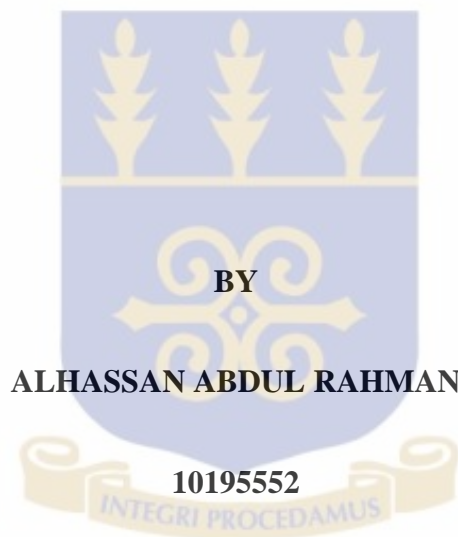


UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF CONVERT TO
ISLAM IN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION**



**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF
MPHIL RELIGIONS DEGREE**

JULY, 2015

DECLARATION

I Alhassan Abdul Rahman declare that, this research work, with the exception of references to which were cited from other works of other researches, is the results of my own research work carried out in the Department for the study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon.

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SIGNATURE.....

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HAJJ MUMUNI SULEMANA

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father Alhassan Adamu and my mother Hawa Nkeane who did not leave to see this stage of my life. I also dedicate it to all Muslims especially new reverts and Muslim leadership institutions.



AKNOWLEDGMENTS

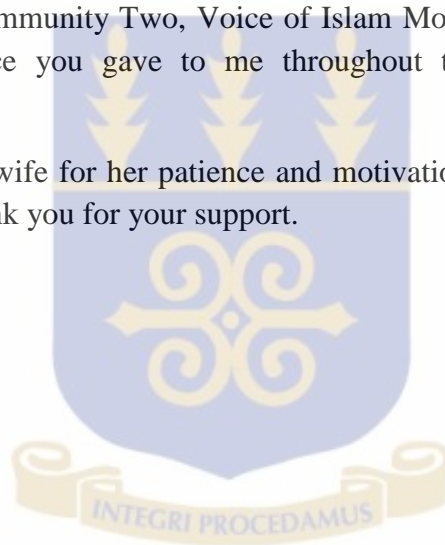
The success of this work wouldn't have been achieved without the favours of Allah. My first thanks goes to Him for granting me good health and psychological insight into the work. I can never forget the contributions of Dr. Cosmas Ebo Sarbah and Hajj Mumuni Sulemana who became fathers to me. Their guidance and motivation have made a lot of impact in the work. They critiqued the work adequately. I pray for Allah's blessing for them.

My appreciation also goes to Dr. Rabiatu Ammah for her motherly guidance and advice. She made me realize that academic work demands a lot of sacrifice and hard work. She would always ask: "how far have you gone with your work? Make sure you work ahead of schedule so that you can finish well."

My special thanks goes to my respondents who but for their time and views the work would not have been possible. I appreciate the support and time that they sacrificed for me during the gathering of data on the topic.

To my brothers at Tema Community Two, Voice of Islam Mosque, I say, may Allah richly bless you for the assistance you gave to me throughout the work. I appreciate your suggestions and advice.

Finally, I cannot forget my wife for her patience and motivation. The motivation alone was enough for me to excel. Thank you for your support.



ABSTRACT

Ghana is not only a secular state that promotes freedom of religion and association but also a pluralistic religious society. As such, conversion from one religion to the other is a common phenomenon. Converts to Islam in the Greater Accra region are very important to the development of the faith. Unfortunately, they are confronted with some challenges but there appears to be no concerted efforts from the Muslim Community to ameliorate the plight of these converts. The research attempts to investigate these challenges and highlight them to the Muslim leadership so that appropriate measures are taken to address them.

To be able to do this, the views of new converts to Islam and those who had returned to their former religion from Islam were solicited. Others were *A'imah* (Imams) and representatives of some Islamic Institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations such as Office of the National Chief Imam (ONCI), Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah (ASWAJ), Voice of Islam (VOI) and Direct Aid (DA).

The findings of the research showed that some of the converts to Islam were physically assaulted while others were neglected by their families as a result of their conversion. Others also found it difficult to access Islamic literature. As a result of these challenges, some became apostates while others lacked basic knowledge about Islam which negatively affected their practice of Islam. Though some Islamic Institutions, Islamic NGOs and individuals intervened by providing some English Translated Qur'ans and cash donations, their support was not enough to address all the challenges.

To enable converts to Islam maintain their faith and contribute meaningfully to the development of Islam, the research suggests that, a formal fund be established to take care of their financial needs. Also Islamic Institutions and Organization need to establish training centers to teach new converts to Islam and also counsel them to enable them overcome their initial psychological uncertainties. The research is relevant because, it provides findings on the challenges of converts to Islam and how to address them as far as the development of Islam is concerned.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

VOI: Voice of Islam

DA: Direct Aid

ISB: Ihsan Services Bureau

GMM: Ghana Muslim Mission

ASWAJ: Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah

AIS: Al-Huda Islamic Society

ICODEHS: Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services

FOMWAG: Federation of Muslim Women Association in Ghana

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GLOSSARY OF FOREIGN OR TECHNICAL WORDS

These are Arabic, Indian, Akan, Portuguese and Latin words. For the purpose of clarification, the initial of every language is used to indicate the origin of the word. Arabic (A), Akan (AK), Indian (I), Portuguese (P), Latin (L) and Arabic origin but used by Hausa in a different form (AH)

Conversio (L): means to change or repent.

Amjuman Hami Islam (I): name of an organization in India that supports converts to Islam

Asantenkramo (AK): Asante name for an Asante convert to Islam.

Fantenkramo (AK): Fante name for a Fante convert to Islam

Tabons (P): A name which refers to the free slaves from Brazil who came to Accra in 1839. They are said to be the foundation of Islam in Accra.

Tuba (AH): A name referring to a convert to Islam in Ghana.

Kalam (A): used to refer to Scholastic Theology

Ahadith (A) Plural of Hadith which means sayings of the Prophet (SAW)

A'imah: plural of Imam.

Al-Fitrah (A): Islamic concept of the natural religion (Islam) which humankind is created upon.

Sunnah (A): The actions, sayings and silent approvals of the Prophet (SAW). It is referred to as the second primary source of Islamic Jurisprudence

Salat (A): The Muslim prayer

Zakat (A): The compulsory Alms-Giving which is the third pillar of Islam

Ka'bah (A): The first House of Allah built for His worship. It is the Qiblah (direction) of Muslim prayers.

Hajj (A): The pilgrimage to Makkah which is the fifth pillar of Islam

Murtad (A): An apostate in Islam.

At-Tahwil (A): To change or turn to something else.

Fuqahaa (A): Plural of Faqih: A jurist

Ad-Daakhil fil-Islam (A): A word used by Fuqahaa to mean a convert to Islam.

Jihad (A): Striving or fighting in the course of Allah.

Hijrah (A): A journey of the Muslims from a place of tyranny and oppression in religion to a safe place to worship Allah. Specifically, it refers to the migration of the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah in 622 C.E

Jizyah (A): A form of tax non-Muslims pays to the Muslim State.

Quraish (A): The Arab tribe in Makkah which the Prophet belonged.

Ulama (A): The plural of Alim: an Islamic Scholar.

Shahaadah (A): Testifying to the oneness of Allah and the Prophethood of Muhammad (SAW)

Ghusl (A): A ritual bath taken in times of certain occurrences in Islam such as embracing Islam and sexual intercourse.

Kuffaar (A): Plural of Kaafir; A disbeliever

Taharah (A): Ritual Cleanliness/ Purity

Du'a (A): Supplication

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

According to Salman Harun and others, conversion is from a Latin word “*conversio*” which means repentance, return or change. In English, it means changing from one state or religion to another¹. This means that, conversion can take place in any field. This work shall however concentrate on religious conversion. In actual fact, conversion can be inter-religious or intra-religious. In intra-religious conversion, a person switches from one doctrine to another within the same religious tradition while in inter-religious conversion, a person moves from one religion to another. Even though, both are applied in Ghana, the study will focus on inter-religious conversion.

The word “convert” is generally used to refer to a person who changes from one religion to the other. However, Kevin Brice is of the view that Muslim scholars prefer the word revert in reference to a convert to Islam because of the notion of “*al-Fitrah*” (natural religion). This means that everyone is born a Muslim but it is the parents or the environment that makes him/her a non-Muslim. However if a person embraces Islam, it means he/she has converted to his/her original religion (Islam).² The study will therefore use reverts to refer to converts to Islam.

Muslims are encouraged to invite people to Islam. It is therefore a meritorious act to invite people to Islam. In Sahih Bukhari, the Prophet told Ali,

¹. <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>(accessed, October 04,2014)

². Kevin Brice, *A Minority within a Minority: A report on reverts in the United Kingdom* (U.K: Swansea University, 2010), 23.

*Proceed steadily to them and then invite them to Islam and inform them of their duties to Allah, for if one man is guided on the right path (i.e. converted to Islam) through you, it would be better for you than (a great number of) red camels.*³

Reverts have roles to play for the betterment of the society. One of these roles is to practice the teachings of Islam and urge people to do so as well. The spread of Islam was partly made possible by the Muslim reverts. According to Ali Muhammad Sallabi, the early reverts such as Uthman Ibn Affan, Abdur-Rahman Ibn Auf, Sa'ad Ibn Abi Waqaas, Zubair Ibn Awwam and Talhah Ibn Ubaydullah who converted to Islam through Abu-Bakr bin Abi Quhaffah played important roles in the spread of Islam.⁴

In Ghana conversion to Islam started so many years ago. It went alongside the spread of Islam. According to Mark Sey, by the 15th century, Islam had been in the Gold Coast through some Muslims of Malian origin. He explained further that, by 1585 Islam had entered Gonja land with its first revert, Mawur.⁵ According to Ivor Wilks, the trading activities of the pioneer Muslims paved the way for a greater number of people to revert among the Gonjas.⁶ Mumuni Sulemana states that, by the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, Islam had reached the coastal regions of Ghana⁷ but by 1940 a lot of the Ga got converted to Islam.⁸ To promote the teachings and practices of Islam and to organise all reverts among the Ga, the Ga reverts formed the Aborigines Muslim Association (AMA) in 1934. Nathan Samwini posits that, the (AMA) was to prove to the migrant Muslims that, all men are equal in the faith. This was necessary because, they were not wholly accepted to be

³. Imam Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, translated into English by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Vol 5 (Turkey: Crescent Publishing House, 1973), 43

⁴. Ali Muhammad Sallabi, *as-Siratun-* (Egypt: Al-Maktabatut-Tawfiqiyah, 2000), 512-520

⁵. Mark Sey, *Historical Society of Ghana.org/sites.../files/Historical_Insight_Religion.pdf* (Accessed November 07, 2014)

⁶. Ivor Wilks, *Chronicles from Gonja: A Tradition of West African Muslim Historiography* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 310

⁷. Mumuni Sulemana, *Islamic Studies* (Accra: Kapital Publishing, 2004), 26

⁸. Mumuni Sulemana, "Islamic Organizations in Accra, Their Structure, Roles And Impact in The Proselytization of Islam" (M Phil Thesis, Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon, 1994), 35

part of the Muslim community. The name “*tuuba*” which was used in reference to them was derogatory.⁹ The Ga reverts therefore suffered a form of discrimination from their fellow migrant Muslims.

In recent times, even though reverts are contributing to the development of Islam, they continue to face challenges. Such derogatory remarks are still used. Though, Article 21 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana promotes freedom of religion,¹⁰ some reverts are assaulted and neglected by their families because of their conversion to Islam. In the midst of these challenges, there are no formal structures from the Muslim leadership to address them as Islam requires. This may be due to the lack of information about the challenges faced by reverts.

It is against this background that this research is conducted to investigate the challenges reverts in the Greater Accra face and to find out how these challenges would be addressed to enhance the development of Islam in Ghana.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Assistance to reverts has been a challenge in Ghana. There are no formal structures put in place to address the challenges they face. Sometimes those who initiate them into Islam do not take into consideration the challenges that the environment pose to the spiritual and social lives of these reverts. They therefore find themselves in difficult situations either with the members of their former faith or in the practice of Islam. Some are denied education or are assaulted by their family members because they have abandoned the faith of the family. These challenges have perhaps not been brought to the attention of the Muslim leadership, hence the lack of appropriate channels to address them. This research is therefore an attempt

⁹. Nathan I. Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana and Christian Relations* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), 83

¹⁰. www.politicsresource.net/docs/ghanaconst.pdf (Accessed on November 20,2014)

to investigate and highlight these challenges to the Muslim leadership so that necessary structures could be put in place to enhance the development of Islam in Ghana.

1.2 Research Question

The main research question is. What are the challenges reverts face in the Greater Accra Region? And what are the interventions made to ameliorate these challenges to enhance the development of Islam in Ghana.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives below will form the focus of the study. They include, to:

- ❖ Highlight the Islamic Perspectives of conversion.
- ❖ Investigate the socio-religious challenges reverts face.
- ❖ Outline the interventions made to ameliorate the challenges of reverts.
- ❖ Offer some suggestions based on the findings.

1.4 Scope of Research

The scope of this research is limited to the Greater Accra Region, because its cosmopolitan nature has allowed rigorous religious activities to take place every day. It also has considerable number of Muslim population of 10.2%¹¹. In addition, many of the Muslim organizations and institutions are based in the Greater Accra region. This makes it easier for data to be collected. Furthermore, the search covered the socio-religious challenges, because reverts are affected by both religious and societal influences as they interact with members in their communities.

¹¹.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Accra_Region (Accessed November 11,2014)

1.5 Methodology

The study was conducted using two approaches. These are theological and phenomenological approaches.

1.5.1 Theological Approach

Challenges and prospects of reverts have theological basis and therefore are discussed using the Theological approach. This is to ensure that, explanations are in consonance with Islamic teaching. According to Frank Whaling,¹² theology deals with the transcendence, doctrinal issues and interpretation of faith. He further explains that four types of theologies are found in each tradition. The first is Descriptive theology. This type of theology allows for a description of a doctrinal issue in a functional way. The second is Systemic theology. It summarizes the doctrines of the faith community in a professional sense. According to him all religious traditions contain this type of theology. The third is Philosophical theology. This is a type of theology that engages with other positions in a philosophical way. Finally, there is Theology of dialogue. In this type, there is a deliberate desire to understand others for their own sake not just for apologetic reasons. The researcher is of the view that, the Descriptive theology is suitable for the study because it allows for the description of the views of respondent's.

Even though the term theology has no equivalent in Arabic, the word *Kalam* (Islamic scholastic theology) as an Islamic discipline that asserts the existence of God has functions that include scholastic reasoning that apply to theological explanations. This therefore assists the researcher to use appropriate verses of the Qur'an and *Ahadith* (Prophetic Traditions) to analyze the challenges and prospects of reverts.

¹². Frank Whaling, *Theological Approaches in Peter Connolly, Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London: York House Typographic Ltd, 2004), 229-240

1.5.2 Phenomenological Approach

According to James L. Cox, Phenomenology was first used by J.H. Lambert to describe how “appearances” can lead to truth. However, the use of the word in contemporary philosophy is traced to the German Philosopher, Edmund Husserl. He begun the philosophical movement associated with phenomenology.¹³ For Richard Foli, Husserl used phenomenology as a method of knowing reality.¹⁴ As applied to religion, Clive Erricker posits that, phenomenological approach to the study of religion originated in an attempt to construct a coherent methodology for the study of religions. The approach makes use of *epochy* and eidetic intuition among other processes to study a phenomenon.¹⁵ According to Cox, by *epochy*, a researcher brackets- out his/her pre- conceived ideas. He explains further that, the process of describing the phenomena in phenomenology ensures that, obtained description of a phenomenon corresponds to the believer’s own testimony and not the researcher.¹⁶ The researcher therefore seeks to shed-off his prejudices in the study of the challenges of reverts by applying a phenomenological concept of *epochy*. Also he seeks to describe the views of respondents from their own testimonies. Though phenomenological approach to the study of religions has been criticized for using subjective mind to study an objective world,¹⁷ the researcher believes that, a proper use of *epochy* helps to gather the views of respondents.

1.6 Method of Data Collection

This research is a qualitative one. As such it needs an appropriate sampling technique that will be used to identify respondents. Usually conversion issues border on relationships with

¹³. James L. Cox, *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion Key Figures, Formative Influences and Subsequent Debates* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group,2006), 9

¹⁴. Richard Foli, *Introduction to Religious Studies* (Accra: Trust Publishers, 2007), 64

¹⁵. Clive Erricker, *Approaches to the Study of Religion in Peter Connolly, Approaches to the study of Religions* (London: New York House Typography, 2004),77

¹⁶. James L. Cox, *Expressing the Sacred, An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*(Zimbabwe: University of Zimbabwe,1996), 26-39

¹⁷. Richard Foli, *Introduction to Religious Studies*, 69

one's family and others and are difficult to be discussed openly because people wish to keep them secret and confidential. The technique which is more suitable in such a circumstance is the snowball or chain technique. For Rashida Alhassan, This technique allows the researcher to access "difficult to reach" or "hidden populations".¹⁸ According to John W. Creswell, the snowball technique identifies cases of interest from people who could be consulted.¹⁹ Additionally the researcher used Purposeful sampling technique in sampling Islamic Institutions and NGOs as well as some individuals to collect data on the interventions made to ameliorate the challenges of reverts.

1.7 Sample Size

Four categories of respondents were consulted for the research. The first were reverts. This was to investigate the challenges they faced. The second group was Muslim reverts who had returned to their former religions. The researcher wanted to find out the reasons why they returned to their former religions. The third group was some *A'imah* (Imams) whose views were sought on the challenges of reverts and the fourth, some individuals and representatives of some Islamic Institution and NGOs who have made some interventions to ameliorate the challenges of reverts. The sample size for both reverts and the apostates were seventy-five (75). Among them forty (40) were males while thirty-five (35) were female. Their ages ranged between eighteen (18) and forty (40) years. This age group was chosen because the constitution of Ghana regards them as matured who can take responsibility for their actions. They are conscious of their decision to revert or return from Islam. Thirty-two(32) had some form of basic education, twenty-five (25) had second cycle (Secondary School Level) education while eighteen (18), had tertiary education. Additionally, three (3) *A'imah* were

¹⁸. Rashida Alhassan, "From Islam to the other: Social Challenges facing Muslim Reverts in the Ghanaian Community"(M Phil Thesis to the Department for The Study of Religions, University of Ghana,2014),13

¹⁹. John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed(London: SAGE Publications Inc.,2007), 159

also contacted for their views. Finally, five (5) individuals (both preachers and Non-preachers) and Two (2) Islamic Institutions as well as eight (8) Muslim NGOs/ Associations were consulted on the interventions made to address the challenges of reverts. In attempt to restore confidentiality of respondents, the identities of reverts and those who returned from Islam were not disclosed. Alphabets were used to represent them so that they are not exposed to public ridicule. Names of the rest of respondents were used to serve as motivation for others to emulate their good work.

1.8 Techniques of Data Collection

The research is a qualitative one. Sight and hearing techniques are therefore necessary. According to Paul C. Cozby, a qualitative data enables one to obtain data through sight and hearing among others and this helps to provide an in depth analysis of the data collected.²⁰ Data was therefore collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included: observations, interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions.

1.8.1 Observation

The researcher observed selected clips of some Qur'an- Bible preachers to enable him gather information on some of the ways non-Muslims are attracted to Islam. This group of preachers is also selected because it is the only group that targets non-Muslims aiming at converting them into Islam. Additionally, the group is able to use both the Qur'an and the Bible in a convincing and persuasive manner to explain doctrines that are similar in both Islam and Christianity. Additionally, the researcher used participant observation to observe some programs organized for reverts in some Mosques.

²⁰. Paul C. Cozby, *Methods in Behavioural Research*, 9th ed, (New York: McGraw Hill 2001), 19

1.8.2 Interview

Interview scheme was conducted to solicit for information for the research. Interview is one of the effective methods of collecting data. This is acquired if relevant questions are asked. It involves an interviewer and interviewee. According to Tom Kumekpor²¹, relevant questions must be asked on the topic of study to obtain an appropriate response. Due to this, semi-structured interview tool was used. With this tool, different set of interview guides are used to help collect data from different groups of respondents and also help to probe more into the issues. The researcher therefore used interview scheme extensively to collect details of the views of respondents. Fifty-one (51) respondents were interviewed. Among them, forty-one (41) were reverts while ten (10) were those who returned from Islam. Some representatives of the Islamic NGOs and Institutions as well as some individuals were also interviewed on the interventions to ameliorate the challenges of reverts.

1.8.3 Questionnaire

Another tool that was used is questionnaire. Questionnaire helps to collect and record information about a particular issue. It should always have a specific purpose that relates to the objectives of the research. Among its merits are that, basic attitudes or opinions of people or a group are related to specific issues.²² Based on this, the researcher administered two types of questionnaires. One set was to reverts, to investigate the challenges they face while the other set went to those who returned to their former religions. This was to investigate the reasons for leaving Islam.

²¹.Tom, K. B. Kumekpor, *Research Method and techniques of Social Research* (Accra: Son Life Press& Services, 2002),185

²². <https://www.kirkless.gov.uk/community/yoursay/Questionnaire.Pdf> (Accessed on November 11, 2014).

1.8.4 Focus Group Discussion

In addition to the above techniques to collect data, the researcher conducted a focus group discussion with two groups of reverts in both as-Salaam and Voice of Islam Mosques in Communities 2 and 18 respectively. They were ten (10) members in each group.

1.9 Data Management and Analysis

Some control measures were used to ensure that the needed data was collected for the research. The researcher used interview guides and notebooks to help in taking notes during the interviews. Some recordings were done for later transcription based on the consent of respondents. Also, the questionnaires were edited to make use of needed data. The researcher made revisits to respondents and when phone calls were needed, they were used to seek for clarification of information. Finally, data processing was made using qualitative analysis methods.

For the secondary sources, books, articles and journals were consulted to explain concepts and principles of conversion and the need to address challenges. Literature used was both from English and Arabic sources. The internet was of great importance to the research.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

Islam recognizes the differences that exist among people, either based on environment or thought.²³ Qur'an (30:22) for instance highlights the difference in skin colour and language. The difference in thought and choice is further highlighted in Qur'an (11:119) which states, *"If thy Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one people: but they will not cease to disrepute..."* In spite of these differences, man is expected to recognize his creator and worship Him alone by submitting to His Will, hence the call to the (*Diinul-Fitrah*) or natural

²³. Abdallah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'an Text Translation and Commentary* (USA: Amana corp,1983),1056

religion and the need to remain on it despite all challenges. Qur'an (16:36) states, "*For We assuredly sent among every people a Messenger (with the command), "Serve Allah and eschew evil (worship of idols etc.)..."*"

The study was therefore based on the concept of "*al-Fitrah*" in Islam. According to Ruhi al-Balbalaki and Munir²⁴, "*al-Fitrah*" linguistically means nature or natural disposition or innate character. Muhammad Mutawalli Sha'rawee²⁵ explains that, its technical meaning is the natural religious disposition upon which Allah created Adam and his descendants. This natural disposition is for them to know that He is their creator so they worship Him. He is of the opinion that, in Qur'an (30:30), Allah calls people to the "*al-Fitrah*". According to Rabi'atu Ammah, Muslims consider Islam as the "the religion of nature" (*Diinul-Fitrah*) or natural religion (religio-naturalis) meaning, Islam is innate within the whole created order. This order exists naturally in a state of peace with God.²⁶ Abdallah Yusuf Ali emphasizes that, Qur'an (30:30) shows the fact that from the creative hand of God, man is innocent, free, pure and inclined to right and virtue like the nature of a lamb but man is influenced by the meshes of custom, superstitions, selfish desires and false teachings that make him unclean and false.²⁷ According to Bukhari²⁸, Abu Hurayrah narrated that, Allah's Apostle said:

No child is born except on the al-Fitrah (natural religion) and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian or a Magian (Zoroastrian) as an animal produces a perfect young animal: do you see any part of its body amputated?

²⁴. Ruhi al-Balabalaki and Munir al-Balabalaki, *Al-Mawrid* (Lebanon: Dar al-Ilmlil Malaayin, 2001), 829

²⁵. Muhammad Mutawalli Sha'rawee, *Khawaatirii fii Kitabi-Llah Vol 18* (Egypt: Dar Akhbaril-Yawm, 1991), 1418

²⁶. Ms Rabi'atu Ammah, "Muslims and Christians in Africa: The Challenges of Ecumenical Education; A view point in J.S. Pobe and J.N. Kudadjie; *Theological Education in Africa*" *Quo Vadimus*; (Accra: Asempa Publishers).

²⁷. Abdallah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'an Text Translation and Commentary* (USA: Amana corp, 1983), 1059

²⁸. Sahih Bukhari, Volume 2, Hadith No. 441.

Based on the *Hadith* above it is believed that, when a person converts, he/she has returned to his/her original state of faith. It is therefore preferred that, a convert to Islam is known as a revert.

There are two aspects of “*al-Fitrah*”. These are the acceptance of the “*al-Fitrah*”, and the challenges associated with it. The first part of the *Hadith* “*No child is born except on the al-Fitrah (natural religion)...*” indicates the acceptance of the *fitrah*. The natural religion has been accepted by man even before his birth. Qur’an (7:172) states:

When thy lord drew forth from the Children of Adam—from their loins—their descendants, and made them testify concerning them (saying) “Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! We do testify...”

According to Yusuf Ali, the covenant has made it obligatory for the children of Adam to submit totally to the will of Allah since they testified to His Lordship.²⁹

The second part of the *Hadith* “*and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian or Magian...*” explains the challenges associated with the *al-Fitrah*. These challenges are posed by the influence of the environment as deduced from the *hadith*. Reverts therefore encounter challenges from their immediate families and other people. Other challenges are also caused by some practices of their new faith such as circumcision. Abu Hurayrah has narrated that, Allah’s Apostle said: “*Five things are part of al-Fitrah –circumcision, removing the pubic hair, trimming the moustache, cutting the nails and plucking the armpit*”.³⁰ Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah states: “*The beginning of the Muslim life is the point at which a perfect dissimilarity with non -Muslims has been achieved*”.³¹ Challenges faced are further emphasized in Qur’an (35:5-6). It states:

²⁹. Abdallah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur’an Text Translation and Commentary*, 394

³⁰. Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, *Hadith* No. 5441.

³¹. En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibn-Taymiyyah (Accessed on November 13, 2014)

O mankind! Certainly, the promise of God is true, let not then this present life neither deceive you nor let the chief deceiver (Satan) deceive you from God". Verily, Satan is an enemy to you so treat him as an enemy. He only invites his adherents that they become companions of the blazing fire.

For Yusuf Ali, this verse shows the two forms of deception of evil. One is the seductive temptation of this world and the other is the Devil.³² The seductive temptation of this world includes mockery, denial and the negative influences of people. The negative influence of the Devil is one other challenge stated in the verse above. This may be hatred for one another, envy and disbelief that emanate from the Devil. All these challenges may influence reverts to leave Islam. In Qur'an (12:100), Prophet Yusuf recognized the negative effects of the Devil in bringing hatred between him and his brothers and said "... *after The Devil had brought hatred between me and my brothers...*" Assistance to reverts is therefore necessary to help them address their challenges so that they remain on the *Fitrah*.

1.11 Literature Review

According to Seth Kissi³³, literature review shows how a current work relates to previous ones. Literature was therefore carefully selected to discuss the various aspects of the study. Conversion to Islam is not new in Islam. There are verses of the Qur'an and sayings and actions contained in the *Sunnah* (traditions of the Prophet) that discuss various aspects of it. The thesis made use of these explanations, the biographies of the early reverts as well as the reports and researches done on them in other parts of the world. Works on the spread of Islam and conversion of the West African people including Ghanaians were also reviewed.

³². Abdallah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'an Text Translation and Commentary*, 394

³³. Seth Kissi, *Thesis Writing Addressing some common Problems of students* (Accra: Even Media, 2012), 27

1.11.1 *Materials on Islamic Perspectives of conversion*

One material that explained conversion to Islam was *Sahih Bukhari* by Imam Bukhari³⁴. The book is a compilation of the Prophet's sayings and actions. These sayings are grouped under headings and chapters. In the first heading he discussed the virtues of the companions of the Prophet and many others. The second heading addressed chapters such as those who had homes in (Madinah) and elaborated extensively on the conversion of some of the companions to Islam. The book provided some examples of the sufferings of the early reverts. Mus'ab Ibn Umayr for instance, was beaten and chained when he converted to Islam. The book therefore helped in the analysis of the challenges of reverts in the chapter three of the research.

Mumuni Sulemana's³⁵ work on *Islamic Organizations in Accra: Their Structure, Roles and Impact in the Proselytization of Islam* was reviewed for the research. He researched into the activities of Islamic organizations in Accra. His focus was however on Sunni (orthodox) Islamic organizations. He also touched on the origin of Islam among the Gas and also traced the origin and observance of Islam in Accra. He attributed the introduction of Islam in Accra, to the *Tabons* and persons such as Aruna, Asumam, Kangichi among others were part of the leaders of the *Tabons*. This took place in 1836. Other factors such as trade led to the spread of Islam. However it was round 1900 that the first revert among the Ga was made. His name was Kwashie Solomon. Though Mumuni's work was relevant to the chapter three of this research in highlighting the state of Islam in the Greater Accra region, it did not discuss the challenges reverts face.

³⁴. Imam Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, translated into English by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Vol 5(Turkey: Crescent Publishing House,1973),91-134

³⁵. Mumuni Sulemana, "Islamic organizations in Accra, Their Structure, Roles And Impact in The Proselytization of Islam",1994

The Assessment of various Factors in the Spread of Islam during the Medieval Period by Ali Kose³⁶ was consulted for the study. It discussed conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period and highlighted some theories of conversion. These theories were used to explain the reasons for conversion to Islam. They included, the “sword theory”, “interaction theory” patronage theory and the “social liberation theory”. He explained that the “sword theory” was the oldest theory largely used during the days of the crusaders till the nineteenth century by the West to explain conversion to Islam. The theory proposes that, non-Muslims embrace Islam because they were forced to do so. The second theory explains the interaction of immigrant Muslims with the native people. This is the “interaction theory”. For the “patronage theory”, it asserts that people revert to enable them receive favours from people or the ruling class for example freedom from paying taxes. The “liberation theory” emphasizes that Islam liberates lower class people from the upper class. This theory is said to be used especially in India in relations to its Hindu Caste system. The author was of the conviction that, conversion to Islam is a theme that has not been explored very much in Islamic history. Though, the theories raised by the author could lead to some challenges on reverts, the material failed to discuss these challenges. The work was however relevant to the chapter three of this research in analyzing the motives for conversion to Islam.

In addition, *Factors that Influence Religious Conversion among Muslim Splinter Groups in Indonesia* by Salman Harun, Mohamad Avicenna and Mohamad Atqa³⁷ was beneficial to chapter two of the study. It discussed some aspects of conversion. They include the meaning of conversion, religious conversion process, characteristics of conversion, and types of conversion. The literature explained the meaning of conversion and types of conversion. The author stated that, conversion is derived from a Latin word “*conversio*” meaning repentances, return or change. In English, it means change from one state or religion to another. On types

³⁶. www.isam.org.tr/documents%5C_dosyalar%5C_pdfiler%5C_islam_arastir (accessed, October 20,2014)

³⁷. <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>(accessed, October 04,2014)

of religious conversion, the work identified three forms. These are sudden conversion, gradual conversion and religious socialization. However, the study does not contain much explanation on the Islamic views of conversion and Reverts. This work addresses Islamic views on conversion and the challenges of reverts in Ghana.

Another work reviewed was, *The Message of Islam* by Abdur-Rahman as-Sheha³⁸. The author explained basic concepts of Islam that could be themes for a Muslim preacher. It contains simplified teachings and a principle of Islam that is needed by reverts to help them understand the faith. These include the meaning of Islam, articles of faith, ablution and some aspects of Islamic code of ethics. The book was relevant to the discussion on the perspectives of conversion in chapter two and the analysis of the challenges of reverts in chapter three of the research. According to the author, one of the fundamental belief systems in Islam is the belief in the Oneness of Allah. Worship must be directed to Him alone. Qur'an (112:1-4) addresses this position. The conversion to Islam comes along with duties and responsibilities. These include, building one's spirituality through the observance of *Salat*, giving *Zakat*, Fasting in the month of Ramadan and performing *Hajj*. Though the author sought to explain these practices, he failed to address the challenges these practices could have on reverts. This research seeks to investigate those challenges.

Hassan M. Baagil's³⁹ *Christian Muslim Dialogue* was also important for the research. It was relevant in addressing the use of the Qur'an and the Bible in *Da'wah* in Chapter Two. The book is a dialogue between a Christian and a Muslim. It adopts a comparative approach to express ideas in a conversation between the author and a Christian. Some of the topics discussed include, the Holy Bible, the Doctrine of the Trinity and Muhammad (SAW) in the Bible. The author used persuasive arguments to explain the Islamic positions on the various

³⁸ . Abdur-Rahman as-Sheha, *The Message of Islam*(USA: International Institute of Islamic Thought,2000)

³⁹ . Hassan M. Baagil , *Christian Muslim Dialogue* (Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House,2006)

topics. This is one of the approaches used to motivate non-Muslims to find out more about Islam. Comparison between Islam and other religions in dialogue is one of the effective ways to convince people to embrace Islam. However, it does not contain challenges or prospects of reverts.

Also, Mervyn Hiskett's⁴⁰, *Development of Islam in West Africa* looked at the historical dimension of the spread of Islam in West Africa. Though Clarke, Levtzion and other scholars have written concerning Islam in West Africa, Hiskett seems to address conversion to Islam in a concise manner. He devoted the last chapter to discuss this issue. This was relevant in discussing the motives of conversion to Islam in chapter three of the study. He is of the view that one of the factors that led to the conversion of people to Islam is persuasion by peaceful means to people who lived in non-Muslim societies. Another important factor he cited was trade. According to him, though traders were important in the spread of Islam, some scholars believe that, scribes, astrologers, charm-makers, physicians, and theologians were equally important than the traders.

Osman B. Bari's⁴¹ book titled, *A comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana* was very useful to the study. Though some scholars have written on Islam in Ghana, Bari's work is outstanding in tracing the history of Muslims and religion in Ghana. He discussed how Islam entered into the Gold Coast and the conversion of some indigenous people to Islam. The *Tabons* are credited for the introduction of Islam into Accra. The book was relevant to the research in the analysis in chapter three. In spite of the author's efforts in discussing issues concerning Muslims and reverts, he failed to discuss the challenges of these reverts in detail.

⁴⁰. Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (New York : Longman Group Limited, 1984)

⁴¹. Osman B. Bari. *A comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana Vol 1*, (Accra: Dezines Focus Printing and Publications co, 2009)

1.11.2 *Materials on challenges of reverts*

A Minority within a Minority: A report on Reverts in the United Kingdom by Kevin Brice⁴² contains the experiences of reverts in the United Kingdom. The author researched into the factors that made people embrace Islam in the United Kingdom and outlined the experiences of reverts. The work was very useful for this study because, reverts in Ghana too are a minority within a minority. It therefore enhanced the analysis in chapter three. He found out that though there was a rapid growing population of Muslim reverts in United Kingdom, reverts support was very poor. People accepted Islam for two main reasons. These are acceptance based on conscience and acceptance based on convenience. By conscience, a person becomes convinced about the explanations of Islam while by convenience, a particular need becomes the reason for the conversion to Islam. This need could be to facilitate a marriage or to secure a business contract. Though the work was important, Ghana differs from the United Kingdom so challenges of reverts will change. Brice's work does not address the socio-religious nature of the Ghanaian people which could affect the challenges reverts face.

In addition, *Men and Women around the Messenger*⁴³ by Khalid Muhammad Khalid was reviewed for the research. He highlighted the biography of sixty companions of the Prophet (SAW). The book was useful to this research because, it provided examples of the challenges Muslim reverts faced. This therefore helped in the analysis in chapter three of this research. The challenge of Mus'ab Ibn Umayr was an example of the numerous challenges reverts face. He was chained and imprisoned because of his conversion to Islam but with his patience, he was later sent by the Prophet to Madinah to teach and to call others to Islam. The book however, does not explain the meaning of conversion and how the challenges of reverts

⁴². Kevin Brice , *A Minority within a Minority: A report on reverts in the United Kingdom* (U.K: Swansea University,2010)

⁴³. Khalid Muhammad Khalid, *Men and Women around the Messenger* (Egypt: Darul -Manarah, 2003)

could be addressed. In addition, the challenges faced by the companions happened in Arabia so many years ago. This research seeks to find out the challenges in the Ghanaian context and how to overcome them.

Rashida Alhassans's work: *From Islam to the Other: Social Challenges Facing Muslim Converts in the Ghanaian Community* was relevant to the study. She analyzed the motives for converting from Islam to Christianity and the challenges faced by the converts. She identified that, some parents of converts attempted to kill them because they indicated their intention to leave Islam. Others also suffered torture from their families. This research focuses rather on reverts.⁴⁴

1.11.3 Materials on interventions to solve the challenges of reverts

One of the books that give highlights on the need to support reverts is Sallabi's⁴⁵ *as-Siratu-Nnabawiyah* (The Prophet's Biography). The book contains the life history of the Prophet. The author explained the civilization and religious traditions before Islam, the Prophet's life and the conversion of some companions of the Prophet to Islam. According to the author, the Prophet taught the need to assist reverts. The book therefore was relevant to the analysis in chapter four of the research. He explained that, the "*ahlus-Suffa*" were a group of Muslims who did not have any resource to take care of themselves. The Prophet helped these reverts by giving them a place to stay. He also urged Muslims especially the "*Ansar*" to take care of them by providing them with their basic needs. When the Prophet had food, he gave them portions of it. The book made mention of fifty of them. Among them were Abu Hurayrah and Abu Dhar.

⁴⁴. Rashida Alhassan, "From Islam to the other: Social Challenges facing Muslim Reverts in the Ghanaian Community" (M Phil Thesis to the Department for The Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2014)

⁴⁵. Ali Muhammad Sallabi, *as-Siratu-* (Egypt: Al-Maktabatut-Tawfiqiya, 2000)

A guide for a new Muslim by Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo⁴⁶ is a book purposely written to guide reverts understand the basic teachings of Islam. The author welcomes reverts to a most likely different new realm than their previous outlook. A number of topics are then discussed. These topics were carefully chosen and written in a convincing manner to get reverts motivated to learn more about Islam. Some of the topics treated included, the meaning of the word “Islam”, the religion of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the final message among others. These are some basic teachings of Islam that reverts need to know. This was relevant to the chapter four of the study. Furthermore, he addressed a very important point that related to the rites of reverts as explained in chapter two of this study. That is, changing of names of reverts after accepting Islam. He argued out that, there is no evidence in Islamic law that forces the Muslim to do that. What is done is that, a better name is preferred over a name that relates to the worship of an idol or one that doesn't have a good meaning. Even though the author acknowledged the fact that reverts face challenges, he did not address these challenges.

Another material that was important to the research was Thomas Walker Arnold's⁴⁷ *Preaching of Islam, a History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*. He examined the spread of Islam and how reverts were assisted to overcome their challenges. How Islam left Arabia to Asia, Europe, Africa and other places were explained. He stated that, conversion contributed to the expansion of Islam from Morocco to Sierra Leone, Liberia and New Guinea. According to him, the spread of Islam was due to various social, political and religious reasons. Even though the work was mainly on the spread of Islam, almost every chapter addressed the efforts Muslim missionaries made to convert people into Islam. This was helpful in chapter two of this research. He further explained that, the Muslim Missionary

⁴⁶. www.islamguiden.com/arkiv/guideforthenewMuslim.pdf (accessed, October 25,2014)

⁴⁷. Thomas Walker Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam A history of the propagation of the Muslim Faith*(London : Constable & Company Ltd , 1913)

Societies had other roles to play in the spread of Islam. *Amjuman Hami Islam* for instance was formed in India to answer objections against Islam, preach and provide food and clothing to reverts as a result of the challenges they faced, however, the book does not discuss these challenges in detail.

1.12 Limitations of the Study

Some limitations of the study included inadequate detailed documentation of reverts in Greater Accra Region. Most of the information was on the spread of Islam. Furthermore, Language barrier was a challenge when the interviews were conducted. Some respondents spoke languages that the researcher could not understand. In such cases, the researcher took an interpreter.

Lack of confidence of some respondents for the interviews was another difficulty. They were worried about the confidentiality of their views. However, this did not affect the study negatively because the researcher assured them of the secrecy of their views. For this reason, the researcher did not disclose the identities of reverts and those who had returned to their former faiths or left Islam. Alphabets were used instead of their real names in the study.

1.13 Relevance of Study

Academically, the research adds to knowledge by providing findings on the challenges of reverts and how to address them in Ghana. Additionally, it provides the opportunity for the leadership of the Muslim community to be aware of the challenges reverts face so that, appropriate measures are put in place to address them. It also suggests ways that would help reverts understand some issues pertaining to their new faith (Islam) that they have embraced and this helps them cope with the challenges they face. Finally the study provides the

opportunity for the Muslims to know some of the contributions some individuals and NGOs are making to support reverts in the development of Islam in Ghana.

1.14 Structure of the Work

The study was organized into five chapters. Chapter one discussed the introduction which consisted of background of the study, statement of the problem, research question, objectives, outline of study, relevance of the study and limitations. The introduction discussed why the research was conducted and how it was conducted. Chapter two titled: Islamic perspectives of conversion involved what is conversion, the concept of revert in Islam. Chapter three of the study dealt with the content analysis of challenges of reverts in the Greater Accra Region. Some of the challenges recorded were, physical assaults and inadequate Islamic literature. In addition some had challenges with their occupation because, Islam did not approve of them. Chapter four dealt with the interventions made by some individuals and Islamic institutions to ameliorate the challenges of reverts. Some of these interventions were lectures and the formation of NGOs to champion their course. Finally, chapter five was the conclusion which made some recommendations and suggestions based on the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES OF CONVERSION

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the Islamic perspectives of conversion. Even though the research seeks to investigate the challenges and prospects of reverts, it is imperative to highlight the Islamic perspectives of conversion. The discussions on conversion shall be examined from the primary sources of Islam. It is expected that an understanding of conversion in Islam will help reverts know some of their duties in Islam. The researcher therefore will address issues such as conversion in Islam, the reasons for conversion to Islam, teachings for reverts and the rites of conversion to Islam.

2.1 Meaning of Conversion

Conversion is derived from the Latin word “*conversio*” which means repentance, return or change.⁴⁸ In English, it is used to describe the process of changing from one state to another. When applied to religion, it means to change from one religion to another or a change from one doctrine to another within a religious tradition. If the change is from one religion to another, it is termed inter- religious conversion but if the conversion takes place within the same religion, it is referred to as intra-religious conversion. In Arabic, conversion is termed “*at-Tahwil*”.⁴⁹ A person who leaves Islam is called a “*murtad*”⁵⁰ while the one who reverts is called a Muslim. According to Abu Maalik Salim, the *Fuqahaa* (Jurists) refer to a new revert as “*ad-Daakhil fil-Islam*”.⁵¹

⁴⁸. <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>(accessed, October 04,2014)

⁴⁹. Ruhi al-Balabalaki and Muniru al-Balabalaki, *Al-Mawrid*,55

⁵⁰. Ruhi al-Balabalaki and Muniru al-Balabalaki, *Al-Mawrid*, 215

⁵¹. Abu Maalik Salim, *Sahihu Fiqhus-Sunnah* (Egypt: Al-Maktabatut- Tawfiqiyyah, 2000),167

2.2 The Qur'an and *Sunnah* on Inviting to Islam

Islam considers reverts very important. This is because they form one of the driving forces for its growth. As people revert, they help in the spread of Islam from one place to the other. Due to this the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* as the primary sources of Islamic teachings have addressed various facets of it. The following injunctions urge Muslims to call people to Islam. Qur'an (16:125) states, *"Call to the path of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching..."* Qur'an (10:25) also states that, *"Allah invites to the abode of peace (Islam) and He guides to the right way whoever He pleases"*. In Bukhari, the Prophet (SAW) is reported to have told Ali, *"For a person to be guided through you is better for you than a thousand of red camels (valuable assets)."*⁵² This invitation to Islam should be done without any force. The Qur'an (2:256) emphasizes this in the injunction: *"There is no compulsion in religion..."* However, some verses of the Qur'an are misunderstood to mean forcing people to convert. For instance, Qur'an (2:193) which states:

And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression and there prevail Justice and faith in Allah, but if they cease (fighting you) let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression.

Muhammad A. Khan opines that, one of the outcomes of Muhammad's (SAW) *jihad* was forcing conversion on the infidels particularly the polytheist⁵³ but, Arnold holds the view that, the attribution of forced conversion to Muhammad (SAW) is unfortunate because it was the rigorous missionary activity of him and his companions that made people to convert.⁵⁴

According to Imran N. Hosein, the verses concerning fighting were revealed in the second year of the Prophet's mission in Madinah. It was based on a number of reasons. Fighting was ordained as a strategy for Muslims to defend themselves against their enemies. For instance,

⁵². Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Arabic-English Vol 5*, 43.

⁵³ Muhammad A. Khan, *Islamic Jihad A Legacy of Forced Conversion, Imperialism and Slavery* (U.S.A: Felibri.com,2008),53

⁵⁴.Thomas Walker Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam A history of the propagation of the Muslim Faith*, 18-26

Qur'an (2:190) states: *“fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress limits; for Allah loves not transgressors.”* Also, fighting was supposed to set people free from oppression and injustice. Qur'an (2:193) addresses that purpose. Hosein adds that even though Islam fights oppression and injustice, it doesn't force non-Muslim to convert.⁵⁵ These verses therefore do not address forced conversion.

The researcher is of the view that, Islam does not teach force conversion. According to Yusuf Ali, religion is a matter of the heart and cannot be forced on a person.⁵⁶ However, some Muslims may force conversion on others out of ignorance.

For the purposes of continuous worship of Allah and being saved from torment of the Hell fire, Muslims are discouraged from leaving Islam. Qur'an (2:210) states,

Whoever leaves his/her religion (Islam) and dies a disbeliever, such people have lost all their deeds in this world and in the hereafter they shall be among the companions of the hell fire. In it they shall dwell forever.

The Islamic law on apostasy further strengthens the need for a Muslim to always remain a Muslim. According to Doi the punishment for the apostate is prescribed in a *Hadith* of the Prophet which states:

It is reported by Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: “whoever changes his religion (from Islam to anything else), bring an end to his life.”⁵⁷

Salim is of the view that, the law of apostasy requires Muslims to maintain their faith and prevent themselves from becoming unbelievers so as to achieve eternal bliss in the hereafter.⁵⁸

⁵⁵. Imran N. Hosein , *A Muslim Response to the attack oh America* (U.S.A: Global Publishers,2002),11-16

⁵⁶. Abdallah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'an Text Translation and Commentary*,103

⁵⁷. Abdur -Rahman I. Doi, *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law*(Nigeria: A.S Nooredeen Publications,2007),266

⁵⁸. Abu Maalik Salim, *Sahihu Fiqhus-Sunnah Vol. 4*,151

2.3 Conversion in Islamic History

Conversion to Islam has been an integral part of the history of Islam. Through conversion, Islam spread across the length and breadth of the globe. This started from the Prophet (S.A.W) in Arabia in 610 CE.⁵⁹ Some of the early reverts were the Prophet's wife Khadijah, his cousin Ali, his adopted son Zayd Ibn Haaritha, his daughters and friend, Abu-Bakr. Through the efforts of the early reverts, many non-Muslim embraced Islam.⁶⁰

They faced many challenges in Makkah after embracing Islam. Some of them were flogged while others were killed. Others were also neglected by their families. Mus'ab Ibn Umayr was chained and beaten when his parents got to know that he had embraced Islam. The first female martyr, Sumayyah, the wife of Yaasir went through several degrees of torture till she died.⁶¹ Bilal Ibn Rabah was also tortured under the hot burning sand at midday with a heavy stone put on his chest so that he could not move his limbs. He was later liberated by Abu-Bakr. Several others went through similar inhuman situations.⁶²

The suffering of reverts was a worry to the Prophet. He therefore advised them to embark on the first *Hijra* (pilgrimage) to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) during the 5th year of Prophethood. Sallabi reports that the Prophet (SAW) said:

It is important you leave for Abyssinia because there is a king who no one is wronged in his presence. It is a land of truth. Stay there till Allah saves you from the sufferings.

Fifteen of reverts went on this journey with the Prophet's daughter Ruqayyah and her husband Uthman Ibn Affan. Though they were pursued to bring them back, the non-Muslim enemies stopped at the shore when they realized the Muslims had moved towards Abyssinia. They returned to Arabia after three months when they heard that Hamza and Umar who were

⁵⁹. C.E refers to Christian era

⁶⁰. Ali Muhammad Sallabi, *as-Siratun- Nnabawiyya*, 512-520

⁶¹. Khalid Mohammad Khalid, *Men and Women around the Messenger*, 621

⁶². Muhammad Zakariyyaa Kandhlawee, *Stories of the Sahabah* 1st ed (Pakistan: Kutub Khana Faiza, 1936), 19

two heroes of their time had embraced Islam. They also had the information that the persecution had reduced. Unfortunately, the persecution was severer when they returned. The Prophet told them to go back to Abyssinia for the second time. At this time they were eighty-three in number. Though the Arabs followed them to Abyssinia to bring them back at this time round, they were refused by King Negus. The King later embraced Islam.⁶³

As persecution intensified, converts together with the Prophet finally left Makkah for Madinah on what is termed the *Hijratul-Akbar (the great Hijra)* in 622 C.E.⁶⁴ They left their properties and other belongings behind. Some even left their husbands or wives. The journey was to liberate them from persecution, torture and the inability to worship Allah without any hindrance.⁶⁵

Islam had contact with Africa since the 5th century during the first *Hijra*. However, through the Arab Army that invaded Egypt under the command of Amr Ibn Al-As in 640 C.E., Islam penetrated through the north of Africa but the entire country came under Islamic rule in 647 C.E after the surrender of Alexandria. The Muslims were received by the native Christians who hated the Byzantine rule because of their oppressive administration and how their fore fathers were tortured and thrown to the sea. One remarkable incident that made a lot of Christians to embrace Islam is the promise given by Hafs Ibn Al-Walid, the governor of Egypt in 744 C.E. He took the position that, those who became Muslims were exempted from paying the *Jizyah*. Upon this, it is reported that, 24,000 Christians accepted Islam. Exemption from paying *Jizyah* became important reason for conversion to Islam besides the missionary work.⁶⁶

⁶³. Ali Muhammad Sallabi, *as-Siratum- Nnabawiyah*,327-343

⁶⁴. C.E refers to Christian era.

⁶⁵. Mohammad Mahdi as-Sharif, *The Prophet's Biography, by Ibn Hisham* (Lebanon: Darul-Kutubul-Islamiyyah,2006),97

⁶⁶. Thomas Walker Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam A history of the propagation of the Muslim Faith*,486

The Berbers from the Sahara established trade links with North Africa and the Western Sudanese states. The early Muslims in the Volta Basin had interest in trade rather than converting people into the fold of Islam. Levtzion terms this as “dispersion of Muslims rather than the spread of Islam.”⁶⁷ The interaction between the Muslims and the indigenous later led to some conversion to Islam. According to Levtzion and Randal, conversion to Islam in Africa was by the religious men who communicated with the local rulers. This made the local kings the first recipients of Islamic influence. Conversion increased when the Muslim clerics helped African Kings to overcome droughts as in the case of Mali or to secure victory in battle as in Kano and later in Gonja in the sixteenth century. As a result, reverts especially the kings adopted a middle position between Islam and Traditional Religion. They therefore patronized both Muslim divines and traditional priests. Faqih Muhammad al-Abyad for instance introduced Islam to Northern Ghana through the conversion of Ndewura Jakpa.⁶⁸ The biggest challenge encountered therefore was in the practice of Islam. Most of reverts mixed Islamic practices with the indigenous ones. Some also suffered numerous maltreatments from their families and clans. Osei Kwame, one of the Asante chiefs for instance who embraced Islam in 1800 was overthrown because of his conversion to Islam.⁶⁹ According to Mumuni, around 1900, the first revert among the Ga was Kwashi Solomon.⁷⁰ This was after some indigenous Fanti had embraced Islam in Fante Land. Through trade and the conquest of the Ashanti Empire, a lot more non-Muslims had contact with Islam. Later on

⁶⁷.Nehemia Levtzion. “THE SOKOTO CALIPHATE.” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol.4(June 1969),631

⁶⁸. Nehemia Levtzion and Randal L. Pouwel, *The History of Islam in Africa*(U.S.A: Ohio University Press, 2000),4

⁶⁹. David W. Del Testa, *Lives and Legacies, Government Leaders, Military Rulers and Political Activists*(New York: Routledge,2013), 138

⁷⁰. Mumuni Sulemana, “Islamic organizations in Accra, Their Structure, Roles and Impact in The Proselytization of Islam”, 1994). 35

more reverts were made. Some of the challenges faced by reverts among the Ga were discrimination from the migrant Muslims in the practice of Islam.⁷¹

In recent times, even though trade and marriage still influence people to convert, preaching, especially the comparative mode where the Qur'an and the Bible or other religious books are used is significant in driving non-Muslims to Islam. Ahmad Deedat and Abdul-Rahim Green are examples of International preachers who have led a lot of people to embrace Islam. The visit to Ghana by Zakir Naik⁷² in October, 2014 further highlights the contribution of the Qur'an-Bible preachers. His four day visit saw a huge gathering of people at the El-wak Stadium in Accra and the Jubilee Park in Kumasi to listen to his talk. Among the topics he delivered were the similarities between Islam and Christianity at Accra and Muhammad (S.A.W) in the Bible at Kumasi. Seventeen (17) non-Muslims embraced Islam during his visit.⁷³ In Ghana, the late Mallam Issah Osei as well as Ayyuba Ofosehene and Ibrahim Allah Party Odjeawo among others have contributed significantly in making reverts and also helping them to maintain Islam.

From the above discussion, the researcher is of the view that conversion to Islam is an ongoing phenomenon since the time of the Prophet up to date. This could be attributed to the zeal of the *Sahaabah* (companions) and those who followed them as far as the development of Islam is concerned. Most of the *Sahaabah* died while they were engaged in the spread of Islam. Bilal for instance died in Damascus having stayed in Madinah with the Prophet.⁷⁴ The spread of Islam in the Western Sudanese empires, the Volta basin and the Coastal regions of West Africa was mainly due to trade and the activities of Islamic scholars and mystics. The general perception is that, a lot of reverts mixed Islam with their native practices.

⁷¹. Nathan I. Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana and Christian Relations*,83

⁷².Zainabu Issah (graphic.com.gh) (accessed on 12th January,2015)

⁷³.Muhammad Muhsin, a member of Annur al-Islamiyyah, an NGO, interviewed on 23rd January, 2015 in Madinah

⁷⁴. Khalid Muhahammad Khalid , *Men and Women around the Messenger*,77

2.4 Factors that Influence conversion to Islam

Brice opines that, people convert based on two main reasons. These are conversion of convenience and conversion of conviction or conscience.⁷⁵ Those that are based on convenience embrace Islam to facilitate an agenda or an ambition such as marriage and business. For reverts of conviction or conscience, their conversion is based on a response to an intellectual or emotional experience about Islam. Haruna, Avicenna and Atqa have also identified four factors that cause a person to convert to a different religion. They include, conflict with some issues in one's own religion, religious motivation, religious support and search for a meaningful life.⁷⁶

Apart from these reasons, several factors account for why people accept Islam in Ghana. These include religious concepts, trade, marriage and personal search. These factors not only influence conversion to Islam but they also assist in maintaining reverts in the faith.

2.4.1 Religious Concepts

Religious concepts play a very important role in making people convert and to make them firm in the faith. The promise of success in the hereafter and other teachings in Islam serve as motivation for some non-Muslims. One religious teaching that is of importance in this regard as far as Islam is concerned is that, embracing Islam offers one the opportunity for his faith and deeds to be accepted by Allah. In this vain, Qur'an (3:85) states: *"And whoever chooses a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of Him, and in the hereafter, he/she will be among the losers."* Qur'an (3:19) also states that: *"The religion before God is Islam (submission to His will)..."*

⁷⁵. Kevin Brice M.A, *A Minority within a Minority: A report on reverts in the United Kingdom*,2

⁷⁶. <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>(accessed, October 04,2014), 5

The acceptance of one's religion by Allah enables him/her to achieve success in this world and the hereafter. In reference to the above verse, Yusuf Ali is of the view that, Islam views itself as the only true religion because it was preached by all Prophets and the Inspired Scriptures testify to that. Therefore anyone who adheres to a religion other than Islam cannot expect true guidance. This is because he/she has renounced guidance deliberately.⁷⁷ Conversion to Islam is therefore a means to be accepted and guided by Allah.

In addition, conversion to Islam is an opportunity for the forgiveness of sin. According to Khalid, When Amr Ibn Al-As wanted to embrace Islam, he told the Prophet (SAW), *"I shall accept Islam only if you promise me that, Allah will forgive me my sins."* The Prophet then said, *"O Amr, swear allegiance, for indeed Islam disregards whatever preceded it."*⁷⁸ Furthermore, conversion to Islam provides the opportunity for one to be saved from the Hell fire. Qur'an (47:34) states that, *"Lo! Those who disbelieve and turn away from the way of God and then die as disbelievers, God surely will not pardon them."* According to Yusuf Ali, the verse shows the eternal consequences of rejecting Islam. The person is deprived of God's grace and mercy.⁷⁹

The researcher is of the view that, though other Semitic traditions hold exclusivist views similar to the above, the motives for conversion to Islam explained in chapter three confirms the influence of such religious concepts on conversion to Islam in Ghana.

2.4.2 Preachers

According to Sallabi,⁸⁰ the preaching of the Prophet (SAW) to his household, friends and the Quraysh in general was one of the reasons for the conversion of most of the early Muslims. In recent times, new techniques are used in preaching. The use of the electronic media and

⁷⁷. Abdallah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'an Text Translation and Commentary* (USA: Amana corp, 1983), 145

⁷⁸. Khalid Muhammad Khalid, *Men and Women around the Messenger*, 482

⁷⁹ Abdallah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'an Text Translation and Commentary*, 1387

⁸⁰. Ali Muhammad Sallabi, *as-Siratun- Vol 1*, 121

Qur'an-Bible preaching are some examples. The Qur'an-Bible preaching groups are the main body in contemporary times that are contributing greatly in converting people to Islam in Ghana. According to Bari, the method of the Qur'an-Bible preaching in Ghana was used by the early reverts among the Ga. They resorted to this approach because of their background knowledge in the Bible which could help them to preach about Islam to the non-Muslims.⁸¹

In their preaching, emphasis is put on the similarities between other religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam to let people appreciate the teachings of Islam. The Qur'an-Bible preachers constitute the main preaching group that targets non-Muslims in their preaching sessions. The preachers either form groups or preach individually. Some of the renowned Ghanaian preachers in recent times include, Sheikh Muhammad Awal, the late Malam Issah Osei, Ibrahim Allah Party Odjeawo and Ayyuba Ofosuhene. Others include Nurudeen Abdur- Rahman and Farouq Abdus- Salaam.

Furthermore, they use different local languages to preach. The type of language used depends on the spoken language of their audience. Sometimes some of them travel from one place to another to preach. Others also have designated places where they preach. According to Nurudeen Abdul Rahman,⁸² a group of Qur'an-Bible preachers preach on Sundays at the Ashaiman Market. Similarly, Ayyuba Ofosuhene preaches at Circle in Accra also on Sundays. One way through which they reach out to the public is through the open air debates with some Christian Pastors. According to Hussein Iddris Ibrahim, their constant victory over their non-Muslim counterparts in these debates often becomes an attraction for non-Muslims to accept Islam.⁸³ They have therefore converted a huge number of non-Muslims to Islam.

⁸¹. Osman B. Bari, *A comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana Vol,1*,319-334

⁸². Nurudeen Abdur- Rahman, a Qur'an-Bible preacher, interviewed on 15th of January, 2014 at Community Two, VOI Mosque.

⁸³. Hussein Iddris Ibrahim, "Preaching in Muslim Communities in Ghana: Mandate, Challenges and Prospects" (PhD thesis, University of Ghana:2013),105

Sheikh Muhammad Awal⁸⁴ has so far converted more than 2500 non-Muslims. Farouq Abdus-Salaam on his part has also converted over 80 non-Muslim Ghanaians to Islam.⁸⁵ A visit to Ghana by Zakir Naik⁸⁶ further highlights the contribution of the Qur'an-Bible preachers.

The researcher observes that, though, the Qur'an- Bible preachers are contributing so much in converting people to Islam in Ghana, they have not put in place formal measures to either train them on the teachings of Islam or to support them in times of need. Reverts at the Elwak stadium during Dr. Zakir Naik's visit were not introduced to any formal organization that is in charge of the welfare of reverts so that they are assisted in their physical and spiritual needs. Instead, an announcement was made at the stadium after their conversion for support from any person or organization. There was no Islamic literature to be given to them at that moment. In addition, there are inadequate records on the activities concerning reverts. This makes it difficult for accurate statistics to be accessed. For the improvement of the activities of the preaching groups, chapter five contains some useful suggestions.

2.4.3 Trade

Trade is also another factor that plays an important role in the conversion of people into Islam. Trade normally brings people from different places together. According to Hiskett, trade opened the path between North Africa and Western Sudan. Trade along routes such as Awjila, Tripoli and Fazzan generated an intellectual contact where Islam was discussed. That also brought Western Sudanese Muslims to Egypt to study under Egyptian *ulama*.⁸⁷ By so doing, Islam expanded along these communities. Muslim traders therefore came into contact with the native people. According to Bari, trade brought Muslims from the Ashanti Empire to

⁸⁴. Sheikh Muhammad Awal, a Qur'an-Bible preacher, Interviewed on 14th December, 2014 at Zongo Lane in Accra

⁸⁵. Farouq Abdus-Salaam, leader (YMM), interviewed on 12th December, 2014 at Zong Lane

⁸⁶. Zainabu Issah (graphic.com.gh) accessed on 12th January, 2015

⁸⁷. Mervyn Hiskett , *The Development of Islam in West Africa*, 15

the coastal states such as Ga and Fanti.⁸⁸ As a result of these contacts, some natives of these states were converted to Islam to facilitate trade relations. Hiskett further asserts that, “*As trade expanded, so conversion to Islam grew*”.⁸⁹

2.4.4 Marriage

Marriage is another factor that leads people to Islam. Sometimes some non-Muslim men convert to Islam to enable them have access to Muslim women. In Islam, a Muslim woman is not allowed to marry a non-Muslim man. She can only marry a Muslim. According to as-Sayyid Sabiq,⁹⁰ there is consensus among Islamic scholars that, a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim man, whether a polytheist or the people of the book (Jews and Christians). Their evidence is Qur’an (60:10) which states:

O prophet! When believing women come to you as emigrants, examine them; Allah knows best as to their faith, then if you ascertain that they are true believers, send them not back to the disbelievers. They neither are not lawful (wives) for the disbelievers nor are the disbelievers lawful (husbands) for them.

Due to this, non-Muslims who want to marry Muslim ladies have to convert to enable them marry the ladies. Sabiq further cites a tradition where marriage influenced conversion to Islam in the days of the Prophet (SAW). The *Hadith* states:

On the authority of Anas: Abu Talha sought for the hand of Ummu Sulaym to marry but she said: By Allah no one rejects the likes of you but you are a non-believer and I am a Muslim so I am not allowed for you. If you will accept Islam, that will be the dowry and I will not ask of anything else. Upon this, he embraced Islam and married her

In Ghana some people convert to Islam through marriage, prominent among them is the conversion of two renowned personalities. Tony Baffour, a former Black star player and

⁸⁸. Osman B. Bari, *A comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana Vol ,1*, 319-334

⁸⁹. Mervyn Hiskett , *The Development of Islam in West Africa*,30

⁹⁰. as-Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqhus-Sunnah* (Egypt: Maktabatu darut-Turath:1944),134

Kwaku Baako Jnr, a seasoned Journalist. For Tony Baffour, his Islam was confirmed by his wife Kalsoume Sinare. According to her,⁹¹ the husband is called Tony Abdul Hafiz Baffour and many people know him as a Muslim. Kwaku Baako's conversion to Islam was in the news in July 2008. He announced publicly that his name had been changed to Malik Kwaku Baako and that his conversion was a private affair and not subject to public discourse.

2.4.5 Persuasive Conducts and Acts

Islam has been seen by some non-Muslim to have answers to spiritual problems. Due to this, some people embrace Islam. Hiskett⁹² has it that, the people of Gonja converted to Islam due to the spiritual assistance Muhammad al- Abyad gave them to win a battle over their enemies. Additionally, a good conduct showed by a Muslim based on the teachings of Islam such as love, patience and tolerance could lead people Islam. According to Bukhari,⁹³ one day the Prophet (SAW) visited a young boy who used to serve him. The Prophet invited him to Islam and out of the love towards him, he embraced Islam.

In a discussion with a group of reverts at the As-Salaam Mosque in Community 18, one of reverts explained that, he was led to Islam through a kind gesture showed to him by a Muslim friend. He had a lot of support from him both in cash and in kind.

2.4.6 Friends

Friends are also very useful in the conversion of people into Islam. Normally those who have friends who are Muslims tend to be influenced by them to embrace Islam. Even though, the opposite may occur, there are some reverts who have been given the *shahaadah* either by

⁹¹. [www.ghanaweb.com/Ghana Home page/\(News\)](http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/News) (Accessed on 8th December,2014)

⁹². Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa*, 120

⁹³. Bukhari *Vol. 7*, Hadith no 7

other friends or have been assisted to understand Islam. Abu-Bakar took five of his friends to the Prophet (SAW) to peacefully embrace Islam.⁹⁴

Several reverts in Ghana embraced Islam through their friends. According Seth Ibrahim Ayi, a Television Producer at the Metropolitan Television (Metro TV) in Accra, he embraced Islam through his friends. He had Muslim friends who walked with him and they did a lot of things together. As a result of this, he developed interest in the way they prayed. He therefore embraced Islam and was initiated by Mallam Nuhu, a friend.⁹⁵

2.4.7 Personal Search

Conversion to Islam is sometimes motivated by personal search. Individual's personal experiences motivate them to find out more about Islam. at-Tufail bin Amir ad-Dawsi's journey to Islam was out of a personal search. According to Sieny Muhammad, at-Tufail was told by the leaders of Quraysh never to listen to the Prophet (SAW). He therefore put cotton wool into his ears any time he went to the Ka'bah. His first encounter with the Prophet (SAW) was his prayer which was not known to the Arab. He began to blame himself for not allowing himself to listen to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) all this while. After listening to him for some time, he followed him to his house. He asked some further questions and after becoming convinced, he embraced Islam.⁹⁶

Personal search continues to be a tool to conversion to Islam even in recent times. Hajia Samia Zouein⁹⁷ of (FOMWAG) for instance was led to Islam through a personal search. Her study of Islamic teachings got her convinced to embrace Islam.

⁹⁴. Ali Muhammad Sallabi, *As-Siratun-Nnabawiyyah Vol 1*,126

⁹⁵. Seth Ibrahim Ayi , a Television Producer at the Metropolitan Television (Metro TV) in Accra, interviewed on 20th January, 2015 at Madina

⁹⁶. Sieny Muhammad Esma'il, *Heroes of Islam* (Saudi Arabia: Darussalam Publishing House,2000),151

⁹⁷. Hajia Samia Zouein, National Treasurer, (FOMWAG), interviewed on 2nd January,2015 at Dzorwulu, Accra

2.5 Initiation rites for Reverts

A new revert has to go through some initiation rites. According to al-Munajjid, the compulsory rites for a new revert are declaring the *Shahaadah* and taking the *Ghusul*. Salim posits that, a person who wants to embrace Islam is made to take a purification bath (*Ghusl*) to purify him/her, and then he/she cleanses his/her dress. A true *Shahaadah* is then said before prayer is offered. Other practices such as circumcision, shaving of hair and taking a Muslim name are other practices that are associated with the initiation rites.

The common experience in Ghana is that, a lot of the *A'imah* and *Du'at* (preachers) allow the new revert to declare the *Shahaadah* before the *ghusl*. For Ayyuba,⁹⁸ the person should enter in to Islam before he/she bathes. This is because, the declaration is more important. In addition most of the mosques do not have washrooms where reverts will take the purification bath. The researcher is of the view that, the conviction to accept and embrace Islam is the most important before the declaration of the *Shahaadah*. This is why the Prophet told Mus'ab Ibn Umayr and As' ad Ibn Urara to let the intended new revert take the *ghusl* before the *Shahaadah*. Also after *Ghusl*, reverts are clean to recite the words of the *Shahaadah* and pray.

2.5.1 Acceptance of Islam

This is the first rite of conversion. Before the *ghusl*, reverts are made to confess Islam without any form of compulsion. This is done by seeking a confirmation from them about their conviction in accepting to become Muslims as stated in Qur'an (2:256). In his commentary of the above verse, Yusuf Ali states that, compulsion is incompatible with religion. This is because, religion is built upon faith and will and if it is induced by force, it becomes meaningless.⁹⁹

⁹⁸. Ayyuba Ofosuhene, a Qur'an-Bible preacher interviewed on 2nd February, 2015 at Cowlane

⁹⁹. Abdallah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'an Text Translation and Commentary*,103

2.5.2 Taking *Ghusl-ul-dhukhul-Islam*

After deciding to embrace Islam, reverts are made to take the purification bath (*Ghusl*) to cleanse them. According to Salim, it is compulsory for them to take this purification bath. He enumerated some of those who were commanded to take the *ghusl* among the companions. They include Qais bin Aasim, and Samaamatu bin Atsal. He explained further that, when Mus'ab Ibn Umayr and As 'ad Ibn Zurara were sent by the Prophet, they asked him what to do if anyone wanted to embrace Islam, the Prophet then said: “*He should take a ritual bath to clean him and clean his dress. He should then take a true Shahaadah and pray.*” In taking the bath, reverts wash all the parts of the body with clean water without soap or sponge. The intention for taking this bath in the heart should be that he/she is entering in to Islam.¹⁰⁰

The *hadith* above explains the significance of the *ghusl*. It is to clean and purify reverts physically and spiritually. It also prepares the mind towards the new faith. Mumuni posits that, *ghusl* promotes personal hygiene; it serves as an interlude between physical mundane activities and the religious super mundane activities of a Muslim and also shows that, cleanliness of the body has a reflection on the purity of the heart.¹⁰¹ Additionally, *ghusl* at this stage is to teach reverts how it is done, because there are other instances such as after menstruation and sexual intercourse where it becomes is necessary.

2.5.3 Declaration of *Shahaadah*

A new revert is made to declare the *Shahaadah*. He repeats it after the Imam. The words of the *Shahaadah* in Arabic is “*Ash'hadu an laa ilaaha il-la lah Wahdahuu Larsharikallahu wa ash'hadu anna Muhammadan Abduhuu Wa Rasuulu huu*” (I bear witness that, none is worthy of worship except Allah, who is one and has no associate or companion. I also bear witness

¹⁰⁰ . Abu Malik Salim, *Sahihu Fiqhus-Sunnah Vol. 1*,166-187

¹⁰¹ . Mumuni Sulemana, *Islamic Studies*, 66

that, Muhammad (SAW) is His Servant and a Messenger). In Ghana, some *A'imah* (Imams) and preachers add the expression, “and I also bear witness that Jesus is the messenger of Allah”. According to Farouq Abdus-Salaam, the addition is made to inform the new revert and the general public about the position of Islam on Jesus. Also the new revert is made to raise the index finger when pronouncing the *Shahaadah*. Appendix A, Picture two is an illustration of such a scene.

The confession or declaration of faith is in two parts- faith in Allah and the Prophethood of Muhammad (SAW).¹⁰² The essence of the *Shahaadah* is that, reverts are to worship Allah alone by obeying Him and to follow the guidance of Muhammad (SAW). The declaration of the *Shahaadah* is to make public the faith in Allah as is in the heart of the new revert and to enable others witness a person's conversion to Islam so that he/she could be assisted to practice its teachings. Unfortunately, some of the *A'imah* (Imams) and Preachers do not asked reverts where they stay and how they can get in touch with other Muslims who would help them in the practice of the faith.

2.5.4 Circumcision

According to Salim, circumcision is compulsory for men. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was asked by God to circumcise when he was eighty years. Muslims are called upon in Qur'an chapter 3 verses 95 to follow the religion of Abraham. He further quotes Abu Dawud and al-Baihaqi that the Prophet told a revert to shave his hair and circumcise.¹⁰³ Although circumcision is very important for the male reverts, not much effort has been made to make it easier for those who are not circumcised. There is no clinic or hospital that is accredited to assist the adult reverts who are to circumcise.

¹⁰². Mumuni Sulemana, *Islamic Studies*, 48

¹⁰³. Abu Maalik Salim, *Sahih Fiqhus-Sunnah*, 99

2.5.5 Choosing a Muslim Name

A revert is advised to choose a Muslim name if he wishes to do so. According to Zarabozo, it is not compulsory for reverts to choose a Muslim name. However when a name has an affiliation to the worship of idols, then a good one is recommended.¹⁰⁴ Saalih adds that, a different name is chosen for the new revert if his/her name is exclusively used by the *Kuffaar* (dis-believers). In that case if the name is not changed, that will amount to resembling the non-Muslims in their activities.¹⁰⁵

2.5.6 Shaving the head

The *kaafir* (non-believer) who converts is made to shave his/her hair if he/she has a hair style that is connected to the worship of an idol or a particular way of life that contradicts Islam. Saalih explains that, the hair of reverts is shaved because of an order given by the Prophet (SAW). The Prophet said: *“Shave off the hair of kafir and get him circumcised.”*¹⁰⁶

2.6 Reverts and the Development of Islam

Reverts have made immense contributions towards the development of Islam. Through the efforts of the early reverts, Islam spread from Arabia to other parts of the world including Africa. After the Prophet’s encounter in the cave of *Hira*, he was the only Muslim. Khadijah, his wife converted after she heard the experience of the Prophet. She comforted him when he was downhearted. The Prophet said: *“I am scared Khadijah”*. Khadijah replied,

May Allah look after us, Abbul-Qasim, what good news, my cousin so be steadfast? By whom in whose hand is Khadijah’s soul I think that you are the Prophet of this nation. By Allah, Allah will never make you go astray. You keep good terms with

¹⁰⁴. www.islamguiden.com/arkiv/guideforthenewMuslim.pdf (accessed, October 25,2014)

¹⁰⁵. Saalih al-Munajjid, ruling on change of name, islamqa.info/en/26220 (accessed, October 25,2014)

¹⁰⁶. Saalih Al-Munajjid, islamqa.info/en/1405 (accessed, October 25,2014)

*your relatives, and are truthful, you help the weak and are good host to your guests and help the affected.*¹⁰⁷

In addition, reverts sometimes give words of encouragement to the leaders and sometimes to each other and this motivates them to do their best for the *Ummah*. Waraqa Ibn Nawfal encouraged the Prophet in the mission that he had been given when he said. *“By who in whose hand is my soul, you are, the Prophet of this nation. You will be rejected, hurt, expelled, and fought. Had I lived until such day, I would have supported you.”*¹⁰⁸ He then kissed his hand. The views of Waraqa prepared the mind of the Prophet to withstand the difficulties ahead of him in discharging the duties of Allah.¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, reverts spend their monies and resources in the cause of Allah. Abu-Bakr bin Abi Quhaffah used his money to liberate Bilal from slavery so he could worship Allah. Abu-Bakr told Umayyad Ibn Khalaf, the master of Bilal after liberating him that *“By Allah, if you had refused to sell him except for a hundred ounces, I would have paid it.”* Bilal became the first *Mu’azin* (one who calls people for prayers) of the Prophet.¹¹⁰

Besides Abu-Bakr and the other *Sahaabah*, many reverts have spent their wealth and time in the development of Islam. Alhaji Kwajiri Dadzie, the director of Voice of Islam for instance spends over four thousand Ghana cedi a month for feeding needy children and paying school fees and other expenses. Some of those who are assisted are reverts.¹¹¹ Amin Bonsu, the CEO of Amen Scientific Hospital also builds schools and supports the poor and the needy to make ends meet.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷. Khalid Muhammad Khalid , *Men and Women around the messenger*, 524

¹⁰⁸. Khalid Muhammad Khalid , *Men and Women around the Messenger*,524

¹⁰⁹. Hani al-Haaj, *Rijaalun wa nisaalun hawlar- Rasuul* (Egypt: Dar At-tawfiqiyyah Lit-turaath,2009),326

¹¹⁰. Syed Iqbal Zaheer, *Bilal the Abyssinian Out runner* (Canada: Al-Attique Publishers Inc,2000),62

¹¹¹. Alhaji Kwajiri Dadzie, the director of Voice of Islam in Ghana, interviewed on 13th January, 2015 at Tema.

¹¹². Amin Bonsu CEO of Amen Scientific Hospital, interviewed on 20th May, 2015 at Dome Pillar two

Among the contribution of reverts is that they bring their rich expertise to bear in developing Islam. The contribution of Salman Al-Farsi in digging a trench at the boundary of Madinah and his support for Islam earned him praises from the Prophet. The Prophet once said: “*Salman is of us, O people of the house (Prophet’s house)*”. Salman was a Persian who searched for Islam and embraced it in Madinah.¹¹³ Bilal, a revert from Abyssinia (Ethiopia) used to call people to prayers. He was also trustworthy and God fearing. As a result, other *Ashab* (companions) of the Prophet emulated him. The contribution of reverts in Gidan Tuba in Ghana has been so remarkable. Beside the establishment of Islamic schools, mosques and helping children to memorize the Qur’an, no gambling centers as well as bars where alcoholic beverages are sold are allowed in the town because they are not permissible in Islam. The town was established by Ibrahim Bobji, a revert.¹¹⁴

Also, many reverts are preachers who call people to Allah. Allah Party Odjeawo, Ayyuba Ofosuhene, Sheikh Nkrumah, Abdul Rahman Botwe are examples of reverts who use both the Qur’an and the Bible to preach. Through them a lot of non-Muslims embrace Islam. They also solicit for support for reverts and teach them to understand some basic principles of Islam.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the views of Islam on conversion. These included the meaning of conversion, factors that enhance conversion to Islam and the rites reverts are taken through. It highlighted that, the word “revert” is used to refer to a convert to Islam by Islamic scholars. This is because of the notion of *al-Fitrah*. In addition, reverts are taking through some rites such as *Ghusl* and declaration of *Shahaadah* to prepare them for the practice of Islam.

¹¹³ . Khalid Muhammad Khalid , *Men and Women around the Messenger*,38

¹¹⁴ .Hajj Umar Adam Ibrahim Boboji, Chief Imam of Gidan Tuba, interviewed on 12th May, 2015 at Gidan Tuba.

Detailed explanation was given on the Qur'an – Bible preachers because their main objective is preaching to convert people into Islam. Also they have been the group that has made a lot of reverts in Ghana. Unfortunately, much attention has not been given to these reverts. Besides the lack of formal channels to train and help them in the practice of Islam, the Qur'an-Bible preachers do not have reliable statistics on them. As a result, they have many challenges that only few of them are known. In the next chapter, I will discuss the analysis of both the social and the religious challenges reverts face in the Greater Accra Region.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES OF REVERTS IN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION

3.0 Introduction

Under the theoretical framework in chapter one, it was explained that, the environment influence the spirituality of humankind. Some of the environmental factors are the challenges reverts face. Based on this background, this chapter seeks to investigate the socio-religious challenges that reverts face in the Greater Accra Region. This addresses one of the main objectives of the research. The chapter also focuses on the factors that push or pull people to Islam. Other issues such as the state of Islam in the region and inter-religious relations in the region are highlighted since the religious atmosphere affects reverts. It is also important to throw more light on the methods used to arrive at the challenges of reverts.

As stated in chapter one, the research was a qualitative one which sought to analyze the findings of respondents. The researcher purposively sampled seventy-five (75) respondents for the research. Sixty (60) were reverts while (15) were those who had returned from Islam to their former faith. Among the respondents, forty (40) were males while thirty-five (35) were females. Their ages ranged between 18 to 40years. Their educational levels varied. Thirty-two (32) had basic level education. Twenty-five (25) had second cycle (Secondary School Level) education while eighteen (18) had Tertiary education. Their occupations also varied. Nineteen (19) of the respondents work in the private sector. Occupations such as carpentry and driving were stated. Twenty-one (21) work in the public sector. Twenty (20) were students while fifteen (15) were unemployed. The tools used to collect data included participant observation, questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The use of

more than one tool was to enable the researcher confirm the responses of reverts. According to O'Connor and Gibson, using more than one method to study a phenomenon helps to confirm and validate the findings.¹¹⁵

There were two sets of questionnaires. One set was administered to reverts while the other was to those who returned from Islam to their former faith. To reverts, sixty (60) Questionnaires were administered. It contained sixteen (16) questions in three (3) parts. The first part inquired about the demographical data of respondents. They included the name, age, occupation among others. The second part consisted of questions on the conversion of respondents. These included the former religions of reverts, the motivation for conversion and the initiation rites. The last part inquired about the challenges of the respondents. Most of the questions on the challenges were open ended so that respondents could write their views.

On the other hand, fifteen (15) questionnaires with two parts were administered to those who had returned from Islam. The first part was on their demographical data while the rest inquired about the reasons why they left Islam. The researcher guided the respondents to fill the questionnaires. At certain instances, translators were taken to help translate the meaning in to other languages for them to answer. Interviews were also conducted personally by the researcher to be able to collect detailed narrations about their experiences. Seven (7) *A'imah* (Imams) who had some experiences about reverts were also interviewed. Sometimes the researcher contacted respondents on phone for clarifications. Lastly, the researcher organized a Focus group discussion with two different groups, comprising ten (10) respondents each of reverts. Three sittings each were organized for that purpose.

¹¹⁵. H.O'Connor and N Gibson, "A step -by- step Guide to qualitative Data Analysis" *pimatiziwin: A journal of Aboriginal Indigenous Community Health* (1), 3

For the analysis of the findings, three techniques were used. The data from the respondents were first organized. Then, they were reduced into themes through coding. Finally, the findings were analyzed in a discussion. According to Creswell, coding views and reducing them to themes help a qualitative researcher to analyze data effectively.¹¹⁶

3.1 The Location and People of the Greater Accra Region

Greater Accra Region is the smallest among the 10 regions in Ghana.¹¹⁷ It is bordered in the north by the Eastern Region, the east by Lake Volta, the south by the Gulf of Guinea and west by the Central Region. It has 10 districts.¹¹⁸ According to the 2010 population census, Greater Accra has a population of 4,010,054 representing 16.3% of Ghana's total population. This makes it the second most densely populated region in Ghana. It occupies a land of 3.245 square kilometers or a 1.4 percent of the total land area of Ghana.¹¹⁹

The region is the industrial hub of the country. It boasts of over 200 major manufacturing industries. As a result, there is a vigorous marketing activity. Fishing plays an important role in its economy because of the sea. Apart from that, farming also contributes to its economy especially among the rural dwellers. The main crops include cassava, maize and groundnut. Some few farmers are into livestock farming.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶.John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five approaches*, 3rd ed ,184-187

¹¹⁷. Wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater-Accra-Region(Accessed on November 11,2014)

¹¹⁸.[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater Accra region #History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Accra_region#History)(Accessed on November 11,2014)

¹¹⁹. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater Accra region #History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Accra_region#History)(Accessed on November 11,2014)

¹²⁰. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater Accra region #History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Accra_region#History)(Accessed on November 11,2014)

A map of Greater Accra region¹²¹

3.2 Religious Demography of Greater Accra

Greater Accra is a home to a number of religions. They include Christianity, Islam and African Indigenous Religions. According to the 2010 population and housing census, Christianity has the highest population with 83%. Islam is second with 10.2% of the population. Other religions constitute 4.6% while African Indigenous Religion has 1.4%.¹²² This makes greater Accra a region with different groups and religions. The main Eastern religious traditions in the region include Hinduism, Buddhism and Eckankar. According to Alhassan each religion propagates its own activities through the use of different strategies as is allowed by the constitution of Ghana.¹²³

The earliest religion in the region is the African Indigenous Religion. The African believes in the Supreme Being, the lesser gods, ancestors and the spirits. There is no difference between the religious and the non-religious, the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the

¹²¹. Fig one: [www.ghc-ca.com /frm-e-land-people](http://www.ghc-ca.com/frm-e-land-people). (Accessed on November 11,2014)

¹²² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Accra_Region (Accessed on November 11,2014)

¹²³. Rashida Alhassan, "From Islam to the other: Social Challenges facing Muslim Reverts in the Ghanaian Community" 2014,68

material.¹²⁴ Every aspect of the life of the African is determined by religion. The religious activities find their bases in the culture of the people.¹²⁵ One could therefore understand the Indigenous African Religion of a particular people through its cultural practices.

According to A.B. Quartey- Papafio as quoted by Bari, the Ga people are believed to have come through Benin to the Gold Coast from the east either by the sea or land.¹²⁶ Along the line, Islam and Christianity were introduced into the region. The Basel Mission society was the main missionary society in the region since 1828. The Bible was translated into Ga and other local languages especially Twi for the indigenous people.¹²⁷ For Islam its spread was predominantly through trade and Holy men who mostly assisted the chiefs to overcome some challenges of the community. As a result conscious effort was not made to spread its teachings or convert the indigenous people. According to Bari, the collapse of the Ashanti Empire brought more Muslims into the region and this led to some vigorous Islamic activities such as building of mosques and *Madrasas* (schools).¹²⁸

3.3 The State Of Islam in the Greater Accra Region

As Christianity is traced back to the 15th Century in Ghana through the south, Islam entered Ghana as early as the 14th century through the northern kingdoms such as Gonja and Dagbon. By the first half of the 19th century, it had reached Accra.¹²⁹ According to Bari the “*Tabons*” who were repatriated slaves believed to have hailed from Brazil and settled in Accra in 1836

¹²⁴. Kwame Gyekye; *African culture values*, (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), 4

¹²⁵. Kofi Asare Opoku; *West African traditional religion* (Accra FEP international private limited, 1978),1

¹²⁶. Osman B. Bari, *A comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana Vol ,1* 319

¹²⁷. http://www.mongabay.com/history/ghana/ghana-christianity-and_islam_in_ghana.html(Accessed on November 11,2014)

¹²⁸. Osman B. Bari, *A comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana Vol ,1*,298-299

¹²⁹. Ryan Patrick; “Is it possible to conduct a unified History of Religion in West Africa?” *Inter-faculty Journal* Vol.8 University of Ghana,Legon,102

are credited for the foundation of Islam in Accra. Mallam Haruna, Osman Kangidi, Mama Nassau and Mallam Tintingi were some of their elders.¹³⁰

Even though Islam was felt in the region, its spread was enhanced during the 2nd half of the 19th century. The conquest of the Ashanti Empire by sir Garnet Woseley in 1875 paved the way for more Muslims to trade across the region. Trade link was established between the Gold Coast and Hausa land in Northern Nigeria. A lot of Muslim immigrants therefore had access to the Gold Coast. As a result, there were more vigorous Islamic activities in their settlements.¹³¹ According to Alfred, the Muslims were organized in separate settlements from the indigenous people called the Zongo. This gave them the opportunity to maintain their identity.¹³² Even though maintaining their identity was good, the researcher thinks that, the Zongo did not facilitate the introduction of Islam to the indigenous people. Perhaps this was why conversion to Islam was not rapid.

Consequently, the influx of Nigerian Muslims to Ghana through trade and other factors led to the introduction of Islam to the Ga. The early Ga reverts formed the Aborigines Muslims Association (AMA) in 1934 to bring all the Ga Muslims under one umbrella to promote the true teachings and practice of Islam. It later became the Ghana Muslim Mission after independence in 1959.¹³³

In recent times the population of Muslims in the region has increased. The Muslim population in the region according to the 2010 population and housing census is 10.2%.¹³⁴ According to Hussein, the Muslim communities in Accra include Madina, Nima, Ashaiman and Mamobi. He adds that Accra has hundreds of Mosques in the suburbs such as

¹³⁰. Osman B. Bari, *A comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana Vol.1*,298

¹³¹. Osman B. Bari, *A comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana Vol .1*,298-299

¹³². Alfred Ofoosu- Asante. "Christian Mission to Muslims in Ghana-A case study of converted Muslim Christian Ministries and Markaz Al -Bishara" (University of Ghana, Legon: Department for the Study of Religion.1997),17

¹³³. Osman B. Bari, *A comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana Vol .1*,319-334

¹³⁴. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Accra_Region (Accessed November 11,2014)

Tudu, Nima, Mamobi, Accra-New Town, Adabraka, Fadama and Madina among others. The main mosque is the Abbosey Okai mosque which houses the office of the National Chief Imam of Ghana. Members of the *Ahlu-Sunnah* have their central mosque in Nima while Ahmadiyyah mosque is at Osu. Shi'ah has their mosque in Mamobi while the Ghana Muslim Mission mosque is at Korle Gono.

He explained further that, the religion also witnesses some preaching groups besides the preaching that takes place in the mosque especially on Fridays. This group is referred to as the Qur'an-Bible preaching groups.¹³⁵ They include the Society of Islamic Preachers, the Herald of Islamic Message and Allah Party Preaching group. The main aim is to preach to Non-Muslims through the use of Qur'an and the Bible so that, souls would be won for Islam. Appau-Gyekye is of the view that, the group appear to have their inspiration from the Ghana Muslim Mission (GMM)¹³⁶. This is because the members of the Ghana Muslim Mission resorted to the approach of using the Bible (which they knew well before their conversion) and the Qur'an to preach to their people.

The development of Islam in the region is further enhanced by the activities of the Arab-Islamic missions such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt in Ghana after independence in 1957. These missions provided training to some Muslim Preachers to enhance their ability to preach and to be more helpful to the society. Another area they supported was awarding Scholarships for the youth to travel abroad to further their studies in the Islamic Sciences. Islamic Literature is also distributed free of charge to Ghanaians by these missions.

¹³⁵. Hussein Iddris Ibrahim, "Preaching in Muslim Communities in Ghana: Mandate, Challenges and Prospects", (PhD Thesis, Department for the study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2013),8

¹³⁶. Rev. Nana Apau-Gyekye, "The Contributions of the Ghana Muslim Mission to the Development of the Ghanaian Muslim Community", (M. Phil Thesis, Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2010) ,30

There are also Islamic International NGOs who support education and agriculture. They include World Call Islamic Society of Libya and the Agricultural and Rural Development of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Apart from these International NGOs, some local NGOs such as Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services (ICODEHS) and Direct Aid assist in the provision of some social amenities such as water and schools.¹³⁷ According to Mumuni, NGOs in Ghana support education and provide some social amenities.¹³⁸ The influences of the NGOs and some individuals as well as the scholars have contributed to the development of Islam in the region.

3.4 Inter-Religious Relation in the Region

Ghana is a secular state that allows freedom of religion and association. This has made many religions to co-exist in many parts of the country, and Greater Accra is not an exemption. Even though, some of the religions hold some exclusive claims, they relate to each other in businesses, schools and other endeavours.

For instance Muslims quote Qur'an (3:85) to declare their exclusive position. The Qur'an states: *"If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah) never will it be accepted of him; and in the hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)."* Christians also quote John (3:16): *"For God so love the world that he gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but has everlasting life."* For Abdul-Aziz Sachedina, these exclusivist claims in modern times are needed for self-identification and tools for evangelism among Christians and Muslims.¹³⁹

¹³⁷. Yunus Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana* (Stockholm: Sodertorn University, 2013), 20

¹³⁸. Mumuni Sulemana, "Islamic organizations in Accra, Their Structure, Roles And Impact in The Proselytization of Islam", (M Phil Thesis, Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon 1994), 62

¹³⁹. Abdul-Aziz Sachedina, *Is Islamic Revelation on Abrogation of Judeo-Christian Revelation, Self-identification in the classical and modern Age*, at new point in (ed) Hans Kung and Jürgen Moting; *Islam: A challenge for Christianity*, (London: SCM Ltd, 1994), 94

From pre-independence to modern times, there has been healthy inter-religious relationship in the Greater Accra Region between various religious bodies even though there are occasions of some inter-religious conflicts. Bari posits that, chief Ankra of Otooblehun received the immigrants from Brazil and gave them a piece of land between James Town and Ussher Town to settle in 1836. This group was made of Muslims who are known to be the foundation of Islam in the region. The co-existence facilitated trade between the people of different religious backgrounds in the area.¹⁴⁰

Governments have also worked to promote inter-religious co-existence since independence. The formation of the National Peace Council in recent times has given opportunities for dialogue to take place among religious groups. Among the traces of this co-existence is that, Muslims and Christians together with indigenous people work together in many fields such as in parliament, the courts, and the banks among other places. There have also been meetings between the religious leaders such as members of the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Mission, the Chief Imam's Office and the Christian Council of Ghana, all in the interest of fostering peaceful coexistence. The most recent one is the issue of a communiqué from the National Peace Council over the issue of forcing students in religious practices that are against their religious traditions in the public schools. According to Mumuni, the religious relations between Christians, Muslims and other religions is good and must be encouraged at both the family and community levels.¹⁴¹

In spite of these achievements in fostering peaceful inter-religious co-existence, there have been some challenges. According to Owusu Ansah, in the 1980s to 1990's, a Christian crusade was forced to stop at Teshie Nungua because they were using both Qur'an and

¹⁴⁰. Osman B. Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana Vol.1*,298

¹⁴¹.Mumuni Sulemana; A Paper presented on " Muslim Christian Relationship in Ghana".2011

Bible.¹⁴² The recent clash between the Ga Traditional Council and Christians over the ban on drumming and dancing in Accra and occasional insults among religious people are examples.¹⁴³ Religious dialogue is very important in dealing with these conflicts. However, Abdur-Rashied Omar is of the view that, such dialogue should do away with inappropriate means such as insults to entice a person because that can end up in conflict.¹⁴⁴

The co-existence of these different religious traditions has made it possible for non-Muslims to revert from their former faiths to Islam. The conversion is motivated by many reasons. Some are through personal search while others are through marriage. The findings below contain details of what motivates people to embrace Islam in the Greater Accra Region.

3.5 The “Push and Pull” factors to Islam

The question, what led/motivated you to Islam, provided many different responses. With the exception of two who stated that, they were forced to Islam by their relatives, all the respondents became Muslims by choice. Additionally, various reasons were assigned to why they became Muslims. Some of the respondents attributed their conversion to some texts of the Qur’an, either through their readings or the explanations given by the Qur’an-Bible preachers. As a result some verses of the Qur’an were cited. According to them, these verses were frequently repeated in the Qur’an. For instance Qur’an (3:64),

Say: O people of the book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allah.” If then thee turn back say you; bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah’s will).

¹⁴². Owusu Ansah David (<http://westafricaislam.matrix.msu.edu>) (Accessed on 8th November,14)

¹⁴³. www.modernghana.com/news/22481/1/ban-on-drumming-noise-making-in-force-in-accra.html(Accessed on 14th May,2015)

¹⁴⁴. Abdur-Rashied Omar; A paper presented on “The Right to Religious Conversion: Between Apostasy and Proselytization at Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies”, University of Notre Dame, USA, 2006.

Some also quoted Qur'an (3:19), "*The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to this will).*" Mr. A,¹⁴⁵ a business man at Tema was very ready to give the reasons why he converted to Islam. According to him, he was born at Tema into a Christian home. He was a devout Christian and was a leading member in teaching the children who came to church on Sundays. He completed Tema Senior High School and was preparing to enter the university. He narrated his conversion story as:

"I was a devout Christian who used to read the Bible, learn it and teach others. Even though I used to see Muslims in the mosques praying and preaching, I did not take any keen interest in their activities because, I concluded that they were lost. At a point I wanted to talk to them too about Christianity so I bought the Qur'an to find out some faults. I was interested in where the Qur'an contradicted the Bible so that I could argue with the Muslims. For me the Bible was the truth. I started reading the Qur'an page to page, cover to cover. I came across verses that repeatedly mentioned the statement, "*people of the book (Christians and Jews)*. The message that followed also contained some additions to what I knew from the Bible. This intrigued me to read more. Subsequently, I embraced Islam."

In a similar Scenario, Miss B,¹⁴⁶ a teacher at one of the English-Arabic Schools in Accra shared her experience. She narrated her story as follows:

"I was a Christian who used to preach a lot at school. As a preacher I was surprised about the resistance my Muslim colleagues in School gave to Christian teachings each time I made the attempt to talk to them and convince them to Christianity. I therefore decided to read the Qur'an so that I could find a way to convince them. I read the open chapter of the Qur'an and that made me to read more. I therefore decided to read the content of chapters in the Qur'an. I realized some new things I did not know about the Muslims. For instance, the title of chapter 19 is Mary, The mother of Jesus. I quickly opened the chapter to know what is said about her. I read a lot about the birth of Jesus and other issues that I did not know in the Bible. This made me to believe that Muslims also know Jesus and Mary. This idea begun to change my perception about the Muslims and finally led me to Islam.

¹⁴⁵. Mr. A, a business man, interviewed on 15th January, 2015 at Tema

¹⁴⁶. Miss B, a teacher, interviewed on 15th January, 2015 at Accra

The reasons for conversion of Mr. A and Miss B agrees with Kose's "interaction theory" of conversion because, reverts had some interactions with Muslims. There was no force in their decisions. They did not also convert because of a specific favour from Muslims which would have made their reason an example of a "patronage theory". Additionally, their reason agrees with Brice's conversion by conviction.

In addition, the research revealed that, another factor for conversion was the technique adopted by the Qur'an-Bible preachers. The Qur'an-Bible preachers made great impact in the conversion of most of the non-Muslims to Islam. Chapter two described their technique for preaching and the method they use. Their method gave a lot of non-Muslims the opportunity to compare the teachings of Islam to other religions. Some reverts embraced Islam as a result of such comparisons.

Mr. C,¹⁴⁷ a Qur'an-Bible preacher himself, for instance, converted through the Qur'an-Bible preachers. He hated Muslims and did not want to associate himself with them. He states that:

"I was a Christian who hated Muslims. In fact, I did not want to see them or associate myself with them. I even wanted to stop some Muslims from praying when I was made the head of a construction site at the American embassy some years back. My mother was the one who advised me to stop. I also used to challenge the Qur'an- Bible preachers anytime I met them. I remember very well that for six months, I did not go to church because I was preparing to argue with Musah Kalamulah, one of the preachers. One day I referred some of the verses Musah used to my pastor to help me explain them so that he could go and have a debate with him. To my surprise, the pastor could not explain these verses to my satisfaction. I therefore left the church and went to a Hindu establishment to worship with them. There I used to pray for God's guidance. I was still making references to the preaching of Musah Kalamulah. At last I became convinced and embraced Islam on October 22nd, 1990."

¹⁴⁷. Mr. C, a Qur'an- Bible preacher, interviewed on 15th January, 2015 at Tema

Similarly Mrs. D,¹⁴⁸ a student at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) also got converted through the Qur'an-Bible preachers. She narrates that:

“Even though I was a Christian before embracing Islam, I was not a devout Christian. I seldom went to church. In my case I used to pass along the Nkrumah Circle area in Accra during vacations. Many times I heard a man preaching while mentioning the names of Muhammad (S A W) and Isa (Jesus). The first time I heard it I thought it was one of the Christian pastors who normally preach along the road but the number of times I heard the two names mentioned together gave me the urge to stand and listen to what he was saying. At the first time, I thought he was a fanatic who hated Christianity and used that platform to insult Christians and Jesus. Later, I developed interest in listening to him. Any time I moved along that road to the market, I stopped to listen to him. I started to ask questions on some of the explanations he gave. I was convinced one day and embraced Islam there.”

The researcher is of the opinion that, the experiences of Mr. C and Mrs. D testify to the efforts made by the Qur'an-Bible preachers in creating the opportunities for non-Muslims to receive Islamic teachings and to ask questions. This is reminiscent of the practice where the Prophet sent Ali to non-Muslims to preach to them as narrated by Bukhari. Finally, it testifies to the effective use of scripture texts espoused by Baagil.¹⁴⁹ This could also be classified under conversion based on conscience or conviction according to Brice.

One of the factors for conversion is the act of Prison visitations. Even though most of the respondents did not attribute their conversions to outreach programs, two of the respondents testified to the fact that intermittently, some Muslims paid visits to the prisons to preach and donate some items to them. Their activities exposed him to Islam and consequently his conversion to Islam. Mr. E,¹⁵⁰ also narrated,

¹⁴⁸. Mrs. D, a student, interviewed on 15th January, 2015 at Tema

¹⁴⁹. Hassan M. Baagil, *Christian Muslim Dialogue*, 56

¹⁵⁰. Mr. E, an ex-convict, interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Tema

“I am an ex-convict from the Nsawam prison. I was convicted and imprisoned at the Nsawam prison in 2009. I was a Hindu before I embraced Islam. While I was there, I had a Muslim friend. This friend was very kind to me. I got to know him when some Muslims visited the prisons and donated some items to them. After sometime, I had a keen interest in listening to the Muslims. My friend also used to explain the message of the preachers to me and gave me some of the items. As a result I was with him most of the time. I got convinced in January 2014 and embraced Islam.”

Mr. E’s experience suggests that less effort is made by Muslims in organizing outreach programs to the prisons. This is because according to Mr. E Muslims did not normally visit them like the Christians. The story of E confirms the position that, assistance to non-Muslims could lead to conversion to Islam. Though Mr. E partly listened to some preaching of the Muslims, the items he received from the Muslim visitors played a major role. His reason could therefore fall under Brice’s conversion based on convenient as explained in Chapter one.

One other factor that is revealed by the research is some unresolved challenges that confront some adherents in a religious tradition. Their unresolved challenges in their various religions push them to convert. According to Mr. F,¹⁵¹ a security person in an establishment at Ada manifests this factor. He narrates:

“I converted to Islam for two reasons. One was that, I did not understand why my church members entered the church with their sandals. I thought that, the church is a holy ground where one has to remove his or her sandals. I was therefore surprised at them why on the contrary they removed their sandals at the door when they entered their rooms. Is the room better than the church? The second factor was that, whenever I went to church, other members of the church used to mock at my clothes and that of my family. I therefore used to feel embarrassed each time I went to the church. For me Muslims remove their sandals when they enter the mosque and much attention is not given to the beauty of one’s clothes in the mosque.”

¹⁵¹. Mr. F, a security officer, interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Tema

The reasons given by Mr. F may be interesting because reasons why foot wears are taken into the church could have been explained by the church to him. What is more, there are churches where members remove their foot wear before they enter the church premises. However, his reason may raise a theological debate, whether removing foot wears at a holy ground is an issue in both Islam and Christianity. Both Islam and Christianity have similar scriptural narratives on the religious experience of Moses. For instance Exodus (3:5) states, *“And he said, draws not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place where on thou standest is a holy ground.”* Also Qur’an (20:12) states, *“surely I am your lord. Therefore (in my presence) put off your shoes: you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa.”* Meanwhile the reason for reverting to Islam by Mr. F could fit into the “Social Liberation theory” of conversion by Kose. Mr. F finds the practice of Islam as liberation from his difficulties in his former religion. On the other hand Harun and others will classify Mr. F’s experience under “conflict” because he had conflict of ideas with his own religious beliefs and this pushed him to Islam.¹⁵² Meanwhile Brice would classify it as conversion by convenience because, he converted based on a particular need not necessarily learning Islam and becoming convinced with its teachings.

Personal search for the truth led some non-Muslims to Islam. According to Mrs. G,¹⁵³ an executive member of one of the Islamic Associations in Accra,

“My search for Islam started when I met my husband. Even though before then I used to ask myself questions such as whom I am and why was I created? Islam had never crossed my mind. In fact no one used to talk about Islam in school. I was therefore adamant about Islam and its practices. Even though my father was an Arab, he was a Christian so he did not also talk about Islam. My mother was also a Christian. Islam at that time had never been part of our experience. My search for Islam was influenced by a popular Islamic expression *“In Sha Allah”* (If Allah wills) which was used by my husband in a

¹⁵². <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>(accessed, October 04,2014)

¹⁵³. Mrs. G, a researcher/executive member of an NGO, interviewed on 20th January, 2015 at Dzorwulu

conversation. The word “Allah” drew my attention to Islam. I then started the search to know more about Islam. I therefore devoted much of my time listening to videos on Islam and reading books on Islamic practices. I listened to Ahmad Deedat and other scholars. This went on for some time before I was finally convinced to embrace Islam. I must say that my husband did not force me in any way to accept Islam. I have since been an active Muslim and I explain Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims. Currently, I have been advising Muslims on the television and other programs and also help other reverts to come out with some organizations that will focus on bringing reverts together to help solve some of their socio-religious challenges.”

The reason given by Mrs. G is similar to that of at-Tufail as explained in chapter two. Salman Al-Farsi, one of the companions of the Prophet was also led to Islam through his personal search. The reason of conversion also is an example of Brice’s conversion based on conscience. This is because Mrs. G was convinced about the teachings of Islam but not based on a need for a particular thing. The researcher observed that, those who embraced Islam out of personal search were very vibrant in the practice of the Islamic principles amidst all challenges. Some of them were forming some organizations that will see to the assistance of reverts or were helping to solve the problems of reverts. Some of them also organized some preaching sessions where reverts were taught the Qur’an and other aspects of Islam. The contribution of those who accept Islam based on personal search agrees with Brice’s conversion by conscience or conviction. Such a factor makes reverts appreciate Islamic teachings and become committed to them. A similar conclusion could be drawn in the case of those who embraced Islam through the Qur’an- Bible preachers. On the other hand, conversion by convenience such as marriage may make reverts nominal Muslims because they would have not understood Islam before embracing it.

In addition, marriage is one of the reasons that lead some reverts to embrace Islam. Mr. H¹⁵⁴, a tailor at Zongo lane narrates:

“I was in a relationship with a Muslim woman with the intention that, it will end up in marriage. She used to talk to me about Islam and the need to be a Muslim. Each time she visited me, Islam became part of our discussions. She told me that, if I did not embrace Islam, her parents would not allow me to marry her because Islam prevents her from marrying a non-Muslim. I initially refused because I believed in pouring libations and other Traditional Practices but because I loved her and wanted to marry her, I became a Muslim.”

Similarly, according to Miss I,¹⁵⁵ a student at Accra Polytechnic,

“A Muslim man deceived me that he will marry me so I should accept Islam. After I accepted Islam, he left me and got married to one of the ladies at the *Zongo*. I thought of leaving Islam because of the deceit but I was advised by Farouq Abdus-Salaam, the leader of Young Muslim Mission to maintain my Islam and that Allah will give me a good man to marry. I have since maintained my faith even though sometimes it occurs to me to stop and go back to Christianity. According to Farouq Abdus-Salaam,¹⁵⁶ he had to assist this lady to overcome her psychological problems and the derogatory remarks that she received from her family and the public.”

The researcher is of the view that, the issue of embracing Islam through marriage may be dicey because one cannot just embrace Islam and that ends it. The belief in Allah comes along with practices. A revert is able to practice the teachings if he/she knows such teachings or makes conscious efforts to learn but not just believing in it. On the other hand, once a person accepts Islam, assistance should be given to him/her notwithstanding the reason for accepting it. This could help reverts to understand the practices as is the case of Miss I. The new revert should be taught the basics of Islam so that, he/she can appreciate the good that Islam offers to its adherents in this world and the hereafter. It could be said that Mr. H and Miss I embraced Islam because of some favours they wanted to have. This is in consonance

¹⁵⁴. Mr. H, a tailor, interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Zongolane

¹⁵⁵. Miss I, a student, interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Accra

¹⁵⁶. Farouq Abdus-Salaam, leader of (YMM), interviewed on 12th December, 2014 at Zong Lane

with the “Patronage theory” of conversion by Kose as discussed in chapter one. Similarly, their reason falls under Brice’s conversion based on convenience as discussed in chapter one. They embraced Islam based on a particular need which is marriage not necessarily being convinced of the teachings of Islam.

Dream was also one of the reasons why some embraced Islam. According to Mr. J,¹⁵⁷a student, his conversion to Islam was a surprise to him because, he had never thought of being a Muslim. His conversion story is as follows:

“I had a dream one night and heard a voice speaking to me. I heard the words *“You say God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit but here I am, I am One, bow with those who bow.”* I woke up suddenly after hearing the voice and was terrified. I could not understand it so I informed my parents about it but they kept quiet on it without comments. They took it to be one of those dreams that people usually have but I took it serious. I therefore started afterwards to read the Bible often whether I could find out something concerning the dream. I also informed some other people about the dream. The people I asked included pastors and my friends at school. I was informed by some Muslims that, the final words I heard in the dream were words that are found in the Qur’an. *“I am one”* and *“Bow with those who bow”*. I was assisted to read verses on what I heard from the Qur’an. Qur’an (112:1) states that: *“Say: He Allah, the One.”* While Qur’an (2:43) also states that: *“And be steadfast in prayer; give Zakat (poor due) and bow down your heads with those who bow down”* “It was a surprise for me to have read those verses in the Qur’an. I started asking myself so many questions afterwards. Is it that, I have to be a Muslim or it is just an illusion? This went on for some time till one day I went to an Imam and embraced Islam. For me, I took the *Shahaadah*, when I did not know much about Islam. The only question that I was asked before the *Shahaadah* was whether I was forced to accept Islam or not. I did not receive much support at the initial stages from Muslims concerning the teachings of Islam.”

The researcher is of the view that, Mr. J’ experience could easily be dismissed by any one because it is difficult to prove. Since dreams are similar to religious experiences that urged Prophets to pursue their duties, Mr. J’s situation could be understood in that perspective. His

¹⁵⁷. Mr. J, a student, interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Ashaiman

inability to obtain enough support is a worrying one for a new revert. According to Mr. K,¹⁵⁸ a mason, a lot of what he knows concerning prayers and other teachings in Islam were due to his readings. He received little attention from the *A'imah* (Imams) who initiated him to Islam. A situation of this nature may make Islam too challenging to reverts. Religiously, they will find it difficult to learn how to pray and recite the Qur'an. There are other critical Islamic teachings that they will not know. There is therefore the need for the *A'imah* (Imams) and the NGOs to support reverts to adjust to the new environment they find themselves and to be able to deal with some challenges that they will face later.

3.6 Classification of Challenges

The research revealed two main challenges. These are classified into two. Challenges from the former faith of respondents and those experienced from their new found faith (Islam).

3.6.1 Challenges from the Former Faith

3.6.1.1 Physical assault

Some of reverts suffered some physical assaults. According to some of the respondents, they were beaten by their relatives in order to stop them from practising Islam. However how they were beaten differed from one revert to the other.

According to Mr. L¹⁵⁹, a student, his father slapped him to stop him from practicing Islam. He said: *"because I did not stop practising Islam I was sacked from the house"*. When asked whether he reported the incident to the police, he said no. His reason was that although he thought of that, he abandoned the idea because he did not want to bring the name of the family into disrepute. He was advised by Mallam Usman Hussein, an Imam to be patient,

¹⁵⁸. Mr. K, a mason, interviewed on 25th January, 2015 at Ada

¹⁵⁹. Mr. L, a student, interviewed on 27 of January, 2015 at Ashaiman

since his father will one day come to understand his position. He is being assisted financially by Voice of Islam to attend a secondary school in Kumasi.

Mr. M¹⁶⁰, a shop assistant at Tema, also narrated a similar incident of assault because of his conversion to Islam. This happened around the Voice of Islam mosque at Tema Community Two. The researcher was at the scene and approached them to see what was happening. He observed that, a fierce fight was going on between two boys but one was older than the other. A lot of people were at the scene to stop them because the brother of the revert was beating him. They were insulting each other but hardly did anyone understand the reason for the fight. According to Mr. M, the brother beat him because he had told him that, he will never stop practising Islam. The family had told him to stop practising Islam but it was his brother who was very alarmed. When asked whether he reported the case to the Police, he said that, he did and the police told him to go for a medical report on his condition. However he gave the medical report to his father who treated the case as a family issue.

Miss. N,¹⁶¹ a student at Pokuase narrated her ordeal. She embraced Islam immediately after she had completed Senior High School (SHS). She was nineteen years by then. Her father beat her and gave her two options. Either she renounced Islam or left the house. He threatened to even kill her when she saw her in the house. She had to run away for her life. That ended her dreams to ever continue her education. No one was there to help her. She run to her uncles and narrated the story to them. Since they knew what her father could do and were afraid they hid her and later made her run away from there and stayed with an Imam in a different town.

¹⁶⁰. Mr. M, a shop assistant, interviewed on 4th December, 2014 at Tema

¹⁶¹. Miss N, a student, interviewed on 23th January, 2015 at Pokuase

Amin Bonsu,¹⁶² the CEO of Amen Scientific Hospital mentioned some other challenges of reverts. There was a lady who embraced Islam and based on that, her father nearly killed her. She ran away from home without any support. Another lady who also embraced Islam suffered family rejection so she left home and was staying in an uncompleted building. A male revert was also sacked from home by his brothers and some church members when he embraced Islam. When he left home and had some work in Kumasi, he was sacked again because he attended the Friday congregational prayer.

Sheikh Abdallah Junaid, an Arabic instructor at Madina Islamic Junior High School (JHS) was asked of his views on the physical assault of reverts. He rather gave an advice. He likened the affliction of pain and sorrow to the suffering and tortures that Muhammad (SAW) and his companions went through. He likened it to that of Bilal, who was put in the hot sun and left to lie on the hot sand without a dress and a stone put on his chest for him to abandon the faith of Islam. There is the need for reverts to be patient. The Prophet told the family of Yaasir to be patient for their abode was paradise¹⁶³

The researcher is of the opinion that, such ordeals which new reverts face in the hands of people as a result of their faith are trials that determines the sincerity of their faith. In this direction, Qur'an (2:214) states:

Or do they think that ye shall enter the Garden (of Bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? They encountered suffering and adversity and were so shaken in spirit that even the Apostle and those of faith who were with him cried: when (will come) The help of God? Ah! Verily, the help of God is (always) near.

Also Qur'an (29:2) states that: *“Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, “We believe and that they will not be tested?”* On this verse, Yusuf Ali comments *“mere lip*

¹⁶². Sheikh Amin Bonsu, CEO of Amen Scientific Herbal Hospital, interviewed on 20th May, 2015 at Dome Pillar two

¹⁶³. Sheikh Abdallah Junaid, an Arabic Instructor and Imam, interviewed 26th January, 2015 at Madinah Islamic School.

profession of faith is not enough. It must be tried and tested in the real turmoil of life."¹⁶⁴

These pain and sorrows are used to purify the believer.

3.6.1.2 Derogatory Comments

Derogatory remarks are one of the challenges experienced by some of reverts. These remarks were directed at them because of their conversion to Islam. Some of these were, *"what are you doing in the religion of the northern people?"*, *"Why will you join the people who wash their private parts all the time?"*, *"It is because of poverty you have become Muslims?"*, *"You are lost because the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) did not resurrect."*

Mr. O,¹⁶⁵ a Clearing Agent and an aspiring preacher said that, derogatory remarks were addressed to him from his family and other people outside his family. When he embraced Islam, numerous attempts were made by his father to force him to renounce Islam. He was told that nothing took him to Islam except that he wanted some gifts and assistance from Muslims. He was also accused of joining the religion of the "filthy" people. Even though the criticism made his practice of Islam so challenging initially, later it urged him on to learn more about Islam. He is now a member of the Young Muslim Mission, a group that uses the Qur'an and the Bible to revert non-Muslims into the fold of Islam.

Similarly, Mr. P,¹⁶⁶ a teacher at Madina was also worried about how his family and other people treated him. According to him, before he embraced Islam, he sometimes took part in some of the Ga traditional practices but when he embraced Islam, he was taught that, some traditional practices such as pouring of libation were un-Islamic so he stopped. As a result of that, he took a stand never to take part in any of the traditional practices that took place in the community. This brought a lot of problems between him and his family. They then criticized

¹⁶⁴. Abdallah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'an Text Translation and Commentary*, 1029

¹⁶⁵. Mr. O, a clearing agent, interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Achimota

¹⁶⁶. Mr. P, a teacher, interviewed on 26th January, 2015 at Newtown, Tema.

him and condemned Islam. When Mr. P was asked why he would not stop Islam, so that he could be free from the condemnations, he said that, he is convinced that, Islam is the religion of the Creator of the world however, Muslims have to conduct themselves well so that, non-Muslims will not have undue misconceptions about Islam.

Similarly according to Madam Q,¹⁶⁷ a trader, some people think that, if one marries and becomes a Muslim or even embraces Islam before marriage, then the reason for embracing Islam is marriage and that, he/she is lost. Explaining her own situation she stated that, even though she embraced Islam through a personal search, some of her family and other people used to tease her that, marriage took her in to Islam. According her what people do not know is that, she was convinced to embrace Islam on the eve of her wedding after she had taken some time to search for Islam. She embraced Islam when even her husband who is a Muslim did not know. People just came to the conclusion that, had it not been the marriage, she wouldn't have embraced Islam. This used to disturb her so much but due to the preaching she received from Islamic Scholars, she was able to maintain the faith.

According to Samira Asare, a leader of “*Ummah* Reverts” who sees to the welfare of some reverts, such remarks are intended to make them leave Islam. She added that, to some reverts, such remarks make them lose confidence in themselves as Muslims and so feel shy anytime they are to pray or do any Islamic activity. Such remarks affect their practice of Islam. She however was of the view that, some reverts are condemned because of their wrong doings.¹⁶⁸ Sheikh Abdul Rauf Issah, the Imam of Tema, Community 7 Central Mosque is also of the view that, derogatory comments are one of the ways some people use to coerce others to

¹⁶⁷ . Madam Q, a trader, interviewed on 6th December at Airport residential area, Accra.

¹⁶⁸ . Samira Asare, leader of “*Ummah* Reverts” interviewed on 5th December, 2015 at Community 18 central Mosque

behave in a particular way. The remark that, Islam is a religion for a particular group of people and also a terrorist religion is not based on Islamic teachings.¹⁶⁹

In such situations Sheikh Sulemana al-Gema,¹⁷⁰ the Imam of al-Fath Mosque in Ashaiman and An Arabic instructor at Nurul-Mustafiyah Islamic School is of the view that though it is easy for one to control himself concerning what he/she says and does than to control what someone will say about him, a Muslim should learn to exercise restraint. He then related some issues pertaining to the Prophet and his companions. The Prophet was insulted by the non-believers in his lifetime and some still insult him even after his death, Qur'an (21:5) states, "*Nay, they say, Medleys of dreams- Nay, he forged it- Nay, he is but a poet...*" The Prophet was constantly reminded by Allah to be patient. Qur'an (46:35) states: "*Therefore, patiently persevere as did (all) messengers and be in no haste about the unbelievers*".

The researcher thinks that even though derogatory comments to reverts affects their practice of Islam and even could make them leave Islam, it could also serve as a source of motivation to study the principles of Islam as is the case of Mr. O. The new revert needs to understand some basic teachings in Islam such as the concept of the Oneness of Allah (*Tawheed*) which will help him/her strengthen his faith in Allah. The strengthening of faith increases the ability to be patient in times of trials and mockeries. According to Sallabi, the Prophet constantly motivated and taught reverts the right concept of God in Islam. They were therefore patient and did not react unnecessarily whenever they were condemned.¹⁷¹

3.6.1.3 Neglect by Family members and Friends

One other challenge reverts face is, sometimes their families abandon them after they embraced Islam. Reverts are either sacked from home or are left to cater for themselves while

¹⁶⁹. Sheikh Abdul Rauf Issah, Imam, interviewed on 10th January, 2015 at community seven, Tema

¹⁷⁰. Sheikh Sulemana Al-gema, Imam, interviewed on 4th January, 2015 at Ashaiman

¹⁷¹. Ali Muhammad Sallabi, *As-Siratu-Nnabawiyyah*, 512-520

they are with their families. If reverts finds it difficult to stay, he/she moves out from home. Mr. R¹⁷² an ex-convict narrates that, before he embraced Islam, his family related with him very well. Even though he used not to respect them, they provided for his welfare. The help they gave him was even extended to his days in the Nsawam prison when he was taken there. They used to visit him and give him food. Sometimes, he was given some money to enable him buy anything he wanted.

One day they visited him at the prison while he was performing one of the daily Muslim prayers. When the information got to his family that he had converted to Islam, they angrily left without meeting him. Each time they came and he was working on the farms, they did not wait for him but rather left with the food they had brought to him.

He thought that, things will change after leaving the prison. To his surprise the relationship between them rather grew from bad to worse. They abandoned him all together. His sister told him one day that, he should go to Makkah to survive when he requested for some money to start a business. She added that, she could not be in a company of the al-Qaeda. After some time in the house, he started to move from one place to another looking for what to eat. Thank God, he is now being helped by Farouq Abdus-Salaam, the leader of Young Muslim Mission.

In an Interview with Ayyuba Ofosuhene, he confirmed that, similar situations happen to most reverts. He narrated a recent one about a revert that he had to find some help for. Before she became a Muslim, her brother supported her in almost everything. After she embraced Islam, the brother sacked her from the house with the intention of forcing her to leave Islam. He together with other scholars organized some form of assistance for her. He added that, such reports come to them always. They also sometimes they and talk to them and encourage them

¹⁷². Mr. R, ex-convict, interviewed on 15th December, 2014 at Adenta

as well to do their best in practising Islam. When asked why there are no formal systems in place to help train them so they can secure a job, he replied that, they were working towards something like that but the problem was finance.

The researcher observes that, Mr. R was having some difficulties in making a living. There was the need for some clothes to be given to him. This confirms why there should be a fund in place to assist reverts. Hammudah Abdalati's view on assisting reverts with part of the *Zakat* fund is that, such assistance will cushion them to be able to take care of their initial difficulties and challenges that affect them because of their conversion.¹⁷³

3.6.2 Challenges from New Found Faith

Respondents stated challenges that they faced in their new faith. These challenges affected their practice of Islam. Some of these are challenges concerning type of occupation, Islamic literature and unavailability of resource persons to teach them.

3.6.2.1 Unavailability of *Ulama* (Scholars)

The researcher observed that, some reverts found it difficult in getting scholars to teach them Islam. Most of the *A'imah* (Imams) and *Ulama* (scholars) who initiated reverts neglected their religious growth. According to Mr. S,¹⁷⁴ a farmer at Seduase on the Dodowa road, an Islamic scholar converted them to Islam in the village and left. After that, they have not had any one to assist them to learn the principles of Islam. Several attempts have been made to get someone but it has been difficult. As a result most of them cannot recite the opening chapter of the Qur'an. For him the worse is that, they don't have a mosque where they could pray and have some studies in case they are able to even get someone to teach them Islam.

Sheik Abdul Kadir Idriss, officer in charge of *D'awah* at Al-Huda Social Services

¹⁷³ . Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus* (U.S.A: Aman Publications, 1997), 109

¹⁷⁴ . Mr. S, a farmer, interviewed on 26th January, 2015 at Seduase

confirmed that, in a number of villages he had preached, a lot of reverts had complained about the unavailability of scholars who will teach them the basics of Islam.¹⁷⁵

The researcher agrees with Sheikh Abdul Kadir that scholars and those who initiate reverts owe it a duty to assist reverts to understand Islam. Sallabi posits that, the Prophet sent Mus'ab Ibn Umayr to Yathrib to teach reverts to know their duties to Allah.¹⁷⁶ Even though, one could say that reverts have the duty to learn Islam without a teacher, the example given by the Prophet above weakens that view. Leaving reverts without an attempt to educate them affects their practice of Islam. Moreover the Qur'an emphasizes the need for knowledge before work or action. Qur'an (47:19) states *"So know that, none has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and ask forgiveness for your sin..."* Khan and Hilali's commentary on the verse indicates that, *"it is essential to know a thing first before saying it or acting upon it."*¹⁷⁷ The worship of Allah in Islam is different from the worship of non-Muslims. This therefore demands an additional effort from the scholars especially those who initiate reverts to help them learn how to recite the Qur'an. Additionally, the change of religion and its new experiences affects the life of reverts. They should therefore be assisted to understand Islam as the Prophet did during his time.

3.6.2.2 Work /Occupation:

Some of the respondents stated that, their conversion to Islam led to some challenges in their occupations. In some cases, Islam did not approve of their occupations. They therefore had to change their jobs or stop so that, they could do those that are approved by Islam. According to Mrs. T¹⁷⁸ who worked in the Modeling industry, she spent much time in displaying and advertising new clothes. She used to travel to Europe and other places to engage in a number

¹⁷⁵. Sheikh Abdul Kadir Idriss, officer in charge of Da'wah at a-l Hudah, interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Accra.

¹⁷⁶. Ali Muhammad Sallabi, *As-Siratu-Nnabawiyah*, 409

¹⁷⁷. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Muhsin_Khan(accessed 14th December,2014)

¹⁷⁸. Mrs. T, a modeler, interviewed on 1st January,2015 at Nungua

of fashion shows. She also had a shop where she sold clothing of different types. Most of the dresses were short skirts and transparent that portrayed the nakedness of those who wear them. After accepting and embracing Islam, she was taught that, as a Muslim woman, she has to cover her whole body and should not assist other women in exposing their nakedness except to their husbands. In compliance to the dictates of Islam, she turned her designer shop into a *Hijab* shop where she now sells long dresses and veils that are worn by Muslim women. For her the joy she gets from this is to give the Muslim an opportunity to get access to a *Hijab* even though, it was so challenging to stop the designer shows.

Miss. U¹⁷⁹ a beer bar attendant had a situation similar to Mrs. T above. She was assisting her brother to sell alcohol in a beer bar before embracing Islam. After hearing that, it is forbidden to sell alcohol or to be part of its transaction from production to distribution. It became a challenge to her whether to continue being a Muslim and dealing in that business or stop Islam and save herself from any psychological problems. Finally, she decided to stop the work and struggled to survive since she had chosen to be a Muslim.

The researcher is of the view that the experience of Mrs. T and Miss U above is one of the examples of the influence of the worldly life on the spirituality of the slaves of Allah as stated in Qur'an (35:5). With regard to alcohol, At-Tirmidhi narrated that Anas bin Maalik said:

*The messenger of Allah (SAW) cursed ten with regards to alcohol. The one who squeezes (the grapes etc.), the one for whom it is squeezed, the one who drinks it, the one to whom it is carried, the one who pours it, the one who sells it and spends its price, the one who buys it and the one for whom it is bought.*¹⁸⁰

If Miss. U stops the work and she is unable to make a living, it may mean that, Islam has put hardship on her. She is supposed to be assisted by the Muslim community to overcome her

¹⁷⁹ . Miss U, a beer bar attendant, interviewed on 1st December, 2014 at Teshie

¹⁸⁰ . <http://islamqa.info>

challenge. This underscores the need for a fund to be made available to address the financial need of reverts.

3.6.2.3 Inadequate Literature

Reverts are also faced with the problem of getting adequate learning materials to enhance their understanding of Islam. Those that are translated into local languages are not available. The few ones that are found are in the Arabic language and this makes it difficult for them to understand. As reverts, some basic items and literature are very necessary. These include Islamic materials in the form of books, pamphlets and praying mats. These will enable them to learn the new faith and to practice its teachings with ease. Unfortunately, some of the *A'imah* (Imams) and scholars who initiated these reverts do little to assist them have a smooth transition from their old religions to Islam by providing them with some of these items.

A secretary to one of the Lawyers in Accra¹⁸¹ explained that, she did not get any book on Islam to read during her conversion. She saw what people used to do in the mosque and also followed. As a result, she was always confused and doubtful because she used to see different ways of performing prayers in the mosques. It took a long period of time before she had a book on prayers from a Muslim friend. There are many occasions where people have converted and are not given any Islamic material to read about Islam. The researcher observed numerous instances of this nature at preaching grounds where some souls were won over to Islam. Miss V and others who had such challenges confirmed the lack of adequate concern for reverts. The non-Muslims who converted to Islam during the visit of Zakir Naik on the 18th of October, 2014 at the El-Wak Stadium in Accra were not given any material at that moment. When an announcement was made for people to support them with Qur'an and

¹⁸¹. Miss V, a secretary, interviewed on 1st January, 2015 at Accra

other materials, there were no translated copies of the Qur'an. An Arabic Qur'an was brought by a young man but reverts could not read it. One would have thought that in a program such as that, arrangements would have been made for those who would revert to get access to some materials. This situation prompted Voice of Islam's representative who was there to donate some copies of the English Translated Qur'an to the organizers the following day. According to Sufian Adam, the Voice of Islam representative at the gathering, the organizers of the program of the Zakir Naik's visit should have prepared adequately for those who would revert. He added that, providing an adequate Islamic literature especially to reverts has been a challenge for so many years. He was of the opinion that some of the wrong doings of Muslims is as a result of lack of adequate information about Islam. Muslims should therefore see the need to invest in getting these resources for the development of Islam in Ghana.¹⁸²

3.6.2.4 Some Religious Practices

Some Islamic religious practices were stated by some respondents as very challenging. One of such practices is circumcision. According Mr. W¹⁸³, a student, he embraced Islam when he was not circumcised. After embracing Islam, he was told that, a Muslim has to circumcise. It was very difficult for him at age 19. He inquired whether there was a hospital that could assist him to circumcise. He thought that, with a hospital he might be given some drugs that would reduce the pain when in the act of circumcision. When he was told that, there was no arrangement like that and, he had to be circumcised at home, he was alarmed. However, he was motivated by an Imam he stayed with. Even though it was very painful, he finally got circumcised. Some also mentioned fasting in the month of Ramadan as very challenging.

¹⁸². Sufian Adam, (VOI) representative, interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Tema

¹⁸³. Mr. W, a student, interviewed on 1st January, 2015 at Dawa

Mrs. X¹⁸⁴, a seamstress also had a challenge with taking *Ghusl* after menstruation or sexual intercourse with her husband. She saw that practice as very difficult for her and it used to bring some misunderstanding between her and her husband. For her she was used to some hair styles that would be affected negatively when water enters into it.

Other respondents stated the offering of the five daily prayers as challenging. To them they thought the prayers they saw Muslims perform is optional as such could be performed at any time just as they used to do in their former faiths. After accepting Islam they realized that it is compulsory. Even though they are doing their best, they are of the view that it will be good if non-Muslims are told of some of these issues before they make their decisions.

The researcher is of the opinion that though Mr. W and Mrs. X. maintained their Islam, their challenge could make them or other reverts become apostates. The fear for having the circumcision could lead to leaving Islam. The researcher sought for the opinion of Sheikh Suleiman al-gema on such a situation. He was of the opinion that, reverts should be motivated to circumcise but not to leave Islam because of the circumcision. He added that, some arrangement should be made at some hospitals in Ghana to help reverts with such a problem. He concluded that, before non-Muslims convert, they should be informed of some of the challenges so that they can decide whether to embrace Islam or not.¹⁸⁵ The researcher does not agree with al-gema on his last point because, every Muslim whether new revert or not has one challenge or the other in the practice of Islam. Qur'an (29:1) confirms this position. The way out is that, Muslims should assist one another in addressing these challenges. Qur'an (5:2) states this fact clearly.

¹⁸⁴.Mrs. X , a seamstress, interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Accra

¹⁸⁵ . Sheikh Sulemana al-Gema, Imam, interviewed on 4th January, 2015 at Ashaiman

3.6.2.5 Social Integration

The problem of integration into the Muslim communities was one of the challenges narrated by some of reverts. This started from the mosques to the larger community. The mosque environment is new to reverts so they did not know what to do and where to stand. Mr. Y, a carpenter narrated that, his entry into the mosque for the first time was a difficult task for him. He did not know what to do because he was not directed into the mosque. After embracing Islam, he was told to wash down and join the Muslims to pray. He was so confused that, he nearly left the mosque that day. Some of the Muslims looked at him in a strange manner.¹⁸⁶

For Miss Z, a baker, she found it difficult to integrate into the Muslim community. This is because the environment was so new to her. She could not understand the language spoken by majority of the Muslims. As a result she could not communicate well with the Muslims. He also found most of the activities of the Muslims very new to her because of her background. She was worried initially because she thought she was at the wrong place. She could not be part of a lot of the communal activities in the community.¹⁸⁷

3.6.2.6 Ethnic Influence

Even though, most of the respondents did not have challenges from the migrant Muslims, some of them narrated some experiences that made ethnic influence a challenge to them as reverts. Some of the migrant Muslims regarded them as fake Muslims since they did not belong to the northern tribes.

According to Mr. AA, a driver, he was disrespected by some Muslims who belonged to the Hausa or the northern tribes. This happened when they were discussing some issues about

¹⁸⁶. Mr. Y, a carpenter, interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Accra

¹⁸⁷. Miss .Z , a baker , interviewed on 19th January, 2015 at Accra

Islam. When he stated his opinion, which he was sure about, they hooted at him and told him “You Tuba”! What do you know about Islam? Keep quite! This made him embarrassed. He could not understand why some Muslims would look down upon others because of the different ethnic backgrounds.¹⁸⁸

The researcher is of the view that, some Muslims and non-Muslims in Ghana have the notion that, Islam belongs to the northern tribes or the Hausa. For this reason, if non-Muslims from any other tribe embrace Islam, some of the Muslims look down upon them. The attitude of some migrant Muslims towards them demoralizes their zeal to portray what they know. The ordeal of Mr. AA affected his motivation in the practice of Islam.

3.7 Impact of Challenges on Reverts

These challenges have a serious effect on reverts. Even though, most of them still wished to maintain the faith because they found Islam to be the truth, they were not able to practice Islam well. The research revealed a link between the occupation of respondents and the effects of the challenges they faced. Reverts who were not affected so much by the challenges they faced from either their relatives or other people were those who were self-employed because they had some amount of control over themselves. On the contrary, the students and those who worked for other people were those most affected by these challenges. Some of the effects are discussed below.

3.7.1 Difficulty in Acquiring Islamic Knowledge

The challenges negatively affected their ability to acquire knowledge in Islam. This is because they rather concentrate in seeking for help to solve the difficulties they faced. By so doing, their attention was taken away from seeking for knowledge in Islam. Miss N for

¹⁸⁸ . Mr. AA, a driver, interviewed on 20th January, 2015 in Tema.

instance was driven out from home and that made her run for her life. Such a circumstance prevented her from studying the teachings of the faith.

Moreover the inadequate *Ulama* (scholars) or *A'imah* (Imams) who will teach reverts the basics of Islam worsen their plight in acquiring Islamic knowledge. Some of those who converted them left them to their fate without any effort to teach them. This could make them lose confidence in Islam since their knowledge was not much.

3.7.2 Difficulty in the Practice of Islam

The challenges also affected revert in the practice of Islam. Some reverts had to hide from their families before they could pray. They therefore could not pray at all or were in hurry to complete their prayer so that they were not caught. According to Amin Bonsu,¹⁸⁹ a revert's kettle and other items were burnt by his mother because, she saw him praying as a Muslim. Such a situation will lead to his inability to pray.

3.7.3 The Problem of Mixing

Islam expects that one practise it's teachings without mixing it with traditional practices that are not recognized in the *Shariah*. Reverts are therefore expected to leave practices that they were used to if they did not conform to the teachings of Islam and also make effort to practise the teachings of Islam perfectly. The challenges reverts face affects their practice of Islam. They are bound to mix the practices of Islam with some of the practices of their former faith. This is due to their inability to seek for Islamic knowledge or inadequate scholars. The performance of religious duties such as *Hajj*, Ablution and also *Ghusl* are affected negatively because of lack of Islamic knowledge.

¹⁸⁹. Sheikh Amin Bonsu, CEO of Amen Scientific Herbal Hospital interviewed on 20th May, 2015 at Dome Pillar two

3.7.4 Termination of Education

The challenges faced by reverts affected their education. Some of them could not continue their education or had to stop schooling until they were assisted by some of the NGOs or philanthropists. Miss N is an example of this situation. Several incidents were narrated by Amin Bonsu. Most of them had to stop their education because of numerous challenges they faced. He was of the view that, Muslims should be able set up funds to help reverts to go to school and make meaningful contributions to themselves to portray that, Islam promotes education.¹⁹⁰

3.7.5 Influence on Occupation

One other impact of the challenges on reverts was on the work they did for a living. Either they had to stop the work they did because such works did conform to the teachings of Islam or they were denied of their jobs because of their conversion to Islam. The challenge of Mrs. T and Miss U affected their occupation. For Miss U, she had no other work to do when she stopped the alcohol business. She became jobless as a result of her conversion to Islam. Such situations make life difficult for reverts. Some workers also were threatened that, if they did not stop Islam they would be sacked from the jobs they did.

3.7.6 Withdrawal from Islam

Some of reverts returned to their former faiths because, they could not overcome the challenges they faced as reverts. The little assistance given to them by some Muslim philanthropists was not adequate to enable them maintain their new faith. Out of the fifteen respondents five stated reasons other than challenges in Islam. Some of the views of the remaining ten (10) are summarized below.

¹⁹⁰. Sheikh Amin Bonsu, CEO of Amen Scientific Herbal Hospital, interviewed on 20th May, 2015 at Dome Pillar two

Mrs. BB¹⁹¹, a worker with one of the firms in Accra narrated that, she converted to Islam from Christianity at the age of 20 while working as a cleaner. Immediately her boss knew that she had converted to Islam, he sacked her without given her an opportunity for redress. She therefore became jobless and could hardly feed herself. She informed some Muslims in the area but nothing was done about that. She therefore went back to her boss after some time and told him to take her back. That ended her Islam after being a Muslim for almost a year.

Miss.CC,¹⁹² a student at Ada, left Islam to Christianity because of inadequate support from the Muslims. She narrated that, she embraced Islam about four months ago. Initially, she knew her parents would not agree because of how strong the family was in the Christian faith. As a result, she hid to observe the five daily prayers. Someone who knew her parents saw her one day while praying and broke the news to her parents. She was called and questioned whether it was true that she was a Muslim. She could not deny the truth so she told them. Since that day, they started to maltreat her. Her school fees were not paid. She did not have adequate support to depend on so that she could leave the parent's place and be on her own. Even though she informed the Imam of the mosque, what they did for her was not enough so she had no option than to stop the faith and win the love of her parents back so that she could continue her education. When asked whether she would consider Islam again, she said that, she was thinking about it because she still thinks that Islam is a true religion.

Another challenge that made some reverts leave Islam was the inability of reverts to have constant teachings that would enable them to understand some basic principles of Islam for their faith to be strengthened. According to Mr. DD,¹⁹³ a trader at Seduase, after reverting to Islam in the village for seven months through a Bible preacher who went there to preach, he did not have a mosque to pray but some few Muslims prayed in their homes. There was no

¹⁹¹. Mrs. BB, a worker in a firm, interviewed on 10th January, 2015 at Accra

¹⁹². Miss CC, student, interviewed on 7th January, 2015 at Ada

¹⁹³. Mr. DD, trader, interviewed on 7th January, 2015 at Seduase

preacher who would preach to them to know more about Islam. Instead some pastors used to go there to preach. One of them approached him and started to preach to him. The first day he talked to him, he did not believe him but when he returned another time, he got convinced. That made him to leave Islam.

The researcher is of the opinion that, the challenge of Mr. DD and other related issues could not have been a challenge if they had enough teaching about Islam. The preacher who initiated him into Islam perhaps was interested in just ushering him into Islam without paying particular attention to how he would be sustained in its practices.

Additionally, their conversion to Islam could be attributed to Brice's conversion by convenience not conscience. If they were actually convinced by the teachings of Islam before they embraced it, they would have stood firm on the faith and hoped for Allah's assistance notwithstanding the difficulties they faced.

3.8 Conclusion

The chapter highlighted the religious demography of the people of the Greater Accra Region and the state of Islam in the region. The inter-religious relationship was also looked at. This was necessary because the challenges of reverts which were discussed later had a link to it. Other issues discussed were some of the effects the challenges had on reverts. Even though for some of them, the challenges affected their practice of Islam, they still continued as Muslims. Some also abandoned Islam because they could not overcome the challenges. Some of these challenges were as a result of the inadequate assistance given to them though some stakeholders especially the Qur'an-Bible Preachers and some Muslim NGOs did their best in addressing some of the challenges. For the maintenance of reverts, they are to be assisted to overcome the challenges that affect them both in the former religion they came from and the religion they have chosen. The next chapter will discuss the interventions made by the

Islamic leadership institutions, some NGOs and individual to ameliorate the challenges of these reverts.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERVENTIONS TO AMELIORATE THE CHALLENGES OF REVERTS

4.0 Introduction

It was established in chapter three that reverts were faced with numerous challenges which affected them negatively. Some of them had no option than to stop their education. Others also found it difficult to practice the faith. Meanwhile respondents made references to some individuals and Muslim NGOs that assisted them to overcome some of their challenges. This chapter will assess the interventions made by some Islamic leadership institutions, Muslim NGOs, Mosques and some individuals to ameliorate the challenges of reverts. It will finally highlight on what the future holds for them.

The researcher purposively sampled two (2) Islamic leadership institutions, eight (8) Islamic NGOs/Associations and five (5) individuals who have made some contributions towards reverts. Two among them were non-Preachers while three were preachers. According to Creswell, a purposeful sampling strategy is important in a qualitative research because selected individuals can give information of the research problem and the central phenomenon of the study.¹⁹⁴

The researcher interviewed individuals and the leaders or schedule officers of the NGOs for their views. The finding was analyzed by focusing on the main themes in the views expressed by respondents. The themes included how the individuals or the NGOs received information about reverts, the forms of assistance given by the individuals or the NGOs to reverts, the

¹⁹⁴. John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Choosing among Five Approaches*, 155

source of funding the programs, difficulties encountered and what to do in the future to curb the challenges of reverts.

4.1 Islamic Leadership Institutions

4.1.1. Office of the National Chief Imam (ONCI)

This is one of the major leadership institutions in Ghana that address the concerns of Muslims. It is involved in a number of activities to assist Muslims in the country. It sometimes donate food especially rice during the Fasting season to Muslims.

On reverts, Mallam Adam Musah Abu-Bakar,¹⁹⁵ the administrator at the office of the National Chief Imam explained that, even though the Office has no statistics that could be taken at a glance to find out issues concerning reverts, they address some of their concerns. He asserted that, each month people accept Islam but are supported through other mosques. The Central Mosque at Abossey Okai is one of the mosques through which some assistance is sought for reverts because the Office of the Chief Imam manages the affairs of the mosque. There are also instances where reverts are helped with Islamic literature from the Office.

One of the challenges that confront the Office is the difficulty of confirming the sincerity of reverts because there are no formal methods for that purpose from the Office. He cited an instance where two people came to them to solicit for assistance to enable them retrieve the cops of their brother from the mortuary. After using the Central Mosque to raise an amount of six hundred Ghana cedis to assist them, a representative from the Office who accompanied them to the hospital realized that the information given by them was false. The hospital did not demand that amount from them. He added that, though reverts are very important in Ghana, there is no specific unit within the administration of the Office that is responsible for

¹⁹⁵. Mallam Adam Musah Abu-Bakar, Administrator at the office of the National Chief Imam, interviewed on 7th January, 2015 at Abossey Okai

them. As a result issues concerning them are mostly not programmed. According to the administrator, this research is a wakeup call to them to start keeping adequate records on reverts.¹⁹⁶

4.1.2 Office of the Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah (ASWAJ)

This is also another Muslim leadership institution in Ghana. It has branches in every region in Ghana. Its programs include settling marriage problems and preaching Islam to the general public. They also donate Islamic literature to Muslims and build schools. The institution gets to know of reverts through two main ways. The first is the preachers they sponsor and the second is reverts who come to the office to seek for some assistance. In the interview, Sheikh Yakubu Abban, the General Secretary¹⁹⁷ indicated that whenever the Office came into contact with a new revert, they investigated to find out whether the conversion was real or otherwise before any assistance was given. He mentioned that sometimes some converted through their Muslim friends without actually intending to do so. What push them to Islam is that, they don't want to be left alone when their friends leave them for prayers. The Institution works with some NGOs, who organize programs for reverts. Some of them are Ihsan Services Bureau (ISB) and al-Hudah Islamic Society (AIS). They assist reverts with Islamic books.

He cited Ibrahim Baidoo as an example they had assisted before. He explained that, Ibrahim Baidoo faced a lot of challenges when he converted to Islam. He was sacked from home and he lost his job. He was also forced to stop preaching Islam. His wife was taken away from him. The Office helped him to have a place for himself and his wife. He has established a school and has performed pilgrimage to Makkah on two occasions.

¹⁹⁶. Mallam Adam Musah Abu-Bakar, Administrator at the Office of the National Chief Imam, interviewed on 14/04/15 at his office at Abossey Okai

¹⁹⁷. Sheikh Yakubu Abban, general secretary Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah, interviewed on 20th January, 2015 at Nima

The other assistance they give is working towards a possible reconciliation between the family of reverts and reverts themselves. Reverts, are considered outcasts and are therefore thrown out from their families and this creates hatred between them and their families. They mediate with the family of reverts and explain that it takes patience and dialogue to get a person to understand but not hatred or torture. They then explain to them some religious teachings concerning similarities in both Islam and the other religions.

The Office's view is that reconciling the parties is better than reporting such cases to the Police even though, when the need be, such reports could be made to them. Their position is that, before reverts became Muslims, they were living relatively well with their families. If after embracing Islam there is sour relationship and the Police come in, then it is as if it is Islam that dislikes peace. Meanwhile Islam propagates peace among people. Secondly, with patience some of the non-Muslim families may come to accept Islam later.

According to Sheikh Yakubu Abban, the case of Sheikh Suleiman Muzu, the Western Regional Imam of Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah is an example of the importance of working towards reconciliation between families as stated above. Now Muzu has almost converted the whole of his family. He has even taken his father and mother to Makkah to perform pilgrimage. Sheikh Yakubu Abban lamented of inadequate funds to support the numerous reverts so they are currently thinking of some innovative ways of raising funds.

The researcher is of the view that, even though the leadership institutions have made some interventions one could expect that, they did more considering their position in the country. They could have institutionalized the collection of Zakat so that funds could be obtained to see to the welfare of reverts as explained by Abdalati. Unfortunately in Ghana Zakat is mostly distributed individually rather than paying it into a fund.

4.2 Islamic NGOs/ Associations

Besides the Islamic leadership institutions who intervened to ameliorate the challenges of reverts there are also some Muslim NGOs, who have been involved in this drive. Some of these NGOs/ Association are: Voice of Islam (VOI), Direct Aid (DA), Ihsan Services Bureau (ISB), Ghana Muslim Mission (GMM), Al-Huda Islamic Society (AIS), and Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services (ICODEHS), Federation of Muslim Women Association in Ghana (FOMWAG) and Young Muslim Mission (YMM).

4.2.1 Voice of Islam (VOI)

Voice of Islam was inaugurated in Ghana in 2010 with the motto: Bringing the message of Islam to all people. It was established to defend Islam from many misconceptions, negative stereotypes and generally bad press Islam receives through the media. It does this through the distribution of the Qur'an and preaching. According to Alhaji Ibrahim Nkrumah¹⁹⁸, the Country Director, Voice of Islam does not have a special program for reverts. The NGO does not also have a specific program where it receives information about the challenges reverts face but it gets information from the preachers and reverts when they request for English Translated Qur'ans.

The main assistance given to reverts is the provision of Islamic literature especially English translated Qur'ans. He further stated that so far over thousand English translated copies of the Qur'an have been distributed to them nationwide. Sometimes, some preachers come to its center to request for Qur'ans and other items for reverts. Fig. three and four of Appendix "A" are samples of the distribution of the Qur'an to reverts. The NGO also supports some reverts to go to school. One revert is under its scholarship Program. This young man was sacked from home by his father because of his conversion to Islam. As a result he did not have

¹⁹⁸. Alhaji Ibrahim Nkrumah, country director of Voice Of Islam, interviewed on the 28th January, 2015

anyone to assist him to continue his education. His matter was made known to the organization and it saw the need to support him.

The researcher observed that though Qur'ans had been distributed and scholarship awarded to some reverts so that, they overcome their challenges, there was no adequate statistics to show how many people have received the Qur'ans. The Director however complained of inadequate funds to help increase the scholarship package as well as distribute more Islamic Literature to them.

4.2.2. Direct Aid (formerly African Muslim Agency) (DA)

It was established in 1988 at Adabraka by Hajj Zakariyyah Muhammad Nawawi. The NGOs activities are targeted at all Muslims. These activities include, preaching, provision of Islamic literature, construction of schools, digging of boreholes and wells. According to Sheikh Qasim Basha¹⁹⁹, the Officer responsible for *Da'wah*, the organization has no special unit that deals with reverts. The department of Islamic propagation is responsible for reverts in addition to its mandate to preach to all Muslims.

He further explained that, the NGO receives information about reverts through preachers and the request made by reverts themselves. He added that, as part of their programs they organize preaching sessions for reverts to enlighten them about Islam. One other project they undertake is to assist communities with boreholes and other infrastructure with various intentions. One of them is to enable non-Muslims see the humanitarian aspect of Islam, so that they may embrace Islam.

The researcher inquired whether they have reports about assaults and insults that some of reverts face. He said that they have not received such reports. What they have received is

¹⁹⁹. Sheikh Qassim Basha, officer in charge of *Da'wah* at Direct Aid, interviewed on 29th January, 2015 at Madina

complaint of some reverts from Teshie. They complained about inadequate Islamic materials and resource persons to teach them. He therefore went and preached to them. He taught them some basic principles in Islam.

Similar to Voice of Islam, Direct Aid also has no adequate statistics and adequate records on how reverts are assisted, even though according to Sheikh Qasim Basha, reverts are very important to the development of Islam.

4.2.3 Ihsan Services Bureau (ISB)

This is also one of the NGOs that have made some interventions to help address the challenges of reverts. According to Sheikh Khidir Idriss Adam²⁰⁰, the Director of the NGO, the main program they organize for them is preaching. The Director posits that, when non-Muslims convert, one of their biggest challenges is how to learn Islam. This is because the Arabic language is foreign to them so there is the need for some assistance to enable them recites some chapters of the Qur'an. As a result some preachers especially, the Qur'an- Bible preachers are supported to give some form of training to them.

Sheikh Khidir Idriss Adam, explained that he received some funds that enabled him to pay some preachers to go to some communities where there were reverts to teach them Islam but unfortunately, that fund has been exhausted. Ayyuba Ofosuhene was one of the resource persons for that program. The preachers used to send reports to the NGO and the progress made. According to him this program was one of the important programs that benefited reverts but there are no funds to continue it.

Another project Sheikh Khidir mentioned was a housing unit which was built for Muslims. Even though the project was not meant for only reverts, some of reverts who had problems with their families were assisted. For him, the project was for Muslims and reverts are part of

²⁰⁰. Sheikh Khidri Idriss Adam, Director of Ihsan Services Bureau, interviewed on 20th January, 2015 at Mamobi

the Muslim Community. So far seven (7) regions have been covered across the country.

Sheikh Khidir however complained about inadequate funds for the projects. Their intention was to continue with the preaching. The termination of the allowance given to the *Du'at* (Islamic Propagation scholars) who preached to them affected them so much.

4.2.4 Ghana Muslim Mission (GMM)

The Ghana Muslim Mission was inaugurated in 1959. It was out of an attempt to attract the national Muslim Migrants in Accra and to unite the other Ga Islamic Associations under one umbrella. The national Migrants are the northern tribes that have their origins in Ghana. The Mission had among its objectives to cater for the needs of reverts. Some of the founding members were themselves reverts. As stated in chapter one, the Ghana Muslim Mission was founded to make a point that Islam was not a religion of only migrants but a religion of humanity.

According to the Greater Accra Regional Chairman of the Mission, Hajj Abdullah Tetteh, the NGO receives reports on reverts through the Imams Council Office. However as at the time of the research, no documented information on reverts was available but for him, some of reverts went to their Offices for assistance and this gave them the opportunity to know of the challenges of reverts.

On the assistance given to reverts, Hajj Abdullah Tetteh²⁰¹ explained that sometimes cash donations are given to them. They also had a Qur'an school where they were taught how to read the Qur'an in Arabic. This is to satisfy the NGOs mission to eradicate illiteracy. Even though some assistance had been given to some reverts there were no adequate statistics and reports on the impact of such assistance.

²⁰¹. Hajj Abdullah Tetteh, Greater Accra Regional Chairman, interviewed on 4th February, 2015 at Kole Gornor

According to Alhaji Bashiru, a member of the Ga Itihads Islammiyyah, a branch of the GMM, a woman revert was once assisted with some money to start a business after she was told by her children to stop Islam before they will take care of her. He added that the GMM will want to do more of that but unfortunately there are no specific funds for the assistance given to reverts. Sometimes they withdraw some money from the contributions they make and also solicit for help from individuals. He cited Dr. Amin Bonsu to be one of the individuals who had been helping most of reverts. The NGO sometimes finds it difficult to give appropriate support to reverts because of inadequate resources. To solve the problem the *Zakat* fund was launched a year ago to bring all the contribution of *Zakat* under one treasury. The NGO is optimistic that, when the *Zakat* begins to work as expected, it will boost the support to reverts.

4.2.5 al-Hudah Islamic Society (AIS)

Al-Hudah Islamic Society was also mentioned by Sheikh Abban as one of the organizations under the Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah that supports reverts. It was formed in 1990 by Sheikh Umar Ibrahim Imam. Although the NGO engages in the building of Mosques and schools, it also has a *Da'wah* (Islamic Propagation) group known as, The Light of The World Ministry headed by Sheikh Abdul Kadiri Idriss. The department deals with preaching and supports Muslims in the practice of Islam. The support system for reverts is also under this unit.

According to Sheikh Abdul Kadiri Idriss,²⁰² the NGO engages in preaching to non-Muslims from one village to the other with the intention of making reverts. When reverts are made, they are given some clothes and kettles and are taught some of the basic principles in Islam. Sometimes, mosques are built for them when the village has no mosque. There are also

²⁰². Sheikh Abdul Kadir Idriss, Officer in charge of *Da'wah* at al-Hudah Islamic Society, interviewed on 5th January, 2015 at Pick farm

instances where Islamic preachers are sent to places where reverts are made so that they are taught the fundamentals of Islam.

Sheikh Abdul Kadiri explained further that, the work they have at hand is a difficult one and it requires enough support and money but unfortunately, there are no funds, he stated that, when reverts are made, their families leave all the burden of reverts on the Muslims. He had received numerous calls from families of reverts concerning the health of reverts or other needs.

For al-Hudah, the main method of getting information about reverts is through reverts themselves and their families as mentioned earlier. One major problem that confronts the NGO is inadequate funds. Sometimes they become helpless to some of the situations. There are instances that they are not able to help reverts even though their requests are genuine.

4.2.6 The Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services (ICODEHS)

The NGO was founded in 1982. Initially it was called the Islamic Council for Book Development and Translation. It was founded by Sheikh Mustapha Ibrahim as a non-Governmental Organization to work towards human and rural development. It is one of the most influential NGOs in Ghana. Its activities include building of mosques and schools. It also supplies Islamic literature to the public and has *Du'at* (preachers) who preach to the public.

According to Sheikh Suraka Swallah,²⁰³ Director of the Orphan Department, the main activities concerning reverts include supplying of books, preaching to them, payment of school fees and supply of clothes. Unfortunately there are no statistics of the number of reverts that have been assisted so far and how the assistance has impacted on their lives. As a

²⁰³. Sheikh Suraka Swallah, Director, Orphan Department (ICODEHS), interviewed on 5th January, 2015 at Habavana, Accra

result, no reports are given on specific reverts and their challenges.

The situation of revert is handled within the *Da'wah* department. There is no specific unit that deals with reverts. Even though the NGO sees the importance of reverts and the need to support them, the NGO has inadequate funds to help reverts address some of their challenges. According to Sheikh Suraka Swallah, sometimes the inability of the Muslims to help reverts to overcome their challenges makes them return to their former religions.

Sheikh Suraka Swallah admitted that, much is supposed to be done for reverts in Ghana. He also quoted Qur'an (9:60) to confirm the position of reverts as beneficiaries of *Zakat*. The research work was therefore an eye opener to them to put a system in place to find out the challenges of reverts and the assistance to be given.

4.2.7 The Federation of Muslim Women Association in Ghana (FOMWAG)

The Federation of Muslim Women Association in Ghana (FOMWAG) started in 1992 in Accra by women such as Aisha Lamin Futa, Hajia Katumi Mahamah and Zalia Ali to inspire women to climb very high in education and to have confidence as Muslims in practicing their faith. It is one of the organizations in Ghana that is championing the cause of Muslim women. It is also to assist women to overcome intimidation and fear. The Association is able to achieve this through organizing conferences across the whole country to preach and help Muslim women to understand Islam. A lot of Muslim women have been transformed through FOMWAG. It is therefore appropriate that the issue of reverts is examined.

Even though the contribution of FOMWAG towards the success of Muslim women in Ghana cannot be over-emphasized, less is achieved when it comes to reverts. No separate unit is created to deal with their issues. No adequate statistics are prepared on reverts even though the organization receives reports on some of their challenges.

According to Hajia Samia Zouein,²⁰⁴ the National Treasurer, the NGO does not have a special program for reverts. Even though reverts are important, there is the need to encourage existing Muslims to practise Islam. The Association does not have a system of connecting to reverts except when they approach them for assistance. Those that they can help, they do. They sometimes refer some of them too to some individuals and organizations for assistance.

Hajia Samia Zouein explained that, there is the need for the Association and the general Muslim *Ummah* (Community) to embark on *Da'wah* to revert people to Islam. After that a program should be instituted to train reverts so that they gain more Islamic knowledge and skills to be able to maintain their faith.

4.2.8 The Young Muslim Mission (YMM)

The Young Muslim Mission (YMM) has been in existence since 2013. However, the Mission was inaugurated in 2014 with Farouq Abdus-Salaam²⁰⁵ as its leader. The mission for its establishment is to guide people to Allah before their departure from this earth. It therefore preaches to both Muslims and non-Muslims though many efforts are made to preach to non-Muslims. It organizes debates between Muslim scholars and scholars from other religions. Farouq talked about some of their achievements since the beginning of the Mission.

It has influenced over hundred non-Muslims to embrace Islam. Each time they make reverts, they either led them to some designated mosques where they normally preached or introduced them to Muslim Scholars to teach them Islam. He mentioned the al- Furqan Mosque at Zongo lane in Accra as an example. The Mission also helps to educate reverts by organizing open forum for them where they are equipped with the teachings of Islam and how to practice it. There are also counseling services for those who have challenges.

²⁰⁴. Hajia Samia Zouein, National Treasurer, interviewed on 2nd January, 2015 at Dzorwulu, Accra

²⁰⁵. Farouq Abdus-Salaam, leader of (YMM), interviewed on 2nd January, 2015 at Cowlane.

Sometimes they help reverts with clothes and other logistics. He added that, even though they would have wished to give more assistance to reverts, they are not able because of inadequate funds. The only source of funds they have is the individual contributions they do.

The researcher is of the view that the intervention made by the Islamic NGOs and Associations is similar to that of the Islamic leadership institutions mentioned above. The GMM mentioned the *Zakat* as a remedy to the challenge of inadequate resources mentioned by each one of them. This is a confirmation of Qur'an (9:60). They also did their best in assisting some of the new revert by providing money, Islamic literature and other items.

However, documentation of the activities of NGOs and Associations on reverts was not effective. This made references to what has been done difficult. Most of the NGOs were not able to give details of reverts they had assisted. They simply narrated the issues without specific dates, names and telephone numbers for a possible follow-up. Some gave the reason that they assisted for the sake of Allah. The researcher thinks that, keeping of adequate records on reverts is very important because, Islam has made a lot of references to the importance of writing and keeping of records. The Qur'an was not only read by the *Sahaabah* (companions), it was ordered to be recorded by the Prophet (SAW). According to Ibn Hisham, the Prophet Said: "*Do write from me nothing, but the Qur'an*". This was to prevent a possible mix of revelation and Prophetic traditions. Though the Prophet allowed them to write later on, Umar bin Abdul-Aziz (99-101) issued out a command later for the traditions to be compiled.²⁰⁶ Additionally, Allah has made angels record the actions of human beings. Qur'an (82:10-11) states that, "*But verily over you (Are appointed angels) to protect you, - Kind and honorable,-Writing down (your deeds).*" Records are for preservation and referencing among other benefits.

²⁰⁶. Mohammad Mahdi as-Sharif, *The Prophet's Biography, of Ibn Hisham*, 4

4.3 Individuals (non-preachers)

Some reverts who are not preachers give some support in diverse ways. They are motivated by their own experiences concerning the challenges and the difficulties they went through themselves. Such individuals include: Brigit Merki and Samira Asare.

4.3.1 Brigit Merki

According to Brigit Merki,²⁰⁷ the President of al-Asr International Islamic Women's Organization, after embracing Islam, she wanted to have an Islamic society where she could associate with. It was difficult to come by one since her residence was far away from the Muslim community. Language was also a problem for her with regards to the Muslim community. She also realized that, whenever she went to the mosque for Friday congregational prayers she met other reverts. With time she started to associate with them. During their interactions, they also complained about what she had been complaining of all this while. Based on this background, with the support of Hajia Samia Zouein they came together to form an organization to facilitate the activities of reverts especially females to meet, share ideas and assist reverts understand Islam.

They formed al-Asr International Islamic Women's Organization with her as the President to provide an opportunity for women and children to come together to study Islam. The emphasis is on bringing reverts together and for programs. So far they have organized programs for kids and meet some women reverts to discuss issues bothering them.

They have close relations with some NGOs such as the Ghana Society for Islamic organization, Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah and Voice of Islam. They solicit assistance from these organizations. Voice of Islam for instance has donated English Translated Qur'ans to

²⁰⁷. Briggit Merki, president of Al-Asr International Islamic Women's Organization interviewed on 6th December, 2014 at airport residential area.

them. For Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jam'ah, they assist them with resource persons during their programs.

According to her, they meet once every week at her shop at Dzorwulu in Accra. Some of the achievements have been helping one another to be confident in dressing as Muslims and improving the knowledge base of reverts so that they are able to ask and answer relevant questions concerning Islam. They have also been able to create a mini family within the larger Muslim community where their children socialize together.

However, the achievements are not without challenges. The main challenge is inadequate funds for their programs. So far their main source of income is the membership dues which are not enough to support their activities.

4.3.2 Samira Asare.

Samira Asare²⁰⁸ is also a female revert who is passionate about the need to assist reverts to understand Islam. In her own small way, she has initiated a program to assist reverts with an association called “*Ummah* Reverts”.

According to her, the idea of having a program to assist reverts came about when she was discussing with Hajia Samia Zouein on how to support reverts. Even though she was convinced to start such a program she waited because she did not have the resources. However a meeting with a brother from *Ummah* Initiative rekindled the urge to get that program rolled out. It is dubbed “*Ummah* Reverts”. The program is organized every Sunday at the as- Salam mosque at Community 18 in Tema. She has a time table for it and invites resource persons to discuss pertinent issues with reverts. They have enough time to provide answers to the questions posed by reverts during the sessions. The researcher used to be part of some of their meetings and has discussed some critical issues with them.

²⁰⁸. Samira Asare, coordinator of “*Ummah* revert”, interviewed on 2nd January, 2015 at Tema.

Samira also mentioned some difficulties she encounters. Reverts were usually eight in number but sometimes some were unable to attend. According to her, there are no adequate funds to remind them for meetings. Also, some of them are not regular. The excuses some of them give are that, they do not have enough time or their bosses have given them work to do. Presently, it is Voice of Islam, an NGO at Tema that has donated some books and other logistics to them. They don't receive any assistance from anywhere. She has been using her own resources to call reverts to the meetings.

The researcher is of the view that the program has so far been very helpful. During discussions with reverts, they explained how beneficial the program had been. Some are now able to appreciate the teachings of Islam especially the topics on the biographies of the *Sahabah* (companions). Such topics give them the understanding of some of the challenges they face and how to address them. Samira suggested that, every mosque should be able to have a similar program to help reverts to understand Islam.

The researcher is of the view that Samira and Merki have similar objectives. These are attempts to create an Islamic atmosphere where reverts could interact. However the difference is that, Samira's "*Ummah* Reverts" has a preaching plan where resource persons meet reverts and teach them. There is therefore an opportunity for them and the other Muslims in the mosque to ask questions bordering them for answers.

4.4 Individuals (preachers)

Besides the efforts of some individuals who are not preachers, there are preachers who have been making contributions to ameliorate the challenges of reverts. Most of them were reverts themselves. Although they have not institutionalized a system for reverts, they assist some of them in so many ways. The personalities involved are: Ibrahim Allah Party Odjeawo, Mallam Hassan Hussein Yeboah and Dr. Sheikh Amin Bonsu.

4.4.1 Ibrahim Allah Party Odjeawo

Allah party Odjeawo²⁰⁹ is a Qur'an-Bible preacher who has made lots of reverts. He has been soliciting for some assistance from mosques and individuals to assist reverts. This has been part of his preaching exercise. Sometimes he sent resource persons to some villages where they have made reverts to teach them the faith. This move is targeted at addressing their religious challenges so that, they maintain the faith and its principles.

According to him, seeking for help from people to assist reverts has been the work of almost all the preachers. Sometimes items are collected from Muslims in the various mosques and sent to reverts in the villages. He intimated that, he has plans to build an institute where reverts will be trained and housed but the problem is how to fund the project.

There is the need for a more proactive measure that will cushion reverts. Odjeawo's idea of building an institution is good but as he stated, there are no funds to even start it. Notwithstanding the difficulties, he has identified the need not only to help reverts to understand Islam but also to support them with logistics. This will help to address the problems of those who have been abandoned by their relatives because of their conversion.

4.4.2 Mallam Hassan Hussein Yeboah

Hassan Hussein Yeboah is also a Qur'an-Bible preacher who propagates the teachings of Islam from one place to another across the length and breadth of Ghana. He usually preaches at radio Gold and also Gold TV. He has led a lot of non-Muslim to embrace Islam and also supported most of them to maintain their faith. He indicated that several of those who embraced Islam had challenges with their families. There was one new revert who was abandoned by his family. His school fees were not paid and did not have any place to lay his

²⁰⁹. Allah Party Odjaewo, leader of Allah Party preaching group, interviewed on 26th January, 2015 at Tema community two

head. All these challenges were because he had embraced Islam. Mallam Hussein allowed him to live with him and assisted him through other Muslims to go to school. Now he is at the university.

Several others had been assisted by him. One male revert he assisted was studying at the Institute of Languages in Kumasi. He was also abandoned without any accommodation. He added that, he was just told of one female revert who is also facing some challenges and he was making preparations to go to Apam junction in the Central Region see to how she could be helped.

Mallam Hussein explained during the interview that, there is no specific support system that is put aside for the work they do. Sometimes he uses his own resources or solicits for help from other preachers and philanthropists. He called on the general public to contribute a fund that will be used to support reverts because it is a religious duty.²¹⁰

4.4.3 Dr. Sheikh Amin Bonsu

Dr. Amin Bonsu²¹¹ is the C.E.O of Amen Scientific Herbal Hospital. He is also the national chairman of the Ghana Muslim Mission and the Deputy Imam. He is one of those who have won a lot of souls for Islam in Ghana. He mentioned a lot of interventions he has made in the lives of reverts.

Sheikh Amin Bonsu outlined a number of interventions to ameliorate the challenges of reverts. He first considered helping reverts to have a peace of mind in situations where they were rejected or abandoned. For a lot of them he gave them employment in his establishment. He provided accommodation for some of them so that they could settle and have a meaningful life. He also talked to their families for a possible reconciliation. Aside this

²¹⁰ . Mallam Hassan Hussein Yeboah, a Qur'an-Bible preacher, interviewed on 20th May, 2015 at Korle -Gono

²¹¹ . Sheikh Amin Bonsu, C.E.O of Amen Scientific Hospital, interviewed on 20th May, 2015 at Dome Pillar two

contribution, his major concern was also the acquisition of knowledge of reverts because it is important to increase their faith in the religion.

To ensure that, reverts received adequate knowledge of Islam, he normally organized workshops for them where he and other scholars would teach them the basic concepts and practices of Islam. He also gave them some pamphlets on Islam to read. In line with this, he has written a book on Salat (Prayer) in three languages namely Arabic, English and Twi so that, reverts can easily read. Other books he has written include, “Jesus and Muhammad (SAW), brothers in Islam” and the translation of *Juz Amma* (30th part of the Qur’an) and *Tabaaraka* (29th part of the Qur’an) into Twi. He also writes simple sermons to be used by some *A’imah* (Imams) especially in the villages on giving hope and encouragement to reverts.

Dr. Amin is of the view that, a fund should be set up purposely for reverts. Also the *Zakat* is very important in getting some money for the programs. Furthermore grouping reverts for some time so that they are taught will also help. Finally, the institutions such as Islamic Banking, Islamic Insurance and proper organization of Hajj in Ghana by Muslims will give the Muslims enough money for those projects.

The researcher considers the interventions of the individuals as very encouraging. Their efforts show that, given the needed support, reverts could be assisted to solve the challenges they face. Unfortunately, the same challenge that faced the Islamic leadership institutions and the NGOs affect them too. Even though those who have organizations such as Briggit Merki, Samira Asare and Allah Party Odjeawo have some program line up for what they do for reverts, there is room for improvement.

4.5 Mosques

Mosques have also been used to address the challenges of reverts. Sometimes clothes and other logistics are obtained from the mosques. The mosques became the main source of funds for the Preachers who assist reverts to overcome their challenges. Two of such Mosques are sampled below.

4.5.1 Voice of Islam (VOI) Mosque

The VOI Mosque in Community Two Tema supports reverts in many ways. Besides the contributions that are done to be given to reverts, the Mosque supports an Islamic Instructor to teach them the basics of Islam. The Mosque also solicits for some clothes from the Muslim for reverts. According to Mallam Muhammad Addae, the instructor, reverts meet every Sunday at 8:30 a.m. and so far ten reverts have been meeting. He added that the mosque transfers reverts to the Voice of Islam, an NGO for further assistance if the needs of reverts are more than what the Mosque could afford.

4.5.2 as-Salam Mosque

The as-Salam Mosque at Tema, Community 18 also helps some reverts to address some of their challenges. Like VOI Mosque, the as-Salam Mosque also sometimes solicits for assistance from Muslims in the form of money and logistics to revert. In addition to that, the Mosque sometimes gives some assistance to the resource persons who are invited by Samira Asare on her *Ummah* Revert programs. Announcements are made in the mosques to invite reverts to the programs.

4.6 Sustaining Reverts

The responses of reverts and the interventions made to solve the challenges indicated some issues pertaining to how to sustain reverts to enable them maintain their faith and contribute

to the development of Islam in their communities. A lot could be derived from the reasons that made reverts to maintain their religion.

4.6.1 Good Conduct and Attitude

The first of this is good conduct and attitude towards reverts. Islam admonishes Muslims to portray good conduct and character. Some of the good morals include honesty, respect, hard work and sincerity. Islam on the other hand abhors deceit, envy and laziness. Qur'an (5:3) quoted earlier on addresses this issue. Qur'an (5:3) should have guided the man in Miss J's issue. He deceived her and that made her leave Islam. Good conduct does not only sustain a new revert but also can lead to the conversion of other people in to Islam.

4.6.2 Financial Assistance to Reverts

Contrary to those who left Islam because of the challenges they faced, other respondents did not leave Islam even though the challenges affected them as well. Some probably maintained their religion because of the financial support they received from individuals and some Muslim NGO's. The case of Mr. L falls under this category. When he faced the challenges from his family, Voice of Islam's intervention made him comfortable to continue to practice the teachings of Islam. Through the financial support, he was able to continue his education and at the same time study Islam. This is one of the reasons why Islam has put in place the *Zakat* fund to enable reverts to be supported to make them a bit comfortable as mentioned in chapter two.

4.6.3 Preaching/ Counseling Reverts

Preaching to reverts during conversion and after conversion is very important in sustaining them in Islam. Several instances by respondents portray the importance of preaching in the affairs of reverts.

Madam D for instance stated she maintained her faith in Islam because of the preaching she received from scholars. The importance of preaching especially to reverts cannot be over-emphasized. This is because reverts do not know much and need constant reminders to strengthen their faith. It is even more important, to advise them before they embrace Islam. This would prepare them psychologically for the practices of the new faith. The effects of preaching to reverts agree with the interaction theory of conversion to Islam as explained by Salman and the others. According to them, the knowledge of Islam through preaching is able to convince reverts to practice the new faith. This is contrary to the sword theory that its application only puts fear in people. In this direction, Qur'an (51:55) states: *"But teach (thy message): For teaching benefits the Believers."*

In addition, preaching to reverts motivates them to become preachers and also call people to the way of Allah. Mr. O's experience is an example in this regard.

4.6.4 Reason for Conversion

Another factor that helps to sustain reverts in the religion is the reason for conversion. According to Brice, when non-Muslims revert based on conviction or conscience, they are able to withstand difficulties and challenges. This is because they normally have a prior knowledge about Islam that leads them into the decision to revert. On the other hand conversion by convenience does not normally help to maintain Islamic practices in reverts. The effort of the Qur'an- Bible preachers is therefore a welcoming step in trying to help reverts even before conversion to understand Islam.

4.7 The Way Forward for reverts

The efforts made by the various institutions, NGOs and the individual personalities indicate optimism in the affairs of reverts. Even though most of the interventions to ameliorate the

challenges of reverts were adhoc and are not sustaining enough, some programs are in place to assist them.

The establishment of a *Zakat* fund is one view that provides the opportunity for constant support for reverts. The Ghana Muslim Mission (GMM) indicated a plan to institutionalize the collection of *Zakat*. The *Zakat* provides money and food stuffs and other resources are made available. Qur'an (9:103) states: "*Take Sadaqa (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them with it, invoke Allah for them, and Allah is all-Hearer, all-knower.*" Also through charity, reverts are assisted with clothes, dresses for prayers, veils and money to enable them cope with life.

Secondly, establishment of organizations that have the development of reverts as the main objective is good. The "*Ummah Reverts*" has achieved some positive results. Some of reverts can now recite some verses of the Qur'an and are able to pray with confidence. Such initiatives should be sustained.

Thirdly, there is hope that the Islamic NGOs and institutions shall put a unit in place to formally address issues concerning reverts. Most of the institutions and NGOs saw this research work as a wakeup call on them to establish places for reverts.

Finally, the contribution of reverts and other individuals to the affairs of reverts is encouraging. In situations where reverts needed books, clothes and other logistics, some of the preachers moved from one mosque to the other and from one individual to the other to solicit help for them. The researcher observed an instance when Allah Party Odjeawo solicited for clothes and other items at the Voice of Islam Mosque at Tema, Community Two. He also requested for English Translated Qur'ans to be given to some reverts at Afram Plains and other places. Mallam Hussein Yeboah also allowed a new revert to stay with him because he had some challenges with his family.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the efforts made by some leadership Institutions, NGOs and individuals to address the plight of reverts. The main assistance identified include: provision of some books and clothes, continuation of education and reconciling reverts with their families. Though the individuals and NGOs are trying their best for reverts, there are lots of works to be done. This is because no specific channels are put in place to know and deal with the challenges of reverts. There is also inadequate statistics on reverts to help trace the type of assistance given and how the interventions have impacted on them. However, the individuals and the NGOs have suggested ways to improve on their assistance to reverts in the development of Islam in Ghana. These include having a unit within the Islamic organizations and institutions to deal specifically with issues of reverts, having a specific fund to cater for their needs and the need for mosques to have programs for reverts to interact and be educated on the principles of Islam.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher summarizes the findings of this research. He makes some concluding remarks and ends it up with recommendations. The main objective of the research was to investigate and highlight the challenges faced by reverts. Another objective was to highlight the interventions made to ameliorate the challenges. To achieve these objectives, two approaches were used, theological and phenomenological approaches. The Islamic notion of *al-Fitrah* was the theoretical frame work and some literature was reviewed for the research.

5.1 Summary

Based on this background, the research was organized into five chapters. Chapter one dealt with what, how and where the research was carried out. The scope of the research was the Greater Accra Region because it is a cosmopolitan area where rigorous religious activities take place. The research was based on the Islamic concept of *al-Fitrah* with the reason that it explains all aspects of the research. Two approaches were used. They are Theological and Phenomenological approaches. The theological approach enabled the researcher to discuss the findings of the study by using the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* while phenomenological approach aided the researcher to present views and experiences of respondents through their own spectacles. To achieve this, observations, interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions were used to collect data. The sample size therefore consisted of Sixty (60) reverts and fifteen (15) of those who have returned to their former religions. Some *A'imah* (Imams) and *Ulama* (scholars) were also consulted for information.

In chapter two, the main issue discussed included, the factors that led to conversion to Islam, the rites of conversion to Islam and the contribution of reverts to the development of Islam. Even though Brice, Haruna and others have identified reasons for conversion such as conversion based on convenience and conviction, other factors include the religious concepts, marriage, personal search and social services. Reverts are taking through some rites to prepare them physically and spiritually to enable them practice the new faith. Some of these rites include: *Ghuslul-dukhlul-Islam* (revert's ritual bath) and declaring the *Shahaadah*. The last thing discussed in chapter two was the contribution of reverts to the development of Islam. Reverts have contributed a lot to the development of Islam. This started from the early reverts at the Prophet's time and till today, they support with their expertise and resources. Unfortunately, they face some challenges which affect the contribution they make to the development of Islam.

Chapter three discussed one of the main objectives of the research. The researcher investigated the push or pulls factors of conversion to Islam. The challenges faced by reverts and the impact these challenges have on reverts were also investigated. Some of the challenges discussed are, physical assault, derogatory remarks, inadequate Islamic literature, social integration and neglect by some of their family members. These challenges not only negatively affect their practice of Islam but compelled some to apostate. Some also stopped their jobs because Islam did not approve the work they were doing.

To help address the challenges, some interventions made were assessed in Chapter four. Two (2) Islamic Leadership Institutions, eight (8) Islamic NGOs or Associations, some individuals both preachers and non-preachers and some mosques were consulted for these interventions. The interventions made to address the challenges of reverts were discussed in chapter four. While some of them make cash donations to reverts, others gave clothes and other items. The

mosques also serve as places where lessons are taken. The difficulties of the Islamic NGOs and the individuals in addressing the challenges of reverts were also discussed.

Finally in chapter five, the researcher summarized the study, outlined some research findings, concluded and gave some recommendations.

5.2 Research Findings

The research revealed some useful information about reverts. It was established in chapter two that, reverts have been very important to the development of Islam. Their important contribution has been reverting non-Muslims to Islam. As explained in chapter two, most of the preachers who targeted non-Muslims were reverts themselves. They were the Qur'an-Bible Preachers who preached to non-Muslims and helped reverts to address some of their challenges.

The contribution of the preachers was to help achieve the aim of the *al-Fitrah* (natural religion) by either calling people to it or maintaining Muslims on it. As stated in chapter one, the Prophet's saying "*No child is born except on the al-Fitrah* (natural religion). The research also revealed that those who converted through the Qur'an-Bible preachers or personal search understood the religion to a greater extent than those whose reasons were marriage and some gains they wanted in Islam. The factors that lead non-Muslims to Islam therefore have effect on their practice of the faith.

Additionally, reverts are taken through some rites. These rites are based on the *Fitrah*. These rites generally prepare reverts physically and psychologically towards the practice of the new faith they have accepted. Significant of these rites are the declaration of the *Shahaadah* and the *Ghusl* bath. Being on the *al-Fitrah* demands that, one adheres to the practices of Islam. These practices are enshrined in the *Shariah*. The importance of the rites of conversion to

reverts is that, they begin to understand that, Islam is based on practices but not just faith in Allah.

Some of the motives for embracing Islam raised some critical issues. Mr. F's reason which was narrated in chapter three for instance could raise a theological debate between Christians and Muslims on wearing of foot wears to holy grounds. Mr. A and Miss B's experiences could also raise some criticisms on their conversion because they did not have enough knowledge to do in-depth interpretation of the scriptural texts that led them to embrace Islam.

Reverts face challenges from both sides, thus their previous and their new found faiths. This is a confirmation of the second half of the Prophet's *Hadith* on the *Fitrah*. "... and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian or a Magian (Zoroastrian) as an animal produces a perfect young animal: do you see any part of its body amputated?" Since reverts leave their family's religions, they face challenges from the family and the environment around them. These challenges negatively affect them.

Some of these challenges were physical assaults, derogatory remarks and inadequate Islamic literature. These challenges are examples of the environmental factors that affect them. As a result, they either maintain their faith or are compelled to stop practising the faith. In response to this, the Qur'an warns Muslims not to allow the devil or the present life to mislead them. Qur'an (35:5-6) quoted in chapter one addresses this issue. It was evident in chapter three that, because some reverts were not able to ameliorate their challenges, they returned to their former religions or left Islam. They were not able to maintain the *Fitrah*. These challenges could be understood as a test of faith of the believer or a test on the extent at which the Muslim community is prepared to assist each other especially reverts.

To address the challenges of reverts, there was the need to find out the interventions made to ameliorate the challenges of reverts. The research revealed some interventions. Muslim

Leadership institutions and NGOs made some contributions. Whiles some donated Islamic literature and counseled reverts to be patient, others such as Ahlus-Sunnah Wal- Jama'ah went a step further to look for a possible reconciliation between the family of reverts and reverts themselves.

A more remarkable intervention came from individuals. They formed preaching groups and associations where they either preached to non-Muslims to win them to Islam or helped to maintain reverts through teachings and provision of logistics. Some of the individuals were Allah Party Odjeawo, Hussein Yeboah, Brigit Merki, Samira Asare, among others. However, there was inadequate statistics and documents on the activities that were undertaken towards reverts. Some attributed it to lack of time whiles others complained about lack of resources but the research revealed optimism in addressing the plight of reverts.

5.3 Conclusion

The research discussed a number of pertinent issues regarding reverts in the Greater Accra. The notion of *al-Fitrah* (natural religion-Islam) used as a theoretical framework for the study addressed all aspects of the new revert. The main areas which were therefore looked at included calling people to the *Fitrah*, investigating the challenges faced by the new revert as a result of adopting the *Fitrah*, (embracing the natural religion) and assessing ways through which the challenges are addressed so that reverts could maintain the *Fitrah*. After using research tools such as interviews and focus group discussions, and applying both theological and phenomenological approaches as explained in chapter one, some findings were made.

The Qur'an-Bible preachers contributed so much to the conversion of people to Islam though they did not have adequate records on reverts. Also reverts faced a lot of challenges either from their families or in the new found faith. Some of them were assaulted while others could not access Islamic literature. As a result of the difficulty in addressing the challenges, some

became apostates while others found it difficult to practise Islam as required. These were explained in chapter three. Some interventions made included programs for reverts, donation of Islamic literature and clothes. The Islamic Leadership Institutions and Muslim NGOs as well as some individuals such as Dr. Amin Bonsu and Samira Asare were consulted for these interventions. The Mosques also contributed immensely in raising some funds to address the challenges. To help improve the way reverts are assisted, the researcher made some useful recommendations and suggestions.

5.4 Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the findings of the research, the researcher suggests the following to help enhance the contributions made to address the challenges of reverts in the Greater Accra Region.

- The Islamic leadership Institutions, the NGOs and other individuals should keep adequate records about reverts. The records or the statistics shall help in follow-up programs which are needed for the assessments of the help that is offered. It will also help in drawing adequate programs for reverts.
- Furthermore, the institutionalization of *Zakat* will help in dealing with the challenges of reverts. This is so because some funds will be realized to mitigate some of the challenges. The importance of *Zakat* cannot be overemphasized perhaps that is why it has been made compulsory for those who have the ability to give. Qur'an 9:60 states who benefits from it.
- In addition every mosque should organize a program for reverts. The community 18 mosque at Tema allowed Samira Asare to organize reverts program in the mosque and supports her. This will unite reverts and give them the motivation to practise Islam.

- There should also be counseling services for reverts to enable them cope with some of the challenges that confronts them. Counseling shall give them the extrinsic motivation that will urge them on.
- Finally, the Qur'an-Bible preachers should use their background to form an association to deal specifically with the affairs of reverts. The adhoc programs though are useful but not enough to sustain and maintain them in life.

5.5 Suggested areas for further research

The issue of *Zakat* came up severally in the research but its impact on the poor and the needy in Ghana has not been explored, the researcher therefore recommends that a further research is carried out on *Zakat* and its impact on the socio-economic development of Muslims in Ghana.

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List of respondents

SN	RESPONDENT	STATUS	DATE OF INTERVIEW	PLACE OF INTERVIEW
1	Briggit Merki	Leader (al-Asr org.)	6 th December, 2014	Airport Re. Area
2	Farouq Abdus-Salaam	Leader (YMM)	12 th December, 2014	Cowlane
3	Samira Asare	Coordinator (Ummah revert)	2 nd January, 2015	Tema (C. 18)
4	Hajia Samia Zouein	Treasurer FOMWAG	2 nd January, 2015	Dzorwulu
5	Sheikh Sulemana Al-gema	Imam	4 th January, 2015	Ashaiman
6	Sheikh Suraka Swallah	Officer, orphanage (ICODEHS)	5 th January, 2015	Habavana
7	Sheikh Abdul Kadir Idriss	Officer ,Da'wah (AIS)	5 th January, 2015	Pick farm
8	Mallam Adam Musah Abu-Bakar	Adm. (ONCI)	7 th January, 2015	Abosey Okai
9	Sheikh Abdul Rauf Issah	Imam	10 th January, 2015	Tema (C. 7)
10	Alhaji Kwajiri Dadzie	Dir. Gen . (VOI)	13 th January, 2015	Tema (C.2)
11	Sufian Adam	Rep. (VOI)	19 th January, 2015	Tema (C.2)
12	Sheikh Yakubu Abban	Gen. Secretary (ASWAJ)	20 th January, 2015	Nima
13	Sheikh Khidri Idriss Adam	Dir. (ISB)	20 th January, 2015	Mamobi
14	Seth Ibrahim Ayi	Officer, Islamic pro. METRO.TV	20 th January, 2015	Madina
15	Allah Party Odjaewo	Leader (Allah Party Preaching Group)	26 th January, 2015	Tema (C.2)
16	Sheikh Abdallah Junaid	Imam/ teacher	26 th January, 2015	Madina
17	Alhaji Ibrahim Nkrumah	Country Dir. (VOI)	28 th January, 2015	Tema(C.2)
18	Sheikh Qassim Basha	Sch. Office for Da'wah (DA)	29 th January, 2015	Madina
19	Hajj Abdullah Tetteh	Gr. Accra Reg. Imam (GMM)	4 th February, 2015	Kole - Gornor
21	Sheikh Amin Bonsu	CEO Amen sci.	20 th May, 2015	Dome Pillar 2

22	Mallam Hassan Hussein Yeboah	Preacher	20 th May,2015	Korle-Gonor
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APPENDIX A

Figures

Fig two: A revert taken *Shahaadah*



Fig 3: Voice of Islam donates English Translated Qur'an to Samira Asare during one of the sessions of the “*Ummah revert*” program at as-Salaam Mosque at community 18.



Fig 4: Qur'an stands of Voice of Islam on the 2nd day of Zakir Naik's visit at the Elwak stadium in October, 2014



APPENDIX B

A SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire to Reverts

Introduction

This is to solicit for your opinion on the topic An Analysis of The Challenges and Prospects of reverts in the Greater Accra Region. This is towards an MPhil program at the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana. Your views will be very much respected. The confidentiality of your views is guaranteed.

PLEASE TICK OR SUPPLY ANSWERS WERE APPROPRIATE.

Part One

1. Name :(Optional)
2. Sex: male () female (). Where do you live?
3. Age.....
4. Occupation.....

Part Two

5. How many years have you being a revert?
6. What was your former religion?
7. What motivated you to Islam? Preaching () marriage (), others () please specify
8. Please narrate your experience
.....
.....
.....
.....
9. Who performed the initiation rites for you? (Name or position)
.....
10. Did he/she ask you to give him/her anything? Yes () No (). If yes, please specify the items.
.....
.....
11. Did he/she teach you the teachings of Islam or led you to someone? Yes () No ().
12. List the names of Muslims or Muslim organizations that are helping/helped you to understand Islam.

.....
.....

16. In spite of these challenges, do you still love to be a Muslim? Yes () No ().

Questionnaire to reverts who returned to Their Former Religions

INTRODUCTION

This is to solicit for your opinion on the topic An Analysis of The Challenges and Prospects of reverts in the Greater Accra region. This is towards an MPhil program at the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana. Your views will be very much respected. The confidentiality of your views is guaranteed.

PLEASE TICK OR SUPPLY ANSWERS WERE APPROPRIATE.

Part One

1. Name :(Optional)
2. Sex: male () female (). Where do you live?
3. Age.....
4. Occupation.....

Part Two

5. How many years have you being a revert?
6. What was your former religion?
7. What were your reasons for leaving Islam?
 - A
 - B
 - C
 - D