

Pentecostal Spirituality and the Theology of Prayer: Continuities and Discontinuities of African Indigenous Spirituality

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Abstract

This study employs a conceptual research method to examine the continuities and discontinuities of African indigenous religious prayer practices within the context of emerging Pentecostal and neo-Prophetic movements in Ghana, with the objective of theologising the spiritual practice of prayer in Pentecostalism. The nomenclature and practices of African indigenous religions resonate profoundly with many Africans, cultivating a strong subconscious connection to these activities. As a result, neo-Prophetic churches have integrated certain prayer practices from African indigenous religions that resonate with their followers during prayer sessions. These practices aim to encourage followers to engage in their faith more easily. Research indicates that Ghanaian Pentecostal prayer while preserving connections to African indigenous religions—such as seeking prayer consultations through prominent figures who require compensation for prayer rituals at designated prayer markets—also shows notable differences by abandoning traditional rites, sacrifices, and the consultation of mediums among neo-Pentecostals. Evaluating African Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal worship exclusively through the lenses of drumming, singing, dancing, and worship as direct continuities of the African indigenous system would be unfair as other mainstream churches also incorporate these elements into their worship practices. Consequently, it can be concluded that emerging African Pentecostal prayer is not only connected to the themes of the African religious system but also diverges in certain aspects of worship.

Keywords: African Spirituality, Indigenous religions, neo-Prophetic, Pentecostal, Prayer

How to cite this article: Buerterey, Joseph T. I. "Pentecostal Spirituality and the Theology of Prayer: Continuities and Discontinuities of African Indigenous Spirituality." *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 5, no. 2 (2025): 77-89.

Introduction

The main argument of this study is that the African Pentecostal understanding and practice of prayer, which is essential to Pentecostal spirituality and theology, has been influenced by African Indigenous religious worldviews.¹ (AIR). Therefore, a deeper understanding of the theology of prayer within African Pentecostal Spirituality can be attained by exploring it through the framework of the African Traditional

¹ African Indigenous religions are commonly referred to as African Traditional Religions. There are debates about whether this terminology should be African Traditional Religions or Religion. In recent studies, ATR has even been avoided altogether for 'Indigenous Religions' because it is considered a problematic term.

cosmological model. This study specifically investigates the practice of prayer in Pentecostal traditions in Ghana, such as the Church of Pentecost (CoP) and the emerging neo-Pentecostal movements. While researchers like Jack Steve Land² and Daniel Albrecht³ have made significant contributions to the study of Pentecostal Spirituality, there remains a notable gap in research focusing on the influence of African indigenous religions on this Pentecostal spirituality.

According to Poloma and Lee, prayer serves as a means for created beings to communicate with their Creator.⁴ Also, Baesler⁵ rightly points out that prayer has been a part of every recorded society throughout history.⁶ Undoubtedly, the most common method of praying in Christianity involves the recitation of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6: 9-15). In historical mission churches, prayer is often guided by prayer books. In contrast, the Pentecostal community emphasises the spontaneous nature of prayer, which is believed to be inspired and spoken under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, Pentecostal spirituality in prayer is inherently experiential, influenced by the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Albrecht and Howards define Pentecostal spirituality as the means by which Pentecostals connect with God, shaped by their beliefs, practices, sensibilities, and values.⁷ A Pentecostal's beliefs influence their perception of God, while their actions serve as a way to encounter Him.⁸ The unique sensibilities and values of each Pentecostal community establish their distinctive habits, defining how they relate to and respond to the Spirit of God.⁹ Foster notes that Pentecostal spirituality can be understood as a profound connection with God, achieved through a powerful form of prayer.¹⁰ Therefore, any discussion of Pentecostal spirituality must include the concepts of the Holy Spirit and prayer, as these two elements are central to the intricate and multifaceted nature of spirituality.¹¹

² Steve J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), 35.

³ Daniel E. Albrecht, "Pentecostal Spirituality: Looking through the Lens of Ritual," *Pneuma* 14, no. 2 (1999): 110.

⁴ Margaret M. Poloma and Mathew T. Lee, "Prophetic Prayers as Two-Way Communication with the Divine," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 35, no. 3 (2012): 271-94.

⁵ James E. Baesler, "An Introduction to Prayer Research in Communication: Functions, Contexts, and Possibilities," *The Journal of Communication and Religion* 35, no. 3 (2012): 202-8.

⁶ Douglas L. Kelly, "Prophetic Prayer as a Two-Way Communication with the Divine," *The Journal of Communication and Religion* 35, no. 3 (2012): 272-95.

⁷ Daniel E. Albrecht and Evan B. Howards, "Pentecostal Spirituality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, ed. Cecil M. Robeck and Amos Yong (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 235-54.

⁸ Albrecht and Howards, "Pentecostal Spirituality," 236.

⁹ Albrecht, "Looking through the Lens," 15.

¹⁰ Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1992), 1-3.

¹¹ Kees Waaijman, "Spirituality- a Multifaceted Phenomenon: Interdisciplinary Explorations," *Studies in Spirituality* 17 (2007): 1-113, <https://doi.org/10.2143/SIS.17.0.2024643>.

Regarding spirituality in Ghana, the Church of Pentecost (CoP) emerged within the country's religious and cultural context at a time when missionaries associated with historical mission churches disapproved of 'abisa,'¹² a prevalent traditional practice. The CoP responded to this contemporary religio-cultural challenge by organising intensive prayer sessions, which were theologically endorsed as an alternative solution. This approach served as a catalyst for the church's growth and popularity, providing the local indigenous population with viable solutions and religio-cultural options. Over time, however, the rise of neo-Pentecostal, neo-Prophetic, and deliverance ministries has introduced new prayer practices within the church.¹³

These practices include 'breaking prayers' (*bubu wɔn*), 'binding prayers' (*kyekyere wɔn*), and 'trampling prayers'¹⁴ (*tiatia wɔn so*) activities that resemble the spirituality of African indigenous religions. These behaviours resemble AIR Spirituality, which this research calls 'encultured positivisation.' Some of these new prayer practices seem to be variations of the traditional Pentecostal spirituality of prayer, which initially emphasised the lived emotions experienced during encounters with the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Even though the CoP believes that Pentecostal spirituality begins with speaking in tongues,¹⁶ which is also the most significant aspect of Pentecostal prayer.¹⁷ Most of these neo-prophetic churches engage in what is termed¹⁸ 'glossolalic abuse' (praying amiss).

Methodological Considerations

This study employed a conceptual research approach within systematic theology to reexamine established notions of prayer spirituality.¹⁹ Conceptual research focuses on abstract ideas and theories, serving as a tool for philosophers to generate new concepts

¹² *Abisa* is an Akan term for divinatory consultation. This is a practice in which local people seek prophetic advice on poignant issues of life.

¹³ Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, ed. Christopher John Thomas (Blandford: Deo Publishing, 2012).

¹⁴ Opoku Onyinah, *Spiritual Warfare: A Centre for Pentecostal Theology Short Introduction* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2012), 197-98.

¹⁵ Christian Tsekpoe, "Pentecostal Christians' Response to Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana: The Contribution of Apostle Professor Opoku Onyinah," in *African Pentecostalism Mission Maturing Essays in Honour of Aps Prof Opoku Onyinah*, ed. L.D. Donkor and R.C. Clark (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 142.

¹⁶ Daniel O. Walker, "Baptism, Gifts and Fruit of the Holy Spirit," in *Tenets of the Church of Pentecost*, ed. Opoku Onyinah et al. (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2019), 225-87.

¹⁷ Okyere Walker, "Stoking the Fire of the Holy Spirit, in the Fear of God in the Local Church," in *Repositioning the Local Church for Maximum Impact in the Nations*, ed. Eric Nyamekye, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2022).

¹⁸ Joseph T. I. Buertey, "Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities with Reference to African Traditional Religious Practices and Pentecostal Theologies of Prayer in Ghana" (PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2023), 284.

¹⁹ Basilius Kasera, "Towards a Contextualised Conceptualisation of Social Justice for Post-Apartheid Namibia with Reference to Allan Boesak's Framing of Justice" (PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2021), <https://scholar.sun.ac.za>.

or reinterpret existing ones.²⁰ This method involves analysing and interpreting available information on a subject, often negating the need for a new field study. By utilising abstraction, conceptual research seeks to interpret theories and models, thereby generating new frameworks or rethinking previous ones from a philosophical standpoint.²¹

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research draws on the continuity-discontinuity concepts articulated by Andrew Walls and Kwame Bediako.^{22,23} This theory provides a vital lens through which to examine the interactions between Christianity and indigenous cultures, particularly in Africa. Scholars like Walls and Bediako have explored the relationship between Christianity—especially its Pentecostal expressions—and Indigenous Religions. Their writings examine how ancient and contemporary religious systems engage with one another, highlighting instances where Christian theology assimilates indigenous elements and where Christian beliefs diverge significantly from traditional practices.

Andrew Walls,²⁴ a renowned historian of Christianity in Africa, articulated the indigenous and pilgrimage concepts that form the basis of the continuity-discontinuity paradigm.²⁵ He argues that the indigenising principle signifies that when Christianity is introduced into a new cultural context, it assimilates elements of the original culture, thereby becoming regionally relevant. Conversely, the pilgrim principle highlights Christianity's transformative nature, which challenges and alters societal conventions that contradict biblical teachings.²⁶ This duality results in both continuities, where Christianity integrates indigenous spiritual practices, and discontinuities, where it requires a departure from certain traditional customs. Walls illustrates that African Christianity has consistently emphasised the supernatural, encompassing healing, prophecy, and deliverance ministries, which are deeply rooted in African Indigenous Religions.²⁷ However, it has also rejected practices such as ancestral worship, polytheism, and specific ceremonial traditions that conflict with biblical monotheism.

²⁰ C. R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Technique*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: New Age Publishers, 2004).

²¹ Perkins Muredzi, "Research and the Concept of Research," (paper presented at the Innovative & Quality Research Methods for the 21st Century Workshop, African Association of Universities, March 2019), 21, doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.25310.28483.

²² Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

²³ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

²⁴ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 1.

²⁵ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 1.

²⁶ Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

²⁷ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 1.

Kwame Bediako elaborates on Walls's framework by highlighting the development of African Christian identity through the interaction between Christian theology and indigenous spiritual traditions. He argues that understanding the African religious experience is essential for grasping the essence of African Christianity, as traditional religious beliefs provide a foundational context for Christian theology.²⁸ In his influential work, 'Theology and Identity,' Bediako examines the challenges encountered by early African theologians in reconciling their newly adopted Christian faith with their cultural heritage.²⁹

Bediako highlights numerous similarities between African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity, including the belief in a Supreme Being, the roles of prophets and priests in providing spiritual guidance, and the emphasis on communal aspects of religion.³⁰ However, he also acknowledges significant discontinuities, particularly in the rejection of ancestral veneration, divination, and specific ceremonial sacrifices that conflict with Christian doctrines.³¹ He views African Pentecostalism as a reflection of this continuity-discontinuity dynamic, wherein elements of African Traditional Religion—such as fervent prayer, healing, and exorcism—are incorporated into Christian worship, even as theological frameworks evolve towards biblical revelation.

The model proposed by Walls and Bediako regarding continuity and discontinuity proves to be highly valuable for examining African Pentecostal spirituality and its connection to African Indigenous Religion. This relationship is maintained through a focus on divine intervention, spiritual warfare, and prophetic revelation. Within this context, prayer often mirrors traditional African practices of invoking spiritual power, including collective intercession, nocturnal vigils, and fasting.³² However, discontinuities emerge due to the exclusive emphasis on Christ as the sole mediator, which excludes other mediators such as ancestors or spirits.

The Continuity-Discontinuity Theory, developed by Andrew Walls and Kwame Bediako, provides a fundamental framework for analysing the interaction between African Christianity and indigenous traditions. Their observations highlight that Christianity in Africa is neither a straightforward translation of Western practices nor a total rejection of local spiritualities. Instead, it signifies a dynamic interplay where elements of African Indigenous Religions (AIR) are reconfigured within a biblical

²⁸ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*.

²⁹ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992).

³⁰ Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 1.

³¹ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 1.

³² J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Charismatic Spirituality," in *Studies on Religions in Africa* (Supplement of the Journal of Religion in Africa), ed. Paul Gifford, Marc R. Spindler, and Ingrid Lawrie, vol. 27 (Boston: Brill, 2005), 65.

context. This concept is essential for understanding African Pentecostal theology, particularly in relation to its views on prayer, spiritual warfare, and divine intervention.

African Traditional Religious Spirituality and Pentecostalism

African Traditional Religions (ATR) can hardly be separated from the ordinary African.³³ ATR's cosmic vision has instilled a sense of awe and has significantly influenced the worldview, rituals, and lifestyles of many Africans. They engage in prayer driven by the belief that the world comprises both natural and supernatural elements, with the physical realm being contingent upon the supernatural. According to this perspective, nothing occurs in the physical world without prior orchestration in the realms of the supernatural.³⁴ Therefore, African traditionalists pray for human survival, social and cultural acceptance, and community preservation. They ask for abundant food, wealth, rain, successful hunting, clothing, long life, fertility, marriage, and family growth.³⁵ They pray against evil omens, diseases, misfortunes, death, disasters, epidemics, plagues, aversion to war, success in war, peace, community evil detection, and to protect and preserve the community.³⁶

Neo-Pentecostal groups seem to have adopted the prevailing worldview to emphasize prayer driven by faith rather than fear, and vice versa. This shift appears to have resulted in increased prayer activity within Ghanaian Pentecostal churches, enhancing spirituality and attracting followers to God. However, some neo-prophetic churches have incorporated practices from African Traditional Religions (ATR) to develop various divinatory prayer activities that influence their lives. This dynamic portrays the neo-prophet as a powerful figure with extraordinary abilities to offer salvation.

ATR and Christianity both espouse monotheism, though this similarity is somewhat superficial. Despite their significant differences, African Pentecostal Spirituality may have incorporated certain elements of ATR. According to Mbiti, ATR profoundly influences converts who are transitioning to Christianity. Many Christian converts often struggle to fully grasp Christian teachings about God without a foundational understanding of ATR.³⁷ As a result, the African perception of God is seen as interconnected with the Christian concept,³⁸ a notion referred to as "preparatio

³³ Anthony Chiorazzi, "The Spirituality of Africa," *The Harvard Gazette*, October 6, 2015.

³⁴ Wyatt MacGaffey and Mariam Goshadze, "African Traditional Religion," *Oxford Bibliographies*, August 9, 2022, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846733/obo-9780199846733-0064.xml>.

³⁵ Christopher Ampadu, *Africa Religiosity and Africa Development: Understanding Africa Traditional Religion and Its Effects on Africa Development* (Accra: Sonlife Ghana Ltd, 2019), 21.

³⁶ Ampadu, *Africa Religiosity and Africa Development*, 23.

³⁷ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1975).

³⁸ John S. Mbiti, "The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion," *Christian Century* 97, no. 27 (1980): 817-20.

evangelica,” where many hypothesise that the God of ATR embodies monotheism.³⁹ Understanding this Supreme Being is essential for effective evangelism, especially considering that ATR has historically facilitated the spread of the gospel in Africa.⁴⁰

The African God may be viewed as monotheistic if He has not relinquished His authority and dominion to subordinate deities. The concept of an African monotheistic God can be upheld, provided He is not seen as indifferent to human issues and the cosmos. The confidence in a Supreme Being within African Traditional Religion (ATR) is unequivocal. In ATR, immediate needs-based prayers are directed toward lower deities rather than the Supreme Being. Adewuya,⁴¹ Wariboko,⁴² and Meyer⁴³ describe the relationship with the Christian God as an abstract response to prayer that tends to be slow, stemming from the inaccessibility of this God. This perception has led neo-Pentecostals to incorporate ritualistic prayer in hopes of achieving greater efficacy and effectiveness.

Pentecostal Theology and Spirituality

Pentecostals are typically people of the Spirit,⁴⁴ expressing this spirituality primarily through prayer, especially in the Spirit.⁴⁵ As prayer serves as the chief theological action for Pentecostals, contextualising their theology may seem subjective. Since nearly all Pentecostal activities centre around the Spirit, believers must remain continually filled to receive divine guidance that leads them into all truth through prayer. The Spirit-driven Ghanaian Pentecostal spirituality is thus characterised as pneumato-liturgical, pneumato-biblical, pneumato-democratic, and theocratic. Consequently, the Spirit directs the liturgy of their services, provides a hermeneutical understanding of the Bible, and encourages widespread participation during services and leadership roles within the Church. Furthermore, Pentecostals hold that the Holy Spirit initiates the sanctification process at conversion, and as such, speaking in tongues should lead to a life characterised by holiness in various aspects, including dress, ministry, giving, and discipline. Thus, Pentecostal spirituality and theology are intrinsically intertwined, forming two sides of the same coin—mutually

³⁹ Y.S. Han and J. Beyers, “A Critical Evaluation of the Understanding of God in J. S. Mbiti’s Theology,” *Acta Theologica* 37, no. 2 (2017): 22-24.

⁴⁰ Joel D. Heck, “Praeparatio Evangelica,” in C. S. Lewis: *Light-Bearer in the Shadowlands*, ed. Angus J. L. Menuge, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Wheaton: Crossway, 1987), 3.

⁴¹ Ayodeji J. Adewuya, “The Spiritual Powers of Ephesians 6:10-18 in the Light of African Pentecostal Spirituality,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 22, no. 2 (2012): 251-58.

⁴² Nimi Wariboko, “Pentecostalism in Africa,” *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History*, last modified October 26, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.120>.

⁴³ Birgit Meyer, “Religious and Secular, ‘Spiritual’ and ‘Physical’ in Ghana,” in *What Matters? Ethnographies of Values in a (Not so) Secular Age*, ed. Courtney Bender and Ann Taves (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 86-115.

⁴⁴ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*.

⁴⁵ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism Origins and Development Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005).

complementary and reciprocally dependent; one cannot be fully understood without reference to the other. Thus, Pentecostal spirituality is “a means by which a person elevates the inner self through a deeper connection with the divinity, society, fellowship, or group, to achieve physical and spiritual growth and satisfaction; and discover meaning for life, both physically and transcendentally.”⁴⁶

Pentecostal theology is intricate and multifaceted. The complexities of Pentecostal spirituality become evident when they seek to theologise their prayer, which is motivated by an effective Spirit element experienced through the Holy Spirit. Buertery conceptualises Pentecostal theology in this research as a fourfold framework: rooted in the Trinitarian theology of God, the Christocentric Full Gospel, the experience of the Spirit, and the Bible. Understanding the nature of God is essential for grasping pneumatic theology, Christology, and biblical interpretation within Pentecostalism. Thus, prayer serves as a vital link between humanity and God, facilitated by the Spirit, Christ, and the Scriptures. As a Spirit-driven practice, Pentecostal prayer can manifest in various forms—through intelligible words, in silence, or as unintelligible utterances.⁴⁷ Classical Pentecostals believe that the concept of the Spirit propels their prayer from contemplation through meditation to *glossolalia*.⁴⁸ Pentecostals express their aspirations to God through diverse forms, such as praise, thanksgiving, confession, worship, intercession, petition, inquiry, spiritual warfare, healing, exorcism, blessing, and Holy Spirit prayer, all aimed at manifesting miracles and calling upon divine assistance for humanity. Furthermore, Pentecostals view ‘the Lord’s Prayer’ as both comprehensive and succinct, asserting that it encapsulates a wealth of ideas within few words, functioning as a compound metaphoric PUSSEH (pray until something spectacular happens) and PULL (pray until let loose) prayer.⁴⁹

Thus, Pentecostal theology on prayer seeks a cognitive understanding of its purpose and examines its epistemology, practices, viewpoints, and beliefs. It also involves recognising the ontology of prayer by comprehending its nature, concepts, forms, and praxis through the adoption of affirmative activities and Christian prayer experiences. According to Buertery, Ghanaian Pentecostal prayer is described as “transactionally Trinitarian,” “heuristically experiential,” “lyrically doxological,” “biblically consequential,” and “spontaneously glossolalic.”⁵⁰ Neo-Pentecostal prayers are often loud, shouted, and accompanied by drums and music, believed to attract God’s attention.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Buertery, “Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities,” 284.

⁴⁷ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 170.

⁴⁸ Buertery, “Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities,” 207

⁴⁹ Peter Rigwell Joe-Andah, *Plugged into the Power of Prayer: The Greatest Untapped Power on Earth* (Sydney: The Church of Pentecost, Australia, 2018), 18.

⁵⁰ Buertery, “Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities,” 298.

⁵¹ Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, “Prophetic Practices in Contemporary Pentecostalism in Ghana,” *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* 6 (2015): 57.

Neo-Pentecostals believe that many individuals engage in prayer, and to capture God's attention, one must "out-shout" others, expressing their needs through intense emotional outbursts, both physically and with the use of biblical texts. They adhere to a Christological model of prayer, emulating Jesus, who prayed loudly during his time on earth – experiencing deep groans (Heb. 5:7-8) and sweating profusely (Lk. 22:44), often retreating to mountains and secluded places (Lk. 22:44).⁵² Pentecostals assert that prayer can compel demons to flee (Lk. 4:35; Mk. 9:25), challenge the names of demons (Mk. 5:7-8), and involve physical acts, such as placing hands in someone's ears and touching their tongue (Mk. 7:32-35).

Continuities and Discontinuities of ATR on Pentecostal Prayer

Walls⁵³ and Bediako⁵⁴ have argued that African Pentecostalism shares similarities with African indigenous religions. Just as traditional Africans are wary of negativity in their environment due to their cosmological understanding of evil, neo-Pentecostals are similarly driven by prayer.⁵⁵ This suspicion of evil fosters an affinity for transactions, rites, and rituals within the African context, impacting spirituality and drawing individuals toward neo-prophetic churches rather than classical Pentecostal ones.

Due to the belief among Africans that evil permeates all aspects of existence, African Indigenous religious practices such as *akwankyere* (medium consultants), *mpata* (pacification), and *banbo* (divine counsel and protection) have emerged within the neo-Pentecostal and neo-prophetic landscape as a means of overcoming the nocturnal activities of the evil one. These practices have led to the rise of neo-prophetic figures, known as "prayer giants," who have created 'prayer markets' as a form of 'prayer outsourcing', and 'prayer monetisation' as described by Buertey.⁵⁶ Nel draws a parallel between these 'neo-prophetic giants' and the 'witch doctors'⁵⁷ in the African indigenous religious systems. Just as individuals within these indigenous communities may seek out a witch doctor when they perceive that 'witchcraft' is obstructing their prayers, neo-Pentecostals similarly turn to a 'prayer giant or prophet' as a crucial intermediary in their spiritual journey.⁵⁸ Thus, many Ghanaians turn to neo-prophets for guidance when they face unusual illnesses, encounter obstacles in

⁵² James Osei Amaniampong, "The Prayer Ministry of Jesus and the Early Church" (paper presented at the CoP Prayer Leader's Seminar at PCC, Accra, 2013), 14.

⁵³ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 1.

⁵⁴ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 1.

⁵⁵ Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 35.

⁵⁶ Buertey, "Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities," 244.

⁵⁷ Marius Nel, "African Pentecostal Spirituality as a Mystical Tradition: How Regaining Its Roots Could Benefit Pentecostals," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76, no. 4 (2020): 1-10.

⁵⁸ Girish Daswani, *Looking Back, Moving Forward: Transformation and Ethical Practices in the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

their pursuit of prosperity, or believe they are hindered by witchcraft or ancestral spirits. This practice reflects a continuity of African indigenous religion.⁵⁹ In Ghana, the neo-prophetic prayer leaders play a central role in prayer activities and commercial responses. These emerging neo-prophetic practices, which encompass sacramental, transactional, ecstatic, and imprecatory prayers, have contributed to the ongoing influence of African Indigenous Religion within contemporary neo-Pentecostalism.

Despite this, there are discontinuities in African indigenous religious systems within neo-Pentecostal prayer, as not all neo-prophetic practices are grounded in African indigenous religions; instead, some practices align more closely with the broader global Christian tradition.⁶⁰ For instance, although singing, drumming, dancing, and the use of instruments are closely linked to the spiritual activities of Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals, and neo-prophetic groups, all other mainstream churches also incorporate these elements into their worship. Indeed, one could argue that the soul of Africans is akin to music, with a strong inclination to dance at the sound of it. However, it would be unfair to describe Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal, or neo-prophetic praise, worship, and dancing as an absolute continuity of African indigenous practices and religions.⁶¹

The above characteristics, therefore, affirm the writings of Walls and Bediako that there are continuities and discontinuities regarding the Pentecostal inclination towards African traditional practices and religion.^{62,63} It can be established that although the quest for supernatural encounters and the desire for healing, breakthroughs, and deliverances are fundamentally rooted in African indigenous religion, there are discontinuities in specific ceremonial practices, sacrifices, and divinations that contrast with Pentecostal practices.⁶⁴

Conclusions

This research investigated the conceptual framework of Pentecostal theology of prayer, focusing on its intrinsic spirituality and the interplay with elements of African traditional spirituality. The study identifies that a pivotal aspect of Pentecostal

⁵⁹ Daswani, *Looking Back, Moving Forward*, 15.

⁶⁰ Joseph Teye Ignatius Buerthey and Len D. Hansen, "Keeping Time: Prayers and Social Vitality in the Ashanti Aɔɔ Festival," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 36, no. 4 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2024.2391761>.

⁶¹ Buerthey, "Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities," 244.

⁶² Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 1.

⁶³ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 1.

⁶⁴ Joseph T.I. Buerthey, Len D. Hansen, and Lord E. Donkor, "A Theological Review of the Religio-Cultural Practices of Prayer and Social Identity of the Asantes during the Aɔɔ Festival," *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2023): 145–63, <https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-7644/2023/v4n2a8>.

spirituality is the concept of “prayer in the Holy Ghost,” underscoring its foundational role. It further posits that Pentecostal spirituality and theology are inherently intertwined, necessitating a holistic understanding where spirituality, experiential knowledge, and personal knowledge are harmonised to adequately articulate Pentecostal theology. The study indicates that the spirituality of prayer within the Pentecostal tradition is significantly shaped by the aesthetics, practices, and customs rooted in African traditional spirituality. This influence manifests through a continuity of enculturated prayer practices that originate from the African cosmological perception of evil while also displaying notable discontinuities from indigenous African religious systems.

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