UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

THE COMMUNICATION AND RECEPTION OF PROPHECY IN GHANA:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

OBED KWABENA OBENG

MASTER OF ARTS

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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MAY, 2023

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Obed Kwabena Obeng declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE   :   ………………………………….

DATE   :   ………………………………….

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR : MR. KWESI AGGREY

SIGNATURE   :   …………………………………..

DATE   :   …………………………………..

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late father Mr. Daniel Osei Mensah. I thank him so much for the challenge he gave me when he was alive. Two of the promises I gave him are fullfilled. The last promise yet to be accomplished. God be my help.
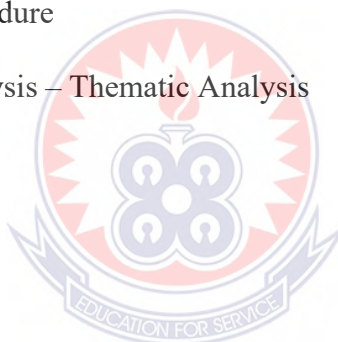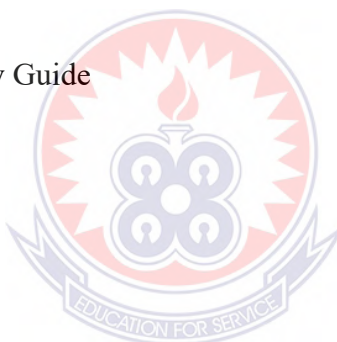
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ABSTRACT

This research investigated how prophecies are communicated in Ghana and how prophecy communication and reception should be approached. The research approach used in this study was qualitative, with data collected through interviews and analysis of video documentary evidence on some prophetic proclamations in Ghana. Four renowned clergy men in Ghana were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. Bhagwan's model of divine communication served as the framework for the study. The findings revealed that Ghanaian prophets rely heavily on biblical exegesis as a means to clarify and understand the meaning of prophetic messages and provide context for the messages they communicate. The study also discovered that visions and dreams play a fundamental role in how prophecies are communicated in Ghana. Additionally, humility, open-mindedness, and discernment were found to be necessary virtues for the communication and reception of prophetic messages. These virtues are critical in avoiding being captivated by the allure of new media, which has insulated the world at present. The virtues also enable Christians to be receptive to what God has to say about an issue while remaining watchful against false prophets. In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of how prophetic messages are communicated and received in Ghana. The findings provide valuable insights for religious leaders and followers in Ghana, as well as for scholars of religious communication. The study recommends that Ghanaian prophets should continue to rely on biblical exegesis, while remaining open to new forms of communication that may emerge in the future.
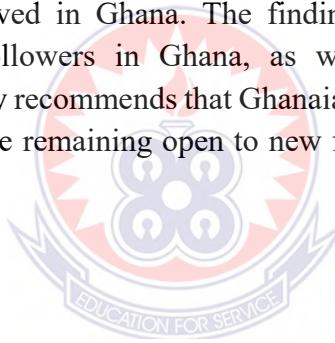
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

The practice of prophecy, which is defined as speaking "God's mind" through the inspiration of God's "Holy Spirit," has sparked a heated debate in both academic circles and the mainstream media (Athur & Pickford, 2016, p. 25). While some dispute what "God's mind" actually is (Stiles-Ocran, 2017, p. 13), others are more interested in how men of God convey "God's mind" (Smith, 2018, p. 4). The concept of God has drawn philosophical and religious considerations in and of itself (Bordwell, 2014; Luhman, 2015). In monotheistic thought, God is seen as a supreme entity, creator, and the primary object of faith (Bordwell, 2014). God is also commonly regarded as possessing omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and omnibenevolence, as well as an eternal and essential existence (Smith, 2018). In the Christian theological faith, God is viewed as the creator and sustainer of the cosmos who communicates with humanity through His Spirit and his appointed messengers (Luhman, 2015). In Christianity, one of the ways God communicates with humanity is through prophecy (Luhman, 2015). While this study will make an effort to explain what prophecy is, its communication will be the main focus.

Communication is the cornerstone of human interaction (Peterson, 2017; Witkins, 2019). This is due to the fact that human beings begin communicating the moment they are born; their facial expressions, hand movements, the way they look at someone, and their sounds or speech convey their thoughts to others (Peterson, 2017; Witkins, 2019). So, Watkins (2019), for example, notes that communication is very important for human societies. It gives people a place to start building and maintaining relationships

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(Witkins, 2019). In light of this, it can be challenging to imagine a world without communication (Witkins, 2019). It is safe to say that communication is an important aspect of human life, as a society can only grow and change if individuals collaborate and share their ideas (Peterson, 2017; Witkins, 2019).

There are several forms of communication, including verbal communication, nonverbal communication, and written communication (Adoro, 2019; Witkins, 2019). In verbal communication, people only use their words and speech to talk to each other. There is no exchange of words in nonverbal communication, but gestures, signs, or facial expressions may be used to communicate (Adoro, 2019; Witkins, 2019). Written communication is mainly through printed messages (Adoro, 2019; Witkins, 2019). While verbal communication is usually done in real time, written communication can be done over a longer period of time (Adoro, 2019). Written communication is often asynchronous (occurring at different times). In other words, the sender can compose a message that the recipient can read at any moment, unlike in a real-time conversation (Adoro, 2019).

Groth (2016) endeavours to track the evolution of communication. He asserts that ancient communication was the initial stage of its development. There were no languages at the time, and humans followed only some communication procedures (Groth, 2016). The growth of human communication and society, on the other hand, was made possible by the development of human skills over time. People began employing signs and non-verbal communication to communicate with one another (Groth, 2019). As people became more organised, they also came up with different languages and ways of talking (Groth, 2019). In the modern world, communication is

more important than ever before (Groth, 2016; Washington, 2018). The number of communication technologies in the contemporary age has outpaced even that of food-producing technologies (Groth, 2016; Philips, 2017; Washington, 2018), and not only has the number of communicative technologies risen globally, but so has their speed, precision, and clarity (Groth, 2016).

As with all kinds of human organisation, the church has not been exempted from the expanding opportunities that modern modes of communication bring (Minton, 2020). So, both religious and secular experts are interested in how the church communicates in the 21st century (Ayers, 2018, Kilgore & Vincent, 2006, Minton, 2020, Schartz, 2015). According to Ayers (2018), there are occasional debates in Christian circles because older people, in particular, are unaware that they need to be reoriented to modern ways of communicating and that the old solutions are still acceptable and adequate. He goes on to say that the problem is not that the core beliefs of Christianity are no longer important, but the way they are taught needs to be changed because people are always changing the way they interact with each other.

According to Minton (2020), communication in the church can be characterised as the use of words, acts, reactions, appearance, moods, signals, fellowship, and prayers to reveal God's work of transformation in people's lives and develop closer relationships with God. He says that the goal of all divine messages is to bring people closer to God. God needed to connect with some people in order to unite mankind to Himself. God then chose to use those to whom He had communicated Himself as instruments for communicating Himself to others (Minton, 2020). The institution of prophecy is integral to the Christian faith. In this sense, prophets are a central aspect of God's plan

to unite humanity with Himself (Minton, 2020; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). The concept of prophecy is fundamental to all religious practices (Athur & Pickford, 2016; Assandoh, 2018; Minton, 2020). Prophets consider themselves and are also primarily perceived by others as individuals sent by God with a message for God's people (Athur & Pickford, 2016; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). As God's messengers, they claim access to a realm generally inaccessible to other men and women (Stiles-Ocran, 2017).

The phenomenon of prophets or prophecy is not a new thing in the history of Christianity in Ghana. Scholars have done some work on earlier prophets like William Wade Harris, Samson Oppong, and John Swatson (Ayeboyin, 2011; Ghansah, 2020; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Both Beata's (1962) seminal study, cited by Stiles-Ocran (2017), and Harris's (1972) seminal work, cited by Ghansah (2020), are important studies on the subject. Most scholars would agree that these publications provide historical context for the birth of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic renewal movement in Ghana (Ayeboyin, 2011; Ghansah, 2020; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). A group of churches in Ghana known as' Prophet-led Charismatic Churches' is one of the most recent additions to the Pentecostalism and Charismatic renewal movements in Ghana (Ghansah, 2020; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). This is a thing that happens with prophets who work in the same way as the older prophets Baeta (1962) studied from 1914 to 1960. Though their beliefs and practices are strikingly similar to those of the prophets studied by Baeta, they prefer to refer to their churches as "Charismatic Churches" (Ghansah, 2020; Stiles-Ocran, 2017, p.4).

Despite the presence of prophets in the earlier Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, the growth of prophet-led Charismatic churches has been rapid in Ghana, particularly

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during the 1990s (Stiles-Ocran, 2017). In light of this, Ghansah (2020) thinks that Prophet-led Charismatic churches have sped up the rate and scale at which prophets or prophecy are becoming more common in modern Ghanaian religious discourses. Even though the situation in Africa might not be all that different, in Ghana, a close examination of the 'prophetic' meetings in these Prophet-led Charismatic churches reveals that the 'prophecies' of these prophets centre, primarily, on the socio-economic needs of their patrons (Ghansah, 2020; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Stiles-Ocran (2017), for example, said that many of these churches are full of people who think that going abroad to find greener pastures is the only way to solve their financial problems. This is clear from the fact that a lot of people come in with their passports so that prayers can be said for them to get visas.

It's noteworthy that these prophets, who are often the founders of their churches, use radio and television as evangelistic platforms to promote their beliefs and ways of doing things (Ghansah, 2020; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Through these means, it is believed they are able to address individuals in their homes prophetically, for example, by calling out names that are naturally unknown to them as well as describing a particular situation to them. Most people, out of excitement and astonishment, are attracted to them (Ghansah, 2020; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Sackey (2017) asserts that the liberalisation of the media, particularly in Ghana, has significantly changed the media landscape and given rise to the use of mass media for evangelistic purposes. Churches in Ghana, especially those led by prophets, have become so adept at appropriating the electronic media that it now forms a significant component of their self-definition (Johnson, 2012). The reason is that the electronic media can portray things and people as genuine and accessible while also making them look more appealing than they actually are (Johnson, 2012). The

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characters on these electronic media are also "embodiments of ideological beliefs," as opposed to merely being depictions of specific individuals (Fiske, 2019, p.9). As a result, they elevate the status and significance of the churches and the people who utilise them to spread the gospel (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005).

Denson (2017) acknowledges that prophets using electronic mass media is a form of religious practice that is inherently modern and inextricably linked to modern technological media, which not only allows for its production, distribution, and consumption but also increases people's desire for hyper-instant interventions. In light of the ever expanding media technologies that define the modern world, Anderson and Rainie (2019) observed that the modern society is quickly becoming hyper-connected as individuals are becoming more and more adaptive and quick-acting multitaskers. At the same time, Anderson and Rainie (2019) projected that the effects of hyperconnectivity on contemporary culture will cause individuals to lack patience, settle for hasty decisions, and crave instant gratification. Washington (2018) calls the modern world's need for instant gratification the "hyper-instant" phenomenon (p. 13). Washington (2018) also connects this hyper-instant tendency of the modern world to their increased desire for miracles. Thus, the modern modes of communication not only expand the reach of prophetic demonstrations but also nurture and feed the public's insatiable demand for power and rapid results (Washington, 2018).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The subject of prophecy elicits divergent opinions and interpretations among scholars and religious leaders (Athur & Pickford, 2016; Smith, 2018; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Some scholars question the nature and definition of prophecy (Athur & Pickford, 2016), while others scrutinise its function and significance in the broader framework of religion and

humanity (Smith, 2018; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Nevertheless, the increasing utilisation of electronic mass media by prophets to propagate fear and establish power and wealth has prompted several academics and religious leaders to call for a critical assessment of prophecy, particularly in terms of its communication and reception (Athur & Pickford, 2016; Smith, 2018; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Stiles-Ocran (2017) asserts that although prophecy has a discernible purpose in religion, its contemporary usage has devolved into a form of self-aggrandisement that is more of a curse than a blessing.

The literature on prophecy can be categorised into several foci, including anthropological and sociological approaches (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Denson, 2017), the presentation of the prophetic persona (Athur & Pickford, 2016; Ghansah, 2020), the nature of prophecy (Tiemeyer, 2017; Zoolander, 2014), rhetorical analysis studies of prophecy (Assandoh, 2018; Minton, 2020; Washington, 2018), and audience perception of prophets (Ayeboyin, 2011; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Moreover, considering the sensitivity of the issues to the geographical context, the existing body of literature on prophecy, particularly in Christendom, assumes a new and interesting dimension (Athur & Pickford, 2016; Washington, 2018; Stiles-Ocran, 2017; Tiemeyer, 2017). For instance, whereas Western studies have focused primarily on the portrayal and nature of prophets and prophecy (Athur & Pickford, 2016; Tiemeyer, 2017), non-Western studies have examined the emergence of prophetism in localised contexts and the increasing prevalence of the prophetic role in political scenarios (Stiles-Ocran, 2017; Washington, 2018).

Specifically in the Ghanaian context, Washington (2018) investigated the role of neo-prophetism in contemporary presidential elections in Ghana. The study analysed

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selected prophecies from the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections in Ghana. Despite the majority of Ghanaian Christians believing in and accepting prophecies in general, the study found that political prophecies have little influence on voters' behaviour in election contexts. The study concluded that, due to the violence and tension that often accompany election years in Ghana, prophets should exercise caution and restraint in their delivery of prophecies concerning upcoming elections (Washington, 2018). In a similar vein, Stiles-Ocran (2017) conducted a study on the perceptions of Ghanaians towards prophets. The research concluded that with the rise of neo-pentecostalism movements, prophets have become prevalent in the public sphere of Ghana, making a multitude of prophecies, promoting their ability to perform healings and other miraculous acts, and competing for spiritual dominance and wealth. Consequently, a significant number of Ghanaians believe that prophets in Ghana are becoming progressively confrontational, ostentatious, and lacking in originality (Stiles-Ocran, 2017).

In their respective works, Stiles-Ocran (2017) and Washington (2018) made reference to the escalating intricacy of contemporary society, and the role that electronic media can play in amplifying prophetic actions and statements. As a result, they recommended that, given the increasing relevance of prophecy, the practice of prophecy, its modes of dissemination and reception, as well as its constraints, be reevaluated. Consequently, in light of the aforementioned arguments, this study aims to investigate the perspectives of prominent Ghanaian religious leaders regarding the subject of prophecy, with a particular focus on the methods used to communicate prophecies and the appropriate ways in which audiences should receive them, in a world that Washington (2018) has characterized as "a highly mediated and hyper-instant world" (p.13).

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1.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine how prophecies are communicated in Ghana.

2. To assess how prophecy communication and reception should be approached in Ghana.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How are prophecies communicated in Ghana?

2. How should prophecy communication and reception be approached in Ghana?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Given the complexities of modern society and the ways in which electronic media can amplify prophetic actions and statements (Stiles-Ocran, 2017; Washington, 2018), the goal of this study is to examine the perspectives of some renowned Ghanaian clergy on prophetic communication and how audiences should respond to it. As a result, this study will be beneficial to academia and other relevant stakeholders in a number of ways. To begin with, it will contribute to the growing body of contemporary scholarship on prophecy. It will also serve as a theoretical foundation for assessing the most effective approach for communicating and receiving prophecies. Furthermore, it will pave the way for other studies to be conducted on prophecy communication and reception in Ghana. Furthermore, all church leaders, faith-based organisations like the Council of Churches, and civil society organisations (CSOs) on religious bodies will find this study to be a helpful resource. It will serve as a resource for religious education on prophecy in the modern world as well as offer insightful advice on how to communicate prophecies. The knowledge gained from this study can subsequently be applied to teaching prophecies, redressing prophetic challenges, and moral training.

Last but not least, this study makes an effort to dispel any misunderstanding that may be caused among Christians and, by extension, the rest of society, particularly when the practice of prophecy is connected to utopian ideals that encourage persuasiveness and the ability to manipulate others. Such associations have the potential to alter the consciousness of otherwise reasonable people (Tiemeyer, 2017). This style of manipulation has recently been observed in relation to presidential prophecies uttered by some leaders of Prophet-led Charismatic churches in Ghana. Both these and other prophecies instilled fear and perplexing political rhetoric, facilitating mockery and judgement of the church (Both Stiles-Ocran, 2017). The public's understanding of prophecy will therefore benefit from this study. This study will inform the public about how prophets often use communication strategies to engineer a sense of urgency and consent. It will also assist readers and the general public in developing a guided worldview for interpreting prophecy.
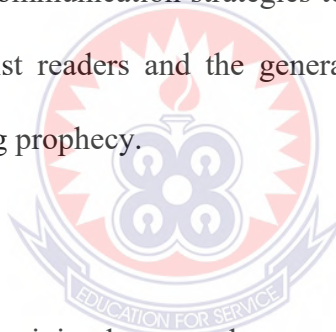
1.5 Delimitation

This study focused on examining how prophecy communication and reception should be approached. The research was limited to the Ghanaian situation, focusing only on the viewpoints of the following eminent Ghanaian clerics on the subject: The Rev. Prof. J.O.Y Mante, Chairman of the Ghana Christian Council (Presbyterian Church of Ghana); Col. Dr. Samuel Amponsah, Vice Chairman of the Ghana Christian Council (The Salvation Army); Elder Marcus B. Nash, Senior Leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Archbishop Nicholas Duncan Williams, representing the National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches (NACCC); Apostle (Dr.) Aaron Ami-Narh, Head of the Apostolic Church Ghana; and Apostle Eric Nyamekye, head of the Church of Pentecost, Ghana. The data collected and analysed for the study

was also limited to a period of six months, ranging from September 2021 to February 2022.

1.6 Organisation of the Study

The study is organised into five chapters. Chapter one comprises the background of the study; the objectives of the study; research questions; the significance of the study; delimitations; and the organisation of the study. The second chapter reviews related literature and discusses the theories necessary to situate the research within its context. Chapter three discusses the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis. Here, the research approach, research design, sample and sampling technique, data collection methods, data collection procedure, and method of data analysis are discussed. The fourth chapter is dedicated to the findings and discussions of the study. Chapter five summarises the findings arising out of the study, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations for further studies.
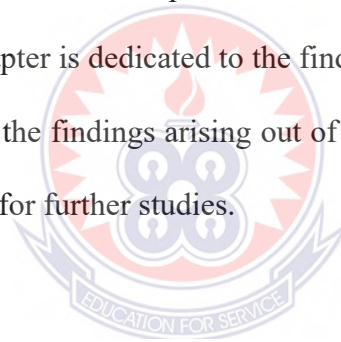
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines various studies on prophecy and the media, as well as how the media influences the practice of prophecy, particularly in Ghana. It also discussed Bhagwan's model of divine communication as a framework for the study. These are intended to help situate the research within a context.

2.1 An Overview of the Media

The influence of the media on society cannot be overstated (Dents, 2017; Harken, 2015; Jules & Firth, 2019). The media continues to have an impact on how people live their daily lives (Jules & Firth, 2019). News provides information on current events in and around the world; entertainment, such as music, movies, and television shows, offers a means of escaping reality and entering the reality or fantasy of others; and advertisements compete to provide information on not only where to shop but also what to buy (Dents, 2017; Harken, 2015; Jules & Firth, 2019). The media also influences how individuals perceive one another and themselves. (Dents, 2017). The news media, which is also known as the "fourth estate" or "the watchdog of society," is regarded as a champion of the people and, more importantly, of free speech and access to information so that the public can make informed decisions about their lives (Jules & Firth, 2019, p. 13).

The term "media" is the plural form of the word "medium," and it is usually taken to mean a channel of communication (Fletcher, 2018). At the end of the 20th century, it became widespread for the term "media" to be thought of as a single entity instead of the plural way it had always been thought of (Halim, 2020; Fretcher, 2018). The mass

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media also signifies organised ways to spread news, opinions, entertainment, and other kinds of information (Harken, 2015; Zacharie, 2017). It also relates to the industries that produce content for the mass media (Zacharie, 2017). While there are various ways to categorise the media, in the context of this thesis, the four categories of print, broadcast, audio-visual, and internet will suffice (Jackson, 2017; Thompson, 2014).

Print media includes newspapers, books, magazines, flyers or leaflets, posters, and billboards, though the latter is typically used for advertising (Bhagwan, 2017; Hales, 2013). Radio and television are examples of broadcast media because sound and images are transmitted via signals from local stations or satellites from overseas broadcasters (Bhagwan, 2017; Thompson, 2014). These signals are picked up by radios and television sets wherever they can be received (Bhagwan, 2017; Thompson, 2014). Films and videos seen in movie theatres or on cassettes and discs (VCDs and DVDs), as well as spoken word or music recorded on analogue cassettes, reels, vinyl discs (records), or digital tape and disc (CD), are examples of audio-visual media (Arthur, 2011; Zacharie, 2017). The Internet is a relatively new addition to the media, and it is more often lumped in with radio and television as "electronic media" (Britton, 2015; Thrift, 2018). Connecting to the World Wide Web via a computer allows one to access information, entertainment, and send messages to others who have access to this technology (Thrift, 2018). These four major media divisions operating in Ghana today are commonly known as the "mass media" because of their collective ability to reach every citizen in this country, regardless of that person's location or socio-economic status.

The origins of print can be traced back to the Egyptians writing on papyrus over 6,000 years ago (Clutters, 2013; Niels, 2015). Babylonian tablets discovered to document

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legal and financial records have been dated to be over 4,000 years old (Clutters, 2013; Niels, 2015). Up until the ninth century CE, the written word on parchment was widely used (Clutters, 2013). The invention of the printing press with movable type in China around 868 CE marked the beginning of printing as we know it today (Niels, 2015). However, when Johannes Gutenberg published the first printed Vulgate Bible in 1456, he sparked a print revolution that resulted in over thirty thousand different books being printed by the end of the 15th century (Niels, 2015). Since time immemorial, the print medium has had an effect on the communication process (Bhagwan, 2017; Nickleton, 2018). Even though print is sequential and linear, it encourages logical and linear thinking while also allowing readers to distance themselves from the text and objectively encounter ideas, words, symbols, and meanings (Fitscher, 2017; Nickleton, 2018). Print also provides self-gratification and relaxation in the form of enjoyment of reading, comprehension of events, affirmation of literacy, and entertainment (Bhagwan, 2017; Hales, 2013). The main limitation of print as a medium of communication is that it requires the reader to have a certain level of literacy (Eagleton, 2018; Youngs, 2015). This is undoubtedly a problem in Ghana, where oral culture still prevails (Youngs, 2015). Even countries with high literacy rates have a low number of readers who can use or understand the persuasive form of communication that print provides (Eagleton, 2018; Hales, 2013; Nickleton, 2019).

According to Bridges (2011), the origins of radio broadcast can be traced back to Samuel Morse's 1844 invention of transmitting electromagnetic messages over wires. By 1920, wireless radio broadcasting was a growing industry, with the transmission of news and live musical performances (Bridges, 2011; Thompson, 2014). The development of the transistor allowed radios to become smaller, cheaper, and more portable (Bridges, 2011; Tucker, 2018; Washington, 2014). The use of the radio wave

spectrum for short-wave, AM, and FM transmission (Bhagwan, 2017; Washington, 2014). Radios are now available in a variety of shapes and sizes, and broadcasts can be received on mobile phones as well as via the internet (Bhagwan, 2017; Tucker, 2018; Washington, 2014). Radio as a medium has several distinct characteristics (Thompson, 2014; Tucker, 2018). Radio has the potential to reach everyone because it only requires listening, making it accessible to those who are illiterate, blind, or elderly, as well as those who drive a car (Bhagwan, 2017; Tucker, 2018). As radio is only the broadcast of sound, it uses speech, music, and sound effects to create visual images or pictures in the minds of listeners (Prinston, 2017). Radio is traditionally broadcast in real time, with live voices and sounds, current news and information, and the most recent updates. With the advent of the digital age, entire programs can be pre-recorded and later broadcast "as live," creating the illusion of immediacy (Prinston, 2017, p. 23). Radio also allows for face-to-face communication, as most radio presenters and panellists speak one-on-one (Guttensten, 2013; Prinston, 2017).

According to Bhagwan (2017), television has evolved significantly since its introduction in the 1930s, becoming broadcast in colour in 1966 and, beginning in the 1970s, instituting subscriber-based programming (cable and now via satellite) to become a globally encompassing form of communication. Beginning with the Vietnam War and culminating in global coverage of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, the war in Iraq, the Asian Tsunami crisis, and the funeral of Pope John Paul II, viewers around the world have been able to share the experience and receive immediate information transmitted directly into their homes (Thompson, 2014). Television is a powerful medium because it is a broadcast medium that uses both images and sounds and reaches a large number of people at the same time (Thompson, 2014). It has enormous appeal and effect among a large portion of the population and can

potentially transmit the same message to the entire world at the same time (Aibien, 2018; Thompson, 2014). Television is the primary recreational activity for many users (Aibien, 2018; Perking, 2017). American children, for example, spend an average of 28 hours per week watching television (Perking, 2017). Television uses every type of program available, such as drama, lecture, dialogue, dance, and song, to effectively influence viewers' cognitive and affective domains (Perking, 2017). Television is believed to be above all (Perking, 2017). This credibility stems from many viewers' acceptance that seeing is believing (Perking, 2017).

The internet, on the other hand, is a worldwide network of both large and small computer networks (Britton, 2015; Thrift, 2018). It was created in 1962 as a computer network for the United States military that could withstand a military-strength attack (Britton, 2015; Thrift, 2018). Since its initial public launch in 1991, the Internet has evolved into a global communication tool that connects a wide range of military, government, industrial, and financial corporations; non-profit organisations; educational institutions; and businesses (Saxxon, 2013; Thrift, 2018). Even though most people use the internet to talk to each other, it can also be used to learn and have fun (Britton, 2015). According to Ernst (2020), the internet has grown at a rate of 50% per year since 1995. In 1998, there were approximately 147 million people connected to the Internet, and it was estimated that by 2025, one out of every ten people would have access to the internet (Ernst, 2020; Thrift, 2018).

The most commonly used features of the internet include electronic mail (e-mail), search engines for research, discussion groups (also known as bulletin boards), online conversations (known as chatting), role-playing and adventure games (often with players from all over the world), and electronic commerce (e-commerce) (Ernst, 2020;

Saxxon, 2013; Yalles, 2017). As such, it is also used for advertising (Yalles, 2017). Pop-up ads and junk mail often clog up internet mailboxes and clutter the screen (Ernst, 2020). Another issue with the internet is the unfettered access users have to all sorts of material, especially children's accessibility to adult-rated sites, and the fact that on the internet one can be virtually anonymous (Saxxon, 2013; Yalles, 2017). This has led to paedophiles using the net to snare young children by pretending to be young children themselves. The use of the Internet for banking and financial transactions has led to Internet or e-commerce fraud (Yalles, 2017).

Saxxon (2013) asserts that the internet is also a great place to find a lot of information about any subject. Anyone with a computer, a modem, a phone line, and access to the Internet through an Internet service provider can find information and learn about a wide range of topics (Saxxon, 2013). Knowledge is no longer just for experts or the government; it is now available to everyone (Saxxon, 2013; Yelbs, 2017). This freedom has also greatly increased the likelihood of disinformation (Yelbs, 2017). Within the anarchistic design of the internet, whoever really wants to can be a publisher and an advocate for whatever cause (Saxxon, 2013; Yelbs, 2017). In the same way that people generally believe what they read or watch, there is a tendency to view as basically true whatever is read on a computer screen (Clet & Fottoh, 2012; Saxxon, 2013; Yelbs, 2017). When downloading information from pages or sites on the internet that you don't know much about, it's important to think about and evaluate the sources. This becomes even more important when we deal with information downloaded from unknown Internet pages or sites (Yelbs, 2017).

Thousands of Christian ministries and churches can now be found on the internet (Pieters, 2019). There are numerous discussion groups for religious issues on the

internet, both moderated and unmoderated (Pieters, 2019). Electronic versions of the Bible are available in a variety of editions and languages, as are a wide range of Christian resource materials for almost any purpose (Jesphates, 2018; Pieters, 2019). The 8th World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in Harare was the first to report on the internet's capabilities, allowing thousands of people to become virtual or online participants (Jesphates, 2018). The internet was extensively used for coverage of the 9th WCC, which was held in Brazil in early 2006, with event information, news releases and reports, and electronic versions of papers presented, including text and audio/visual broadcasts (Jesphates, 2018). This demonstrates how Christians and church communications are embracing online media as a viable medium for spreading Christian beliefs and practices.

2.2 Christianity and the Church

Christianity is widely regarded as the world's largest religion, with a following of over 2.4 billion people (Hart, 2017). The religion is founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ, who established it more than two millennia ago (Brittons, 2017). Throughout history, the Christian Church has been a vital institution and continues to play a crucial role in society today (Hart, 2017). For example, Brittons (2017), the Christian Church has played a significant role throughout history, especially during the Middle Ages, when it was the dominant institution in Europe. During this period, the Church was responsible for providing education, healthcare, and social welfare. It was also a significant political force and played a crucial role in the formation of European society (Brittons, 2017). In contemporary society, the Christian Church continues to play a crucial role in various areas of life (Golileo, 2018). One significant area is education, where the Church operates many schools, colleges, and universities worldwide. These

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institutions provide quality education while also instilling Christian values and ethics in their students (Golileo, 2018).

Another area where the Christian Church contributes to society is through its social welfare programs (Halaneg, 2017). Churches often run programs that provide assistance to people in need, such as the homeless, refugees, and victims of natural disasters. These programs provide practical support to those who need it, often regardless of their religious affiliation (Halaneg, 2017). Moreover, the Christian Church continues to be a significant political force, advocating for social justice, human rights, and moral values (Jesphates, 2018). The Church has been instrumental in promoting democratic values and the protection of human rights, which are vital for a just and peaceful society (Jesphates, 2018; Halaneg, 2017).

In Spite of the contributions of Christianity and the Church on society, numerous studies have delved into the religion's origins, history, and relevance to contemporary society. Notable among these works is "The New Testament: A Translation" by Hart (2017), which presents a fresh translation of the New Testament that highlights the Jewish origins of Christianity. In his translation of the New Testament, Hart (2017) draws attention to the Jewishness of the early Christian movement, emphasising the Jewish cultural and religious context in which the New Testament was written. He argues that Christianity cannot be fully understood without recognizing its roots in Jewish culture, religion, and history. Hart highlights the ways in which the New Testament authors drew upon Jewish thought and practices to develop their theology and worldview (Hart, 2017).

Another significant work is "The Earliest Christian Artefacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins" by Hurtado (2006), which examines the earliest Christian manuscripts and their role in shaping the religion's development. Hurtado (2006) argues that early Christian manuscripts played a crucial role in the spread and development of Christianity. He notes that the earliest Christian texts were written on papyrus, a cheap and widely available material in the ancient world. These texts were copied and distributed throughout the Mediterranean world, leading to the establishment of Christian communities in various regions. Hurtado (2017) also emphasises the significance of the earliest Christian manuscripts as evidence of the diversity of early Christian thought and practice. He notes that the manuscripts provide insight into the various beliefs and practices of early Christian communities, as well as the debates and controversies that arose within these communities (Hurtado, 2017).

The history of Christianity is a vast and complex subject that spans over two millennia (Golileo, 2018). Recent academic works have focused on specific periods in Christian history, such as the Reformation and the Enlightenment. One notable work in this area is "The Reformation: A History" by MacCulloch (2003), which provides a comprehensive overview of the Protestant Reformation and its impact on European society. Another significant work is "The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture" by Sheehan (2020), which explores the role of the Bible in the Enlightenment and the development of modern secularism.

The Reformation: A History" by MacCulloch (2003) is a comprehensive examination of the Protestant Reformation that took place in Europe during the 16th century. MacCulloch (2003) examines the social, political, and religious factors that contributed to the rise of Protestantism and its impact on European society. He explores the

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theological debates that led to the schism between Catholics and Protestants, and how the Reformation affected the everyday lives of people in Europe. The study also covers the impact of the Reformation on politics, culture, and the arts (MacCulloch, 2003). One of the significant implications of MacCulloch's study is its contribution to the understanding of the diversity of Christian beliefs and practices. The Reformation led to the establishment of various Protestant denominations that differ from Catholicism in terms of their theological perspectives and worship practices (MacCulloch, 2003). The work highlights how these differences shaped European society, politics, and culture. Moreover, it emphasises the role of religious dissent in the development of modern democracy, individual rights, and freedom of conscience (MacCulloch, 2003).

The study "The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture" by Sheehan (2020) on the other hand explores the role of the Bible in the Enlightenment, a period of intellectual and cultural change that took place in Europe in the 18th century. Sheehan (2020) examines the translation of the Bible into various languages, the rise of biblical scholarship, and the impact of biblical interpretation on Enlightenment philosophy and culture. Sheehan (2020) argues that the Enlightenment challenged traditional religious beliefs and paved the way for modern secularism. One of the significant implications of Sheehan's study is its contribution to the understanding of the relationship between religion and modernity. Sheehan (2020) shows how the Enlightenment challenged traditional religious authority and provided an alternative to theological explanations of the world. Moreover, the study highlights the role of the Bible in shaping modern secular culture and the development of critical thinking. The study also raises important questions about the nature of religious authority and the possibility of reconciling religious beliefs with modern scientific knowledge (Sheehan, 2020).

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A key aspect of Sheehan's (2020) work is that it tends to raise questions about the relevance of traditional religious beliefs and practices in contemporary society. Contemporary Christianity is a diverse and rapidly evolving phenomenon that encompasses a wide range of beliefs and practices (Dreher, 2017). Recent academic works have focused on various aspects of contemporary Christianity, including its relationship with politics, culture, and globalisation. One notable work in this area is "The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation" by Dreher (2017), which proposes a new approach to Christian life and community in the face of secularisation. Another significant work is "Globalization and the Mission of the Church" by Goheen (2018), which examines the challenges and opportunities of globalisation for Christian mission and evangelism.

Dreher (2017) bases his arguments on the notion that contemporary Western culture is increasingly hostile to traditional Christian values and beliefs, and that Christians need to respond by creating intentional communities that are rooted in a deeper understanding of their faith. He stresses on the fact that Christians today need to adopt a similar strategy, by creating intentional communities that are focused on prayer, study, and hospitality. These communities should be grounded in a deep understanding of Christian tradition and doctrine, and should be committed to living out the faith in every aspect of their lives. Dreher's (2017) work takes its name from Saint Benedict of Nursia, who in the 6th century founded a monastic community that became a model for Christian living and witness. One of the implications of Dreher's (2017) work for the history of Christianity and the Church is that it highlights the need for Christians to be intentional about their faith and their community. In the past, the Church played a central role in the life of Western societies, but this is no longer the case. Christians need to create intentional communities that are grounded in a deep understanding of the

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faith, and that are committed to living out the gospel in every aspect of their lives. This is a significant shift from the past, where the Church was seen as a cultural institution rather than a counter-cultural movement.

A critical look at Goheen's (2018) work also reveals the challenges and opportunities of globalisation for Christian mission and evangelism. The study argues that globalisation has created new opportunities for the Church to spread the gospel, but that it has also presented new challenges that need to be addressed. Goheen (2018) argues that the Church needs to be intentional about its engagement with globalisation, and that it needs to develop strategies for reaching people in different cultures and contexts. This requires a deep understanding of the cultural, economic, and political factors that shape different societies, and a willingness to adapt the message of the gospel to these contexts (Goheen, 2018). One key implication of Goheen's (2018) work for the history of Christianity and the Church is that it highlights the need for Christians to be adaptive and flexible in their approach to mission and evangelism. In the past, the Church has often taken a one-size-fits-all approach to evangelism, assuming that the message of the gospel would be equally relevant in every context (Goheen, 2018). However, globalisation has highlighted the diversity of human cultures and contexts, and has shown that a more nuanced and contextual approach is needed (Goheen, 2018). This requires Christians to be open to learning from other cultures, and to be willing to adapt their message and methods to reach people in different contexts (Goheen, 2018).

2.3 The Church and the Media

According to Rika (2016), most news media organisations have an internal code of ethics or code of conduct in place to ensure that all religions are treated fairly, particularly when it comes to religious matters. He believes that in a pluralistic society,

the news media should avoid jumping to conclusions about people's faiths and beliefs. There is a need to respect all religious matters, even if the parties involved do not share the same beliefs (Rika, 2016). Akaoula (2014) studied the news media and the church in Nigeria and made some three observations. To begin with, she established that the news media would typically approach churches for remarks on religious and church matters. Nonetheless, the church's reactions are reactionary in nature. He believes that churches must be proactive rather than wait for things to happen (Akaoula, 2014).

Yokini-Ayedola (2017) also observed that when the news media approaches the church, they are eager to address social and spiritual matters, but not money matters. From the church's perspective, church finances cannot be discussed publicly in the mainstream media. Consequently, churches often respond unfavourably to criticism from the mainstream media concerning matters of church finances. According to the news media, church leaders are an integral element of the cultural leadership system in every society. Consequently, church leaders are responsible for society (Yokini-Ayedola, 2017). As a result, Yokini-Ayedola (2017) argues that there is a general ignorance amongst both the news media and the church about their respective roles in society.

The Church's initial perception of the media relates primarily as a tool for evangelism and information dissemination (Friedricks, 2018). In terms of the mass media, there is a concern from church leaders and members about the quality of media programming in terms of music and commentary on radio and the relevance of television programmes (Grithford, 2017). In regards to the news media, the mainline churches tend to request news coverage of activities such as fundraising, provision of social services (feeding of the poor and free medical clinics), the dedication of church buildings, induction or ordination services, and other celebrations (Brittons, 2017). Britton (2017) cited Randy

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Naylor, General Secretary of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), as saying that Christians must actively participate in the media because it allows them to offer an alternative vision of life. Naylor claims:

> The church often thinks only of using the media for free publicity for their own programs. They forget that the media is how people increasingly experience the world. The media shape values, fashion changes and define the agenda for society. The media affects what happens in politics, our view of the economy, and our understanding of our neighbours. If you're not part of that social influence, you are not part of deciding what is important, what is valuable, and what it means to love your neighbour (p.14).

Naylor's claims were reiterated by Archbishop Petero Mataca, the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Australia. He considered the media to be a gift to humanity (Brittons, 2017). Mataca stresses that the church of God must effectively use the media so that their voices can be heard in remote areas where people who need to hear God's word are present (Brittons, 2017). Mataca continues by asserting that the Catholic Church recognizes the role of the media and that by hearing the Catholic voice in a diverse range of voices, Catholic families in remote and predominantly Protestant communities will be drawn into the Catholic community. He believes that the Catholic Church requires a presence in the media beyond the radio programs and newspapers that they produce. Given the power of the audio-visual characteristics of television, Mataca was even more interested in its use (Brittons, 2017).

Halaneg (2017), a regular contributor to the newspaper with opinion articles on social and religious issues, believes that the Church, analysing the signs of the times, must use the media to say what needs to be said. He claims that Christians must see themselves as responsible for society because their contributions shape the society in which they live (Halaneg, 2017). Using Fuji as an example, he goes on to argue that Fiji has been heading toward moral and spiritual bankruptcy since the political crises of 1987 and

2000, and that each member of Fijian society has contributed to the atmosphere of this society through action or inaction, statement or silence (Halaneg, 2017).

Another whose work has echoed the sentiments of Archbishop Mataca is Golileo (2018). He states that the Church, in order to proclaim the sovereignty of God, should be involved in all facets of human nature, offering well informed comments based on an understanding of scripture, tradition, and reason, adding that the news media and the Church often have common goals on issues of national importance. However, Golileo (2018) expresses a concern about the approach of the news media when seeking the Church's comment on an issue. In his view, journalists need to allow time for church leaders to review an issue and develop a response rather than being put on the spot for an immediate comment (Golileo, 2018).

Part of Golileo's (2018) work was based on Yabaki (2010), who established that the Methodist Church in Glasgow has faced media persecution as a result of poor media management. According to Yabaki (2010), the church has become more concerned with its authority and perceived influence. As a result, the church has been unable to proclaim the gospel in a way that is good news to those outside the church, particularly those for whom the gospel is as much about them as those in the pews in the churches. As a result, Yabaki (2010) strongly indicated that the church should consider using radio as part of their communications to reach out to people in the hinterlands. He argued that radio still has a greater impact in reaching remote members of society, and as a result, they use it more frequently (Yabaki, 2010). Thus, Yabaki (2010) viewed radio as a potent medium for assertively conveying what the church is about, notably that it has a place in Glasgow society and has existed for a long time.

Jesphates' (2018) work, as earlier mentioned, is also worthy of mention in this section of the review. This is because, as he points out, following the WCC Harare Assembly's calls for clear implementation of an integrated communication strategy and process throughout the WCC, the central committee was set up to review all the communication strategies immediately. The committee proposed a strategy paper that sets out management priorities, objectives, and principles to be used as a basis for communicating the work of the WCC (Jesphates, 2018). Following the Harare assembly, the WCC has expanded its output in terms of format, content, and languages for secular and religious media. Intensive efforts have been made to improve relationships with the media in order to respond to their interests and improve their knowledge of ecumenical issues, as well as to broaden the WCC's understanding of how to work best with the media (Jesphates, 2018).

These reviews are crucial and instructive for this current study because they lay the groundwork for the church's relationship with the media and vice versa. They also contribute to the current study's understanding of how churches are conscious of the potential of the media to support them in their work. Nonetheless, as some of the reviewed authors have stated, there is still a certain suspicion surrounding the media for a number of church leaders, outside of the understanding of news and evangelism. Thus, churches must demystify the media so that it is seen as a blessing for gospel propagation rather than a curse. Furthermore, it is evident from the preceding assessment that churches, as communicators of God's word, should understand the influence and function of the media in any given society, particularly how the Church is perceived through the media. As a result, the Church should examine how it communicates its prophetic voice from a theological standpoint. The following section investigates the

theological imperative to communicate with and on behalf of God, as well as attempts to develop a modern-day understanding of the prophetic voice.

2.4 The Church and Christian Communication

From a theological perspective, Christianity can be wholly and completely interpreted as a religion of communication, divine-human and, at the same time, inter-human communication (Foster, 2015; Nada, 2017; Yiesmite, 2012). According to Nida (2017), no other religion is so thoroughly word-oriented as Judeo-Christianity. While the Judeo-Christian perspective and impetus for communication will be discussed later in this review, it is important to briefly discuss the basic understanding of the Christian context of communication. The simplest expression of the desire to communicate in this context is to spread the Gospel. In a theological reflection on communication, Valle (2016) states that while all humans are created to communicate with God and with one another, communication between humans is the essence of what it means to be human, the image of God.
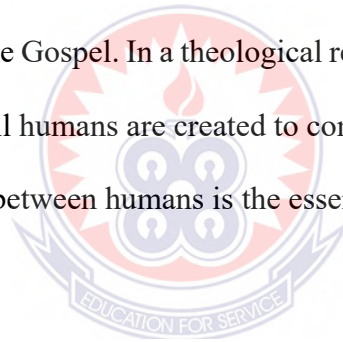
The Great Commission given by Jesus to the disciples (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8b) to go and make disciples of all nations has been the mission-call for the Church for the past two millennia. This mission is primarily a communication task, with the ensuing mission aimed at improving or re-establishing communication between human beings and God (Yiesmite, 2012). The Church maintains a complex attitude toward communication, viewing themselves as agents of communication and understanding themselves as an administrator of information for the understanding of life, values, morals, and God's awareness (Foster, 2015; Yiesmite, 2012). The growth of the media as an alternative administrator of similar information has called this into question. The result has been the Church's call for a New World Information Order, which affirms

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that communication is prophetic and, as such, "is required to serve the cause of justice, peace, and integrity" (Foster, 2015, p.3).

Meiden (2017), in discussing the relationship between communication and theology, highlights four basic elements, which form a communication framework for theological discussion. The first is that theology is a product of communication, implying that there is only theology because the Gospel has been communicated. Theology also speaks about communication, through disseminating information about a speaking God, a witnessing Church, and developing a systematic framework for the contents of human faith to efficiently deliver the message. Meiden's (2017) third element in this relationship is that theology commits communication or that communication is an instrumental component of theology, through the preaching of the word, Christian education, training, Bible translation, and mission work. Finally, Meiden's (2017) states that theology aims at communication because theology is a device to bring people to God, men to each other, and the world nearer to the Church and vice versa.

Asher (2011) examined Christian communication principles. According to him, humanity's response to God's gift of communication must reflect humanity's place in creation as God's image, even if it is an attempt to restore the broken communication caused by Adam and Eve's disobedience. Asher (2011) draws out the idea that in exercising the role of God's steward of Creation and as an extension of Creation, the gift of communication, humankind must base its use of this gift on scripture to accomplish the will of God, revealed as the creation and maintenance of a just, peaceful, and loving community (Asher, 2011). This requires Christian communicators to demonstrate God's transformative power in every aspect of human life and for Christian

communication to be an act of love that liberates both the sender and receiver of the message (Asher, 2011).

In this regard, Asher (2011) outlines five principles for directing Christians' work and missions in communication as well as for the church's efforts to build community and communion. These principles express the role of Christian communication in society. These five principles are as follows:

- Communication creates community: People come together regardless of ethnicity, gender, religious belief, social class, and wealth, and where there is cognition of and faithfulness to one another.

- Communication is participatory: It is a two-way process that establishes meaning and relationships. Communication is a fundamental human right that incorporates the established freedoms of expression and the right to seek, receive, and disseminate information. By increasing access and altering the authoritarian structures of communication, participatory communication provides a new sense of human dignity, a new sense of community, and the fulfilment of a fuller life for all.

- Communication liberates: It empowers people to articulate their own needs, to work together to meet those needs, thereby strengthening their sense of dignity, while affirming their right to equal and full participation in society.

- Communication supports and develops cultures: It employs and advances indigenous communication techniques. These methods foster the symbolism of mutually shared images and meanings that respect human dignity and religious and cultural values, which are at the very heart of the cultures of the Third World. The diversity of the world's cultures exemplifies the rich diversity of God's image.

- Communication is prophetic: In attempting to interpret the signs of the times, media workers and communicators listen to God and are guided by the Spirit. As will be seen in the following chapter, prophetic communication expresses itself in words and deeds and is willing to challenge principalities and powers. When communication serves the truth, and confronts falsehood, it is prophetic.

In the above review, the focus was on Christian communication. The studies reviewed serve to express how God communicates with humankind and, along with the principles of communication, suggest how humankind should communicate with God and their fellow humans. The reviews also showed that the goal of Christian communication in and through history is communion with humankind. The use of human messengers to speak to the human frame of reference demonstrates that God is continually seeking a covenantal relationship with humanity. Therefore, humankind's response to communication should foster community, be participatory, and liberatory. Lastly, communication that responds to God's communication must be prophetic. The following section focuses on prophetic communication as the key to communicating the liberating, participatory diversity of the church, which is God's community.

2.5 Prophetic Communication in Christianity

Chriatianity and prophetic communication studies are divided into two periods: prophetic communication in the Old Testament and prophetic communication in the New Testament (Aldihol, 2014; Salvador, 2011; Sawyer, 2017; Wilberforce, 2019). Sawyer (2017) noted in his study of prophetic communication in the Old Testament that prophets were primarily viewed as proclaimers, a term derived from the Hebrew word for prophet, *nabi*. According to Sawyer (2017), the Hebrew Prophet was more than just a man who was inspired by God to foretell future events. The Prophet was a

divinely inspired messenger sent by God to interpret and communicate to the Israelites the divine will and purposes (Sawyer, 2017). His duties included preaching and prophesying (Aldihol, 2014; Sawyer, 2017). He was responsible for maintaining and expanding the knowledge of the Covenant among Yahweh's Chosen People, bringing them back when they strayed, and gradually preparing the way for the new kingdom of God, which the Messiah was to establish on earth (Aldihol, 2014; Sawyer, 2017). Prophecy, in general, signifies the supernatural message of the Prophet, and more especially, by custom, the predictive element of the prophetic message (Aldihol, 2014). The prophet generally displayed the following characteristics: a sense of divine calling; intelligent/tough decision-making; understanding; sense of responsibility; persistence; organisational skills; credibility; technical skills; sociability; and high levels of motivation (Aldihol, 2014; Rotherman, 2019; Sawyer, 2017).

According to Rotherman (2019), the call to the prophetic office is in the hands of God, who knows what He wants and when, where, and why He wants it at any given time. God chooses, prepares, calls, and guides each prophet individually, but in such a way that the call to prophetic office comes to the individual with convincing power and sufficient evidence that he and his associates know it with certainty (Rotherman, 2019; Sawyer, 2017). The prophetic gift rests upon the fundamental need for communication to take place between the Deity and the fallen family of humankind (Thamps, 2010). God's call to humanity to enter into communion with Godself was revealed through the prophets as a call to righteousness and holiness, the manifestation of union with God and obedience to the covenant (Sawyer, 2017; Thamps, 2010). In this regard, whatever truth was spoken and whatever consequences were heralded were spoken in love (Sawyer, 2017; Thamps, 2010). One of the more prominent messages of the prophets was a call for social justice (Rotherman, 2019; Thamps, 2010). The key to this prophetic

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message was the concept that there was an absolute link between ritual and ethical standards, so that sacrifice in the temple without justice for the underprivileged members of society was worthless (Rotherman, 2019; Thamps, 2010).

The early church fathers played a prophetic role in the development of doctrine in defence of the Christian faith against heresy, which was defined as false prophecy and unsound theological thought in the second and third centuries (Aldihol, 2014; Wilberforce, 2019). For example, Aldihol (2014) emphasised obedience to church authorities in the context of a single bishop as the church's leading figure, with authority over holding services and church actions, and the combined role of teaching, ruling, and prophet. Prophecy was not stifled at this time, but rather subdued through regulation by the church's developing officialdom (Aldihol, 2014). However, with the rise of heretical movements both within and outside the church, such as Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Montanism, which claimed divine wisdom and prophecy, there was a revival of the first-century state of affairs, which welcomed the expression of various Spirit-given gifts, also referred to as spiritual gifts (Wilberforce, 2019).

Due to the established church's opposition to the spread of heresy, an emphasis was placed at joint council meetings on apostolic authority, succession, and cooperation on these matters, with the development of Christian doctrine and the basis of scripture taking precedence over spiritual gifts (Wilberforce, 2019). The Old Testament was used as a source of discipline and doctrine, with prophecy subject to written records (Aldihol, 2014; Wilberforce, 2019). Although not forbidden, prophecy was subordinate to scripture (Aldihol, 2014; Wilberforce, 2019). As interest in interpreting the signs of the times waned, teachers and preachers assumed the prophetic role (Aldihol, 2014; Wilberforce, 2019).

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The work of Johnson and Arthur (2012) signifies modern prophetic communication in Christianity. According to the authors, the prophetic communication revolution took place in the fifteenth century, at the same time as the advent of the printing press, more than a thousand years after the prophetic role was incorporated into the functions of the priest. At that time, the only Bible available was the Latin Vulgate (Johnson & Arthur, 2012). Martin Luther's prophetic call to righteousness and holiness against the selling of indulgences, which offered forgiveness of sins for a price, sparked the Reformation (Atkison, 2010; Johnson & Arthur, 2012). Atkison (2010), commenting on Luther as a prophetic reformer, says that when God addresses the human being, and when that person hears and obeys, it is a shattering and terrifying experience. This experience provides the person experiencing it with surges of power and energy to proclaim and make effective the new truth. Copies of Luther's theses against the Catholic Church quickly spread across Europe, sparking a firestorm of debate (Atkison, 2010; Johnson & Arthur, 2012).

Luther's writings were easily disseminated and circulated after the invention of the printing press, reaching France, England, and Italy (Atkison, 2010; Johnson & Arthur, 2012). Printing had been around for about 75 years in Europe, and it had mostly consisted of expensive ecclesiastical books in Latin that few people read (Atkison, 2010; Johnson & Arthur, 2012). Luther's pamphlets were only a few pages long, inexpensive to purchase, and quickly printed (Atkison, 2010; Johnson & Arthur, 2012). Between 1518 and 1520, thirty of Luther's pamphlets were printed, while those wishing to counter Luther's views had difficulty getting published, with publishers having little interest in publishing pamphlets for which there was little demand (Atkison, 2010; Johnson & Arthur, 2012).

John Wesley, who converted after reading Luther's preface to Paul's Epistle to the Romans, also made good use of 18th century print media (Johnson & Arthur, 2012). In addition to his 140 sermons and his notes on the New Testament, Wesley published journals, magazines, and pamphlets (Johnson & Arthur, 2012). The topics ranged from theological debate to social justice issues such as the abolition of slavery and prison reform. Wesley established a medical nursery, and other social service support groups after incorporating elements of action into his speech (Johnson & Arthur, 2012). Wesley was an avid reader and writer. He began his day at four o'clock each morning and worked ceaselessly preparing sermons, studying the Scriptures, absorbing the classics, creating pamphlets, studying medicine, making judgments about current affairs, and writing books (Johnson & Arthur, 2012).

Wesley composed many pamphlets calling for environmental change in housing, wages, and community services and condemning the conditions of hospitals. Many of his concerns about health and social welfare came from his observations of the appalling conditions in which ordinary people lived (Johnson & Arthur, 2012). Wesley is said to have coined the saying "cleanliness is next to Godliness" (Johnson & Arthur, 2012, p.12). The sheer volume of Luther and Wesley's published writing demonstrates the impact that the printing press had on communication, making the Christian message and prophetic thought accessible to thousands. The sheer magnitude of published writing by Luther and Wesley underscores the impact that the printing press had on communication, making the Christian message and prophetic thought accessible to thousands (Wilberforce, 2019).

2.5.1 Christian Prophetic Communication in the 21st Century

Two fundamental factors contribute to the phenomenon of prophetic communication in the twentieth and 21st centuries (Drenth, 2017; Smothley, 2011). The global spread of Christianity has resulted in an increase in the number of people who have heard the Gospel as well as those who have accepted Jesus into their lives, with effects comparable to the growth and development of the early Christian communities in the New Testament (Smothley, 2011). Similarly to events two millennia ago, an increase in the number of Christians and those who listen to God, interpreting the signs of the times, has resulted in men, women, and children hearing and accepting the prophetic call to righteousness and holiness (Smothley, 2011). Simultaneously, the advancement and expansion of communication technology has resulted in greater accessibility, availability, and variety (Berths, 2017; Smothley, 2011). The stories of many prophets from other lands are received and retold as a result of the pervasiveness of the mass media and the opening of windows to many different worldviews and events.

Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the prophetic voices in Europe during and after the Second World War (Lukman, 2015). He was a theologian who left the protection of the United States to return to Nazi Germany and work in the Confessional Church in opposition to the Nazis during the Second World War. He was arrested and eventually executed in 1945 for plotting against Adolf Hitler just weeks before Germany surrendered (Lukman, 2015). His publication was smuggled out of prison letters and has served as an example of the modern prophetic call for righteousness. The story of Bonhoeffer echoes the biblical tradition of prophecy (Lukman, 2015). Like the Old Testament prophets who risked everything to expose corrupt kings and priests, Bonhoeffer understood that God calls us not only to care for the poor, oppressed, and vulnerable, but also to challenge any religious or secular power that perpetuates

injustice (Lukman, 2015). Many of the world's great civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr. and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, were inspired by his insistence on the significance of a committed response to Christ's Sermon on the Mount, a call to social justice (Lukman, 2015). His concept of "religionless Christianity" has aided Christian theology in navigating an uncertain future landscape. It is an idea that reveals the vitality and relevance of faith in a world that, as Bonhoeffer put it, has reached maturity (Lukman, 2015, p. 14).

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. can be considered a modern-day prophet who brought a message of freedom for his people while also speaking truths some did not want to hear (Berths, 2017). King's message was about more than civil rights (Berths, 2017). He was a zealous advocate for economic justice, bridging the gap between haves and have-nots and empowering the poorest to reach their full potential. He was opposed to war not only because of the cost in terms of lives and property destruction, but also because it diverts society's attention away from addressing the terrible ills that exist within it (Berths, 2017). King's legacy continues to inspire those who strive for justice and peace (Berths, 2017; Reddington, 2014). Unfortunately, his dream that one day all children will live in a country where they will be judged not by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character remains a prophetic vision (Berths, 2017; Reddington, 2014).

According to King's conception of the prophetic function of the contemporary church, the church must affirm that every human life is a reflection of divinity and that every act of injustice marries and defaces the image of God in man (Dearth, 2013; Reddington, 2014). In King's opinion, a prophetic utterance must be motivated by compassion for those who have been wronged as well as a desire to build a community

based on grace, forgiveness, and mutual aid (Dearth, 2013). Unlike Bonhoeffer's posthumous publications and recognition, King was surrounded by the media and the subject of news broadcasts on radio and television, as well as articles in magazines and newspapers, while performing his prophetic role in the United States of America. He gave regular interviews and speeches to journalists and media organisations. His "I Have a Dream" speech at the August 1963 March on Washington for Civil Rights at the Lincoln Memorial was not only attended by hundreds of thousands of marchers and civil rights supporters, but it was also broadcast live on radio and television to an audience of millions (Dearth, 2013; Reddington, 2014).

Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador is another example of a Christian prophetic leading voice in the 21st century (Goddison, 2015). In 1980, in the midst of a US funded war that the UN Truth Commission called genocidal, Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador promised history that life, not death, would have the last word. He was quoted as saying, "I don't believe in death without a resurrection. If they kill me, I will come back to life in the people of El Salvador" (Goddison, 2015, p. 24). On March 23, 1980, he delivered his final radio broadcast sermon directed at the National Guard, police, and military, which has been described as his most thunderous prophetic denunciation of the security forces' repressive acts (Goddison, 2015; Yandel & Pollenin, 2012). In the aforementioned radio broadcast, Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador stated that:

> I would like to make a special appeal to the men of the army, and in particular to the soldiers of the National Guard, the police, and the constabulary brothers! We are the same people! You are slaying your Campesino brothers and sisters! When a human being orders you to kill, the law of God must prevail: "You shall not kill!" No soldier is obliged to obey an order in violation of the law of God. No one is bound to obey an immoral law. It is time you recovered your conscience and obeyed your conscience instead of orders to commit sin. The church is the defender of God's rights, God's law, human dignity, and the worth

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of people. It cannot remain silent before such an abomination. We ask the government to consider seriously the fact that reforms are of no use when they are steeped in all this blood. In the name of God, in the name of these suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day, I implore you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression! (Yandel & Pollenin, 2012, p. 22).

The next day, as he celebrated Mass, a sharpshooter murdered him (Yandel & Pollenin, 2012). A number of those who attended his funeral were also shot in front of the cathedral (Yandel & Pollenin, 2012). At the height of oppression and persecution, Romero saw the church as a prophetic voice speaking truth to power. As a result, even the morning before his death, he is said to have reminded the congregation:

> If they ever take our radio [which had already been jammed and bombed], suspend our newspaper, silence us, put to death all of us priests, bishop included, and you are left alone as a people without priests, then each of you will have to be God's microphone. Each of you will have to be a messenger, a prophet. The church will always exist as long as even one baptised person is left alive! (Yandel & Pollenin, 2012, p. 20).

2.6 Christianity and Prophetism in Ghana

Scholars date the roots of prophetic ministry in Ghana to the years 1900 to 1950. (Aboagye, 2018; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002; Opoku, 2016). Different scholars have attributed the origin and continuation of prophets in Ghana to a variety of social, political, or theological factors (Aboagye, 2018; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002; Opoku, 2016). Beata's (1962) work, as cited by Opoku (2016), examined the origin and continuance of prophets in Ghana from the perspective that the African worldview of religion served as the catalyst for the development of the prophetic phenomena. According to the author, historically, prophetism was analogous to divination in the majority of Akan civilizations, where priests were consulted to divine the causes of various tragedies such as famine, unexplained death, unusual illness, and so on. They were also tasked with

foretelling a person's fortunes or fate, as well as prescribing solutions to any looming dangers (akwankyere) (Opoku, 2016).

According to Asamoah-Gyadu (2002), religion pervades all aspects of an African's life. As a result, people look for a spiritual explanation for every event in their lives (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002). Death, chronic disease, childlessness in a woman, and other similar situations are all thought to have spiritual causes (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002). The African worldview of religion was further strengthened by the missionaries who brought Christianity to Africa (Aboagye, 2018; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002). Aboagye (2018), for example, is of the opinion that the missionaries were the ones who introduced the concept of the devil and associated traditional gods with demons, a situation which eventually strengthened Africans' belief in witchcraft and demons. Aboagye (2018) also believes that the missionaries were the ones who associated traditional gods with demons. As a result of this, African Christians still struggle greatly to rid their minds of the notion that there is some sort of spiritual power behind the world (Aboagye, 2018). Such a state of those who have converted to Christianity provides fertile ground for the emergence and acceptance of prophetism in Ghana (Aboagye, 2018).

The first major prophetic activity in the country was by Prophet William Wade Harris, a Liberian, who in 1914 appeared in the Nzema area of south-western Ghana (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002; Larbi, 2001). When God called Harris into ministry, he was a prisoner serving a sentence for allegedly participating in a protest against the Americo-Liberian government's repressive policy toward the Grebo people (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002; Larbi, 2001). Harris' activities were characterised by an uncompromising attitude toward tribal gods, adaptation of indigenous ways of worship, a strong evangelistic

drive, and demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002; Larbi, 2001).

Following him was another prophet named Sampson Oppong, who was from Akontanim in the Bono Region of Ghana. He had no education and worshipped idols, but after a profound experience with God in which he was instructed to destroy all of his idols, he converted to Christianity and became a Christian (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002; Larbi, 2001). Following his encounter with God, he began an itinerant preaching career, calling for the abolition of fetishes and the abandonment of superstition and witchcraft. His work as a talisman destroyer earned him the title "Osebetutu," which means "talisman remover" (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002, p. 17). Despite his illiteracy, Asamoah-Gyadu (2002) claims that God endowed him with a remarkable knowledge of the Bible. In 1923, the Methodist Church claimed that Oppong's activities had resulted in 20,000 converts (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002; Larbi, 2001). Prophetism was incorporated into Ghanaian Christianity at that time (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002; Larbi, 2001).
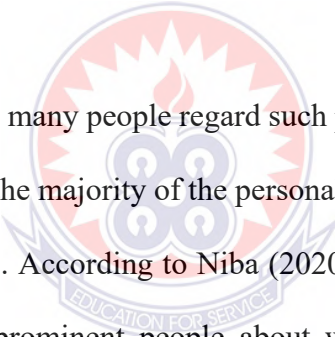
The rise of Penteco-Charismatic churches in Ghana has also increased prophetic phenomena (Aboagye, 2018; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). The Prophets are now well-known for their teachings on wealth, prophecy about people's personal lives, and miraculous deeds (Aboagye, 2018; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Prophetic stories fill the airwaves, newspapers, television stations, and social media (Aboagye, 2018; Boaheng, 2017; Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Boaheng (2017) investigated some aspects of contemporary Ghanaian prophetism and discovered that prophetic ministry in Ghana typically takes a problem-solving approach to ministry. The movement provides numerous benefits to followers of prophetic ministry (Boaheng, 2017). Some prophets, for example, have caused cripples to walk, the deaf to speak, and so on, in full view of their congregation.

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This ministry heals all types of illnesses, including cancer, hepatitis, hypertension, stroke, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS (Amoako, 2015; Boaheng, 2017). Some prophets even claim to be able to resurrect the dead. The poor are relieved of their plight by so-called "miracle money," which occurs when people discover money in their bank accounts that they did not previously deposit and thus cannot account for (Amoako, 2015; Boaheng, 2017).

The prophetic ministry has a large following because of the help and support it provides to followers (Amarteifio, 2013; Amoako, 2015; Mensah-Quaye, 2015). Yet at the same time, over-concentration on finding solutions to life challenges eventually has negative consequences for church members (Amarteifio, 2013; Mensah-Quaye, 2015). According to Amarteifio (2013), although prophetic activities are meant to help followers solve problems in their lives so that they can become more committed followers of Christ, the over-emphasis on the immediate benefits derived from prophetism results in the lack of committed Christians in most prophetic-oriented churches. However, not all prophetic-oriented churches, as observed by Boaheng (2017), use the problem-solving approach to ministry. Amarteifio (2013) asserts that in churches where solutions to human problems are overemphasised, people leave the church after finding a solution to their problems because such churches lack effective teaching that enhances effective discipleship. As a result, most followers of such prophetic-oriented churches, once they realise that these churches cannot help them grow spiritually, return to their former churches once their problem is resolved. This is why such churches fail in the long run (Amarteifio, 2013).

Additionally, playing a significant role in contemporary Ghanaian prophetism is the art of making accurate predictions about the future (Amarteifio, 2013; Boahene, 2017).

Ghanaian prophets assert that they have the ability to reveal to their followers what the future holds for them (Agyemang, 2019; Amarteifio, 2013; Boahene, 2017). Agyemang (2019) also observed that there is a recent trend in Ghanaian prophetism where prophets use their 31st December Watch Night Services to deliver people from past demonic influences and to prophesy longevity, prosperity, good health, God's favour, and other blessings upon the lives of individuals. At these services, many prophets also reveal imminent calamitous events, such as the death of prominent figures in the nation. For example, on December 31st, 2018, the Rev. Isaac Owusu-Bempah (founder of Glorious Word and Power Ministry church), for example, predicted the death of the national chief Imam Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu in 2019, which failed to happen (Niba, 2020).

According to Niba (2020), many people regard such prophecies as prophetic blackmail for material gain because the majority of the personalities to face misfortune tend to be high profile public figures. According to Niba (2020), the reason for this reasoning is that, in most cases, the prominent people about whom prophecies are given seek spiritual assistance from the prophets in order to avoid the calamities that are about to befall them (Niba, 2020). Spiritual assistance is commonly associated with akwankyer, which means spiritual direction or literally, showing the way (Niba, 2020). The prophet's services are paid for by the beneficiary (Niba, 2020).

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework section of a thesis presents the theoretical foundation upon which the research questions are analysed. This section provides a systematic overview of the theory relevant to the research problem, and demonstrates how the research questions are situated within this broader theoretical context.

2.7.1 Bhagwan's Model of Divine Communication

As the name suggests, James Bhagwan proposed this model in his attempt to contextualise the theology of prophetic communication (Jester, 2018; Monterey, 2016). Despite the fact that Bhagwan's (2003) work focused on the role of the news media in prophetic communication in contemporary Fiji-Island society, its overall relevance served as a useful lens to appreciate not only how prophecies are communicated but also how the reception should be approached anywhere else. In light of this, the current research is positioned within the framework of Bhagwan's model of divine communication. This is because the framework corresponds well with the aims and purposes of this research.

Bhagwan (2003) situated the model of divine communication within the ambit of Christology. He then proceeded to conceptualise the model into five distinct yet interrelated components. The first component was about God and creation, which Bhagwan (2003) asserts is the basis for Christian communication. According to Bhagwan (2003), the doctrine of creation institutes the relationship between God and His creation. Creation, in effect, was the result of an act of God's will, an act of speaking that released God's creative energy (Bhagwan, 2003; Jester, 2018). As a result, creation was dependent on and sustained by God (Bhagwan, 2003; Jester, 2018). The doctrine of creation, therefore, attests to a communicative relationship between God and God's creation (Bhagwan, 2003; Jester, 2018).

On Bhagwan's (2003) first component of God and creation, Jester (2018) argues that the images of God in the world are expressions of the relationship that God sustains with God's

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creation. Jester (2018) adds that the Christian view of creation affirms that no reality exists without God, that He created the world freely by His will, and that the world is a reality in and of itself. For these reasons, the images of God in the world are seen as expressions that communicate the nature of God (Jester, 2018). Thus, prophetic communication should take on the outer being or shape, such as creativity, love, joy, peace, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness, which is the communication of God's inner essence with creation (Bhagwan, 2003; Jester, 2018). It can also be said that while the world is not an extension of God, it is a reflection of God Himself. And so, prophetic communication is God's self-communication to the world as creation occurs through nature as well as time, space, and history.

The second component of Bhagwan's (2003) model of divine communication centred on history as a means of direct communication with God. Bhagwan (2003) stated in this component that Christianity is historically rooted. In this section, Bhagwan (2003) stated that Christianity is historically rooted. The message of redemption, which is central to Christianity, was offered to save humanity from the power of sin. It is a historical message that was communicated at specific points in history (Bhagwan, 2003; Jester, 2018). The redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 19:6) is an example of a redemption message communicated at a specific point in history. The resurrection, which provided the ultimate redemption through Jesus (Rom. 8:18-25), also took place in time and space. These redemptive experiences, which not only reflect past events but also make future promises, provide evidence that prophetic communication is about God's redemptive power being revealed and communicated through people whom God has selected for His use (Atkinson, 2017; Hooke, 2011).

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Hooke (2011) observed that the historical action and experience of God have profound implications for prophetic communication. The first is that prophetic communication must be contextual as well as historical. Second, God must be communicated with through the message in prophetic encounters. In other words, the message should be about God and his redeeming power (Hooke, 2011). Third, prophetic communication in a specific context must include both speech and action, because the Word of God must be directly proportionate with both speech and its accompanying action (Hooke, 2011). Finally, prophetic communication must be considered as an ongoing process in which more of the message is communicated or revealed each time (Hooke, 2011).

Bhagwan (2003) posited that the third component of his model of divine communication is language, which he referred to as the "voice of God" (p. 54). Bhagwan (2003) bases his argument on Exodus 4:12, where God tells Moses not only to go to Pharaoh and speak on God's behalf. Speaking was the most direct form of divine communication, and it could be intrapersonal (the inner monologue of the soul) or interpersonal (audible speech). The prophets and angels have been acknowledged as God's messengers. The divine speech indicator of *"Thus saith the Lord"* at the beginning of prophetic utterances attests to God's use of intelligible language (Atkinson, 2017, p. 45). Therefore, when it comes to prophetic communication, it is necessary to pay attention to the intelligibility of the language that is being used. Understanding humanity in light of the *Imago Dei*, which literally translates to "image of God," is essential to developing an interaction that is on an appropriate level between God and humankind (Bhagwan, 2003; Atkinson, 2017). This makes the contextualization and translation of divine communication much easier while ensuring that biblical and theological truths are preserved (Atkinson, 2017, p. 45).

The fourth component of Bhagwan's (2003) model of divine communication is angels, who are seen as heralds of God's message. God speaks through angels to God's chosen servants and through prophets to God's chosen people (Girth, 2018). While angels are given various divine tasks such as assisting and protecting humanity (Genesis 24, Psalms 91:11-13), executing judgement (Matthew 13:24-50), serving in heaven (Revelation 8-9), and being spiritual warriors (Revelation 12:7-12), their primary function is to be a visible manifestation of God's word. Angels convey God's messages of judgement, instruction, pleasure, anger, hope, and love to His prophets (Bhagwan, 2003; Girth, 2018). According to Girth (2018), prophetism is closely associated with angelic visits. He emphasises that when prophets of God receive these angelic visits, it represents the personal visible manifestation of a heaven-dwelling invisible God on Earth and His desire to come close to His people in a personal, affirming, and empowering encounter (Girth, 2018).

God's prophets also serve as His oracle (Donte, 2015). The fifth component of Bhagwan's (2003) model of divine communication mentions prophets, who are oracles who determine God's divine will in the affairs of mankind, among other things. When it comes to communication in the Bible, the term "oracle" can refer both to divine responses to a question that is posed to God as well as to proclamations that God makes on his own initiative and without being prompted by anyone (Donte, 2015). Oracles were prophecies in the sense that while they frequently provided information about the future, they also occasionally provided guidance regarding choices that needed to be made in the present (Donte, 2015). Smith and Firth (2016) distinguished between oracles that were sought and those that came without any request when determining why oracles are given. They called the first "decision oracles" and the second "pronunciation oracles" (Smith & Firth, 2016, p.5). When people asked God a question

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or sought His advice, decision oracles invoked. For example, David needed to know when to attack the Philistines. So he enquired of God. The responses he received were oracles (2 Samuel 5:19; 2 Samuel 5:23-24). Saul, Israel's first king, was chosen by an oracle (1 Samuel 10:20-24). The casting of lots was used to communicate with God in that case. The drawing of lots was regarded as a divine oracle. Decision oracles were thus God's response to present-day questions and concerns. They did not condemn sin or predict the future in any way (Smith & Firth, 2016).

Fundamentally, Bhagwan's (2003) model of divine communication seeks to express, through the medium of prophetic communication, how God communicates with humanity and, in turn, how humanity receives such messages. To authenticate such communications, Atkinson (2017) advises Christians who are the receivers of such communications to cross-check the prophetic messages with the various components of prophecy outlined in the Bible and by Bhagwan (2003). Predicated on this, this study uses Bhagwan's (2003) model of divine communication to look at how prophecies are communicated in Ghana and how they should be received.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The current chapter is focused on providing an overview of existing studies related to the present study's subject matter, while simultaneously identifying research gaps that existed in prior investigations. The primary objective of this undertaking is to pave the way for this study to contribute new ideas and perspectives to the existing literature on church communication, particularly as it pertains to prophetic communication in Christianity. After conducting a thorough review of the available literature, it has become apparent that there has been very little attention given to the practice of how prophecy is communicated and received in Ghana. Consequently, the current study is

poised to address this research gap in subsequent chapters, offering a fresh perspective on the topic. By doing so, this research aims to contribute significantly to the body of literature on church communication and, more specifically, prophetic communication in Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE

# METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the study's approach, design, sample size and sampling technique, data collection methods, and the procedure used for data collection and analysis.

3.1 Research Approach

The present investigation adopts a qualitative research approach, which is grounded in a fundamental philosophical premise that accords human experience a significant role in shaping knowledge and comprehension (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). This philosophical foundation stems from the constructivist perspective, which asserts that knowledge is not an objective truth that is waiting to be discovered, but rather it is a product of human interactions and experiences (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Qualitative research, underpinned by constructivism, endeavours to gain insights into the ways in which people create their own realities and how these realities influence their conduct and interactions with others. In view of the above, the current study employed a qualitative research approach for several reasons. First and foremost, qualitative research is well-suited for exploring the perspectives, experiences, and emotions of specific individuals, generating subjective data. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate the opinions of a select group of prominent Ghanaian clerics on prophetic communication and reception (Hancock, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

The qualitative research paradigm is centred on human perception and comprehension, where the researcher endeavours to comprehend the significance of a phenomenon from

the outlooks of participants (Creswell, 2014). Consequently, Denzin and Lincoln (2007) characterised qualitative research as an interpretive and naturalistic methodology. This indicates that qualitative researchers analyse phenomena to comprehend or interpret them in relation to the significance that individuals attribute to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). Correspondingly, the data gathered was solely based on the viewpoints of participants in the study. Given the objective of qualitative researchers to examine a particular phenomenon comprehensively, this current study does not involve any generalisation (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, in qualitative research, the social phenomena being studied manifest spontaneously, devoid of the artificiality that may be observed in experimental or survey research (Hancock, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Hence, the researcher refrained from attempting to manipulate or influence the phenomena under investigation in this study, with the intention of maintaining the genuineness of the data.
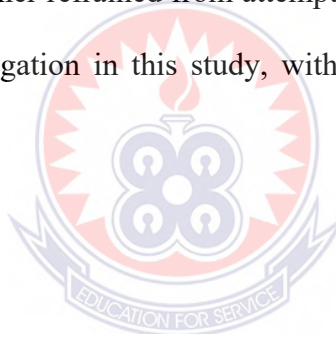
3.2 Research Design

According to Yin (2009), research design is the logic that connects the data to be gathered (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial research questions. A research design, to put it another way, is an action plan for getting from here to there, where here may be described as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) to these questions (Yin, 2009). When using a qualitative research approach, there are several research designs to choose from. Among these are ethnography, phenomenology, and case studies. The case study design was adopted for this study.

3.2.1 Case Study

A case study design is utilised when a researcher wants to delve deeper into a phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Generally, the research questions help to establish the best research design for the study (Creswell, 2014). Thus, according to Yin (2009), a case study may be applicable when a researcher's research questions are designed to explain a current phenomenon (such as "how" and "why" a certain phenomenon occurs). In clarifying what a case study is, Yin (2009) explains that a case study is an empirical inquiry that analyses a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not readily visible. Case study research is also a qualitative approach in which the researcher investigates a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time by collecting detailed, in-depth data from multiple sources of information and reporting a case description and case themes (Creswell, 2014).

According to the above-mentioned authors' explanation, this study used the case study design because, first, the case study design provides this study with an action plan that thoroughly investigates the phenomenon of prophecy communication in Ghana and how its audiences should receive these communications in depth and within its real-world context. Second, using Creswell's (2014) description, the phenomena of prophecy communication in Ghana is a contemporary bounded system, and data was collected over time and later presented by categorising the findings into themes.

3.3 Sampling Strategy and Size

Qualitative approaches necessitate distinct sample techniques from the typically random and probabilistic sampling employed by quantitative researchers (Daymon &

Holloway, 2010). They do not begin with the development of a strict sample frame, as is the case with quantitative studies, because qualitative sampling evolves as researchers identify new paths and leads to study (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). According to Daymon and Holloway (2010), qualitative researchers' sample procedures are guided by the fundamental premise of obtaining rich, in-depth information. Who you choose for your study, where you choose them, and when you choose them are all determined by the goal of the research. Thus, the term "purposeful sampling" is employed.

In addition, Lindlof and Taylor (2017) argue that qualitative research cannot capture every phenomenon as it occurs. As a result, many qualitative researchers employ a sampling technique to guide their selection of what to observe or who to interview. The argument by Lindlof and Taylor (2017) highlights the importance of purposeful participant selection in qualitative contexts because, with the right sampling technique, researchers may make systematic contact with a phenomenon with minimal wasted effort. Creswell (2014) further notes that the objective of qualitative research is to select people or places (or written or visual resources) that will assist the researcher in comprehending the problem and the research inquiry. In purposive sampling, the selection of participants, settings, or other sample units is based on specific criteria (Patton, 2002). The sample units are selected on the basis of specific qualities or characteristics that will facilitate in-depth exploration and comprehension of the primary themes that the researcher wishes to investigate (Patton, 2002).

From the preceding explanations, it is clear that a qualitative researcher chooses participants or materials that will help them answer the research questions; and thus, the primary purpose of this study, which is to investigate how prophecy should be

communicated and received in Ghana, is the overarching criterion that guided the selection of participants, documents, and sites. First of all, a participant has to be someone who possesses adequate knowledge of prophetic communication and reception, so the study selected six eminent Ghanaian clerics: The Rev. Prof. J.O.Y Mante, Chairman of the Ghana Christian Council (Presbyterian Church of Ghana); Col. Dr. Samuel Amponsah, Vice Chairman of the Ghana Christian Council (The Salvation Army); Elder Marcus B. Nash, Senior Leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Archbishop Nicholas Duncan Williams, representing the National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches (NACCC); Apostle (Dr.) Aaron Ami-Narh, Head of the Apostolic Church Ghana; and Apostle Eric Nyamekye, head of the Church of Pentecost, Ghana. The study selected these six personalities so as to get a cross-section of Christian representations, as Biber (2017) defines representativeness as a diverse range of perspectives for an investigation that captures the full range of variability in a population.

The selection of the six eminent Ghanaian clerics as the sample size of the study is justified by the fact that sample sizes are not really material in qualitative studies (Daymon & Holloway, 2001; Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2017), qualitative studies, such as the current research, do not produce data that can be subjected to rigorous statistical procedures and, therefore, do not allow generalisation to a population. It also follows from the fact that qualitative studies focus on social practices in a historical or cultural setting and that the question of whether they are normally distributed in a population is immaterial. Daymon and Holloway (2010) also describe qualitative research as "small-scale investigations." In their opinion, qualitative researchers are interested in conducting in-depth studies in order to produce a rich, detailed, holistic description. Small sample sizes are therefore the norm

(Daymon & Holloway, 2010). The researcher nonetheless ensured that the sample size was not too small. This was done to allow for adequate data and in-depth analysis, a position endorsed by Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2017).

The researcher also retrieved and analysed each of the three 31st December 2021 Watch Night service videos featuring three Ghanaian prophets. These prophets included Prophet Nigel Gaisie, founder and leader of Prophetic Hill Chapel, Accra; Prophet Isaac Owusu Bempah, the founder and leader of Glorious Word Power Ministry International, Accra; and Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi, founder and general overseer of Glorious Wave Church International, Accra). The videos were retrieved by the official social media pages of the sampled Ghanaian prophets. 31st December Watch Night service, also known as New Year's Eve service, is a traditional religious observance in Ghana. These services are typically held in churches and other places of worship, and are designed to provide an opportunity for people to reflect on the past year and to look forward to the New Year with hope and optimism (Agyemang, 2022). The aforementioned prophets and their videos were chosen because, according to Agyemang (2022), the nature of 31st December Watch Night service in Ghana is becoming increasingly prophetic, particularly among names such as Prophet Nigel Gaisie, Prophet Isaac Owusu Bempah, and Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi. Due to the controversy that occasionally surrounded the messages delivered as prophecies, the 31 st December Watch Night services have grown in popularity on social media platforms over time.

3.4 Data Collection Method

Snape and Spencer (2003) aver that certain data collection methods have also been identified with qualitative research such as: observational methods, in-depth interviewing, group discussions, narratives, and the analysis of documentary evidence.

This study collected data through the utilisation of interviews and analysis of documentary evidence on some prophetic proclamations in Ghana. These documentary materials included the December 31, 2021 prophetic declaration of Prophet Nigel Gaisie, founder and leader of Prophetic Hill Chapel, Accra; Prophet Isaac Owusu Bempah, the founder and leader of Glorious Word Power Ministry International, Accra; and Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi, founder and general overseer of Glorious Wave Church International, Accra.

3.4.1 Interviews

Creswell (2014) describes qualitative interviews as the researcher conducting face-to-face interviews with participants, telephone or Internet interviews with participants, or focus group interviews with six to eight participants in a group. These interviews consist of unstructured, generally open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' perspectives and opinions on the subject of inquiry. Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2013) define an interview as a professional dialogue with the objective of eliciting a participant's experiences and viewpoints and capturing their language and thoughts in relation to a predetermined topic. The authors feel that interviews are utilised when the researcher seeks to answer questions regarding the participants' own experience, comprehension, perceptions, and construction of objects (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

In accordance with the above explanations, the researcher for this study was able to conduct semi-structured interviews with four of the six indicated study participants. They were: The Rev. Prof. J.O.Y Mante, Chairman of the Ghana Christian Council (Presbyterian Church of Ghana); Elder Marcus B. Nash, Senior Leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Apostle (Dr.) Aaron Ami-Narh, Head of the Apostolic Church of Ghana; and Apostle Eric Nyamekye, head of the Church of

Pentecost, Ghana. Through the interview with them, the researcher got to know and understand their appreciation of prophecy and how it should be communicated and received in a world that is currently highly mediated and hyper-instant (Washington, 2018). However, the researcher was unable to speak with Archbishop Nicholas Duncan Williams, who represents the National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches (NACCC), and Col. Dr. Samuel Amponsah, Vice Chairman of the Ghana Christian Council (The Salvation Army), to get their thoughts on the inquiry's subject matter.

3.4.2 Document Analysis

For qualitative case studies, which are in-depth investigations that result in lengthy descriptions of a single phenomenon, event, organisation, or program, document analysis is particularly helpful as a research technique (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Thus, according to Bowen (2009), document analysis provides researchers with a systematic method for reviewing or evaluating documents, including both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material, and may consist of words or images that have been recorded without the intervention of a researcher. This assertion is appropriate given that the researcher did not develop or co-produce the electronic materials obtained for this study, as they were posted without his knowledge prior to his study. This lends the documents a natural appeal and a measure of inherent validity (Leavy, 2014).

According to Bowen (2009), documents can take many different forms, including advertisements, attendance registers, and minutes of meetings; manuals; background papers; books and brochures; diaries and journals; letters and memos; maps and charts; the newspaper, etcetera. However, in the context of this study, the researcher retrieved

and analysed videos of the prophets (Prophet Nigel Gaisie, founder and leader of Prophetic Hill Chapel, Accra; Prophet Isaac Owusu Bempah, the founder and leader of Glorious Word Power Ministry International, Accra; and Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi, founder and general overseer of Glorious Wave Church International, Accra) that were uploaded on their official social media pages. The researcher approached the videos as documents, viewing them as a repository of ideas, opinions, and perspectives pertaining to prophetism and its communication.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher sent out an official letter to all of the participants at the commencement of the data collection. In the letter, the researcher explained the objective of the study as well as the participants' roles in it. The letters were personally delivered to the workplaces of all of the participants. After several follow-ups on the letter, four of the participants, specifically Rev. Prof. J.O.Y Mante, Chairman of the Ghana Christian Council (Presbyterian Church of Ghana); Elder Marcus B. Nash, Senior Leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Apostle (Dr.) Aaron Ami-Narh, Head of the Apostolic Church of Ghana; and Apostle Eric Nyamekye, head of the Church of Pentecost, Ghana, agreed to meet the researcher. In spite of the fact that they were all in agreement that the interview should take place in their respective offices, their proposed interview times varied greatly. They had decided to do the interviews at separate times.

The researcher quickly agreed to meet them on the proposed dates and times, knowing fully well that it was difficult to secure an interview with them due to their busy schedules. The researcher emailed them the interview guide and then called them to clarify some of the details that were included in the interview guide. It was important

for the researcher to make sure that the participants understood the direction of the interview. This is because the success of the process in a one-on-one interview is equally dependent on the interviewee as well as the interviewer in terms of both parties understanding their roles (Braun & Clarke, 2013). On the day of the interviews, the researcher took the participants through an additional run of the interview guide to ensure everything was understood. Again, he reassured them that the interview was being conducted just for academic purposes and nothing else, and that, as a result, they should not be hesitant to completely express themselves on subjects that they are aware of. Nevertheless, they are not required to answer questions to which they do not feel comfortable replying or for which they do not have an answer.

During the interview, English was used as the language of communication. The reason for this is that all of the study participants stated that the English language was a more effective means of communication for them. As part of the process, the researcher asked for permission to record the interviews with his Sony UX560 audio recorder, which was granted by all participants. The interviews lasted between 12 and 20 minutes. Each session was a success. The interviews lasted between 12 minutes to 20 minutes. Each session was successful. After thanking the participants for the sessions, the researcher returned home. He dedicated time to each interview and transcribed them into a Word document. Later, he converted the Word documents to PDF files in order to prevent accidental data modifications. The materials were then printed for analysis. This method adheres to Altheide and Schneider's (2013) recommendation to save the retrieved data for future research since it is easier to search and a more secure method of examining data because the researcher can return to it at any point during the study.

The researcher devised a coding technique using the emerging codes. In order to get a comprehensive understanding of the contents, he first skimmed the collected data and then engaged with it closely, taking detailed notes at every level. After gaining a thorough understanding of the data's issues, he began coding. As several of the categories were intertwined, he subsequently derived themes from them. Videos gathered and analysed from the official social media pages of the prophets named above were used to enhance the interview data. The primary objective of this additional data collection stage was to give a context-rich background for prophets and their communication of prophecy, as well as how audiences are supposed to respond to certain pronouncements.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis – Thematic Analysis

Data analysis is the act of cataloguing and deconstructing raw data in order to reconstitute it as patterns, themes, concepts, and propositions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Data analysis, according to Creswell (2014), therefore involves a process of data reduction. In other words, it is the step-by-step procedure a researcher goes through to make sense of vast amounts of data. The current study employed thematic data analysis. According to Smith and Firth (2011), thematic analysis is a method of interpretation in which data is systematically explored to uncover patterns within the data in order to produce an enlightening account of the phenomena. This indicates that, while doing thematic analysis, the researcher recognized recurring patterns, codes, or themes and provided a full discussion of each code. Additionally, according to Braun and Clark (2013), thematic analysis is a technique for detecting, analysing, and reporting data patterns.

As argued by Flick (2013), qualitative data analysis aims at describing issues in the field or a phenomenon in greater detail. The researcher, in turn, read through the field notes and interview transcripts to identify descriptive issues. In a detailed manner, the researcher described the identified themes and also ensured that in-depth and direct quotations were used to support the detailed descriptions and discussions of the research questions. Major thematic areas were deduced from the transcribed data collected from the interviews. This supports views expressed by Creswell (2014), which point out that in analysing data, the researcher needs to sort the information gathered. The effect of this process is to aggregate data into a small number of themes. These themes were inductively generated. According to Braun and Clark (2006), with an inductive type of thematic data analysis, the researcher does not try to fit the data into any form of preconceived analysis or pre-existing coding frame. This current study, therefore, applies this approach. The researcher further interpreted the findings by using concepts and theories to draw meanings from the responses of the informants. Direct quotations were also used to support the interpretations and discussions.

3.7 Ethical Issues

It is imperative to acknowledge that conducting research involves a significant responsibility towards ethical considerations. As pointed out by Creswell (2014), one crucial ethical concern pertains to the necessity of seeking permission from the gatekeepers of an organisation or social group before collecting data. Failure to obtain consent may result in various ethical issues and can cause harm to individuals or organisations. Therefore, it is unethical to enter an organisation or social group without prior consent from the gatekeepers.

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To understand the ethical implications of conducting research, it is essential to consider the nature and function of ethics itself. According to Jennings (2003), ethics is a branch of philosophy concerned with moral questions. It revolves around beliefs and standards related to concepts such as good and bad, right and wrong. Ethics has a normative function, which means it guides individual and collective behaviour by considering how one should behave from a moral perspective (Vanclay, Baines & Taylor, 2013). Thus, ethical considerations in research are grounded in moral principles and values that reflect a deep sense of respect for human dignity and welfare.

This study employed both interviewees and documentary evidence from the 31st December Watch Night Service in Ghana to acquire its data. On the basis of the documentary evidence, there were no study participants; therefore, the focus was on ensuring that the selection and analysis of data from the videos of the selected prophets exhibited objectivity (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Regarding the use of private individuals' footage in film research projects, Wimmer and Dominick (2011) recommended researchers to be morally cautious. However, if the footage is intended for the general public, it may be freely analysed and quoted for research purposes without the author's consent (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The selected footages were public communication and published on the prophets' and their respective church's social media platforms, which are also public platforms, as a result, this study did not require the permission of the creators of these footages for the analysis, as suggested by Wimmer and Dominick (2011).

On the basis of the other part of this study that required interviewees, Halai (2006) observed that comprehensive research is a moral and ethical venture and should be interested in ensuring that respondents in any research are protected from any harm.

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The current study ensured that research respondents' autonomy, well-being, safety, and dignity were protected. Only respondents who agreed to the study were interviewed. Before the researcher started the collection of data, participants for the study were informed about the study, assured of their confidentiality, and were given maximum respect throughout the study. Participants chose freely to engage in the research but were informed to withdraw anytime they felt uncomfortable in the interviewing process. Consent from the participants was sought before all recordings were made. The researcher was as objective as possible and did not in any way knowingly misrepresent or attempt to alter the participant's responses. More so, in dealing with confidentiality, all private issues that were discussed were kept highly confidential except those that were relevant to the study and needed to be known. On the part of anonymity, the names of the respondents were not in any way disclosed. Rather, they were represented with alphanumeric codes such as R1 for respondent 1 and R2 for respondent 2.
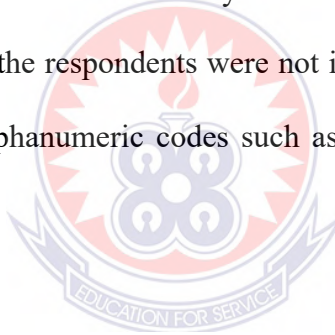
3.8 Trustworthiness

The meaning that validity and reliability carry in qualitative research is different from what they connote in quantitative research (Creswell, 2014). Thus, validity in qualitative research is geared towards determining the accuracy and truthfulness of research findings. Hence, Anney (2014) suggests that researchers should rather consider dependability (in preference to reliability), credibility (in preference to internal validity), transferability (in preference to external validity) and confirmability (in preference to objectivity) as trustworthiness criteria for qualitative investigation, as propounded by Lincoln and Guba (2000).

In agreement with Lincoln and Guba (2000), the study adopted interviews and document analysis as data collection methods for triangulation purposes, which is in line with Riemer's (2008) argument that to increase the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, qualitative researchers must use multiple data sources and methods of data collection. Thus, after gathering data from the interviews with the study's participants, the researcher augmented the findings with evidence from the document analysis. This was meant to provide further insights into the elements under study. The study was conducted in an objective manner and subjected to peer review. The study gave a thick description of the phenomena under study as purported by Geertz (1973) in Daymon and Holloway (2011).

Finally, another way the researcher legitimises the findings of the data collected was the use of the member checking strategy. This is where the researcher returns the manuscripts from an interview and document analysis to the participants to confirm if their accounts of the data collection interactions were accurately captured by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba 1985, cited in Creswell, 2013). The researcher returned the interview transcript that was extracted from the recorded audio to the participants to confirm if the data corresponded to the responses they gave. They went through it all and confirmed that, indeed, those were a true representation of their responses.

3.9 Chapter Summary

The current chapter is focused on elucidating the techniques and processes that were utilised to collect data for the research. The research, in question, adopts a qualitative approach and is fixed on a case study design to investigate the phenomenon of prophetic communication in Ghana. The aim is to examine how this communication is communicated and how audiences approach it. To collect the data from the field,

multiple methods were employed, namely interviews and document analysis. Each method was chosen based on its appropriateness for the research question and was rationally justified. The research was conducted with great emphasis on ethical considerations. Confidentiality, anonymity, reciprocity, informed and voluntary consent were adhered to throughout the research process.

The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research approach, research design, sampling technique and size, data collection method, data collection process, method of data analysis, ethical issues, and trustworthiness. By explicating these crucial aspects of the research, the reader is provided with a clear understanding of how the research was conducted, and can evaluate its validity and reliability. In conclusion, the chapter contributes significantly to the research by providing a detailed account of the techniques and processes that were used to collect data for the research. It also highlights the ethical considerations that were followed throughout the research process, ensuring that the research was conducted with integrity and validity.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussion from the analysis of data collected from document analysis and interviews with study participants regarding prophecy communication and reception in Ghana. The data gathered was simplified into themes to ensure easy presentation and interpretation. The analysis was aided by the existing studies and theoretical framework discussed in Chapter two.

4.1 RQ1. How are prophecies communicated in Ghana?

Prophecy is an important aspect of Christianity and is seen as a way for God to communicate with humanity (Sawyer, 2017; Wilberforce, 2019). Prophets are individuals who receive messages from God and then share those messages with others. These messages can include warnings, guidance, and predictions about the future (Wilberforce, 2019). However, prophecy communication is fraught with controversy within the Christian community (Aldihol, 2014). In the era of mass media, prophecy communication has become even more contentious (Sawyer, 2017). With the rise of television, radio, and the internet, it is easier than ever for people to disseminate prophetic messages to a wide audience (Sawyer, 2017). This has resulted in a proliferation of self-proclaimed prophets claiming to know the future, and many of their predictions have piqued the interest of both clergy and well-meaning citizens (Sawyer, 2017; Salvador, 2011).

Concerns have been rising in Ghana regarding the widespread dissemination of prophetic communication through the nation's many forms of mass media, as there is a

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possibility that this could result in bewilderment or even panic (Stiles-Ocran, 2017). As a result, it is critical to assess how prophecies are communicated (Stiles-Ocran, 2017). Thus, in the case of prophecy communication in Ghana, this research question sought to examine the various ways prophecy is presented in Ghana. From the analysis of data gathered, the following themes were identified to answer the research question: through biblical exegesis, visions and dreams, and direct revelation from God. These themes were analysed using Bhagwan's model of divine communication and related literature from Chapter two of this study to explain how prophecies are communicated in Ghana.

4.1.1 Through Biblical Exegesis

Biblical exegesis is the process of interpreting and explaining the meaning of a passage or text in the Bible (Ayers, 2018). This process typically involves analysing the historical, cultural, and literary context of the passage, as well as studying the original languages in which the text was written (Ayers, 2018). Exegesis is often used by scholars and theologians to gain a deeper understanding of the Bible and to apply its teachings to contemporary issues (Minton, 2020). Biblical exegesis is one of the ways prophecies were communicated to the people in Ghana. The data revealed that prophets use biblical exegesis to communicate prophecy by interpreting and applying the teachings of the Bible to their own time and context. This included drawing on specific passages or themes from the Bible to convey the prophetic message or make a prediction about certain future events. The prophets used various methods of interpretation such as historical-critical, literary, or theological methods.

The historical-critical method is a method of interpreting the Bible that looks at the historical and cultural context in which the text was written, as well as its literary form, in order to understand its meaning (Schartz, 2015). This method can help the prophet

to understand the original intent of the text and how it applies to their own time and context (Schartz, 2015). The literary method is also a method of interpreting the Bible that focuses on the literary structure and style of the text, and how it contributes to its meaning. This method can help the prophet to understand how the text is communicating its message and how it can be applied to their own time and context (Kilgore & Vincent, 2006). The theological method, on the other hand, signifies a method of interpreting the Bible that focuses on the theological themes and concepts present in the text, and how they relate to the overall message of the Bible. This method can help the prophet to understand how the text is communicating a message about God and how it can be applied to their own time and context (Schartz, 2015).

Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi employed lots of the historical-critical method to interpret and apply the teachings of the Bible to the time and context he was prophesying in, aligning his message with the teachings of the Bible, and conveying it as a continuation of God's revelation to Ghanaians. He applied his understanding of prophetic biblical texts to address the social and political issues. For example, in one of the instances, Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi discussed the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 17-19. He explained to his congregation that the story of Elijah was not just a myth or legend, but rather a historical event that occurred in ancient Israel. He then went on to use the historical-critical method to analyse the text, pointing out that Elijah's prophecy of a drought was a direct result of the idolatry and unfaithfulness of the Israelites. Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi then applied this historical context to the current situation in Ghana, noting that the country was also facing a spiritual drought due to the widespread corruption and moral decay among the leaders. He urged his congregation to turn away from their sins and return to God, just as the Israelites did during Elijah's time. He noted that:

> ...Just as God sent drought upon the Israelites as a result of their idolatry and unfaithfulness, God's anger will be released onto you [Ghanaians leaders] if you do not view this as a wake-up call and turn away from your iniquities...

In the case of using biblical exegesis as a literary method to communicate prophecy, Prophet Owusu Bempah often used allegories and symbolisms to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson in his prophecies. Allegories and symbolisms are literary devices used to convey a deeper meaning or message through the use of symbolic characters, objects, or actions (Schartz, 2015). For example, Prophet Owusu Bempah used the parable of the sower in Matthew 13 to explain how different people would respond to his prophecies. He explained how the different types of soil represent the different attitudes of people towards God's word. He used vivid imagery, such as describing the rocky soil as representing a heart that is hard and unyielding, and the thorny soil as representing a heart that is easily distracted by the cares of the world. Through these literary methods, Prophet Owusu Bempah emphasised that:

> ...Saa nsɛm yi im telling you, ebinom bɛtie na wɔayɛ ho adwuma...afoforo nso, de bɛto nkyɛn…Mma nnyɛ sɛ abotan dɔte a ɛwɔ Mateo 13. Nkɔmhyɛ yɛ Onyankopɔn asɛm a ɛyɛ nokware. Sɛ wopo a, wobɛpira wo ho na ɛnyɛ me…

Translated as:

> ...These words I'm telling you, some will listen and work on them...others too, will put it aside…Do not be like Matthew 13's rocky soil. Prophecies are God's unequivocal word. If you reject it, you will hurt yourself rather than me…

During his 2021 31st Night service, Prophet Nigel Gaisie, on the other hand, used both the literary and theological methods of interpreting the Bible to communicate prophecy. An example of this can be seen in one of his prophetic ministrations during the service where he discusses the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. Using literary methods, he breaks down the story and analyses the characters and their actions, highlighting the

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themes of betrayal, forgiveness, and God's sovereignty. He then applies these themes to Ghana's current political and social issues, using them to convey a message of God's sovereignty and justice if Ghanaians do not heed his prophecy and seek forgiveness from God. Additionally, using theological methods, he explains the deeper spiritual meaning behind the story of Joseph, drawing parallels to the life of Christ and the redemption of humanity. He encourages the congregation to trust in God's plan and to have faith in the face of difficult circumstances.

Inviting a gentleman from the congregation to the front of the auditorium, he illustrated the spiritual significance behind the narrative of Joseph. He informed the gentleman and the congregation that the gentleman in question possessed the "Josephic anointing." He told the man that his coworkers and members of his family would turn on him in the next year and try to take his life, but if he would remain at the feet of the Lord, God would use the manipulations and schemes that his coworkers and members of his family would devise against him to his benefit. He asked the congregation to take note of the fact that:

> ...this man is going to become one of the most powerful corporate moguls in Ghana over the next five years…

In the context of communicating prophecies, many Christian scholars like Ayers (2018) and Schartz (2015) have emphasised that exegesis can be used to help clarify and understand the meaning of prophetic messages, and to provide context for the message being conveyed. In addition to this, Minton (2020) mentioned that the Bible serves as the foundation of the Christian faith. In order to effectively communicate prophecies, it is essential to rely on biblical exegesis since this ensures that the prophecy is interpreted and understood in the context of the overall message and teachings of the Bible. It is

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easy to understand why this is the case given that all three prophets, Prophet Emmanuel Badu, Prophet Owusu Bempah, and Prophet Nigel Gaisie, utilised biblical exegesis in order to provide context and clarity regarding the meaning of their respective prophecies.

Drenth (2017) provides a rationale for why Christian prophets would want to apply biblical exegesis while communicating prophecies. He explained that if Christian prophets do not apply biblical exegesis in communicating their prophecies, it may result in confusion or misunderstanding of their messages. In addition, Drenth (2017) makes the point that if Christian prophets do not use biblical exegesis it may also call into question the credibility of the prophet and their understanding of the Bible. It is important for prophets or any religious leaders to have a deep understanding of the texts they are interpreting in order to ensure accurate communication of the message (Drenth, 2017).

Again, with regard to the manner in which all three prophets—Prophet Emmanuel Badu, Prophet Owusu Bempah, and Prophet Nigel Gaisie—had utilised biblical interpretation, one can deduce two primary arguments in support of what the aforementioned authors had established. To begin, each of the three prophets is a Christian religious leader for their respective Christian congregations. They had presented their prophecies within the scope of a church service that had been organised for the evening of December 31st, 2021. Secondly, as preachers who had mounted the pulpit on that fateful evening, their prophecies for the night were delivered at the same time as their sermons for the night. Given the context and setting of the address, it was conceivable that the prophets would deliver their prophecies using biblical exegesis. Thus, as Drenth (2017) and Minton (2020) noted, since Prophet Emmanuel Badu,

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Prophet Owusu Bempah, and Prophet Nigel Gaisie wanted to ensure that their prophecy is interpreted and understood in the context of the overall message and teachings of the Bible, they relied heavily on the Bible as the foundation for their message. In addition, it is also plausible that they had utilised the Bible as the foundation for their prophecy in order to establish the veracity of their interpretation of the Bible (Drenth, 2017).

4.1.2 Visions and Dreams

Visions and dreams are both forms of mental imagery that occur during sleep or in a state of altered consciousness (Amarteifio, 2013). A vision is typically described as a supernatural experience in which a person sees something that is not physically present, while a dream is a series of thoughts, images, and sensations that occur in a person's mind during sleep (Amarteifio, 2013). Both visions and dreams are regarded as forms of revelation that God may use to speak with humans (Niba, 2020). In evaluating the documentary data pertaining to the three Ghanaian prophets for the purpose of this study, it became evident that they had relied on both visions and dreams from God to communicate their prophetic messages.

Prophet Isaac Owusu Bempah, for instance, reported seeing a sequence of dreams and visions relating to political happenings in Ghana and global environmental disasters. He stated that he got these revelations from God, who directed him to share them with his church and the entire world. He specifically emphasised that Ghanaians should pray for the Ghanaian Parliament because in a vision he saw two lawmakers carrying candlesticks. He remarked that the two persons holding candlesticks clashed causing their flames to be extinguished. He stated that:

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> ...Ɛsɛ sɛ yɛkae yɛn Mmarahyɛ Bagua no mufoɔ wɔ mpaebɔ mu...deɛ mehunuu wɔ anisoadehunu no mu gye sɛ mpaebɔ a ɛwɔ hɔ no bɛyɛ ɔhaw...

Translated as:

> ...We need to remember our members of Parliament in prayers...what I saw in the vision, unless prayers, there will be trouble...

Prophet Nigel Gaisie also alluded to God revealing to him through dreams and visions big upcoming events around the world. Although Prophet Nigel Gaisie referred to an unknown country by the name Umofia, which was synonymous with the imaginary country depicted in Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, many of the details of this unknown country resembled Ghana. Prophet Nigel told his congregation, for instance, that he had seen in a vision that Umuofia had been the target of a terrorist attack. He noted that God had revealed to him that a nation named Umuofia will be the target of an impending external attack with inside collaboration involving explosives.

In another case, he predicted that President John Dramani Mahama will win the general election in Umuofia in 2024. Indeed, this is one of the hints that suggested the unknown country with the name Umuofia could be Ghana. Prophet Nigel stated categorically that the Lord revealed to him in a dream that former President John Dramani Mahama will ascend to the throne in 2024, but warned that the current government of "Umuofia" will do everything in its ability to disrupt the election. He described in detail how God had revealed to him about the election in Umuofia:

> Awurade nsa too me so na ɔde abɔfoɔ ntaban soaa me kɔɔ afe 2024 anaa 2025 a wɔpaw me wɔ Umuofia man mu, na Awurade ka kyerɛɛ me sɛ menka nkyerɛ wɔn, sɛ menka nkyerɛ CNDfoɔ no sɛ ɛsɛ sɛ wɔn werɛ mfiri Ashanti Mantam no ho. Ɛsɛ sɛ wɔde wɔn adwene si Atifi fam mantam no so kɛse…Efisɛ amansin abien yi na ɛbɛkyerɛ abatow no. Mihuu frankaa bi a kɔkɔɔ ne tuntum wom sɛ ɛredi tumi. Nanso ma CNDfoɔ no mfa wɔn adwene nsi atifi fam mantam no so kɛseɛ…

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Translated as:

> The hand of the Lord rested upon me and carried me by the wings of angels into the election of 2024 or 2025 in the nation of Umuofia, and the Lord told me to tell them, to tell the CND people they should forget about the Ashanti Region. They should focus more on the Northern region…Because the election will be determined by these two regions. saw a flag with red and black taking dominance. But let the CND people focus more on the northern region…

Given Prophet Nigel Gaisie's use of a fictitious country such as Umofia, it is reasonable to ponder what may have inspired him to take this approach. Prior to the 31st December, where these prophecies took place the Ghana Police Service had issued a warning to prophets and other religious leaders to refrain from making prophecies that could cause panic among the public (Amoako, 2022). The police urged prophets to refrain from making predictions that threaten national security or public safety, and to instead focus on providing guidance and spiritual support to their congregations (Amoako, 2022). The police also urged the public to be cautious when listening to prophecies and to report any that they believe could cause harm (Amoako, 2022).

Visions and dreams are fundamental to how predictions are communicated in Ghana. In many cultures and religions, visions and dreams have long been regarded as a source of prophecy (Niba, 2020). They are believed to be messages from higher powers or the divine, which reveal information about the future or provide guidance for the present (Niba, 2020). Prophets and other religious leaders have often reported receiving visions or dreams as a way of communicating with their deity or as a source of inspiration for their teachings (Niba, 2020). In some cases, the content of these visions and dreams is said to be symbolic, requiring interpretation, while in other cases they are believed to be literal and predictive of future events (Niba, 2020). Considering that Prophet Nigel Gaisie's prophecies adopted connotations such as Umofia instead of perhaps Ghana and

CND instead of NDC, it is almost certain that his visions and dreams employed a great deal of symbolism, requiring interpretation, as opposed to those of Prophet Isaac Owusu Bempah, whose prophecies were more straightforward.

4.1.3 Direct Revelation from God

Direct revelation from God is a communication from God that is received directly and immediately by the individual, without the use of visions or dreams. It is considered to be a more direct and clear form of revelation (Aboagye, 2018). Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi, in particular, predicated most of his prophecies on direct revelation from God. For example, he indicated that "God spoke to me personally…I heard it…He [God] revealed it to me directly…" Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi emphasised that he hears God clearly. As a result, God usually speaks straight to his ears. He indicated that he often receives these messages with the goal of relaying them to the people as a warning, guidance, or instruction. During one of these prophetic utterances at the 2021 December 31 Watch Night Service, he declared, "I heard a voice...it was an angelic voice...then I heard hardship upon hardship." Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi went on to say that "..the first quarter, second quarter, third quarter; there will be hardship in Ghana…"

According to Opoku (2016) direct revelation from God shapes prophecy by providing the prophet with divine knowledge or understanding that they then communicate to others. This revelation can take different forms, including epiphanies or an audible voice, and is commonly regarded as a communication from God to the prophet (Opoku, 2016). The prophet is then responsible for interpreting and conveying this message to others, often in the form of written or spoken prophecy (Opoku, 2016). In the case of Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi, he made it quite apparent that the angelic voice that he

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hears is the medium through which he receives his prophetic revelations. However, based on the documentary evidence analysed from his 2021 December 31 Watch Night Service, it was not quite obvious how he interprets the revelations of the angelic voice. Nevertheless, it can be inferred from his statements that the revelations were intended to be taken literally. Consider his prophecy about the impending hardship in Ghana. He remarked that the voice spoke those precise words to him.

Direct revelation from God is considered to be the foundation of Christian prophecy (Drenth, 2017). It is believed that God communicates directly to individuals through forms of revelations (Drenth, 2017). These revelations are then interpreted and shared with others as prophecies (Amoako, 2022; Drenth, 2017; Opoku, 2016). The relevance of direct revelation from God to Christian prophecy is that it is seen as a reliable source of information about God's plans and intentions (Opoku, 2016). It is believed that God's direct revelations are true and accurate, and that they provide insight into the future and guidance for the present (Opoku, 2016). It is however not surprising that in several of Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi's prophetic pronouncements, he would occasionally add, "What I am saying to you is directly from God...God's words are potent; they are for your own benefit and transformation."

To clearly and conveniently relate the aforementioned themes on how prophecies are communicated in Ghana to Bhagwan's model of divine communication, it is essential to examine the model's many components sequentially. According to Bhagwan (2003), the first component of the model of divine communication is about God and creation, which is the foundation of Christian communication. The doctrine of creation, according to Bhagwan (2003), establishes the relationship between God and His creation. The relationship between God and His creation is central to Christian theology

and plays a significant role in Christian prophecy (Jester, 2018). According to Christian belief, God is the creator of the universe and all that exists within it, including human beings. This relationship between God as creator and humanity as creation is the foundation of the Christian faith (Jester, 2018).

Christian prophecy, as outlined in the Bible, is also rooted in this relationship (Jester, 2018). Prophecy in the Bible is seen as a revelation of God's plan for humanity and the world (Amarteifio, 2013). This includes predictions about the future, as well as messages of hope and guidance for the present. In this way, Christian prophecy is a reflection of God's ongoing involvement and concern for His creation (Amarteifio, 2013). Thus, according to the evidence offered prior, the prophets based their prophecies mostly on biblical exegesis. Second, they established that the prophetic insights they had received originated with God and were intended for the guidance of humanity. This basis in the data, as presented, lends weight to the assumption that Christian prophecies are geared to establish God as creator and humanity as created, which is the core of the Christian faith (Jester, 2018). It also demonstrated God's unwavering willingness to oversee the affairs of mankind and maintain a relationship with them (Amarteifio, 2013).

The second component of Bhagwan's (2003) model of divine communication centred on history as a means of direct communication with God. Hooke (2011) observed that the historical action and experience of God have profound implications for prophetic communication. The second component of Bhagwan's (2003) model of divine communication was primarily based on that prophetic communication must be contextual as well as historical. Prophetic communication being contextual and historical is relevant because it means that the message being conveyed is specific to

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the audience and the time period in which it was given. This allows for the message to be understood and applied in a way that is meaningful and relevant to the people receiving it. Consider Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi's use of the past and present technique to interpret and apply the Elijah narrative in 1 Kings 17-19. He explained that Elijah's prophecy of a drought was a direct result of the Israelites' paganism and unfaithfulness, and he applied this historical context to the current situation in Ghana, noting that the country was also facing a spiritual drought as a result of the widespread corruption and moral deterioration of its leaders.

Bhagwan (2003) posited that the third component of his model of divine communication is language, which he referred to as the "voice of God" (p. 54). The voice of God is considered to be of great relevance to Christian prophetic communication because it is believed to be the source of the message being conveyed (Jester, 2018). In Christian theology, God is considered to be the ultimate authority and the one who speaks through the prophet. This means that the message being delivered is considered to be divinely inspired and carries with it a sense of authority and significance (Jester, 2018). The data revealed that all three prophets were emphatic that the words they were proclaiming originated from God and that God had sent them to announce those messages. In addition, they underlined that the voice of God that had ordered them to prophecy was a source of guidance and direction for individuals and communities, providing them with the insight and wisdom to negotiate the trials and problems of life. Prophet Isaac Owusu Bempah, for example, said that God instructed him to urge Ghanaians to pray for the Ghanaian Parliamentarians, as he had seen the parliamentarians engulfed in flames in a vision. By using the voice God has a basis for the prophecy, Prophet Isaac Owusu Bempah created a sense of comfort and assurance

to those who receive the prophetic message, knowing that they are being guided by a higher power.

Finally, the fourth component of Bhagwan's (2003) model of divine communication is angels, who are seen as heralds of God's message. Angels are considered to be of great relevance to Christian prophetic communication for several reasons (Girth, 2018). First, angels are believed to be messengers sent by God to convey His message to humanity. This means that the message being delivered is considered to be coming directly from God and carries with it a sense of authority and significance (Girth, 2018). Additionally, angels are often seen as powerful and benevolent beings, which can provide a sense of comfort and assurance to those who receive the prophetic message, knowing that they are being guided by a higher power (Donte, 2015). Prophet Nigel declared unequivocally that the Lord transported him on the wings of an angel to the election of 2024 or 2025 in the nation of Umuofia, where he was informed by God that former President John Dramani Mahama will ascend to the throne. Prophet Nigel, by declaring this, stressed how Angels, who are recognized as heralds of the message from God, are considered to be of immense value to Christian prophetic communication.

4.2 RQ2. How should prophecy communication and reception be approached in Ghana?

Prophecy communication and reception refers to the process of delivering and receiving messages that are believed to have been divinely inspired or revealed (Aldihol, 2014). Prophecy communication and reception is important as it provides guidance and direction (Aldihol, 2014; Salvador, 2011). Prophecy is often seen as a means of guidance and direction for individuals and communities, providing them with insight and wisdom to navigate the challenges and difficulties of life (Aldihol, 2014; Salvador,

2011). This can provide a sense of comfort and assurance to those who receive the prophetic message, knowing that they are being guided by a higher power (Aldihol, 2014; Salvador, 2011). It can also serve as a reminder of the spiritual dimension of life as well as the transcendent nature of the message being conveyed (Sawyer, 2017; Wilberforce, 2019). This can deepen the understanding and appreciation of the message and its significance for the individual and community (Sawyer, 2017; Wilberforce, 2019).
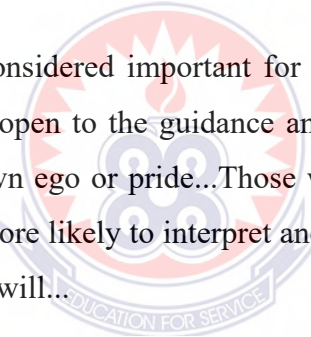
Some scholars have emphasised that how prophecy is supposed to be communicated and received is important (Aldihol, 2014; Salvador, 2011; Sawyer, 2017; Wilberforce, 2019). This is because it ensures accurate interpretation and application of the message (Wilberforce, 2019). If the message is not communicated clearly or if it is received without proper understanding, it may be misinterpreted or misapplied (Wilberforce, 2019). Consequently, it is essential to evaluate how the communication and reception of prophecy should be tackled (Wilberforce, 2019). Thus, in the case of this research question, it sought to assess how prophecy communication and reception should be approached in Ghana. From the analysis of data gathered, the following themes were identified to answer the research question: humility, open-mindedness, and discernment. These themes were analysed using the fifth component of Bhagwan's model of divine communication, which highlights how divine communication should be expressed and received. These themes were also analysed using related literature from Chapter two of this study.

4.2.1 Humility

Humility is a virtue that involves being modest, respectful, and unassuming. It is the opposite of being arrogant, boastful, or self-important (Foster, 2015; Yiesmite, 2012).

Humility is often seen as a desirable trait in many cultures and religions, as it allows individuals to be open-minded, receptive to feedback, and willing to learn from others (Foster, 2015). Additionally, humility can help individuals to be more empathetic and compassionate, as they are less focused on themselves and more attuned to the needs of others (Foster, 2015). According to the data collected from the group of clergy respondents for this study, humility is highly valued in Christian theology and is regarded as an essential characteristic for people who want to communicate and receive prophecy. According to R1, in Christianity, humility is considered to be an essential trait for those who seek to hear and understand the will of God. R1 added that this is because the Bible teaches that God opposes the haughty but favours the humble. R1 stressed that:

> Humility is also considered important for those who receive prophecy, as it allows them to be open to the guidance and direction of God, without being swayed by their own ego or pride...Those who receive prophecy in a humble state of mind are more likely to interpret and act on the prophecy in a way that is faithful to God's will...

In the context of Christian prophecy communication, R4 emphasised the importance of humility also for the prophet themselves. He averred that:

> A prophet who is humble will be less likely to distort or manipulate the message for their own gain or to impose their own agenda...They will have a heart of service, and will be more likely to communicate the message clearly and accurately, as they are not driven by personal ambition or ego.

R5 corroborated the claims made by R1 and R4. He noted that overall, humility is seen as an essential virtue for those who seek to communicate or receive prophecy within the Christian tradition because it allows individuals to be open to the guidance of God, to be faithful to His message and will, and to reflect God's nature and character. He also

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said humility mirrors the essence and character of God, who the Bible describes as "meek and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29), and is a characteristic that God seeks in His people. As a result, much as the previous two respondents noted, R5 indicated that humility helps the prophet maintain the appropriate perspective by preventing them from viewing themselves as the focal point of the message and instead as the messenger and those who receive prophecy with a spirit of humility are therefore more likely to be circumspect and act in accordance with what God requires of them.

R3 added an important addendum to the claims of the previous responses regarding receiving the prophecy with humility. He argued that being humble does not mean being gullible or blindly accepting every message that is presented as prophecy. In his opinion, being humble means being open and receptive to the guidance and direction of God, while also being discerning and critically evaluating the message. He explained that:

> There are many false prophets and false teachings in the world, and it is important to be able to distinguish between true and false prophecies. The Bible teaches that false prophets should be recognized by their fruit, meaning by their actions and teachings. If a prophecy or message goes against the teachings of the Bible or promotes a message that is not consistent with the character of God, it is likely to be false...

According to Yiesmite (2012), humility is essential for the communication and reception of Christian prophecy since it helps to ensure that the message is not skewed or misconstrued in any way. A humble attitude allows for the possibility that one's understanding of the prophecy may be incomplete or incorrect, and encourages a willingness to listen to and consider alternative perspectives (Yiesmite, 2012). The stances expressed by R4 lend credence to the argument made by Yiesmite (2012). Since

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a humble prophet is not motivated by their own personal aspirations or ego, R4 asserts that this type of prophet is more likely to convey the word in a way that is both clear and truthful.

It is difficult to disregard the importance that humility plays in ensuring that a prophecy is delivered and received in the ideal spirit, as Yandel and Pollenin (2012) pointed out in their study. Humility is key to the communication and reception of Christian prophecy because it allows the person communicating the prophecy to approach the message with a sense of openness and vulnerability (Yandel & Pollenin, 2012). This allows them to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to convey the message in a way that is authentic and in alignment with God's will (Yandel & Pollenin, 2012). In Christianity, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, along with God the Father and Jesus the Son. The Holy Spirit is considered to be the source of inspiration and guidance for believers, and is often referred to as the "Comforter" or "Helper" (Jester, 2018, p. 23). The idea presented by Yandel and Pollenin (2012), according to which humility paves the way for prophets to be receptive to the direction provided by the Holy Spirit, was in agreement with the perspectives expressed by the study's respondents, such as R5. Prophets who keep a modest perspective, according to R5, rely on God and God's spirit without perceiving themselves as the focus of the message. As a result, a humble prophet is more likely to be circumspect and act in accordance with God's requirements.

In addition, Yandel and Pollenin (2012) mentioned that humility on the part of the individual who is hearing the prophecy enables that person to approach the message with a sense of cautious readiness to hear and receive it. In the absence of humility, the person who is given the prophecy runs the risk of being unreceptive to the message or

of interpreting it in a way that is not in accordance with the will of God. In this sense, R3 was also of the opinion that humility does not equate to credulity on the part of the Christian receiving the prophecy. He rather urged Christians to evaluate prophetic communications with greater caution. While humility makes it possible for Christians to be receptive to what God has to say about a matter, it also provides the opportunity for Christians to be vigilant of false prophets (Yandel & Pollenin, 2012). Consequently, R3's assertion that Christians should pay special attention to the actions and teachings of prophets holds true. He stated that they must be aware that a prophecy or message is likely to be erroneous if it contradicts the teachings of the Bible or supports a message that is inconsistent with God's character.

4.2.2 Open-mindedness

Open-mindedness refers to the willingness to consider new ideas and perspectives, without being overly attached to one's own opinions or beliefs (Johnson & Arthur, 2012). It involves being receptive to different points of view and being willing to change one's mind in light of new information or evidence (Johnson & Arthur, 2012). Open-minded individuals are often characterised as being curious, flexible, and non-judgmental (Johnson & Arthur, 2012). Another dominant response that emerged from the data is that prophecy should be approached with open-mindedness, recognizing that the message may not always be immediately understandable or easily accepted. This allows for a willingness to explore the message and gain a deeper understanding of its meaning and significance.

R3 explained further that open-mindedness is particularly useful to the communication and reception of Christian prophecy. He stated that in the context of Christian prophecy communication, open-mindedness is important for the prophet, as it allows them to be

open to the guidance and direction of God, without being constrained by their own preconceptions or biases. He also acknowledged that prophets who are open-minded will be more likely to communicate the message clearly and accurately, as they are not hindered by their own personal beliefs or opinions. Regarding Christian prophecy reception, R3 also emphasised the importance of an open mind for those who are listening to the prophecy. He maintained that individuals with an open mind are more likely to grasp the message because they are not constrained by their own preconceptions. Thus, they are more likely to be receptive to God's instruction and direction and to be willing to act on it.

R5 also stated that certain prophets or religious leaders are subservient to a specific agenda or ideology. He explained that these agendas or ideologies could be church dogmas, customs, or even habitual cultures. However, R5 went on to say that prophets or religious leaders that are open-minded may be more likely to communicate the prophecy effectively and properly since they are not wedded to a specific agenda or ideology. In his opinion, open-minded prophets are able to approach prophecy objectively and without bias, which can help to ensure that the prophecy is accurately understood and communicated. He added that:

> Open-mindedness may allow a prophet to be more responsive to the needs of the audience and to adapt the message to best suit their understanding...

The emphasis of R4 was on how Christians should approach prophecy with an open mind. He noted that open-minded Christian audiences are more likely to receive prophecies accurately and clearly since they are not primed to understand them in a specific way. He seized the opportunity to advise that Christians should generally

approach prophecies with a willingness to consider multiple perspectives and should not be tied to a specific doctrine or interpretation. He noted that:

> This allows them to consider the context and meaning of the prophecies in a more holistic and unbiased way, leading to a clearer understanding of their intended message…

R4 also cautioned open-minded Christian audiences to use the Bible as a reference when receiving prophecies. He emphasised that they should study the Bible because it is the measuring stick for anything perceived to be God's word. Also, he urged that when they hit their wits' end, they should not forgo consulting with pastors, teachers, or other spiritual leaders who have a profound understanding of the Bible and can provide insight into the prophecy. In his own words, he made the following observation:

> Prophecy can be dicey sometimes…especially when you are not certain about it…even though I have asked people to be open minded about it…let me add that if anyone want to approach prophecy with an open mind, they must also be willing to seek guidance from spiritual leaders and study the Bible in depth…this will aid in understanding the prophecies…

Studies have demonstrated that the communication and reception of Christian prophecy require an open mind, as prophecy frequently employs symbolic or metaphorical language and is susceptible to different interpretations (e.g., Drenth, 2017; Johnson & Arthur, 2012; Smothley, 2011). According to Drenth (2017), for instance, without an open mind, individuals may be predisposed to perceive prophecy in a literal or narrow manner, which could lead to misconceptions or misinterpretations. Additionally, prophecy often addresses future events or addresses spiritual and moral issues that may be difficult to fully understand or accept without an open mind (Johnson & Arthur, 2012). Open-mindedness allows individuals to consider different perspectives and

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interpretations, which can lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the prophecy (Smothley, 2011).

Therefore, it was not out of place when R4 remarked that prophecy can be dodgy at times or that people must analyse the context and meaning of prophecies in a more holistic and objective manner. Additionally, R4 noted that open-mindedness can help to foster a sense of curiosity and a desire to learn more about the prophecy, which can deepen one's understanding and appreciation of its message. As a result, he urged them that when they had reached their wit's end, they should not forgo consulting with pastors, teachers, or other spiritual leaders who have a profound understanding of the Bible and are able to provide insight into the prophecy. He said that they should do this even if they thought they knew everything there was to know about the subject.
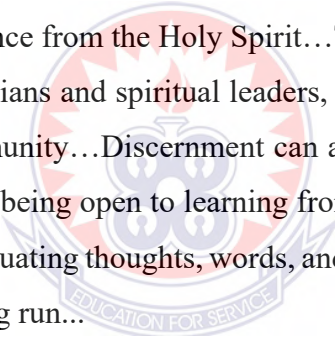
4.2.3 Discernment

Discernment is the ability to distinguish and judge between truth and error, good and evil, or right and wrong (Rotherman, 2019; Thamps, 2010). It is the process of using wisdom and insight to evaluate and make decisions about different options or situations (Rotherman, 2019; Thamps, 2010). This study's respondents indicated that communication and reception of prophecy should be treated with precaution, as not all messages claiming to be prophetic may be legitimate. As a result, Christians must scrutinise the message and the messenger critically, utilising wisdom and discernment to evaluate and determine what is true and genuine. Christian discernment in prophetic communication and reception was described by R2. According to R2, discernment in prophetic communication and reception is the capacity to differentiate between real and false prophecies and to understand and interpret prophetic messages in accordance with biblical teachings and principles. He highlighted that:

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> ...prophetic communication and reception therefore requires a combination of scriptural knowledge, spiritual insight, and reflection in order to assess and interpret prophetic messages…

R1 added that for Christians, prophetic discernment is essential to understanding the message of the prophecy, and it is an ongoing process that requires ongoing learning and growth. He stated that this process entails learning to differentiate between true and false prophets, recognizing the many types of prophetic messages, and interpreting the message of the prophecy in light of the Bible. R3 acknowledged that while in supposition discernment can appear useful and simple, in actuality it can be quite challenging. As a result, he recommended that:

> Christians can develop discernment by studying the Bible, praying regularly, and seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit…They can also seek guidance from experienced Christians and spiritual leaders, and by being actively involved in their church community…Discernment can also be developed through regular self-reflection and being open to learning from others…Practising discernment in daily life by evaluating thoughts, words, and actions against biblical teachings can help in the long run...

R1 corroborated the assertions made by R3. Like R3 had acknowledged, R1 also underlined that Christians should evaluate prophetic messages in light of the Bible. This is because the message of a genuine prophet must constantly match with the teachings of the Bible. R5 specified that messages that contradict the Bible are probably not from God. Similarly, he also pointed out that in evaluating prophetic messages in light of the Bible, Christians should also look at the prophet's lifestyle. This is because a true prophet will live a life that is consistent with their message and the teachings of the Bible. He cautioned that if a prophet's actions do not align with their words, they may not be a true prophet. He continued,

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...A true prophet will produce good fruit, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control…If a prophet's message is causing division, fear, or other negative emotions, it may not be from God…It's also important to keep in mind that the gift of prophecy is for the edification, exhortation, and comfort of the Church as 1 Corinthians 14:3 says and not for personal gain or control...

The responses of the respondents also revealed that with the ease of access to information and the rise of digital technology, it is easier for false messages to spread to a wider audience. According to R1, due to a multitude of factors, including the spread of a wide range of doctrines and ideologies and the degradation of traditional values and morals, the contemporary world has become complex and baffling for many Christians. As a result, R1 stated that developing discernment as a Christian is essential because it enables individuals to better understand and negotiate the contemporary world's complexity and confusion. In a similar vein, R4 underlined how much information and competing messages are available in the contemporary age as a result of the expansion of mass media technology. He also made reference to the fact that the increasing prevalence of all kinds of information makes it harder to distinguish between truth and falsehood. In this regard, R4 also reiterated that Christians need discernment more than ever to scrutinise the information they receive in order to ensure that it is consistent with their faith and values. He continued,

Discernment will assist Christians in recognizing and avoiding false beliefs and ideologies that can lead them astray...In today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, discernment is crucial to keeping a strong and healthy faith…

A number of scholars have emphasised, in addition to what the respondents to the study revealed, that discernment in prophetic messages is more important than ever because there are so many false prophets and misleading teachings circulating in the world today

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(Foster, 2015; Rotherman, 2019; Wilberforce, 2019). For example, Wilberforce (2019) argued that the world is now a highly mediated space with information and communication accessible to more people than ever before. However, this also means that there is a greater potential for misinformation, manipulation and misinterpretation (Wilberforce, 2019). Thus, understanding how prophecy should be communicated and received in a highly mediated world is crucial for ensuring that the message is not lost or distorted in the process of dissemination (Rotherman, 2019). According to Boaheng (2017), with the proliferation of social media and other forms of communication, it can be easy for messages to be twisted or taken out of context. By understanding how prophecy should be communicated and received, it is possible to ensure that the intended message is understood and acted upon appropriately (Boaheng, 2017). Additionally, it helps to prevent false prophets or false messages from gaining traction and causing confusion or harm. Understanding the context and methods of communication for prophecy is essential for discerning the truth and maintaining a healthy and faithful community (Boaheng, 2017).

To relate the aforementioned themes to Bhagwan's model of divine communication, it is important to note that the fifth component of Bhagwan's model adequately illustrates how divine communication such as prophecy should be addressed. The prior components, which capture primarily how divine message is conveyed, were addressed in the first research question; however, the emphasis in this question is on the acceptable way to approach prophecy. Essentially, Bhagwan's (2003) model of divine communication aims to describe, via the medium of prophetic communication, how God communicates with humanity and how humanity, in turn, receives such messages. To validate these communications, the model instructs Christians to cross-reference the prophetic messages with the biblical components of prophecy (Bhagwan, 2003).

Predicated on this, the responses of the respondents demonstrated that the advent of mass communication technologies had undoubtedly facilitated the accessibility of information. As a result, misleading prophecies have been given the push to reach a wider audience. The data also recognized the necessity for humility, open-mindedness, and discernment in order to validate prophetic communications. Additionally, Christians must read the Bible for themselves so that they can reconcile a prophet's message with biblical doctrine.

4.3 Summary

This chapter encapsulates the findings and analysis of the research questions for the study. The data gathered on the two research questions were critically explained, described and analysed through the lens of Bhagwan's (2003) model of divine communication. The first research question which sought to examine how prophecies are communicated in Ghana revealed three main themes: biblical exegesis, visions and dreams, and direct revelation from God. With regards to research question two, a total of three themes were also analysed and discussed. The themes for research question two included: humility, open-mindedness, and discernment.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provided a summary of the study and focused on drawing conclusions based on the study's major findings. The chapter also made recommendations for both academicians and practitioners based on the data's observations and research findings. This chapter also discusses the study's limitations as well as areas for future research.

5.1 Summary

Communication is an intrinsic element of all human interactions, and this holds particularly true in the context of religious interactions. Communication allows individuals to express their beliefs, share information, and connect with others. Effective communication is a critical factor in building and maintaining relationships, whether they are personal or communal. In the religious sector, the role of communication is particularly significant in the context of prophecy.

Prophetic communication is an important concept in many religious traditions. It is based on the belief that certain individuals have the ability to receive messages or predictions from a higher power. These messages are considered a form of communication between the divine and the human, and they hold significant meaning and value for those who believe in them. Prophecy can provide guidance, comfort, and direction for individuals and communities, and it can also play a crucial role in shaping the beliefs and practices of a religious group. Effective communication in the context of prophecy involves not only the ability to transmit the message accurately but also to interpret it correctly. A prophecy can be delivered in various forms, such as through dreams, visions, or spoken words. The recipient must have the ability to understand and

interpret the message, which requires a particular skill set and training. Therefore, the accuracy and credibility of the prophet are critical factors that influence the interpretation and acceptance of the prophecy.

Prophecy communication is not limited to the transmission of messages from a higher power to individuals. It can also involve the transmission of messages from individuals to the divine. In many religious traditions, prayer is considered a form of communication with the divine. Prayer allows individuals to express their desires, concerns, and gratitude to a higher power, and it is often considered a powerful means of establishing a connection with the divine. The modern world has witnessed a considerable rise in the number of communication technologies, which have greatly impacted religious communication, particularly the sharing and reception of prophecies. The advancements in technology, such as the internet, social media, and mobile devices, have transformed the way in which prophecies are communicated.

Traditionally, prophecy was disseminated through word of mouth or written texts that were distributed manually. However, with the introduction of the internet and social media, the transmission of prophetic messages has become instantaneous, allowing for a broader reach across a global audience. As a result, the dissemination of prophetic material has greatly increased, allowing individuals to access and engage with prophetic messages with greater ease. The availability of these communication technologies has made it easier for prophets to reach out to their followers and disseminate prophetic messages through various digital platforms. This has not only increased the accessibility of prophetic material, but it has also facilitated the engagement of individuals with the prophecies. As a consequence, individuals have greater access to prophetic insights and guidance, which can be of great benefit to their spiritual journeys.

The continent of Africa is currently experiencing an unprecedented growth in internet and digital technology penetration. Ghana, like many other African nations, has also witnessed a significant increase in the adoption of these technologies. The impact of this trend on the way information is shared and received in Ghana has been immense. The proliferation of the internet and digital technology has made it easier for Ghanaians to access and share information, including prophetic messages. As a result, there has been a surge in the number of people who claim to possess prophetic abilities and an increase in the number of people who eagerly seek to receive such messages.

However, this rapid expansion of prophetic communication through digital platforms has also led to a rise in the number of false prophets and inaccurate prophetic messages. Consequently, there is a pressing need for a critical assessment of both the communication and reception of prophecy in Ghana. As the internet and digital technology continue to penetrate further into Ghanaian society, it is important for individuals to exercise discernment when receiving prophetic messages. This discernment will involve a careful evaluation of the authenticity of the message, the source of the message, and the individual or group communicating the message.

As a result of the foregoing, this study was conducted to investigate how prophecies are communicated in Ghana and then to assess how prophecy communication and reception should be approached. There was also a thorough review of the literature, which served as the foundation for critically analysing the research findings. The reviewed literature was organised around concepts such as prophecy and the media, and how the media influences prophecy, particularly in Ghana. It also discussed Bhagwan's divine communication model as a framework for the research. These are meant to help place the research in context. The review not only helped the researcher become familiar with

what has been studied in the relevant literature, but also enabled the researcher to identify the gaps in the research.

This study employed a qualitative research approach and case study design to investigate the communication of prophecies in Ghana and the meanings attributed to this phenomenon. The chosen approach and design allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The purposive sampling technique was utilised to select six distinguished Ghanaian clerics and three 31st December 2021 Watch Night service videos featuring three Ghanaian prophets for the study. The data collection methods used in this research were document analysis and interviews.

To analyze the data in a comprehensive and rich manner, thematic analysis was employed. This technique allowed the researcher to identify patterns, themes, and concepts that emerged from the data gathered from the document analysis and interviews. As a result, six themes were identified to answer the two research questions. The themes that addressed the first research question were biblical exegesis, visions and dreams, and direct revelation from God. These themes provided insight into the various ways in which prophecies are communicated in Ghana. On the other hand, the themes identified in answering the second research question were humility, open-mindedness, and discernment. These themes shed light on the characteristics that are essential for individuals to interpret prophecies accurately.

In conclusion, the qualitative research approach and case study design, along with the purposive sampling technique, document analysis, and interviews, allowed the researcher to gather rich and comprehensive data. Thematic analysis was then used to identify patterns and themes that were used to answer the research questions. The

findings from this study provide valuable insights into the communication of prophecies in Ghana and the meanings ascribed to them.

5.2 Main Findings and Conclusions

After analysing the collected data, the key findings led to a number of conclusions. As stated previously, the research aimed to address two research questions.

1. In the course of investigating the first research question, which aimed to examine the manner in which prophecies are communicated in Ghana, significant findings emerged. The study revealed that Ghanaian prophets rely heavily on biblical exegesis as a means of clarifying and interpreting prophetic messages, thereby providing context for the message being communicated. Moreover, it was observed that visions and dreams constitute a fundamental aspect of how prophecies are communicated in Ghana.

   It is crucial to note that the three Ghanaian prophets who participated in the study strongly believed that the messages they delivered were of divine origin, and that they had been sent by God to communicate them. As a result, those who were on the receiving end of the prophetic word were comforted and assured, knowing that they were being guided by a higher authority.

   In summary, the findings of this research suggest that Ghanaian prophets employ a range of methods to communicate prophetic messages, including biblical exegesis and direct revelations through visions and dreams. These methods are regarded as essential in helping to convey the intended meaning of the prophetic messages to the recipients, and in establishing the credibility of the prophets as messengers of God.

2. The second research question of the study aimed to explore the appropriate approach to prophesy communication and reception in Ghana. The findings of the study indicated that the world today is characterised by a high level of mediation, where information and communication are accessible to a greater number of individuals than ever before. However, this increased accessibility has also led to a higher likelihood of misinformation, manipulation, and misinterpretation.

In light of this, the study found that certain virtues are necessary for the effective communication and reception of prophetic messages in Ghana. These virtues include humility, open-mindedness, and discretion. By embracing these virtues, Christians can avoid being captivated by the allure of new media, which has the potential to insulate individuals from the truth. Moreover, these virtues enable Christians to be receptive to what God has to say about an issue, while also remaining watchful against false prophets.

In conclusion, the findings of the study emphasise the importance of approaching prophesy communication and reception with a sense of humility, open-mindedness, and discretion. By doing so, Christians can avoid being misled by false information and remain receptive to the messages that God has for them. These virtues are crucial in an age where information and communication are highly mediated, and they can help individuals to navigate this complex landscape with discernment and wisdom.

5.3 Study Limitations

The present study has its limitations, which primarily stem from the adoption of the qualitative methodology that focused on the detailed and subjective interpretation of

the collected data. This methodology inherently restricts the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of prophetic communications in Ghana. Consequently, it is imperative to acknowledge that any attempt to extrapolate the results of this research to cover all prophetic communications in Ghana would be an erroneous and misleading approach. This is because the sample data selected for this study represents only a small fraction of the various perspectives and viewpoints on prophetism in Ghana.

It is worth noting that the data collected and analysed in this research project cannot be considered as a comprehensive representation of prophetic communications in Ghana. There are many different ways and viewpoints on propheticism that may not have been adequately captured by the data sample chosen for this study. Therefore, it is essential to recognize the significant disparity that exists between the findings of this study and the many other ways of understanding prophetism in Ghana. Any attempt to disregard this disparity in extrapolating the findings of this research would result in an oversimplification of the complex nature of prophetic communications in Ghana.

One significant limitation encountered in the research pertained to scheduling difficulties for interviews with the respondents. As the respondents had busy schedules, coordinating with them posed a challenge that resulted in delays in data collection. It was observed that at times, the respondents had prior engagements or commitments that hindered their ability to schedule an interview at a particular time, adding to the complexity of the situation.

Despite these limitations, it is essential to note that they did not diminish the credibility of the study, as it still carries implications for further research. It is crucial to acknowledge the difficulty in scheduling interviews with busy respondents and

understand that such difficulties may arise in future studies. These limitations serve as a valuable lesson and provide insight into how similar research may be conducted more efficiently in the future. Thus, while the research faced obstacles, its results and implications can still be deemed valid and useful for future studies.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The current study has indicated that there is potential for future researchers to expand upon the research conducted, specifically by critically examining the role of social media in prophetic communication. Given the increasing utilisation of social media platforms within Ghanaian society, it would be insightful to investigate how prophecy is being communicated and received through these channels. This would allow for a more thorough understanding of the impact that social media has on the dissemination of prophetic messages.

Furthermore, it is recommended that future researchers examine the influence of traditional religious beliefs on prophetic communication. Given Ghana's rich cultural heritage, there is ample opportunity to investigate how traditional religious beliefs shape the manner in which prophecy is communicated and received. Such research could provide valuable insights into the broader societal context in which prophetic messages are situated. In sum, the current study has identified promising areas for further research in the realm of prophetic communication. By examining the role of social media and traditional religious beliefs, future researchers can deepen our understanding of the complex dynamics at play within this important aspect of Ghanaian culture.

Moreover, it is suggested that a further study be conducted to examine the role of gender in prophetic communication, particularly in the context of Ghana. Such an investigation could yield valuable insights into the ways in which men and women communicate and interpret prophetic messages differently. A thorough exploration of gender's impact on prophetic communication would be beneficial in providing a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon.

By studying the role of gender in prophetic communication, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of both men and women when receiving and interpreting prophecies. This could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of how gender shapes the way in which prophecy is communicated and received, which may be of particular importance in the context of Ghana.

In addition, an examination of the role of gender in prophetic communication could help to identify any potential biases or barriers that may exist within the prophetic community. This knowledge could then inform efforts to promote greater inclusivity and equality in prophetic communication, ultimately leading to a more diverse and equitable prophetic community in Ghana and beyond.

5.5 Recommendations

The study recommended that there is the need to develop training programs for prophetic leaders to improve their communication skills and enhance their understanding of biblical principles. There is also the need to encourage prophetic leaders to use technology to communicate prophecy in a more effective and accessible way. Also, the study recommended that the Christian umbrella groups like the Christian Council of Ghana, which is an umbrella group that unites over 31 churches and

denominations in Ghana should establish guidelines for prophetic communication that align with biblical principles and promote ethical conduct among prophetic leaders. The Christian umbrella groups should also create platforms for prophetic leaders to interact with other prophetic leaders and other Christian leaders to share ideas, resources and best practices.

The study recommended again that prophetic leaders should engage in continuous theological education to deepen their understanding of biblical principles and enhance their ability to communicate prophecy in a way that is consistent with biblical teachings. They must also invest in other educational resources such as books, videos and other materials to help them deepen their understanding of prophecy and its communication. All Christians, regardless of denomination, have an equal obligation to put effort into acquiring knowledge on topics related to prophecy. This will aid in the reduction of willful ignorance and contribute to the development of a robust and informed Christian society.
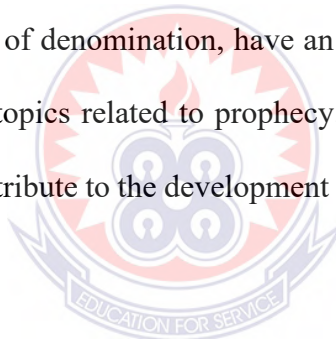
In conclusion, it is important for future researchers to explore the impact of education on prophetic communication. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of how formal education influences the way in which people interpret and receive prophecies. This investigation would provide valuable insights into any potential misconceptions or biases that may be present in the way prophecy is communicated and received, particularly among those with varying levels of education.

Furthermore, the relationship between education and prophetic communication is an area that has yet to be fully explored, and thus represents a unique opportunity for researchers to contribute to our understanding of this phenomenon. Specifically, research conducted in Ghana could prove particularly illuminating given the country's

rich religious and educational landscape. By examining how formal education influences the communication and reception of prophecy in Ghana, researchers could uncover important insights that have the potential to inform both academic and practical discussions around the role of education in shaping our understanding of prophecy.

Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers prioritise the investigation of the impact of education on prophetic communication in Ghana. Through such research, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between education, religion, and prophecy, and identify potential avenues for improving communication and reducing bias within this important domain.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Introduction:

1. Can you introduce yourself and briefly tell us about your work as a clergyman in Ghana?

Prophecy Communication:

2. What are your thoughts on prophecy communication in Ghana?

3. How do you approach the communication of prophecy to your congregation or even to a media audience?

4. Do you believe that there are specific communication strategies that should be used when communicating prophecy?

5. What are some of the challenges you face when communicating prophecy and how do you address them?

Prophecy Reception:

6. In your opinion, how do people in Ghana generally receive prophecy?

7. How do you ensure that people are receptive to the prophetic message you communicate?

8. Are there any specific factors that can affect the reception of prophecy in Ghana?

9. How do you handle situations where members of your congregation or audience may not agree with or believe in a prophetic message?

Conclusion:

10. Do you have any final thoughts or recommendations on how prophecy communication and reception should be approached in Ghana?