



## Western Christian Media As Vectors of Cultural Imperialism In Nigeria: A Case Study of The Watchtower And Awake!

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**Abstract**— Many research works have sought to demonstrate how the secular western media (such as new agencies and transnational media conglomerates) play a great role in the westernisation of Africans, giving relatively little attention to the contribution of western Christian media to this imperialism process. Meanwhile, from many palpable evidences, Christianity and western Christian media's contribution to this western cultural imperialism is somehow notable. This paper demonstrates this fact with respect to two international Christian magazines (*Awake* and *Watchtower*). It presents a content analysis of the two magazines exploring their article contents, and representation of the various cultures (African, Western, and Asian among others) in visuals. It also investigates readership reading of the contents of these magazines through focus group discussions. It argues that the cultural imperialist inclinations of these western Christian magazines are seen in the fact that they dominantly report religious issues from the west. The angle they mostly adopt is pro-western. They subtly exhibit and celebrate the Western style of life - through dressing styles, architecture portrayed and promoted in visuals – over other African cultural values. Africa rarely features in their content. The few instances of reports on Africans are characterised by problematic and arbitrary representations of the Africans. The African culture is mostly and subtly portrayed as less relevant and somehow inferior.

**Keywords**—Cultural Imperialism, Western Christian Media, Cultural Globalisation, Media Imperialism, Religion.

### I. INTRODUCTION

As a social construct, religion is inextricably linked to culture. A good number of theorists have sought to establish the link between the two phenomena (religion and culture). Critics such as Fox view religion as a cultural system in itself [1]. In line with this, Spiro in Etim defines religion as an institution which consists of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings [2, pp.119]. Similarly, Morgan and Pomey cited in Fox construe the phenomenon of religion as “configurations of social relatedness and cultural ordering that appeal to powers that

assist humans in organizing their collective and individual lives” [1, pp.97]. Giving its conservative and stabilising roles, religion has, in many societies, been serving as an indispensable agent of social control (an ideological state apparatus). The phenomenon has thus functioned as “the custodian and defender of established norms and values in the human arenas, personal and spiritual, domestic and political, social and cultural against all threats and violations” [3].

Besides being an instrument of social control, religion has been employed as a powerful vector of western cultural imperialism, especially in Africa. Indeed, the Europeans have used various forms of Christianity (Catholicism, Protestantism, Pentecostalism, and the like) to subtly sell, import and firmly implant their cultures in Africa [4-6]. They have actively used Christianity to facilitate the colonisation of Africans and to later socialise Africans into accepting the western style of life [7-9]. History has it that the intense Christian missionary activities and religious activism in Africa have been responsible for the arbitrary “diabolisation” and progressive abandonment of a good number of African cultural values. Ekanem and Bassey point out some of the culturally devastating effects of “imported” religions (Christianity and Islam) on Africans. They note the aggressive way in which the western and Islamic religions were introduced/implanted in Africa and the heavy socio-cultural repercussions of such an introduction on the survival of African cultural values. They concede that “religion as far as the Africans were concerned, never bred wars. This is because African Traditional Religion never claimed superiority to other religions. This explains why we never had “holy wars” in Black Africa, nor did we have religious discrimination until the Moslem came with their devastating Jihads or holy wars and the Christians mutual condemnation and discrimination. We see that religion here becomes a social problem when it is wrongly applied” [10, 22-23].

In the same line of argument, Amadi opines that religious discrimination and intolerance was practically unknown among the Nigerian tribes until foreign religions were introduced [9, pp.69]. Most Nigerian tribes respected one another's gods and made no attempt in whatever form, at conversion. Instead, the mysteries surrounding any particular religion were jealously guarded against eventual intruders. Imported religions such as Christianity led to the destruction

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of some valuable cultural practices in the name of combating repugnant cultures. Amadi further notes that:

Early Christian [missionaries] destroyed the shrines of indigenous gods by sheer force and sometimes blackmailed worshippers of other gods into accepting baptism. The situation was worsened by the fact that the early Christians confused religion with culture, and in their crusade against what they called 'heathenism' they destroyed works of art, banned cultural dances and time-honoured rituals which provided peep-holes into the remote past. [9, pp.68]

The fact that Christianity is a carrier of the western culture has been viewed by a number of critics as an "anomaly" [6, 9]. Based on this premise, some African sociologists of religion construed Christianity to be an agent of western cultural imperialism [9-12]. Many have viewed it as an institution through which the West has successfully imposed its culture on the Africans thereby causing the progressive extinction of some core African cultural values [7-8, 10]. Maduka passionately highlights this fact when he contends that: "although progress has been made in the manner used by Christianity to spread its message in Africa, especially in terms of giving some modicum of respect to the integrity of the African culture, [dispositions are taken so that], in the long run African religion will disappear, for it is assumed that it contains some impurities that will be removed through enculturation. The Spirit of the Gospel informs what remains after it is purified" [6, pp13]. The long and complex process of cultural imperialism facilitated by the Christian religion continues even in contemporary times. Western Christian media represent serious agents of this western cultural imperialism. Based on a content analysis of some selected international Christian magazines, this paper attempts to show, the role of western Christian media in intensifying western cultural imperialism in Nigeria. It demonstrates this through a systematic analysis of two western international magazines namely *Watchtower* and *Awake*, all published by the Jehovah Witnesses religious group.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper hinges on Louis Althusser's theory of ideology and Gramsci's concept of hegemony, as well as on Georges Gerbner's cultivation theory. As a theoretical concept, ideology is associated with Marxism. It is advanced by culture and communication scholars to describe the practice of reproducing the social relationship of inequality within the spheres of signification and discourse. In this wise, ideology is construed to be a means by which the dominant classes generalise, extend and naturalise their supremacy across a whole range of social activities. As applied in mass communication studies, the theory of ideology insists that there is no natural meaning inherent in an event or object; and that, meanings into which events or objects are constructed are always socially-oriented, that is, they are shaped according to class, gender, race or the interests [13-14, 17]. Ideology either

works on the changing circumstances of social activities with the objective of reproducing familiar and regulated senses or struggle to resist established or naturalised senses that is, it seeks to transform the means of sense-making into new, alternative or counter forms which will generate meanings aligned to different social interests [14-16].

The theory of hegemony on the other hand refers to the ability by the dominant classes, to exercise cultural and social leadership (power) over subordinate classes in the political, economic and cultural spheres, not by direct coercion but with the consent of the "inferior" classes been sought. An important aspect of this theory is that, hegemony operates without the use of force (forcing the subordinate classes to concede power against their will). Rather, it describes a situation in which the consent of the inferior classes is actively sought to concede power to the already powerful classes. This indicates that hegemony works in the realm of consciousness and representations. As O'Sullivan succinctly puts it, "Hegemony naturalises what is historically a class ideology and renders it into a form of common sense" [15, pp.103]. Its effective success depends largely on the apt mobilisation of the totality of ideological state apparatuses (ISA's). The ideological state apparatuses are the various social institutions that perform regulatory functions and reproduce ideology on behalf of the state, and indirectly to the advantage of the dominant classes. The ISA's –which include the media, the law, religion and the like - reproduce the submission of the subordinate group to the relations of the production, by representing class interest as both neutral and natural. Hegemony is never complete and eternal and so it has to be sustained with the help of the ideological state apparatuses [14, 16-17].

Our analysis shall equally hinge on a third theory namely cultivation. The Cultivation theory is postulated by George Gerbner. It stipulates that heavy exposure to the mass media (particularly the television and film media) "cultivates" perceptions of reality, consistent with the view of the world presented in these mass media [14-15]. This re-enforces mass media's contribution to the socialisation of audiences. The cultivation theory concentrates on the long-term rather than the short term effects of the media on the attitudes and opinions of audiences. It suggests that the audio-visual media in particular and the entire mass media in general have a subtle impact on the way majority of the audience look at the world that is, the way they perceive reality.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Christianity and Western Cultural Imperialism in Nigeria*

As earlier mentioned, Christianity has served as an efficient instrument of western cultural imperialism in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. It has enabled the Whites (western colonisers) to subtly sell, import and firmly implant their cultures in most African countries including Nigeria [5-

6]. The numerous and consequential crusades undertaken by the various missionary bodies in Nigeria against what was viewed – though sometimes arbitrary - as “repugnant cultures” and barbaric cultural practices contributed immensely to the supplanting/erosion of many Nigerian cultural values. Ekanem and Bassey passionately pay tribute to such crusades when they note that these forms of alien “religion contributed immeasurably to the development of Nigeria” [10, pp.22]. Christian missionary stopped some inhuman and brutal cultural practices such as the killing of twins, the burying of traditional chiefs with living slaves and the like.<sup>1</sup> The struggle undertaken by these Christian missionaries against such barbaric cultures is just one of the strategic ways through which they supplanted a good number of repugnant cultural practices in Nigeria.

Christianity serves as a kind of enculturation tool to most western religious bodies. They utilise it to subtly sell their cultures to the Nigerians and make these cultural values be perceived as superior to traditional Nigerian values. Many Churches have for instance adopted doctrines that preach against traditional practices, ancestral worship and pure Nigerian cultures [8, 11]. This has culminated in Christianity/westernisation to be associated with civility and modernity. Ifeoma and Ifeanyi for instance note this subtle enculturation and westernisation enabled by religion when they insightfully posit that:

Many Nigerians have been converted to Christianity and some do not value their traditional values again as a result of their belief in Christianity. The Western wedding has been fashioned by many people in Nigeria as the modern type of wedding and they believe that marriage is not complete without the western type of wedding. So they combine the western and the traditional wedding together [...] Western fashion and styles have been adopted as a model although some people still wear Nigerian clothes. Western wedding dresses and men’s suits have been adopted for church weddings [7, pp.112].

Indeed, Christianity is partially responsible for the progressive westernisation of Nigerians as it dominantly favours and facilitates the proliferation of the western cultural values. Christianity highly favours or promotes the western style of dressing, worship, talking and the like. As strongly argued by Witcheke, The dogmas of Christianity, of Western imperialism, capitalism, together with their brainwashing propaganda and ‘education’, have created in Africa as in other continents of the planet one powerful entity. Its effects on African culture and the ideology is heavily felt today [18]. It controls many aspects of life in Africa. Witcheke further

<sup>1</sup> Christian missionaries such as Mary Slessor actively combated and stopped the killing of twins, which was a cultural practice and social *dysnomia* associated with the people of Calabar in the South Eastern part of Nigeria

explores the ideological strength of Christianity when he contends that:

[Christianity] allows no intellectual dissent, and destroys everything that dares to stand on its way. By now, our minds are fully ‘colonized’, our morality twisted, our logic corrupted. Only those who are by some ‘miracle’ spared formal education (read: propaganda) can see clearly. Christian crusades and colonialist expeditions [...] have been continuing with spreading the most complete and complex net of indoctrination, aiming at ending intellectual diversity. Those of us, who fell, at least for some time, into this machine of brainwashing, see the world with the same eyes, even if we are critical of it. And even those of us who call themselves agnostics or atheists, have subconsciously been conditioned, at least partially, to see life through irrational and self-serving Christian lenses. [18]

The enculturation and westernisation of people – orchestrated by Christianity in Nigeria – has been a serious cause of concern to some Nigerian theologians and *africanists* who, in reaction to this alarming cultural imperialism, advocate for the emergence of Nigerian Christian churches that will break free from the “stranglehold of foreign religion and acknowledge the beauty, wisdom and power of their own” [9, pp.7]. These theologians and *africanists* advocate for the birth of indigenous forms of Christian worship that will revalorise Nigerian cultures and will serve as a manifest rebellion against the authority of so called “conventional” or “historic” Christian churches (Presbyterian, Catholic, Baptist and Methodist) that for many years have propagated forms of worship and cultures that are alien to the Nigerians [8-9]. One of such movements for the indigenisation of Christianity and revalorisation of Nigerian cultures has been the acculturation philosophy. Amadi further gives a description and some of the motivations of these religious movements, when he notes that:

A study of these churches reveals that they seek to incorporate elements of indigenous religion into the formal Christian religion. Their mode of worship is very Nigerian. Traditional music instruments are used instead of the organ, and the songs are very similar to those used in shrines of local deities. Worshippers clap, sing, drum and dance, sometimes far into the night. Often members become possessed and see visions at the height of the singing and drumming. Most spiritual churches have prophets and apostles who are reputed to have the powers of traditional medicine men. They heal the sick, prophesy, divine the causes of misfortunes and prescribe sacrifices that are not very different from those normally prescribed by traditional medicine men. But at the same time, they read the Bible and pray through Jesus Christ. [9, pp.7]

The rise of such spiritual churches that promote indigenised forms of Christian worship is, to a great extent, a form of resistance to the nefarious western cultural imperialism very much responsible for the erosion of Nigerian cultures. This resistance is not only emanating from newly

born Pentecostal or revival churches, but equally from established “orthodox” churches. Prominent Nigerian theologians such as the Reverend Edmund Ilogu are for instance noted to have made a case for ancestral worship among Christians. Ilogu in Amadi posits that “our recommendation therefore is that Christians as well as non-Christians, acknowledge this link with our patrilineal ancestors in the pouring of libation and in the giving of pieces of Kola-nut” [9, pp.7].

### B. *Christian Media as Tools of Indoctrinisation and enculturation*

Christian (print) media are among the very first ever established in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Being infants and servants of the Church, their primary responsibilities have been to spread the good tidings and voice the position of the Church on burning and often controversial socio-political issues. Christian media have thus represented strategic communication tools employed by the various denominational bodies for evangelisation and indoctrination of the masses in Nigeria. Pioneering indigenous language newspapers such as *Unwana Efik*, *Obukpon Efik*, *Iwe Irohin Osose*, *Eko Igehin* actively followed these courses. Being consequences of the evangelical efforts of the various Christian missions they actively served as channels to spread messages that solidly supported the civilisation campaign of the European coloniser and missionary in Nigeria. This civilisation campaign entailed the progressive enculturation of Nigerians. Liad notes that:

When the missionaries came into Nigeria, they came with the twin objective of spreading their religion and spread western civilization among the people. One of the potent instruments used to achieve this objective was the media. Advertently or inadvertently, the floating of a newsletter to inform followers on the activities of the church and other developments in the polity [...] turned out to be the birth of the first newspaper in Nigeria. [19]

Up to modern times, this cultural mission is still subtly upheld by the various Christian media. As remarked earlier, it has been extremely difficult for the various churches present in the Nigerian religious and media landscape to dissociate evangelisation from the duty of attacking sensitive aspects of indigenous cultures which they deemed repugnant or dehumanising. This purist/puritan sentiment has been reflected in the content of these media as seen in the product of the prolific tele-evangelism and video culture<sup>2</sup> which have emerged in Nigeria [5, 21]. In guise of a critique of the fecund

<sup>2</sup> To most religious bodies present in Nigeria, the use of television programs and films to preach the gospel has become a serious and must-use strategy. Enormous resources are invested to secure control of these media for the salvific course as well as to advertise particular faiths and forms of worship.

Christian cinema, Meyer notes that although popular in certain circles, from the outset Christian (particularly Pentecostal) films often evoke strong protests from multiple quarters notably film critics, established filmmakers, and intellectuals, because they (Christian films) allegedly “affirmed outdated superstitions” and tend to draw an all too-negative image of African (particularly Nigerian) religious and cultural traditions. “Although at first sight, it may appear that the correct representation of “culture” and “traditional religion” forms the main bone of contention between the Christian video-filmmakers and their critics, a closer look at the conflict reveals that the representations of the two factions do not offer mirror images of a “traditional culture” and “religion” still alive within the various Nigerian societies [20, pp.98]. The course for the proliferation of western cultures is therefore actually done subtly through a media output which on one hand demonises African traditional religion and some cultural practices attached to it and on the other hand, advocates a form of Christianity which sells multiple facets of the European style of life, notably the dress style, music, marital system and the like [21, 23].

## IV. METHODOLOGY

This paper is based two methods of data collection and analysis namely content analysis and focus group discussion. The content analysis involved two international (western) Christian magazines namely *Awake!* And *The Watchtower*. The two magazines are published by Jehovah Witnesses, a Christian denomination present in many African countries of the world. The magazine’s main editorial focus is on family and children issues. The study period was January to December 2013 for *Awake!* and August 2013 to July 2014 for *Watchtower*. The study considered individual stories (both texts and visuals) in all issues within study period as unit of analysis and conceived a data sheet to be utilised as instrument of data collection. The different categories considered for the study include the magazine content, its tone, the angle of stories and race representation. The data collected was analysed statistically and presented graphically (through tables). Findings were discussed with supporting anecdotal evidences (relevant and informative extracts) from the magazines.

The focus group discussion involved 15 discussants who were deemed by researcher as regular readers of the magazines under study. The regularity of reading was determined by the frequency of consumption of the magazines’ contents by the selected discussants. Five of the selected discussants were drawn from the Jehovah Witness faith while the 10 others were drawn from multiple religious denominations. The discussion aimed principally at examining discussants’ reading of the two magazines’ contents. The discussion was equally principally centred on the four following questions:

- How will you describe the contents of the magazines in terms of coverage of African cultures versus the coverage of foreign (western) cultures?
- Do the magazines' contents contradict or align with your personal view on ideal dress code, food habit, leisure, education, lifestyle, and the like?
- Do you consider the magazines more as informative experiences than relevant religious and socio-cultural orientation guides?
- Do your readings of the two magazines motivate you to question indigenous religion or rethink or reshape your attitude towards Nigerian culture?

These questions were circumstantially reformulated or/and accompanied by follow-up questions to ensure comprehension and secure relevant responses from the focus group discussants. The results of this exercise are presented in subsequent sections of this paper.

## V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### A. Outcome of the Content Analysis

According to their various editorial policies, the two magazines claim to be apolitical and mainly concerned with evangelisation/indoctrination. They also claim to be neutral in their representation of races and cultures. *Awake* for instance claims to pursue a purely salvific course and to be principally bent on enlightening and igniting humanity to build confidence in the Creator. Its editorial policy states that: “*It shows how to cope with today’s problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points the real meaning behind current events, yet it stays apolitically neutral and does not exalt one race above another*”.

The magazines’ claim of being neutral in their representation of races and cultures is however partially unverified or doubtful as only 60.24% of their article contents points to such a neutrality. Neutral articles either adopt cross-cultural approaches in their report of events or are purely evangelical with complete inspiration from biblical scriptures. A good example of articles exhibiting the magazine’s cross-cultural and neutral efforts is seen in its September 2013’s edition where it reports on Halloween. In its article titled “The Truth About Halloween”, the magazine explores myths and cultural practices in multiple countries and transcontinental institutions that are directly or indirectly associated with Halloween or likened to this socio-cultural practice. Similarly, most of its reports featuring in its column titled “Watching the

World” are often cross-cultural in nature or reporting many parts of the world simultaneously.

However, 39% of the magazines’ article contents are not perfectly neutral in that it points to the fact that the magazines report certain parts (peoples and cultures) of the world more than others. Moreover, the exposition of cultural artefacts across races and cultures is highly imbalanced and so heavily in favour of the West. In this portion of the magazines’ articles, the West is dominantly (over) reported with 33.73% of their article contents devoted to events in the West, against 00% and 6.03% respectively for Africa and Asia. Most of the people and countries reported in the magazines are western. By reporting the West more than Africa and Asia, the magazines subtly shows their pro-west focus or inclination. The implication is that Africans who heavily depend on the magazine for their source of religious news, education and indoctrination are likely to consume a dominantly western content which might directly or indirectly sell the western cultures to them and may influence their frame of mind in one way or the other. This will be examined in subsequent sections of the article.

TABLE 1: ARTICLE CONTENT

Race	Article Content					
	Awake		Watchtower		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
West	21	39.62	07	23.33	28	33.73
Africa	00	00	00	00	00	00
Asia	04	7.55	01	3.34	05	6.03
Neutral	28	52.83	22	73.33	50	60.24
Total	53	100	30	100	83	100

Though the two magazines exhibit a pro-western focus, they do not, - being bent on evangelisation and exposing ill practices – hesitate to challenge certain cultural practices which are contrary to their religious/moral inclinations and doctrines; irrespective of the social backgrounds of such “ill” socio-cultural practices. It is in line with this that *Awake*’s edition of June 2013 presents the phenomenon of consumerism (a typical western culture) as an irrational way of life, portraying it as being against biblical prescriptions. The magazine challenges consumerists’ aspirations to improve quality of life, gain status and prestige as well as to define identity. It states that:

*As our number of possessions increases, our quality of life can actually decrease [...] When people shop, a very important aspect of their behaviour is that they are competing with friends, neighbours, co-workers and relatives [however], defining our self-work through comparison with others creates a never-ending cycle of dissatisfaction [...] “A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver” –Ecclesiastes 5:10.*

*Awake* similarly criticises the Halloween culture, which is multifaceted and inscribed in socio-cultural rituals in different countries of the world. This is however a marginal aspect of the magazines' report. Race representation in their use of visuals is another level at which images of the west dominate. As shown in table 2 below, most (65.11%) of the people shown in visuals accompanying articles are westerners. Visuals exclusively devoted to images of Africans amount only to 3.86% and 4.65% of these visuals show Asians. This dominant use of visuals containing westerners similarly shows imbalance in reporting and promotion of the (positive) cultural values of the different races of the world.

TABLE 2: PEOPLE IN VISUALS

Race	People in Visuals					
	Awake		Watchtower		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Western	45	66.17	39	63.93	84	65.11
African	04	5.88	01	1.66	05	3.89
Asian	03	4.43	03	4.91	06	4.65
Neutral	16	23.52	18	29.50	34	26.35
Total	68	100	61	100	129	100

The imbalance is intensified by the fact that most of the dressing styles exhibited in these visuals are western as shown in table 3 below. Findings reveal that 70.54% of the visuals exhibited the western way of dressing, against 3.1% for both African and Asian styles of dressing. The dominant use of visuals exhibiting western style of dressing and western architectures and settings (see table 4 below) contribute to the exposition and promotion of western cultural values. These western values are thus subtly and dominantly promoted through these visuals.

TABLE 3: DRESSING STYLE IN VISUALS

Race	Dressing Style in Visuals					
	Awake		Watchtower		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
West	49	72.05	42	68.85	91	70.54
Africa	03	4.43	01	1.65	04	3.10
Asia	04	5.88	00	00	04	3.10
Neutral	12	17.64	18	29.5	30	23.26
Total	68	100	61	100	129	100

The findings show that Africa and Asia are less reported and less present in the visuals used to spice up stories in the two Christian magazines. All these are features often mentioned as associated with western domination of world news and western cultural imperialism. The African and Asian readerships are made to consume a dominantly western content. Given the fact the two magazines are translated into many local indigenous languages (including Yoruba, Igbo,

Hausa among others) and circulated in Nigeria for evangelisation and indoctrination purposes, it may be said that they have potentials of selling the westerners' view as concerns dressing style to wider audiences including illiterate and semi-literate readers.

TABLE 4: ARCHITECTURE AND SETTING IN VISUALS

Race	Architecture and Setting in Visuals					
	Awake		Watchtower		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
West	43	63.23	32	52.45	75	58.13
Africa	03	4.43	01	1.65	04	3.10
Asia	03	4.43	00	00	03	2.43
Neutral	19	27.91	28	45.90	47	36.43
Total	68	100	61	100	129	100

As McQuail and Windahl insightfully observes, the over reporting of the West to the detriment of Africa may only serve the developed world. This leads inevitably to a situation where there is "unintended importation of the negative or pessimistic vision [by Africans or Asians] of their own region [23, pp. 219]. If not negatively portrayed, Third world countries including Nigeria are simply often invisible on the stage of world news". This tends to corroborate Ukah's observation that:

In contemporary times, the most widely known things about Africa seem to be the "breaking bad news" that the global media [including Western Christian media] disseminate about the continent and its many peoples. Africa is a continent of poverty, disease, corruption, wars, and political instability. Some know of portions of Africa as objects of tourist curiosity. Indeed, very few know that Africa is the land with the largest amount of natural resources and the continent with the largest numbers of practicing Christians. Africans are a deeply religious people, where there are many religious traditions, the three most important being indigenous religions, Christianity and Islam. These religions fuse in creative ways to produce rich and innovative religious cultures and lifestyles for the diverse populations of the continent. [24, pp.3]

The tendency by Western media to misrepresent or paint African and its cultures in a relatively negative light is viewed in the content of the two magazines under study. These magazines mainly present Africa as the continent needing the light of the gospel, a form of Christian culture coming from the West. Most, if not all the evangelical efforts reported in the issues – considered for the study – are by westerners who come to Africa for missionary/evangelical activities and never the opposite direction (missionaries from Africa to the West).

#### B. Results of Focus Group Discussion

The responses and views of the focus group discussants were analysed against the objective of the paper to explore the Nigerians' reading of the content of Western international religious magazines. These views (by discussants) would be summarised in this section. A good number (9) of discussants could detect the pro-western contents of the magazines and the very insignificant place consecrated by them to core African cultural values. They interpreted the situation as being the result of the natural influence of the administration of the Church (which is western) on the production of the media. Most of these discussants recognised that besides advocating its religious doctrines (the Jehovah witnesses' faith), the magazines are instruments selling the western cultures. Some substantiated this observation by pointing the dominantly western dress styles of the people that make news in the magazines and the mostly western context of news developed by the two media. One of the discussants noted that "The impression one has when reading these magazine is that only western dress style is godly and Christian. You rarely see some of our African styles being exhibited (encouraged) in their tabloid. To me it is an indirect way of discarding African dress style and mostly branding it as non-recommendable. I know some of them [African dress style] are repugnant but some need to be given attention".

Majority (13) of the focus group discussants recognised the two magazines as having ideological contents and purposes. The form of Christianity being "advertised" by the magazines is visibly European, as they two magazines merely present the way in which an average Westerner will apply core Christian dogmas to his or her day to day life. A discussant remarked this fact, explaining that "Apart from the drawings depicting the life and culture of the Jewish people in history, most of what is shown in these magazines is the White man's philosophy of life: his conception of true Christianity which is obviously Western and which has already spread in Nigeria. Good aspects of African civilisation are not given attention. Meanwhile I believe one can be Christian and still be African". Most of the discussants however agreed that the form of Christianity portrayed and advocated by the magazines could be viewed as humanist and purist. This is so as the two magazines explicitly frown at numerous practices recognised as African, which may be harmful to humanity. In line with this, a discussant noted that: "*Awake* and *Watctower* have in a good number of their columns often warned against pure African practices such as juju, voodoo and ancestral worship, which have for long debased Africans a lot of nefarious cultures which continue to seriously plague Africa including Nigeria. I think it is a commendable course to preach against and help eradicate them. It may be unpatriotic to support alien culture against local ones but pragmatics wants it that we cherish what will benefit us as Africans and reject what is detrimental to mankind". As stressed by this discussant, the two magazines actually participate in socialising Nigerians into questioning the categorical genuineness of the African culture. The two magazines motive

a positive probe of time revered cultural practices which has brought no good to Nigerians.

One of the most interesting results of the focus group talk is that most (over 12) of the discussants recognised the heavy contribution of religion in this cultivation process. In effect, in the context of Nigerians' exposure to these two magazine, one easily notes the synergistic action of religion and media in cultivating audiences' perception of African culture versus Western culture. In line with this, a discussant noted that "these magazines are spiritual authorities. They are inspired and produced by God through enlighten men [people who have received the light of God]. If God is against repugnant cultures be they African or Western cultures, they must be abandoned in favour of fruitful (western) ones". Some of the discussants also argued that the cultural imperialistic actions of the magazines could not be isolated from the works of other imperialistic forces such as education, the mainstream media, and the other ideological state apparatuses. As one of this discussants noted, "Much of what we call Nigerian culture and seek to protect is not Nigerian. Our society has already been transformed according to the Whiteman's system. Why not embrace a culture [the western culture advocated by the magazines under study] which is no more new?".

## VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to show how Christianity and western Christian media contribute to western cultural imperialism using as case study two international Christian magazines (*Awake* and *Watchtower*). The paper presented a content analysis of the two magazines exploring the two magazines' article contents, and representation of the various cultures (African, Western, Asian among others) in visuals and texts.

The paper has argued that the cultural imperialist inclinations of these western Christian magazines are seen in the fact that they dominantly report religious issues from the west. The angle they mostly adopt is pro-western. They subtly exhibit and celebrate the Western style of life - through dressing styles, architecture portrayed and promoted in visuals - over other African cultural values. Africa rarely features in their content. The few instances of reports on Africans are characterised by problematic and arbitrary representations of the Africans. The African culture is mostly and subtly portrayed as less relevant and somehow inferior. Through an exploration of audiences' reading of the magazines, this paper has demonstrated that *Awake* and *Watchtower* contribute to a considerable extent to the cultural imperialism process. Their influence is re-enforced by religion which cultivates audiences' perception of the Western forms of Christian worship as most genuine.

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