

Pentecostalism and Political Engagement in Ghana's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

This paper analyses the nature of Pentecostal political engagement within Ghana's Fourth Republic. It highlights the extent to which Pentecostal churches are fulfilling their divine mandate toward the state. Studies indicate that these churches are actively involved in the political sphere in this context. Methodologically, the study relies on a combination of secondary data, media reports, biblical texts, and personal observations, which are analysed qualitatively through a thematic lens. The findings reveal that their involvement takes shape in three primary forms: participation in the democratic process, socio-economic initiatives, and prophetic politicking. These aspects are assessed against the divine mandate concerning the church's responsibilities to the state as articulated in Scripture. Overall, the study concludes that Pentecostal political engagement in Ghana's Fourth Republic largely reflects their divine mandate. Additionally, the analysis underscores certain nuances and offers recommendations for enhancing their engagement.

Keywords: Political Engagement, Pentecostal Christianity, Fourth Republic, Ghana, Death Prediction.

Introduction

In Ghana, as in many other African nations, religion plays a pivotal role in society. Anything framed in a religious context tends to have a significant impact. Contrary to the expectations of secularists who believed that modernisation would relegate religion to the private sphere¹, it remains very much active in the public domain. Religious practices, beliefs, and values, as well as the intertwining of religion and politics, are prevalent in the public sphere.² The religious constituency is not only influential but also highly sought after by politicians in Ghana; gaining their favour is critical for anyone aspiring to become president or a member of parliament. Consequently, political parties often seek to align themselves with churches across the country. Historically, religion and politics coexisted harmoniously before colonisation, with traditional leadership maintaining

¹ Ozlem Ulker, "Religion and Politics in A Sociological Perspective: A Comparison Between the USA and France," *International Journal of Social Inquiry* 6, no. 2 (2013): 2.

² Anthony Gill, "Religion and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review Political Science* 4 (2001): 118.

authority.³ However, this relationship began to shift with the arrival of Western colonisers, who undermined traditional governance. Despite this, following independence, there was a resurgence of interaction between religion and politics, particularly marked by the prominence of Christianity in this engagement.

Prior to the Fourth Republic, Christianity and politics in Ghana were largely dominated by Historic Mission Churches. These churches actively engaged in political matters, while Pentecostal churches remained more insulated. However, with the onset of the Fourth Republic, Pentecostal churches began to emerge from their enclaves and participate in the political arena.⁴ According to Acheampong, this engagement by Pentecostal churches manifests in several areas, including promoting democracy, fostering socio-economic development, and engaging in prophetic politicking. This article analyses the nature of their involvement in light of Scripture. To achieve this, the study will examine the church-state relationship as described in the Bible, explore the dynamics of Ghanaian Pentecostal engagement, assess Pentecostal political involvement from a scriptural perspective, discuss potential paths forward, and conclude with its findings.

Biblical Perspectives of Church and State Relationship

The Bible serves as a comprehensive guide for the behaviour and actions of Christians, encompassing the will of God for humanity. It is a product of divine inspiration, as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV): “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and providing instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.” One significant area addressed by the Bible is the relationship between the church and the state. It is important to clarify the terms “church” and “state” at this juncture.

The term “church” in English originates from the Greek word *kuriakos*, which translates to “belonging to the Lord.” Additionally, it is derived from another Greek term, *ekklesia*, meaning “an assembly.” The word is commonly used to describe a body of believers in Christ or an institution recognised for public purposes, such as the Church of Pentecost, the Methodist Church, or the International Central Gospel Church.⁵ Furthermore, “church” can also refer to individual believers who collectively make up the body of

³ Elom Dovlo, “Religion in the Public Sphere: Challenges and Opportunities in Ghanaian Lawmaking, 1989-2004,” *Brigham Young University Law Review* 2005, no. 3 (2005): 629.

⁴ See Frederich Acheampong, ‘Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana’s Fourth Republic: From Enclave to Engagement’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2018), 1.

⁵ J. N. Kudadjie and R. K. Aboagye-Mensah, *Christian Social Ethics* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1992), 10.

Christ. In this context, the term “state” pertains to “the area of operation in civil matters concerning the affairs of the nation.”⁶ In essence, it denotes the highest authority responsible for civil matters within a nation.

While the spheres of church and state are distinct, a harmonious relationship is essential for mutual development. The primary reason for this is that state decisions directly affect the church. In light of this, the Bible offers significant insights regarding the church's role in relation to the state. After careful reflection, Kudadjie and Aboagye-Mensah identified four fundamental roles the church should fulfil within the state.⁷ They argue that, in addition to its core responsibilities of preaching, teaching, healing, and caring for the poor and needy – as commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ – the church must also embrace a prophetic role, engage in advocacy, promote awareness and education, and drive transformational efforts.

According to Kudadjie and Aboagye-Mensah, the church's prophetic role involves conveying God’s will and mind to the people. The prophet is tasked with reminding the congregation of God's word and the implications of their responses to it. A positive response leads to blessings and progress, while a negative one can result in hardship and suffering. Additionally, the prophet acts as a vigilant guide, alerting the community to their errors and the potential consequences of those mistakes. As a prophetic voice to the state, the church is also responsible for bringing the state’s concerns before God. Beyond revealing God’s will and warning of the ramifications of disobedience, the church is called to exemplify these values in the world. It is expected to be the light and salt (Matt. 5:13), proclaiming the marvellous deeds of God (1 Pet. 2:9, NIV). Kudadjie and Aboagye-Mensah encapsulated the church’s prophetic mandate by stating:

As a prophetic institution, the church must function like some modern useful instruments: (a) like a thermometer, faithfully reflecting what is happening in society; (b) like a barometer, it must help forecast what is likely to happen, judging from prevailing circumstances; and (c) like a thermostat, it must respond to changes in the situation and activate action that will bring about the desired condition. All this must aim at avoiding what is evil and bringing about the welfare of God’s creation.⁸

More importantly, the church, as a guide and counsellor, is expected to protect and defend the rights of all, including animals and the environment.

⁶ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

⁷ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

⁸ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

The next role of the church in relation to the state is that of advocacy. Drawing from John 14:15-20 and John 16:5-15, the Holy Spirit is portrayed as an advocate for the church. He not only aids us in discovering the truth about God but also “comforts, helps, advises, and advocates for the helpless.”⁹ Believers are encouraged to be guided by the Holy Spirit, becoming a voice for the voiceless in society. It is imperative that they work towards social justice to alleviate the struggles of the vulnerable. This can be achieved by influencing the policy-making process of the state. Key issues the church might focus on include “employment opportunities, working conditions, sanitation and water supply, housing, wages, fair pricing and charges by professionals, responsible use of mass media, the treatment of prisoners, and the welfare of the elderly, women, and children.”¹⁰

Kudadjie and Aboagye-Mensah assert that “many of the injustices and setbacks we experience stem from ignorance – ignorance of our plight, ignorance of better conditions, and ignorance of our ability, or that of others, to improve our situation.”¹¹ Such ignorance leads to misperceptions about our circumstances and available solutions. The church bears the responsibility of enlightening individuals about their situations and the paths to improvement. As a formidable institution, the church can play a crucial role in advancing national agendas, given that its members are often loyal to and trust their leaders. The church can effectively disseminate information on national development, legal matters, and public health issues and promote peaceful electoral processes.

The church’s final role in relation to the state, as gleaned from Scripture, is one of transformation. The Bible is replete with passages that illustrate God’s agenda for transformation. He not only delivers people but also seeks to develop them. This theme is evident throughout various biblical texts. God’s transformation agenda commenced with creation (Gen. 1:4; 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31, etc.). The very purpose of creating humanity in His image was to imbue them with transformative qualities—such as spirit, the capacity for reasoning, the power of speech and communication, the ability to love, and creative potential. These abilities were not only bestowed upon them but also accompanied by the responsibility to steward and care for all of God’s creation (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:15; 18-20; Ps. 8). The transformation agenda of God was hindered by humanity’s disobedience, resulting in a curse being pronounced upon the earth. This curse impacted all creation, affecting both humanity and the cosmos (Rom. 3:14-19; 8:19-23). Nevertheless, in His unwavering love and mercy, God restored everything to humanity through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-19; Col. 1:20).

⁹ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

¹⁰ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

¹¹ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

God has entrusted the church with His transformative mission through the agency of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 5: 20-6:1). Consequently, the church bears the primary responsibility for transforming the world, including the state. By doing so, the church can lead the way in transforming nations across the globe.

To a large extent, Ghanaian Christianity has responded to its divine call by actively participating in the nation's democratic processes. Initial studies revealed that this direct engagement was predominantly led by the Historic Mission Churches, while Pentecostals tended to remain on the outskirts. Prior to the establishment of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, Christian public involvement was largely the domain of the Historic Mission Churches, spearheaded by the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops' Conference. They employed various strategies, including pastoral letters, communiqués, open discussions in newsletters, and sometimes direct interactions with political leaders to facilitate their engagement in political matters. Pentecostals, on the other hand, were initially perceived as being on the fringes of public political engagement, often criticized for merely spiritualising politics without meaningful involvement. However, this narrative has transformed in the Fourth Republic, as recent studies indicate a significant shift toward direct engagement.¹² According to Acheampong, Pentecostal ministries have expanded their focus beyond spirituality to actively engage in the secular affairs of the state.¹³ The following section will explore the nature of Pentecostal involvement in Ghana's Fourth Republic, beginning with a brief overview of Ghanaian Pentecostal Christianity. This will help us determine whether their actions align with a divinely ordained mandate and what further steps may be necessary.

The Nature of Ghanaian Pentecostal Political Engagement

The Portuguese trading expeditions of 1471 aimed to introduce the Christian faith to their trading partners along the coastal towns of Elmina, Cape Coast, and beyond. However, it was the Protestant missionary efforts initiated by the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society from Switzerland and the Methodist Society in the early nineteenth century that established Christianity on a lasting basis in the country. According to the 2021 Ghanaian population census, Christians constitute 71.3% of the national population, making them the largest religious group. The Ghana Statistical Service reports that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity represents the largest segment of the Christian demographic.¹⁴ In Ghana, approximately 9.7 million individuals identify as Pentecostals, representing

¹² Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic: From Enclave to Engagement,' 1.

¹³ Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 1.

¹⁴ 2021 Population and Housing Census-Ghana Statistical Service, statsghana.gov.gh, 15 January 2022.

about 31.6% of the nation's total population.¹⁵ As the number of members continues to rise, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are increasingly influencing other Christian denominations. This impact is evident in the conversion of cinema halls, warehouses, and classrooms into places of worship.¹⁶ Mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic churches have notably felt the effects of the Pentecostal style of worship. Scholars Asamoah-Gyadu and Omenyo refer to this phenomenon as the "Pentecostalization of Ghanaian Christianity" and "Pentecost outside Pentecostalism," respectively.¹⁷

Asamoah-Gyadu characterises Pentecostal Christianity as "the most exciting and dominant stream of Christianity in the twenty-first century."¹⁸ In the context of Africa, he reinforces this assertion by noting the remarkable growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic activity across the continent.¹⁹ He further argues that whereas the early evangelisation efforts were led by traditional missionary churches, Pentecostalism – encompassing both its classical and contemporary charismatic forms – has now emerged as the prevailing expression of Christianity in Africa.²⁰

Emmanuel Larbi presents the perspective that Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are making substantial strides in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.²¹ He notes that, despite the noticeable distinctions within Ghanaian Pentecostalism, it remains the most significant religious movement in the country from a demographic standpoint.²²

Defining Pentecostal Christianity is a challenging endeavour, primarily due to the diverse historical, social, and political contexts in which it has developed. Additionally, the various forms that Pentecostalism takes, along with its ongoing evolution, make it difficult to establish a strict definition. Anderson emphasises this complexity by noting that "in seeking a working definition of Pentecostalism, we need to acknowledge that

¹⁵ Ghana Statistical Service, '2021 Population and Housing Census', (January 3, 2022). Accessed 14 July 2022, http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/2021_summary_report_of_final_results.pdf.

¹⁶ For instance, Lighthouse Chapel, Winners Chapel, Winners Ghana, and Royalhouse Chapel have all transformed warehouses into Chapels.

¹⁷ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 18; Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), 25.

¹⁸ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013), 1.

¹⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 9.

²⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 9.

²¹ Emmanuel K. Larbi, "The Nature of Continuity and Discontinuity of Ghanaian Pentecostal Concept of Salvation in African Cosmology", in *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* Vol. 5 Issue 1, 2002, 99.

²² E. Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), p.xii.

such a definition might prove elusive and always depends on the paradigm and criteria of the individual attempting to make it.”²³ Typically, when people refer to Pentecostal Christianity, they are alluding to contemporary Pentecostalism, which has developed into what Walter Hollenweger describes as Classical Pentecostal Christianity. This includes Pentecostal or Pentecostal-like independent congregations and the Charismatic Renewal movement within mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches,²⁴ which have now spread across the globe, including into countries like Ghana.

Allan Anderson defines Pentecostal Christianity as encompassing “all churches and groups that emphasise the working of the Spirit on both phenomenological and theological grounds.”²⁵ His definition includes “African Independent Churches” (AICs), “Classical Pentecostals,” the “Charismatic Movement” within mainline churches, as well as “New Charismatics” or “Neo-Pentecostal” churches.²⁶ In the context of Ghana, the typology proposed by Asamoah-Gyadu is particularly pertinent, as he refers to it as ‘waves’ rather than the conventional typology. Asamoah-Gyadu identifies three distinct waves of renewal in Ghanaian Christianity: *Sunsum Sore*, Western Mission-Related Pentecostal Denominations, and the Neo-Pentecostal Movement.²⁷ Despite this classification, AICs are often not readily accepted as Pentecostal churches in Ghana or other African nations. Much like the Holiness Movement's relationship to Western Pentecostalism, AICs are viewed as precursors to the Pentecostal churches.²⁸ Cephas Omenyo notes that AICs cannot be categorised as part of Pentecostalism due to differences in “theology and ethos.”

The centrality of the Holy Spirit's influence on both the individual and the church is the defining and most pervasive characteristic of Pentecostalism.²⁹ Speaking in tongues, or glossolalia, is the manifestation of the Spirit most commonly associated with this movement, often viewed as a sign of having undergone Spirit baptism.³⁰ However, Iain MacRobert argues that it would be a grave mistake to interpret the Pentecostal movement

²³ Anderson, ‘Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions’, 27.

²⁴ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 1.

²⁵ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13-14.

²⁶ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 13.

²⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 18-28.

²⁸ See Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 38; Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), 93.

²⁹ Iain MacRoberts, *The Black Roots and White Racism of the Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1988), 2.

³⁰ MacRoberts, *The Black Roots and White Racism of the Early Pentecostalism in the USA*, 2.

solely as a resurgence of *glossolalic* expressions.³¹ He contends that Pentecostals engage in a rich and comprehensive experience of the Spirit that transcends the boundaries set by some scholars. This perspective aligns with MacRobert's assertion that Pentecostal Christianity encompasses other distinctive characteristics in addition to its emphasis on pneumatology. Therefore, a more nuanced definition is necessary.

Pentecostal Christianity is broadly defined by Asamoah-Gyadu as the most globalised type of pneumatic Christianity, which is a member of the larger Protestant family. It shares the traditional evangelical theological emphasis on the inspiration and authority of the Scripture, the centrality of the cross, the necessity of regeneration for Christian salvation, the call to holiness as a result of a new relationship with Christ, and a strong emphasis on the experience and power of the Holy Spirit.³² This description, in our perspective, is a more elaborate representation of the Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity we set out to discuss. Pentecostal churches emphasise that people can still experience God's gifts in the church today.³³ They stress the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and the gift of the Spirit directed toward the proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, in essence.³⁴

The Nature of Pentecostal Political Engagement

The growing numerical strength of Pentecostal Christianity has captured considerable scholarly interest. Researchers have explored nearly every facet of their ministry, including their history, expansion, ethos,³⁵ influence on other Christian denominations,³⁶ evangelistic effectiveness,³⁷ moral pneumatology,³⁸ and political engagement.³⁹

³¹ MacRoberts, *The Black Roots and White Racism of the Early Pentecostalism in the USA*, 2.

³² Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 3.

³³ Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism*, 87.

³⁴ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 87.

³⁵ See Larbi, *Pentecostalism in Ghana*, Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*.

³⁶ See Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism*.; Cephas Omenyo, "From the Fringes to the Centre: The Pentecostalization of the Mainline Churches in Ghana," *Exchange* 34, no. 1 (2005):39-62; Elom Dovlo, "The Church in Africa and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of New Religious Movements and Charismatic Churches," *Exchange* 27, no. 1 (1998): 53-69.

³⁷ Kwabena J. Darkwa Amanor, "Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation," *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research*, accessed October, 21st 2023, <http://www.org.cyberj/cyberj13/amanor.html>.

³⁸ Patrick Tetteh Kudadjie, "The Holy Spirit in Moral Character Formation: Perceptions within Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity (Unpublished PhD thesis, Akrofi Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, Akropong-Akuapem, 2022).

³⁹ Allan Anderson et al, "Introduction to Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods," in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson et al. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 5.

However, the examination of Pentecostal political engagement in relation to their divine mandate has not received adequate attention. This article aims to address this gap.

Pentecostal political engagement in Ghana's Fourth Republic has garnered considerable attention in scholarly publications.⁴⁰ Various works, alongside current media reports, newspaper articles, and church programs, have been critically examined to illustrate the nature of this political involvement. Research indicates that Pentecostal political engagement encompasses three main areas: sound democratic processes, socio-economic development, and prophetic politicking.⁴¹ These criteria will serve as a framework for the discussion in this section.

Participation in Sound Democratic Processes

Contrary to the belief that Pentecostals' conservative nature might prevent them from making meaningful contributions to the democratic process.⁴² Pentecostal churches in the Fourth Republic have demonstrated their capacity to pragmatically influence democracy in significant ways. Aware of their spiritual perspective—that they are “in this world but not of this world” (John 17:14-16)—Pentecostals remain deeply committed to their faith while also being acutely aware of their earthly circumstances. They recognise their divine mandate to pursue peace and prosperity in their communities, as their well-being is intrinsically linked to the environment they inhabit (Jer. 29:7). In various ways, Pentecostals have actively participated in shaping the democratic process. Pentecostals have made significant contributions to the democratic process through their active involvement in governance. Acheampong identifies 1990 as the year when their direct engagement with the governance system began.⁴³ He notes that the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC), the ecumenical body representing Pentecostal churches, formally presented its preferred governance model to the Consultative Assembly.⁴⁴ In 1994, Paul Gifford highlighted the significance of Archbishop Duncan Williams being invited to a national thanksgiving service as a clear example of Pentecostalism's participation in governance. Additionally, it has been

⁴⁰Elom Dovlo, “Religion in the Public Sphere: Challenges and Opportunities in Ghanaian Lawmaking, 1989-2004,” *Brigham Young University Law Review* 2005, no. 3 (2005); Emmanuel Sackey, “Election Prophecies and Political Stability in Ghana” in *Christians Citizens and the Moral Regeneration of the African State* (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2018); Frederick Acheampong, ‘Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic: From Enclave to Engagement’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2018).

⁴¹ See Dolvo, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, 634; Acheampong, “Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,” 54.

⁴² See Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel. Global Christian Fundamentalism* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁴³ Acheampong, ‘Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,’ 54.

⁴⁴ Acheampong, ‘Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,’ 54.

recognized that Pentecostals played a crucial role in advocating for multiparty democratic governance in Ghana.⁴⁵

Participating in government nominations to serve on statutory boards, commissions, and committees that make strategic decisions is another avenue through which Pentecostals engage in democracy. Several church leaders from the Pentecostal community have held positions on government boards. For example, during President Rawlings's administration, Prophet Martinso Yeboah and Rev. S. Asore, the former chairman of the Church of Pentecost (CoP) and General Superintendent of Assemblies of God - Ghana (AG), were both appointed as members of the National Peace Council. Additionally, Apostle Prof. Opoku Onyinah, a past chairman of the CoP and former president of the Ghana Pentecostal Charismatic Council, served on the Peace Council from 2011 to 2019. Currently, Onyinah holds the position of board chairman for the National Cathedral project, which is a state initiative under President Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo Addo's administration.

Furthermore, Pentecostals have played a vital role in the democratic process through their prophetic mandate. Understanding the importance of righteousness and morality in national development, they have not remained silent about the moral decline in society. In addition to their traditional role of guiding their members to be a positive influence in the community, they actively engage with the government on these pressing issues. They also offer intercessory prayers for the state, the president, and key leaders within government and state institutions. From July 26-28, 2023, the CoP hosted a National Development Conference at its Convention Centre in Gomoa Fetteh, centred on the theme "Moral Vision and National Development." This national initiative aimed to engage key government stakeholders in discussing the moral state of the nation and emphasising the need for swift recovery. The conference drew over 2,000 participants, including representatives from various branches of government, politicians, religious leaders, and many others. In his opening address, Apostle Eric Nyamekye, the chairman of the Church of Pentecost, highlighted the necessity for Ghana to adopt a moral vision. Beyond diplomatic engagements, several Pentecostal leaders have taken a confrontational stance against leaders they perceive as corrupt. This approach has been described by Acheampong as a "prophetic critique."⁴⁶ He pointed to notable prophets such as Peter Anamoh, Owusu Bempah, J.Y. Adu and Francis Akwesi Amoako, who have publicly criticised different governmental administrations.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 55.

⁴⁶ Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 59.

⁴⁷ Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 59.

Pentecostals have actively contributed to the democratic process, particularly in the realm of elections. Since the onset of the Fourth Republic, Pentecostal churches in Ghana have demonstrated considerable interest in electoral affairs. Their efforts aim to promote transparency and safeguard the nation's peace. Typically, their engagement includes peaceful campaign initiatives before, during, and after elections. They encourage their members to participate in voter registration, take part in voting, and, importantly, to pray for peaceful elections. Through these activities, they inspire their followers to fulfill their civic responsibilities. In addition to providing guidance to their followers, they actively engage with political parties and their leaders to promote peaceful elections. The Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) has consistently played a significant role in this effort during every election in the Fourth Republic. For example, prior to the 2020 general elections, the GPCC, represented by its First Vice President, Apostle Sam Korankye-Ankrah, urged political parties and their leaders to "embrace integrity and dignity in their campaigns as they approach the December polls, demonstrating civic responsibility to bolster democracy in the country."⁴⁸ He also urged the Electoral Commission (EC), the agency responsible for overseeing elections in Ghana, to "enhance the spirit of consultation, equity, and respect for the rule of law, reflecting the core principles of democracy and multiparty governance."⁴⁹ Additionally, the EC was encouraged to "implement all necessary measures to ensure peaceful, free, fair, transparent, and credible elections."⁵⁰

More significantly, Pentecostals have played a direct role in the democratic process by influencing key decisions within the country. One such issue is the rights of homosexuals. The Christian Council of Ghana, which encompasses the Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches, along with the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches (GPCC), strongly opposed the recognition of these rights. They jointly issued a statement endorsing a draft bill aimed at restricting the rights of such groups in the country. They urged Parliament to pass the bill, with President Nana Akufo-Addo yet to sign it. Their reasoning centred on the belief that homosexuality is "unacceptable behaviour that is frowned upon and alien to Ghanaian culture and the family system."⁵¹ They contended that passing the bill would help safeguard the cherished values of the Ghanaian family structure. The delay in enacting the bill highlights the significant influence of these

⁴⁸ Sam Korankye-Ankrah, "GPCC Urges Politicians to Exhibit Integrity in December Polls," GPCC News, June 19, 2020, <https://www.gpccghana.org>. Accessed November 30th, 2023.

⁴⁹ Korankye-Ankrah, "GPCC Urges Politicians to Exhibit Integrity in December Polls."

⁵⁰ Korankye-Ankrah, "GPCC Urges Politicians to Exhibit Integrity in December Polls."

⁵¹ Ryan Truscott, "Ghana Churches Push Law to Combat Promotion of Homosexuality", Christianity Today, October 26, 2021, christianitytoday.com. Accessed November 30th, 2023.

Christian organisations within Ghana's democratic processes. Additionally, Pentecostal engagement in politics is evident in efforts related to socio-economic development.

Socio-Economic Development

Until the Fourth Republic, Pentecostals were not recognized as key players in the socio-economic development of the country. However, this narrative shifted with the advent of the Fourth Republic. One significant area where Pentecostal voices became prominent in discussions about socio-economic development is education and skill development. With the exception of the Assemblies of God-Ghana (AG), all major Pentecostal churches in Ghana operate universities, and many also run vocational schools, basic schools, and junior high schools. Notable institutions include Pentecost University, Central University, and Perez University College, which are affiliated with the Church of Pentecost (CoP), the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), and Perez Chapel International, respectively. Moreover, as of December 31, 2021, the CoP alone managed ninety-eight (98) basic schools, two (2) senior high schools, and two (2) vocational schools.⁵²

Beyond education, Pentecostal churches have significantly contributed to Ghana's socio-economic development by providing healthcare services. The Church of Pentecost (CoP) and the Assemblies of God (AG) are particularly prominent in this regard. Currently, the CoP operates ten (10) health facilities, with an additional seven (7) under construction.⁵³ These include three hospitals and seven (7) clinics.⁵⁴ The AG also runs several health facilities in the Northern region of Ghana. These establishments have enhanced healthcare accessibility for the communities they serve, thereby alleviating some of the burdens on the government.

Moreover, the creation of employment is a significant way in which Pentecostal churches contribute to socio-economic development in Ghana. Through their various auxiliary organizations and direct ministry efforts, these churches have provided jobs for many Ghanaians. In his opening address during the 17th Extraordinary Council Meeting, the chairman of the Church of Pentecost revealed that as of December 31, 2021, the church

⁵² Eric Nyamekye, "State of the Church Address, 17th Extraordinary Council Meetings," 5th May, 22, <http://thecophq.org> Accessed, 11th December, 2023.

⁵³ Eric Nyamekye, "State of the Church Address, 46th Session of the General Council Meetings," 3rd May, 2023, <http://thecophq.org>. Accessed, 11th December, 2023.

⁵⁴ Eric Nyamekye, "State of the Church Address, 46th Session of the General Council Meetings," 3rd May, 2023, <http://thecophq.org>. Accessed, 11th December, 2023.

employed a total of six thousand and fifty four (6,054) individuals.⁵⁵ This figure does not include employment generated by the over thousand five hundred (1,500) districts across Ghana. If one were to consolidate the employment figures from all Pentecostal churches, it would not be an exaggeration to assert that, without their contributions, the unemployment situation in Ghana would likely be much worse.

In assessing the awareness of the Community of Practice (CoP) regarding the church's social service performance, it was revealed that the majority of members are satisfied with its effectiveness.⁵⁶ Out of 280 respondents, the ratings were as follows: 99 (35.4%) rated the church as very high, 114 (40.7%) rated it as high, 76 (27.1%) rated it as average, and 9 (3.2%) rated it as poor. This data indicates that the combined positive rating (very high and high) stands at 213 (76.1%). Overall, this perception from the majority suggests that the church is performing well in its social service initiatives.

Respondents highly commended the church for its significant efforts in various areas. They highlighted initiatives such as the construction of prisons and correctional camps, the provision of boreholes in rural communities, the establishment of police stations, healthcare facilities, and schools. Additionally, the CoP chairman's scholarship scheme was mentioned, along with the sponsorship of members to Pentecost University and the creation of welfare offerings to support needy members. The church's environmental care campaign was also recognised as a valuable contribution to meeting its social obligations.

The respondents highlighted the need for the church to take its social responsibilities seriously in order to remain relevant in society. Some argue that the church's apparent positive relationship with the government stems from its strong socio-economic commitment. The evidence of Pentecostal involvement in socio-economic issues are so evident that conducting further empirical research feels almost redundant, though it remains necessary to confirm the levels of involvement. This brings us to the third and final form of engagement: prophetic politicking.

Prophetic Politicking

Prophetic politicking in Ghana did not originate with the Fourth Republic. Throughout the 1970s and into the early 1990s, notable figures such as Immanuel Enoch Agbozo of the Evangelical Society of Ghana, Francis Kwasi Amoako of the Resurrection Power and

⁵⁵ Eric Nyamekye, "State of the Church Address, 46th Session of the General Council Meetings," 3rd May, 2023, <http://thecophq.org>. Accessed, 11th December, 2023.

⁵⁶ Patrick Tetteh Kudadjie, "Survey to gather feedback from CoP members on the Church's performance in Social Services," May 2024.

Living Bread Ministries, and Peter Anmoh and John Yaw Adu of the New Jerusalem Chapel were active in this arena. However, their prophetic involvement was not centred on predictions; rather, it primarily focused on exposing corruption and immoral practices within the government. This dynamic shifted with the advent of the Fourth Republic.

Pentecostal prophetic politicking within Ghana's Fourth Republic manifests as what is termed 'divine prediction.' This involves forecasting the outcomes of elections and even the deaths of prominent political figures in the nation. In Ghana, such prophetic politicking is predominantly associated with Neo-Prophetic ministries. These prophets assert that they possess a divine grace that allows them to perceive events in the spiritual realm and influence this realm accordingly. As Acheampong notes, these pastors claim to have a unique anointing that enables them to quickly diagnose the issues facing individuals and institutions, often negotiating with God to alter His divine plans for those individuals and entities.⁵⁷ They sometimes assert their ability to make declarations that can counteract any malevolent forces that may have disrupted an individual's or a country's progress.⁵⁸

Several well-known self-proclaimed prophets in this type of ministry include Prophet Isaac Owusu Bempah of Glorious Power Ministries International, Prophet Nigel Gaise, Prophet Elijah Salifu Amoako, Rev Obofour, and Prophet Badu Kobi. Their predictions typically focus on two main areas: electoral outcomes and the death predictions of prominent political figures. Electoral predictions, as articulated by Emmanuel Sackey, refer to "pre-election declarations in the public sphere about the outcomes of national elections made by religious clerics who attribute their revelations to the will of God."⁵⁹ Electoral predictions, as articulated by Emmanuel Sackey, refer to "pre-election declarations in the public sphere about the outcomes of national elections made by religious clerics who attribute their revelations to the will of God." Several concerns have been raised regarding electoral predictions in Ghana, particularly the issue of conflicting prophecies. There have been instances where some prophets forecasted a victory for the New Patriotic Party (NPP), while others predicted success for the National Democratic Congress (NDC).⁶⁰ For example, before the 2016 election, Prophet Owusu Bempah declared that the NPP would win, while Prophet Nigel Gaise prophesied in favor of the

⁵⁷ Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 119.

⁵⁸ Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 119.

⁵⁹ Emmanuel Sackey, "Election Prophecies and Political Stability in Ghana" in *Christians Citizens and the Moral Regeneration of the African State* (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2018), 49.

⁶⁰ The New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) are the two main political parties in Ghana. Since the re-democratisation began in 1992, these parties have alternated in governing the country.

NDC. This leads to the question: could God truly be revealing different outcomes to His chosen messengers? Such a scenario raises doubts about the origin of these prophecies.

Also, the issue of unfulfilled prophecies is a significant concern. There have been numerous instances where these prophecies did not come to fruition, raising questions about their authenticity. Another challenge regarding electoral predictions in Ghana is the partisan nature of many prophets. They often appear to be aligned with specific political parties, consistently prophesying outcomes that favor their chosen factions. It seems that their allegiance shifts only when their expectations from these favored parties are unmet. In response to the phenomenon of prophetic politicking in the Fourth Republic, Rockson Adofo remarks, “When Rev. Isaac Owusu Bempah predicts victory for the NPP, Prophets Badu Kobi and Nigel Gaisie are forecasting triumph for the NDC. Is it truly the God Almighty, the creator of all things, who is revealing such conflicting messages to them, or is it simply their own known god?”⁶¹ This question, along with many others, encapsulates the complexities surrounding prophetic politicking in Ghana.

Another ethically questionable and unbiblical practice in Ghanaian prophetic politics is the act of predicting death. As Acheampong describes it, death predictions refer to “negative prophecies that often foretell doom and distressing events, particularly affecting political figures, as well as other notable individuals such as celebrities, chiefs, and clergymen.”⁶² Recently, these predictions have turned into a competitive spectacle among certain neo-prophetic leaders in Ghana, who prominently share such forecasts on New Year's Eve. It seems that this particular type of revelation is the primary focus of their prophecies for the upcoming year. Notably, Rev. Owusu Bempah and others, like Peter Anamoh, predicted the deaths of two significant politicians in Ghana—former President Atta Mills and Vice President Alhaji Aliu Mahama—on December 31, 2011.⁶³ Coincidentally, both men passed away as predicted in 2012. In addition to these instances, numerous other examples circulated on social media. On December 31, 2018, Rev. Owusu Bempah reportedly made 18 prophecies for the upcoming year. Among these, two specifically mentioned the potential deaths of either Chief Imam Alhaji Sharabutu or Vice

⁶¹ Rockson Adofo, “The Results of 2024 Ghana General Election come too early because of IGP – Oh Fake Prophets.” 6 January 2022, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/11300076/the-results-of-2024-ghana-general-election-come.html>. Accessed 12th December, 2023.

⁶² Acheampong, ‘Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana’s Fourth Republic,’ 138.

⁶³ See Afua Hirsch, Ghana’s Celebrity Preachers Clash Over Prophecy of Presidents’ Death, *Guardian African Network*, 27 February 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/27/ghana-celebrity-preachers-clash>; Ghanarising.org, “Prephet Anamoh Told Ghanaians Mills Won’t Finish His Terms as President,” *Modern Ghana, General News*, 13 August 2012, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/411189/prophet-anamoh-told-ghanaians-mills-wont-finish-his-terms-as.html#>

President Alhaji Mahamudu Bawumia.⁶⁴ The mention of Chief Imam in these prophecies led to unrest, with Muslim youth in Accra attacking Rev. Owusu Bempah's church and demanding an apology from him to the Chief Imam.

Predictions of death have targeted not only politicians and notable figures but also celebrities. A notable example is Shatta Wale, a well-known musician, who has received three such prophecies from different prophets over the years.⁶⁵ The first came from Bishop Stephen Kwasi Appiah, commonly known as Jesus Ahuofe, who predicted that Shatta Wale would be shot by unknown gunmen on October 18, 2021. The second prediction was made by Prophet Stephen Kwadwo Adom, founder of the Zion Miracle Worship Centre, who foresaw that Shatta Wale would die in a fatal car accident before the end of 2018. Lastly, in 2018, Prophet Cosmos Walker Affran warned via a Facebook post that the spirit of death was looming over Shatta Wale.

The concept of death prophecy raises numerous questions. One of the primary inquiries is whether, even if such predictions are made, it is appropriate for those who receive them to announce them publicly. Have they adequately considered the psychological impact on the individuals involved and their families? What are the underlying motives of these prophets? In Ghana, death prophecy has instilled fear and panic, prompting many to scrutinize its practice. In light of these concerns, the Ghana Police Service issued a statement on December 27, 2022, that criminalizes doom prophecies. An excerpt from this statement reads:

As the year 2022 draws to a close, we wish to once again entreat the general public, especially faith-based groups to ensure continuous compliance with the law as it relates to the communication of prophecies. Let us continue to remember that whereas we have the right to practice our faith in religion, freedom of worship and speech, this right must not be exercised in violation of the rights of others and the public interest.⁶⁶

⁶⁴Bbc.com "Ghana Church Stormed Over Death Prophecy", 3 January 2019, http://.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46747182.amp#amp_tf=From%20%25124s&aoh+17024028378334&referrer=https%3A%2Fwww.google.com. Accessed 12 D

⁶⁵ Mobile.ghanaweb.com, "3 Instances Shatta Wale has Received Death Prophecies", <https://mobile.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/3-instances-Shatta-Wale-has-received-death-prophecies-1383430>

⁶⁶ Www.pulse.com.gh, "No Doom Prophecy will be Tolerated – Police Reminds Pastors Ahead of End-of-Year Services," <https://www.pulse.com.gh/news/local/no-doom-prophecy-will-be-tolerated-police-reminds-pastors-ahead-of-end-of-year/wjk55nx>

While some Christian leaders, particularly neo-prophetic leaders, were opposed, the directive was timely and necessary to address certain aspects of death prophecy.

Pentecostal Political Engagement in the Light of their Divine Mandate

This section aims to explore the nature of Pentecostal political engagement through the lens of Scripture. It highlights one of the church's divine responsibilities: its prophetic role in guiding the nation to align with God's will. Based on the previous discussion of Pentecostal political involvement, it can be argued that they are largely fulfilling this mandate. Pentecostals have made their voices heard in areas where they believe the nation is straying, clearly expressing their stance to the government regarding LGBTQ+ rights and occasionally addressing what they term the moral decline in the country. Furthermore, the Church of Pentecost's National Development Conference, which convened over two thousand politicians and stakeholders, serves as a platform for steering the nation's direction. Additionally, they have actively addressed the issue of illegal mining by visiting various mining sites to gather firsthand information.

During election times, Pentecostals intercede for the nation and seek its progress, which aligns well with Biblical teachings. For example, in the post-COVID-19 era, when the Ghana cedi experienced significant depreciation against major foreign currencies, many Pentecostal churches, including the Church of Pentecost, engaged in fasting and prayer for divine intervention. The Bible encourages Christians to pursue the peace and prosperity of their communities (Jeremiah 29:7). Additionally, these churches have sometimes denounced unbiblical practices within their ranks. A notable instance is when Apostle Prof. Opoku Onyinah, the former chairman of the Church of Pentecost and President of the Ghana Pentecostal Council, criticised the practice of issuing death prophecies. He stated that it is "needless and wrong to stand in public to relay what one believes to be a message from God which could spell grave danger to the object of the message."⁶⁷ His remarks came in response to various claims made by some prophets who alleged they had predicted the death of rising musician 'Ebony Reigns,' born Priscilla Opoku Kwarteng.

Death prophecies, as expressed by contemporary Ghanaian prophets, have a questionable basis in Scripture. In the biblical context, prophets tended to deliver such messages directly to the individuals concerned rather than to the general public. For

⁶⁷ Modernghana.com, "Church of Pentecost Condemns Death Prophecies", <http://www.modernghana.com/new/834668/church-of-pentecost-condemns-death-prophecies.html>. Accessed 12th December, 2023.

instance, in Isaiah 3:1, when the prophet Isaiah was asked to convey news of his impending death to King Hezekiah, he communicated it solely to him and not to others. Similarly, when King David sinned against the Lord, the prophet Nathan was sent to rebuke him privately rather than publicly (2 Sam. 12:1ff). This principle should inform the practice of death prophecies in Ghana.

Another significant mandate of the church to the state lies in the area of advocacy. When evaluating Pentecostal political engagement, it is evident that various forms of advocacy have been undertaken. The Church of Pentecost (CoP), in its efforts to advocate for the rights of prisoners, has established correctional centers designed to enhance the quality of life for inmates. These centers are equipped with vocational and skill training facilities, providing inmates with opportunities to acquire skills even while incarcerated. More importantly, they employ chaplains who address the spiritual needs of the inmates, as well as their moral and ethical development.

Additionally, there have been advocacy efforts focused on sanitation, environmental care, and the welfare of children and women. Many Pentecostal churches have dedicated ministries for women and children. The CoP, for instance, emphasizes marriage and family life as a core component of its statements of faith, highlighting the principles of how husbands should engage with their wives and children. These teachings delineate the characteristics of a Christian family, contributing to the prevention of domestic violence against women and children.

Despite the progress made, much remains to be addressed. Pentecostal churches have generally not engaged in advocacy regarding working conditions, housing costs, fair pricing, professional fees, responsible media usage, and the welfare of the elderly. The Prophet Amos, in the Old Testament, championed the rights of the poor and vulnerable, making numerous appeals on their behalf. Pentecostal congregations could leverage their significant presence and influence to encourage the government to address these important issues.

In addition to the aforementioned efforts, awareness-building and education play a significant role. This is an area in which Pentecostals have actively supported the state. Many government decisions are effectively communicated to the public through churches. For example, when it became challenging for the government to encourage citizens to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, several prominent Pentecostal leaders urged their congregations to get vaccinated. They led by example, publicly sharing evidence of their own vaccinations. The chairman of the Church of Pentecost, Apostle Eric

Nyamekye, shared photos of himself receiving the vaccine, encouraging his ministers and members to do the same.

Finally, the church is expected to play a pivotal role in transforming the nation. Pentecostal churches, in particular, have made significant strides in this regard. As previously discussed, Pentecostals have substantially contributed to Ghana's development through various initiatives. These include the establishment of schools, creation of employment opportunities, improvement of healthcare systems, construction of boreholes, and building police stations, among others. Furthermore, they have a distinctive approach to empowering their members, enabling them to overcome challenges and achieve upward mobility in life.

The Way Forward

Pentecostal political engagement in Ghana's Fourth Republic is promising. It offers both opportunities and challenges that can be leveraged for improved engagement. To achieve this, we can consider several factors:

First, Pentecostal churches should leverage their significant numerical strength to explore additional areas of engagement. Since politics is fundamentally about numbers, governments are likely to seek partnerships with Pentecostal communities due to their substantial influence. Second, it is essential for Pentecostal churches to remain non-partisan in order to effectively fulfil their prophetic roles. Third, the leadership of the GPCC should address the unethical practices prevalent in some of the churches within their network, thereby positioning themselves as a formidable force within the nation. For instance, the issue of death prediction merits special attention.

Fourth, the GPCC ought to consider establishing a research team dedicated to investigating key challenges that hinder national development and collaborating with the government to devise lasting solutions. Fifth, Pentecostal churches should focus on preparing their members for political positions and support those already serving in government roles. Lastly, Pentecostals in government and the business sector should exemplify Christian virtues, setting a positive example for others. By considering these steps, the future of Pentecostal political engagement can be significantly enhanced.

Conclusion

The study set out to explore the nature of Pentecostal political engagement within Ghana's Fourth Republic and its reflection of biblical responsibilities toward the state. The findings indicated that Pentecostals have been notably active in political matters. Their engagement encompasses a commitment to a robust democratic process, socio-economic development, and what is termed prophetic politicking. Additionally, it was observed that their political involvement largely aligns with biblical teachings. The leadership of the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) is encouraged to address unethical behaviours exhibited by certain pastors and prophets, such as publicly forecasting the deaths of prominent politicians and public figures. Ultimately, it was recommended that practical measures be put in place, including the mentoring of Pentecostals for political roles, conducting research on critical issues hindering national development, and promoting the exhibition of Christian values in both politics and business for effective engagement.

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