaphysical, social, economic and psychological services so that they become convinced and stay in that particular religious organisation. It is because for Gooren, Stark and

Finke have no sources to corroborate their argument above. This is because per Gooren's estimation, these two scholars rely on General Social Survey data that is not an authentic and realistic source to prove their argument. For Gooren, it is difficult to put all these shifts within Christianity in the same category of re-affiliation. This is because, it is difficult to explain and analyse the dramatic nature of these shifts.

Another important issue Gooren looks at is how religious demand and supply can be connected as far as the religious market model is concerned. He points out that scholars who work with the religious market model should not choose between paradigms that limit their explanations of religious activity to either supply or religious demand. For Gooren, scholars should rather strive to describe and analyse the connections between religious demand and supply in each specific local context.

Steve Bruce also expresses the above assertion made by Gooren. According to Bruce (2002), "most behaviour of people is/are rational'. However, he rejects 'the very specific claim that economic rationality provides a useful model for understanding religious belief and behaviour' (Bruce 2002, 180). Bruce's main criticism is that rational choice supposes utility. To explain this assertion, he refers to Chaves and Gorski (2001) who argue that; "since there is no way of thinking the best balance of costs and rewards and hence cannot say where utility lies, what appears to be an explanation is reduced to tautology. Another religion is not an alternative to a religion in the sense that a Ford car is an alternative to a Chrysler car" (Chaves & Gorski 2001, 279 cited in Bruce, 2002).

For Gooren (2010), Stark and Finke have hindered the religious market model. This is because these two scholars (Stark and Finke) seem to imply that the religious market is a *metaphor* for a pluralist situation of competing religious groups trying to win new members by selling their ‘product’ called conversion. Gooren adds that the ‘religious market’ is a *literal* description of certain churches merchandising religious products (videos, cassettes, books, miracles etc.) and using marketing strategies to identify, approach and recruit new members. Gooren argues that it will be better if there were critical and careful application of the religious market model as a metaphor that can be useful to analyse religious actors and organisations in the new situation of pluralism that is developing in many parts of the world.

In view of the above argument however, there must be another adaptation that should address and remedy the way belief is left out almost entirely in the religious market model as developed by Stark and Finke (2000), except as ‘religious capital’ and as a way to reduce supernatural risks. Here, the conversion careers approach will depend heavily on conceptualization of belief from theology. Moreover, the final adaptation involves adding the elements of religious demand to the religious market model, which is evident in the conversion careers approach. The *conversion career* may be defined as the member’s passage, within her/his social and cultural context, through various levels of religious activity. This passage can happen in the same church or another one.

Firstly, one must note that the conversion careers approach thus synthesizes approaches to conversion in psychology, sociology, anthropology

and theology. Secondly, it also explores the reason why people are dissatisfied with their original religion. Thirdly, it distinguishes various levels of religious activity, uses life cycles approach to track the different levels of religious activity throughout people's lives and operationalises various factors influencing religious demand. Finally, it connects the religious demand of individual actors with the religious supply of competing churches on the religious market. For Gooren, the factors that influence religious demand as already opined above in turn influence the five levels of increasing religious participation. These levels are disaffiliation, pre-affiliation, affiliation, conversion and confession.

There is a reason to think that the conversion career approach will not attempt to locate the basis of conversion at either the individual, organisational or the social level as most sociological approaches have done in the past. Instead, it will identify the many factors operating at each of these three meta-levels and pay special attention to their interconnections. The next scholar whose work on the market theory is worth discussing is Anton Houtepen.

Anton Houtepen and the Religious Market Theory

Conversion and the religious market theory have gained currency in recent times in the study of religion. Scholars have made efforts in trying to see how conversion works in religious organisations. One of such scholars is Anton Houtepen (2006) who expresses his ideas concerning the religious market and conversion in his article, *Conversion and the religious market: A theological perspective*. Conversion as espoused by the religious market theory connotes when an individual takes over one faith for another, by adhering to

one religious organisation instead of another. Houtepen (2006) disagrees with the religious market theory's definition of conversion because he believes it makes conversion and mission lose their theological meaning to the language of technology and management. Mission, now simply stands for the core business of office and factories, while conversion takes on many connotations depending on the discipline in which it is used. In social science approach to the study of religion, conversion refers to a change in a religious affiliation.

However, in the 16th century onwards, Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Indigenous churches understood conversion in their theology to mean people coming to a firm and personal choice for religious commitment, a decision change in their life and a proper relation to God, usually after a period of crisis, failure, sin or enslavement. This applies to both new comers and people who come from other denominations to a particular faith. According to Houtepen (2006), in a *religious market* or *arena*, conversion means religions or religious people competing with one another for power, influence or success.

Houtepen (2006) then looks at the historical-theological factors that contributed to the shift of meaning in systems of religious adherence. He also analyses a series of problems that arise between a traditional understanding of Christian conversion and initiation and the more modern, experiential view on conversion and Christian belonging in Pentecostal thinking. Houtepen (2006) discusses the idea of conversion and religious market under various themes. Under the themes of 'religion as a communal experience and practice', Houtepen traces, "in the earliest time, roughly up to the time of the reformation, religion was not so much a matter of personal convictions,

worldviews or sentiments, but rather a public affair. It was a system of conduct of tribes, nations and empires constituting the proper worship of the gods or (a) God” (Houtepen 2006, 3). To further elaborate this view, Houtepen (2006) cites Smith (1990) who argues, “the communal affair was evident in the relationship people had with themselves and the gods in a conventional relationship guaranteed by the kings and priests. This communal religiosity is confirmed by the fact that shifts and changes in political loyalty also resulted to mutations in religious loyalty” (Smith, 1990 cited in Houtepen 2006, 3).

In this argument however, Houtepen (2006) forgets that religion has always had an institutional as well as individual components. Individual, subjective, religious experiences may or may not be expressed through membership. Hence, it is too much of generalisation to exclude “personal conviction, worldviews or sentiments” from the religious experience of a whole historical epoch or more (Oxtoby 1996, 220-309). The second theme which Houtepen (2006) uses to discuss conversion is the concept of *Teshubah* in the History of ancient Israel. Referring to Wright (2004), Houtepen (2006) explains that the term *Teshubah* meant a number of things. First, it was a change of mind and heart, the way of life and the worship of YHWH. Secondly, *Teshubah* meant the entrance into the covenant of Israel with YHWH (Gen 17:7; Zach 14:9; Isaiah 56:7; Ruth 2:12) with strong post-exilic overtones (Wright 2004, 14-19).

Thirdly, the term *Teshubah* also meant a lifelong process of renewed commitment to ‘YHWH’. Finally, *Teshubah* meant a renewal, reform and purification of one’s self. These acts were viewed as conversion by the Jews

who came back from exile to their homeland. *Teshubah* was a new form of concentration on Jahwistic monotheism and the general abjuration of the polytheistic cults of Mesopotamia. Warnings, instructions, obligations and circumcision were necessary for the observation of the Torah and being part of the covenant of YHWH. Houtepen argues that the central meaning of *Teshubah* is not based on the change of mind. Rather, it is the final coming home to YHWH who is the source of all religion and the God of all nations.

Houtepen (2006) continues his discussion by looking at the terms *Metanoia* and *Epistrophè* in the New Testament. These terms according to Houtepen are related to *repentance* and *rebirth*. Houtepen argues that these two terms deal with doing away with inherited ways of life and patterns of religious conduct and rather starting a new life in a new community that is dependent on God. Houtepen (2006) argues that the entrance into this community is the public sign of conversion.

This is sealed by baptism and by sharing the sacrament of the renewed covenant with YHWH. Conversion to Christianity was not so much a change of religious affiliation. Houtepen refers to Irenaeus, Origen and Justin's view on conversion. These three scholars saw conversion as turning towards the mystery of God's Trinitarian presence. For them, conversion involves giving up all unnecessary avocations, which is a lifelong challenge. Houtepen (2006) points out that after the conversion of Constantine, Christianity became the dominating culture triumphant over dying paganism. From the sixth century onwards, emperors, kings and princes embarked on campaigns and crusades to bring all manner of societies into Christian society "*Societas Christiana*".

Gradually, conversion became synonymous to living a devout and religious life not only for monks but also for all people who imitated the rules of monastic life. In medieval usage, conversion referred to both those persons who entered the monastic life at a mature age and lay people outside the monasteries living an ascetic life. In the monasteries, conversion was viewed as the return of the penitent sinner to God and a gradually richer and intimate conversation with God.

Houtepen (2006) also looks at some arguments posited by some reformers concerning their understanding of conversion. In the sixteenth century, some groups of reformers led by Martin Luther opposed the way the church had interpreted the gospel. The gospel was interpreted in terms of law and discipline, moral obligation, virtues and meritorious good works. Against this view, the reformers argued that there was the need for a more personal form of the Christian faith stressing the meaning of faith and conversion as justification and sanctification by the grace of God alone not by way of merit and virtue or by the obedience to a central ecclesiastical order. From this background, Luther defines conversion as not a onetime dramatic event but a daily struggle to fulfil the promises of one's baptism and to live from the grace of God in permanent attitude of contrition and penance.

The reformation brought about a new understanding of conversion as an individual and momentous experience of spiritual renewal and revival, accompanied by healings and ecstatic states of mind. Adding to the views expressed by the reformers on the issue of conversion, Houtepen cites Charles G. Finney (2000) in whose view conversion means a visible generation. He

explains that conversion is accompanied by the change of moral character in the subject; “a sinner made holy”. Finney adds that, the momentous experience must be felt by the person and the community the person lives in (Finney, 2000 cited in Houtepen 2006, 10-11).

Coming back to Houtepen (2006) he advances that some Pentecostal tendencies claim that conversion is only real when signs of it become visible, others would contend that the spirit works in diverse and even invisible ways. The outward signs people exhibits are not essential for a conversion experience being authentic. Houtepen concludes that *Teshubah*, *Metanoia*, and *conversion* refer to an existential commitment to and regeneration by the creative Spirit of God. It is an experience of the holiness in life and the return to the one God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who is the God of the people, nations and monotheistic religions.

Arguing from a historical-theological perspective, Houtepen rejects the understanding of conversion as a mere change of religious affiliation. For him, it is better to understand conversion as a continuous appeal and lifelong passion towards the common good, the healthy forms of life, the solidarity and community of the people of God. It is joyful, relaxing, not full of fear, not strangled with obligations, not exhausting, but liberating. He adds that conversion is the act whereby a person returns to the God of the Patriarchs. There is a reason to think that Houtepen is not aware of the development in meaning about how the religious market theory explains conversion. It should be made clear that there is no single way of understanding conversion. Conversion as a term must be viewed and understood from broader purviews

vis-à-vis religions and culture. For example, in Ghana, conversion can be understood in different ways. Conversion can mean a change in religious traditions, within the same religious traditions, newly becoming a member of a particular religious tradition and accepting to belong to a particular religious group.

In addition to what Houtepen (2006) says about conversion, he posits that Christianity as such excludes ecclesiastical competition on something like the religious market or of rational choice about the better life. However, this is not the case in Ghana. In Ghana, some churches put up diverse religious strategies and products to attract people into their churches. For example; anointing oils, holy water, free counselling sessions, financial support to church members and non-church members. Such suggest what Houtepen may refer to as ecclesiastical competition.

Inferring from Houtepen's critique of the religious market model on conversion, there is reason not to relegate it to the background. However, his arguments apply more to the western experience. This is because of the examples and explanations he gives to his understanding of the market model. Another scholar whose work is worth discussing in view of the religious market theory is Bernice Martin (2006).

Bernice Martin and the Religious Market Theory

Aside the views espoused by Houtepen (2006) and Gooren (2006) on the religious market theory, another scholar whose work is worth examining is Bernice Martin (2006) who tries to reflect on some questions that illuminate and obscure the religious market theory. She, in her work finds out whether the

religious market is *just* a metaphor or a universally valid theoretical model as Stark (2000) and other scholars claim. Finally, she interrogates her own practice in using the market theory as a metaphor in trying to account for the incidence, processes and effects of Pentecostal conversion.

To explain in her own view how she understands the religious market theory to have been used in a metaphoric way, Bernice uses the following themes. They include; the structuring of the market, entrepreneurship, converts as clients or customers and marketing strategies. In discussing the theme ‘structuring of the market’, Bernice argues that in all economic markets, even the freest are structured by a framework of law, either contract law, corporate law or employment law and the like (Bernice 2006, 70).

In view of the above, she is convinced that the state has a hand in regulating religious competition in the midst of clusters of religious institutions. By regulation, Bernice states that the state defines the relations between itself and the other civic authorities on the one hand and religious bodies singly or completely on the other hand. She buttresses the above view by citing a scenario in Latin America where an imperial power had legally privileged its own religion but turned a blind eye on the persistence of indigenous practices. She adds that as in the case of Soviet Block, after the year 1989, the state lifted some or almost all of the prohibitions that had restricted the practicing religion as such, or ceased its political infiltration of the main religious bodies. One would like to see that there should be state regulation. However, there is no state regulation for competition amongst religious institutions in the Ghanaian context. The state regulates religious organisations

in their provision of some rites of passage that are civil contract. For example, marriage, registration of birth and the like.

Another issue that Bernice addresses concerning the religious market theory is entrepreneurship. Whereas in economics, Burch (1986) defines entrepreneurship as “initiation of change” and the “process of giving birth to a new business” (Burch 1986 cited in Gutterman 2012, 4), Bernice understands the term to mean the way churches are typically set up. She notes that there seems to be traces of entrepreneurship in Pentecostal churches. This is because of the way a pastor establishes his church based on a conviction that he has received a “calling” from God. Bernice explains the term “calling” to mean the act of God by which he extends an invitation to people to come and partake of his favours.

There is no such difference in the Ghanaian context. Ghana, like a number of other African countries, witnesses an increasing number of smaller independent Pentecostal and African Instituted churches founded by young pastors. These founders claim to have a religious experience in the form of ‘spiritual calling’. Other forms of such religious experiences take the form dreams, visions and the like. In an interview by Lauterbach (2010) in Ghana, he reports a testimony given by a pastor who tried to resist a “calling” from ‘God’:

But initially I wasn’t opening up to God in order to take the task, because I heard many pastors complaining that it is difficult, it is not easy, the problems one faces, so I had not wanted to engage myself in anything that has

got to do with God. I just decided to go to church and be a normal Christian, an ordinary church member and also go about with my normal lifestyle with my business. And yet as God will have it, God just called me, he also confirmed it through many pastors that God has spoken to me, that he wants to use me, that he wants me to be his servant (Lauterbach 2010, 12: Interview with Francis Afrifa, Kumasi, 17th February 2005).

From the above interview, Lauterbach confirms the assertion of Bernice concerning a pastor who sets his own church based on his conviction of his “calling”. Lauterbach (2010) further confirms the view of Bernice that education does not become the yardstick to determine the pastor’s calling. Lauterbach posits that ‘Neo-Pentecostal pastors include a wide range of people from different backgrounds with varying levels of education. Most of the pastors he interviewed had some formal education, both primary education and post-primary education. Many had also completed secondary education. Moreover, about a third had left school after their first level of secondary education and therefore fallen into the category of ‘school leavers’ (Yamada 2005 cited in Lauterbach, 2010).

Turning to Bernice on the issue discussed above, she adds that some of the self-descriptions of these pastors hint at the idea of entrepreneurship. On the one hand, Bernice appears to be convinced that there are some pastors devoid of the idea of entrepreneurship. She refers to an instance where she

encountered some pastors from different churches who have been able to 'plant' (sic) many churches across the globe devoid of the idea of entrepreneurship.

According to Bernice, these pastors rather sought the welfare of pastors and widows who received no pension allowances. On the contrary, there were some other Neo-Pentecostal pastors who had appetite for their selfish financial gains, and this suggested entrepreneurship. In a research conducted by Van Dijk (1992), he described how young 'born-again' preachers in Malawi acted as 'religious entrepreneurs' in the sense that they combine pastoral work with their social careers (such as doing business and evangelisation at the same time). He argues that the young pastors create a new urban space for social mobility and distance themselves from their seniors.

There is reason to agree with Van Dijk's views on pastoral careers as new routes for social climbing and the fact that a dual process is taking place. Young pastors distance themselves from some relations with their seniors, but at the same time, engage in new relations that also contain elements of seniority. Adding to the above, Bernice argues that the elements of voluntarism and individualism give the plausibility of the market metaphor coupled with the high incidence of mount between churches.

She points out from the spiritual autobiographies she gathered in her research that she realized that in conversion, there is the need to emphasize on the importance of individual agency. For Bernice, conversion is not a straight forward product offered or even in a church by a pastor. She advances that conversion experience takes a process and can take place at home, or quite

often in the street or some other public places. It must be noted that the potential convert himself/herself manages conversion process rather than by a pastor or healer, though in some cases it involves a pastor or healer's intervention. Moreover, it does not necessarily mean that the product of conversion is to witness the convert becoming a member of a particular church although in some cases it happens.

Pointing to Bernice, she notes that in her research on conversion, the search for healing by people through miraculous means is the driving force. This assertion is not different from the Ghanaian religiosity where people seek healing from churches and pastors through miraculous means. Bernice adds that it would be a mistake to understand the desire for healing in a narrow sense. This is because the desire for healing can and usually does not encompass moral wholeness and the mending of relationships, especially in the family, as well as the physical and mental healing of the individual.

Inferring from the above view, Bernice gives the impression that there is a difficulty in regarding the "client" or "customer" for "conversion" as the atomised individual consumer of the economic theory. For Bernice, she thinks that the several paradoxes that characterize the Pentecostal conversion make it difficult to see the convert as a straightforward individual "client" or 'customer'. Bernice points out that most people would convert based on their longing for spiritual transformation, coupled with new wholeness of body and stabilization, both material and moral, of the family. She augments that conversion is a free choice that is typically followed by the voluntary acceptance of a set of strong moral rules enforced by the pastor and the church community.

There is reason to think that Bernice is not aware of what people search for before they belong to a particular religious organisation in Ghana. Inasmuch as conversion is a free choice as Bernice posits, firstly, it must be stated that in Ghana, there are many factors that accounts for one's quest to belong to a particular church. Some of the reasons have been enlisted in chapter four of this study. In a study conducted by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana to find out as to why there is the rapid growth in the number of churches in Ghana and why people would want to belong to a particular church but not the other, the following were the outcomes.

Firstly it was noted that churches proclaim with considerable strength what miracles happen in their churches; they offer people what they want whether biblically good or not. A very important point, however, is that they care for people. By this, everybody is asked about his personal needs - spiritual or material - and is prayed for. People are assured of salvation and help and proofs and guarantees are also given. A large number of Christians join spiritual churches because they are disappointed with their former churches. The complaint is often aired that there is no spiritual power, that worship is dull, that church agents are hypocrites and that there is not sufficient prayer in the old churches. Such persons therefore seek younger and more zealous religious fellowship (Opoku 1968, 52-53).

Another significant issue Bernice points out as far as conversion is concerned is the strategies Pentecostals put in place to win people into their fold. Some of the strategies include; preaching on streets, performing healing practices, public witnessing and the use of modern mass media (radio, television and films). The above strategies are obvious on daily basis in Ghana.

For example, some Neo-Pentecostal churches either play their jingles, sermons and videos of healing practices on radios and televisions respectively to advertise themselves to people.

Aside the strategies Bernice points out above, she makes mention of the idea of prominence of pastors in Neo-Pentecostal churches. This is because for her, that idea is characterised by Neo-Pentecostal pastors in modern times. In Ghana, some pastors exhibit prominence, affluence and leadership positions establishing radio and television stations, publishing books and establishing schools (universities etc.). All of these are strategies employed by the pastors to attract and maintain members and prospective members in their respective churches.

Discussions on the Religious Market Theory

From the discussions above, there is reason to argue that the views shared in the works by the respective scholars would apply to the Ghanaian context in the light of the religious market theory. Moreover, their application helps to understand the exchange processes that exist between the WMCI and people that patronise their religious services and products. Having discussed the religious market theory into details, the next chapter assesses the use of miracles in the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch). The chapter divides into two sections. The first section deals with the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) as a church of the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition in Ghana. The second section of this chapter discusses some of the ethical implications associated with the use of miracles for conversion.

CHAPTER THREE

THE USE OF MIRACLES BY THE WORD MIRACLE CHURCH INTERNATIONAL (WMCI) AND ITS ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Chapter two presents the history of the Word Miracle Church International, (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) dating from the year 1987 to 2013 and discusses the religious market theory. The point was to prepare the grounds for a discussion on the use of miracles in the church under study, basing the discussion on the theoretical frame of the religious market theory. This present chapter builds on the discussion in the previous chapter, by focusing on the main thesis of the research, that is, the ethical implications of the use of miracles as a means of getting members by the WMCI.

In order to address the main thesis of the research, three important suppositions need to be considered. The first one concerns the identity of the WMCI as a Ghanaian Christian group of the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition. The second deals with the Indigenous Ghanaian Religious Worldview (IGRW), which finds continuity in the WMCI religious beliefs and practices. This second supposition leads to and stands in close relation to the phenomenology of what the WMCI leadership and members consider as miracle and how the WMCI uses miracles to address the material needs of its members and the Ghanaian populace that patronise their services.

A. Word Miracle Church International (WMCI) as a Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian Tradition in Ghana

In this section, the thesis addresses the question of why we can say that the WMCI belongs to the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian tradition in Ghana. Pentecostalism is the fastest growing stream of Christianity in the world today. In fact, the movement is reshaping religion in the twenty-first century (Harvey G. Cox. 1996 cited in Asamoah-Gyadu 2014, 1). According to Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) “Pentecostalism” may be defined as that stream of Christianity which emphasises personal salvation in Christ as “a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit” (p. 12). He explains the term Charismatic which for him, generally refers to historically younger Pentecostal independent and parachurch movements, many of which function within non-Pentecostal denominations (Asamoah-Gyadu 2014, 1).

The term Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition in Ghanaian Christianity generally describes those Christian groups that emphasise the active presence of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the power of the Spirit in concrete signs and miracles as an integral part of the Gospel and its proclamation (Larbi, 2001; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009; Omenyo, 2006). According to Omenyo, the history of Pentecostalism in Ghana is related indirectly to the Azusa Street Revivals in the United States, though no missionaries came from there to Ghana. He believes that the first direct contact Ghana had with the movement came from Liberia through Prophet William Wade Harris a Liberia national, in South Western Ghana in the year 1914. This contact witnessed mass

conversion of the indigenes from idolatry to Christianity coupled with miracles, signs and wonders (Omenyo, 2002).

Larbi (2001) as cited by Cofie (2010) writes that the efforts put up by Prophet Wade Harris in his quest for Ghana to have a feel of the Pentecostal experience gathered momentum in the middle of the 1970s when an American healing evangelist, Oral Granville Roberts started airing his television broadcast on Ghana's sole broadcasting network, Ghana Television. This Pentecostal-Charismatic broadcast according to Larbi (2001) exposed Ghanaian Christianity to another mode of the gospel that was foreign to them. Larbi reminds us that during Roberts' televised programme, a picturesque view of the edifices of the Oral Evangelistic Association and University were shown. At the tail-end of the programme, the addresses of Oral Roberts' ministry and University were displayed and the viewers were encouraged to write to receive free books and monthly newsletters authored by Roberts' outfit. Roberts' materials were spread in Ghanaian circles. This made Roberts' theologies and terminologies popular amongst Ghanaians. This continued until 1982 when his telecast was taken off and by that time, Roberts had become popular to his Ghanaian viewers and had great influence. His influence was further heightened when after six years of silence he paid a visit to Ghana on 4th July 1988 to hold a Miracle Crusade in Accra. Roberts thus influenced Pentecostal – Charismatic Christians in Ghana (Larbi 2001 cited by Cofie 2010, 32-33).

Another personality who fuelled the fire lit by Roberts was the Neo–Pentecostal Evangelist, Benson Andrew Idahosa. Like Roberts, Idahosa's telecast dubbed 'Redemption Hour' was characteristically charismatic and was

beamed at primetime. Idahosa also organised a mammoth crusade in the cities of Accra and Tema. At the end of the crusade, he offered scholarships to men and women who were willing to be trained for ministry work in his Bible School, All Nations For Christ Bible Institute in Benin City, Nigeria. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) adds that the graduates of the school were specifically charged to start their own ministries. This charge was faithfully carried out by many Ghanaians who trained with Idahosa. The result was products like Christie Doe-Tetteh of Solid Rock Chapel, Godwin Normanyo of Fountain of Life Ministries, George Ferguson-Laing of Living Praise Chapel, Matthew Addae-Mensah of Gospel Light International Church and Charles Agyin-Asare of Word Miracle Church International to name, a few of which the latter is the focus of this study. These persons and many other Idahosa-trained ministers formed the first generation leaders of the Charismatic Movement in Ghana (Cofie 2010, 32-33 citing Larbi 2001: Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, 110-11).

The Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian churches in Ghana of which the WMCI is of no exemption have some general characteristics. One of the central characteristic of this genre of Christian tradition in the words of Asamoah-Gyadu (2009) is the much emphasis they place on the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit (Asamoah-Gyadu 2009, 33). In the WMCI for instance, in most of Agyin-Asare's sermons, one finds him emphasising on the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit. For him, they (anointing and power of the Holy Spirit) are the sources of power from where miracles in his ministry occur. This finding by the researcher in the course of this study is in line with what Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) writes of Agyin-Asare at a Full Gospel Banquet after the latter had received 'anointing' from Morris Cerullo's church:

“As Dr. Cerullo spoke and wept, I also wept for my powerlessness to save this sinful world. On that day of the conference, Dr. Ness anointed our ears, thumbs and toes. When I got to my seat and knelt, I heard a voice of the Holy Spirit say; ‘My boy Charles, I send you out as I sent Moses. Go and I will put my words on your lips and take the world for me’” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, 157).

Another significant characteristic of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches is the emphasis they place on the phenomenon of healing and deliverance. The concept of healing and deliverance is what Asamoah-Gyadu (2009) respectively calls in Twi Akan language “*ayaresa ne ogyee*” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2009, 36). For him, the phenomenon of healing and deliverance has been consciously integrated into the evangelising efforts of many Christian traditions. In the WMCI, one finds miraculous healing occurring times without number. Majority of Agyin-Asare’s ministry is characterised by healing of the sick and delivering people from under the control of demonic spirits. At most times, healing in the WMCI takes place in the church (mostly during Sunday and weekday services) and at crusade grounds.

The phenomenon of speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) is one of the conspicuous characteristics of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana, which the WMCI is of no exemption. Speaking in tongues in the WMCI is a very common phenomenon in the lives of majority of the members of the church. The WMCI as a church stresses on speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*).

This is because speaking in tongues is an indication that one has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit according to Agyin-Asare, gives one the power to do exploits. The phenomenon of speaking in tongues is highly felt during prayer sessions in the church. In a personal communication with some of the church members of the WMCI, the researcher was informed that speaking in tongues whiles praying helps an individual to rise to a higher status where the individual can commune with God. Speaking in tongues makes a person spiritually strong and undefeated by the powers of the devil (personal communication with some members of the WMCI on 13th April, 2013). Aside the characteristics of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana mentioned afore, one other feature worth noting is their emphasis on spiritual gifts. Examples of the spiritual gifts are but not limited to are the gift of prophecy, discernment of spirits, interpretation of dreams, and gift of empowerment to become leaders, evangelists (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, 159-160).

In the WMCI, members are encouraged to discover their innate spiritual gifts. In the course of the research, the researcher interacted with five of the church members of which three of them claimed that they had discovered their spiritual gifts of prophecy, singing and evangelisation when they became church members of the WMCI. The three church members had a lengthy discussion with the researcher on their gifts. The discussion ended with the assertion that before they discovered and developed their spiritual gifts they went through rigorous Bible teachings coupled with prayers with Bishop Agyin-Asare and some of the church leaders.

Moving away from the issue of spiritual gifts as a characteristic of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana, it is worth mentioning that the idea of prosperity gospel cannot be left out as far as Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana are concerned. This idea of prosperity in the words of Copeland (1978) is evident in the titles of publications emanating from Charismatic leaders. Notable examples are Duncan William's *Destined to succeed*, Eastwood Anaba's *Breaking illegal possession: Dislodge the enemy and possess the land* and Michael Essel's *Three things to do with the word to prosper* (Copeland 1978, cited in Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, 206). Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) adds to Copeland (1978) by positing that Charismatic preaching and writing is also dominated by the themes of 'blessing', 'success', 'prosperity', 'achievements', 'victories' and 'breakthroughs'. Suffering, pain, the high cost of discipleship and inevitability of death are conspicuously absent (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, 205-207).

In the WMCI, church members are taught the need to be prosperous financially, materially, and spiritually as children of God. This is because prosperity has a Biblical reference. One of the most referred arch-texts of the prosperity gospel is 3 John 1:2 "*Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth*" (King James Version). It is no wonder that the WMCI has the biggest church auditorium in Ghana with a fourteen thousand (14,000) seating capacity coupled with a modern stylish architectural design.

i. Indigenous Ghanaian Religious Worldview (IGRW) and the Pentecostal-Charismatic Tradition

Under this section, discussions have to do with the Indigenous Ghanaian Religious Worldview (henceforth, IGRW), which finds continuity in the WMCI theology and practice. Asamoah-Gyadu (2014) and Larbi (2001) have argued that in the IGRW, what people consider important in theology are the things that address their religious needs. Larbi writes that the IGRW reach out to a form of salvation that relates to the existential here and now. Salvation in this context, according to Larbi embodies the enjoyment of long life, vitality, vigour, and health; a life of happiness and felicity; the enjoyment of prosperity: that is, wealth, riches, and substance, including children; life of peace, tranquillity; and life free from perturbation. Larbi adds that the concept of salvation in the primal world is single-faceted and for that matter there is no concept of heaven tomorrow (Asamoah-Gyadu 2014, 3: Larbi 2001, 104).

Moving away from the concept of salvation in the IGRW, we refer to Larbi who throws more light on the Pentecostal-Charismatic worldview of salvation. By so doing, he examines how both religious worldviews seek salvation. Larbi argues that on the *prima facie* level, the whole idea of salvation in the Pentecostal-Charismatic worldview embodies the atonement, forgiveness of sin, and reconciliation with God. Yet by their practices, they are reaching out to things that go beyond the “born again” experience, to an experience that permeates their here and now life, and also promises them of a better tomorrow in the hereafter. For Larbi, Pentecostal-Charismatic worldview of salvation unlike the primal worldview is dual-faceted. That is, incorporating “this-worldliness” and “other-worldliness”. In spite of this dual concept of salvation, Larbi posits that the salvation of soul plays a central role in their (Pentecostal-Charismatic) scheme of salvation. The experience of “soul salvation” not only

prepares the “redeemed ones” for the “celestial city” in the hereafter, but also, it is perceived as the key to abundant life or salvation today. This state of abundant life experience embodies the enjoyment of prosperity, which includes wealth, health and fertility (Larbi 2001, 96-104).

Larbi notes that though the primal understanding of salvation today is the same as the Pentecostals’ conception of salvation, the way salvation is sought in the two realms are different. Whereas in the primal world salvation is sought through traditional forms of supernatural succour, which include the divinities, the mediatorial role of the ancestors, and the use of charms and amulets, the Pentecostals are uncompromisingly hostile to these traditional forms of succour. They look to the Christian God as the only and ultimate supernatural succour. What cannot be found through the traditional forms of supernatural succour is now available to them in Christ. By virtue of the superior power of Christ in salvific encounters, He is perceived as the matchless and incomparable One. Christ, as Larbi notes is thus considered as superior to the traditional pantheon: the local divinities, the ancestral cult, witches, charms and amulets, and all other forms of magical power (Larbi 2001, 96-104).

In view of the above, Larbi (2001) and Asamoah-Gyadu (2014) remind us about the fact that it was as a result of the Pentecostal-Charismatic continuity of the African religious paradigm that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian tradition was said to have proven successful in Africa and for that matter Ghana. Asamoah-Gyadu (2014) explains that the success to a very large degree emanated from the fact that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity

opened up to the supernatural and through its interventionist and oral theological forms that resonate with traditional African piety (p. 3).

Larbi (2011) argues that the success as Asamoah-Gyadu posits was in view of the fact that Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition however appealed more to the IGRW, thus succeeding in permeating into the Ghanaian society with its message. That is to say, the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition provided ready answers to the complex problems of the indigenes. Unlike the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition who succeeded in meeting the felt needs of the indigenes, Larbi notes that the Western mission-related Churches, superficially addressed the needs of the indigenes thus their impact was short-lived (Cofie 2010, p. 8 citing Larbi 2001).

By placing the religious practices of the IGRW side by side with the religious beliefs and practices of the WMCI, one finds certain religious practices in these two religious worldviews of which it can be said that the IGRW finds continuity in the WMCI's religious beliefs and practices. For example, in the IGRW, it is reckoned with the fact that African religion is expected to deal with the effects of evil caused by demonic spirits and witchcraft. Evil powers represented by those with evil eyes, demons, witchcraft and curses, in the African context, result in all sorts of misfortunes — sickness, failure, childlessness and other setbacks in life (Asamoah-Gyadu 2014, 3). In this regard, in the IGRW, it is believed that people who are in search of spiritual protection against malevolent spirits resort to the patronage and use of charms, amulets, and magic prepared for them by traditional priests and priestesses (Opoku 1978, 140-42).

Asamoah-Gyadu notes that the worldview underpinning the practice of deliverance in African Pentecostalism is based primarily on Jesus' encounters with the powers of affliction and Pauline notions of the wrestle with principalities and powers (Ephesians 6). The basic theological orientation of the healing and deliverance phenomenon is the belief that demons may either possess a person and take over his or her executive faculties or simply oppress people through various influences (p. 3). However, from the findings the researcher gathered from the WMCI, there is reason to agree with Asamoah-Gyadu's propositions above. In the WMCI, demonic spirits that are believed to possess people are exorcised. People who are believed to be spiritually married to some demonic spirits are also delivered through fervent prayers.

In the IGRW, it is believed that adherents who feel insecure and are willing to find answers to their predicaments subscribe to the use of several religious products. These religious products are, but not limited to magical powders, amulets, charms, beads and dolls. Testimonies emanating from the use of the religious products are overwhelming, testifying the potency of such products (Idowu 1973, Mbiti, 1989, Sarpong, 1974). Inferring from the practices and beliefs among the IGRW, one finds its continuity in the WMCI. The WMCI as a Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition makes some Christian religious products and services available to its members and people who come to the church to find answers to their problems. Some of these Christian religious products and services are anointing oils, and deliverance services, fervent prayers and fasting sessions respectively. The anointing oils are prayed over by Agyin-Asare. The prayer aims at invoking the power of God onto the oils. The power of God which then comes to inhabit the oils render spiritual

protection whereas the deliverance, prayers and fasting are intended to liberate one from the bondage of malevolent spirits and attacks.

Another religious practice worth mentioning in the IGRW that finds continuity in the WMCI, as a Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition is the concept of healing. In the IGRW, there are several examples of ailments that traditional priests and priestesses cure. Some notable examples include, but are not limited to convulsion, epilepsy, asthma, eczema, fever, urinary tract infections, gout, and healing of wounds and burns. The healing in the IGRW is done through diverse media. For example, in some cases, the traditional priest prepares concoction for the sick. This concoction is either used to bathe or is drunk daily by the sick person. The prevention and cure of these ailments and misfortunes according to Opoku (1978) include taking of herbs and roots as well as ritual cleansing and offering of sacrifices. Opoku notes also that in curing of ailments in the IGRW, the traditional priests acknowledge God as the healer and the expression usually used is, *if God permits it* (italics mine) (Opoku 1978, 149 & Anti, n.d.). In the WMCI like what goes on in the IGRW, there are many examples of ailments of people that the church heals. Some examples of ailments include but not limited to epilepsy, asthmas, deafness, and blindness.

By inferring from the paragraphs above in view of how the WMCI as a Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition builds on the IGRW, one comes to understand some of the reasons why the WMCI like other Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana is attracted to its church members and majority of the Ghanaian populace.

ii. The Use of Miracles by the WMCI

The term miracle has already been dealt with in chapter one. However, in this section of the thesis, miracle is differentiated from its counterpart, magic. In doing such distinctions, some of the reasons why the WMCI rejects similar experiences in the traditional religion as demonic are noted. Finally, some of the ways the WMCI uses miracles to address the needs of its members and people that patronise their religious services are discussed.

We recall in chapter one that the study's working definition of the term miracle is, an unusual and extraordinary event that occurs resulting from God's volition and intervention in nature, which beats the intelligence and understanding of human beings in time and space. "The term magic in the African and Ghanaian contexts refers to *"juju"*. Awuah-Nyamekye (2008) writes that 'magic includes those supernatural devices employed to gain one's end without the help of spirits or gods' (p. 25). He adds that magic is something one can conjure up with the help of other devices. Idowu (1973) understands magic to be an attempt on the part of a man to tap and control the supernatural resources of the universe for his own benefit. For him, magic is "My will be done". It must be noted that the practice and the use of charms, potent portions, wearing of amulets, voodoo dolls and invocation of non-physical persons or powers by means of incantations have all come to be regarded as the basic manifestation of magic within the African context (Awuah-Nyamekye 2008, 25-46 & Idowu 1973).

According to Mbiti (1989), Sarpong (1976) and Idowu (1973), miracle differs from magic in many ways. For these three scholars, whereas magic is an event caused by a person's own might to get a desired result (either good or

bad) accomplished by using the mind, spells, candles, and other implements, a miracle is not personal base and is devoid of the use of spells, candles, incantations and the like to bring out a desired effect. The efficacy of magic is short-lived in its effect whiles miracle is long lasting in its effect. Magic involves manipulating or controlling the mind of the supernatural to get the desired effects but a miracle involves supplication and petitioning the will of the supernatural to cause an effect. Whiles magic is private, involving secrecy and mysterious acts carried out mainly for individual gains, miracle is open and it serves the entire society. Magic is stereotyped as being used to fulfil bad ends whiles miracle aims in its essence to fulfil good ends.

In the WMCI, similar experiences of miracle that magic produces in traditional religion are considered demonic. This is because a miracle is understood in the WMCI as an event that occurs resulting from the volition of God, without the manipulation of objects, use of spells, incantations and techniques. For the WMCI, miracles are extraordinary events caused by God in the life of the believer. Inferring from the stance of miracles in the WMCI vis-à-vis the distinctions Mbiti (1989), Sarpong (1976) and Idowu (1973) make between miracle and magic, there is reason to understand why the WMCI will consider similar outcomes of magic to be demonic irrespective of the effects magic produces as against its counterpart, miracle.

Moving away from the distinction between miracle and magic, one other important aspect of the thesis that needs attention concerns the use of miracles by the WMCI. In the course of the research, the researcher discovered that in the WMCI the miracles that take place are mainly healing in nature, for e.g.

deaf and dumb, cancer, asthma etc. The miracles take place during Sunday and weekday church services. On these said days, Agyin-Asare prays for people that are sick and instantly, they receive their miraculous healing. Apart from the fact that miracles occur in the church, miracles also occur during crusades.

Some of the noted miraculous healing that the WMCI has recorded over the years are, but not limited to healing people with hearing disabilities, cripples, the blind, epileptics, cancer and asthma. There are testimonies of the miracle of the fruit of the womb, people with fibroid, hypertension, and stroke to mention but a few. The picture galleries below show some of the people who received their miracle after a word of prayer and the laying on of hands by Agyin-Asare during some of the church's organised crusades in Ghana.

Picture 1a: Cripples Relieved from their Walking Aids



Picture 1b:



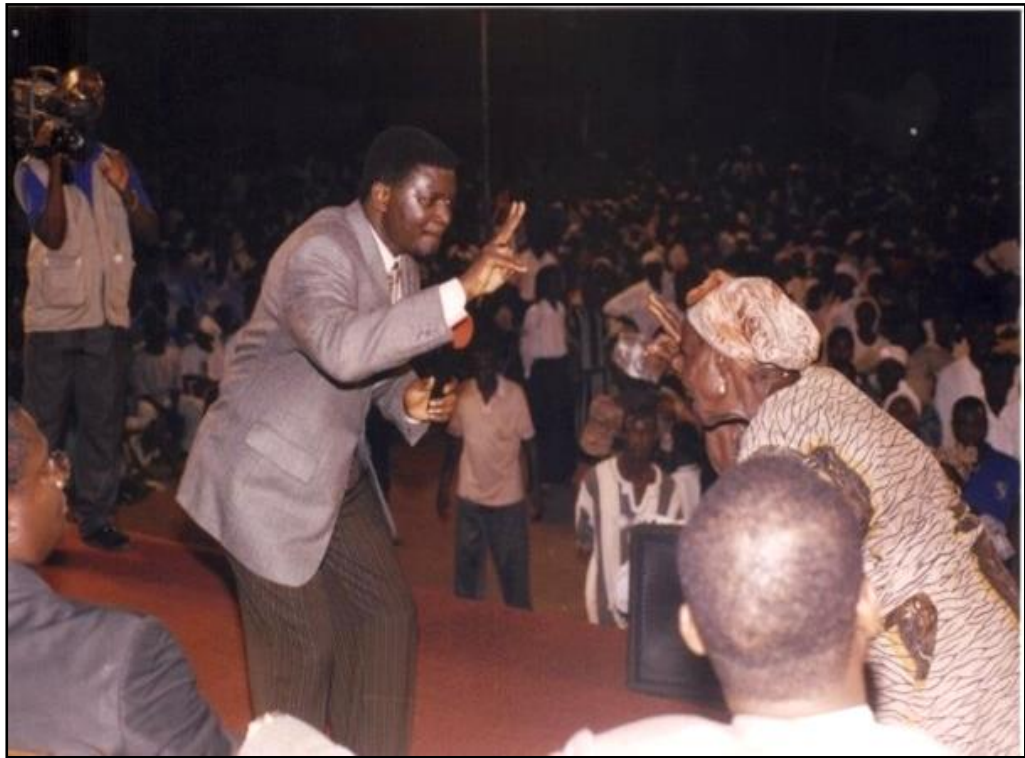
The **Pictures 1a and 1b** respectively show Agyin-Asare at a crusade ground holding walking aids of cripples who could not walk but after he had offered prayers for the cripples, they could now walk. The man in the **Picture 1b** reports of being unable to walk and now he can walk after being prayed for.

Picture 2: A Deaf and Dumb Child's Hearing and Speaking Aids Restored through prayer and laying on of hands by Agyin-Asare



In **Picture 2** above, one finds Agyin-Asare standing behind a child in a state that suggests that he is clapping his hand while the child in front of him begins to clap. The child is reported deaf and dumb by his mother. However, after Agyin-Asare had prayed for the child, he stood behind the child and began to clap while instructing the child to clap as well if he could hear. The picture above suggests that the child who is deaf and dumb could now hear and claps while Bishop Agyin-Asare also clapped.

Picture 3: A Blind Woman Receives her Sight



The picture above specifically illustrates Agyin-Asare and a woman both showing two of their fingers at each other. This woman was reported blind for ten (10) years but now, has received her sight after a prayer by Agyin-Asare. From the picture galleries presented, one reckons with how WMCI uses miracles to address the needs of its members and majority of the Ghanaian populace.

B. Moral Agency and the Ethical Implications of the Use of Miracles for Conversion

Under this heading, the study focuses on addressing the thesis of this research. That is, discussing some of the possible ethical implications emanating from the use of miracles for conversion studying the WMCI.

Moreover, discussions are made on the question of moral agency. That is to imply the extent to which an individual Ghanaian can be said to be a moral agent choosing rationally in the midst of the numerous religious organisations that are appealing without any influence.

Moral Agency

An important aspect of the ethics of the use of miracles for conversion is the question of agency. Namely, the extent to which the “rational actors” in the words of the market theory act rationally, or in our case, as subjects of their choice in the midst of the numerous religious organisations and the Christian religious products in a highly competitive religious environment.

In the study of ethics, a moral agent is a person who is capable of choosing or acting with reference to right or wrong. Ozumba (2001) posits that to be a moral agent means that moral qualities can be ascribed to a person. For Ozumba, a moral agent must be free and responsible, imbued with certain maturity, rationality and sensitivity (Ozumba 2001, 3). One can understand Ozumba to mean that a moral agent acts in his/her own volition without any internal or external influences characterising his/her choice, decision-making and judgments within his/her frame of reference.

According to the market theory, rational actors have a rational frame of reference, and can operate in their environment logically. However, in ethics, the question is the extent to which a person makes choices as a moral subject. This means it should be possible to identify the rational actor of the religious market theory as free, responsible and a well-informed person. Moral agency must also be achieved in an environment. Here, environmental factors like

values of the society, equal opportunity, availability of important services like education, health care, housing, and other extrinsic values like physical and psychological security that support the harmonisation of life are determinants of moral choice and action.

The question of moral agency helps one to understand the extent to which the rational actor in the religious market theory is said to be choosing freely without any influences which is an integral aspect of the objectives of the thesis. In Ghana, for example, there is a high level of illiteracy, poverty, poor health delivery, insecurity, unequal opportunities, lack of education, and injustice (Ghana Statistical Service 2012, 6-7). It is in this line of thought that Peschke (1996) argues that, if such obstacles like ignorance, error, fear, violence, passion, forgetfulness, habits and disposition of temperamental or of pathological nature surrounds a moral agent, the actions and freedom of the moral agent become impaired (pp. 238-240). The obstacles mentioned by Peschke can be shown to be true of the Ghanaian context.

If that be so, then there is reason to wanting to assess the extent to which the person envisioned by the religious market theory can be said to be choosing rationally in the Ghanaian context. The argument is that individual Ghanaians who are significantly affected by poverty, illiteracy and other pressures of life (e.g. anxiety and fear about calamity, divine punishment, or effects of evil spirits and divinities) are at risk of not acting as agents. On the other side, since the population of Ghana is not limited at every point in time, religious organisations are compelled to reach out to the same target groups. When this happens, there is room for competition among churches and commercialisation

of religion by churches. It is however, within this context that the study studies the justifications (rightness or wrongness) of the use of miracles for conversion using the WMCI as a study area.

Ethical Implications of the Use of Miracles for Conversion

i. The Risk of Religious Manipulation

According to Van Dijk (2006), manipulation may be social, cognitive, or discursive. For him, in its social mode, manipulation consists of “illegitimate domination” which confirms inequalities in society. In terms of cognition, manipulation tends to control the mind and involves “interference with processes of understanding, formation of biased mental models and social representations such as knowledge and ideologies”. The discursive aspect of manipulation is generally represented by the usual forms and formats of ideological discourse, such as emphasizing our good things, and emphasizing their bad things” (Van Dijk 2006, 1).

The study uses the term manipulation to explain a situation where it would become possible for one to posit that because of the expectation of miracles, members of the WMCI are likely to become psychologically, emotionally, financially and spiritually fragile to the demands of the church. The term and its explanation is needed here because it helps the researcher to trace, identify and understand the current trends of religious competition since miracles has become a popular and an attractive religious phenomenon used as a mean to attract and maintain people and church members respectively by some Penteco-Charismatic churches in Ghana. In this regard, the research discovered that the WMCI like some Penteco-Charismatic churches in Ghana

teach their members and converts to believe that it takes only a miracle from God to solve a person's predicaments. The study suggests that when its results are situated within the general religious environment of Ghana today, there would seem to be some reason to believe that the use of miracles is based on certain state of anxiety of the superstitious type. Using the judgement of Plutarch (1878) for instance, one can say that the relation between anxiety and miracles give reason to think that the use of miracles as a tool for conversion may not be ethically good religious practice.

ii. Religious Competition

Many connotations of the term competition exist. However, for the purpose of this study, the study adopts the meaning given to it by Stark and Finke (2000) in connection with the religious market theory. Stark and Finke who explain competition as the situation where religious firms contend with each other to attract or maintain adherents by means of providing Christian religious products and services (pp. 199-202). This understanding of competition ties in well with the background to the study.

Several researches exist on the trends of new religious movements in Ghana (Asamoah-Gyadu, 1998). Some of these sources attest to the fact that these new churches provide Christian religious products and services, and put up strategies to attract and maintain members into their religious organisations. Some of such products include miracles, anointing oils, and holy water whereas the services include provision of social, psychological, financial, emotional and spiritual assistance for members and converts alike.

Aside the above products and services, some of the strategies are quite similar across religious groups. They include crusades, mounting of billboards, the use of radio and television adverts in which telephone numbers are provided encouraging individuals to call for assistance.

Pictures of Some Church Billboards Suggesting Religious Competition

Picture 4: Three Church Billboards located at the same vicinity



Referring to plate 4, one can see billboards of different churches located at the same place, each seeking to undo each other in size, content and aesthetics. Such a picture suggests religious competition.

Picture 5: A Billboard showing a Church's details

The picture below is similar to **Plate 5** above. It is presented in view of the details it outlines. These include the contact lines, days and time for

worship, the church's edifice, the television stations through which the church telecasts its shows and the pastor and wife's picture.



Another element that suggests competition among churches is their exclusivist approach in the organisation of their members. The churches tend to refer to themselves as the exclusive avenues to salvation, healing, material and spiritual success, which no other church can provide. In these perspectives, members who belong to such churches are counselled to stay with only the pastor and limit their friendship to members of the church. Members are taught that their disobedience to these stipulations can fully prevent a person from experiencing a miracle in his/her life.

iii. Reductionism/ Religious Commercialisation

Reductionism carries a variety of implications, often more hinted at than clearly stated (Wildman et. al. 2011, 169). In the study of religion, Segal (1997) defines reductionism as “an analysis of religion in secular rather than religious terms” (p. 4). For the purpose of this study, we may add the element of commercialisation to Segal’s definition. In this study, therefore, reductionism stands for the attempt to channel religion through ideas or structures of secular business ventures. The idea of reductionism is also used to relate to all the factors discussed under the religious market theory and reminds us about how a secular construct of economy serves as a metaphor for religious practice. For example, some religious organisations have their leaders charge consulting fees while others sell some specific items to their members.

In the course of the research, the researcher discovered from three churches, two religious products that are purported to heal, and provide spiritual protection for people who use them. The products were anointing oil called “back to sender” and holy water. These religious products were sold to people who were in demand of it. The holy water was sold at the cost of eighty Ghana Cedis per bottle (GH ¢ 80) whereas the anointing oil was sold at the cost range of fifty, hundred and one hundred and fifty Ghana Cedis (GH¢ 50, 100, 150) per the size of the bottles. However, in the WMCI, the researcher did not discover any anointing oil called “back to sender” and holy water sold at the prices quoted above.

iv. Over Emphasising Fear and Anxiety

Almost every human being in the state of fear or anxiety would want that he/she is told the mysteries surrounding his/her world of life. Such mysteries may involve finding answers to questions about the reasons for which certain things are proving futile, and why certain misfortunes occur. Generally, the only means that seem to be pleasant apart from consulting a traditional priest is to consult a pastor who is popularly referred to as “a man of God”. The pastor or “man of God” is believed to have the power to unravel such mysteries and to provide antidotes to such problems through miraculous means.

It must be pointed out that in ethics of religion, fear or anxiety is an important issue. As mentioned earlier, the challenges of life in the Ghanaian context make many people anxious and fearful about their survival and development. This experience of Ghanaians cannot be set aside when one tries to understand why Ghanaians yearn for supernatural intervention as the struggle for survival and self-fulfilment in the most challenging of situations.

Plutarch (1878) takes a broader look at the variable fear or anxiety within the context of superstition. What is unique about Plutarch (1878) according to Appiah (2014) is that he does not apply the term “superstition” in isolation, but as one end of two points. While this usage cannot be purged completely of its historical baggage, it introduces a new element into the attempt to assess “good” or “bad” religious practice. For Plutarch, religious “doing” will occur as a continuum on a scale that runs from what he calls “atheism” on one end of the extreme to “superstition” on the other end. On this scale, religious behaviour is “good” or “bad” not in terms of how well it measures against

officialdom, civility or even reason alone. Rather, the quality of religiosity is measured by the states of consciousness it produces in view of how well it finds and maintains a good equilibrium between the extremes (Appiah, 2014).

Conclusion

Majority of Ghanaians today do not profess atheism. Yet, many of them have tendencies of superstition. Usually, religious people in Ghana may pose as rational actors, wanting more for their lives by investing less. They want to have whatever problems solved quickly and miraculously. Hence, there exists a huge attraction (market) for “supernatural manifestations”. Heightened levels of anxiety and fear coupled with the desire to find quick remedies to problems make people vulnerable to religious organisations that use miracles to lure them into their fold.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The third chapter looks at Miracles in the Word Miracle Church International. It discusses the question of how the church under study can be said to belong to the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian tradition in Ghana. It also discusses how Indigenous Ghanaian Religious Worldview finds continuity in the WMCI theology and practice. Finally, it looks at the phenomenology of Miracles in the WMCI and the ethical implications of the use of miracles for conversion. This chapter of the work presents and analyses the data the researcher collected from the WMCI in the light of the religious market theory.

We recall that the study adopted the religious market theory as a framework for explaining the process of interaction between the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) and its members. The theory explained that religious organisations compete for membership by putting up attractive strategies and religious products. Of the religious products, the theory suggested that miracles are commonly used as a Christian religious strategy and commodity to get church membership. People who patronise the services and activities of the religious organisation are identified as rational actors, who make informed choices from the available Christian religious products that serve their needs in a metaphorical “religious market”. The principal operation

that takes place in this market is an exchange process. The individual gets involved in this exchange process and aims at paying less to receive more from these religious organisations. The religious organisations also aim at producing the social, spiritual needs and some services for the focus group so that they can win their commitment (Sengers, 2006).

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The data collected from the respondents in the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) is presented in a tabula form with the corresponding questions in the pages that follow. The following form the themes emerging from questions the interviewees in the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) responded to. The question of membership, some strategies and Christian religious products used by churches to cause rapid growth in church membership, and assessing the ethical implications of the use of miracles for conversion.

The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the nine (9) Interviewees in the WMCI.

Characteristics	Number of Respondents
a. Sex	
Male	5
Female	4
b. Ethnicity	
Ga	6

Akan	3
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c. Educational Background

University Graduates	6
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Senior High School Graduates	3
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d. Religious Affiliation

Christianity	9
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Q. 1. Exploring how respondents become members of the WMCI.

On the question of membership, the research revealed that if a person wants to become a member of the WMCI, the person looks out for certain benefits and expectations. Additionally, the research revealed that the interviewees became members of the WMCI because of the satisfaction and miraculous intervention they received. Table 2 presents the main question and the follow-up questions, emerging categories of views and the number of the respondents.

Table 2. Responses to Question One

Question	Categories <i>Responses to the question were sorted into</i>	Number of Respondents
How did you become a member of the WMCI?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Friend’s invitation and warm reception from church members. 2. In search of financial assistance. 3. The church’s performance of miracles. 	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>
a. What is the aftermath of people who receive their miracles or get their problems solved by the WMCI?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some stay. 2. Others do not stay. 	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>
b. How would you prove that people who after receiving their miracles or solution to their problems stay or leave?	<p style="text-align: center;">Those who stay:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal conversations. 2. The exponential increase in the total population of the church. 	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>

	1. The fear of not finding a church of this nature where people are nicely treated (by members of the church).	2
	2. Previous church could not help with financial supports.	1
c. Why did you choose to stay?		
	3. Miracles give answers to problems.	5
	4. The songs the choir sings during worship, sermons, joy and sense of belongingness.	8

On the question of membership, the theory posits that membership is based on the satisfaction the rational actor gets from the religious organisation. That is spiritual, financial, social, or psychological satisfaction. In view of this supposition, religious organisations are under the pressure to put up attractive Christian religious products and services (for e.g. miracles, anointing oils etc.) on a religious market. These Christian religious products and services attract the rational actors. However, the theory suggests that miracles are the most attractive and efficient religious product the rational actors prefer (Sengers, 2006).

Inferring from the religious market theory and the data presented on **Table 2**, there is reason to posit that the data confirms the assertion made by

the religious market theory. This is on the question of how a particular church, in our case WMCI gets members by satisfying people's needs. The table also brings to the fore that there are other things (for e.g. church songs and word ministrations, sense of belongingness, happiness, liberty etc.) aside miracles that the interviewees looked out for before they become members of the WMCI. However, of the total eight interviewees, five out of the eight interviewees became members of the church resulting from the miracle factor. This suggests that majority of the church members in the WMCI as it stands now stayed or became members of the WMCI because they were satisfied with the services WMCI provided for them to get rid of their problems. There is the possibility factor that, of the other Penteco-Charismatic churches, WMCI stands the better position to solving their problems for that reason the need to stay to become members.

The table indicates also that becoming a member of the WMCI is a choice. This confirms what the religious market theory says about choice making by the rational actor in terms of the kind of religious organisation to belong to out of the numerous ones on the religious market. This suggests that there is a high possibility that people would only want to belong to the WMCI since it better stands the position to solving or satisfying peoples' problems. On the contrary, people would not choose to belong to the WMCI if the church fails to satisfy or solve the problems of the people that patronise their services.

The argument above therefore may imply that membership to the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) has a relationship with the kind of satisfaction the members and converts alike gain from their interaction with the WMCI. In our case, there is reason to argue that all the respondents were

satisfied after their interaction with the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch). For this reason, all the interviewees chose to stay and became members of the church.

Q. 2. Some Strategies and Christian Religious Products used to Support growth in Church Membership in the WMCI.

The responses to this question generally indicated that the interviewees were aware of some strategies and Christian religious products Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana including the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) use to support growth in church membership. The interview revealed some of the Christian religious products and services that are highly patronised by the church members and people who patronise their services.

Table 3. Responses to Question Two

Question	Categories <i>Responses to the question were sorted into</i>	Number of Respondents
What do you think are the most attractive strategies, services and Christian religious products used to support growth in church membership in the WMCI?	Attractive Strategies:	5
	1. Performing Miracles.	
	2. Home visitation.	
	3. Evangelism.	
	4. Giving financial aid to the poor and needy freely.	
	5. Rendering social, psychological and spiritual needs.	
	6. Building schools for rural communities.	
7. Radio, Television and online advertisements.		
a. Among all the strategies, services and religious products outlined, which of them is effectively patronised?	Attractive Christian Religious Products:	3
	1. Miracles.	
	2. Anointing oils.	
a. Among all the strategies, services and religious products outlined, which of them is effectively patronised?	1. Miracles	8
	2. Guidance and counselling	2
	3. Anointing oils.	2

b. What do you think are some of the reasons why miracles play important roles as far as getting members is concerned?	Miracles provide instant solution to one's problem. e.g. (heart attack, cancer), bareness, epilepsy, etc.	8
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c. What are some of the ways by which miracles occur in the WMCI?	1. The use of anointing oils.	8
	2. Prayers offered by Agyin-Asare.	8
	3. Laying on of hands.	8
	4. Prayers and Fasting.	3

According to the religious market theory, religious organisations put up attractive strategies, services and Christian religious products on a religious market. The theory suggests that the promise of salvation into the kingdom of God, miracles, guidance and counselling, advertisement, religious artefacts (like anointing oils and holy water), and financial support are some of the core products and strategies that are displayed by religious organisations on the religious market. These strategies and Christian religious products according to the theory have the following as some of its aims. Firstly, to attract the rational actor into their fold and secondly, to convince the rational actors about how their problems can be readily solved for them (Sengers, 2006).

Inferring from **Table 3**, the views of the respondents confirm that the strategies, services and Christian religious products that the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) puts up supports growth in the church's membership. However, of all the strategies and Christian religious products that the WMCI puts on board to get membership, two-thirds of the eight interviewees pointed out that miracles are the most attractive product patronised by church members and people alike. This finding goes to confirm the proposition the religious market theory makes concerning miracles, being the most attractive and patronised Christian religious product by people. Additionally, **Table 3** indicates that miracles occur in different ways.

In the course of the research, the researcher discovered an anointing oil called 'back to sender' and 'holy water' from two Kumasi-based churches (Ebenezer Miracle and Worship Centre and International God's Way Church) and one Accra-based church (Synagogue Church of All Nations, of T. B. Joshua fame). This anointing oil and holy water are purported to have the power to protect the user from spiritual attacks, food poisoning, car accident, health-related problems, they grant favour from people, and render success to one's business and examination.

Q. 3. Assessing the ethical implications of the use of miracles for conversion in the WMCI.

a. Conditions to Fulfil before a Person Receives his/her Miracle in the WMCI.

The responses to this question during the discussion indicate that there are some instances people with peculiar problems fulfil some conditions before

their miracle will occur. At other instances, people receive their miracle without fulfilling any conditions. The views are presented in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4. Responses to Question Three (a)

Question	Categories	Number of
	<i>Responses to the question were sorted into</i>	Respondents
What is expected of a person before he or she receives a miracle? Are there some conditions to fulfil?	1. There are some conditions to fulfil. 2. There are no conditions to fulfil.	3 5
a. If there are some conditions to fulfil what are some of them?	1. Buying anointing oil 2. Undergoing fasting and prayers (two or three days).	1 7
b. If there are no conditions to fulfil, how then do people receive their miracle?	1. Laying on of hands 2. Praying	8 8
c. Does the person who expects a miracle pay any specified amount of money?	1. No	8

According to the religious market theory, the rational actor or consumer pays or gives out something valuable to the religious organisation in return for his/her wants. This suggests that the rational actor gives in all that it takes to receive his/her needs. For example, it could be money, gifts and time. The activity that involves the rational actor giving to receive from the religious organisation explains what the theory refers to as 'exchange processes' (Sengers, 2006).

In **Table 4**, the views indicate that prospective members and the church members of the WMCI (Accra, Dzorwulu Branch) may or may not necessarily have to fulfil any conditions before they get their problems solved. Secondly, it was made clear that a person who wants his/her problems solved through miraculous intervention pays no money to the church or Agyin-Asare. However, one logical inference that is possible to emanate from a situation where church members and people that patronise the services of the WMCI may or may not be required to pay for the services they enjoy may raise some questions. Questions such as; will the church not later exorbitantly bill or manipulate the person or people who has/have once met his/her needs free of charge in the future?

Here, the study questions the findings because in an exchange process between two parties, in our case between the WMCI on one side and its members and people that patronise their services on another hand, both parties aim at making profits. However, if one party, in this case, the WMCI refuses to make profit at a particular instance, what would be the possible future outcome? Here, the possible future outcome the study envisages is either

manipulation or extra charges from the other party who enjoyed freely. In another development, when church members of the WMCI enjoy the services of the WMCI freely, there is reason to suggest that it will become difficult for them to leave the WMCI for another church once they have enjoyed free services. In the case of three of the eight interviewees, they claimed that the WMCI gave them some amount of money to further their education and to feed. This kind gesture shown by the WMCI towards them, according to the interviewees inspired them to become members of the church after their first visit. For them, they are not ready to leave the church for another.

b. Will you say that the use of miracles in the WMCI belongs to good or bad practice of religion? Why?

Responses to this question indicate that the use of miracles for conversion belongs to two sides of the same coin. Four of the respondents held that the use of miracles for conversion by WMCI belongs to a good practice of religion whereas the other four said the opposite. The views are presented in **Table 5** below.

Table 5. Responses to Question Three (b)

Question	Categories	Number of Respondents
To which ethical practice of religion would you say the use of miracles for conversion belongs?	<i>Responses to the question were sorted into</i>	
	1. Good practice of religion.	4
	2. Bad practice of religion.	4

- a. Why would you say, the use of miracles for conversion belongs to a bad practice religion?
1. Miracles pave way for religious exploitation and manipulation of people.
 2. Miracles breed religious competition
 3. Miracles breed ‘false prophets’ who put fear into people and dupe them of their wealth.
 4. Miracles create the avenue for religious commercialisation.
- 4
-

- b. Why would you say the use of miracles for conversion belongs to a good practice of religion?
1. Jesus Christ’s ministry was characterised by miracles.
 2. Miracles indicate God’s power on a church.
 3. Miracles draw people to God.
 4. Miracles help to solve problems beyond the limits of medicine.
- 4
-

Table 5 above presents the views the respondents on the place of miracles as a means for conversion. The views show that the use of miracles belongs to two sides of the same coin. That is a good and a bad way of practising religion. The good ways are evident in the way miracles are used by religious organisations to address the problems of people.

The bad ways of using miracles are also evident in the ways religious organisations use miracles as a means to manipulate people, compete and put fear into people so that they can control their activities and behaviours. From the views presented, there is reason to posit that it is very difficult for one to say that the use of miracles as a means for conversion is a bad religious practice. This is because the use of miracles in the practice of religion has its own merits and demerits as depicted in the **Table 5**.

c. Miracles seem to be used in a competitive, manipulative, commercialising and fear inducing way to get members by Penteco-Charismatic churches in Ghana including the WMCI. Is it the case and do you agree or disagree?

Responses to this question were diverse. Three of the respondents were of the view that the WMCI's stress and use of miracles suggests competition, manipulation, commercialisation and fear inducement whiles the remaining five of the respondents were of the opposite stance.

Table 6. Responses to Question Three (c)

Question	Categories <i>Responses to the question were sorted into</i>	Number of Respondents
<p>Miracles seem to be used in a competitive, manipulative, commercialising and fear inducing ways to get members by Penteco-Charismatic Churches in Ghana including the WMCI. Is it the case and do you agree or disagree?</p>	<p>1. Agree</p> <p>2. Disagree</p>	<p>3</p> <p>5</p>
<p>a. Why would you agree?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">On Competition</p> <p>1. The frequent television radio and internet advertisements by the church.</p> <p>2. Because of the frequent miraculous manifestation videos shown on some of the national televisions.</p>	<p>3</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">On Manipulation</p>	
	<p>3. Majority of the church members give money to the church without any reluctance and they are taught to dedicate much of their time to the work of the church in expectation of</p>	

God's blessings.

On Commercialisation

4. The sale of Charles Agyin-Asare sermons copied on compact discs, anointing oils and some of his books to prospective church members suggests religious commercialisation.

On Fear

5. Members are frequently reminded of the frequent harmful attacks and handiworks of malevolent spirits on their family, businesses, marriage etc.
-

On Competition

1. The church does not condemn other churches.
 2. The church does not compete with any other churches by virtue of public proposal of miraculous contest with some churches
- b. Why would you disagree?

On Commercialisation

3. The books and the audio-
-

	visual sermons copied on compact discs aim at getting the word of God close to the door-step of people, impacting and changing people's lives rather than with the aim of enrichment.	5
	On Fear	
Why would you disagree?	4. Miracles are used to set the oppressed free from spiritual bondage but not to induce fear in members.	
	On Manipulation	
	5. The Bible admonishes Christians to do God's work with all their might, time, and resources in expectation of God's blessings.	

From **Table 6**, it is clear that there are diverse opinions concerning what members of the WMCI perceive how miracles are used as a means of getting membership by the WMCI.

Three of the eight respondents' views differed from the other five's. For the three, the fact that the WMCI puts up frequent advertisement, makes sales of sermons copied on discs, the bishop's books and show videos of miraculous manifestations through all forms of attractive media that are similar to the approaches adopted by other churches that perform miracles are suggestive of

competition and commercialisation. The respondents argued that there are many churches in Ghana, however, hardly would one hear these churches on radio, and watch them on the internet and television. However, the frequent ones one would hear and watch their programmes are the churches that perform miracles. This is evident enough to suggest that such churches are using miracles as an attractive religious product and strategy to compete among themselves to get membership.

On the contrary, for five of the respondents, they do not agree that the way miracles are used by the church suggests competition, manipulation of church members, commercialisation and fear inducement into members. For them, by placing the WMCI side by side with some churches that perform miracles, those churches' use of miracles rather suggests competition, manipulation of church members, commercialisation and fear inducement into members rather than the WMCI.

From the views of the respondents, there is reason to argue that there are some members of the church who object to the way miracles are used by the church to cause growth in membership. This is because the approach suggests competition, commercialisation and fear inducement. However, if we should go by the views of these respondents, then there is reason to argue that the WMCI use miracles belong to a bad practice of religion. On the contrary, if we should go by the views of the majority of the respondents, then there is reason to argue that WMCI use of miracles does not belong to bad practice of religion.

Conclusion

By paying particular attention to the findings as presented in **Table 6**, which forms the fundamental aspect of the research, one finds two main views. In one perspective, the views of the interviewees that form the minority who argue that the WMCI use of miracles as a means for getting members defies ethics and that the practice suggests a bad way of practising religion. On another perspective, there is the majority view that refutes the assertion made by the minority.

However, if one should go by the views of the interviewees that form the majority, then there is reason to conclude that the WMCI use of miracles does not defy the ethics of the use of miracles for conversion. Secondly, it would also imply that the WMCI use of miracle is not a bad way of practising religion. On the field, the researcher found some practices of the WMCI that suggest that the WMCI commercialises and competes with other Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian churches in Ghana. The finding was in connection with frequent ways the WMCI uses online adverts, televised programmes showing crusades that witnessed miracles, the sale of Agyin-Asare's books and sermons copied on compact discs to maintain and attract people into their fold.

Having presented the data collected from the field with an analysis, the next chapter presents the summary, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This chapter presents the summary, key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The study focused on the ethical implications of the use of miracles for conversion in the WMCI in Accra. The motivation for the study was the heightened and seemingly competitive activities of different Christian religious groups in their bid to win members to their fold. This means that the use of miracles for conversion is only one of the many services and products used by these religious groups. The study chose to focus on miracles because miracles form one of the most important attractions, which appeal to Ghanaian Christians. In the background to the study, it was explained that the WMCI was purposefully selected for the study, since it is one of the Christian churches that categorically lays emphasis on the use of miracles as an integral component of its proclamation of the Gospel.

Chapter one explained that the religious market theory would form the conceptual frame within which to treat the main thesis question; namely, what is the ethical implication of the use of miracles as a means for conversion (getting church membership). Within this frame of reference, the study explained a miracle to mean solutions to a person's problems, though some

scholars have classically explained miracle to mean an extraordinary event that occurs under the spur of God. The problems envisioned here include health, material wellbeing, success in business and in life generally and deliverance from evil and calamity. Conversion was used in the study to express certain assumptions underlying the missionary and evangelistic activities of some new Christian groups and the WMCI in particular.

Because of the controversy it raises in the religious market theory, conversion was discussed in some detail in the literature review and theory sections in chapter two. It was pointed out, for instance, while Houtepen (2006), argued that conversion in a *religious market* or *arena*, means religions or religious people competing with one another for power, influence or success, the term in the words of the religious market theory was understood as taking over of one religious faith in place of another by a person. It is adhering to one religious organisation instead of another because that individual finds this faith or the religious organisation more convincing. This is because of both the religious and social rewards they provide to satisfy his/her needs (Sengers, 2006). However, the chapter's working definition of conversion which firstly meant an act of becoming a member of a particular church in our case, the WMCI and secondly, referring to the process by which the WMCI gets church members by providing Christian related service and products to attract and maintain members and people alike tied with Houtepen's view on conversion.

Chapter two was divided into two sections. The first section presented the history of the Word Miracle Church International, Accra Dzorwulu Branch dating from the year 1987 to 2013. The second section of the chapter discussed

into details the religious market theory. The study traced the origin of the theory through to how it took a new name in the study of religion. The study found out that the theory was initially called Rational Choice Theory. This theory was used by social scientists to understand human behaviour.

Stark and Finke (2000) however, adopted the theory and applied it to the study of religion. The new name the Rational Choice Theory took was Religious Market Theory. In the study of religion, the theory was used to provide a clearer understanding of the exchange processes that go on between religious organisations and people that patronise their services and religious products. In the context of this research, the theory is used to provide an explanation to the kind of exchange process between the Word Miracle Church International and its members and prospective church members.

In discussing the theory in the context of this study, works by selected scholars (Henri Gooren, Anton Houtepen and Bernice Martin) on the religious market theory were discussed. The study indicated that the relationship between the religious market theory and the Ghanaian context is that the WMCI provides Christian religious services. These services are in turn patronised by its members and majority of the Ghanaian populace. In this regard, the study argued that there was the need to assess the ethics that surrounds the interaction between the WMCI and its members and the people that patronise the church's services.

Chapter three was dedicated to assessing the use of miracles in the Word Miracle Church. The chapter was divided into two sections. The first section dealt with examining the WMCI as a church of the Pentecostal-Charismatic

tradition in Ghana. This means that by virtue of some of its beliefs and practices, it was possible to associate the WMCI with the Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian tradition in Ghana. In doing so, there was reason to suggest that, like other Penteco-Charismatic churches, the WMCI offered a good continuity of the beliefs and expectations enshrined in the Indigenous Ghanaian Religious Worldview (IGRW).

Though the WMCI rejects Indigenous religious practices as satanic, it employs Biblical and Christian resources to answer the questions and expectations of the traditional religious worldview, which many Ghanaians share. It was clear that this characteristic of the WMCI was one of the reasons for its use of miracles. Here, the study revealed some of the material needs of people the WMCI uses miracles to address. Some of the needs are restoring the sight of the blind, healing the deaf and dumb, cripples, epileptics, asthma, diabetes, bone dislocation and cancer.

At the same time, the second part of the chapter pointed out that in view of the main concern of the study, it was important to raise some critical ethical questions regarding the practice for a number of reasons. First, there is the question of the risk of manipulation. In this regard, the chapter referred to the possible risk of miracles being used as a manipulative device by the WMCI to control, convince and maintain members and prospective members of the church. The researcher found some evidence that in the WMCI and some Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana, they teach their members and converts to believe that it takes only a miracle from God to solve a person's predicaments. In this regard, the study argued that by taking into consideration

individual Ghanaians who are significantly affected by poverty, illiteracy and other pressures of life (e.g. anxiety and fear about calamity, divine punishment, or effects of evil spirits and divinities), there would seem to be some reason to believe that the use of miracles is based on certain state of anxiety of the superstitious type. In view of this, using the judgement of Plutarch (1878) for instance, one can say that the relation between anxiety and miracles give reason to think that the use of miracles as a tool for conversion operates on the terminus of manipulation which may not be ethically good practice of religion.

Then there is the issue of religious competition. The idea about the question of religious competition reminds us of the explanation Stark and Finke (2000) gave to the term. For them, competition is the situation where religious firms contend with each other to attract or maintain adherents by means of providing Christian religious products and services (Stark & Finke, 199-202). This understanding of competition as the two scholars note was evident in the WMCI. In the WMCI like some other Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian churches in Ghana, the church sponsors church members in the area of education, provision of social amenities (e.g. food, shelter, schools, money, clothes etc.) in order to maintain and attract other people into their fold. On the issue of competition, one finds that the WMCI like some other Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian churches in Ghana, put up adverts, telecast their sermons, crusades, publicise their authored books and church edifice to attract people to join them. In chapter three one finds some pictures of three billboards closely mounted in the same vicinity suggesting competition in terms of size, aesthetics and phone contact numbers.

Apart from religious competition, there is concern about religious commercialisation. The idea of religious commercialisation was used to relate to all the factors discussed under the religious market theory and reminds us about how a secular construct of economy serves as a metaphor for religious practice. In the course of the research, it was discovered that some churches have their leaders charge consulting fees while others sell some specific items (holy water, anointing oils, stickers, hand fan, books etc.) to their members and the Ghanaian populace. In the WMCI, the researcher discovered a bookshop (WMCI Chapel Bookshop) set up by the church. In this bookshop, books authored by Charles Agyin-Asare and some other pastors' books were displayed on sale to church members. Some of the books are '*Power in Prayer*', '*Pastoral Protocol*', '*How Anybody Can Become Somebody*', '*Breaking the Power of Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco*', and '*Celebrating Marriage - How to be Friends & Passionate Lovers*'.

Finally, the second part of chapter three discussed the question of over emphasis on fear and anxiety as a negative consequence of the use of miracles. Chapter four was dedicated to the presentation and analysis of data collected from eight respondents from the WMCI. The chapter was divided into two sections. The first section presented information about the number of interviewees that partook in the research. The type of research design the study adopted was the descriptive analysis, using the simple random sampling procedure. Participant observation, focused group discussion, observation, and personal interviews were the research instruments. The second section of the chapter presented and analysed the data that were collected. The data were presented on tables under three headings (questions the researcher asked, their

corresponding emerging categories of responses and the number of respondents providing the responses) after which the analysis followed.

The research was spread over a period of three months. During this period, the researcher participated in the church's daily and weekend services and observed how miracles occurred and were used by the church to address the problems of people. Following a month of church participation and observation, the researcher conducted interviews and focused group discussions to gather data in a space of two months. The researcher established contacts with eight church members and the founder of the WMCI, Bishop Charles Agyin-Asare. Four of the church members were males and the other four were females. The interviews and discussions were summarised under the following headings: exploring how respondents become members of the WMCI, strategies and Christian religious products used to support growth in church membership in the WMCI, and assessing the ethical implications of the use of miracles for conversion.

Key Findings

The paragraphs that follow below present the key findings that emerged out of the research.

Firstly, on the question of one becoming a member of the WMCI, it was discovered that the occurrences of miracles in the church attracted majority of the people including majority (5) of the interviewees to become members. Secondly, it was discovered that the warm reception the WMCI provides for people gives them reason to stay, as in the case of two of the interviewees. This

finding is true of how the researcher was welcomed as a first-time visitor to the church.

Thirdly, the study discovered that the church provides financial (giving money to the poor and needy in the church) and social (educational scholarship) assistance to its members. In this regard, the study revealed that three of the eight interviewees became a member to the WMCI resulting from the financial assistance the church provided for them when they were financially handicapped.

On the question of how miracles occur and the conditions to be fulfilled before one receives his/her miracles, it was discovered that miracles occur in two ways. In one instance, a person receives his/her miracle when Agyin-Asare lays on his hands on the recipient. In another instance miracle occurs after Agyin-Asare has offered a general healing prayer for the entire members of the church. There a person receives his/her miracle. To confirm such miraculous occurrence, Agyin-Asare calls for people to testify of any healing after he had prayed. The research revealed varying opinions on how the WMCI stresses on the use of miracles to cause growth in church membership. On one hand, the opinions suggested that miracles are used in a competitive, manipulative, commercialising, and fear and anxious ways to support church membership growth as against other viable churches. These views were supported by the way the church puts forth their televised and radio programmes, crusades, sermons preached, and online advertisements. It was discovered that miracles are used by the WMCI to solve some pertinent problems of its church members and majority of the Ghanaian populace free of charge. In an Accra-based

church (Synagogue Church of All Nations of the T. B. Joshua fame) and two Kumasi-based churches (Ebenezer Miracle and Worship Centre and International God's Way Church) the researcher visited, he discovered the following. On these mentioned churches, members and clients who came to find miraculous interventions to their problems were required to pay some amount of money as consultation fee. Secondly, they were also to buy anointing oils and holy water at exorbitant fee to serve as a medium through which their expected miracle will occur.

The study revealed that many Ghanaians seek miraculous interventions resulting from the existential factors (for e.g. fear, poverty, loss of job, disappointment in one's marriage, sicknesses, bareness, and educational opportunities) that surround them. Finally, the study revealed that the term 'miracle' is surrounded with both positive and negative controversies. One of the negative controversies is evident in the reason for the change of name from Word Miracle Church International to Perez Chapel International.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the research, the study made the following conclusions.

Firstly, the study does not condemn the use of miracles by the WMCI Accra, Dzorwulu Branch and other Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian churches in Ghana. This is largely because miracles are used to solve the material needs of majority of Ghanaians. However, the study focused on the risk manipulation, commercialisation, and fear and anxious elements involved in the use of miracles as a means of getting church membership.

Secondly, in view of the research findings, the study ended with the impression that there could be some unethical aspects of the use of miracles and other diverse strategies in the WMCI to compete among other Pentecostal Charismatic churches in Ghana to accrue church membership.

Finally, the study concluded that the stress on miracles, the sale of anointing oils and holy water as solution to certain problem and phenomena is not always the case. This approach is rather simplistic or superficial.

Recommendations

The research proposes the following recommendations.

1. Results of the study allow recommendation that the Word Miracle Church International should set up a committee that will annually or quarterly evaluate the church's activities and the services they provide to people. This will help the church to be able to control possible excesses and abuses.
2. The study allows recommendation that individual prospective and church members must not be religiously gullible by virtue of putting their high hopes in religious artefacts sold to them by various religious personages. However, they must be able to guard themselves against becoming possible victims of religious manipulation by some Ghanaian churches.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

a. From Word Miracle Church International Accra, Dzorwulu Branch

Nana Adwoa	14 th April 2013	21 st April, 2013	5 th May, 2013
Beatrice Naa Mensah		14 th April 2013	5 th May, 2013
Joyce Tabiri		21 st April, 2013	5 th May, 2013
Daniel Agyei		21 st April, 2013	5 th May, 2013
Francis Adjety		21 st April, 2013	5 th May, 2013
Michael Nii-Lampsey		28 th April, 2013	5 th May, 2013
Priscilla Ayitey		28 th April, 2013	5 th May, 2013
Emmanuel Asong		28 th April 2013	5 th May, 2013
Bishop Charles Agyin-Asare			23 rd June, 2013

b. From Ebenezer Miracle and Worship Centre (Kumasi, Ahenema Kokoben Branch)

Grace Adoma Asante		14 th July, 2013	
Philomena Osei Akoto		14 th July, 2013.	

c. From International God's Way Church (Kumasi Branch)

Abena Mansah		14 th July, 2013	
Gladys Osei Acheampong		14 th July, 2013	

d. From Synagogue Church of All Nations (Accra Branch)

Sophia Koufie		21 st July, 2013.	
Mary Naa Adjeley		21 st July, 2013.	

APPENDIX B
INTRODUCTORY LETTER

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND HUMAN VALUES

**The Ethical Implications of the Use of Miracles for Conversion: A Study of
the Word Miracle Church International (WMCI) Accra, Dzorwulu
Branch**

Interview Guide for Key-Informants

1. How did you become a member of the WMCI?
 - a. What is the aftermath of people who receive their miracles or get their problems solved by the WMCI?
 - b. How would you prove that people who after receiving their miracles or solution to their problems stay or leave?
 - c. Why did you choose to stay?
2. What do you think are the most attractive strategies, services and religious products used to support growth in church membership in the WMCI?
 - a. Among all the strategies, services and religious products outlined, which among them is effectively patronised?
 - b. What do you think are some of the reasons why miracles play important roles as far conversion is concerned?
 - c. What are some of the ways by which miracles occur in the WMCI?
3. **A.** What is expected of a person before he or she receives a miracle?
Are there some conditions to be fulfilled?
 - a. If there are some conditions to fulfil what are some of them?

- b. If there are no conditions to fulfil, how then do people receive their miracle?
 - c. Does the person who expects a miracle pay any specified amount of money?
- B.** To which ethical practice of religion would you say the use of miracles for conversion belongs?
- a. Why would you say, the use of miracles for conversion belongs to a bad practice religion?
 - b. Why would you say the use of miracles for conversion belongs to a good practice religion?
- C.** Miracles seem to be used in a competitive, manipulative, commercialising and fear inducing way to get members by Penteco-Charismatic churches in Ghana including the WMCI. Is it the case and do you agree or disagree?

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND HUMAN VALUES

**The Ethical Implications of the Use of Miracles for Conversion: A Study of
the Word Miracle Church International (WMCI) Accra, Dzorwulu**

Branch

Interview Guide for Pastor

1. How did the Word Miracle Church International start?
1. What is the church's understanding of miracles?
2. What is the administrative structure of the church?
3. What is the church's mission?
4. What are the aims and objectives of the church?
5. What necessitated for the church's change of name from Word Miracle Church International (WMCI) to Perez Chapel International (PCI)?