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EDITORIAL

Pentecostalism and the Public Sphere

German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, renowned for his significant contributions to the concept of the 'public sphere,' presented a more inclusive perspective on the role of religion in this domain in his 2006 essay, "Religion in the Public Sphere." This represented a notable shift from his earlier views. He argued that religion has gained "hitherto unexpected political importance" and, therefore, warrants renewed consideration.¹ This shift is particularly significant when contrasted with the predictions of secularisation theorists, who anticipated a gradual decline in the social and cultural relevance of religion within the public sphere. They believed that religious values would be supplanted by secular ones and that religious figures, such as church leaders, would lose their authority and influence in society. However, this prediction has proven to be fundamentally incorrect, as religion has become even more vital.² In fact, Habermas advocates for the inclusion of religious language in public debates due to its political relevance in diverse contexts around the world.

With the growth and resurgence of religions, especially Christianity in the form of the Pentecostal-Charismatic strands, and the role they play in various societies, Habermas's call to grant religious actors reciprocal rights in the realm of public discourse is critical. On the one hand, he encourages both religious and non-religious people to openly engage in discussions about the "truth content" of religious statements in the public sphere. On the other hand, he also urges secular citizens to acknowledge the dynamics of a "post-secular" society, which necessitates the integration of religion as a significant element influencing public discourse and civic life.³ Habermas's approach effectively establishes a mutual responsibility for both religious and secular individuals, advocating for a framework in which religious perspectives can engage in political discourse without being co-opted by partisan agendas. This model seeks to facilitate the inclusion of diverse moral viewpoints in the public sphere while maintaining the integrity of their religious principles, ensuring that their contributions enhance democratic deliberation rather than distort it through political entanglement.

This issue highlights the important role of religion in the public sphere, focusing on the theme of "Pentecostalism and the Public Sphere." It offers various perspectives on the relationship between Pentecostalism and the African public sphere. Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is recognised as a significant driver of social and cultural change within Africa. The goal was to compile essays that examine how Pentecostal-

¹ Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2006), 1

² Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1967.

³ Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," 1

Charismatic movements and churches have instigated sociocultural transformations while also considering how the broader society has influenced these movements. We aim to explore the connection between Pentecostalism and public life, covering topics such as its impact on public discourse, its involvement in politics, its approach to social justice and human rights, its influence on public policy, its relationship with the media, and its strategies for public engagement.

The issue consists of six articles that explore a broad range of topics related to the main theme and two book reviews. The discussion begins with an intervention from Jeffrey Haynes, a professor of politics at London Metropolitan University. He posits that there exists a strong connection between the Church of Pentecost and the major political parties in Ghana, suggesting a significant interplay between Christianity and politics. Haynes analysed the CoP's Vision 2023 document and reviewed the National Development Conference held in 2023 to evaluate the ways in which the CoP aims to enhance the nation's morality, which they believe will subsequently strengthen democracy. He concludes that there is a correlation between morality and the health of democracy; however, the potential for enhancing democratic integrity by promoting national morality is limited. This limitation arises from the fact that many Ghanaians are sceptical about whether this approach will yield the desired outcomes.

Charles Prempeh follows with an article that examines the interplay between religion and politics in Ghana, with a particular focus on the Church of Pentecost (CoP) and its influence on the nation's public sphere. It highlights how the CoP has become a significant force in shaping Ghana's sociopolitical landscape, especially through its dedication to social services and moral leadership. The article concludes that the CoP views itself as God's chosen church, aiming to steer Ghana away from Western influences and to guide the nation's governance in order to fulfil its role as God's chosen nation for global evangelism. Abraham Nortey contributes a textual analysis of selected passages to highlight the Holy Spirit's role in leadership and societal development in the Old Testament, suggesting that figures like Daniel, Joseph, and Moses, as well as artisans Bezalel and Oholiab, were empowered by the same Spirit recognised in the New Testament.

Drawing mainly on secondary data, Patrick Kudadjie examines Pentecostal political engagement in Ghana, focusing on how these churches fulfil their divine mandate towards the state. The study identifies three primary forms of involvement: participation in the democratic process, socio-economic initiatives, and prophetic politicking. Ultimately, it concludes that their engagement significantly aligns with their divine responsibilities. With Ghanaians going to the polls this year, Samuel Nkrumah-Pobi et al. examine how religion impacts the voting behaviour of Pentecostals. Their findings reveal mixed responses: while some educated respondents assert that policies should guide their votes rather than religious

affiliation, others may choose to abstain from voting if candidates do not align with their religious beliefs.

In his concluding article, Justice Arthur analyses the methodologies employed by British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson in his efforts to combat the slave trade. He utilises Clarkson's framework as a springboard to propose strategic approaches for enhancing public engagement and advocacy within the Pentecostal-Charismatic community. The issue concludes with two insightful book reviews: the first by Christian Tsekpoe and Eric Kallai, followed by a review from Julia Owiti. Overall, the range of topics covered in these articles highlights the extensive research opportunities not only for Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars but also for those of other Christian traditions.

Justice Anquandah Arthur

Associate Editor

The Church of Pentecost and the Moral Transformation of Ghana

Jeffrey Haynes

Abstract

The paper argues that the close relationship between Ghana's largest church, the Church of Pentecost, and the country's main political parties is indicative more generally of an increasingly close relationship between Christianity and politics, including in relation to seeking to amend and improve the moral behaviour of Ghanaians which in turn could help improve the quality of the country's democracy, said to be declining. The paper adopts a comparative and qualitative methodological approach while also drawing on Afrobarometer's quantitative data. The key result is that there is a link between morality and democratic health in Ghana, while the major conclusion is that the potential to improve democratic health by improving national morality is limited, mainly because many citizens are sceptical that such a path is likely to achieve the desired objective.

Keywords: Christianity, Church of Pentecost, morality, development, democracy

Introduction

The paper argues that the close relationship between the Church of Pentecost (CoP), and the country's main political parties is indicative more generally of an increasingly close relationship between Christianity and politics. This relationship includes ways to try to amend and improve the moral and ethical behaviour of Ghanaians in order to help improve the quality of the country's democracy, which is said to be declining due in part to increasing corruption among politicians.⁴ It examines the Church's landmark policy document, *Vision 2023*, specifically to assess ways that the CoP envisages improving the country's morality. In addition, the paper reviews the CoP's National Development Conference 2023, entitled: 'Moral Vision and National Development', during which a host of speakers, both from the CoP and from outside the Church, expressed support for the CoP's initiative to improve Ghana's morality.

Following independence in 1957, Ghana had a series of elected and unelected civilian and military regimes. Following a decade of military rule, Ghana democratised in 1992. In 2023, Ghana celebrated three decades of the Fourth Republic, an impressive feat of democratic longevity, one of Africa's few continuously democratic regimes. Pressure to democratise developed from the mid-1980s. The historic mission churches,

⁴ John Osae-Kwarpong. 'Ghana's democracy. Worrying signals from 2023 Democracy Index', *Daily Graphic*, 21 February 2024, 18.; Interview with Dr Charles Prempeh, Church of Pentecost member, and Research Fellow at the Centre for Cultural and African Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, 1 November 2022.

both Protestant and Catholic, were at the forefront of civil society pressure on the unelected military-based government of Jerry John Rawlings to democratise.

Democratisation encouraged various civil society actors, both secular and religious, including the Christian Council of Ghana, to comment publicly on issues of public concern.⁵ The onset of democratisation in 1992 coincided with a period of rapid growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana.⁶ Taken together, these developments encouraged Christian leaders to contribute to debates about public policy in various areas, including Ghana's moral calibre.

Senior politicians from Ghana's two main parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Convention (NDC) became increasingly open about how their faith affected their parties' public policies. For example, Ghana's then president, the NDC's John Evans Atta-Mills, declared in May 2011 at the annual convention of the Church of Pentecost that "Christ is the president of Ghana and he owe[d] no one any apologies for the statement which, according to him, is his 'guiding principle as head of state.'"⁷ With this statement, Otu notes, Atta-Mills "essentially proposed Christianity as Ghana's national religion."⁸

This does not imply that Christianity was uninfluential in Ghana's politics before the 1980s. Christianity had an important historic role in Ghana in the nation-building project both during and after the colonial period.⁹ In Ghana, religion and politics are traditionally connected through a notion of power, fundamentally of a spiritual nature.¹⁰ Before British colonialism, the Ashanti kingdom was the most powerful territorial political actor. This source of power fused religion and politics within the Ashanti kingdom, based on the belief that the king's seat of power ('the golden stool') descended from the sky, uniting the nation's soul and spirit. This reflects an indigenous and precolonial notion of religious nationalism, suggesting that the political philosophy of fusing religion and politics in Ghana is neither historically novel nor alien. Rather, it is a contemporary manifestation of a deeply rooted indigenous idea, albeit informed by contemporary regional and global discourses and influences. Among the latter is the contemporary impact of Pentecostal Christianity and its paradox of dis/continuity with African indigenous religions, which provides

⁵ Jeffrey Haynes. *Religion and Politics in Africa*. (London: Zed Books, 1996).

⁶ Francis Benyah. 2020. "Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches and the Provision of Social Services in Ghana." *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 38: 16–30.

⁷ 'Christ is President'. 2011. GhanaWeb.

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Christ-Is-President-President-Mills-208162> Accessed 18 August 2020.

⁸ Kwame Edwin Otu. 2019. *Skewing Sexuality*. Africa Is a Country. Available online:

<https://africasacountry.com/2019/12/skewingsexuality>

⁹ Paul Gifford. *African Christianity: Its Public Role*. (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1998).

¹⁰ Stephen Ellis and Gerri Ter Haar. *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Power in Africa*. (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2004).

a useful angle to explore the historical and religious context of Christianity in Ghana.¹¹ Asamoah-Gyadu notes that religion in Ghana today is all-pervasive and linked to most popular communal and societal activities, and, as a result, “it is impossible to understand politics in contemporary Ghana without some knowledge of the role religion plays in it.”¹²

The reintroduction of democracy in 1992 led to a new phase of national religiousness, contoured by Pentecostal-Charismatic churches’ growing religious and demographic prominence.¹³ Professor Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, immediate past President and Baeta-Grau Professor of Contemporary African Christianity and Pentecostalism at Trinity Theological Seminary at Accra, explained that the historic mission churches traditionally “responded to [political] developments through communiques and statements in the media,” addressing their comments to those in power.¹⁴ The Pentecostal-Charismatic churches took a different approach to political concerns. Typically, they would organise mass ‘prayer and fasting’ among their followers in order to deal with “political issues during elections, such as threats of violence both before and after elections.”¹⁵ Pentecostal-Charismatic churches used biblical precedence to interpret and explain why Ghana was suffering, employing prayer and prophetic declarations, which over time tilted Ghana’s Christian gravitational centre.¹⁶ As a result, the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches became the heartland of the Christian faith, dominating Ghana’s religious landscape.¹⁷ Over time, rather than secularising, many Ghanaians have embraced their Christian faith with great fervour, which in turn has significantly impacted many Ghanaians’ sense of national identity.¹⁸

Despite the return of democracy in 1992 and the growing influence of religion in public life and politics, many Ghanaians, both Christians and Muslims, express

¹¹ Adeshina Afolayan, Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, and Toyin Falola, eds. *Pentecostalism and Politics in Africa*. (London: PalgraveMacmillan, 2018); Allan Heaton Anderson. *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

¹² J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. ‘God Bless our Homeland Ghana’: Religion and Politics in a Post-Colonial African State, in Cephas N. Omenyo and Eric B. Anum (eds.), *Trajectories of Religion in Africa. Essays in Honour of John S. Pobee*. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 165.

¹³ Paul Gifford. *Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Interview with Professor Asamoah-Gyadu, Accra, 17 April 2023.

¹⁵ Interview with Professor Asamoah-Gyadu, Accra, 17 April 2023.

¹⁶ Fredrick Acheampong. n.d. Unpublished review of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, ‘God Bless Our Homeland Ghana’.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277009276_Acheampong_Fredrick_review_of_God_Bless_Our_Homeland_Ghana_Religion_and_Politics_in_a_Post-Colonial_African_State_by_J_Kwabena_Asamoah-Gyadu_in_Trajectories_of_Religion_in_Africa_Essays_in_Honour_of_J/link/555ddf3f08ae6f4dcc8d4345/download (accessed 31 May 2023).

¹⁷ Joseph Quayisi-Amakye. 2015. “Pentecostals and Contemporary Church-State Relations in Ghana.” *Journal of Church and State*, 57: 640.

¹⁸ Interview with Professor Asamoah-Gyadu, Accra, 17 April 2023.

concern about what they regard as a serious decline in morality and integrity at both elite and popular levels.¹⁹ Moral decline is believed to fuel corruption, undermine national development, and diminish faith in democracy as the best available system of government. Kwame Gyekye examines the nexus between corruption and morality in his 1997 book, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*.²⁰

Senior figures in the Church of Pentecost (CoP), Ghana's largest church, with more than 3.8 million followers – over 10% of the country's population are concerned both with the apparent decline of morality in Ghana and with the chances of political violence in the run-up to the December 2024 elections.²¹ The Chairman of the Church of Pentecost, Apostle Eric Nyamekye, voiced his concern in May 2024 that Ghana's 2024 elections could turn into a religious battle with one presidential candidate, the NPP's Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, a Muslim, and his main challenger, John Mahama of the NDC, a member of the Assemblies of God church.²²

Apostle Nyamekye and other senior CoP figures have developed close relationships with senior figures in Ghana's political class, including Ghana's two main political parties, the NPP and NDC. A close relationship between the CoP, the NPP and the NDC informs political debate in Ghana in two main ways. First, the CoP seeks to develop a framework to improve Ghanaians' moral behaviour, which accords both with Ghana's traditional culture and with the CoP's values and beliefs. Second, the CoP seeks to improve Ghanaians' morality in the run-up to the 2024 elections and to achieve this goal politically by voting for politicians who exemplify a suitable sense of morality in both their public and private lives.

¹⁹ Interview with Sheikh Aremeyaw Shaibu, spokesperson of Ghana's National Chief Imam, Accra, 6 February 2024.

²⁰ Kwame Gyekye. *Tradition and modernity. Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*. (Oxford, UK, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²¹ Interviews with Justice Anquandah Arthur, Senior Lecturer, PSTM, Pentecost University, Accra, 13 April 2024; Interview with J. Asare, CoP Pastor, 13 April 2024; Emmanuel Bonney. 2024. 'Don't turn elections into religious battle - Apostle Nyamekye to Ghanaians', *The Daily Graphic*, 3 May. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghana-news-dont-turn-elections-into-religious-battle-apostle-nyamekye-to-ghanaians.html> Accessed 18 August 2024.; Felix Delah Klutse. 2022. The Church of Pentecost membership hits over 3.3 million. 'Modern Ghana' <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1155852/the-church-of-pentecost-membership-hits-over-33mi.html> (accessed 16 August 2023).

²² Emmanuel Bonney. 2024. 'Don't turn elections into religious battle - Apostle Nyamekye to Ghanaians', *The Daily Graphic*, 3 May. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghana-news-dont-turn-elections-into-religious-battle-apostle-nyamekye-to-ghanaians.html> Accessed 18 August 2024.

Following this introductory section, the second section of the paper outlines the paper's research methodology. The third section examines links between morality and politics in Ghana. The fourth section looks at how moral vision is connected to national development. The concluding section sums up the findings of the paper.

Research Methodology

The paper adopts a comparative and qualitative methodological approach while also drawing on Afrobarometer's quantitative data. It builds on the author's long-standing interest in religion and politics in Ghana, which began in the mid-1980s, involving lengthy research trips in 1985 and 1990. The author undertook further research visits to Ghana in July and November 2022, April 2023, and February and June 2024. These visits resulted in many personal interviews with knowledgeable Ghanaians, including theologians, public intellectuals, political scientists, current and former government members, civil society organisations, and journalists.²³ The article also draws on other sources of information, including research monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, press statements from politicians and religious figures, relevant articles from Ghanaian newspapers, Ghanaian and foreign news websites, blogs, and social media channels. Finally, the article benefited from grey literature,²⁴ not least because much of the current debate about the political role of religion in Ghana is expressed in such fora.

Morality and Politics in Ghana

Ghana's national development is said to be undermined by what many Ghanaians regard as a serious decline in morality and integrity at both elite and popular levels. Moral decline is believed to fuel corruption and diminish some citizens' belief in democracy as the best available system of government. The role of religion in morality

²³ The author conducted fieldwork for this article, including relevant interviews, as an emeritus professor of London Metropolitan University, during 2022-24. Research ethics approval was obtained from the author's university, London Metropolitan University. Research ethics approval was also granted by Professor William Otoo Ellis, Chairman of the CoP's Research and Development Committee. The author's request to interview Professor Opoku Onyinah, Apostle Dr Emmanuel Anim, and Apostle Dr Christian Tsekpoe, was granted by Prof. Ellis in March 2023. Unfortunately Prof. Ellis' approval came too late for the author to interview the named persons during his February 2023 research visit to Ghana. Names of interviewees who contributed to the research for this paper are included at the end of the paper. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Interview questions are included at the end of the paper.

²⁴ Grey literature is any information not produced by commercial publishers, including research reports, working papers, conference proceedings, theses, preprints, white papers, blogs, podcasts, social media posts, guidelines, policy documents and reports produced by government departments, academics, business and industry. For this paper, such sources of information were often useful in helping find out current information on emerging areas of concern, enabling the author to learn from diverse range. Such information is not of course peer reviewed, and its quality is variable. As a result, the author sought to triangulate any information from grey sources with further insights from peer reviewed material.

is highly important in Ghana, a highly religious country.²⁵ Most Ghanaians belong to a religious faith. The most recent census (2021) indicates that 71.3% of the population identify as Christians.²⁶ About three-tenths of Ghanaians (29%) – that is, about 10 million people in a population of 30.8 million – are not Christian. Muslims comprise a fifth (19.9%) of Ghana’s population, those following ‘traditionalist’ religions amount to 3.2%, ‘other religious groups’ to 4.5%, and those with ‘no religion’, 1.1%.²⁷

Today, the public voice of Christian leaders is very prominent in Ghana. Bediako examined the central role of Christian leaders in calls for Ghana’s re-democratisation from the mid-1980s.²⁸ Bediako identified the then contemporaneous emergence of a new public theology, which, contesting a tendency unquestioningly to vest political power with sacred authority, had a central role in changing Ghana’s political culture in a genuinely democratic direction.

Scholars have also written extensively on the relationship between religion and morality in Ghana. These include their assessments of what determines moral or immoral behaviour.²⁹ It is unclear whether religious belief is a key determinant of moral behaviour. Discourse on the sources of morals found its way into African ethics from the West, augmenting Africans’ own examinations of the religious roots of morality.³⁰ For Christians, the foundation of the church is the Bible, teaching principles such as love and compassion. Consequently, Christians are encouraged to shun greed, bribery and corruption and thus improve society’s moral fibre.³¹

²⁵ Kofi Quashigah. *Religion and the Secular State in Ghana*. (Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2015); Interviews with Hajj Abdel-Manan Abdel-Rahman, Chairman of Coalition of Muslim Organisations of Ghana, via Zoom, 10 May 2023, Mr Kpanie Addy, Executive Director, Arrupe Jesuit Institute, Accra, 17 April 2023, and Dr John Azumah, Executive Director, The Sanneh Institute, University of Ghana, Accra, 21 April 2023.

²⁶ Christian denominations in Ghana include Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Catholic, Lutheran, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, and Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. Today, the latter demographically overshadow the historic mission churches, including the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches (<https://africanchristian.info/ghana-christianity/>).

²⁷ Doris Dakua Sasu. N/d. Religious affiliation of the population in Ghana in 2010 and 2021.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1172414/religious-affiliation-in-ghana/> (accessed 1 June 2023).

²⁸ Kwame Bediako. “Christian Witness in the Public Sphere: Some Lessons and Residual Challenges from the Recent Political History of Ghana”, in Lamin Sanneh and Joel A. Carpenter (eds.), *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 117.

²⁹ See, for example, Kofi Quashigah. *Religion and the Secular State in Ghana*. (Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2015 and George Anderson Jnr. 2013. ‘Religion and Morality in Ghana: A Reflection’, *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1 (3): 162-170.

³⁰ Kwame Gyekye. *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*. (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996); John Mbiti. *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Heinemann, 1990); George Anderson Jnr. 2013. ‘Religion and Morality in Ghana: A Reflection’, *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1 (3): 162-170.

³¹ Interviews with the executive director of a national religious project, Accra, 26 April 2023, and with a retired Romam Catholic priest, Accra, 21 April 2023.

Anderson Jnr and Inusah identify moral values as “guiding principles, virtues, or standards of behaviour” widely understood “as desirable and important” and “held in high repute by a society or an individual.”³² The values guide the moral agent in his or her interaction with other moral agents. The authors identify the following moral values extant in Ghana: honour, respect, hospitality, gratitude, truthfulness, obedience, unity, godliness, hard work and courage. For Gyekye, moral values are “forms or patterns of conduct that are considered most worthwhile and cherished by society.”³³ Moral values are principles of behaviour and objectives of both social and individual actions. Sarpong adds that moral values may be peculiar and differ from one culture or society to another; yet there are some values such as respect, truthfulness and honesty *inter alia* which are universal.³⁴

Leading Christians in Ghana publicly assert that the country is undergoing significant moral decline.³⁵ Reverend Joseph Felix Mensah, Chairman of the Apostolic Council, Great Commission Church International, stated in August 2022 that “the Church has failed in its responsibility of nurturing people of integrity and sound character.” This is because “issues of morality and integrity were no longer of major concern, especially in educational institutions” and “moral breakdown” was negatively affecting society, leading some to ridicule the Christian faith. Mensah’s concerns were echoed a few months later in a June 2023 newspaper article, by Most Reverend Emmanuel Kwaku Asante, former Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana and past Chairman of the National Peace Council.³⁶ Asante quoted a prominent Ghanaian theologian, the late Rev. Prof. Joshua Kudadjie:

In private as in public life there is irresponsibility, dishonesty, corruption, subterfuge, people of all walks of life and status engage in currency and drug trafficking, abuse of office, cheating, fraud, misappropriation, embezzlement, nepotism. It looks as if we cannot distinguish between right and wrong and have no recognizable standard of behaviour. ... There is lawlessness, lack of respect for authority.³⁷

³² George Anderson Jnr and Hussein Inusah. 2023. “Virtue Ethics as a Model for Addressing Moral Decline in Ghana,” *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 4, 3:170.

³³ Kwame Gyekye. *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*. 55.

³⁴ Peter Sarpong. *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*. (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), 64.; Interviews with Reverend Michael Nortey, Research Fellow, Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, Accra, 24 April 2023 and Father Joop Visser, Catholic priest, Accra, 21 April 2023.

³⁵ Interview with Church of Pentecost Pastor, Bright Nyamedor, National Director of the Ghana Evangelism Committee, Accra, 16 February 2024.

³⁶ Most Reverend Emmanuel Kwaku Asante highlighted his concerns to the author during a personal interview with the author via WhatsApp on 3 May 2023. This form of interview was necessary as Reverend Asante was not been in Ghana during the author’s April 2023 research visit to Accra.

³⁷ Emmanuel Asante. 2023. ‘Message For Fathers’ Day Celebration: To Be Celebrated Or Not To Be Celebrated?’, *The Chronicle*, 23 June. <https://thechronicle.com.gh/message-for-fathers-day-celebration-to-be-celebrated-or-not-to-be-celebrated/> (accessed 16 August 2023).

The following section examines the Church of Pentecost's approach to Ghana's morality dilemma, as exemplified in *Vision 2023* and the Church's National Development Conference 2023, entitled Moral Vision and National Development.

Moral Vision and National Development

The Speaker of Ghana's Parliament, Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, announced that parliament would not sit on Wednesday, 26 July 2023, due to an event of great national importance taking place away from parliament. Not only Bagbin, but also the 'Leadership of the House, and other Members of Parliament' (MPs) participated in the country's first National Development Conference on 26-27 July, organised by the Church of Pentecost at the Pentecost Convention Centre in Millennium City, Gomoa Fetteh, near Kasoa in the Central Region.³⁸ Others in attendance included National Executives of political parties, leaders of religious bodies, civil society organisations and governance experts. Conference keynote speakers were drawn from Ghana's political, legal and religious elite: the vice president, Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, speaking on behalf of Ghana's president, Nana Addo Dankwah Akufo-Addo, Speaker Bagbin, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Gertrude Araba Esaaba Torkornoo, two former presidents of Ghana: John Agyekum Kufuor and John Dramani Mahama, the Chairman of the Church of Pentecost Apostle Eric Nyamekye, and Sheikh Aremeyaw Shaibu, spokesperson of Ghana's National Chief Imam, Osmanu Nuhu Sharubutu. Clearly, this was an important event featuring the involvement of leading figures from Ghana's political and religious environments.

The 2023 CoP-organised national development conference followed publication in 2019 of *Vision 2023*. *Vision 2023* sets out in detail how the Church strategically addresses Ghana's development problems. The Church's strategy, "to possess the nations", is to be achieved via three approaches: "equipping the church", "strengthening and realigning church institutions and structures", and "transforming societies." Pastor Kwasi Asante Annor, General Manager of the CoP television station, PENT TV, explained that the National Development Conference was an important component of "transforming societies." The conference was "a historic event that brought together the influencers of society to deliberate and reflect on the moral vision of our nation - Ghana - and its implications for National Development."³⁹

³⁸ Parliament suspends July 26 sitting for National Development Conference. 2023. 'The Ghana Report'. <https://www.theghanareport.com/parliament-suspends-july-26-sitting-for-national-development-conference/> (accessed 16 August 2023).

³⁹ Kwasi Asante Annor, 2023 'Deepening the Call For Moral Vision and National Development: The Rwandan Model- Lessons For Ghana - Part One'. <https://thecophq.org/deepening-the-call-for-moral-vision-and-national-development-the-rwandan-model-lessons-for-ghana-part-one/> (accessed 16 August 2023).

Vision 2023 is a manifesto to transform Ghanaian society in line with biblical pronouncements, including Genesis 41: 39-41 and Jeremiah. 29: 4-7.⁴⁰ A section of *Vision 2023*, entitled, "Community Transformation Overview," states:

The Church is commissioned by Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to advance the Kingdom of God on earth. Its mandate is the discipleship of the nations, which also brings along societal transformation and development. In other words, to develop and transform the nations and communities is to move those communities towards Christ. This calls for a change of worldviews, opinions, attitudes and ways of life.⁴¹

CoP efforts to transform society involve working with the government, traditional authorities, such as chiefs, and the media. Specific steps include:

- rolling out 'programmes to strategically engage/disciple the nation's existing governance structures'.⁴²
- deepening 'engagement with the chieftaincy institution in order to impart values of the Kingdom of God to traditional authorities'.⁴³
- embarking 'on strategic partnerships with government in developing the nation,
- partnering with 'Government to establish public schools at strategic places to enable the poor to have improved access to education'.
- contributing 'to national level dialogues and discussions on highly relevant issues that promote national development and border on the welfare of Ghanaians'.⁴⁴
- initiating a security-based development project dubbed 'Police Station & Post Project (PSPP)' to put up police stations/police posts in some selected deprived and insecure areas. This will be "our contribution to government's efforts to provide police posts in communities where they are needed,"
- collaborating 'with the Ghana Prisons Service, the church will initiate the construction of accommodation facilities (cells) for selected prisons in the country as part of efforts to support government ease congestions in those prisons'.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Genesis 41: 39-41: Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.' Jeremiah. 29: 4-7 'So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.' This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.'

⁴¹ The Church of Pentecost. *Vision 2023. Five-Year Vision Document for The Church of Pentecost Covering the Period 2018-2023. Theme: Possessing the Nations: Equipping the Church to Transform Every Sphere of Society with Values and Principles of the Kingdom of God.* (Accra: Church of Pentecost Ghana, 2019), 62.

⁴² The Church of Pentecost, *Vision 2023*. 53.

⁴³ The Church of Pentecost, *Vision 2023*. 57.

⁴⁴ The Church of Pentecost, *Vision 2023*. 61.

⁴⁵ The Church of Pentecost, *Vision 2023*. 61-62.

- ‘strategically collaborate with some selected media houses to push the transformation agenda of the church.’⁴⁶

The anticipated outcome of the strategy, covering the years 2018-2023, was set out in a section entitled: ‘Expectation of a Transformed Society’:

- A society free from negative behaviours or vices,
- A society where Christ-like behaviours are displayed,
- Increase in godliness in the society, i.e., people of integrity,
- Considerable reduction in corruption,
- Reduction in crime-rate and social vices such as teenage pregnancy, smoking and rape cases,
- A society whose members are law-abiding citizens,
- Godliness in the society,
- The Church will be actively involved in the disciplining of the nation’s existing governance structures (executive, judiciary, legislature) and corporate and social institutions with the values and principles of the Kingdom of God.⁴⁷

Achievement of the goals of *Vision 2023* is dependent on the ability to achieve a moral transformation of Ghana. The theme of the 2023 National Development Conference, ‘Moral Vision and National Development’, highlighted links between morality and national development. Conference speakers addressed the theme in several ways. For example, the vice-president, Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, ‘pledged that the Government would work assiduously’ to establish a free and just society, where entrepreneurship and individual initiative are the sources of wealth creation with “a strong social safety net for the marginalised and disadvantaged; and the improvement of the governance architecture to deepen accountability and respect for the rule of law in our body politic.”⁴⁸ Dr Bawumia did not have the time to explain how this would be done, or what particular reforms would be needed to ensure success.

A second speaker, the Chief Imam’s spokesperson, Sheikh Aremeyaw Shaibu, emphasised the “significant role of religion in upholding moral uprightness for national development.” Shaibu asserted that “religion and morality are inseparably intertwined, with religious norms shaping and governing behaviour to achieve moral goals.” To define morality as a system which society uses to understand what is right involves for Shaibu, “a code of conduct that guides individuals to engage in behaviours deemed good and encouraged while discouraging harmful actions (moral vices).”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ The Church of Pentecost, *Vision 2023*. 67.

⁴⁷ The Church of Pentecost, *Vision 2023*. 105-110.

⁴⁸ The Church of Pentecost is a Steadfast Development Partner – Veep’. 2023.

<https://thecophq.org/category/church-news/page/4/> (accessed 16 August 2023).

⁴⁹ Religion Plays a Significant Role in Nation Building – Sheikh Shaibu Asserts. 2023.

<https://thecophq.org/category/church-news/page/5/> (accessed 16 August 2023).

At its close, the conference issued a communique, stating that: “The moral character of the nation has dipped, as evidenced in the increasingly inefficient leadership at all levels (such as family, Chieftaincy, religious, political etc.), degradation of the environment, lack of integrity, disrespect in public discourse, corruption, lack of patriotism and volunteerism in Ghana.”⁵⁰ The conference called for establishment of a National Moral and Integrity Council (NMIC), with the status of Ghana’s Peace Council.⁵¹ The aim of the NMIC is to oversee “a process of restoration of generations of decay and moral decadence that Ghana has experienced over the years,” via a ‘National Moral Vision Plan’.⁵² In addition, the NMIC would appoint a ‘multi-electoral team’ led by ‘Faith Based Organisations’ to engage national bodies, such as the National Commission on Civic Education and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, and other relevant stakeholders to actualise the National Moral Vision Plan.

The government did not publicly respond to the call for a NMIC, a National Moral Vision Plan, or a faith-dominated ‘multi-electoral team’, and there were no further details provided by the CoP, such as terms of reference or how progress would be assessed. To seek to assess how Ghanaians felt about the NMIC and other aspects of the CoP plan, the author communicated during the week of 5-12 August 2023 with around 20 Ghanaian colleagues and friends, some religious people and some not. The aim was to seek their views on the NMIC and whether they believed it could fix Ghana’s perceived morality and integrity concerns, including significant state-level corruption, identified by Afrobarometer as one of the most serious issues facing the country, many Ghanaians believe.⁵³ Responses ranged from, on the one hand, a belief that such a council was not needed and/or would not be established, to a belief, on the other hand, that the NMIC was potentially a good idea but unlikely that the government would see it as a priority with presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for December 2024. Several respondents noted a problematic issue: Whose morals are appropriate to judge elite and public morality and integrity, and what standards should be used to make judgements?

⁵⁰ The communique is reproduced in full at <https://thecophq.org/category/church-news/page/5/> (accessed 16 August 2023).

⁵¹ Ghana’s National Peace Council is an independent statutory national peace institution established by 818th Act of Ghana’s Parliament, named The National Peace Council Act, 2011. The core function of the Council is to prevent, manage, and resolve conflict and to build sustainable peace <https://www.peacecouncil.gov.gh/>

⁵² Letitia Osei. 2023. Clergy, chiefs, others call for establishment of National Moral and Integrity Council. ‘Citi Newsroom’. <https://citinewsroom.com/2023/07/clergy-chiefs-others-call-for-establishment-of-national-moral-and-integrity-council/> (accessed 16 August 2023).

⁵³ Afrobarometer. 2023. ‘Summary of results. Afrobarometer Round 9 Survey in Ghana, 2022 <https://www.afrobarometer.org/countries/ghana/> (accessed 16 August 2023).

Conclusion

The narrative in this brief paper suggests several points for those seeking to understand the links between religion, morality and democracy in Ghana. The aim of this paper was modest: to set out the role of the Church of Pentecost, in accord with the government of Ghana, to introduce and develop a framework of national importance to improve Ghana's morality, development and democracy.

First, it is clear that to ascertain links between corruption, values and the role religion plays in people's attitudes and lives, it is necessary to conduct in-depth research into Ghana's specific cultural and religious context. The current paper is no more than a preliminary effort to do that. Second, the potential contribution of religion to improve morality, for example, by tackling corruption, is inherently limited, not least because in contemporary Ghanaian society, values are subject to many non-religious influences. Third, recent Afrobarometer data indicate that many Ghanaians, despite the great majority being followers of religious faith, are sceptical of their religious leaders, believing many to be prone to corruption.⁵⁴

Recent data from Afrobarometer reveals that democracy in Ghana is falling short for many citizens due to various factors, including heightened perceptions of both petty and state-level corruption. There is also a growing sense of pessimism regarding national development and a lack of confidence in the ability of successive governments to address these issues. According to Afrobarometer, "77% of Ghanaians believe that the level of corruption in the country has increased over the past year," and "87% of citizens feel that Ghana is moving in the wrong direction." Additionally, when asked about the current government's effectiveness in "fighting corruption in government," responses were as follows: 33.5% indicated very badly and 21.0% fairly badly.

Afrobarometer posed a further question: "How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Religious leaders?" The results revealed that 61.5% perceived 'some' religious leaders as corrupt, while 17.7% believed 'most' were corrupt, and 9.5% thought 'all' were corrupt. Consequently, a significant 88.7% of Ghanaians surveyed in 2020 believed that either 'some', 'most', or 'all' religious leaders are involved in corruption. Furthermore, over half of those surveyed expressed limited faith in religious leaders: 21.0% indicated 'not at all' and 31.3% said 'just a little'. These findings are particularly relevant in light of proposals for a National Moral and Integrity Council and a National Moral Vision plan, which are likely to be influenced by prominent Christian figures, including those from the Church of Pentecost.

⁵⁴ Afrobarometer. 2023.

Fourth, despite the scepticism of some Ghanaians, there is clearly untapped potential for religious ethics and narratives to contribute to curbing corruption. However, this would only be the case if religion is not merely interpreted in terms of ritual practices, but in terms of its values consistently lived out and translated into appropriate moral behaviour. To attain this, spiritual training and appropriate values should be infused from childhood, and then consistently reinforced throughout adult life.

The Church of Pentecost's organisation of Ghana's initial national development conference underlined growing calls for religion to be used in the fight against 'moral decadence' and corruption on the assumption that Ghana's religious elite are more ethical and moral compared to other Ghanaians. Yet, this may be a dubious assumption, not least because many of the more corrupt countries in the world, including Ghana according to Transparency International, also rank highly in terms of religiosity; yet many religious leaders are believed to be corrupt by 'ordinary' Ghanaians, according to Afrobarometer data. Some Ghanaians may believe that there is a causal relationship between religion and corruption, involving some religious leaders. Religion may have some impact on attitudes towards corruption, but it may have only a limited impact on actual corrupt behaviour. This is because – despite universal condemnation of corruption – the latter is widely seen by Ghanaians as being so systemic that being incorrupt may make little sense.

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“God Would Himself Raise Up a Nation out of Africa”: God’s Covenant, The Church of Pentecost and Ghana’s Public Sphere

Charles Prempeh

Abstract

In this article, I discuss the trajectories of religion and politics in Ghana, which have been extensively analysed, focusing on the role of the Church of Pentecost (CoP) in shaping the country’s public sphere. Given the burgeoning contestation over Ghana’s public sphere, focusing particularly on the CoP’s visible presence in the country’s sphere as providers of social services and vanguards of the country’s moral rectitude, this paper concentrates on answering the questions: what accounts for the conviction and boldness of the CoP shattering the boundaries of religion and politics? How is the church reorienting its members to conform to its moral reforms? My questions chime with the debate between the often glossed-over and blurred lines of demarcation between religion and politics. As a methodological approach, I deploy critical reading of Ghana’s socio-political histories and the ideas of secularism to argue that the CoP, currently Ghana’s largest Pentecostal denomination, has revitalised the premodern logic of state-religion relations, based on its intermeshing of covenantal relationship with God since the 1930s and oral theology, to stage itself as an important player in Ghana’s public governance. The CoP’s perception of itself as God’s chosen church rationalises its efforts at choreographing Ghana away from Western cultural influences. Thus, both religion and CoP’s covenant are prior to the state, and the church seeks to guide the public sphere and governance of Ghana so that the country can fulfil its calling as God’s end-time chosen nation from Africa for global evangelism.

Keywords: Church of Pentecost, Covenant, LGBTQ, Secular, Ghana

Introduction

“PENTECOST Church” to build a new prison” Got to love GH. The govt builds a cathedral and the church builds prison. Only in GH.”⁵⁵

The above vignette was not just a mockery but an imagined contradiction between church and state relations that the Ghanaian comedian and satirist, Kwaku Sintim Misa, known in the showbiz industry as KSM, laughed off. The statement was triggered when the Church of Pentecost (CoP) announced the construction of prison facilities. As part of the CoP’s five-year vision labelled, “Possessing the Nations” agenda, the church has re-enforced its visibility in Ghana’s public sphere through providing social services. It has built roads, bus stop sheds, boreholes, clinics, and

⁵⁵ Ghanaweb (July 29, 2019), ‘It’s only in Ghana churches build prisons – KSM mocks’, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/It-s-only-in-Ghana-churches-build-prisons-KSM-mocks-767557> (Accessed: June 3, 2022).

police stations. During the outbreak of the current coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the CoP offered its ultra-modern recreational and religious centre to the state to fight the pandemic. The church also donated a fleet of cars to the government to fight against the pandemic.

Before then, the CoP had invested heavily in building peace during elections, participating in massive regular clean-up exercises, nationwide planting of trees and incorporating traditional chiefs into Pentecostal practice and national governance. All these appear counter-cultural to the usual simplistic public framing of religion as worship and cultic practices. But of all these, perhaps the one that exasperated a section of the public, including KSM, to consider as an aberration and antinomy of religion and politics was the CoP's construction of prison facilities and the recent debate over LGBTQ+ rights.

Much as the CoP seeks to close the gap between religion, and social justice, the church has become the focus of the tiring, enlivened discourse over the nexus between religion and politics. On social media, some CoP members have accused the church of neglecting their members to demonstrate populist showmanship of what a church member expressed as, "outside gentility, home cry." Additionally, the CoP's involvement in the task of protecting Ghana's public sphere against the liberal sexual invasion from the neoliberal Western world has been a subject of critique. Pro-LGBTQ+ campaigners have profiled the CoP and the religious community for reinforcing hatred against a minority group.⁵⁶

As Ghana's public sphere goes through rising contestation over the boundary between religion and politics in public governance, church activities in public have become a subject of intense debate. Specifically focusing on the CoP's visible presence in the country's public sphere as key agents in providing social services and vanguards of the country's public ethics, this study accounts for the CoP's assertiveness in deconstructing the superficial boundaries of religion and politics. How is the church reorienting its members to conform to its moral reforms? As I respond to these issues, my study contributes to the debate between the often simplistic lines of demarcation between religion and politics. In this article, I discuss the trajectories of religion and politics in Ghana – which has had extensive analysis,⁵⁷ focusing on the role of the CoP

⁵⁶ A Group of Ghanaian Citizens, 'Press Conference on Memorandum to Parliament of Ghana Against Passage of the "Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, 2021', <https://cddgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ANTILGBT-BILL-PRESS-STATEMENT.FINAL-1.pdf> (Accessed: June 3, 2022); Essien, Kwame and Aderinto, Saheed, ' "Cutting of the Head of the Roaring Monster": Homosexuality and Repression in Africa', *African Study Monograph*, 30, 3 (2009); 121-135.

⁵⁷ Charles Prempeh, 'Religion, Social Media and the Discourse on Prisons: An Analysis of the Responses to the Church of Pentecost (CoP) Prison Project in Ghana', *Prison Service Journal* 256 (2021): 38-43; Opoku Onyinah, 'Distinguished Church Leader Essay: The Church of Pentecost and Its Role in Ghanaian

in shaping the country's public sphere. I will argue that the CoP, currently Ghana's largest Pentecostal denomination,⁵⁸ has revitalised the premodern logic of state-religion relations, based on its intermeshing of covenantal relationship with God since the 1930s and oral theology, to stage itself as an important player in Ghana's public governance. The CoP's perception of itself as God's chosen church rationalises its efforts at choreographing Ghana away from Western cultural influences. Thus, both religion and CoP's covenant are prior to the state, and the church seeks to guide the public sphere and governance of Ghana so that the country can fulfil its calling as God's end-time chosen nation from Africa for global evangelism.

Methodologically, I anchor my argument on a contextual reading of Ghana's socio-political trajectories and ideas of secularisation. Similarly, I leverage my own immersion as a member of the CoP, having been baptised in 1997, to indicate my appreciation of the socio-cultural and historical nuances of the church. Nevertheless, to ensure that my own biases do not slip into and mar my analysis, I approach my analysis from the perspective of my training as an academic, with a speciality in the Humanities (African Studies) as a guide. Broadly, the rest of my article is structured as follows: The CoP's covenant with God and the church's identity, Ghana's trajectories with religion and politics, and CoP's engagement with the country's public sphere.

The CoP's Covenant with God since the 1930s

The history of the CoP goes back to the 1920s with a group of Gold Coasters (now Ghana), the majority of whom belonged to the Christ Apostolic Church in Asamankese in the Eastern Region of the country.⁵⁹ The group made up of Brothers J.S. Gyimah, S.R. Asomaning from Akroso, S.W. Dufour and S.H. Ankama of Atonsu-Mampong, led by Peter Anim, sought the power of God's Holy Spirit to rejuvenate Christianity.⁶⁰ It was through this earnest desire that Pastor Clarke helped the group to establish the Faith Tabernacle. Since then, the group prayed and studied the doctrines of Christianity, especially about the New Birth, the Baptism of the Holy

Society', in Philipp Ohlmann, Wilhelm Grab and Marie-Luise Frost (eds.), *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonisation of Development*, 183-194 (London/New York: Routledge, 2020); Opoku Onyinah and Michael Ntummy, *God's Faithfulness to the Church of Pentecost* (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2019); Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, 'Pentecostals and Contemporary Church-State Relations in Ghana', *Journal of Church and State*, 54, 4 (2015): 640-657.

⁵⁸ Amos Jimmy Markin, *Transmitting the Spirit in Missions: The History and Growth of the Church of Pentecost* (Eugene, Oregon: WIPF & Stock, 2019).

⁵⁹ Michael K. Ntummy, 'Covenant Renewed', in D.K. Noble-Atsu (ed), *Tell the Next Generation: Lectures Notes on the Annual Themes of The Church of Pentecost Vol. I 1988-2002* (Accra: The National Literature Committee, The Church of Pentecost, 2007), 18.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

Spirit and the resultant gifts. As part of the evolution of the group, led by Anim, they renamed their Faith Tabernacle Church, The Apostolic Faith Church in 1930.⁶¹

According to the CoP's history, in 1931, as the group prayed at the base in Akroso, God made a covenant with the church in the form of a prophetic message. This message was mediated through Rev. J.S. Gyimah. The covenant has received extensive discussion from several CoP church chroniclers, so I will in this article focus on the portion that claims that:

God would Himself raise up a nation out of Africa that would be a spearhead and light to the world, heralding the Second Coming of Christ Jesus the Lord. For that matter, Ghana has been chosen to fulfil this eternal will and purpose of God.⁶²

The text of the covenant brings out several issues for discussion. First, it recapitulates the nature of the Middle Eastern covenant where tutelary deities go into special relations with their people.⁶³ The same is true of pre-colonial ethnic groups in Ghana, where some tutelary deities served as the patron force of their people. Second, the covenant brought to the fore, the old narrative of "chosen-ness".⁶⁴ Extrapolation from the CoP's covenant, I argue that the covenant gives the church an idea of having a unique identity with an extraordinary mission. As the CoP profiles itself as the chosen church of God, it concurrently considers itself the vector of reforming Ghana's public sphere.

To ensure the fulfilment of the covenant, which is so central in carving an image for the CoP, the church undertook the following measures:

1. It was the general consensus that every first Wednesday of each month be set aside as Missionary Day for prayers and offerings to be made for the expansion of mission work.
2. It was generally agreed that the Women's Movement should set aside every first Tuesday of the Month to pray for the growth and expansion of the Church spiritually, morally, financially, and numerically. The slogan of the Women's Movement has been "Holiness Unto the Lord" because of the covenant of holiness.

⁶¹ Ibid., 2.

⁶² Ibid.,19.

⁶³ Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J.N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East: Part 2: Text, Notes and Chromograms* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012).

⁶⁴ Reuven Firestone, *Who Are the Real Chosen People?: The Meaning of Chosenness in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Pub., 2008).

3. All calls and elections were to be confirmed through divine intervention and the general consensus of the people.⁶⁵

Concretising the above measures largely shaped CoP's missiological strategy, including the founder's (James McKeown) creative cultural adaptability.⁶⁶ Occasionally, in light of seismic shifts and periodic socio-cultural changes, certain covenant-fulfilling measures of the church can lead to inter-generational conflicts. This phenomenon has been thoroughly examined by one of the church's distinguished scholars, Christian Tsekpoe. He investigated the effective transgenerational mission strategies that the Church of Pentecost has adopted since the beginning of the millennium.⁶⁷ Merging the above in public life, the church has, since the 1980s, exerted more influence in Ghana's public sphere. More recently, in 2019, the CoP openly declared a ban on pre-marital photos that it is considered morally irreconcilable with the church's holiness practices.⁶⁸ In all this, I will also discuss how orality is a major feature of the Pentecostal movement in transmitting social values,⁶⁹ the CoP is investing in creative songs, as part of oral theology, to reorient public political discourse and moral lives.

The CoP's pervasiveness visibility in public with "conservative" moral values has raised concerns for a section of its youthful members and the public about the church transgressing the marital choices and itinerary of its members and public morality. But making sense of this seeming contradiction and its implications for church theology and orthopraxis requires a contextualised reading of politico-religious history since the 1930s. The 1930s in the history of Ghana (then the Gold Coast) was saturated by religious nationalism – emblematic of the rising influence of the African Independent Churches (AICs) and indigenous tutelary deities. Historically, the CoP largely damned the AICs' conflation of indigenous cultures and elements of Christianity as syncretistic. Additionally, Onyinah argued that the absence of strong moral ethics in the AICs was one of the reasons for the decline in the growth of such churches.⁷⁰ As the church records, the 1930s nationwide popularity of *Tigare* was a

⁶⁵ Ntummy, 'Covenant', 21.

⁶⁶ Christine Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana: 3,000 Churches in 50 Years: The Story of James McKeown and the Church of Pentecost* (Chichester: New Wine Press, 1989); Walker, O. Daniel. 'The Pentecost fire is Burning: Models of Mission Activities in the Church of Pentecost' (PhD Dissertation Submitted to the University of Birmingham, 2017).

⁶⁷ Christian Tsekpoe, *Intergenerational Missiology: An African Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2022).

⁶⁸ Graphic Online (January 27, 2019), 'Pentecost Church Bans Amorous Pre-Wedding Photos', <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghana-news-pentecost-church-bans-amorous-pre-wedding-photos.html> (Accessed: June 3, 2022).

⁶⁹ Opoku Onyinah, 'Pentecostalism and the African Diaspora: An Examination of the Missions Activities of the Church of Pentecost', *Pneuma*, 26, 2 (2006): 216-241.

⁷⁰ Opoku Onyinah, 'African Christianity in the Twenty-first Century,' *Word & World*, 27, 3 (2007), 307.

major blot on the influence of missionary Christianity on the Gold Coast.⁷¹ Busia, therefore, assessed that Christianity had a thin veneer impact on the cultures of the people of the Gold Coast because it was either superficial, alien or both.⁷² The alienation of Christianity and the popularity of tutelary deities were threats to the emerging nation as God's covenanted nation – Hence, a rationale for CoP's retelling of God's covenant severally after 1931.⁷³

Similarly, the struggle for independence during the decade, especially after the end of World War II, fractured the nation among several interests. Kwame Nkrumah and his group advocated for unitary government, and Asante royals pleaded for a federation.⁷⁴ Shortly after independence, Ghana was expressed as “God Has Chosen Nkrumah Already” in support of Nkrumah's political ambition to perpetuate and consolidate himself in power.⁷⁵ The context that involved a merging of the deities and a political figure in the contest for the “soul” of Ghana provided a socio-political and theological justification for God's covenant with the CoP. All of these bled into the contours of postcolonial politics, where religion and politics complexly merged in defining Ghana's constitutional status. The next section, therefore, discusses religion and politics and the idea of secularism.

Religion, Politics, and the Idea of Secularism in Ghana

Religion and politics have interplayed to shape human lives for centuries.⁷⁶ In the precolonial era, chiefs and monarchs were not just political leaders; they also mediated between the tutelary deities and the state.⁷⁷ Thus, before the birth of Western enlightenment – the secularisation of politics in the eighteenth century – chiefs and monarchs derived their authority from religion.⁷⁸ All this was because religion and politics were not considered irreconcilable categories. The word religion was hardly used as an academic category to reflect a distinct metaphysical aspect of life from their mundane life until the nineteenth century.

⁷¹ Tigare deity and the shrine were one of the numerous anti-witchcraft religious cults that were influential in the 1940s, spreading from the Northern Regions to the Akan areas of Ghana (See: Dovlo, Elom. “New religious movements in Ghana.” *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia* 4, no. 1 (2002): 1-34. Ntummy, ‘Covenant’, 24.

⁷² Kofi A. Busia. ‘Has the Christian faith been adequately presented?’. *International Review of Mission* (1961): 88.

⁷³ WideSOFT Hannover (April 4, 2021), ‘God's Covenant With The Church of Pentecost – Prof. M.K. Yeboah’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUUug6b-v-0>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUUug6b-v-0> (Accessed: June 4, 2022).

⁷⁴ Yao O. Asamoah, *The Political History of Ghana (1950-2013): The Experiences of a Non-Conformist* (Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2014).

⁷⁵ Personal conversation with my late father Anthony Prempeh.

⁷⁶ Steve Bruce. *Politics & Religion* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).

⁷⁷ K.A. Busia. *The Position of the Chief in Modern Political System of Ashanti: A Study of the Influence of Contemporary Social Change in Ashanti Political Institutions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951).

⁷⁸ Maurice Keen. *The Penguin History of Medieval Europe* (London: Penguin Books, 1968).

When the Arab and European colonisers visited the shores of Africa, Africans already held onto a non-binary worldview that informed socio-political institutions for the insurance of social order. Islam and Christianity, therefore, did not find a religiously *tabula rasa* society or a society bereft of a complex understanding of the interface between religion and politics. Given the non-binary composite worldview of Africans, the Europeans struggled to separate African cultures from religion as both were hardly separated – leading to their wanton bastardisation of African cultures as pagan before the nineteenth century.⁷⁹ All the same, at the time of late colonialism, religion was already firmly established in precolonial Africa. For this reason, given that Britain had significantly secularised its politics during the colonial era, the British did not unnecessarily interfere with the religious regime of the colonised Gold Coasters.⁸⁰

The relative tolerance of the British to the interface between religion and politics persisted into the postcolonial era. As the colonialists left Ghana deeply fractured on “the Abrahamic religions” alongside indigenous religions, during the struggle against colonialism, Nkrumah deployed majority Christian motives to advance partisan politics. He inverted the Christian text, Matthew: “Seek ye first the political kingdom and all others shall be added.”⁸¹ While his inversion of Jesus’s statement drew criticism from Christians, it helped Nkrumah to invest in religion for counterhegemonic purposes.⁸² Similarly, Nkrumah *sacralised* politics to appeal to the increasingly enchanted public sphere of Ghana. Nkrumah merged his discursive interaction with Ghana’s multi-religious heritage in his philosophy of *consciencism*, which advocates for a fusion of Indigenous beliefs, Islam, and Christianity in supporting human flourishing.⁸³ A section of Ghanaians also read Nkrumah as overly ambitious in canonising himself as a lifelong president – partly explaining his overthrow.⁸⁴

After Nkrumah’s overthrow by the army and police in 1966, nearly every single leader of Ghana has, in one way or another, appropriated religion for several purposes.⁸⁵ Regardless of the use of religion by the political elites, religion is strongly featured in nearly every public event. Ghana could, therefore, hardly be called a secular state.

⁷⁹ Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 1999).

⁸⁰ John Dun and A.F. Robertson, *Dependence and Opportunity: Political Change in Ahafo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

⁸¹ Kwame Nkrumah, *Axioms of Kwame Nkrumah* (London: Panaf Books Ltd, 1967), 47.

⁸² Rupe Simms, “‘I am a Non-Denominational Christian and a Marxist Socialist:’ A Gramscian Analysis of the Convention People’s Party and Kwame Nkrumah’s Use of Religion”, *Sociology of Religion*, 64, 4 (2003): 463-477.

⁸³ Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophical and Ideology for Decolonization and Development with Particular Reference to the African Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1964).

⁸⁴ Peter T. Omari, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Anatomy of an African Dictatorship* (London: C. Hurst, 1970).

⁸⁵ John Pobee, *Religion and Politics in Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1991).

That Ghana is hardly a secular state remains highly debatable. This debate involves two contradictory claims: on the one hand, Muslims argue that the state should disentangle itself from all religions – as they seek to contest Christian hegemony in the public sphere. On the other hand, the highly vocal Christian majority claims the country is a Christian nation as part of enforcing Christian hegemony in the public sphere. These polar stances reinforce my argument about the need to nuance the usual overly simplistic profiling of Ghana as either “secular” or “Christian”.

Since the 1990s, the Muslim call for the hijab to be accepted in public and Christian efforts at protecting the frontiers of Christian practices as a shared heritage in historic Christian mission schools draws out the contradictory claims of Ghana’s perceived secular status.⁸⁶ A recent example was the alleged instance of the administrators of the historic Methodist Senior High School, Wesley Girls, proscribing a Muslim student from fasting in the month of Ramadan.⁸⁷ Apart from these religions striving over the “soul” of Ghana’s public sphere, the religious edifice that signals Christian broadening and extension of their influence over the public tends to draw the religion’s “non” into the controversy over Ghana’s religious-politics constitutionality. This may explain why the proposed state’s involvement with a National Cathedral continues to polarise Ghanaians over the issue of secularism. It may also explain the brouhaha over Achimota’s initial refusal to admit two Rastafarian students because of their locked hair in 2021.⁸⁸ The religion-politics nexus even gets more complex when the CoP’s building of roads and especially the prison facility considered by a section of the Ghanaian public as an infraction of Ghana’s secular status. Nevertheless, both Muslims and Christians, as part of a shared “Abrahamic origin”, tend to share the same moral vision of sexual purity that informs their denouncement of the Western extension of LGBTQ+ rights in Ghana – possibly explaining the national Chief Imam’s moral and financial support for a Christian National Cathedral.⁸⁹

Given the vexatious debate that tends to characterise Ghana’s perceived secular status, I argue that the issue is more about a conflation of secularism as a concept than as a practice. In other words, secularism, which has had discursive socio-historical

⁸⁶ Charles Prempeh, “‘Hijab Is My Identity’: Beyond the Politics of the Veil: The Appropriations of the Veil in an Inner-City Muslim Area of Accra (Ghana) Since the 1980s’, *Journal of Africana Religions*, 10, 1 (2022): 20-46.

⁸⁷ Ghanaweb (May 5, 2021), ‘Wesley Girls’ No-Fasting Rule Faith-Blind, Non-Discriminatory – PTA’, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Wesley-Girls-no-fasting-rule-faith-blind-non-discriminatory-PTA-1252165> (Accessed: June 2, 2022).

⁸⁸ Ghanaweb (June 2, 2021), ‘Rastafarian Students Saga: Achimota School Freezes Decision to Halt Admission of Marhguy, Nkrabea’, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Rastafarian-students-saga-Achimota-School-freezes-decision-to-halt-admission-of-Marhguy-Nkrabea-1277200> (June 2, 2022).

⁸⁹ Ghanaweb (August 26, 2021), ‘Chief Imam Donates GH GH¢50,000 Towards the Construction of National Cathedral’, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Chief-Imam-donates-GH-50-000-towards-the-construction-of-National-Cathedral-1341961> (June 3, 2022).

construction since the eighteenth century, was/is meant to manage a religiously plural public sphere as opposed to marginalising religion from the public sphere.⁹⁰ This is because no space is “secular” in terms of the absence of a form of religious belief – as is already evidenced in the recent tension between Evangelical Christians and liberal politicians over the moral revolution issues in the United States of America. But, perhaps, the issue is also because of the scholarly or public attempts at defining religion as decidedly metaphysical, based largely on a belief in God. Usually, when the word religion is used in public discourse, several minds consciously and/or unconsciously avert to God, raising an eyebrow about a religious invasion of the public.

Notwithstanding the public’s convoluted view about religion, for which reason some scholars such as Harvey Cox and Peter Berger belatedly in the 1960s, thought science and technology would peripherise religion,⁹¹ religion has surged. Regardless of the prediction about religion’s decline, religious politics surged back in the 1970s. Since then, Berger and Cox, who predicated the marginalisation of religion, have recanted their position.⁹² The surge in religion granted an assumption that the secularisation thesis failed for several reasons, including the absence of clear contra-religious secular values.⁹³ As to whether the secularisation thesis failed is a complex debate. But what could hardly be glossed over is that religion is now practised by individuals who tend to have more deterministic rights over what they believe than, say a century ago.⁹⁴

The secular debate is complex, but Ghana’s public remains highly enchanted in shaping CoP’s covenantal identity and role. Since the 1980s, the country’s public sphere has increasingly become an epicentre of religiously informed ideological contentions – which could be situated within the country’s socio-economic history of the 1980s. In the 1980s, for various reasons, including colonial legacies of underdevelopment, corruption, and Western African citizenship politics of deportation, Ghana’s economy atrophied.⁹⁵ Concurrently, the international financial institutions – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – imposed neoliberal policies on the country. The neoliberal policies, which involved the state’s

⁹⁰ Talal Asad, *Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

⁹¹ Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Berger, L. Peter, *The Social Reality of Religion* (London: Faber, 1969).

⁹² Peter L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999); Cox, Harvey, ‘The Myth of the Twentieth Century: The Rise and Fall of Secularization’, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 23, 1/2 (2000): 1-13.

⁹³ Meera Nanda, ‘Secularism without secularisation: Reflections on God and Politics in US and India,’ *Economics and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Jan. 6-12, 2007): 39-46.

⁹⁴ Daniele Hervieu-Leger, ‘The Twofold limit of the notion of Secularization’ In Linda Woodhead (ed.), *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion*, 112-126 (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 112.

⁹⁵ Kwame Akonor, *African and IMF Confidentiality: The Unevenness of Compliance, 1983-2000* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2006).

removal of subsidies from education, agriculture, and health – key sectors of the economy – impoverished several Ghanaians.⁹⁶ Therefore, it was during this period that the CoP reinforced the social aspect of its covenanted relationship with God by recuperating the Pentecost Social Services (PENTSOS).⁹⁷

It was also during this period that the international financial institutions rechannelled funding for the developmental project through local and foreign-originated non-governmental organisations – leading to some scholars referring to them as compradors.⁹⁸ Similarly, several Ghanaian students received financial sponsorship from the liberal West and international religious community to pursue further studies in Euro-America and the Arab world. Some of these students, returning as graduates, became the conveying channels of either the Western cultural revolution agenda or religious fundamentalism. The issues were complicated when, upon Ghana's re-democratisation, the country became more open to diverse religious opinions than ever as the 1992 Constitution granted more freedoms. The freedom of religious conscience partly inspired the formation of local and internationally inspired humanistic and atheistic groups, such as Avraham Ben Moshe's "Common Sense Family". At the same time, the cultural revivalism at the end of the 1990s and entering into the millennium has inspired a revitalised Pan-African agenda of the Ghanaian political elites, inviting African diasporans to return to the country. Thus, whether Rawlings' introduction of PANAFEST in the 1990s,⁹⁹ J.A. Kufuor's introduction of "The Joseph Project" in the 2000s or more recently (2019), Akufo-Addo's agenda of "The Year of Return" and "Beyond the Year of Return" (2020), the country's public sphere has become the hub of multi-cultural expression.

Given the above complex mixture of religion, politics, and secularism, the next section discusses how the CoP has responded. More specifically, I discuss how the church reconstructs the secularisation thesis to wage a crusade against the impact of multicultural moral depravity on the Ghanaian public sphere. The church is even empowered on this agenda because religion is anterior to the state – making religious rights more God-given for the state to protect than state-given that could be undermined with political intent.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Onyinah, 'Distinguished Church Leader Essay: The Church of Pentecost and Its Role in Ghanaian Society', 183.

⁹⁸ Yash Tandon (May 1, 2006), 'African Perspective', <https://www.tni.org/en/article/an-africa-perspective> (June 4, 2022).

⁹⁹ PANAFEST is an abbreviation of The Pan African Historical Theatre Festival that was engineered by Efua Sutherland, a Ghanaian married to an African diasporan man, in the mid-1980s, but received state support in the 1990s as a means of reuniting the cultural bond between Africans on the continent and their counterparts in the diaspora.

Contesting Ghana's Secularity: *ɔman Krɔnkrɔn*

The conflation over secularity does not rule out the fact that Ghana is overwhelmingly Christian in demographic terms. Popular discourse in Ghana assumes that the presence of “prekese”¹⁰⁰ in *only* Ghana and Israel means that these two countries are the desired earthly spaces of God. For the CoP, while the church does not seek to impose a theocratic regime on the country, the church profiles the country as God's country and positions itself as God's appointed with a divine mandate to evangelise the nation and beyond. The CoP's song *ɔman krɔnkrɔn* (A Holy Nation), which was composed by Eunice Addison, encapsulates this posturing by the church:

Song 9: Holy Nation

Twi Version

ɔman, ɔman, ɔman krɔnkrɔn
Yehowa ne man bɔn renntena mu
ɔman krɔnkrɔn, nye eyi
M'asem nye eyi
De hom ndzi mu

English Version

A nation, a nation, a Holy Nation
Jehovah's nation, where sin will not dwell
This is a holy nation
This is my word
That you should abide in it

Asɔr, Asɔr, Asɔr Krɔnkrɔn
Yehowa n'asɔr bɔn renntena mu
Asɔr krɔnkrɔn nye eyi
M'asem nye eyi
De hom ndzi mu
Asɔr, Asɔr, Asɔr Krɔnkrɔn

A church, a church, a holy church
Jehovah's church, where sin will not dwell
This is a holy church.
This is my word
That you should abide in it.
A church, a church, a holy church.¹⁰¹

This song profiles Ghana as God's holy country wherein sin cannot dwell. The song also profiles the CoP as God's Holy Church, wherein sin cannot dwell. In this regard, the song profiles both the CoP and Ghana as God's Holy institutions where sin must not be allowed to dwell. As has been discussed above, the CoP ensures the moral aptitude of its members and openly disciplines members who fail the moral test, especially sexual sin, by excluding the person from holding any leadership position in the church or suspending them from taking an active part in all church activities. In extreme cases, an offending person may be excommunicated from the church by the Executive Council.¹⁰² As recently as 2019, the church outlawed what it considers

¹⁰⁰ *Prekese*, known by its botanical name *Tetrapleura tetraptera*, is a flowering plant species in the *Fabaceae* family native to Western and Central Africa. It is said to have medicinal value and is rich in essential vitamins.

¹⁰¹ 2020 CoP theme song (Twi version): 4man kronkron, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBVPzOaUK4A>; February 7, 2020; November 7, 2020.

¹⁰² The Church of Pentecost, *The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost* (Accra: Pentecost Press, 2016), 106.

indecent pre-wedding pictures that expose some sensitive body parts of the woman of a would-be couple.

As a Holy Church in a Holy Nation, the church encourages its members to engage in politics as a way of influencing/impacting the nation. For instance, the immediate past Chairman of CoP, Opoku Onyinah, instituted a mentoring program (Youth Political Chamber) that grooms the young men and women of the church to go into politics. Currently, CoP has church members in high and strategic public offices, including the Minister of Education, Inspector General of Police (current and immediate past), the first elected female Greater Accra Mayor, and the immediate past chairman of the NDC, the country's largest opposition party at the moment.

Profiling the Church of Pentecost as a Moral Agent in Ghana: "A Glorious Church to Possess the Nations"

As part of revising Ghana's "secular" status to rekindle the moral reformation agenda of the CoP, the church needs to brand itself as legitimate with a God-ordained mandate to push back moral laxity in the country. For this reason, the church rebranded itself as the moral vanguard of society through the song "A Glorious Church"¹⁰³:

Song 10: A Glorious Church

Twi Version

*Anuonyam Asɔre
Nkonimdie Asɔre
ereko agye dɔm ama Kristo
Asɔre yi ne fapem ne Kristo
Etim ɔbotan Yesu so
erenhinim
Na enni nkoguo da
'Fise etim ɔbotan no so*

English Version

A glorious church,
Victorious church
Setting free many to Christ.
The church is founded on Christ.
It is built on Jesus the Rock,
Will not be moved,
Will never know defeat,
For it is built on the Rock.

*Anuonyam Asɔre
Nkonimdie Asɔre
erefa wise nyinaa nnomum
Asɔre yi ne fapem ne Kristo
Etim ɔbotan Yesu so
erenwoso
Na erensesa ara da*

A glorious church,
Victorious church
Taking captive all of the world
The church is founded on Christ
It is built on Jesus the Rock
Will not be swayed,
Will never change its course

¹⁰³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2CG_hic1SE (English version) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teSkMWHnHIM> (Twi - Akan- version). February 2, 2020. Accessed November 7, 2021.

<i>'Fise etim ɔbotan no so</i>	For it is built on the Rock.
<i>Anuonyam Asɔre</i>	A glorious church
<i>Nkonimdie Asɔre</i>	Victorious church
<i>erehyeren wɔ wise nyinaa</i>	Shining brightly through the world
<i>Asɔre yi ne fapem ne Kristo</i>	The church is founded on Christ
<i>Etim ɔbotan Yesu so</i>	It is built on Jesus the Rock
<i>erennuru sum</i>	Will not go dim
<i>Na erenyera kwan da</i>	Will never lose its way
<i>'Fise etim ɔbotan no so</i>	For it is built on the Rock
<i>Anuonyam Asɔre</i>	A glorious church
<i>Nkonimdie Asɔre</i>	Victorious church
<i>erekyere nnipa nkwagye kwan</i>	Showing all the way of life
<i>Asɔre yi ne fapem ne Kristo</i>	The church is found on Christ
<i>Etim ɔbotan Yesu so</i>	It is built on Jesus the Rock
<i>erenfom kwan</i>	Will not be swayed
<i>Na erenyera ne tumi</i>	Will never lose its power
<i>'Fise etim ɔbotan no so</i>	For it is built on a Rock. ¹⁰⁴

This song, which was composed in 2020 as the CoP theme song for that year, hinges on the church's glory on Christ as its "Foundation". The CoP is described as a 'glorious and victorious church' because Christ, who is metaphorically conceptualised as a Rock, is the head of the Church and the foundation upon which it is built. Consequently, the church feels empowered (will not be moved, will never know defeat, will not be swayed, will never change its course, will never go dim, will never lose its way) to execute its mission (set many free, taking captive all of the world, shining through the world). Thus, the CoP incorporates the divine as the reason for the church's mission to embark on a moral reform in Ghana and the world. According to cognitive linguists, metaphorical language not only reflects metaphorical thought but is also capable of shaping and creating new ways of thinking about things in the world.¹⁰⁵ Thus, as suggested by the words of the song in brackets, the metaphorical conceptualisation of the Christian life as a battle (know no defeat), the church as a building with Christ as its foundation Rock (It is built on Jesus the Rock) is empowering and can energise church members to see the church as invincible against all forces in the world as it performs its divine mandate of evangelising the world.

¹⁰⁴ 2020 Theme song "A Glorious Church" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2CG_hic1SE. December 16, 2019. Accessed: November 7, 2021.

¹⁰⁵ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

The belief that the church (CoP) is invincible manifests in how the CoP has related to issues of morality not only in the church but in Ghanaian society as a whole. For instance, in recent times, Western governments, including the USA and the UK, are leveraging their economic strength and technological breakthroughs to persuade African leaders and even church leaders across the world to accept homosexual practices. Indeed, some churches in the West have succumbed to the pressure to liberalise and acquiesce to homosexual practices and their stance on LGBTQ+ (e.g., The Church of England),¹⁰⁶ which has led to Anglican churches in Nigeria and Uganda breaking ranks with The Church of England.¹⁰⁷ In Ghana, several churches and church organisations, including the Anglican bishops, have openly declared their support for the criminalisation of LGBTQ+ practices in the country, arguing thus, “We see LGBTQ+ as unrighteousness in the sight of God and will therefore do anything within our powers and mandate to ensure that the bill comes into fruition”.¹⁰⁸ In executing its divine mandate to set many free for Christ, and in the power that comes from Christ, the Rock and Head of the church, the CoP, in a press conference in Accra, did not only openly profess support for the criminalisation of LGBTQ+ activities in the country but also vowed to mobilise its congregants, constituting a little over ten per cent (10%) of Ghana’s population, to vote against any political party that cows to Western pressure to liberalise LGBTQ+ rights in the country.

Again, through this song, the CoP metaphorically conceptualises the Christian’s moral duty to the world in terms of standing erect. The CoP, like other churches in Africa, refuses to be swayed by the currency of modernity, exemplified in the Western sexual revolution, which manifests in extreme forms of individual autonomy over their sexuality and bodies, which Robert Bellah referred to as individual expressionism and Charles Taylor’s “authentic age”.¹⁰⁹ While modernity and secularisation of morality since the 1960s are part of the drive towards the decriminalisation of homosexual practices, the CoP, among several other churches in Africa, have resisted all influences from the West to liberalise and adopt secular sex ethics. This runs at odds with a simplistic argument from Birgit Meyer and Kevin Ward that Christianity is the purveyor of modernity in Africa. While these scholars claimed that there is an intertwined nexus between Pentecostalism and modernity, they failed to demonstrate

¹⁰⁶ Ghanaweb, “Archbishop of Canterbury speaks on anti-gay Bill in Ghana’s Parliament”. October 27, 2021. Accessed: November 7, 2021.

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Archbishop-of-Canterbury-speaks-on-anti-gay-Bill-in-Ghana-s-Parliament-1388941>.

¹⁰⁷ Kevin Ward. *A History of Global Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹⁰⁸ Myjoyonline.com, “We support anti-LGBTQ_ Bill – Anglican Church of Ghana”. October 11, 2021. Accessed: November 7, 2021. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/we-support-anti-lgbtqi-bill-anglican-church-of-ghana/?param=>.

¹⁰⁹ R.N. Bellah, Madsen, R., Sullivan, W.M., Swidler, A. & Tipton, S.M. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press; 1985); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

the extent to which such a simplistic idea of modernity incorporates sexual ethos among Pentecostals.

The Church of Pentecost and Ghana's Public Sphere and Orality

The spillovers of the 1980s crystallised at the turn of the millennium, signalled by the Western drive to compel Ghana and other African countries to decriminalise homosexuality.¹¹⁰ Since 2007, the visible and aggressive involvement of foreign diplomats in Ghana and the international community to get homosexual practices accepted in Ghana has rationalised the call for the CoP to revitalise its moral reforms. In 2018, Opoku Onyinah (former chairman of the church – from 2008 to 2018) threatened to lead thousands of his congregants on a nationwide demonstration to fight the government over any efforts to decriminalise homosexual practices.¹¹¹ In 2021, in response to diplomats of Euro-Americans seeking to compel Ghana to decriminalise LGBTQ+ practices. A group of Ghanaians drafted a Bill to protect the heterosexual family values of the country.¹¹² While the Bill enjoyed nationwide support, a group of eighteen academics and professionals, led by their lawyer, Akoto Ampaw, wrote a counter-memorandum to the Bill.¹¹³ This led to Eric Kwabena Nyamekye, the current Chairman of the CoP, also threatening to mobilise his congregants to vote out any government that opposes the passage of the Bill.¹¹⁴

The CoP's efforts at keeping the ethical and moral boundaries of Ghana have reinforced the orality culture of Pentecostalism. As a church with strong usage of oral theology, the church uses songs to enforce its covenantal responsibility of keeping Ghana's public sphere against the influences of the moral liberalism of the West. One such song, as scripted below, calls on church members to see themselves as slaves to Christ. The image of a slave in the song is socially and theologically relevant to reorienting church members to dedicate their bodies and sexual desires to the control of God. This is largely because the church frames homosexual tendencies as a form of enslavement to sin. So, with songs such as the following, the church calls on its constituency to surrender their desires to Jesus, their newfound friend.

¹¹⁰ 'Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, 2021,' <https://citinewsroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/LGBT-BILL.pdf>. (Accessed: June 5, 2022).

¹¹¹ Ghanaweb (May 3, 2018), 'I Will Lead Demonstration Against Legalising Homosexuality - Onyinah' <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/I-will-lead-demonstration-against-legalising-homosexuality-Onyinah-648389> (Accessed: June 4, 2022).

¹¹² 'Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, 2021,' <https://citinewsroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/LGBT-BILL.pdf>. (Accessed: June 5, 2022).

¹¹³ A Group of Ghanaian Citizens, 'Press Conference on Memorandum to Parliament of Ghana Against Passage of the "Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, 2021",' <https://cddgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ANTILGBT-BILL-PRESS-STATEMENT.FINAL-1.pdf> (Accessed: June 4, 2022).

¹¹⁴ Kenneth A. Darko, (October 7, 2021), "'We Will Vote Out Any Government that Opposes Anti-LGBTQ+ Bill" - Church of Pentecost' <https://www.myjoyonline.com/we-will-vote-out-any-government-that-opposes-anti-lgbtq-bill-church-of-pentecost/> (Accessed: June 4, 2022).

Song 3 (a repetition of Song 2)

I have found a friend
A friend who sticks forever
I have gained a spiritual wealth for myself
I am no longer a slave to sin
Because I am born of Christ.¹¹⁵

The homosexual discourse is quite sensitive, as it is located within the rubrics of human rights. Consequently, because individuals with claims to same-sex orientation can be marginalised if the church composes songs that directly implicate such individuals, the church engages in the extrapolation of songs in its teaching against same-sex practices. So, as the CoP seeks to walk the complex terrain of being compassionate that drives its evangelism without compromising its position on same-sex practices, the church composed and/or re-articulated these songs to reinvest in Paul's theological denunciation of same-sex practices. In the Epistles of Paul, especially as recorded in the books of Romans and Corinthians, Paul profiled sexual impurity as sinful and a violation of one's body – which, in the case of a Christian, should be dedicated entirely to Jesus Christ.¹¹⁶ Paul profiled himself as a slave of Jesus Christ, which is extrapolated to mean that he had debased himself to honour his Saviour.¹¹⁷ For this reason, Paul could say that he considered all things useless because of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁸

Similarly, Paul argued that when one becomes a Christian, one transitions from the Kingdom of Darkness, which involves subjection of the body to sexual perversion, to the Kingdom of Light, which involves renunciation of one's sexual desires to the service of the Lord.¹¹⁹ So, for the CoP and several Pentecostals, same-sex practices constitute an antinomy in the expected holy and dedicated life of a Christian. This is because, in Pentecostal theology, one is expected to pursue holiness as one debases and mortifies oneself to take on the character of Jesus Christ. This partly explains the preponderance emphasis the CoP places on Holy Spirit baptism, as the Holy Spirit is believed to transform one's moral and sexual life to reflect the righteous character of Jesus Christ.

With the song, "I have found a good friend," the CoP reengages Paul's Christian transformation from Satan's Kingdom to Christ's Kingdom. A convert of the CoP is expected to sever relations with Satanic practices and align with Jesus Christ as his or her new friend. With Jesus Christ as a new friend, a Pentecostal convert is expected to

¹¹⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7WtX2_wfVQ.

¹¹⁶ Romans 1:18:32; 12:1-2.

¹¹⁷ Romans 1:1; I Corinthians 5:1-12.

¹¹⁸ Philippians 3:8.

¹¹⁹ Colossians 1:13.

renounce worldly friendship that drives his or her passion for his or her old life, which may include sexual impurity. The “new friend” – Jesus Christ – is expected to endow the new convert with spiritual wealth to overcome the temptations of the body towards sexual immorality and also make one “no longer a slave to sin”. Since Pentecostals treat same-sex marriage as sinful and enslavement to the desires of the body, a Pentecostal convert must renounce same-sex practices because he or she is expected to lay claim to “I am born of Christ”.

The same Pentecostal anti-homosexual stance is condensed in the second song, which invites the Pentecostal convert to see Christ as indwelling in him or her. With the stanza, “I have Jesus who lives in me; He is my Lord; I will worship Him always; Because He is all I have”, Pentecostals are called on to dedicate their lives to Jesus Christ through sublimating themselves. The Pentecostal converts, upon coming to Christ, are expected to look to Christ for their identity instead of looking within themselves.

The above Pentecostal theological dislocation of homosexuality as immoral is expressed in the second and third stanzas of Eunice Addison’s song, which invites Christians to invest their energy in God’s service rather than pursuing amorous desires through same-sex practices. Another common song the CoP sang to urge its constituency to refrain from LGBTQ+ practices was the following:

Nyame Ahome

*Nyame ahome, twi fa me so
Nyame sunsum, bɔ bra me kra so
Sesa me ni-padua nyinaa
Hye me na menye wo pe nyi-naa*

Spirit of God

Spirit of God, hover over me
Spirit of God hover over me
Transform completely my entire body
Cause me to do all your will

Nka emi nko a

*Nka emi nko a
Nkye meehu Wo yie Nka emi nko a
Nkye meehu Wo yie
Na maadɔ Wo
Na maasom Wo
Medze mo ho nyinaa ama wo*

Left to me

Left to me
Left to me I would have known you well
I will have known you well
So that I will love you
So that I will worship you
I dedicate all my life to you

The CoP’s anti-homosexual theology is further concretised in Opoku Onyinah’s song, “Nyame home, twi fa me so” (“God’s Spirit, rule over me”). As stated above, the CoP considers same-sex practices as the antinomy of the Christian self-debasement upon his or her acceptance of Jesus Christ – a violation of God’s appointed nation. The church’s songs are usually directed toward inviting Christians to dedicate their bodies as sacrifices to Christ. Such a transition in the theology of the church is mediated

through the Holy Spirit. For instance, in Onyinah's song, the Holy Spirit is invited to rule over the life of the Christian (*bo bra kra so*) and also transform the Christian (*sesa me nipadua nyinaa – transform my body*). The same anti-homosexual socio-theological import of the CoP is expressed in Eunice Addison's song, '*Nka emi nko a*', which in the last line invites the Christian to dedicate his or her entire body to Jesus Christ. Transformation of the "body" of a Christian, as emphasized in the CoP song, is because the CoP affirms the Christian theology of "original sin" that teaches that one is born a sinner and in need of the transformative character of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.¹²⁰

As the church is represented transnationally in different countries of the world, including those that have accepted and legalized LGBTQI+ rights, in 2010, the CoP added *the* definition of marriage as heterosexual to its tenets. For example, in its revised Constitution, the church declared its stance on LGBTQI+ as follows: "Homosexuality, lesbianism and other perverse sexual practices are not permitted in the Church as these are not biblically acceptable practices".¹²¹ The sum of all this is that the CoP invests and employs these songs to affirm Christ's command that anyone who desires to follow Him must renounce himself and herself by rejecting dual loyalty between the worldly things and the things of the Kingdom of God.¹²²

The Moral Responsibility of the Church of Pentecost Members: "A Prisoner of Christ"

I have stated that the major antinomy in Ghana, which the CoP seeks to address, is moral corruption. The church is engaging in an internal moral reform, encouraging its members to exemplify Christ in the public through yet another song which was composed (in English) by Fred Amoakohene Sarpong:

Song 11: A Prisoner of Christ

A prisoner of Christ
I must live only in Christlikeness
A prisoner of change is to reflect the beauty of the church
I will examine my life
check my motives
I will let the word of Christ
dwell in me richly
I will shun uncleanness,
And be clothed with Holiness

¹²⁰ Christian Tsekpoe, "Man's Depraved Nature" In *Tenets of the Church of Pentecost*, edited by Michael Ntummy, Alfred Koduah and Emmanuel Anim, 120-133 (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2020)

¹²¹ The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2010), 74.

¹²² Matthew 16: 24-26.

So, the glory of Jesus Christ.¹²³

This song calls on CoP members (Christians) to lose their freedom to do whatever they please in order to do what is pleasing to Christ. This idea is metaphorically conceptualized as being prisoners of Christ. The lyrics allude to some texts in the New Testament of the Bible. In Ephesians chapter three, Paul calls himself a prisoner of Christ and encourages Christians to become like him - prisoners of Christ, if they are to live righteous, godly, morally upright lives, as Christ would have them do. The imagery of a prisoner implies restrictions on freedom as is espoused by modern and post-modern theories that overemphasise individual freedoms and liberties. In 2 Corinthians 5:14, Paul says, “the love of Christ constrains us” and John 14:15 says “if you love me, keep my commandments”.

Thus, this song reiterates known Christian principles in a form (song) that is easier to memorize and remember. Also, as a metaphorical prisoner and slave, the Christian is expected to submit their will to the Lordship of Jesus by pursuing holiness and shunning all forms of corruption. Although the church does not have the prosecutorial power to punish its members who engage in corrupt practices, it expects the state to punish wrongdoers, including church members. However, state prosecutors often accuse Christian leaders and traditional leaders of meddling in the prosecution of corrupt church public officers. These complexities have morphed into the excitement that CoP has experienced since the appointment of Ghana’s current IGP who is a member of CoP. The new IGP enjoys great public trust and respect for introducing several reforms that appear to be mending the dented image of the police and restoring integrity in the service.¹²⁴

Conclusions

The CoP is exploring important ways of resolving antinomies between the Christian majority in Ghana and rising cases of moral corruption in the country. By embedding its identity as a covenanted church in a covenanted nation, the CoP is deconstructing the ideas of secularism by infusing Christian morality into the country’s public sphere. Staging its presence in Ghana’s public sphere as a vanguard against moral decadence, e.g., the global push for the country’s decriminalisation of LGBTQ+ practices and advocacy, the church challenges the state to destabilise false binaries between “tradition” and “modernity”. This is to restore family ethics that serve as a point of convergence for all the major religions in Ghana. By framing itself as a God-ordained

¹²³ “A prisoner of Christ lyrics//2020 theme song”. February 24, 2020. Accessed: November 7, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEyBnipamzE>.

¹²⁴ Adom Online, “IGP Dampare’s message of caution to religious organisations [Photos]”. October 26, 2021. Accessed: November 7, 2021. <https://www.adomonline.com/igp-dampares-message-of-caution-to-religious-organisations-photos/>.

institution to recalibrate the moral foundation of a country profiled as “God’s own chosen country”, the CoP seeks to turn the nation after God’s principle for a living (*setting many free to Christ*). Using songs as an entry point, the church hopes to make it easier to memorise and remember the values that are embedded in the songs than any written code of conduct or laws.

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The Works of the Spirit of God in Public Leadership: A Review of Selected Readings in the Old Testament

Abraham Nortey

Abstract

Pentecostalism, as a strand of Christianity, has made substantial contributions to both Christendom and nation-building. Much has been discussed regarding the impact of Pentecostals on national development and the role of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual lives of believers and the church. However, when it comes to Old Testament biblical studies, there has been limited attention given to the role of the Holy Spirit in public leadership and His influence on society. Despite the existing literature on the subject, a common challenge is the hesitance to definitively conclude whether the continuous, abiding presence and actions of the Spirit of God (*ruach 'elohim*) operate in the same way as the Holy Spirit depicted in the New Testament. The aim of this work is to re-emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in public leadership, administration, and societal development as illustrated in the Old Testament. It posits that the same Holy Spirit celebrated in the New Testament empowered figures such as Daniel, Joseph, and Moses, as well as artisans like Bezalel and Oholiab, granting them exceptional gifts that set them apart as adept leaders and skilled architects of their time. Furthermore, there is ample biblical evidence showing instances of the Spirit's continuous presence in these Old Testament leaders. This paper will conduct textual analyses of selected biblical passages to support its conclusions.

Keywords: Spirit of God, Gifts of the Spirit, Public Administration, Leadership and Pentecostalism

Introduction

There is a considerable body of work on the role of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual life of a Christian.¹²⁵ He empowers believers for ministry and service, convicts them of sin, and bestows spiritual gifts for the edification of the church. The Holy Spirit also elevates even the most ordinary tasks, allowing them to be performed with distinction.¹²⁶ Similarly, in contemporary Ghanaian societies, Pentecostal communities have shown a remarkable capacity to excel in various spheres. Individuals from Pentecostal and charismatic backgrounds have effectively harnessed social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube to promote the spread of

¹²⁵ Cf. Astley G. Mitchel, *The Empowerment of the Holy Spirit* (Accra: Christian Faith Publishing, 2020), 13 and David Stone, *The Holy Spirit: Understanding and Engaging with the Third Person of the Trinity* (New York: RWG Publishing, 2023), 1.

¹²⁶ David Stone, *The Holy Spirit: Understanding and Engaging with the Third Person of the Trinity*, 1.

Christianity. Programmes such as Alpha Hour, led by Elvis Agyemang of Grace Mountain Ministries, along with initiatives from the Church of Pentecost and other similar groups, have used these channels to organise various activities, including online prayers and gospel preaching.¹²⁷ These efforts have significantly contributed to the dissemination of the gospel in audio-visual formats, reaching audiences in Ghana and beyond.

Apart from some Pentecostals reaching out to people with the gospel, they have actively moved on to play essential roles in politics. In the year 2022, the leaders of Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) led by their president at the time, Paul Frempong Manso, voiced their stance on the LGBTQ+ bill before the parliament of Ghana and also speak against the menace caused by *galamsey* in some selected mining sites and rivers in Ghana¹²⁸. Additionally, they spoke out against the destructive impact of *galamsey* in certain mining sites and rivers in Ghana. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the general perception of the church by skeptics as a place where monies are extorted for the benefit of the clergy was to some extent defused.¹²⁹ The Church of Pentecost and other Pentecostals supported the government with their facility at Pentecost Convention centre and in various forms to help combat the pandemic.¹³⁰ This impressed the Akufo Addo government to give the Church of Pentecost for instance a national award.

In the realm of leadership, there has been a remarkable rise of individuals with Pentecostal backgrounds in Ghanaian politics. Notable figures include Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum, the Minister of Education under President Akufo-Addo's administration,¹³¹ and Mr. Sammi Awuku, a former Youth Organizer of the New Patriotic Party, both of whom are Pentecostals.¹³² In the past, many Christians viewed politics as a domain dominated by dishonesty and ungodliness. However, today, Pentecostals are encouraging their members to engage fully in the political arena at all levels. Furthermore, Pentecostals have begun to focus on the chieftaincy institution, empowering church leaders to motivate their members with Acts 1:8, emphasizing that one role of the Holy Spirit is to equip them for political engagement. They are encouraged to recognise that by gaining political influence, they can meaningfully contribute to discussions that reflect the transformative power of the gospel on national issues.

¹²⁷ Pastor Elvis Agyeman is the Pastor in charge of Grace Mountain Ministries, a Charismatic church in Ghana.

¹²⁸ Read details of the news from www.ghpage.com published on the 16th of October, 2022.

¹²⁹ Read more from Stan Chu Ilo, *A poor and Merciful Church: Illuminative Ecclesiology of Pope Francis* (New York.: Orbis Books, 2018).

¹³⁰ Pentecost Convention Centre was given by the church of Pentecost leadership to accommodate COVID-19 patients during the pandemic.

¹³¹ Read more about Yaw Osei Adutwum from www.moe.gov.gh

¹³² Refer to mobile.ghanaweb.com to read more about Samuel Awuku.

The preceding discussion has offered an overview of the involvement of Pentecostals in significant matters and community development, drawing from a diverse array of sources, including social media and various forms of literature. While there is an abundance of material concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in the church, the available resources on the Old Testament tend to limit the discussion to instances where He empowers individuals occasionally, rather than as a permanent presence, as seen in the New Testament.¹³³ The sections that follow will explore Old Testament examples of how the Holy Spirit operated in various public figures in roles of leadership and administration. It is important to note that all the gifts observed in the New Testament, with the exception of speaking in tongues, were also present in the Old Testament.¹³⁴ More significantly, there are only a few instances where He remained with individuals permanently.

Old Testament Modules of Pre-Pentecostal Gifts

The Old Testament illustrates how the Spirit of God empowered ordinary individuals to achieve remarkable feats and fulfill significant responsibilities assigned to them. According to Obisakin, the Holy Spirit operated primarily within individuals in the Old Testament.¹³⁵ God appointed prophets and prophetesses – sometimes referred to as judges – endowing them with the spiritual or supernatural gifts necessary to carry out specific tasks for particular communities.¹³⁶ Whenever God had an assignment, He selected a person and equipped them with the required power and abilities to ensure the successful completion of the work.

Looking ahead to the New Testament era, where the Gifts of the Holy Spirit would be bestowed upon believers en masse, we find Old Testament references anticipating this Pentecostal outpouring.¹³⁷ This shift would mean that the Spirit's power would not be limited to a select few but would instead be accessible to the broader community. For example, Moses expressed his desire for everyone to prophesy like him (Num. 11:29). Similarly, the prophet Joel envisioned a wider outpouring of the Spirit, as he proclaimed in Joel 2:28-29:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon

¹³³ This is the position of scholars like Patricia King, *Spiritual Revolution: Experience the Supernatural in your life through the Holy Spirit* (Connecticut: Destiny Image Publishers, 2006); Gregg Allison and Andreas J. Kostenberger, *The Holy Spirit* (Maryland: B & H Publishing Group, 2020), 4.

¹³⁴ Read more from 1 Corinthians 12: 3-11.

¹³⁵ Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin, *God the Holy Spirit: The Mystery of Christianity* (Abuja: Spectrum Book Limited, 2007), 22-23.

¹³⁶ Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin, *God the Holy Spirit: The Mystery of Christianity*, 24.

¹³⁷ Read 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11, Acts 2

the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit (RSV).

In the following section, the significant roles of the Spirit of God—*ruach 'elohim*—in the Old Testament will be explored, highlighting the important functions He performed in the assignments given to specific individuals.

Bezalel and Oholiab: Endowment with Creativity by the Spirit of God (Ex. 31:3-11; 35)

God endowed humanity with the special gift of creativity through His Spirit. Bezalel, a layman rather than a priest or Levite, was the architect responsible for the design and construction of the Tabernacle. He was described as being filled with the Spirit of God (*ruach 'elohim*), which granted him skills, intelligence, and knowledge in various forms of craftsmanship. This included the ability to devise artistic designs and work with gold, silver, and bronze, as well as cutting stones for setting and carving wood—essentially excelling in every craft (Ex. 31:3; 35:31). The infilling of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Exodus 31:3 was a rare event in the Old Testament. Known as the Spirit of God (*ruach 'elohim*), the Holy Spirit (*ruach hagadosh*) empowered Bezalel and Oholiab, enabling them to carry out the diverse craftsmanship that the LORD commanded for the establishment of the Tabernacle.

Oholiab, appointed by God as Bezalel's assistant, hailed from the tribe of Dan. He was recognized as "an engraver, designer, and embroiderer of blue, purple, and scarlet yarns, as well as fine twined linen" (Ex. 38:23). Together, Bezalel and Oholiab were the architects behind all the woodwork in the tabernacle, including the tent of meeting, the ark, the mercy seat, and various sacred tables and utensils. Their contributions extended to metalwork as well, designing elements such as the golden lampstand, utensils, and the altar of incense. Additionally, they crafted the Holy garments for Aaron and his sons, adhering closely to God's specifications. To ensure the successful completion of the tabernacle, God instructed Bezalel and Oholiab to impart their craftsmanship knowledge to others (Ex. 35:34).

Examining the exceptional skills demonstrated by Bezalel and Oholiab, one could rightly conclude that these men were blessed by the Spirit of God. Their receipt of direct commands from God indicates that it was indeed God working through them (Ex. 31:11). Furthermore, the African Bible Commentary¹³⁸ emphasises that God can utilise ordinary individuals just as effectively as He uses prophets and priests, empowering them with His Spirit to achieve remarkable feats. These individuals apply their professional and specialised skills in service to God. Typically, God assigns significant projects or tasks requiring spiritual leadership to accomplish.

¹³⁸ Read more from Abel Ndjerareou, *Exodus* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), 125

One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to bestow upon individuals special abilities for performing both natural and supernatural tasks or assignments. In Acts 1:8, we see that one of the primary functions of the Holy Spirit was to empower the disciples for evangelism. Prior to this, the disciples had shared the gospel in various locations (Lk. 10:1-11), but the results were not as remarkable as those observed following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41). It is through the Spirit of God that Oholiab and Bezalel were enabled to undertake such multifaceted assignments. Their ability to construct the tabernacle, create intricate metalwork, tailor garments for the Levites, and produce the sacred incense and perfume truly reflects the grace of God at work.

The next question to explore is the nature of the gifts possessed by Bezalel and Oholiab. Bezalel, for instance, was bestowed with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in various forms of craftsmanship. Similarly, Oholiab and a group of artisans also received the gift of wisdom (Ex. 31: 3-6). When the Apostle Paul described the various gifts stemming from the same Holy Spirit, he mentioned both wisdom and knowledge as gifts intended for the benefit of believers (1 Cor. 12: 4-10). While one could argue that the wisdom and knowledge they received were ordinary rather than mysterious, the fact that God dwelled within them and directed them through His Spirit to fulfill the specific tasks assigned suggests otherwise.

If this perspective holds true, one could also argue that it is the same God who endowed Bezalel with knowledge and craftsmanship that endowed Peter with the word of knowledge, enabling him to reveal the deceptions of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. In 1 Corinthians 12, the gifts of wisdom and knowledge are presented as divine endowments meant to serve God. The word of wisdom grants an individual insight into the mysteries of hidden events, allowing them to explain these mysteries clearly.¹³⁹ In contrast, the word of knowledge provides understanding about these mysteries through prophecies and divine insights, offering counsel in difficult situations.¹⁴⁰ In contrast, the word of knowledge provides understanding about these mysteries through prophecies and divine insights, offering counsel in difficult situations. Just as the architectural design of the tabernacle, the priestly garments, the unique ingredients for the anointing oil, and the utensils remained enigmatic to the average person, Oholiab and Bezalel were able to access this specialised knowledge because it was revealed to them by the Spirit of God.

In this regard, I respectfully disagree with Crosley, who views the skills possessed by Bezalel and Oholiab as forms of natural intelligence rather than as gifts of the Spirit, as described in the New Testament. According to him, such skills can be acquired

¹³⁹ Jay Werman, *An In-depth explanation of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (New Jersey: Ministerial Publication, 2011), 25.

¹⁴⁰ Ashish Raichur, *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Bangalore: Church and Word Outreach Publisher, 2023), 148.

through one's natural environment and, unlike the gifts of the Holy Spirit, do not constitute spiritual gifts from God.¹⁴¹ However, I believe that the special skills endowed by the Spirit of God are indeed spiritual gifts. A skill transforms into expertise only when one undergoes vocational training and, with time and experience, develops those abilities further. In my opinion special skills possessed by a man that are acquired through the endowment of the Spirit of God is equally a spiritual gift. A gift only becomes a skill when one receives training on a vocation and after sometime develops the skills better to gain experience.

Richard S. Hess views the architectural skills of Bezalel and Oholiab as supernatural, contrasting them with Hiram, the architect Solomon employed to build the temple:

First, Bezalel and Oholiab are explicitly named and appointed by God, according to the text of Exodus. Hiram is not. Instead, Solomon seeks Hiram out and he comes and does 'for Solomon' all required labour....Third, Yahweh called Bezalel and Oholiab by name....and gave them wisdom for their task....This again contrasts with Hiram, whose skill is attributed to his father, a citizen of Tyre who was a bronze worker. Hiram is described as skilled in the Area of metallurgy.¹⁴²

When examining Bezalel and Oholiab, it appears that they may possess inherent natural talents that were awakened by the Holy Spirit, enabling them to carry out their architectural tasks with exceptional skill. However, this talent is not merely innate; it is a divine gift bestowed by Almighty God, allowing them to partake in His creative power to fulfill the requirements for wooden, fabric, and metal works in the tabernacle. In contrast, Hiram's architectural abilities do not compare to those of Bezalel and Oholiab, as his skills were acquired through his father's teachings.

Next, we turn to Moses, whose distinctive spiritual gift seems to stem from the presence of the Holy Spirit within him. He had the unique ability to impart the spirit of prophecy to others through the laying on of hands. This indicates that the Spirit of God did not merely visit him temporarily but resided with him continually, enabling him to pass on this gift to others in a manner akin to the reception of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

Moses' Administrative Roles and the Enablement of the Holy Spirit

The Israelites had no doubt that Moses was filled with the Spirit of God (*ruach 'elohim*), as indicated in Isaiah 63:11-14. It is evident that the primary manifestation of the

¹⁴¹ Robert O. Crosley, *Close encounter with God: Unveiling the secret of the hidden God* (Houston Texas: Strategic book publishing, 2010), 45

¹⁴²Cf. Richard S. Hess, "The Spirit and creativity", in *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, ed. David G. Firth & Paul D. Wegner (New York: Orbis Press, 2011), 10.

Spirit's presence in Moses' life was through the powerful acts of deliverance experienced by Israel under his spiritual leadership. Christopher J. H. Wright rightly recognizes the significant role of the Spirit in empowering Moses with the abilities necessary for effective leadership.¹⁴³ While he accurately highlights this, it is also a recurring theme found among the judges, prophets, and kings of the Old Testament.

It is crucial to observe that God used Moses not just once but consistently throughout his leadership and administrative responsibilities in Egypt and during the exodus in the wilderness. Unlike the judges, who were empowered by the Spirit for temporary tasks, Moses' situation was distinctly different. He is described as a man full of the Spirit (Deut. 34:9; Num. 11:25). In this context, one can agree with Lawrence Olufami Obisakin, who argued that Moses, the lawgiver, was continuously filled with the Holy Spirit – perhaps throughout his forty years in the wilderness. Obisakin further noted that Moses was so anointed that he could communicate with God at any time, in any place, and on any topic.¹⁴⁴

Obviously, God used Moses to perform several miracles to validate his choice as the leader to bring the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.¹⁴⁵ First, he made Moses cast his rod down before Pharaoh and it turned into a serpent (Ex. 7:8-9). Without such powerful miracles Moses would not have been able to convince Pharaoh at all since the Egyptian palace was not a stranger to such practices. Pharaoh equally has wise men (*'anshie hachammim*) and sorcerers (*mekassephim*) to do similar miracles. God making Aaron's rod swallow the serpent is to prove that Moses's God was a mighty God. The ten plaques recorded in Exodus 7-10 were solid evidence that Moses was not an ordinary man but a true servant of God endowed with supernatural gifts. One consistent feature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament was miracles. If anyone exemplifies divine gifts beyond imagination, it is Moses. While both Elijah and Elisha parted the River Jordan, Moses parted the Red Sea. Some scholars suggest that the Hebrew term for the Red Sea, *yam suph* (Ex. 15:4), translated as "Sea of Reeds," casts doubt on this miracle.¹⁴⁶ They argue that it was not an actual sea that he parted, but rather that the Israelites traversed a marshy area. However, the point remains that no sea historically matched the description these scholars attribute to the event. The details provided in the Bible indicate that the author was well aware of a real sea at that time. *Yam suph* does not necessarily need to be linked to *reed* based solely on its literal meaning; it may simply be another name for the Red Sea. Furthermore, when the Holy Spirit descended in Acts chapter 2, one of the key actions facilitated by the

¹⁴³ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Oxford: Monarch Books), 45.

¹⁴⁴ Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin, *God the Holy Spirit: The mystery of Christianity* (Abuja: Spectrum book limited, 2007), 32.

¹⁴⁵ Read Ex. 7; 14; Ex. 33 about miracles and wonderful things Moses did.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. from James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: the Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York: University Press, 1996), 56.

Apostles was the performance of various miracles. Thus, the crossing of the Red Sea – or Sea of Reeds, as some call it – not only involved passage but a miraculous parting, solidifying Moses' place among miracle makers.

Moses' ability to lead the community in the desert stemmed from the empowerment granted to him by the Spirit. First, he appointed the seventy elders. When this significant event occurred, the Lord descended in a cloud, spoke with Moses, and took the Spirit that was upon him, placing it upon the seventy elders. As Eldad and Medad returned to the camp, the Spirit of Moses rested on them, and they began to prophesy. It is crucial to note that this transfer of the Spirit from Moses to the seventy is of great importance. This event suggests that the Spirit continually dwelled within Moses, which is quite unusual for the Old Testament. Such an experience parallels the workings of the Spirit of the Lord in the New Testament. Once the Spirit rested upon the early church, He remained and could be imparted by Spirit-filled individuals, like Ananias the disciple (Acts 9:17) or Peter the Apostle (Acts 10:44). By examining how God took the Spirit from Moses and bestowed it upon the seventy elders, one can infer that while Moses possessed the Spirit of God at all times, this was distinct from the temporary visitation of the Spirit that would come upon leaders in the Old Testament and later depart.

The Spirit of prophecy, in this context, is not meant to prompt the seventy elders to prophesy – an event that is not recorded – but rather to bestow upon them deeper wisdom, knowledge, and discernment, equipping them to be effective leaders in addressing the issues presented by the people. The incident involving Eldad and Medad prophesying outside the camp was merely a temporary phenomenon. Thus, this gift serves the purpose of enhancing leadership capabilities. Moses willingly obeyed God's directive to share the source of his leadership – the Spirit of God – enabling these men to assume significant leadership roles on his behalf.

Wilfred Hildebrandt acknowledges that the various roles Moses fulfilled as the leader of Israel – judge, lawgiver, prophet, intercessor, miracle worker, and provider – were successful due to the enduring presence of God with him and the *ruach* that brought God's plans and miracles to fruition.¹⁴⁷ While this statement summarizes the concept of the Spirit's permanent operation, it lacks detailed classic examples. However, such instances are fully manifested and understood through the narrative of the anointing of the seventy elders with the prophetic gift.

In the latter part of his ministry, Moses, guided by the Spirit, selected Joshua as his successor. Recognizing Joshua's personal and natural attributes, Moses chose him to

¹⁴⁷ Winfred Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*. (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1993), 108.

lead Israel. To enhance Joshua's leadership capabilities, Moses laid hands on him during the official inauguration ceremony in the presence of High Priest Eleazar (Numbers 27:18-23). From that moment, Joshua operated with a spirit of faith, boldness, and courage. Alongside Caleb, he exhibited unwavering faith in God when the twelve scouts were sent to Canaan to survey the land and report back (Num. 14:6-10). It was not through mere apprenticeship under Moses that Joshua acquired his leadership abilities as a military leader; rather, it was the anointing of the Spirit of God by Moses that endowed him with wisdom and the skills necessary for effective leadership and administration. This scenario illustrates that it was indeed the Spirit that made Moses a dynamic leader throughout his tenure.

The Spirit and Daniel's Exceptional Leadership Acumen and Statesmanship (Dan 4:8; 5:12; 6:3)

The Spirit empowers individuals to possess knowledge that others lack, perceive what others may overlook, and accomplish remarkable feats. It nurtures various qualities within a person, distinguishing them from the rest.¹⁴⁸ A prime example is Daniel, a young man who was profoundly influenced by the Spirit of the Lord, to the point that even the foreign rulers of Babylon acknowledged the distinctive hand of God in his life.

When King Belshazzar became alarmed by mysterious writing on the wall—something none of his enchanters and diviners could decipher—his queen's words became crucial to our discussion:

...Let not your thoughts alarm you or your colour change. There is in your kingdom a man in whom is the spirit of the holy gods...because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar (Daniel 5:10-12 RSV).

The queen's recognition of the Spirit's presence in Daniel provided him with a significant advantage over Belteshazzar's enchanters, facilitating his ascent into higher political positions. The Babylonian wise men consistently struggled to interpret or narrate King Nebuchadnezzar's secret dreams, but Daniel, empowered by the Spirit of God, was able to serve three successive kings of Babylon and Persia through his gifts of interpretation, knowledge, and wisdom. In this context, the word of knowledge revealed to Daniel insights in dreams that were beyond the comprehension of ordinary men, while the word of wisdom allowed him to receive accurate revelations from the

¹⁴⁸ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa's Enigma and Leadership Solutions*. (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers Limited, 2009), 99.

Lord regarding future events. When discussing interpretation of tongues, it is important to note that this special gift enables the explanation of words spoken in a foreign language in a language known to the listener. The writing on the wall was in a foreign language that, even when read, would not be understood by Belteshazzar himself unless it was interpreted; *m^ene' m^ene' t^eqal ûphasîn*.¹⁴⁹ The Spirit enabled Daniel not only to read this foreign script but also to interpret its meaning. It is important to note that speaking in tongues is not solely for prayer; it is often a means through which God conveys messages, much like prophecy within the church. Clearly, the voice behind the writing was divine, and it requires someone filled with the Spirit of God to discern its meaning and communicate it to others. While such occurrences are rare in the Old Testament, understanding how the Spirit used Daniel in this instance is crucial for our discussion.

The pagan queen, unfamiliar with the Spirit of God, concluded that it was the Spirit of the holy gods who endowed Daniel with his remarkable abilities. Interestingly, she may not have been referring to the deities of Babylon, since Daniel's faith was widely acknowledged. Her expression could very well be her way of recognising God's unique gift to Daniel. Throughout his life, Daniel experienced success and favour at every turn, as the Bible notes that he possessed an excellent spirit (6:3). The exact nature of this "Excellent Spirit" is not elaborated upon. Could it imply that Daniel performed his duties with exceptional knowledge and distinction? Or perhaps that God gifted him with unique talents that allowed him to excel in all endeavors? If that is the case, then this concept of an Excellent Spirit could align with one of the key roles of the Holy Spirit.

Discussing the works of the Spirit necessitates an exploration of the miracles recorded in the book of Daniel. This book recounts a series of miraculous events that God orchestrated during the Babylonian exile, demonstrating that Daniel and his friends were indeed servants of the Most High God, YHWH. Through these miracles, God showcased His omnipotent power over human affairs. For instance, Daniel and his friends experienced extraordinary health and vitality after consuming only vegetables for ten days. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were miraculously preserved amid execution by fire, joined in the flames by a fourth figure of heavenly appearance (Daniel 3:16-28). Additionally, Daniel emerged unscathed when his friends deceived the king into ordering the execution of his most trusted statesman by lions; he survived that ordeal as well (Daniel 6:10-23).

One could argue that the accounts in the Old Testament, which showcase how God used Daniel and his friends to unveil mysterious truths, serve as a precursor to the similar events that occurred in the New Testament during the dispensation of the Holy

¹⁴⁹ Cf. My transliteration of Daniel 5: 25

Spirit. The final story about Joseph follows a comparable trajectory, highlighting the role the Spirit of God played in his accomplishments in Egypt.

The Spirit behind Joseph's Dreams (Gen. 41)

In Genesis 41, Joseph speaks with prophetic authority as he reveals to Pharaoh that God has communicated through his dream what is about to unfold. He then proceeds to interpret the dream. Notably, the Scripture does not suggest that the Spirit of the Lord descended upon Joseph prior to his understanding and interpretation of the vision. What is particularly striking is Pharaoh's acknowledgment of his encounter with Joseph. He states, "Can we find such a man as this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" (Gen. 41:38 RSV).

Why would God cause a pagan to express such a statement, much like in the case of Daniel? Earlier, Joseph asserted, "God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do."¹⁵⁰ If Joseph acknowledged that God was the source of the dream given to Pharaoh, could it not also be the case that this same God inspired Pharaoh to proclaim that Joseph possesses the Spirit of God? David G. Firth thoroughly critiques this assertion, identifying several complexities in understanding the work of the Spirit in this context. Firth contends that when Pharaoh refers to the "Spirit of God," it may be interpreted by his attendants as the spirit of the Egyptian gods. However, he points out that in 41:39, Pharaoh speaks directly to Joseph, affirming that God has shown him this dream.

In this context, the Hebrew word used for "revealed" is *hodi'ah*, which is the infinitive construct form of the *hiphil* verb. If Pharaoh intended to use the plural form, he would have employed the plural version of the *hiphil*, *hodi'ot*. Firth further examines that utilising the infinitive absolute form of the *hiphil* verb renders Pharaoh's statement ambiguous, as it does not specify number or person. Consequently, this ambiguity allows for the possibility that the knowledge revealed to Joseph could be attributed to either God Almighty or the gods of Egypt.

However, Firth concludes that the infinitive form of the verb resonates with Israelite readers, who recognise *Yahweh* as the one true God. This aligns with Joseph's revelation in Genesis 41:16, where he emphasises that God provided Pharaoh with a favorable interpretation rather than claiming it as his own. Additionally, when Joseph explained the source of Pharaoh's dream, he used the term *elohim* for God, which can be understood in the plural sense but is paired with the masculine singular verb

¹⁵⁰ Read Gen. 41: 25 RSV

ya'aneh (He has answered). This construction typically indicates a reference to Israel's God rather than using *elohim* generically for gods.¹⁵¹

Firth's underlying argument in his analysis of Joseph's dream and its interpretation is that it originated from God. Divine communication often occurs through dreams and visions, employing symbols and events that require interpretation. Only those who have been endowed with the gift of understanding can provide the necessary insights.

Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin noted that Joseph's dream serves three functions: First, dreams often have a prophetic purpose. Second, such dreams are given by God. Third, interpretation can successfully be accomplished with God's assistance.¹⁵² Dreams serve various functions; they can predict both divine blessings and impending difficulties. A significant role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal mysteries to us:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come (John 16:13 RSV).

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions (Joel 2:28 RSV).

I wholeheartedly agree with Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin's perspective. Joseph's dream was a divine gift that enabled him to operate in the prophetic realm. The gift of prophecy provides insight into God's will regarding current or future events, guiding His people on the appropriate actions to take in order to experience His blessings continually.¹⁵³ While there is no explicit mention of Joseph utilising the gift of prophecy, we can infer its presence from the outcomes of his many dreams.

According to Darryl Blackwell, although the Holy Spirit did not indwell individuals during Joseph's time, the gift of dream interpretation functioned similarly to the gifts of the Holy Spirit available to believers today.¹⁵⁴ He identifies this gift as the word of wisdom, asserting that without it, one cannot effectively interpret dreams and visions.¹⁵⁵ It is important to note that the word of wisdom provides insight into how to act concerning a mysterious subject revealed to an individual. Roderick L. Evans

¹⁵¹ David G. Firth, "The Spirit and leadership: Testimony, Empowerment and Purpose", in *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, eds. David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner (New York: Intervarsity Press, 2016), 15-32.

¹⁵² Lawrence Olufemi Obisakin, *God the Holy Spirit: The Mystery of Christianity* (Abuja: Spectrum Books Limited, 2007), 34.

¹⁵³ Barry L. Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament: Introducing the Hebrew Bible* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publisher, 2004), 195.

¹⁵⁴ Darryl G. Blackwell, *The Joseph Effect* (Maryland: Christian Faith Publishing, 2019), 32.

¹⁵⁵ Darryl G. Blackwell, *The Joseph Effect*, 2-4.

made a similar observation, stating that prophecy manifests the word of knowledge and wisdom in action.¹⁵⁶ This gift serves as a vital tool that allows prophets to convey divine guidance regarding what God desires His children to do at specific moments. Therefore, both Obisakin and Blackwell hold a shared perspective on the prophetic significance of Joseph's dreams.

Additionally, Joseph's profound guidance on how Egypt should prepare for the impending famine highlights his operation in the word of knowledge. This concept does not refer to an all-encompassing understanding but, as Linda Triska explains, it encompasses crucial information supernaturally inspired by God. This gift is bestowed upon an individual for a specific purpose at a particular time, enabling them to effectively minister to others.¹⁵⁷ Triska further notes that this gift allows God to reveal hidden and secret matters. Those who possess this gift may gain insight through dreams, visions, or even through impressions or inner voices.¹⁵⁸ Roderick L. Evans aptly observes that these mediums of revelation do not stem from human intuition, feelings, or thoughts, but are instead divinely inspired.¹⁵⁹ Joseph exemplified this gift, which complemented his prophetic role within these narratives. In his later years, he prophesied that God would return to visit the Israelites in Egypt, instructing his brothers to carry his bones with them to the Promised Land at the appropriate time (Gen. 50: 24-25).

Conclusion

The presence of the Holy Spirit has been evident throughout the Old Testament, mirroring many trends found in the New Testament. This paper has argued that the notion of the Holy Spirit coming and going—appearing only to accomplish specific tasks—is not consistently supported in the Old Testament. There are notable instances, such as in the life of Moses, where His abiding presence is clearly felt. Furthermore, it is asserted that many of the remarkable feats achieved by individuals in the Old Testament were orchestrated by the Spirit of God (*ruach 'elohim*). The Holy Spirit was instrumental in empowering artisans like Bezalel and Oholiab, as well as leaders such as Moses, enabling them to perform extraordinary tasks in Egypt and during their time in the desert. Similarly, it was the Holy Spirit that endowed figures like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Joseph with unique gifts, allowing them to significantly influence foreign lands and gain respect and recognition for

¹⁵⁶ Roderick L. Evans, *The Prophetic Mantle: The Gift of Prophecy and Prophetic Operations in the Church Today* (North Carolina: Abundant Truth Publishing, 2019), 195.

¹⁵⁷ Linda C. Triska. *Works of His Hands: Targeting your Spiritual Gifts* (New York: Christian faith publishing, 1995), 3.

¹⁵⁸ Linda C. Triska. *Works of His Hands: Targeting your spiritual gifts*, 4-5.

¹⁵⁹ Roderick L. Evans, *The Prophetic Mantle: The Gift of Prophecy and Prophetic Operations in the Church Today* (North Carolina: Abundant Truth Publishing, 2019), 195.

YHWH among foreign kings. Contemporary discussions often focus on how leading Pentecostals contribute to the socio-political development of their nations and the role of the Holy Spirit within the church. However, the Old Testament models provide compelling evidence of the substantial work the Holy Spirit accomplished through individuals to shape nations and societies.

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Pentecostalism and Political Engagement in Ghana's Fourth Republic

Patrick Tetteh Kudadjie

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 sphere¹⁶⁰, 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.¹⁶¹ 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 authority.¹⁶² However, this

¹⁶⁰ 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.

¹⁶¹ Anthony Gill, "Religion and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review Political Science* 4 (2001): 118.

¹⁶² 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.

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.¹⁶³ 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.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, “church” can also refer to individual believers who collectively make up the body of Christ. In this context, the term “state” pertains to

¹⁶³ See Frederich Acheampong, ‘Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana’s Fourth Republic: From Enclave to Engagement’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2018), 1.

¹⁶⁴ J. N. Kudadjie and R. K. Aboagye-Mensah, *Christian Social Ethics* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1992), 10.

“the area of operation in civil matters concerning the affairs of the nation.”¹⁶⁵ 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.¹⁶⁶ 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.¹⁶⁷

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

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

¹⁶⁵ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

¹⁶⁶ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

¹⁶⁷ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

church. He not only aids us in discovering the truth about God but also “comforts, helps, advises, and advocates for the helpless.”¹⁶⁸ 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.”¹⁶⁹

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.”¹⁷⁰ 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). 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

¹⁶⁸ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

¹⁶⁹ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

¹⁷⁰ Kudadjie, *Christian Social Ethics*, 42.

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.¹⁷¹ According to Acheampong, Pentecostal ministries have expanded their focus beyond spirituality to actively engage in the secular affairs of the state.¹⁷² 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.¹⁷³ In Ghana, approximately 9.7 million individuals identify as Pentecostals, representing about 31.6% of the nation's total

¹⁷¹ Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic: From Enclave to Engagement,' 1.

¹⁷² Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 1.

¹⁷³ 2021 Population and Housing Census-Ghana Statistical Service, statsghana.gov.gh, 15 January 2022.

population.¹⁷⁴ 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.¹⁷⁵ 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.¹⁷⁶

Asamoah-Gyadu characterises Pentecostal Christianity as “the most exciting and dominant stream of Christianity in the twenty-first century.”¹⁷⁷ In the context of Africa, he reinforces this assertion by noting the remarkable growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic activity across the continent.¹⁷⁸ 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.¹⁷⁹

Emmanuel Larbi presents the perspective that Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are making substantial strides in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.¹⁸⁰ He notes that, despite the noticeable distinctions within Ghanaian Pentecostalism, it remains the most significant religious movement in the country from a demographic standpoint.¹⁸¹

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 such a definition might prove elusive and always depends on the

¹⁷⁴ 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.

¹⁷⁵ For instance, Lighthouse Chapel, Winners Chapel, Winners Ghana, and Royalhouse Chapel have all transformed warehouses into Chapels.

¹⁷⁶ 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.

¹⁷⁷ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013), 1.

¹⁷⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 9.

¹⁷⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 9.

¹⁸⁰ 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.

¹⁸¹ E. Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), p.xii.

paradigm and criteria of the individual attempting to make it.”¹⁸² 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,¹⁸³ 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.”¹⁸⁴ His definition includes “African Independent Churches” (AICs), “Classical Pentecostals,” the “Charismatic Movement” within mainline churches, as well as “New Charismatics” or “Neo-Pentecostal” churches.¹⁸⁵ 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.¹⁸⁶ 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.¹⁸⁷ 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.¹⁸⁸ 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.¹⁸⁹ However, Iain MacRobert argues that it would be a grave mistake to interpret the Pentecostal movement solely as a resurgence of *glossolalic* expressions.¹⁹⁰ He contends

¹⁸² Anderson, ‘Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions’, 27.

¹⁸³ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 1.

¹⁸⁴ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13-14.

¹⁸⁵ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 13.

¹⁸⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 18-28.

¹⁸⁷ 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.

¹⁸⁸ Iain MacRoberts, *The Black Roots and White Racism of the Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1988), 2.

¹⁸⁹ MacRoberts, *The Black Roots and White Racism of the Early Pentecostalism in the USA*, 2.

¹⁹⁰ MacRoberts, *The Black Roots and White Racism of the Early Pentecostalism in the USA*, 2.

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.¹⁹¹ 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.¹⁹² 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.¹⁹³

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,¹⁹⁴ influence on other Christian denominations,¹⁹⁵ evangelistic effectiveness,¹⁹⁶ moral pneumatology,¹⁹⁷ and political engagement.¹⁹⁸ 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.

¹⁹¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 3.

¹⁹² Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism*, 87.

¹⁹³ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 87.

¹⁹⁴ See Larbi, *Pentecostalism in Ghana*, Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*.

¹⁹⁵ 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.

¹⁹⁶ 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>.

¹⁹⁷ 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).

¹⁹⁸ 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.

Pentecostal political engagement in Ghana's Fourth Republic has garnered considerable attention in scholarly publications.¹⁹⁹ 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.²⁰⁰ 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.²⁰¹ 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.²⁰² 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.²⁰³ 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

¹⁹⁹Elom 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); Frederich Acheampong, ‘Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic: From Enclave to Engagement’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2018).

²⁰⁰ See Dolvo, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, 634; Acheampong, “Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,” 54.

²⁰¹ See Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel. Global Christian Fundamentalism* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

²⁰² Acheampong, ‘Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,’ 54.

²⁰³ Acheampong, ‘Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,’ 54.

been recognized that Pentecostals played a crucial role in advocating for multiparty democratic governance in Ghana.²⁰⁴

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."²⁰⁵ 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.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 55.

²⁰⁵ Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 59.

²⁰⁶ 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.”²⁰⁷ 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.”²⁰⁸ Additionally, the EC was encouraged to “implement all necessary measures to ensure peaceful, free, fair, transparent, and credible elections.”²⁰⁹

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.”²¹⁰ 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 Christian organisations within Ghana's democratic processes. Additionally, Pentecostal engagement in politics is evident in efforts related to socio-economic development.

²⁰⁷ 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.

²⁰⁸ Korankye-Ankrah, “GPCC Urges Politicians to Exhibit Integrity in December Polls.

²⁰⁹ Korankye-Ankrah, “GPCC Urges Politicians to Exhibit Integrity in December Polls.

²¹⁰ Ryan Truscott, “Ghana Churches Push Law to Combat Promotion of Homosexuality”, Christianity Today, October 26, 2021, christianitytoday.com. Accessed November 30th, 2023.

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.²¹¹

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.²¹² These include three hospitals and seven (7) clinics.²¹³ 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 employed a total of six thousand and fifty four (6,054) individuals.²¹⁴ 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,

²¹¹ Eric Nyamekye, "State of the Church Address, 17th Extraordinary Council Meetings," 5th May, 22, <http://thecophq.org> Accessed, 11th December, 2023.

²¹² Eric Nyamekye, "State of the Church Address, 46th Session of the General Council Meetings," 3rd May, 2023, <http://thecophq.org>. Accessed, 11th December, 2023.

²¹³ Eric Nyamekye, "State of the Church Address, 46th Session of the General Council Meetings," 3rd May, 2023, <http://thecophq.org>. Accessed, 11th December, 2023.

²¹⁴ Eric Nyamekye, "State of the Church Address, 46th Session of the General Council Meetings," 3rd May, 2023, <http://thecophq.org>. Accessed, 11th December, 2023.

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.²¹⁵ 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 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.

²¹⁵ Patrick Tetteh Kudadjie, "Survey to gather feedback from CoP members on the Church's performance in Social Services," May 2024.

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.²¹⁶ 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.²¹⁷

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."²¹⁸ 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).²¹⁹ For example, before the 2016 election, Prophet Owusu Bempah declared that the NPP would win, while Prophet Nigel Gaise prophesied in favor of the 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

²¹⁶ Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 119.

²¹⁷ Acheampong, 'Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic,' 119.

²¹⁸ 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.

²¹⁹ 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.

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?”²²⁰ 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.”²²¹ 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, 2011.²²² 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 President Alhaji Mahamudu Bawumia.²²³ 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

²²⁰ 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.

²²¹ Acheampong, ‘Pentecostals and Politics in Ghana’s Fourth Republic,’ 138.

²²² 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#>

²²³ Bbc.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

received three such prophecies from different prophets over the years.²²⁴ 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.²²⁵

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

²²⁴ 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>

²²⁵ Wwww.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>

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."²²⁶ 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 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.

²²⁶ 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.

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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Pentecostals and Voting Behaviour in Ghana's 2024 Presidential Elections

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Abstract

The 2024 general elections in Ghana will mark a historic moment in the Fourth Republic, as both major political parties will be led by a Christian and a Muslim for the first time. This development has sparked a debate among the populace regarding the influence of religion on the election outcome. According to the recent population census, the majority of Christians in Ghana identify as Pentecostals, suggesting that this group will significantly impact the selection of the next President. This research, employing a qualitative design and the social model of voting behaviour as its framework, aims to explore the relationship between religion and the voting habits of Pentecostals in the upcoming elections. The findings revealed a range of responses among participants. Among the formally educated respondents, many asserted that religion would not influence their voting decisions, emphasising the importance of policies instead. Conversely, others expressed a tendency to abstain from voting because their preferred parties are nominating candidates who do not align with their religious views.

Keywords: Pentecostals, Politics, Voting behaviour, Elections, Religion

Introduction

Abamfo Ofori Atiemo emphasised that in Ghana, religion integrates with nearly all aspects of life, including the public sphere.²³⁰ John S. Pobee further observed that this deep connection has existed since pre-colonial times, resulting in no clear separation between religion and politics.²³¹ Elom Dovlo highlighted examples from indigenous African communities that illustrate how religion and politics have historically intertwined.²³² In this regard, Hans Haselbarth states, "It is part of African tradition that we cannot easily distinguish between the secular and religious realms, even in

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²³⁰ Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, *Religion and the Inculturation of Human Rights in Ghana* (London, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), 86.

²³¹ John Samuel Pobee, *Religion and Politics in Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1991), 11.

²³² Elom Dovlo, "Religion in the Public Sphere: Challenges and Opportunities in Ghanaian Lawmaking, 1989-2004," *BYU L. Rev* 3, no. 4 (2005): 629.

politics.”²³³ Thus, Haselbarth aligns with Pobee regarding the connection between religion and the public sphere. In this context, religion and politics in Ghana have been closely linked since the origins of the traditional state, making it difficult to separate the two in contemporary times. Traditional thought and practice conferred legitimacy upon the leadership of ethnic groups through religion,²³⁴ so prior to colonialism, the traditional leaders among various ethnicities were deeply intertwined with religious beliefs.²³⁵ The stools on which many traditional leaders sat were associated with State deities,²³⁶ and these leaders often had priests as key advisors.²³⁷ Policies and State decisions were often viewed as requiring divine approval through divination and oracles. Additionally, there existed a relationship between traditional laws and religious beliefs, with taboos that, if violated, resulted in both civil condemnation and the need for religious restitution.²³⁸

Colonial rule in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) did not diminish the influence of religion in the public sphere. In British West Africa, the colonial authorities implemented a system of “indirect rule,” which integrated traditional leadership into their governance framework.²³⁹ This approach established a new relationship between the state and religion.²⁴⁰ Although Ghana is a secular state, Christianity—the religion of the colonisers—remains the predominant religion.²⁴¹ Following the end of colonialism, the role of religion in Ghana’s public life was reevaluated. During the decolonisation process, religion played a nuanced role, leading to nationalist movements that challenged Christianity to become more culturally relevant to Ghana and the African context. Consequently, many independent African churches and their leaders actively supported the struggle for independence.²⁴²

The relationship between the state and religion in Ghana has fluctuated since 1957, largely due to political instability. New religious movements tend to emerge in the

²³³ Hans Haselbarth, *Christian Ethics in the African Context* (Daystar Press, 1976), 189.

²³⁴ Pobee, *Religion and Politics*, 11.

²³⁵ G.K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1992) 7, 77–78.

²³⁶ Peter Sarpong, *The Sacred Stools of the Akan* (1st ed.) (Accra: Ghana Publishing, 1971), 8.

²³⁷ Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture* (3rd ed.) (Accra: Ghana Publishing, 1974), 17–18.

²³⁸ Kwasi Wiredu, “Morality and Religion in Akan Thought,” In *African-American Humanism: An Anthology*, Norm R. Allen (ed.) (New York: Prometheus Books, 1991), 210–222.

²³⁹ Michael Crowder, “Indirect Rule: French and British Style,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 34, no. 3 (1964): 198.

²⁴⁰ E.K. Quashigah, “Legislating Religious Liberty: The Ghanaian Experience,” *BYU L. REV* 2, no. 6 (1999): 589, 594.

²⁴¹ GhanaWeb.com, Legal History and Notable Features of Ghana Law, http://www.ghanaweb.info/law_cms/article.php?ID=2276 (accessed December 2023).

²⁴² Pobee, *Religion and Politics*, 144–146.

aftermath of coups,²⁴³ enabling their leaders to gain significant influence in state affairs. During periods of democratic governance, mainline churches have actively participated in the public sphere, sharing similar structures and ideologies, unlike these new religious movements. Although Ghana has no official religion²⁴⁴ and has been declared a secular state since its independence—a status that also existed during colonial times—Dovlo argues that a concept he terms “Civil Religion” persists in the country.²⁴⁵ This notion refers to the incorporation of religious symbols and imagery in public and political life, fostering a sense of patriotic piety and unity among the populace.²⁴⁶ Dovlo further observes that in Africa, religion's role in public life extends beyond these usages. He identifies two specific expressions of religion in politics that are unique to West Africa: religious nationalism and the political manipulation of religion. The latter is particularly evident during election periods when religion is often leveraged for electoral advantage.²⁴⁷

A strong connection between religion and politics can be observed in Ghana, particularly during elections. This indicates that politicians are acutely aware of the significant influence religion has on the populace, often leveraging various religious institutions and leaders in their campaigns.²⁴⁸ For instance, in elections held under the Fourth Republican Constitution, phrases like the election of a “God-fearing man” as president emerge,²⁴⁹ alongside the use of religion to determine truth from falsehood. Traditional religious oracles have been employed to ascertain whether voters who accepted gifts from politicians actually supported them, and to evaluate the validity of accusations against political figures.²⁵⁰ The 2000 election was notable for political parties selecting Christian presidential candidates paired with Muslim running mates, which some perceived as divine intervention. Many believed that angels would ensure victory for the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which indeed succeeded with a Muslim running mate.²⁵¹ Looking ahead to the 2024 general election, a different dynamic is anticipated in Ghana's Fourth Republic, as it will feature presidential candidates from the two major political parties,

²⁴³ Elom Dovlo, “Civil Religion in Ghana,” *Orita Ibadan J. Religious Stud* 50 (2003): 37.

²⁴⁴ Dovlo, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, 634.

²⁴⁵ Dovlo, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, 634.

²⁴⁶ Patrick J. Ryan, S.J., “Is it Possible to Construct a Unified History of Religion in West Africa?” *Universitas: An Inter-Faculty Journal of the University of Ghana* (1986):107.

²⁴⁷ Dovlo, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, 634.

²⁴⁸ Birgit Meyer, *Impossible Representations: Pentecostalism, Vision and Video Technology in Ghana* (Johannes Gutenberg Univ., Dep't of Anthropology & Afr. Studies, Mainz, F.R.G., Working Paper No. 21, 2003),8.

²⁴⁹ Joseph Osei, “Manipulation of the Mass Media in Ghana's Recent Political Experience,” In *Ghana: Changing Values/ Changing Technologies*, Helen Lauer (ed.) (The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 200),2.

²⁵⁰ Dovlo, “Civil Religion in Ghana”, 35.

²⁵¹ Dovlo, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, 635.

the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the NPP, each representing the country's predominant religious groups.

This paper seeks to explore the relationship between religion and the voting behaviour of Pentecostals in the forthcoming 2024 general elections in Ghana. The impending election within Ghana's Fourth Republic presents a unique opportunity to assess whether Pentecostals will base their votes on the political parties' manifestos or on the religious affiliations of the presidential candidates. In the upcoming 2024 general election, each of the two major political parties will nominate a presidential candidate: one party will present a Christian (Classical Pentecostal) candidate, while the other will field a Muslim candidate. What role will religion play in these elections, and how might it influence the outcomes?

Sociological Model of Voting Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this research is the sociological model of voting, which posits that while many individuals make voting decisions based on personal factors, various social influences also play a significant role in their choice of candidate. Scholars such as Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee identify key societal factors—such as family, media, region, class, religion, and race—as critical influences on voting behaviour.²⁵² Similarly, Michael Marsh and Kevin Cunningham highlight categories like gender, class, religion, region, and ethnicity as important divisions.²⁵³ However, Robert Andersen and Anthony Heath have noted that the sociological model has faced criticism for its emphasis on collective rather than individual motivations behind voting behaviour.²⁵⁴

Despite this, it is essential to acknowledge the voting patterns observed in Africa, particularly in Ghana, where a significant portion of the electorate casts their votes based on ethnic, religious, or regional affiliations.²⁵⁵ This model highlights the importance of these social classifications, which reveal the underlying divisions and tensions within Ghanaian society. While ethnic and regional influences are the primary factors shaping voting behaviour in Africa and Ghana, much of the existing research has predominantly

²⁵² Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee, *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign* (The University of Chicago Press, 1986).

²⁵³ Michael Marsh and Kevin Cunningham, "Voting Behaviour," In *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* 6th ed. (London: Routledge, 2017), 157–183.

²⁵⁴ Robert Andersen and Anthony Heath, "Class Matters: The Persisting Effects of Contextual Social Class on Individual Voting in Britain, 1964–1997," *European Sociological Review* 18, no. 2 (2002):125–138.

²⁵⁵ Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

focused on these aspects. Additionally, studies examining the role of religion in voting behaviour often emphasise religious divides in relation to regional factors rather than from an individual perspective. This research, however, specifically investigates the voting behaviour of Pentecostals in Ghana as the nation approaches the 2024 presidential election.

Religious Influence on Elections

Before we delve into the influence of religion on voting behaviour, it is important to first explore the meaning of the term “religion.” This term is widely used in both everyday conversation and academic discourse. However, despite its frequent application, the complexities involved in defining “religion” cannot be overlooked. The interpretation of the term varies significantly depending on the context in which it is employed. Therefore, it can be argued that the definition of religion is context-dependent. Various scholars have suggested different definitions, including “functional-based,”²⁵⁶ “content-based,”²⁵⁷ “the presence of a belief,”²⁵⁸ “the presence of faith,”²⁵⁹ and “analogical-based definitions,”²⁶⁰ to name just a few. Despite efforts by scholars to arrive at a fitting definition of religion, the few proposed definitions have faced criticism for being either too broad or too narrow. This highlights the complexities involved in defining religion. This paper will not address the technicalities related to defining religion, as it is not its primary focus. However, given the term’s usage in this study, we will provide a working definition. In this paper, the term “religion” refers specifically to the major world religions, including Christianity, Islam, African Indigenous Religions, Judaism, and others. The emphasis of this section will be on the impact of these major religions on elections.

The impact of religion on politics, particularly in the context of elections, presents multiple dimensions globally, with a specific focus on Africa. This paper will first examine the relationship between religion and politics before delving into its effects on elections. Numerous scholars have highlighted this connection. For example, Christopher Callaway noted that the rise of secularism has not diminished the significance of religion in political phenomena worldwide.²⁶¹ Similarly, Jeffery Haynes argues that religion plays

²⁵⁶ Jesse H. Choper, “Defining Religion in the First Amendment,” *University of Illinois Law Review* (1982): 579-591.

²⁵⁷ Choper, “Defining Religion,” 579.

²⁵⁸ Choper, “Defining Religion,” 579.

²⁵⁹ Andrew W. Austin, “Faith and the Constitutional Definition of Religion,” *Columbia Law Review* 22, no.1 (1992): 33-43.

²⁶⁰ F. Ferré, “The Definition of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 38 (1970):3-16.

²⁶¹ Christopher Callaway, “Religion and Politics,” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/rel-poli/>. (accessed December 2023).

a crucial role in addressing and often intertwining political, social, economic, and developmental conflicts. He emphasises that religion can significantly shape individual and group values, which in turn influence fundamental issues affecting people everywhere.²⁶² In contrast, Jon G. Abbink suggests that, in Africa, the importance of religion can be observed from both a numerical standpoint and its ties to politics and the public sphere. He further observes that the wave of economic liberalisation and democratisation since the 1990s has led to a marked increase in the presence of religion in the public space, highlighting its political relevance in Africa. Abbink asserts that religion will continue to play a vital role in the continent's political trajectory in the future.²⁶³

The role of religion in the public sphere across Africa can certainly be observed in Ghana; however, there are unique aspects within the West African context—particularly in Ghana and Nigeria—that render this interaction particularly compelling. The rise of neo-Prophetic Pentecostalism has introduced a distinct dynamic to this arena. Notably, spiritual forecasting, prophesying, or predicting the outcomes of general elections has emerged as a significant practice. When these prophecies materialise, many neo-Prophets anticipate a “role” within the ruling government, aiming to influence decisions accordingly. Fredrick Acheampong, in his assessment of the situation in Ghana, noted that while issues such as spiritual forecasting, religious bloc campaigns, discrediting candidates before religious and ethnic constituencies, and concerns regarding moral and human rights, as well as the use of religious songs in campaigns, may have shifted attention somewhat, these religious matters still play a significant role in the political landscape of the 2008 campaigns.²⁶⁴ Additionally, Jessica Naa Ahiney Boifio emphasises that Ghanaians are deeply religious, suggesting that every campaign message must align with their values and morals. Moreover, any individual aspiring to public office must consider the social dynamics of Ghanaian society, particularly the centrality of religion, which serves as a foundational element of public life in the community.²⁶⁵

²⁶² Jeffrey Haynes, “Religion, Identity, Security and Governance,” In *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics* (Routledge, 2016), xv-xvi.

²⁶³ Jon G. Abbink, “Religion and Politics in Africa: The Future of ‘The Secular’,” *Africa Spectrum* 49, no.3(2014):83.

²⁶⁴ Fredrick Acheampong, “Religion and Politics in Ghana: An Analysis of Repetitive Issues in Electioneering Campaigns under the 4th Republic (1992-2008),” (Conference: Paper presented at an International and Interdisciplinary conference on “Politics, Probity, Poverty, and Prayer: African Spiritualities, Economic and Socio-Political Transformation”, 2013).

²⁶⁵ Jessica Naa Ahiney Boifio, “The Battle Is the Lord’s”-Religion as a Tool for Political Branding in Ghana’s Fourth Republic,” Unpublished Bachelor of Science in Administration Thesis submitted to Ashesi University, 2014.

Building on Boifio's assertion, the 2024 general election is poised to be pivotal in Ghana's Fourth Republic. As previously discussed, the ruling New Patriotic Party is fielding Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, a Muslim candidate, while the opposition National Democratic Congress has nominated John Dramani Mahama, a member of the Assemblies of God Church, a prominent classical Pentecostal denomination in Ghana. Given Boifio's argument that the social dynamics of Ghanaian society – particularly the influence of religion – should be considered when seeking public office, and taking into account that a significant portion of the population identifies as Christian, one must question whether these dynamics will impact the upcoming elections. Is there a connection between religion and voting patterns that could shape the electoral outcomes?

Various studies across the world have demonstrated such a relationship. A study conducted by Mian Gul Said, Aziz Ur Rahman, and Musab Yousufi in Pakistan focusing on the 2013 general election among the electorate of the Buner district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa concerning the voting behaviour presented mixed responses from the electorate. While the research demonstrated a seeming relationship that exists between religion and voting patterns by some of the electorates, others were of the view that the religion that one belongs to does not affect one's decision on the day of elections.²⁶⁶ Sarah Botterman and Marc Hooghe, conducting their research from Belgium to examine the relationship between religion and voting patterns for the Christian Democratic Party (CDP), acknowledged that although Christianity is in decline in Western Europe, voting patterns are still influenced by religion.²⁶⁷ Robyn Driskell, Elizabeth Embry, and Larry Lyon in addition, argued that religion continues to influence the voting patterns of most electorates. They posit that "different types of religious beliefs influence political participation differently. Although some macro religious beliefs significantly increase macro-political behaviour, believers in an involved God are less likely to participate politically."²⁶⁸ This then brings out different variables determining such influence in an election.

Focusing on Africa, particularly Nigeria, Cletus Famous Nwankwo examined the impact of religion on voters' choices in the country. He noted that while there was minimal religious influence in the first two elections of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, from 1999 to 2015, a significant level of religious impact emerged in the 2011 and 2015 elections.

²⁶⁶ Mian Gul Said, Aziz Ur Rahman, and Musab Yousufi, "The Impact of Religion on Voting Behavior," *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews* 9, no 2 (2021):14-24.

²⁶⁷ Sarah Botterman and Marc Hooghe, "Religion and Voting Behavior in Belgium: An Analysis of the Relation Between Religious Beliefs and Christian Democratic Voting," *APSA 2009 Toronto Meeting Paper*, (2009).

²⁶⁸ Driskell, Elizabeth Embry, and Larry Lyon, "Faith and Politics: The Influence of Religious Beliefs on Political Participation," *Southwestern Social Science Association* 89, no.2 (2008):294-314.

Nwankwo argues that the influence of faith on Nigeria's presidential elections during the Fourth Republic has markedly increased over time.²⁶⁹

The situation in Ghana during its Fourth republic stands in contrast to that of Nigeria. In Nigeria, leading presidential candidates typically hail from either Christian or Islamic backgrounds. In Ghana, however, ethnicity and regional considerations play a more direct role, with religion having a more indirect influence. Gilbert Arhinful Aidoo and Thomas Prehi Botchway emphasise that ethnicity, regionality, and religion significantly shape electoral outcomes in Ghana's Fourth Republic. They note that politicians often leverage these factors to secure electoral victories. This reliance on identity politics can potentially lead to instability within the nation's political framework, prompting a call for authorities to address these challenges.²⁷⁰

Although their mission is commendable, it may appear "unachievable" at times due to the significant role of identity in human decision-making. It is not uncommon for individuals to act in accordance with their identities. A comprehensive and consistent educational approach is essential to transform this proposed change into reality, beginning in kindergarten and continuing through university. Such education should highlight the importance of prioritising policies over identity when selecting leaders. In contrast to the position presented by Aidoo and Botchway regarding the influence of ethnicity on voting behaviour, Ransford Gyampo and Ricky Appah assert that their empirical evidence reveals a declining impact of ethnicity on electoral choices. Instead, party identification has now taken on a more prominent role in how Ghanaians cast their votes.²⁷¹ This suggests that a growing number of Ghanaians are choosing to vote based on policy or ideological considerations rather than solely on the ethnic affiliation of the candidates.

Baffour K. Takyi, Chris Opoku-Agyeman, and Agnes Kutin-Mensah identified a correlation between religion and voting patterns in Ghana's 2004 presidential election. They noted that while the majority of Ghanaian Protestant Christians support the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the Muslim community tends to favour the National Democratic Congress (NDC).²⁷² This observation is significant for the current study, as the dynamics

²⁶⁹ Cletus Famous Nwankwo, "Religion and Voter Choice Homogeneity in the Nigerian Presidential Elections of the Fourth Republic," *Stat Polit Pol* 10, no. 1(2019)1-25.

²⁷⁰ Gilbert Arhinful Aidoo and Thomas Prehi Botchway, "Ethnicity, Religion and Elections in Ghana," *UCC Law Journal* 1, no.2 (2021): 419-444.

²⁷¹ Ransford Gyampo and Ricky Appah, *Voting Behavior in Elections in Ghana's Fourth Republic: A Study of Manhyia South, Ho West and Ayawaso West Wuogon* (Mauritius: Editions Universitaires Europeennes, 2018).

²⁷² Baffour K. Takyi, Chris Opoku-Agyeman and Agnes Kutin-Mensah, "Religion and the Public Sphere: Religious Involvement and Voting Patterns in Ghana's 2004 Elections," *Africa Today* 56, no. 4 (2010): 62-86.

have changed in the upcoming presidential election. The party predominantly backed by Christians is now fielding a Muslim candidate, while the party with a majority of Muslim supporters is presenting a Christian candidate. This raises an important question: how will this influence the voting behaviours of the electorate?

Methodology

The Pentecostals in Ghana are broadly classified into three main groups: classical Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals, and neo-Prophetic. For this research, the focus was not on a specific category of Pentecostals in Ghana, but rather on engaging any Christian in the two demarcated areas who belonged to any of the Pentecostal groups. This qualitative study employed the purposive sampling technique for data collection. The researchers conducted brief face-to-face interviews with a sample size of 60 respondents, consisting of 30 formally educated Pentecostals and 30 informally educated Pentecostals, with an equal split of 15 males and 15 females in each group.

The study included 30 formally educated Pentecostals, primarily from the University of Ghana Main and Accra City Campuses, as well as 30 uneducated Pentecostals from Nsawam, Achimota, Bekwai, and Hohoe. The respondents belonged to various churches, including the Church of Pentecost, Assemblies of God, Christ Apostolic Church International, Lighthouse Chapel International, Spiritlife Revival Ministry, and the Glorious Word Power Ministry International. The research categorised the data into two main themes: formally educated Pentecostals and informally educated Pentecostals, and the data was analysed using the sociological model of voting.

Presentation of Findings

The interview questions focused on two main areas: the voting patterns of participants in the last two elections and the potential influence of religion on their decisions in the upcoming election. The data will be organised into two overarching themes: formally educated Pentecostals and informally educated Pentecostals. It is essential to clarify the meanings of “formal” and “informal” education in this context. These terms are used in their Western sense. Formal education refers to Pentecostals who have received Western-style education, while informally educated Pentecostals are those who have gained knowledge outside of that framework. We contend that education extends beyond traditional classroom settings (the Western model) and encompasses any process of acquiring knowledge that is beneficial to humanity.

Formally Educated Pentecostals

The respondents interviewed in this category represented two voting backgrounds: those who have participated in elections before and those who will be voting for the first time in the 2024 general election. Some expressed their disappointment with the democratic system and have decided against voting in the upcoming election. Conversely, others conveyed their eagerness to participate. For example, the first respondent remarked that elections are fundamentally meant to select leaders who are competent and capable of addressing our issues rather than merely discussing them. Furthermore, she emphasized that the qualities of these leaders are the key factors she will consider when casting her vote, stating that her religious beliefs will not influence her decision.

The second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh respondents first noted that they voted for the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the previous general election in 2020. They explained that their choice was influenced by the appealing policies presented by the NPP. They emphasised that neither religion nor ethnicity played a role in their decision-making process. Consequently, they believe that in the upcoming election, their choice will similarly not be swayed by religious considerations. Instead, they intend to base their decision on the candidate whose policies will be most beneficial to them and the country as a whole.

The eighth respondent, like others, indicated that in previous elections, she voted for the National Democratic Congress (NDC) based on policy considerations rather than religious affiliations. She emphasised that as she approaches next year's general election, policies will be crucial in her voting decision. Another respondent provided an intriguing rationale for supporting the incumbent party in the last election, revealing that her mother encouraged her to do so in appreciation for the introduction of the free senior high school initiative, from which she personally benefited. This initiative, introduced by President Nana Akufo Addo, aims to make secondary education accessible to all by offering scholarships to students at the high school level. The respondent also expressed that the stress she experienced while casting her vote would deter her from participating in the upcoming election. She commented that elections often become a means of creating jobs for those in power, frequently to the detriment of the citizenry, as promises made are not fulfilled.

One respondent, in contrast, expressed that he would cast his vote for a Christian candidate. He argued that the Christian values of such an individual tend to shape their governance, as these individuals embody the teachings of Christ. Another respondent, aligning himself with the previous speaker, stated that his decision in the election would not be swayed by religion but rather by policies. When asked if he plans to vote in the upcoming election, he replied, "Of course, why not? If the policies are good, that's all that matters. Remember, Ghana is a secular state; I don't need to belong to any religious sect to vote for someone. Historically, all our presidents have been Christians, and yet we have seen little change. The NDC has been in power for a long time, and their candidates have always been Christians." His comments highlight two key points: the prevalence of Christians in leadership roles within the country and his disappointment in their governance. He concluded by emphasising that, regardless of his vote, he will focus on long-term policies rather than short-term solutions.

Many of the individuals interviewed expressed the belief that policies will significantly influence their voting decisions in the upcoming elections, rather than religious affiliations. Additionally, a number of respondents indicated that they may abstain from voting due to the repeated failures of successive governments to fulfill their promises.

Informally Educated Pentecostals

Most respondents interviewed in this category had mixed reactions to the questions posed. Similar to the earlier responses from formally educated Pentecostals, about half indicated that they planned to vote in the upcoming election based on the policies of the two presidential candidates. They elaborated that having previously experienced both candidates in power, their track records significantly influence their voting decisions. Additionally, some respondents noted that they have benefited from the policies of either the incumbent or the opposition party, and their votes will serve as an expression of gratitude for the contributions made to their lives.

However, Some respondents indicated that their voting decisions would not be influenced by religious affiliations but rather by party loyalty. They expressed that, as supporters of the NPP/NDC, they would vote for whichever candidate their party presents, regardless of the candidate's religious background. While the questions posed focused primarily on the impact of religion in the upcoming elections, a few respondents mentioned ethnicity as a consideration. One individual noted that she would support the incumbent government because the candidate they are presenting is from her hometown. She further asserted that just as the current president has fostered development in his

hometown, she believes that if the incumbent's presidential candidate wins, similar progress will occur in her community.

In contrast to the responses provided earlier, some respondents clearly stated their intent not to participate in the upcoming elections. When probed further about the reasons behind this voter apathy, they expressed that as fervent Pentecostal Christians and supporters of the NPP, they could not bring themselves to vote for a Muslim candidate for the nation's leadership. Consequently, rather than casting a ballot for the NDC, they have chosen to refrain from voting altogether. This sentiment was echoed by many who had made the decision not to participate in the elections. One individual remarked, "I have a friend who is Muslim and an NDC supporter. He mentioned that he would vote for Mahama in the upcoming elections despite Mahama being a Christian. So why did the NPP allow the NDC to mislead them into thinking that nominating a Muslim candidate would secure the Muslim vote?"

Another respondent articulated her reasons for opting out of voting by stating, "How can a Muslim lead us? He will prioritise Islam and elevate it as the primary religion. The Bible teaches that a nation flourishes when the righteous govern. The righteous are filled with the Holy Spirit. Bawumia is a good man, humble in nature, but he lacks the Holy Spirit, which means he cannot discern the voice of God." While some respondents chose to withdraw from the elections due to their party's candidate, others expressed their intent to vote for a Christian candidate.

Data Analysis

The responses outlined above highlight the current role of Pentecostals in Ghana's public sphere. Notably, there were mixed viewpoints from both formally and informally educated Pentecostals. It is particularly fascinating to observe that while the majority of formally educated Pentecostals leaned towards the opinion that religion would not influence their choice of President or their vote in the upcoming 2024 General Election, a couple of respondents expressed opposing perspectives. According to these respondents, religious identity should significantly influence voting decisions. In this context, the criterion of selecting a leader based on competence takes a backseat. It is crucial to consider the demographic of these participants; they are members of the societal elite, who are typically expected to vote based on an individual's qualities, skills, and abilities. Nevertheless, in this instance, religion has emerged as a pivotal factor.

Another significant issue identified was voter apathy. Many of the Pentecostals interviewed expressed that, due to the failures of successive governments, they have chosen not to participate in future elections. Their responses prompt critical inquiries. First, are their decisions truly linked to developmental concerns, or are they influenced by the fact that their preferred political party is fielding a Muslim candidate? This question holds importance, given that the NPP has historically performed well in areas with a more elitist or educated electorate. Consequently, the insights gathered from formally educated Pentecostals raise important questions about the underlying reasons for their apathy.

In contrast, the responses from informally educated individuals provide a clearer understanding of the genuine reasons behind this disengagement in the upcoming elections. According to the respondents, their reasoning is not rooted in the failures of successive governments but rather in the religion of the candidate presented by their political party. Consequently, religion plays a significant role, whether directly or indirectly, in influencing voting decisions. Additionally, one participant pointed out the predominance of Christian leadership during the Fourth Republic, which has yielded little in terms of substantial development. Therefore, the rejection of successive governments by Pentecostals, stemming from a perceived lack of national progress, can be interpreted as a disapproval of Christian leadership in the country. This raises the question: why not consider giving a chance to a candidate from a different religion?

For Pentecostals, individuals from other religious backgrounds are often viewed as neither “righteous” nor “filled with the Holy Spirit.” This perspective suggests that such individuals are perceived as being distant from the voice of God. As one respondent noted, this mindset can contribute to national stagnation and extreme poverty. Consequently, many believe that leadership should ideally be in the hands of a Christian. This brings us back to our earlier discussion: despite having experienced Christian leadership during the Fourth Republic, development has remained elusive. Many Pentecostals contend that they would prefer a Christian in a leadership position – even if progress is minimal – over someone from a different religion.

Furthermore, some responses suggest that when leaders are granted power, they may distance themselves from God. It is argued that true progress for the nation can only be achieved through a closer relationship with God. A recent visit to the Glorious Word Power Ministry, led by Isaac Owusu Bempah, underscored this notion. Owusu Bempah asserted that the current economic challenges in Ghana stem from the president's departure from God's presence, drawing a parallel to King Saul's separation from God. He emphasised that the country's development hinges on the president's return to a

closer connection with God. These sentiments illustrate the significant influence of Pentecostalism in shaping Ghana's public discourse.

Conclusion

This study has revealed a significant shift in the voting motivations of Pentecostals in Ghana as the 2024 general election approaches. Traditionally, it was believed that Pentecostals would primarily support candidates based on their strong Christian and doctrinal values. However, this study indicates a change in this perspective, with many Pentecostals now prioritising party identification, ethnicity, or policy positions over the religious affiliation of candidates. While some still choose to vote based on religious considerations, a significant number are increasingly focused on the potential benefits of a candidate's policies, rather than their religious background.

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Confronting the Ills of Society: Thomas Clarkson and the Slave Trade

Justice Anquandah Arthur

Abstract

The first generation of Christians constituted a small minority within the Roman Empire and did not seek to wield significant social influence. Thus, the New Testament does not provide a direct mandate for social transformation. Instead, Christians were encouraged to maintain a constructive relationship with the state while also being prepared to adopt adversarial stances when faced with oppression from hostile authorities. This context characterised their existence under the centralised, undemocratic Roman Empire. The challenge arises in applying the teachings of the New Testament to a participatory democracy, where Christians have ample opportunities for public engagement. Using Thomas Clarkson's approach to confronting the slave trade in Britain as an entry point, this paper has a two-pronged focus: 1) to bring Clarkson's somewhat eclipsed story into contemporary church-state discussions and 2) to contend that the strategies employed by Clarkson and other abolitionists can serve as a model for Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and Christians in their efforts to engage with the democratic state, aiming to foster societal transformation.

Keywords: Slavery, slave trade, Thomas Clarkson, public engagement, societal transformation

Introduction

The early Christians were a small minority within the Roman Empire and did not aspire to hold significant social influence. As a result, the New Testament does not contain a direct mandate for social transformation. Nevertheless, they believed that the Gospel would ultimately change the world (1 Cor 15:25-28; 2 Cor 5:18-19). They were also concerned about how others perceived them (Matt 5:13-16; 1 Pet 3:15-16) and were prepared to stand up against the authorities when necessary (Acts 4:19-20). What is clear is that the first-generation Christians did not teach political or social action as a conduit for spreading the Gospel. Instead, they shared their faith by preaching and healing and acts of mercy, which were basically directed toward their fellow believers (Matt 25:40; John 13:34-35) and sometimes, on others too (1 Pet 4:9; 1 John 3:16-17; Jas 2:15-17). Their attitude toward the political situation of their time was largely shaped by their anticipation of the kingdom of God, which they saw demonstrated through the

miraculous power of Jesus. As a result, they regarded the importance of the political order as minimal, as Jesus himself declared, “My kingship is not of this world...” (John 18:36).

Despite their longing for the coming kingdom of God, these first-generational Christians still acknowledged the state as a bearer of order. Therefore, two opposing views coexisted within the Christian communities. On the one hand, Paul’s perspective was that the existing Roman Empire, the political structure of his time, was “from God...for your good” and that Christians should be “subject to the governing authorities” (Rom 13:1-4). Additionally, Paul believed that the Roman state played a crucial role in “restraining” the chaos that the anti-Christ sought to introduce through its political order (2 Thess 2:1-12). In Pauline teaching, Christians were encouraged to engage positively with the state (Rom 13:1-7) and are called to live peacefully with everyone as much as possible (Rom 12:18).

On the other hand, Rome is often associated with the notorious “whore of Babylon,” a significant figure depicted in the apocalyptic narrative of Revelation (Rev 17:3-7). This figure is seen as analogous to the pagan nations and governments that stood in direct opposition to Christianity, particularly the city of Rome itself.²⁷³ The imagery serves as a counter-protest to that provided by Rome. Consequently, Christians are expected to adopt adversarial stances as an unfortunate necessity under duress (Rev 13). The difference between Paul’s teaching in Romans and the imagery in Revelation shows that the early Christians did not have the same attitude toward the state in every situation. Their approach to engaging with a friendly and transparent state was different from their strategy for a hostile, secular society, where they were to resist oppression.

This was the picture of their lives under the centralised, undemocratic Roman Empire. The question then is how one can apply the New Testament to a participatory democracy, like Ghana, in which Christians do have a considerable opportunity for public engagement. Generally, there are two approaches to sociopolitical issues among Christians today. Some Christians advocate for a complete separation between church and state. They argue that since New Testament believers did not participate in sociopolitical battles, contemporary Christians should refrain from public engagement. Instead, they believe the church should focus on fulfilling its divine mandate of evangelising the world. They argue that concentrating on sociopolitical issues diverts the believers’ attention “from the heavenly toward which Christians should look.” Dave Hunt, a proponent of this perspective, argues that the first generation of Christians stayed

²⁷³ M. Matthias. “whore of Babylon.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 26, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/whore-of-Babylon>.

away from sociopolitical engagements out of conviction and not simply by necessity.²⁷⁴ In contrast to this group is another approach where contemporary Christians find sociopolitical implications from New Testament texts, albeit sometimes without regard to serious exegesis. For instance, proponents of this view typically point to a social mandate in Jesus' call to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19) and "let your light shine before men" (Matt 5:16).²⁷⁵

Although both groups anchor their arguments on Scripture, there is no consensus on whether and how Christians should participate in the socio-political transformation of contemporary nation-states. Many Christian groups today hold differing views on this issue. While both sides of the debate invoke the support of Jesus and Paul, they often selectively choose historical church figures to bolster their positions. Church history is filled with individuals and Christian groups who advocated for societal change in their respective contexts. We can discuss reformers like John Calvin, Huldrych (Ulrich) Zwingli, and, more recently, Abraham Kuyper, who were regarded as visionaries whose influences shaped their societies.²⁷⁶ Additionally, we can consider groups like the Pietists, who were commended for recovering the importance of the heavenly hope, although they are criticised for their perceived lack of social relevance.²⁷⁷

One notable churchman who dedicated his entire adult life to fighting one of the most grievous issues in British society – and, broadly speaking, global society – was Thomas Clarkson. Clarkson worked tirelessly to raise awareness about the injustices of slavery, emphasising the profound suffering it caused both individuals and society as a whole. Through his efforts, Clarkson and like-minded abolitionists advocated for the abolition of the slave trade, urging society to acknowledge and rectify this grave sin. His contributions to the abolition movement ultimately led to Britain's abandonment of the lucrative slave trade and slavery itself, which are considered some of the most significant and morally transformative changes which swept British society. Clarkson's life and work exemplify how the church and Christians, in general, can actively participate in a democratic society like Ghana to foster essential sociopolitical change. His commitment to confronting the sin of the slavery trade demonstrates the power of individual resolve in effecting social change. There are numerous lessons that the church in Ghana,

²⁷⁴ Dave Hunt, *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1988), 8, 41-44, 79, 205.

²⁷⁵ Barron Bruce, *Heaven on Earth: The Social and Political Agendas Dominion Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 153.

²⁷⁶ Bruce, *Heaven on Earth*, 157.

²⁷⁷ F. Ernest Stöffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*. (Leiden: Brill, 1973), ix-xi.

especially the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, can learn from Clarkson's efforts to confront the moral and ethical violations associated with slavery and the slave trade.

Britain and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The British were at the heart of the transatlantic slave trade. The significance of British involvement in this historical process cannot be overstated; they played a critical and pioneering role, particularly in the transportation of millions of Africans into slavery across the Atlantic. The influx of a large number of African slaves significantly bolstered the viability of British colonies. Furthermore, British material prosperity was greatly enhanced by the labour of those same slaves.²⁷⁸

Slavery itself has been a part of human history since ancient times. In the UK, even Britons experienced enslavement and were transported under Roman rule. In the sixteenth century, captured British sailors were forced into servitude as galley slaves for the Spanish. Throughout the seventeenth century, the British government exported Irish men and women to the Americas under conditions that closely resembled slavery.²⁷⁹ Additionally, in the sixteenth century, indigenous slavery existed in Africa, much like in Europe, but it differed significantly from the form of slavery practised by Europeans in the Americas. In African societies, slaves were often prisoners of war who were required to serve a period of unpaid labour for their captors. They were not dehumanised or subjected to brutal treatment. Even those enslaved for life typically had the opportunity to marry and could be assimilated into their captors' families and communities, although they were not always treated as equals.²⁸⁰

Nevertheless, the enslavement of Africans by Europeans was characterised by a significant difference in how they were treated. Enslaved Africans were viewed as mere possessions stripped of human dignity and completely at the mercy of their owners. While the conditions for enslaved Africans in Europe were often less brutal, those sent to the Americas faced even harsher treatment; they were regarded as expendable, subhuman labourers. Although the Roman Catholic Church placed some moral restrictions on its followers, British owners were particularly notorious for their inhumane treatment of the enslaved.²⁸¹ At one point in 1783, one slave ship captain was

²⁷⁸ James Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic: Britain and the African Diaspora* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), x; By 'involvement,' I mean participating in and benefiting from the trade of slaves and the institution of slavery. Without the existence of slavery, there could not be trade in slaves.

²⁷⁹ Marika Sherwood. *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade Since 1807*. (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 5.

²⁸⁰ Sherwood, *After Abolition*, 6.

²⁸¹ See Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic*, 1-2; Matthew David Mitchell, *The Prince of Slavers: Humphrey Morice and the Transformation of Britain's Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1698-1732* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

reported to have thrown 132 slaves overboard alive, a “scheme to collect insurance for what seemed the inevitable loss of a sickly cargo of slaves.”²⁸²

The primary reason for the enslavement and transportation of African men, women, and children to the Americas was to generate profit for European emigrants who were establishing mines, plantations, farms, and businesses. In many cases, especially outside of the North American colonies, the profits were sent back to Europe. Accordingly, slavery persisted in European colonies and even in countries that gained independence. Britain actually enacted its last anti-slavery legislation in its African colonies in 1928 in the Gold Coast (Ghana), even though the slave trade was officially abolished by an Act of Parliament in 1807.²⁸³

The immense human cost of slavery and the slave trade by the British was devastating. Many of the enslaved people died in Europeans’ congested slaveholding cells in places like Elmina and Cape Coast Castles in Ghana while awaiting shipment. Sherwood estimates that in the late eighteenth century, 4.5 per cent of enslaved people died on shore, 12.5 per cent on board the ships, and 33 per cent during acclimatisation in the Americas. When those killed in battles are added, it seems that half the number of slaves actually died before they even started their often brief lives as unfree, dehumanised labourers. This is shocking, considering that the slaveholding nations were people who supposedly practised Christian virtues.²⁸⁴ What is even more shocking is that some pastors and church leaders in the South of the United States had slaves of their own and treated them as brutally as other slaveholders. Additionally, Christian missionaries, particularly in Africa and the Americas, were also implicated in this practice for either supporting or participating in this trade.²⁸⁵

The slave trade was an exceptionally lucrative endeavour that involved multiple stakeholders, including British merchants, shipbuilders, insurers, bankers, manufacturers, and workers. Many investors reaped substantial benefits from this trade, particularly through the use of enslaved individuals in plantations, farms, and mines. The trade functioned as an economic engine for Britain, significantly contributing to its economic growth.²⁸⁶ Thus, slavery and the slave trade were deeply intertwined with the British imperial economy, relying on vast property holdings and contributing

²⁸² Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 10.

²⁸³ Sherwood, *After Abolition*, 6.

²⁸⁴ Sherwood, *After Abolition*, 6.

²⁸⁵ Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African, Translated from a Latin Dissertation* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1785), 4.

²⁸⁶ Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic*, 1-2.

significantly to the nation's prosperity. Ellen Wilson contends that the abolition of the slave trade would not have occurred purely through economic forces had it not been for the efforts of abolitionists. She argues that the trade was not only profitable for investors but also sustained by the indifference of ordinary British and European citizens. For them, Africa and the West Indies were distant lands, largely invisible, while plantation owners were regarded as prominent figures within British society.²⁸⁷ It was in this context of a morally and ethically challenged Christian-dominated British society that Thomas Clarkson devoted his efforts to the abolition of the slave trade and, later, slavery as a whole.

Thomas Clarkson: A Life Dedicated to Abolition of Slavery

Thomas Clarkson was born on March 28, 1760, in Wisbech, England. He was the eldest son of John Clarkson, an Anglican priest and headmaster, and Anne Ward, who hailed from a notable Huguenot family. Thomas' father epitomised piety and a strong sense of duty, but he died when Clarkson was just six years old, leaving a profound effect on his three children.²⁸⁸ To understand why Clarkson chose his mission, it is crucial to reflect on his religious upbringing and the early influences of his parents. Clarkson's Christian upbringing remained with him throughout his life. His father served as a model of self-sacrifice for a noble cause, while his mother instilled in him resilience and hard work. She was known for her remarkable energy and strong character, successfully navigating the challenges of early widowhood while raising three young children and coping with chronic rheumatism. With his mother's guidance, young Thomas opted to follow his father's path by seeking ordination in the Church of England. He enrolled at St. John's College at the University of Cambridge, just as his father had done before him.

At Cambridge, Clarkson was regarded as a brilliant and disciplined scholar in the field of Classical Studies. He received his bachelor's degree in 1783 and was subsequently ordained as a deacon in preparation for the Anglican priesthood. While working towards his master's degree, Clarkson decided to enter the Vice Chancellor's essay competition on the question, "Is it lawful to make slaves of others against their will?" Initially, he viewed the competition as an intellectual challenge, having little prior knowledge of the subject. Nonetheless, he approached his research with diligence, ultimately becoming overwhelmed by the gravity of his findings. He remarked at one time while working on

²⁸⁷ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 3-4.

²⁸⁸ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 6; John Clarkson and Anne Ward had a daughter named Anne, followed by a son, Thomas, and then they welcomed John Clarkson. Clarkson was an abolitionist who played a pivotal role in the founding of Freetown, Sierra Leone, where he also served as governor. Alongside others, he is credited with the establishment of the country of Sierra Leone.

the essay, “I sometimes never closed my eye-lids for grief.”²⁸⁹ In the end, his completed essay won the contest.

By this point, deeply troubled by the horrors of the slave trade, he experienced a moment of awakening—an epiphany concerning slavery. Clarkson came to understand that “If the contents of the Essay were true, it was time some person should see these calamities to the end,”²⁹⁰ and he resolved to be that person.

With the support of the Society of Friends (Quakers), who had long opposed the slave trade, he published his essay, which became a crucial resource in the indictment of that trade.²⁹¹ Committing to the mission of abolition required him to forgo a promising priesthood career in the church. He ultimately emerged as the architect of a national campaign aimed at the abolition of the slave trade, believing this cause to be his divine assignment. Until his death, he devoted his entire life to the abolition movement, playing a prominent role not only in Britain but also on the global stage. It took two decades, until 1807, for the British Parliament to outlaw the slave trade, yet long before that, the British public had been convinced by this unparalleled movement that slavery was a crime.²⁹² Later, he worked with a new wave of abolitionists to establish the anti-slavery movement, which led to the emancipation of slaves in British colonies in 1833.

Clarkson’s Advocacy and Methods

While many abolitionists and organisations, such as the Quakers, were involved, Thomas Clarkson stood out as a leading advocate against the moral atrocities of the slave trade, mobilising the British public around this issue. To grasp how his strategies could assist contemporary African churches and Christians in addressing today’s moral and ethical dilemmas, it is important to explore some of his key methods.

Research and Documentation of Slavery’s Atrocities

Foremost, Clarkson grounded his advocacy in thorough research and documentation of the atrocities of the slave trade.

²⁸⁹ Thomas Clarkson, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade*, Volume I (1808), 209.

²⁹⁰ Clarkson, *History*, 210.

²⁹¹ See Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African, Translated from a Latin Dissertation* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1785).

²⁹² Sherwood. *After Abolition*, 3.

Gathering Testimonies and Evidence

To be effective, he initiated the collection of testimonies and evidence from London, alongside key slaving centres such as Bristol and Liverpool. This approach resembled a form of fieldwork, allowing him to better grasp the practical severity and scale of the challenges he would face. London was chosen for its role as the financial and commercial nucleus of the plantation economy. Moreover, it was a crucial location where influential West Indies lobbyists had embedded themselves within the highest echelons of government, Parliament, and commerce.²⁹³ Furthermore, Clarkson embarked on a series of observations and investigative trips to the major slave ports of Bristol and Liverpool in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the trade and expose the weaknesses of the institution they aimed to dismantle. These pioneering journeys often posed significant risks to his life, as he sought evidence and testimonies in these cities.

Through this field research, he gathered a variety of items, including leg shackles and handcuffs that were once used on slave ships, along with woven and dyed cloths crafted in Africa. The cloths served as exhibits to challenge the prevailing perceptions of the general public, many of whom viewed Africa as a dark, uncivilised continent populated by unskilled people. They exemplified sophisticated craftsmanship produced for the British market. He also conducted interviews with many involved in the slave trade, including naval and army officers who served along the coast. Through his research efforts, Clarkson demonstrated that slavery had far-reaching effects beyond just African countries; notably, half of the seamen serving on British slave ships never returned, and one in five lost their lives.²⁹⁴ This evidence became one of the most compelling arguments for the abolitionists. Thus, Clarkson advocated for a type of evidence-based advocacy that is grounded in proper methods of data collection and analysis.

Publications and Writings

The thorough research culminated in a wealth of publications and the dissemination of vital information for the abolition movement. Clarkson notes that the central committee of abolitionists collectively produced “51432 pamphlets or books and 26526 reports and other papers. It had also inspired 103 petitions to Parliament.”²⁹⁵ Among these many publications, Clarkson’s two books emerged as essential reference materials for the movement, achieving the highest distribution.

²⁹³ Clarkson, *History*, 236.

²⁹⁴ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 29, 40.

²⁹⁵ Clarkson, *History*, 571, 491.

The first book, an expanded version of his award-winning essay from Cambridge University, covered the subject in great detail. The arguments presented in this essay gained momentum and became increasingly effective in lobbying Members of Parliament. One MP noted that Clarkson's first book was "unanswerably and I should have thought, irresistibly. It marked a turning point for British abolitionists."²⁹⁶ To make his essay accessible to ordinary citizens, Clarkson created a shorter pamphlet based on his work. He ordered a thousand copies of "A Summary View of the Slave-Trade, and of the Probable Consequences of its Abolition" for immediate distribution.²⁹⁷

Clarkson's second major publication and one of his most influential works, *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade*, became a valuable resource for abolitionists. Even stronger arguments were derived from this book. He sought to prove that the slave trade was not only inhumane and unjust but also a grave danger for seamen and an impractical means of providing plantation labour, as well as demonstrating the immorality of the slave trade. The arguments in this book are not only evidence-based but also biblically grounded. Clearly, writings and publications were critical means of engaging the public and sustaining the abolitionist fight in Parliament.

Grassroots Mobilisation and Public Engagement

The next strategy was embarking on grassroots mobilisation and engaging the British public. Arguably, Clarkson's most significant contribution to the abolition movement was his idea of a new form of extra-parliamentary action through the formation of a committee of twelve like-minded abolitionists called The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade. He described this committee as representing all aspects of the history of abolition. He compared it to a great river fed by tributaries, illustrating how each member played a role in creating the powerful current that ultimately ended the slave trade. In addition to their piety, the committee members brought a wealth of worldly experience from diverse occupations and philanthropic endeavours. As one member aptly stated, "I believe no committee was ever made up of persons whose varied talents were better adapted to the work before them."²⁹⁸ Clarkson's organisational skills, appreciation for the unique contributions of other leaders, and ability to unite people from different backgrounds were truly exceptional.

To engage the British public, Clarkson traversed 35,000 miles on horseback across the country. This method was not only the most efficient mode of transportation in all

²⁹⁶ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 15.

²⁹⁷ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 28.

²⁹⁸ Clarkson, *History*, 271-272.

weather conditions, but it also required considerable physical effort and stamina. Through his extensive journeys, he transformed the abolitionist movement into a national cause, representing both society and its governing bodies. He inspired and educated supporters about the advancements in the struggle for abolition. Additionally, he recruited subscribers and established local committees to gather petitions and raise funds. Wilson states that Clarkson was “listened to with breathless attention and reminded at least one man of St. Paul preaching at Athens.”²⁹⁹ Although the journeys were fraught with danger and exhaustion, they were also exhilarating; Clarkson utilised speeches, local committee meetings, and other public engagements to mobilise grassroots support and bring the cause of abolishing the slave trade closer to fruition.

Partnership with William Wilberforce and Other Abolitionists

Through the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Clarkson worked alongside other influential abolitionists. Central to this effort was his collaboration with the charismatic William Wilberforce, who took up the campaign within Parliament. Their partnership spanned nearly fifty years. While both men were instrumental in the fight to abolish the slave trade, it is Wilberforce’s name that has become widely recognised as the parliamentary champion, whereas Clarkson’s legacy has faded. Nevertheless, during their time, the names of the two abolitionists were often mentioned together in the public consciousness.³⁰⁰ It was Clarkson who envisioned the campaign and galvanised public support for it. As a master strategist, he and his colleagues recognised the necessity of combating the slave trade in Parliament, and they required someone capable of representing the moral imperative of their cause.

Clarkson and Wilberforce were different in many ways, yet they found common ground that allowed their partnership to thrive. Clarkson was methodical, always punctual, and had a quiet voice, but he was also sensitive and deeply passionate. In contrast, Wilberforce was charming, easy to talk to, and an impressive orator, though he did not share Clarkson’s methodical approach. While Clarkson dedicated his life exclusively to the abolition of the slave trade, Wilberforce aimed to transform a corrupt society through serious Christianity, with the abolition of the slave trade serving as a significant political expression of his faith. This effort was just one of many evangelical causes he supported. Clarkson and Wilberforce had differing political perspectives. Clarkson embraced a Whiggish philosophy, while Wilberforce held deeply conservative views, although both

²⁹⁹ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 29.

³⁰⁰ This paper is inspired by Prof. Dr. (Emeritus) Ulrich Berner, my *Doktorvater*, who introduced me to Thomas Clarkson’s work, “Letter to the Clergy of Various Denominations and to the Slave-Holding Planters.” and his lifelong role in the abolition movement.

claimed to be non-partisan. Although they were both members of the Anglican Church, Clarkson identified with the Orthodox tradition, whereas Wilberforce was an evangelical who felt comfortable among his fellow evangelicals. In contrast, Clarkson was more flexible in his associations and was even at ease with the Quakers.

Despite these glaring differences, Wilberforce and Clarkson collaborated with one another, understanding the value of each in their endeavour. Clarkson described the working relationship within the Committee when he said,

For what, for example, could I myself have done if I had not derived so much assistance from the committee? What could Mr. Wilberforce have done in parliament, if I...had not collected that great body of evidence, to which there was such a constant appeal? And what could the committee have done without the parliamentary aid of Mr. Wilberforce?³⁰¹

They needed each other to achieve their goal. As leaders, they overcame class, regional, personal, and religious barriers to advance the cause of abolition.

Reflection on Confronting Societal Issues: Lessons for Pentecostal-Charismatic Advocacy

The New Testament does not offer a clear social mandate for Christians, leading some to opt for living in closed communities to distance themselves from the broader society, fearing potential contamination. However, historically, most Christians and churches have engaged with the state to some extent. The current debate has shifted from whether Christians should pursue social change or participate in democratic processes for transformation; it is now widely accepted that they should. A key question now is: how can Pentecostal-Charismatic churches enhance their role as the moral conscience of society, advocating for fairness and justice while effectively addressing societal issues at hand, such as the *galamsey*³⁰² menace in Ghana?

One effective way to achieve this is through consistent advocacy on pressing social, economic, and political issues. The church can draw valuable lessons from Thomas Clarkson's approach to engaging with society and addressing the challenges that afflict communities. First and foremost, the church's advocacy efforts must be founded on

³⁰¹ Clackson, *History*, 271-272.

³⁰² Galamsey is a linguistic corruption of the English phrase "gather and sell." It refers to illegal small-scale gold mining activities that cause significant environmental damage in Ghana, including the pollution of major water bodies like rivers. For more on galamsey, See Amy S. Patterson, "When to Speak? Church Advocacy on Galamsey and Mental Health in Ghana," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 16, no. 1, (2018): 37-50.

thorough research and the publication of essential materials, including books, journal articles, magazines, and other sources that facilitate the dissemination of vital information regarding the topic at hand. Although some Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana may exhibit a degree of scepticism towards anything labelled as ‘academic,’ the case of the abolitionist movement clearly demonstrates that grounding advocacy in a diligent and methodical approach yields not only theoretical arguments but also empirical evidence to support a position.

Second, mobilising grassroots support, especially within local churches, is essential to enhance the efforts of national committees. Clarkson successfully leveraged his extensive travels throughout the country to gain more support for the abolitionist movement and increase their funding sources. While a central committee is important for addressing national issues, it may not be adequate for making significant progress on the social causes endorsed by the church.

Third, partnerships are essential for sustained advocacy. It is insufficient for a single church to champion all causes independently, as this can lead to a greater likelihood of losing focus during challenging times. For the African church to effectively drive social transformation, it must collaborate with other faiths and engage both governmental and non-governmental entities. Establishing partnerships with like-minded politicians, such as Members of Parliament, who possess the knowledge, willingness, and moral integrity to advance its initiatives, is crucial. Every church needs advocates similar to Wilberforce—individuals within the political sphere who are committed to fostering social change. Politicians who are willing to strive for “the common good” of society, embodying a way of “doing politics” that transcends sectional or partisan interests.³⁰³

Ultimately, having moral courage is essential when facing societal injustices, no matter who wields political power or is in the wrong. Clarkson consistently called out anyone who remained complicit in the sin of the slave trade, including missionaries and pastors. In one of his letters, he addressed them with unwavering firmness:

I am told, that some of you, when you first went to your respective congregations, undertook the charge with an honest indignation against slavery, and with a conviction of its sinfulness, but that you afterwards changed your sentiments; that you had at length the hardihood to preach in favour of what you had denominated sinful before; that many of your profession became owners of slaves: and it grieves me to say, that you

³⁰³ Andrew Bradstock and Hilary Russell, “Politics, Church and the Common Good.” in *A Companion to Public Theology*, ed. Sebastian Kim and Katie Day (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 166-67.

whipped and treated them severely as others; but O, monstrous profaneness!³⁰⁴

This quotation is from a letter written by Clarkson to slave-holding ministers in North America. It highlights that during the peak of the slave trade, some ministers of the Gospel were complicit in the grave sin of treating human beings as mere possessions, stripped of their dignity. Furthermore, it demonstrates that Clarkson was unafraid to call out these Christians. This suggests that in a society marked by moral decay, the Nathan principle,³⁰⁵ beloved by Pentecostals, should not be the only approach to holding political or even religious leaders accountable; there are instances when public accountability is warranted, and the church should not compromise.

Conclusion

This article focuses on Thomas Clarkson's life mission to abolish the transatlantic slave trade, one of the most egregious crimes against humanity. It serves as a foundational lens through which to explore how the Pentecostal-Charismatic church can respond to the social, economic, and political challenges facing African societies. The discussion highlights the dehumanisation inflicted by the slave trade, which reduced individuals to mere commodities within a lucrative business that bolstered the British imperial economy until its abolition in 1807, followed by the emancipation of all enslaved individuals in 1833. Thomas Clarkson made significant contributions to this cause, including co-founding the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, conducting research and documentation on the trade, and mobilising public opinion through pamphlets and speeches. Finally, the article argues that the strategies and methods employed by Clarkson and other abolitionists can serve as a valuable model for the contemporary African Pentecostal-Charismatic church and Christians. By adopting these approaches in their advocacy, the church can effectively engage with the democratic state to promote societal transformation.

³⁰⁴ Thomas Clarkson. *A Letter to the Clergy of Various Denominations and to the Slave-holding Planters* (London: Johnson and Barrett, 1841), 3,4.

³⁰⁵ Nathan confronted David in a unique way, as described in 2 Sam. 12:17. Rather than publicly rebuking him, he chose to speak to David privately. Nonetheless, he managed to convict David of the injustice he had committed and the abuse of his power. This approach reflects a principle that is prevalent among Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians in Ghana.

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Wanjiru M. Gitau, *Megachurch Christianity Reconsidered: Millennials and Social Change in African Perspective*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018. pp. 118.

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In the book *Megachurch Christianity Reconsidered: Millennials and Social Change in African Perspective*, Wanjiru Gitau extensively analyses the Nairobi Chapel and its daughter, the Mavuno Church. The book explores the renewal of a declining church through contextualisation. Once a prominent church, the Nairobi Chapel had lost its appeal to successive generations and the local community but was revitalised and expanded to other daughter churches such as the Mavuno Church. Gitau's work highlights the pivotal role of the Mavuno Church in bridging the generational gap, with millennials emerging as the driving force in the church's revival. They are portrayed as active participants, converts, conformers, and adaptors, shaping the church's future. In an in-depth examination, the book begins with factors that led to the decline of the once-lively Nairobi Chapel, a key feature of Gitau's study. The revival of the old church was achieved by integrating with contemporary society and addressing fundamental communal perceptions of the church. However, the main focus of the book is the Mavuno Church, where millennials played a central role in its revival (1-65).

Gitau's unique position as an 'insider' in the megachurch story is a significant aspect of her analysis. Her interactions with both Oscar Muriu and Muriithi Wanjau, pastors of Nairobi Chapel and Mavuno Church, respectively, and her active involvement in the reconstruction of the Nairobi Chapel provide her with a firsthand perspective. While it is acknowledged that biases may arise from this insider perspective, Gitau leverages this position to offer a more nuanced understanding of the Mavuno Church (14-15).

In the first chapter, we are introduced to Oscar Muriu, a young man who assumes the role of pastor and achieves the remarkable feat of growing the church from a modest following to a congregation of approximately three thousand within a span of ten years. His leadership aptitude is tested in the face of historical colonial legacies and ongoing political turbulence that have significantly impacted the country. A significant challenge

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Muriu faces is engaging the younger generation, particularly the millennials, who perceive the church as incongruent with their contemporary experiences. This perception has led to a disinterest towards the church's relevance in their lives, a challenge Muriu grapples with.

In Chapter Two, the author delves into a comprehensive exploration of the disparities between the church and local communities using empirical research. The author characterises these disparities as 'crossroads' and 'checkpoints.' Despite Christianity's status as the predominant religion in Kenya, the research revealed that only a minority of individuals attended church services on Sundays. The church appeared entrenched in an 'old world' paradigm disconnected from contemporary society, failing to resonate with the latter. The Mavuno church, in particular, faced significant challenges. It emerged as a beacon of hope for millennials, who were grappling with the adverse economic conditions prevalent at the time, a predicament experienced by numerous African nations. The Mavuno church envisaged a future that would imbue significance and purpose into the lives of this demographic, aiming to ameliorate the harsh realities they faced.

In the third chapter, Muriithi faces numerous obstacles that pose significant challenges. However, his strategic outreach to the millennial demographic produces a positive response. This approach is particularly important as it engages a disillusioned younger generation, many of whom have distanced themselves from the church due to the worldview shaped by the tumultuous circumstances in Kenya. Muriithi's strategy not only establishes a framework but also offers guidance for other churches facing similar challenges or seeking to enhance their growth.

Chapter Four focuses on the topic of leadership, exploring it through the lens of an African country that has experienced significant challenges, including economic difficulties, which have left its youth feeling hopeless. Leading in such a difficult community, Muriithi learnt to hybridise the mission and produce an African-Western church experience. Muriithi learns 'Disciplined Leadership' from Muriu, his mentor. He is taught to think and generate ideas, to see leadership as problem-solving, raising leaders and delegating responsibility. The young man built a robust system of leadership, the 'Mavuno marathon' that does the 'magic' of bringing the church to a place where everyone would want to belong.

In Chapter Five, the book examines the profound impacts of the Mavuno church on the local community and its wider sphere of influence. It discusses how the church nurtured congregants to develop sustainable networks, foster Godly families, establish ethical

businesses, and positively influence their communities. The author highlights that individuals who join the Mavuno Church undergo a comprehensive transformation in their lives, often expressing this change as “My life is under new management” (115).

Chapter Six examines the intersection between Christianity and modernity, particularly emphasising the ambiguity inherent in this relationship. The author observes that many new Christians grapple with the dilemma of rejecting success and wealth as incompatible with Christian principles or embracing material prosperity regardless of ethical considerations uncritically. Widespread issues such as poverty, deprivation, injustice, economic disparities, and political upheavals, typically categorised by Western nations as “Third World Problems,” emerge as pertinent subjects for contemplation within the context of African Christianity. Rather than succumbing to this prevailing sense of hopelessness, Mavuno Church emerges as a beacon of holistic Christian teachings, instilling a sense of optimism among its members.

Wanjiru Gitau’s analysis of the megachurch phenomenon offers valuable insights. However, the focus on millennials as the primary audience overlooks the presence and needs of the older generation in Kenya. It is clear that many megachurches are ill-equipped to cater to the requirements of the older demographic and people with little or no Western education, resulting in their marginalisation and increased vulnerability. This challenge is not confined to the Mavuno Church but is indicative of the broader difficulties faced by many megachurches in Africa. Identifying and proposing recommendations for this discrepancy would have been essential for the church to fulfil its mission and establish an inclusive environment for intercultural and intergenerational faith development. This notwithstanding, this book is a great addition to the literature on African Christianity and a must-read for scholars of theology and mission, church leaders and those in the seminaries.

Barkley, Stephen D. *Pentecostal Prophets: Experience in Old Testament Perspective*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2023 Kindle Edition, pp. 172.

Julia Owiti³⁰⁸

The introduction begins with a comprehensive exploration of the prophethood of all believers and the gift of prophecy. The author works at Master's College and Seminary in Canada as the Director of Pastoral Leadership and Campus Pastor. This book is derived from his doctoral dissertation in Practical Theology and is a product of his academic background and real-life work. He is also an Assistant Professor of Bible and Practical Theology and an ordained Pentecostal minister at the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.

The book is divided into two sections: methodologies and research procedure. The first section discusses the four lenses used in the book: practical theology, practice-led research, phenomenological perspective, and theological reflection. Practical theology is seen as an intersection where belief, tradition, and practice of the religious faith interact with modern life, engaging in a dialogue that is enriching, critical, and transformative. Practice-led research is described as relatively new and developing but useful for theological studies, using the author's own acquired practice to provide new insights. Phenomenological research is a qualitative research method that aims to understand the essence of several individuals of a certain phenomenon of experience.

The author's geographical focus is Canada, specifically the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador. The second section is a literature review that examines the contributions of different scholars, divided into theoretical and empirical studies. The themes discussed under theoretical studies include intertestamental break and restoration of prophecy, Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and authority of prophecy. Josephus suggests that prophecy existed during Herod's besieging of Jerusalem in 37 BC. Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and both continuity and discontinuity of the Old Testament prophets. of the Spirit from Jesus to the Church (48).

Stronstad presents a parallelism drawn between the transfer of the prophetic from Elijah to Elisha and the transfer of the Spirit from Jesus to the Church (48). Jesus is seen as a prophet empowered by the Spirit. Concerning the authority of prophecy, he notes that

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although the Old Testament prophecies were viewed to have more authority than the New Testament prophecies, both should be evaluated. The theoretical studies emphasize a disconnect between the Old and New Testament prophecy, but empirical studies show a strong connection and similarities.

The third chapter introduces the prophetic experience of Hebrew prophets, specifically Jeremiah. The five textural constituents of phenomenological study used for analyzing Jeremiah's experience are: the prophet recognizes the presence of God, receives the prophetic impulse, discerns the source and recipient of the message, releases the prophetic message, and experiences attendant physical and emotional sensations (68). Jeremiah carried a message of judgment and hope greatly inspired by the Deuteronomists. This message included breaking the Covenant, which resulted in judgment, and the element of God's pathos, which opened room for forgiveness and mercy. Jeremiah's language was deep and expressed a sense of urgency, transcending emotions and egos.

Chapter Four of the book explores the prophetic experience of Pentecostal prophets, focusing on the author's personal experience and the experiences of eight participants who practice Charismatic Prophecy within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. The author emphasizes that not all prophecies are divinely inspired, but sometimes, they are out of personal devotion and have the potential to impact people's lives. Barkley introduces 8 participants who practice Charismatic Prophecy within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and share their experiences with prophecy, shaping his phenomenological study.

Chapter Five focuses on similarities between the Old Testament and modern charismatic prophets. The author notes the importance of recognizing God's presence before a prophetic move in Jeremiah, who simultaneously experienced both the presence and prophetic impulse. The structural components of the prophetic phenomenon include the prophet's mentoring, the prophet's location, and the response to failure.

The author also discusses the differences between the structural setting of contemporary prophets and the Old Testament prophets, such as the organized atmosphere of worship experienced by CP practitioners. Discussions of discernment arise in the era of contemporary prophets compared to the Old Testament prophets, as well as the reverence of the word received and the overwhelming feeling experienced by message carriers.

The last chapter is a dialogue between the Old Testament and contemporary prophets, with the author challenging Pentecostals to view prophecy with a broader perspective. Prophecy is another critical concept of salvation, and Bradley adds his rich experience from years of ministry to broaden one's understanding of the prophetic in Canada and modern-day prophets.

The combination of practice-based research with theology is well executed, providing readers with scholarly and practical insight into what it means to be a prophet. Through evidence from various scholars, the author tactfully weaves the connection between Old and New Testament prophets (including contemporary ones), demonstrating prophetic continuity across different eras.

The book explores God's pathos through the language used to describe the prophetic event and the surrounding emotions. The participants' insights provide a deeper insight into what it means to experience the prophecy.

The author explains his bias towards Pentecostal circles to dispel any assumptions therein. He also addresses any issues that arise from readers who may not necessarily have a Pentecostal background and question the legitimacy of modern-day prophecies. Although the book bears the title of experience from an Old Testament perspective, there is much focus on Jeremiah, who is the critical prophetic figure. Readers need to fully experience the rich perspective that the other prophets would have brought.

In conclusion, the book connects the historical background of a concept to present-day implementation, thereby improving the understanding of the prophetic ministry within the church. It can guide those new to prophecy, especially those who have had a prophetic experience. This scholarly work is suitable for academic research, church leadership, and anyone interested in matters of prophecy.