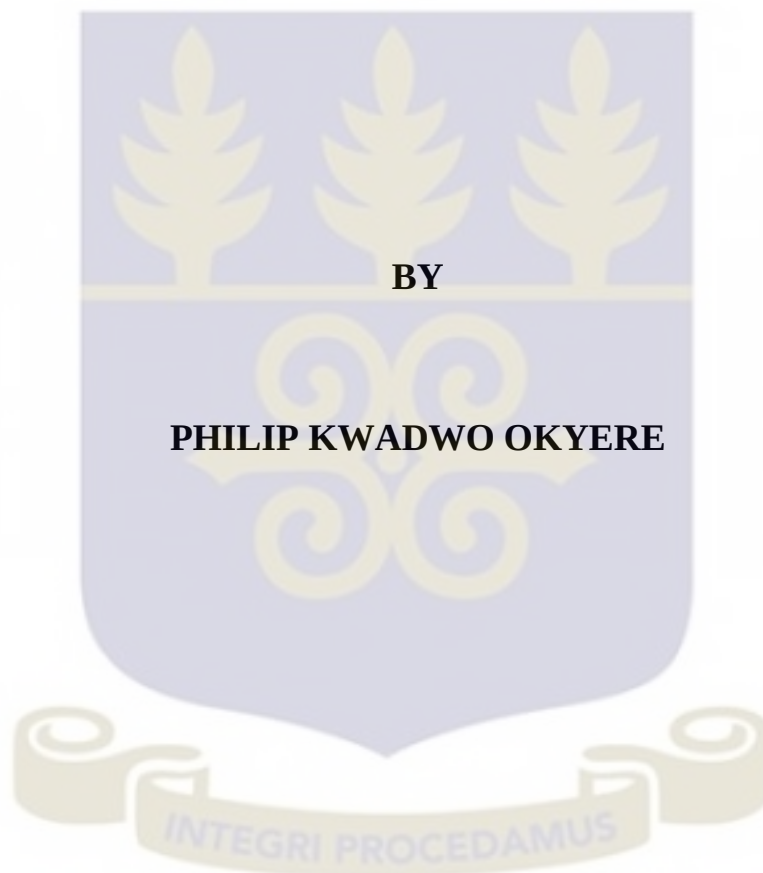


UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

**RETHINKING PRAYER MOUNTAINS AS SACRED SPACES IN
CONTEMPORARY GHANAIAI CHRISTIANITY**



BY

PHILIP KWADWO OKYERE

DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

JULY 2018

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(10020275)

**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE
STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE AWARD OF
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE STUDY OF
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JULY 2018

DECLARATION

This is to certify that this Thesis is the result of research undertaken by Philip Kwadwo Okyere under the supervision of Rev. Dr. Abamfo Ofori Atiemo and Prof. Dr. Andreas Heuser, towards the award of Ph.D in the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana.

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DATE

DEDICATION

For the Lord Jesus Christ's unimaginable protection, incomparable guidance and abundant provision of spiritual and material resources thorough out my education, I unreservedly dedicate this work to Him. *Twereampɔn Onyankopɔn, aseda nka wo daa.*

The work is further dedicated to my companion and dear wife, Mrs. Martha Okyere and our sons, Cyril, John and Philip, for prayerfully supporting me, encouraging me and tolerating my many days of absence from the house during my rigorous Ph.D journey.

To my parents, Mercy Mensah and Philip Badu, my siblings, uncles, nephews, nieces, aunts, cousins and numerous relatives who have been superbly helpful to me in diverse ways, I sincerely dedicate the thesis.

Last but not least, the research is dedicated to all my disciplined teachers, class mates and other friends for being sources of motivation and blessing to me.

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I also owe tons of gratitude and appreciation to all the lecturers in the Department for the Study of Religions and in other Departments of the University, especially, those whom I had the opportunity to interact with in one way or the other during my Ph.D journey.

To my field work respondents and all those who provided me with other vital pieces of information such as pictures and statistics of the pilgrims to the Prayer Mountains, I say a very big thank you.

I am sincerely thankful to my church, The Methodist Church Ghana, for permitting me to study at Legon and also assisting me financially. The church absorbed 40% of the school fees. I also owe heavy doses of gratitude to Dunwell Methodist Church, Jumapo, for her good support.

ABSTRACT

Notwithstanding the burgeoning compendium of literature on Prayer Mountains (PMs), scholarly discourse on them in contemporary African and Ghanaian Christianity seems limited only to their role in enhancing pilgrims' spirituality. Using *Atwea Boɔ*, *Ɔboɔ Tabiri*, Abasua Prayer Mountain (APM) and Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp (NMOPC) in Ghana as contextual examples, this study argues that scholarly focus on PMs as sacred spaces should not be limited only to the conventional thinking of them as sites of transcendent spiritual experiences, encounters with God or appearances by God. Rather, there are other aspects of PMs considered to be of academic importance with social policy implications, but which seem to have fallen out of scholars' grasp. Therefore, the study generally focuses on rethinking PMs as sacred spaces in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. Specifically, the work attempts to examine the continuity of Christians' pilgrimage to PMs in Akan primal religious context. Also, it explores the historical narratives of the evolution of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity. Besides, it investigates how Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity promotes the appropriation of PMs as sacred spaces in Ghanaian Christianity. Last but not least, the study examines the place of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian development discourse.

The research is theoretically anchored on Clifford Geertz's social-anthropological model. Methodologically, it is mainly a qualitative study. A diverse approach, including historical, theological and phenomenological methods, was employed to guide the collection and analysis of relevant field data.

It has been observed that in Ghana, pilgrimage to sacred mountains in Akan primal religion appears to be a precursor of Christians' religious pilgrimage to PMs. The quest for identity construction is a paramount motivation underlying pilgrimage to sacred mountains among the adherents of the two religions. In spite of the continuity of the

Christian phenomenon of PMs in Akan primal religion, the study underscores some discontinuities. Moreover, the historical narratives of the evolution of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity indicate that PMs as sacred spaces hardly evolve in a vacuum. They gradually emerge and ultimately develop into Christian sacred sites through the interplay of a diversity of religio-cultural, socio-economic and political forces. The study also reinforces Pentecostalism as a modern religious phenomenon that has had a great influence on global Christianity, including Christians' pilgrimage to PMs. The prevalence of imprecatory prayer rituals on the PMs, akin to some aspects of traditional Akan religious practices, and the seeming endless theological contestations about those rituals underscore their centrality and sensitive nature in Christian theology. Furthermore, the study examines the interface between religion and development, with special focus on the place and relevance of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian development discourse.

In conclusion, the research presents two diametrically opposed standpoints with respect to the sustainability of the PM phenomenon and its attendant pilgrimage attraction in Ghanaian Christianity. Some of the findings suggest that the phenomenon is sustainable, while other findings suggest otherwise. A rethinking of the conventional understanding of PMs and the debate on the sustainability of PMs are possible markers of the variability of the PM phenomenon in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AM	Africa Mission
AMPM	Abasua Mountain Prayer Ministry
APM	Abasua Prayer Mountain
ARC	Abasua Retreat Centre (An alternative name of APM)
CAC	Christ Apostolic Church
CMs	Christian Ministries
CNRMS	Christian New Religious Movements
CoP	Church of Pentecost
CPP	Convention People's Party
CPR	Connexional Prayer Retreat
CT	Camp Three
EMD	Evangelism and Missions Division
EMRD	Evangelism, Mission and Renewal Directorate
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
INRMs	Islamic New Religious Movements
MCG	Methodist Church Ghana
NATRMs	New African Traditional Religious Movements
NMOPC	Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp
NRMAD	New Religious Movements from the African Diaspora
NRMs	New Religious Movements
NT	New Testament
ONRMs	Oriental New Religious Movements
OT	Old Testament
PAMSCAD	Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment
PCG	Presbyterian Church of Ghana
PCs	Prayer Camps

PMCs	Prayer Mountain Centres
PMM	Prayer Mountain Movement
PMs	Prayer Mountains
RCCG	Redeemed Christian Church of God
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMTc	Salvation Ministerial Training College
WdGC	William deGraft Centre

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS OF SACRED MOUNTAINS STUDIED



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Mountains are seen as the highest and most impressive features of the landscape with an unusual power to awaken a sense of the sacred.¹ This is because their remarkable soaring summits, the clouds and thunder that swirl about their peaks, the life-giving waters that flow from their heights and other features imbue them with an aura of mystery and sanctity.² In that aura, people of diverse backgrounds, both traditional and modern, through pilgrimage, experience a deeper reality that gives meaning and vitality to their lives.³ Thus as pilgrimage or awe-inspiring sites, mountains facilitate pilgrims' encounter with a transcendent realm. This encounter is almost always tantamount to pilgrims' experience of power and complexity with perhaps a real touch of unpredictability.⁴

Mountains, understood as sacred expressions of some deeper reality, have become associated with the deepest and highest values and aspirations of cultures and traditions throughout the world.⁵ The rationale behind this religio-cultural and social phenomenon has been amply expressed. Norbert C. Brockman, for instance, observes that 'the perception that the sacred is associated with high places, that mountains point to a heaven above and beyond the earth, is deeply ingrained in human consciousness.'⁶ Virtually all pilgrims around the world who appropriate mountains as sacred spaces do

¹Edwin Bernbaum, 'Sacred Mountains: Themes and Teachings' *Mountain Research and Development* 26 (2006), pp. 304. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4540647> [Accessed 2 May 2013].

² Bernbaum, 'Sacred Mountains', p. 304.

³ Bernbaum, 'Sacred Mountains', p. 304.

⁴ Veikko Anttonen, 'Sacred', in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds) *Guide to the Study of Religion* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), p. 272

⁵ Bernbaum, 'Sacred Mountains', p. 304.

⁶ Norbert C. Brockman, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places (second edition)* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011), p. 347.

so as a result of their perception of those mountains as homes of the gods, as places of revelation, as places to discover spiritual insight and as deities themselves.⁷

When sacred mountains are appropriated through pilgrimage rituals by adherents of different religio-cultural traditions, those adherents attempt in diverse ways to construct and attach different belief systems and identities to that mountain. This phenomenon seems vividly expressed in virtually all settings, including Africa, where some sacred mountains are regarded as extremely important in mapping out the people's religio-social and cultural identities. Examples include Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania⁸ and Mount Kenya.⁹

Edwin Bernbaum reveals that the sacredness of mountains is manifested in three general ways. The first is mountains that are regarded by particular cultures and traditions as places of sanctity. These mountains traditionally referred to as 'sacred mountains' have well-established networks of myths, beliefs, and religious practices such as pilgrimage, meditation, and sacrifice. Primary examples are Tai Shan in China, Mount Sinai in Egypt, and the San Francisco Peaks in the United States.¹⁰

The second is mountains that may or may not be revered frequently but which contain sacred sites and objects such as temples, monasteries, hermitages, stones, springs, and groves, or are associated with the activities of important holy persons. Examples of such mountains are Mount Koya and Kobo Daishi in Japan. Great numbers of people, for instance, visit pilgrimage shrines located in mountainous regions, such as the Hindu shrine of Badrinath in the Indian Himalaya.¹¹

⁷ Brockman, *Encyclopedia*, p.347; Robert H. Dalton, *Sacred Places of the World: A Religious Journey Across the Globe* (Chandigarh, India: Abhishek Publications, 2010), p. 19.

⁸ Brockman, *Encyclopedia*, p. 347.

⁹ Brockman, *Encyclopedia*, p. 357.

¹⁰ Bernbaum, 'Sacred Mountains', pp. 304-305.

¹¹ Bernbaum, 'Sacred Mountains', pp. 304-305.

The third is mountains that awaken in individuals a sense of wonder and awe that sets them apart as places imbued with evocative beauty and meaning. Many pilgrims and other climbers go to mountains such as Sierra Nevada in California, the Alps in Europe, and other ranges such as Huang Shan in China for esthetic and spiritual inspiration and renewal. They often regard these mountains as expressions of important values enshrined in works of literature and art.¹²

The crux of this taxonomy of sacred mountains is that the perception of some mountains as symbols of sacredness and aesthetics seems to be the justification for their ability to attract pilgrims from different religio-cultural traditions.

Bernbaum further outlines and thematically discusses ten features or widespread views of sacred mountains which underscore their potency and justification to attract people in pilgrimage. The features are height, centre, power, deity or abode of deity. Others are temple or place of worship, paradise or garden, ancestors and the dead. The rest are identity, source, and inspiration, renewal and transformation.¹³

Each of these ten features or views brings together different ideas, images, and associations to evoke the experience of a deeper reality. For the sake of simplicity, Bernbaum illustrates each theme with a particular mountain. But in reality, he indicates that these themes come in clusters inextricably linked to each other in complex ways. The more views that gather like clouds around a peak, the more associations they bring to bear, making the sacred mountain resonate with increasingly deeper significance in various religio-cultural traditions including Christianity.¹⁴

The overarching influence of mountains which reverberate with increasingly deeper significance in the religious cosmology of Christians has engaged the attention of

¹² Bernbaum, 'Sacred Mountains', pp. 304-305.

¹³ Bernbaum, 'Sacred Mountains', pp. 305-307.

¹⁴ Bernbaum, 'Sacred Mountains', p. 307.

scholars such as Yeol Soo Eim¹⁵ and Yong Kwon Jung.¹⁶ Eim articulates a positive correlation between the rise of the Prayer Mountain Movement (PMM) and the burgeoning Pentecostalism in South Korea.¹⁷ ‘The [PMM]’, in the words of Eim, ‘is an indigenous Korean Pentecostal movement.’¹⁸ He clearly indicates the significant role of Kumkang Mountain and Yongmun Mountain in the Pentecostal ministry of Yong Do Lee and Elder Woon Moon Ra respectively. Lee and Ra were some of the early revival preachers in South Korea who spent ample time in the Prayer Mountains (PMs) praying, experiencing the Pentecostal blessings and positively influencing Pentecostal revival in the country.¹⁹

The PMM contributes greatly to the Pentecostalism in South Korea in three different channels: holding camp revival meetings at Yongmun Prayer Mountain, sending students to various parts of the country for evangelism and spiritual renewal and through literature.²⁰

Several reasons account for the rapid growth of the PMM in South Korea. First, Christians are able to concentrate on prayer at PMs. Second, Christians who long for spiritual encounters or experiences visit PMs. Third, Christians visit the PMs to seek answers to their existential challenges. Fourth, the PMs have become the place where some families of late spend their vacations.²¹

¹⁵ Yeol Soo Eim, ‘South Korea’ in Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Mass (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Revised and Expanded Edition) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), pp. 239-246.

¹⁶ Yong Kwon Jung, ‘Korean Prayers: Evaluating the Prayer Phenomena at the Prayer Mountain Centres in Korea’, PhD Dissertation (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2002).; Yohan Lee, ‘The Analysis of the Prayer Mountain Phenomenon in Korea’, Dissertation (School of World Missions, Fuller, 1985).

¹⁷ Eim, ‘South Korea’, pp. 239-246.

¹⁸ Eim, ‘South Korea’, p. 240.

¹⁹ Eim, ‘South Korea’, pp. 240-243.

²⁰ Eim, ‘South Korea’, p. 242.

²¹ Eim, ‘South Korea’, p. 243.

Jung has also investigated the indigenous prayer phenomena of Korean Christians praying at the Prayer Mountain Centers (PMCs) in South Korea. He sought to find out whether the Christians' prayers at PMCs are an example of shamanistic syncretism or they are an expression of indigenous Christianity. The research findings showed that most indigenous beliefs and patterns of PMC Christians cannot be simply treated as expressions of shamanistic syncretism. Korean church leaders' incorrect or negative evaluations of the PMC prayer phenomena come mainly from their lack of cultural understanding of the phenomena and their misunderstanding of religious syncretism.²²

Undoubtedly, sacred mountains resonate with deeper level of significance in the spirituality of Korean Christians. As long as the PMs meet the spiritual and physical needs of Korean Christians, Eim is justified to foretell a proliferation of the PMM in the country. What is obviously contentious in his phenomenology of PMs is his assertion that 'the [PMM] is an indigenous Pentecostal movement in Korea' because PMs are not common in other countries.²³ From the foregone review, however, it is clear that PMs are found in many countries in the world. It seems to me, however, that there is scanty scholarly focus on the phenomenon of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity as compared to other countries such as Korea.

Prayer Mountains as sacred spaces in Christianity are not a recent phenomenon.²⁴ Historically, they have been part of the sites or communities for several Christian

²² Jung, 'Korean Prayers', abstract.

²³ Eim, 'South Korea', p. 243.

²⁴ Finely E. Harvey, 'Mountain', in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p 1157. See also Barnabe Assohoto and Samuel Engewa, 'Genesis' in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), pp. 42 - 43., Keith N. Schoville, 'Jerusalem. The Name.' in Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996). P. 394., Abel Ndjerareou, 'Exodus' in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed.), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p. 90., Davison G. Vernon, 'Carmel' in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds.) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p. 315.

religious practices including monasticism.²⁵ During the Byzantine Empire in AD 476, one of the obvious features of Christianity was the development of monastic communities. Roy T. Matthews and F. DeWitt Pratt note that ‘The monastic communities were basically places where people retreated from the world to lead strictly disciplined lives.’²⁶ ‘The most important monastic complex in Byzantium’, according to Matthews and DeWitt ‘was at Mount Athos, founded in 963. This mountain retreat in northern Greece ... housed about eight thousand monks in the thirteenth century.’²⁷

In the history of African Christianity, PMs as sacred spaces have not evaded the scholarly gaze. Mount Kenya, the second-highest mountain in Africa after Kilimanjaro, is believed to be sacred to some Kenyan Christians.²⁸ The Maasai tribe of Kenya believes that its nation descended from the first hunters, who came down from the mountain. Some have incorporated worship of the mountain into Christianity, equating Ngai, their high god, with the Creator God of the Bible. A cross sent by Pope Pius XI was placed at Point Lenana, one of the three peaks of Mount Kenya, in 1933.²⁹ Mount Kenya is significant as a sacred space to Kenyans because in many ways, it embodies or symbolizes their religious, historical, cultural, social and political experiences.

Olatunji F. Aina also underscores the prevalence of PM phenomenon in African Christianity. He is of the view that trips to PMs for spiritual adventures are as old as the *Aladura* Churches or Independent African Churches in Nigeria. Such mountains, it is believed, provide pilgrims with a serene and spiritual atmosphere to commune with God in fasting, prayer and worship. Aina asserts that difficult life cases including illnesses are

²⁵ Roy T. Matthews and F. DeWitt Pratt, *The Western Humanities* (Fourth Edition) (California, USA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 2001), p. 193.

²⁶ Matthews and Pratt, *The Western Humanities*, p. 193.

²⁷ Matthews and Pratt, *The Western Humanities*, p. 193.

²⁸ Brockman, *Encyclopedia*, p. 357

²⁹ Brockman, *Encyclopedia*, p. 357.

often ‘referred’ to such mountains by clergymen for spiritual intervention to placate or destroy evil forces behind such life crisis.³⁰

He explores the appropriation of some PMs by the Independent African Churches which emerged in Nigeria in 1918. The three principal groups of the movement in his study are the Aladuras, Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and the Cherubim and Seraphim Church. He notes that the movement’s prophetic healing activities as well as trips to selected PMs to solve difficult life problems have been noticed since its emergence. He indicates that ‘a large number of such activities were found to be of psychotherapeutic importance through the manipulation of the clients’ cultural environment and the ‘prescription of such ‘symbolic rites’ as the use of ‘Holy Water’, ‘Anointing Oil’, ‘Mantles’, etc.’³¹

Mountains in Ghana, like elsewhere in Africa and other parts of the world, are not only part of the earth’s formations, but some of them are also relevant symbols in the construction of traditional or indigenous religio-social and cultural identities. Prior to the re-discovery of mountains as sacred sites for Christian religiosity in Ghana, some of them were the abodes of deities and embodiment of the indigenous peoples’ traditional religious expression.³² The re-discovery and subsequent re-appropriation of such sites for Christian rituals have, among other things, resulted in a paradigmatic shift of some of the indigenous peoples’ religious focus from traditional religious inclination to Christianity.³³

³⁰ Olatunji F. Aina, ‘Psychotherapy by Environmental Manipulation’ and the Observed Symbolic Rites on Prayer Mountains in Nigeria’, *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2006), pp. 1-13. (Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13674670512331322612>. [Accessed 14 October 2017].

³¹ Aina, ‘Psychotherapy by Environmental Manipulation’, p. 2.

³² Philip Kwadwo Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space: The Place and Relevance of Abasua Prayer Mountain in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity’, Mphil Thesis (University of Ghana, Legon 2012), pp. 13&14, 38-41

³³ Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, pp. 13&14.

In the history of Ghanaian Christian missions, scholars have alluded to the religious and ecological relevance of mountains as ideal settlements for some Basel Missionaries and the starting point of the Basel Mission work in Ghana.³⁴ J. Kofi Agbeti points to the serene environmental condition that prevailed at Akropong in the Akwapim Mountains, as one of the reasons for which, in 1836, Rev. Andreas Riis and a Danish merchant, George Lutterodt, entered Akropong and established a new station there. Agbeti further writes: ‘Akropong is a [mountainous] area and Riis enjoyed better health there than on the coastal plains around Christianborg.’³⁵ In the opinion of F.L Bartels, Riis moved permanently to Akropong, in the Akwapim Mountains, on March 21, 1835...where the bracing mountain air and stimulating local wine from the palm tree proved to be an effective tonic.³⁶ On the movement of the Basel Missionaries to Akwapim Mountains, Noel Smith also indicates that George Lutterodt and Andreas Riis reached Akropong ‘in January, 1835, and the two were warmly welcomed by the Chief Adow Dankwa, the Omanhene of Akwapim.’³⁷

Another mountainous area in the Eastern Region of Ghana where the Basel Mission work strenuously thrived is Kwahu. Alfred E. A. Asiamah has noted that ‘Christian religion was introduced to Kwahu in 1876 by the Basel Missionaries led by Rev. Ramseyer.’³⁸ This observation perhaps accounts for the massive presence of

³⁴ J. Kofi Agbeti, *West African Church History: Christian Missions and Church Foundations: 1482-1919* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1986), p.63; F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp.5-6; Noel Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960* (Great Britain: Ebenezer Baylis & Son, Ltd., 1966), p. 30.

³⁵ Agbeti, *West African Church History*, p. 63.

³⁶ Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, pp. 5-6.

³⁷ Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana*, p. 30. It is clear that Bartels, Smith and Agbeti slightly differ on the dates in which the Basel Missionaries moved to Akropong. In my opinion, these discrepancies imply the difficulty historians face in harmonizing historical data and accurately reporting them.

³⁸ Alfred E. A. Asiamah, *The Mass Factor in Rural Politics: The Case of the Asafo Revolution in Kwahu Political History* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2000), p.65.

Presbyterianism in almost all the mountainous Kwahu towns such as Abetifi, Obo, Aduamoa, Pepease, Twenedurase, Atibie, Kwahu Tafo, Nkami Mponua and Bepong.³⁹

A panoramic view of contemporary Ghanaian Christian topography is likely to locate pilgrimage to mountains as one of the burgeoning and highly patronised religious activities. For instance, it has been found out that between the year 2002 and 2011, about one hundred and eighty-two thousand, four hundred and sixty-four (182,464) pilgrims visited Abasua Prayer Mountain (APM) in the Asante Region of Ghana.⁴⁰ Another mountain in Ghana which attracts many Christian pilgrims is Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp (NMOPC). More than five hundred pilgrims patronize the camp monthly.⁴¹

My several pilgrimages to these PMs have enabled me to witness some miscellany of testimonies, divine revelations and interventions / miracles. It is probably because of the prevalence of these supernatural manifestations on the PMs that their relevance in contemporary Christianity in Ghana seems narrowly discussed in the context of their role in promoting pilgrims' spirituality. I am of the view that there is the need to move beyond this narrow discussion to a much broader and thorough multi-dimensional examination of the relevance of PMs.

First, it seems to me that Christians' pilgrimage to PMs in Ghana has not yet been discussed much in the context of its continuity in primal religion. Second, it appears that scholars have not paid enough attention to the historical narrative of the emergence PMs and how Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity serves as a vehicle for promoting Christians' appropriation or patronage of PMs in Ghana. Moreover, the appropriation of

³⁹Nana Ofori Agyapong, Nsuta Dikro, disclosed this during an interview he granted me on Saturday, September 10, 2016 at Nkawkaw.

⁴⁰Okyere, "Reconstructing Sacred Space", p. 106. The 182,464 pilgrims were the total number of Methodists (67,915) and non-Methodists (114,549) who visited only Camp Three of Abasua Prayer Mountain during the period.

⁴¹Evangelist Frank K. Gyasi (the founder of the Camp), Interview, Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp, 27 July, 2016.

PMs by Christians seems to have other implications beyond what scholars conventionally accept, with respect to the notion of PMs as sacred sites for the promotion of pilgrims' spirituality. For instance, pilgrimage to PMs by large numbers of Christians appears to have implications for environmental sanitation. Also, the visitation by large numbers of Christians around the year is believed to have implications for grassroots ecumenism and the unity of the church in Ghana. Finally, I perceive that Christians' pilgrimage to PMs has implications for the economic development of the communities in which those mountains are located.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In contemporary African and for that matter Ghanaian Christianity, scholarly discussion of sacred spaces does not seem to have focused on their continuity in primal religious thought; they rather seem to have been narrowly examined in the context of their role in enhancing pilgrims' spirituality. Using some PMs in Ghana as contextual examples, this work seeks to explore the continuity of PMs in Akan primal religiosity and how Ghanaian Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity may promote or is already promoting the appropriation of PMs by pilgrims. The study further explores how the appropriation of PMs may enhance Christian eco-theological or environmental sanitation consciousness, ecumenical networks and people's⁴² economic wellbeing.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study generally focuses on rethinking PMs as sacred spaces in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. Specifically, the work attempts to:

⁴² The people in this context is a generic term referring to the pilgrims who patronize the Prayer Mountains for prayer rituals purposes and those who utilize the Prayer Mountains for socio-economic intentions. These include drivers who ply the sites, luggage carriers and petty traders at the sites.

- Examine the continuity of Christians' pilgrimage to PMs in Akan primal religious context
- Explore the historical narratives of the evolution of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity
- Investigate how Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity promotes the appropriation of PMs as sacred spaces in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.
- Examine the extent to which the belief in the sacredness of PMs promotes the quest for Christian environmental sanitation consciousness or eco-theology in Ghana
- Study how PMs as sacred spaces enhance ecumenical / interdenominational networking in Ghana
- Explore how Prayer Mountains in Ghana contribute to the economic wellbeing of people

1.4 Research Questions

The main research question that guides the study is: In what other ways do PMs as sacred spaces and their perceived continuity in Akan primal religion enhance the development of Ghanaian Christianity, apart from the conventional thinking of sacred mountains as sites for pilgrimage, prayer, worship and divine revelation?

In an attempt to respond to this central question, the following sub-questions are explored:

- How do sacred mountains in Akan primal religion constitute a sub-structure for PMs in Ghanaian Christianity?
- What are the historical narratives of the evolution of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity?
- How does Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity serve as a vehicle to promote pilgrimage to PMs?

- To what extent does the belief in the sacredness of PMs contribute to the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse / environmental sanitation in Ghana?
- How does the appropriation of PMs as sacred spaces promote ecumenical / interdenominational networking in Ghana?
- How do activities surrounding PMs in Ghana enhance people's economic wellbeing?

1.5 Methodology

The study is mainly a qualitative one. 'Qualitative research', in the opinion of Richard Boateng, 'tends to explore the meanings, attitudes, values, and beliefs people associate with a phenomenon in order to establish a better understanding, rather than to test to either support or disprove a relationship.'⁴³ In the light of the aims and objectives of the study, a multi-disciplinary approach including historical, theological and phenomenological methods are employed to guide the collection of data. A brief survey of each of these approaches suffices below.

Theoretically, history carries two meanings in modern usage. It refers both to what really took place in the past and to historians' conscious attempt to recast or represent those past realities in contemporary works.⁴⁴ The historian's starting point in representing the past realities in modern works is 'Historical awareness'⁴⁵, understood as 'a universal psychological attribute, arising from the fact that we are, all of us, in a sense, historians.'⁴⁶ It also means respecting the independence of the past and trying to

⁴³ Richard Boateng, *Research Made Easy Classic Edition* (Accra, Ghana: PearlRichards Foundation, 2016), p. 135.

⁴⁴ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), p. xix.

⁴⁵ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, p. 1.

reconstruct it in all its strangeness before applying its insights to the present. A person's identity as a historian is as a result of their ability to draw on their past experiences for various reasons.⁴⁷ Generally, historical narrative as a practice widespread in religious and non-religious groups typically arises in situations of conflict and contested claims. Such historicization, in the thought of Jorg Rupke, is useful for legitimization, boundary drawing and formulation of identities.⁴⁸

History, understood as historians' intentional effort to recast the past realities in contemporary works, immediately presupposes prevalence of some historical events or phenomena that warrant the attention or engagement of the historian. The historical data are sometimes characterized by irregularities and inconsistencies; what Rupke refers to as 'conflict and contested claims'.⁴⁹

Prayer Mountains as sacred spaces in Ghana and their attendant pilgrimage attractions and prayer rituals, like the term 'religion' and virtually all other religious phenomena in the world, seem to have conflicting evolutionary trajectories.⁵⁰ Church historians who embark on an academic study of such phenomena usually encounter the daunting task of strenuously and unbiasedly harmonizing discrete historical data in order to present them logically and systematically.

The historical model in this context is thus couched on the notion that contemporary religious phenomena such as PMs have their pasts which are inextricably linked to their modern identities. The modern identities of those phenomena are therefore the result of several processes or stages of evolution /development which started long ago. Contemporary religious phenomena are therefore products of their past. The

⁴⁷ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁸ Jorg Rupke, 'History' in Michael Stausberg and Stephen Engler (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religions* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 285.

⁴⁹ Rupke, 'History', p. 285.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Religion, Religions, Religious' in Mark C. Taylor (ed.) *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago, USA: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.269.

implication is that Christians' appropriation of religious phenomena (for instance, PMs), is partly the result of their (that is, the Christians') awareness of how other Christian pilgrims have, over the years, patronized or appropriated those sites as religious resources or as panacea to some of their existential challenges.⁵¹ The historical method is employed in this study to examine the development of PMs in Ghana.

The theological model, in the opinion of Richard King, is one among many methodologies or theoretical foundations in the study of religions.⁵² In this study, the theological paradigm is fundamentally rooted in Ian Markham's understanding of theology: 'an attempt to determine the implications of God for a given subject area.'⁵³

In the light of this model, the following sub-themes are explored: the influence of Pentecostalism on the appropriation of PMs in Ghana; the extent to which PMs promote economic wellbeing; the extent to which pilgrims' appropriation of PMs enhances environmental sanitation in Ghana and the ways in which PMs promote ecumenical / interdenominational networks in Ghana.

The phenomenological approach in this context is an impartial description of PMs as sites characterized by trepidation or a deep sense of awe and religious pilgrims' persistence to variously engage or experience the transcendent realm over there. The centrality of 'experience' in the phenomenological approach to the study of religion has been scholarly underscored. James V. Spickard, for instance, notes that 'In the study of religion, the term 'phenomenology' draws us toward the experiences that are supposed to

⁵¹For an example of the use of the historical model, see Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Zoetermeer, The Netherlands: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), P. 9.

⁵² For details on Richard King's Paradigms, see 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), p. 217.

⁵³ Ian Markham, 'Theology' in Robert A Segal (ed.) *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006), pp. 192-210.

underlie religious life.⁵⁴ The overarching point in Spickard's assertion is that the phenomenological model to the study of religion seeks to impartially describe religious experience as it presents itself to subjective consciousness.⁵⁵ It is basically an approach to the study of religion which requires the scholar of religion to suspend judgments about the phenomenon being studied, by bracketing out potentially distorting presuppositions stemming from both confessional Christian theology and from positivistic science in order that, by using empathetic methods, he or she could enter into the experiences of the believers or adherents to achieve understanding-in-depth.⁵⁶ The implication is that by this model, my personal biases arising from my Christian inclinations are considerably minimized. The phenomenological method is employed to examine some of the prayer rituals at the sacred sites; the meaning and relevance of those rituals to the adherents or practitioners.

To augment the multi-dimensional approach to the study, I adopt Kenneth L. Pike's emic and etic viewpoints for the description of behaviour and examination / discussion of field data gathered from respondents or informants.⁵⁷ The emic perspective is the outsider's attempt to describe the informant's own descriptions or production of sounds, behaviour, beliefs, etc. The emic viewpoint arises from studying behaviour as from inside the system. The etic perspective, on the other hand, is observer's subsequent attempt to take the descriptive information they have already gathered and to organize, systematize, compare – in a word, redescribe – that information in terms of a system of

⁵⁴ James V. Spickard, 'Phenomenology' in Michael Stausberg and Stephen Engler (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religions* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 334.

⁵⁵ Spickard, 'Phenomenology', p. 333.

⁵⁶ Cox, *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion*, p. 209.

⁵⁷ Kenneth L. Pike, 'Etic and Emic Standpoints for the Description of Behaviour', in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *The Insider / Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 1999), pp. 28-36.

their own making. The etic viewpoint, in that sense, studies behaviour as from outside the system.⁵⁸

As an outsider – a researcher supposedly ‘alien’ to the informants and their vital pieces of information – I emically⁵⁹ elicited and described the relevant field data for the study from the perspective of the respondents. As an insider – a researcher who already has some ideas about the phenomena under study – I etically organized, systematized and compared the elicited field data in order to make them comprehensible and meaningful to readers. For instance, after emically describing the phenomenon of sacred mountains in Akan primal religious context and their associated religious pilgrimage and prayer rituals, I tried, albeit briefly, to etically explore the implications of the New Juaben traditional leaders’ annual religious pilgrimage to Oboo Tabiri, a sacred mountain in the New Juaben Traditional area.

1.5.1 Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data sources were used to conduct the study. Primary data refers to data that is collected by a researcher from first-hand sources, using methods like surveys, interviews, or experiments. It is collected with the research project in mind, directly from primary sources.⁶⁰ On the research fields, I obtained primary data from sources such as participant observations, observations, structured interviews and unpublished works. Secondary data, on the other hand, refers to research data that has previously been gathered and can be accessed by researchers.⁶¹ I obtained secondary data

⁵⁸Pike, ‘Etic and Emic Standpoints for the Description of Behaviour’, p. 28. See also Russell T. McCutcheon, ‘Introduction’, in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *The Insider / Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 1999), pp. 15-22.

⁵⁹For more information on the contextual use of the words ‘emically’ and ‘etically’, see Pike, ‘Etic and Emic Standpoints for the Description of Behaviour’, p. 29.

⁶⁰ <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=primary+data> [Accessed 25 May 2019].

⁶¹ <https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/secondary-data> [Accessed 25 May 2019].

from published books, scholarly journals in electronic data bases and other internet sources.

1.5.2 Defining the Population

A population refers to any group of specified human beings or of non-human entities such as geographical areas or objects drawn by individuals. Some reserachers call it universe.⁶² The populations for this study refer to all the sacred mountains in Ghana⁶³, the communities in which the sacred mountains are located, the pilgrims who visit the sacred mountains and the luggage carriers / other groups of people who benefit economically as a result of pilgrims' patronage of the mountains. Obvioiusly, it was impracticable, if not impossible, to interview or observe each unit of the populations under controlled conditions inorder to arrive at principles having universal validity.⁶⁴ Moreover, the populations for the study were so large that their study would be expensive in terms of time, money, effort and manpower. Sampling was therefore inevitable.

1.5.3 Sampling and Sampling Technique

'Sampling', according to Tom K.B. Kumekpor, '... involves the examination of a carefully selected proportion of the units of a phenomenon inorder to help extend knowledge gained from the study of the part to the whole from which the part was selected.'⁶⁵ It is thus the use of definite procedures in the selection of parts of the

⁶² Lokesh Koul, *Methodology of Educational Research* (3rd Rev. Ed), (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House PVT Ltd, 2000), p.111.

⁶³ Sacred mountains in Ghana are many. They cover about one-quartre of Ghana's land. For details, see Zindy Gracia 'Names of mountains in Ghana and their locations', available at <https://yen.com.gh/109470-names-mountains-ghana-locations.html#109470> [Accessed: 3 April 2019].

⁶⁴Koul, *Methodology of Educational Research*, p. 111.

⁶⁵Tom K.B. Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research* (Accra: SonLife Printing Press and Services, 1999), p.129.

populations for the express purpose of obtaining from their description or estimates certain properties and characteristics of the whole.⁶⁶

Therefore, a purposive sampling technique was used to select four sacred mountains in Ghana; namely, *ƆboƆ Tabiri*, *Atwea BoƆ*, APM and NMOPC. ‘In purposive sampling’, Kumekpor writes that, ‘the units of the sample are selected not by a random procedure, but they are intentionally picked for study because of their characteristics or because they satisfy certain qualities which are not randomly distributed in the universe, but they are typical or they exhibit most of the characteristics of interest to the study.’⁶⁷ Even though there are many mountains in Ghana, not all of them possess the relevant features of interest to this study. The implication is that the four sacred mountains purposively sampled have the relevant features of interest to this work. One of the key features is their potency to attract religious pilgrims to encounter the transcendental realm. *ƆboƆ Tabiri* and *Atwea BoƆ*, are sacred mountains in Akan primal religion. In this study, they are the main focus of my position that pilgrimage to sacred mountains in Akan primal religion forms the sub-structure or foundation of Christian pilgrims’ appropriation of PMs.

A purposive sampling technique was again used to select a sample size of thirty-four (34) respondents. The respondents included pastors, evangelists and lay pilgrims who visit the PMs, traditional leaders and citizens of the communities where the PMs are located and luggage carriers / drivers who ply the communities where the PMs are located. The justification for the selection of this sample size is that it represents a range of respondents which I needed as far as the aim and objectives of this work is concerned. In fact, Boateng underscores that in qualitative research, the sample size depends on the

⁶⁶Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research*, p. 129.

⁶⁷Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research*, p. 135.

focus of the researcher.⁶⁸ One of the guidelines he provides in selecting the sample size is that ‘the respondents should represent a range of potential respondents in order to ensure diversity in perspectives in data collected.’⁶⁹ The selection of the sample size was also facilitated by snowball or chain sample. Boateng defines snowball as ‘a multistage sampling technique – beginning with a few people and growing through referral. Initial respondents are selected by other methods like purposive sampling... Additional respondents are obtained from information provided by the initial respondents.’⁷⁰

1.5.4. Methods of Primary Data Collection

I have already indicated that I obtained primary data from sources such as participant observations, observations, structured interviews and unpublished works. Participant observation, in Kumekpor’s opinion, ‘involves the idea of being both a spectator and an actor at the same time when observing and recording information. The observer must find a means of integrating himself into the group in one way or the other and attempt to observe and record from within the group.’⁷¹ I embarked on several research trips to the PMs and the communities where the PMs are located to collect the needed field data. For instance, I went to APM, Abasua and Atwea communities from 10th to 13th July, 2016 and from 28th to 30th March, 2017. I must indicate that some of the interviews for this work are from a much earlier period. They are field data I gathered at Abasua community and APM between the dates 12th to 14th August, 2011 and 12th to 15th August, 2012, for a different undertaking. I have made use of them because of their relevance to this work.

⁶⁸ Boateng, *Research Made Easy Classic Edition*, p. 151.

⁶⁹ Boateng, *Research Made Easy Classic Edition*, p. 151.

⁷⁰ Boateng, *Research Made Easy Classic Edition*, p. 152.

⁷¹ Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research*, p. 72.

Furthermore, I visited Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp (NMOPC) on 5th February, 2015, 27th July, 2016 and 25th July, 2017. On these dates, I had the opportunity to participate in some of the activities at the prayer sites (that is, APM and NMOPC). These include church services on Sundays, all-night prayer sessions on Wednesdays, communal labour on Saturday mornings, and healing and deliverance services on Wednesday mornings. With the permission of the leaders of the PMs, relevant programmes or activities were audio or video recorded. My participation in the aforementioned activities on the PMs also afforded me the opportunity to observe other activities such as carrying of luggages to and from the PMs and sale of provisions.⁷²

Another primary data collection instrument employed was structured interview. Kumekpor explains that:

This type of interview follows a set pattern usually adhering, as much as possible, to the order of questions in the interview questionnaire. It is conducted in a formal manner, taking into consideration the factors that make the atmosphere of an interview one that is conducive to a congenial interviewer-interviewee rapport.⁷³

To all the respondents, I first introduced myself as a Ph.D candidate at the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Ghana embarking on a research for academic purposes. In order to assuage their doubts or scepticism with respect to the outcome of their responses, I assured them that their responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality. Those who were convinced immediately granted me the interview. Others also scheduled an appointment with me before I could meet them.

As a face-to-face manner in which a researcher elicits information from respondents, this type of interview was useful in collecting the relevant field data. In the first place, it did not only make it possible for me to meet the respondents face-to-

⁷² Okyere maintains that In Ghana, 'provisions' is a word used to designate a wide range of items such as milo, milk, sugar, mackerel and soft drinks. See Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, p.20.

⁷³ Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research*, p. 186.

face, but it also enabled me to interrogate and sought further clarifications from them. Secondly, the structured nature of the interview schedule imposed some sort of discipline on me to go straight to the subject matter and discuss only issues related to the subject under investigation. This saved time and presented information collected from the respondents in almost the same form and order.⁷⁴ With the permission of the respondents, vital aspects of the interview were audio recorded.

Furthermore, I accessed some electronic data bases and libraries for information about unpublished works such as theses, dissertations and long essays. The pieces of information gathered were organised, synthesised and analysed. The category of respondents and the pieces of information elicited from them through structured interview schedule are presented below:

Table 1.1: A table showing categories of respondents and pieces of information elicited from them

Category of Respondents	Pieces of information elicited
Pastors who patronize APM and NMOPC as pilgrims	Spiritual, ecumenical, economic and ecological relevance of PMs; Pentecostal Christianity and visit to PMs, etc.
Lay people who patronize APM and NMOPC as pilgrims	Spiritual, ecumenical, economic and ecological relevance of PMs; Pentecostal Christianity and visit to PMs, etc.
Traditional leaders, luggage carriers and drivers who ply APM and NMOPC	History of the sacred mountains and the communities in which the sacred mountains are located; socio-economic and ecological relevance of PMs, etc.

1.6 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The study is theoretically grounded on the social-anthropological model. The social-anthropological model to the study of religion, in the opinion of Max Assimeng, is the effort of modern-day sociologists and anthropologists to explore the question ‘How

⁷⁴ Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research*, p. 186.

does religion function....'⁷⁵ Evans-Pritchard, the noted late British doyen of social anthropology, is said to have posited that: 'This then is the task of the social anthropologist, to show the relation of religion to social life in general. It is not his task to "explain" religion.'⁷⁶

Evans-Pritchard's position further accentuates the central point of functionalism as a theory and method in the study of religion. Functionalism originated principally from the work of the French Sociologist Emile Durkheim as far as the study of religion is concerned. In principle, functionalism examines how social phenomena operate and are interrelated with other sets of social phenomena.⁷⁷ The implication is that in this work, the social-anthropological model and functionalism are employed synonymously because they both attempt to examine the function of religion in the society.

One of the social-anthropologists whose works are relevant to this study is Clifford Geertz. Geertz's analysis of ethos, worldviews and sacred symbols discloses the interrelationship between religion and social phenomena. He writes as follows:

Religion is never merely metaphysics. For all peoples the forms, vehicles, and objects of worship are suffused with an aura of deep moral seriousness. The holy bears within it everywhere a sense of intrinsic obligation: it not only encourages devotion, it demands it; it not only induces intellectual assent, it enforces emotional commitment ... that which is set apart as more than mundane is inevitably considered to have far-reaching implications for the direction of human conduct.⁷⁸

Geertz implies that religion scarcely deals with only the metaphysical aspects of life. It also deals with the issues of ethos and world views of people. 'A people's ethos', according to him, 'is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life

⁷⁵Max Assimeng *Religion and Social Change in West Africa: An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion* (2nd edition) (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2010), p. 10.

⁷⁶ Assimeng *Religion and Social Change in West Africa*, p. 10.

⁷⁷ Assimeng *Religion and Social Change in West Africa*, p. 10.

⁷⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), p. 126.

reflects.’⁷⁹ He also points out that ‘Their world view is their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order.’⁸⁰ Furthermore, Geertz uses the notion of the mutual non exclusiveness of religious belief and ritual to explicate the relationship between ethos and world view. ‘[T]he ethos is made intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life implied by the actual state of affairs which the world view describes, and the world view is made emotionally acceptable by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs of which such a way of life is an authentic expression.’⁸¹

Both ethos and worldview underscore the reality of a religious system which, according to Geertz, ‘is a cluster of sacred symbols, woven into some sort of ordered whole.’⁸² Geertz does not only assert the prevalence of the notion of sacred symbols in almost all religious traditions; he also points out that what all sacred symbols assert is that the good for man is to live realistically; where they differ is in the vision of reality they construct.⁸³

Geertz however maintains that ‘it is not only positive values that sacred symbols dramatise, but negative ones as well. They point not only toward the existence of good but also of evil, and toward the conflict between them.’⁸⁴

It is worth noting, however, that Geertz’s theory has not been spared of scholarly critiques. Talal Asad, for instance, problematizes Geertz’s social-anthropological model, specifically, his anthropological definition of religion, by assigning that endeavour to a

⁷⁹ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.127.

⁸⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.127.

⁸¹ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.127.

⁸² Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.129.

⁸³ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.130.

⁸⁴ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.130.

particular history of knowledge and power (including a particular understanding of our legitimate past and future) out of which the modern world has been constructed.⁸⁵

In spite of this critique, I still find the social-anthropological model to the study of religion useful in this study. This is because it provides a solid theoretical framework for the examination of the extent to which Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity stimulates pilgrims' visit to PMs. It further examines the extent to which PMs promote socio-economic development, environmental sanitation and ecumenical / interdenominational networks in Ghana.

1.7 Literature Review

Scholarly works on the topic under discussion abound. The issues that have engaged the attention of scholars over the years include the meaning of sacred, sacred space and prayer rituals, distinctions between sacred and secular with attention to the nexus between sacred space and religious pilgrimage, a survey of some sacred mountains in the bible and prayer mountains as sacred spaces in Ghana.⁸⁶ These are thematically reviewed below.

1.7.1 The meaning of Sacred, Sacred Space and Prayer Rituals

Etymologically, Anthony Thorley and Celia M. Gunn indicate that the word sacred evolved from the classical Latin word *sacer*, meaning 'set apart to or for some religious purpose'.⁸⁷ This implies that sacred connotes some inherent special quality that differentiates it from the ordinary or normal.

⁸⁵ Talal Asad, 'Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam', in Carl Olson, *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: A Selection of Critical Readings* (California, USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2003), pp. 298-307.

⁸⁶ Anthony Thorley and Celia M. Gunn, *Sacred Sites: An Overview. A Report for the GAIA Foundation 2007*, p. 22. Available at <http://www.sacredland.org/media/Sacred-Sites-an-Overview.pdf> [Accessed 21 June 2016].

⁸⁷ Thorley and Gunn, *Sacred Sites*, p. 22.

In addition to the primary meaning of *sacer* as ‘dedicated or consecrated to a divinity’, is its related meaning as ‘accursed, execrable, horrible, infamous’ or ‘devoted to a divinity for destruction, forfeited.’⁸⁸ The implication is that *sacer* is associated with divinity both as a powerful force for injury and destruction, as well as the idea of simply being exceptionally regarded or revered.⁸⁹

Thorley and Gunn further observe that the root *sac* is related to the Hittite *saklais*, meaning ‘rite, custom, law.’ The root *sac* also relates to the derived Latin word *sanus*, meaning ‘safe, whole or healthy.’ This is the same root that gives the Latin word *sanctus*, a ‘saint or holy person’, and *sanctum*, a ‘holy place or sanctuary’.⁹⁰ Thus although sacred may seem a relatively simple word in terms of its contemporary usage, it is actually a complex word carrying a fascinating blend of meanings which make up its derivation: rite, custom, safe, whole, accursed, horrible, divine destruction, divine presence.

The Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of the word sacred includes such terms as ‘made in awe,’ ‘revered,’ ‘considered deserving of veneration,’ and ‘consecrated.’ Terms such as ‘holy’ and ‘hallowed’ are employed in elaboration to designate the sacred.⁹¹ Most students of religion agree that societies everywhere have a conception of a force that evokes emotions and feelings of sacredness, although the specific content of ideas about the sacred varies across different peoples and historical eras.⁹²

⁸⁸Thorley and Gunn, *Sacred Sites*, p. 22.

⁸⁹ Robert A. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise: A Guide to understanding the Medieval Cathedral* (California: University of California Press, 2003), p. 148.

⁹⁰ Thorley and Gunn, *Sacred Sites*, p. 22. Italics original.

⁹¹ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, p. 148.

⁹² Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, p. 148.

The notion of sacred space as one of the more obvious characteristics of religious expression in the world also seems to be universally acknowledged.⁹³ Virtually all religions designate certain places as sacred or holy, and this designation often encourages adherents to visit those places in pilgrimage.⁹⁴ World Religions⁹⁵ and their various sacred sites which attract believers in pilgrimage have been identified and scholarly articulated.⁹⁶ Generally, a sacred space is a place not only for worship and divine revelations, but is also a place which provides pilgrims with peace and solace from the pestering burden of daily life.⁹⁷ Against this backdrop, sacredness understood as a religious and theological category has not escaped the intellectual gaze.⁹⁸

Veikko Anttonen, in his assertion that seems to corroborate Park's observation about the ubiquitous nature of sacred spaces in all religious traditions, writes as follows:

Setting specific times and places apart as sacred is a fundamental structure in human cultures, without which no religion, nation-state or political ideology can insure the continuity of its power, hierarchy and authority. Such universal forms of religious behavior as fasting, pilgrimage, asceticism, celibacy, religiously motivated forms of seclusion and reclusion and various forms of meditation can also be comprehended in terms of the category of the sacred. These forms of religious behavior are culturally constituted on the idea of marking one's physical and mental self as separate from the routines of everyday social life.⁹⁹

Central in Anttonen's observation is the notion of sacredness, believed to be an integral component of all religious traditions. Historians and phenomenologists of religion such as Nathan Soderblom, Rudolf Otto, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade, according to Anttonen, hold sacrality to be not only a hall mark

⁹³ Chris Park, 'Religion and Geography' in Hinnells, J. (ed.) *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 19.

⁹⁴ Park, 'Religion and Geography', p. 19.

⁹⁵For details on these World Religions, see Dean C. Halverson, (Gen. ed.) *The Compact Guide to World Religions* (Minnesota, USA: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), pp.13-234; Michael Molloy, *Experiencing the World's Religions: Tradition, Challenge and Change* (second edition) (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 2002), pp.59-525.

⁹⁶ Dalton (ed.), *Sacred Places of the World*, preface.

⁹⁷ Dalton (ed.), *Sacred Places of the World*, preface.

⁹⁸ Anttonen, 'Sacred', pp. 271-282; Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, pp. 147-170; Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 126.

⁹⁹ Anttonen, 'Sacred', p. 272. See also Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', pp.52-53.

of religion but its very essence.¹⁰⁰ These theorists assert that cultural systems of belief and practice cannot be given the title 'religion' if there is nothing which is deemed sacred by their adherents.¹⁰¹ In the methodological approach of these scholars, the sacred is treated as an ontological category, culturally schematised in human experience in the form of subjective feelings of the presence of what scholars refer to as *mysterium tremendum et fascinosum*,¹⁰² that is, a mysterious something that both frightens and fascinates.¹⁰³ This position reinforces Geertz's notion of sacred symbols as some of the major characteristics of religious traditions.¹⁰⁴

A sacred space, therefore, is a place where people encounter the sacred, understood as something truly extraordinary and overwhelming. It is a place where people feel gripped by a reality that is 'wholly other' than themselves – something mysterious, awesome, powerful and beautiful.¹⁰⁵ The conception of a sacred space also implies the reality of a profane or secular space. In the scheme of Eliade, the profane space is 'the realm of the everyday business – of things ordinary, random and largely unimportant.'¹⁰⁶ In short, profane space is 'the worldly Universe or historical situation of people.'¹⁰⁷ The role of religion, according to Daniel L. Pal, is to promote encounters with the sacred, to bring a person "out of his worldly Universe or historical situation, and project him into a Universe different in quality, an entirely different world, transcendent and holy."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰ Anttonen, 'Sacred', p. 272.

¹⁰¹ Anttonen, 'Sacred', p. 272.

¹⁰² Anttonen, 'Sacred', p. 272.

¹⁰³ Daniel L. Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.164.

¹⁰⁴ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 129.

¹⁰⁵ Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁶ Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, pp.163-164.

¹⁰⁷ Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁸ Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, p. 165.

In Scott's view, [prayer] rituals are required to effect the transition from worldly Universe to the realms of transcendence, also referred to in this work as sacred space.¹⁰⁹ My operational definition of prayer rituals is humans' activities or actions (visible or invisible) perceived to symbolize their belief in and communication with God or a deity. They are thus some of the main activities or actions that inform and define the sacredness of almost all spaces.¹¹⁰ In his definition of 'ritual', Ronald L. Grimes points out that ritual refers to 'traditional, prescribed communication with the sacred.'¹¹¹ By this definition, ritual is identified 'with actions predicated on a theistic, mysterious or animistic premise, or performances by religious functionaries in sacred places.'¹¹² In that sense, prayer rituals are believed to be the nexus of the two divergent worlds (that is, sacred space and profane space). In other words, prayer rituals can be conceptualised as humans' activities or actions by which the gulf between sacred space and profane space can be bridged.

If the sacredness of a place is determined by the belief in the presence of a supernatural force or a deity in that space and the possibility of human's interaction with that deity through rituals¹¹³, then a discourse on the sacredness of a space, in my opinion, would not be complete without reference to prayer rituals. Thus sacredness of a place and prayer rituals, in this context, are not mutually exclusive.

Edward Mckendree Bounds, a doyen on prayer, categorizes prayer into seven aspects: 'purpose in prayer'¹¹⁴, 'the necessity of prayer',¹¹⁵ 'the possibilities of

¹⁰⁹ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, p.150.

¹¹⁰ Dalton, *Sacred Places of the World*, pp7-11, 13 and 112.

¹¹¹ Ronald L. Grimes, 'Ritual' in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds.) *Guide to the Study of Religion* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), p. 261.

¹¹² Grimes, 'Ritual', p. 261.

¹¹³ Randall Studstill, 'Eliade, Phenomenology, and the Sacred' *Religious Studies*, 36 (2000), pp. 177-194. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20008280>. [Accessed 17 March 2012].

¹¹⁴ Edward Mckendree Bounds, *E. M. Bounds on Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997), PP.11-106

prayer'¹¹⁶, 'essentials of prayer'¹¹⁷, 'obtaining answers to prayer'¹¹⁸, 'power through prayer'¹¹⁹, and 'the weapon of prayer'¹²⁰. This taxonomy of prayer implies that, for Bounds, prayer is Christians' indispensable resource. It is the Christian's lifeline to God, and with it lives are changed for eternity.¹²¹

Prior to Bounds' comprehensive work on prayer, Dick Eastman had underscored prayer as the 'Slender nerve of power' and 'that marvelous mystery hidden behind the cloud of God's omnipotence.'¹²² To him (Eastman), 'Nothing is beyond the reach of prayer because God Himself is the focus of prayer.'¹²³ Defining prayer as 'divine communion with our heavenly Father',¹²⁴ Eastman adds that 'Prayer does not require advanced education' and that 'Knowledge is not a prerequisite to engage in it. Only an act of the will is required to pray.'¹²⁵ The implication of this is that prayer is not the preserve of a few selected individuals. It cannot be monopolized by anybody. Whoever has 'an act of the will' could pray. David Cook corroborates Eastman's view by underscoring prayer to be 'an interactive communication with God.'¹²⁶ Thus in prayer, Cook maintains, 'The believer assumes God's existence and prayer is the expression of a relationship with that God, not a means of establishing his existence.'¹²⁷

¹¹⁵ Bounds, *E. M. Bounds on Prayer*, pp. 107-190.

¹¹⁶ Bounds, *E. M. Bounds on Prayer*, pp. 191-286.

¹¹⁷ Bounds, *E. M. Bounds on Prayer*, pp. 287-376.

¹¹⁸ Bounds, *E. M. Bounds on Prayer*, pp. 377-466.

¹¹⁹ Bounds, *E. M. Bounds on Prayer*, pp. 467-524.

¹²⁰ Bounds, *E. M. Bounds on Prayer*, pp. 525-613.

¹²¹ Bounds, *E. M. Bounds on Prayer*, blurb.

¹²² Dick Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 11.

¹²³ Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*, p. 11.

¹²⁴ Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*, p. 11.

¹²⁵ Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*, p. 11.

¹²⁶ David Cook, *Thinking About Faith* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), p. 95.

¹²⁷ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, pp. 94 -95.

Eastman conceptualizes a theology of based on a twelve-step model to ‘be applied with spiritual liberty rather than regimented legality.’¹²⁸ He enumerates and briefly defines the items or ‘steps’ in the model as follows:

Praise: The act of divine adoration; *Waiting*: The act of soul surrender; *Confession*: The act of declared admission; *Scripture Praying*: The act of faith appropriation; *Watching*: The act of mental awareness; *Intercession*: The act of earnest appeal; *Petition*: The act of personal supplication; *Thanksgiving*: The act of expressed appreciation; *Singing*: The act of melodic worship; *Meditation*: The act of spiritual evaluation; *Listening*: The act of mental absorption; *Praise*: The act of divine magnification.¹²⁹

The implication here is that prayer rituals in Christianity are so broad that they seem to defy systematic categorization. They encapsulate several actions or practices that symbolize or facilitate a Christian’s interaction with God.

Cook further confirms Eastman’s formulaic and theological perspective of prayer but he categorizes prayer into four distinct components expressed by the initials ACTS. He maintains that ‘Prayer is *adoration, confession, thanksgiving* and *supplication* (also called petition). When people are involved in prayer, they may be engaged in any or all of these activities.’¹³⁰ The views of Eastman, Cook and Bounds as briefly surveyed, in my opinion, underscore the overarching importance of prayer in a Christian believer’s life.

The significance of prayer in a person’s religious life is articulated in the introduction to *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, edited by Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba.

How could there be a vibrant religious life without the practice of prayer? In both theistic and non theistic traditions, religious followers are generally counseled to steadfast prayer—to pray “without ceasing.” Without prayer, religious sensibility would likely atrophy and perhaps die. Yet what makes prayer so essential to a life of faith? Perhaps the most important answer is that

¹²⁸ Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*, p. 10.

¹²⁹ Eastman, *The Hour That Changes The World*, pp. 11-137.

¹³⁰ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, p. 95. (Emphasis original).

prayer connects us to the divine, to something beyond ourselves and beyond immediate reality.¹³¹

On the basis of the perception that human life comprises both the material /secular and spiritual /sacred dimensions, prayer, according to Benson and Wirzba, may be understood as ‘the moral and spiritual discipline that introduces and directs us to the sacred dimension that infuses and undergirds all that is.’¹³² This gives credence to the perception that there are some things in prayer that give it such a formative role in religious life, a role that informs and transforms believers. One of such things, according to the editors, is the understanding that prayer is an “experience at the limit.”¹³³ What this means, according to Benson and Wirzba, is that:

Prayer effectively strips the soul of its pretense and makes it available before an inscrutable God. At its extreme, prayer leads to a breakdown of language as the believer enters a “dark night” or “blinding light” like those described by the great mystics. Prayer is reduced to mute, amorous praise, for the believer is now bathed in a transcendence that both exceeds and also sustains one’s being.¹³⁴

The other striking motivation and essence of prayer is its perception as the “intensification of experience.”¹³⁵ This means that in prayer, ‘we have revealed to us the depth and breadth of what we otherwise overlook or take for granted—life’s gratuity, fragility, terror, blessing, and interdependence. Such a revelation calls us to a more honest and authentic accounting of our lives.’¹³⁶ The view of prayer as an ‘intensification of experience’ is expressed somewhat clearly in Cook’s five-fold functional description of prayer: ‘Prayer as dependence’, ‘Prayer as performance’, ‘Prayer as living’, ‘Prayer as contemplation’ and ‘Prayer as relationship.’¹³⁷ These prayer rituals exist at sacred spaces to promote or facilitate interaction between a religious person and the transcendent

¹³¹Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (eds.), *The Phenomenology of Prayer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 1.

¹³² Benson and Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, p.1.

¹³³ Benson and Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, p.1.

¹³⁴ Benson and Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, p.2.

¹³⁵ Benson and Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, p.2.

¹³⁶ Benson and Wirzba, *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, p.2.

¹³⁷ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, pp. 100 – 101.

realm. In that sense, it is plausible to argue that for a very long time sacred sites have been understood mainly as places where religious pilgrims employ prayer rituals to advance their quest for spiritual uplift. This conventional understanding, to the best of my knowledge, needs to be interrogated.

1.7.2 Distinctions between Sacred and Profane

Distinctions between sacred and profane or secular appear to have originated in European culture following the Enlightenment and the rise of nineteenth-century secularism. One of the pioneering philosophers and social scientists who sought to provide a clear distinction between the sacred and profane was Emil Durkheim (1858-1917).¹³⁸ He wrote: ‘A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, and all those who adhere to them.’¹³⁹ On the basis of this definition, Durkheim saw the sacred as essentially a social construction and mutually exclusive from the profane,¹⁴⁰ so that ‘the two classes cannot even approach each other and keep their own nature at the same time.’¹⁴¹

Sometime later, the philosopher and scholar of the history of religions, Mircea Eliade, expressed an important view of sacred space almost diametrically opposed to Durkheim’s position. While acknowledging spatial non homogeneity, Eliade is pessimistic about the possibility of an absolutely profane existence. He writes: ‘It must be added at once that such a profane existence is never found in the pure state. ... It will appear that even the most desacralized existence still preserves traces of a religious

¹³⁸ Ivan Strenski, *Thinking About Religion: An Introduction to Theories of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 283-307.

¹³⁹ Emile Durkheim, trans. Karen E. Fields, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1995 [1912], p.35. See also Thorley and. Gunn, *Sacred Sites*, p. 31; Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 126.

¹⁴⁰ Strenski, *Thinking About Religion*, p.283.

¹⁴¹ Thorley and Gunn, *Sacred Sites*, p. 31.

valorization of the world.’¹⁴² Eliade asserts that in some profound way all sacred landscape, however desacralized or secularized by mundane activities or by social construction, remains at some level essentially sacred.

Additionally, Eliade explores how secular or profane space is converted into a sacred space, and suggests that this symbolic process reflects the spiritual characteristics associated with both the physical features and the deeper, abstract implications of delimiting a particular site as sacred. Designation of a site as sacred is generally a response to two types of events. Some events (which Eliade calls *hierophanic*) involve a direct manifestation on earth of a deity or a spontaneous expression of the divine on earth whereas in other (*theophanic*) events somebody receives a message from the deity and interprets it for others.¹⁴³ By this interpretation, a natural landscape becomes consecrated and amplified by human recognition, participation and ritual.

From the above divergent or extreme positions of Durkheim and Eliade, it is obvious that a discourse on sacred space is, among other things, characterized by a tension between those who advocate that sacred site is essentially a social construct that can be located anywhere on earth and those who see sacred space as a transcendental construct, more autochthonous or more naturally born from a specific point on the earth itself, only awaiting social recognition and enhancement through rituals.

Almost directly related to the above tension in recent years is the emergence of new postmodern and traditional conceptions of pilgrimage to sacred places. In the traditional view, which is somehow couched on Eliade’s transcendental perspective of sacred space, ‘the power of a miraculous shrine is seen to derive solely from its inherent capacity to exert a devotional magnetism over pilgrims from far and wide, and to exude of itself potent meanings and significances for its worshippers ... its power is internally

¹⁴²Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 23.

¹⁴³Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 20 – 27.

generated and its meanings are largely predetermined.’¹⁴⁴ The traditional view, therefore, is that some places are inherently sacred, and the act of pilgrimage to those places bestows inherent benefits.

The postmodern view, which thrives on Durkheim’s perspective of sacred space as a social construct, is very different. This is because it argues that meanings are not inherent but are attributed by those who believe in the notion of sacred space. In the postmodern perspective, ‘pilgrimages are journeys to the sacred, but the sacred is not something which stands beyond the domain of the cultural; it is imagined, defined, and articulated within cultural practice.’¹⁴⁵ In this perspective, therefore, different people bring their own perceptions and meanings to the sacred place. As a result, sacred spaces have projected onto them a range of different meanings and interpretations, even among believers.¹⁴⁶

Notwithstanding the above tension, sacred sites and their attendant pilgrimage attractions in contemporary global religious topography¹⁴⁷ seem to reflect a creative fusion of Eliade’s transcendental orientation / traditional perspective of sacred space and Durkheim’s social construct / postmodern view of sacred sites. What this means is that a sacred site in contemporary religions may attract pilgrims who recognize the inherent miraculous or divine potency of that site and pilgrims who imagine, define and articulate the sacredness of the site within cultural practice.

The notion of sacred space is not novel in African religion. John S. Mbiti, a renowned African scholar, has embarked on taxonomy of sacred places in African religion. Referring to sacred sites as ‘religious places’, Mbiti classifies them into ‘man-made places’ and ‘natural places’ and asserts that ‘in both cases the places are used for

¹⁴⁴ John Eade and Michael Sallnow (eds), *Contesting the sacred* (London: Routledge: 1991), p.9.

¹⁴⁵ Park, ‘Religion and Geography’, p. 23.

¹⁴⁶ Park, ‘Religion and Geography’, p. 23.

¹⁴⁷ Dalton (ed.), *Sacred Places of the World*, pp. 1-208., Park, ‘Religion and Geography’, p. 19.

religious activities like praying, making offerings and sacrifices, and major ceremonies and rituals.¹⁴⁸ Thus Mbiti attempts to establish a close nexus between sacred sites and pilgrimage movements in African traditional religious context.

Mary W. Helms appears to corroborate Mbiti's classification of sacred sites and their attendant pilgrimage attractions. She also underscores a close link between sacred sites and pilgrimage by identifying the following as some of the sacred landscapes that could be found in most regions of the world: the networks of earthen mounds characteristic of pre-Columbian eastern North America, the numerous temple complexes of the lowland Maya, the interrelated oracle sanctuaries of the Ibo of Nigeria, the sacred places where the mythic ancestors of Australian Aboriginal tribes first emerged from the earth during the Dreaming, and the distributions of Neolithic chambered monuments in southern Wales.¹⁴⁹

It could be deduced from Helm's brief survey that a discourse on sacred space is not only limited to mountains. In addition to great mountains like Kilimanjaro in Africa, Michael Molloy explains that sacred space may also encompass a volcano, a valley, a lake, a forest, a single large tree or some other striking natural site.¹⁵⁰ Molloy further asserts that sacred space could also be constructed in a symbolic shape such as a circle or square, and defined by a special building or by a boundary made of rope or of rocks, such as Stonehenge in England. It could even be an open area among trees or buildings, such as the great open space between the temples of Teotihuacan, near Mexico City.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (2nd Revised Edition) (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1991), p. 147.

¹⁴⁹ Mary W. Helms, *Sacred Landscape and the Early Medieval European Cloister: Unity, Paradise, and the Cosmic Mountain* (Anthropos Bd.: Anthropos Institute Stable, 2002), p. 435. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40466044>, [Accessed: 10 October 2011].

¹⁵⁰ Molloy, *Experiencing the World's Religions*, p. 36.

¹⁵¹ Molloy, *Experiencing the World's Religions*, p. 36.

1.7.3 A Survey of Some Sacred Mountains in the Bible

The Bible is replete with several references to sacred mountains.¹⁵² Biblical imagery of mountains locates them in a quagmire of complexity and captivating mixture of meanings. Lyland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III disclose the paradoxical and even contradictory orientation of the biblical meanings of the mountain:

Mountains are sometimes a symbol of refuge and security and sometimes a threatening place of military slaughter. At times inaccessible, barren and uninhabited, mountains are nonetheless places where God's people will dwell in abundance. As sites of religious experience, mountaintops are places of pagan worship that God denounces and of true worship that he commands. The mountains of the bible are both physical phenomena and spiritual symbols.¹⁵³

In the light of the above fascinating blend of meanings of mountains, Ryken et al categorize the biblical imagery of mountains under four main headings. These are mountains as physical places, the mountains of the poets, mountains as sacred sites and apocalyptic mountains.¹⁵⁴ The implication of this categorization is that the view of sacred mountains as avenues for prayer and divine revelations is amplified in Christianity.¹⁵⁵ Mountains in the Old Testament which were often chosen as the place for worship or divine revelation include Moriah (Gen. 22:2), Sinai (Ex. 19: 18 – 20; 24:9 – 18), Zion (Ps. 2:6; 48:1 – 2) and Carmel (1Kgs. 18: 19 – 39).¹⁵⁶

Mount Moriah is believed to be the place where God tested the faith of Abraham by commanding him to offer his only son, Isaac, as a burnt offering.¹⁵⁷ It was, thus a sacred place where Abraham worshipped and offered sacrifice to God.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Gen. 22:2, Ex. 19: 18 – 20; 24:9 – 18, Ps. 2:6; 48:1 – 2, 1 Kgs. 18: 19 – 39, Matt. 5:1-7:29; 17: 1-21., Mk. 9:2-13.; Lk. 9:28-36., II Pet. 1: 16-18.

¹⁵³ Lyland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, (eds.), 'Mountain' in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998), pp. 572-574.

¹⁵⁴ Ryken et al, 'Mountain', pp.572-574.

¹⁵⁵ Philip Kwadwo Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space: The Place and Relevance of Abasua Prayer Mountain in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity', MPhil Thesis (University of Ghana, Legon 2012), pp. 5-11; Gen. 22:2, Ex. 19: 18 – 20; 24:9 – 18, Ps. 2:6; 48:1 – 2, 1 Kgs. 18: 19 – 39, Matt. 5:1-7:29; 17: 1-21., Mk. 9:2-13.; Lk. 9:28-36., II Pet. 1: 16-18.

¹⁵⁶ Harvey, 'Mountain', p. 1157.

¹⁵⁷ Assohoto and Engewa, 'Genesis', p. 43.

Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai is perceived to be another biblical basis for the appropriation of PMs as sacred spaces in Christianity. In his commentary on 'God's call to Moses' in Exodus 3:1-10, Abel Ndjerareou rightly points out that:

The place where God chose to reveal himself [to Moses] was Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai (3:1). Here God attracts Moses' attention by using a strange sight – a bush that burns without burning up (3: 2-3)... Because God is present, the ground where Moses is standing is declared to be *holy*. He is told not to come any closer and to take off his sandals as a sign of humility and worship.¹⁵⁹

It can be observed that in the context of Mount Moriah and Mount Horeb and, of course, other PMs to be considered later, the sacredness of a place may be defined and informed by the belief of the presence of the supernatural in that space. This supernatural, in the case of Mount Moriah and Mount Horeb, was perceived to be God. Various signs or manifestations could represent God's presence at a place. In the case of Mount Moriah, the miraculous provision of a ram instead of Isaac as the object for the burnt offering was seen to be a dramatic manifestation of God's presence there. This perception of the reality of miraculous intervention may however be contested by cynics or skeptics who seem to banish the miraculous to the prescientific world of medieval superstition.¹⁶⁰

In the case of Mount Sinai, one of the manifestations believed to depict God's presence there was a bush in flames without burning up. Ndjerareou is of the opinion that 'The fire is said to represent *the angel of the Lord*, that is, the angelic form in which God at times reveals himself to humans (3:4; see also Gen. 16: 19). In [Exodus] 19:18, fire will again symbolize the presence of God.'¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', pp. 5&6.

¹⁵⁹ Ndjerareou, 'Exodus' p. 90.

¹⁶⁰ Ronald J. Sider, 'Miracles, Methodology and Modern Western Christology' in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds.) *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World* (Michigan, USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), p. 238., Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', pp. 6&7.

¹⁶¹ Ndjerareou, 'Exodus', p. 90. (Emphasis original).

In addition to the above sacred mountains is Zion. Keith N. Schoville thinks that in contemporary times, Zion is used as a synonym for all Jerusalem.¹⁶² As a synonym of Zion, Jerusalem is now believed to be the city or dwelling place of God. Perhaps it is against the backdrop of this perception that John Rea and George Turner describe Jerusalem as the “spiritual capital of the world.”¹⁶³ Their description corroborates the United Nations’ resolution of 1947 which designated Jerusalem an international holy city.¹⁶⁴

It can be observed that the connection of Zion or Jerusalem with the sacred mountain of God is implicit in many of the references to mountains in the Old Testament. Schoville traces the historical basis of this connection as follows:

The concept of a sacred mountain as the abode of deities was common in the ancient Near East. At Ugarit on the North Syrian coast, Mount Zaphon to the north was the sacred mountain. The most active of the gods of Ugarit was called Baal – Zaphon. Psalm 48: 3..., refers to Jerusalem as “the utmost height of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King.” The poet has drawn on Canaanite imagery to enhance praise of the Lord.¹⁶⁵

The perception of Mount Zion or Jerusalem as a holy site indicates the possibility of reconstructing a secular space into a sacred space.¹⁶⁶ David’s military prowess, among others, may have enabled him to convert what was formerly called ‘the city of David’ or ‘Zion’ to ‘the dwelling place of God.’¹⁶⁷

The survey of Old Testament sacred mountains or spaces would be incomplete without Mount Carmel. It is believed to be the site where Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal in a contest (1 Kgs. 18). Davison G. Vernon underscores that ancient sanctuaries to the weather deities were built on the heights of Mount Carmel; thus it was a fitting site

¹⁶² Schoville, ‘Jerusalem. The Name.’ p. 393.

¹⁶³ John Rea and George Turner ‘Jerusalem’ in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p. 905.

¹⁶⁴ Rea and Turner ‘Jerusalem’, p. 905.

¹⁶⁵ Schoville, ‘Jerusalem. The Name.’ p.394.

¹⁶⁶ For details on ‘Creating sacred spaces’, see. Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, pp. 153 – 164.

¹⁶⁷ Schoville, ‘Jerusalem. The Name.’ p. 393.

for the contest between Elijah and the prophets of the Canaanite storm-god Baal. The Egyptians called Carmel a sacred cape.¹⁶⁸ Vernon thus corroborates Schoville's description of sacred mountains as the abode of deities. The colonization of mountains by deities and the re-appropriation of those mountains as sacred spaces in different religio-cultural contexts appears to be a research area worth exploring.

The New Testament (especially the Synoptic Gospels, that is, Matthew, Mark and Luke), is also replete with references to Jesus' mountaintop experiences. Popular among these experiences include the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29), and the Transfiguration (Matt. 17: 1-21.; Mk. 9:2ff.; Lk. 9:28-36.; II Pet. 1: 16-18).

The mountain plateau where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, according to Donald R. Sime, has often been referred to as the Mount of Beatitudes.¹⁶⁹ Many scholars have compared the Mount of Beatitudes to Mount Sinai, where God, through Moses, first taught his moral codes by the law (Ex. 19 – 20).¹⁷⁰ For instance, Delitzsch is cited by Sime as having called the Mount of Beatitudes the "Sinai of the New Testament."¹⁷¹ Delitzsch thus corroborates the view of Thomas Watson that the law was first given on Mount Sinai and on the Mount of Beatitudes Christ expounded it.¹⁷² The evidence of this, in my opinion, is underscored in Grant R. Osborne's view about the inseparability between the Old and New Testaments, as far as biblical hermeneutics is concerned. Osborne points out that

It is impossible to separate the two testaments, and any truly biblical theology must begin with the recognition of unity and demonstrate such. The simple fact that there are at least 257 quotes and over 1,100 allusions ... of the Old Testament in the New shows the extent to which the latter built upon the former. In terms of vocabulary, themes, religious emphases and worship, the two depend

¹⁶⁸ Vernon, 'Carmel', p. 315.

¹⁶⁹ Donald R. Sime, 'Mount of Beatitudes' in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds.) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p. 1155.

¹⁷⁰ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 56.

¹⁷¹ Sime, 'Mount of Beatitudes', p. 1155.

¹⁷² Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes* (Pennsylvania, USA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), p. 16.

upon one another. In terms of redemptive history, a clear typological relationship of promise-fulfillment exists between the testaments, and any concept of the progress of revelation in history (the backbone of biblical theology) must build upon this deeper interdependence.¹⁷³

Apart from the perception of the Mount of Beatitudes as the location for the Sermon on the Mount, Watson agrees with Jerome¹⁷⁴ and other scholars that the specific site was Mount Tabor.¹⁷⁵

In his commentary on the experience of Jesus' transfiguration, Cole Victor Babajide's view deserves attention. He maintains that 'The transfiguration must have taken place somewhere in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, probably on Mount Hermon.'¹⁷⁶ This position is, however, contested by Allan R. Killen. Killen suggests four possible locations for the transfiguration. In addition to Mount Hermon, he suggests the Mount of Olives, Mount Tabor and Jebel Jermaq.¹⁷⁷ Killen's argument is that Mount Hermon seems to some to be the most likely because of its great height (9,232 feet) and its proximity to Caesarea Philippi. Besides, this place was mentioned immediately before Matt. 16:13 and Mk. 8:27.¹⁷⁸ He further maintains that the Mount of Olives and Mount Tabor appeared to have been too inhabited for an event that called for such privacy and quiet as the transfiguration.

Jebel Jermaq (3,962 feet), believed to be the highest mountain in Upper Galilee, is also suggested by W. Ewing as the location for the transfiguration. Ewing's contention is that Hermon lay outside Palestine and therefore was unlikely. Further, since Christ

¹⁷³ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991), p. 277.

¹⁷⁴ One of the greatest scholars of the early Christian Church (c. AD 420).

¹⁷⁵ Watson, *The Beatitudes*, p. 16.

¹⁷⁶ Cole Victor Babajide, 'Mark' in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p. 1185.

¹⁷⁷ Allan R. Killen, 'Transfiguration of Christ' in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p. 1731.

¹⁷⁸ Killen, 'Transfiguration of Christ', p. 1731.

went up the mountain to pray (Lk. 9:28) and came down next day to meet a multitude (Lk. 9:37), Hermon appeared to be too inaccessible.¹⁷⁹

One thing is however clear about the apparent controversy surrounding the location of the transfiguration. All the four suggested locations are mountains. In other words, the transfiguration of Jesus was believed to have occurred on a mountain. According to Robert H. Stein, the fact that all the Synoptic Gospel writers did not unanimously agree on one site for the transfiguration implies that they were not interested in locating exactly *where* this event took place; they were more concerned with *what* took place.¹⁸⁰

It has been said that Jesus Christ took His three closest disciples, Peter, James and John, with Him on this occasion. The transfiguration occurred as He was praying (Lk. 9:29). The disciples, who were asleep (Lk. 9:32), awakened to see Christ transformed or metamorphosed. His outward appearance, it has been said, was completely transformed, allowing the trio to catch a glimpse of his inner glory. Even his clothes reflected unsurpassed glory, for they appeared to be of a whiteness or purity unequalled on earth (Mk. 9:3).¹⁸¹ It is believed that his face shone with brightness like the sun, an event perceived to confirm Jesus' divine personality and status.

All of this is to say that in the Bible, mountains as sacred spaces occupied a considerable place and relevance. Some of them were places for worship and others, for divine revelations. Such divine encounters were probably part of the reasons those mountains became sacred to the believing community. Thus the Bible as one of the ideal historical points of reference in a discourse on PMs underscores the fact that the current

¹⁷⁹ Killen, 'Transfiguration of Christ', p. 1731.

¹⁸⁰ Robert H. Stein, 'Transfiguration' in Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), P.782. (Emphases original).

¹⁸¹ Babajide, 'Mark', p. 1185.

academic interest or emphasis¹⁸² on mountains as sacred spaces in contemporary Christianity dates back to times immemorial.¹⁸³

1.7.4 Prayer Mountains as Sacred Spaces in Ghana

Mbiti and Helm's classification of sacred sites reinforce the observation that the phenomenon of sacred space is prevalent and integral in almost all religious and socio-cultural contexts.¹⁸⁴ In the light of this apparent universality, the variations in the symbolic representation of these sacred spaces have not escaped scholarly attention. Henryk Zimon, for instance, has found out 'The sacredness of the Earth among the Konkomba of Northern Ghana' and other parts of West Africa.¹⁸⁵ Researchers such as Clement Dorm-Adzobu, Okyeame Ampadu-Agyei and Peter G. Veit have also discussed 'Religious Beliefs and Environmental Protection' in the context of 'The Malshegu Sacred Grove in Northern Ghana.'¹⁸⁶ In these instances, the 'Earth' and the 'Grove' are the respective symbolic representations of the sacred spaces among the Konkomba and the Malshegu people. The implication of this is that the notion of sacred space is not in any way alien to Ghana's religious cosmology. In *Traditional African Religion* for instance, John D.K. Ekem discusses priesthood in Akan Traditional Religions and makes mention of the following as some of the popular shrines in Ghana: Akonnedi at Larteh – Akuapem in the Eastern Region and Kwaku Fri at Nwoase – Wenchi in the Brong-Ahafo

¹⁸²Peter Jan Margry (ed.) *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008) and Gideon Bar, 'Reconstructing the past: The Creation of Jewish Sacred Space in the State of Israel, 1948–1967' *Israel Studies*, 13(2008), pp. 1-21. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30245829>, [Accessed 10 October 2011].

¹⁸³Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 20-27.

¹⁸⁴Park, 'Religion and Geography', p.19.

¹⁸⁵ Henryk Zimon, *The Sacredness of the Earth among the Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, (Anthropos: Anthropos Institute Stable, 2003), pp. 421-443. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40467332>, [accessed: 10/10/2011].

¹⁸⁶ Clement Dorm – Adzobu, et al, *Religious Beliefs and Environmental Protection: The Malshegu Sacred Grove in Northern Ghana* (Nairobi, Kenya: World Resources Institute: 1991), pp. 421 – 443.

Region.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, I am personally aware of other shrines in the Asante Region. These include Antoa Nyamaa at Antoa and Gadawu at Agona-Asamang.

Scholarly works on PMs in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity, to the best of my knowledge, include those done by Doris Ekua Yalley¹⁸⁸, Philip Kwadwo Okyere¹⁸⁹ and Isaac Owusu Ansah.¹⁹⁰ In her scholarly study, Yalley examines the perceptions of the Methodist Church Ghana's authorities (both clergy and laity) about the church's involvement in the practice of institutionalised mass pilgrimages to sacred sites both at the Connexional and Diocesan levels.¹⁹¹ She does not only confine her study to the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG), but also focuses on three pilgrimage sites operated by the church. These sites are the William de Graft Centre (WdG) at Azani in the Sekondi Diocese in the Western Region, Thomas Birch Freeman (TBF) Centre at Kusa in the Obuasi Diocese in the Asante Region and Abasua Prayer Centre (APC) in the Effiduasi Diocese, also in the Asante Region. She looks at the contribution pilgrimage to these sites makes to the renewal programme of the MCG.

Okyere's study essentially dwells on some aspects of APM. The work generally underscores the reality of sacred spaces and their attendant pilgrimage attractions in almost all religious traditions in the world. In his view, 'people's belief in the presence of the luminous or transcendent reality at places and the possibility of their interaction with the luminous through prayer rituals, do not only define those places as sacred, but are

¹⁸⁷John D. K.. Ekem, *Priesthood in Context: A Study of Priesthood in some Christian and Primal Communities of Ghana and its Relevance for Mother-Tongue Biblical Interpretation* (Accra, Ghana: SonLife Press, 2009), pp.43-57.

¹⁸⁸ Doris Ekua Yalley, 'Sacred Site Visitation and the Renewal Program of the Methodist Church Ghana', PhD Thesis (University of Ghana, Legon, 2015).

¹⁸⁹ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space' (Already cited elsewhere in this work).

¹⁹⁰Isaac Owusu-Ansah, 'Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity', Long Essay (Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon 2005).

¹⁹¹ Yalley, 'Sacred Site Visitation', p.4.

also some of the major reasons for pilgrimage to such places.¹⁹² He indicates that ‘the traditional notion of sacred places as spaces for prayer, worship and divine revelation is virtually ubiquitous in all discourses on sacred spaces.’¹⁹³ The specific themes he discusses in the work include the history of Abasua community¹⁹⁴ and APM,¹⁹⁵ religion of Abasua community¹⁹⁶ and the role of the PM in the development of Abasua citizens and the pilgrims.¹⁹⁷ This current work undoubtedly reflects these themes or aspects of the mountain, but novel nuances include an attempt in this present study to re-examine the themes in the light of possible changes or different narratives that may have emerged.

Isaac Owusu-Ansah also outlines and discusses some Christian sacred spaces in the context of Prayer Camps in Ghana: Grace Deliverance Centre for the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), Kusa Camp for the MCG, Edumfa Prayer Centre for the Church of Pentecost and Abasua Prayer Mountain (APM).¹⁹⁸ His research seeks to evaluate the use of APM in Ghanaian Christianity in terms of the site’s role in advancing pilgrims’ spirituality.¹⁹⁹ The traditional notion of APM as a place for worship, prayer and divine revelation is, thus the crux of Owusu-Ansah’s study.

It could be inferred from the discussions that PMs essentially form part of the scholarly discussion of sacred sites. They have fascinating blend of meanings, taxonomies, features and relevance. However, from the works of Yalley, Okyere and Owusu-Ansah, for instance, it could further be inferred that in Ghana, academic discussion of PMs as sacred sites seems to have mainly centered on the conventional

¹⁹² Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, p. iii.

¹⁹³ Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, p. iii.

¹⁹⁴ Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, pp.27-41.

¹⁹⁵ Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, pp.58-95.

¹⁹⁶ Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, pp.41-50.

¹⁹⁷ Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, pp.96-129.

¹⁹⁸ Owusu-Ansah, ‘Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity’, pp. 5-48.

¹⁹⁹ Owusu-Ansah, ‘Abasua Prayer Mountain’, p.49.

thinking of those mountains as sites for pilgrimage, worship, prayer and divine revelation. In my opinion, this understanding needs rethinking or revising.

1.8 Significance of the study

The study enables academic institutions, churches, individuals and organizations to appreciate the continuity of PM phenomena in sacred mountains appropriated within primal religious context.

Moreover, as an intellectual exercise, the work provides vital pieces of information about PMs which, I perceive, have not received much scholarly attention. These include the history or the development of PMs as sacred sites, the relevance of PMs in Ghana's contemporary Christianity, the interrelatedness of spirituality and materiality and the relationship between PMs and pilgrimage.

Last but not least, the study explores the place and relevance of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian development discourse.

1.9 Organization of chapters

The work is divided into six chapters as follows: Chapter one generally deals with the introduction to the study. It is sub-divided into nine components. These are background to the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study. Others are research questions, methodology, theoretical framework. The rest are literature review, significance of the study and organization of chapters.

In chapter two, sacred mountains in Akan primal religious context are explored. Chapter three examines the historical narratives of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity. In chapter four, I discuss the influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' appropriation of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. Chapter five is devoted to PMs in contemporary Ghanaian development discourse. It focuses on religious pilgrimage to PMs and its attendant environmental sanitation or Christian eco-theology, ecumenical networks in

Ghana and economic wellbeing. Chapter six considers the summary, conclusion and recommendations on the study. The conclusion explores PMs and the future of Ghanaian Christianity.

CHAPTER TWO

SACRED MOUNTAINS IN AKAN PRIMAL RELIGIOUS CONTEXT: ANTECEDENTS OF PRAYER MOUNTAINS IN CONTEMPORARY GHANAIAAN CHRISTIANITY

2.1 Introduction

A discussion of the evolution of Prayer Mountains in chapter three of this work is intentionally preceded by a survey of some sacred mountains and their attendant pilgrimage attractions in Akan primal religious context. The justification for locating the examination of sacred mountains in Akan primal religious context is obvious. The Akan group constitutes the largest proportion of the population of Ghana. The group includes people-group in the [Asante], Brong-Ahafo, Central, Eastern and Western regions of Ghana.²⁰⁰ Since they are the majority ethnic group, Akan ways of life have been a dominant influence in the inter-borrowing of cultural elements among the various ethnic groups in the country.²⁰¹

Focusing on some of the sacred mountains in Akan primal religion is therefore illustrative or a fair representation of sacred mountains in Ghana's primal religious thought.²⁰² The sacred mountains and their attendant pilgrimage attractions in Akan primal religiosity are perceived to be some of the antecedents of pilgrimage to PMs in Ghanaian contemporary Christianity. The contention is that one of the key concerns in modern African church historiography is the notion of Christian roots in African primal

²⁰⁰ Kwabena J. Darkwa Amanor, 'The African Renaissance and Theological Reconstruction: The Akan Contribution', *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XIV (2004), p. 57.

²⁰¹ G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1992), p. 71.

²⁰² Omenyo makes similar argument when he uses Akan Traditional Religion as a case illustrative of Ghana's traditional religions. For details, see Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 26.

religion.²⁰³ On the basis of this position, it is logical to argue that pilgrimage to sacred mountains in Akan primal religion is a sub-structure or precursor of pilgrimage to PMs in Ghanaian contemporary Christianity. In other words, pilgrimage to sacred mountains in primal religious context, understood as antecedent of pilgrimage to PMs in Christianity, is generally a marker for the continuity of African primal religion in African church history.²⁰⁴ The relevant sacred mountains in Akan primal religion that seem to function as some of the precursors of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity include *Atwea boɔ* in the Asanti Region and *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* in the Eastern Region.

The history of the communities in which these sacred mountains are located is somehow briefly examined in order to attempt providing some historical insights into the religio-social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds of those sacred mountains.

2.2 History of Atwea Community

Historically, it is believed that the initial settlers of Atwea mysteriously emerged from a mountain deity called *Atwea boɔ*.²⁰⁵ The mountain deity is therefore believed to be very pivotal in the historical narrative of the birth of Atwea community. Prior to the Atwea citizens' emergence, legend upholds that a dog (*ɔtwea* in Asante Twi dialect) bearing a live coal in its mouth came out of the mountain. Hence, the initial settlers were *Aduana*²⁰⁶ whose totem is a dog with a live coal in its mouth.²⁰⁷ The name 'Atwea' is thus a corruption of *ɔtwea*. The third creature to emerge from the mountain after the

²⁰³ Ogbu U. Kalu, 'Shape, Flow and Identity in Contemporary African Church Historiography', *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XII, 1&2 (2002), pp.1-22; Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana: Regnum Africa, 2000), pp. 20-33.

²⁰⁴ Kalu, 'Shape, Flow and Identity', p. 1.

²⁰⁵ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, a 93-year old Atweadikro, disclosed this during an interview he granted me on 29 March 2017 at Abasua community.

²⁰⁶ Aduana is one of the eight clans of Akan matrilineal divisions. For details, see Amenumey, *Ghana*, p.16. *Italics mine*.

²⁰⁷ For details on totems, see Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture* (Tema, Ghana: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 2006), pp. 59-63.

coming out of the initial settlers was a toad that mysteriously carried a pot of water.²⁰⁸ *Atwea Boɔ Kwabena Tenten* – the real name of the mountain deity – had Yaw Berko as his traditional priest who served as the medium between the deity and the devotees or clients who consulted the deity for assistance.²⁰⁹ Geographically, Atwea is one of the small communities in the Nsuta Municipality. It is also located in the Effiduase Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana.

2.2.1 Atwea Boɔ as a sacred mountain in Akan primal religious context

Religiously, Atwea community was dominated by Akan primal religiosity.²¹⁰ Most of the people interviewed disclosed that the centre of traditional religious expression at Atwea before the introduction of Christianity there, was *Atwea boɔ*.²¹¹ *Atwea boɔ*, one of the four mountains in the vicinity of Abasua, was believed to be a very powerful deity or *ɔbosom*, whose overarching influence and power had resulted in the influx of many people to the place. Most of these people came there to consult the deity, through the deity's *ɔkɔmfoɔ* (Traditional Priest)²¹², for answers to their existential needs and challenges. According to Mr. Aboraa, most of the people who came for consultation and received answers to their questions did not go back to their towns again; they relocated and stayed there. The natives were also kind and hospitable to the new settlers.

²⁰⁸ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2107, Abasua Community.

²⁰⁹ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2107, Abasua Community.

²¹⁰ Madam Adwoa Apemasu and Mr. Daniel Aboraa disclosed this during an interview they separately granted me on 13 August 2011 at Abasua community. C.f. Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Ghana: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1998), pp.3-19. Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, pp.27-42.

²¹¹ Madam Adwoa Apemasu and Mr. Daniel Aboraa disclosed this during an interview they separately granted me on 13 August 2011 at Abasua community; Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2107, Abasua Community.

²¹² For a good discussion on the functions of Akan Traditional Priests/Priestesses and their impact on society, see Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, PP. 52-57.

The mountain deity, *Atwea boɔ*, strongly dominated the traditional and religio-social consciousness of the indigenous people of Atwea and Abasua.²¹³ One major influence of *Atwea boɔ* was in the belief in his²¹⁴ ability to provide protection to the natives of Atwea, Abasua and other people, especially, the rich cocoa farmers who, because of their wealth, were afraid of being destroyed by witches and wizards.²¹⁵ The reality of *Abosom* (plural form of *ɔbosom*) and some people's strong belief in their potency has been expressed by Omenyo as follows:

Generally, they are perceived to provide solutions to many social problems, personal problems and mishaps as well as to reveal witches and to witness to the truth of an event. They are also believed to have powers that can destroy. The popularity of a deity depends largely on its reputed ability to perform by way of providing material and spiritual prosperity. Such deities attract devotees from far and near. However, they are abandoned if they fail to meet specific needs of groups or individuals.²¹⁶

Related to the above is the Akans' belief in the malevolence of witches and wizards. Omenyo further notes that 'There is a strong belief among Akans in witches and wizards (*abayifo* and *abayibonsam*), who are perceived as enemies of the Akan society. They are believed to possess evil psychic powers that could, among other things, destroy life and property; cause sickness, barrenness or impotence, material poverty, drunkenness and death.'²¹⁷ This belief may have influenced the people who tramped to *Atwea boɔ*, for consultation, resettlement and security purposes.

Atwea boɔ was also believed to have significant influence on the moral and religio-cultural lives of the natives and 'clients' who came there for resettlement or for consultation purposes. The belief in the mountain deity's (*ɔbosom*'s) ability to expose

²¹³ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, a 93-year old Atweadikro, disclosed this during an interview he granted me on 29 March 2017 at Abasua community.

²¹⁴ In an interview with Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Atwea Dikro, on 29 March, 2017 at Abasua, he told me that *Atwea boɔ* is a male mountain deity called Atweaboɔ Kwabena Tenten. In Ghana, Kwabena is the Akan word for a male human being born on Tuesday, hence the use of a male human category 'his'.

²¹⁵ Madam Adwoa Apemasu and Mr. Daniel Aboraa, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community. (Separate interviews).

²¹⁶ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 27.

²¹⁷ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 28.

and punish wrongdoers, such as thieves, witches and wizards, according to Madam Apemasu, put fear in the citizens. Consequently, the people became terribly afraid of flouting any of the numerous taboos of the place. It is a taboo, for instance, to work on any of the sacred days²¹⁸ such as Wednesday. It is also a taboo to work in or around *ɔnwam Yaa*²¹⁹ on Thursdays. It is, however, not a taboo to merely cross the river on Thursdays.²²⁰ It is strictly forbidden for farmers or hunters to go to *Atwea boɔ* on Tuesdays to embark on farming activities or hunting expeditions respectively.²²¹

A story narrated by one of the people interviewed underscores the belief in the *Atwea boɔ*'s overarching influence and power over the people's moral lives.

There was a deity called *ɔbosom Fofie* who resided at Nsuta. It was believed that *ɔbosom Fofie* so detested wrongdoers that such culprits suffered instant death, immediately the deity got to know of their evil deeds. One day, over seventy people at Nsuta believed to be wrongdoers were killed by the deity. The unpleasant smell, which their dead bodies exuded in the community, forced the *ɔmanhene* at that time to move out of his traditional area to a place where he hoped to find a lasting antidote to that mass killing of people in his community. Upon hearing of the presence of another powerful deity at Duroman in the Nkoranza area, the *ɔmanhene* went there for consultation and assistance.

When he reached Duroman and narrated his story and mission to the Traditional Priest of the deity, the *ɔmanhene* was told to come back to *Atwea boɔ*, located at the Nsuta area. The deity at Duroman was believed to have revealed to its Traditional Priest that the *ɔmanhene*'s problem could best be handled by *Atwea boɔ* since *ɔbosom Fofie* (who was believed to be responsible for the mass killing of the people at Nsuta) was the son of *Atwea boɔ*.

The *ɔmanhene* hurriedly came back and performed the necessary rituals for the consultation of the deity to be possible. He took a bottle of locally-brewed dry gin (popularly called *akpeteshie* in Ghana) and went to *Atwea boɔ*. Immediately he reached there, a stool and a calabash which were not brought out by any human being suddenly appeared. The *ɔmanhene* was instructed to sit down on the stool. He could hear human voice but could not see any human being there. He was then asked to tell his mission for coming there. When he finished telling what had brought him there, he heard nothing except a very loud laughter by a group of people he could not physically see. He was then told to go and organise his people for them to come and weed the surroundings of *Atwea boɔ*, since that

²¹⁸ Among the Akan people of Ghana, sacred days are days on which certain activities such as farming or fishing are strictly forbidden by the traditional authorities.

²¹⁹ Name of the river crossed just before climbing APM. Fishing in the river on Thursdays is strictly forbidden. Mr. Bismark Adu-Gyamfi, Interview, 14 August 2011, Abasua community.

²²⁰ Mr. Bismark Adu-Gyamfi, Interview, 14 August 2011, Abasua community.

²²¹ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2007, Abasua Community.

would pacify the angry *ɔbosom Fofie* and put an end to the mass killing of the people. When the *ɔmanhene* went and carried out the directive given him, the serial killing of the people ceased.²²²

By killing people suspected to be wrongdoers at Nsuta traditional area (which includes Abasua), *ɔbosom Fofie* thus functioned as a custodian of morality and ethical behaviour. The people's awareness of the deadly consequences that follow their wrongful acts or misdeeds serves as a deterrent to potential or would-be miscreants in the traditional area. The people's moral and ethical consciousness thus became heightened by the presence of the deity. This affirms Geertz's assertion that

Religion is never merely metaphysics. For all peoples the forms, vehicles, and objects of worship are suffused with an aura of deep moral seriousness. The holy bears within it everywhere a sense of intrinsic obligation: it not only encourages devotion, it demands it; it not only induces intellectual assent, it enforces emotional commitment ... that which is set apart as more than mundane is inevitably considered to have far-reaching implications for the direction of human conduct.²²³

Thus in a traditional Akan community, Kwesi A. Dickson seems to agree with Geertz when he (Dickson) observes that

There is a traditional pattern of life, itself, the *summum bonum*, sanctioned by spirit-ancestors and gods expressing itself in Akan institutions and behaviour patterns. Evil may be atoned for, and wrong-doing may be set right within a framework of traditionally sanctioned rites and practices. The appropriate appeasement, the necessary arbitration restores the *status quo*, itself the perfect pattern for Akan life.²²⁴

The son-father relationship between *ɔbosom Fofie* and *Atwea boɔ* and the belief that the *ɔmanhene*'s problem could best be addressed by *Atwea boɔ*, as the deity at Duroman had revealed, reinforced the popularity of *Atwea boɔ* and people's belief in it.²²⁵

It is worth noting that the power and influence of *Atwea boɔ*, as far as traditional Akan religiosity at Abasua is concerned, was partly through the presence and

²²² Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

²²³ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.126.

²²⁴ Kwesi A. Dickson (ed.), *Akan Religion and the Christian: A Comparative Study of the Impact of Two Religions* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1965), p. 141. (Emphases original).

²²⁵ Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

effectiveness of its *asɔfoɔ* (devotees) and *akɔmfɔɔ* (Traditional Priests).²²⁶ The regular rituals and sacrifices offered to the deity by these traditional Akan religious functionaries, according to most of the people interviewed, were believed to be the live wire of the deity.²²⁷ It is said that on some of the sacred days, when rituals and sacrifices were performed to the deity (*Atwea boɔ*), he manifested his presence and power through some mysterious occurrences such as sudden appearance of many big and flapping state umbrellas on top of the mountain. These umbrellas, however, immediately vanished after the sacred day's rituals and sacrifices were completed.²²⁸

The demise of some of the traditional religious functionaries and the reluctance of the subsequent Paramount Chiefs of Nsuta to assist in replacing dead devotees and Traditional Priests/Priestesses, according to some of my informants, contributed greatly to the waning and loss of power and influence of *Atwea boɔ* and *ɔbosom Fofie* in the area. The death of *akɔmfɔɔ* Ama Animwaa (Traditional Priestess of *ɔbosom Fofie*) and Akua Pomaa (Traditional Priestess of *Atwea boɔ*), for instance, was a heavy blow to their respective deities. This is because no replacements were found for them.²²⁹ According to some of the respondents, the reluctance of the people²³⁰ to avail themselves of the traditional religious vocation (that is, to replace the demised religious functionaries), was as a result of the influence of Christianity in the community. This confirms the previous assertion that the presence and effectiveness of the traditional religious functionaries were believed to be the live wire of the deities. It can therefore be argued that the deities'

²²⁶ For a good discussion, see Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, pp.46-7.

²²⁷ Madam Adwoa Apemasu and Mr. Daniel Aboraa, 13 August 2011, Abasua community (Separate interviews). Mr. Emmanuel Oduro, Mobile Phone Interview, 19 February 2012.

²²⁸ Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

²²⁹ Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community. Mr. Emmanuel Oduro, Mobile Phone Interview, 19 February 2012.

²³⁰ These people, according to some of the respondents, were the family members of the deceased traditional religious functionaries. By custom, replacements or successors for the deceased devotees were often selected from among the living family members of the deceased.

power and influence derived significantly from the rituals and sacrifices given to them regularly by their devotees and Traditional Priests / Priestesses.

Owing to the demise of the deities' traditional religious functionaries and the decline in their (deities') power and influence, the many 'clients' who used to come to Abasua for consultation also stopped coming. The natives of Abasua, who, hitherto, paid allegiance to the deities also stopped doing so. They did not see why they should express loyalty and allegiance to deities which were perceived to be powerless.²³¹ As Omenyo notes, 'The popularity of a deity depends largely on its reputed ability to perform by way of providing material and spiritual prosperity. Such deities attract devotees from far and near. However, they are abandoned if they fail to meet specific needs of groups or individuals.'²³²

2.3. Historical narrative of the founding of New Juaben State

In pursuance of the scheme of situating a discourse on sacred mountains in a historical context, the narrative of *ƆboƆ Tabiri* as the epitome of primal religiosity in the New Juaben state is preceded by a brief survey of the founding and development of the state. This is because the place and relevance of *ƆboƆ Tabiri* in the religious cosmology of the people of New Juaben would not be noticed and appreciated without recourse to the historical narrative of the founding of the New Juaben state.²³³

The history of the New Juaben State is a multifarious narrative of a people who had to migrate from their ancestral homes in Asante in the 1870s to seek refuge in the then British Protectorate of Akyem Abuakwa.²³⁴ The choice of Akyem Abuakwa as their

²³¹ Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

²³² Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 27.

²³³ Nana Amo Boakye (Okyeame, Linguist of New Juaben Traditional Area), Interview, 3 January, 2016, Koforidua.

²³⁴ Scholarly works on the history of New Juaben State include Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, pp. 12-22; Carl C. Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (3rd ed.) (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Universities Press, 2007), pp. 284-305; J. G. Amofo, 'The founding and

destination was not by accident but by design. It is said that in the 1830s the people of Juaben, under their great leader, King Kwasi Akuamoa Boateng, had sojourned at Kyebi in self-imposed exile and cherished the great hospitality of the people of Akyem.²³⁵

Prior to her first migration to Akyem Abuakwa in 1830s, Juaben had been one of the founding members of the Asante Confederacy. In fact, Juabenhene, Adarkwa Yiadom, was said to be among those who had insisted on open defiance against the obnoxious, vexatious and humiliating annual demands of tribute by Denkyira; and it was actually the Juaben contingent that captured and killed the Denkyirahene, Ntim Gyakari.²³⁶ These remarkable roles sealed Juaben's reputation and eventually earned her an enviable position in the affairs of the newly consummated Asante nation.²³⁷ The significant roles Juaben played in the consummation of the Asante nation also secured for her the headship of the Oyoko caucus within the Union.²³⁸ After the creation of *Ko-Nti* and *Akwamu* Divisions, Nana Osei Tutu is said to have categorically asked the Juabenhene to appoint somebody to represent him in Kumasi, who would act for him when he was in his Province. Being unwilling to appoint his near relative, he appointed Kwamong and sent him to Kumase as his representative and he was made the Ayokohene of Kumase.²³⁹

development of New Juaben State: A historical background' in the Souvenir Brochure for the Launching of Akwantukese Afahye of New Juaben and Fifth Anniversary Celebration of the Enstoolment of Daasebre Oti Boateng as Omanhene of New Juaben, 1997, pp. 6-10;

R. Addo-Fening, 'The Background to the Deportation of King Asafo Agyei and the Foundation of New Dwaben' in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 14, 2 (1973), pp. 213-228. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41406526> [Accessed 27 February 2017].

²³⁵ Amofo, 'The founding and development of New Juaben State', p. 6.

²³⁶ Amofo, 'The founding and development of New Juaben State', p. 6.

²³⁷ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p.11.; Albert Adu Boahen, 'The Juaben State, A Historical Background', Nana Otuo Siriboe II, Silver Jubilee Souvenir Brochure 1996, p.2.

²³⁸ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II*, p.11.; Albert Adu Boahen, 'The Juaben State, A Historical Background', p.2.

²³⁹ Addo-Fening writes that Kwamong was an Oyoko fugitive from Asiakwa in Akyem Abuakwa. He escaped with his niece first to Dwansa and thence to Juaben where the Juabenhene welcomed him as a clansman. See Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p.11.

After the toppling of Denkyira's hegemony, Juaben continued to be renowned for its courage and military prowess in the consolidation of the Asante Union.²⁴⁰ It was very instrumental in the wars of expansion embarked upon by Nana Osei Tutu and Opoku Ware in the first half of the 18th century. Its rulers, Osei Hwedee and Kofi Akrasi, were actively involved in the incorporation of present-day Asante-Akyem into the Asante Union. They also participated actively in the invasions of Akyem and Ga to the south, and the Guan states of Bassa and Krakye to the north-east. In recognition and appreciation of Akrasi's military prowess, he was dubbed 'Akrasi Dente', after the leading god of the Krakye State. The title, 'Akrasi Dente', seems to allude to the primal religious consciousness of the Juaben people. Juaben continued to exhibit unwavering patriotism and loyalty to the Asante Union up to the third decade of the 19th century. Thereafter, relations got strained. Juaben's prior cordial relationship with the Union became acrimonious.²⁴¹

In October 1875, the persistent feuds between Kumase and Juaben took a dramatic turn when the Asantehene, Kofi Karikari pounced on Juaben and its allies, namely, Afigyaase, Asokore and Oyoko. After three days of intensive fighting, Juaben and her allies were brutally defeated on 3rd November, 1875. Kumase-Juaben relations had been utterly strained beyond repair and the only alternative for Juabenhene, Asafo Agyei, and his allies was to emigrate to Akyem Abuakwa where they had once lived in self-imposed exile half a century before. Since Juaben and her allies had fought with Kumase and lost, their defeat and sense of grievance seemed to provide a bond of solidarity and a catalyst for their asylum at Akyem Abuakwa.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p.11.

²⁴¹ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p.11.

²⁴² Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, pp.16-17; Amofo, 'The Founding and Development of New Juaben State', p.8.

The journey was long and wearisome but they persevered. After a short rest at Asuom the refugees continued to Kyebi under the leadership of King Asafo Agyei. On their arrival at Kyebi they notified the colonial administration of their presence in the protectorate.²⁴³

By March 1877, many Juaben exiles were occupying portions of Kukurantumi stool lands on ill-defined terms.²⁴⁴ After some time, the Colonial Government thought it prudent to regularize the stay of the exiles by negotiating with Kukurantumihene and Adontenhene of Akyem Abuakwa, Nana Ampao, for a gift of the portion of his land to resettle the Juaben refugees in the vicinity of Kukurantumi forest or the modern day of Koforidua.²⁴⁵

There is an interesting narrative about the evolution of the name *Koforidua*. Oral tradition and other documentary sources maintain that the portions of Kukurantumi forest offered the exiles were part of the forest and hunting areas of the Akyem Abuakwa state. Okyenhene Amoako Atta I had settled his hunter named severally as Kofi Ofori, Kwaw Ofori or Akoa Ofori in the forest to keep it and to embark on hunting expedition for him. In addition to his hunting expedition, Kofi Ofori was a wood carver. The carver displayed his wooden artifacts for sale under a big tree. In no time the term **Kofi Ofori duase** [under the tree of Kofi Ofori] evolved and the name was eventually corrupted into Koforidua.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Amofo, 'The Founding and Development of New Juaben State', p.7.

²⁴⁴ Amofo, 'The Founding and Development of New Juaben State', p.8.

²⁴⁵ Amofo, 'The Founding and Development of New Juaben State', p.8.

²⁴⁶ Nana Yaw Annor Boateng II (New Juaben Nseneyehene) Interview, 13 March 2017, New Juaben Palace, Koforidua. See also 'Koforidua Circuit' in The Methodist Church Ghana, Koforidua Diocese: 35th Anniversary Celebration Brochure (6th September, 2014), p. 83. Emphases original.

2.3.1 *Ɔboɔ Tabiri*: The embodiment of indigenous religious expression in the New Juaben State

A notoriously and enthusiastically religious African and for that matter, Ghanaian / the Akan effortlessly resorts to religion as a survival strategy in the pursuit of any worthwhile life's endeavour.²⁴⁷ Kwame Gyekye accentuates the centrality of religion in the affairs of Africans as follows: 'Religion – the awareness of the existence of some ultimate, Supreme Being who is the origin and sustainer of this universe and the establishment of constant ties with this being – influences in a comprehensive way, the thoughts and actions of the African people....The African heritage is intensely religious. The African lives in a religious universe: all actions and thoughts have religious meaning and are inspired or influenced by a religious point of view.'²⁴⁸

Against this backdrop of Africans' profound religiosity, it is said that the Old Juaben refugees were accompanied to their new settlement by their deities; *Atwere*, *Ateko*, *Abrampon* and *Boɔnson* and their traditional priests.²⁴⁹ Oral tradition posits that prior to the arrival of the Old Juaben refugees at the Kukurantumi forest area, which eventually became their destination, a mountain deity called *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* or Nana *Boɔ*, which was located there, was the epitome of traditional Akan religiosity of the Akyem Abuakwa state. The deity's traditional priests and other devotees regularly walked from Akyem Abuakwa to pay allegiance to him through sacrifices, libation and other pilgrimage rituals.²⁵⁰ The rituals of sacrifices, libation and pilgrimage contributed greatly to the activation of the spiritual vitality and relevance of the deity. This

²⁴⁷ For details on the notion that Africans are notoriously religious, see John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 1.

²⁴⁸ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1998), p. 3.

²⁴⁹ Nana Yaw Annor Boateng II (New Juaben Nseneyehene), Interview, 13 March 2017, New Juaben Traditional Council, Koforidua.

²⁵⁰ Nana Yaw Annor Boateng II (New Juaben Nseneyehene) and Nana Baah Acheamfuor Ampeh II (New Juaben Banmuhene) Interview, 13 March 2017, New Juaben Traditional Council, Koforidua.

immediately suggests that the presence and effectiveness of the traditional religious functionaries were believed to be the live wire of the deity.²⁵¹

The forest area where the mountain deity was sited was characterized by wild beasts, dwarfs and other supernatural forces which evoked tremendous trepidations among those who visited the area.²⁵² As a result of these and the hazardous long distance the traditional priests and the devotees walked to attend to the deity, they had abandoned him in the forest many years before the coming of the Old Juaben refugees. The abandonment implied that the people who expressed loyalty and allegiance to the deity had withdrawn their traditional religious services considered to be vital in the regular activation of his potency and relevance.

Oral tradition further maintains that when the Old Juaben refugees finally settled at their destination (i.e., the Kukurantumi forest area, now Koforidua) where the abandoned mountain deity was (and is still) located, the Akyem Abuakwa people informed the refugees and their traditional priests about the reality or presence of the abandoned mountain deity, called *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* or *Nana Boɔ*. Being a people of profound primal religious consciousness and whose deities - *Atwere*, *Ateko*, *Abrampon* and *Boɔnson* - and their traditional priests had accompanied them in their migration, the traditional priests, on behalf of the entire refugees, reportedly went to pay homage to the abandoned mountain deity in the forest.²⁵³

This payment of homage to the resident deity was very essential and revealing. It was one of the indispensable and non-negotiable community entry protocols required to be observed by the Old Juaben refugees, especially, the traditional priests, as far as their

²⁵¹ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', p. 46.

²⁵² Nana Yaw Annor Boateng II (New Juaben Nseneyehene) and Nana Baah Acheamfuor Ampeh II (New Juaben Banmuhene) Interview, 13 March 2017, New Juaben Traditional Council, Koforidua.

²⁵³ Nana Yaw Annor Boateng II (New Juaben Nseneyehene) and Nana Baah Acheamfuor Ampeh II (New Juaben Banmuhene) Interview, 13 March 2017, New Juaben Traditional Council, Koforidua.

quest for a peaceful and progressive stay in the new environment was concerned. Their failure to pay homage to the resident deity would be tantamount to their blatant disregard of the territorial dominance of the deity as far as that forest area was concerned. Any such barefaced disregard would be interpreted by the deity as an attempt by the refugees to usurp his power of territorial dominance and hence, an undisputable recipe for spiritual altercation.²⁵⁴

It is said that despite the Akyem Abuakwa traditional religious functionaries' withdrawal of traditional religious services to the mountain deity for a long time before the Old Juaben refugees' encounter with him, the deity was still perceived to be very powerful when the traditional priests from Old Juaben went to pay homage to him. It is alleged that the resident deity, through his traditional priest, promised to prosper and protect the new settlers whose traditional priests had recognized him, paid homage to him, re-enacted and re-visited the abandoned primal religious devotion or practice. The promise to bless the new settlers included their unsurpassed emergence into socio-economic, religio-cultural, administrative and political limelight beyond the imagination of the surrounding nations in the Eastern region which they had come to meet; specifically, Akyem Abuakwa, Akuapem and Krobo. They were also promised unrivalled military backing and victory over all their assailants.²⁵⁵

2.3.2 New Juaben Traditional Leaders' Annual Pilgrimage Rituals to *ƆboƆ Tabiri*: A Necessary Condition for the Continuous Fulfilment of Promises

The continuous fulfillment of *ƆboƆ Tabiri*'s promises to bless the New Juaben state was, however, contingent upon the satisfaction of one important condition by the New Juaben traditional leaders. The deity allegedly requested the traditional leaders to

²⁵⁴ Nana Yaw Annor Boateng II (New Juaben Nseneyehene) Interview, 13 March 2017, New Juaben Traditional Council, Koforidua.

²⁵⁵ Nana Yaw Annor Boateng II (New Juaben Nseneyehene) Interview, 13 March 2017, New Juaben Traditional Council, Koforidua.

embark on an annual pilgrimage to the mountain to offer him libation and a ram as sacrifice. Okyeame Amoh Boakye's description of the pilgrimage rituals and their importance to the New Juaben state are briefly presented:

The pilgrimage to the mountain takes place on the last Fofie of the year. The Paramount Chief, affectionately called *Daasebre*, and all his male traditional leaders are the pilgrims. It is a taboo for a female traditional leader to take part in it. Among the items taken along to the mountain are hen, a big ram, tubers of yam, bottles of schnapps, palm wine, vegetables, spices, fire wood and water. The pilgrimage is usually a very hazardous one. Upon reaching the spot on the mountain where the sacrifice takes place, *Daasebre* first gives the hen to *Banmuhene* who also throws her into a particular hole in the mountain. The giving of the hen symbolically announces to the mountain deity about the presence of the traditional leaders to offer annual sacrifice to him. If the hen does not come back from the hole into which it is thrown, it symbolizes the deity's readiness to accept the sacrifice of the leaders. Surprisingly, there is no historical record of the coming back of any hen thrown into the hole to signal the deity's unpreparedness and displeasure in the pilgrimage ritual.

After the hen has been given out, the *Okyeame* presents the ram to *Banmuhene* who performs libation with schnapps and then slaughters the sheep. The libation is always about the peace and prosperity – that is, total salvation – of the New Juaben people. A sumptuous soup is prepared with the mutton. The tubers of yam are also cooked. *Daasebre* is the one who serves each leader with the food. He does the service in his capacity as the Paramount Chief. The palm wine and the remaining bottles of schnapps are voluntarily enjoyed. No remnant of food or palm wine is brought home from the mountain. It is a taboo. After eating and drinking, *Daasebre* brings the rituals to a close and directs the leaders back home. This pilgrimage ritual also marks the commencement of the annual *Akwantukese* festival of the New Juaben people.²⁵⁶

The annual pilgrimage to *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* as briefly described above reveals several themes of religious implications and significance. These themes include the following: First, hard work and determination (with respect to the zeal and commitment with which the traditional leaders embark on the hazardous and difficult annual pilgrimage to the mountain). Second, leadership and service (with respect to the exemplary leadership of the *Omanhene* who, though a Paramount Chief, stoops down to serve his subjects with food on the mountain). Third, prayer and sacrifice (with respect to the centrality of libation prayer and the offering of animal sacrifice as integral parts of the pilgrimage rituals). Fourth, fellowship (with respect to the feasting, excitement and solidarity that

²⁵⁶ Okyeame Amoh Boakye (New Juaben) Interview, 1 March 2016, Koforidua.

characterize the pilgrimage rituals). Fifth, the exclusively male gender orientation of the pilgrims. These themes, in my opinion, are some of the significant identity markers of Akan primal religious tradition.

The promise of the mountain deity to bless the New Juaben state, on condition of the traditional leaders' recourse to annual pilgrimage rituals to him, must be understood and discussed against the backdrop of Akan primal religious worldview. Omenyo notes that the Akan primal religious worldview 'lies in the belief that the spiritual is immanent and impinges directly on the living. In other words, there is a strong belief that people are surrounded by hosts of spirit-beings – some good, some evil – which are able to influence the lives of the living for good or for ill.'²⁵⁷

This immediately means that in the Akan primal religious worldview, the ontology (that is, existence or reality) of spiritual forces is hardly contested. The hosts of spirit-beings, in the opinion of Geoffrey Parrinder and other scholars, are categorized in a descending order as follows: the Supreme God, deities or gods, ancestors and charms or amulets. Next after these entities, according to Kwame Gyekye, are humans and the physical world of natural objects and phenomena.²⁵⁸

The Akans' perception of the Supreme God is summarized by Omenyo as follows: He (the Supreme Being) is perceived to be:

An all-powerful creative force whose existence is unknown. He is regarded as the creator (*Obooadee*), and owner (*asaase wura*) of the world. He is thought to be immanent as well as imminent, thus he is believed to be present and active in the affairs of humans. Akans conceive of God as the preserver of the world, and he is known principally in terms of what he is believed to do for humankind. Thus there are such descriptions of God as giver of sun (*amowia*), giver of water (*amonsu*), giver of rain (*totrobonsu*), and the reliable one (*twereampon*). There are traditional names, attributes, myths, symbols, proverbs, greetings, and everyday sayings that together express God's omnipotence, omniscience,

²⁵⁷ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 26

²⁵⁸ Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p.16. See also Kwame Gyekye *African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Revised Edition) (Philadelphia, United States of America: Temple University Press, 1987), pp. 68-84.; Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 26

goodness, dependability, immortality and other beliefs in him. He himself is not generally worshipped directly; however. His help is invoked in times of crisis.... God is generally viewed as transcendent so he requires intermediaries through whom he functions and humankind also approaches him through these means – deities and ancestors.²⁵⁹

If the Supreme Being (*Onyankopon*) is the ultimate source of everything,²⁶⁰ then it is thoughtful to underscore that he is the one from whom the blessings of the people emanate through the deities.

Next in the hierarchical character of Akan primal religious cosmology are the deities. They are non-human spirits, some of which are personified in the form of *Abosom* (singular, *obosom*) who are viewed as children of God. Each has been given tasks to perform under God's control. The deities are believed to depict their reality in various physical or tangible forms such as water (*nsuobosom*), rocks and caves (*bosombuo*), house gods (*fiobosom*) and other natural objects. Generally, they are believed to provide remedies to social and personal problems as well as to reveal witches and to witness to the truth of an event. They are also believed to possess destructive powers.²⁶¹

Ɔ boɔ Tabiri, in the opinion of some of the New Juaben traditional leaders, is a deity through whom the Supreme Being's blessings flow to the entire New Juaben people as a result of the annual pilgrimage ritual on the mountain. In this sense, the mountain deity is thought to be an embodiment of God's abundant blessings to the people. The traditional leaders also believe that God, the Supreme Being, through the deity, punishes individuals in the state who do not endear themselves to God's admiration, pleasure and approval through morally and ethically appropriate behaviours. Such punishments, according to the leaders, include sudden or mysterious deaths, fatal accidents, chronic sickness, barrenness, impotency, miscarriages, unexplained loss of

²⁵⁹ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 26

²⁶⁰ Gyekye *African Philosophical Thought*, pp.70-71.

²⁶¹ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 27.

jobs, etc. Thus the deity epitomizes a monumental evidence of the Supreme Being who both blesses (in response to appropriate practices such as the leaders' annual pilgrimage rituals and the people's moral and ethical uprightness) and curses (as a result of the leaders' neglect of the annual pilgrimage rituals and the people's irresponsible or miscreant behaviours).²⁶² Even though the concept of causality would be considered in relative detail later in this study, it suffices now to indicate that in the Akan primal religious thought, causality leans heavily on the supernatural.²⁶³

Usually there are ritual experts who function as intermediaries between the deity and the devotees or clients who seek God's intervention in their existential circumstances through the deity. For the purpose of this work, it is imperative to examine the place and relevance of *Okomfo* Nana Afua Tabiri, a traditional priestess who functions as an intermediary between the deity and the devotees.

2.3.3 The *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* Shrine and the Institution of Traditional Priesthood Services in the New Juaben State through the calling and empowerment of *Ɔkomfo* Nana Afua Tabiri

The *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* shrine in the New Juaben Municipality, Koforidua, was established in August 1985, when the young Nana Afua Tabiri, then known and called Miss Lydia Enninful, aged seventeen (17) years, was reported mysteriously missing from the Seventh Day Adventist Middle School in Koforidua, where she was then a student. Traditionally, the African will resort to the supernatural to understand or unravel the reason behind any occurrence deemed mysterious in a family or to an individual. When this was done, it came to light that Miss Enninful had been mysteriously whisked away by some beings from a place called the Devic Kingdom or the land of dwarfs. It was,

²⁶² Nana Yaw Annor Boateng II (New Juaben Nseneyehene) Interview, 13 March 2017, New Juaben Traditional Council, Koforidua.

²⁶³ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 30.

however, predicted by the oracles that the young Enniful would return from the Devic Kingdom after twenty-one (21) days.

It must be made clear here that the deity, *Ɔboɔ Tabiri*, did not have any priest or priestess ever since the Akyems from Tafo identified and worked with him centuries ago, receiving guidance, counselling and hospitality from this mountain deity. As it was rightly predicted by the oracles, in the early hours of 6th of September, 1985, exactly three weeks after her mysterious disappearance, she mysteriously reappeared amidst pomp and pageantry in her resplendent clothes, meticulously put on her by some beings believed to be dwarfs. On her arrival, she, among other things, narrated her twenty-one day experience in the Devic Kingdom. She was mysteriously ‘called’ into the land of dwarfs to be initiated and trained into traditional priesthood. She also gave her new name as ***Okomfo*** Nana Afua Tabiri to indicate her new identity and role as a traditional priestess of Nana *Ɔboɔ Tabiri*. The powers bestowed on her were for healing all manner of diseases.

Again, for the second time Nana Afua Tabiri made another trip to the land of dwarfs to be tutored for eleven (11) days.²⁶⁴ Her eleven-day tutelage was to ‘empower’ her to acquire more knowledge on how to cure diverse diseases, eradicate evil and restore ecological and moral balance.

The traditional priestess made a third journey to the Devic Kingdom to be finally trained and fortified for seventy-five days (75). She ultimately returned carrying a Golden Stool, in fulfilment of a promise made to the New Juaben people by Nana *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* to bring peace, prosperity and harmony to the nation.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ ‘The land of dwarfs’, also known as ‘the Devic Kingdom’, is the sacred mountain called *Ɔboɔ Tabiri*, located in New Juabeng, Koforidua. See Brochure of the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* Shrine (1985-1995), pp.1-20.

²⁶⁵ Brochure of the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* Shrine (1985-1995), pp.1-20.



Figure 2.1: The portrait of *Ɔkomfo* Nana Afua Tabiri, the traditional priestess of *Ɔbo* Tabiri

As a full-fledged traditional priestess who acts as a medium for the deity, Nana Afua Tabiri, on sacred days such as *Awukudae* and *Fofie*, gets possessed by the deity to perform functions on his behalf. She helps the community ‘by communicating with meta-empirical beings on behalf of clients or devotees for the purposes of sacral mediation, prophecy, healing, exorcism, diagnosis, the restoration to wholeness of ill and disturbed persons and general pastoral care.’²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, pp.37-50; Cephas N. Omenyo, ‘African Religion’ in Stephen D. Glazier (ed.) *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions* (New York / London, Routledge, 2001), p.28; Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p.27.



Figure 2.2: *Ɔkomfo* Nana Afua Tabiri, in Kente cloth, and in a mood of possession by the mountain deity, *Ɔbo* Tabiri

All of this is to say that the traditional priestess occupies a very sensitive position in the traditional religiosity of the New Juaben citizens. Her conspicuous exclusion, on the basis of her feminine gender, from the New Juaben traditional leaders' annual pilgrimage to the mountain deity whom she serves as a traditional priestess, therefore, remains puzzling. Her exclusion, in my opinion, amounts to an organized annual religious pilgrimage to a deity without the deity's official spokesperson or mouthpiece.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed *Atwea Boɔ* and *Obɔɔ Tabiri* as some of the sacred mountains in Akan primal religious thought. The narratives of their discovery and identity as sacred mountains have been examined. Attempt has also been made to explore the history of the communities in which these sacred mountains are located, in order to provide some insights into the historical, religio-social, cultural, economic and political underpinnings of these sacred mountains. These sacred mountains are considered to be antecedents of Prayer Mountains in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity because some adherents of Akan primal religion seem to have identified and appropriated them as sacred spaces before Christians in Ghana embarked on pilgrimage to PMs. In that sense it is logical to contend that pilgrimage to sacred mountains in Akan primal religion is a sub-structure of pilgrimage to Prayer Mountains in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EVOLUTION OF PRAYER MOUNTAINS AS SACRED SPACES IN CONTEMPORARY GHANAIAI CHRISTIANITY

3.1 Introduction

The narrative of sacred mountains and their attendant pilgrimage attractions in Akan primal religion in chapter two of this work points, among other things, to the dominance of some spiritual or supernatural forces in those sacred mountains who orchestrate in some mysterious ways to call, initiate and empower traditional priests or priestesses and to attract devotees and pilgrims. The discourse on the evolution of prayer mountains as sacred spaces in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity, the focus of this chapter, is an account of the conversion of previously wild mountainous sites into sacred spaces for Christian prayer rituals. The discourse focuses on the historical narrative of prayer mountain phenomenon in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity, using Abasua Prayer Mountain and Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp as contextual examples or case studies.

The narrative and case study strategies adopted in this work are consistent with John W. Creswell's narrative research and case studies which are some of the strategies of qualitative research.²⁶⁷ 'Narrative research', Creswell writes, '[is] a form of inquiry in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives [or the particular phenomenon being investigated by the researcher]. This information is then retold or restoried by the researcher into a narrative chronology.'²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (2nd ed.) (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2003), pp. 13-15.

²⁶⁸ Creswell, *Research Design*, p. 15.

With respect to case studies, Creswell further indicates that ‘the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time.’²⁶⁹ Against the backdrop of the field data gathered from my respondents, I attempt to account for the unfolding of the selected prayer mountains in Ghanaian Christian setting. The account is preceded by an examination of the history of the communities within which the PMs are located. This, as already noted, is to provide some historical insights into the religio-social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds of those PMs.

3.2 History of Abasua community

The history of Abasua community is so inextricably linked to the history of the Asante people that there may not be a complete examination of the former without a brief historical review of the latter.²⁷⁰ There is actually no dearth of scholarly works on the history of the people of Asante.²⁷¹ D.E.K Amenumey, for instance, succinctly summarizes the origin of Asante as follows:

Asante was the largest and most powerful of the states to be established in the Gold Coast. Apart from what was added to it in the early nineteenth century, the Asante Empire had been created within about fifty years between the 1690s and 1750. But the foundations of the empire go back much further. Sometime between the fourteenth and the middle of the seventeenth centuries, a number of Akan families moved out of their homes in the basin of the rivers Pra and Ofin to the area between the Pra and the Oda. They selected a region where there were gold and kola nuts; at the same time it was the meeting point of important trade routes leading to Hausaland and Western Sudan. There they founded a number

²⁶⁹ Creswell, *Research Design*, p. 15.

²⁷⁰ Okyere, ‘Reconstructing sacred space’, pp. 27-46.

²⁷¹ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 8-11., Ivor Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), pp. 91-120., W. Walton Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti* (Vol. one) (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1964), pp. 181-208., Peter Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan* (Tema, Ghana: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1971), pp. 29 -34., Ernest E. Obeng, *Ancient Ashanti Chieftaincy* (Tema, Ghana: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1988), pp.1-69; Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, pp. 27-35.

of settlements very close to one another and in the neighbourhood of present-day Kumasi. The settlements were Kumawu, Tafo, Amakom, Kaase, etc. These settlements constituted Asantemanso, the nucleus from which Asante came to be created.²⁷²

The Asantes were very powerful ethnic group.²⁷³ In the course of time, however, their superiority and power were terribly challenged by the Akyems.²⁷⁴ The Akyems, famous for their military prowess, defeated and humiliated the Asantes by drowning their legendary King, Osei Tutu, in the River Pra.²⁷⁵ These intertribal wars and conquests and their associated migrations are perceived to have eventually resulted in peoples' quest for new settlements. One of such settlements is Abasua community, the place where APM is located.²⁷⁶

Abasua is a small community in the Nsuta Municipality in the Asante region of Ghana. Currently, it is one of the small communities in the Effiduase Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana. Current studies on the history of Abasua community are located in the context of the social, cultural, religious and political circumstances leading to the development of the community and the diverse experiences of the initial settlers.²⁷⁷

Oral tradition maintains that the first settler came to settle at Abasua in about 1692, long before Nana Osei Tutu acceded to the Kumasi stool in 1697.²⁷⁸ The first settler, in the opinion of my informants, was Nana Yaw Obogya.²⁷⁹ It is said that prior to his settlement, Nana Yaw Obogya and his sister, Nana Gyaaben were migrating from

²⁷² D.E.K Amenumey, *Ghana: A Concise History from Pre-Colonial Times to the 20th Century* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2011), pp. 49-51.

²⁷³ Amenumey, *Ghana*, pp. 51-54.

²⁷⁴ Emmanuel Doe Ziorklui, *Ghana: Nkrumah to Rawlings, Kufuor & Beyond: A Historical Sketch of some major Political events in Ghana from 1949 – 2004 (Vol. one, part one 1949 – 1960)* (Accra, Ghana: Emzed Books Centre, 2005), p. 14.

²⁷⁵ Ziorklui, *Ghana: Nkrumah to Rawlings, Kufuor & Beyond*, p.14.

²⁷⁶ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', pp. 27-35.

²⁷⁷ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', pp. 27-50.

²⁷⁸ The people interviewed on the history of Abasua community included Mr. Daniel Aboraa and Mr. Kofi Boakye. These people were interviewed on 12 August 2011 at Abasua.

²⁷⁹ The informants included Mr. Daniel Aboraa and Mr. Kofi Boakye. These people were interviewed on 12 August 2011 at Abasua.

Akyem- Ahwenease to Asante Mampong. Several factors could have precipitated their migration to Mampong; the desire to break family ties, outbreak of epidemics and the upsurge of other natural disasters. In the opinion of Ampaw-Asiedu, their migration was as a result of inter-tribal wars in the Akyem-Abuakwa area at that time.²⁸⁰ This is believed to be in the 17th century when the hegemony of Denkyira had culminated in wars and conquests at the Pra and Ofin basin and the overthrow of Adansi.²⁸¹ Another view upholds that the migration of the initial settlers was as a result of the influence of *Atwea Boɔ*, a very powerful mountain deity at Atwea, near Nsuta, who had ‘called’ Nana Obogya from Akyem Ahwenease to be initiated, trained and empowered by the deity as his ‘wife’ or traditional priest.²⁸²

On their way to Asante Mampong, Nana Obogya and her sister Nana Gyaaben allegedly reached Nsuta where, probably out of exhaustion, they decided to rest a little while under a certain tree. They meant to continue their journey afterwards. News about the arrival of these ‘strangers’ at the vicinity of Nsuta got to the then *ɔmanhene* (that is, the Paramount Chief) of Nsuta, Nana Danso Abeam. Owing to the prevalence of wars and conquests at that time and the possibility of invasion by other assailants, the *ɔmanhene* allegedly dispatched some of his subjects to inquire about the mission of the strangers. Customarily, the strangers ought to have first reported themselves to the *ɔmanhene* and his elders who would then inquire of their mission. They did not do that perhaps because they did not intend any longer stay at Nsuta which, at that time, was their transit point to Mampong.

When it was ascertained that Nana Obogya and her sister, Nana Gyaaben, did not mean any mischief at Nsuta but were innocent migrants to Mampong, Nana Danso

²⁸⁰ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.4.

²⁸¹ Addo-Fening, *Nana Otuo Siriboe II (Omanhene of Juaben- Asante)*, p. 9.

²⁸² Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, March 29, 2017, Abasua.

Abeam, the *omanhene* of Nsuta, out of hospitality, invited them to his palace. Among Africans, it was common in those days for stranded strangers to be invited home and acts of hospitality shown to them. Gyekye's comments on the hospitality of Africans justify the above claim:

Africans recognize the dignity of the human being and, in consequence, hold a deep and unrelenting concern for human welfare and happiness. ... the powers and attributes of the supernatural agents are [therefore] to be tapped and utilized for the welfare of humans in *this* world. ... The thoughts, actions, art, and institutions of the African people are replete with expressions of concern for human welfare and the importance of the human being. Recognition of the value of humanity is intrinsically linked with recognition of the unity of all people, whether or not they are biologically related. This deep appreciation for humanity is reflected in such communal structures as the clan, the extended family, and complex networks of social relationships and the African custom of opening one's door to strangers and showing them acts of generosity and hospitality.²⁸³

Gyekye's opinion is a reflection of the African's normal positive response or attitude towards a person whose behaviour is right and socially acceptable. Thus the African will oftentimes be hospitable to a stranded stranger or person believed to be harmless. The opposite will be true for a stranger thought or perceived by the African to be wicked or harbouring some mischievous intentions. To such miscreants, doors would quickly be shut and acts of generosity and hospitality completely denied. Even though Gyekye is commended for his brilliant overview of the hospitality of the African, he is silent on the African's likely negative attitude towards strangers believed or considered to be miscreants and therefore social misfits.

When they were at the palace of the *omanhene*, it was said that Nana Obogya and her sister, Nana Gyaaben, were not found to be miscreants; rather they endeared themselves to the admiration of the Paramount Chief. Nana Gyaaben was said to be an exceptionally beautiful and attractive young lady while her brother, Nana Obogya was physically healthy, industrious warrior and an experienced hunter. Because of these

²⁸³ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1998), p. 23.

appreciable attributes of the ‘strangers’, the *ɔmanhene* allegedly decided to retain them in his palace with the intention of permanently settling them in his traditional area. By this decision, the Paramount Chief indirectly diverted the course of the ‘strangers’.

It was said that after sometime the *ɔmanhene* fell in love with Nana Gyaaben and subsequently married her. The *Dwumakwaahene* of Nana Danso Abeam (the Paramount Chief), was allegedly mandated to have oversight responsibility of Nana Gyaaben, the wife of the Paramount Chief. The *Dwumakwaahene* had the duty of ensuring the security or safety of the King’s wife. Thus, he sought to prevent her from being usurped or snatched out from the King.

It is said that Nana Gyaaben’s brother, Nana Obogya, undertook some of his hunting expeditions in some of the nearby forests in the Nsuta traditional area. One of the forests in which he is said to have carried out these hunting expeditions was *Yaase*. This is the place where *Yaase boɔ*, one of the mountains of Abasua community, is situated. It is said that Nana Obogya admired the serenity of the place and wanted it for a new settlement. As a result, he was believed to have asked Nana Danso Abeam, to allow him to use that forest area as a place for his new settlement. The *ɔmanhene* allegedly gave in to his request and Nana Obogya left the King’s palace at Nsuta to settle at *Yaase*.

It is said that when the first settler came to *Yaase* to settle there, he found a river which took its source from the *Atwea Boɔ*.²⁸⁴ He is said to have prayed and solicited spiritual assistance from the river in the following Twi prayers: *Nana, m’abesoɛ wo oo, enti boa me na deɛ meye wo ha biara nye yie*, meaning ‘Nana (referring to the river), I have come to you as a settler, therefore help me to be prosperous in all my undertakings here’²⁸⁵. If the sacredness of a space is defined by the belief in the presence of a

²⁸⁴ *Atwea boɔ*, according to Mr. Daniel Aboraa and Mr. Kofi Boakye, was a sacred mountain in the vicinity of Abasua community. Interview, 12 August 2011, Abasua. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.3.

²⁸⁵ Mr. Daniel Aboraa, Interview, 12 August 2011.

supernatural reality in that space and the possibility of human interaction with that reality through rituals, then by the presence of the river and Nana Obogya's prayer to it for assistance, the sacredness of the place was implied.

This prayer underscored the traditional religious orientation of Nana Obogya. He believed that the river was a deity in whom supernatural power resided. It could also be inferred from the prayer that he believed in the magnanimity of deities, as far as their ability to provide material and spiritual blessings were concerned. This view is sustained by R.I.J Hackett as follows: 'In traditional pre-colonial societies, it was common for people to associate the deities with prosperity [because it] was believed that a harmonious relationship with the spiritual forces was necessary to ensure good health, long life and prosperity and to ensure that one's destiny was not altered for the worse.'²⁸⁶

As the first settler of the place, Nana Yaw Obogya customarily became the first traditional ruler (that is, the Chief) of *Yaase*. It is said that the *ɔmanhene* of Nsuta allowed his wife, Nana Gyaaben, to assist her brother, Nana Obogya, in his administration as the traditional leader of the place. She was, thus to be the *ɔbaapanin* (that is, the Eldest Woman) of the place. It is believed that the *ɔmanhene* formed a stool for his wife and named it Gyaaben *akonwa* (that is, Gyaaben's stool). The stool was the symbol of Nana Gyaaben's authority and recognition as the *ɔbaapanin* of the place.²⁸⁷

The order of succession of some of the Chiefs who came after Nana Yaw Obogya is as follows:

1. Nana Yaw Boakye. He was a nephew to Nana Obogya.

²⁸⁶ R. I. J. Hackett, 'The Gospel of Prosperity in West Africa', Roberts, R. (ed.). *Religion and the Transformation of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 208. C.f. Emmanuel Anim, 'The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination', *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, XVII (2009), P. 34. Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, p. 162.

²⁸⁷ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p. 4. C.f. Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan*, p. 26., and Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, p. 91.

2. Nana Gyan Hwedie. He was also Nana Obogya's nephew. About five other chiefs came after Nana Gyan Hwedie.
3. Nana Yaw Aboraa (the ninth chief)
4. Nana Kwasi Bresa (the tenth chief)
5. Nana Boakyerε (the eleventh chief)
6. Nana Kwasi Marfo (the twelfth chief)
7. Nana Kwame Owusu (the thirteenth chief)
8. Nana Wiredu, also known as Nana Obogya II (the fourteenth chief at the time of this research). He was installed in 2010. The *ɔbaapanin* at Abasua at the time of this work was Nana Akosua Achiaa.²⁸⁸

The relative scanty information on the order of succession of the Elderly Women (*mmaampanimfoɔ*, plural of *ɔbaapanin*) at Abasua is due to the inaccessibility of the people from whom I could elicit those pieces of information. This limitation could, however, engage the attention of future researchers who may investigate in relative detail the history of the institution of chieftaincy at Abasua.

In the course of time, it is said that the river to whom Nana Yaw Obogya allegedly prayed for assistance became known as *m'abesoε wo*, an Asante Twi expression which literally means 'I have come to you as a settler, a stranger or a sojourner. It is said that *m'abesoε wo* later became corrupted as Abasua river. The corruption eventually affected *Yaase*; the name of Nana Obogya's new settlement. The result was Abasua community. The implication is that *Yaase* forest area has also been reconstructed. It has been reconstructed from its former identities as hunting and farming sites into Abasua community; a new area for human settlement or habitation.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Mr. Daniel Aboraa, Interview, 12 August 2011, Abasua community.

²⁸⁹ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', p. 41.

3.2.1 Discovering *Krɔbo Boɔ* as a Sacred Space: The Evolution of Abasua Prayer Mountain in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity

Abasua Prayer Mountain is located at Abasua under the jurisdiction of Nsuta Traditional Council. Oral tradition²⁹⁰ and participant observation indicate that Abasua community is surrounded by four mountains. These are *Krɔbo boɔ*, *Atwea boɔ*, *Yaase boɔ* and *Kompi boɔ*. *Atwea boɔ*, as already seen, was a very powerful mountain deity whose influence and potency was believed to be the source of attraction to many traditional religious devotees and clients from diverse backgrounds to Abasua community. In that sense, *Atwea boɔ* was the pivot of the community's traditional or indigenous spirituality.²⁹¹

Krɔbo boɔ, also referred to as *Krɔbo Kwasi Bediatuo*, was a powerful mountain deity on which warriors, political leaders and many other people tramped to for ritual bathing and mystical insulation against potential attacks especially, from malevolent forces and gun shots.²⁹² As a mountain deity, it had a traditional priest by name Kwabena Adu.²⁹³ He did not only function as the mouth piece of the mountain deity, but also the medium through whom clients could reach the deity with their concerns.

Apart from this Akan traditional religious significance of the mountain, it was the venue for some other social engagements or activities. Ampaw-Asiedu reports that between the year 1959 and 1965, Lebanese and Syrian traders used to come to the top of the mountain as tourists. Each time they came, Kwame Boɔ, a citizen of Abasua, assisted

²⁹⁰ The following were some of the people interviewed about the history of Abasua Prayer Mountain: The Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, Superintendent Minister of Atonsua Circuit, Effiduasi Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana, 19 October 2010; Mr. Daniel Appiah-Aboraa, a retired educationist and a royal native of Abasua community, 13 August 2011; Mr. Kofi Boakye, a carpenter and a royal native of Abasua community, 13 August 2011; and Madam Adwoa Apemasu, a native of Abasua community, 13 August 2011.

²⁹¹ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', pp. 47-50.

²⁹² Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2017, Abasua Community.

²⁹³ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2017, Abasua Community.

them to climb the mountain. The tourists ate, drank, made merry and took photographs of the beautiful scenery. It is said that there was a small cave at the tip of the mountain which overlook Abasua community. In the cave was a container in which a notebook was kept. Visitors or tourists who patronized the mountain wrote their name, place of birth, time of arrival on the Mountain and time of departure. Unfortunately, in 1989, the container and the notebook disappeared from the top of the Mountain.²⁹⁴

The other two mountains were on the periphery, with respect to people's belief in their religious potency and influence. A Christian Minister's discovery²⁹⁵ of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred mountain where God's presence dwells²⁹⁶ or sacred space for Christian prayer rituals, is believed to have resulted in the current paradigmatic shift of the people's²⁹⁷ religious focus from *Atwea boɔ* to *Krɔbo boɔ*. The people's belief in the potency of *Atwea boɔ* has drastically waned in favour of *Krɔbo boɔ*. The words of one of the citizens of Abasua community, Madam Adwoa Apemasu, confirmed this: Akan traditional religion, which used to dominate and overtly describe the religious life of Abasua community, has now given way to Christianity.²⁹⁸ This shift of the people's religious focus, to a large extent, is due to the discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as an ideal place for prayer, worship and miracles.²⁹⁹ The discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* and the subsequent re-appropriation of the site by Christian pilgrims are the basis for the alteration in the site's identity from *Krɔbo boɔ* to Abasua Prayer Mountain.³⁰⁰ Okyere has examined the

²⁹⁴ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.6.

²⁹⁵ Rev Abraham Osei-Asibey, a Methodist Minister, is believed to have discovered *Krɔbo boɔ* in February, 1965.

²⁹⁶ See Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea* (cover page).

²⁹⁷ These people include the clients who used to consult *Atwea boɔ* for assistance.

²⁹⁸ For a good discussion on Primal Religions as preparatory grounds for the spread of Christianity in Africa, see Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, pp. 20-33.

²⁹⁹ Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 14 August 2011, Abasua community.

³⁰⁰ Okyere, 'Reconstructing sacred space', p.13.

discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* as a prayer mountain in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.³⁰¹ Aspects of his work are, however, critically borrowed in this present study.

The late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey discovered *Krɔbo boɔ* as a sacred space in 1965.³⁰² At that time, the traditional priest of the mountain deity had died.³⁰³ The demise of the priest, in the opinion of Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, had a lot of ramifications on the Abasua community's Akan traditional religiosity. First, it implied the absence of the deity's spokesperson and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of clients having their concerns directly addressed by the deity. Second, it indicated an abrupt curtailment of sacrifices or religious rituals offered by the devotees to periodically activate and reinforce the deity's potency. This is because the physical presence of the traditional priest (being the medium between the devotees and the deity) was very imperative for the validity and recognition of sacrifices offered to the deity.³⁰⁴

It is said that prior to the discovery, the late Osei Asibey had been transferred from the Sunyani Circuit to the Asante Effiduasi Circuit of the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG) as the Superintendent Minister in 1963.³⁰⁵ The then Effiduasi Circuit was a vast area since it extended to the Northern Region of Ghana.³⁰⁶ The Circuit included Konongo, Achinakrom (around the Lake Bosomtwe), Asante Mampong, Atebubu, Wioso, Yeji, Ejura-Sekyeredumase, Asokore and Dwaben.³⁰⁷

Oral accounts about the late Rev. Osei Asibey's discovery of the site as a sacred space are characterized by several nuances. For example, Owusu-Ansah, citing The Rt. Rev. Samuel Agyemang Kwakye (former Bishop of Effiduasi Diocese of the MCG),

³⁰¹ Okyere, 'Reconstructing sacred space', pp. 58-69.

³⁰² Very Rev. Isaac Yaw Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. C.f. Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain*, p. 11., Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.4.

³⁰³ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2017, Abasua Community.

³⁰⁴ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2017, Abasua Community.

³⁰⁵ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p. 4.

³⁰⁶ Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain*, p 11.

³⁰⁷ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.4

maintains that the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey was returning from a pastoral trip to the Afram Plains. When he reached Atwea, the car with which they were travelling suddenly stopped when they got to the Abasua junction. It is said that when the car was put into reverse gear, it went backwards but when it was in the forward gear, the car would not move. At that moment, something dawned on late Rev. Asibbey to go to Krɔbo boɔ, one of the four mountains in front of him.³⁰⁸

This account sharply differs from what I gleaned from the Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, who claimed he was with the late Rev. Osei Asibbey at the time of the PM's discovery. According to the Very Rev. Boamah, in 1965, the Asante Effiduasi District Education Office was located at Asante Mampong. The late Rev. Osei Asibbey was travelling to Mampong to attend an official assignment in his capacity as the Local Manager of Methodist Schools. Mr. Yao Boamah (now the Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah whom I interviewed) claimed that he was the driver of the Effiduasi Circuit car in which the late Rev. Osei Asibbey was travelling. Upon reaching Banko, one of the towns in the Effiduasi Circuit, the late Rev. Osei Asibbey allegedly saw the Krɔbo boɔ from afar and asked whether it was possible for people to go there. When they reached the Atwea community which was on their way to Mampong, the late clergyman was said to have been moved by an unusual urge to tell the driver to stop. The Very Rev. Boamah maintains that the late clergyman felt insistently drawn to the top of the mountain. It was said that 'Later in a chat with him, he (The Rev. Osei Asibbey), confessed, "My heart was strangely warmed when I encountered the mountain."'”³⁰⁹

Based on this strange warmth and the inner urge of Rev. Osei Asibbey, they decided to go to Abasua community to inquire from the traditional leaders about the possibility of going to the top of the mountain. They decided to do this before continuing

³⁰⁸ Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain*, p 11.

³⁰⁹ Very Rev. Isaac Yaw Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.5.

their journey to Mampong. When they reached Abasua community, it is said that they contacted the then chief, Nana Kwasi Marfo, about the possibility of visiting the top of the mountain. The chief's response was that it was possible since some European tourists had been using the site for relaxation and merry-making during summer holidays. On the basis of this response and the fact that Rev. Osei Asibbey was on official assignment, they continued their journey to Mampong, and rescheduled to come back to Abasua after two weeks.³¹⁰ One of the people interviewed disclosed that Rev. Osei Asibbey and his driver reached Mampong at about 3.00 pm, but the meeting which he was attending had not yet started until he got there.³¹¹

The differences between these two accounts basically lie in two major issues: the direction of the late Rev. Osei Asibbey and the presence of what Benjamin W. Warfield referred to as '*the supernatural act*'.³¹² In the first account, the direction of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey was that of a journey from Afram Plains in the Eastern Region of Ghana to Effiduasi, where he had been posted. In the second account, however, his direction was that of a journey from Effiduasi to Asante Mampong. Given the vastness of the Effiduasi Circuit at that time, and the Minister's duties (which included frequent pastoral visitation),³¹³ it can be contended that the late Rev. Minister's alleged pastoral trip to Afram Plains (in the first account) looks quite plausible.

On the other hand, by virtue of his office as the Superintendent Minister of the Effiduasi Circuit, the late Rev. Osei Asibbey necessarily became the Manager of Methodist Schools within his Circuit. Moreover, the Effiduasi Circuit at that time

³¹⁰ Very Rev. Isaac Yaw Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

³¹¹ Taller, a native of Abasua community disclosed this during an interview he granted the researcher at Abasua on 14 August 2011.

³¹² The supernatural in this context refers to matters and experiences connected with forces that could not be explained by science. For a good discussion on 'Christian Supernaturalism', see Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology* (USA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), pp. 25-46. (Emphasis original).

³¹³ *The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana (2000 Revised Edition)* (Accra: The Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana, 2001), pp. 75-76.

extended even beyond Asante Mampong, where the District Education Office was located. The implication is that the late clergyman's alleged travelling to Mampong to attend an education-related meeting looks more plausible to me. In fact, the more plausibility of the late Rev. Minister's direction, as found in the second account, lies in the notion that the Very Isaac Yao Boamah, from whom this information was elicited, claimed to be an eye-witness to the journey of the late clergyman; he claimed to be the driver of the Circuit car in which they were travelling. The Rt. Rev. Agyemang Kwakye, from whom the information about the journey of the late Rev. Osei Asibbey was gleaned (in the first account), was not an eye-witness to the events. As a result, his account could not be more authentic and plausible than that of the Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, who claimed to be an eye-witness to the events.

The second difference lies in the presence of the supernatural reality that characterised the Rev. Minister's encounter with the mountain. In the first account, The Rt. Rev. Samuel Agyemang Kwakye was cited by Owusu-Ansah as having said that the Rev. Osei Asibbey was returning from a pastoral trip at Afram Plains. The car with which they were travelling suddenly stopped when they got to Atwea junction. When the car was put in the reverse gear, it moved backwards, but when put in the forward gear, the car would not move when the late clergyman discovered the Krobo boo at Atwea junction.

In the second account, the late clergyman allegedly saw the mountain from afar when they reached Banko while on their way to Asante Mampong. The irresistible sensation and inner urge of the late clergyman to go to the mountain allegedly became heightened when they got to Atwea community. When they reached Atwea community which was on their way to Mampong, the Very Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey was said to have been moved by an unusual urge to tell the driver of the car to stop. According to the

Very Rev. Boamah, the late clergyman unusually felt drawn to the top of the mountain. This unusual sensation and inner urge might have culminated in the late clergyman's latter confession that 'My heart was strangely warmed when I encountered the mountain from a distance.'

Given the above nuances of the presence of the supernatural reality in the two accounts, my contention is that the eye-witness account of the Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah is more plausible and relatively more authentic to the account of the Rt. Rev. Samuel Agyemang Kwakye.

I am, however, not unaware of the potential difficulty the alleged supernatural realities may pose to skeptics of the supernatural phenomena or those whose judgments of experiences are almost always scientifically motivated. The supernatural realities in the two accounts, in the opinion of such skeptics, may easily be relegated to the backdrop of natural occurrences or experiences without any link at all to the metaphysics. For instance, the sudden stoppage of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey's car, the backward movement of the car when the gear lever was in the reverse position and the car's stationary position when the gear lever was in the forward position, may be scientifically explained in the context of a mechanical or electrical fault in the car. Moreover, the claim that the late clergyman was driven to the mountain through an irresistible inner urge may have no allusion whatsoever to the supernatural, but perhaps a manifestation of the psychological definition of religion as 'a universal obsessive neurosis' or 'some kind of profound inner experience.'³¹⁴ Thus the allusion to the supernatural reality as a major source of the *Krɔbo boɔ*'s discovery and sacredness may be rationally contested.

³¹⁴ James L. Cox, *Expressing the Sacred: An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion* (Harare, Zimbabwe: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1996), p. 4.

Despite these contentions, I unreservedly maintain that the alleged supernatural occurrences that characterized the late clergyman's discovery of the *Krɔbo boɔ* cannot be completely relegated to the background. The alleged supernatural occurrences are plausible because they have biblical antecedents. They are therefore not new. One of these biblical antecedents of a supernatural attraction to a sacred space was Moses' encounter with the burning bush.³¹⁵ In Exodus 3:2 -3, it is said: 'And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."'

From the above biblical antecedent, I can contend that both Moses and Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey *felt* drawn to their respective sacred sites because of what they *saw*. Moses saw a burning bush that was not consumed and the late clergyman allegedly saw *Krɔbo boɔ*, believed to be a mountain of God's presence.³¹⁶

3.2.1.1 The Maiden Visit to *Krɔbo boɔ* and an Encounter with the Supernatural

It must be recalled that when the late Rev. Osei Asibbey and his driver first visited the chief and other elders of Abasua, the late clergyman promised to go back two weeks later in order to be led to the top of the mountain for religious purposes. When the time was due, the late clergyman, the Catechist J.M. Quartey who hailed from Akuapem Mampong but was in charge of the Sekyere Methodist Society of the MCG, Mr. Isaac Yao Boamah who was the driver and also the Circuit Steward and Mr. Brefo, the Caretaker of Banko Society of the MCG set off to meet the chief and elders of Abasua on the possibility of visiting the top of the mountain.

³¹⁵ For details, see Exodus 3:1 – 10.

³¹⁶ (Emphases mine).

Following their meeting with the chief, Nana Kwasi Marfo, and some elders of Abasua (some of whom were Kwasi Boɔ, Yaw Denteh and Kwame Kwayie), the late pastor and his men were advised by the chief of the community to go back to Effiduase to adequately prepare and come back to be taken to the top of the mountain another time.³¹⁷ This directive of the Chief was not to be literally understood or interpreted. The directive underscored the need for the visitors to observe some relevant community entry protocols. Among the Akan or Asante people of Ghana, a chief's instruction to a client³¹⁸ to go back and adequately prepare and come back later can have several implications. First, it can imply that the client should go and come back with either money or alcoholic beverage (wine) or, sometimes both. The money or the wine would be given to the chief and his elders as a motivation or as a customary requirement. It can also imply that the client should go back and rethink about the possible ramifications of his or her decision to embark on a venture which warrants engagement of the services of the chief or his elders. Here, the chief would want to ascertain the client's preparedness to be responsible for the outcome of his or her decision.

It is said that the late pastor agreed and so in February 1965, the first visit was scheduled. Two hunters from the community were delegated by the chief to lead the Rev. Minister and his team to the top of the mountain. It is said that before they departed, two bottles of schnapps were presented to the chief by the Effiduasi party and a farewell libation prayer³¹⁹ was said to dispatch them. When the *ɔkyeamee* (linguist) finished the libation prayer, the walking to the top of the mountain started around 10:30am. They were believed to have gone with a pot of water and the pastor was given a walking stick,

³¹⁷ Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, pp.7-8.

³¹⁸ A client in this context is anyone who approaches a chief or queen to solicit his or her assistance.

³¹⁹ For a good discussion on 'the pouring of libation' and its related problem for the African Christian, see Joseph Osei-Bonsu, *The Inculturation of Christianity in Africa: Antecedents and Guidelines from the New Testament and the Early Church* (Berlin, Germany: Peter Lang, 2005), pp.10-12.

whilst the hunters had their guns loaded. The others followed closely. The journey is said to have taken them about one hour, forty- five minutes to complete.

When they got to the top of the mountain, the two hunters waited at the outskirts of the forest reserve, whilst the late pastor and his three friends continued to the flat top of the mountain. It is said that when they got to the top of the mountain, the pastor immediately stepped forward and began to pray. In the course of his prayer, the Very Rev. Boamah indicates that the weather suddenly changed into a violet colour and the pastor was allegedly enveloped in a very thick cloud, reminiscent of the story of Jesus' transfiguration in the Bible. The other three members of the team who were looking on were frightened but kept this to themselves. When he finished praying, he asked his three friends about what had happened but none could answer him. Later on, when the issue of the cloud was revealed to him by the other three friends, the pastor confirmed that he had also heard a voice from the clouds assuring him of God's presence on the mountain. From that day onwards, that spot became an important point on the top of the mountain.³²⁰ The pastor is said to have erected a wooden cross at that place to designate its special religious importance.

³²⁰ Very Rev. Isaac Yao Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.8.



Figure 3.1: The late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey and Mr. (now Very Rev.) Isaac Yao Boamah

It could be observed that the phenomenon of the clouds, which allegedly enveloped the late pastor in the presence of his three friends on the mountain, is reminiscent of Jesus' transfiguration experience in the New Testament (Matt. 17:1ff.; Mk. 9:2ff.; Lk. 9:28ff.; II Pet.1:16-18). On the day of his transfiguration, Jesus Christ took his three closest disciples, Peter, James and John with him to a high mountain to pray.

And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" – not knowing what he said. As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen;

listen to him!” And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.³²¹

Thus on the basis of Mircea Eliade’s sacred space paradigm (that is, *hierophanic* and *theophanic* events³²²), the sacredness of Krɔbo ɔɔ and the mountain of Jesus’ transfiguration are obviously accentuated. The *hierophanic* event, in Eliade’s scheme, involves a direct manifestation on earth of a deity or a supernatural reality. The *hierophanic* event on the two mountaintop experiences can, among others, be the sudden appearance of the clouds.

Writing on the significance of the clouds in Jesus’ transfiguration experience, Babajide comments that ‘In the [Old Testament], clouds often reveal or conceal God’s glory.’³²³ He further indicates that the cloud that enveloped Jesus and his disciples on the mountain of Jesus’ transfiguration served to conceal the glory that had been momentarily revealed.³²⁴ However, the cloud that appeared on the Krɔbo ɔɔ, in my opinion, served to reveal God’s glory on the mountain. This is because the late Rev. Asibbey claimed that the cloud was accompanied by what was perceived to be a heavenly attestation of God’s presence on the mountain. In that sense, the cloud could be a visible manifestation of the invisible God, just as fire symbolizes the presence of God in Exodus 19:18.

The *theophanic* event, on the other hand, is when somebody receives a message from a deity and interprets it for others. In the context of Jesus’ transfiguration and the late Rev. Asibbey’s prayer on the Krɔbo ɔɔ, the *theophanic* event could also be the supernatural voice they heard from the clouds which enveloped them. In the case of Jesus’ transfiguration experience, a voice believed to be God’s confirmation of Jesus’ divine personality was heard. In that voice, according to Babajide, the Father (God)

³²¹ Luke 9:29 – 36 (Revised Standard Version)

³²² Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 20-27.

³²³ Babajide, ‘Mark’, p.1185.

³²⁴ Babajide, ‘Mark’, p.1185.

corroborated Jesus' words and deeds and announced the only appropriate response from humans: *Listen to him!*³²⁵ In the case of the late pastor's experience, it must be recalled that he claimed to have heard a voice assuring him of God's presence on the mountain.

Since interpretation of a message received from a deity formed a major component of Eliade's *theophanic* event, my argument is that the interpreters of the message (or voice) believed to have come from God could be some of the eye-witnesses to the two supernatural scenes. Given that the vision of the transfiguration had been revealed only to the trio (that is, Peter, James and John), Jesus told them to keep it a secret until after his resurrection (Mark 9:9). But as they descended the mountain, the three kept discussing the subject (Mark 9:10). In the case of Rev. Asibbey's experience, it is rational for me to assume that the eye-witnesses themselves could interpret what they had seen to other people. Their interpretation of what they had witnessed on the mountain, which indicated the sacredness of the place, could be a justification for the appropriation of the mountain as a pilgrimage site by the *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* (Joy in Christ Group).

3.2.1.2 *Kristomu Anigye Kuo*: the pioneers of pilgrim movements to *Krɔbo boɔ*

Oral tradition indicates that *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* (Joy in Christ Group) was the first organised group of people to go to *Krɔbo boɔ* as pilgrims, after the discovery of the place as a sacred space.³²⁶ This group, according to the Very Rev. Boamah, was formed by the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey. Available oral and written records seem to indicate that the Rev. Asibbey formed the group wherever he was posted to serve the Church. Omenyo, for instance, identifies *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* as having been formed by the late Rev. Osei Asibbey when he (Rev. Asibbey) was the Minister-in-charge at Tafo

³²⁵ Babajide, 'Mark', p.1185. (Emphasis original).

³²⁶ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

Methodist Church in Kumasi.³²⁷ Other records indicate that he had started a prayer group (probably, *Kristomu Anigye Kuo*) at Sunyani before he was posted to Effiduase Circuit in 1963.³²⁸ If these are true, then it is not a surprise that upon his transfer to Effiduase Circuit in 1963, the Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey decided to introduce his *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* to that place also.

It was a group of Christians that sought to renew the spiritual fervour of the Church through Bible studies, prayer, singing of hymns and lyric. The group also sought to empower the church for evangelism and church planting. It consisted of male and female Christians who felt called by God to use Bible studies, prayer, hymns and lyric as instruments of renewing the church.³²⁹ He therefore assembled all lyric singers in the Circuit. Among them were Mr. Edward Mensah from Effiduase, Mr. Seth Akromah and Madam Comfort Akromah from Bodwease. Others included Madam Elizabeth Amankwa and Madam Afua Ataa who were natives of Asekyerewa. He also included Local Preachers in the group. Among them were Mr. Isaac Yao Boamah, Mr. Brenya, Mr. J. A. Achampong, Mr. M. A. Agyei- Boadi, Mr. Samuel Gyebi Ababio, Mr. Kwabena Ameyaw Boateng (Now the late Very Rev. Kwabena Ameyaw Boateng) and Mr. Amankwa Boafo.³³⁰ Other interested people later joined the group. They included the Very Rev Abayie Sarpong and the late Very Rev. Dr. Sarpong Danquah.

The maiden meeting of the group was held at Effiduase. The group met once every month at one of the societies for fellowship. It met again at another society in the following month. This practice was rotated from society to society. The group visited places where there were no Methodist Churches. Through the instruments of lyric singing, prayer, dawn broadcast and other evangelistic activities, many Methodist

³²⁷ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 158.

³²⁸ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

³²⁹ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

³³⁰ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

Churches were established. It is said that by this routine rotational programme, about eleven (11) Societies³³¹ were established by Rev. Osei-Asibey and the *Kristomu Anigye Kuo*, between 1963 and 1969. These Societies included Nsuta, Adumakwae, Bomeng, Akrofonso, Asamang, Agona –Akrofonso, Odumase and Jamase.³³²

It is worth noting that the group attributed its laurels in evangelism and other spiritual renewal activities to its regular pilgrimage to *Krɔbo boɔ*.³³³ This is because whenever the group embarked on a pilgrimage to the mountain, its activities over there had always been characterised by miracles, healing and deliverance and other supernatural manifestations.³³⁴ The site's present name, APM, is believed to have emerged as a result of the group's regular pilgrimage to the mountain for prayer rituals.

When the Rev. Osei-Asibey was transferred to Wenchi in 1969, the late Rev. Solomon Kwasi Debrah replaced him. The group was meeting occasionally. However, in 1970, Mr. Isaac Yao Boamah, the secretary of the group, left the Circuit work to work with the State Transport Corporation. He was also replaced by one Mr. Brenya who was the Caretaker of Sekyere Society of the MCG. Unfortunately, the group grew weaker and weaker and eventually died off by the late 1980s. The implication is that the group utilised APM as a pilgrimage site for more than twenty years before its dissolution. In all these pilgrimage activities, it is said that other non-Methodists who had heard of the place's spiritual significance also utilised the PM for religious activities.

I was an eye-witness to the influx of pilgrims from other parts of the world to the PM. From 27th to 30th June, 2009, the researcher met people who claimed to have come

³³¹ The Society is the Local organisation of the Methodist Church, meeting as one congregation for public worship, and organised into Classes under the supervision of the Leaders' Meeting. The Society consists of the Junior Members and Full Members, who are members of the Methodist Church. C.f. *The Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana*. p.86.

³³² Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. C.f. Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p.14.

³³³ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

³³⁴ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi. Some of the miraculous deeds would be considered when discussing 'Miracles on the PM.'

from Italy, Senegal and America to the PM as pilgrims. These foreign pilgrims heard of the PM through the media and their Ghanaian friends / relatives who usually visit the place.³³⁵ Moreover, since 2010 the PM has been the venue for the biannual Connexional Prayer Convention of the MCG. The first part of the 2012 segment of the Prayer Convention under the theme: “Fan into Flame the Gift of God in You” (2Timothy 1:6), held from February 28 to March 3 on the PM, for example, attracted more than four thousand pilgrims.³³⁶ The second part of the Prayer Convention is in August each year. Similarly, the PCG has its site (i.e., Camp Eight) as the venue for its biannual Prayer Retreat. The second segment of their 2011 Prayer Retreat under the theme: “Breaking the Protocol of Satan”, held in August, attracted about five thousand pilgrims.³³⁷

The pilgrimage to the PM, in my opinion, is due to the pilgrims’ perception of the site’s sacredness. This confirms the assertion of Park that ‘Pilgrimage represents the main physical manifestation of the abiding pull of such sacred places, sometimes involving vast numbers of people travelling by various means from around the world.’³³⁸

3.2.1.3 Other Prayer Camps and Christian Ministries on the mountain

One of the justifications for the sacredness of *Krɔbo boɔ* is the upsurge of other Prayer Camps (PCs) and Christian Ministries (CMs) on the mountain. In addition to Camp Three (CT) believed to be the site where the late Rev. Osei Asibbey was engulfed

³³⁵I am aware that the biannual Connexional Prayer Conference of the MCG is sometimes reported or advertised in the print and electronic media in Ghana. The print media include posters, flyers and the MCG’s quarterly magazine, *The Christian Sentinel*. For an example of a report on the Connexional Prayer Conference at the PM, see *The Christian Sentinel* 19 (2010), p. 20. The electronic media include radio and television. The popular ones the MCG uses to announce its Prayer Conference are Peace FM and TV3, private radio and television stations respectively, both based in Accra, the capital of Ghana.

³³⁶ I was a participant observer at the Prayer Conference. The Director of Evangelism, Mission and Renewal of the Methodist Church Ghana, the Very Rev. Adu Boateng, on 2 March 2012, disclosed the number of pilgrims who attended the February 2012 Prayer Conference on the Mountain.

³³⁷ I was a participant observer at the Prayer Conference. Revs. Asare Amoah and Kofi Antwi, Ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, disclosed the number of pilgrims during an interview they granted the researcher on 12 August 2011 at Abasua Prayer Mountain (Camp Eight).

³³⁸ Park, *Religion and geography*, p. 22.

in a cloud when he was praying, the present writer could count about nine other established PCs and CMs or churches on the mountain. It was observed that almost all the founders of the Camps or Ministries were men who had, for quite a long time, patronised or utilized CT, the prayer camp of the MCG. Camp Three, the premier prayer camp on the mountain, is believed to have been ‘the spiritual power house’ for those who have established their prayer camps and Christian Ministries. For instance, Pastor Joseph Boaheng, the founder of Camp Seven (Word Faith Ministries International), was once one of the Caretakers of CT. He is said to have served as a Caretaker from 1997 to 2001.

According to Mr. Boateng Fordjour,³³⁹ the founder of Camp Eight (the prayer camp of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana), the late Rev. Antwi Boasiako, utilised Camp Three for more than ten years before leading the Presbyterians to establish Camp Eight.³⁴⁰ The establishment of this Camp is believed to have been preceded by some rituals which one considers to be of immense phenomenological significance. For instance it is alleged that some of the Presbyterians went to fetch ordinary sand from Camp Three and spread it on the ground before they erected the physical structures at their prayer camp. This practice is perceived to have emanated from their belief in the potency and sacredness of Camp Three, including the sand found there.³⁴¹ If it is true that the Presbyterians went to fetch ordinary sand from Camp Three, then its phenomenological significance to the present writer is that the practice implies an unconscious reinvention of relics in contemporary protestant church, the PCG.

It was noted that the numerical designations of some of the prayer camps did not correspond with the chronological order of the camps’ establishment. Instead, the numerical designations were symbols of some historical events that were believed to

³³⁹ At the time of this work, Mr. Boateng Fordjour was the Secretary of Camp Three.

³⁴⁰ Mr. Boateng Fordjour, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

³⁴¹ Mr. Boateng Fordjour, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

have informed the establishment of those camps. The Methodist camp, believed to be the first camp on the mountain, is also referred to as Camp Three. If it was the first prayer camp to be established on the mountain, why is it not Camp One? The name ‘CT’, according to Mr. Fordjour Boateng, is as a result of the number of ‘prayer stops’ Rev. Asibbey made on his way to the top of the APM. The ‘prayer stops’ were the number of times the late pastor stopped to pray while climbing the mountain to the top. According to Mr. Boateng, Rev. Asibbey made three ‘prayer stops’ on his way. The first ‘prayer stop’ is where a PC has been established as Camp One. The second ‘prayer stop’ is where Camp Two has been built. The third ‘prayer stop’ is the place where the Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey is believed to have been engulfed in the clouds when he was praying. This is CT, the premier prayer camp on the mountain. Thus, contrary to popular thinking, neither Camp One nor Two was built before CT. In that sense, the numerical designations of these Camps did not necessarily correspond with the chronological order of their establishment, rather they were symbols of historical reality. The numerical designations of the PCs also imply the possibility of identity formation from the beliefs and practices of religious leaders.³⁴²

3.2.1.4 Appropriation of relics and prayer accessories on the mountain

Cambridge International Dictionary of English defines a relic as ‘an object, tradition or system from the past which has survived and continues to exist.’³⁴³ It is also ‘a part of the body or clothing or one of the belongings of a saint.’³⁴⁴ In this context, one’s operational definition of a relic is any object or belonging, experience and tradition

³⁴² The identity of the followers of revealed religious traditions, for example, Christianity and Islam, are believed to be significantly shaped by the beliefs and practices of the founders of those religions. For a detailed study on this, see James Fieser and John Powers (eds.), *Scriptures of the World’s Religions* (New York, United States of America: McGraw –Hill, 1998). C.f. George E. Saint-Laurent, *Spirituality and World Religions: A Comparative Introduction* (California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 2000).

³⁴³ *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, Low Priced Edition, s.v. ‘relic.’

³⁴⁴ *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, Low Priced Edition, s.v. ‘relic.’

of a dead Christian, which the living Christians endeavoured to utilise or appropriate because of their belief in the spiritual potency of those objects, experiences and traditions. The prevalence of relics at a place is believed to be some the indicators of the place's sacredness. Douglas Davies points out that relics make those sites sacred because they

were often treasured as the central possession of a church and marked, in some way, the continuity of the faithful with those who had given their lives for their faith in Christ. At the level of popular religion these relics were often reckoned to possess special powers, which could, for example, heal people.... The relics not only reckoned to include pieces of the bodies of martyrs, but embraced an extremely wide variety of things, including, for example, ' Our Lord's shoe, his swaddling clothes, blood and water from his side, bread from the feeding of the five thousand and the Last Supper ... the rods of Moses and Aaron, relics of St. John the Baptist.'³⁴⁵

In his summary of Emile Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religion*, Scott indicates that a sacred force is thought to have a radiating quality; that is, its power is believed to diffuse and radiate out, in the process occupying objects and spaces adjacent to it. The power is believed to diminish with distance, so that the farther one is from the source, the weaker its effects. This idea permeates beliefs about saints' relics. Such objects are thought to have a quality similar to radioactivity that affects anything they touch. The belief is that the farther one stands from the object, the weaker is the effect. Thus a person who hopes for a miraculous cure needs to have direct or near-direct physical contact with the relic.³⁴⁶

The items believed to be relics and which were observed as vigorously patronised by some pilgrims at CT of APM included the portraits of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey and the first chapel which was built at CT by the *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* and later

³⁴⁵ Douglas Davies, 'Christianity' in Jean Holm with John Bowker (eds), *Sacred Place* (United Kingdom: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), p. 41.

³⁴⁶ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, p. 151.

demolished. Below are the portraits of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey and the first chapel believed to have been built at CT by the *Kristomu Anigye Kuo*.

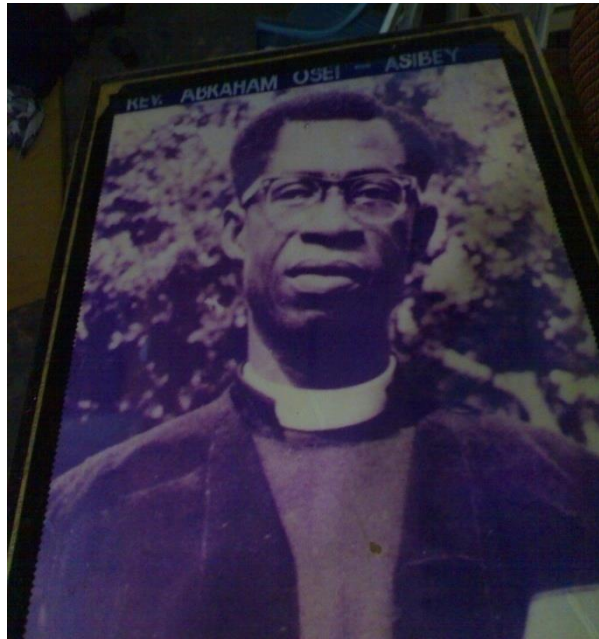


Figure 3.2: The late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey

This portrait was placed at the topmost part of the chancel (sanctuary) of the new chapel at CT. It was observed that anytime preachers preached on themes such as ‘Christian sacrifice’ or ‘Christian commitment’, they were seen to be highly animated or inspired, as they gazed on the late Rev. Asibbey’s portrait in the chapel or as they made reference to him as one of the people believed to have lived a committed Christian life in his generation.



Figure 3.3: The first chapel believed to have been built by the *Kristomu Anigye Kuo*

Many copies of the portrait of the first chapel in which the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey presumably worshiped were offered for sale and many people, including this researcher, rushed to patronise them. Apart from the economic dimensions of these quasi-business activities, the sellers of these relics made buyers believe in their miraculous potency and historical significance. The significance the sellers attached to the relics corroborates the view of Davies with respect to the relevance of relics among believers. According to him, relics can serve as a concrete expression of the faith of past believers and as a focus for the faith of the living.³⁴⁷

Another relic which symbolises the sacredness of the *Krɔbo boɔ* is the metal cross at CT. The cross has been erected at the very spot where the Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey stood to pray and was said to have been engulfed in the clouds. It is recalled that on the first visit to the PM when the late Rev. Asibbey was allegedly engulfed in a cloud, it is said that he erected a wooden cross at the site to designate the site's spiritual significance. That wooden cross has been replaced by a metal one. The metal cross is thought to be more durable than the wooden cross. Owing to some pilgrims' belief in the spiritual potency of the cross, the very site where the cross has been erected is the space where most pilgrims keep items such as anointing oil, water, food, clothing etc. It is also a common practice to see many people kneeling down below the cross and praying. For some people, sleeping under the cross at night is preferred to sleeping in any of the rooms, even when unfavourable weather conditions at night demand their relocation to some of the rooms. This is because such people believe that the clouds which enveloped the late Rev. Minister made the place *exceptionally supernatural*.³⁴⁸ Their sleeping there or keeping of items under the cross is therefore believed to be some of the means by which such pilgrims hope to have answers to their prayer requests.

³⁴⁷ Davies, 'Christianity', p.42.

³⁴⁸ (Emphasis mine).

The issue of relics is not limited only to the PM but to the entire Abasua community. One of the relics which are perceived to be of immense importance to the entire Abasua community is the special walking staff of the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey. It is said that when the late clergyman came down after his second visit to the PM in April 1965, he made a special walking staff. It is a brown wooden stick of about five feet ten inches tall, with a metal pointed stand at the bottom. On top of the staff is a spherical silver knob on which a star-like brass is situated.



Figure 3.4: The special walking staff used by the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey.

This staff was initially kept at the palace of the then chief of Abasua, Nana Kwasi Marfo. The arrangement was that anytime he (Rev. Asibbey) climbed the mountain he used it and upon his return, it was kept in custody of the chief.³⁴⁹

Related to the issue of relics is pilgrims' appropriation of prayer accessories on the mountain. Prayer accessories are symbols or aids to a person's interaction with a

³⁴⁹ Very Rev. Isaac Y. Boamah, Interview, 19 October 2010, Effiduasi.

transcendent reality or a deity.³⁵⁰ They include water, sand, leaves and anointing oil believed to be potent as a result of their encounter with a supernatural reality. The researcher observed the practice of pilgrims' fetching of water that had been accumulated on the floor of the rock and gathering of sand and leaves from trees and shrubs on the mountain. The water, sand and the leaves were believed to be efficacious to the users, once they (the prayer aids) had been gathered from the PM.³⁵¹ These observations corroborate those made by J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, when he studied the St. Mary's Sanctuary (SMS) at Buoho in Kumasi. He maintains that:

Pilgrims to SMS also collect some of the sand and leaves of trees at the place, which they claim have demonstrated miraculous powers for users. Underneath a huge stone edifice of the Madonna, at my visit in December 2003, were several gallons of water that had been placed there by pilgrims and supplicants. The gallons of water had been placed at the foot of the Madonna to attract her blessings unto the water. The blessed water will then be used either as drinking or bathing water to effect religious healing. In a combination of traditional healing practices and Christian healing, pilgrims had also placed herbs collected from the grotto under the statue of the Madonna, presumably to let her presence infuse the herbs with miraculous effect when they are applied.³⁵²

The gallons of water which had been placed under the foot of the Madonna to attract her blessings unto the water and the pilgrims' perception that the blessed water could bring about religious healing, in my opinion, are all in the context of the appropriation of prayer accessories. The perception that the blessed water can bring about religious healing is believed to be Christianity's unconscious reenactment of some of the practices of Traditional Akan Religion. In this religious tradition, adherents sometimes use physical objects such as talisman, amulets and concoctions believed to be spiritually

³⁵⁰ For a good discussion on prayer accessories, see Virginia Greene, "Accessories of Holiness": Defining Jewish Sacred Objects' *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, 31 (1992), pp. 31-39. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3179610>, [accessed 04 June 2012].

³⁵¹ Mr. Fordjour Boateng and Nana Kwame, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

³⁵² J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Born of the Virgin Mary": Mary, Marian Apparitions and the Catholic Heritage in Ghanaian Christianity. Paper presented at the Conference on 'Sensational Heritage: Fashioning Culture, Styling the Past, Stimulating the Senses'. Conference Organized by the NOW Research Program, Heritage Dynamics: Politics of Authentication and Aesthetics of Persuasion in Ghana, South Africa, Brazil and the Netherlands (n.d), pp. 6-7.

potent in bringing about religious healing or protection. The appropriation of physical items such as blessed water at Christian sacred spaces, in my opinion, can be a typology of traditional Akan religious practice in Ghanaian Christianity. In that sense, the affinity between Christianity and Traditional Akan Religion is highlighted.

3.2.1.5 Sacredness through miracles

According to Davies, some places became sacred because it is believed that something miraculous took place there, as with the Holy Land, given that name because Jesus was born and lived there.³⁵³ Several miracles³⁵⁴ are believed to have taken place on APM which, on the basis of Davies' scheme, warrants its designation as a sacred space. Some of these claims of miraculous occurrences on the PM are examined and discussed.

First, during the field work of this research at Abasua, Madam Apemasu, one of the natives of Abasua who was interviewed by the researcher, shared what she considered to be her miraculous experience on the mountain. According to her, she was one of the people with whom the late Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey was going to the mountain to pray. She said that this was after the late Asibbbey had discovered the site as a place for prayer rituals in 1965. In one of the usual prayer visits to the mountain, the woman said that the late Rev. Asibbey asked them to pray and ask God for one of these two concerns; children or money. She said that at that time she had assumed her menopausal stage for some years, therefore, to ask God for a child was perceived to be impossible. She rather resolved to pray to God for money to be able to take care of the children she had already given birth to. But according to her, she immediately had a change of mind and rather prayed to God for children because she believed that human

³⁵³ Davies, 'Christianity', p.44.

³⁵⁴ Miracles in this context refer to 'extraordinary events caused by supernatural agency.' For detailed discussion on 'Miracles', see Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, pp. 103-115.

beings were more valuable to her than money. Moreover, according to her, nothing was impossible with God.

She said that after the prayer when they were coming home, she experienced the resumption of her menstrual period. A few months afterwards, she became pregnant and eventually gave birth to a beautiful girl. About two years afterwards, she gave birth again to another beautiful girl. At the time of the field work of this research, each of the girls had grown and also given birth to seven children each.³⁵⁵

Related to the above is the miraculous experience of Madam Felicia Kyere of Yonso, near Jamasi in the Effiduasi Diocese of the MCG. According to her, she came with a group of people to pray on the mountain one day. During one of the prayer sessions, the leader requested people who needed children to come forward so that they would be assisted in prayer. Madam Kyere said she willingly stood in for her niece who needed children and they were prayed for. She claimed she was fifty-two years and was in her menopause. Within a few months after the prayer retreat, she herself became pregnant and eventually gave birth to a baby boy. The boy was called *aberewa ba* (Old Lady's son), since the mother gave birth to him in her old age. Subsequently, the niece also gave birth.³⁵⁶

Moreover, some of the respondents affirmed the sacredness of the prayer mountain by referring to it as 'a place where impossibilities become possibilities.' One of such respondents is Mr. Lawrence Asare Dankwa.³⁵⁷ According to him, in February 2005, he proposed to marry a certain lady. He said the lady accepted the proposal, but she in turn disclosed to him what she referred to as 'the unfortunate aspect of my life.'

³⁵⁵ Madam Adwoa Apemasu, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

³⁵⁶ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, p. 40.

³⁵⁷ Mr. Lawrence Asare-Dankwah was an Economics teacher at Aburi Girls' Senior High School and also a member of Wesley Methodist Church Choir, Aburi. He made this affirmation during a discussion with the researcher on the sacredness of APM on 16 March 2012, at the Wesley Methodist Chapel, Aburi.

That unfortunate aspect of the lady's life, according to Mr. Asare-Dankwa, had to do with the notion that some Medical Doctors had allegedly diagnosed and declared her to be sterile owing to some biological complications they claimed is associated with her reproductive system. Mr. Asare-Dankwa said that he was not perturbed in anyway by that apparently discouraging and hopeless response of the lady. Instead, he said he determined to marry her since he hoped that he could have children with her 'through prayer or divine intervention.'

Mr. Asare-Dankwah said that he went to APM to pray to God for her would-be wife's reproductive system to be restored. He said he spent about a week on the mountain. In July 2005, he said that they got married, and barely a year after their wedding ceremony, his wife gave birth to a bouncing baby girl. He attributes her wife's successful delivery to a miraculous restoration of her reproductive system, made possible through his prayer and fasting session on APM.

The above claims of miraculous occurrences were all on issues of fertility or child bearing. The pilgrims' ardent desire to have children through divine intervention partly underscores the importance of children among the Akan people and Africans in general. Emmanuel Anim notes the overarching importance of fertility or procreation among Africans by referring to it as that which 'occupies the prime locus in the African concept of prosperity.'³⁵⁸ Anim, citing K.A Opoku, further points out that 'children are highly valued by the Akan. In spite of all the changes introduced into Akan society by modernity, procreation remains the aim of marriage, for without offspring, marriage is incomplete.'³⁵⁹ Opoku's assertion was sustained by John Pobee, an eminent Ghanaian

³⁵⁸ Anim, 'The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination', p. 38.

³⁵⁹ Anim, 'The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination', p. 38.

theologian, who maintains that ‘childlessness is a disaster in so far as it means the dying out of family and incompleteness.’³⁶⁰

The implication is that childlessness, among the Akan people, is considered as a curse and humiliation. To mitigate this humiliation, people, especially married couples, resort to several means. One of the means, in the opinion of the present writer, is religion. Asamoah-Gyadu points out that ‘in the African context solutions to problems are often sought within the ambience of religion.’³⁶¹ Their pilgrimage to APM, therefore, indicates their appropriation of a religious resource to realise their material desires. Victor Turner and Edith L.B. Turner note the importance of pilgrimage to ordinary people: ‘At the heart of pilgrimage is the folk, the ordinary people who choose a ‘materialistic’ expression of their religion. In other words, pilgrimage as a religious act is a kinetic ritual, replete with actual objects, ‘sacra’, and is often said to have materialistic results, such as healing *and child bearing*.’³⁶²

Thus, the sacredness of APM lies in the perception that, it is a site where the religious practitioners or the pilgrims (i.e., the people who pray on the mountain) are believed to have experienced the presence and power of the transcendental, as Birgit Meyer described it,³⁶³ as far as the realisation of their prayer requests³⁶⁴ is concerned. We have already indicated that the sacredness of APM is defined and informed by the belief in the presence and power of a deity at that place, and the possibility of human interaction with the deity through prayer rituals. The alleged miraculous occurrences on

³⁶⁰ Anim, ‘The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination’, p. 38.

³⁶¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, “Born of the Virgin Mary”, p. 7.

³⁶² Victor Turner and Edith L.B. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. xiii. (Emphasis mine). C.f. Amoah, *Religion and Poverty*, p. 111.

³⁶³ Birgit Meyer, *Religious Sensations: Why Media, Aesthetics and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2006), p.8.

³⁶⁴ These prayer requests, in the opinion of the researcher, were believed to be humanly impossible that was why the people resorted to the power of the transcendental.

the mountain, in the opinion of the researcher, are reinforcements of the claims of God's presence on the mountain.

This view, however, presupposes the existence of God who is believed to be the orchestrator of miraculous events or signs on the APM. In his interrogation of the presupposition of God's existence and the belief that he is the orchestrator of miraculous signs, Cook raises the following questions and concerns:

What sense of 'event' and 'cause' is there which can be applied to divine agency? How can the transcendent God intervene in the world without destroying that transcendence and becoming merely another part of creation itself? How can we be sure what the [miraculous] sign is meant to signify? It may and does often mean different things to different people. We would require some independent verification and identification that the [miraculous] sign was genuine.... How is it possible to justify a claim that a miracle has occurred?³⁶⁵

The above questions and concerns partly show the difficulty with which scholars have to grapple with phenomena which defy scientific explication and empirical verification.

Cook's response to the above questions and concerns are worth noting.

The problem with a miracle, if there really are such things, is that, by definition, no one will be able to tell you how it is done. If they can, it ranks the same as other explicable events. To say that God did it, is not to reveal *how* the event happened, but to point to the fact that there was some divine purpose and agency behind it. Neither of these can be exhaustively described without making man God or reducing the divine to the human. Accordingly, there can be no naturalistic description or explanation of how a miracle has happened, and that, by definition. If there could be, it would no longer be a miracle. That leaves open the possibility of a supernatural explanation.³⁶⁶

3.2.1.6 Other related prayer rituals

The sacredness of APM could be observed from the prevalence of other prayer rituals such as sacred writings, Bible studies / preaching and the administration of the Lord's Supper (that is, Holy Eucharist). It must be pointed out that these practices are not new in Christianity, neither are their sacral orientations. They are however examined and discussed in this context because of what the researcher observed as the special

³⁶⁵ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, p.106.

³⁶⁶ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, p.107. (Emphasis original)

importance the camp workers and the pilgrims place on those practices. Almost all the religious functionaries³⁶⁷ at the various PCs on the mountain recognised all or some of these prayer rituals.

Sacred writings in Christianity, according to Douglas Davies, primarily refer to the Bible and its centrality in Christian thought and practice.³⁶⁸ In his emphasis on the centrality of the Bible in Christian worship, Davies further maintains that:

Christian worship is so closely linked with sacred scriptures that it is almost impossible to think of any formal Christian service taking place without some use of the Bible. This centrality of the Bible is due to the fact that Christianity stresses its past through the belief that God's self-revelation has occurred within history at particular times and places, through religious leaders such as prophets, but most especially, through Jesus of Nazareth. The Bible is the central deposit of witness to this divine revelation.³⁶⁹

The researcher observed the centrality of sacred scriptures or excerpts of them on the PM in several ways; on sign boards, charts etc. For example, the sign board at the Abasua community which directs visitors or strangers to the PM has this inscription, among others: 'On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that folds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nation. Isaiah 25:7.' It was insightful to observe two drawn opened Bibles just below the inscription. The inscription and the two opened Bibles are perceived to inform readers or prospective pilgrims on the mountain that people and nations can find deliverance on the PM through the God who has revealed himself in the Bible.

Some of the excerpts of the Bible as found on charts in some of the PCs were words of prayer (petition) and those considered to indicate the identity of Jesus Christ. Some of the words too were not direct excerpts of the Bible, but were perceived to have

³⁶⁷ The religious functionaries refer to pastors, evangelists, caretakers, camp overseers.

³⁶⁸ Douglas Davies, 'Christianity' in Jean Holm with John Bowker (eds.), *Sacred Writings* (London, United Kingdom: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), p. 44.

³⁶⁹ Davies, 'Christianity', p.45.

scriptural implications or underpinnings. For instance, in one of the rooms at CT, these sets of sacred writings were read:

Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.
Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God,
For unto thee will I pray.
My voice shalt thou hear in the morning,
O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee,
And will I look up. Psalm 5:1-3.³⁷⁰

The above were perceived to be petition prayer, which Eastman describes as ‘the act of personal supplication.’³⁷¹ The identity of the God in this petition prayer seems to have been briefly described on another chart in the same room. The chart had as its title: ‘Jesus the bread of life.’ The content was: ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger and he who believes in me shall not thirst. John 6: 35.’ From a hermeneutical point of view, Jesus, in this text, claims to be the embodiment of peoples’ basic needs. Hence the need for their encounter with him, probably, through prayer.

In addition to these words were those perceived to urge the pilgrims to persist in prayer even in the midst of inevitable challenges and adversities in life. On one of the charts with the portrait of an eagle and a caption: ‘Don’t give up’, the content was:

Be focused,
Watch and pray,
Even when friends and relatives forsake you.
The LORD will surely take care of you.
Your miracle is on the way.³⁷²

These writings found in some of the rooms on the PM reinforce the sacredness of the site because they are generally perceived to be sacred scriptures of prayer, understood by Cook as ‘an interactive communication with God.’³⁷³

³⁷⁰ The researcher read these words on 13 August 2011 during one of his field works for this study.

³⁷¹ Eastman, *The Hour that Changes the World*, p.87.

³⁷² The researcher read these words at the ‘Miracle House’ at Camp Three, during a field trip to Abasua on 13 August 2011.

³⁷³ Cook, *Thinking about Faith*, p. 95.

The presence of several prayer camps or Christian Ministries and religious functionaries on the PM, to some extent, implies the religious practice of Bible studies or preaching, among others. On the PM, Bible studies are sometimes held in groups, usually under trees. The number of people in each group varies. One person normally functions as the facilitator of the group. As the facilitator, he or she reads the scripture for the studies or appoints one of the members to read. The facilitator raises questions and the other group members respond. Bible studies always begin and end with prayer. In the course of the studies, the people almost always become glued to their Bibles, an impression of serious and diligent study of God's Word. Serious study of God's Word also implies that during Bible studies, pilgrims scarcely have time for frivolous behaviours such as excessive laughter, unnecessary chatting and late attendance. The implication of this is that the sacredness of the place conditions the behavior of the pilgrims.

Related to Bible studies is preaching. Preaching normally takes place in chapels but sometimes, under trees in the forest on the PM. For instance, the morning and afternoon sessions of the seventh biannual Connexional Prayer Convention (CPC) of the MCG, held at CT from 28th February to 3rd March, 2012, were held under trees in the forest. Preaching and other related activities take place there.³⁷⁴ Sermons are usually in Akan language, except a few occasional flashes of English language by preachers who had some level of formal education.

The relationship between preaching and sacredness of a place has been identified by Davies. According to him, 'preaching is also seen by some ... as providing a moment of communication between God and the congregation. When the preacher addresses the people it is God, they say, who addresses them through the words of the sermon. So the

³⁷⁴ The researcher was a participant observer in this Connexional Prayer Convention.

sacred place is the place where the divine word is spoken.’³⁷⁵ The implication is that market places, hospitals/clinics, buses and lorry stations where God’s word is preached are all regarded as sacred places. This position justifies the validity of Pal’s assertion that the role of religion is to promote encounters with the sacred, to bring a person “out of his worldly Universe or historical situation, and project him into a Universe different in quality, an entirely different world, transcendent and holy.”³⁷⁶

In addition to the above, one of the factors perceived to be responsible for the sacredness of the PM is the celebration of Holy Communion. The perception of Holy Communion as a determinant of the sacredness of APM lies in the opinion that:

In the rite [referring to the Holy Communion], the central history of the faith is recalled and focused in the life and earthly ministry of Jesus. Then in the prayer of consecration the priest asks that by the power of God’s Holy Spirit the bread [wafers] and wine may be to the worshippers the body and blood of Christ....Although this ritual normally takes place in a consecrated church, it can be carried out any where by a suitably ordained priest, whether in someone’s home or in a field or factory.... The significant point is that in this service believers are drawn both into the presence of God and into the history of the life of Jesus. The group celebrating the eucharist comprises the sacred community of believers without having to be in any church building. In other words, it is the community of believers that marks off a sacred territory rather than the other way round.³⁷⁷

When churches embark on a pilgrimage or hold prayer conventions on the mountain, one of the rituals that usually mark the end of their pilgrimage is the Holy Communion. The special importance some of the pilgrims attach to the Holy Communion is that whenever it is celebrated on the mountain, it is believed to be an indelible seal on the participants or communicants against evil and demonic machinations.³⁷⁸ The researcher’s contention is Why is the efficacy of the ritual seems to be limited only to the mountain? Doesn’t the ritual have the same degree of potency

³⁷⁵ Davies, ‘Christianity’, p. 56. This was cited from the book titled *Sacred Place*.

³⁷⁶ Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, p. 165.

³⁷⁷ Davies, ‘Christianity’, p. 56.

³⁷⁸ A PCG member, who took part in the second segment of the biannual Prayer Retreat on the PM, in August 2011, said it to buttress a testimony he shared on the PM.

when it is celebrated outside the PM? These questions notwithstanding do not in any way relegate the plausibility of such a claim to the backdrop, considering the fact that it is perceived to be the communicants' own experience about the ritual. The plausibility of such a claim is augmented by the perception that by their participation in the Holy Communion, the communicants are also assured of total security in Jesus Christ.³⁷⁹

If the people who celebrate the Holy Communion comprise the sacred community of believers whose presence at the place of the ritual marks off that site as a sacred space, and if the same communicants are urged to go out and proclaim Christ in the world,³⁸⁰ then the present writer is of the view that the ritual of Holy Communion celebrated on the mountain has a multiple role of bringing about sacredness. This multiple role is referred to in this work as the ripple effect of sacrality.

I now turn to focus on the historical narrative of Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp to examine its sacred orientation or identity within contemporary Ghanaian Christian context. This, however, is grounded on a brief exploration of the history of Nkawkaw community because of the perception that the historical narrative of Nkawkaw community and Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp is inseparably linked. In other words, the history of the Prayer Mountain will not be complete without recourse to the history of Nkawkaw, the community in which the Prayer Mountain is located.

3.3 The history of Nkawkaw

Historically, Nkawkaw began as a modest village in the nineteenth century. Traditionally, there are seventeen principal towns (*Nkurotoɔ du nson*) in the Kwahu

³⁷⁹ For a good discussion on the Eucharistic Offering or the efficacy of the Holy Communion, see Donald M. Baillie, *Theology of the Sacraments & Other Papers* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, n.d.), pp. 108-124.

³⁸⁰ Proclaiming Christ in the world is understood as one of the ways by which the communicants help to promote an encounter between the sacred and profane spaces.

traditional area of the Eastern Region of Ghana, where Nkawkaw is geographically located. Nkawkaw is not one of these principal towns.

Oral tradition maintains that the story of Nkawkaw would not be complete without the following personalities: Nana Amoah, Oyoko royal and Safohene from Obomeng, Adonten, Akowuah, Dankyira and Twerefo.³⁸¹ The oral account posits that Adonten, Akowuah, Dankyira and Twerefo were nephews of Nana Amoah. The nephews were hunters and palm wine tappers who lived on top of the Kwahu Mountains where they plied their trade. It is said that, the hunters found it difficult to trace the animals that they killed during their hunting expedition. The dead animals used to fall from the mountains and roll over to the foot of the mountains. Therefore, they decided to relocate to the foot of the mountains. Fortunately, they discovered that the land below the mountains was flat and suitable for human settlement. The Chief of Obomeng (one of the principal towns in the Kwahu traditional area) was informed accordingly and the hunters were allowed to settle on the land. It was a very dense forest at that time. In the course of time, others came to join the hunters and more huts were put up.

Several legends account for the derivation of the name 'Nkawkaw'. First, it is said to have been derived from the Nkawkaw stream which flows through a section of the town. The story behind is that the colour of the stream appears to be 'red' any time it gets flooded. This is rendered in Asante Twi dialect as: 'Nsuo a eyiri a ani ye kɔkɔɔ'. Over the years, this rendition has been corrupted as 'Nkawkaw'.³⁸²

Another school of thought upholds that geographically, anyone who wanted access to the Kwahu Kingdom had to pass through the foot of the Kwahu Mountains then believed to be a dangerous zone. The foot of the mountains, the current geographical

³⁸¹ Kwame Ampene, 'The Story of Kwahu Nkawkaw'
<https://www.facebook.com/Nkawkawkwahu/posts/513358765530605> [Accessed 24 July 2017].

³⁸² Ampene, 'The Story of Kwahu Nkawkaw'

location of Nkawkaw, was called ‘ɔboɔ ase’, meaning ‘beneath the rock or mountains’. Strangers or travelers approaching the Kwahu Kingdom through ɔboɔ ase were warned with the expression ‘nko nkɔwu’, Asante Twi dialect meaning ‘do not go to die’. The expression ‘nko nkɔwu’ was also a warning to the marauding Asante army who were bent on attacking the Kwahu Kingdom in the nineteenth century.³⁸³ Thus from this school of thought, ‘nko nkɔwu’, has been corrupted as Nkawkaw.

3.4 Discovering *ɔboɔ anim* as a Christian Sacred Space: The Emergence of Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity

The narrative of the discovery of ‘ɔboɔ anim’ explores the customary ownership of the site and its tripartite orientation as a cocoa farm, a village site and a non-denominational prayer ground prior to its current status as a Christian pilgrimage site. It also focuses on some *theophanic* events which were perceived to confirm or attest to the site’s sacredness. The discussion further explores the development of the space for pilgrimage and prayer rituals by Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi.

3.4.1 Customary Ownership of *ɔboɔ anim* and its Tripartite Orientation

Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer is traditionally referred to as ‘ɔboɔ anim’, meaning ‘in front of a rock or mountain’.³⁸⁴ It is a mountainous sacred space supernaturally constructed and located in front of a mountain. From a Christian theological point of view, the supernatural aesthetic orientation of the site simply depicts William Evans’ perspective of God’s impressive creativity, stupendous design, unparalleled ability and unimaginable dexterity.³⁸⁵

³⁸³ Nana Ofori Agyapong, Odikro of Nsuta, disclosed this during an interview he granted me on 10 September, 2016 at Nkawkaw.

³⁸⁴ Nana Ofori Agyapong, Interview, 10 September, 2016, Nkawkaw.

³⁸⁵ William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago, USA: Moody Press, 1980), p.17.

There seems to be a universal consensus among Christians with respect to God's unquestionable ownership of the earth and all its contents, including mountainous sites: 'the earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.'³⁸⁶ In Ghana, the traditional Akan Religious perspective of the Supreme God's identity as the greatest deity [and owner of the earth] also seems to be corroborated by this biblical position.³⁸⁷ It is, however, insightful to point out that the site is customarily owned by the late Nana Jacob Yaw Asiedu, the grandfather of Nana Ofori Agyapong, Nsuta Dikro, who is also one of my informants for this study.³⁸⁸

The site formed part of Nana Asiedu's cocoa farm and the exact location of his village where harvested cocoa pods were gathered and the beans dried up. To minimize the difficult task of frequently climbing the mountain to carry down cocoa beans, especially during bumper harvest, Nana Asiedu thought it expedient and prudent to dry his cocoa beans at the village, before conveying them down for sale.

Owing largely to the plenteous quantity of cocoa the farmer harvested, his farm or village almost always attracted people usually workers he recruited for several aspects of his project. Unfortunately, the demise of the farmer dealt a heavy blow to the lucrative cocoa business which had been a source of livelihood to many people at Nkawkaw and its environs. Surprisingly, it is said that the cocoa farm and the village were abandoned after the death of the man.

Scarcely did Nana Asiedu know that the activities related to his cocoa farm and the many workers he attracted to the site could also underscore the site's assumption of a sacred status with the potency to attract many religious pilgrims from diverse backgrounds. Since the location of the cocoa farm and the village was mountainous and

³⁸⁶ Psalm 24:1 (English Standard Version Study Bible).

³⁸⁷ Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, pp.116-117.

³⁸⁸ Nana Ofori Agyapong, Interview, 10 September, 2016, Nkawkaw. See also Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, pp.116-117 for a good discussion of ownership and use of stool lands.

therefore very serene and ideal for reflections and meditations, people from diverse religious persuasions utilized the site for prayer. These people included Christians, Muslims and practitioners of African Traditional Religion. Some of them were the workers whom the farmer recruited. Others also came from some parts of Ghana and other African countries such as Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Niger. The foreigners who patronized the site claimed that they had dreams about the sacredness of the site. They also claimed to receive divine directions to the place.³⁸⁹ It is thus in this context that the site's multipurpose orientation is located – a cocoa farm, a village site and a non-denominational prayer ground. This tripartite identity of the site, with its inherent element of sacredness, in my opinion, suggests that the sacredness of the site was underscored long ago before the onslaught of *theophanic* events which allegedly confirmed its current spiritual potency as a Christian pilgrimage site.

3.4.2 The Confirmation of *Oboro anim*'s Sacredness by *Theophanic* Events

I have indicated elsewhere in this work that in Eliade's theoretical scheme, designation of a site as sacred is generally a response to two types of events: *hierophanic* and *theophanic* events. The one that is of immediate relevance to this aspect of the work is *theophanic* event. In this event, Eliade maintains that somebody receives a message from the deity and interprets it for others [to probably recognize and appreciate the site's sacredness or spatial non homogeneity].³⁹⁰ Two of such *theophanic* events are the hanging of a cross in front of the mountain by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) in Koforidua in 1958 and a prophetic declaration about God's gracious presence at the site.

³⁸⁹ Nana Ofori Agyapong, Interview, 10 September, 2016, Nkawkaw.

³⁹⁰ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 20 – 27. See also page 19 of Chapter one of this work

These events about the sacredness of the site were all perceived to have been orchestrated or directed by God³⁹¹. The events are successively explored in this context.

The utilization of the site for non-denominational prayer rituals by people of different religious traditions was reinforced in 1958 by the RCC in Koforidua. In that year, it is said that the RCC, under the inspiration of God, went to hang an aluminum cross on the mountain. The church, then under the pastoral leadership of Bishop Bowers, further highlighted the sacredness of the place with this inscription on the face of the mountain: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Host ... Behold the Cross of the Lord.’ These religious symbols did not only accentuate the RCC’s notion of the site’s apartness and spiritual relevance, but also indicated the church’s perception of Christ’s ownership and territorial dominance of the entire earth, including Nkawkaw community and its environs.³⁹² These religious symbols are reminiscent of one of the occurrences on 20th January, 1482, the date traditionally regarded as when Christianity was first introduced to West Africa in contemporary times. J. Kofi Agbeti, a renowned Ghanaian Church historian, observes that ‘On that day, a Portuguese expedition of 600 men, under the command of Don Diogo d’Azambuja who had landed at Elmina, near Cape Coast, in Ghana, a day before [symbolically announced their presence]’.³⁹³ Agbeti, citing C.P. Grooves, discloses that they:

suspended the banner of Portugal from the bough of lofty tree, at the foot of which they erected an altar, and the whole company assisted at the first mass that was celebrated in Guinea, and prayed for the conversion of the natives from idolatry, (sic) and the perpetual prosperity of the church which they intended to erect upon the spot.³⁹⁴

It seems to me that the suspension of religious items such as cross on the face of a mountain or banner from the bough of a tree and their respective religious inscriptions

³⁹¹ Nana Ofori Agyapong, Interview, 10 September, 2016, Nkawkaw; Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi, Interview, 27 July, 2017, Mount Olive Prayer Camp, Nkawkaw.

³⁹² Nana Ofori Agyapong, Interview, 10 September, 2016, Nkawkaw.

³⁹³ Agbeti, *West African Church History*, p. 3.

³⁹⁴ Agbeti, *West African Church History*, p. 3. Emphasis mine.

and prayer rituals were part of the missionary or evangelistic strategies employed by Western Christian Missionaries who sought to announce their presence and missionary intentions in Africa or Gold Coast (now Ghana). Thus such religious items, in my opinion, formed part of the means by which the Portuguese in the fifteenth-century and the RCC in the twentieth century negotiated for space to encounter Ghana's (then Gold Coast's) existing religious traditions (which they erroneously stigmatized, stereotyped and marginalized) and possibly spearhead a change in her indigenous religious culture through conversion.³⁹⁵

The second *theophanic* event that allegedly attested to the spiritual potency of the site was a prophecy. Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi, the founder of Nkawkaw Prayer Mountain, narrated the circumstances surrounding the prophetic utterance to me. He said that in the year 1991, Rev. Kwame Nti, a pastor of the Resurrection Power Ministry, a Christian denomination at Nkawkaw, had organized a group of people into a Christian fellowship to pray on Wednesdays. Evangelist Gyasi maintains that it was one of these prayer meetings that a certain sister prophesied about the prevalence of spiritual power at Ɔboɔ anim. The prophecy literally meant that the Almighty God was present and active at the site. It was therefore imperative for the Christians to go there to wait on the Lord in prayer. It is said that Rev. Kwame Nti, upon hearing the prophetic utterance, began to lead his team to Ɔboɔ anim to pray.³⁹⁶ The implication is that the prophetic utterance officially gave birth to pilgrimage movements to Nkawkaw Prayer Mountain.

³⁹⁵ Jacob K. Olupona, 'African Humanity Matters: Religious Creativity and Africa's World Encounters' in Gordon S.K. Adika, George Ossom-Batsa and Helen Yitah (eds.) *New Perspectives on African Humanity: Beliefs, Values and Artistic Expression* (Accra, Ghana: Adwinsa Publications (Gh) Ltd., 2014), pp. 1-37.

³⁹⁶ Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi, Interview, 27 July, 2017, Mount Olive Prayer Camp, Nkawkaw

3.4.3 The Transformation of *Oboo anim* into Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp under the Leadership of Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi

The transformation of *Oboo anim* into Nkawkaw Mount Olive Prayer Camp is attributed to Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi. He is credited to have founded and facilitated the development of *Oboo anim* into a Prayer Camp of international repute.³⁹⁷ He reveals how *Oboo anim* emerged to become a Christian sacred space of international standing, after the prophetic declaration which attested to God's abiding presence at the site.

He confirms the dominance of mysterious powers and wild animals at *Oboo anim*, prior to the prophetic utterance of the site's sacredness and appropriateness for Christian pilgrimage rituals. In his opinion, it was a site densely populated by mysterious and weird creatures such as dwarfs and malevolent forces. He discloses that despite all these scarring forces at the site, he, together with Rev. Kwame Nti and the rest of the fellowship members (as they were then called) were never scarred to utilize the site for prayer.³⁹⁸ They were actually determined to tarry there in prayer.

Between the years 1991 and 1992, the zeal or enthusiasm with which the fellowship members appropriated the site surprisingly declined, when Rev. Kwame Nti was transferred by his church, the Resurrection Power Ministry. The group's pilgrimage to the site, according to Evangelist Gyasi, eventually halted and the site was entirely abandoned. The members of the Christian fellowship who were patronizing the site with Rev. Kwame Nti retreated to their various denominations.

Between the years 1993 and 1994, Evangelist Gyasi maintains that he volunteered to resume pilgrimage to the site through prayer and fasting, in order to

³⁹⁷ Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi, Interview, 27 July, 2017, Mount Olive Prayer Camp, Nkawkaw

³⁹⁸ Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi, Interview, 27 July, 2017, Mount Olive Prayer Camp, Nkawkaw

reactivate the spiritual fervor of the place. In his view, the prophetic utterance about the site's spiritual potency was authentic, inerrant and absolutely reliable. It was therefore thought to be inconsistent with Christian religious practice for such a prophecy to be repudiated by his refusal to patronize the site through pilgrimage.

He reveals that his resumption of pilgrimage movement to the mountain apparently coincided with what he considered to be a heightened activation of demonic operations over there. The site was overtly characterized, among other things, by sudden and surreptitious disappearance of his food items like banana and kenkey; loud laughter, conversation and touching of people by some invisible beings believed to be dwarfs. The dominance of spiritual forces on the mountain at that time was so heavy that the road from Nkawkaw to Atibie, at the vicinity of the PM, was almost always characterized by fatal motor accidents believed to be orchestrated by the malevolent forces that were thought to reside on the mountain.

The prevalence of these mysterious phenomena on the mountain, in Gyasi's opinion, impregnated in him an insatiable thirst and hunger for prayer anytime he embarked on pilgrimage to the site. He claims that he and other pilgrims who occasionally patronized the site determined to prayerfully halt those fatal accidents.

In the course of time, he decided to move and stay on the mountain. He asserts that though he was young (less than thirty years at that time), he scarcely entertained fears. He further claims that for fourteen years (from 1994 – 2008), he was on the mountain praying and fasting, especially in the night, when evil spiritual forces were believed to heighten their diabolical and mischievous nocturnal expeditions. Prayer and fasting was the order of those years.

Evangelist Gyasi attributes the coming into lime light of the prayer camp to God who, through dumbfounding miraculous deeds, continually proves himself faithful and

powerful in the lives of pilgrims who come to wait on him in prayer. In his opinion, the dumbfounding miracles at the camp attest to the faithfulness of God as the real source of the prophetic utterance that attested to the site's spiritual potency. One of such astonishing miracles which popularized the prayer camp, according to Evangelist Gyasi, was God's revival of a dead woman through him (Evangelist Gyasi) in the year 1997 at Nkawkaw. The details of the flabbergasting miracle as narrated by the Evangelist are as follows:

In the year 1997, I was praying on the mountain with three of my Christian friends. I heard God instructing me to descend. I asked him why he wanted me to descend. He responded that he would show me the rationale behind the instruction. I obeyed and descended. Owing to excessive prayer and fasting, I had grown very lean; almost emaciated. I was divinely instructed by God to go to the Roman Hospital at Nkawkaw. Upon reaching the hospital, I saw three vehicles with their horns being incessantly tooted by their drivers; a scene that depicted a crisis situation. The passengers in the vehicles were also very intoxicated amidst singing of songs and noise making. When they reached the hospital where we were standing, they stopped. Suddenly I heard God speaking to me: 'There is a dead body in one of the vehicles. The relatives were going to deposit her in the morgue. Go and pray for her to arise.' I became startled and confused. In my confusion, I disclosed the instruction to one of my prayer partners. I tried to find out from one of the passengers in the vehicles the reason for their noise making and intoxication. The response was that their sister had suddenly died in the morning and they had come to preserve her in the morgue. I asked the person whether the relatives of the deceased would permit me to pray for her. Immediately they heard my request to pray for the deceased, the relatives, under the influence of liquor, began to hurl insults on me. They insulted me partly because I physically looked very emaciated due to excessive prayer and fasting. They could scarcely associate anything good such as spiritual vitality with me. But for the timely intervention of an elderly woman, the intoxicated mob would have pounced on me to beat me up for daring to request to pray for the revival of their deceased relative. The woman persuaded them to permit me to pray for her since, according to the woman, a favourable outcome of the prayer would be stupendous and exhilarating. The opposite, on the other hand, would not essentially matter much. The relatives consented for me to pray. I then instructed the relatives to bring the dead body out of the vehicle. God ordered me to give the dead person water to drink. I asked God how could a dead person drink water, but I was still directed to obey by giving her water to drink. When I began, the water could not go down through her throat. God ordered me to hit her chest. When I did that the water entered her body and immediately she was revived. The people who were holding her and those around the scene suddenly took to flight because of what had happened. I asked of her name, and she responded 'Ama', then she began to fall down. I gave her water and hit her chest the second time. Immediately, she opened her eyes and asked for food to eat, precisely, *banku*. The relatives who had run away in bewilderment returned when they realized that she had come back to life and even asked for food to eat. I asked what was wrong with her and she said that she had a problem with her

heart. She was a Presbyterian. I told her relatives to go and give thanks to God in her church. The relatives asked of my identity and where I was staying. I told them that I was an Evangelist, staying on the Prayer Mountain at Nkawkaw.³⁹⁹

The narrative of the revival of the dead person by Evangelist Kwadwo Gyasi points, among other things, to prayer and miracles as some of the major themes in Christian theology. Even though prayer and miracles are among the themes pursued in relative detail in chapter four of this work, it suffices now to assert that the revival of the dead person seems to establish a Christian theological paradigm of inextricable nexus between prayer and miracles. If this thesis is theologically valid, then anyone who conjectures the inevitability of miracles in any prayer-infested Christian context is not far from right.

Given the astonishment of the people who witnessed the revival of the dead person, the several questions the relatives asked about the location or residence and identity of the Evangelist, the dominant notion of mystical causality⁴⁰⁰ in African religiosity and the huge number of people attracted by religious functionaries perceived to be powerful or agents of uncommon miracles, Evangelist Gyasi would, after this miracle, attract many curious observers to the PM where he engaged in serious prayer rituals. In fact, he attests to the fact that God's revival of the lady through him (Evangelist Gyasi) was a major contributor to his popularity and attraction of huge number of pilgrims. Ever since the miracle occurred in 1997, he claims that the influx of pilgrims to the PM and the corresponding upsurge of supernatural manifestations of God have been massive and humanly unimaginable.⁴⁰¹ The continuous outpouring and

³⁹⁹ Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi, Interview, 27 July, 2017, Mount Olive Prayer Camp, Nkawkaw

⁴⁰⁰ Mystical causality in this context refers to the belief that the spiritual world of the African includes malevolent forces responsible for evil occurrences in life. For a good discussion, see Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought*, pp. 76-84.

⁴⁰¹ Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi, Interview, 27 July, 2017, Mount Olive Prayer Camp, Nkawkaw.

experience of God's supernatural manifestations such healing and deliverance at the PM culminated in the alteration of its name from *Obos anim* to NMOPC in the year 2002.⁴⁰²

A cursory examination of the Mount of Olives from biblical perspective is important to understanding the theological and metaphorical implications of the change in the name of the PM from *Obos anim* to NMOPC. The Mount of Olives is mentioned in the account of David's flight from his son, Absalom. David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered, when the news of Absalom's revolt came to him. Not only had David been betrayed by his son, but one of his trusted counsellors, Ahithophel, had abandoned him and joined with Absalom. On learning of this, David, probably while on the Mount of Olives, was moved to pray that God would turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness (2 Samuel 15:1-31).⁴⁰³

The Mount of Olives is also named in Zechariah 14:4, which speaks of the Lord's coming when this Mount, where the Messiah will physically stand, will split into two from East to West, forming a great valley. This will provide an escape route along which God's people can flee from their enemies.⁴⁰⁴ Moreover, it is referred to as a stage in the departure of God's presence from Jerusalem in Ezekiel's day. The Mount of Olives was believed to be the destination of God's glory when it departed from Jerusalem (Ezekiel 11:23).⁴⁰⁵

In the New Testament, Harris R. Laird observes that the Mount is mentioned as the favourite resort of Christ as he withdrew from Jerusalem. It was the stage of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1), the scene of his weeping over Jerusalem

⁴⁰² Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi, Interview, 27 July, 2017, Mount Olive Prayer Camp, Nkawkaw.

⁴⁰³ Gbile Akanni and Nupanga Weanzana, '1 and 2 Samuel' in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p. 398.

⁴⁰⁴ Yoilah Yilpet, 'Zehariah' in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p.1091.

⁴⁰⁵ Tewoldemedhin Habtu, 'Ezekiel' in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p. 947.

(Luke 19:37-41), his eschatological instruction (Matthew 24-25), his agony in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30), and his ascension (Acts 1:9-12). It will be the Mount of Christ's second coming (Acts 1:11).⁴⁰⁶

Thus from the above scholarly views about the Mount of Olives, it seems that it symbolizes, among other things, a place of refuge, a place of agonizing prayer and a place of glory. Moreover, as a stage of Christ's eschatological instruction, ascension and second coming, the Mount seems to be a theological motif underscoring the certainty of Christ's second coming and the urgency with which his followers should prepare in anticipation of that coming. In the light of these symbolic indications, NMOPC, which is intended to be the exact replica of the Mount of Olives,⁴⁰⁷ is a Christian sacred space where pilgrims experience God's total security, astonishing miracles or supernatural blessings through prayer and fasting. Noting the upsurge of amazing miracles at the site, Evangelist Gyasi asserts that 'Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp is a place where God makes nobodies somebodies'.⁴⁰⁸ During one of my visits to the Prayer Camp, the contents of one of the stickers apparently made by the management of the Prayer Camp to advertise it really fascinated me: 'Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp: A Promise Land where God changes Destiny, My year of Divine and Total Restoration, Come and Experience the Spiritual Anointing.'

3.5 Conclusion

The foregone narratives indicate, among others, that PMs as sacred spaces do not evolve in a vacuum. They emerge from a diversity of religio-cultural, socio-economic and political contexts. Prior to the discovery of *Krɔbo* boɔ and *Ɔboɔ* anim as APM and NMOPC respectively, both sites were instrumental in these plural contexts. They were

⁴⁰⁶ Harris R. Laird, 'Mount of Olives' in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds.) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p.1156.

⁴⁰⁷ Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi, Mobile Phone Interview, 30 August, 2017.

⁴⁰⁸ Evangelist Frank Kwadwo Gyasi, Mobile Phone Interview, 30 August, 2017.

scarcely on the periphery of their respective pluralistic settings. The irruption of *hierophanic* and *theophanic* events or supernatural phenomena contributed in no small measure to the discovery of the sites as sacred spaces for prayer rituals. The discovery of the sites as sacred spaces has also resulted in a reconstruction of their identities; that is, from *Krɔbo boɔ* to APM and from *Ɔboɔ anim* to NMOPC. The sites' assumption of new identities certainly has implications for continuities and discontinuities of their respective former functions.

I have also contended that sacred spaces and prayer rituals are not mutually exclusive. That is, the presence of one directly implies the presence of the other. This thinking is couched on the understanding that the sacredness of a space seems to be determined by the belief in the presence of the supernatural or a transcendent reality, and the possibility of human interaction with that reality through prayer rituals.

The narrative of the evolution and presence of other prayer camps and their inherent competitions on APM⁴⁰⁹ suggests that it is possible for some other churches or individual Christians to negotiate with the owners of NMOPC for space to operate prayer camps at NMOPC. The presence of other prayer camps at NMOPC may spark off competitions and contestations bordering on issues such as exclusive claims to ownership.⁴¹⁰

In the next chapter I will examine and discuss the influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' appropriation of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.

⁴⁰⁹ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, pp. 22-28.

⁴¹⁰ For details on the exclusive claims to ownership of Prayer Mountains, see Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea*, pp. 22-28.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INFLUENCE OF PENTECOSTALISM ON PILGRIMS’ APPROPRIATION OF PRAYER MOUNTAINS IN CONTEMPORARY GHANAIAAN CHRISTIANITY

4.1 Introduction

In the examination of sacred mountains in Akan primal religious context in chapter two of this study, I indicated, among other things, the significance of sacred mountains such as *Atwea Boɔ* and *Obɔɔ Tabiri* to the citizens of Atwea and New Juaben respectively. As mountain deities believed to possess spiritual potency, they are perceived to be the pivot around which the primal religious expression of Atwea and New Juaben citizens revolves. A major significance of these sacred mountains, as I have already noted, is the presumed ability of the deities to address some of the existential concerns of the people. The implication is that pilgrimage to sacred mountains is believed to produce some positive outcomes to the pilgrims.⁴¹¹ The narrative of pilgrimage to *Atwea Boɔ* and *Obɔɔ Tabiri* in Akan primal religion, for instance, partly attests to the merits of pilgrimage to sacred mountains.

The historical narrative of APM and NMOPC in chapter three reveals, among other things, the in-breaking of some supernatural phenomena on these mountains and Christian pilgrims’ subsequent use of these mountainous sites as pilgrimage centres. The narrative shows that the potency of sacred mountains to attract religious pilgrims in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity is not essentially new. The phenomenon in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity appears to have its antecedent in Akan primal religion.

⁴¹¹ Owusu Ansah, ‘Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity’, pp. 15-21.

In pursuance of the topic of rethinking PMs as sacred spaces in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity, this chapter discusses the influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' appropriation of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity. It is imperative to discuss the influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' appropriation of PMs because of its presumed indispensability and overarching significance in contemporary Christianity. For instance, Afe Adogame maintains that:

The debut, visibility and mobility of the Pentecostal movement and the charismatization of mainline Christianity have combined to reshape the African [or Ghanaian] religious landscape so profoundly that its footprints [and influence] can hardly be sidestepped. Its stark emphasis on personal pneumatic experience, expression and committed evangelical re-engagement of depth spirituality has implications that transcend the religious sphere to how humans deploy religious power for economic, social and political gymnastics vis-à-vis the sacraments of life.⁴¹²

Abamfo Ofori Atiemo also indicates that one of the changes in Ghana since 1995 is the obvious Pentecostalization of the Ghanaian traditional churches. He writes as follows: 'Most of the Ghanaian 'mainline churches', which I now prefer to call 'traditional churches' have become almost completely Pentecostal; and there are hardly any distinctions between them and the newer churches in terms of grassroots theology, worship patterns and other practices. Pentecostalism has become more 'mainline' than the churches which previously carried that designation.'⁴¹³

One of the implications of the above quotations is that Pentecostalism has become so dominant and appealing in Ghana that it influences almost every aspect of the Ghanaian Christians' life, including their pilgrimage to PMs. Atiemo has classified the reasons for which people are attracted to the New Movements (including the Pentecostal

⁴¹² Afe Adogame, 'Foreword' in J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa* (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2015), p. xvii.

⁴¹³ Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, *Aliens at the Gate of Sodom and other Reflections* (Accra: Heken Ltd., 2016), p.iv.

/ the charismatic churches) under psychological, social, intellectual and spiritual.⁴¹⁴ The spiritual reasons, according to Atiemo, are:

- a. The need for sense of mystery – the desire to be united with God; the search for a spiritual experience that transforms and restores.
- b. The desire for super-natural power to overcome destructive habits, weaknesses, and difficulties in one's life e.g., help to overcome smoking, drunkenness, etc.
- c. The need for spiritual guidance and direction e.g., people want leaders they can rely on and look up for guidance through life.
- d. The desire to overcome the felt or the perceived effects of the activities of malevolent spiritual forces such as witches and demons.⁴¹⁵

Thus Pentecostalism is attractive to many Christians because it appears to have answers to almost all their existential concerns. I therefore attempt a working definition of Pentecostalism and follow it up with a discussion of the Christian faith as a prophetic religion, using it as a hermeneutical framework of the influence of pilgrimage to PMs on society. The justification is that the working definition of Pentecostalism also has implications for some practical actions which appear to promote or strengthen the contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostal Christianity in one way or the other. This is followed by a discussion of some of the practical actions inherent in the working definition of Pentecostalism. While my emphasis in this chapter is largely theological, it is imperative to underscore that the theological model is not exceptionally unique. It is sometimes born out of, or at least shaped by, a certain mutual cognition in which phenomenological, social-anthropological and historical standpoints are complementary methodologies.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, *Aliens at the Gate of Sodom and other Reflections* (Accra: Heken Ltd., 2016), pp.29-30.

⁴¹⁵ Atiemo, *Aliens at the Gate of Sodom and other Reflections*, p.30.

⁴¹⁶ Afe Adogame, 'Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in a Global Perspective' in Bryan S. Turner (ed.), *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (West Sussex, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), pp. 498-518.

4.2 A Working Definition of Pentecostalism

In this study, I employ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu's personal definition of Pentecostalism. He writes:

Pentecostalism refers to Christian groups which emphasise salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit and in which pneumatic phenomena including 'speaking in tongues', prophecies, visions, healing and miracles in general, perceived as standing in historic continuity with the experiences of the early church as found especially in the Acts of the Apostles, are sought, accepted, valued, and consciously encouraged among members as signifying the presence of God and experiences of his Spirit.⁴¹⁷

The justification for the above working definition lies in its emphasis on the Holy Spirit's transformative influence on Christians. It provides the conceptual basis for the examination of the influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' appropriation of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. Thus in this context, it is imperative to indicate that Christian pilgrims who have a transformative or experiential encounter with the Holy Spirit and are endued with diverse spiritual gifts attempt to respond to their perceived divine directives or personal convictions in practical actions. These practical actions include the establishment of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and ministerial training schools, institutionalisation of pilgrimage and adherence to holiness ethics. These are done with the intention of contributing to the transformation of society.⁴¹⁸

Pentecostalism as viewed in the above working definition is unarguably a theological construct that underscores the primacy of Christians' encounter with the Holy Spirit and the objectification of such (subjective) supernatural encounters in relevant practical works including the establishment of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and ministerial training schools, the institutionalisation of pilgrimage to PMs and adherence to holiness ethics. Before I examine each of these sub-themes in relative details, the

⁴¹⁷ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p.12.

⁴¹⁸ Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, 'Christianity in Ghana: An Introduction' in J. Kwabena Asamoah Gyadu (ed.), *Christianity in Ghana: Volume 1 A PostColonial History* (Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2018), pp. ix-xiii.

Christian faith as a prophetic religion is explored as a hermeneutical framework of the influence of pilgrimage to PMs on society.

4.3 The Christian Faith as a Prophetic Religion: A Hermeneutical Framework of the Influence of Pilgrimage to PMs on Society

Miroslav Volf brilliantly asserts that the Christian faith is a prophetic religion because it is ‘an instrument of God for the sake of human flourishing in this life and the next.’⁴¹⁹ In that sense the Christian faith as a prophetic religion ‘advocates active transformation of the world’, unlike mystical types of religion which encourages flights of the soul from the world into God’s arms.⁴²⁰

Generally, Christians agree that ‘an authentic religious experience should be a world-shaping force’.⁴²¹ In the context of this study, this implies that Christian pilgrims’ ascents to PMs to encounter the transcendental realms must be ideally followed by their return to renew or revitalize their communities or churches through various prayer rituals and other transformative activities. Thus Volf rightly underscores that ‘ascents’ ... must be followed by ‘returns.’⁴²²

The Bible clearly reinforces pilgrims’ ascents to mountains and their subsequent returns. Moses ascended Mount Sinai and returned with the tablets of the law (Exodus 24:12-13; 32:15-16).⁴²³ A similar pattern applies to Jesus Christ and the Jerusalem

⁴¹⁹ Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How the Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2011), p. 5.

⁴²⁰ Volf, *A Public Faith*, p. 6.

⁴²¹ Volf, *A Public Faith*, p. 7. See also Jesse Johnson, ‘Thinking About Social Justice in Light of the Great Commission’ in Nathan Busenitz (ed.), *Right Thinking in a Church Gone Astray: Finding Your Way Back to Biblical Truth* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2017), pp. 155-164.; David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You’re Irrelevant and Extreme* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2016); Emmanuel Asante, *Theology and Society in Context: A Theological Reflections on Selected Topics* (Accra, Ghana: SonLife Press, 2014).; Ronald J. Sider, Philip N. Olson and Heidi Rolland Unrue, *Churches That Make A Difference: Reaching Your Community With Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2002).

⁴²² Volf, *A Public Faith*, p. 7.

⁴²³ Volf, *A Public Faith*, p. 7

pilgrims who experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus Christ ascended the Mount of Transfiguration and returned to mend a world plagued by evil (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-37).⁴²⁴ More fundamentally, Jesus came ‘from above’ to bring healing and redemption (John 8:23), and having ascended into heaven at the end of his earthly sojourn, will return once more to judge and transform the world (Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; Rev. 21:1-8).⁴²⁵ After ascending the mountainous city of Jerusalem to celebrate the festival of Pentecost which providentially coincided with God’s outpouring of the Holy Spirit, John Schwarz reveals that some of the visitors or pilgrims from Rome returned and founded the Church in Rome.⁴²⁶ These biblical examples, to some extent, underscore the fact that for prophetic religions such as Christianity, pilgrimage to mountains as a religious experience (that is, ascent) is not complete until it is followed by the pilgrims’ return. In that sense, both ‘ascent’ and ‘return’ are very crucial.

Volf provides a critical distinction between ‘ascent’ and ‘return’ which constitutes a relevant theological fulcrum for the examination of the influence of Pentecostalism on the appropriation of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. He writes:

‘Ascent’ is the point at which, in the encounter with the divine, [PM pilgrims] receive the message and their core identity is forged – whether through mystical union with God, through prophetic inspiration, or through deepened understanding of sacred texts. The ascent is the *receptive* moment. ‘Return’ is the point at which, in interchange with the world, the message is spoken, enacted, built into liturgies or institutions, or embodied in laws. The return is the *creative* moment.⁴²⁷

Volf’s description of ascent as receptive and return as creative is very appropriate because it zeros in on the main thrust of what happens in ascent and return. And yet, he

⁴²⁴ Volf, *A Public Faith*, p. 7.

⁴²⁵ Volf, *A Public Faith*, p. 7.

⁴²⁶ John Schwarz, *The Compact Guide to the Christian Faith* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1999), p.109.

⁴²⁷ Volf, *A Public Faith*, p. 8 (Emphasis original).

further indicates that ‘ascent’ is not *merely* receptive. In receiving, the [pilgrims] themselves are transformed – they acquire new insight; their character is changed. So ascent is very much creative – a case of creative receptivity. Similarly, the ‘return’ need not be merely creative – the [pilgrims] unilaterally shaping social realities. They themselves may be shaped in the process, return then being a case of receptive creativity.’⁴²⁸

Keeping in mind this relatively more complex understanding of prophetic receptivity and creativity, Volf forcefully contends that:

without the ‘receptive ascent,’ there is no transforming message from God; without the ‘creative return,’ there is no engagement in the transformation of the world. Leave out either one, and you no longer have prophetic religion. Together, ‘ascent’ and ‘return’ form the pulsating heart of prophetic religion – showing that though ‘prophetic’ and ‘mystical’ are contrasting types of religion, religious experiences and engagement with the world are both essential components of [Christianity as a] prophetic type of religion.⁴²⁹

Therefore, it is appropriate and logical to argue that the Christian faith partly malfunctions when Christians’ pilgrimage to PMs (that is, receptive ascent) is not followed by a creative return. In that sense, Christians’ pilgrimage to PMs becomes like that of mystical religions in which ascent is followed by unproductive rather than creative return – in Volf’s words – ‘a return that has no positive purpose for the world but is merely an inevitable result of the inability of a flesh-and-blood human being to sustain unitive experience over time.’⁴³⁰

As I have already indicated, Volf’s ‘The Christian faith as a prophetic religion’ is employed as a hermeneutical underpinning of the influence of pilgrimage to PMs on society. It is linked to the impact of pilgrims on their societies when they descend from the mountains.

⁴²⁸ Volf, *A Public Faith*, p. 8 (Emphasis original).

⁴²⁹ Volf, *A Public Faith*, pp. 8-9.

⁴³⁰ Volf, *A Public Faith*, p. 7.

4.4 The Establishment of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches

David Barrett and Todd Johnson have defined the terms ‘Pentecostals’ and ‘Charismatics’. In their understanding, Pentecostals are:

Christians who are members of the major, explicitly Pentecostal denominations in Pentecostalism or the Pentecostal Movement or the Pentecostal Renewal, whose major characteristic is a rediscovery and new experience of the supernatural, with a powerful and energizing ministry of the Holy Spirit in the realm of the miraculous that most other Christians have considered to be highly unusual. This is interpreted as a rediscovery of the spiritual gifts of [New Testament] times and their restoration to ordinary Christian life and ministry.⁴³¹

Pentecostals hold the distinctive teaching that all Christians should aspire a post-conversion religious experience called baptism in the Holy Spirit, and that a Spirit-baptized believer may receive one or more of the supernatural gifts that were known in the early church. These supernatural gifts may include instantaneous sanctification, the ability to prophesy, to practise divine healing through prayer, to speak in different tongues or to interpret tongues, singing in tongues, singing in the Spirit, dancing in the Spirit,⁴³² dreams, visions, discernment of spirits, word of wisdom, words of knowledge, miracles. Power encounters, exorcisms (casting out demons), resuscitations (reviving the dead or the unconscious), deliverances, signs and wonders.⁴³³

Charismatics, on the other hand, are Christians affiliated with non-Pentecostal denominations (Anglican, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox) who receive the Pentecostal experiences and therefore describe themselves as having been renewed in the Spirit and experiencing the Spirit’s supernatural, miraculous and energizing power.⁴³⁴ Charismatics remain within – and form organized renewal groups within – their older mainline, non-

⁴³¹ David Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, ‘Global Statistics’, in Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Mass (eds.), *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), p. 290.

⁴³² It refers to ecstatic movement of a person as a result of their encounter with the Holy Spirit.

⁴³³ Barrett and Johnson, ‘Global Statistics’, p. 291.

⁴³⁴ Barrett and Johnson, ‘Global Statistics’, p. 291.

Pentecostal denominations rather than leaving to join Pentecostal denominations.⁴³⁵ They demonstrate any or all of the New Testament gifts of the Spirit, including signs and wonders, (though glossolalia or tongue speaking is regarded as optional).⁴³⁶

To the best of my knowledge, scholars do not appear to have paid much attention to the influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' appropriation of PMs and their subsequent establishment of Pentecostal / Charismatic churches in Ghanaian. There are some new Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Ghana whose founders claim that they were divinely inspired or directed by Jesus Christ to embark on pilgrimage to PMs to pray and fast for spiritual power to establish such churches. The church founders, some of whom were Pentecostals before their spiritual encounter with Jesus Christ, maintain that they received inspirations to establish their own Pentecostal / Charismatic churches during their pilgrimage amidst intensive prayer and fasting on PMs in Ghana such as APM and NMOPC. Some of these church founders, their respective denominations and headquarters include Apostle James Kofi Marfo (Faith in Christ Ministry International at Abuakwa in Kumasi), Apostle Prince Emmanuel Godsson (Full Gospel Church of God International at New Weijah in Accra), Apostle Richard Kwame Owusu (Jesus the Light Evangelistic Ministry at Dansoman Junction in Accra) and Evangelist Kwadwo Gyasi (World for Christ Gospel Outreach at New Abirem). Owing largely to space constraints, the data on the establishment of Faith in Christ Ministry International and Full Gospel Church of God International are examined. This is intended to ground the claim of their respective founder's alleged encounter with Jesus Christ and the culmination of such an encounter in the establishment of his Pentecostal / Charismatic church.

⁴³⁵ Barrett and Johnson, 'Global Statistics', p. 291.

⁴³⁶ Barrett and Johnson, 'Global Statistics', p. 291.

4.4.1 Apostle James Kofi Marfo and the Narrative of the Establishment of Faith in Christ Ministry International⁴³⁷

Biography of Marfo

Mr. James Kofi Marfo was born on 23rd November, 1957 at Bonwire in the Asante region. His parents are the late Mr. Kwame Ofe (from Wakeese, near Kokofu in the Asante region) and Madam Ama Konadu, from Bonwire. He began his formal education at Bonwire, from class one to class six, and continued at Ahafo Kenyase Number 2 L/A Middle School, where his father was residing. He completed form four or standard seven in the year 1974. Owing to financial constraints of his parents, he could not further his education. He came back to his home town, Bonwire, to engage in kente weaving business as a means of livelihood. He later travelled to Nigeria to seek greener pastures. He claims that prior to his migration to Nigeria he was not a Christian, yet when he was in Nigeria many people referred to him as a pastor owing to what he refers to as the exemplary lifestyle he exhibited.

Religious Conversion

James Kofi Marfo traces his religious conversion to a miraculous event he experienced in Nigeria. He says that one day he went out to buy a loaf of bread. Upon reaching the market, some of the women selling bread started shouting at him, ‘thief!, thief!’. He says that those women wrongly accused him to be one of the thieves who had come to the market a few hours ago to steal loaves of bread. He says that some of his colleagues had actually gone to the market to steal some loaves of bread a few hours before he got there. The bread sellers therefore mistakenly regarded him to be one of the thieves. The shouts of the bread sellers attracted many angry people to the scene. He says

⁴³⁷ Apostle James Kofi Marfo, Interview, 7 December, 2017, Faith in Christ Ministry International Headquarters, Kumasi.

that the mob was ready to stone and burn him to death when an unknown young man suddenly came to the scene and asked about what had happened. When the young man heard about the reason for the mob's readiness to stone Mr. Marfo to death, he was reported to have shouted them down and quickly paid for the cost of the bread. The man then ordered Mr. Marfo to follow him. After a few meters away from the scene while Mr. Marfo was still following him, the young man mysteriously vanished. After this incidence, he resolved not to stay in Nigeria again. He therefore came back to Ghana in 1977 to engage in buying and selling business.

Mr. Marfo claims that the miracle he experienced in Nigeria produced in him a very strong urge to surrender his life to Jesus Christ, but he did not do that until between 1990 and 1991. He says he was having a nap one afternoon when he saw the sky opened. He says that he heard a voice instructing him to go to APM. He woke up in amazement and asked his younger brother who was then with him in the room whether someone had come to the room. When Mr. Marfo realized that no one had come to the room, he went back to sleep. He claims that the same voice did not only instruct him three times to go APM, but it also gave him the direction to the site.

With the aid of the direction, he went to the PM where many people were already praying. Mr. Marfo reports that immediately he arrived on the APM, an unknown young man who was praying in 'tongues' approached and called him by his real name 'Marfo'. The young man reportedly told Mr. Marfo that he had been deliberately sent from Accra by God to meet him (Marfo). The messenger said that he had been sent by God to teach him how to pray and study the word of God. Owing to the then acute shortage of water on the mountain, the messenger's initial fourteen days of appointment with Mr. Marfo were reduced to seven days of prayer, fasting and the study of God's word. After the

seven days of spiritual guidance and teaching, the messenger descended the mountain. Mr. Marfo says he has never seen or heard of that messenger of God again.

He (Marfo) indicates that when he was praying and studying God's word as he had been directed by the messenger of God, he received the gift of 'tongue speaking'. Later, he further reports that he had a revelation in which a big board with the inscription 'C.A.C' and a voice instructing him to attend the C.A.C (that is, Christ Apostolic Church). Since he did not have any affiliation with any Christian denomination, he joined the C.A.C at Kwadaso, a suburb of Kumasi.

He began to testify publicly about his experiential encounter with God on the APM and his conviction that God meant something great and remarkable for the whole world through him. He then intensified his visits to the mountain to pray and fast for not less than seven days every month. He indicates that as a result of his regular visits to APM, the Lord blessed him with the gifts of healing, prophecy, visions, etc. Through these gifts, he says he was able to attract many people to Christ.

It was however not long when some of the leaders of CAC allegedly began to falsely accuse him of going to APM for what they described as 'some strange spiritual power.' In the opinion of the leaders, Mr. Marfo's spiritual gifts were not genuine. This misconception of his spiritual gifts, according to him, resulted in a protracted antagonism between him and some of the leader of the church. The antagonism lingered until a spiritual direction allegedly came for him to start his own ministry.

The Supernatural in the Establishment of Faith in Christ Ministry International

He discloses that one day while he was waiting on God in a 21-day prayer and fasting on APM, an unknown young man appeared and informed him that God had sent him (the stranger) to tell Mr. Marfo that he (God) had fully prepared him (Marfo) to start his own ministry. Upon this information, he descended the mountain after his 21-day

prayer and fasting to commence the establishment of his own church. He began with a prayer fellowship in 1993 and later converted it into a church by name 'Faith in Christ Ministry International.' He indicates that the name of the church did not spontaneously emerge out of the figment of the founder's imagination. Rather it is a name he claims to have received through intensive prayer and fasting on the APM in the year 1994.

Since the establishment of the church, the founder has assumed the title 'Apostle', in recognition of what he refers to as his personal conviction of having been called by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel, plant churches and engage in social services such as caring for orphans and widows and establishment of Bible Schools to train pastors.

4.4.2 Apostle Prince Emmanuel Godsson and the Narrative of the Establishment of Full Gospel Church of God International⁴³⁸

Biography of Godsson

Bro. God'sson was born on 25th December, 1959 at Asante Akyem Domeabra. His parents are Mr. Cyprian Kwasi Poku, a citizen of Nkawie Wioso and Madam Hannah Adwoa Adamu, a citizen of Asante Akyem Domeabra. In 1965, he started schooling at Kwahu Emeyiwa, near Kwahu Tafo, where he was staying with his uncle, Yaw Sekyere, a cocoa farmer. He later came back to Asante Akyem Domeabra to continue his education. He completed middle school (Standard Seven) in 1976. He attended Bompata Secondary School at Asante Akyem. At form four he fell sick and interrupted his education. He was a science student. When he recovered, he continued his education at Kumasi Technical Institute (KTI), from 1980 to 1982. He read Mechanical Engineering.

⁴³⁸ Apostle Prince Emmanuel God'sson, Interview, 14 August, 2011, APM (Camp Three).

The Experience of God's Call and Subsequent Pilgrimage to APM

He says that he started experiencing the call of the Lord through dreams, prophecies and visions in 1982 when he was a Christian in the Church of Pentecost (CoP). He joined the Resurrection Power Fellowship formed by the late Evangelist Francis Kwasi Amoako in Kumasi. God'sson was both a member of the CoP and the Resurrection Power Fellowship until Evangelist Amoako's death in 1990.

He indicates that he started embarking on pilgrimage to APM in 1982. He was regularly visiting the site with the members of the fellowship. In 1995, he was travelling to the United States of America to attend a conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on the invitation of Arch Bishop Hyman. He says that he had decided to stay in America to continue his education in theology after the conference. He therefore prepared very well for the journey. However, the 'unexpected' happened. He points out that on 19th September, 1995, a day before the flight, the Lord spoke to him to stop the journey and go to APM, without any specific reasons. He was in dilemma since he did not actually know what to do at that moment. When he tried to resist the divine directive, he experienced what he describes as 'the departure of the Holy Spirit from me.' He reports that he sensed the departure of the Holy Spirit whom he saw as a dove. Suddenly, an unusual experience like an electric shock enveloped him and he became partially paralyzed. Upon this strange development, he immediately responded 'Lord, I will go.' Therefore, on 20th September, 1995, APM became his 'abroad.' He reached the PM at night with his entire luggage meant for the conference in America.

Prophetic Declarations, Prayer and Fasting and the Birth of Full Gospel Church of God International

Bro. God'sson discloses that he stayed on the mountain from 1995 to 1998. When he arrived, he maintains that he was initially confused and discouraged. This was

because many family members and friends had contributed huge amount of money to support him to attend the conference in the USA. He therefore felt that his coming to the mountain instead of America would not only be interpreted by his donors as waste of money, but also as an act of sheer senselessness. He was also discouraged because his dream of furthering his education in the USA after the conference was considered dashed.

In the early morning of 21st September, 1995 (about 5:30 am), a day after his arrival on the mountain, he was very perplexed and thought about his actual mission on the mountain while standing in front of the old chapel built by the Rev. Abraham Osei Asibbey at Camp Three. Suddenly, a young man of about twenty-four years of age allegedly walked through the heavy fog and approached him. The young man was said to be praying in ‘tongues’, had a stick in his hand and a cloth tied around his neck. He greeted Bro. God’sson and informed him that God had sent him to deliver a message to him. According to Bro. God’sson, this was the message delivered to him by the young man:

You were travelling to America to attend a conference. You made up your mind to continue your education after the conference. But a day before your flight, you heard a voice that instructed you to come here [APM]. The Lord has sent me to tell you that he caused you to come here to be spiritually prepared for a soul-winning assignment. Moreover, Satan had planned destruction ahead of you in the USA. You were not going to come back from the conference as God’s servant again, but as a backslider and a slave of the devil. The Lord therefore brought you here to secure your life and prosper you with a fruitful ministry.⁴³⁹

According to Bro. God’sson, he considered the young man’s words to be prophetic declarations meant to overcome his dilemma and emotional turmoil. In response, his three-year stay on the mountain was mainly characterized by intensive prayer and fasting. He claims that he initially went through a period of ten-day prayer and ‘dry fast’ (that is, praying and fasting without food and water). When he wanted to

⁴³⁹ Apostle Prince Emmanuel God’sson, Mobile Phone Interview, 19 June, 2018.

break after the tenth day, the Lord allegedly told him to continue and he would feed him with spiritual food. He therefore prayed and fasted for one hundred and ten days more, with only hot water and honey.⁴⁴⁰

The one hundred and twenty days of prayer and fasting, coupled with intentional daily study of God's word, he indicates, spiritually toughened him for other spiritual exploits such as preaching and teaching of God's word, healing and deliverance or exorcism. In his opinion, these spiritual activities, his disciplined prayer and fasting lifestyle and several other prophetic declarations convinced him that the Lord had called him into the pastoral ministry.

When he descended the mountain in 1998 and went to Kumasi, he maintains that he was providentially assisted by some of his friends to move to Accra to start his own ministry. He started a prayer fellowship on 7th January, 2001 in the house of a friend. He persisted in prayer for a better place where his prayer fellowship could be converted into a church. He indicates that the Lord providentially gave him a place at Weijah in Accra and the prayer fellowship was subsequently converted into a Pentecostal church called Full Gospel Church of God International. He claims to have received the name of the church through the scriptures (Acts 20:28), prayer and fasting and divine revelation. Excerpts of Acts 20:28 talk about the church of God. He considered 'Church of God' to be an apt description because according to him, 'God is the source and owner of the church.'

During the registration of the title 'Church of God' at the Registrar General's Department, that title already existed as the name of a registered church in Ghana. This meant that Bro. Godsson could not register the church with that title. He therefore came

⁴⁴⁰ The hot water and honey, according to Bro. Godsson, were freely provided by some of the citizens of Abasua community who use to come there to sell such necessities to pilgrims who are engaged in prayer and fasting.

back and torrentially prayed to God for a new name. He says that while praying one day, the Lord instructed him to lift up his eyes to the sky. He claims that he found the words ‘Full Gospel’ boldly inscribed in the clouds. The Lord then instructed him to precede ‘Church of God’ with ‘Full Gospel’. He testifies that he was able to register the church with the name ‘Full Gospel Church of God International’ – a church he describes as having been unequivocally born out of prayer, fasting and prophetic declarations.

The influence of Pentecostalism on Apostles God’sson and Marfo with respect to their pilgrimage to APM and the subsequent establishment of their Pentecostal churches are obvious in the above narratives. The narratives allude to the Apostles’ encounter with Pentecostal experiences such as divine revelations or dreams as the driving forces of their pilgrimage to the PMs. During church service on the mountains, it is a common thing to hear some pilgrims affirming their perception of God’s presence at the sites by openly testifying of their experience of having been inspired or divinely mandated and led to the PMs. My argument is that when Christians embark on a religious pilgrimage to PMs on the basis of what they claim to be divine revelations or dreams, their pilgrimage may be deemed to have been essentially influenced by those divine revelations or dreams, which, according to Barrett and Johnson, are aspects of Pentecostalism.⁴⁴¹

The narratives further underscore the divine confirmation of the Apostles’ pilgrimage to the PMs through prophetic declarations from some unknown individuals believed to be messengers of God. Prophecies that seem to attest to divine endorsement of Christians’ pilgrimage to sacred sites appear to have the propensity to inspire piety among those Christian pilgrims through relentless prayer, fasting and the study of God’s word.

⁴⁴¹ Barrett and Johnson, ‘Global Statistics’, p. 291.

It can also be deduced from the discussion that prayer, fasting and the study of God's word by the Pentecostal Christians (that is, Apostles God'sson and Marfo) and prophetic declarations / divine directives led to the establishment of their respective Pentecostal / charismatic churches. The names of the churches were also supernaturally produced through the founders' prayer, fasting and the study of God's word. The implication is that contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostal / charismatic churches believed to have been established as a result of the founders' religious pilgrimage to PMs are products of series of supernatural manifestations and encounters. Some observations about these new Pentecostal / charismatic churches seem to reinforce the supernatural manifestations and encounters which characterize their establishment.

First, as new Pentecostal churches perceived to have been borne out of intense prayer, fasting and divine revelations, the founders who also refer to themselves as 'General Overseers' maintain structured renewal programmes that focus on enhancing the spirituality of the church, especially the youth. These renewal programmes include prayer and fasting, all-night prayer sessions, gospel concerts, Bible quiz and Bible studies. The renewal programmes are not only characterised by pneumatic phenomena such as prophecy, tongue speaking, visions, sharing of testimonies and working of miracles as evidence of the Holy Spirit's active presence in the churches, but are also usually youth oriented. The reason is that the youth are not only seen as the future of the churches, but also as the driving force of the churches' current evangelization agenda. Intentional and appropriate ministry which has them in mind is therefore a worthwhile venture in the churches' quest for relevance and continuity.

The organisation of almost all of these renewal programmes are preceded by several days of aggressive preparation in terms of prayer (usually, by a team or Prayer Tower), invitation of guest preachers, gospel artistes and other relevant functionaries and

the use of mass media for publicity. J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu reveals the motivation behind the appropriation of mass media by contemporary Pentecostals:

The use of modern mass media in Christian ministry has developed as part of the self-definition of Pentecostal Christianity in particular. On the one hand, this extensive usage stems out of the inspiration to use media in the fulfilment of the divine mandate to make disciples of all nations. To that end, television and the internet, for example, expose ministries to large numbers of people across borders, whom the producers of religious commodities may not be able to reach physically. On the other hand, the international aspirations of Christian ministries make the use of mass media inevitable in the practice of religion. One needs to be in the media to be counted as important, a reality that is non-negotiable in the technological. We see such a presence in the life and ministries of Dag Heward Mills of the Lighthouse Chapel International in Ghana, Ukraine-based Church of the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations, led by a Nigerian, Pastor Sunday Adelaja, and other such contemporary Pentecostal ministries led by Africans. These contemporary Pentecostals deploy both conventional and new media extensively as tools for ministry.⁴⁴²

Second, almost all the founders of the churches under consideration bear the title ‘apostle’ or ‘evangelist’. They thus see themselves as people called and gifted by Jesus Christ in the context of Ephesians 4:11: ‘And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers’ (ESV). This cluster of five gifts, often referred to as the fivefold ministry of the church, is basic and fundamental to the planting and growth of the church.⁴⁴³ In the understanding of these church founders, Christ gives specific spiritual gifts to people in the church whose primary mission is to minister the word of God and make disciples of all nations. As apostles and evangelists, the founders consider themselves as missionaries, envoys or ambassadors called and sent by Jesus Christ to carry the gospel to areas that have not heard it.⁴⁴⁴ This orientation partly accounts for their aggressive appropriation of mass media as tools of ministry.

Third, during my visit to some of the new Pentecostal churches under consideration, I found their use of religious symbols such as globe, eagle, horse and dove

⁴⁴² J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa* (Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana: Regnum Africa, 2015), p. 62.

⁴⁴³ Yusufu Turaki, ‘Ephesians’ in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed.), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p. 1433.

⁴⁴⁴ For details on the gifts of the Spirit for the Church, see Mal Couch (Gen. ed.), *A Biblical Theology of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999), pp. 77-95.

very captivating. These findings corroborate Asamoah-Gyadu's observation that in Pentecostal Christianity, dove, eagle and globe are symbols of dominion pneumatology.⁴⁴⁵ In the study of religions as in other disciplines, symbols have a depth of meaning that may not be exhausted by what is seen. They convey levels of meaning and reality through that which is visible, with great significance for the invisible, i.e., belief in the supernatural and experience.⁴⁴⁶ The implication is that 'Religious symbols possess the power to remind the people of faith that reality can be complex and is not always communicated adequately in words ...Religious symbols enable people to communicate profound truths and realities in concrete and accessible ways.'⁴⁴⁷

The globe points to the churches' worldwide aspirations in conformity with their mission mandate of witnessing in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). In the opinion of Asamoah-Gyadu, 'the globe is perhaps the most self-evident and vivid depiction of the expansionist mission agenda of contemporary Pentecostalism.'⁴⁴⁸ This implies that Pentecostalism is a movement that was meant to be global in outlook from the outset. The words international, world, worldwide, global and, more recently, trans-continental in almost all the names of the new Pentecostal churches under study really attest to their global aspirations.

It is believed that in Acts 2:1-13, symbolic confirmation of Pentecostalism's global missionary orientation was given when people who had come from Europe, Africa, the Arabic world and the Semitic regions were all named as active participants in the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The languages that were spoken declaring the wonders of God also dealt a heavy blow to prevailing linguistic

⁴⁴⁵ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 30.

⁴⁴⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 32.

⁴⁴⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 32.

⁴⁴⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 43.

barriers. Although, the globe as a symbol does not appear in scripture, it is taken to be a concise representation of the expression ‘ends of the earth’ in Acts 1:8.⁴⁴⁹

The global missionary aspirations of these churches even find expression in the identity of some of the founders. For example, it is intriguing to note that Evangelist Kwadwo Gyasi, the founder of World for Christ Gospel Outreach, also refers to himself as I.G.P, meaning ‘International Gospel Preacher’, but not Inspector General of Police.

The symbol of the eagle signifies aspiration, empowerment and motivation.⁴⁵⁰ Charles Ansah- Owusu identifies some essential features of the eagle which seem to explain its use as one of the symbols in contemporary Pentecostalism. In his opinion, the eagle has a sharp vision, is fearless, tenacious and purpose-driven, a highflyer, possesses vitality and nurtures its younger ones.⁴⁵¹ The eagle symbolizes the Holy Spirit’s aggressive and conquering side. The eagle has the capacity to take dominion because it has the advantage in height, strength, endurance, longevity, vision and power over other birds.⁴⁵² One of the biblical foundations of the eagle metaphor among many Pentecostals is Isaiah 40:27-31 (ESV):

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, my way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Pentecostals interpret this text in a variety of ways, including God’s consolation of his people and the potency of prayer. Edouard Kitoko Nsiku, a Congolese Baptist scholar and Translation Consultant for the United Bible Societies based in Maputo, is of

⁴⁴⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 43.

⁴⁵⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p.32.

⁴⁵¹ Charles Ansah-Owusu, *Golden Keys to Distinction* (Ghana: Abundant Grace Academy Publications, 2013), pp. 26-34.

⁴⁵² Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 40.

the view that even though the text forms part of the reminders of the scope of God's power, Christians may sometimes be tempted to think that they are too small to attract his interest. But believers should not think that they are forgotten by God in difficult times and become discouraged. God reminds them that his knowledge is infinite and that he does not grow weary. If they persevere and place their hope in the Lord, they will share in his characteristics and have the strength to endure.⁴⁵³

One of the ways in which Christians demonstrate perseverance and hope in the Lord is prayer. Bishop Charles Agyin-Asare, a contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostal and founder of the Perez Chapel International, applies the metaphor of the eagle in Isaiah in the context of prayer as follows:

The fact is that the eagle is the king of the birds. Scientifically, it has been proven that the eagle can spy its prey five miles away because it has very powerful microscopic eyes. It can also live for over thirty years. ... When the eagle's feathers start getting weak, it goes among the rocks and uses its very sharp beak to remove all its feathers from its skin. After that, it uses its beak and talons to hit the rock till they all fall off and the soft tissues come up. As a result of this, the eagle is not able to eat for a number of days. It is also unable to fly for a while so it spends the time resting on the rocks. After it has gone through this period of fasting (waiting), fresh feathers come up and its beak and talons grow again. By this, the eagle is renewed to a youth and is able to fly stronger than before. He does not grow weary and is able to go after its prey better. The beak grows out stronger and the feathers and the talons are strengthened so it flies better and gets a better grip.⁴⁵⁴

Agyin-Asare attempts to compare the period of 'waiting' in the above quotation to periods of 'fasting and prayer'. He writes: 'Those who forsake themselves, make sacrifices and pay a dear price to wait on the Lord ... will renew their strength, they will mount up with wings like the eagle.'⁴⁵⁵ He continues: 'the more one waits upon the Lord, the more he breathes over you and the more his presence overshadows you and you renew your strength... As you wait on the Lord, God will infuse, inject and vaccinate

⁴⁵³ Edouard Kitoko Nsiku, 'Isaiah' in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed.), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p.837.

⁴⁵⁴ Charles Agyin-Asare, *Powwer in Prayer: Taking Your Blessings by Force* (Hoornaar, Netherlands: His Printing, 2001), pp.11-12. See also Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁵⁵ Agyin-Asare, *Powwer in Prayer*, p. 12.

you with his power and you will be energized to rise to fulfill your God-given destiny.’⁴⁵⁶

The action-oriented words in Agyin-Asare’s exposition which underscore the presence of God’s Spirit upon or in people include ‘breathe’, ‘energize’, ‘infuse’, ‘inject’, ‘overshadow’ and ‘vaccinate’. These words aptly describe what the Holy Spirit does in the lives of the founders of the new Pentecostal churches and other pilgrims who sacrifice to wait on the Lord through fasting and prayer on the Prayer Mountains.

The eagle metaphor is somehow akin to the symbol of the horse. The horse metaphor may depict several qualities including zeal, determination, strength, authority and speed with which the new Pentecostal Churches brace themselves to execute their global missionary mandate. As apostles and evangelists, the founders of the new Pentecostal churches as well as their followers or members see themselves as called by Jesus Christ to translate the Great Commission into reality. The Great Commission refers to the ‘mandate to make disciples of all nations’ given by Jesus Christ to his disciples following his death and resurrection (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8).⁴⁵⁷ In the thinking of the founders of the new Pentecostal churches under study in this chapter, they have been called, empowered and sent by God to evangelize and disciple the world. The Christ who is believed to have called, empowered and sent them ‘to make disciples of all nations’ referred to himself as the embodiment of all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). One of the apt representations of Christ or the Holy Spirit is horse. John W. Klotz, writing on ‘Animals of the Bible’ discloses that ‘horses were ... used by the wealthy for hunting.’⁴⁵⁸ He

⁴⁵⁶ Agyin-Asare, *Powwer in Prayer*, p. 13.

⁴⁵⁷ Glenn E. Schaeffer, ‘Great Commission, the’, in Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), p. 317.

⁴⁵⁸ John W. Klotz, ‘Animals of the Bible’ in Charles F. Pfeiffer, et al (eds) *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), p.75.

further reveals that King Ashurbanipal of Assyria used horses to hunt lions.⁴⁵⁹ The horse metaphor in this context thus suggests power or authority to prevail. It also connotes swiftness with which one executes assigned task and outruns to conquer the other, especially, the enemy. In that sense, the horse, like the eagle, represents the authoritative and conquering sides of the Holy Spirit.

The horse metaphor as indicative of the Holy Spirit's ability to conquer is theologically cogent in the context of the critical constituents of the Great Commission. Schaeffer maintains that 'the Great Commission is accomplished through witnessing (Acts 1:8), preaching (Mark 16:15), baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:20). Jesus' disciples are to replicate themselves in the lives of those who respond to the Good News.'⁴⁶⁰ These tasks are undeniably humanly difficult, if not impossible, to execute owing largely to the prevalence of what Kalu refers to as 'the forces that deface'⁴⁶¹ (that is, malevolent powers or evil spirits). But there is a way out. Schaeffer further asserts that 'the Holy Spirit is [available as] the empowering agent for those who witness (Acts 1:8), as well as the one who convicts sinners of their need for Jesus (John 16:8-11). The disciples will have success because Jesus, the Lord of heaven and earth, will be with them as they undertake their assignment (Matthew 28:20).'⁴⁶² This perhaps explains why all the founders of the new Pentecostal churches under study are embarking on aggressive evangelistic and discipleship activities including open air evangelism and church-planting in Ghana and abroad.

In addition to the above, the horse metaphor seems to have apocalyptic and eschatological significance. Perry Stone articulates that:

⁴⁵⁹ Klotz, 'Animals of the Bible', p.75.

⁴⁶⁰ Schaeffer, 'Great Commission, the', p. 317.

⁴⁶¹ Kalu, 'Shape, Flow and Identity', p. 6.

⁴⁶² Schaeffer, 'Great Commission, the', p.317.

Elijah was transported in a whirlwind to heaven, in a chariot engulfed in fire and pulled by fiery spirit horses (2 Kings 2:11). Years later, Elisha awoke one morning, tapped into the invisible world, and saw horses and chariots of fire surrounding a hilltop and protecting him (2 Kings 6:17). However, when the Apostle John saw Christ and His heavenly entourage (armies of heaven) return to earth from heaven at the end of the tribulation, he saw them descend to earth riding white horses (Revelation 19:14).⁴⁶³

Stone's explanation of this quotation is revealing: 'Just as the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:16), certain spirits have the ability to transform themselves into different forms. This does not only point to the versatility of the Holy Spirit, but it also endorses Klotz's position that 'horses are often spoken of figuratively ... and in contexts of judgment...'⁴⁶⁴.

In addition to the above symbols is the dove. 'Generally', Asamoah-Gyadu writes, 'the dove symbolizes the presence of the Holy Spirit, the harbinger of the new creation who descended on Jesus at his baptism.'⁴⁶⁵ Klotz posits that 'the Psalmist employed the word [dove] metaphorically as a term of affection, "the soul of thy dove" (Psalm 74:19).'⁴⁶⁶ The dove is therefore representative of the calmer and gentler moves of the Spirit, while the eagle and the horse, as already noted, represents the Spirit's more aggressive and conquering side.⁴⁶⁷

The crux of the forgone discussion is that Pentecostalism has the potential to influence some pilgrims' appropriation of PMs and their subsequent establishment of Pentecostal churches. I have underscored that the new Pentecostal churches and their respective founders are characterized by series of supernatural manifestations and encounters. As a result, the founders employ several religious symbols as their self-

⁴⁶³ Perry Stone, *Chronicles of the Sacred Mountain* (Cleveland: Voice of Evangelism Outreach Ministries, 2015), pp. 17-19.

⁴⁶⁴ Klotz, 'Animals of the Bible', pp.75-76.

⁴⁶⁵ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 32.

⁴⁶⁶ Klotz, 'Animals of the Bible', p. 85.

⁴⁶⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 40.

evident and vivid description of their uncompromising position on the Holy Spirit as an indispensable factor in all aspects of Christian life.

4.5 Influence of Salvation Ministerial Training College at Nkawkaw Mountain

Olive Prayer Camp on Christian Pilgrimage and Pentecostal Growth

Another area in which Pentecostalism is believed to influence Christians' pilgrimage to PMs in Ghana is the establishment of Salvation Ministerial Training College (SMTTC) at NMOPC. The SMTTC is a Pentecostal learning centre where Christians who feel called by God into the ordained ministry are theologically formed or retooled. The SMTTC is a Pentecostal learning centre because of the following reasons: First, the teachers at the college are Pentecostal pastors who consciously inculcate Pentecostal ideas into the students. Second, prayer and renewal programmes which form an integral part of the students' training focus on a synthesis of spirituality and materiality – a view believed to be dominant within Pentecostal and Charismatic circles. Third, almost all the students who graduate from the college contribute to the growth of Pentecostalism in Ghana through the establishment of Pentecostal / Charismatic churches. Fourth, Bishop Dr. James Obeng Nyantakyi, the founder / director of the college is a Pentecostal Christian. Thus Pentecostalism promotes the setting up of a Pentecostal learning centre which attracts pilgrims to pursue Christian spirituality from the perspective of teaching and learning. In that sense, Pentecostalism is deemed to have influenced pilgrimage to the PMs. In order to explain further how Pentecostalism, through the setting up of a ministerial training college, promotes pilgrimage to PMs, I undertake a brief examination of the history of SMTTC at NMOPC, duration of training, curriculum and instructional strategies, spiritual renewal programmes prior to graduation / ordination and church planting strategies of the newly trained ministers.

4.5.1 History of Salvation Ministerial College: Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp Campus

Between 1st October and 31st December, 2013, the founder of NMOPC, Evangelist Kwadwo Gyasi, is said to have seen the need to provide a serene learning environment to pilgrims, especially pastors, who patronize the prayer camp.⁴⁶⁸ As a Pentecostal Christian, Evangelist Gyasi is believed to have been motivated by his desire to seeing God's ministers as people who sincerely and dutifully combine their subjective encounters with God with sound scriptural teaching and training. He attributes most of the moral and ethical failures or problems among some church leaders, pastors, prophets, evangelists, teachers and apostles in Ghana to charlatans who, he believes, have infiltrated the Christian ministry. In pursuance of his ardent desire, he is reported to have collaborated with Bishop Dr. James Obeng Nyantakyi, the Director of Salvation Ministerial Training College and founder / general overseer of Salvation House Chapel, all located in Accra, for a campus of the college to be sited at the NMOPC to award certificate in ministry to the graduates.

The Director allegedly agreed and the training began in the year 2013. Teachers who teach in the Accra campus are the same teachers who teach at the campus on the mountain. The trainees, who usually are from the classical Pentecostal churches (i.e., Christ Apostolic Church, Church of Pentecost, etc.) and sometimes have very low or no academic background, go through a six-month period of practical training in Christian ministry. The teachers engage the students for one week of intensive teaching and learning every month, after which the students are given practical assignments to complete and discuss the following month. The first batch of twenty-seven (27) students

⁴⁶⁸ Rev. Nathanael Akoto Danquah, a pastor at NMOPC disclosed this to me on Phone on 27 May 2019.

graduated in the year 2014. The second batch of twenty-four (24) students graduated in 2015. In the year 2016, the number of students who graduated were twenty-seven (27).⁴⁶⁹

4.5.2 Curriculum and Instructional Strategies

Even though the subjects taught include Christology (a study of Jesus as man and God)⁴⁷⁰, Pneumatology (a study of the Holy Spirit)⁴⁷¹, Eschatology (a study of the end times)⁴⁷², Homiletics (the principles and practice of effective preaching)⁴⁷³, The Call of God⁴⁷⁴ and Christian Ethics⁴⁷⁵, the teachers do not focus more on the theoretical or academic and sophisticated aspects of these theological disciplines. Rather, owing to the students' low academic backgrounds, the teachers essentially focus on the practical aspects and implications of theology as a tool in Christian ministry. In this regard, they often teach in both the English and Akan languages since most of the students, apart from their low academic qualifications, are also citizens from Akan speaking contexts of Ghana. In fact, they do not place much emphasis on the academic or theoretical aspects of theological education because in their thinking most of the initial disciples of Jesus Christ did not receive any such theological education, yet they made exploits in their ministries through the practical insights they received from him.

The teachers employ several instructional strategies that aim at varying teaching methodologies and promoting holistic practical formation of the students. These

⁴⁶⁹ Pastor Agyemang Prempeh, Interview, 25 July, 2016, NMOPC.

⁴⁷⁰ John A. Witmer, 'Jesus Christ' in Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Gen. eds), *Understanding Christian Theology* (USA: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), pp. 291- 390.

⁴⁷¹ Robert G. Gromacki, 'The Holy Spirit' in Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Gen. eds.), *Understanding Christian Theology* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), pp. 391- 538.

⁴⁷² John F. Walvoord, 'End Times' in Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (eds.), *Understanding Christian Theology* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), pp. 1245-1372.

⁴⁷³ Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Gen. eds.) *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

⁴⁷⁴ Ben Patterson, 'The Call to Ministry' in James D. Berkley (Gen. ed.) *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration* (United States of America: Baker Books, 2003), pp. 13-24.

⁴⁷⁵ Kerby Anderson, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005).

instructional strategies include lecture, lecture and discussion, role play, brainstorming, buzz groups, student presentations and demonstrations.⁴⁷⁶

The curriculum, the Akan and English languages used in teaching and the instructional strategies of the teachers undoubtedly demonstrate some remarkable strides on the part of the school management as far as Christian education of pastors is concerned. But the teachers' intentional placement of emphasis on the practical aspects of ministry at the expense of the academic dimension and their claim that most of the initial disciples of Jesus Christ did not receive theological education cannot escape interrogation. The interrogation is warranted against the backdrop of Ghana and Africa in general where concerned scholars such as Lois Semenye,⁴⁷⁷ Emmanuel Asante,⁴⁷⁸ Kwame Gyekye⁴⁷⁹ and Kwame Bediako⁴⁸⁰ have not only dilated on the relevance of appropriate Christian education in the holistic formation of Christians, especially pastors, but also seem to question the genuineness of Christian education in Africa. They seem to attribute the apparent paradox of the massive Christian presence in Africa and the corresponding escalation of social, political, economic and religio-cultural turmoil in Africa to poor attention to effective Christian education in Africa. Semenye, for example, laments on this enigma as follows:

In the 1960s, Christianity in Africa was described as a mile long and an inch deep. Not much has changed since then. Despite the vast number of African Christians, the new churches springing up every day, the all-night prayer meetings, exorcism and the days of fasting, the continent is still blighted with

⁴⁷⁶For details on these instructional strategies, see Linda Meeks, Philip Heit and Randy Page, *Comprehensive School Health Education* (3rd ed.) (New York, USA: McGraw-Hill, 2003), pp. 155-165.

⁴⁷⁷ Lois Semenye, 'Christian Education for Africa' in Tokumboh Adeyemo (Gen. ed.), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p.1480.

⁴⁷⁸ Emmanuel Asante, *Stewardship: Essays on Ethics of Stewardship* (Kumasi, Ghana: Wilas Press Ltd., 1999), pp.206-210.

⁴⁷⁹ Kwame Gyekye, 'Spiritual and Moral Leadership: The Role of Theological Institutions', *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* vol. XV (January 2005), pp.34-40.

⁴⁸⁰ Kwame Bediako, 'Whose Religion is Christianity?' Reflections on Opportunities and Challenges in Christian Theological Scholarship: The African Dimension' in Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross (eds.) *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008), pp.107-117.

poor government, bribery, killings, coups, the AIDS epidemic and so on. This apparent paradox invites us to examine the way in which Christians [especially pastors] are nurtured. Is there genuine Christian education in our churches?⁴⁸¹

In my opinion, ‘Christian education’ – understood by Semenye as ‘a means of improving, developing and nurturing the church in its authentic walk with Christ so that the applied word of God will have a positive impact on our societies’⁴⁸² – cannot be effective and genuine if Christian educators who train pastors ignore the academic aspects and focus only on the practical dimension. It seems to me that the two go hand-in-hand. The reason is that the students, after their period of training, would be graduated and / or ordained. Those to be ordained would go and serve as pastors or church leaders in various capacities. In a church with high literacy rate the congregation or members would normally expect their pastor to be of a certain reasonable level of academic experience in addition to his ability to translate theoretical ideas into practical or concrete situations. A pastor who is completely oblivious of the theoretical foundation of the practical Christian ideas he or she tries to espouse to a literate congregation may not make much progress.

In addition to the above, Gyekye seems to buttress the point on the mutual non exclusiveness of academic and practical dimensions of pastoral training in his discussion of some of the moral qualities that pastors as leaders would be expected to possess. Pastors, in his view, would be expected to possess a whole gamut of moral qualities including incorruptibility or freedom from corruption, integrity and humility.⁴⁸³ He further locates the relevance of knowledge in the acquisition of these virtues in the context of Greek philosophy: He writes: ‘The ancient Greek philosophers argued that knowledge is a necessary and sufficient condition for attaining virtue, and hence for

⁴⁸¹ Semenye, ‘Christian Education for Africa’, p.1480.

⁴⁸² Semenye, ‘Christian Education for Africa’, p. 1480.

⁴⁸³ Gyekye, ‘Spiritual and Moral Leadership’, p. 35.

doing the right thing. Knowing, for them, is an insurance against wrong doing; so that if a person knows that X is wrong he would refrain from doing X. For them all wrongdoing is due to ignorance (Greek: *agnoia*) or lack of the necessary knowledge. Moral knowledge, they maintained, is the final and irresistible determinant of action.⁴⁸⁴

The overarching importance of both theoretical and practical moral knowledge in the holistic formation of ministers cannot be compromised or disputed, especially, in Ghana where the attitude of some pastors has brought the public image of the pastoral ministry under gross disrepute. Gyekye buttresses this position in these words:

In Ghana, members of the pastorate (if we are to use what we read in our newspapers as evidence) have been suspected, accused, and not infrequently found guilty, of such immoral or criminal acts as adultery (including having ‘affair’ with married and unmarried women in their own churches) fornication, stealing monies belonging to the church, extortion, involving themselves in shady business deals, including collecting people’s money to obtain passports and visas for them, and a host of other wrongful acts.⁴⁸⁵

The claim that almost all the initial disciples of Jesus did not receive any theological education is, according to Emmanuel Asante, very contentious and a serious theological misnomer. In his view, the disciples (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16) were thoroughly educated theologically by Jesus Christ through their interactions with him on earth. Asante further explains that Jesus’ three years of interactions with his initial disciples provided an original and incomparable teaching and learning context in which the disciples were exceptionally privileged to be taught directly by the greatest teacher of all teachers, Jesus the Christ.⁴⁸⁶ This contentious claim that the initial disciples of Christ did not have any theological education is, perhaps, the reason for which ‘the Pentecostal movement not too long ago considered academic theology an aberration from genuine spirituality.’⁴⁸⁷ In fact in the opinion of Lewis F.

⁴⁸⁴ Gyekye, ‘Spiritual and Moral Leadership’, p.38.

⁴⁸⁵ Gyekye, ‘Spiritual and Moral Leadership’, pp. 37-38. See also Asante, *Stewardship*, pp. 197-210.

⁴⁸⁶ Emmanuel Asante, Interview, April 15, 2015, Methodist Headquarters, Wesley House, Accra.

⁴⁸⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p.35.

Wilson, ‘Pentecostals have generally been ambivalent about higher education, many regarding it with open suspicion.’⁴⁸⁸

4.5.3 Spiritual Renewal Programmes Prior to Graduation / Ordination

‘Operation 72’ and ‘Redeeming your Ministerial Image’ are some of the spiritual renewal programmes the prospective graduates go through. ‘Operation 72’ is a seventy-two hour or three days of fasting and fervent prayer by the would-be ordained ministers. The number ‘three’, in the opinion of Pastor Agyeman Prempeh⁴⁸⁹, was not arbitrarily chosen; it symbolizes the Trinitarian orientation of God. By spending several three days to fast and pray throughout their six-month formation, it is believed that the students imbue themselves with the notion of God’s powerful presence with them in the discharge of their duties before and after graduation and ordination.

In addition to the interpretation of the number ‘three’ as a symbol of the Trinity, Chuck D. Pierce and Rebecca Wagner Sytsema also treat the number ‘three’ as a symbolic description of deity, conformity, obedience, copy, imitation, likeness, tradition, completeness, perfection, testimony and that which is connected with the bodily resurrection of Christ and His people.⁴⁹⁰ It implies that from numerological perspective, the fluidity of the number ‘three’ cannot be ignored. In this context, it seems plausible to assert that there is no universally accepted or precise interpretation of the number ‘three’ as a symbol. The interpretation is relative; it is subject to the context of the interpreter.

Another spiritual renewal programme designed to equip the prospective ministers at the college is ‘Redeeming Your Ministerial Image’. This programme, according to

⁴⁸⁸ Lewis F. Wilson, ‘Bible Institutes, Colleges, Universities’ in Stanley M. Burgess and Edward M. Van Der Mass (eds.), *International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Revised and Expanded Edition) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), pp. 372 – 380 (372).

⁴⁸⁹ He is one of the teachers at the SMTC. He disclosed this to me during an interview he granted me at NMOPC on 25 July, 2016.

⁴⁹⁰ Chuck D. Pierce and Rebecca Wagner Sytsema, *The Spiritual Warfare Handbook: How to Battle, Pray and Prepare Your House for Triumph* (Minneapolis: Chosen, 2016), p. 125.

Pastor Prempeh, focuses on making the prospective ministers become men and women of God who are not only spiritually vibrant, but also economically or materially affluent. In his opinion, materiality and spirituality are inseparable in Christianity. The implication is that wealth is inextricably linked to the pastoral ministry. Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 3:1, 'The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a **noble task**'⁴⁹¹, is considered to be one of the biblical bases of wealth as an integral component of the pastoral ministry.

A materially poor minister, in the thinking of Pastor Prempeh, is therefore that minister who has not redeemed his or her ministerial image through the application of biblical principles. The renewal programme focuses on breaking the powers of malevolent forces believed to be responsible for ministers' spiritual oppression, economic or financial deprivation and material destitution. The teachers at the college uphold the notion that a minister's background is an indispensable factor of the ministry. Therefore, if ministers do not redeem their ministerial image by consciously and relentlessly dealing with their background, their back will put them to the ground; meaning they will plunge themselves into a quagmire of poverty and be unsuccessful in their ministry.⁴⁹²

'Redeeming Your Ministerial Image' as examined above resonates scholarly discourse on the popular wealth or prosperity hermeneutics among contemporary Pentecostals and Charismatics. Asamoah-Gyadu espouses on some of the scriptural foundation of the perceived inseparable nexus between salvation and prosperity (Exodus 23:25-26; 1 Peter 4:12-13). He also undertakes an overview of the historical origins of the doctrine of prosperity in North American neo-Pentecostalism. He goes ahead to articulate some of the theories underlying the doctrine of prosperity. He posits that: 'The

⁴⁹¹ Emphasis by Pastor Agyeman Prempeh.

⁴⁹² Pastor Agyeman Prempeh, Interview, July 27, 2016, Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp.

underlying theory of the “gospel of prosperity” is that God rewards faithful Christians with good health, financial success and material wealth, “according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 4:19).⁴⁹³ He further demonstrates how the main features of prosperity theology are outlined in Charismatic messages delivered on radio, services he attended and books written by its main Ghanaian exponents. More insightfully, he explores a theological critique of the prosperity gospel in the light of its main sources of influence and the theological and pastoral problems that those teachings inevitably raise.⁴⁹⁴ It is hardly disputed that in both biblical and Ghanaian traditional settings, salvation has a strong existential significance.⁴⁹⁵ In that respect, it is logical to contend that holistic development, understood in this context as the realization of both spiritual and material aspirations, which seems to be a major emphasis of the prayer and renewal programmes on the PM, cohere with traditional notions of religion as a means of realizing existential ends.

By underscoring the inseparable nexus between faith in Christ and material affluence, it must be acknowledged that the teachers of the college under consideration articulate a message that addresses Ghanaians’ situations and existential circumstances in a relevant manner. The teachers strongly emphasise that becoming a Christian is a transforming experience. Through the teaching that suggests a synthesis of spirituality and materiality, the teachers underscore the attainment of a balanced self-image for the Christian minister. Asamoah-Gyadu succinctly articulates this position in the context of Christ’s ministry as follows:

In addition to his message of self-denial Jesus also affirmed the value of human beings in God’s sight by the space he created in his ministry for the marginalised

⁴⁹³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, p. 202.

⁴⁹⁴ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, pp. 201-232.

⁴⁹⁵ Christian R. Gaba, ‘Man’s Salvation: Its nature and meaning in African traditional religion’ in Edward Fasholé-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings & Godwin Tasie (eds.), *Christianity in Independent Africa* (Great Britain: Rex Collins Ltd, 1978), pp. 389-401.

by the social, religious and political institutions of his day: sinners, lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, women, children and the weak. On the whole the gospel of prosperity assures people that God values them, wills the best for them and that with the proper use of their abilities and potentialities they could maximise their talents and enhance their own value as human beings.⁴⁹⁶

However this theological position cannot be left hanging without a creative interrogation. This theological standpoint ought to be evaluated against the reality that in practical terms productive aspirations are not always actualised. In fact in reality, things do not always get better as expected. Therefore, the emphasis of the teachers at the SMTC that ‘Redeeming Your Ministerial Image’ essentially implies that ‘God’s will for his [ministers] *always* means prosperity raises theological and pastoral difficulties which cannot be sustained in the light of the full implications of God’s message of salvation as mediated in Christ.’⁴⁹⁷

After their six-month intensive training, one month is used to prepare them for graduation and ordination. As part of their preparation towards graduation and ordination, the students pass through an interview of seven-member panel to ascertain the depth of their basic knowledge in ministry and how productive they would be on the field as God’s ministers. Upon satisfactory performance at the interview, they are then graduated and given certificates in ministry. The students about whom ordination recommendations are made by their senior pastors to the instructors of the college are ordained after their graduation. Those without such recommendations are only graduated.

The management of the college attaches a great deal of importance to the ordination ceremony because it is expected that the students, after their ordination, would see themselves as ministers of God and agents of moral, socio-economic, religio-cultural and political reconstruction in Ghana and the world at large. Evangelist Gyasi and Rev.

⁴⁹⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, pp. 231-232.

⁴⁹⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, pp. 202-203. Emphasis original.

Richard Ansah, a former graduate of the college and founder of Crown of Life Ministry at Nkawkaw, maintain that the management of the college unequivocally asserts the theological import of ordination as part of the students' preparation towards ordination.⁴⁹⁸ In the thinking of Rev. Ansah, ordination implies that God has chosen, appointed and set one apart for ministry.⁴⁹⁹ The position of Evangelist Gyasi and Rev. Ansah on the theological import of ordination corroborates Darrell W. Johnson's. In Johnson's opinion, ordination entails four meanings:

- *Recognition.* We are acknowledging and affirming that, yes, this person has been entrusted (by God's sovereign grace) with appropriate gifts of the Spirit for leadership in Christ's Body (1 Cor. 28-31)...
- *Setting apart.* We are then saying that this appropriately gifted person is to be set apart from "normal" responsibilities in order to take up the mantle of leadership in the church. We affirm that all believers are "set apart by God for God" ... But we also affirm that some are called to be set apart by God for God in a different way in order to give undivided attention to the preaching of the Word and the equipping of the saints (Eph. 4:11-12)...
- *Empowerment.* We are then empowering the gifted person, usually by the laying on of hands. That is, our hand in that act become the hands of Christ, conveying to the person Christ's divine energy (1 Cor. 12:4-6). And our hands are granting the person authority to function in a leadership role in our lives...
- *Accountability.* Finally, we are calling those ordained to accountability. We are asking of them fidelity to Jesus Christ as head of the church, to the Scriptures as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice, to our unique theological emphases, and to our special way of doing things. Thus we extract a vow from the person... In many cultural settings, we are also confirming other special privileges such as the authority to officiate at weddings... But essentially, we are recognizing gifts, setting apart for special functions, empowering and entering into sacred accountability.⁵⁰⁰

It is hardly disputed that ordination, understood by David W. Hegg as 'the public affirmation by a church of God's personal appointment of a man to be His herald in the

⁴⁹⁸ Evang. Gyasi and Rev. Richard Ansah, Interview, Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp, July 27, 2016.

⁴⁹⁹ Rev. Ansah, Interview, Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp, July 27, 2016.

⁵⁰⁰ Darrell W. Johnson 'Ordination' in James D. Berkley (Gen. ed.) *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2003), pp. 18-19. Emphases original.

church’⁵⁰¹, brings both joy and fear to the ordained. This is because ordination entails both privileges and responsibilities.

4.5.4 Church-planting Strategies of the Newly Ordained Ministers

Everett Wilson and Douglas Petersen are among the scholars who have dilated on church planting strategies in contemporary global Pentecostalism, using Latin America as a case study. Wilson aptly observes that general methodologies employed to the study of Pentecostalism have tended to neglect one of the most characteristic features of the movement, that is, the formation of congregations.⁵⁰² Petersen posits that ‘the strength of the [Pentecostal] movement is achieved at the level of the local congregation, where small groups of congregates have not only organized themselves into stable, often growing associations, but have invariably acquired land, support a pastor and have undertaken social programmes.’⁵⁰³

It is insightful to note that the Pentecostal orientation of the SMTC further strengthens the Pentecostalisation of Ghanaian Christianity through the establishment of Pentecostal / Charismatic churches by the newly ordained ministers of the college. The newly ordained ministers collaborate with Evangelist Gyasi for him to help them establish their own churches or ministries. Evangelist Gyasi maintains that he arranges with each one of them and facilitates the organisation of mammoth open-air evangelistic programmes (usually at his own expense) at the ministers’ preferred places; that is, where they want to plant their churches. He is almost always the preacher at such mammoth evangelistic programmes. The new souls won are immediately placed under

⁵⁰¹ David W. Hegg, *Appointed to Preach: Assessing a Call to the Ministry* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Evangel Publication, n.d.), p. 91

⁵⁰² Everett Wilson, ‘Dynamics of Latin American Pentecostalism’ in Daniel R. Miller (ed.) *Coming of Age: Pentecostalism in Contemporary Latin America* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), p.100.

⁵⁰³ Douglas Petersen, ‘Pentecostals: Who Are They?’ in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds.) *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 1999), p.81.

the pastoral care of the newly ordained ministers. These new souls or ‘new converts’ as they are popularly called in Ghana become the pioneers or founding members of the churches. Some of the experiences of the newly founded churches under consideration in this study are reminiscent of the Latin American case described by Petersen.

The churches usually begin as small Bible study groups or fellowships in the house of one of the new members or a rented apartment. The pastor initially does almost everything – a liturgist, preacher, administrator, etc. People who demonstrate leadership ability, under the mentorship of the pastor, are given the opportunity to develop their gifts as leaders of the group. There is a time for praise and worship, sharing testimony, reading and studying the Bible. Neighbours are invited to attend. In the course of the service, new members are gladly asked to indicate whether they came as visitors or permanent members. The pastor prays for them and members are asked to give them a hearty welcome. Those who bring new members to church are openly commended and other church members are urged to do same. As soon as the group grows to approximately twelve members and above, the pastor begins the process of converting the fellowship into an official congregation through a service of inauguration under the auspices of Evangelist Gyasi and the concerned pastor of the fellowship. Evangelist Gyasi periodically undertakes pastoral visits to the ministers to encourage them and to ascertain how they are faring on the field. Pastor Richard Ansah is one of the ordained ministers of SMTC. His current Pentecostal fellowship awaiting inauguration in 2019 is ‘Crown of Life Embassy’ located at Nkawkaw.

The ministers’ training on the PM through the SMTC, graduation / ordination and subsequent church-planting, according to Evangelist Kwadwo Gyasi, is understood as

aspects of African Christians' efforts to reinvent and contextualise the Great Commission as found in Matthew 28:16-20.⁵⁰⁴ It reads:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the **mountain** to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Go** therefore and **make disciples of all nations, baptising** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age."⁵⁰⁵

Some theologians have attempted to interpret this text and taken recognition of the exact place where Jesus commissioned his disciples. Craig S. Keener, for instance, tries to interpret the text by first indicating that Christ's meeting with the disciples on the mountain had a historical antecedent in the Old Testament (OT). He notes: 'God had often revealed himself on mountains in biblical tradition, especially, in the narratives about Moses.'⁵⁰⁶

Thus Keener, like Eliade, alludes to spatial non homogeneity and significance of some mountains as far as humanity's encounter with the transcendental realm is concerned. Of course, seemingly endless debates among scholars about the particular mountain in the bible on which supernatural occurrences took place, have lessened the interest among scholars with respect to the notion of spatial significance of mountains. For instance, I have indicated elsewhere in this study the apparent controversy surrounding the mountain of Jesus' transfiguration. I have pointed out Stein's position on this controversy: 'The fact that all the Synoptic Gospel writers did not unanimously

⁵⁰⁴ Evangelist Kwadwo Gyasi, (The Founder of the Camp), 27 July, 2016, Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp.

⁵⁰⁵ Emphasis mine.

⁵⁰⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), p.130. See also chapter one of this study for more information on the biblical antecedents of supernatural occurrences on mountains.

agree on one site for the transfiguration implies that they were not interested in locating exactly *where* this event took place; they were more concerned with *what* took place.⁵⁰⁷

Despite these controversies, I maintain that by meeting the disciples and commissioning them on the mountain, Christ, in my opinion, sought to reinforce the spatial non homogeneity and significance of some mountains in God's scheme of things. In the case of the SMTC students, by their training on the mountain and subsequent graduation / ordination to embark on the Great Commission, among other duties, the management of SMTC and the ordained ministers are perceived as trying to **reinvent** (that is, critically bring back) and **contextualize** (that is, critically appropriate) the context and content of the Great Commission as a biblical motif in contemporary Ghanaian Christian setting.

From the above narratives, it can be inferred that church-planting is one of the means by which the ordained ministers of SMTC try to execute the Great Commission. Schaefer seems to allude to the relevance of a church as a defined religious denominational context for Christian education on evangelism and discipleship – two crucial aspects of the Great Commission. He notes:

The Great Commission necessitates taking the gospel message to “the ends of the earth” (Acts1:8), to “all nations” (Matt.28:19). The Good News is to be shared with all peoples, for all are sinners, Jews and Gentiles alike, and in need of deliverance from sin (Rom.3). All peoples, by faith, can receive God's provision and are baptized into Christ. In Christ, all distinctions between Jew and Gentile disappear (Rom. 10:12-13; Gal.3:28).⁵⁰⁸

Thus far, I have attempted to show that Pentecostalism influences pilgrims' patronage of PMs through the setting up of SMTC at NMOPC by a Pentecostal Christian pastor. The Pentecostal orientation of the SMTC on the other hand further enhances the

⁵⁰⁷ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', p. 11. See also Stein, 'Transfiguration', p. 782. (Emphasis original).

⁵⁰⁸ Schaefer, 'Great Commission, the', p.317.

Pentecostalization of contemporary Ghanaian Christianity through the establishment of Pentecostal /charismatic churches by the ordained ministers of the college.

4.6 The Institutionalisation of Pilgrimage to Prayer Mountains

The influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' patronage of sacred sites is further observed from the institutionalisation of pilgrimage to PMs by some churches in Ghana. This is because the place and relevance of prayer camps or prayer centres and their institutionalisation in Ghanaian Pentecostalism has attracted scholarly discussions among some Pentecostal theologians. In his preamble to 'Salvation at the Fringes of the Church: The case of the Pentecostalist Prayer Camps and Prayer Centres', Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, for instance, posits that:

Prayer Camps or Prayer Centres are Pentecostalist prayer and healing centres where people with various needs go for supernatural succor. The activities of these centres almost exclusively gravitate around one key person: a prophet, a prophetic, or an evangelist. ... These healing centres though are predominantly found within the Church of Pentecost, they have now become a growing phenomenon in Ghanaian Christianity, stretching beyond the boundaries of mainline Pentecostalism to the precincts of the historic churches, knocking at the iron door of historic orthodoxy demanding attention. Though all these healing activities start in the context of an established denomination, in the process of time the leaders, more often than not, break away to form their own independent ministries.⁵⁰⁹

Some of the popular healing or prayer centres in the CoP, according to Larbi, are the Okanta Camp and Maame Dede's Camp, both located in the Eastern Region of Ghana.⁵¹⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu corroborates Larbi's opinion on the prevalence of prayer or healing camps in the CoP, and further discloses the efforts of the church to institutionalize the activities connected with healing and prayer camps.⁵¹¹ He notes:

The CoP gained an urge on the Sunsum Sorè (Spiritual Churches), as the older independent churches are referred to in Ghana, and thus supplanted the activities of many prophets through the ministry of healing and deliverance. In order to avoid some of the excesses, suspicion and abuses surrounding the healing

⁵⁰⁹ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra, Ghana: Blessed Publications, 2001), p. 367.

⁵¹⁰ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, pp. 367-368.

⁵¹¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, pp.133-135.

practices of ‘prophetism in Ghana’, the CoP has *nstitutionalised*, integrated and therefore brought under the church’s administrative control the activities of those of their number manifesting the gifts of healing and deliverance.⁵¹²

I can deduce from Larbi and Asamoah-Gyadu’s observations that the prevalence of healing or prayer camps as some of the spiritual resources in the CoP to mitigate the crises of those who patronize or appropriate the facilities also has implications for pilgrimage to those places, especially by suffering Pentecostals. The relevance of these healing centres and the quest to guard against possible abuses, especially by those in charge, has resulted in the CoP’s institutionalisation of the prayer or healing centre concept. The implication of this institutionalisation, in my opinion, is that the CoP does not only bring under the church’s administrative control the activities of those of their number manifesting the gifts of healing and deliverance, but also it recognises and approves of members’ appropriation of those healing centres through religious pilgrimage. On the basis of this implication, I can argue that the institutionalisation of healing or prayer centres – and by extension, pilgrimage to those centres – is one of the features of contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostalism. This sounds plausible because healing centres are not prevalent only in the CoP. Larbi reveals the novelty of the phenomenon within neo-Pentecostalism and indicates that ‘the first of its kind is the Solution Centre within the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), under the leadership of Pastor Annor.’⁵¹³

PMs in Ghanaian Christianity, especially those under consideration in this study, may also be regarded as prayer or healing centres which pilgrims patronize for various reasons, including relief from existential crises. Moreover, I have pointed out in this chapter that pilgrimage to PMs has become one of the means by which some pilgrims, upon their return, start their ministries. It is instructive to note that these church founders

⁵¹² Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p.134 (Emphasis mine).

⁵¹³ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p. 369.

do not only have classical Pentecostal churches as their religious background,⁵¹⁴ but have also institutionalised pilgrimage to PMs. They lead their church members to the PMs at least once every quarter to pray and fast for not less than a week. They embark on periodic pilgrimage to the PMs mainly to be spiritually empowered for spiritual revitalization activities in their churches upon their return. These spiritual revitalization activities, in the words of Apostle James Kofi Marfo, include ‘tongues’ speaking, prophecy, healing, deliverance, visions and revelations.⁵¹⁵ The PMs are perceived by Christian pilgrims as the ‘power house of spiritual endowments and solution centre’.⁵¹⁶ The institutionalisation of pilgrimage to such sacred sites is therefore seen as one of the means by which the churches which patronize those sites try to ensure regular spiritual vibrancy and revitalization.

In addition to the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches which have institutionalised pilgrimage to PMs are historic mission denominations such as the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG) and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG). Camps Three (3) and Eight (8) of APM are owned by the MCG and the PCG respectively. The camps are the venues for the churches’ annual Connexional / national Prayer Retreat held twice a year. The MCG controls the Connexional Prayer Retreat through the church’s Evangelism, Mission and Renewal Directorate (EMRD).⁵¹⁷ Aspects of the EMRD’s report on the MCG’s pilgrimage to APM or Abasua Retreat Centre (ARC) to the

⁵¹⁴ The religious background of Apostles James Kofi Marfo, Prince Emmanuel Godsson, Richard Kwame Owusu and Evangelist Kwadwo Gyasi is Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), CoP, CoP and CAC respectively.

⁵¹⁵ Apostle Marfo, Interview, 7 December 2017, Abuakwa, Kumasi. See also Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p.2.

⁵¹⁶ Evangelist Richard Afriyie (General Overseer of Camp Three, Abasua Prayer Mountain), Interview, March 12, 2016, Abasua Prayer Mountain.

⁵¹⁷ The Representative Session Agenda of the 9th Biennial / 47th Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana held at Tarkwa in 2016, pp. 136-137. See also The Representative Session Agenda of the 8th Biennial / 46th Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana held in Kumasi, pp.112-113.; Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, pp.72-74.

Representative Session of the 9th Biennial / 47th Conference are revealing and informative in this context: ‘The Connexional Prayer Retreat [CPR] at the Abasua Prayer Centre [APC] for zones one and two took place from Tuesday, 23rd February to Saturday 27th February 2016 and April 19th to 23rd, 2016 respectively, under the theme “Witnessing to Christ: The Methodist Identity and Spiritual Renewal”...About five hundred and twenty (520) attended the zone one retreat while about eight hundred and seventy (870) people attended the zone two retreat.’⁵¹⁸ A similar and relatively detailed report had been submitted by the EMRD at the 8th Biennial / 46th Conference:

By the grace of God, patronage of the ARC keeps increasing year after year and we are trying very hard to improve upon the facilities. For example, an auditorium to seat about two thousand people is under construction while some Dioceses and Circuits are also helping to put up room to accommodate people. Apart from the Connexional Prayer Retreat (CPR) which is held twice in a year for zones I and II, other Dioceses and Circuits also visit the place for spiritual renewal.... Over the years, Dioceses have been encouraged to identify and establish retreat centres in their Dioceses so that people can visit those places for spiritual exercises in addition to the Abasua Centre. The following Dioceses report of having established retreat centres which are being patronized by both Methodists and non-Methodists.

Tarkwa Diocese:	Wassa Akropong and Bremang in Asankragwa Circuit
Sefwi Bekwai:	Ankramoano in Bibiani Circuit and Aknotombra
Nkawanta	
Obuasi:	Kusa
Cape Coast:	Ntaferewaso
Sekondi:	William De-graft Retreat Centre, Azani
Akyem Oda:	Gethsemane
Northern Ghana:	Damango Hills

The Lord is blessing the people who visit these places. Some of the testimonies shared include: healing, deliverance, from spiritual forces, spiritual renewal, childbirth...⁵¹⁹

The MCG reinforces her position on the institutionalisation of pilgrimage to sacred sites by ensuring that prayer centres established by Dioceses, Circuits and Societies are managed by mature, spirit-filled and trusted leaders. In order to avoid excesses, these

⁵¹⁸ The Representative Session Agenda of the 9th Biennial / 47th Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana, pp.136-137.

⁵¹⁹ The Representative Session Agenda of the 8th Biennial / 46th Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana, pp. 112-113.

centres and their various leaders are under the supervision of the clergy and the Leaders' Meeting.⁵²⁰

The PCG also has oversight responsibility of the church's many prayer centres including Abasua Mountain Prayer Ministry (AMPM), through its Evangelism and Missions Division (EMD).⁵²¹ The AMPM of the PCG is reported to be one of the church's vital spiritual revitalization programmes. The PCG's appropriation of media technologies at the AMPM has made available many audio-visual DVDs mostly containing sermons preached or testimonies shared. Captivating sermon topics over the years include 'Divine Selection' (Acts 1:24), 'Crossing Over to the Other Side' (Mark 4:1), 'Crossing the Jordan' (Joshua 3:5) and 'Breaking the Protocol of Satan'. Several testimonies, including those on the reality of heaven and the power in the blood of Christ have been shared over the years.⁵²²

It must be emphasized that the historic mission denominations that have institutionalised pilgrimage to PMs appear to be replicating one of the characteristics of classical Ghanaian Pentecostalism which is visitation of prayer centres including PMs.. It is believed that Christians' pilgrimage to prayer sites sharpens their devotion or results in their acquisition of spiritual gifts such as 'tongues' speaking, healing, deliverance, etc. Institutionalizing pilgrimage to PMs or prayer centres is therefore understood as the churches' efforts at ensuring or safeguarding the continuity of the beneficial outcomes of pilgrimage as a religious ritual.

The efforts of Pentecostal / Charismatic churches and the historic mission denominations to institutionalize pilgrimage to PMs appear to corroborate Park's opinion

⁵²⁰ The Representative Session Agenda of the 8th Biennial / 46th Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana, p.113.

⁵²¹ Rev. Felix Akresu (the Evangelism and Missions Director of the PCG), Interview, 16 March, 2016, PCG Headquarters, Accra.

⁵²² I have copies of the DVDs referred to in this study.

on the notion of sacred space and its attendant pilgrimage attraction as some of the more prominent dimensions of religious expression in the world.⁵²³ Webb also reveals that humans' innate predilection for pilgrimage in utilitarian terms dates back in antiquity. She writes: 'The apparently deep-seated human tendency to locate the holy at a distance from one's everyday surroundings and to seek solutions to personal problems and the alleviation of suffering (or boredom) in a journey to such a place was clearly manifested in pre-Christian cultures.'⁵²⁴ In the religions which preceded Christianity in the Near Eastern and Mediterranean region, it is possible for one to locate features that still persist throughout the Christian epoch. The idea that particular beneficial outcomes accrued to those who had made the pilgrimage to Osiris at Abydos became familiar to Egyptians of the New Kingdom, and Abydos remained an important shrine in the Hellenistic and Roman epochs. Healing shrines which were sacred to Asklepios abounded in ancient Greece. Greeks were said to practise 'incubation' (that is, sleeping at a shrine in order to obtain a cure), and Medieval Christians developed their own version of the practice.⁵²⁵

Moreover, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu affirms the importance of pilgrimage as a religious activity for many religious traditions including certain streams of Christianity such as Roman Catholicism. He maintains that pilgrimages are embarked upon to various Catholic grottos such as Lourdes in France.⁵²⁶ He further underscores the prevalence of sacred spaces in the history of African Christianity and the power of those sites to attract pilgrims. He writes:

In the history of Christianity in Africa, members of the African independent churches in particular, created all sorts of healing centres in forests and on mountains to which people repaired in search of supernatural interventions for their problems. The Garden of the Church of Twelve Apostles and the Mercy Ground of the Celestial Church of Christ are cases in point. In other words,

⁵²³ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', p. 1. See also Park, 'Religion and Geography', p. 19.

⁵²⁴ Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, p. viii.

⁵²⁵ Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, p. viii.

⁵²⁶ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Do not "Meccanize" Christianity: Worship in Spirit and in Truth', *The Christian Sentinel* 22 (2013), p. 12.

pilgrimage in Christianity may take people to a multiplicity of centres depending on what such people think about pilgrimage sites and the personal benefits expected to be gained from their visit.⁵²⁷

Thus there appears to be an upsurge of institutionalised religious pilgrimage to prayer sites or PMs in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity, as the foregoing narratives indicate. One of the possible explanations for this is what I consider to be one of the prevailing influences of Pentecostalism as far as institutionalised religious pilgrimage to prayer sites or PMs is concerned.

4.7 Adherence to Holiness Ethics

Pilgrims' adherence to holiness ethics at the PMs is another way by which Pentecostalism influences pilgrimage to PMs. I must acknowledge the existence of scholarly and insightful works on holiness ethics as integral aspects of the spirituality of Pentecostal / Charismatic churches.⁵²⁸ Focusing exclusively on Ghana's CoP's holiness ethic, for instance, Asamoah-Gyadu categorically asserts that

The CoP is noted for its uncompromising holiness ethic and high moral standard. There is a definite relationship between personal experiences of the Spirit and commitment to the cause of Christ and his mission through the church. Such commitment arises out of a sense of belonging that develops within the individual as a result of that intense encounter with the Holy Spirit.⁵²⁹

In other words, the authenticity of a Pentecostal's experiential encounter with the Holy Spirit finds expression in his or her ultimate testimony 'of personal transformation from life in the world to a new life in Christ, involving a renewal of the whole person for a life of holiness.'⁵³⁰ One of the key factors of CoP's uncompromising stance on holiness ethic

⁵²⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Do not "Meccanize" Christianity', p.12.

⁵²⁸ For details, see Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, pp.138-141; Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, pp.216-218; Petersen, *Pentecostals: Who are They?*, pp. 94-96.

⁵²⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 138.

⁵³⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 138.

appears to be its constitution which, among other things, spells out moral failures or deviations on the part of church members and their associated stringent sanctions

Omenyo also locates his discussion of holiness ethics in the context of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana. He maintains that ‘In their spirituality, Charismatics stress holiness ethic – personal “holiness” or “righteousness”, which for them is a fruit of “new birth”. They regard a life of holiness as the real proof of life in Christ. This life starts with the experience of “new birth”. Then everything becomes new.’⁵³¹ Omenyo and Asamoah-Gyadu underscore the pivotal role of constitutions and by-laws as key factors undergirding the Pentecostals’ and the Charismatics’ uncompromising stance on holiness ethics. The constitutions and by-laws spell out moral failures or deviations and their corresponding sanctions to be meted out to miscreant church members.⁵³² Thus Pentecostals, in the opinion of Petersen, are overtly distinguished by their moralism because their view of reality, invested as it is with a pervasive sense of the sacred, imposes moral sanctions on their adherents.⁵³³ Petersen cites Bryan Roberts to buttress his argument about Pentecostals’ uncompromising attitude towards holy living: ‘as they [Pentecostals] see it, a person’s Christian quality ... is certified by changes which occur in his moral life, rather than by his doctrinal loyalties.’⁵³⁴ Petersen, like Asamoah-Gyadu and Omenyo, clearly articulates the outcomes of Pentecostals’ hard stance on holiness:

Rather rigid rules of conduct tend to separate adherents from the easy going, permissive attitude toward marital infidelity, gambling, excessive drinking and misrepresentation found often in popular culture. Practical norms and rules provide assurance to one’s behaviour, and illuminate a ‘signpost’ to the authenticity of the dramatic and radical nature of conversion. Such demands,

⁵³¹Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 216.

⁵³²Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 217; Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, pp. 139-140.

⁵³³Petersen, *Pentecostals: Who are They?*, pp. 94-95.

⁵³⁴Petersen, *Pentecostals: Who are They?*, p. 95.

beyond a demonstration of moral life, have a pedagogic importance, particularly when they guide people clearly out of harmful patterns of behaviour.⁵³⁵

In the light of these outcomes, participation in Pentecostal services is intentionally meant to influence members' conduct, specifically a concrete realization of the group's values which include adherence to holiness. The emotional orientation of Pentecostal services increases members' motivations to live a holy life beyond simply a sense of obligation to comply with a sense of spiritual dimensions. Pentecostals appear to draw from their beliefs and experiences in their spiritual sensitivity to invoke an aspiration and commitment to produce high levels of selfless, enthusiastic practice of moral living.⁵³⁶

The crux of the reviewed works on holiness ethics among Pentecostals is that Pentecostals endeavor to authenticate their subjective, experiential, and transformative encounter with the Holy Spirit through practical holy living. These works are important because they provide some empirical evidence of holiness as one of the cardinal emphases of Pentecostal spirituality. They are also important because they provide a relevant and compelling academic basis to explore the influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' adherence to holiness ethics on PMs. The underlying presupposition is that Pentecostalism as a modern religious phenomenon has had a significant impact on Christianity worldwide.⁵³⁷ Therefore, the spirituality of PMs as sacred spaces in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity is primarily characterized by the belief in the active presence of the Holy Spirit who is perceived to be the source of pneumatic phenomena (such as 'tongues' speaking, prophecy, healing and deliverance, etc.) and the one who engenders Christian pilgrims' conversion and transformation evidenced in practical holy

⁵³⁵ Petersen, *Pentecostals: Who are They?*, p. 95.

⁵³⁶ Petersen, *Pentecostals: Who are They?*, p. 95.

⁵³⁷ Burgess and Van der Mass (eds.), *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, p. xv.

living. As a result, conscious emphasis on holiness or moral uprightness as evidence of pilgrims' authentic conversion and transformation is one of the key aspects of the spirituality of PMs in Ghana. For instance, in one of my field trips to APM, I found these sacred writings pasted on some of the buildings at 'Camp Three' very intriguing:

The Bible mentions many specific actions and attitudes that are either right or wrong. The wrong ones or vices include sexual immorality, impurity (Gal. 5:19), lust (Col.3:5), hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, anger, selfish ambition, dissension (Gal. 5: 20), arrogance (2 Cor. 12:20), envy (Gal. 5: 21), murder (Rev. 22:12-16), idolatry (Gal. 5: 20; Eph. 5:5), sorcery (Gal. 5: 20), drunkenness (Gal. 5: 21), wild parties (Luke 15:13; Gal. 5:21), cheating, adultery, homosexuality, stealing (1 Cor. 6:9-10), greed (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:5), lying (Rev. 22:12-16). The virtues, understood as the by-products of living for God, include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness (Gal. 5:22), gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:23).

These vices and virtues had their respective additional pieces of information which appeared to be their commentaries. The commentary on the vices was anchored on Galatians 5:19-21:

'We all have evil desires, and we can't ignore them. In order for us to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance, we must deal with them decisively (crucify them – Gal. 5:24). These desires include obvious sins such as sexual immorality and demonic activities. They also include less obvious sins such as hostility, jealousy, and selfish ambition. Those who ignore such sins or refuse to deal with them reveal that they have not received the gift of the Holy Spirit that leads to a transformed life.'

The commentary on the virtues was couched on Galatians 5:22-23:

The fruit of the Spirit is the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Spirit produces these character traits that are found in the nature of Christ. They are the by-products of Christ's control. We can't obtain them by trying to get them without his help. If we want the fruit of the Spirit to grow in us, we must join our life to his (see John 15:4-5). We must know him, love him, remember him and imitate him. As a result, we will fulfill the intended purpose of the law – to love God and our neighbours.

These sacred writings fascinated me because they appeared to be a catalogue of vices and virtues together with their brief interpretations ostensibly intended to educate

pilgrims about the perils of a godless life and the fruitfulness of a Christ-centered life. The writings were also considered to be part of the efforts of the site's management to use the Bible to reinforce the sacred identity of the site and the need for pilgrims to abide by the rules and regulations governing the site's sacred orientation. This position is succinctly articulated by Douglas Davies who defines sacred writings in Christianity as the Bible and its centrality in Christian thought and practice.⁵³⁸ He further expounds on the supreme significance of the Bible in Christian worship:

Christian worship is so closely linked with sacred scriptures that it is almost impossible to think of any formal Christian service taking place without some use of the Bible. This centrality of the Bible is due to the fact that Christianity stresses its past through the belief that God's self-revelation has occurred within history at particular times and places, through religious leaders such as prophets, but most especially, through Jesus of Nazareth. The Bible is the central deposit of witness to this divine revelation.⁵³⁹

The relevance of Davies' point is that a discourse on holiness in Christianity would scarcely be complete without resorting to the Bible.⁵⁴⁰ The prevailing holiness ethics on the PMs could also be seen from the strict religious and moral rules that pilgrims are obliged to observe or adhere to. On all the PMs under study, attendance to religious programmes is compulsory for all pilgrims. These programmes include morning devotions, Bible studies, all-night prayer sessions and divine services. Besides, strict moral rules feature prominently. On all the PMs, it is not allowed for males and females who are not married to sleep in the same room. Owusu-Ansah, citing Evangelist Asiamah,⁵⁴¹ maintains that opposite sexes [who are not married couple] are forbidden to sleep in one room because there have been some incidence of sexual affair at Camp

⁵³⁸ Douglas Davies, 'Christianity' in Jean Holm with John Bowker (eds.), *Sacred Writings* (London, United Kingdom: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), p. 44; Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', p. 90.

⁵³⁹ Davies, 'Christianity', p.45.

⁵⁴⁰ See Jude Hama, *Practical Holy Living* (Accra, Ghana: Step Publishers, 2017), pp.19-238; Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, United States of America: Navpress, 2006), pp. 1-127.

⁵⁴¹ Evangelist Asiamah was the Caretaker of Camp Three from the year 2004 to date (the time of this work).

Three of APM.⁵⁴² Moreover, wearing of indecent clothes or sexually provocative dressing anywhere on the PMs is seriously frowned upon. The wearing of such indecent clothes is believed to have the propensity of sexually luring or enticing people into some misconduct, thereby truncating and defeating the very essence of the pilgrimage⁵⁴³ at the site.

This brief survey of holiness ethics on the PMs forms part of the rituals that ‘are needed to cleanse, purify and prepare those coming from the realm of the secular before they enter the realm of the sacred.’⁵⁴⁴ The survey of holiness ethics on the PMs would be incomplete without a discussion of its influence on pilgrims’ conversion and, by implication, their quest to lead morally upright lifestyles. The conversion testimony of Apostle Richard Kwame Owusu is contextually instructive.

On the 15th August, 2011, Apostle Owusu informed me about the sanctity and spiritual potency of APM and its influence on his conversion into Christianity and, subsequently, into the pastoral ministry, during an interview he granted me at APM. Apostle Owusu reports of being a professional carpenter and testifies of having been a massive beneficiary of the toils and sacrifices of his relatives, but did not initially live up to their pleasure and expectation until he met Jesus Christ at APM, through the influence of Apostle Godsson. As one of the eleven children of his economically powerless parents – M r. Kwaku Nsiah and Madam Agnes Agyapong – Owusu had his formal basic education through the efforts of his maternal aunt, Madam Ama Tiwaa and her husband, Mr. S.K Fokuo. He completed Roman Catholic Middle School in 1985 at Donyina in the Asante region. After moving to Kumasi to briefly struggle as a cobbler and a sole

⁵⁴² Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity*, p. 23.

⁵⁴³ In Islam, for example, Muslims who embarked on pilgrimage to Mecca were required to abstain from sexual intercourse, obscene language and acrimonious disputes. For details, see Fieser and Powers, *Scriptures of the World's Religions*, p. 401.

⁵⁴⁴ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, p. 152.

proprietor, he was assisted by his sister and his brother-in-law to learn carpentry. Owing to his determination and tenacity of purpose, he completed within two years instead of the normal three years of apprenticeship. He was further assisted by his sister and brother-in-law to move to Accra to practice his trade as a professional carpenter.

He reveals that it was in Accra that he bitterly and unfortunately plunged his life into a quagmire of all sorts of vices including drunkenness, fornication and recklessness. He lost focus as a professional carpenter and was eventually rejected by his parents and relatives. It was in the midst of this disillusionment that he claims to have been providentially led by a friend to APM in August 1999. He describes his going to APM as providential because according to him, God strangely arranged for him to meet Apostle Prince Emmanuel Godsson, the founder and general overseer of Full Gospel Church of God International, who was then praying on the mountain. Apostle Godsson is said to have prophetically disclosed to Owusu (as he was then called) that God was going to use him mightily to win many souls to His Kingdom. Apostle Owusu indicates that he spent three months on the mountain without any of his relatives knowing his whereabouts. He reports of being significantly influenced by the serenity and holiness of the site. As a result, he claims that he went through stringent spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting for seven days, for fourteen days, for twenty-one days and for forty days, under the spiritual guidance of Apostle Godsson. He discloses that after going through the twenty-one days of prayer and dried fasting (that is, praying and fasting without food), he experienced an unprecedented abdominal disorder, followed by diarrhea for forty-five times. According to Apostle Owusu, God told him that the forty-five times of diarrhea he experienced was nothing but His (God's) own way of purging him of all the filthy deposits of drunkenness, fornication, recklessness, etc., which had been accumulated in him for a long time. He testifies of a dramatic conversion experience characterized by

transformation and what Jude Hama refers to as ‘practical holy living’. He further testifies that as a result of his conversion and transformation, Jesus Christ has been gracious enough by calling him into the pastoral ministry as the founder and general overseer of Jesus the Light Evangelistic Ministry, a Pentecostal church. He was ordained as ‘Apostle’ by Rev. Dr. Robert Ampia-Kwofie (founder and leader of Global Revival Ministries)⁵⁴⁵ and Apostle Godsson – the people he describes as his spiritual fathers.

If Apostle Owusu attributes his transformation of character and subsequent ordination into the pastoral ministry to his pilgrimage to APM and providential encounter with Apostle Godsson (a Pentecostal Christian), then it is plausible to argue that the Pentecostal orientation of PMs attracts (Pentecostal) Christian pilgrims (usually as pastors, prophets, evangelists, etc.) who also assist other pilgrims to be spiritually gifted, transformed and imbued with the quest for holiness which, as I have already stated, are aspects of Pentecostal Christianity. In that sense, the positive influence of Pentecostalism on Christians’ pilgrimage to sacred sites and their quest for holiness ethics are underscored.

There are however certain observations which seem to negate the positive influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims’ appropriation of PMs, as far as their quests for holiness and transformation of character are concerned. Thus inasmuch as Pentecostalism seems to positively influence pilgrims’ patronage of PMs and stimulate their transformation of character and quest for holiness, the same religious phenomenon sometimes appears to obliterate pilgrims’ quest for authentic Christianity characterized by love for neighbour or love for one’s enemies.

During my field trips to the PMs under study, I observed many things including the inscriptions of some banners and some symbols which were very captivating. At

⁵⁴⁵ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p.504.

NMOPC, for instance, I saw a banner with the inscription: ‘Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp presents 60 days of fasting and prayer [on the] theme: **Operation Fire Your Enemies...**⁵⁴⁶ The biblical reference of the theme was Revelation 11:5: ‘If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die’ (NIV).

Moreover, at APM, specifically, in the forests where some pilgrims pray during the day, I saw, among others, pieces of wood tied with red materials or other ropes against trees. These symbolic prayer rituals were believed to be such pilgrims’ own way of binding and cursing the enemies perceived to be responsible for their predicaments.⁵⁴⁷ These observations are generally understood as the prevalence of what Osei Sarfo-Kantanka refers to as ‘dangerous or imprecatory prayers’⁵⁴⁸ by people perceived to be Pentecostal Christian pilgrims.



Figure 4.1: Symbols of imprecatory prayers found in the forests of Abasua Prayer Mountain. Pieces of wood tied with ropes to trees. It is believed to be some pilgrims’ own way of binding and cursing their enemies perceived to be responsible for their predicaments.

⁵⁴⁶ (Emphasis mine).

⁵⁴⁷ Mr. Joseph Boateng Fordjour (the secretary of Camp Three, Abasua Prayer Mountain), Interview, March 14, 2016, Abasua Prayer Mountain.

⁵⁴⁸ Osei Sarfo-Kantanka, ‘Responses to Contemporary Issues in the Church in Ghana: “Dangerous Prayers” in *Asempa Dawuro*, Vol. 2, N006 (April – June, 2011), pp. 4-7.

Theological contestations about the appropriateness or otherwise of imprecatory Psalms or ‘dangerous prayers’ in Christianity warrant a brief survey in this section of the study in order to ascertain whether or not such prayers really desecralize pilgrims who utter or resort to them on PMs. In his commentary or notes on Psalm 35:1-28, Donald C. Stamps refers to the Psalm as ‘an imprecatory Psalm, meaning that the Psalmist *prays that God will bring judgment on the enemies of his people and overthrow the wicked* (see Ps 35, 69, 109,137; Ne 6:14; 13:29; Jer 15:15; 17:18; Gal 5:12; 2Tim 4:14; Rev 6:10).⁵⁴⁹ Although Stamps appreciates Christ’s instruction to believers to forgive their enemies (Luke 23:34) and to pray for their salvation (Matthew 5:39, 44), he is still of the opinion that ‘a time comes when we must pray for evil to cease and for justice to be done for the innocent. We should be vitally concerned for the victims of cruelty, oppression and evil.’⁵⁵⁰ He expounds on his perspective of the theological appropriateness of imprecatory prayers in the church as follows:

They are prayers for deliverance from injustice, crime and oppression. Believers have a right to pray for God’s protection from evil people. They are appeals to God to administer justice and to send penalties on the wicked that are commensurate with their crime.... If just retribution is not undertaken by God or by human government, violence and chaos will reign in society (see Dt. 25:1-3; Ro 13:3-4; 1Pe 2:13-14). As you read these prayers, know that the Psalmist does not take vengeance into his own hands but commits it to God (cf. Dt 32:35; Pr 20:22; Ro 12:19). The imprecatory Psalms point to the truth that when the sin of the wicked reaches its full measure, the Lord in his righteousness does judge and destroy (see Ge 15:16; Lev 18:24; Rev 6:10, 17). Remember that these prayers are inspired words of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2Ti 3:16-17; 2Pe 1:19-21), and not just an expression of the Psalmist’s human desire. The ultimate goal of an imprecatory prayer is to see injustice and cruelty come to an end, evil destroyed, Satan defeated, godliness exalted, righteousness established and God’s kingdom realized. This goal is a dominant concern in the NT. Christ himself states that true believers may pray for the vindication of the righteous. He widow’s prayer to “grant me justice against my adversary” (Lk 18:3) is answered by Jesus’ assurance that God will “bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night” (Lk 18:7; cf. Rev 6:9-10). Believers must keep two Biblical principles in balance: (a) the desire see all people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (cf. 2Pe 3:19), and (b) the desire to see evil destroyed and God’s

⁵⁴⁹ Donald C. Stamps, ‘Psalm 35:1-38 (sic) Fight against those who fight against me’ in *The Full Life Study Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corporation, 1992), pp. 794-795 (Emphasis mine).

⁵⁵⁰ Stamps, ‘Psalm 35:1-38 (sic)’, p.794.

kingdom victorious. We must earnestly pray for the salvation of the lost and weep for those who reject the gospel; yet we must also know that righteousness, goodness and love will never be established according to God's purpose until evil is conquered and Satan and his followers are forever put down (see Rev 6:10, 17:19-21). The faithful must pray, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20) as God's ultimate and final solution for evil in the world.⁵⁵¹

In his introduction to his *Prayer of Jehu*, Daniel Olukoya appears to corroborate Stamps' defence of the theological validity of imprecatory prayers among Christians:

There are prayers that the enemy cannot toy with. There are prayer points that will be too hot for the enemy to confront. When the mystery of Jehu prayers is at work, arrows that are sent by the enemy will go back to the sender and so much violence will be discharged that the enemy will regret ever trying to go into conflict with a member of the Jehu army. In these last days, God has established an elite force called the Jehu army, made up of aggressive warriors who are not ready to take nonsense from the enemy. This divine force has constituted serious headache to the enemy. Its symbol is holy fury. Its trademark is fire. Its mission is to totally disgrace and bury [the] enemy's army.⁵⁵²

I can discern from the perspective of Stamps and Olukoya that Christian pilgrims do not become unholy for employing imprecatory Psalms or prayers. Imprecatory prayers rather appear to be some of the catalysts for enhancing pilgrims' quest for virtuous lives since these prayers are perceived by pilgrims as powerful and efficacious enough in dealing with the contending forces believed to be responsible for all vices or immoral behaviours.

Sarfo-Kantanka, however, strongly argues against these prayers in the church. In his opinion, the language of libation in Traditional African Religion is the religio-cultural context or source of the prevalence of imprecatory prayers in the church. In libation, the linguist usually articulates the antagonism among the adherents of Traditional African Religion and the enemy through a forceful invocation of curses onto the enemy. In a typical traditional Akan religious context, the linguist usually ends libation in these words: 'Obi nkɔ ahyira nkɔhyira ne busuyɛfoɔ', meaning; 'No one goes to pray for blessings on his or her enemies'. The linguist would usually add these words: 'Onipa

⁵⁵¹ Stamps, 'Psalm 35:1-38 (sic)', pp. 794-795.

⁵⁵² Daniel Olukoya, *The Prayer of Jehu* (Lagos: Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 2012), p. i.

bɔnefoɔ a ɔmpe yen yie deɛ, ne kɔnkɔ mmɔ ne so', meaning; 'May those who wish evil for us fall and die.'⁵⁵³ Thus in the view of Sarfo-Kantanka, paying the enemies back in their own coin is the Africans' understanding of how one deals with their enemies.⁵⁵⁴

Despite the Old Testament's references to some imprecatory prayers (Ex 21:24) as seen in the worldview of traditional African religious practitioners, Sarfo-Kantanka vehemently contends the prevalence of these prayers in the church [and PMs] by appealing to the New Dispensation in Christ, Pauline teachings and the views of other theologians to buttress his stance. He anchors his explanation of the New Dispensation in Christ on Matthew 5:17 where Christ is reported to have said: 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them' (NIV). The fulfillment, according to Sarfo-Kantanka, may be understood in two senses. First, the fulfillment of the promises of God as given in the Law and Prophets is to be found in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). Second, Jesus Christ is the embodiment of humankind's complete understanding of the Law and the Prophets.⁵⁵⁵

In the light of this, Christ announced the style of the New Dispensation as follows: **'You have heard that it was said to the people long ago... But I tell you...'**⁵⁵⁶ The implication of this announcement is that there was no other acceptable teaching beyond what Christ said and practiced. If this is logical, then the New Dispensation in Christ is the yardstick for determining what is supposed to be the Christian norm in Christians' relationship with their enemies or those who persecute them. In Matthew 5:43-48 Jesus taught: 'You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.... Be perfect,

⁵⁵³ Sarfo-Kantanka, 'Responses to Contemporary Issues in the Church in Ghana', p. 4.

⁵⁵⁴ Sarfo-Kantanka, 'Responses to Contemporary Issues in the Church in Ghana', p. 4.

⁵⁵⁵ Sarfo-Kantanka, 'Responses to Contemporary Issues in the Church in Ghana', p. 4.

⁵⁵⁶ Sarfo-Kantanka, 'Responses to Contemporary Issues in the Church in Ghana', p. 5 (Emphasis original).

therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (NIV). Thus 'the New Dispensation initiated by Jesus', according to Sarfo-Kantanka, 'is therefore higher and is to be our example rather than some Old Testament practices.'⁵⁵⁷

Moreover, the Pauline corpus appears to be replete with references to the need for Christians to love their enemies, thereby shunning from imprecatory prayers and other revengeful actions. The words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:14-21, according to Sarfo-Kantanka, are apt:

'Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse ... Do not repay anyone evil for evil ... If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath....Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good' (NIV). Paul in this text appears to be telling his Christian listeners to follow Jesus Christ who, in the course of his crucifixion, was reported to have prayed 'Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing (Lk 23:34 – NIV), or the martyr Stephen who allegedly followed Jesus Christ and prayed during his persecution 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them' (Acts 7:60 – NIV).

A rather uncompromising position against imprecatory Psalms or prayers is maintained by John W. Baigent and Leslie C. Allen whose work is quoted by Sarfo-Kantanka:

A more serious problem confronts the Christian in the so called imprecatory Psalms (eg., 35:1-8; 58:6-9; 59; 69:22-28; 137:8f) [or prayers] in which the Psalmists curses his enemies, call down vengeance on them, often vindictively and gloats over the prospect of their downfall. The Christian is not able to adopt this kind of language in relation to his own enemies and persecutors. He has learned a better way from his Lord's teaching and example (Mt. 5:44ff; Lk 23:34) and from the NT generally (cf. Acts 7:60, Ro 12:14, 19ff, 1Ti 2:1-4).⁵⁵⁸

The theological arguments against imprecatory prayers imply that Christians are forbidden from employing them to deal with their enemies. Therefore Christian pilgrims who use them may be regarded as unholy and disobedient since the appropriation of such

⁵⁵⁷ Sarfo-Kantanka, 'Responses to Contemporary Issues in the Church in Ghana', p. 5.

⁵⁵⁸ Sarfo-Kantanka, 'Responses to Contemporary Issues in the Church in Ghana', p. 4.

prayers by Christians is considered to be tantamount to their repudiation of the instructions of Jesus Christ.

The seeming endless debate about the theological justification or otherwise of imprecatory prayers is, in my opinion, a reflection of the centrality and sensitive nature of the concept in Christian theology. Sarfo-Kantanka's association of libation in Traditional African Religion with imprecatory prayers indicates his attempt to contribute to the on-going scholarly discussion on the African religions as the substructure of African Christianity. Andrew F. Walls clearly articulates this as follows: 'African Christianity is a new development of African religion, shaped by the parameters of pre-Christian African religion as was the Christianity of the Jerusalem church of the Acts of the Apostles rooted in the religion of old Israel.'⁵⁵⁹ Also Stamps' insistence on the theological validity of imprecatory prayers appears to find space and relevance in African Christianity and Traditional Akan Religion characterised, among other things, by what Omenyo refers to as [mystical] causality.'⁵⁶⁰ Omenyo writes: 'The [Akan's] idea of causality leans heavily on the spiritual. Besides purely organic causation of sickness, for instance, no interpretation of causality that does not include elements like preordained destiny, punishment by angered ancestors and witchcraft can be fully acceptable.'⁵⁶¹ The presence of destructive forces in the worldview of the African Christian seems to justify Stamps' perspective of imprecatory prayers in Christianity, since those prayers, in Stamps' thinking, are efficacious in dealing with those malicious forces. Thus the position of each exponent, in my view, is theologically valid as long as each one eschews

⁵⁵⁹ Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), p.116.

⁵⁶⁰ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 30.

⁵⁶¹ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 30. Omenyo adds that this is not to say that the Akan is blindly fatalistic. In spite of supernatural interpretation of mishaps, the role of conscience, common sense and for that matter human responsibility is considered. See Joshua N. Kudajie, "Does Religion Determine Morality in African Societies? A Viewpoint" in John S. Pobee (ed) *Religion in a Pluralistic Society* (Leiden:E.J Brill, 1976),pp. 62ff.

relying on the proof-text approach to biblical hermeneutics. This is where, in the opinion of Asamoah-Gyadu, context is ignored in the interpretation of scripture so that passages are made to serve the purposes of the interpreter rather than the purposes of the Spirit of God.⁵⁶²

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted a discussion of the influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' appropriation of PMs in Ghana. It has been noted that Pentecostalism as a modern religious phenomenon has had a great impact on all the nooks and crannies of Christianity, including Christians' pilgrimage to PMs. It has been underscored that Pentecostal experiences such as dreams, divine revelations, visions and prophecies do not only underlie some pilgrims' appropriation of PMs, but they also appear to present God as the driving force of their pilgrimage to PMs and the motivation for their establishment of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches. Furthermore, the discussion shows that Pentecostal Christianity influences the setting up of ministerial colleges on PMs. Moreover, the discussion posits that Pentecostal Christianity induces the institutionalisation of pilgrimage to PMs and pilgrims' adherence to holiness ethics. The prevalence of imprecatory prayer rituals as part of the spirituality of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity, however, seems to contradict the assertion of Pentecostalism's positive influence on pilgrims with respect to their quest for holiness and transformation of life. In Chapter five, I will examine PMs in contemporary Ghanaian development discourse.

⁵⁶² Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, p. 40.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRAYER MOUNTAINS IN CONTEMPORARY GHANAIAN DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

5.1 Introduction

Generally, development is understood in terms of release from that which holds a captive. In that sense, development entails restoration and transformation which result in progress (*nkɔsoɔ*) and well-being (*yieye*).⁵⁶³ It points to some positive progress in the condition of people in a country.⁵⁶⁴ In his apparent synthesis of the various definitions of development, Elom Dovlo underscores that development is ‘a sequence of positive and systematic changes that lead to the growth and progress of people and their community.’⁵⁶⁵ The ‘Human Development Report 1990’ of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), attempts to conceptualize and explicate development in terms of ‘a process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect - what Adam Smith called the ability to mix with others without being "ashamed to appear in publick”’⁵⁶⁶ (sic). People, according to this report, are described as the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is, therefore, to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶³ Emmanuel Asante, *Culture, Politics and Development: Ethical and Theological Reflections on the Ghanaian Experience* (Accra, Ghana: Challenge Enterprise, 2007), pp. 8-9.

⁵⁶⁴ Mike O'Donnel, *Introduction to Sociology* (Surrey, United Kingdom: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1997), p.576.

⁵⁶⁵ Elom Dovlo, ‘Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana’ in Thomas W. Scheidtweiler (ed) *Human and Economic Development – The Importance of Civil Society and Subsidiarity* (Kumasi, Ghana: Africa Publications, 1998), p. 65.

⁵⁶⁶ Adam Smith's view of human development is cited in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990*, p.9.

⁵⁶⁷ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990*, p.9.

These ways of looking at development, in my opinion, are not really new. The idea that social, economic, political and religious arrangements ought to be judged by the extent to which they promote ‘human good’ have several antecedents in the Bible⁵⁶⁸ or in Christian thought⁵⁶⁹ and in the writings of some early philosophers⁵⁷⁰ and liberation theologians. Liberation theologians are advocates of development because they generally contend against socio-economic, political and spiritual / religious systems or institutions that are oppressive and dehumanizing to people, especially, those in two thirds World.⁵⁷¹ Also, notions of development can be gleaned from traditional Akan religious cosmology.⁵⁷² The central themes of development in all these antecedents include the general perception of poverty as an affront to human dignity and the urgency with which it must to be tackled. Poverty is understood as a multi-faceted phenomenon that has adverse impact on individuals and the community as a whole. The adverse impact of poverty includes diseases (owing to inadequate medical care and malnutrition), illiteracy, poor housing, poor choices in life, etc.⁵⁷³ The central themes also encapsulate the

⁵⁶⁸ Psalm 10:2, 9&10; Isaiah 3:14&15; Jeremiah 2:34; Amos 2:6&7; 5:12&13; Luke 4: 18-21; James 2:6.

⁵⁶⁹ Dovlo, ‘Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana’, pp. 68-77., see also Elom Dovlo, ‘Christianity, Nation-Building and National Identity in Ghana: Religious Perspectives’, in James L. Cox and Gerrie ter Haar (eds.) *Uniquely African: African Christian Identity from Cultural and Historical Perspectives* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World press, 2003), pp. 187-190.

⁵⁷⁰ These philosophers included Aristotle and Immanuel Kant. For details on them, see Brooke Noel Moore and Kenneth Bruder, *Philosophy: The Power of Ideas* (5th ed.) (New York, United States of America: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2002), pp. 55-65 and 121-129 respectively.

⁵⁷¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, ‘Toward a Theology of Liberation’ in Alfred T. Hennelley, S.J. (ed.) *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (United States of America: Orbis Books, 1990), pp. 62-76. See also Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Great Britain: Burns and Oates/Search Press Ltd., 1987), pp. 78-95., Sergio Torres, ‘The Irruption of the Third World: A Challenge to Theology’ in Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (eds.) *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology* (United States of America: Orbis Books, 1983), pp. 3-13.

⁵⁷² See Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, pp. 23-29. See also. Elizabeth Amoah, *African Traditional Religion and the Concept of Poverty*, pp.111- 125.

⁵⁷³ Abena D. Oduro, *Reducing the Extent and Depth of Poverty in Ghana* (University of Ghana: The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, 2001), pp. 1-7., K. A. Twum-Baah, ‘Wealth Creation and Poverty Reduction: The Christian Factor’, *The Christian Sentinel* 11(2002), pp. 18&19., Joseph Kimos Adjei, *Microfinance and Poverty Reduction: The Experience of Ghana* (Accra, Ghana: **BOLD** Communications Limited, 2010), pp. 6-14, 88-94. Martin N. Marger, *Social Inequality: Patterns and Processes* (2nd ed.) (New York, United States of America: McGraw-Hill Companies, 2002), pp. 50 &

provision of social services to enhance the general well-being of people. Development thus appears to be a dominant theme that touches almost all the nooks and crannies of life. It therefore warrants a considerable space and attention in a research work such as this which purports to have both academic and policy implications.

This chapter discusses the place and relevance of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian human development discourse. Three main questions essentially engage my attention. First, to what extent does the belief in the sacredness of PMs contribute to the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse in Ghana? Second, how does the appropriation of PMs as sacred spaces promote ecumenical / interdenominational linkages in Ghana? Third, how do activities surrounding PMs in Ghana enhance pilgrims' economic wellbeing? These questions are not only aspects of the research questions for this study, but they are, in my opinion, development oriented because cogent and thoughtful responses to them may be considered as aspects of the concept of development briefly defined above.

In order to accentuate some of the scholarly lacunas that the responses to the above questions attempt to fill, I undertake a cursory examination of antecedent of development in the thought of some early philosophers⁵⁷⁴ and some economic development ideologies. I then explore the presumed indispensability of religion in contemporary Ghanaian development discourse. These are intended to provide a broad empirical context and meaningful nexus to the discussion of the influence of pilgrimage to PMs on Ghana's quest for Christian eco-theology, on ecumenical / interdenominational networking and on pilgrims' economic well-being.

79., Alan Walker and Carol Walker, 'Poverty' in Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper (eds.) *The Social Science Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 655-657.

⁵⁷⁴ My choice of the antecedents of development in the thought of some early philosophers is largely due to space constraints to enable me examine all the other antecedents in this chapter.

5.2 Antecedents of development in the thought of some early philosophers

The antecedents of development in the writings of the early philosophers date back at least to Aristotle (384-322 B.C.).⁵⁷⁵ He argued for seeing ‘the difference between a good political arrangement and a bad one’ in terms of its successes and failures in facilitating people's ability to lead ‘flourishing lives’.⁵⁷⁶ Human beings as the real end of all activities were a recurring theme in the writings of most of the early philosophers. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)⁵⁷⁷, for example, is believed to have observed: ‘So act as to treat humanity, whether in their own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only.’⁵⁷⁸ The same motivating concern could be found in the writings of early leaders of quantification in Economics⁵⁷⁹ and in the writings of the leading political economists.⁵⁸⁰

Related to the view of human beings as the real end of all activities is the philosophical conception of the person also as the agent of his or her own destiny and the one responsible for his or her own development in history. For example, the reflection of Descartes’ ‘*cogito ergo sum*’ that is, ‘I think, therefore I am’, according to Gustavo Gutierrez, is a reflection that started with the human person.⁵⁸¹ This, in my opinion, generally implies some philosophers’ recognition of the human’s identity as persons endowed with potentials to consciously re-order or creatively interact with their environment and thus, bring about development. This tendency was accentuated by Kant,

⁵⁷⁵ Moore and Bruder, *Philosophy: The Power of Ideas*, pp. 55-65.

⁵⁷⁶ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990*, p.9.

⁵⁷⁷ Moore and Bruder, *Philosophy*, pp. 126-129.

⁵⁷⁸ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990*, p.9.

⁵⁷⁹ These early leaders of quantification in Economics included William Petty, Gregory King, Francois Quesnay, Antoine Lavoisier and Joseph Lagrange. See United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990*, p.9.

⁵⁸⁰ These leading political economists included Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Robert Malthus, Karl Marx and John Stuart Mill. See United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990*, p.9.

⁵⁸¹ Gutierrez, ‘Toward a Theology of Liberation’, p.67.

for whom the world was conceived as a chaotic place, where the human being creates order by means of the well-known categories.⁵⁸²

It is noted by Brooke Noel Moore and Kenneth Buder that the reflections of philosophers such as Aristotle and others, provided some of the theoretical foundations of contemporary epistemology, especially, in Christian theology.⁵⁸³ If their observation is true, then my argument is that theories of human capital formation and human resource development that view human beings primarily as means rather than as ends⁵⁸⁴ with respect to development, may have had some philosophical underpinnings. I further contend that such theories of human capital formation (or human resource development) capture only one side of human development, not its whole. This is because human beings are perceived to be more than capital goods for commodity production. They are also the ultimate ends and beneficiaries of the development process.⁵⁸⁵ The UNDP *Human Development Report 2016* seems to corroborate the views of philosophers with respect to their position on the human orientation or person-centeredness of development:

Human development is about acquiring more capabilities and enjoying more opportunities to use those capabilities. With more capabilities and opportunities, people have more choices, and expanding choices is at the core of the human development approach. But human development is also a process. Anchored in human rights, it is linked to human security. And its ultimate objective is to enlarge human freedoms. Human development is development of the people through the building of human resources, for the people through the translation of development benefits in their lives and by the people through active participation in the processes that influence and shape their lives. Income is a means to human development but not an end in itself.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸² Gutiérrez , ‘Toward a Theology of Liberation’, p. 67.

⁵⁸³ Moore and Bruder, *Philosophy*, p. 32.

⁵⁸⁴ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990*, p.11.

⁵⁸⁵ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990*, p.11.

⁵⁸⁶ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2016*. p.25.

The quest for people-centered development through a conscious and deliberate marshaling of all resources at all levels of existence – local, national and global – can thus be hardly disputed.

5.3 Some economic development ideologies

For a long time development has been the elusive concern of many countries in the world including Ghana.⁵⁸⁷ Governments have pursued various paradigms or ideologies⁵⁸⁸ as the theoretical frameworks within which their human development policies and programmes were fashioned out.⁵⁸⁹ Kwadwo Asenso- Okyere, for instance, points out that ‘... the world has been polarized between two major development ideologies. The ideologies are socialism and capitalism.’⁵⁹⁰ Each ideology primarily aims at promoting growth and improving the livelihood of its citizens.

5.3.1 Socialist Economic Ideology

Socialism or Command Economy is a developmental ideology geared towards equity and the sharing of the wealth of the society.⁵⁹¹ Economists such as Philip Hardwick, Bahadur Khan and John Langmead maintain that in a Command Economy, resources are allocated by a central planning authority and key industries and resources were owned and controlled by the state. Under this system, the public sector is the main

⁵⁸⁷ Kwadwo Asenso-Okyere, *Wealth Accumulation, Utilization and Retention* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Universities Press, 2001), pp. 1-8.

⁵⁸⁸ Wane G. Bragg, ‘From Development to Transformation’ in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds), *The Church in Response to Human Needs* (Oxford, U.K: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 20-47. See also United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990*, pp. 9-16.

⁵⁸⁹ For a scholarly discussion on theoretical models as the basis of applied disciplines, see Richard A. Swanson, ‘Theory Framework for Applied Disciplines: Boundaries, Contributing, Core, Useful, Novel and Irrelevant Components.’ Available at [www.richardswanson.com/pdf_files/swanson,R.A\(2007\)](http://www.richardswanson.com/pdf_files/swanson,R.A(2007)) [Accessed 5 April 2012].

⁵⁹⁰ Asenso-Okyere, *Wealth Accumulation, Utilization and Retention*, p. 1.

⁵⁹¹ Asenso-Okyere, *Wealth Accumulation, Utilization and Retention*, p. 1.

arbitrator of the access to society's resources.⁵⁹² What it means is that in a Socialist or Command Economy the central economic questions of 'what to produce', 'how much to produce', 'when to produce' and 'for whom to produce goods and services' – that is, means of actualizing human development - are all addressed by the government through a central planning authority. The economies of such countries as China, Sweden, Canada, Great Britain and recently, France and Greece, according to Stephen L. Slavin, have been described as socialist.⁵⁹³ In general, these economies have three major characteristics: government ownership of some of the means of production⁵⁹⁴; a substantial degree of government planning; and a large-scale redistribution of income from the wealthy and the well-to-do to the middle class and the poor.⁵⁹⁵ The welfare of the poor, the vulnerable and the deprived is presumed to be enhanced in a socialist economy.

5.3.2 Capitalist Economic Ideology

'Under Capitalism', according to Asenso-Okyere, 'productive resources are owned by individuals and firms. These individuals and firms are looked up to as the engine of growth in the economy with government playing a facilitating role. The standard of living of individuals depends upon their initial endowments and their productive capacity.'⁵⁹⁶ Property laws give the owners of resources the right to make decisions concerning access to these resources and to determine the purpose for and the manner in which they are to be used. In a capitalist development ideology, the basic questions of 'what to produce', 'how much to produce', 'when to produce' and 'for whom to produce

⁵⁹² Philip Hardwick, Bahadur Khan and John Langmead, *An Introduction to Modern Economics* (England: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1994), p.4.

⁵⁹³ Stephen L. Slavin, *Economics* (New York: McGraw Hill/Irwin, 2005), p. 85.

⁵⁹⁴ Means of production refers to the factors used to produce goods and services. These factors include land, labour, capital, entrepreneurship and technology.

⁵⁹⁵ Slavin, *Economics*, p.85.

⁵⁹⁶ Asenso-Okyere, *Wealth Accumulation, Utilization and Retention*, p. 1.

goods and services' are handled by the invisible hand called the profit motive⁵⁹⁷ or price mechanism.⁵⁹⁸ The United States of America, Japan and those countries where the majority of firms and other resources are privately owned and controlled are, to a large extent, capitalist economies. Owing to the dominance of the private sector in capitalist economies, the reality of human development, depend, to a large extent, on the resources individuals own and the preparedness of those wealthy individuals (resource owners) to engage the resources in the production of goods and services. As the owners of productive resources produce goods and services, employment and income levels increase. Given a stable socio-political and macro-economic indicators⁵⁹⁹ in such economies, workers' standard of living increased, and hence improvement in their material conditions.

5.3.3 Mixed-Economic Ideology

What Assenso-Okyere loses sight of in his presentation of the world's development paradigms is the fact that some countries have pursued a mixed-economic policy. Mixed-economy is a developmental ideology or economic system which integrates the features of both socialism and capitalism. I am aware that Ghana is an example of a mixed economy. Yuri Smertin's observation justifies the claim of Ghana's ideological identity as a mixed-economy. Smertin points out that when Ghana attained independence in 1957, the leaders set about to determine the country's path of development through socio-economic reform and the adoption of effective theoretical foundation. There were

⁵⁹⁷ The concept of The Invisible Hand was coined by Adam Smith, Scottish professor of philosophy. For further reading on this concept, see Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book IV (London: Methuen, 1950), pp. 477-78.

⁵⁹⁸ Price mechanism simply refers to the interaction of the forces of demand and supply to determine the prices of goods and services in a Capitalist or Free Market Economy. Profit motive and price mechanism are used interchangeably.

⁵⁹⁹ These socio-political and macro-economic indicators included political stability, respect for fundamental human rights of people, low level of urbanization, low level of inflation, low level of interest rate, etc.

two main development paradigms at that time, but Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana, supposed that Africa, and for that matter Ghana, did not need to choose between them. Rather, it had to search for a system of its own which would make use of ‘the best that capitalism and socialism had to offer’.⁶⁰⁰ As a mixed economy, the resources in the country are not owned and controlled only by the government; individuals and private firms also own and control some of the resources. The implication is that the basic questions of ‘what to produce’, ‘how much to produce’, ‘when to produce’ and ‘for whom to produce goods and services’ are addressed by the government, individuals and private firms.

The above developmental ideologies are believed to have significantly shaped the designing and implementation of human development policies and programmes of most countries in the world, including Ghana. Asenso-Okyere maintains that Ghana has had an interesting human development strategy from the pre-independence period to the present time.⁶⁰¹ The pre-independence Ghana was, among other things, characterized by the launch of various development plans aimed at accelerating the rapid socio-economic development of the country. The objective of these development plans, according to Joseph Kimos Adjei, was to improve the living standards of the population, especially, those living in the rural communities.⁶⁰² Notable among these pre-independence plans was the 10-year development plan of Governor Guggisberg, from 1920-1930, which had as its main focus the development of the infrastructural base of the country.⁶⁰³ In the year 1951, the then government of Gold Coast (now Ghana) launched the 10-year Accelerated

⁶⁰⁰ Yuri Smertin, *Kwame Nkrumah* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), pp. 120&121

⁶⁰¹ Asenso-Okyere, *Wealth Accumulation, Utilization and Retention*, p. 2.

⁶⁰² Adjei, *Microfinance and Poverty Reduction*, p. 7.

⁶⁰³ Adjei, *Microfinance and Poverty Reduction*, p. 7.

Development Plan with the view to accelerating the socio-economic development of the country.⁶⁰⁴

When Ghana attained independence in the year 1957, the Convention People's Party (CPP), led by *Ɔsaagyefo* Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, launched the 7-year Development Plan (1961-1968) which emphasized industrialization, among others. Another notable post-independence program for development was the 5-year Development Plan (1975-1980).⁶⁰⁵ All these plans sought to fast-track the development of the infrastructural base which was believed to be one of the indicators of human development in the country. Despite these development programmes, the economy of Ghana did not register much improvement. This was partly due to political instability which thwarted the politicians' efforts at implementing the programmes over their life cycle.⁶⁰⁶ One of the effects of the political instability at that time was that Ghana was plunged into a quagmire of poverty, especially, in the 1970s and early 1980s.

It was against this backdrop that post-independence development programmes were launched with the aim of overcoming the problem of high incidence of poverty in Ghana. These programmes include the Economic Recovery Program (ERP), Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) and Ghana Vision 2020.⁶⁰⁷ This implies that for a very long time, the idea of development has been understood and pursued in socio-economic terms and their attendant technological and infrastructural improvement. Consequently, improvement in the material conditions of life, through improvement in economic infrastructure and increase in annual per capita

⁶⁰⁴ Adjei, *Microfinance and Poverty Reduction*, p. 7.

⁶⁰⁵ Adjei, *Microfinance and Poverty Reduction*, p. 8.

⁶⁰⁶ Adjei, *Microfinance and Poverty Reduction*, p. 8.

⁶⁰⁷ Asenso-Okyere, *Wealth Accumulation, Utilization and Retention*, p. 3. See also Adjei, *Microfinance and Poverty Reduction*, pp. 8-10

income were considered to be the main indicators of development.⁶⁰⁸ Development, understood this way, has become synonymous to economic growth. Highlighting the negative connotation the term development has assumed when understood economically, Paul K. Bekye notes that:

[Development] sprang into use in opposition to the term under-development, which expressed the condition and the anguish of poor countries compared with rich ones. Hence the term for a long time was seen from a purely economic point of view and was synonymous to economic growth. In a contrasting manner, nations with growing economies were considered 'developed', as against nations with economies that tended to stagnate; these were underdeveloped countries.⁶⁰⁹

In the light of the above economic understanding of development, solutions to the problems of Africa and Ghana in particular were conceived in purely economic terms.

Bekye further articulates that:

This approach to development was no doubt at the center of the neo-liberal economists' endeavor to transfer the 'economic miracle' of North America to under-developed countries, particularly Africa, in decades following the war. The obstinate conviction was that the factors which had produced economic growth in the already developed world, constituted an adequate model for economic development in under-developed nations. The assumption was that the various economic factors for instance abundant raw materials etc., were already present in the underdeveloped countries. What was needed then was to add or pump in a bit more capital, encourage or provide technological innovations, improve the training of the labor, and economic growth and development were automatic outcomes. The economic approach to development has been by far the most widespread and most enduring.⁶¹⁰

The core of Bekye's argument is that the pursuit of development from purely economic perspective is a western construct with little relevance to the existential realities of Ghana. Therefore, it cannot be exclusively replicated in Ghanaian context without reasonable modification and thoughtful reflections. Bekye appears to corroborate Tom Sine's view on the western orientation of the concept of development. In Sine's opinion,

Western development is a child of the European and American Enlightenment. It is based on the implicit belief that human society is inevitably progressing

⁶⁰⁸ Dovlo, 'Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana', p. 65.

⁶⁰⁹ Paul K. Bekye, *Peasant Development: The Case of Northern Ghana* (Leuven: acco, 1998), p.28.

⁶¹⁰ Bekye, *Peasant Development*, p.29.

toward the attainment of a temporal, materialistic kingdom. In fact, the certain belief that unending economic and social progress is a natural condition of free persons has become the secular religion of the west. Somehow, the millennial expectation of the in breaking of a new transcendent kingdom was temporalized and secularized into the expectation of a future of unlimited economic and technological growth. ... Implicit in this progressive view of the future was the firm conviction that economic progress would automatically result in social and moral progress. This view of the better future is primarily economic, focusing largely on human activities of production and consumption. The “good life” became synonymous with self-seeking and the ability to produce and consume ever-increasing quantities of goods and services.⁶¹¹

Ghana’s development programmes from the pre-independence period to the present time have been designed along western or secular ideology development. As a result of that, the pre and post-independence socio-economic interventions which were intended to improve the standard of living of Ghanaians did not fully realize the anticipated objectives. For instance, it is claimed that whereas some Ghanaians must have immensely benefitted from these interventions, paradoxically, such interventions increased the poverty of a majority of citizens and worsened their plight.⁶¹² Key aspects of development in Ghana such as the quest for ecological balance or environmental sanitation consciousness,⁶¹³ harmonization of faith-based organizations and holistic well-being of Ghanaians appear either peripherally pursued or conspicuously overlooked by the country’s western orientation of socio-economic interventions. The implication is that the western ideology of development understood purely in socio-economic terms is a mixed-blessing in Ghana. It is a clear reflection of Thierry Verhelst’s opinion that there are those for whom development means the inevitable Westernization and

⁶¹¹ Tom Sine, ‘Development: Its Secular Past and Its Uncertain Future’ in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds) *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), pp. 2-3.

⁶¹² Dovlo, ‘Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana’, p. 66.

⁶¹³ Environmental sanitation consciousness in this context refers to peoples’ efforts to ensure clean and healthier surroundings

standardization of human existence.⁶¹⁴ In fact, Abraham Akrong frowns upon this as follows:

This triumphalist western idea found in both capitalist and socialist ideologies cannot be an obligatory model for the whole world and, therefore, it will be an error to identify [development] with westernization. Indeed, there are alternative forms of development, which various people from their own cultural contexts can develop to free themselves from destitution, because the autonomous human spirit that thrives to create conditions for the good life is the same spirit that continues to resist acculturation in the name of development. The acculturation that identifies [development] with westernization occurs on these levels – external controls and dependency, borrowed institutional structures and worship of foreign values. Where these variables are present, development results in dependency and loss of identity.⁶¹⁵

John G. Sommer therefore rightly contends that ‘the measuring of development on the materialistic basis of per capita gross national product is inadequate and often misleading.’⁶¹⁶ He thus advocates a rethinking of the definition of development to include the spiritual, cultural and economic dimensions of people. By this argument, Sommer articulates the inclusion of religion if the equation of development is to be complete. Sommer’s contention suggests the need for a holistic development paradigm which is aptly defined and informed in the context of religion.⁶¹⁷

5.4 The Indispensability of Religion in Development Discourse: A Paradigmatic Shift in Development Models

The understanding of development in only socio-economic terms has been found to be an inadequate yardstick of determining human well-being because it excludes other vital components such as the spiritual and cultural dimensions.⁶¹⁸ This limitation has

⁶¹⁴ Thierry Verhelst, *No Life Without Roots* (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1987), p. 56.

⁶¹⁵ Abraham Akrong, ‘African Traditional Religion and Development: Clash of two Worlds of Discourse and Values’, *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XVIII (2003), p.36.

⁶¹⁶ John G. Sommer, *Beyond Charity: U.S. Voluntary Aid for a Changing Third World* (Washington, D. C.: Overseas Development Council, 1977), p.3.

⁶¹⁷ Molefe Tsele, ‘The Role of the Christian Faith in Development’ in Deryke Belshaw, Robert Calderisi and Chris Sugden (eds) *Faith in Development: Partnership Between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa* (Oxford, U.K.: Regnum Books International, 2001), p. 205.

⁶¹⁸ Sommer, *Beyond Charity*, p.3.

necessitated the need for a comprehensive development ideology which does not deal only with the socio-economic aspects of life, but also spiritual aspects as well. This suggests the need for a paradigmatic shift in models of development from their purely western / secular economic orientations to a more humane approach which advocates a holistic emphasis of development. The humane approach affects the totality of man's existence: social, economic, political, cultural, spiritual, moral, etc.⁶¹⁹ It is, thus the approach to development which is driven by the need to achieve significant impact on the overall quality of life of the people. John Pobee has noted that '*economics is about life and not only about money and wealth. It is therefore stressed that economics must enter on how life can be sustained and made to flourish.*'⁶²⁰

The humane approach to development is grounded and defined in the context of religion. The humane approach to development also referred to in this study as the religious or faith-based approach to development, interrogates the purely western or secular economic orientation of development which grossly relegates religious phenomena to the background.⁶²¹ The faith-based approach underscores Gerrie ter Haar's position on the indispensability of people's religious or spiritual resources in contemporary development discourse.⁶²² It is anchored on the premise that without religion and its related religious phenomena as its base, development is bound to be reduced to an appendage of capitalist ideology and, therefore, would not offer much to the poor in Africa and Ghana in particular.⁶²³

⁶¹⁹ Dovlo, 'Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana', p. 66.

⁶²⁰ Cited in Dovlo, 'Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana', p.66. (Emphasis original). Pobee's view underscores the fluidity and broad nature of 'Economics' as a discipline.

⁶²¹ Sine, 'Development: Its Secular Past and Its Uncertain Future', pp.8-9.

⁶²² Gerrie ter Haar, 'Religion and Development: Introducing a New Debate' in Gerrie ter Haar (ed.) *Religion and Development: Ways of Transforming the World* (London, United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2011), p. 8.

⁶²³ Tsele, 'The Role of the Christian Faith in Development', p. 205.

One of the stark realities of post-independent Ghana is the perception that governments have failed to deliver on their promises of development.⁶²⁴ The disappointing experience with development has prompted the quest for alternative views of development which rely less on state institutions and more on the creativity and resourcefulness of private non-governmental and faith-based organizations. Part of this self-reliance has been an intellectual and productive engagement with religious organizations to promote development in Ghana.⁶²⁵ This engagement has introduced religion into the discourse of development as an essential concept for the modernization of socio-economic and political institutions for development. This comes from the realization that development discourse that includes religion tends to produce progressive outcome, which is usually consistent with human values.⁶²⁶

A religiously pluralistic country such as Ghana does not lack religious resources as some of the essential variables in her equation of development. That Ghana is a religiously pluralistic country is attested to by the preliminary figures from 2000 Housing and Population Census conducted by Ghana Statistical Service. The Housing and Population Census has revealed that Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religion are the major faiths practised in Ghana with the following representation: Christianity (69.0%), Islam (15.6%) and Traditional Religion (8.5%).⁶²⁷ There are also some New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Ghana. Elom Dovlo's classification of such NRMs is revealing: New African Traditional Religious Movements (NATRMs), Oriental New Religious Movements (ONRMs), New Religious Movements from the African Diaspora

⁶²⁴ Akrong, 'African Traditional Religion and Development', p.36. See also Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (London, United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2004), pp.1-19., Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, pp. 20 – 23.

⁶²⁵ Akrong, 'African Traditional Religion and Development', p. 36.

⁶²⁶ Akrong, 'African Traditional Religion and Development', p. 36.

⁶²⁷ From 'Selected Social Characteristics of Population by Religion', preliminary figures from the 2000 Housing and Population Census conducted by Ghana Statistical Service. See also Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 25.

(NRMAD), Islamic New Religious Movements (INRMs) and Christian New Religious Movements (CNRMs).⁶²⁸ These religious bodies and their related religious traditions are indispensable agents or partners with governments to promote Ghana's development.⁶²⁹

Assimeng brilliantly articulates the social function and indispensability of religion in society, and of course, in development debates. In his thinking,

The main sociological crunch for which religion is of profound interest to the student of society is thus that although religious activities relate to unseen forces, these activities take place in this seeing and feeling world. Religious beliefs, as of any other form of belief in a society, have direct and indirect influence on individuals and social groups, and on their disposition to enter into commerce with others in the wider society. Religious beliefs influence social action, determine social interaction and social distance, and can never be completely divorced from other forms of social activities, especially those activities that deal with the social and economic order.⁶³⁰

The indispensability of religion is thus understood in its universality in human society, its role in the historical development of civilizations, its resilience and adaptation to different and changing cultural forces and the moral, socializing and integrative role of religion in individual and social life as a whole.⁶³¹

Despite the obvious relevance of religion in development discourse, scholars posit that 'religion, until very recently, has been ignored in the development equation.'⁶³² Theories of development in Africa have not paid much attention to the central role of religion although in traditional thought, politics, economics, and religion are so inextricably interwoven that political conflicts often have obvious and very strong religious dimensions.⁶³³ Within the various theoretical schools of development, religion and its related phenomena were considered as expressions of anachronistic and dysfunctional traditions in culturally stagnated and static communities. These anti-

⁶²⁸ Elom Dovlo, 'The Church in Africa and Religious Pluralism' *Exchange*, 27 (1998), p. 53.

⁶²⁹ Dovlo, 'Religious Bodies, Subsidiarity and Development in Ghana', pp. 68 - 70.

⁶³⁰ Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in West Africa*, p. 14.

⁶³¹ Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in West Africa*, p. 16.

⁶³² Akrong, 'African Traditional Religion and Development', p.37. See also Gabriel Andreescu, 'International Relation and Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe', *International Studies* 4(1998), pp.35-47.

⁶³³ Akrong, 'African Traditional Religion and Development', p.37.

religion theoretical schools of development predicted that religion and its related phenomena would vanish as the development of national societies on the basis of modern economy, rationality and western science accelerate. Religious groups were regarded as less evolved alternatives to politics for ‘traditional’ or ‘indigenous’ people who are literally waiting to be secularized, as they become more modern. In that sense, development or political transformation was conceptualized as a shift from tradition to modernity.⁶³⁴ The indispensability of religion in contemporary development discourse, in my opinion, is an interrogation of the previously-held notion of the inverse correlation between religion and development, as was loudly espoused in various theoretical schools of development. Abamfo Ofori Atiemo succinctly points out that the surprising resurgence of religion and its related religious phenomena in local and international affairs in the 21st Century has challenged the validity of such conclusions made by major proponents of secularization thesis.⁶³⁵

It is in the light of the indispensability and renewed visibility of religion in development discourse that I attempt to discuss the religious phenomenon of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian development debate. As I have already indicated, I am focusing on the extent to which pilgrims’ belief in the sacredness of PMs contributes to the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse in Ghana; the appropriation of PMs as sacred spaces and how that promotes ecumenical / interdenominational networking in Ghana and how the activities surrounding PMs in Ghana enhance pilgrims’ economic wellbeing.

⁶³⁴ ‘African Traditional Religion and Development’, p.37.

⁶³⁵ Abamfo O. Atiemo, ‘International Human Rights, Religious Pluralism and the Future of Chieftaincy in Ghana’, *Exchange*, 35 (2006), p. 365. For details on ‘Secularization thesis’, see Linda Woodhead and David G. Robertson, ‘The Secularisation Thesis’ *The Religious Studies Project (Podcast Transcript)*. Available at: <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/podcast-linda-woodhead-on-the-secularisation-thesis/> [Accessed 2 March 2018].

5.5 The Extent to which Pilgrims' Belief in the Sacredness of Prayer Mountains

Contributes to the Quest for Christian Eco-theological Discourse in Ghana

The efforts of Thorley and Gunn to unpack the meaning of sacred are important in my attempt to examine pilgrims' perception about the sacredness of PMs and the extent to which their belief in the sacredness of the sites contributes to the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse in Ghana. Thorley and Gunn variously refer to sacred as that which is set apart to or for some religious purpose or that which is dedicated / consecrated to a deity. They further maintain that sacred connotes that which is accursed, execrable, horrible, infamous or devoted to a divinity for destruction.⁶³⁶ The implication is that sacred underscores a powerful force for injury and destruction, as well as the idea of simply being exceptionally regarded or revered. Thus although sacred may be conceptualized as a relatively simple word in terms of its contemporary usage, it is actually a complex word shouldering a fascinating blend of meanings.

Prayer Mountains as sacred places, therefore, may be understood as awe-inspiring sites where pilgrims' possible encounter with the transcendental realm is almost akin to their experience of supernatural potency in terms of divine interventions and complexity or danger.⁶³⁷ Almost all the pilgrims who appropriate APM and NMOPC regard these sites as places of sanctity. This is because as sacred mountains, they have well-established networks of myths, beliefs and religious practices such as meditation, sacrifice, worship, prayer / fasting and miracles.

The question that engages my attention in this section of the study, however, is: to what extent do pilgrims' belief in the sacredness of PMs contributes to the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse in Ghana? I attempt to answer this question by briefly explaining Christian eco-theological discourse and by examining some of the

⁶³⁶Thorley and Gunn, *Sacred Sites*, p. 22.

⁶³⁷ Anttonen, 'Sacred', p. 272

modern growing awareness of ecological crisis that appear to warrant the intervention of stakeholders such as faith-based organizations. I then contend that the prevalence of environmental sanitation consciousness at the PMs, owing largely to pilgrims' perception of their encounter with the transcendental realms, seems to be a novel theological paradigm for containing the escalating and developmental issue of environmental filthiness or crisis in Ghana.

5.5.1 Christian eco-theological discourse briefly explained

Pilgrims' perception of the sacredness of PMs may have implications for the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse in Ghana. Christian eco-theological discourse refers to a form of constructive theology that focuses on the interrelationships of Christianity and nature, particularly in the light of environmental concerns.⁶³⁸ Eco-theology generally begins from the premise that a relationship exists between human's religious or spiritual worldviews and the degradation of nature.⁶³⁹ It explores the interaction between ecological values, such as sustainability, and the Christian's dominion mandate (Genesis 1:28).⁶⁴⁰

Christian eco-theology draws on the writings of such authors as Jesuit priest and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, process theologian Alfred North Whitehead, and is well represented in Protestantism by John Cobb, Jr. and Jürgen Moltmann and eco-feminist theologians Rosemary Radford Ruether, Catherine Keller and Sallie McFague.⁶⁴¹

The relationship of theology to the modern ecological crisis became an intense issue of debate in Western academia in 1967, following the publication of the article,

⁶³⁸ www.unitearthweb.org.au/about-us/1-what-is-ecothology.html [Accessed 25 July 2016].

⁶³⁹ www.unitearthweb.org.au/about-us/1-what-is-ecothology.html

⁶⁴⁰ www.unitearthweb.org.au/about-us/1-what-is-ecothology.html

⁶⁴¹ www.unitearthweb.org.au/about-us/1-what-is-ecothology.html

‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,’ by Lynn White, Jr., Professor of History at the University of California at Los Angeles. In this work, White postulates a theory that the Christian model of dominion mandate, understood as human’s dominion over nature, has led to environmental devastation.⁶⁴² White implies that Christianity has often been viewed as the source of negative values towards the environment. In 1973, theologian Jack Rogers published an article in which he surveyed the published works of approximately twelve theologians which had appeared since White’s article. They reflected the quest for ‘an appropriate theological model’ which adequately assesses the biblical data regarding [Christians’ relationship with God and its implications on nature].⁶⁴³

The contemporary burgeoning awareness of environmental crisis that seems to have necessitated the quest for active intervention by stakeholders, including faith-based organizations, has been amply raised by several scholars.⁶⁴⁴ Roger S. Gottlieb, for instance, has summarized his view of the modern global ecological crisis as follows:

Global climate change has already damaged, and will damage at an increasing rate, agriculture, wild lands and animals; raise the ocean level and precipitate more intense storms and worse droughts; expand the range of tropical insects and diseases and kill coral; and in all likelihood have effects that we cannot foresee. A staggering accumulation of *chemical, heavy metal, biological, and nuclear wastes* is found in every region, no matter how remote, and leads to a plague of environmentally caused diseases – most obviously the dramatic increase in cancer, immune-system problems and birth defects. From overuse of chemical agriculture and the destruction of forests, *loss of topsoil* threatens the production of food throughout the developing nations and leads to erosion and desertification everywhere. Massive erosion can also destroy ecosystem balance in rivers and coastal fishing areas. In what some call a *crisis of biodiversity*, the decimation of habitats through the expanding human

⁶⁴² Lynn White Jr. ‘The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis’, *Science, New Series*, Vol. 155, No. 3767 (1967), pp. 1203-1207. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1720120>. [Accessed 5 August 2009].

⁶⁴³ www.unitearthweb.org.au/about-us/1-what-is-ecothology.html

⁶⁴⁴ Celia Deane-Drummond and Heinrich Bedford-Strohm (eds.) *Religion and Ecology in the Public Sphere* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2011). See also Harry & Sophia Awortwi, *Mind Your Environment: It Is Your Life Support* (Accra, Ghana: New Image Foundation, 2010); Roger S. Gottlieb (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

settlements, logging, mining, agriculture, and pollution and the killing of animals for sport, use, or food have raised rates of extinction to the highest they have been for sixty-million years. Potential medicines vanish, ecosystem are destabilized, water supplies threatened, and irreplaceable natural beauties are lost forever. As we witness the harm we are doing we also lose ethical confidence in humanity's own worth. *Loss of wilderness* is seen in the increasing rarity of ecosystems that are free to develop without human interference or intrusion. Besides the dwindling of biodiversity that this entails, human beings face a paradoxical loneliness. People are everywhere; yet we are haunted by a deep loneliness for those natural others who have been our companions for biological ages. ... *Unsustainable patterns and quantities of consumption* deplete natural resources and contribute to global warming and accumulation of waste. In the underdeveloped world, overpopulation relative to existing technological resources and political organization decimates the landscape. *Genetic engineering* menaces us with the dismal prospects of engineered life-forms and the potentially catastrophic invention of insufficiently tested organisms. Given our track record with nuclear waste and toxic chemicals and our political and economic elites' pronounced tendency to short sightedness and greed, it seems highly doubtful that we are ready to create new life-forms in a cautious and sensible way.⁶⁴⁵

Given the diverse nature of environmental issues, Kerby Anderson suggests the need for a framework to discuss the extent of these problems.⁶⁴⁶ Calvin DeWitt's framework of seven degradations of the creation, apparently corroborated by Gottlieb, provides a brief but insightful survey of the extent of environmental problems facing humankind. His seven degradations are as follows: land conversion and habitat destruction; species extinction; land degradation; resource conversion and waste and hazard production; global toxification; alteration of planetary exchange; human and cultural degradation.⁶⁴⁷ This scope and framework of contemporary global ecological crisis implies that '*nature* – however it was thought of before this time – has been transformed into something new: the *environment*, that is a nonhuman world whose life

⁶⁴⁵ Roger S. Gottlieb (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 4-5 (Emphases original).

⁶⁴⁶ Kerby Anderson, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), p. 181.

⁶⁴⁷ Calvin DeWitt, 'Seven Degradations of Creation', in Calvin DeWitt (ed.), *The Environment and the Christian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), pp. 15-22. See also Anderson, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, pp. 181-183.

and death, current shape and future prospects, are in large measure determined by human beings'⁶⁴⁸, including their religious institutions.

5.5.2 A brief survey of ecological / environmental filthiness in Ghana

The survey of ecological crisis by DeWitt and Gottlieb appears to provide a broader context within which Ghana's modern environmental crisis, specifically insanitary conditions, can be briefly examined and articulated. In Ghana, 'It is estimated that more than 20,000 tonnes of waste is generated ... daily, with Accra [the capital city] alone accounting for 3,000 tonnes. The waste, which comes in solid, liquid, electronic and plastic forms, does not only destroy the land but also end up in water bodies, leading to a reduction in fish stock in those water bodies.'⁶⁴⁹ In addition to the pollution of land and water, the issue of environmental crisis in Ghana, in the opinion of Harry and Sophia Awortwi, also entails land degradation and wanton depletion of forest resources through activities such as illegal mining, logging and bush fires.⁶⁵⁰ These activities aggravate the already nasty and insanitary conditions in the country which undoubtedly culminate in outbreak of diseases such as malaria, bilharzia, onchocerciasis (river blindness), dysentery, cholera and typhoid.⁶⁵¹

The above disturbing environmental or ecological crisis in Ghana coupled with its attendant catastrophic health consequences warrant the intervention of stakeholders such as faith-based organizations. My general position on this matter is that the issue of environmental crisis in Ghana, like all other developmental issues, cannot be adequately managed without recourse to religion. This is because of the common positions of

⁶⁴⁸ Gottlieb (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, p. 5 (Emphasis original).

⁶⁴⁹ Nana Dei, 'Sanitation Problem can be solved with attitudinal change', *Daily Graphic*, 12 March, 2018, p. 16.

⁶⁵⁰ Harry & Sophia Awortwi, *Mind Your Environment: It Is Your Life Support* (Ghana: New Image Foundation, 2010), pp. 109-184.

⁶⁵¹ Harry & Sophia Awortwi, *Mind Your Environment*, pp. 93-104.

scholars such as Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo, Matthew Clark and Gottlieb on the indispensability of religion in society, as far as the management of environmental crisis is concerned. Golo brilliantly articulates the interplay of faith-based organisations, specifically Christianity, Islam and indigenous African religion, as indispensable agents of environmental sanitation in Ghana. In his abstract to the paper, he indicates, among others, that *‘Contemporary resurgences of religious environmentalism are reflections of the sense of urgent need to re-orientate humankind’s relations with the created order, based on a basic common denominator in the teachings and affirmations delivered in a range of religious doctrines. One of the unifying hubs of different religious traditions in Ghana is their common mandates for the mitigation of further environmental problems.’*⁶⁵²

In Clark’s observation, not only does eighty percent of the world’s population claim to profess religious faith, but also religious belief is generally pervasive, profound, persuasive and persistent in influencing social behaviour.⁶⁵³ In Gottlieb’s view, ‘religion remains the arbiter and repository of life’s deepest moral values. ... More broadly we might say that it is part of the essential role of religion in social life to serve as a realm in which the pursuit of power, pleasure and wealth is suspended in favour of attention to and conformity with humanity’s “ultimate concern”. Religion [thus] prompts us to pursue the most long-lasting and authentic values’⁶⁵⁴ which, in my view, include environmental sanitation or environmental preservation.

⁶⁵² Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo, ‘Tending Creation Together: Religious Environmentalism as a Matrix for National Cohesion and Unity in Ghana’, in Helen Lauer, Nana Aba Appiah Amfo and Joanna Boampong (eds.), *The One in the Many: Nation Building through Cultural Diversity* (Legon-Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2013), pp. 201-223 (201) (Emphasis original).

⁶⁵³ Matthew Clark, *Development and Religion – Theology and Practice* (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015), p. 5.

⁶⁵⁴ Gottlieb (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, pp.12-13.

Specifically, I posit that to some extent, Christian pilgrims' belief in the sacredness of PMs contributes to the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse in Ghana. Considering the relatively huge number of Ghanaian Christian pilgrims who patronise the PMs,⁶⁵⁵ I argue that the prevalence of environmental sanitation consciousness at the PMs owing to the pilgrims' perception of their encounter with God or the Ultimate Reality, may possibly be a groundbreaking theological paradigm for containing the mounting developmental issue of environmental crisis or filthiness in Ghana. This position immediately alludes to the possibility of transporting or replicating the notion of pilgrims' sanitation consciousness from the sacred sites to the larger Ghanaian public space where environmental filthiness commonly prevails. Before I attempt a discussion of the possibility of replicating the pilgrims' sanitation consciousness from sacred sites to the larger Ghanaian context, I examine the pilgrims' perception of the sacredness of PMs and how that perception is believed to enhance their environmental sanitation consciousness at the sacred sites.

5.5.3 The interface between pilgrims' perception of the sacredness of Prayer

Mountains and the heightening of their environmental sanitation consciousness

During pilgrimage, the pilgrims' perception of the supernatural orientation of the PMs appears to significantly influence their interactions even with the physical environment. Some of the pilgrims believe that objects such as trees, leaves, sand, stones, water, etc., found on the PMs are not mere objects without the potency to mediate spiritual benefits or results. They consider these objects as aids to prayer or prayer accessories which facilitate their interaction with the transcendental realms. The pilgrims' reverential attitude towards some physical objects on the PMs seems to be

⁶⁵⁵ More than ten thousand pilgrims patronise the Prayer Mountains a year. For details, see Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', p. 106.

aspects of sacramental theology which, in the opinion of Douglas Davies, is closely related to the doctrine of the incarnation. Davies writes:

[The] process of God entering into humanity in the individual man, Jesus of Nazareth, is spoken of in theology as the doctrine of the incarnation. It is a doctrine closely associated in Christian belief with what is often called sacramental theology, emphasising how ordinary aspects of life can be endowed with religious significance. This refers not only to official church sacraments using wine, bread, or water as in the eucharist or baptism, but to many other aspects of life, and in one sense it embraces the very matter of the universe itself. In this incarnational-sacramental theology, God employs natural phenomena as vehicles for religious truth. For Christians committed to this view of the universe, attitudes to nature are grounded in a world of divine value and significance.⁶⁵⁶

It is therefore no wonder that as sacred spaces, stringent rules and programmes of sanitation permeate the activities of all the PMs under study in this work. On the PMs, littering, spitting, urinating and defecating in the open spaces are deemed serious infractions by the culprits. All pilgrims are obliged to fully and actively participate in the regular clean up exercises. These include weeding, sweeping, scrubbing and proper disposal of refuse. Waste disposal bins are placed at vantage points to augment cleanliness and the creation of environmental sanitation consciousness among the pilgrims. Availability of lavatory facilities for males and females as well as designated places for refuse dumping are undoubtedly some of the measures to augment sanitation activities on the PMs.

The rules and programmes of sanitation on the PMs are not novel. Rather, they are reflections and appropriations of biblical antecedents of cleanliness at military camps. In Deuteronomy 23:9-14, for instance, the instructions on environmental sanitation at the military camp were unambiguously articulated:

When you go forth against your enemies and are in camp, then you shall keep yourself from every evil thing. If there is among you any man who is not clean by reason of what chances to him by night, then he shall go outside the camp, he shall not come within the camp; but when evening comes on, he shall bathe himself in water, and when the sun is down, he may come within the camp. You

⁶⁵⁶ Davies, 'Christianity,' p.40.

shall have a place outside the camp and you shall go out to it; and you shall have a stick with your weapons; and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it, and turn back and cover up your excrement. Because the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to save you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, that he may not see anything indecent among you, and turn away from you.⁶⁵⁷

In their commentary on this text, Luciano C. Chianeque and Samuel Ngewa indicate that a nocturnal emission at the camp made a man ritually unclean. He was required to remain outside the camp till evening, when he could wash himself and return to camp. The legislation also laid down rules relating to hygiene. A specific area outside the camp ought to be set apart to be used as a toilet and needed to be kept clean by burying excrement. Such cleanliness was necessary to avoid offending the Lord God who moved about inside the camp. The camp was to be kept holy in his honor and to prevent him from leaving. This regulation was perceived to contribute to the health of the campers (or soldiers) by removing one possible source of infection.⁶⁵⁸

Thus the notion of the sacredness of PMs or spaces such as APM and NMOPC is not a mere metaphysical or abstract apprehension. Rather, it appears to be an empirically verifiable religio-social reality which significantly influences or conditions human behaviour.⁶⁵⁹ In that sense, I agree with Geertz in his assertion that ‘The holy [sacred symbol] bears within it everywhere a sense of intrinsic obligation ... [which also] enforces emotional commitment.... That which is set apart as more than mundane is inevitably considered to have far-reaching implications for the direction of human conduct.’⁶⁶⁰

Notwithstanding my observation about the pilgrims’ consciousness of environmental sanitation on the PMs, I further observed that the massive influx of

⁶⁵⁷ The biblical quotation was from the Revised Standard Version.

⁶⁵⁸ Luciano C. Chianeque and Samuel Ngewa, ‘Deuteronomy’ in *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), p. 240.

⁶⁵⁹ Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, p. 76.

⁶⁶⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 127.

pilgrims (an average of over twelve thousand pilgrims a year) to the PMs poses several environmental challenges to the pilgrims and the local people of Abasua and Nkawkaw communities. These challenges include deforestation, congestion and sanitation problems. It is worth noting that the two PMs under study are located in thick forest areas. Deforestation therefore results from the wanton felling of trees from the forest by the management of the sites or camp owners who embark on building projects such as accommodation facilities and chapels. Whether those deforesters had the approval of the traditional authorities or not, my contention is that paradoxically, the upsurge of development projects on the PMs also means the deterioration of the environment through deforestation. The debilitating effects of deforestation on climate change in Ghana and Africa have been scholarly accentuated.⁶⁶¹

Another environmental challenge posed by the pilgrimage movements to the PMs is congestion. During the peak seasons for pilgrimage activities by the MCG and the PCG, the small Abasua community, for instance, gets choked up with vehicles and human beings. Vehicular and human traffic and intermittent downfall of pilgrims on the rugged path to the PMs are almost always unavoidable. Human congestion also characterises the camps where religious activities take place. Many pilgrims therefore sleep on the bare rocky floor, while others also resort to makeshift tents. This implies that the accommodation facilities on the PMs are woefully inadequate to contain all the pilgrims during the peak seasons for pilgrimage activities. Human congestion is believed to be one of the causes of infectious respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis, common cold, influenza, strep throat and pneumonia.⁶⁶²

⁶⁶¹ For details on the negative consequences of deforestation on climate change in Ghana and Africa, see Ebenezer Yaw Blas, “‘Compensated Reduction’ as Motivation of Reducing Deforestation: An African Christian Response’ *Journal of African Christian Thought* Vol. 18, No.1 (June 2015), pp. 18-27.

⁶⁶² For details on these diseases, see Meeks, Heit and Page, *Comprehensive School Health Education*, pp. 413-417.

Related to the issue of congestion are sanitation problems. In spite of the prevalence of clearly spelt-out rules and regulations governing environmental cleanliness on the PMs, sanitation problems (indiscriminate littering, irresponsible refuse dumping and unpleasant smell exuded from the lavatories, etc.) were observed and, sometimes, experienced on the mountains. But information gathered from some of the camp workers, for example, seemed to counteract my perception of littering and irresponsible refuse dumping as sanitation-related problems. Evangelist Richard Afriyie, the Overseer of APM (Camp Three) and Evangelist Gyasi, the Overseer of NMOPC disclosed to me that the more the PCs become dirty and camp workers endeavour to tidy up the places through sweeping, scrubbing, weeding, etc., the more blessings they claim to receive.⁶⁶³

This information corroborated what Nana Kwame, a worshipper at APM (Camp Three) and Mr. Fordjour Boateng, the secretary of Camp Three, disclosed to me some time ago at APM. They claimed that the camp workers are almost always delighted by the insanitary conditions at the camp because it provides them the opportunity to tidy up the place and receive more blessings. They buttressed their point with the testimony of a woman believed to be poor and who allegedly came purposely to embark on cleaning activities at APM, specifically Camp Three. It was reported that the single woman had more than five children. It is said that her belief was that through her devotion to the sanitation work on the mountain, the Lord would be merciful and gracious to her. In the course of working, it is said that some unknown philanthropists came to her aid by picking five of her fatherless children abroad⁶⁶⁴ (Europe and America) on humanitarian

⁶⁶³ Evangelist Richard Afriyie, Interview, 12 March, 2016, Abasua Prayer Mountain; Evangelist Gyasi, Interview, 27 July, 2016, Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp.

⁶⁶⁴ Gerrie ter Haar points out that African Christians who travel to Europe are perceived to be 'Halfway to Paradise.' For details, see Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Great Britain: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), pp. 128-146.

grounds.⁶⁶⁵ The case of this woman, in my opinion, is miraculous and therefore quite exceptional, even though an explanation of the same case from the perspective of eco-theology is plausible. Like all other faith-based issues, the miraculous nature of the woman's experience certainly transcends empirical verification and rational analysis.

5.5.4 Replicating the notion of pilgrims' sanitation consciousness at sacred sites:

The perspective of African Christian eco-theology as holistic and sustainable motivation for environmental sanitation in Ghana

The possibility of replicating the notion of pilgrims' sanitation consciousness from the PMs or sacred sites to the larger Ghanaian context where environmental filthiness dominates, I contend, would be a viable remedy for environmental sanitation crisis in Ghana. This implies that the pilgrims' environmental sanitation consciousness at the PMs hints at the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse which attempts to address the developmental issue of environmental filthiness in Ghana. I pursue this argument from the perspective of African Christian eco-theology as holistic and sustainable motivation for environmental sanitation in Ghana.

One of the clearest and penetrating voices on the justification for African Christianity's active involvement in responding to civil society issues such as environmental sanitation crisis in Ghana and other African countries is Walls. He writes:

It is widely recognised that there has occurred within the present century a demographic shift in the centre of gravity of the Christian world, which means that more than half of the world's Christians live in Africa ... and that the proportion doing so grows annually. This means that we have to regard African Christianity as potentially the *representative* Christianity of the twenty-first century..... [The implication of this demographic shift in the centre of gravity of the Christian world is that] the things by which people recognise and judge what Christianity is will (for good or ill) increasingly be determined in Africa. The characteristic doctrines, the liturgy, the ethical codes, the social applications of the faith will increasingly be those prominent in Africa. New agendas for theology will appear in Africa. And one of the anvils on which the Christianity

⁶⁶⁵ Nana Kwame and Mr. Fordjour Boateng, Interview, 3 March 2012, Abasua Prayer Mountain.

of the future will be hammered out will be the question of the nation, the state, the nature of civil society.⁶⁶⁶

The attempt to replicate the notion of pilgrims' environmental sanitation consciousness from the PMs to address the issue of environmental filthiness in Ghana is, to the best of my knowledge, one of the social applications of the Christian faith especially, in the area of environmental crisis, and a new agenda for African Christian eco-theology. A replication of the notion of pilgrims' environmental sanitation consciousness is the attempt by Christian pilgrims to reproduce, upon their return, their experience of environmental cleanliness at the PMs, to address environmental filthiness in the larger Ghanaian public space.

This definition, undoubtedly, entails several implications. Two of such implications are considered. First, it calls for a deconstruction of the Christian pilgrim motif to encapsulate other Christians in Ghana who may not have had any pilgrimage experience at all to PMs, but who cannot also be ignored in the quest to construct environmental sanitation consciousness to address environmental filthiness in Ghana. Here, Webb's perspective of the true identity of Christians is worth reconsidering. In her scheme of thought, 'Christians [are] true *peregrini* in the original sense of the Latin word, 'strangers' or 'foreigners' in the midst of a sometimes hostile society, spiritual pilgrims between earth and heaven, between physical birth into this world and spiritual rebirth into eternal life.'⁶⁶⁷ Webb seems to agree with the theme of Apostle Peter's first epistle: 'living as an alien.' It is said that Peter called his Christian readers 'aliens' or 'strangers' to make the emphasis that 'Christians are really citizens of heaven and our

⁶⁶⁶ Walls, *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History*, p.85. (Emphasis original).

⁶⁶⁷ Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, p.2.

sojourn here on earth is only temporary.’⁶⁶⁸ Thus from a theological perspective, every Christian, irrespective of their geographical location, is a pilgrim.

Second, the definition also calls for every Christian pilgrim’s renewed ontological perspective or worldview that hardly draws a sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular realms of existence. In other words, Christian pilgrims must ideally see the larger Ghanaian public space as essentially and qualitatively the same as the PMs. This puzzle, however, does not appear insurmountable. It can be unraveled in the context of African Christian eco-theology as holistic and sustainable motivation for environmental sanitation.

African Christian eco-theology as holistic and sustainable motivation for environmental sanitation emphasises the need to see ecology from the perspective of African Christian theological lens. It is couched on the theological premise that the African theistic cultural self-understanding of life, interpreted by the gospel, contains a motivation for African Christians to naturally appreciate the need for environmental sanitation from a religious awe of God first and foremost and, hence, act in obedience to his command to seek first his kingdom in all things (Matthew 6:33).⁶⁶⁹ It underscores African Christian pilgrims’ intentional and conscious adherence to environmental sanitation as a divine or biblical imperative. In the light of this theological premise, Ebenezer Yaw Blasus points out that the African Christian’s ‘failure to let God’s concern for his environment be central in [ensuring environmental sanitation] could be classified for the Christian as ‘ecological sin’, because it reflects a refusal to do all things for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31), or to be not so constrained by *love* for God (2 Cor. 5:14)

⁶⁶⁸ Mark Bailey, Tom Constable, Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (eds.), *Nelson’s New Testament Survey* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1999), p. 557.

⁶⁶⁹ Blasus, ‘‘Compensated Reduction’ as Motivation of Reducing Deforestation’, p. 24.

and neighbour ... as to obey him (Jn. 15:10).⁶⁷⁰ Thus Christian pilgrims, who by theological designation are aliens or strangers here on earth, are not excused by their perceived foreignness as far as their adherence to environmental cleanliness here on earth is concerned. In other words, the ‘other-worldly’ mindset of Christian pilgrims does not guarantee their exclusion from active involvement in ensuring environmental sanitation. Emmanuel Asante’s position on this matter is apt and revealing:

[Christians’] concern for personal salvation, wellbeing, wholeness and integrity cannot be separated from a deep respect for everything that God created and pronounced as good. The well-being, and for that matter, the peace of the nation depends, among other things, on the conservation of the environment including bio-diversity, ecology and climate. Protection of the ecology is necessary both in terms of ensuring the sustenance of production of material goods and of ensuring availability of potable water, non-polluted air and the protection of life from radiation, toxic substance and climate change. Lack of care for the environment endangers tomorrow’s well-being.⁶⁷¹

Inherent in the theological premise of African Christian eco-theology is the need for African / Ghanaian Christians, understood as pilgrims, to recognise the larger Ghanaian context as spatially homogeneous and qualitatively indifferent to *special* sacred sites where their environmental sanitation consciousness is normally heightened. This does not only imply the possibility of pilgrims or Christians encountering the transcendent and immanent God in the Ghanaian public space, but it also implies that Mircea Eliade’s designation of sacred sites as spatial non homogeneity may be deemed contentious, if not questionable, in this context.

It is instructive to observe that African Christian eco-theology as holistic and sustainable motivation for environmental sanitation, in the opinion of Blasus, has the African primal religious context as its substructure. He posits that:

From an African traditional cultural perspective, people may see ‘ecological sin’ in terms of the breaking of ecological taboos, as what will incur the wrath of God (or the divinities and ancestors). Though based on fear-imposing religious

⁶⁷⁰ Blasus, ‘‘Compensated Reduction’ as Motivation of Reducing Deforestation’, p. 24. (Emphasis original).

⁶⁷¹ Emmanuel K. Asante, ‘Religion, Politics and National Peace’, *S.H. Amissah Memorial Lectures* (Compiled Series) (MCG headquarters, Accra: Alpha Royal Publications, 2017), pp.6-27.

myths that do not necessarily explicitly elucidate any ecological values, the taboos are invariably ecological ‘ethical codes’ for ecosystem conservation. The effectiveness of the taboos as motivating tools in sustaining the ecosystem arises, perhaps, from the African fear of the divinities or respect for the ancestors; the latter, who are ‘interested in the welfare of their descendants ... serve as custodians of traditional moral order [including environmental sanitation]... with power to punish ...or reward’ breakers or upholders, respectively. This implies that the traditional African impulsion for [environmental sanitation] is essentially theocentric, as it is centered round divinities as the channels through which God works...⁶⁷²

Thus Ernestina Afriyie appropriately states that ‘traditionally, Africans are likely to treat the environment with little or no special respect when their belief in the relationships of the divinities and ancestors with nature are undermined.’⁶⁷³ In the light of Afriyie’s statement, it is plausible to argue that the current environmental filthiness apparently engulfing Ghana may underscore Ghanaians’ disbelief in the relationships of the divinities and ancestors with the environment. This is, however, a viable research area that can engage the attention of future interested researchers. Noting the importance of the absence of *theocentric* inclination to eco-care [including environmental sanitation] in the Western church, Hugh Montefiore is reported to have lamented the seeming disinterestedness in the environment and called for a review of Western ecological theology and praxis.⁶⁷⁴

The validity, appropriateness or otherwise of the African primal religious standpoint on ecological or environmental issues is determined by the index of Scripture. Kwame Bediako asserts that the Bible must be central in the engagement of gospel with culture.⁶⁷⁵ This is because Scripture is the yardstick, the model and measure for testing,

⁶⁷²Blasu, ‘‘Compensated Reduction’ as Motivation of Reducing Deforestation’, p. 24. See also Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, p. 162.

⁶⁷³ Cited in Blasü, ‘‘Compensated Reduction’ as Motivation of Reducing Deforestation’, p. 24.

⁶⁷⁴ Blasü, ‘‘Compensated Reduction’ as Motivation of Reducing Deforestation’, p. 24. (Emphasis original). See also Hugh Montefiore, ‘Why aren’t more church people interested in the environment?’, *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* Vol.16, No. 3 (July 1999), pp.74-77. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F026537889901600302> [Accessed 10 March 2018].

⁶⁷⁵ Kwame Bediako, ‘Scripture as the hermeneutic of culture and tradition’, *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (June 2001), pp. 2-11 (2).

urging and opening up, for pointing to, and also controlling all engagements of gospel and culture in the continuing divine-human encounter that characterises Christian faith.⁶⁷⁶ In the view of Blasu, the implication of the Bible's centrality in the engagements of gospel and culture is that 'an African Christian eco-theology needs to pass traditional African beliefs and praxis about ... [environmental sanitation] through the prism of scripture, to reveal its light and shade, a process that will be of benefit to the universal Christian community.'⁶⁷⁷ As far as environmental issues are concerned, the primal religio-cultural self-understanding that seems to have theological affinity to the biblical world-view, according to Harold W. Turner, is a person's 'sense of kinship with nature... [as the basis for] the environment itself [to be] used realistically and unsentimentally but with profound respect and reverence and without [pollution].'⁶⁷⁸ This environmental sanitation consciousness of primal religions is considered to be 'a profoundly religious attitude to man's natural setting in the world.'⁶⁷⁹ A person's 'sense of kinship with nature' implies that humankind is inextricably linked to nature⁶⁸⁰ and therefore, the environment. Human sinfulness which results in environmental crisis⁶⁸¹ or filthiness ultimately affects human beings negatively.

African Christian eco-theology is holistic and sustainable incentive for environmental sanitation because it ideally emphasises the need for African / Ghanaian Christian pilgrims to integrate the views of environmental sanitation inherent in primal religious tradition and Christianity, and relevantly apply them in the larger Ghanaian context as they would at designated sacred sites such as PMs. This fusion of 'two worlds

⁶⁷⁶ Bediako, 'Scripture as the hermeneutic of culture and tradition', p. 3.

⁶⁷⁷ Blasu, 'Compensated Reduction' as Motivation of Reducing Deforestation', p. 24.

⁶⁷⁸ Harold W. Turner, 'The Primal Religions of the World and their study', in Victor Hayes (ed.) *Australian Essays in World Religions* (Bedford Park: Australian Association for World Religions), pp. 27-37 (30).

⁶⁷⁹ Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, p. 87.

⁶⁸⁰ Blasu, 'Compensated Reduction' as Motivation of Reducing Deforestation', pp. 25-27.

⁶⁸¹ Anderson, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, 184.

of religious discourse’⁶⁸² in fashioning out environmental sanitation programme in Ghana has liturgical, hermeneutical and policy implications ‘for national cohesion, unity and development.’⁶⁸³ In Ghana where about 69% of the population claims to profess Christianity, African Christian eco-theology seems to be a unifying hub of the various Christian denominations to consciously mitigate environmental sanitation challenges, to promote unity and solidarity among the different Christian denominations and to stimulate sustainable national development.

Furthermore, in Ghana, African Christian eco-theology appears to be one of the indispensable tools for the realization of goal six (6) of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development dubbed ‘Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).’ Goal six (6) of the seventeen (17) SDGs emphasises the need for governments to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.⁶⁸⁴

Another important aspect of development that I pursue in this section of the study is how the appropriation of PMs as sacred spaces promotes ecumenical / interdenominational networking in Ghana.

5.6 The Appropriation of Prayer Mountains as Sacred Spaces and its potential for Ecumenical / Interdenominational Networking in Ghana.

The appropriation of PMs and its potential for ecumenical / interdenominational networking point to Christian pilgrims’ patronage of PMs and the possibility of that patronage to stimulate unity among churches or denominations in Ghana. Almost throughout this work, I have attempted to indicate, among other things, the biblical antecedents of mountains as places of ‘transcendent spiritual experiences, encounters

⁶⁸² Part of the title of Akrong’s paper, ‘African Traditional Religion and Development.’

⁶⁸³ Golo, ‘Tending Creation Together’, pp. 201, 217-221

⁶⁸⁴ For details on the SDGs, see Zadok Kwame Gyasi ‘Creating a new world; changing the MDGs to SDGs’, *Daily Graphic*, October 21, 2015, pp. 40-41.

with God or appearances by God.’⁶⁸⁵ For the sake of emphasis in this section, I recap the central ideas of biblical antecedents of PMs already espoused. Ezekiel 28:13-15 locates the Garden of Eden on a mountain. Abraham demonstrates his willingness to sacrifice Isaac and then encounters God on a mountain (Gen. 22:1-14). God appears to Moses and speaks from the burning bush on ‘Horeb, the mountain of God’ (Ex. 3:1-2 NRSV), and he encounters Elijah on the same site (1 Kings 19:8-18). The experience of the Israelites at Mount Sinai, which Moses ascends in a cloud to meet God (Ex. 19) seems to be one of the most impressive Old Testament (OT) accounts of God’s encounters with people on mountains.⁶⁸⁶ The OT further alludes to Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a geographically mountainous holy city, as the venue for the Israelites to celebrate three festivals in God’s honour (Exodus 23:14-17).

The New Testament (NT) is also replete with accounts of Jesus’ association with mountains. It is said that ‘Jesus resorted to mountains to be alone (Jn. 6:15), to pray (Mt. 14:23; Lk. 6:12) and to teach his listeners (Mt.5:1; Mk.3:13). It was on a mountain that Jesus refuted Satan’s temptation (Mt. 4:8; Lk.4:5). He was also transfigured on a mountain (Mt.17:1-8; Mk.2-8; Lk.9:28-36), and he ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:10-12).’⁶⁸⁷

These biblical antecedents are undoubtedly some of the main reasons Christian pilgrims employ to justify their appropriation of PMs as pilgrimage sites.⁶⁸⁸ It seems to me, however, that Christian pilgrims’ appropriation of PMs as sacred sites and the potential of that appropriation for ecumenical / interdenominational networking in Ghana, has not yet attracted scholarly gaze. The relevance of unity among Christians and the aggregate positive effect of that unity on the overall development of Ghana cannot be

⁶⁸⁵ Ryken, et al, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, p. 573.

⁶⁸⁶ Ryken, et al, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, p. 573.

⁶⁸⁷ Ryken, et al, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, p. 573.

⁶⁸⁸ Evangelist Gyasi, Mobile Phone Interview, 7 March, 2017.

underestimated. David N. A. Kpobi rightly asserts that ‘Christians cannot hope to make impact if they are divided along racial, social, gender, economic [and denominational] lines.’⁶⁸⁹ Kpobi aptly reinforces T. P Weber’s definition of ecumenism as ‘the organized attempt to bring about the cooperation and unity of all believers in Christ.’⁶⁹⁰

Therefore, in this section of the study, I attempt to examine Christian pilgrims’ appropriation of APM and NMOPC and the potential of the pilgrims’ influx to these sacred sites to promote ecumenical / interdenominational networking in Ghana. My attempt to explore the interface between Christians’ pilgrimage to PMs and its potential for ecumenical networking is deemed biblically underpinned. It is instructive to note that the two eschatological images in the OT which envision the nature of Christian unity in mission, according to Kpobi, are all mountain-related. He writes:

The first image is that of Mount Zion as the dwelling place of Yahweh to which all nations shall flock (Isaiah 24:1-4; Isaiah 25:6-7; Micah4:1-3). Christian mission envisions that future period where the church will become the unifying factor to bring not only Christians but also all religions and races together to worship Yahweh. The second image is that of Jerusalem restored and inhabited as a city without walls (Zechariah 2:4-5) where God himself would become the wall, not of separation but of unity.⁶⁹¹

In addition to the significance of APM and NMOPC as places of ‘transcendent spiritual experiences, encounters with God or appearances by God’, field data from these two sacred sites also label them as religious contexts for ecumenical / interdenominational networking in a religiously pluralistic Ghanaian context. They are sites which Christian pilgrims from different denominations patronise for various reasons.

It is scarcely doubtful that the influx of pilgrims to sacred sites also has an inherent propensity to stimulate interdenominational linkages. For instance, Evangelist

⁶⁸⁹ David N. A. Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: The Ecumenical Heritage* (Accra, Ghana: Asempa Publishers: 2008), p.8.

⁶⁹⁰ T. P. Weber, ‘Ecumenism’ in Walter A. Elwell (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2nd edition) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2001), p. 363.

⁶⁹¹ Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana*, p. 9.

Gyasi maintains that the All-Night prayer programme he organizes every Wednesday at NMOPC attracts not less than eight hundred pilgrims from different Christian denominations. Moreover, organized field data on pilgrims' appropriation of 'Camp Three' of APM, from the year 2002 to 2015, underscore the ecumenical networking potential of PMs in Ghana.⁶⁹² A table to this effect is presented and discussed below.

Table 5.1: A table showing the statistics of pilgrims' visits to Camp Three of APM from the year 2002 to 2015⁶⁹³

(A)				(B)			(C)		
Methodists and Non-Methodists				Non-Methodists			Methodists		
Year	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
2002	11666	10355	22021	-	-	-	-	-	-
2003	9906	10550	20456	-	-	-	-	-	-
2004	8469	10023	18492	6940	7647	14578	1629	2376	4005
2005	8914	9643	18557	7221	7421	14642	1693	2222	3915
2006	9487	10618	20105	7680	8153	15833	1807	2465	4272
2007	9366	9504	18870	6174	5477	11651	3192	4027	7219
2008	8457	10566	19023	5550	4872	10422	2907	5694	8601
2009	14275	11979	26254	7857	8276	16133	4122	5999	10121
2010	12342	15829	28171	7262	7169	14431	5080	8660	13740
2011	14338	18554	32892	7723	9127	16850	6615	9427	16042
2012	14562	19957	34519	7536	9794	17330	7026	10163	17189
2013	13130	22650	35780	7010	12370	19380	6120	10280	16400
2014	17036	22564	39600	9875	12387	22262	7161	10177	17338
2015	20724	23710	44434	14628	16713	31341	6096	6997	13093
Grand Total	172672	206502	379174	95456	109406	204862	53448	78487	131935

The above table shows the statistics of pilgrims' visits to Camp Three of APM from the year 2002 to 2015. Because Camp Three is believed to be the premier and the most patronised PC in Ghana,⁶⁹⁴ it seems to me that the statistics are a fair representation of PMs' role in stimulating ecumenical networking in Ghana. Writing on 'Islamic

⁶⁹² I limited himself to this time frame because that was the period statistics on pilgrims' annual visits to Camp Three could be made available.

⁶⁹³ Source: From Pilgrims' Records Note Book kept at the office of Mr. Fordjour Boateng, the Secretary to Camp Three. He gave these data to me on 14 March 2016 at Camp Three, Abasua Prayer Mountain.

⁶⁹⁴ Evangelist Afriyie, Interview, 12 March, 2016, Abasua Prayer Mountain.

Pilgrimage to Mecca’ and ‘Roman Catholic Pilgrimage in Europe’ in his ‘Geography and Religion’, Park indicates that ‘number of pilgrims at a sacred space within a period of time’ is one of the clear indicators of pilgrims’ perception about the spirituality of sacred spaces.⁶⁹⁵ I argue that the greater the number⁶⁹⁶ of pilgrims who patronise the PMs in a period of time, the higher the pilgrims’ perception about the spiritual relevance of the place. The table is made up of three main sections. These are sections A, B and C. Section A is the combination of Methodists and non-Methodist pilgrims who patronised Camp Three from the year 2002 to 2015. Section B is the number of non-Methodist pilgrims who patronised the site from the year 2004 to 2015. Section C is the number of Methodist pilgrims who patronised the PM from the year 2004 to 2015.

The table indicates that generally, the spiritual significance of APM in the life of pilgrims can scarcely be disputed. The site is perceived as an ideal place for the enhancement of pilgrims’ spirituality; understood as their awareness and belief in the existence of an Ultimate Reality or God and the possibility of personal interaction with this Reality through prayer rituals. In that sense, the PM facilitates the bridging of the gap between pilgrims and the transcendent realms, an index of the pilgrims’ spiritual uplift. Scott asserts that the closer a person is to a relic, the more likely they would be empowered. The same logic is plausible here to establish the empowering effect of pilgrims’ proximity to an Ultimate Reality.⁶⁹⁷

I have already indicated elsewhere in this study that the sacredness of a space is defined by the belief in the presence of a god or a supernatural deity in that site, and the

⁶⁹⁵ Park, ‘Geography and Religion’, p. 25.

⁶⁹⁶ Ten thousand (10,000) and above pilgrims who visit the Prayer Mountains annually is believed to be a great number.

⁶⁹⁷ Scott, *The Gothic Enterprise*, p. 151.

possibility of human's interaction with that deity through prayer rituals.⁶⁹⁸ On this conceptual foundation, sacred sites are believed to be places of supernatural potency where pilgrims can be connected to the transcendent realms through prayer rituals and religious symbols. Pilgrims' encounter with the transcendent realms stimulates spiritual development, generally conceptualized as the existence of vertical relationship between religious practitioners and the realms of transcendence. In this work, spiritual development refers to pilgrims' relationship with God expressed through their appropriation of prayer rituals at the PMs.

It is obvious from the table that from the year 2002 to 2015, a grand total of three hundred and seventy-nine thousand, one hundred and seventy-four (379,174) pilgrims comprising one hundred and seventy-two thousand, six hundred and seventy-two (172,672) males and two hundred and six thousand, five hundred and two (206,502) females patronised the PM. It is also clear under section B that from the year 2004 to 2015, a grand total of two hundred and four thousand, eight hundred and sixty-two non-Methodist pilgrims (204,862) comprising ninety-five thousand, four hundred and fifty-six (95,456) males and one hundred and nine thousand, four hundred and six (109,406) females appropriated the site. Section C shows that from the year 2004 to 2015, a grand total of one hundred and thirty-one thousand, nine hundred and thirty-five (131,935) Methodist pilgrims comprising fifty-three thousand, four hundred and forty-eight (53,448) males and seventy eight thousand, four hundred and eighty seven (78487) females patronised the site.

Sections B and C of the table clearly show that pilgrims who were not Methodists really patronised the site more than the Methodists who claim to have ownership of

⁶⁹⁸ Joe Edward Watkins, *Contemporary Native American Issues: Sacred Sites and Repatriation* (United States of America: Chelsea House Publishers, 2006), pp. 88 - 89.

Camp Three. The implication is that the non-Methodist pilgrims appear to harness the spiritual benefits of the mountain more than the Methodists.

It is further discerned from the table that generally, the female pilgrims who patronise the site outnumber the males. Out of the grand total of 379,174 Methodist and non-Methodist pilgrims who visited the site from 2002 to 2015, 172,672 were males, whilst females totaled 206,502. Again, out of the grand total of 204,862 non-Methodist pilgrims who visited the site within the period under consideration, 95,456 were males, whilst 109,406 were females. Moreover, out of the grand total of 131,935 Methodist pilgrims who patronised the site from 2002 to 2015, males totaled 53,448, whilst females totaled 78,487. Does this mean that many females in general prefer to pray at Camp Three? Or does it have any hint to the popular perception that females in general are more ‘spiritual’ than their male counterparts? A detailed comparative study of the patronage of PMs by gender may provide responses to these rhetorical questions, but that falls outside the scope of this work. Interested future researchers may take it up.

Even though Camp Three of APM belongs to the Methodist Church Ghana, the church does not actually monopolise the site. It is a sacred site for all Christians irrespective of their denomination. This explains the dominant presence of non-Methodist pilgrims at the site since 2002 when the management began to compile the statistics of pilgrims who patronise the site. The non-Methodists included pilgrims from other Christian denominations. The implication is that both APM and NMOPC have the potential to foster ecumenism in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. The PMs’ potential to engender cooperation and unity among pilgrims of different Christian denominations must be understood against the backdrop of the pilgrims’ quest for spirituality which appears to be a fundamental motivation for their religious pilgrimage

to the sacred sites. Of course, the pilgrims' perception of the spiritual potency of the PMs cannot be excluded from the factors that determine their pilgrimage to those sacred sites.

On the PMs, all pilgrims, irrespective of their Christian denominations, embark on religio-social activities together. These include worship services (such as healing and deliverance, All-Night Prayer, divine services, etc.) and communal labour which usually includes weeding, sweeping, scrubbing, etc. These religio-social activities executed together by pilgrims of diverse Christian denominational backgrounds promote social interaction, unity, solidarity and cohesion among the pilgrims. Significant aspects of the sites' religio-social activities which bring pilgrims together and bind them in a shared or mutual experience are prayer rituals such as the biannual Connexional Prayer Convention of the MCG, the biannual Prayer Retreat of the PCG and Communion Services. Owusu-Ansah indicates that pilgrims appropriate these prayer rituals for several reasons: healing/deliverance, spiritual empowerment, divine favor, spiritual protection, etc.⁶⁹⁹ The implication is that the main preoccupation for pilgrims' appropriation of sacred sites is what Asamoah-Gyadu refers to as 'empowerment', understood variously as a redemptive uplift, anointing and the restoration of spiritual gifts.⁷⁰⁰

The fostering of ecumenical networking eventually results in social development among pilgrims. Robert Moffitt is of the view that social development is expressed in the need for people or individuals to develop, nurture and maintain horizontal relationships with other people and groups.⁷⁰¹ Moffitt's view of social development seems to be a reflection of Durkheim's position on the social and collective function of religion.

⁶⁹⁹ Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity*, pp. 15-21.

⁷⁰⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, pp. 152-163.

⁷⁰¹ Robert Moffitt, 'The Local Church and Development' in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds) *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), p. 234. C.f. John & Agnes Sturt, *Created to be Whole* (Guildford, Surrey: Eagle, 1998), pp. 87- 186.

Durkheim (1858-1917) argued that religion functions to reinforce the collective unity or social solidarity of a group: ‘There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and collective ideals which make its unity and its personality.’⁷⁰² Durkheim maintained that one way in which a society could express its shared identity and unity was through symbols and rituals.⁷⁰³ Thus symbols and rituals were vital to Durkheim’s analysis of the social function of religion, just as they appear to be very crucial in promoting social interaction among pilgrims on the PMs.

In O’Donnell’s thinking, religious symbols such as the Christian cross provide a focus of emotion and belief. Rituals such as sacrifice, Catholic mass or Eucharist bring people together and bind them in communal or mutual experience.⁷⁰⁴ In addition to the above religio-social activities which facilitate unity among the pilgrims, there are other religious symbols on the PMs which are believed to be potent in attracting them. The symbols include the mountains themselves, erected crosses at the sites and other prayer accessories (for example, water, anointing oil, sand and leaves believed to be of medicinal quality). Pilgrims who utilise these religious symbols believe that they are potent in alleviating their suffering or challenges.⁷⁰⁵ On APM, for instance, almost all pilgrims fetch the rain water that is accumulated on the bare rocky floor. Besides, at NMOPC, the water that flows from the mountain is vigorously fetched by almost every pilgrim who visits the site. The belief is that the water is ‘holy and powerful’ in bringing about healing, business expansion, prosperity, restoration of broken marriages, etc.

⁷⁰² O’Donnell, *Sociology*, p. 530.

⁷⁰³ O’Donnell, *Sociology*, p. 530.

⁷⁰⁴ O’Donnell, *Sociology*, p. 530.

⁷⁰⁵ This does not mean that pilgrims patronise the Prayer Mountains only to find solutions to problems. There are several reasons for pilgrims’ appropriation of sacred spaces, one of which is to find solutions to suffering or predicament. I agree with John Bowker that suffering or predicament is one of the central causes of religion. For details, see John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 1.

The sand on the mountains is even thought by some pilgrims to be powerful in bringing about progress in people's businesses, occupations and finances. The testimony of a certain Akan woman who allegedly came to fetch some of the sand at Camp Three is worth noting. It is said that one day a certain woman came to the site as a pilgrim and among other things, fetched about a sack full of the sand at Camp Three. The woman claimed that her cocoa farm was under severe attack by what she referred to as 'some evil forces.' Therefore, she believed that the mere application of the sand as an insecticide on the cocoa farm would restore it by warding off the 'evil forces.' It is said that the woman came back to the site, after she had allegedly applied the sand on her farm, and testified about the miraculous deed or the spiritual potency of APM, including the sand she fetched. The woman claimed that the yield from the farm tremendously multiplied and the notorious insects which, hitherto, attacked the cocoa trees (but were not even responding to the application of chemicals or insecticides) immediately vanished from the farm.⁷⁰⁶

This testimony certainly substantiates Omenyo's observation that among the Akan, causality is understood in the context of the inseparability between the empirical and the meta-empirical.⁷⁰⁷ 'Besides purely organic causation ... no interpretation of causality that does not include elements like preordained destiny, punishment by angered ancestors and witchcraft can be fully acceptable. The phrase, 'it is not an ordinary occurrence' (*enyɛ kwa*) is invariably, the thought of the Akan in any life crises.'⁷⁰⁸ In a religiously pluralistic Ghana where a multiplicity of predicaments is perceived to be spiritually caused, many religious people do not hesitate having recourse to religious

⁷⁰⁶ Mr. Fordjour Boateng and Nana Kwame, Interview, 3 March 2012, APM.

⁷⁰⁷ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 30.

⁷⁰⁸ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, p. 30.

resources as some of the means of ameliorating their predicaments.⁷⁰⁹ If the religious symbols at the sacred sites are believed to be spiritually potent, then in a context such as Akan in Ghana, where suffering and other forms of predicaments are perceived to be spiritually related, I argue that those religious symbols would naturally be attractive to many people and pull them to the PMs. In this sense, the ecumenical interaction of the pilgrims is the result of the attractive and integrative functions of those religious symbols on the PMs. In other words, the spiritual orientation of pilgrims such as the Akan woman in the above narrative makes the role of religious symbols at sacred spaces very crucial. Pilgrims who have similar or related spiritual challenges and perceive of the sites' religious symbols to be spiritually potent in ameliorating their crises, often patronise the sites and participate in the prevailing religio-social activities which in turn foster ecumenism and social development.

Religion as 'a social institution'⁷¹⁰ seems to provide a relevant conceptual basis for the interplay of a diversity of religious pilgrims who are knit by their participation in defined religio-social activities at the sacred sites. The integrative and ecumenical networking function of the PMs⁷¹¹ is very crucial in the African context because it lends support to what Pobee refers to as *sensus communis*.⁷¹² In contradistinction to Descartes' '*cogito ergo sum*', that is 'I think, therefore I am,' the PMs, by their integrative function, promote the African principle of existence which tends to follow the Akan philosophy of

⁷⁰⁹ In Africa, solutions to problems are often sought for within the ambience of religion.

⁷¹⁰ Richard T. Schaefer and Robert P. Lamm, *Sociology* (5th Edition) (New York, United States of America: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1995), p. 396.

⁷¹¹ Nana Yaw Obogya II, the Chief of Abasua, informed me on 13 August 2011 at Abasua that his people's hospitable attitude, kindness and strong aversion to miscreant practices are partly due to Abasua Prayer Mountain which, among other things, attracts many pilgrims and other people to the community. My point of view is that in a context where people are believed to be hospitable, kind and have aversion to miscreant practices, social cohesion and solidarity emerge.

⁷¹² John S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1979), p. 49 (Emphasis original). C.f. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Reconciliation: An African Perspective' *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XIV (2004), p. 3.

'*cognatus ergo sum*,' that is, 'I am because I belong.'⁷¹³ In Africa, Asamoah-Gyadu substantiates Pobee's opinion that the individual can only say, 'I am because we are.' Because of this philosophical notion there is a complete repudiation of ethical egoism in Africa's theory of existence.⁷¹⁴

The PMs' role in facilitating ecumenical interaction among religious pilgrims is a vivid expression of John Donne's view of human's / African's social orientation: 'No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main.'⁷¹⁵ Thus the integrative function of the PMs through the fostering of ecumenical networking among religious pilgrims is believed to be theologically appropriate and relevant given the view of John and Agnes Sturt about the theological perspective of social interaction. According to them, 'Human beings are gregarious and do not like to be isolated from others. This desire to socialise is a direct consequence of the fact that God has created us in his image to live in community as he does: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We were not designed to live in isolation.'⁷¹⁶ The communal nature of God is believed to be one of the theological justifications for the ecumenical interactions among pilgrims from a diversity of religio-social and cultural backgrounds.

The crux of the discussion of the place and relevance of the PMs in promoting ecumenical networking and social development is that the sacred sites, in my opinion, have an integrative function of bringing various pilgrims together to engage in various forms of religio- social activities which in turn stimulate social cohesion and social solidarity. This integrative function of the PMs is also thought to be aptly theological in

⁷¹³ Pobee, *Toward an African Theology*, p. 49. C.f. Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Reconciliation', p. 3.

⁷¹⁴ Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Reconciliation', p. 3.

⁷¹⁵ Cited in John & Agnes Sturt, *Created to be Whole*, p. 162.

⁷¹⁶ John & Agnes Sturt, *Created to be Whole*, p.162. C.f. Samuel N. Boapeah, *Christian Approach to Development: A Guide for Practical Christian Ministry in Development* (Ghana: Challenge Enterprises of Ghana, n.d.), pp. 34-41-

orientation, given the view that the God whom the pilgrims seek to interact with, through various prayer rituals, is believed to be a communal God.

5.7. An Examination of the Economic Significance of Abasua Prayer Mountain and Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp

This section of the study focuses on the examination of some of the activities surrounding the PMs and how those activities enhance people's⁷¹⁷ economic wellbeing. How the activities enhance or stifle the economic wellbeing of pilgrims, traders, drivers and other people connected to the sites in one way or the other, appear to have eluded scholarly attention. The examination of how the activities enhance peoples' economic wellbeing is in the context of Moffitt's physical development paradigm. In this development model, Moffitt interprets Jesus' growth in stature in Luke 2:52 in the context of physical development and associates it with economic wellbeing or peoples' ability to meet their physical needs such as food, clothing, shelter, good health, good physical environment, etc.⁷¹⁸

The economic activities surrounding the PMs include buying and selling of goods and services, revenue mobilization through the tolls paid by pilgrims who patronise the PMs and fund-raising toward the development of infrastructural facilities at the sites. The economic activities contribute positively to the material wellbeing of the people, especially, those from Abasua and Nkawkaw communities as well as those from other adjoining communities. In addition to their identities as sacred sites, the PMs are also perceived to be hot spots for brisk and lucrative business for sellers of water, provisions, anointing oil, fruits, food items, herbal medicines, mobile phone accessories, Christian literature and for people who carry the luggage of pilgrims to and from the sites. Items sold on the PMs are relatively exorbitant as compared to the prevailing market prices outside the sacred sites. This is because the retail price of the items

⁷¹⁷ The people in this context include the pilgrims who patronise the PMs, the citizens of Abasua and Nkawkaw, luggage carriers to the PMs, sellers and the commercial drivers who ply the sacred sites.

⁷¹⁸ Moffitt, 'The Local Church and Development', p.235.

on the PMs often includes the cost price and other expenses such as transportation / cost of carrying the items to the sites.

At APM, the luggage carriers come from Abasua community and other neighbouring communities such as Adutwam, Awanya, Krowi, Atwea, Banko, Sekyere, Effiduasi, Nsuta, etc. to carry luggage of pilgrims or tourists to and from the site. At NMOPC on the other hand, the luggage carriers come from Nkawkaw and other adjoining communities such as Atta ne Atta, Osei Krom, Atibie, etc. The luggage carriers strategically gather themselves almost at the base of the mountains or places where they are most likely to meet pilgrims, especially during February and August, the peak seasons for pilgrimage to APM by the MCG and the PCG.

Upon the arrival of any vehicle with pilgrims, the luggage carriers rush to the vehicle with their baskets and head pans, to struggle for the luggage of the pilgrims. Usually, the size of the luggage determines how much the carriers charge. During the peak seasons for pilgrimage movements to the sites, some of the luggage carriers⁷¹⁹ said that they could have between three and ten times a day of luggage carriage to and from the sites. This enables some of them to mobilize income for their basic education or to start a trade such as fitting, masonry, carpentry, driving and dressmaking. The example below further explains the above point.

Yaw Mensah, a twenty-one (21) year old young man from Abasua community said that he started carrying luggage to and from the PM at age ten (10). Through the income he generated from this business activity, he fended for himself from primary four to Junior High School (JHS) form three - he bought his own school uniforms, fed himself and registered the Basic Education Certificate Examination in 2006. When he finished writing the examination, he went to learn driving at Asante Effiduasi at the cost of one hundred and fifty Ghana cedis

⁷¹⁹ These luggage carriers at APM include the following natives of Abasua: Mr. Yaw Menash (a driver and JHS graduate), Mr. Kwame Owusu (No schooling) and Mr. Abass (schooled up to class 4). At NMOPC, Pastor Richard Ansah told me that during the peak seasons for pilgrimage, luggage carriers sometimes make between three and eight times of luggage carriage to and from the Camp.

(GHC 150.00) which he paid from his accumulated income from luggage carriage.⁷²⁰

If Yaw Mensah started carrying luggage to the PM at age twenty-one (21), then it seems plausible to infer that the business is probably dominated by a group of people Esther L. Megill classifies as early adolescents (ages 12-14 or 15), middle adolescents (ages 14-15) and late adolescents (ages 16-18 or 20-21).⁷²¹ It implies that the luggage-carrying business activity is dominated by young people who are generally considered to be enthusiastic, adventurous and sometimes, delinquent in behaviour

The luggage-carrying business activities surrounding the PMs are lucrative means of livelihood as the example below also underscores about APM. Kwame Adu and Akosua Owusuaa, aged thirty-two and thirty years old respectively, are married couple with three children. They testify that the luggage-carrying business has been a blessing to them. They point out that they have been in this luggage-carrying business for over ten years. They maintain that in February and August when ‘business is good’, meaning when many pilgrims climb the mountain, they realize about four hundred Ghana cedis (GHC400.00) a month. When the influx of pilgrims reduces, they claim that they make about one hundred and fifty Ghana cedi (GHC150.00) a month. They further indicate that some of their friends who stay in the neighbouring communities such as Effiduase and Juaben, sometimes come to stay at Abasua to carry luggage during the busy months of February and August. They allegedly go with huge sums of money.⁷²²

I have already stated elsewhere in this work that the water that flows from NMOPC is perceived by pilgrims to be unimaginably potent in healing and deliverance.

⁷²⁰ Mr. Yaw Mensah, Interview, 12 August 2011, Abasua community. See Okyere, ‘Reconstructing Sacred Space’, p. 116.

⁷²¹ For details, see Esther L. Megill, *Education in the African Church* (Accra, Ghana: Safeway Printing Works, 1998), pp. 108-110.

⁷²² Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountain of God’s Presence*, p. 44.

During All-Night prayer on Wednesdays, most pilgrims come along with empty gallons to fetch the water and engage energetic young men and women (luggage carriers) to carry them to the base of the mountain at a fee. Thus the PM phenomenon in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity is also a form of natural economic / poverty reduction intervention that engages the youth who, out of frustration emanating from unemployment and disillusionment, might have engaged themselves in all sorts of miscreant or socially irresponsible practices in their communities. As a result of the young people's active engagement in the relatively lucrative luggage-carrying business prevailing at APM, Nana Obogya II, the Chief of Abasua, disclosed to me that the people in his community, especially the youth, eschew social vices such as pilfering or stealing. This attitude of the youth, according to the Chief, endears them to the admiration and pleasure of many pilgrims. Therefore pilgrims who come to spend several days on the mountain do not hesitate leaving their cars, vehicles and other property in the custody of the youth and other people in the community.⁷²³

In as much as the chief's defense of his people sounds credible, logical and thoughtful, it cannot be wholly sustained without some interrogation. If it is true that the young people have strong aversion to deviant practices as indicated by the chief, I am of the opinion that such dislike may also be attributed to some prevailing old taboos or restrictions in the community, which, to some extent, may have functioned for a long time to condition the behaviour of the citizens, thereby restraining them from indulging in miscreant practices. Peter K. Sarpong asserts that 'a taboo is something that must not be eaten or touched or seen or smelt or said.'⁷²⁴ He further maintains that it is a taboo to

⁷²³ Nana Yaw Obogya II, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community. See also Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', pp. 116-117.

⁷²⁴ Peter Sarpong, *Peoples Differ: An Approach to Inculturation in Evangelisation* (Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2002), p. 104.

have sex in the bush even with your own wife. It is also a taboo to insult the king.⁷²⁵ It is believed that taboos form a great part of traditional religion.⁷²⁶ If this is true, then it is no wonder that Abasua community, which was previously dominated by Traditional Akan Religion, has some old taboos.⁷²⁷

It was also observed that the influx of pilgrims to the PMs provide employment for many commercial drivers, especially those who convey pilgrims to and from the sites during peak seasons for pilgrimage. In February and August, the peak seasons for pilgrimage to APM by the MCG and the PCG, some drivers from the length and breadth of Ghana get temporary employment as they busily convey pilgrims to the site and back to their destinations. For example, some of the drivers who ply Abasua whom I interviewed at Asafo Market in Kumasi disclosed that apart from the employment opportunities which their plying Abasua and Kumasi offers them, some of them have been able to buy their own buses or vehicles, through the business of conveying pilgrims and other people to and from Abasua.⁷²⁸

The activities surrounding the PMs also contribute to the development of infrastructural facilities at the sacred sites and the communities in which the PMs are located. At Abasua community, it was discovered that the tolls collected from pilgrims and others who patronise the PM is one of the main sources of revenue for the construction of a new classroom block and procurement of light poles for the community's electrification project. It is said that the road linking Atwea and Abasua was constructed in the early 1990s by the government of Ghana because of the massive

⁷²⁵ Sarpong, *Peoples Differ*, p. 104.

⁷²⁶ Sarpong, *Peoples Differ*, p. 104.

⁷²⁷ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', p. 117.

⁷²⁸ The following were some of the drivers I interviewed at Asafo Market (Abasua station in Kumasi) on 13 August 2011: Appiah Kwasi (Urvan Bus driver), Kwasi Badu (Hyundai Grace driver), Kofi Abunua (207 Benz Bus driver) and Sampson Adu (207 Benz Bus driver).

influx of pilgrims to the Abasua Prayer Mountain.⁷²⁹ Mr. Boakye further discloses that prior to the construction of the road, vehicles and cars conveying pilgrims could not come to Abasua community, owing to the rugged and deplorable nature of the road. The drivers therefore only stopped at Atwea and the passengers / pilgrims walked from there to Abasua. The construction of the road, according to him, has not only facilitated the easy movement of vehicles to the place, but the stress, exhaustion and ordeal experience by the people who walked from Atwea to Abasua and Abasua to Atwea have been considerably reduced.⁷³⁰

Moreover, the PMs have various infrastructural facilities. These include chapels, separate accommodation facilities for male and female pilgrims, power plants for provision of light in the evening, lavatory facilities and stair case to facilitate the movement of pilgrims. Some of these facilities were donated by individual philanthropists and churches while others were provided through the funds generated from fund-raising activities which are normally integral part of almost all church services held. Labour force for the construction of almost all these projects was provided by the local people from Abasua, Nkawkaw and other neighboring communities.⁷³¹ Prior to the provision of these infrastructural facilities, pilgrimage to the sites were characterised by congestion. Many pilgrims also slept on the bare rocks at night owing to inadequate accommodation facilities. They were exposed to unfavourable weather conditions and other health related hazards. The provision of these facilities has considerably minimized the unbearable experiences of pilgrims as far as accommodation facilities and places of convenience are concerned. The wellbeing or welfare of pilgrims and others who patronise the PMs is thus enhanced. This observation corroborates Park's view of the

⁷²⁹ Mr. Kofi Boakye (a royal citizen of Abasua), Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community.

⁷³⁰ Okyere, 'Reconstructing Sacred Space', pp. 118-119.

⁷³¹ Mr. Kofi Boakye, Interview, 13 August 2011, Abasua community; Mr. Fordjour Boateng, Interview, 14 March, 2016 Evangelist Gyasi, Interview, 27 July, 2016, Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp.

role of pilgrimage in infrastructural development at sacred spaces. He posits that '[pilgrimage] can have a major effect on local economies, by encouraging the development of infrastructure such as shrines, shops selling devotional articles, and facilities for overnight accommodation [including dormitories and camp sites].'⁷³²

The upsurge of physical developments at sacred spaces and their contribution to human development have attracted the attention of some scholars of religion. Afe Adogame, for example, writes about the emergence of infrastructural facilities at the Redemption Camp (a.k.a Redemption City) believed to be the most important sacred space of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in Nigeria. Adogame maintains that:

The Camp now physically occupies over ten square kilometres of land acquired within two decades of its inauguration. The most expansive facility at the site is a large auditorium believed to host over half a million people at a single religious event. The geography of the Camp is diversified with physical structures hosting a conference centre, guesthouse and chalets, and a presidential villa set aside for government functionaries and politicians who visit the Camp. Also situated at the site are a maternity centre, an orphanage, a post office, a gas station, bookstores, supermarkets, bakery, and canteen. Other significant facilities include two banks, a secondary school, and a bible school. An estate consisting of residential buildings have come to characterise its topography. Interested members are allotted space to erect private residential homes. Thus the significance of the Redemption Camp lies not only in the religious and spiritual functions it serves for members and non-members alike. It also has come to represent an avenue where social, economic, cultural, ecological, and political functions meet at a crossroads.⁷³³

Dele Olowu also highlights RCCG's missions and development activities and thus reinforces Adogame's position on the place and relevance of sacred space in the development of infrastructural facilities. He highlights the upsurge of infrastructural facilities in Africa Mission (AM), an organisation within the RCCG responsible for the economic and social conditions of members and others to whom the church has been called to minister. There are six AM chapters undertaking various developmental

⁷³² Park, 'Geography and Religion', p. 22.

⁷³³ Afe Adogame, 'Contesting the Ambivalences of Modernity: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, North America', *Studies in World Christianity* 1 (2004), 9-10.

projects: in Canada, continental Europe, Ireland, Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the United States.⁷³⁴ The infrastructural and other developmental projects of Africa Missions Nigeria are noteworthy. Olowu writes:

Africa Missions Nigeria has undertaken several projects from its time of inception to date.... The construction of church buildings, classroom blocks, clinics / maternities, staff quarters and student dormitories has been a major focus of the mission. These projects constitute part of the infrastructural facilities needed by these communities in order to establish a sustainable development framework for them to thrive. Some of the projects in which AM Nigeria has been involved include the building of classroom blocks at the RCCG School of Missions in Ede in southwestern Nigeria; the erection of a hostel room, class room blocks and staff quarters for the first primary schools in Komla Hills in Northern Nigeria; ... Other projects range from the purchase of motorcycles, bicycles and vehicles as assistance to the missionaries or local communities at the various project sites, to the building of a maternity centre at Bakassi (Peninsular Cross River State), and the provision of boreholes and potable water in Maiduguri in the north of Nigeria. Many more projects are in the pipeline.⁷³⁵

Olowu and Adogame are trying to establish that the significance of sacred space such as RCCG in the creation of human-centred development projects is scarcely disputed.

The seeming inseparability between the activities surrounding sacred space or PMs and the emergence of human-centred development projects come into sharp focus in Evangelist Gyasi's poverty reduction intervention at NMOPC. It has already been indicated elsewhere in this work that after the training and graduation /ordination of ministers from the SMTC at the NMOPC, the new ministers are allegedly assisted by Evangelist Gyasi to establish their own churches or ministries. The Evangelist disclosed to me that the ministers whom he assists to establish their churches are also obliged to show appreciation and reciprocate his sacrifices. They demonstrate their appreciation and reciprocate his sacrifices by periodically contributing an amount of money to his fund-

⁷³⁴ Dele Olowu, 'Faith-Based Organisations and Development: An African Indigenous Organisation in Perspective' in Gerrie ter Haar (ed.), *Religion and Development: Ways of Transforming the World* (London, United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2011), p. 71.

⁷³⁵ Olowu, 'Faith-Based Organisations and Development', pp. 71-72.

raising programmes meant to ameliorate the suffering of the poor (that is, orphans, widows, school drop-outs, the unemployed, the sick, etc.) at Nkawkaw and other neighbouring communities in Ghana.

It is plausible to surmise that the evolution of sacred spaces correspondingly gives rise to socio-economic activities and infrastructural facilities which ultimately enhance the wellbeing of pilgrims and other people. In that sense, it is appropriate to infer that the economic activities surrounding the PMs help in one way or the other in Ghana's quest to attain goals one (1) and three (3) of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development / SDGs. Goal one of the SDGs aims to end poverty in all its forms by 2030, while goal three is to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all.⁷³⁶

The development orientation of activities surrounding the PMs are considered to be of immense theological significance because they appear to variously promote the dignity of pilgrims who patronise the PMs as well as the local people at the catchment areas of the PMs. The local people are believed to be economically empowered through their engagement in luggage carrying, sale of water, food items and other economic activities on the PMs. Those activities therefore serve as poverty reduction interventions by which the local people do not only have their dignity enhanced, but also become economically empowered to effectively contribute to their own development and that of their dependents.⁷³⁷ The infrastructural facilities at the sacred sites promote what Samuel N. Boapeah refers to as 'sustainable development' since those facilities are seen as development projects that meet the needs of the pilgrims and the local people.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁶ Gyesei, 'Creating a new world', p. 40.

⁷³⁷ Samuel N. Boapeah, *Christian Approach to Development: A Guide for Practical Christian Ministry in Development* (Accra, Ghana: Challenge Enterprises of Ghana, n.d.), p. 65.

⁷³⁸ Boapeah, *Christian Approach to Development*, p. 67.

Despite the seemingly impressive contributions of the PMs to the economic wellbeing of pilgrims, it was observed that the massive influx of pilgrims to the sites poses several challenges to the pilgrims and the local people of Abasua and Nkawkaw communities. An examination of some of the responses revealed that the activities surrounding the PMs sometimes stifle the people with respect to their social development. On the research field, I found out that even though the luggage-carrying business in the communities economically empowers the youth and other carriers in one way or the other, the same activity paradoxically appeared to stifle them by breeding juvenile delinquency in the communities. Almost all the youth I interviewed affirmed that the luggage-carrying business economically and socially empower them. By ‘social empowerment’, I mean the youths’ claim to have a strong aversion for health-impairing practices (such as smoking and drunkenness) and being in good relationship with themselves and their elderly people. The elderly people (some of whom were parents and guardians of some of the luggage-carriers), whom I interviewed,⁷³⁹ disclosed, among other things, that the luggage-carrying activity economically empowers the youth but socially stifles them. Owing to what the elderly people referred to as ‘the young people’s easy access to money through luggage-carrying and other forms of business activities’, the elderly people claimed that some of the youth were not disciplined at all. Unwholesome practices such as smoking, truancy, drunkenness, etc., were not only reported by the elderly respondents as prevalent among some of the youth, but I also observed those practices among some of them, especially the male luggage-carriers. The implication is that because the youth who engage in the luggage-carrying activity considered themselves to be financially independent and capable of managing their own

⁷³⁹ The elderly people interviewed at Abasua from 12-14 August 2016, include Elder Addo (Leader in the Church of God), Mr. Bismark Adu Gyamfi and Nana Akosua Achiaa (*ɔbaapanin* of Abasua); Nana Ofori Agyapong (Nsuta Dikro), Interview, 10 September, 2016, Nkawkaw; Nana Kwaku Kwarteng (Atwea Dikro), Interview, 29 March, 2017, Abasua.

affairs, some of them had become wayward, stubborn and incorrigible to their parents and guardians. In this sense, the significance of the PMs in enhancing people's economic wellbeing becomes paradoxical. For on the one hand, the economic activities surrounding the PMs promote the development of infrastructural facilities, create employment for people and hence, enhance their economic wellbeing. On the other hand, the economic activities which ultimately enhance people's wellbeing indirectly impair the relationship between parents or guardians and their children.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the place and relevance of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian development discourse. The discussion has essentially been anchored on three central questions. First, to what extent does the belief in the sacredness of PMs contribute to the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse in Ghana? Second, how does the appropriation of PMs as sacred spaces promote ecumenical / interdenominational in Ghana? Third, how do activities surrounding PMs in Ghana enhance pilgrims' economic wellbeing? In order to highlight some of the scholarly gaps that the responses to these questions attempt to fill, I have undertaken a cursory examination of antecedents of development in the thought of some early philosophers and some economic development ideologies governments have pursued in Ghana. Moreover, the chapter has explored the perceived indispensability of religion in contemporary Ghanaian development discourse. The justification for this is an attempt to provide of a wide-ranging empirical context and relevant link to the discussion of the influence of pilgrimage to PMs on Ghana's quest for Christian eco-theology, on ecumenical or interdenominational networking and on pilgrims' economic well-being. It is obvious that the three central questions undergirding the discussion generally border on some important aspects of religion and development in contemporary scholarly pursuits, but which are thought to have eluded academic gaze.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The summary, conclusion and recommendations on the study are presented in this chapter. The crux of the issues raised and discussed in the study is captured under the summary session. The conclusion session examines the sustainability of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity, in the light of some of the themes discussed in the research. The recommendations on the study focus on areas of this work that require further academic research.

6.2 Summary of the Research

That there is scarcely any dearth of scholarly discourse on PMs as sacred spaces in academic, religio-social and cultural contexts, has been accentuated in this study. Notwithstanding the burgeoning compendium of literature on PMs, scholarly discourse on them in contemporary African and Ghanaian Christianity seems limited only to their role in enhancing pilgrims' spirituality.

Using *Atwea Boɔ*, *Ɔboɔ Tabiri*, APM and NMOPC in Ghana as contextual examples, this study argues that scholarly focus on PMs as sacred spaces in global religious cosmology should not be limited only to the conventional thinking of them as 'sites of transcendent spiritual experiences, encounters with God or appearances by God.'⁷⁴⁰ Rather, there are other aspects of PMs considered to be of academic importance and of national policy implications, but which seem to have fallen out of scholars' grasp. These gaps include the perception that:

⁷⁴⁰ Ryken et al, 'Mountain', p. 573.

- Christians' pilgrimage to PMs in Ghana has not been examined in the context of its continuity in primal religion.
- Scholars have not paid enough attention to the historical narratives of the emergence PMs
- Scholars have not considered how Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity serves as a vehicle for promoting Christians' appropriation of PMs in Ghana.
- Pilgrimage to PMs by large numbers of Christians has implications for environmental sanitation in Ghana.
- The visitation by large numbers of Christian pilgrims around the year is considered to have implications for ecumenical / interdenominational networking in Ghana.
- Christians' pilgrimage to PMs has implications for the enhancement of the economic wellbeing of the communities in which those mountains are located.

Thus the study maintains that scholars' conventional understanding of PMs as sites mainly for prayer, worship and divine revelation needs rethinking. Therefore, the main research question that guides the study is: In what other ways do PMs as sacred spaces and their perceived continuity in Akan primal religion enhance the development of Ghanaian Christianity, apart from the conventional thinking of those sacred mountains as sites for prayer, worship and divine revelation?

In an attempt to respond to this central question, the following sub-questions were explored:

- How do sacred mountains in Akan primal religion constitute a sub-structure for PMs in Ghanaian Christianity?
- What are the historical narratives of the evolution of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity?

- How does Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity serve as a vehicle to promote pilgrimage to PMs?
- To what extent does the belief in the sacredness of PMs contribute to the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse / environmental sanitation in Ghana?
- How does the appropriation of PMs as sacred spaces promote ecumenical / interdenominational networking in Ghana?
- How do activities surrounding PMs in Ghana enhance people's economic wellbeing?

The research is theoretically anchored on Clifford Geertz's social-anthropological model. This model to the study of religion highlights the efforts of contemporary sociologists and anthropologists to find out the function of religion in the society. In his examination of ethos, worldviews and sacred symbols, Geertz discloses the interrelationship between religion and social phenomena.

Methodologically, the study is mainly a qualitative one. It generally attempts to revise the traditional notion of PMs as sacred sites mainly for the promotion of pilgrims' spirituality. Specifically, the research:

- Examines the continuity of Christians' ritual of pilgrimage to PMs in primal religious context, with special focus on pilgrimage to Atwea Boɔ and Ɔboɔ sacred mountains in Akan primal religiosity.
- Explores the historical narratives of the evolution of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity
- Investigates how Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity stimulates pilgrims' appropriation of PMs

- Examines the extent to which belief in the sacredness of PMs promotes the quest for Christian environmental sanitation consciousness or eco-theological discourse in Ghana
- Studies how PMs as sacred spaces enhance ecumenical / interdenominational networking in Ghana
- Explores how PMs in Ghana contribute to the economic wellbeing of people

A diverse approach including historical, theological and phenomenological methods were employed to guide the collection of relevant field data. I have employed Kenneth L. Pike's emic and etic viewpoints for the description of behaviour and examination / discussion of field data to supplement the multi-dimensional approach to the study. Both primary and secondary data sources have been used to conduct the study. On the research fields, I obtained primary data from sources such as participant observation, observation, structured interviews and unpublished works. Secondary data were collected from published books, scholarly journals in electronic data bases and other internet sources. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the four sacred mountains and the respondents for the study.

I have attempted to point out that Ghanaian Christians' appropriation of PMs as sacred spaces for prayer rituals seems rooted in primal religious consciousness. Sacred mountains in Akan primal religiosity such as *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* and *Atwea Boɔ* and their associated pilgrimage attractions and prayer rituals may be antecedents of the appropriation of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. It is discerned from the narratives that peoples' religious inclinations are inextricably linked to their diverse historical, political, social and cultural experiences. The diverse experiences of the Old Juaben rebels who migrated to found New Juaben state and the narrative of the founding

of Abasua and Atwea communities seem to indicate the basis of the peoples' ardent primal religious inclinations embodied in sacred mountains; *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* and *Atwea Boɔ*.

The Old Juaben peoples' primal religious consciousness expressed through their deities, *Atwere*, *Ateko*, *Abrampon* and *Boɔnson*, the narrative indicates, was a major catalyst to their encounter with and obedience to the mountain deity (*Ɔboɔ Tabiri*). Their encounter with *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* was also underpinned by their political experiences of defeat, humiliation, insecurity and social marginalization and their quest for new identity characterized by migration, new settlement, socio-political, economic and religious freedom and selfhood. Their encounter with *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* resulted in the birth of traditional religious culture which informs and defines the identity of the New Juaben citizens. The traditional religious culture includes the re-activation of primal religious services through the institution of annual pilgrimage rituals to the mountain deity and the establishment of *Ɔboɔ Tabiri* shrine to provide traditional priesthood services through the calling and empowerment of *Ɔkɔmfɔɔ* Nana Afua Tabiri.

The indigenous Atwea people's historical awareness of *Atwea boɔ* as the source of the initial settlers, the source of a dog bearing a live coal in its mouth and the source of a toad mysteriously caring a pot of water had several religious, historical and socio-cultural ramifications. First, it underscored their historical identity as a people originated from a mountain deity (that is, *ɔboɔ mma*).⁷⁴¹ Second, it defined their cultural identity as *aduana* people (that is the meaning a dog bearing a live coal in its mouth).⁷⁴² Third, it formed the basis of their belief in the mountain deity's influence and power to favourably respond to their existential concerns (that is, the interpretation of a toad

⁷⁴¹ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2017, Abasua community

⁷⁴² Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2017, Abasua community

carrying a pot of water).⁷⁴³ Fourth, it reinforced their allegiance to the mountain deity through religious pilgrimage rituals and other traditional religious practices.

It can be gleaned from the discussion that the quest for identity construction is one of the primary motivations underlying Akan primal religious practitioners' allegiance to mountain deities through various pilgrimage rituals and other traditional religious practices. On the basis of this thesis, I have argued that pilgrimage to sacred mountains in Akan primal religion is a precursor of Christians' religious pilgrimage to PMs. This is because Christians who embark on pilgrimage to PMs also seem to have identity construction as one of their essential motivations. Unpacking identity construction as one of the key impetuses for pilgrimage to sacred mountains in both Akan primal religion and Christianity, it is observed from the narratives that the adherents of both religious traditions appropriate sacred mountains for utilitarian⁷⁴⁴ reasons or for what Larbi refers to as 'salvation that relates to the existential here and now.'⁷⁴⁵ The adherents of both religions embark on pilgrimage to sacred mountains mainly to encounter the transcendental realms in order to experience salvation embodied in 'the enjoyment of life, vitality, vigour, and health; a life of happiness and felicity; the enjoyment of prosperity; that is, wealth, riches, and substance, including children; life of peace, tranquility; and life free from perturbation.'⁷⁴⁶ Herein lies the continuity of Christians' pilgrimage to PMs in Akan primal religion.

⁷⁴³ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2017, Abasua community.

⁷⁴⁴ Utilitarianism is the theory that the rightness of an act derives from the happiness or pleasure it produces as its consequences. Utilitarian philosophers include Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), Harriet Taylor (1807-1858) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). For details, see Moore and Bruder, *Philosophy*, pp. 286-287.

⁷⁴⁵ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p.420. See also 'New Juaben traditional leaders' annual pilgrimage to Oboɔ Tabiri...' in chapter two for the salvific or utilitarian orientation of pilgrimage to sacred mountains in Akan primal religious thought.

⁷⁴⁶ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p.420.

Even though identity construction in terms of the pursuit of total salvation appears to be a major impetus for pilgrimage to sacred mountains in the two religious traditions, there are some discontinuities which warrant thoughtful consideration. The utilitarian orientation of pilgrimage to sacred mountains in Akan primal religious worldview is single-faceted in the sense that it relates solely to the here and now. There is no concept of heaven tomorrow.⁷⁴⁷ The theological identity of Christian pilgrims as ‘strangers’ or ‘foreigners’ here on earth,⁷⁴⁸ on the other hand, suggests that the utilitarian orientation of Christians’ pilgrimage to PMs incorporates ‘this-worldliness’ and ‘other-worldliness’.

Moreover, different prayer rituals are performed in the two religious traditions as far as their attainment of pilgrimage goals are concerned. The New Juaben traditional leaders’ annual pilgrimage to *Obow Tabiri*, for instance, implies among others, that during pilgrimage to sacred mountains, the adherents of Akan primal religion employ traditional forms of supernatural succour which include the invocation of divinities and ancestors through libation, to access the desired blessings from the transcendental realms. Christian pilgrims on the other hand appear to be uncompromisingly hostile to these traditional religious ways of connecting to the transcendental realms. In Larbi’s words, ‘[t]hey look to the Christian God as the only and ultimate supernatural succour’,⁷⁴⁹ through several Christian religious rituals such as prayer, fasting, healing, deliverance, meditations, etc.

Moreover, using APM and NMOPC as case studies, I have tried to explore the historical narratives of the evolution of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity. The discourse is

⁷⁴⁷ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p.420.

⁷⁴⁸ See chapter five of this work.

⁷⁴⁹ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, p.421.

essentially an account of the construction of previously wild mountainous sites into sacred spaces for Christian prayer rituals.

It has been found out, for instance, that prior to its evolution as a sacred space for Christian prayer rituals, APM was called *Krɔbo boɔ* or *Krɔbo Kwasi Bediatuo*. Formerly, it was a powerful mountain deity whose overarching spiritual potency and influence attracted many clients including warriors and political leaders for ritual bathing and mystical insulation against potential attacks especially, from malevolent forces and gun shots.⁷⁵⁰ Again, as a mountain deity, it had a traditional priest by name Kwabena Adu who did not only function as the mouth piece of the mountain deity, but also as the medium through whom clients could reach the deity with their existential concerns.⁷⁵¹ Apart from these Akan traditional religious roles of the mountain, it was also the venue for some other social engagements or activities. It is said that between the year 1959 and 1965, the mountain was a tourist and merry-making centre for some Lebanese and Syrian traders who utilized the place annually. In the context of Geertz's social-anthropological model, the activities on the mountain almost simultaneously function to incorporate the sacred and the secular realms of existence.

It has also been found out that NMOPC is traditionally referred to as '*Ɔboɔ anim*', meaning 'in front of a rock or mountain'.⁷⁵² The narrative of the discovery of '*Ɔboɔ anim*' has explored, among others, the customary ownership of the site and its tripartite orientation as a cocoa farm, a village site and a non-denominational prayer ground, prior to its current status as a Christian pilgrimage site. From the narratives of the discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* and *Ɔboɔ anim* as sacred sites for Christian prayer rituals, it is plausible to point out that PMs as sacred spaces hardly evolve in a vacuum. They

⁷⁵⁰ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2017, Abasua Community.

⁷⁵¹ Nana Kwaku Kwarteng, Interview, 29 March 2017, Abasua Community.

⁷⁵² Nana Ofori Agyapong, Interview, 10 September, 2016, Nkawkaw.

gradually emerge and ultimately develop into Christian sacred sites through the interplay of a diversity of religio-cultural, socio-economic and political forces. Prior to the discovery of *Krɔbo boɔ* and *Ɔboɔ anim* as APM and NMOPC respectively, both sites played significant roles in the lives of people. They were therefore not on the periphery of their respective pluralistic contexts.

Moreover, it has been observed that the inception of *hierophanic* and *theophanic* events are significant markers of the sites as sacred spaces for Christian prayer rituals. The onset of *hierophanic* and *theophanic* events at places does not only result in the discovery of those sites as sacred spaces for Christian religious practices, but it also culminates in the reconstruction of the sites' identities; that is, from *Krɔbo boɔ* to APM and from *Ɔboɔ anim* to NMOPC.

Closely related to the evolution of PMs as sacred spaces is the influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' appropriation of PMs. It has been noted that Pentecostalism as a modern religious phenomenon has had a great influence on global Christianity, including Christians' pilgrimage to PMs. I have argued that Pentecostal experiences such as dreams, divine revelations, visions and prophecies do not only constitute the reasons for some pilgrims' appropriation of PMs, but they also present God as the driving force of their pilgrimage to PMs and the inspiration for their establishment of Pentecostal / Charismatic Churches, upon their return.

Furthermore, it could be deduced from the historical narratives of the evolution of PMs in chapter three of this study that, both APM and NMOPC were believed to be discovered by Pentecostal Christians. The Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey and Evangelist Kwadwo Gyasi who are reported to have discovered APM and NMOPC respectively claimed to have various Pentecostal experiences as part of the rituals culminating in the

discovery of the sites as sacred spaces. In the light of this, it is plausible to argue that Pentecostal Christianity influences Christian pilgrims' patronage of those sites.

Moreover, I have pointed out that one of the features of contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostalism is the institutionalisation of prayer centres. Since Pentecostalism has significantly influenced global Christianity including the historic mission denominations, my argument is that the institutionalisation of pilgrimage to PMs or prayer centres by historic mission denominations such as the MCG and the PCG, may be understood as a replication of a Pentecostal practice. In that sense, Pentecostalism is deemed to have positively influenced the phenomenon of institutionalised pilgrimage, especially, among the historic mission denominations.

Again, it has been observed that Pentecostal Christianity influences pilgrims' visit to PMs through the setting up of ministerial colleges on PMs. The SMTC at NMOPC, for instance, is a Pentecostal college which was established through the initiative of Pentecostal Christians. The instructors who are mainly Pentecostals also inculcate Pentecostal ideas into the students. The rigorous spiritual renewal programmes which form an integral part of the students' training implies that the students do not climb the mountain only as learners, but also as pilgrims who aspire to encounter the transcendental realms through various prayer rituals. The implication is that the students' appropriation of the PM is considered to have been largely motivated by Pentecostal Christianity.

Besides, I have endeavoured to explain holiness ethics as one of the essential marks of Pentecostalism. Regular insistence on holiness at the PMs and the dire need for pilgrims to adhere to it, in my view, are indicative of some of the ways in which Pentecostal Christianity positively influences Christian pilgrims at the PMs.

The study however shows that the prevalence on the PMs of various forms of imprecatory prayers, akin to some aspects of traditional Akan religious practices, and the theological debates surrounding those prayers, make it contentious for the full sustenance of the view that Pentecostalism promotes pilgrims' appropriation of PMs. I maintain that 'the seeming endless debate about the theological justification or otherwise of imprecatory prayers is ... a reflection of the centrality and sensitive nature of the concept in Christian theology. The position of each exponent sounds theologically valid as long as each one avoids relying on the proof-text approach to biblical hermeneutics.

Besides, the study has found out that PMs are significant players in contemporary Ghanaian development discourse. It has been said that development has been a major focus of many African countries including Ghana since independence. In its general terms, development points to release from that which holds a person or a group of people back. It indicates restoration and transformation which find expression in progress and well-being. In that sense, development underscores a sequence of positive and systematic changes that lead to the growth and progress of people and their community. Development thus culminates in some positive progress in the condition of people in a country. Its basic objective is, therefore, to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives.

As a major aspiration of many countries including Ghana, development has for a long time been pursued such that social, economic and political arrangements ought to be judged by the extent to which they promote human good or wellbeing. Ghana's development trajectory indicates that the country has had an interesting human development strategy from pre-independence period to the present time. Development has been pursued from socio-economic perspectives. Unfortunately, the socio-economic interventions which aimed at improving the standard of living of Ghanaians did not fully

realize the intended objectives. Whereas some Ghanaians must have massively benefitted from these interventions, paradoxically, such interventions plunged the majority of citizens in a quagmire of poverty and sapped their very existence.

This implies that it is inadequate to pursue development in only socio-economic terms, since it excludes other important components such as spiritual dimensions. This inadequacy has necessitated the need for a comprehensive development ideology which does not deal only with the socio-economic aspects of life, but also spiritual aspects as well. This suggests the need for a paradigmatic shift in models of development from their purely socio-economic orientations to a more humane model which advocates a holistic emphasis of development. The humane approach encapsulates the totality of man's existence: social, economic, political, cultural, spiritual, moral, etc. The constituents or elements of the humane approach underscore the resurgence of religion in contemporary development discourse.

Against this backdrop, I have examined the interface between religion and development, with special attention to the place and relevance of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian development discourse. I have concentrated on three thematic areas of the interface between PMs and development. The first is the extent to which pilgrims' belief in the sacredness of PMs contributes to the quest for environmental sanitation consciousness or Christian eco-theological discourse in Ghana. Christian eco-theological discourse and some of the modern growing awareness of ecological crisis that appears to justify the intervention of stakeholders (such as faith-based organizations) have also been briefly explored. My contention is that the prevalence of environmental sanitation consciousness at the PMs, owing largely to pilgrims' perception of their encounter with the transcendental realms, seems to be a novel theological paradigm to be employed to mitigate the escalating and developmental issue of environmental filthiness in Ghana.

In the light of this contention, it has been established that African Christian eco-theology is holistic and sustainable motivation for environmental sanitation. This is because it ideally emphasises the need for African / Ghanaian Christian pilgrims to integrate the views of environmental sanitation inherent in primal religious tradition and Christianity, and relevantly apply them in the larger Ghanaian context, as they would at designated sacred sites such as PMs. This fusion of two religious worldviews in fashioning out environmental sanitation programme in Ghana has liturgical, hermeneutical and policy implications for national cohesion, unity and development. In Ghana where majority of the population (about 69%) claims to profess Christianity, African Christian eco-theology appears to be a unifying hub of the various Christian denominations to conscientiously mitigate environmental sanitation challenges, to promote unity and solidarity among the different Christian denominations and to stimulate sustainable national development.

It has been underscored that in Ghana, African Christian eco-theology appears to be one of the indispensable tools for the attainment of goal six (6) of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, popularly referred to as the 'Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).' Goal six (6) of the seventeen (17) SDGs urges governments to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Secondly, the chapter has explored how the appropriation of PMs promotes ecumenical / interdenominational networking in Ghana. It has been observed that the sacred sites have an integrative function of bringing pilgrims from various backgrounds together to engage in various forms of religio-social activities which in turn stimulate social cohesion and social solidarity.

The integrative function of PMs is substantiated by the following statistics on gender and denominational patronage of Camp Three of APM. The study reveals that from the year 2002 to 2015, a grand total of three hundred and seventy nine thousand, one hundred and seventy four (379,174) pilgrims, comprising one hundred and seventy two thousand, six hundred and seventy two (172,672) males and two hundred and six thousand, five hundred and two (206,502) females patronised the site. The study further indicates that from the year 2004 to 2015, a grand total of two hundred and four thousand, eight hundred and sixty two (204,862) non-Methodist pilgrims, comprising ninety five thousand, four hundred and fifty six (95,456) males and one hundred and nine thousand, four hundred and six (109,406) females appropriated the site. Moreover, the research shows that from the year 2004 to 2015, a grand total of one hundred and thirty one thousand, nine hundred and thirty five (131,935) Methodist pilgrims, comprising fifty three thousand, four hundred and forty eight (53,448) males and seventy eight thousand, four hundred and eighty seven (78,487) females visited the Camp.

It could be inferred from these statistics that generally, the female pilgrims who patronise the site outnumber the males. Out of the grand total of 379,174 Methodist and non-Methodist pilgrims who visited the site from 2002 to 2015, 172,672 were males, whilst females totaled 206,502. Again, out of the grand total of 204,862 non-Methodist pilgrims who visited the site within the period under consideration, 95,456 were males, whilst 109,406 were females. Furthermore, out of the grand total of 131,935 Methodist pilgrims who patronised the site from 2002 to 2015, males totaled 53,448, whilst females totaled 78,487. The integrative function of the PMs is considered to be theological in perspective, since it reflects the notion of the perceived communal orientation of the Christian God whom the pilgrims seek to engage through various prayer rituals.

Thirdly, I have examined how the activities surrounding PMs in Ghana enhance pilgrims' and other people's economic wellbeing. It has been found out that the influx of pilgrims to PMs stimulates economic activities which also have ripple effects on the development of infrastructural facilities and enhancement of pilgrims' and other people's economic wellbeing. It is therefore reasonable to surmise that the emergence of sacred spaces and their attendant pilgrimage attractions correspondingly stimulate economic activities and the wellbeing of pilgrims and other people. The implication is that the economic activities surrounding the PMs help in one way or the other in Ghana's quest to attain goals one (1) and three (3) of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development / SDGs. Goal one of the SDGs aims to end poverty in all its forms by 2030. Goal three, on the other hand, is to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all.

Notwithstanding the laudable contributions of the PMs to the enhancement of the economic wellbeing of pilgrims and other people, the massive influx of pilgrims to the sites poses several challenges to the pilgrims and the local people who also patronise the sites.

6.3 Conclusion: The Sustainability of Prayer Mountains as Sacred Spaces in

Ghanaian Christianity

The fallouts from the study seem to present two diametrically opposed standpoints with respect to the sustainability of the PMs phenomenon and its attendant pilgrimage attraction in Ghanaian Christianity. Some of the findings appear to suggest that the phenomenon is sustainable, while other findings seem to suggest the opposite. These two divergent positions are examined below. I first consider the sustainability debate.

The PM phenomenon promises to have an enduring and sustainable future owing largely to its strong affinity with sacred mountains in Akan primal religion. The study

has revealed that pilgrimage to sacred mountains (such as Ɔboɔ Tabiri and Atwea Boɔ) in Akan primal religion is the substructure of Christians' pilgrimage to PMs (such as APM and NMOPC). Scholars maintain that contemporary religious traditions or phenomena that maintain strong affinity with the primal religion are known to have the propensity to endure, to remain focused and to become resistant to secularization pressures.⁷⁵³ Empirical evidence in Ghana that seems to attest to the future sustainability of the PM phenomenon is that PMs have been attracting many pilgrims from diverse Christian denominational persuasions, since their discovery as sacred spaces. Moreover, some churches in Ghana are currently developing additional mountainous prayer sites to augment the few already in existence. Examples of such churches are the MCG and the PCG.

Another development that appears to significantly contribute to the sustainability of the PM phenomenon, the study shows, is influence of Pentecostalism on the appropriation of PMs by pilgrims. The influence of Pentecostalism on global Christianity is scarcely disputed. Ghanaian Pentecostal scholars such as Omenyo, Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, Asamoah-Gyadu and Kingsley Larbi have argued that as far as the African situation is concerned, Pentecostalism offers the most palpable evidence of the current exponential growth taking place within African Christianity.⁷⁵⁴ In the light of the enduring and favourable influence of Pentecostalism on pilgrims' patronage of PMs, it is

⁷⁵³ Rev. Dr. Benhardt Quarshie, the Rector of Akrofi-Christaller Institute (ACI) of Theology, Mission and Culture at Akropong, Ghana, made this statement as part of his response to a question I asked, when the graduate students of the Department for the Study of Religions of the University of Ghana, Legon, visited the ACI on the 18th March, 2016, as part of the Experiential Learning component of the Department's PhD students. Rev. Dr. Quarshie attributed this statement to Andrew F. Walls, one of the World's doyen Missiologists. See Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, p. 21., Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movements in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), pp. 119-139.

⁷⁵⁴ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, pp. 301-306. See also Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, *The Rise of Charismatic Movements in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Accra, 1993); Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, pp. 233-248; Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Ghana: Blessed Publications, 2001), p. xii.

just logical to infer that the phenomenon of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity has a promising future. As a result of Pentecostal Christianity, the PMs are seen as ‘Spiritual Power Houses’ of contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. They are sites where some pilgrims claim to receive spiritual gifts or divine calling to start their own Christian Ministries (CMs) which are almost always Pentecostal / Charismatic churches.

The role of Pentecostalism in stimulating pilgrims’ patronage of PMs, the study reveals, are the establishment of ministerial training school on NMOPC, institutionalisation of pilgrimage and emphasis on holiness ethics. The curriculum of the ministerial training school, thorough spiritual preparations of the ministerial candidates prior to their graduation / ordination and the support the newly ordained ministers receive to start their churches, in my view, hint at efforts to sustain the PM phenomenon. As ‘Spiritual Power Houses’, PMs have the propensity to be sustainable because almost all Christian pilgrims recognise them as contexts for spiritual renewal, vitality and nourishment.

Furthermore, the quest for Christian eco-theological discourse in Ghana to mitigate her environmental filthiness, huge Christian pilgrims’ patronage of PM and the possibility of replicating the notion of pilgrims’ sanitation consciousness at sacred spaces, are some of the vivid pointers to the sustainability of the PM phenomenon in Ghanaian Christianity. The study shows that the fusion of the notions of environmental sanitation consciousness inherent in Akan primal religion and Christianity, would be a viable force to address the developmental issue of insanitary environmental conditions currently engulfing Ghana.

Besides, in a religiously pluralistic Ghana, a religious phenomenon (such as Christians’ pilgrimage to PMs) that has a strong integrative function appears to be overtly sustainable. This is partly because it breeds cross-cultural interactions, unity,

solidarity and cohesion, thus providing the necessary safety valves against potential religious, political or ethnic conflicts.

In addition, the PM phenomenon is sustainable owing to the economic well-being opportunities it offers pilgrims and other users of the sites. The study reveals that lucrative economic activities, including luggage carriage, buying and selling, etc., surrounding the PMs are seen as timely interventions that salvage some pilgrims and other users of the site from economic destitution.

In spite of the above arguments in favour of the sustainability of the PM phenomenon in Ghanaian Christianity, other scholarly views appear to suggest otherwise. Thus the second divergent position focuses on the non-sustainability debate.

The prevalence of some counter-productive practices associated with pilgrimage to the PMs seems to challenge the validity of the sustainability debate. For instance, the study reveals that the prevalence on the PMs of imprecatory prayer rituals akin to some African primal religious practices, appears to negate pilgrims' quest for holiness, understood as transformation of character, love of God and neighbor. The practice of imprecatory prayers seems to cast doubt about the perceived authentic Christian spiritual orientation of the sites.

Moreover, the study shows that the economic activities that promote the wellbeing of the youth who carry luggage at the sites, paradoxically impairs them. It has been observed in the study that owing to the young people's relative financial or economic independence as a result of their engagement in the economic activities surrounding the PMs, some of them are disrespectful to their parents. The miscreant behaviour of the youth is crucial in this context because it is partly attributed to pilgrimage which is ostensibly a productive religious activity. In this sense, pilgrimage to PMs becomes an enigma. The escalating delinquency of the youth would inevitably

arouse the displeasure of concerned stakeholders such as traditional, political and ecclesiastical authorities. Some of the possible outcomes of the intervention of these stakeholders may be de-institutionalisation and anathematization of organized pilgrimage to such sites.

Furthermore, owing to what I refer to in this study as geo-cultural homogeneity of sacred sites⁷⁵⁵, the development of other prayer centres by some churches in Ghana may ultimately reduce pilgrims' preference for and patronage of PMs as sacred sites. This implies that PMs functioning as centres of massive pilgrimage attractions may not be the case always.

The debate on the non-sustainability of the PM phenomenon corroborates Kwame Bediako's observation attests to the inevitable variations in the centres of Christian religious attraction:

It does not require exhaustive investigation to demonstrate that the history of Christian expansion from its origins is not marked by inexorable, uniform, and cumulative growth in every context of its manifestation. Through the successive shifts in its centre of gravity and relocation of its heartlands – from the Jewish to the Hellenistic world, to the Barbarian world of Northern and Western Europe, and to its present heartlands in the southern continents of South America, Asia and Africa – the evidence of Christian expansion shows that both accession and recession belong within Christian religious history. This itself qualifies as a unique feature of the Christian religion: among all major religions, the Christian religion presents the unusual characteristic of being comparatively marginal in the land of its birth. One could reasonably conclude that there is no such thing as a permanent centre of Christianity. Every centre is a potential periphery; while every periphery is a potential centre.⁷⁵⁶

Even though Bediako's observation is in respect of the historical geographical shifts characterising Christianity, it may in this context also allude to the possible variability of PM phenomenon in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. In that sense, it is

⁷⁵⁵ I define geo-cultural homogeneity of sacred sites as the attraction of sacred sites to religious pilgrims of diverse geographical and cultural persuasions who are indifferent to the popular perceptions of spiritual potency of the sites.

⁷⁵⁶ Kwame Bediako, 'Whose Religion is Christianity? Reflections on Opportunities and Challenges in Christian Theological Scholarship: The African Dimension', in Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross (eds.) *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008), pp. 107-117 (108).

plausible to contend that APM and NMOPC as important sacred sites as they are, may in future be on the periphery of Ghanaian Christian pilgrimage sites. However, it seems to me that Bediako's position is contentious, at least in Ghana, because of the argument in favour of the sustainability of PM phenomenon predicated on the phenomenon's strong affinity with primal religious tradition.

The attempt to rethink the conventional understanding of PMs and the debate on the sustainability of PMs appear to underscore the fluidity of the phenomenon in Ghanaian Christianity. In addition to the traditional notion of PMs as centres for the enhancement of pilgrims' spirituality, this study has endeavoured to unearth other dimensions perceived to be oblivious to scholars. These dimensions include the continuity and discontinuity of Christians' pilgrimage to PMs in Akan primal religious thought; the historical narratives of the emergence of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity and Pentecostalism as a religious phenomenon that may promote pilgrims' appropriation of PMs in Ghana. It has also been emphasised in the work that Christians' pilgrimage to PMs seems to have implications for environmental sanitation, ecumenical / interdenominational networking and economic wellbeing of the communities in which the PMs are located.

6.4 Recommendations

In spite of the few areas where PMs seem to stifle the development of the people or communities where the sacred mountains are located, the place and relevance of PMs in development discourse is, in my opinion, scarcely doubted. Therefore, churches should collaborate with corporate bodies, Non- governmental organisations (NGOs) and the government of Ghana to develop more PMs to stimulate more development in the country.

The following are some of the areas in the study which are recommended for further academic research:

- A detailed study of the initiatives of Ghanaian Christians in the development of PMs in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity⁷⁵⁷
- Founders of Prayer Mountain-related-Pentecostal Churches in Ghanaian Christianity: A narrative of their alleged encounters with Jesus Christ on the PMs and the culmination of such encounters in the establishment of their denominations.⁷⁵⁸
- A comparative study of gender patronage of PMs in Ghanaian Christianity⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁷ See chapter three of this work.

⁷⁵⁸ See chapter four of this work

⁷⁵⁹ See chapter five of this work

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Schedules

A. Interview schedule for traditional leaders of Abasua and Nkawkaw communities

1. Please what is your full name?
2. Please kindly tell me the history of this community.
3. Please tell me the nature of religion in the community before Christianity was introduced.
4. Please kindly tell me the history of this Prayer Mountain.
5. Please apart from its relevance as a prayer / pilgrimage site for Christians, in what other ways is the Prayer Mountain beneficial to this community?
6. Please are there any disadvantages of the Prayer Mountain to the development of this community? Please explain, if yes.

B. Interview schedule for pastors and lay people who patronise the APM and NMOPC as pilgrims

1. Please what is your full name?
2. Please are you a pastor or a lay pilgrim?
3. Please how did you hear about the Prayer Mountain?
4. Please why do you come to this Prayer Mountain?
5. Please have you personally experienced any miracle or divine revelation on this Prayer Mountain before? If yes, please tell me.
6. Please how does the sacredness of the Prayer Mountain promote:
 - a. ecumenical networking

- b. economic wellbeing of the communities in which the Prayer Mountains are located
 - c. pilgrims' awareness of environmental sanitation?
7. Please are there any disadvantages of the Prayer Mountain to the development of this community? Please explain, if yes.

C. Interview schedule for luggage-carriers at the Prayer Mountains

- 1. Please what is your full name?
- 2. Please how old are you?
- 3. Please what is your level of education?
- 4. Please what is your occupation?
- 5. Please in your opinion, how relevant is the Prayer Mountain to you or the youth in this community?
- 6. Please does the Prayer Mountain stifle you or this community in any way? If yes, please explain.

D. Interview schedule for drivers

- 1. Please what is your name?
- 2. Please what are some of the benefits you derive as a driver from Christians' use of the Prayer Mountains?
- 3. Please what are some of the disadvantages in your work as driver who plies the communities in which APM and NMOPC are located?

E. List of some of the ministerial students who were ordained / graduated by Salvation Ministerial College at NMOPC on 3rd September, 2016

- 1. Rev. Richard N. Ansah
- 2. Rev. Nicholas O. Sasu
- 3. Rev. Prince K. Antwi
- 4. Rev. Sampson Owusu
- 5. Rev. Opari Junior
- 6. Rev. David Antwi
- 7. Rev. Daniel Appiah

8. Rev. Esther Baffolo
9. Rev. Esther Woadie
10. Rev. Mary Mperah
11. Rev. Ernest Kwako Owusu
12. Rev. Gifty Ansah
13. Rev. Douglas Fosu Boateng
14. Rev. Owusua Diana
15. Rev. Darkoster Osei
16. Rev. victoria S. Agyapong

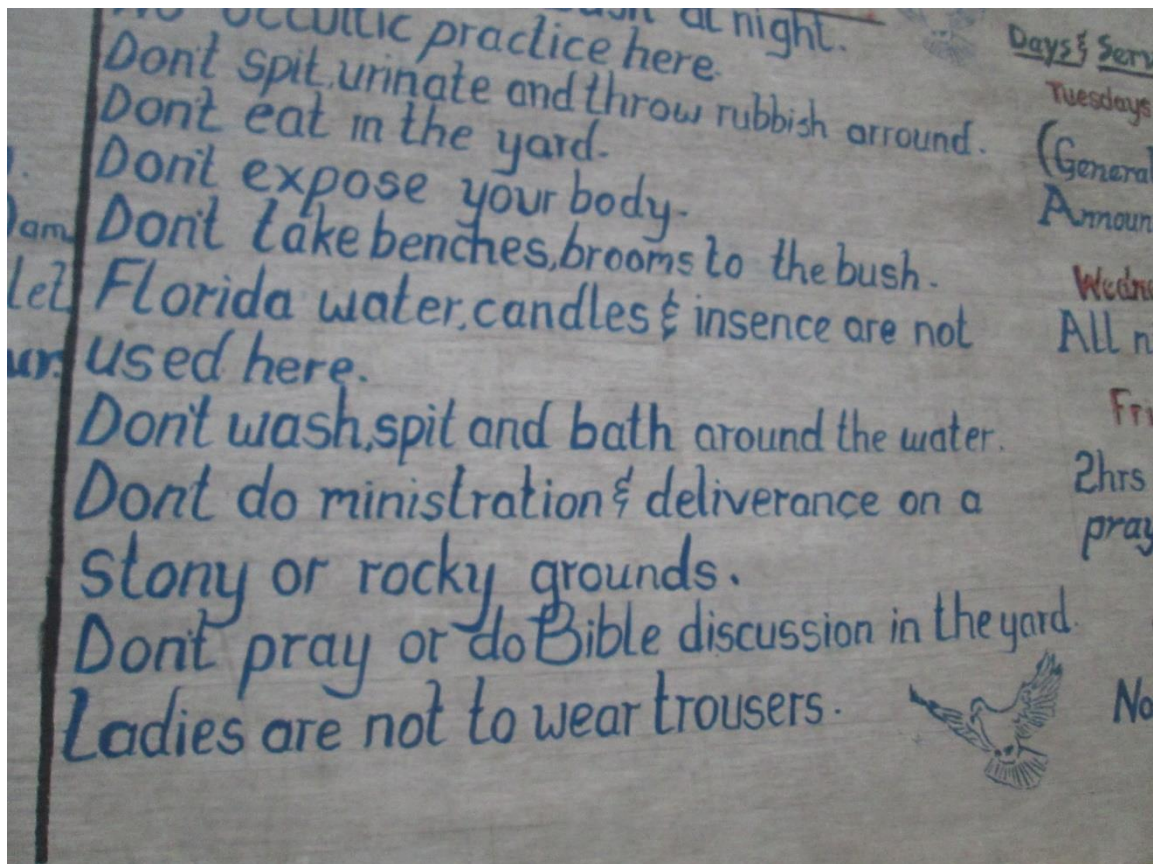
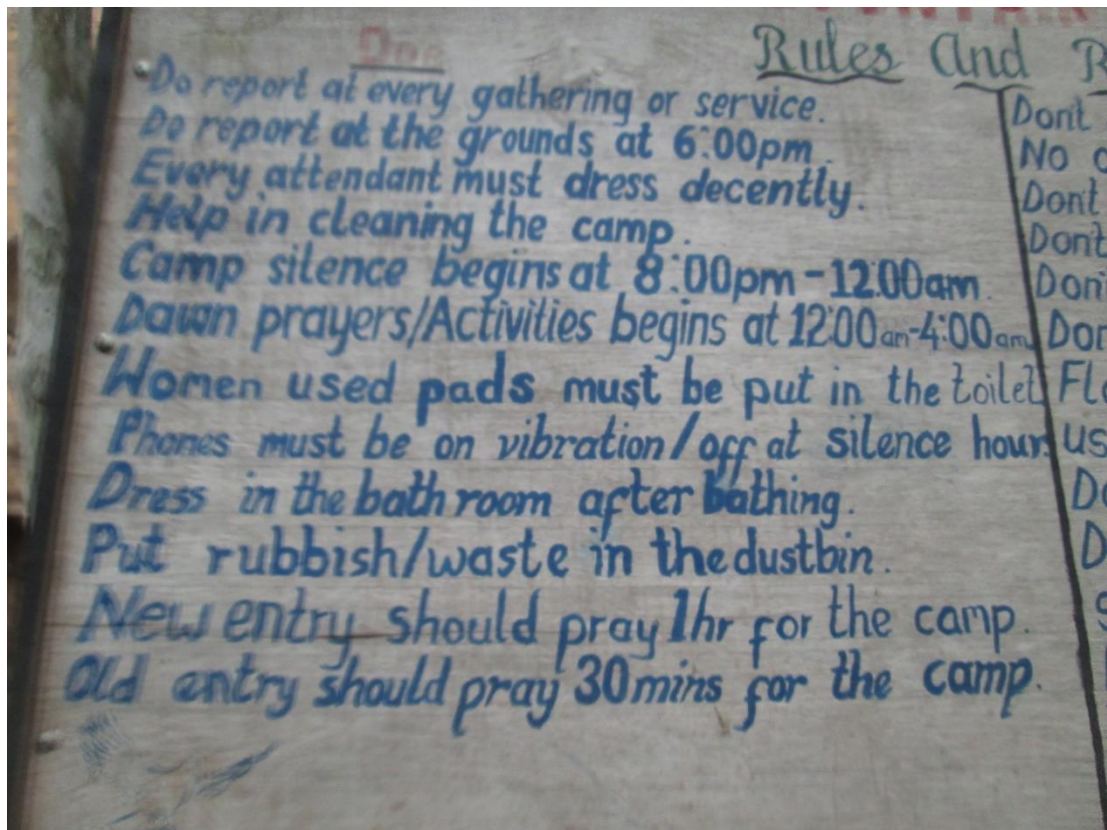
Appendix 2: Photographs



A picture of Nana Afua Tabiri in 'Kente cloth' under possession by the Mountain Deity ƆboƆ Tabiri.



A welcome signpost of Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp



Some rules and regulations at Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp



Evangelist Frank K. Gyasi (right) in a handshake with the researcher after an interview the Evangelist granted the researcher at Nkawkaw Mountain Olive Prayer Camp.



Areaview of Camp Three of Abasua Prayer Mountain



A bare rocky compound of Camp Three of Abasua Prayer Mountain. Pilgrims have placed their items such as water and anointing oil at where the Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey was allegedly engulfed in a clouds on his maiden visit to the Mountain.



A man carrying pilgrims' luggage to Abasua Prayer Mountain