

Conversion from Islam to Christianity in Senegal: missiological implications for church planting

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that it has not been submitted for any other module for which I have gained credit. I have acknowledged all other sources used in the research of this paper.

Signed: Bagaramba Jules KAZURA

Date: 12 November 2021

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ABSTRACT

Senegal's evangelical churches have attempted to reach out to Muslims; however, few have converted to the Christian faith. Theologians, missionaries, and pastors have debated understanding the causes of the fruitless endeavours. Although few individual Muslims converted to Christianity, the church has been trying to find answers without involving and getting insight from Muslim background believers. There is limited information accessible about how those who became Christians began their journey, the process of their conversion, and their current situation. This thesis aims to comprehend the conversion to Christianity from Islam of Muslim by analysing the conversion process found in the testimony of thirteen Senegalese.

The study's analysis reveals vital characteristics of the conversion process of Senegalese Muslims who choose to join Christianity and similarities to conversion experiences in other nations.

According to the research, Muslim conversion to Christianity is a multi-stage process involving various factors. It is also a long process involving social, mental, emotional, and spiritual life. The study established the reality of persecution and challenges encountered by the prospective convert during the conversion process.

Despite the persecution that typically comes from the convert's immediate family and the community, the study found that conversion had positive repercussions. These include changes in behaviour and morals, improved interpersonal relationships, peace, joy, and assurance of salvation. This study also demonstrated that young people convert more frequently than elderly ones.

To conclude the study, missiological implications for Church planting are drawn from the data; finally, recommendations are provided for a contextualised and adapted outreach.

Understanding the conversion process from the experience of Senegalese Muslim background believers and in Senegal's cultural and geographical context is helpful for the church witness in Senegal. It assists in singling out ineffective evangelism strategies and helps develop new approaches to church planting in Senegal.

Key Words

Senegal; Islam; Christianity, Conversion; Missiology; Mission; The process of conversion; Conversion models; Contextualisation; Reasons for Conversion; Main factors leading to conversion; consequences of conversion process; Mission; Missiology, stages of conversion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
Chapter one:	1
Introduction	1
1.1. Background and introduction	1
1.2. Problem statement.....	3
1.3. Aims & Objectives	3
1.4. Central theoretical argument (Hypothesis)	4
1.5. Methodology	5
1.6. Value of the study	6
1.7. Ethical consideration	7
1.8. Outline of chapters	7
Chapter two:	8
Understanding(s) of conversion.....	8
2.1. Islam and Christianity in Senegal	8
2.1.1. Islam in Senegal	8
2.1.2. Christianity in Senegal	10
2.2. History of the study of conversion.....	13
2.3. Multidisciplinary perspectives on conversion	15
2.3.1. Conversion from the perspective of the geography of religion	15
2.3.2. Conversion from the perspective of history and religion.....	16
2.3.3. Conversion from the perspective of Sociology of Religion	17
2.3.4. Conversion from the perspective of Anthropology of Religion.....	22
2.3.5. Conversion from the perspective of the Psychology of Religion.....	24
2.3.6. Conversion from the Perspective of Theology	25
2.3.7. Conversion in the perspective of Missiology	29
2.4. Conversion Models.....	36
2.5. Conversion and contextualisation	39
2.5.1 The Task and Importance of Contextualization.....	40
2.6. Literature related to conversion from Islam faith to Christianity faith	40
2.7. Conclusion	48

Chapter Three:	51
Processes of conversion	51
3.1. Life before conversion	52
3.1.1. Stage One: Context	52
3.2. The process of conversion	55
3.2.1. Stage Two: Crisis	55
3.2.2. Stage Three: Quest	57
3.2.3. Stage Four: Encounter	61
3.2.4. Stage Five: Interaction	65
3.2.5. <i>Stage Six: Commitment</i>	67
Chapter four:	71
Reasons and factors leading to conversion.	71
4.1. Analysis – Reasons for Conversions among Senegalese	71
4.1.1. The Main Reasons for Conversion	72
4.2. Main factors leading to conversion.	73
4.2.1. Witness factor	74
4.2.2. Affectionate factor	74
4.2.3. Media Factors	75
4.2.4. Supernatural factors	76
Chapter Five:	78
Consequences of conversion	78
5.1. Problems with the Family and Society	78
5.1.1. Validation of the Results from other geographical areas	80
5.2. The new convert and the hosting church	82
5.3. Results of Conversion	84
5.3.1. Identity	85
5.3.2. Religious conviction	86
5.3.3. The social and cultural way of life	86
Chapter Six:	89
Conclusion and recommendations	89
6.1. Our approach to evangelism	90
6.1.1. The importance of sharing the Gospel	91
6.1.2. Long-term strategy mindset.	91
6.2. The use of inappropriate and appropriate strategies	92
6.2.1. Inviting a Muslim friend to a church service	93

6.2.2. Evangelistic crusades	95
6.2.3. The role of social ministry in the mission of the Church.....	96
6.2.4. Appropriate use of media	97
6.2.5. Integration of a new convert into the Church	98
6.3. Pray for renewal and pray for all people	101
6.4. Concluding remarks	102
6.5. APPENDIX 1: CONVERSION TESTIMONIES	103
REFERENCE LIST	119

Chapter one:

Introduction

1.1. Background and introduction

This study investigates the conversions from Islam to Christianity in Senegal. The idea to engage in such research developed gradually during the researcher's stay in Senegal. Since 2012, the researcher has lived in Thiès, the second most inhabited city in Senegal with 2,049,764 people (RGPHAE, 2013). He became acquainted with various religious groups while visiting churches and conversing with church leaders and Muslim Background Believers. Senegal has a population of 16,229,000, composed of fifty-six ethnic groups; among them, twenty-six are unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ, which totalises 13,191,000 (81.3%). Islam is the predominant religion in Senegal (Joshua project, 2019). In terms of article 19 of the Senegal Constitution (2001), everyone has the right to the free practice of religion, and the government does not interfere in the affairs of religious groups. Even though the country is open to all religions, it is not common in Senegal for a Muslim to convert to another religion or embrace the Christian faith.

Christianity came to Senegal soon after the Portuguese discovered the Cape Verde Islands in 1460, and the first Senegalese were baptised between 1486–1490, helping to promote the faith (Bouchaud, n.d.). According to Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ in Senegal (WEC, 2012), the first Protestant missionary entered Senegal in 1862. Louis Jacque was sent, and a small team was built up. In 1933 the Christian Missionary Alliance began work in Senegal and handed over their work to the first Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ (WEC) missionaries in Senegal in 1936. Other missions then followed (WEC, 2012). Even though Christianity was introduced in Senegal before Islam, which entered Senegal in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, 91% of Senegalese are Muslims, 4.5% are Catholic Christians, and 0.17 % are evangelical Christians (Joshua Project, 2019).

There are about seven local multi-ethnic evangelical churches in the Thiès region, where the researcher has served as a missionary since 2012. We estimate the number of evangelical church members to range from 450 to 600 people with a

minor number of adults Senegalese Christians, about fifty in total. Expatriates highly dominate the leadership of those evangelical churches, down to the choir leaders. The evangelical churches have been trying to reach out to Muslim people for many years, but very few have responded to the Christian call to salvation. Questions are being asked; discussions are going on, theologians and missionaries debate the causes of unfruitful endeavour. Is the reason the lack of teachings about the mission in church? Is it the lack of contextualization of the church? Is the lack of leadership or theological training causing the ineffectiveness of the church? All these mentioned handicaps are to be considered, but the researcher realised that although few individual Muslims converted to Christianity over those years, some became mature Christians and leaders in the church, but many of them relapsed and returned to their former faith.

The issue is that there is a limited amount of information available that shows how Muslims who became Christians started their journey, and the process of their growth into mature Christians, and their situation. No specific research asks why some backslid and returned after attending the churches for several years. Some Christians who lived with those converts from Islam who backslid are disappointed and do not want to evangelise to Muslims again, doubting if a Senegalese Muslim can convert and become an active believer. In order to efficiently evangelise Muslim people, there has to be more research in the area of conversions of Muslims to Christianity. We need more research to find common factors in how the Muslim background believers (MBBs) saw the church before their conversion, how they became believers, and what motivated them. What ex-Muslims admired in the church when they joined Christianity has to be analysed. We should study and understand what religious and cultural shocks; Muslim background believers experienced and how they adapted to the new Christian community and faith. The church has to hear the advice and suggestions of former Muslims on what should be done for it to be a community ready to welcome the Muslims who converted to Christianity. This study attempted to find and provide information regarding the situation in Senegal. It will help to understand a specific missiological and sociological phenomenon, broaden church planters' knowledge, and provide the understanding and tools needed to share the Gospel with Muslims in Senegal.

Subsequently, the outcome will be implementing strategies that will enable church planters to plant a church model that fits the Senegal-Muslim context.

1.2. Problem statement

The inadequacy of Senegal Church insufficiency in understanding Muslim conversion to Christianity seems to have a detrimental effect on evangelism and church planting in Senegal religious context. What appears to be missing is an understanding of the conversion process from Islam faith to Christianity, which, if well comprehended, could offer a strong foundation for church planting programmes and strategies.

This study investigates the conversion from the Islam faith to Christianity and elaborates a theory that could help understand the conversion from the Islam faith to Christianity in the Senegal context.

The main research question for this study is:

- What causes Muslims to convert to Christianity, and how does it happen?
How does this affect the Christian church's outreach to Muslims, and what are the implications?

To answer this question, attention will be given to the following questions:

- What is conversion?
- What is the process of conversion from Islam faith to Christianity faith?
- What factors motivate a Muslim to abandon Islam and convert to Christianity?
- What are the challenges in the conversion process of Muslims?
- What methods will enhance church planting in Senegal?

1.3. Aims & Objectives

This study aims to investigate the process of conversion from Islam to Christianity and understand the critical factors that preceded, lead, and affect the conversion of Muslims to Christianity and elaborate a theory that could help the church understand the conversion from the Islam faith to Christianity in Senegal context serve as a basis for the church planting programmes and strategies.

To reach this aim, the following objectives should be reached:

- To understand the different aspects of conversion.
- To analyse different stages that the converts experience in the conversion process from Islam faith to Christianity faith.
- To discover different factors that motivate a Muslim to abandon Islam and convert to Christianity
- To understand the challenges Muslims encounter when in conversion process.
- To discover existing methods or develop new methods to enhance church planting in Senegal.

The study will examine Muslims' presuppositions about Christianity and the church before conversion. It will investigate the Muslim Background Believers' (MBBs) problems when they interacted with the Christians for the first time. In conclusion, we will present recommendations to influence and motivate church planters in Senegal to contextualise the gospel presentation. Those recommendations will also aim at motivating missionaries, church leaders, and evangelists to reflect on a church model that can effectively motivate Muslim converts to adjust and feel acclimatised to the Christian faith.

1.4. Central theoretical argument (Hypothesis)

Rambo (1992:159) describes religious conversion as a "complex process involving a complete interweave of personal, social, cultural, and religious forces." comprehending conversion as a complex process discloses essential difficulties that accompany the ministry of evangelism and discipleship. Therefore the study's central theoretical argument is: If the conversion process from Islam to Christianity is fully comprehended, the church can adapt and contextualise its approach and strategies in evangelising Muslims in Senegal so that individuals or groups of people can, with no coercion or manipulation, choose which faith they wish to adhere to and practice.

- Preventable and non-adapted methods of evangelism will be averted, and the number of converts from Islam will increase.
- More non-traditional methods of evangelism will be developed.
- Newly adapted discipleship manuals and programmes will be produced

- Churches will be planted where Muslim background believers feel accepted and understood; they will mature and be empowered to share the Gospel with their relatives.

1.5. Methodology

This study explores available literature about conversions from Islam to Christianity and seeks to discover and analyse the motivations, circumstances, factors, phases and steps, and difficulties and struggles of the conversion processes of individuals from Islam to Christianity. As a result, those findings will be interpreted and compared to similar findings from literature about conversion in Senegal to help provide implications for church planting in Senegal. The research will use the literature review study method to accomplish this objective. The researcher will do an analysis of multidisciplinary literature referring to the aspects of conversion. Maha Al-Qwidi (2002:107) states that the study of conversion to Islam to be complete must at least include four essential parts. He notes the following “the cultural, social, personal, and religious systems.” (Rambo, 1993:27). To fully understand the conversion, various scientific disciplines will be considered. The disciplines of sociology, psychology, and religious studies will all be considered; otherwise, an examination of conversion will remain “one-dimensional” (Alyedreessy, 2016). Other existing sources about conversions of Muslims to Christianity from other countries are used to analyse, evaluate, and compare the data collected from similar existing sources in Senegal. Work by the following researchers is used: Berhe (2011), Syrjänen (1987), Greenlee (1996), Strahler (2005, 2009), Maurer (1999), Murumba (2008), Adeney (2005), Gaudeul (1999), Woodberry (2001). The researcher will analyse testimonies of twelve Muslim Background believers corrected in the testimony for the Glory of God in Senegal (SIM, 1996), and compare the conversion data process to the data collected from the research mentioned above.

To conclude, ineffective strategies and errors the church and missionaries previously made when evangelising to Muslims are singled out. Elements that were analysed and used in reaching out to Muslims for conversion, as confirmed by the twelve MBBS, are highlighted. Significant factors in the conversion process, suggestions, and recommendations are given for a contextualised and adapted outreach.

1.6. Value of the study

This study seeks to deepen the comprehension of the conversion process from Islam to Christianity among Senegalese, which will have missiological implications for evangelism and church planting. The study will be significant to different entities involved in the Senegal mission: Missionaries, church leaders, and missiologists. There have been several publications in different regions of the world about the conversion in general and of Muslims to the Christian faith, but few have explicitly been published for Senegal, which has 12,000,000 Muslims. Gaudeul (1999) studied around one hundred written testimonies from various countries. Syrjänen (1984) investigated the conversion of Pakistani. In Morocco, Greenlee (1996) researched urban Muslim conversion to Christianity. Maurer (1999) presented and examined the conversion stories of ten South African Muslims who converted to Christianity. Recently Woodberry (2001) interviewed 600 converts, and his preliminary analysis contains 120 interviews. Berhe interviewed twenty Orsi Oromo Muslims in Ethiopia. Even though testimonies of conversion from Islam to Christianity always have many factors in common, differences in some areas are expected in this study due to the context of Islam in Senegal. In Senegal, four brotherhoods represent Sufism, including Layenism, Tijanism, Mouridism, and Qadiriyya (Sawe, 2017). Each brotherhood has recognised, and venerated Marabout, and their religious practice is mainly synthetic. They have their holy cities, and one of them, called Touba, is the home to one of the most prominent mosques in Africa (Lang, 2010).

This study tries to understand the conversion process and the changes that take place within Senegalese Muslims who convert to Christianity. It addresses the questions found in the mission field in Senegal. It draws missiological implications for church planting, which affects the development of strategies and the creation of discipleship manuals and programmes that are contextually effective. The research will assist the church in understanding its role in facilitating the adaptation of the converts from Islam to the Christian church and community. It will also help those involved with evangelism understand Muslim conversion to Christianity, which will produce a mentality change and better communication of the Gospel.

1.7. Ethical consideration

The study will follow the guidelines of the NWU ethical committees. The researcher applied for ethical clearance, and only after ethical clearance had been approved, he continued with the empirical research.

Ethics Certificate/number - Kazura, BJ - NWU-01902-19-A6

1.8. Outline of chapters

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER TWO: UNDERSTANDING(S) OF CONVERSION

CHAPTER THREE: PROCESSES OF CONVERSION

CHAPTER FOUR: REASONS AND FACTORS LEADING TO CONVERSION

CHAPTER FIVE: CONSEQUENCES OF CONVERSION

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter two:

Understanding(s) of conversion.

2.1. Islam and Christianity in Senegal

Senegal is a West African country with more than 36 ethnic communities, significant in the country's political, social, cultural, and religious spheres (Skurnik, 1972:3).

There are only four main ethnic groups in Senegal: Wolof, Pulaar, Serer, and Jola, which account for around 83 per cent of the total population (Carroll, 2015:44). The Wolof constitutes almost half of the Senegal population, and they have culturally and linguistically permeated and dominated the ethnic minorities (Sawe, 2017). Modern Senegal is predominantly Muslim. Official statistics present 94% Muslim, 5% Christian—mostly Roman Catholic—and one per cent animist (Cámara & Seck, 2010:859-884). Unlike Wolof and Fulani people who primarily practised Islam, Serer and Jola peoples, kept traditional African religions during colonization (Carroll 2015:32). In Senegal, 97% of the population say they are permitted to follow their faith, including the Christian faith. (Pew Research Center, 2010)

2.1.1. Islam in Senegal

Since the colonial period, Islam has been a dominant theme in Senegal studies (Diouf & Leichtman, 2009:1). The origin of Islam in Senegal continues to be a topic for debate as experts have diverse viewpoints. Ellen E. Foley (2010) offers an overview of Senegal's history. He mentions three important kingdoms that characterized Senegal's pre-colonial social and political order: The Wolof kingdom, the Sereer state, and the Fulbe kingdom in the Fuuta Toro of the Senegal River valley. It is generally accepted that from around the 11th century, there has been an Islamic presence in West Africa and Senegal (Bouchard, 2018). Clark attests that northern African traders had peacefully spread Islam to West Africa by the eleventh century. Triaud (2012) states that Islam's influence in Senegal began with the conversion of the King of Takrur, War Jabi, in 1040. Fulani / Tukulor and Pulaar were the first major Senegalese ethnic groups to convert to Islam (Gellar, 1982). Carroll (2015) reveals that Islam first entered the Wolof in the 11th century through Muslim merchants, teachers, and settlers, and expanded in the 16th century. Dieye (1996)

argues the complexity of tracing the timeline by which Islam precisely entered Senegal. He says that we cannot determine the exact date and year of Islam's arrival in Senegal. His argument is based on the geographical changes that happened in history. He writes that Senegal of today was, in the 11th century, assimilated to another region called Tékrou, with which geographical limitations are imprecise (Dieye, 1996:63-64). Diouf and Leitchman (2009:1) give an insight into how the French colonial administration and community of scholars classified Islam in the South of Sahara. They indicate that Islam in the south of the Sahara was considered impure, less literate, and magical. It was considered and is still today considered, an amalgam of spiritual and ritualistic interactions between Islam and the traditional African religion. On the organizational structure of Islam in Senegal, Sawe (2017) affirms the reality that the majority of the Senegalese population practices Sunni Islam. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth, Senegal saw the emergence of locally based Sufi movements (brotherhoods) formed around the tradition and teachings of the North African Muslim leaders and native sons like Amadu Bamba and Abdoulaye Niasse. Some brotherhood originating from North Africa, we call the Qadiriyya, and the Tijaniyya and other brotherhood are from Senegal: The Mouridiyya, and the Layene. By the end of the nineteenth century, Islam had expanded throughout the Senegambia region. More than ninety per cent of Muslims in Senegal belong to one of the country's four important brotherhoods and follow a marabout. Marabouts are considered living saints linked to a particular Sufi brotherhood. and are believed to have supernatural powers. They act as mentors and mediators between brotherhood members and the divine (UNESCO, 1974). Different researchers studied each of the Senegalese Muslim brotherhood. Wane (Wane, 2010) and Gifford (Gifford, 2016) discuss the introduction and in-depth description of the Tijaniyya, Khadiriyyathe, Mourides, and the Layene Brotherhoods in Senegal. As attested by Diop (1987), without first examining the role of the Muslim brotherhoods, it is difficult to understand the Senegalese political and religious system. Diop (1987) regards the role of the brotherhoods as a stabilizing factor on the country's political scene. Senegal is a pluralistic and peaceful society, and the brotherhood leaders have immense political and religious power. Many have regarded Senegal's cultural and religious pluralism as the reason for a potential cohabitation of faith and religious tolerance, and in contemporary Senegal, this is traditionally a matter of pride (Smith, 2013:146-165). Some researchers dispute the

view that attributes Senegal stability to religious organizational structure. Smith (2013: 165) gives a broader perspective that explains political stability and religious cohabitation in Senegal. For Smith (2013), religious cohabitation and political stability in Senegal are based on three interacting spheres: the patriarchal cultural sphere (Senegalese terroirs and pre-colonial polities, the republican sphere of the state (colonial and postcolonial), and the religious sphere (including the Christian minority). Volk (2017:34) and Folley (2010:35) agree on the fact that Senegal's history has for a long time demonstrated a unique religious tolerance and balance between Islam and secular democracy. They also noticed that the past decade had seen the rise of fundamentalist challenges to the secular state, some demanding the restoration of Muslim courts and sharia law for Muslim families. Another sign of a deteriorating religious cohabitation noted is that while interfaith marriages did not create much uproar in the past, there has been an increasing number of reports for such marriages facing problems.

2.1.2. Christianity in Senegal

Several studies deal with the coming of Christianity to Senegal. Christians make up 4-10% of the population. The vast majority follow Roman Catholicism, with approximately 430 000 members. (Pew Research, 2011). Senegal, considered one of the oldest and most important centres of Islam in West Africa, was far from a promising area for Christian missions. Carroll (2015) wrote that Senegal's first contact with Christianity was through the Roman Catholic mission on the arrival of Portuguese traders during the 15th century. The first Catholic church was built on the island of Gorée in 1444 (Gomis, 2013:147). Several French missionaries entered Senegal, but the Catholic Mission experience was disappointing. Carroll (2015) wrote that before the colonists landed in the 1630s, more French missionaries arrived to evangelize the south of modern Dakar. During the 18th and 19th centuries, catholic missionary congregations started doing different social activities; they built hospitals, educational institutions, and healthcare facilities, and the roles of the clergy extended and involved intensive conversion effort among Africans. Jones (1980:323-340), Carroll (2015:15), and Gomis (2013:147) indicate two fundamental reasons which rendered the history of the Catholic Church in Senegal frustrating and slowed it from gaining momentum. First, the Portuguese confused slave trading and evangelism;

they did not emphasize the message of conversion. Second, the first French priests arrived solely to serve the French people; they had little impact because they largely disregarded the local population.

Many Christian congregations settled in Senegal during the French colonial era (1880-1900). After several years of service, the catholic missionaries recognised that Senegal would never be a Catholic stronghold. (Foster, 2013:22). Roman Catholic missionaries adopted a new strategy; they focused their evangelisation on the Serer and Jola, who still followed traditional African religions throughout colonization. Serer and Jola ethnic groups, situated in the southwest of Senegal and distributed around Dakar, are the most prominent colony of Christians in Senegal. (Carroll, 2015:32)

We do not have much literature that elaborates on the history of protestant churches and missions in Senegal. Kirkland (2019:2) indicates that Protestant missions were planted in Senegal for more than a century but with practically no cultural presence. The church remains small; non-Senegalese members account for up to 80 per cent. Joblin (2005:210) summarises the arrival of the protestant church in Senegal. He states that in 1863, a Swiss missionary named Louis Jacques came to Senegal, disguised as the French governor's private chaplain. He was taken to Casamance in the South of Senegal to avoid conflict with Catholic missionaries. Through his care, a missionary station with a school began to operate in Sedhiou. Between 1863 and 1867, four more missionaries came to work in Casamance. Even though the missionaries did not baptize any Senegalese in four years, Labrune (2008) does not agree with those who say that the Protestant experience in Casamance was a failure. She notes that schools had done very well; the missionaries had reconciled the trust and friendship of the families. From 1863 to 1884, some twenty missionaries joined for mission, but the disagreement between Protestant missionaries and the harsh climate frustrated the task: four died, victims of fevers, and two were repatriated because of illness. Due to the health problems, the protestant mission decided to relocate to Saint-Louis. In 1873 the first Senegalese was baptised (Emile,1964:496). After Villégier, the last French missionary, resigned in 1877 due to misunderstandings, Walter Taylor, a Sierra Leonean naturalized French, was the only French missionary in Senegal for specific periods. In 1879, he established an institution to help fugitive slaves from inside Senegal and took care of

their evangelisation. For twenty years, he was the primary worker of the protestant church of France in Senegal. (Labrune, 2008). The overview of the arrival of different protestant missions in Senegal is narrated by Gomis (2013:368). He mentions that on May 1, 1913, the Evangelical Temple of Dakar was inaugurated; this event was a bid step in institutionalizing the Protestant Church in Senegal. It was not until 1936 that another Mission, the Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade (WEC), arrived in Senegal. No other Mission did so until the end of the Second World War. In 1954, the New Tribes Missions (NTM) arrived, followed in 1956 by the Assemblies of God, and the first Senegalese Bible Institute was constructed. From 1960 to 1990, many missionaries arrived in Senegal; The Lutheran mission, International Baptist Mission, United World Mission, Southern Baptist Mission, Norway Evangelical Mission, and Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). In 1995 a Senegalese evangelical mission organisation "Mission Inter Senegal" was created to send national missionaries to the towns and villages in the interior of Senegal without any Christian witness (Anon., n.d.). From 1960 to 2020, more mission organisations entered Senegal, SIM International, Christian Mission Alliance, Crossword Mission, and more. Christian missions distributed Christian literature and translated the Bible into various local languages. They are currently involved in the Media Ministry, schools, and vocational education. Gomis (2013) noted that today, African, Korean, and South American missionaries use many evangelising strategies, including the street children's ministry. Though most Christians in Evangelical churches are non-Senegalese, we find few Senegalese pastors countrywide.

Conversion is complex

According to Rambo and Farhadian (2014:4), conversion is a fascinating, complex, and contested topic. Conversion is a multidimensional issue that needs to be perceived from multiple perspectives. During conversion, there is an individual's personal life story and experience, but every person lives in a community organized according to a particular political and cultural system. Therefore, an individual conversion does not only affect his religious life but encompasses the political, psychological, social, and cultural domains of his life. We need to consider these perspectives to understand how conversion happens among Muslims. This chapter

discusses multiple aspects, factors, and dimensions that converge in the religious conversion phenomena.

The chapter aims to build a study's theoretical framework by reviewing, examining, and assessing some of the literature associated with conversion. We will also identify substantial problems to be approached in the research. In their book, Rambo and Farhadian (2014), the Oxford handbook of religious conversion, and Malony and Southard (1992), in the handbook of religious conversion, various scholars expounded the knowledge of conversion's study, from different interdisciplinary perspectives, sociology, geography, psychology, history, anthropology, theology, and religious studies. The analysis of conversion from various scientific disciplines provides an encompassing theory of the development and steps of the conversion process. However, this study bases the fundamental orientation on Christian theological and missiological understanding of the conversion process. Also, Google Scholar was used to searching for information. Information sources covered peer-reviewed journal articles, books, dissertations, and theses. Rambo's seven stages model of the process of religious conversion assisted in analysing the findings of the study. (1993:168)

2.2. *History of the study of conversion*

Conversion and the idea and phenomena associated with conversion have been debated for centuries. The end of the Nineteenth-century marks the emerging of theories and methods to describe, understand, and interpret the nature of the conversion processes (2014:5). One of the early scholars and prominent influential on religious conversion is Harvard professor William James. His book, *Varieties of religious experience* (1902), is, according to Rambo and Farhadian (2014:5), at the centre of the discussion related to conversion since the emergence of modern, critical scholarship on the nature of religious conversion. James (1902:62-164) classifies people into two types: the healthy-minded person, called "once-born," and the "twice-born" (a person having an extremely sick soul). The healthy-minded person has an optimistic mental outlook on life and develops his religious orientation over time. The sick soul sees the world as evil, and that vision of the world inhibits him from attending the fullness of life; he must experience a second birth before finding true joy. He concludes his discussion by explaining the incapacity of

philosophy to comprehend and elucidate religious experiences. James (1902:335-345) thinks that the nature of religion precludes the use of logical frameworks or evaluation. He recommends the science of religion to help explain the religious experience and fill the gap left by philosophers.

Like all other scholars of his era, James's psychological perspective on conversion, though still influential today, is influenced by Protestantism's understanding of conversion that only focuses on interior change and subjectivities (Rambo and Farhadian, 2014:5).

The last four decades indicate changes in the study of conversion. Scholars broaden their research beyond the Judeo-Christian and psychological perspective to conversion. New theories and methodologies have been developed, which embrace a more comprehensive range of themes, disciplinary insight, and global forms (Rambo and Farhadian 2014:7).

Rambo and Farhadian (2014:7-9) enumerate seven themes explored since the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The first theme is about the discontinuity and continuity between the past religious life's experiences and new experiences in the newly found religion. It is a study that looks at understanding the continuity and the discontinuity between the convert's former religious practices and the newer adopted beliefs. The second theme concerns the active agency in the conversion process. It is the study of the flexibility, adaptability, and creativity of the advocates of the new religion in another context. The third theme is the complexity and diversity of motivation, and the fourth, the value of the narratives or understanding the impact of the language used by faith adherents on the lives of converts. The fifth theme is the significance of the human body or the study of the centrality of religious rituals in conversion; the sixth is the conversion career or the study of the dynamics of changing religion several times, and abandonment of some practices within the same religion or deconversion. Seventh, the conversion is analysed with historical material.

In summary, the study of conversion has been an effort to understand how and why people and groups move from once accepted and valued belief systems and religious convictions and embrace others.

2.3. Multidisciplinary perspectives on conversion

2.3.1. Conversion from the perspective of the geography of religion

Park (2004:3) notes that “Geography rarely appears in books on religion, and religion rarely appears in books on geography.” While contemporary books of geography do not have religion as a central theme, it has not been overlooked entirely.

Geographers have for long studied religious conversion as a subfield in the discipline of cultural geography. Lily and Nail (2014), writing the overview of geographical research of religious conversion, indicate two main ways by which geographical distribution of religious groups change. the first is permanent or temporary change, such as the Jewish Diaspora; tourism or religious motivations (missionary).

Resettlement process of a religious group for socio-political and economic reasons such as colonization and forced immigration by persecution or natural disasters.

Second, spatial change happens through religious conversion, either from no religion to religion, from religion to another, or from religion to no religion. Researchers in the Geography of religion also investigate the changes that happen in a geographical location because of the changes in religious beliefs. They assess the strategies applied by different religious groups to influence the geographical space they occupy and increase the number of adherents. This assessment touches on the conversion issue as it is the critical strategy for expanding a religion and increasing its adherents (2014:66).

Discussing the factors facilitating religious conversion, Kong and Nair (2014:72) mention personal contact as the most important. He asserts that technological advances such as religious broadcasting via electronic media can help reach far more people quickly and increase awareness of the message of a particular religion. However, in our ministry and context, we found that media does not often produce genuine conversion; it lacks human and personal interaction and persuasion.

Another vital factor facilitating conversion is kinship ties or the wish to maintain family unity and harmony (2014:73). A spouse can change his or her religious affiliation if the danger of breaking the harmony of the family is apparent. Social and economic advantages may instigate community conversion if joining another religious community can bring respect, a sense of prestige, and honour. Sensitivity to local

culture and a message styled following the pre-existing beliefs may also translate into conversion; strategically, measures must be taken to avoid religious syncretism (2014:74). The presence of social, financial, recreational, and medical support when available in a community can also result in conversion for the community around. Stump (2008:95) gives an example of Indian lower caste members who converted to Christianity to gain an upper social status and economic opportunities. We also note the fact that conversion may provoke or aggravate social tensions when successful conversions happen in a community that once shared the same religious beliefs, traditions, and customs (2004:22-35).

Kong & Nair, (2014) conclude by asserting similarities between geographers and other disciplines to understand conversion. The difference resides in the attention given by geographers, not on the individual religious experience but on the religion in an organized social entity (1986:428-440). Geographers focus on the spatial change in the distribution of religions, meaning “the study of factors underlying conversion and the impact of conversion on communities, society, polity, and landscape.” (Kong and Nair, 2014)

2.3.2. Conversion from the perspective of history and religion

Conversion is a problematic concept for historians. For centuries conversion has been occasionally invoked to indicate a gradual process that may take years. In Christian tradition, conversion is presented as a radical change or transformation of beliefs in a short moment – an instantaneous transformation “in which a complete division is established in the twinkling of an eye between the old life and the new.” (Baer, 2014:25), historians refute this theory. Baer (2014) enumerates and summarises four categories by which historians describe the conversion process; acculturation, adhesion or hybridity, syncretism, and transformation (2014:25). Acculturation happens when a person or group changes religion and adopts specific values, language, and practices of the dominating foreign culture. Those in the process of acculturation forsake their former way of living, private and public. They adopt religious terms from other languages considered sacred. They change their dress code, pray differently, adopt another form of art, categorize food according to the new culture, and to some extent, change their acquaintances, separating

themselves from all who do not follow the rules of the newly adopted culture, including family members. Reflecting on the view that equates conversion to acculturation, one must ask how well acculturation transforms the inner being of the convert. Adhesion and syncretism processes answer the deficits of acculturation in producing genuine converts.

Baer (2014) defines adhesion or hybridity as the process where a person or group adopts new beliefs and practise them alongside the old. Conversion is not a complete break in belief or practice. The newly adopted religion does not utterly replace all traces of preceding religions. According to Nock (1998:7), adhesion is where there is “no definite crossing of religious frontiers”; it is having one foot on each side of a cultural fence; a person or group accepts new worships as beneficial supplements and not as substitutes. Baer further describes syncretism to occur “when the convert(s) reconcile or fuse old and new beliefs and practices to create a new religious synthesis.” (2014:25)

Baer (2014, 28-32) sees acculturation, adhesion, and syncretism as a temporary process that can, over time, lead to transformation. I agree with Baer’s argument because when people convert to another belief system, they do not often accept abandoning the former beliefs and practices immediately. Before they fully comprehend the teachings of the new religion, some converts continue to engage in their ancient practices unconsciously. Others do it privately, avoiding being seen by those not engaged with the new religion. We speak of transformation when converts take a new way of life in place of the old. “It is a deliberate turning from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a significant change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right.” (Nock, 1998:32). Converts reject and speak of their past practices as emanating from ignorance. They commit to follow and engage wholeheartedly in the teachings and the morals of the new faith.

2.3.3. Conversion from the perspective of Sociology of Religion

Sociologists have been studying conversion and the context in which it takes place for a long time. Bainbridge (1992:178) asserts that sociological analysis of conversion remains incomplete and partial. He further adds that the study of God’s

intervention in the conversion process is to be left to theologians. Sociologists Lofland and Stark (1965) move beyond a psychological conception of conversion and suggest a sociological model of religious conversion that considers the personal bonds and effective social networks (Lofland & Stark, 1965:862-875). Other sociologists argue that religious conversion involves a psychological transformation of the convert and a reorganisation of the convert's social relationships (Fenggang & Abel, 2014:142). Bainbridge (Bainbridge, 1992:178) attests to the existence of two competing social hypotheses that contest to explain religious conversion: "the strain theory and social influence theory." (Berhe, 2011:10). The strain theory explains conversion using social phenomena, while the social influence theory stresses human beings' influence on one another.

The strain theory explains religious conversion as a result of a deprivation felt by an individual. The theory differentiates between absolute deprivation and relative deprivation. It defines absolute deprivation as the lack of something objectively needed (lack of health or poverty) and relative deprivation as the lack of something that a person of different status possesses. This theory brings more confusion than answers because many factors can make people feel deprived. Therefore, if absolute or relative depravity causes conversion, all individuals should have persuasive motivation to convert to a religion; why then do some people not convert? (Bainbridge, 1992: 181). In conclusion, strain theory concepts do not convincingly explain all religious conversion.

The social influence theory asserts that individuals change from one religion to another because they have strong social ties with their followers and a weakened attachment to non-members (Bainbridge, 1992:179). Bainbridge names two separate schools of thoughts born out of the social influence theory: the control theory and the subcultural theory. The social influence theory holds that people act following their social order if they have a strong link with it (Bainbridge, 1992:182). According to this theory, people who lost the social connectedness to the established social order due to different circumstances might be likely to convert to another religion. The change of social status of a person, change of location or facing disruption in life, whether positive or negative, all affect the individual's connectedness with the group member, and that loss triggers the wanting to convert to an alternative community.

The second school of thought, called the subcultural theory, stipulates that, within broader mainstream culture, some people create an insider group of like-minded people with distinct values, practices, and beliefs. This theory asserts that through social interactions and information transfer, other people within the broader culture agree with the sub-group's actions and thoughts, convert, and join the group.

The influential guidance of both theories is found in several studies on the sociology of conversion. Bainbridge claims a practical study of a combined analysis of both theories as a way forward in the study of conversion (Fenggang & Abel, 2014, p. 142). Lofland and Stark (Lofland & Stark, 1965, pp. 862-875) suggest a model that I theoretically uphold, combining both theories. The combined theory states that when a person exhibits predisposing conditions, experiencing frustrating deprivation or oppression, he becomes a seeker. The conversion of the seeker depends on situational contingencies, meeting and interacting with members of another religion, and the weakening of the formal social bonds. To understand the unified theory, Bainbridge gives an example: a person faces great frustrations and fails to find answers within his religion. He starts searching for a religion that can efficiently address his quests. While at his maximum vulnerability, he meets people who belong to another religious affiliation. The more the individual becomes attached to the new group, the more his attachment to the former group lessens. With time, the intensive interaction with the group members influences him to align and agree with their belief system and he becomes converted (Bainbridge, 1992:84).

These theories have some bewilderment in defining conversion. They confuse affiliation, adhesion, or commitment to a group, and conversion. They define individual actions as always influenced by the community or circumstances and ignore the individual's conscious role in the decision-making process. Fenggang and Abel (Fenggang & Abel, 2014:143) note that a critical point is missing with these theories. They noticed that because the inner states of mind cannot be directly studied using empirical methods, affiliation and commitment can be confused with conversion. Berhe (2011:11) maintains that conversion entails more than being part of a particular community.

In some cases, conversion may precede affiliation to a group. For example, a person may convert in isolation and secrecy, waiting for the right time to join a group. In

other cases, a person affiliates himself to a group without adherence to their beliefs and practices and later converts and makes firm commitments to that group. Kasdorf (1980:105) argues that “Christian conversion does not follow a stereotyped pattern but may take a variety of forms both personal and multi personal.” Iyadurai (2014) agrees and argues that “religious conversion results not only in personal transformation but social transformation as well.” Within some communities with influential family attachment culture, individual conversion may happen without becoming a member or developing a deep affiliation with another community. The converted individual stays in his community until life circumstances change, and he finds a new community, agreeing with his new beliefs.

The cultural aspect of conversion is fundamental in understanding the conversion process. Kasdorf expounds more on conversion, interpreting it as “the religious and ethical processes of man’s spiritual transformation in terms of his values, relationships, attitudes to God, himself, and others within the matrix of his own cultural and social structure” (1980:20). This concept demonstrates that the people’s cultural setting can influence conversion, but conversion can also change their cultural perception. Additionally, the definition clarifies different elements impacted by the conversion process: personal, spiritual, societal, and cultural.

Rambo (1993) enumerates five different types of conversion, which portray the nature of it “in terms of how far someone has to go socially and culturally in order to be considered a convert.” (:13). The first category comprises *Apostasy* or *defection*. It means the rejection of religion, its belief, and traditions by an individual, and he/she joins another religion, or do not join another religion. The second type is *Intensification*. It happens when a nominal convert affiliated to a religious institution rededicates his life to it and decides to devote himself wholeheartedly to the cause of his faith, which he previously neglected. The third is *Affiliation*. It happens when an individual or group’s commitment to a religious community progresses from a state of non-commitment or casual religious involvement to a state of full participation. The fourth type of conversion is *institutional transition*. It is the process by which an individual or group switches from one established religious denomination to another of the same tradition. The fifth type is the *traditional transition*, meaning the complex move an individual or group takes from one major religious system and all its morals,

rituals, and worldviews to another (Syrjänen 1984:33). The given list of the type of conversion is not exhaustive. According to Rambo (1993:12), these five forms of conversion are a result of conceptualisation, intended to represent a variety of conversions.

As the types of conversions vary, the conversion motifs also vary across conversions. Lofland and Skonovd (1981) believe that it is worthwhile to distinguish six conversion motifs that help understand the conversion experience. The motifs differ depending on the individual circumstances and places.

The first motif of conversion is *intellectual conversion*. It includes an individual search for truth and an alternative way of life. It includes a thorough private investigation on religion by consulting incorporeal modes of communication: books, television, internet, and other media that enable interpersonal contact. For the intellectual conversion, social external pressure and religious ecstasy are minor; reasoning over beliefs precedes commitment to the religious community.

Mystical conversion happens when a sudden, dramatic, and supernatural encounter changes a person's life before joining the community associated with the experience. It might be associated with a dream or vision. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus functions as the standard.

Experimental conversion results from intensive interaction with religious members, learning new values and morals. Everything that makes up the existence of the new community is tried for a specific time (theology, rituals, organisation) before joining. The potential convert must discover and decide if joining the community is beneficial.

The affectional motif of conversion is a social-psychological transformation caused by interrelation bonds with members of a religious institution. Potential converts are challenged by the experience of love, acceptance, and support received in the community, and they decide to join it.

Revivalist conversion occurs when a crowd is emotionally stimulated, and new behaviours and faith are promoted. Within that context, individuals face the group's influence, social pressure, and crowd conformity, which results in conversion.

The sixth is the coercive motif, also called brainwashing. It involves a long process of intense external pressure on an individual, intending to coerce and manipulate the person to conform to the rules of a community and follow its ideology blindly.

2.3.4. Conversion from the perspective of Anthropology of Religion

Buckser and Glazier, in the preface of *Anthropology of Religious Conversion* (2003:11), state that religious conversion poses a powerful challenge to anthropological theories concerning the connection between culture and the self.

Conversion is typically an individual process, encompassing a shift in a single person's worldview and identity; however, it happens within a framework of institutional procedures and social connections (Buckser and Glazier, 2003:11).

While researching conversion, we discovered several parallels between the perspectives of anthropology of religion and sociology of religion; they involve the environmental context of conversion. However, whereas a sociological method focuses on the social context, an anthropological approach researches the cultural context.

Buckser and Glazier (2003:158) maintain that conversion experience is very complex. While some interpret conversion as a sudden occurrence, it influences the whole person. Berhe (2014:14) indicates that conversion prompts a shift in “social identity, cognitive, and affectional aspects.” He includes other aspects that can be affected by conversion, like the cultural setting and social association; this applies specifically to a Muslim community.

Tippett in the *Handbook of Religious Conversion* (1992:193-194) does not focus on the motives and occasions of conversion but asks five questions concerning the conversion process of a group of people: a) How people separate themselves from the old context and how they incorporate into the new. b) How people act and why they act the way they do throughout the conversion c) What happens within the community group when converted? d) What physical and psychological elements do people and groups share in the process of decision-making? e) Why do people act as they do by breaking off from a domain of a known stimulus and encounter an unstructured one? To clarify his questions, Tippet thought of a process of

conversion that consists of four periods: a period of awareness, a period of decision, a period of incorporation, and maturity. During the awareness period, a person or a community becomes aware of an alternative lifestyle, a different pattern of behaviours, or other moral codes/principles (Tippett, 1992:195-196). Tippet provides four ways that make people and groups aware of new contexts and may lead to conversion. The most common way to stimulate awareness, according to Tippet, is natural environments, such as education, travelling, or other social services. Other causes include external pressures, such as social, economic, and political crises. Thirdly the person's emotional challenges, such as stress, fear, shame, and lastly disastrous experience, for instance sickness or loss of a loved one. Such negative factors contribute to the awareness and wish for a new system of meaning.

As the knowledge of the new context increases, the individual or group reaches the period of decision making. That period is a lengthy discussion process and concludes with a decision. The decision does not necessarily mean approval of the new community structure. Tippett states four different responses: Refusal, total acceptance, acceptance with adaptation, or acceptance with a combination (Tippett, 1992:196-198). After choosing to convert and deny the old system, the convert begins to be incorporated into the new system, then follows a transitional period. The new converts receive instructions and teachings regarding the new norms and beliefs. To finalise the process, the convert performs an act of incorporation (Tippett, 1992:198-205). The climax of the decision period is what Tippett calls "the point of encounter," which is a public testimony of conversion; it is an act that manifests the rejection of the old context and pledge allegiance to the new" (Tippett, 1992:200). Tippet makes an essential comment for the successful incorporation of new converts in a new structure, "For any religious conversion to be permanent, the new structure should meet the needs of the converts and operate in meaningful forms" (Tippett, 1992:199). The last period of Tippet's process of conversion is an unceasing "period of maturity." Tippet distinguishes "incorporation" from "maturity" and highlights the importance of the qualitative growth of the converts after their inclusion in Christianity, both spiritually and socially. The period of maturity is critical to the converts from a Muslim background, still living in a constant challenge from an antagonistic Muslim culture, as well as to the inner struggle of the old worldview (Takamizawa, 1999). The lack of emphasis on maturity is the cause of many villages

abandoning Christianity after many years of incorporation in the church. I agree with Tippet that Christian ministry should objectively aim to transform converts' mindsets and lifestyles.

2.3.5. Conversion from the perspective of the Psychology of Religion

Even though Psychology studies the person in the sociocultural context, it focuses primarily on the fundamental understanding of human psychic functioning, the person's patterns of perception, cognition, emotion, motivation, and behaviour (Berzen, 1997). The primary attention of the psychological approach to religious conversion is how conversion operates in the individual's mind. Paloutzian (2014:217) defines the psychology of religious conversion as a study of how a person perceives the meaning of a particular sort. The permanent problem for psychology has been to understand to what extent transcendence can be included in the psychological study of religion. Hood (2018:3) states that many psychologists subscribe to what is known as the "methodological exclusion of the transcendent." They argue that psychology must confine its empirical study within the limits of natural science and not include any reference to transcendence as playing a causal role in psychology. Other psychologists refute the theory of non-inclusion of transcendence in any study of religious conversion, especially in the study of spiritual experience. Rambo (1992:160) says that "Conversion is what a particular group says it is. No one type of conversion can be seen as normative from a psychological point of view." The psychology of conversion, being a human endeavour to comprehend religious belief, can only use inconclusive theories to understand an event beyond human comprehension (Malony and Southard, 1992:161).

Rambo describes the psychology study of conversion in terms of four different approaches.

- The first one is psychoanalytic. It reveals the emotional components in conversion by focusing on the unconscious rather than the convert's conscious mind.
- The second approach, called behaviourist, focuses on learning the effect of the interaction of the convert with the environment.

- The third is the humanistic and transpersonal approach. It is the ideal of becoming fully human, reaching wholeness, and full human potential as a positive result of conversion.
- The last one is holistic/social. It involves examining all factors affecting the whole person rather than focusing on one issue. Rambo (1992:162) summarises the four approaches, indicating that put together, these four points of view provide an overall understanding of the diversity and complexity of conversion phenomena.

2.3.6. Conversion from the Perspective of Theology

Conversion is an essential topic in the study of theology. However, since it is impossible to provide a comprehensive review of all material published in this domain, only a few carefully chosen works will be analysed and evaluated in this research: those that are particularly pertinent to this research and those that examine conversion from a Christian standpoint.

Gaiser (1992:106) asks crucial questions for a deep understanding of conversion; who is the active agent in conversion? Is conversion from humans or God? The critical debate focuses on the relation between God's activity and human responsibility in the process of conversion; how one understands, this debate influences how one will organise the mission endeavour.

Conversion focuses on Christ's work of salvation, and it has to be understood in relation to other theological terms related to soteriology. Over time, terms such as calling, regeneration, and conversion were used synonymously by some classical theologians. In the seventeenth century, some theologians, by seeking to give an accurate description of the whole salvation order (*ordo salutis*), started to differentiate between terms used to define conversion (McKim, 1992:124-125).

We will enumerate the terms used synonymously for conversion and give an overview of their meaning from different theological viewpoints. The first term is "calling." In reformed theological tradition, conversion happens only in the heart of those partaking in the calling of God for salvation. According to Berckhof (1997), this calling is defined as the gracious act of God, whereby He invites sinners to accept the salvation offered in Christ Jesus. There is one calling but it is distinguished into

two aspects: external calling and internal calling. The external call consists of presenting God's gospel, the invitation, and the offering of salvation through Christ to sinners, with an exhortation to believe in Christ and have eternal life. The external call is universal in that it is extended to all men who hear the gospel (Matt. 28:19). The Holy Spirit's compelling application of the gospel to the hearts of God's chosen people is referred to as the internal call (1 Cor. 1:23, 24). The Spirit uses the preaching of the word, and the called one listens to the voice of His God.

The second term is regeneration. Regeneration is often used interchangeably with conversion. Here it is a narrower meaning of regeneration; it denotes "that act of God by which the principle of the new life is implanted in man, and the governing disposition of the soul is made holy." (Berchhof, 1997). It is the manifestation of the new life. It is the awakening of the soul to the reality of the human condition and standing before a holy God. In other words, it is what is called "The new birth." Berkhof (1996:473) indicates three fundamentally different views to consider regarding the understanding of regeneration. The first is the view of the Pelagians. They see regeneration as an act of the human will, practically identical to self-reformation. Arminians regard regeneration as, in part, an act of man, cooperating with divine influence through the truth. The Arminians' view, when analysed, often confuses persuasive strategies by the preacher and the work of the Holy Spirit. The reformed view considers the Holy Spirit to be the efficient cause of regeneration. The Holy Spirit changes the heart's spiritual condition with no single co-operation with the sinner. This view defines regeneration as an act of God that allows the new human will to do what is in harmony with the will of God (Malony & Southard, 1992:127). Calvinist theologians assert that the power of sin enslaves human will. By his own will, A person cannot initiate a relationship with God. Berkhof (1996:490) insists that God alone is the author of regeneration and, therefore, of conversion. However, he further emphasizes the fact that there is a certain cooperation of man in conversion, which results from a previous work of God in man. God alone initiates the work of regeneration, and man will co-operate with the Holy Spirit in later stages of the work of redemption.

The third term is conversion. Conversion has two aspects, divine and human. It represents the incursion of divine grace into human life, the resurrection from

spiritual death to eternal life. **Human** is active in conversion but inactive in regeneration. **Grace** brings in us the ability to listen to God. We cannot save ourselves, but when our spiritual eyes are opened to the reality of salvation, we can accept it and receive it. (Acts 16:14). We are saved and justified by grace alone, and conversion is the sign of such incredible grace. Therefore, “human and divine actors in conversion should be studied and understood.” (Berhe, 2011:20). The way conversion is understood will have implications, especially for the strategies applied in mission. “How we conceive of conversion determines how we do evangelism” (Peace, 1999:286). While biblical scholars differ on the concept of conversion, they agree on the idea of responding to God's redeeming work by a renunciation of a sinful living (Walls, 2004). Erickson (1983:935-938) notes two dimensions to the biblical definition of conversion: the negative side of conversion, “the repentance from sin,” and its positive aspect, “faith.” Berkhof (1996:485) perceives repentance as being retrospective, directly linked to sanctification. In contrast, faith is prospective and connected with justification. Several theologians have attempted to define these two complex but important terms: “repentance” and “faith.”

A. Repentance

Erikson (1983:935-936) defines repentance as “the abandonment of sin, based upon a feeling of godly sorrow for evil done.” The Hebrew term for repentance is *shuv*, “to go back again” or “to return.” This word is used in the Old Testament, referring to genuine repentance, forgiveness, restoration from wrongdoing, and entering an authentic communion with God. The New Testament uses three significant Greek terms to describe repentance for conversion. The word *metamelomai* means “to have a feeling of care, concern, or regret” (Erickson, 1983:936). It refers to repentance's emotional aspect, a sense of remorse for having done wrong. The second word is *epistrepho*, meaning “to turn around; to return back” (Malony and Southard, 1992:94). It is often used for translating the Hebrew *shuv* (Wells, 2012:33).

The third word is *metanoeo*, which means “to change one's mind, repent, be converted.” It is a conscious act of turning away from a sinful life and looking forward to God. Such a change brings about a drastic change in the direction of life, and it changes the convert's entire life. The New Testament emphasizes the significance of

conversion, implying a change from immorality toward faith in Jesus. Like that of the earlier prophets, the ministry of John (Matt. 3:1–11) is a call for turning—for conversion. He calls for a radical change of mind (repentance) in light of the establishment of God’s rule (Walls, 2004). Acts 26:18 explains how sorrow for one’s sin (*metanoeo*) and turning to God (*epistrepho*) must be combined. “Repentance, therefore, suggests that we are not concerned primarily with turning from the old life, but that the stress is on the turning to Christ, and through Him to God (Brown, 1975:355)”. Berkhof (1996:486) gives a concise explanation of true and complete repentance by simplifying components that make repentance into three distinct elements: intellectual, emotional, and volitional. The intellectual element of repentance suggests the change of perspective; sin is understood as moral culpability, defilement, and hopelessness. An emotional element is characterised by a change of emotions that expresses itself in remorse for sin against a holy and just God. It must be a godly sorrow, not a sorrow of the world (2 Cor. 7:9, 10). A volitional element consists of a change of purpose—an inward turning away from sin and a disposition to seek pardon and cleansing.

According to Wells (2012:48), conversion in the New Testament is not limited to the inner experience, but restitution, moral uprightness, and love for others must be evident. Conversion must be expressed by practical actions that bear witness to others and the convert. Whenever Jesus is identified as teaching or preaching in Bible, the desired answer is faith and repentance (Mk 1:15); when the mystery of the kingdom is addressed, it must be seen through the eyes of repentance and faith (Marshall, 1989:38-39). In the Bible, repentance and faith are inseparable; repentance is a beginning part of conversion; faith is the far-reaching term. Anderson (1998) and Pink (1996) express it clearly: “Repentance is the heart’s acknowledgment of the justice of God’s sentence of condemnation and faith is the heart’s acceptance of the grace and mercy which are extended to us through Christ.”

B. Faith

The most common Hebrew idea of faith is conveyed in the verb “*aman*.” It means “to consider as established, to regard as true, or to believe” (Berkhof, 1996:493). It refers to a confident quiescence (resting) on a person or thing or testimony. Another important Hebrew word describing faith is “*batach*.” It means “to confide in,” “to lean upon,” or “to trust.” It does not stress the element of intellectual belief but instead suggests trust and confident reliance (Erickson, 1983:939). This faith has its foundation in the words of God, his promises, and the manifestation of his power.

Special meaning should be distinguished when defining the use of faith in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the keyword that conveys the concept of faith is “*pisteuo*” meaning to believe, and “*pistis*” which means faith. In other words, as Berkhof (1996:493-494) notes, “*pistis*” means a conviction based on confidence in a person and his testimony. It is more than just an analytical conviction that a person is reliable; it presupposes a personal relationship with the object of trust, allowing oneself to rest in another. Another word for faith is “*Pisteuein*.” It expresses the concept of faith in the sense of agreement to God's word and trust in Him. Berkhof (1996:494) puts together different words for faith and records three successive stages of faith: first, the general confidence in God and Christ; second, the acceptance of God and Christ's testimony based on that trust, and finally, the yielding to Christ and trusting in Him for the salvation of the soul. The last stage of faith is explicitly a saving faith. Erickson (1983:940) affirms that “the type of faith necessary for salvation involves both believing that and believing in or assenting to facts and trusting in a person.” Peace explains what characterises Christian conversion “Christian conversion is characterised by a decision (repentance) based on understanding (awareness, consciousness, conviction) to turn around from a life of sin (darkness, disobedience to the way of Jesus (Faith), resulting in a new way of living in the context of the kingdom of God.” (2004:8) Conversion must be followed by strict obedience; to believe in and to obey Christ should not be two separate things, but one (Lee, 2011). True conversion must reflect a life of complete submission to the Lord's instructions, “faith without works is dead” (James 2:14-26).

2.3.7. Conversion in the perspective of Missiology

Conversion is the mission's goal and fruit, therefore an important study in Missiology. Spindler (1997:293) made an alarming comment, criticizing current missiologists for

prioritizing discussion on inculturation or contextualization and ignoring the importance of conversion. He attests that “conversion has increasingly become a field of research for social and cultural anthropology and general history, whereas missiologists are generally busy with other urgent matters.” I agree with Spindler’s comments; “conversion is not only a classic missionary motive; it deserves a place of honour in the contemporary missiological discussion.” (Spindler 1997:293) Many concerns must be addressed while researching conversion from the standpoint of missiology. Here are a few examples: McGavran (1955:323) stresses that the most crucial missiology question should be how people become Christian. The way one views conversion is important because it forms and dictates how one views evangelism. As a result, this issue has significant missiological ramifications. (Peace, 2004:8). Two more sub-questions will limit our discussion to answer the question above. The first question: “Is conversion a sudden action or a long-term process, and the second question: “Is conversion limited to an individual level, or can it be experienced by a whole group or community”? (McKim, 1992:135).

We proceed by discussing each of the two questions.

- Is conversion a punctiliar event or an experience that occurs gradually?

For a long time, Paul's encounter on the Damascus Road was the most well-known example of New Testament conversion, and many people regard it as a paradigm of authentic conversion. While studying conversion, I noticed disagreeing views within different denominations. Peace writes that to evangelicals, fundamentalists, and charismatics, “one cannot be considered a Christian unless one has been converted—and the more like Paul’s Damascus Road experience, the better.” (2004:8-11). Paul’s conversion paradigm is generally viewed in passivist and deterministic terms (Kilbourne & Richardson, 1988:1). The following characteristics usually describe this kind of conversion: 1) sudden and dramatic, 2) irrational or magical in nature, 3) involving a powerful, external, and impersonal force, 4) usually a single event, 5) the negation of the old self and the affirmation of the new self, 6) change from one static state to another static state, 7) typically occurs during adolescence 8) behaviour change usually follows belief change. (Kilbourne & Richardson, 1988:1-21).

Within this paradigm, to communicate the word of God with someone, the Evangelist memorizes some well-structured verses and methodically reads them and asks the listener to make an immediate decision based on these verses. The truth about salvation is organised in certain doctrinal portions, presented to an individual, ask him to believe in Jesus, ask for forgiveness, and pray a prayer of commitment to follow Jesus. Within this paradigm, the beginning of the salvation experience can be dated as the beginning of Christian life. Some preachers go as far as asking every Christian to know the exact date of conversion. This evangelistic method may not be efficient and appropriate in a Muslim context like Senegal. Conversion should be understood as a gift from God rather than a demand imposed on an individual. Many Evangelists fail to distinguish between the external calling to believe and the Holy Spirit's inner work that leads people to conversion alone. "The external call to believe is dedicated to the missionary but not the conversion itself, which is God's work and grace." (Maurer,1999:87). Evangelisation should not be a mastered manipulative technique but a usual Christian way of life, focusing on relations. We admit that God is sovereign; He can accomplish his purpose through ways that are, to some, not appropriate if they do not contradict God's word. Peace testifies to the positive evangelistic outcomes of the sudden conversion view of conversion. He recognises that it has resulted in the growth of several churches. Different outreach methods like mass evangelism, door-to-door visiting, and tract distribution in public locations can be linked to this understanding of conversion (Peace 2004:8).

Today's critics raise the issue of the legitimacy of this personalistic and sudden conversion concept. Peace (2004:8) asks a pertinent question: whether a genuine conversion can happen via a single sermon consisting of ordered gospel passages believed and attested by a sinner's prayer? Different weaknesses of that perspective are cited by Miller (1999) and Peace (2004). First: the percentage in numbers of those who, after praying the sinner's prayer, continue as disciples of Jesus. The critics count only 10 per cent of the "sudden conversion" decisions to produce a long-term behaviour change. (Miller,1999:171:172). Although I disagree with the strategy that imposes conversion to others, taking the sinner's prayer as a magical formula that brings conversion, I would not disqualify an evangelistic strategy based on the numbers of true converts. God's work cannot be deduced into numbers. Our work is to share the truth of the gospel as trustworthy servants, but the transforming power

belongs to God. According to Peace (2004:9), the church's primary duty is to make disciples/ people who are actively and consciously following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, rather than just converts, or those who come to Jesus but do not intend to obey him in everything. For a mission to produce a genuine conversion in a Muslim context, evangelism and spiritual formation need to be linked. According to Peace (2004:9), the second weakness is that “the decisionist tradition leaves behind frustrated and angry unconverted people.” They were told to confess some words and automatically get converted, they tried, and it did not work. This is a truthful critic; none can promise conversion to another person; God has the absolute power to convert people in His sovereignty and grace. The cited weaknesses of Paul’s conversion paradigm do not eradicate the fact that sudden conversion still occurred in church history: Rottenberg (Rottenberg, n.d.) gives several examples “Augustine with his Garden of Milan experience, Martin Luther with his Cloister Tower experience, and John Wesley with his Aldersgate experience. The church must also acknowledge that Paul's conversion is not the only New Testament example of conversion. The conversion process of Jesus' twelve disciples is depicted in the Bible as an alternative paradigm of carrying out missionary efforts (Peace, 1999:13).

- Conversion; a journey or a gradual process?

The conversion of Paul is portrayed in clear terms: it goes from killing Christians to converting people to Christ: he is turned into a zealous Christian from a Pharisee. Moreover, all this happened in a second; there is a vision, a single question, and a total life transformation (Peace, 1999:105). But how about the twelve disciples of Jesus. The Bible shows the twelve disciples’ journey to conversion as a process. Jesus spent years teaching them, by all means possible, but they fall short in grasping Jesus’s teachings from time to time. Finally, they were transformed and witnessed about Christ. The conversion of the twelve is used to explain another conversion paradigm that must be adopted with Paul’s conversion paradigm to have complete and adequate mission work in a Muslim context. The prototypes of this paradigm are called seekers in general. In our case, we will take the twelve disciples as a sample.

Kilbourne and Richardson (1988:1) see the primary arguments for this paradigm in how conversion is conceptualised. The seeker is an active agent generally

characterized by the following: 1) volition; 2) search for meaning and purpose; 3) rational interpretation of experiences; 4) gradual and continuous conversion, and 5) belief change and behaviour change, as the individual learns the role of being a new convert. To establish the new conversion paradigm, Peace (1999) describes three fundamental elements of Paul's conversion observed in Acts 26:18: "seeing, turning, and transformation." (:14). He evaluates the experience of the twelve disciples to find the three characteristics in the scene of their gradual conversion.

According to Peace (1999:99-101), the first characteristic of Paul's conversion is insight. Paul understood who he was and the status of his relationship with God. Secondly, he encountered Jesus and submitted himself to Him as his Lord and the son of God. Finally, he was transformed and started having a new perspective on life and acting in response to God's revelation. Did the twelve disciples undergo the same conversion characteristics as Paul in their process of conversion? Mark's gospel expounds on the conversion journey of the twelve. They lived with Jesus; they understood who Jesus was and realised they were sinners. They submitted to Jesus and decided to serve Him. After the resurrection of Jesus, they met Him in Galilee, and there began their life of discipleship. While Paul's experience and the disciples' experiences are different, the central aspects underlying each of these turnings is the same. Paul's turn is rapid; the twelve disciples' turning is slow, but they experienced the same conversion. Peace (1999:287) uses two terms to differentiate two evangelistic strategies resulting from the two conversion perspectives.

The first term is "Encounter evangelism," which is the most used in missions. It applies a confrontational method (mass evangelism, personal evangelism, and media evangelism) to produce the Pauline-like conversion. One presents some elements of the gospel, expecting the listener or the reader to decide to follow Jesus.

The second term is "process evangelism," founded on the gospel, according to Mark. It is an outreach that seeks to help people embark on a spiritual pilgrimage to become Jesus' active disciples. The Church's understanding of conversion determines how to do mission. Strategies that aim at reproducing the sudden conversion may not be the most efficient in predominantly Muslim countries. For example, questions like "will you receive Jesus as your Lord and Saviour?" Whether

posed during open-air evangelism or door to door, evangelism might not interest a Muslim who knows Jesus as a prophet. On the other hand, instead of producing only discipleship materials for those already attending traditional churches, a Missionary who understands conversion as a process would also develop materials dedicated to helping those searching to know the way to salvation. The question to ask would be, "Where are you in your spiritual pilgrimage, and what issue are you wrestling with when it comes to God?" (Peace, 1999:286).

Missionaries should understand that for people who have reached the decision point, we need to proclaim the gospel to them, to urge them to turn from their old ways and follow Jesus. However, we also must develop strategies to assist those already in the spiritual journey, those confused in search of salvation. McKenzie (2012:320) writes that "Whereas the journey of faith can assume a progressive growth towards God, conversion emphasizes the radical need for change." The emphasis on conversion process needs to be balanced with the response to the call to transformation. While sharing God's word with a person, it is vital to listen attentively and discern the spiritual needs and address those needs, but all must be balanced with the proclamation of the good news; Faith comes by hearing the word of God.

- Is conversion only limited to an individual level? Can it be experienced by an entire group or a community?

For some scholars, evangelism should focus on individuals. The statement of Spindler (1997:299) merits special attention: "Human beings are individuals, should be approached as individuals, shaped, created individually, separated from their mothers at birth, and dying alone, each one called to a living dialogue with God in Christ." Other scholars consider the demand of an individual decision to believe and follow Jesus, a Western culture not applicable in other cultures. Donald McGavran (1955:324) introduces a challenging discussion on the Strategy of Missions. He avers that "since a true people is a social organism, the Christian mission must consider that." The mission's primary task is to approach people in community, not isolated converts. He holds that "people become Christians where a Christward movement occurs within that society." McGavran (1955:133). Simonson (1964:189) consents with McGavran's statement and affirms that "While it remains true that ultimately each man must make his profession of faith, we must admit that in

societies where people think and respond so corporately, we have all too often been far too "Western" and individualistic in our approach and thereby done more harm than good." Contemporary missiologists critique the nineteenth-century mission approach centred on converting individuals and gathering them in one compound, apart from their social group. McGravan, in his book *Bridges of God* (1955:133), highlights that "It is of the utmost importance that the church understands how peoples, not merely individuals, become Christian." Throughout the book, he generalises that true people are a social organism throughout the world except in the West, and therefore the Christian Mission must consider its primary task of evangelism to promote "people movements," "not isolated converts." He further says that "in a society where people think and respond so corporately, the process of extracting individuals from their setting does not build a Church. On the contrary, it rouses antagonism against Christianity and builds barriers against the spread of the gospel." (McGavran, 1955:225).

The Christianisation of the entire fabric, which is the people or significant parts of it, prevents the destruction of the individual's social life. Simonson (1964:190) says that the church should see conversion in corporate terms. For example, the head of the family brings the whole family with him when he asks for baptism, or the village elders are followed by part or whole of the village. The theory behind this is that, at the outset, those following the head of the family, or the village chief may not fully realise what is happening. However, with teachings, they will grow into a fuller understanding and a more profound commitment to Jesus Christ in time. McGravan (1955:235) insists that while promoting the Christianisation of the social group, we should not ignore the personal conversion and justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

The complexity of looking at conversion in a corporate term resides in defining the terms used. Christianization of a people is confused with the conversion of people and the individual. Is Christianisation of people the same as the conversion or the rebirth in Christ of men and women? I agree with McGravan (1955:225); the church should lead communities to Christ by winning individuals in their corporate life. While the new convert must stay in his community, he must also go through a new birth. Greenham (2007:29) shows concern with the group decision. He comments that "some group members can be truly converted and others not, in that case, we

cannot say that the group is converted. The only real indicator of the conversion or encountering Christ, individual or corporate, is transformation and behaviour change over time. (Engel 1990:190). Tippet (1977:213) argues that a change of allegiance within a group when converted must be evidenced by "an ocular demonstration with a manifest meaning to Christian and pagan alike." We conclude that God may reveal himself to a group of people; indeed, many of the baptisms mentioned in the New Testament deal with the household, where personal belief is not explicitly mentioned for every member in the household. A group decision, if it represents real conversions of persons who come to Christ interdependently, is a best-case scenario. However, because of several reasons, God, in His sovereignty, can call an individual out of a group. It is a fact that among those who have a corporate mindset, "only a rebel would strike out alone, without consultation and companions." (McKim, 1992:325). The Bible presents obvious examples of individual conversion. Jesus preached to Nicodemus alone, and we do not see families of the men who listened to Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. The Apostle Paul heard the voice of Jesus alone, not in a group; the Ethiopian eunuch is another example. We must remember and endure the suffering that may accompany a decision to follow Jesus. Like our Lord, believers are called to suffer disgrace outside the camp (Hebrews 13:12-13). Converted individuals may suffer persecution at the hands of the unconverted majority. Stephen's death and the persecution of Christians in the first century were not attributed to the incorrect evangelism methods (Acts 8-9).

None of the mission approaches can offer salvation; The Holy Spirit is responsible for the conversion process; it is beyond human control (John 36:8). We must consider the entire teaching of the Bible and follow the reading of the Holy Spirit while on mission. Sometimes the Bibles show us a whole household baptised, and in other instances, individuals are baptised with no family presence.

2.4. Conversion Models

Scholars have developed various models to act as a structure for the conversion process. Engel and Norton attempt to develop a figure representing the spiritual-decision process (Engel & Norton, 1975:44-45). In this method, the phases of the conversion cycle are divided into four. In the first phase, called proclamation, the objective is to stimulate interest; build awareness. This stage is called pre-

evangelism. The next phase is persuasion. The Evangelist tries to know the person's felt need and present a Biblical answer, bringing the seeker to understand Jesus' requirements to his followers. At stage three, called Regeneration, the Evangelist stresses the principles and imprecations of the Gospel message, knowing that The Holy Spirit alone can accomplish regeneration. The last stage is cultivation, which is synonymous with sanctification. The new convert starts to mature in his faith but still needs a follow-up, help, and encouragement from other believers (Engel & Norton, 1975:47-56). Rambo (1992) brings a vital contribution to the study of conversion as a process. He does not contest the perspective of sudden conversion, but he attests that most conversions are gradual (Rambo, 1992:159). He emphasizes that in most cases, religious transformation occurs over time, and is a complex interweaving of personal, social, cultural, and religious elements. Rambo attempted to develop a conceptual framework structured to manage large amounts of data and procedures on conversion. In the fifth chapter of this study, we will use the conversion stage model established by Rambo to organize, evaluate, and analyse different stages that convert from Islam faith to Christianity faith go through mainly: "context, crisis, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequence." (Rambo, 1993:163-167). The following is the summary of Rambo's seven-stage models:

Context: it is the world of the individual in the process of conversion, all life's experience. Rambo (1993) elaborates more on the definition of context, meaning the "social, cultural, religious, and personal dimension" (:20). It includes both "*the micro and macro contexts*." The macro context is the convert's broader cultural and social environment. The micro context is the converts' immediate close context, like relatives, tribe or ethnic group, religious group, and immediate communities. Barhe (2011:22). These groupings are significant; they create a sense of identity and membership and influence the decision-making processes in individuals.

A crisis or disorientation precedes conversion most of the time. Crisis challenges an individual's identity and beliefs and motivates him to investigate other philosophies of life. Religious, psychological, political, or cultural crises in the individual's life create disorientation, which stimulates the need to begin the journey in search of a solution, in quest of new options (Rambo, 1993:44). The individual in crisis embarks on a quest to find answers to his problems and the quest for effective alternatives. When

faced with crisis circumstances, this search becomes increasingly irresistible; people actively seek means that provide opportunities for progress to fill the void, resolve the issue, or improve their lives. (Rambo, 1993:56).

In searching for meaning and purpose in life, a potential convert engages with the advocate of another religion in a particular setting; we call the meeting an encounter. Compatibility of ideology, education, gender, age, and other attributes, between the potential convert and the advocate, influence the outcome of the encounter. Interpersonal relations like friendship and kinship are a major trial to the conversion success. An encounter can precede a crisis or sometimes follow it. (Rambo 1992, 169-171).

A deepened interaction occurs when the encounter has succeeded in intensifying the contact between the prospective convert and the advocate. The prospective convert starts to study, to know more about the other group's way of life, doctrine, and beliefs. When the potential convert finds the group to suit him or her, he or she gradually integrates into the group. The degree of the relationship, the rituals, bodily experience, eagerness to change, and the internalization of the group teaching determine the pace of the conversion process (Rambo, 1993:102).

After a period of intense interaction, the convert must make a public confession as a demonstration of his choice; he or she must testify his/her commitment to the new religious community. Commitment ceremonies such as baptism and testimony are significant, tangible events that bear witness to the decision of the convert (Rambo, 1993:124).

After committing to adhere to the new community, follow the manifestation of consequences. The convert continually assesses the consequences, and wrestles in mind to determine whether the new religious affiliation is relevant and trustworthy. Rambo affirms that the consequences of conversion are conditioned "in part by the nature, intensity, and duration of the conversion and the response to conversion in a person's or a group's context" (Rambo, 1993:144). He further clarifies the following as theological implications of conversion: release from the guilt of sin, a sense of mission, and a reason for living, a sense of belonging and identity, a renewed

understanding of reality, a sense of wholeness and peace, a sense of relationship with God, and a sense of a second chance and a fresh start (Rambo, 1993:160-162).

Conversion can also have negative consequences. In some cases, when expectations are not met, and the convert thinks to have been manipulated, the conversion process can affect the person destructively. Depending on the social context, the convert may go through psychological persecution, and even physical harm can happen in some Muslim contexts. (Beehner, 2007)

2.5. Conversion and contextualisation

Contextualization has been discussed for a long-time in missiology and proves to be a complicated term to define. I acquiesce with Gilliland's (2000, 225:227) statement, "there is no single or broad definition of contextualization." Bosch (1983:485-510) refers to contextualization as an ongoing process, where the gospel is assimilated into people's entire lives in their cultural context so that the message becomes applicable to those who profess it. God does not change; neither does His word, but the world we live in continues to change, and its population sees things and decodes them differently. The change in people's worldview influences how they judge and interpret everything they see and hear. The non-contextualization of the gospel makes it perceived as foreign to the receiving culture. However, contextualization should not be an occasion to change or compromise its content.

Contextualization is not limited to theology; it encompasses all dimensions of religious life. Church architecture, worship, preaching, the system of church governance, symbols, and rituals are all areas where contextualization applies (Gilliland, 2000:226).

Why Contextualization?

When we read the Bible, we see traditions, names of trees, birds, mountains, and more other things that we do not sometimes understand, because the writers of the Bible belonged to a culture that was different from ours. Hesselgrave (1995:116) attests that "The biblical message came in language and concepts meaningful to sources (prophets, apostles, and Bible authors) and receptors (their hearers and readers) in the Hebrew and Greco-Roman cultures of Bible times." Whether

consciously or unconsciously, the Biblical message has been contextualized to be meaningful to people in cultures in which the Christian message spread, emerged, and from which it sends out its cross-cultural missionaries. The task of the missionaries is to interpret (or decontextualize) biblical messages. They interpret the biblical message to limit the intrusion of materials from their own culture. They must recontextualize the message to communicate it effectively to respondents in their target culture (Hesselgrave, 1995:3).

2.5.1 The Task and Importance of Contextualization

Song (2006) avers that the receptor's mind is far from empty or free. Instead, the mind must go through a fierce battle before adopting any biblical truth.

Contextualization refers to the utilisation of whatever good is available in a culture as a bridge for the clear delivery of the gospel to potential converts.

Paul's ministry demonstrates the importance of contextualization, most notably in his Acts sermons. Paul purposefully addressed his Jewish audience differently than he addressed Pagan philosophers. When speaking to Jews, Paul began by quoting Scripture, but to the Gentile, he opened his presentation with the general revelation. Paul adapted his gospel presentation to his listeners' worldviews, But the gospel remained the central theme of his teachings. (Song 2006; Hesselgrave 1995; Stetzer 2014). Contextualization makes the gospel real to the untrained layperson and simplifies it; it makes the convert decide with comprehension. The missiological significance for contextualization is to ensure that all nations understand the gospel as clear and accurate, as did the people in Jesus' days (Gilliland, 2000:227).

2.6. Literature related to conversion from Islam faith to Christianity faith

Several researchers studied the conversion of Muslims to the Christian faith. Hoskins (2014:62) noted that most researchers wrote from a Christian missionary perspective. A profound reading of researchers' findings concerning conversion from Islam faith to Christianity demonstrates the complexity of the conversion involving multistage passage. This process is long and progressive, proceeding from one phase to another in the convert's life. While each research concentrates on geographical locations and groups of people, their general observations are universally relevant in other contexts. In his doctoral thesis, Maurer (1999) studied

the conversion process of twenty converts. Ten of them became Christians from Islam, and ten became Muslims from Christianity. Maurer (1999) explored the conversion motives of those narratives. His findings show five different conversion motives: “religious, mystical, affectional, socio-political, and material.” (:127). The five conversion motives mentioned by Maurer correspond with five recorded by Rambo (1993:14-16). Maurer (1999:130-131), for example, claims that during the conversion process, a range of conversion motives are at work. These motives collide, and so influence one another. He explains the conversion process, starting on a single motive called the initial factor or entrance of the conversion process. Then follows a cycle of interplay or a combination of different motivations. With time the interconnection of different motives leads to one or two final motives, culminating in a commitment to change the religion” (Maurer, 1999:130). He agrees with Rambo (1993:140) by affirming that “conversion motives vary from person to person and are numerous, interactive, and cumulative.”

Seppo Syrjänen (1984), a missionary and scholar in Pakistan, studied the conversion from Islam to Christianity of the Pakistani group. He discusses the conversion experiences of thirty-six people. His research focuses primarily on identity issues. Among converts from Islam to Christianity, Syrjänen (1984:57) identifies identity formation as the core area of concern. He remarks that in Pakistan, when a person converts to Christianity, his social identity changes; he is considered joining the lowest social group. To resist the pressure of abandoning the people and the culture, any prospective convert needs to have a firm religious conviction and develop a substantial religious commitment (Syrjänen, 1984:8).

A PhD. thesis by Greenlee (1996) in Morocco describes key components of conversion stories. He classifies those elements into four. The first element is communication; it includes audio, visual, print, and individual face-to-face conversations. The second is the social factor or witness factor. It includes the continued personal witness of Christians, friendly contacts, persecution, and family challenges. The third is the cultural factor. A convert from Islam faces the complexity of national identity, who he is, and whom he is becoming as an individual. The convert faces a multifaceted problem; he struggles with explaining his abandonment of the formal rituals, family religion, and tradition and - how to integrate into the newly

found and adopted religious culture and rituals. The fourth factor is the supernatural factor which comprises dreams, spiritual power encounters, and miracles. Greenlee cannot define a specific conversion process that suits all individual conversions but does see similarities. In his research, even though he did not specify the precise stages of the decision-making process, he defined a simple conversion pattern, which, in some ways, was the typical conversion process for youth.

In this sequence, a mentor exposes a young man to Bible teachings. He finally connects him with a missionary Christian who exposes him to the Christian teachings. Finally, He meets a Christians from the same background, who can assist him in overcoming the obstacles that have kept him from converting. Greenlee concludes that “Muslims who have come to faith in Jesus Christ usually have encountered the truth of God’s Word; received a touch of God’s love through his people; and have seen a sign of God’s power.” (Greenlee, 2010:6). He further consents to the fact that it is erroneous to pinpoint the exact point and time of conversion, but he is persuaded of the existence of a point prior to which one is still under God’s condemnation and another point in life after which one has eternal life (Greenlee, 1996:24). Upon studying various conversion processes, Greenlee (1996:143) compares them with different conversion hypotheses to see which one matches which conversion scenario. Most of the conversions studied fit Engel's gradual conversion process theory (1990).

Gaudeul (1999), in his book “from Islam to Christ,” conducted literary research by gathering valuable information on the subject of conversion from Islam to Christianity. His research does not use private interviews but gathers testimonies in writing (Gaudeul, 1999:24-25). The research analyses more than one hundred accounts by converts of both sexes from different countries and backgrounds worldwide. Gaudeul is not comparing Christianity and Islam to prove which one is true religion. He also admits to the reality of people confessing to be called to become Muslim, but the book's purpose is unambiguous: it is to demonstrate how God called Muslims to accept Christ (Gaudeul, 1999:11). The author classifies these accounts in five key headings: The first are those who find Jesus to be attractive. Their narratives reveal how they felt drawn by the personality of Jesus. Second, those trying to find the truth, looking for inner certainty. Thirdly, people

seeking acceptance are searching for a family, and are attracted by the communal life of believers in Christian churches. Fourth, those who lack the inner peace and seek forgiveness; lastly, those who eagerly want to know God, seeking a personal encounter and personal experience with God.

Data from Hoskins' (2014) work add unequivocal findings to the research on the conversion from Islam to Christianity. His study focused on Muslims living under Russian rule, especially in Central Asia in the 1970s. Such people were enculturated into Russian ways of life, ideology, and worldview process named "russification." Hoskins interviewed thirty-six Muslims who converted to faith in Christ in post-Soviet Central Asia and provided a clear view of the nature of religious conversion in the context of history, community, and religion. According to Hoskins, "if we are to understand the personal experience of conversion, we must frame it within the social, cultural and historical currents swirling around that experience" (Hoskins, 2014:3).

To conclude his study, Hoskins reveals personal and contextual factors that enhance conversion from Islam to Christianity. First, the necessity of understanding the culturally constructed metaphysical landscape. For many Central Asian Muslims, some of the Christians' essential terms and names are inaccessible until they enter the acceptable Muslim terms. Hoskins gives an example of the linguistic phenomenon where the name Jesus Christos in Russia had to change into Isa Masih for the Muslims to listen to the Gospel. He argues that, for Muslims, conversion is about a new relationship with a different supernatural being then the context or location of the being is significant. If the culture of the prospective convert locates the name of Jesus to be a foreign God, the understanding of the cultural space in which that convert locates Jesus will influence his decision, it carries a significant emotional reaction. Therefore, the shift in the choice of words by using those belonging to the cultural world of the converts makes a big difference (Hoskins, 2014:116-125). Secondly, Hoskins emphasizes the importance of literacy. He believes that the efforts of the Soviet era to increase literacy played a significant factor in the conversions of Central Asian Muslims. This effort laid the foundation for the textual nature of Protestant Christianity, which Muslims later encountered. For Russians, the precise way to advance their political agenda and to systematically

inculcate specific Soviet values was through mass literacy. Quran being written in Arabic, and the fact that many people could not read and understand it; led Muslims to read the Bible written in Russia and convert to Christianity (Hoskins, 2014:125-131). Lastly, although Hoskins did not deny the importance of missionaries as agents of Muslim conversions in Central Asia, he discovered that foreign missionaries played a secondary role in most cases. He claims that local Russian Christians and other former Muslims who turned evangelists were the primary conversion agents in general.

Hoskins' study proves the efficacy of the intra-cultural religious idea transmission in contrast with the cross-cultural one. The research reveals the impact that former Muslims can make when viewed as Christian leaders by fellow Muslim converts (Hoskins, 2014:132-147). His conclusion also identifies what he calls "push factors and pull factors." Push factors mean negative experiences in the Muslim society that cause some to lose interest in Islam. He mentions religious nominalism, alcoholism, and unanswered existential questions. Pull factors are things that the converts find attractive enough to risk the disapproval or persecution of family and community when changing religion. He includes the good reputation of Christians and the supernatural experience found in Christianity; visions, dreams; miracles, and physical healings (Hoskins, 2014:149-166).

Another researcher, Greenham (2004), conducted a qualitative study on conversion of twenty-two male and female Palestinian Muslims in Israel. The author investigates the case of Palestinian Muslims' conversion to Christ and discusses the various factors involved. He marks different conversion factors affecting each convert significantly with little distinction between women and men, certain factors more prevalent than others. (Greenham, 2004:214). He identifies the most significant conversion factors, naming: the person of Jesus, God's miraculous involvement, the truth of Jesus' message, Bible reading, and the role of believers; however, Jesus is always central (Greenham, 2004:215).

J Dudley Woodberry's (2007) research validates the veracity of the studies already discussed. He interviewed 750 Muslim converts. The participants were from all Muslim-majority countries. They filled out a comprehensive questionnaire, and the fundamental question was, "What attracts Muslims to follow Jesus?" While the work

does not assert scientific accurateness, it gives an insight into some of the keyways God's Spirit uses to open Muslim hearts to the gospel (Woodberry, 2007:82). The participants assessed the relative significance of various conversion factors before, during, or after the decision to change their faith. A review of the study results indicates that the reasons given for the conversion have to do with the specific positive experiences of individuals (Sträehler, 2009:60). The cited experiences that most influenced the participants to convert are the lifestyle of Christians were the power of God in answered prayers and healing; dissatisfaction with the type of Islam they had experienced; visions and dreams; the gospel message, particularly its promise of redemption and forgiveness, and the spiritual truth in the Bible as confirmed by the Quran.

Another study in the sub-Saharan context was done by Sträehler (2009). He investigated in detail the process of conversion from Islam to Christianity in Kenya. His research addresses conversion in its multiple aspect and multidimensional phases. He gives a multidisciplinary description and elaborates the Spiritual decision Matrix of Conversion Process to illustrate the intricate dynamics in action during conversion. His matrix has two dimensions: cognitive and affective. The former demonstrates a development in the Christian faith's substance knowledge, while the latter displays a shift in attitude towards Christ (Sträehler, 2009:24). Two of the objectives in Sträehler's research have a direct implication for our study: to demonstrate that "there are identifiable stages in the journey the converts go through and there are factors that act as catalysts in the transition from one stage to another." (2009:26).

According to Sträehler (2009), converts go through five identifiable stages. The first phase encompasses the period before they became interested in the Christian faith and the Gospel. At this stage, the majority of the converts were anti-Christian. The second phase is when their awareness is directed towards Christianity. According to the survey, awareness grew primarily through face-to-face interactions with Christians, with only a few media examples. Phase three is a period during which new converts connect with Christian teachings and beliefs. At this stage, converts start developing the love towards the Gospel and are impacted by the character of Jesus. Phase four is when a convert must decide whether to follow or not to follow

Jesus Christ. At phase five, the new Christian begins the journey with Jesus Christ. (2009:134). Sträehler's findings also indicate twelve key components involved in the conversion process: "answer to prayer; personal witness by Christians; the attractive lifestyle of Christians; Christian love/friendship shown by Christians; dissatisfaction with the practice of Islam; reading Bible; reading Christian literature, evangelistic meetings, or witnessing the miracle power of Jesus, dreams, and visions; theological debate and TV/Video." (2009:138).

Conversion from Islam to Christianity refers to both men and women, but much research focuses on men; consequently, it is crucial to review a few studies on women. Muslim women, in general, are considered as always victims. (Miriam Adeney, 2005). Evangelizing women in Senegal is considered harmless to their religion. The belief is that a woman cannot change her religion because of a man's authority over her. Miriam, in her research, stresses the impact of female conversions. She narrates the history of powerful women who impacted and influenced Muslim communities, in politics, social affairs, and religion (Adeney, 2005:288-290). She also reports various stories of women who have converted from Islam to Christianity; the purpose is to demonstrate that women may indeed choose and decide to change from one faith to another.

Adeney points out five recurrent landmarks on the converted women's journeys to Christ (2005:290-299). The first is the longing for wellbeing and just and equitable communities. The second central theme concerns the family: sex, husband, and children. These two cited elements are traditionally overlooked when discussing women's felt needs before conversion. Adeney raises important questions that merit attention in the Muslim context. Can a Muslim woman decide to convert to Christianity if she is single? Can she maintain the decision to follow Christ if she is married to a Muslim? If married, can she teach her children in a Christian manner while living in a Muslim environment? (2005:292). The author acknowledges that families decide together to come to Christ in many Muslim settings, but she cites exceptions of women who personally opted to convert to Christ. Some women went through fierce persecution and raised Christian children, others had to undergo divorce, and others died single (Adeney, 2005:295-296). Adeney's observations attest to the reality in Senegal. Many sacrifices are expected from a Muslim woman

who converts to Christianity. She will have to marry a Christian. When converted married to a Muslim man, she will have to be secretive; otherwise, divorce and loss of children are unavoidable. Islam has restrictions that make it challenging to address these issues humanly. For example, in divorce instances, children usually go to their father; daughters get half of the inheritance compared to sons. A man's testimony is equal to that of two women. A man, not a woman, can have four lawful spouses. All these challenging injustices towards women exist in Senegal (Adeney, 2005:293). Other contributing factors to Muslim conversion investigated by Adeney are common to other research, such as "the story of Jesus, praying together, a supernatural spiritual experience, and persevering friendship." (2005:297).

Murumba (2008) is another researcher who focuses primarily on women's conversion from Islam to Christianity. She did her research among the Borana women in Nairobi, Kenya. Twelve women from Borana were interviewed, their narrative experiences before and after conversion studied, and the findings reported. Those women were Muslim but married to Christians. The researcher noticed that the encounter and relationship with Christian women made a big difference for Borana women. Many Borana Muslim women longed for excellent and valuable social and spiritual relationships (Murumba, 2008:152). She also pointed out that the material or spiritual crisis was the most crucial point of the conversion process for some women seeking an alternative solution (Murumba, 2008:154). Murumba also discovered the vital role of husbands in the conversion of their wives. For the research on women's conversion, topics such as persecution, sex, the influence of husbands and children must be thoroughly investigated (Murumba, 2008:158).

In concluding this section of studies, we can address the problem of apostasy in Islam. Additionally, we shall study how Islam views it and treats it. While according to article eighteen of the Declaration of Human Rights, all countries are under human rights obligation to uphold the right to freedom of religion, including people's right to change their beliefs, Islamic teaching in the Muslim world violates this principle (Garces, 2010:229-264). As Garces (2010:232) indicates in his article about Apostasy Laws under Islamic Law and International Legal Obligations, Islamic law varies from other justice systems because it is based on a divine source that Muslims believe is the right word and instruction of God. Apostasy is defined as

"turning away from Islam" or "severing the ties with Islam" (Peters and De Vries, 1977:2). The apostate is a Muslim by birth or conversion who renounces his religion, regardless of whether he then embraces another faith (1977:3). According to Garces (2010:235), a Muslim generally commits apostasy through beliefs, deeds, words, or a combination of those actions that do not conform to Islam.

Apostasy punishment usually calls for apostate death, but other types of punishment exist. Before the execution, the apostate is invited to return to Islam. Unless the apostate repents, punishment is levied. Adult men are executed, while women are incarcerated until they repent. Another penalty is civil death, which removes all civil rights, including invalidating marriage or removing children, stripping property, or inheritance rights of an apostate (Garces, 2010:237). These laws pose an enormous challenge for Muslims who convert to other religions. Although apostates from Islam in some countries cannot live peaceably *de facto* under extreme social pressure and pressure from the authorities, this is possible in other countries. The persecution of the converts in some countries like Senegal does not come from civil authorities but from society and relatives. Meral (2006) affirms that few converts bear these humiliations and distress. Indeed, very few converts from Islam are those who do not abandon their newfound religion in their first two years of conversion. Meral (2006) further notes that five years after the new convert from Islam has progressed in his commitment and knowledge to the new religion and internalised his new identity as a Christian, he will probably stay with the faith. To effectively integrate the converts from Islam into Christian churches, Meral asks for three things that I found indispensable: to work for a relevant theology, to think of the social need of the convert consciously, and a holistic discipleship strategy.

The aforementioned studies about conversions from Islam to Christianity are rich in information and instructions for analysing Muslim conversions in all existing contexts and Senegal peculiarly.

2.7. Conclusion

In this field of research, it is critical to have a comprehensive understanding of several perspectives of the study. The literature reviewed provided vast amounts of

knowledge and a detailed perspective on the conversion process. However, it was also clear that research on conversion is far from complete overall.

The geography of religion helps to think through the influence that the communities, society, polity, and landscape have on the conversion process, especially with current growing issues of militant Islam and religious fundamentalism. The perspective of the history of religion provides an insight into the historical views of conversion and their impact on defining Biblical conversion. While this research is not directly related to the sociology of religion, it takes vital information from it, mainly the convert's motivations and background. The anthropological study helps to understand the impact of cultures, beliefs, and social settings on the conversion process. Finally, the psychological study of religion provides an insight into the value of including transcendence in the conversion narratives. These five fields of conversion research do not explicitly address the conversions from a specific religion to another; however, they establish the necessary context for this research.

The Theological viewpoint of Conversion includes God's spiritual dimension, through which he draws a person closer to himself. This is something secular research has difficulty explaining. The knowledge obtained from the theological perspective of conversion is the foundation for my exposition of what converting to Christian faith entails, turning from sin, having faith in God's promises as well as in Christ's sacrifice, and obedience that results in an entirely new way of life. The perspective of missiology studies on conversion relates to the different conversion models relevant to this study, which aims to identify stages of conversion and elements that function as catalysts for each stage. The task then for my study is to find out how the theoretical knowledge gained by reading different perspectives on conversion worked out in the real-life testimonies of twelve Muslim background believers, corrected from the book "the testimony for the Glory of God in Senegal" (SIM, 1996). A study on Islam and Christianity in Senegal provided helpful background information on the position of Islam and Christianity in Senegal and insight into the challenges of conversion from Islam to Christianity in that context.

This study's extensive literature review was vital to comprehend the particularity of conversion from Islam to Christianity, and conversion in general. This study based its outcomes on that understanding to provide well-informed perspectives on Muslims'

conversion to Christianity. This research differs from others because it tries to extend existing knowledge on conversion to the specific topic of Muslim conversions to Christianity in Senegal.

Chapter Three:

Processes of conversion

Chapter two of the research concentrated on motivations for conversion; this chapter takes a different approach to analyse the research question. To answer the question, this chapter studies the process of conversion from Islam faith to the Christianity faith. The study uses collected conversion testimonies of thirteen Senegalese (SIM, 1996). Testimonies will be analysed to understand the various stages that a convert goes through when changing the religion, from Islam to Christianity.

Analysing the testimonies, the researcher noticed a similar pattern characterising a testimony. A testimony is a vital commitment ritual and observable event that witnesses the convert's decision (Rambo, 1993:124). It is a language and biographical reconstruction, a rhetorical adaptation for describing one's conversion experience and telling one's own story (Rambo, 1993:137). Knowing that learning to give one's testimony of conversion is often a crucial component of the conversion process for some Christian communities, the researcher supposes that the testimonies to be studied have been structured not to explain the entire process of conversion, but as apologetics to prove Jesus exists and can save Muslims.

Although the study of a convert's verbal accounts is not without questions, Maurer (1999) sees no reason that individual conversion claims should not be regarded as true and accurate accounts of past events and experiences, a stance I affirm.

The researcher tried to decipher the data to find significant ideas, patterns, and topics (Creswell, 2003:191). The data were coded, then arrayed to create a comprehensive description.

All thirteen testimonies analysed have similar highlights: Life before conversion, the process of conversion, and life after conversion.

No conversion model can ever fully capture the reality of conversion, but I do agree with Rambo's statement attesting that "the study of conversion must include, at the

very least, the following four components: cultural, social, personal, and religious systems.” (Rambo, 1993:7)

While Lofland and Stark’s (1965) work and Tippet’s (1977) missiological model supply helpful heuristic conversion models, I prefer the Rambo model; it is multidimensional, historical, yet also process-oriented. It approaches conversion as a collection of interdependent and cohesive aspects across time rather than a single occurrence. It also provides a broader, more complex view of the multi-layered conversion processes involved (Rambo, 1993:16-17).

For the reasons expounded above, this study analyses the testimonies using the seven stages model theory established by Rambo (1993:159-177) and the coded data to see similarities or discordances. We will explain common concerns arising from the coded data in each phase. The processes and factors that led to the conversion from Islam to Christianity will be investigated.

A conversion model developed by Rambo has seven stages: Context; Crisis; Quest; Encounter; Interaction; Commitment; and Consequences. Context is the first stage of the paradigm.

The first six stages and the coded data are analysed separately: the seventh stage (the consequences) will be referred to in other chapters.

3.1. Life before conversion

3.1.1. Stage One: Context

According to Rambo (1993), context refers to the person’s overall environment, including economic, social, and gender status, also to the political and religious context. Muslim People in Senegal have cohabited with Christians from the Catholic Church since 1444. The modern world's ease of movement allows missionaries to reach new locations for evangelism. In the same way, a person seeking to change can move and break away from the obstructive social acquaintances and explore new ones. (Rambo, 1993:31). When Protestants arrived in Senegal in 1863, missionaries moved within the four corners of Senegal and exposed several villages and cities to the gospel using different strategies. The researcher noted that the

analysed testimonies mostly come from Muslims with secular education. He also noted that the researcher noted that the number of converts from Islam to the Christian faith is higher for young people from ten to thirty-one years old.

Religious, family, and professional life before conversion

The religious background of converts: The environment where a person is raised always has an impact on his decision to become a Christian. The researchers identified two distinct converts categories according to their previous religious affiliations. The initial category of converts genuinely adhered to Islamic principles. Since childhood, they were committed Muslims attending Quranic schools; three Muslim background believers are in that group. However, as their encounter with Christians expanded, their attitude toward Islam and Christianity changed.

The second category comprises nominal Muslims following folk Islam (4MBB Men and 3MBB Women). The third type of converts consists of persons who followed Islam while still married to Christians or living with a family member who is a Christian (3MBB Women). There was a noticeable difference in the third group's attitude toward biblical teachings compared to the others. They were far more open to receiving and accepting Jesus Christ. Before the study, the researcher assumed that most converts would decide to pursue Christ while away from home, which could decrease the amount of control of their family and community.

Nevertheless, this analysis showed that eight of the thirteen converts became Christians living with their families. When they converted to Christianity, four converts lived in their village; they all met with Christians who talked to them or provided Christian literature for reading. The convert considered accepting Jesus as his saviour when adult and economically independent. After a conversation with a Christian friend on the book of Psalms, the incessant inner call to follow Jesus was emphatic that the potential convert accepted it and was chased from home. Four other converts were introduced to the Christian faith (Christianity) by their immediate family members.

Two women were influenced by the transformation that happened to their husbands after their conversion; they accepted Jesus. Another young man was converted by

listening to the gospel through his nephews. One girl was influenced by her father, who preached the gospel to his family. The family members' moral elements and preaching impacted these converts' decision-making process. On the other hand, four new Christian converts found Christ while living far from the family setting. One man testifies that he went to study and lived an autonomous life away from the family. He found and read the New Testament, initially with non-comprehension. With the help of a missionary, he understood salvation and converted to Christianity.

Another young man, while studying law at university, read a book called "Is Jesus God?" He did in-depth research on that subject and was convinced by Jesus's claim to be the son of God. After repentance, he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. The same with another convert who studied in France, where he shared a room with a Christian. The roommate introduced him to the good news. He studied to know if the salvation in Jesus is false or true. After researching for two years, he finally decided to accept Jesus and get baptized. Another woman became acquainted with Christianity in the hospital after an accident, and she was given a Bible to read. After the hospital's dismissal, she researched sin and its consequences; she found the verse in John 3:16 and accepted Jesus as her saviour and Lord. Reading one riveting testimony, we could not know where the witness lived when he converted to Christianity. He stated that he listened to a BBC World service programme that attracted him to Christ, whom he only knew as a prophet and not the Saviour. A study on Christianity and the encounter with a pastor contributed to his renouncement of Islam. He got baptised after accepting Jesus as his Lord and Saviour.

In analysing the samples of thirteen testimonies, we discovered that people were more likely to convert while living in their family setting than in a new environment. Despite their family's anti-Christian sentiments, eight converts converted to Christianity at home. These findings suggest that when Senegalese Muslims make important decisions for their lives, they feel secure to do it within their family background. However, it also indicates that they might be able to decide when they are far from home.

School or academic life

Another milieu that assists Muslim conversion to Christianity is educational institutions (schools, libraries, youth centres, vocational training). Three out of the thirteen people confess to getting to know the Christian faith primarily through their school or university Christian mates. The first testimony was from a man who studied at university, and he knew a little about the Bible. He read some portion of the Bible through the Christian youth centre near his university, which he attended for leisure.

Another individual, upon entering high school at the age of thirteen, found a Christian centre where he could watch movies and do other youth activities. There he heard the story of Jesus for the first time.

One of the converts heard the Gospel message through a Christian roommate in university. He learned to know Jesus through God's word and researched more to find the truth, and after two years, He chose to give his life to Jesus.

The study concludes that micro and macro circumstances affect conversion from Islam to Christianity in Senegal. The evidence is apparent from our data that despite the knowledge of all challenges awaiting them, most people decide to convert while living within a familiar rather than unfamiliar setting. Converts' previous religious experiences and beliefs shape how they engage with Christians and the pace of decision-making. Schools, universities, and other learning institutions provide a fertile conversion environment. Christian youth centres conveniently located close to schools and universities will effectively contribute to spreading the good news amongst the youth. Rambo attests that "Religion and the social matrix are so intertwined that a change in the sociocultural setting will stimulate a change in the religious sphere" (1993:93).

3.2. The process of conversion

3.2.1. Stage Two: Crisis

Context is, among other steps, an important step and must be understood because of its relevance in the conversion process. Rambo's first conversion stage examined various contexts that shape the convert and affect his conversion. The crisis follows the context. Rambo (1993:166) states that "Crises force individuals and groups to confront their limitations and can stimulate a quest to resolve conflict, fill a void,

adjust to new circumstances, or find avenues of transformation.” Crises occur to people of all ages when converting to Christianity.

Rambo (1993:46) indicates that significant crises and other trivial events can challenge and threaten one’s fundamental attitude and perception towards life and are crucial to conversion.

The following section will explain how the crisis has affected the Senegalese Muslims' conversion process.

3.2.1.1. The average age of conversion

While analysing the testimonies, we found that converts faced many forms of crisis in their conversion to Christianity. Most of them had a significant or moderate pre-conversion crisis.

When facing crises, my earlier presumption was that seniors have the fortitude to decide compared to younger people. The analysis of the thirteen testimonies reveals the contrast: seven people aged 10 to 20 decided to become Christians; six others aged 21 to 30; none aged over 30 converted to Christianity.

This study shows that older people are less likely to convert due to shame, fear of losing privileges, social status, social and cultural pressure, and identity conservation despite having more freedom to decide about their lives.

3.2.1.2. Tension or life Crisis

Before conversion, converts endured numerous crises, such as family mistreatment, illness, fear of death, meaninglessness, and dissatisfaction with their faith. Four of the thirteen converts had a life crisis that led them to doubt Islam, and they started to believe that Christianity could respond to their problems.

One convert suffered because of his parent's divorce when he was young. His father married two wives, and they mistreated him. He searched for a solution to his suffering and was introduced to Jesus, who became his refuge. Another convert experienced troubling thoughts. She was unsure of her destiny after death. In her quest for the answer, she read Christian literature that offered an assurance of

salvation in Jesus. One woman had an accident, and while in hospital, she was offered a Bible. She was touched by what she discovered about Jesus as a Saviour and a healer when she read it. Another life crisis that the converts experienced was a sense of meaninglessness and discontent with Islamic doctrines and practices. One convert was dissatisfied with the hypocrisy and injustice he experienced within Islam, and he could not find peace. As a result of this difficulty, he began reading the Bible and eventually learned, trusted, and accepted Christ.

3.2.1.3. Dreams and Visions

As noted by Woodberry, Shubin, and Marks (2007), many Muslims interpret dreams as connections between the material world and the spiritual realm, and pre-conversion visions and dreams frequently lead Muslims to consult the Christian or the Bible. Like other Muslims, Senegalese believe that dreams should not be ignored; they are God's answers to life's complexity. Dreams often occur during a crisis or after a Muslim encounters a Christian, reads, or watches Christian-oriented material. In some instances, identical dreams and visions may be witnessed frequently before a person agrees to convert to Christianity. Dreams and vision play an essential role in instilling the desire to obey Christ in the Muslim heart.

While contemplating whether or not to accept Christ, three converts were motivated by dreams and visions. One of them had several dreams appearing at different times which convinced her to have faith in Jesus. Another person saw her grave one night in a dream, and she was scared and troubled. She started to imagine and worry about her destiny after death. Her husband encouraged her to pray to Jesus while searching for a solution. In Jesus' name, she prayed and received peace in her heart. Also, another had a vision of three people in a cloud and instinctively knew that the person in the middle was Jesus. In each scenario, a dream or a vision influenced the conversion process. Dreams and visions were not the sole cause of conversion, but they were significant factors that consolidated the decision-making.

3.2.2. Stage Three: Quest

It is usual for human beings to pursue a solution to the problem they face. When converts faced such crises, they reacted in various ways.

Rambo stated that “many people who leave a particular religious orientation are thrown into a crisis that triggers their quest for new religious experiences, institutions, teachings, and communities.” (Rambo, 1993:53). In either case, a crisis, whatever quarter it originates in, would more than certainly trigger action to alleviate stress, overcome discord, eliminate tension (Rambo, 1993:55). Some will look for a solution in the teachings of other religions, books, or prayers to supernatural beings. At the quest stage, the convert will respond to the crisis by resisting, repudiating, or accepting the new option. As an alternative, some people decide to investigate Christianity when their religion does not satisfy their inner longing.

The study revealed two main quests: the religious and emotional quest. Berhe (2011) in “On conversion from Islam to Christianity among the Arsi Oromo” cites more quests that are not found in our study because of the nature of the converts’ accounts analysed. Those quests include the financial quest, the mystical quest, and the social quest.

3.2.2.1. Religious quest

a. Quest for truth

An individual in crisis often has questions about his past experiences and tries to understand his or her problems and find a reasonable and effective solution. This study shows that after experiencing some crises, six converts faced an intense truth quest. They sought answers from religious texts, religious leaders, media, and spiritual means to search for the truth. Uncertainty about their destiny after death and salvation prompted them to look for people from other religions and query their beliefs.

Like many other converts, one gave his story. He knew little about the Bible; he read portions of it and had many things he wanted to understand. He spent years searching the scripture and discovered that the Bible was full of mysteries, very different from what he expected. In his search for the truth, he met a missionary who expounded the Bible for him, and he decided to become a Christian. Another convert was studying law at university, and while in the search for the truth, a missionary gave him a book entitled “Is Jesus God?” that was a shocking title” That book challenged him to do more research on Jesus’ claim to be the son of

God. By comparing Old Testament and the New Testament's verses about eternal salvation, he comprehended the magnitude of the prophecy about Jesus; he was convinced that Jesus is the son of God. He knew that his conclusion was blasphemy in Islam, but he decided to give his life to Jesus.

One more convert was confused concerning all the claims uttered by all Christian branches. He researched to understand why there are different sects in Christianity and which one is true Christianity. One woman wanted to know what happens after death and her destiny in the afterlife. Her mother could not answer that question; she advised her to follow Islam's ordinances, hoping God would have mercy on her. She was not satisfied with this answer. She searched for a valid answer until she met a man selling booklets and bought some, hoping to get more answers.

The booklets explained the way to salvation in Christ Jesus and the state of man in sin. She searched in the Bible while still practising her Muslim duties.

One day she prayed and asked God to lead her into the right path toward Him. After the prayer, she felt attracted by Jesus, and she decided to follow Him. A compelling testimony of one convert who wanted to know God more is the following: In his quest to know God, a Christian gave him a gospel book. It took him five years of reading and deep searching before he decided to give his life to Jesus. Another convert had two significant and fundamental needs he wanted to be solved. He was longing for purity in his heart and to get saved. He tried to earn salvation by his efforts but in vain. One day He was listening to BBC a programme called "word of faith" aired by Radio BBC, and he was attracted to Christ. From there on, He embarked on a long search to understand Christianity.

Being taught the uniqueness of Islam among other religions, the converts wondered if salvation is attainable without Islam. After the crisis, they sought help through different means in their search for the truth. They read books, asked other people questions, and prayed until they got answers to their questions.

Reading religious scriptures produced a search for truth and the need for a Saviour for many converts. Most believers came to faith in Christ as a result of reading the Bible and other Christian literature.

3.2.2.2. *Emotional quest*

a. Quest for peace

One could argue that peace is one of the most important and highest objectives or hopes that we all aspire to achieve as human beings; it was another vital need for Senegalese converts. People have been attempting to achieve peace in any way they can. We expect to see a peaceful society, and we hope to see peace achieved in the world.

By "peace," what do we mean? Peace has been discussed, debated, taught, and defined in many ways. Ayto (1991:387) defines peace as "a pact, a control or an agreement to end any battle between two individuals, states, or antagonistic groups of people." On the other hand, other peace experts disagree with that description; they believe peace is something more meaningful, precious, and significant.

Vesilind (2005:43) quotes Albert Einstein: "peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, of law, of order; in short of government." Peace should not only be considered a social issue; it is also a state of mind. Calmness, tranquillity, and silence are all examples of peace. This second definition of peace can also refer to a person's perception of oneself, being calm, happy, not worried, being "at peace" with one's own mind (Anon., 2006).

As a result, peace can be classified into two types: internal peace, also known as inner peace, and outer peace, which is defined as the absence of conflict and the presence of social harmony and justice. Bilan (2009:74) combines both statements: "We can never obtain peace in the outer world until we make peace with ourselves."

When we speak of peace in our study, we refer to the Bible definition of peace. The term "peace" appears in the Bible several times, demonstrating its centrality in Christian teachings.

Shalom is a Hebrew word that implies "completeness, soundness, welfare, and peace." It is a comprehensive notion encompassing all aspects of justice, mercy, rightness or righteousness, compassion, truthfulness, friendship with others, and friendship with God; this is the concept of peace in the Bible. (WCC, 2011:5)

This broad definition of shalom is carried over into the New Testament. It is clear from the New Testament that true peace cannot be attained via human effort; it is God's gift, God's blessings. In other words, the source of peace is God and peace is given to those who attentively follow His decrees and follow His laws (Leviticus 26:6).

In the New Testament, The Greek term *eiren* describes peace. *Eiren* has a connotation similar to shalom. According to the New Testament, Jesus is the source of peace. His life exemplifies the Spirit of Peace, which the world cannot provide. (Jean 14:27-28). The peace that Jesus brings makes it possible to overcome enmity. As a result of his death, Jesus has conquered Satan, the very origins of enmity. He made it possible for all creation to be brought together in unity through him and for all creation to be reconciled to God (Ephesians 1:10; Col, 1:16.19-20). Therefore, from the Biblical viewpoint, we can assert that an individual can possess everything the world offers but still lack peace. Any human being who has not reconciled with God will always seek peace.

One of the converts states that he often felt overwhelmed by sins in his life. In his search for peace, he went to nightclubs, dancing and participated in other leisure activities, but did not feel at peace in his heart. After discovering the salvation in Christ, he felt delivered and found the peace that he was longing for. Another man practised his religion faithfully, but his heart was not satisfied; he wanted God's help and the power to overcome sin; his life changed after receiving Jesus. One of the females converts states that she was cruel, quarrelsome, and unforgiving. When she became a Christian, she found joy, and as a result, her family has found peace in Christ.

We found one convert who always thought about salvation, and he had doubts about whether his salvation is from God or following religious duties. When he gave his life to Christ, his faith assured him of the salvation that he wanted.

3.2.3. Stage Four: Encounter

Rambo asserts that the actual conversion dynamics only begin when an agent of a new faith and potential convert comes into contact. He further stresses that no conversion occurs without encounter (Rambo, 1993:86). He describes the encounter

as a stage that brings people in crisis exploring new options with others who aim to provide a new direction to the searchers (Rambo, 1993:167). There are several ways the agents or advocates of a new religion meet the potential convert. The interactions can occur naturally in everyday business or daily family life, and in some cases, a supernatural encounter may occur. The interaction may happen in a group or on a one-on-one basis, public or private, personal, or impersonal.

An encounter may trigger the crisis in an individual's heart and be the conversion process's catalyser. In most cases, the encounter comes after a crisis or quest for the truth. The encounter stage is very complex and takes a long time before the potential convert commits to join the new group. Berhe affirms that "the encounter between the agents and the converts is significant to the understanding of conversion." (2011:55). When preparing for an encounter with someone from the Islam faith, the Christian advocate must be prepared. Personal belief, bias, and prejudice, according to Kritzing (2008), should be evaluated for a mature meeting to take place because they play a significant role in interfaith interactions. The advocates must comprehend how their own culture and religion affect how they perceive and relate to others. For example, In Senegalese Muslim culture, men should not evangelise women and vice versa. Following each cultural context, the conversion process can be slowed or accelerated depending on how the first encounter is handled.

As Rambo (1993:80) demonstrates, the encounter happens via a different contact mode. The media, including television, radio, mass demonstration, revival meetings, direct mails, provide public and impersonal means of conveying the message, not on a one-to-one encounter. Interpersonal or confrontational encounters are private and personal, through Christians who come to one's home to converse and invite a person to study the Bible or pray. He maintains that "the most successful forms of contact are via friendship and kinship networks, which are the most personal forms." (Rambo, 1993:80).

3.2.3.1. Missionaries, Pastors, and evangelists

Seven out of the thirteen people interviewed met with missionaries and evangelists, which indicates that missionaries and evangelists are actively involved in leading Muslims to Christ among the Senegalese.

Concerning one convert, the missionaries helped him understand the Bible and become a Christian by explaining certain Bible verses that were obscure. Another convert, searching for the truth, met a missionary who presented him with a book about Christ in both the Old and the New Testament. Another one testified to have started the conversion journey by discussing with a missionary who came to his village to study the local language.

The missionary took him to the church, and after listening to the Bible teachings, he received Christ. Another convert, while in her quest for the truth, she met an evangelist who was selling Christian booklets, and she asked to buy some. The book had different titles, but one of them talked about Jesus, the saviour of the world, and another was titled "The way of righteousness." After reading it, she was convinced of her sinful nature. Three more converts were introduced to the Christian faith by different evangelists. One of them was asking herself questions about God. She met an evangelist near her home who gave her one gospel book one day. She read it every day with attention. Moreover, two more converts testified to have received the Gospel message from missionaries and evangelists in their respective villages.

A remarkable phenomenon is the participation of evangelists and missionaries in the conversion. The testimonies do not say specifically whether all the evangelists were Senegalese. A recurring fact we can see is that the evangelists and the missionaries were instrumental in half of the conversions in this article. The researcher noted that we could not say if any of the evangelists were MBBs, but we can see from experience that the number of MBB evangelists has increased in Muslim evangelism in recent days.

3.2.3.2. Family Members

The daily encounter and discussion with a family member has proven to be a crucial element in conversion. In four cases, a close family member's behaviour, lifestyle, or preaching impacted the convert. Two women noticed the power of the

Lord that transformed their husbands' lives. One testified that since her husband met Jesus, he became another man, and that proved to her that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Another woman said that she heard the gospel for the first time through her husband's preaching. Another convert became a Christian from his nephews' influence and preaching. One young woman observed the changes that occurred in her father's life after conversion, who, in the aftermath, shared the gospel with the family. The preceding stories show that some converts were profoundly affected by a Christian family member's exemplary life and bravery in proclaiming the gospel, making those Christians the successful emissaries of salvation.

3.2.3.3. Supernatural work of God

In the conversion process of Muslims, including the Senegalese context, the divine aspect cannot be ignored. Rambo (1993) reveals that in all his research on conversion in a Muslim context, conversions "are often stimulated by an extraordinary, and in some cases mystical, experience." (:48). When a church in Senegal advertises a programme that includes prayer for healing and demonic exorcism, more people will show up. We have not witnessed many long-term spiritual transformations from those ministries, but salvation is God's. The Bible tells how some individuals became followers of Christ as a result of witnessing miracles. Hence as Berhe (2011) suggested, "we need to take supernatural intervention seriously into account in the study of conversion processes." (:58). Dreams and vision already discussed count amongst supernatural intervention.

One of the converts testified to have been a devout Muslim; When he read the Bible in his native tongue, he felt God's presence in his life in new ways. He examined the scriptures, and with the help of a missionary, he became a Christian. One day when he was reading John 10:35, a verse where Jesus was accused of comparing himself to God. He examined the accusation using the scriptures and discovered the claim of Jesus to be valid. After that, he repented and accepted Jesus as the saviour and king in his life. Two converts testified about the changing power of the word of God. One stated that God used the scripture to convert him, especially in Ecclesiastics 12:1. When he heard that verse, he felt fear in his heart, mixed with the need to be transformed and saved, and decided to give his life to Jesus and follow him. Another convert met a missionary, and after hearing the gospel, he attended

the church, and when he listened to the preaching of a pastor, he sensed the pastor directly addressing him. He was astonished to hear the pastor mentioning things that preoccupied him. He sensed someone else besides the pastor talking to his heart. After conversion, he understood how, through the pastor, the Holy Spirit spoke to him. One female convert prayed while studying the Bible, asking God to lead her on the right path toward Him. Indecisive as to whether to follow Mohamed or Jesus, she requested God to intervene and direct her in her prayers. After the prayer, she felt joy and serenity in choosing Jesus over Mohamed. The testimonies agree with Rambo's statement indicating "conversion as sudden, created by the action of God but also gradual, created totally by the action of humans." (Rambo, 1993:176). The testimonies above assert that God uses His words to express His message to potential converts in a supernatural way. During the conversion process, God is at work from the start to the end.

3.2.4. Stage Five: Interaction

In the lives of converts, interaction is a critical stage. When the converts choose to adhere to a new religious community, their engagement with the new community solidifies. They better understand the doctrines of the new group, lifestyles, and aspirations to better integrate into the group (Rambo, 1993:102). Some converts steadily communicate with the agent while others do not. For a long-lasting interaction, both parties must be committed. The advocate must be willing to be present when the potential convert requires it; otherwise, trust will erode, and the relationship will be hampered or broken. Rambo observes that "in the interaction stage, the potential convert chooses to continue the interaction and become more involved, or the advocate works to sustain the interaction in order to extend the possibility of persuading the person to convert" (Rambo, 1993:102).

Communities consider the length of interaction differently. For some, the new convert must undergo preparation for a substantial period for successful incorporation and trust, while others prefer rapid decision-making and profound teaching after that. In a Muslim context, communication with potential converts requires extreme attention and long-term relationships. Establishing trust and growing relationships are crucial and foundational steps toward sharing the gospel.

After reading the testimonies used in this study, we noticed that converts had negative preconceived notions about Christianity due to the teachings of Islam. Therefore, the Christian approach to evangelism must emphasise friendship and relationships to help clear up all negative misconceptions and biases in order to encourage a prospective convert to decide.

3.2.4.1. Interaction and fellowship with Christians

Islam upholds life in the community; therefore, potential converts from Islam expect to be expelled by their family and religion when converted. The convert aspires to experience Christian care and fellowship within the community s/he wants to join. The testimonies examined in this study show the advocate–convert relationship significance from the initial encounter. Few testimonies attest to the fellowship after conversion. One convert had fellowship with Christians when he was a student; he visited an evangelical centre to play basketball and watch movies; he tested the Christian communion and care. His Christian friends helped and prayed to overcome the adversities when his family persecuted him after conversion.

The welcoming heart and care of a pastor strengthened the faith of one of the converts. For his conversion to Christianity, God used his nephews. After conversion, he declined to participate in the magical rituals that his father organised. His father tried to kill him, and he sought shelter in a pastor's house; that gave him a sense of safety in the decision-making process. In his interaction with a Christian friend on the Book of Psalms, one convert started his conversion journey. He was enrolled in a Christian college for a few years, connected with Christians, and made a long commitment to Christ. During his university studies in France, He shared a room with a disciple of Jesus, who introduced him to the gospel. For two years, he searched for the truth with his Christian friend. He believes that the Christian family has replaced his natural one, and he testifies about the support he received from the Christians to endure and victoriously go through various trials.

The study indicates that no convert was drawn to Christianity by the conventional Christian evangelistic methods; instead, almost all the converts were affected by the friendship, relationship, and interaction with Christians. Evans consistently demonstrates that the growth of a new follower of Jesus depends more on his / her

warm personal relationship with a mentor and fellow believers than on the basic content of the discipleship programme (2007:2). This analysis shows that the advocate lifestyle and the approach and method adopted in sharing the gospel should be suitable for the given context to produce a proper response and relationship.

3.2.4.2. Duration of Interaction

The study shows that a long-term relationship and fellowship are required for Senegalese conversion. It took several converts a considerable time to assess what they learned from Christians and grasp their decision implications. It was short for some because of their situation. The widely held approach to short-term mission and open-air evangelism is inadequate for reaching Muslims in Senegal. The best way to evangelise Senegalese Muslims is a long-term commitment, fellowship, and regular personal contact.

3.2.5. Stage Six: Commitment

After extensive contact and encounter, the potential convert faces the problematic option to commit to the new religious system. This stage is a severe self-confrontation. The convert evaluates all alternatives, weighs the advantages and disadvantages, wants and concerns, and must decide. If convinced, the prospective convert to Christianity must resolve to devote himself to biblical teachings and be fully committed to Christ with his life. When a Muslim commits his life to Christ, he is mindful of the dangers awaiting him. Various strategic measures must be in place to facilitate the decision. Without clear motivations and dynamics, surrendering to Christianity from Islam is highly challenging. Therefore, the welcoming factors, spiritual, social, psychological, and emotional, must be stronger than the anticipated obstacles for an easy commitment. As Rambo states, the individual decision is to be “dramatised and commemorated, sealed with a public demonstration of the convert’s choice” (Rambo, 1993:124).

3.2.5.1. Decision-making challenges

Senegalese Muslims typically face several difficulties that cause them not to make conversion decisions. Since 94 per cent of Senegal's population is Muslim, it takes a strong motivation and a deliberate recognition of the implications to convert to Christianity. The consequences include social, financial, psychological, and physical persecution, such as rejection by the family and society, losing a career and clients in business, divorce, and separation with children. Reflecting on benefits and consequences and assessing decisions are constant challenges for the potential convert in the decision-making process. Depending on the context and each person's background, transitions can take years, while for another, few months.

A gripping testimony of a convert who testifies that he did not meet many challenges when he decided to change his allegiance to Islam.; he was living an independent life, far from his family. Because of many Quranic verses he memorised and the ideas he had about the superiority of the Koran over the Bible; it was not easy for him to convert to Christianity. Concluding her testimony, one of the converts reveals that some Muslims want to commit their lives to Christ but are threatened by the consequences, most fear their parents. Her sister wanted to accept the Lord for a long time, but she feared losing their father's support. Another convert chose not to publicly disclose his commitment to Jesus; he thought to do it after achieving financial independence. Meanwhile, he tried to live an exemplary life in his community; he read the Bible but refused to join other Christians, fearing the persecution that might follow. In a hostile Muslim environment, the conversion decision is primarily made in private and revealed to only a few people to prevent persecution.

3.2.5.2. Decision-Making Period

Several different factors are involved for the potential convert to decide; we will analyse them in chapter four. Berhe (2011) provides us with a better outlook on this stage. "Decision-making is a dynamic that makes the transition to the stage of commitment." (Berhe 2011:68). After a long internal battle, the converts decide to give their life to Christ.

New converts should not be pushed to a precipitated public profession of their faith before they feel ready to face persecution. The converts should devote their lives to

God and continue receiving Bible teachings and exhortations. As commitment is a crucial facet of conversion, new converts need assistance from mature Christians to strengthen their faith and be ready to meet and overcome all challenges, including persecution.

If the religious and cultural environment becomes conducive, the convert's commitment may be publicly announced.

In our research, twelve converts chose to make their decision secretly, but after that, most of them attended established Christian churches for fellowship. Only one convert declared the decision to follow Christ in a public church service after listening to a sermon.

3.2.5.3. Rituals

All religions have a set of rituals practised to confirm the commitment. Rituals are an essential aspect of determining one's level of devotion to a particular belief system. As Rambo (1993) states "commitment rituals like baptism and testimony are important, observable events that give witness to the convert's decision." (:124).

In Christianity, the essential rite that the new converts experience is baptism. Christian theology gives baptism both a theological and social significance. Baptism expresses identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the commitment to Follow Christ (Romans 6:3-4). It is a sign of an invisible inner conversion, publicly expressed in baptism (1 Peter 3:21). Concerning many churches in Senegal, only after baptism is a convert formally accepted and recognised as a church member. Then he or she can begin to serve in the local congregation and be active in the church's social, religious, and other significant affairs.

One convert waited for two years, studying the word of God before he decided to be baptised. Another convert, after he received help from a pastor, helping him to solve problems that obscured his decision-making, renounced Islam, and accepted the Lord Jesus as Lord and Saviour before getting baptised in front of the congregation.

Rambo (1993:127) notes that a ritual such as baptism is intended to establish and preserve loyalty to the community from a religious community viewpoint. Baptism allows the converts to profess their faith publicly. It signifies the end of a lengthy process.

Because of the significance of baptism as a means of declaring one's faith and devotion, it may lead to persecution when performed publicly. Although it is vital to symbolise the Christian commitment to baptism, the event should be culturally sensitive.

Chapter four:

Reasons and factors leading to conversion.

In the previous chapter, we were introduced to various stages appertaining to conversion. This chapter will summarise the main reasons and factors involved in converting Senegalese Muslims to Christianity. The factors in the conversion processes are inextricably connected to the reasons for conversion. According to Sträehler (2005:52), reasons are the primary motivation for conversion, while factors are the elements that motivate or encourage the individual on his or her journey to become a follower of Christ.

Different researchers use different terms when writing on reasons for conversion. Rambo (1993) and Lofland and Skonovd (1981) use the term motifs. However, Rambo (1993:15, 48) intermittently speaks about "motifs" and, in some instances, "catalyst." Therefore motifs, motives, and catalysts point to a specific reason that leads to conversion and the factors.

A question needs to be asked and answered. If, according to Islam, Christianity is considered defiant and inferior to Islam, why then does a Muslim convert, and adopt Christianity? To answer the question, we will analyse and conclude according to the testimonies of thirteen Senegalese people converted from Islam to Christianity (SIM, 1996).

By reading the testimonies, we realise that though we have a dominant reason for the conversion, fewer conversions were caused by a single dominant factor. Most of the conversion process was caused by different factors. Internal and external factors facilitated the conversion process to some degree. In their testimonies, while speaking about the reason for conversion, the converts gave various answers.

4.1. Analysis – Reasons for Conversions among Senegalese

Other conversion studies have identified several motives that influence the conversion process. These studies show that conversion is motivated by several reasons that can change, adopt, or adapt over time (Butselaar, 1981:113).

Conversion motivations are diverse, interactive, and cumulative and differ from

person to person (Rambo 1993:140). This study's results are mainly in line with their findings.

In his research in South Africa, Maurer identified several motives leading to conversion; "Religious, mystical, affectional, socio-political, and material." (1999:122-127). Lofland and Skonovd (1981), Rambo (1993:14-16) list similar motives. We will now equate the reasons for the Senegalese converts' conversion to the reasons or motives discovered by other researchers.

4.1.1. The Main Reasons for Conversion

a). Spiritual - Cognitive Reasons.

Maurer's (1999) religious motive is the same as what Lofland and Skonovd's (1981) calls the intellectual motive. This motive is described as the true motive for conversion, and it is referred to as spiritual by Van Butselaar (1981:112). We speak of the spiritual motive when an individual actively seeks information about religious or spiritual issues through all available means. In our case, the search has a cognitive aspect as it deals with increasing one's understanding of the Christian faith.

The spiritual issues cited most frequently by Senegalese converts as the primary reason for their conversion are consistent with other Muslim conversions to Christianity. In his study, Maurer (1999:204) discovered that nine of the ten Christian converts he studied suggested that religious motives assisted their conversion narrative. In five of these conversions, stories served as an impetus for the conversion process to get started.

The main reasons for converting to Christianity reported in the study are nearly identical to those found in other Muslim contexts, hunger for truth, search for assurance of salvation, disappointment with Islam, thirst for peace, and fear of death (Sträehler 2005:44).

Testimonies in our studies demonstrate that the primary reason people cited most frequently is the thirst to know God by understanding his word. The pursuit of knowledge about God was a deciding motive for six converts. They sincerely believed in God's existence and sought to learn more about him.

One of the converts knew about hell and paradise but was unsure of her destiny after death; she was seeking the assurance of salvation. She read the booklets that explained salvation in Christ Jesus and chose to follow Jesus.

Another convert questioned Muslim beliefs and practices. He was greatly relieved to learn that only God's grace through Jesus Christ could save him.

When the Christian message is conveyed to Muslims with reverence, love, and respect, it can initiate a Muslim conversion. A clear presentation of the scriptures was critical in ushering Senegalese Muslims into Christianity.

It should be noted that Muslims do not make decisions based solely on emotional or situational factors but rather after a time of careful thought. The conversion accounts of six converts show the struggle with religious questions and an improvement in cognitive comprehension. They became Christians after years of studying the Bible and seeking the truth.

At the beginning of this section, we asked why Muslims convert and adopt Christianity while Muslims consider it insolent and inferior to Islam.

The fundamental cause for the shift in religious belief has now been described: A spiritual-cognitive revelation in which the MBBs found a different and new truth in Christ.

4.2. Main factors leading to conversion.

The relationship between the 'reasons' for conversion and the 'factors' that led to conversion has already been stated. Although the reasons are the primary motivation for conversion, the factors are the forces that influence the individual's walk to Jesus. (Sträehler, 2005:52).

Additional research has confirmed the factors of conversion described in the testimonies of Senegalese converts. Those factors are detailed in a conversion study done in Morocco by Greenlee (1996).

When analysing the testimonies for this study, it is noted that there are four primary groups of factors that influence conversion: witness factors, affectional factors, media (communication) factors, and supernatural factors.

4.2.1. Witness factor

When it comes to conversions, we have noticed in our research that nothing can take the place of a Christian's witness and Christian life testimony. Four converts attributed their conversion to the influence that the life of Christians played in their lives. Most of them realised that the transformation in their Christian relatives' lives brought about love, eagerness to live and share their faith, much more than they experienced in the lives of Muslim relatives and friends. In Morocco, none of the converts Greenlee interviewed testified that meeting a missionary was the catalyst for their conversion (Greenlee 1996:78). When comparing the two countries, it is important to remember that Morocco has no officially recognised local church, while in Senegal small but free-to-do mission work exists. In Senegal, the first connections were made via conversing with a follower of Jesus, such as missionaries, or by witnessing the conversion of a family member or acquaintance. Christians played a vital role in the process of all conversions, as seen in the studied testimonies, at the start of the process of conversion and in its various stages.

Unexpectedly, none of the converts mention the church experience as a key influence in their conversion. Christian witnesses played the key role in clarifying their beliefs to Muslims, but outside the church premises or buildings.

4.2.2. Affectionate factor

This word alludes to the importance of interpersonal relationships in the conversion process (Rambo 1993:15). It is referred to be 'personal' by Van Butselaar (1981:113). "A person perceives affection as being cared for, fostered, and confirmed by another individual or group," according to Maurer (1999:125).

The affectional motive can be viewed as a motivating factor that "pulls" the convert to accept a new religion, or as a negative force that "pushes" the convert to do so. In the first situation, a close friend may be the one who converts to a new faith and therefore pushes the other person to follow, but in the second instance, the convert

may lose a family member, a close friend, through death. As a result, he may face a life crisis, prompting him to seek conversion as an alternative to his or her formal religion (Maurer 1999:125). This was the situation with one convert, who was disappointed when his son died and then began reading the Bible. We have five converts as an example of the 'pulling' factor; they were pulled into Christianity by the living testimony of their Christian relatives. When characterising the affectional feature, Gaudeul (1999:87) mentions "those without a family looking for a new community" and "the attractiveness of God's community - the church." He says that Islam has admirable social principles, but it fails to realise them. Disparities in Islamic beliefs and behaviours and the discontent with Muslim doctrines and practices resulted in the conversion of some Muslims to Christianity as another religious alternative.

4.2.3. Media Factors

The same conclusions reached from the research in Sudan by Sträehler (2005:53) concerning the role of media in conversion apply in Senegal. Senegalese Christians employed a variety of media to spread the gospel message, including print media and radio. According to the testimonials, there was a considerable impact only on reading Christian literature and Bible. They were the prevalent media factors that influenced the Senegalese converts' decision for Christ. Other media types had little impact. Media are referred to as 'communication factors' by Greenlee (1996). He reveals that most converts from Islam to Christianity in Morocco first meet Christians through Bible correspondence courses (:70). We did not find any incidence of that strategy referred to in the testimonies. Using the Bible in the process of converting Muslims appears to be a prevalent factor. Syrjänen (1984) confirmed the same conclusion in research done in Pakistan. He writes that "one of the most decisive factors creating interest in Muslims towards Christianity has been their becoming familiar with the Bible, especially with the New Testament." (1984:128). In stark contrast to Morocco, where Christian radio broadcasts impacted many converts (Greenlee 1996:83-87), in the Senegalese conversion story, only one convert mentioned radio. Christian TV programmes and social media were not mentioned; they were not prevalent in Senegal when the testimonies were recorded.

In conclusion, this study indicates that eight people underwent a conversion process influenced by media factors which exposed the convert to a different world perspective and religious system.

4.2.4. Supernatural factors

As the stories were examined, it became clear that no one can decide to follow Christ without God's intervention, no matter what missional approach applied. Salvation is a gift from God. He empowers His people to share His word and fortifies them to persevere, and introduces individuals to their path to Christ. God's involvement may be recognised at all stages throughout the decision process. In His love, He chooses who to convert; he creates crises and concerns in the heart and organises the encounter with the advocate of the Christian faith. God inspires the agent of the Gospel, who teaches the potential convert to view Christ differently, leads him or her to trust Jesus as the Saviour and disciple the individual into growth in Christ.

God uses several supernatural means like answering prayers, dreams, and visions. Muslims in Senegal consider some dreams to be a kind of spiritual perception. Dreams that have supernatural aspects raise questions and trigger the search for answers. They motivate the person to quest for the meaning of the dream and often lead to meeting a dream interpreter. When the interpreter happens to be a Christian, the conversion process starts. Three converts attest that a dream played a critical role in their decision to accept and follow Christ.

As Greenlee discovered, dream material can include visions of Christ, but it is not restricted to them (1996:136). None of the Senegalese converts claimed to have had a dream of Christ appearing to them. Although dreams seem to be unusual, they are relatively regular occurrences. In summary, we can state that no single factor exclusively can influence a person towards conversion. Berhe (2011) asserts that “the interplay of all factors encourages potential converts to decide.” (:68).

To conclude, we have shown in this section of the research that conversion is usually the consequence of the interaction of multiple reasons and circumstances rather than a single cause (Maurer 1999:159). Other reasons and factors may have prompted the converts' quest for a new religion. Therefore, converts' main reason

and factor for conversion as recorded in their testimonies do not necessarily signify that they were the initial reason or factor for their conversion.

Even with adequate and elaborated evangelical efforts, a conversion could not occur without God's intervention. God is the initiator of faith and repentance. God is always working in the life of a person. Conversion is not the result of a Christians' effort to evangelise; it is not the result of the convert's own free will. However, there is a connection and relationship between God's work and human responsibility and action in the process of conversion. Only God's grace and His power enable human involvement in conversion.

God's role in the conversion processes of Senegalese converts was stated, and we also established the significant role of the believers as actors in the conversion processes of Senegalese converts.

This study found that the Bible and Christian literature played a crucial part in the conversion process, among other media. They assisted the person in becoming aware of a different worldview and religious system, but mass media played a far more minor role. Finally, there were affectional elements that had a part in influencing a person's decision to convert, either positively or negatively pushing or pulling the convert to adopt a new faith.

Chapter Five:

Consequences of conversion

Conversion to Christianity can result in several consequences; this section will discuss the most significant immediate consequences. It identifies two significant conversion outcomes: challenges and persecution encountered by Senegalese converts, and positive life changes during and after conversion.

Each convert's life transformation has beneficial consequences on the individual's life, personal relationships, and communion with God. However, it can also have a detrimental effect on an individual's life and relationships.

The section will also compare the persecutions and life change experiences that Senegalese converts experienced in different geographical areas.

5.1. Problems with the Family and Society

Islam accepts new converts to Islam but does not readily let them leave the Islam faith. Islam's official view on someone who wishes to abandon Islam is that the individual is an apostate and must be prevented from doing so by any means necessary (Cook, 2006:276).

The topic of persecution highlighted by Gibb & Kramers (1974:413) and Greenlee (1996:27) is a significant challenge many converts encounter as they transition from Islam to Christianity. In our study, the majority of converts reported being persecuted chiefly by family members. They attested that the most discouraging aspect of their conversion was persecution and rejection. According to the testimonials we analysed, converting from Islam to Christianity entails substantial costs and sacrifices. The data indicate that all converts suffered rejection and some level of persecution from their families and their Muslim communities. Seven of the converts were evicted from their homes. Two converts were subjected to various forms of persecution, including death threats, beatings, and verbal abuse. Given the severity of the suffering, two converts could not remain in their community and were compelled to seek safety among Christians.

One of the converts distinguished between persecution at home and persecution away from home. He became a Christian while living independently, away from his family. Despite their fury and opposition to his conversion, his parents were powerless to stop him. It was much easier for him to practise his new faith.

Typically, friends reacted furiously. All converts said that they encountered hostility from co-workers, colleagues, neighbours. Some members of the community, however, were unconcerned about the conversion. The convert did not address the reactions of religious leaders.

Other stressful encounters include the following:

- Convert 2 was banned from the residence of his uncle. He travelled around in search of a home until the church rescued him.
- Convert 3: her family persecuted her and cut off all contact with her. Her relationship with her other Muslim neighbours grew tense.
- Convert 4: His father brought him to a marabout for witchcraft. His father attempted to assassinate him, but he sought safety in the home of a pastor.
- Convert 5: Because of his faith, his parents, friends, brothers, and sisters abandoned him. His father convened a meeting to inform him of the family's decision to exclude him from all the family affairs.
- Converts 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12 were expelled from their different houses. They were accused of belonging to a cursed group and were avoided by all their friends.
- Convert 8: His family attempted to poison him twice. His brother assaulted him in front of the church one Sunday.
- Convert 9: his father threatened to call the police. He was asked to deny his faith or lose his family's assistance. He was instructed not to touch any family property or speak to any siblings; subsequently he chose to leave the house.
- Convert 10: Her husband permitted her to practise her faith but prohibited her from teaching it to her children. Her father attempted to evict her, but she refused. All Muslims discovered she was Christian within a week of her conversion. She

remained a resident in the same neighbourhood for the remainder of her years. People were suspicious, but she was not harmed.

- Convert 12 was chased out from the family house but later was welcomed back into her family when they noticed the positive changes resulting from her new faith.

The testimonies show that only two of the thirteen converts' ties with their families were not restored. Eleven converts maintained positive relationships with their families, even living with them. Despite the harassment and difficulties they endured, they were able to live a normal life as converts.

Because Senegal preserves the constitution's laicity, conversion seldom causes severe problems with the government. Convert 11 had difficulties finding a wife because of his faith. Nobody else had a similar problem.

The Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2002 lists no execution case of a convert under the Islamic apostasy law in Senegal. We may thus infer that, whereas it is challenging to change religion in Senegal, Muslims who want to, can abandon Islam and become Christian.

5.1.1. Validation of the Results from other geographical areas

Regarding their families, society, and government, Muslims who convert to Christianity in Senegal face similar issues to those in other parts of the world, excluding murder. Woodberry (2001:8) documented persecution in several parts of the Muslim world where some converts were physically harmed, and others murdered. Senegal is unique in that it is permissible to evangelise anybody over the age of eighteen; yet Senegal law punishes anyone who does physical violence to another person for any reason, including religious grounds. In Pakistan converts were sometimes isolated from their relatives (Syrjänen 1984:177). However, like in Senegal, some families often attempted to reclaim the convert back to Islam in various ways, such as conversation and negotiation with a religious educator or arrangements for marriage. Converts from Islam to Christianity suffered opposition and persecution in South Africa, as Maurer (1999:233) discovered in his research. Some were assaulted; others were promised material assistance in exchange for

returning to Islam, or they were ostracized in public. Half of the Moroccan converts questioned in Greenlee's (1996:106) research claimed persecution or the threat of persecution. Some people were put under much strain, while others had problems after it was publicly known that they became Christians. Three primary difficulties experienced were menaces to their lives, banishment from home, and the father's disownment. Woodberry (2001:9) states that persecution produced positive outcomes like spiritual maturity on the persecuted convert and numerical growth for the church.

Additionally, there is the problem of fear and benefit to consider when analysing the conversion process. The convert always reflects on how the community will react and what he or she will lose. Syrjänen (1984:165-167) illustrates how this fear affects young and single people living with and dependent on their families. He discovered that as people grow older and less reliant on others, they gain more independence and make their own decisions. This observation corroborates convert one's story in Senegal. He did not face severe persecution because he was not dependent on his family for existence; he led an independent life. Another psychological element that affects new converts is fear. The fear of persecution has tremendous consequences for some converts. To avoid being persecuted, they try hard to hide their faith to the extent that some choose not to attend Christian meetings (Eenigenburg, 2001). The issue of honour and shame also brings persecution. The families of the converts persecute their children as they become worried about their honour; how they will be looked at by their neighbours when one family member converts to Christianity. In her study, Eenigenburg (2001) found that in some cases, the family hostility against the converts melts away with time, and the convert can openly exercise the new faith. According to the testimonials, the families of the thirteen converts came to know they were Christians. These stories demonstrate that converts across the world encounter almost the same difficulties as they abandon Islam to become Christians.

Difficulties converts experience are primarily with nuclear and extended families, with authorities being the exception. Greenlee (1996:214) puts it succinctly when he says, "Persecution is a reality of Christian existence throughout the Muslim world." He recommends that it is critical to inform prospective converts what they can expect

when they become disciples of Jesus. Although there is no need to pursue persecution, it still has to be anticipated (John 15:20). When times are difficult for the convert, the church must be prepared to assist them; the Senegalese church does its best in that domain. This is not always the case in the church in general, which brings us to the second set of difficulties encountered by converts.

5.2. The new convert and the hosting church

Many Muslims find it difficult to comprehend the possibility of following Christ and joining an assembly of Christians. Greenlee (1966:147) avers that such Muslims can only accept the possibility of such a move when they encounter a person from the same religious background who is already a faithful Christian. Kilbourne and Richardson (1989:15-19) calls it social audience reaction. Sträehler (2005) says that a potential convert has a “need for a reference group against which they can measure themselves and by whom they are encouraged by example into the new way” (:89). In Senegal, this reference group is generally provided first by an individual MMB, and then he connects the new convert to several other MBBS living in different localities. However, the adjustment difficulties of the new convert start when introduced to the large new community of faith.

According to Syrjänen (1984:180), in the situation in Pakistan, the convert’s adaptation to the church is far more complicated as Islam is considered a superior religion. Christians and Muslims come from different ethnic groups in Pakistan, and when a Muslim converts to Christianity, he comes with a sense of superiority since culturally, Christians are considered to come from the lowest socioeconomic class. As a result, converts from Islam are confused about why they are denied a respectable position in the Christian community (Syrjänen, 1984:181). In Senegal, ethnic distinctions are not much considered, and amongst converts in established churches, they do not result in such pronounced prejudice. Three Senegalese converts have stated that they feel totally at home in their church. The problem in Senegal is that Christianity tries to welcome new converts from Islam, but it does not offer them a culturally contextualized environment. New converts are obliged to adapt to a new, foreign, culture and language imported from other countries. The adaptation takes time and can hinder the growth of some converts to the extent that some choose to go back to Islam, where they feel culturally accepted.

Local churches' responses to Muslim converts to Christianity are critical in determining whether other Muslims will be discouraged or encouraged to receive the gospel message. It may also have an impact on converts' attitudes toward the church and Christians. The testimonials demonstrate that the churches were welcoming to Muslim converts. Despite their lack of understanding about Islam, churches in Senegal are, to their best knowledge, supportive of Muslims who join them. All converts conclude their testimony by encouraging others to follow Christ and offering advice on dealing with persecution.

In conclusion, we realise that Muslims who want to convert to Christianity in Senegal, as in other countries, will face challenges in two key areas, as did the thirteen converts studied in this study. Conflict with family, society, and friends is the first area of concern, and conflict with the existing church is the second most common problem that a Muslim convert is likely to experience.

Family members are sometimes the first to reject and try to prevent a person from leaving Islam. In addition to discussion and threats, we find other tactics such as psychological (emotional) pressure, and physical threats; however, they are not always used in a way that causes bodily injury or death. Because no problems with authorities are observed, they are omitted from this study. On the other hand, converts must be prepared to face hardships and suffer for the cause of the Lord, Jesus Christ. As observed in our study, most Senegalese converts could have a regular life after their conversion amid persecution and suffering.

The Christian community may be reluctant to accept converts from Islam due to the unstable state of the church in many Muslim nations. They may be concerned about being spied on or generally uncomfortable with someone from the Muslim community, not knowing how to handle him/her. Apart from that, more universal concerns affect all Christians, regardless of their specific congregation, such as division, which might discourage a new convert. In order to avoid being unduly disappointed if they are not warmly welcomed, converts must prepare themselves in advance for the likelihood of such issues. I find it better to disciple the new convert in a home setting before joining a large Christian meeting. Muslims are habituated to live within a community referred to as *Ummah* in Arabic. Stacey (2018) defines *Ummah* as “a community of believers bound together with a common purpose, to

worship God, and with a common goal, to advance the cause of Islam.” When a Muslim comes to the church, he or she should find an equivalent community that is ready to support and help him or her overcome the obstacles that are to come. Fellowship is a significant notion in the New Testament. It expresses joint participation in Christ and the link formed between believers through Christ. The church in Senegal should imitate the New Testament church. Despite persecution, the church in the New Testament has steadily grown in numbers throughout time. The occurrence of *koinonia* (fellowship, friendship, communion, community) appears to have been the most attractive expression for most conversions. (Acts 2:42). New converts require a new spiritual home as well as people who will support and encourage them. It is a significant issue for any community where a convert is accepted to recognize that the individual has lost his previous acquaintance. He needs unconditional affection, as well as the type of fellowship and nurturing that he requires to grow in faith and fellowship.

5.3. Results of Conversion

The last part of this section examines the outcomes of the thirteen's conversion processes, how their lives were transformed, and the impact that those changes had on their everyday lives. We will at the same time cross-check the results of this study against reports from different geographical locations.

Because the term "conversion" refers to "transformation," it is reasonable to anticipate evidence of change or results from the person who professes to be a Christian. According to Peace (2004:8), conversion produces a "new way of life in the framework of the kingdom of God." Because of this, the biblical concept of conversion involves a significant shift. However, which aspects of one's life are affected by these changes and how they express themselves continue to be debated. The thirteen testimonials highlighted three essential aspects of the converts' lives, affected by the conversion. They are the same as those shown by Sträehler (2005): "identity of the converts, their religious convictions, and social and cultural changes in their lifestyle." (:95).

5.3.1. *Identity*

In some countries, where most Christians and Muslims originate from distinct ethnic groups, it becomes difficult for converts from Islam to identify with Christianity since it is viewed as renouncing one's identity. In the instance of the thirteen Senegalese converts, it seemed as though they had no difficulty associating with Christians. However, since Christian culture in Senegal is mostly moulded and dominated by expatriates from other west African nations, some converts from Muslim backgrounds struggle to identify completely with the church. This, of course, complicates the process of developing a healthy Christian identity for converts. In Senegal, new converts do not have other options for practising their new faith, as most churches continue to practise Christianity acquired from other west African nations. We have seen that some people can change their religion because they are unsatisfied with their country and culture. Though discontent may be a good element in persuading a person to change faith, it may negatively influence the convert later (Greenlee 1996:130). Although converts in Senegal have difficulty adjusting to the church due to their contentment with their cultural background, I agree with Greenlee's discovery that a Christian who understands and likes his culture, after adjustment, will participate actively in all efforts of the church directed to the community where he comes from (Greenlee, 1996:182). Christians who identify strongly with their broader cultural environment will naturally evangelize that group (Greenlee, 1996:200). Six Senegalese converts were dissatisfied with their previous religious practices but not their country or culture. They abandoned their religious beliefs to follow Christ. They tried to find a church that would accept them, but they did not abandon their identity as Senegalese or members of their tribe even when abandoned by them. They became church members, hoping that the church would contextualize and absorb positive Senegalese culture and customs one day. The development of a secure identity for the convert is closely related to how the church accepts him or her. Without such a welcoming group, the convert's identity becomes insecure (Syrjänen 1984:190). This demonstrates that conversion may strengthen the convert's identity, something the Senegalese converts also experienced.

5.3.2. Religious conviction

Conversion also influences religious conviction, the emotions, intellect, relations, and behaviours of a person. This demonstrates that a convert's life will undergo a significant transformation: views and convictions will shift (religious convictions), loyalty will shift from Mohamed to Christ, and ethical behaviour will shift (following biblical standards). These changes are most noticeable in converts' religious convictions and comprise the core of conversion. According to testimony analysis, the Senegalese converts underwent the most significant modifications in this area. A critical issue in this regard is the comprehension of God. Converts in Senegal suggested that their conception of God was changed after acknowledging that Jesus is the only saviour. This demonstrates the cognitive transformation that occurred during their conversion processes. The question now is whether this cognitive shift influences the convert's actual behaviour. The proof of change can be traced from their testimonies. Senegalese converts abandoned Muslim rites when their theological views shifted, and they became more sensitive to some moral concerns they now see as sin. One convert stated that after conversion, he became joyful; his life changed; the love toward God and the surroundings increased, and the compulsion to sin has vanished. After conversion, another convert testified that she became an excellent mother and a better spouse.

5.3.3. The social and cultural way of life

Thirdly, the new faith will influence the social and cultural way of life. How do converts' new religious convictions express themselves in their daily lives? The Christian faith seeks to affect the convert's entire life, not only his or her personal religious life. Changing one's beliefs usually necessitates a change in behaviour and conduct toward one's social and cultural surroundings. Life's example from Maurer's research (1999) implies that some converts experienced social and cultural transformation. One person joined a church "where they talked English and Afrikaans rather than Arabic," while another lady abandoned her Muslim and Hindu families to live with Christians (Maurer, 1999:166 -176). In such circumstances, conversion resulted in a shift in community affiliation.

The question of cultural transformation is equally relevant concerning converts in Europe. According to Köse (1996:134), some British who converted to Islam changed their names and dress, while others have not. This is a problem that Senegalese converts are also facing. Some are asked to alter their names, and some agree, while others resist. Certain individuals are afraid to wear the same clothes as before their conversion or adhere to Islamic dietary restrictions. Unless they significantly contradict the new faith's core precepts, elements of previous religious tradition might remain a part of a convert's lifestyle (Sträehler, 2005:99). This process's guiding concept should be extensively studied. Islamic names, clothing, and dietary rules do not contradict Christian teachings; therefore, no one should be forced to change in these matters.

A person's relationship with God changes when s/he accepts Christ as their Saviour. Genuine conversion impacts a person's relationships with his or her neighbours, especially Christians. Formal friendships with Muslims gradually fade away due to conversion, and new ones are formed with the Christian community. The Senegalese converts stated to have, amid adversity, experienced improved relationships with their family members, and they were able to establish new friendships with Christians. Converts who married Christians expanded their social networks by interacting with new Christian relatives.

In conclusion, this portion of the research investigated the impact of the conversion processes on the lives of the thirteen converts. I wanted to discover how their lives were affected by the change from the Islamic faith to Christianity. The first aspect is their identity. It is evident that their conversion did not have a detrimental effect on their identity but rather reaffirmed or enhanced it. Converts did not feel compelled to relinquish their national, tribal, or cultural identities to embrace Jesus Christ. This is a favourable outcome since some people in the Christian community in Senegal often pressure new converts to change their cultural and tribal identity and adopt the so-called Christian culture, which is sometimes confused with the traditions of the country of origin of the members of a Christian community.

Conversion also influences religious conviction. In this area, the testimonies of Senegalese demonstrate substantial changes; the converts now identify themselves as Christians. They were fully assimilated into the Christian community, but their

cultural identity as Senegalese was not compromised. Their conversion caused them to reconsider their religious beliefs, particularly in their view of God and how they cope with moral difficulties and sin in their daily lives. In terms of their perception of God, they now have a completely different perspective than Muslims. One convert testifies to have accepted that Jesus is the son of God, which is blasphemy to Muslims. The converts perceive God as loving, compassionate, forgiving, and caring.

According to testimonies, the transformation went beyond religious convictions and affected their inner being and emotions. Converts claim that their hearts have changed because of their conversion to Christianity. Five converts testified that they found happiness, joy, and peace after conversion, which they had never felt before. The converts attribute their hearts' changes to a divine influence that they cannot explain. Conversion also brings the assurance of salvation. One convert was concerned about God's last judgment and unsure about his future destiny. He claims that faith in Jesus Christ produced the assurance of salvation in the heart; he realised his life has changed. He now has a strong sense of hope for redemption.

Other good outcomes of conversion, according to one convert, include deliverance from demonic spirits and physical healing. Her son was ill, and she refused to give him the medicines that the sorcerers recommended. They prayed with other Christians, and God healed the kid.

Certain Senegalese cultural elements were continued, and others were dropped. One convert stated that he renounced superstition and fetishes after conversion. However, I have contacted some converts who still adhere to Muslim dietary restrictions on alcohol use and pork consumption which should not be a problem as these issues do not contradict any biblical core principle.

Senegalese converts' testimonies show that their conversion yielded results that corresponded to the biblical definition of conversion as expressed by Sträehler (2005:93) "a turning away from sin, and a turning to God in faith," practically testified by a transformed lifestyle.

Chapter Six:

Conclusion and recommendations

When it comes to evangelizing Muslims, a deeper grasp of the conversion process can enhance the effectiveness of the church in its mission.

This study aimed to investigate the conversion experiences of thirteen Senegalese Muslims who converted to Christianity. The study focuses on the conversion process, namely the elements that facilitated Senegalese conversion and conversion results in new believers.

The data indicate that several factors influence conversion from the Islam faith to Christian faith in Senegal. As observed in our study, all MBBs I interacted with in Senegal testified that the fundamental factor in their conversion process was a great longing for a spiritual connection with God and a morally upright community. Other factors include the context or location in which individuals live; his spirituality quest, social interactions, personal crises; a desire for truth and peace; and interaction with missionaries and other gospel agents.

Additionally, the study established that immediate beneficial consequences of conversion include a sense of wholeness, assurance of salvation, joy, and peace. Interestingly, the conversion process continued uninterrupted, despite difficulties and persecutions encountered. For a tremendous missional consequence, this study shows that youth convert at a higher rate than middle-aged adults in Senegal.

As a result of our investigation, several challenges have arisen that are critical for the current and future mission of the Senegalese church. We would outline these challenges and make recommendations for the ministry to Muslims in Senegal.

The findings of this study provide helpful guidance on how Christians in Senegal might adapt their approach to sharing the Gospel with Muslims. We further urge that they be studied in terms of their implications for the church planting experience in Senegal.

6.1. *Our approach to evangelism*

When it comes to evangelisation, we must be careful about our strategies, tactics, and methods. We must keep in mind that no man or process can influence God. God is not a machine, force, law, or human being; He is God and cannot be influenced by a strategy. Instead, we must strive to do His will while enjoying His grace.

The God revealed in Scripture is beyond our comprehension. Human concepts do not constrain God. He is always greater. As Sträehler (2005:101) points out, we must be cautious when using lessons learned from the experiences of other converts. We must avoid treating the learned lessons as if they were God's standard formula for everyone in all contexts. Just because God has acted in one way in the past does not imply that he will always act the same way in the future. It was clear that no two conversions were alike, even among the small group of thirteen converts.

Conversion is God's work; He unlocks the heart, enlightens the mind, and quickens the whole person (Chew, 1990:31). As a result, conversion is a divine work. It does not happen solely through the Church's methods and strategies. The Church must have complete confidence in God to convert Muslims.

The Church's Muslim outreach should be both God-centred and people-oriented. However, although there is no easy standard strategy for evangelism, the place of Christians in the process of Muslim conversion cannot be ignored. We know that God gave biblical leaders specific strategies for achieving His objectives. So, we should seek God's guidance in our ministry to successfully minister to His people.

Christian missionaries who believe in God's sovereignty must also think strategically (Michel, 2005). Luke records Jesus teaching, "Suppose one of you want to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it" (Luke 14:28). God may not give us specific guidance on approaching the ministry and the exact strategy to apply. However, just as Jesus instructed His disciples to think and act following kingdom principles, we can use the theoretical and practical lessons obtained in this study to improve our knowledge of the conversion process. Relying on God's grace, we can humbly apply that knowledge in our organizations or churches' ministry to fulfil God's mission among Muslims in Senegal.

6.1.1. The importance of sharing the Gospel

We discovered that none of the thirteen Senegalese started the conversion process by actively searching for an alternative religion. Specific life experiences or needs encouraged or compelled them to study the Christian faith more thoroughly.

Christians were available throughout the entire conversion process to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. According to the study, most prospective converts are drawn to Christians by their conduct, behaviour, sociability, fellowship, and love. We must not lose sight of the fact that the witness the Christians way of living has one purpose; to provide the groundwork for the gospel to be proclaimed. Bosch backs up the statement above, stating that “evangelism is only possible when the community that evangelises is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle.” (1991: 309). Some Muslims have questioned their religious beliefs and traditions. They are unsatisfied with Islam's teachings and search for light elsewhere. Others have spiritual or emotional demands that their religion does not address. Adverse events in people's lives inspire others to change and look for alternatives. Some people long for God's peace, forgiveness, and acceptance from those who care about them.

The Church must see these longings as an opportunity to engage people, based on their needs. Bosch's (1991:358) statement is true “we cannot possibly dialogue with or witness to people if we resent their presence or the views they hold.” Rather than criticizing Muslims' religious convictions, Christians should assist Muslims in becoming aware of an alternate faith system. Christians in Senegal should therefore take advantage of any opportunity to meet with Muslims and discuss religious topics with them.

6.1.2. Long-term strategy mindset.

Christians often give up sharing their faith with Muslims because they do not see immediate conversion. They presume that Muslims are uninterested, and that further discussion is fruitless.

The Senegalese church members must change their mindset to believe that conversion occurs spontaneously following a one-time presentation of some biblical truth. Though God may transform a person in a way and at a time He chooses in His

sovereignty, the study shows that most Muslims on a quest to follow Christ require time; they progressively comprehend Christ and Christianity.

As indicated in the analysis section, potential converts waited years after being confronted with a crisis or hearing the gospel. Conversion to Christianity from Islam is a lengthy process. The gospel communicator must reflect on Wells' (1989) statement, "the conversion process of a Muslim entails thinking and rethinking, doubting and overcoming doubts, soul-searching, and self-admonition." (:63). The same process is full of struggle against emotions of guilt, shame, and worries about what a practical decision to follow Christ would entail: maintaining patient and consistent contact with Muslims and adequate transmission of truth are critical components of a fruitful encounter with them. Therefore, the Church must devise long-term methods for outreach to the Muslim community.

The survey findings revealed that Christian lifestyle and witness frequently and profoundly impacted Muslims.

The emphasis when considering evangelising Muslims must be on developing personal connections and friendships. Religious debates are reserved for religious leaders in Senegal, but friends can discuss any topic, including religion, without inciting division. Sträehler (2005:272) noticed that if Christians follow their Christian values in their daily lives and develop relationships, they will provide a firm and successful foundation for interactions with Muslims. A successful gospel advocate should live among Muslims and share life with Muslim neighbours over an extended period. In Senegal, evangelistic open-air crusades and short-term mission activities may not have been of much assistance to the Church's efforts to convert Senegalese Muslims to the Christian faith.

6.2. *The use of inappropriate and appropriate strategies*

As previously mentioned, the Senegalese church comprises many foreigners who do not see why the church in Senegal should be different from the church in their own country. Thus, more contextual awareness is compulsory to develop contextualized evangelistic strategies and abandon those that do not fit the community. The church should prepare the members for contextual living and ministry.

David Hesselgrave's (1991:12) seven levels of cross-cultural communication require attention for an effective encounter. They must be analysed and evaluated to see how far each church can include them in the discipleship teachings.

- Worldview: understand how the Muslims in Senegal perceive the world.
Example: What do they think about foreigners? Visiting villages in Senegal, we discovered that people are more likely to beg for money from white and European missionaries than from black African missionaries.
- Cognitive processes: The ways of thinking. For example, in Senegal, people are hesitant to decline any service requested because of the shame culture. It is humiliating to a friend to say no. You may believe that someone has agreed with what you shared with him, but you may have no idea that he did so merely to keep the relationship alive.
- Linguistic forms: What is the people's heart language, and how do they express their ideas? What are the taboo topics that should not be discussed?
- Behavioural patterns or how people operate in their daily lives. What to do when you pay a visit to a friend, attend a wedding, or attend a funeral.
- Social structures: How people of different gender or age interact. What should be anticipated in a relationship?
- Media influence: Which mode of communication is prioritised. Which one is appropriate for which age group or gender?
- Motivational resources: how individuals make judgments. Are they acting independently or collectively?

If the church leaders reflect on these cultural features, they can dramatically improve the effectiveness of members seeking to share the Gospel and the quality of the church's relationships with the surrounding community.

6.2.1. Inviting a Muslim friend to a church service

The importance of large Christian gatherings in spreading the gospel is well known. Large indoor gatherings can attract many people in some contexts, such as Rwanda, where I ministered for twelve years. It demonstrates that God is visiting a community to save people. This assumption is accurate if the population of a community is at

least evenly divided between Christians and Muslims. Islam is the dominant religion in Senegal (94%), and Muslims often organise such gatherings in their mosque; numerous challenges can arise when inviting a Muslim friend to an event in a church building. The same challenges apply to an MBB who joins existing Church denominations early in the conversion process.

According to Ibrahima Diop's research (2010:49), 90% of Muslims in Senegal cannot distinguish between evangelical and other Christian from the Catholic Church. When people hear the word "Christians," they immediately think of Catholic Church members. Diop (2010:49) reveals prevalent prejudices towards Christians among Muslims in Senegal. When these preconceptions are not understood and addressed, they can obstruct the convert's integration into the established Church.

We shall list three:

- Christians are morally reprehensible.

The accusation is that all the colonizers were Christians, and they ruled over Senegalese for 150 years. They sold Senegalese and deported them to other continents. They are the same individuals who preach Christianity and attempt to evangelize Senegalese. The majority of Muslims in Senegal consider Christianity a corrupted western religion. Actors in western films are considered Christians, depicting Christian conduct and behaviours. As a result, anything Christian is contaminated and immoral.

- Christians are idolators.

Because several African traditional religions worship idols, most Muslims do not distinguish between pictures and statues found in Roman Catholic churches and those in animist shrines. All images in the Catholic churches, including that of Mary, are considered idols. To those Muslims, Christians are idol worshippers. Joining a church is equated as bowing down to false gods.

- Christians are drunkards and pork eaters.

Some Christians eat pork meat and serve alcohol during celebrations such as Christmas and Easter. This is forbidden for Muslims. These eating habits make it difficult for Muslims to participate in any Christian event.

Given the prejudices outlined above, it is not recommended to immediately invite a convert to a church gathering or church building. The person will feel insecure. The best method would be to form a strong relationship with a Muslim and invite him/her to meet in a neutral location where she/he feels at ease. A household is desirable for effective discipleship because it provides the best environment for demonstrating faith in action. Through gradual conversation, the prospective convert will acquire an understanding that will assist a shift in worldview and make the transfer to the Church easier.

6.2.2. Evangelistic crusades

Open-air evangelism is a common strategy for reaching people with the gospel throughout the world. Sinclair (2006) terms it “apostolic evangelism.” It is “the exposing of many to the gospel in order to find the few who are spiritually responsive.” (:133). He discusses that friendship evangelism “was not the model of the apostles in the New Testament” (:132). He delves into the New Testament's evangelism methods, demonstrating that whenever apostles came across a community who had never heard the Gospel, they evangelized them in great numbers. He finally advises a church that wants to preach the Gospel to an unreached community to organize a large gathering of people. Senegal context does not permit the success of this strategy. Many missionaries have attempted that with no results. Our study found that none of the converts mentioned the evangelistic crusade to have played a role in the conversion process. Diop (2010:37) states that Muslims do not attend those gathering because they do not want to be viewed as part of a Christian campaign by other Muslims. They are afraid to be labelled as supporters of Christian evangelisation.

According to our findings, most prospective converts were drawn to Christ by the Christians' lifestyle instead of mass evangelism.

Instead of the costly and ineffective open-air crusades, the Church should empower and equip gospel advocates who live among Muslims with adequate relationship evangelism methods. They must know how to build solid relationships and friendships to share life with Muslim neighbours.

6.2.3. The role of social ministry in the mission of the Church

There has always been a significant divide between evangelism and social work concerning mission in church history. Some evangelicals worry that as some Christians get more socially involved, they become less biblical. Miles (1988:273-283) emphasises that this controversy can be bridged through Christ. Bosch (1991:284) states it well that “if the church attempts to serve itself from involvement in the world and if its structures are such that they thwart any possibility of rendering a relevant service to the world, such structures have to be recognised as heretical.” A holistic Christian mission must care for both man's spiritual and physical, emotional, and social needs within the social and cultural context it serves.

The Church in Senegal is actively engaged in social, medical, educational, and development activities, but more needs to be done. One convert mentioned the Church's medical ministry as a factor in his conversion; two others highlighted the Church's educational ministry as one of the factors in their decision to follow Christ. Many youths lack the skills to get jobs; libraries are very few; sports centres are needed. When used to build connections and present the gospel in a friendly manner, these types of venues can be highly effective at spreading the gospel of God's kingdom. Even though the ministry of the Church should be holistic, involved in the social affairs of the community, it is crucial not to overestimate the influence of these ministries on people's propensity to convert. The community may appreciate the Church's nonverbal ministries, but they may not equate good service with the Christian faith. Even if the service is excellent, it will not persuade anyone to change their religion. Good deeds themselves do not convey to the Muslim the possibility of a different worldview. Providing social services and taking social action should be as natural as sharing the gospel (Bosch 1991:408). Muffet (1992:207-209) states that even though gospel preaching unaccompanied with good deeds is not a complete Christian service, the works of compassion without the preaching of the Word, does not convey a comprehensible Christian message. While we should be modest about

the quality and efficacy of our witness, evangelism is a necessary ministry. It is not a discretionary extra but a Christian obligation (Bosch 1991:309). The Gospel message is indeed necessary. It is unique. It cannot be replaced". Bosch (1991:413-414) explains evocatively about sharing the Gospel, stating that the evangelistic dimension of the church's mission cannot be assumed to be implicit in everything the church says and does; it must be made clear. Non-verbal ministries must always be supplemented by some form of verbal or media communication (audio, visual, or print) for the Christian belief to be understood.

6.2.4. Appropriate use of media

The proper use of media in transmitting the gospel is another challenge. Various media platforms are used extensively in Senegal (print, audio, and visual), but most media content is not contextualised. The Church should assess the current media platforms used to spread the Christian message.

According to Poston (1990:24), most Christians in various parts of West Africa and Western countries join the Church in their twenties. The thirteen Senegalese believers were between twenty and thirty when they came to faith in Jesus Christ. Though it is difficult for the youth to make significant decisions regarding their future and lifestyle, their minds remain open to different worldviews and critical towards what they hear and see. Furthermore, because the burdens of life are not yet heavy, youth provide an opportunity to convert. The church should therefore develop evangelistic material mainly focusing on youth.

a. Printed and audio-visual communication

Even though Wolof is the primary language spoken in Senegal, Wolof has no complete Bible. Most printed documents are in French, a language spoken by only a few educated individuals. Our study noticed how valuable the few Wolof printed media are. One convert was very happy when he received a pamphlet written in Wolof. Another convert searching for the truth found the light about Jesus while reading a portion of the Gospel in Wolof. The Church in Senegal should understand that the Church cannot reach out to Muslims with a foreign language. The whole Bible must be translated into Wolof, and the same for all teaching materials used in the church.

Audio materials are a great tool to evangelise Muslims in Senegal. Radio broadcasts can reach many people where the church has no converts, but they should also use appropriate and contextualised content and be in the people's language.

The Church must develop evangelism materials that focus on Muslims who have little or no knowledge of the gospel and are hostile to Christianity. In cities and towns especially, evangelism should consider traditional Muslims and modernity (Greenlee 1996:209).

Some Muslims in Senegal travel to other nations and return with their worldviews altered because of things they witnessed in different cultures. The Church must have a plan and a media communication strategy to reach out to persons who have received multicultural education. Similarly, the Church must remember that women likewise are interested in learning about other faiths.

With the advent of television and the internet, the influence of secularism on young Muslims in Senegal outweighs that of orthodox Islam. To reach this age group, the planning of the Church must be redesigned to include programmes that offer them the opportunity to learn about Christianity. Because social media is so popular now among the youth in Senegal, its use should be regarded as critical. Using different social media platforms, the church can reach more people than ever before by engaging Scripture-based content that speaks to them in their real lives. The end goal should be getting any prospective convert into a face-to-face offline meeting with a trained Christian for further conversation.

6.2.5. Integration of a new convert into the Church

The inclusion of converts into the visible Church, which is the local body of Christ, requires careful consideration. We recommend that the same strategies Sträehler (2005) offers for contextualised church planting in Sudan be implemented in Senegal. He offers two possible solutions to the problem of integrating new converts to the church: developing culturally relevant churches and promoting church planting movements. These ideas need to be thoroughly investigated since they can provide practical mission concepts to reach many Muslims in Senegal.

a. developing culturally relevant churches

Even though problems do arise, this study has proven that some converts from Senegal Muslim backgrounds can, at a given time, find a place in a Christian church. On the other hand, converts find it challenging to feel at home in the Church. The challenge for the convert is that most churches, primarily formed of expatriates, appear to accept only converts from Muslim backgrounds who are willing and capable of adapting to the Church's foreign culture and language (Murumba 2008:157).

The Senegalese Church's mission praxis must be reconsidered to ensure the smooth integration of new converts and to increase conversions. It is a fundamental missiological notion that the Christian faith must be expressed in a form and in languages appropriate to the cultural environment in which it operates (Bosch, 1991:421).

Bosch (1991:334) comments concerning the mistake that some missionaries from Europe made. They were unaware that their theology was culturally contingent; they just imagined it was supracultural and universal in application. Furthermore, because Western culture was implicitly viewed as Christian, it was self-evident that this culture, along with the Christian faith, had to be exported. In Senegal, the missionaries are making the same mistakes. The church hesitates to adapt to the hosting culture. It strives to continue using foreign languages. Even though ninety-eight per cent of Senegalese speak Wolof, used in the mosque for teaching, the Church employs French, appearing foreign. The music and dancing, in addition to the language, are also from a different culture. The significant cultural disparities between the church and the surrounding communities have two negative consequences.

First, it is difficult for new converts to assimilate to the Church. They are required to communicate in a language other than their native one; subsequently it is difficult for them to comprehend what is being taught. They are required to exert excessive effort to worship God in a manner that is not culturally acceptable or well-known. One MMB related to me his initial admission into the church and his confusion. He was requested to dance since anyone who does not dance, does not worship God.

Throughout his life as a Muslim, he believed that people danced in nightclubs, not before God.

Another problem is that after years of arduous integration into established churches, most converts often participate in internal church ministry but are rarely actively involved in the ministry to the community where they came. They have acquired all the fundamental knowledge of their faith in a language other than their own. As a result, they are unable to communicate their beliefs with other members of their community. The individuals' conversions frequently end there and do not continue to influence others, which prevents the formation of new fellowships inside a given community or people group (Garrison & Garrison, 2008:208). To solve this problem, an intentional shift in attitude and thinking is required for the church leadership and Christian ministers who work among Senegalese Muslims. The Church should advocate for forming culturally appropriate congregations for Muslim converts. Such congregations will not develop on their own. According to Livingstone (1993:13), church planting among Muslims requires deliberate planning. This type of Church can be found in various geographical locations around the Muslim world. In his book, Livingstone (1993:169-189) outlines these kinds of churches and offers a few examples.

The Church in Senegal should research how God uses culturally relevant churches in other parts of the world to reveal Jesus to Muslims. However, a thorough investigation is required before application to ensure the method is appropriate to the Senegal context (Wakely, 2004:12-22).

b. Promoting Church Planting Movements

Christian Outreach to Muslims has recently shifted its focus in some missionary circles, away from creating culturally relevant churches towards promoting Church Planting Movements. Garrison (2004:21-22) defines a Church Planting Movement as "a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches that sweeps through a people group or demographic segment."

The current approach in Senegal, similar to the church planting movement, entails the deployment of trained local church evangelists to plant churches among their people group. This strategy can win a few individuals to Christ, but it does not assist

the multiplication. With this evangelism approach, as Garisson (2000) says, the momentum remains in the hands of a limited group of professional church planters rather than in the heart of each new convert.

On the contrary, for the church planting movement, the gospel is introduced to a people group by a missionary or an evangelist; however, the momentum quickly becomes indigenous, and the multiplication of converts comes from within the people group. The new converts continue planting several new self-sustaining churches. Garrison (2004) investigated such groups in several different places and the Islam majority world.

According to our findings, there was no testimony linking a conversion to the church planting movement. The accounts of such movements in other parts of the world are astounding, and we believe they can be effective in Senegal.

We recognise the limitations of our study. It did not cover every aspect of the conversion process in detail and the whole country. As a result, additional research is necessary to determine whether the church planting movement can be effective in Senegal.

6.3. *Pray for renewal and pray for all people*

Miracles, dreams, and other miraculous manifestations trigger the hearts of some Muslims to search for God. Therefore, a missional church recognises that the mission is God's; it must have a relationship with Him to understand His leading. Members of a missional church are true worshippers of God, in spirit and truth. The Church of Senegal should commit to prayer and fasting, believing in the power of prayer. The prayer time is not concealed in the church building; members should pray at home, wherever, and to whoever asks for prayer.

In summary, to make sure the church's ministries meet the people's needs and reach many Muslims in Senegal, we advise the church to be more missional and view contextualisation as a vital aspect of effective ministry among Senegalese Muslims.

A thorough grasp of the process of Muslim conversion will motivate the church to learn more about the social, cultural, political, and religious context in which it is called to serve.

6.4. *Concluding remarks*

The church should recognize that a member, missionary, or pastor from another cultural context will always experience insurmountable challenges to fully understand and adapt to the new cultural setting. Senegalese will find it much easier to comprehend their people and their needs. Imagine if an expatriate professional theologian does not lead the Bible study but rather an ordinary layperson, who knows the stories of the people, their culture, their literature, their art, and their thoughts, and can discuss these both appreciatively and yet critically: that church will impact the neighbourhood and beyond. Therefore, the church must put Senegalese MBB on the frontline or consult with them while developing any mission strategy. It has to take note of MBB devices when creating printed and audio-visual material for evangelism. The church must strategize using all available resources to present the Christian faith to Muslims throughout the country in a variety of methods and via all their senses, regardless of their cultural and socioeconomic situation.

6.5. APPENDIX 1: CONVERSION TESTIMONIES

The testimonies' data are grouped according to the study topic and sub-questions. The table below (Table 1) shows the list of testimonies (T), the narrator's age, gender, and marital status. The testimonies are retrieved from the book the testimony for the Glory of God in Senegal (SIM,1996). The names in the book were fictional, but the author opted not to mention them for safety purposes

- Male gender (M)
- Female gender (F), testimony (T), and number (1-13).

Table 1: Testimony List by Code Number

Testimony information

Number

T1M	37 years old, man, single
T2M	34 years old, man, married
T3F	54 years old, woman, married
T4M	22 years old, man, single
T5F	27 years old, woman
T6M	24 years old, man, single
T7F	37 years old, woman, married
T8M	42 years old, man, married
T9M	24 years old, man, single
T10F	34 years old, woman, married
T11M	48 years old, man, single
T12M	37 years old, man, married
T13F	24 years old, woman, married

Research Questions 1: • What causes Muslims to convert to Christianity, and how does it happen? To analyse different stages that the converts experience in the conversion process from Islam faith to Christianity faith. The study uses the conversion theories established by Rambo (1992:159-177).

Life before conversion

Theme: Context

Sub-Theme: Religious, family, and professional life before conversion

**Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies
number**

T1M I was a committed Muslim, and I did not question any of my religious practices. I learned the Coran since I was a kid, and I memorised several verses of Coran. I used to smoke and commit different sins and ask God for forgiveness. -

I decided to follow Jesus when I was independent, living far from my family.

When I was a university student, I knew a little about the Bible, a Christian youth centre near our university, I used to go there for leisure, and occasionally I got to read some portion of the Bible.

T2M I grew up obeying religious rules and rituals, but I mixed it with worldliness. I was much into fornication.

T3F I was publicly practising Islam but not well versed in Muslim faith

T4M I tried to follow all teachings of Islam, but we mixed our religion with some old practices from the Africa tradition religion.

I converted when I was 17 years old, staying with my parents. My nephews were already Christians.

T5F I was not a devoted Muslim. Once in a month, I prayed did not fast, but I sometimes did it, mostly when the Muslim festival approached.

I was married to a man from the Catholic Church, but he had to become a Muslim before marriage. When his older son died, he began to read the Bible and exposed me to the gospel.

T6M I was raised Muslim family, and in my younger age, my family forced me to pray. I attended the mosque only during the festivals; I was not a devoted Muslim.

T7F I grew up following my parents' religion, and as a young Muslim, though I did not learn the Coran, I was devout to all that I knew; I was doing my five daily prayers and do the fasting as required in Islam.

I accepted to obey Jesus and follow him when my Muslim husband was away. I was a secret believer for many days.

T8M I was a nominal Muslim, but my family was devoted to Islam. They encouraged me and forced me to perform the duties of Islam.

T9M I was attracted to and practising Islam since my childhood. I prayed, on Friday, and go to the koranic and Arabic school but was disappointed by the behaviours that I saw within Muslims.

I converted to Christ while living with my parents, and I continued even after my conversion.

At thirteen years old, I started the high school; I found a house where I could watch movies and do some other activities in my free time. I was in contact with Christians who became my friends; I heard about Jesus for my first time.

T10F I grew up in a Muslim family, and I prayed five times a day.

I heard the word of God from my father, whom himself was earlier converted from Islam to Christianity.

T11M I was born and raised a Muslim, but I was involved in superstition practices with fetishes.

When I was in France, I lived with a Christian in the same university room. My Christian roommate shared the gospel message with me. I heard the word of God led me to research more to find the truth, and after two years, I decided to follow Christ.

T12M I grew up in Islam, and I practised it. My piety did not assure me of salvation. I was a slave of sin. I wanted to be free of sin, but my effort toward that objective did not produce any result.

T13F I grew up within a Muslim family, but since I was young,

I had good esteem towards Christianity, and I believe their testimony led me to become a Christian. I had Christian neighbours, and I highly esteemed their way of living.

1. Processes of conversion

Theme: Crisis

Sub-Theme: Average age of conversion

Testimony Excerpt from the Testimonies number

- T1M** I was thirty years old when I became a Christian.
- T2M** I came to faith when at the age of twenty.
- T3F** I converted to Christianity after seeing the transformation in my husband's life who was then a Christian. I had visions and dreams, but the conviction to serve Jesus came by looking at my husband's behaviour change; I was twenty-seven years old.
- T4M** When I was seventeen years old through my nephew; I was living with my family.
- T5F** My husband was once a Catholic and became a Muslim to marry me. When he lost his son, he started reading the Bible, and I noticed changes in his life. He tried to convince me to read with him, but I refused, saying that I did not believe in their Jesus Christ. I even threatened to divorce him. At age twenty-seven, one night in a dream, I had a nightmare; I saw my grave, terrified and troubled. I started thinking about my destiny after death, and I did not have an answer. My husband told me to call on Jesus, which I did, and I received peace in my heart.
- T6M** I accepted Jesus when I was sixteen years old.
- T7F** I gave my life to Jesus when I was twenty-three years old.
- T8M** I became a Christian when I was fifteen years old.

- T9M** While practising Islam, I was dissatisfied with the hypocrisy and injustice that I saw within Muslims. At age thirteen, I decided to change my religion, but I was very young and not allowed to make my own life decision. I continued living my Christian life in secret, waiting for the time when I will be an adult. At age twenty-two, I took my decision and became a disciple of Jesus.
- T10F** My father ushered me to Christ, I was 15 years old.
- T11M** I have heard the word of God since 1972 for two years, I did my research before my conversion. I came to faith when I was 24 years old in 1974.
- T12M** I became a Christian at thirty-one years old.
- T13F** I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour; I was ten years old.

Sub-Theme: Tension or life Crisis

testimony Excerpt from the testimonies

number

- T6M** My parents divorced when I was too young. My father married the other two wives; with them, I was mistreated a lot. I searched for the true religion, wondering why I hear different sects in Christianity, which one is true Christianity. I met a missionary who led me to a church where I listened to the preacher. As if the preacher had addressed all his sermons to me, I heard a voice in my heart, convincing me to trust in Jesus for salvation.
- T7F** When I was twenty-three years old, I had troubling thoughts. I knew, one day I was going to die, and that heaven and hell exist. I wanted to know about my destiny after death. My mother could not answer that question; she advised me to follow Islam's ordinances hoping that God will have mercy on me; I was not satisfied with this answer. I continued searching for the answer until I met a man selling booklets and I bought some. I read the booklets that explained the way to salvation in Christ Jesus and man's state as a sinner who needs to be rescued. I searched in the Bible while still practising my Muslim duties. One day I prayed

and asked God to lead me into the right path toward Him. I knew two ways, through Mohamed or Jesus, I asked God to reveal to me which one is the right way. After the prayer, I felt my heart being attracted by Jesus, and I decided to follow him.

T13F In 1983, I had an accident, and while in the hospital, I was given a Bible. I read it, and I was touched by what I discovered about Jesus. I was not attended by any nurse or checked by any doctor for three days. My parents had to corrupt the doctor to be cared for. Jesus healed people for free; that mercy and compassion touched my heart, I studied the Bible and concluded that Jesus came to redeem sinners, and that I was one of those sinners.

Sub-theme: Dreams and vision

Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies number

T3F I came to faith after seeing the transformation that happened in my husband's life when he became a Christian. I had visions and dreams, but the conviction to serve Jesus came by looking at my husband's behaviour change; I was twenty-seven years old.

T5F At age twenty-seven, one night in a dream, I had a nightmare; I saw my grave, terrified, and troubled. I began reflecting on my destiny after death, and I did not have an answer. My husband told me to call on Jesus, which I did, and I received peace in my heart

T13F One day, I saw three persons in the cloud, and I knew immediately that the person in the middle was Jesus.

Theme: Quest

Sub-Theme: Religious quest

Quest for Truth

Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies number

- T1M** Since I was in university, I knew little about the Bible, but I was only reading portions of it; I spent years searching the scripture. The Bible was very different from what I expected; it was full of mysteries. I got helped by missionaries and decided to become a Christian when I was thirty years old.
- T2M** I was studying law at university, and in my search for the truth, a missionary gave me a book entitled "Is Jesus God?" That book challenged me to do more research on Jesus' claim to be the son of God. By comparing the verses from the Old Testament and the New Testament, my conclusion was that Jesus is the son of God. I knew my conclusion was blasphemy, but I decided to follow Jesus.
- T6M** I was searching for the true religion. I wondered why I hear different sects in Christianity, which one is true Christianity. I met a missionary who introduced me to a church, and I heard the sermon. I gave my life to Jesus, and I never regretted my decision.
- T7F** When I was twenty-three years old, I had troubling thoughts. I knew, one day I was going to die, and that heaven and hell exist. I wanted to know about my destiny after death. My mother could not answer that question; she advised me to follow Islam's ordinances with the hope that God will have mercy on me; I was not satisfied with this answer. I continued searching for the answer until I met a selling booklet and I bought some. I read the booklets that explained the way to salvation in Christ Jesus and man's state as a sinner who needs to be rescued. I searched in the Bible while still practising my Muslim duties. One day I prayed and asked God to lead me into the right path toward Him. Through Mohamed or Jesus, I knew two ways; I asked God to reveal to me which one is the right way. After the prayer, I felt my heart being attracted by Jesus, and I decided to follow him.
- T8M** When I was young, my father encouraged me to do the Muslim prayers, but the more he tried, the more I asked myself questions about God and wanted to know Him more. In my quest to meet God,

a Christian gave me one of the gospel books. It took me five years of reading before I decided to give my life to Jesus.

T12M In my life, I felt to have two significant fundamental needs: purity of the heart and salvation. I knew that I was a sinner and that I need to be delivered from my sins, I tried, but my efforts were in vain. In my quest, while listening to a BBC radio broadcast called “Words of faith,” I was attracted to Christ, whom I considered only as a prophet of God but not as the saviour. From there on, I embarked on a long search to understand Christianity.

Sub-Theme: Emotional quest

Quest for Peace

Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies
number

T1M I used to be overwhelmed by my sins, but now I feel delivered and at peace.

T2M I was practising my religion, but my heart was longing for God and overcoming sin.

T5F My life changed after receiving Jesus. I was cruel, quarrelsome, and unforgiving, but now I have joy because my family and I have found peace in Christ.

T11M Faith in Christ assured me of salvation.

Theme: Encounter

Sub-Theme: Missionaries, Pastors and Evangelists

Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies
number

T1M Missionaries helped me understand the Bible and become a Christian by explaining some obscure verses to me.

T2M In my search for the truth, I met a missionary who gave me a Christian book.

- T6M** Through the discussion that I had with a missionary who came to our area to study the local language, I became a Christian. The missionary took me to the church, and I received Christ after the preaching of the pastor.
- T7F** While I was in my quest for the truth, I met a man who was selling Christian booklets and bought some. One of them talked about Jesus, the saviour of the world.
- T8F** I asked myself questions about God when I met a Christian who gave me the one gospel book.
- T9M** When I was visiting one Christian centre, I met with Christians and missionaries, who became my friends.
- T12M** The Lord brought a Pastor who helped me solve difficulties that scrambled my abilities to take the final decision.

Sub-Theme: Family members

**Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies
number**

- T3F** I saw the power of the Lord that transformed the life of my husband. Since he met Jesus, he became another man, and that transformation attracted me to Jesus.
- T4M** my nephews influenced me to be a Christian and I was touched by their verbal witness about the word of God.
- T5F** I heard the gospel for through the teachings of my husband.
- T10F** My father found true life in the Lord, and he shared it with us.

Sub-Theme: Supernatural work of God

**Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies
number**

- T1M** I became a Christian by reading the translation of the New Testament in Wolof (local language).
- T2M** One day I was reading John 10:35, I saw where Jesus was accused of comparing himself to God. I examined the accusation using the

- scriptures. I discovered the claim of Jesus to be valid. After that I repented and accepted Jesus as the saviour and king of my life.
- T4M** God used the scripture to convert me, especially the verse in Ecclesiastes 12:1. When I heard that verse, I was afraid and decided to give my life to the Lord.
- T6M** I accepted the Lord Jesus after hearing the preaching of a pastor. It was as if the pastor was talking directly to me. He mentioned things that preoccupied me. I sensed someone else besides the pastor talking to my heart. After I came to know that it was the Holy Spirit of God, since that day, I gave him the direction of my life, and I have never regretted it.
- T7F** When I was twenty-three years old, I had troubling thoughts. I knew, one day I was going to die, and that heaven and hell exist. I wanted to know about my destiny after death. My mother could not answer that question; she advised me to follow Islam's ordinances with the hope that God will have mercy on me; I was not satisfied with this answer. I continued searching for the answer until I met a selling booklet and I bought some. I read the booklets that explained the way to salvation in Christ Jesus and man's state as a sinner who needs to be rescued. I searched in the Bible while still practising my Muslim duties. One day I prayed and asked God to lead me into the right path toward Him. I knew two ways, through Mohamed or Jesus, I asked God to reveal to me which one is the right way. After the prayer, I felt my heart being attracted by Jesus, and I decided to follow Him.
- T8M** I met a Christian who gave me one of the gospels. When I started reading it, the Spirit started his work in me to reveal who Jesus Christ is. In my bible study, I decided to accept Christ as my saviour and Lord.

Theme: Interaction

Sub-Theme: Interaction and Fellowship with Christians

Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies number

- T1M** As a student I visited an evangelical centre to play basketball and watch movies.
- T3F** I saw the power of the Lord by watching the transformation that happened in the life of my husband, whose life was changed after receiving Christ.
- T4M** God used my nephews, who were Christians, for my conversion to Christianity.
- T6M** I became a Christian through the witness of a missionary who often visited our area for language study.
- T8M** In my interaction with a Christian friend on the psalm, I received the Lord in my life.
- T9M** By attending a Christian centre, I read the scriptures and interacted with Christians and missionaries.
- T10F** My father, who is a Christian, shared the word of God with us.
- T11M** During my university studies in France, I shared a room with a disciple of Jesus, who introduced me to the gospel.

Theme: Commitment

Sub-Theme: Decision-making challenges

Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies number

- T1M** I did not have many challenges; I was living an independent life, far from my family. Because of many koranic verses memorised and the preconceived idea about God as taught in Koran, it is not easy for a Muslim to convert to Christianity.

- T4F** Many people want to come to Christ but fear the reaction of their parents. My sister wants to accept the Lord, but she fears losing the support of our father.
- T7** It took me five years before I got delivered from the evil's bondage and my parents' traditions.
- T8M** I have come to know that Jesus is the saviour but delayed the public confession. I planned to make it after I have achieved my financial independence. Meanwhile, I tried to live an exemplary life; I read the Bible and prayed but refused to proclaim my faith.
- T11M** Before I decided to become a Christian, I researched for two years on salvation in Christ to know if it holds the truth or not.
- T12M** After listening to a radio programme about Jesus, the saviour, I started researching on Christianity. I knew Jesus as a prophet of God, not as a saviour.

Sub-Theme: Factors for Conversion

testimony Excerpt from the testimonies

number

- T1M** Reading of a Bible translation in a local language and quest for truth.
- T2M** Quest of the truth.
- T3F** The behaviour of my Christian husband attracted me.
- T4M** Hearing the word of God.
- T5F** Hearing the word of God, the testimony of my husband and vision.
- T6M** Searching for the truth, listening to the gospel, and the joy I saw in the church.
- T7F** Fear of death and reading of the Bible tracts.
- T8M** Questioning my religion, the reading of the Bible, and miracles.
- T9M** The injustice and hypocrisy within Muslims.
- T10F** My father's testimony from the scriptures.
- T11M** Search for the truth and the preaching of my roommate.
- T12M** The quest for purity, salvation, and freedom from sin.
- T13F** The exemplary life Christians, visions, life crisis and the reading of scriptures.

Sub-Theme: Decision Making

testimony Excerpt from the testimonies

number

- T1M** After examining the Bible and getting more explanation from a missionary, I understood the meaning of the bible verses and decided to be a Christian.
- T2M** When I analysed the scripture in John10:35, I was convinced that Jesus is the son of God and accepted the Bible truth only in my mind. I came to know that I should repent from my sin to trust Jesus in my life as the Lord and Saviour.
- T3F** The transforming power of God that changed my husband convinced me of the Lordship of Christ, and I saw several visions.
- T4M** After hearing the word of God in Ecclesiastics 12: 1, I was afraid and decided to give my life to Christ.
- T5F** One night I had nightmares; I see my grave open; I was petrified. I was unsure of my fate after death. My husband advised me to ask God. I prayed and asked him to reveal to me whom I should follow between Jesus and Mohamed. I was led in my heart to follow Jesus, and I felt peace from knowing and accepting that Jesus is the way.
- T6M** During a church service accompanied by a missionary, I gave my life to the Lord after listening to the preaching of the pastor.
- T7F** After searching for the truth and sometimes practising Islam, I asked God to guide me toward the way to salvation. Afterword, I believed Jesus to be the only way to God.
- T8M** While reading the gospel, I decided to accept Jesus Christ as my saviour and Lord.
- T9M** My father shared the word of God with us, and I decided to walk with the Lord when I was fifteen years old.
- T11M** Studying the word of God took me two years before I decided to follow Christ and be baptised.
- T12M** After receiving help from a pastor to solve problems that obscured my decision making, I gave my life to the Lord Jesus Christ as my saviour before I was baptised in front of the congregation.

T13F By researching about Jesus, I found the verse in John 3:16. I knew the hell is real and that I had a problem. Then I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour.

Sub-Theme: Ritual

**Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies
number**

T11M After two years of studying the word of God, I decided to follow Christ and be baptised.

T12M After receiving help from a pastor to solve problems that obscured my decision-making, I renounced, accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my saviour before I was baptised in front of my Christian brothers and sisters.

Theme: Consequences

Sub-Theme: Life Change

**Testimony Excerpt from the testimonies
number**

T1M My life changed; I renounced the sins that I used to commit before my salvation; I now have peace in me. My faith gives me joy.

T2M My life changed; I love God, my surrounding, and the compulsion to sin has vanished. I became Christian beaming with joy and victory. By prayer, God provided a job for me.

T3F I became an excellent mother and a better spouse; I learned to depend on the Lord to give me the patience to endure the difficulties and react not according to the flesh. I am happy to be a citizen of heaven and to be delivered from superstition.

T4M My life changed on several levels: my relationship with others and my personal life. I abandoned several unfair practices and sins. God answered my prayers. I am happy to belong to the heavenly family.

- T5F** My life changed dramatically; I was cruel, quarrelsome with no mercy. All these bad temperaments vanished. I have joy because of my heart in peace.
- T6M** I became a new creature. I did not lose; instead, I won peace, joy, love, affection toward others, even in the middle of suffering. I no longer fear death, I am no longer
- T7M** I felt perfect peace in my heart; after my conversion, I knew I would go to heaven after death. My parents noticed changes that happened in my life. Before salvation, I was nervous, angry, and resentful. I have joy and peace.
- T8M** It was an upheaval in my life; my desires changed. When I was a Muslim, I was a slow learner, not gifted, but a radical change happened in my studies afterward.
- T9M** I live in the grace of the Lord with assurance and perfect peace.
- T10F** The decision changed my life; my joy is that I belong to God.
- T11M** Since my conversion, I have abandoned superstition and fetishes. I am not afraid of death, the future, and hell.
- T12F** Faith in Christ procured me the assurance of salvation, and the Lord's power changed my life. I conquered many sins that chained me.
- T13M** I am experienced happiness in my marriage.

Sub-Theme: Persecution

testimony Excerpt from the testimonies number

- T1M** Because of my faith, I lost my friends and suffered solitude. Sometimes I was confronted with material subsistence's problems.
- T2M** It was the beginning of the persecution; I was kicked out of my uncle's house. I erred looking for a house till the church rescued me.
- T3F** My family stopped all contact with me. My relationship with my Muslim neighbour is not easy.
- T4M** When I told my father about my conversion, I was persecuted. My father took me to a marabout for witchcraft, and I refused to

- compromise. I confessed to Jesus before my father. He wanted to kill me, but I took refuge in a pastor's house for two hours.
- T5F** My parents, father, friends, brothers, and sisters abandoned me because of my faith. My father called a meeting to announce my exclusion from the family.
- T6M** My father expelled me from our house, accusing me of following cursed people. I fled but came back to my home after one day. Some of my friends avoided me.
- T7F** My husband allowed me to practise my faith but not to teach my children about my beliefs. My father chased me from his house, but I refused to leave. Everyone in the Muslim community found out about my conversion within seven days.
- T8M** Two times, my family tried to poison me. One Sunday, my brother beat me in front of our church.
- T9M** My father threatened to take me to the police. During a meeting, he asked me to deny my faith; if not, I was told not to touch anything belonging to my father and not to talk to any of my siblings; I opted to leave the house.
- T10M** My family abandoned us because of my faith.
- T11M** My family does not implicate me in any family decision. I have difficulties finding a wife because of my faith. God helped me; he used my Christian family to support me through several difficulties.
- T12M** My parents disowned me and kicked me out of the house. They accepted me back after noticing the positive changes in my life produced by my new faith.

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