

# Religion and Urban Life: Space and Patronage for Prophetic Ministry in Cities in Ghana

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## Abstract

This essay argues that prophetic ministry, which is a strand of Pentecostalism, has become popular and a preferred religious lifestyle in urban cities in Ghana. Religious urban lifestyle is characterized by centripetal and centrifugal effects. These ethos of cities in Ghana are systematically overshadowing the Traditional Historic Mission churches to become centrifugal while the newer churches (Charismatic) that are prophetic in nature are becoming centripetal. The changing trend has led to the review of the accolade: Mainline churches to Traditional Historic Mission churches because they ceased to command large patronage of their religious lifestyles and congregations. The essay seeks to explore the various reasons and phenomena that led to the change to the ‘prophetic model of city lifestyle’ raising the question as to whether the Prophetic churches can sustain their central position in the cities; and examining the comments of city dwellers (as captured in existing literatures) concerning the works of the Prophetic churches.

**Keywords:** City, Church, Charismatic, Prophetic Ministries, ‘Prophetic model of city lifestyle’

## Introduction: Definitions and Literature Review

Cities play an important role in the social, cultural, economic, political, and religious development of nations. Many Church denominations compete for visibility and control of religious lifestyle in cities. It resonates with religious

lifestyle in rural communities. In Traditional African Religion (ATR), villages, towns, and cities have a particular deity and religious intermediary that superintend activities within its jurisdiction. In addition to city deities, many clans have a deity or spirit for protection and favor for members of the clan. Hence, the religious lifestyle of people living in villages, towns, and clans were determined by the deity that oversees it. Their names depict their function or specialty. Non-performing deities and religious lifestyle were discarded and new deities and lifestyle adopted (Quarcoo 1987: 72-75). Cities may have more than one dominant religious lifestyle based on its needs (Mbiti 1975:47). It indicates that cities identify the role of religion in their daily activities. In other words, religion is central to the survival and success of cities in Africa. It may be due to the belief of the citizens in spiritual causality and solution to physical happenings. In *Akan*<sup>1</sup> cosmology and religion, the earth is believed to be a deity – *Asaseyaa*, therefore, religion is fundamental to any city and its inhabitants. Subsequently, religion is a human response to the divine in a particular location and condition (Assimeng 2010: 8-11). It means that one's geographical location and economic, political, social, educational change may precipitate a change in religious adherence and lifestyle.

It has been generally accepted that the world began to experience cities about 5,550 years ago with the emergence of the ancient Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley, Hindus Valley, and the Hoang-ho Valley as cities (Frey & Zimmer 1998: 14-35). Cities can be defined from the perspective of function and space. According to Wirth (2001: 159), 'a city is a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals'. Cities in Africa are generally large, dense, and composed of heterogeneous persons. The definition of Wirth is based on space for human settlement. 'Everything about the city then becomes "too much", "too crowded", "too much noise", "too much stress"' (Conn & Ortiz 2001: 159). These 'too much' phenomenon could serve a dual purpose: (i) an opportunity; and (ii) a nuisance. Since religion is about people, it is an opportunity for religious leaders to campaign for adherents. The city, MacKenzie (1963: 60) argued, is 'essentially religious in establishment and character, inconceivable without its dedication to specific gods and its sacred history of foundation and establishment'. It also serves as

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<sup>1</sup> The *Akan* people are a major ethnic group in Ghana with many linguistic divisions, which includes Asante, Akim, Akwapim, Fante etc. In Ghana, the *Akan* language is spoken by 42% of the population as their first language.

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nuisance for religious ascetism. During the period of fasting by the *wulɔmoi* (*Gã*<sup>2</sup> traditional priests, the singular form is *wulɔmɔ*), Accra city dwellers were ordered by the traditional authorities to minimize noise. Hence, there was a ban on drumming and noise making for one calendar month so that the priests could concentrate and communicate with the deities. This ban, until recently, generated confusion between city dwellers and the traditional authorities (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005: 106-116). In Ghana, cities are not a permanent settlement for persons who migrate into it. Many city dwellers come from either rural or other cities. They may go back to their initial dwellings when the situation in the city is not favorable to them (Conn & Ortiz 2001: 177). In their old age, many city dwellers return to their ‘home towns’ because they are not able to cope with the ‘too much’ phenomenon of city religious lifestyle. In other words, the city rejects them or they reject the city.

Functionally, a city can be defined on its economic elements and its strategic location as a transit point to serve other cities, towns, and villages. According to King Abdullah Economic City Forum (2015) ‘they represent increased potential for addressing pressing societal and economic issues, from meeting soaring demand for housing to boosting economic development and expanding and modernizing infrastructure’. An example is Accra Central Business District (ACBD), where many Ghanaians go to work because of the concentrated location of government offices, ministries, and agencies. In addition, traders in perishable goods (food stuffs such as tomatoes, onions, pepper, cabbage, cassava etc.) go to the ACBD to buy goods at wholesale prices to other parts of the Greater Accra Region and even to other parts of Ghana to sell. Dealers in imperishable goods such as shoes, clothing, etc. go to ACBD to buy wares at wholesale prices to various locations to sell for profit. This is so because many of the food stuffs from the rural areas and goods

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<sup>2</sup>The *Gã* people are an ethnic group in Ghana. Many of them occupy the capital of Ghana – Greater Accra. Their territory shares a border to the North with the Akuapem Hills, to the South by the Gulf of Guinea (sea), to the West by Awutu, and to the East by Adamgme. The term *Gã* is derived from Gaga, a black invading and dangerous military ants, however, the natives of *Gã* refer to themselves as *Loeiabii* (descendants of *Loei*), a dark brown invading ants. The *Gã* language is a tonal language. It belongs to the Kwa group of Niger-Congo languages spoken along the coast of West Africa, which also includes Akan, and Ewe languages.

imported from other countries were taken to ACBD for retailers to come and buy. The enormous presence of businesses and people who travel to the ACBD daily create a lot of challenges of filth and vehicular traffic for the managers of the city.

In many ways, market women became the newspaper's archetypes of irresponsibility; individuals who prioritized personal profit above urban order, national progress, and the greater good. Articles frequently portrayed them as self-centered rogues who haphazardly 'settle[d] down anywhere', including sites along 'the sides of narrow streets and under the roof of dilapidated buildings', near 'public dust-bin[s]', and adjacent to 'public house[s] of convenience', in order to sell their goods. Market women threatened the nation's landscape of order and hygienic well-being by clogging the colony's new roads, roundabouts, and pedestrian walkways, drawing business away from the city's new commercial buildings and shopping centers (such as the 'new Kingsway Store', which was praised as 'the most up-to-date departmental store in West Africa'), and subjecting their customers to 'filth' and disease. Some pieces went so far as to insist that conditions at Makola Market, the city's largest trading center, were so 'deplorable' that the site needed to be razed and filled with 'more up-to-date trading houses', structures congruent with the nation's future (Plageman 2010: 137-159).

However, the traders do not live in the ACBD. They converge to the city daily or weekly to do business and return to their place of abode. Cities are not statically constant, but dynamically evolving with the trend of time. They have pull, push, and overshadow effects. Cities 'are an aggregate of accumulated traits and habits, shaped by time and history, constantly subject to change and modification' (Conn & Ortiz 2001: 193). In the process of change and modifications, cities reject, adapt, and adopt. It demonstrates the power of the city to choose what happens within its boundaries based on the fortunes of city dwellers.

The concept of centripetal and centrifugal is a Newtonian mechanics that was first applied to the study of geographic sciences by Charles C. Colby in the 1930s. Since then, it has been used to describe 'new science of cities' in the universal socio-economic system (Krzysztofik 2016: 429-442). The term centripetal is a compound word of the Latin *centrum*, which means 'center', 'and *petere*, meaning "tend towards" or "aim at"'. It is the acceleration of a body to draw others into its folds (Virágos 1996: 15-34). When used in relation to a city, it refers to unifying people from all social strata for support to advance

the vision of the city, a concept of centralization of people. Its religious use connotes attracting others to subscribe and rally for one religious faith or denomination (Robinson 2007: 3-28). Conversely, the term centrifugal is derived from the Latin words *centrum*, meaning 'center' and *fugere*, which means 'to Flee'. It connotes decentralization when it is used in the context of a city; a force or attitude that divides a city (Krzysztofik 2016: 433). Religiously, it connotes the breaking apart or non-adherent of a denomination as a result of a centripetal attitude of other denominations, or internal conflicts among its adherents (Robinson 2007: 3-28). It also implies the overshadowing of denominational teachings.

Centripetally, cities and religious groups use their magnetic attitudes to draw other denominations, and other territories into its orbit to adapt or adopt its lifestyle. Conversely, they engage their centrifugal approach to push or overshadow other denominations' lifestyles to the peripheral or to other cities, towns, and villages. The centripetal and centrifugal essentials lay in the religious lifestyle of city dwellers (Conn & Ortiz 2001: 194).

In this study, I use Traditional Historic Mission churches to encompass churches that were brought to Ghana through missionary activities of a mother church in the Euro-Americas. In other words, they began as a derivative of a church from a foreign land. They include the Roman Catholic church, the Anglican church, the Presbyterian church of Ghana, Methodist church Ghana, Evangelical Presbyterian church of Ghana among others. Charismatic churches are Christian denominations started by indigenous Ghanaians that vividly came to public attention in the 1980s. Urbanization is used as the process of making a city. City refers to a fully-fledged settlement with appreciable levels of social amenities and infrastructure. A town is a state between a city and a village; a settlement that is gradually receiving attention to become a city; whilst a village or rural community is a settlement composed of few houses, limited economic activities, and generally lacks adequate social amenities and infrastructures.

The study proceeds within the framework that the city is a provision by God to minister grace to its inhabitants (Conn & Ortiz 2001: 193); and religious lifestyle in cities is influenced by the dominant denomination in the city from time to time. It provides an opportunity for the expansion of Christianity. Religious lifestyles in cities are not static. They evolve and adapt according to the prevailing issues of great concern in city life. Charismatic churches, who seem to dominate in the cities, have not demonstrated their

capacity to influence the city cogently; the city pressures are forcing them to adopt some city ethos that, in the long run will not maintain their dominance in the cities for long. Historical narrative method is adopted for the study. It is a qualitative approach, which involves library and archival research as well as analysis and interpretation of findings. My procedure is to briefly discuss the ethos of contemporary prophetic ministry; examine the dynamics of urban cities; explore the impact of the Traditional Historic Mission churches in cities in Ghana; space, patronage, and ‘prophetic model of city lifestyle’ will be discussed; comments of city dwellers concerning contemporary prophetic ministry will be examined; and then draw conclusions.

## **Characteristics of Contemporary Prophetic Ministries**

Contemporary prophetic ministry in Ghana is a neo-prophetic ministry of the prophetic ministry that emerged in 1914 led by Prophet William Wade Harris (Opoku 1990: 11-21). The prophetic ministry in Ghana today is the sixth phase of neo-prophetism that began to gain critical media attention and the scrutiny by Ghanaians in the 2000s (Aryeh 2017: 1-20). Based on the complaints by members of earlier neo-prophetic ministries of not being able to effectively and in an urgent manner provide solutions to existential issues, contemporary prophetic ministry promised a better and improved prophetic services (Aryeh 2017: 7-8). At the center of contemporary prophetic ministry is the ‘prophet’ figure, who is the founder and general overseer around which almost everything in the ministry revolves. However, spiritual giftedness does not necessarily connote spiritual maturity or being endowed with leadership skills (Aryeh 2018: 52). The ministry is often built around the charisma of the prophet. The ‘prophet’ has overwhelming control over the finances of the ministry; hence, they were referred to as ‘one man churches’.

The charisma of the prophet to ‘see’ into the spiritual realm to diagnose the causes of misfortunes and prescribe solutions is central to the definition of ‘prophet’. Hence, the prophet is a spiritual consultant who can reveal the secret arts of one’s enemies and prescribe solution to totter their plans and a person who can predict a desirable future for his/her patrons. ‘[They] could prophesy, cure the sick, raise the dead, make the blind see and the crippled walk, and cast out evil spirits .... Know what was happening in other places and to know what was in a person’s heart’ (Kustenbauder 2008a: 261-270). The concept, to ‘see’ into the spiritual realm at will and perform miracles reflects the African

traditional view of religion as having diagnostic elements. Adherents of Akan traditional religion has the notion of *ebisa* (literally, to inquire), the process where one goes to a seer or diviner to inquire of one's fortunes and insight into pressing issues. It is similar to the work of the *babalawo* (diviner) in Nigeria where people may visit for information concerning a deal they were engaged in (Holbraad 2005: 231-254; Kustenbauder 2008b: 273-279). And the work of the *n'anga* (diviner-healer) in Zimbabwe, 'most *n'anga* have the power and the ability to forth tell, fore tell, heal, exorcize demons and protect their adherent....S/He utters prophetic oracles that may even influence the general socio-political structures of a given community' (Shoko & Chiwara 2013: 217-230). In that regard, Shoko & Chiwara (2013: 217-230) further argue that the work of contemporary prophetic ministry for the Christian community is the equivalent of the work of traditional diviners and seers. The followers of contemporary prophets refer to them as 'man of God'; it depicts the proximity of YHWH to the 'prophet'. The concept of 'the man of God is a specially set aside individual who is essentially a manifestation of the divine hence protected by the divine and in instances where such divinity is not respected, the divine reserves the right to avenge' (Gunda & Machingura 2013: 15-27).

Contemporary prophetic ministry is the most criticize neo-prophetic group due to the sale of ritual objects to their clients and extravagant lifestyles at the detriment of poor members of the church.

The process of diagnosing a problem, prescription and administration of the prescription is usually called *sunsum akwankyere* [spiritual direction], and a fee is mostly charged. Where there are no direct charges, clients were made to buy relics of the prophet, blessed water, oil, handkerchief, portraits, salt, etc. at exorbitant prices ranging between GhC 50.00 to GhC 300.00 [\$10 to \$60 USD] based on the needs that the client tables. Sometimes composite liquid and powdered substances made from herbs and tree roots are being sold to clients to be used at specific places and times at night with some declarations/ incantations. The sale of these substances to clients by prophets for protection and miracles have been named *Nyame Ahyiraso* ('Blessed by God'), 'charming oil', *sunsumu boafɔɔ* ('spiritual helper'), 'do what I say', 'marry me by force', *dadeɛ bi twa dadeɛmu* (some metals are subject to other metals) etc. to describe its potency to particular challenges (Aryeh 2015: 196-221).

Recently, the rate for one to receive the services of a prophet has gone up to between GhC 100.00 and GhC 500.00 (approximately \$20 and 100 USD). Without paying money or buying relics or prophylactics of a prophet, it is diffi-

cult to receive the services of a prophet. Money has become the prerequisite and access code to see a prophet during counseling sessions, which is also referred to as consultation. Paying money before seeing a prophet is tantamount to remunerating the prophet for his/her gift (Gifford 2004: 94). Mangena & Mhizha (2013: 133-152) refer to contemporary prophets as white collar ‘prophets who are motivated by the desire to professionalize the word of God through monetizing it. In other words, white collar prophets put emphasis on money and prosperity as pillars of deliverance and salvation .... One white collar prophet in Zimbabwe sells cloths for \$ 3(USD) to his congregants who use them as healing and protective charms’. This practice resonates with medieval Catholicism that necessitated the protest of Martin Luther (Gonzalez 1985: 22).

Gradually, they are migrating from the extensive use of local Ghanaian languages to the use of English language during major activities of the church. Although it is a strategy to reach a wider populace, it is likely to result in the decline of the ‘prophetic model of city lifestyle’ (which I discussed below); because the local Ghanaian languages easily make space for spiritual causalities and spiritual aid to success better than a foreign language. For example, Prophet Elisha Salifu Amoako of Alive Chapel International and Prophet Isaac Anto of Conquerors Chapel now use English language to preach, despite the fact that they started with the use of *Akan* (a popular local Ghanaian language). It may be due to the centripetal and centrifugal nature of cities and its dwellers, to demonstrate that the ‘prophets’ belong to the elite class of religious intermediaries in the cities.

New religious movements go through three (3) stages of religious experience (Vance 2002: 91-112): (i) Charismatic phase; (ii) consolidated phase; and (iii) instigation for social change phase. The Prophetic churches are at the Charismatic phase in the process of graduating into the consolidated phase. They mainly concentrated on the well-being of city dwellers. There was no need for one to necessarily register as a member; they were not baptizing converts; there was no welfare scheme system for members; and the leaders preferred the charismatic title (Prophet) to the conventional ecclesiastical titles (Reverend, Bishop, Archbishop). However, these have changed. They now either use the charismatic title together with the ecclesiastical title such as ‘Reverend Prophet’ or drop the charismatic title in favour of ecclesiastical title. Prophet Elisha Salifu Amoako is now Bishop Elisha Salifu Amoako. In addition, the charisma they exhibited during their formative period in the cities is gradually waning.



## **Urban City Dynamics in Ghana**

David N. A. Kpobi (2011: 18) defines urbanization 'as the process of creating or developing cities. Urbanization is determined largely by the presence and concentration of people in a particular area and is therefore a response to, social, economic, political and demographic conditions'. Rural-urban migration is the main factor fuelling urbanization in Ghana (Ayertey 2002: 11). It is a situation where the work force in rural areas travels to cities in pursuit for employment, social amenities, education, and better social status. Rural-urban migration creates the challenges of unemployment, high cost of living, putting pressure on social amenities, the development of slum areas and conurbation for cities. Kpobi (2011: 17) asserted that: 'urbanization is God's way of teaching the world that 'all things are lawful but all things are not helpful' (1 Cor. 10:26). Urbanization can be formal or informal. Formal urbanization is a deliberate attempt by government or city and town authorities to modernize while informal urbanization depicts the quarantining of spatial area by citizens for activities for human survival without using conventional processes (Anyamba 2011: 58-60).

According to Nukunya (2003: 141), urbanization is viewed from three perspectives: (i) the size of the population living in a particular location; (ii) the process of growth of urban areas; and (iii) the principal features of an urban way of life. In Ghana, settlements of 5,000 inhabitants with basic social amenities such as post office, hospitals, shops, schools, banks etc. were considered as a city. It means that many Ghanaians are living in cities (Nukunya 2003: 142). However, it is significant to add that the criteria for cities in Ghana may not be the same in developed countries, and some cities in developed countries may be regarded as mega-cities in some parts of Africa (Conn & Ortiz 2001: 161), because conditions that mitigates social change are different.

City lifestyle is 'characterized by disunity and hostility, rampant individualism and selfishness' (Conn & Ortiz 2001: 158). City way of life is homogeneous such that the rich are found in one place and the poor are found in another place. Obviously, there is dichotomy between the rich and the poor. There are mansions and bungalows for the rich whilst the poor live in slums and ghettos. Conn and Ortiz (2001: 160) opine that, 'urbanism as a way of life was ultimately an acid that will eat away traditional rural values and undermine meaningful relationships and institutions'. City dwellers adopt religious

lifestyles that are motivated by socio-economic ambitions; they can decide to belong to a particular religious denomination in order to succeed economically without considering socio-cultural values regarding others.

There is congestion in many cities in Ghana, and this has led to ghettos and slum settlements. There are no taboos nor strict adherents to cultural values as existed in rural areas and so new cultures could be adopted (Kpobi 2011: 17-27). City dwellers could live any kind of lifestyle without notice or it would take some time before it become known, due to the individualistic lifestyle as opposed to the rural communal life.

The continuous urbanization of Ghanaian towns is likely to have proportionate increase in religious behaviors. The United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) as captioned in the work of Kpobi (2011: 20) pointed out that 'the challenge for the next few decades is learning to exploit the possibilities urbanization offers'. That notwithstanding, urbanization has some negative perceptions; crimes and social vices are prevalent and operate in an organized manner. In spite of all the negatives associated with urbanization, it offers outstanding opportunities for the Christian faith. Many urban dwellings have social amenities and infrastructures, which can be used to advance the gospel in cities and facilitate religion in cities in terms of communication, transportation, auditoria among others. Just as Paul took advantage of the *Pax Romana* to preach and spread the gospel across the Roman Empire. These amenities and infrastructures are scarce in the non-urban areas.

Alfred Kwasi Poku, general secretary of the Ghana Institute of Planners predicted that '... about 50% of the Ghanaian population will be living in urban areas by 2020 ...' (Cited in Kpobi 2011: 20). It implies that membership of churches in rural communities is likely to decline and churches in the urban areas will become centres for missionary activities. In addition, adherence to cultural beliefs may dwindle and new cultural beliefs emerged in the urban areas. The large number of urban dwellers is an essential element for religious adherence in urban cities. It suggests that religion in cities will be critical in understanding lifestyles in cities in Ghana. The religious group or denominations that control the city become very influential in determining religious urban way of life (2010 Population & Housing Census 2012:4).

## **The Traditional Historic Mission Churches in Cities in Ghana**

The Traditional Historic Mission churches started in cities in Ghana. Although

Christianity was reported in North Africa in the first century CE, there is no evidence to show that Christianity was brought to sub-Saharan Africa through the North. Christianity was first reported in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in January, 1482 by Portuguese traders and explorers (Obeng 1996: 95). It is significant to observe that although some of the Portuguese traders and explorers were Christians, the main religious activities to convert the indigenes of Elmina began in 1482 (Kpobi 2015: 21). However, Omenyo (2002: 14) argued that there is archeological evidence to show that Christianity was earlier brought to the Gold Coast by traders from the Mediterranean, but it did not survive.

Although the requirements for a city may defer from the missionary periods and today, adducing from the requirements for a town to become a city as posited by Nukunya above, it can be argued that Elmina was then a city. The Portuguese landed at Elmina due to the availability of commercial activities including slave trade, labor force, and the search for gold by other Europeans in the area (Omenyo 2002: 14; Debrunner 1967: 39-41; Wiltgen 1956: 11-25). In addition, the ancient Ghana Empire, which included Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal that collapsed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century had brought developments to the coastal towns of Ghana (Omenyo 2002: 14). This is not to argue that the Roman Catholic Mission did not bring any development to the people of Elmina, they built schools and trade centres, which benefited the indigenes greatly. The Roman Catholic Mission settled in the city of Elmina before making attempts to convert the people in the rural communities (Foli 2006: 29). Their presence in the city of Elmina was to also serve the spiritual needs and well-being of the traders of gold and their leaders (Omenyo 2002: 40).

The Roman Catholic Missionaries laid a good foundation for Christianity in cities in Ghana (Omenyo 2002: 48). Thereafter, the English, Dutch, French, Danes, Swedes and Germans missionaries settled in cities along the coast of Ghana (Omenyo 2002: 48). The Church of England's Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) had congregations in the cities of Accra, Cape Coast, Axim, and Kumasi. Their congregation in Kumasi, a city in the Ashanti Region was through the missionary efforts of Prophet John Swatson, an indigenous Ghanaian. The Basel Evangelical Mission Society had congregations in the cities of Kumasi, and Akropong Akwapim. 'Accra and Kumasi, at least, were already important population centres before effective colonial rule' (Nukunya 2003: 141). Debrunner (1967: 125-131) surveyed economic, social, and commercial activities in Akropong and showed that it

was a city. It is obvious that the Traditional Historic Mission churches had congregations in cities. The city served as their base to move to the rural communities of Ghana. Their presence and dominance in the cities along the coast of Ghana may be due to the sea way being the major travelling root to West Africa at the time. The climate of some coastal cities of Ghana may closely be related to some seasons of Europe. Many of the Christian groups or denominations serve as chaplains for European Christians in the cities and forts rather than missionaries.

The Euro-American Missionaries began to give autonomy and leadership of the churches to indigenous Ghanaians from the 1923s (Omenyo 2002: 63). The restructuring and renewal of the liturgy by the Traditional Historic Mission churches to incorporate African religious worldviews made them very popular and become dominant in the cities. Their agenda to incorporate African religious worldviews in Christianity coupled with the large number of members in the cities won them the accolade 'Mainline churches' used by Omenyo (2002:63-67), Bediako (2009: 95-115), Atiemo (1993) and others to describe them. Further, due to their established order and structure of administration, some refer to them as 'orthodox', 'mainstream churches' or 'established' churches (Foli 2006: 65). They have their headquarters in the city of Accra and regional headquarters at various regional capitals, which are cities. The Traditional Historic Mission churches built schools, trading centres for palm kernels, health centres, manufacturing companies, skills training centres, seminaries, and agri-businesses, which were in need in the cities (Debrunner 1967: 120-152).

In fact, the Traditional Historic Mission churches quest for independence from the Euro-American churches and their renewal policies fuelled the quest for political independence in Ghana (Larbi 2001: 55). Various religious and denominational censuses up until 2010 placed the Traditional Historic Mission churches as the largest group of Christians in cities and Ghana at large (Foli 2006: 196-202; Omenyo 2002: 35). Since their leaders were well trained, they were ably placed to comment on issues concerning religion in the city better than others. They influenced religious lifestyle in cities in Ghana. Religious lifestyle was characterized by an intellectual and philosophical 'basis for understanding the universe and developing the lot of human society' (Omenyo 2002: 43). It is based on the enlightenment of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries characterize by empiricism and rationalism of European culture. The intellectual and philosophical framework did not accommo-

date the African Traditional Religious view of the supernatural.

Religion in rural communities acknowledged the complementary role of the supernatural for successful living. Any issue that defies sociological and scientific prescriptions was considered for spiritual solution. The continued migration of rural dwellers into cities in Ghana precipitated a change of religious lifestyle of city dwellers. Population increase and spatial expansion have had an effect on religious lifestyle in cities in West Africa (Assimeng 2010: 74-76). It breeds new religious ideas in the cities to cope with economic and sociological issues. The newly arrived city dwellers come with the Africa idea that religion is at the root of human life; and one ought to travel, re-settle without neglecting his/her erstwhile religious ideas but could add to it. Mbiti (1975:10) stated that 'religion is found in all areas of human life. It has dominated the thinking of African peoples to such an extent that it has shaped their cultures, their social life, their political organization and economic activities'. Meanwhile, the Traditional Historic Mission churches dichotomize between natural and supernatural, physical and spiritual. This phenomenon gradually overshadowed the Traditional Historic Mission churches religious lifestyle of city dwellers to the peripheral (minority, marginal) and centripetally accepted a new form of religious lifestyle in cities in Ghana.

The inability of the Traditional Historic Mission churches to effectively respond to the demand of city dwellers for a religious lifestyle provided the platform for the emergence and receipt of new religious lifestyle by city dwellers. It is significant to state that the definition of spirituality vary from one religious denomination to the other. The Traditional Historic Mission churches consider the sacraments, and prayer as spiritual. But the Prophetic churches believe that every activity in the Church including the sacraments, prayer, and fasting must lead to a revelation (prophecy) concerning the solutions their members seek.

### **Space, Patronage, and 'Prophetic Model of City Lifestyle' in Ghana**

No single Christian denomination can claim ownership of the city perpetually. It evolves, based on the characteristic of cities and its dwellers at a specific period and what a denomination claims to offer. Religious lifestyles in cities in Ghana are bespoke according to the Prophetic model. The African Independent churches (AICs) also refer to as *Sunsum sorè* (spiritual churches) whose liturgy

and beliefs were similar to the Aladura churches in Nigeria, and the Zionist churches in South Africa began to experience the religious centripetal magnet of the cities and its dwellers since the 1920s. Vividly, they were the pioneers of prophetic ministry in Ghana (Aryeh 2017: 1-20). The AICs were initially dominant in the rural communities in Ghana and their members were mostly elderly women who trade in food stuffs (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005: 18-23). It was reported that '52 villages heeded the message' (Omenyo 2002: 68) of William Wade Harris, a key founder of the AICs in Ghana. Their presence in the villages may be due to 'the low level of education by their leaders or the desire to eradicate idol worship, which was more rampant in the rural areas' (Aryeh 2017: 4). According to Foli (2006: 47), 'Harris had immense successes for an estimated 100,000 people were baptized and whole villages and tribes did away with all of the old signs religion'. Baëta (1962: 6-7) observed that many of the leaders of the AICs could not read in English language. They could only read the Bible in local Ghanaian languages.

Consequently, the religious lifestyles of people in villages were determined by the ethos of the AICs' form of worship and belief. A prophet can be consulted just like medical doctors, and consultants in various fields of human endeavors for spiritual direction to existentially challenging issues that defies the solutions of other consultants. Therefore, to be successful in the city is dependent on one's relationship with a prophet. This phenomenon was engineered by economic pressures in the city and the lack of adequate social intervention programmes by successive governments.

Hence, a village religious lifestyle found expression in cities because of its emphasis on the Spirit. For the AICs, spirituality is not doctrinal formulation but an experiential exercise in daily activities that causes desired changes (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005: 22). It agrees with the components of salvation in African Traditional Religion (ATR). Salvation is not limited to life after death but also the provision of daily existential needs, which religious lifestyle must mediate (Mbiti 1975: 1-2). Apparently, the presence of the AICs in cities in Ghana affected the religious lifestyle of city dwellers. City dwellers have alternative Christian denominations, which emphasizes the role of the Spirit in successful living in the city. Although they converted many to the Christian faith in the villages, in the cities, they were primarily consultants for solutions for city problems. It is as a result of a city lifestyle that religious groups or denominations are forced to adapt and respond to the pressure of city dwellers' religious needs. Members of the Traditional Historic Mission

churches were often found participating in the services of the AICs, ‘Shopping for health’ (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005: 67) and spiritual solution to economic and social issues. Religious lifestyle of city dwellers became driven by one’s need rather than loyalty. It also generated multiple denominational allegiances. This religious lifestyle depicts the African polytheistic religious character where deities were consulted based on their specialties (Sarpong 1996: 1-5; Mbiti 1975: 70-81).

In the 1990s, there was a re-emergence of Prophetic churches in cities in Ghana. ‘Many Christian programmes and statements were linked with the word “prophetic” or “prophet” in order to attract and maintain members in the church. The word “prophetic” means that members would receive personal prophecies’ (Aryeh 2017: 6). It is a form of religious lifestyle in cities in Ghana that Paul Gifford partly referred to as *Ghana’s New Christianity* (2004: 90-112). Some of the leaders began ministry in the villages but were later welcomed in the cities while others left the Traditional Historic Mission churches to start their own Prophetic churches. Prophet Bernard Opoku Nsiah began ministry in Wamsambre, then a village in the Asante Region between 1979 and 1987 (Aryeh 2017: 12). Prophet Atsu Manasseh and Isaac Anto left the Traditional Historic Mission churches to start their own Prophetic churches (Aryeh 2015: 93). The re-emergence of the Prophetic churches in cities in Ghana was as the result of the deep rootedness of the AICs in African religious-cultural traditions (Omenyo & Atiemo 2006: 55-68), which many city dwellers were not comfortable with.

Gifford (1994: 23) observed that the Charismatic churches and the Newer Charismatic churches (Prophetic churches) have eclipsed the Traditional Historic Mission churches in the cities. They managed to present themselves on giant bill boards and in the media as ‘Prophets’, who have solutions for city dwellers’ economic, social, marriage, educational, and traveling abroad challenges. They influenced city dwellers with the notion of spiritual causality to anything that happens in one’s life. Religious lifestyle of city dwellers is mainly hinged on a third party as the cause of misery, disappointments, and failure (Omenyo & Atiemo 2006: 55-63). It placed more emphasis on individualistic lifestyle in cities (Kpobi 2011: 20) and the neglect of the extended family relatives in the villages. Sin and human limitations are hardly ever mentioned as the cause of one’s predicaments (Gifford 1994: 110).

As put forth in the work of Omenyo and Atiemo: ‘Claiming Religious Space: The Case of Neo-Prophetism in Ghana’, the Prophetic churches and

their Pentecostal and Charismatic churches began to take the centre stage of religious lifestyle and activities in cities in Ghana (Omenyo & Atiemo 2006). They set the agenda for religious lifestyle and theological discourse coupled with their mega church buildings where on Sundays, some of them had three to four services. In that regard, it can be argued that they have become ‘mainline’, ‘mainstream’ religious denomination in cities in Ghana. The Prophetic churches have grown into prominence, which deserve to be studied on its merits (Omenyo & Atiemo 2006: 68). In the 2010 Population and Housing Census, it was reported that the Pentecostal and Charismatic and Prophetic churches have large number of adherents in cities in seven (7) Regions that were fast becoming urbanized as indicated in figure 1 above. They had 701,540 in the Western Region; 655,298 in the Central Region; 1,786,519 in the Greater Accra Region; 563,560 in the Volta Region; 955,336 in the Eastern Region; 1,440,589 in the Ashanti Region; and 566,878 Brong Ahafo Region. At the national level, they are the largest Christian denomination with 28.3% adherents (2010 Population & Housing Census 2012: 40). Hence, religious lifestyles in urban cities in Ghana are tailored towards the beliefs and practices of the Prophetic churches and their predecessors, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches.

Religious lifestyle in cities in Ghana has become what I call ‘prophetic model city lifestyle’. It is a lifestyle that the individual believes that his/her destiny had been established by God; and that he/she needs a prophet to reveal it to him/her. When the devil, who manifests through evil family relatives want to totter it, one needs a prophet who can ‘see’ into the spirit realm to resist it and bring restoration. The ‘prophet’ in the city is the one who interprets the challenges of the people like how he/she interprets the Bible (Kpobi 2011: 24). The ‘prophetic model city lifestyle’ is a lifestyle that has close proximity to a prophet/ prophetess (a man/ woman of God), who can diagnose present predicaments to offer solution(s), and for foresight into future happenings (Aryeh 2015: 214-215). Prophecy then becomes the order of religious lifestyle of city dwellers. It is the quest for knowledge concerning what happened, what is happening, and what must happen in every aspect of one’s life.

The ‘prophetic model of city lifestyle’ does not stress on an orthodox observation of biblical precepts that do not provide immediate economic and social solutions. Prayer is usually accompanied with ritual observations of using anointing oil, blessed water, powdered substances etc. to facilitate quick answer to prayer. It is the concept of taking what one wants by force and



immediately. However, practitioners of the ‘prophetic model of city lifestyle’ are not satisfied with the systems and modalities of the Prophetic churches concerning consultation of a prophet, their moral life styles, and biblical interpretations. This may keep the Prophetic churches at the charismatic phase for a long time. The lack of formal theological education by its leaders will hinder the consolidation phase and deny them moving to the instigation for social change phase.

### **Comments of City Dwellers Concerning Contemporary Prophetic Ministry**

Although city dwellers have welcome Prophetic ministry, it is not without complains. Politicians, religious leaders, and ordinary citizens have air their opinions. Their comments border on the claims of the prophets concerning miracles, sale of ritual objects, and their moral lifestyles. The former President, Jerry John Rawlings described Prophets Daniel Obinim (popularly known as angel), and Nicholas Osei (also known as Kumchacha) as false prophet. And that media houses must not give them airtime to speak because the miracles they claim to have performed in the name of Jesus is not true. Rawlings further explained that using the name of God falsely is corruption that must not be condoned by giving airtime to them (*Daily Guide* 12 November 2014: 2). There is no empirical evidence to show that media houses have heeded to the advice of Rawlings. However, many contemporary prophets began to own media networks to broadcast their programmes. Therefore there is no need for them to go and buy airtime at other media houses where they may be rejected. Examples include Prophet Daniel Obinim, who owns OB Television, Ice Television, and Soul Television; Rev. Obofour owns Sweet Television, Kiss Television, and Cash Television; Rev. Christian Kwabena Andrews owns Fire Television; Prophet Mafred Acheampong owns Rock Television; Prophet Gabriel Akwasi Sarpong owns Cross Television.

Citizens often complain about the level of noise that the Prophetic churches make during worship services. They do not observe the city bye laws of sound levels during the day to be 58 decibels maximum, and 48 decibels maximum during the night. Hence, city authorities were compelled to enforce the bye laws by giving them ultimatum to install sound proof devices in the place of worship (*The Ghanaian Times* 10 April 2014: 1 and 4). The city authorities could not force them to reduce the noise levels to comply with what is

contained in the bye laws but to advise them to install sound proof devices. This is an indication of the acceptance of Prophetic churches in the city, although some do not like their noisy worship services.

The financial demands by prophets and the sale of ritual objects for flamboyant lifestyle at the detriment of the poor adherents is a worrying issue for city dwellers. The Mirror newspaper (26 June 1990: 2) stated that ‘the recent talk of the nation is that churches are now becoming business entities since some pastors are seen extorting so much money from the congregation and riding in the most expensive vehicles which can build sizeable structures for them to use as their church buildings’. It is not strange to find a prophet, who rides in luxurious car while he/she uses a classroom or uncompleted residential building for worship service. This including non-maintenance of school properties force city authorities to sack some of them from the use of classrooms (*The Ghanaian Times* 21 Jan 2015: 4). In view of the exorbitant sale of ritual objects to adherents, K. B. Omane-Antwi, vice rector of Pentecost University College and Emmanuel Asante, former president of Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon and past presiding bishop of the Methodist church Ghana argue that government must consider taking tax from the sale of ritual objects by prophets (*The Ghanaian Times* 26 January 2015: 4; *The Ghanaian Times* 9 February 2015: 15).

The moral lifestyles and failed prophecies of contemporary prophets have also been a concern to city dwellers.

In Ghana, it is not uncommon to hear people point accusing fingers at the abuses prevalent in prophetic circles. They point to instances of failed prophecies and to certain self-styled prophets who engage in some abuses such as sleeping with women who come to them for assistance. They point to certain unbiblical practices among some so-called prophets and the use of occult powers for the purposes of performing miracles (*Daily Guide* 13 November 2014: 4).

In a research study in 2013, in the Ga South Municipal Area, out of 297 total respondents in which the Prophetic ministry constitutes the majority of respondents make up 46.12% or 137 persons; 68.18% of respondent who received prophecies said it did not come to pass. Meanwhile they pay money for the prophecies (Aryeh 2015: 210-217). These phenomena concerning contemporary prophetic ministry clearly show that although it is the norm of religious lifestyle in cities in Ghana, it is without challenges. These financial demands were some of the issues that influenced the protest of Martin Luther

against the medieval Catholicism (Gonzalez 1985: 22). Financial issues of making members to pay some money prior to communion (the Lord's Supper) and conflict over property were some of the issues that led to the breaking away of Christ Evangelical Mission from the Evangelical Presbyterian church in 1964 (Omenyo 2002: 177). These are internal and external signs for the quest for reformation (Opocensky 1993: 64-71) in contemporary prophetic ministry in Ghana. It is hoped that the reformation, which will be another phase of neo-prophetism will not mainly be hinged on the charisma of the 'prophet' but also the issues of financial demands, sale of ritual objects, flamboyant lifestyles, immoral issues, and unbiblical rituals that city dwellers have raise against contemporary prophets will be corrected.

## **Conclusion**

In this essay, I attempted to discuss religion and religious lifestyle in cities in Ghana. It was done through the examination of dominant religious groups and denominations from the period of the Euro-American missionaries to the era of Prophetic churches in cities in Ghana. The cities along the coastal parts (sea ports) of Ghana served as the base for Christian activities for the pioneer missionaries. Clearly, it made the religious lifestyles of city dwellers conform to that of the beliefs and practices of the Traditional Historic Mission churches. Religious lifestyle was formal and sometimes described as 'bookish'. As time elapsed, the centrifugal power of the city gradually overshadowed the Traditional Historic Mission churches' dominance to the peripheral and centripetally pulled in the Pentecostal and Charismatic's Prophetic churches. The overshadowed was due to the notion that the Traditional Historic Mission churches did not effectively respond to the spiritual needs of city dwellers. The charismatic features of the Prophetic churches enabled them to receive insight into present happenings and foresight into the future, and offer solution for present predicaments and guidelines for a blissful future.

Religion in Africa is critical to one's survival and success in life. It determines one's social construct. The sacrifices and care that is given to a particular deity is motivated by its efficacy to effectively and urgently respond to the needs of its adherents. There is no perpetual allegiance or faithfulness to a non-performing deity. Hence, non-performing ancestral deities could be discarded and new highly performing deities installed. It calls for a change in religious lifestyle. This phenomenon is at the root of religious lifestyle in cities

in Ghana. Although there may be city dwellers that owe allegiance to a particular church denomination and may not attend any other church's service, many city dwellers are multi-denominational. They move from one denomination to the other in search of solutions for existential needs. City dwellers may register with a particular church, however, he/she chooses which church to attend and how religious lifestyle should be practiced based on present city economic, social, and political pressure.

Although the cities welcomed the 'prophetic model of city lifestyle' and the Prophetic churches, they have begun to dislike some of their practices and thereby describe them as unbiblical. The issue of payment of money before one could receive the services of a prophet has also been criticized. The moral lifestyle of the prophets had always been in doubt. Their extravagant and flamboyant living to the detriment of the poor has been questioned by city dwellers. These issues coupled with unfulfilled prophecies issues by these prophets, if it is not critically reviewed, are likely to change religious lifestyle in the cities of Ghana. The 'prophetic model of city lifestyle' will be centrifugated and another centripetated in the cities of Ghana. African towns are becoming urbanized at a fast rate. Religion is about people, therefore the effective and most populous religion or Christian denomination will be that which take cognizance of city dynamics, its evolving character, and factor it into its daily theologizing.

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