

PENTECOST JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY AND MISSION (PJTM)

Volume 5, Number 2 March 2025

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ISSN: 2343-6549

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Cover Design by Pentecost Press Ltd. Ghana

EDITORIAL

Pentecost Researchers' Forum: Emerging Scholars in African Pentecostal Discourse

Volume 5, Issue 2 of the Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission (PJTM) marks a notable scholarly contribution stemming from the inaugural Pentecost Researchers' Forum (PRF) organised by Pentecost University in 2023. This forum serves as an annual convening for researchers whose interests align with Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, particularly within the African context and the African diaspora. I have previously argued that both Pentecostalism and African religions exhibit a shared affinity for oral traditions and have historically shied away from formal academic discourse.¹ In her analysis of Pentecostalism, Teresa Chai, a Malaysian scholar specialising in intercultural studies at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in the Philippines, highlights a significant concern regarding the relationship between academic knowledge and spiritual experience within Pentecostal communities. She observes a notable sense of fear and apprehension among adherents regarding the potential implications.² Marius Nel observes that early Pentecostals in South Africa favoured being Spirit-filled over pursuing academic knowledge, believing that such pursuits could hinder their ability to remain attuned to the workings of the Holy Spirit.³ Thus, Pentecostals generally raise questions about the compatibility of rigorous theological education with the spontaneous and experiential nature of their spirituality.

Despite these fears, recent trends indicate a notable increase in scholarly engagement among Pentecostal-Charismatic leaders across Africa, mirroring the developments in global Pentecostalism. A significant number of these leaders are now pursuing formal theological education at various esteemed institutions worldwide, signifying a shift towards integrating academic rigour with spirituality. The primary objective of the PRF is to cultivate an academic platform that fosters knowledge exchange among such scholars, enabling them to share their findings with peers who have similar interests. The forum is dedicated to exploring methodologies for effectively integrating scholarly research into the practical ministry of the church. This is achieved by recognising the inherent compatibility between academic inquiry and Pentecostal spirituality. Such integration is not only beneficial but also considered an essential

¹ Christian Tsekpoe, "Shifting Centres of Christian Vitality: Challenges and Opportunities for African Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*. 32/2 (2023), 250-66.

² Teresa Chai, "Pentecostal Theological Education and Ministerial Formation," in Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, et al. Eds., *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*. Oxford: Regnum, 2014, 356.

³ Marius Nel, "Rather Spirit-filled than learned! Pentecostalism's tradition of anti-intellectualism and Pentecostal theological scholarship" *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37/1 (2016), 2.

aspect of the University A+ agenda at Pentecost University.⁴ Furthermore, the PRF aims to achieve multiple objectives, including promoting collaborative research efforts, enhancing the visibility of Pentecostal scholarship, and fostering dialogue among diverse theological perspectives. By addressing these goals, the forum aspires to contribute to the broader discourse surrounding African Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and its implications for contemporary ministry.

At the 2023 PRF, ten emerging scholars were given the opportunity to present their PhD research conducted across a diverse array of prestigious universities worldwide. The selection of presenters was carefully curated, focusing on scholars whose doctoral degrees were awarded within the previous two years at the time of presentation. This dynamic group of emerging scholars reflects the vibrancy of contemporary academic discourse in their respective fields. From these presentations, seven scholarly articles have successfully passed rigorous peer review and have now been published in this special volume. Each article underscores the need for African Pentecostals to engage proactively with a variety of pressing contemporary issues.

The first significant contribution to this issue is the article titled “Beyond Eco-Pneumatology: An Examination of Scripture with ‘Green Eyes’ Towards the Development of An African Pentecostal Ecotheology” by Emmanuel Awudi. This work originated from his PhD research, which he successfully completed in 2023 at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture in Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana. Through his extensive research, Awudi has established himself as a prominent scholar in the field of African Pentecostal ecotheology. In this article, he critically examines the factors contributing to the insufficient development of ecotheology within African Pentecostal circles. He posits that the prevalent apathy towards ecological initiatives among Pentecostals is intrinsically linked to an anthropocentric hermeneutic of Scripture. To address this shortcoming, he proposes strategic methodologies aimed at reorienting eco-care from a marginal aspect of theological engagement to an essential component of missional practice. He advocates for the integration of ecological principles into the discourse of practical theology, thereby fostering a more robust and responsible theological framework that prioritizes ecological stewardship. This work is an important contribution to knowledge that deserves attention among African Pentecostals and beyond.

Another important study in this volume was conducted by Dieudonne Komla Nuekpe regarding the presence of folk Muslims in Ghana and its missiological implications for Pentecostalism. This noteworthy work originated from his PhD thesis, completed in 2021 at Torch Trinity Graduate University in Seoul, South Korea, and was

⁴ Under the University A+ agenda, Pentecost University recognises the place of the Holy Spirit in guiding diligent efforts to nurture ethical, resourceful, entrepreneurial, and value-driven graduates in a research-led, innovative and problem-solving environment.

subsequently published by Langham under the title *Lived Islam in Africa and Its Missiological Implications for Pentecostals*.⁵ In this article, he highlights the nuanced presence of Islam in Ghana, drawing attention to specific areas of misunderstanding and ignorance that exist among Pentecostal adherents and Muslims. By integrating perspectives from various fields—including intercultural studies, Islamic studies, Pentecostal missiology, church history, cultural anthropology, and biblical theology—he proposes a framework through which Pentecostals can effectively and respectfully witness Christ to Ghanaian Muslims. This study has discovered the nexus of shared heritage that provides strategies for Pentecostals in Ghana to share their faith with folk Muslims in a peaceful atmosphere. It is a resource book for scholars and Christians concerned with Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana and beyond.

Samuel Kodzo Gakpetor authored the next article, which is based on his PhD research submitted to the Department of Practical Theology at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. In this scholarly inquiry, he explores the effectiveness of disciple-making processes within Ghanaian ecclesiastical contexts and their contribution to cultivating a healthy work ethic among Christians. He contends that a significant challenge faced by many Christians in Ghana is the persistent dichotomy between the sacred and secular spheres, which is further exacerbated by a notable absence of deliberate and systematic discipleship practices. He also identifies the detrimental impact of certain cultural characteristics endemic to the Ghanaian context that may hinder holistic spiritual development. In addressing these critical concerns, he advocates for the formulation of a comprehensive and integrative disciple-making strategy, one which seamlessly interweaves various dimensions of life, as a vital necessity for effectively tackling the challenges presented by the contemporary ecclesial landscape in Ghana. This is an important study, owing to the central place discipleship plays in Christianity. A Pentecostal approach to discipleship in Africa is a welcome contribution, and Samuel Gakpetor must be commended for his excellent work.

The next article was written by Philip Osei-Korsah under the title “Sexual Misconduct Suspension: The Impact of Guilt on Members of the Church of Pentecost, Ghana.” This scholarly work is derived from his PhD thesis, which was submitted to the Department of Community Care Counseling at Liberty University in Lynchburg, USA, in 2023. The study examines the psychosocial conditions affecting CoP members who have faced suspension from fellowship as a disciplinary response to instances of sexual misconduct. It contends that the primary repercussions of such church discipline on the suspended individuals manifest as profound feelings of shame, guilt, sadness, and anger, which consequently drive these individuals to withdraw from

⁵ Dieudonne Komla Nuekpe, *Lived Islam in Africa and Its Missiological Implications for Pentecostals*. Carlisle: Langham Publishing, 2023.

ecclesiastical activities. The research advocates for the pressing necessity for structured social support systems to aid in the reintegration of individuals suspended for sexual misconduct back into the church community. This subject of church discipline is very controversial among Pentecostal-Charismatics. Philip-Korsah's work has scratched exactly where it itches.

Job Wiredu is the author of "Rural Pastors, Family Welfare, and Pastoral Care Equity Challenges: A Case Study of Three Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana." This work is the culmination of his PhD research, which he presented to the Department of Religious Studies at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. The article explores the diverse challenges encountered by pastors and their families serving in rural areas, focusing specifically on three prominent classical Pentecostal denominations in Ghana: The Church of Pentecost, The Apostolic Church of Ghana, and Christ Apostolic Church International. The research explores the dynamics surrounding the reluctance of some pastors to accept postings to rural areas, in contrast to the compulsion faced by others to comply with such assignments. The findings indicate that a significant factor influencing these decisions stems from the comparative welfare disparities between urban and rural pastoral assignments, resulting in a noticeable trend: urban-based pastors are perceived to receive better welfare benefits compared to their rural counterparts. The study proposes the need for the involvement of the churches in the provision of basic social amenities and the categorisation of welfare policies to ensure equity in the welfare benefits of ministers in rural communities as a possible mitigation of the gaps between rural pastors and urban pastors. This study addresses an important issue that requires the attention of church leaders in both rural and urban settings.

The article titled "The Holy Spirit in Moral Character Formation: Perceptions within Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity" is authored by Patrick Tetteh Kudadjie. This work, derived from his PhD thesis submitted to the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture in Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana, in 2023, critically engages with themes relevant to contemporary Pentecostal pneumatology. Kudadjie examines the impact of Pentecostal pneumatology on the formation of moral character. Through empirical research involving congregants from the CoP and the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) in Ghana, he argues that while a substantial portion of participants acknowledges the role of the Holy Spirit in cultivating charismatic gifts, there is a notable lack of awareness regarding the Holy Spirit's contribution to moral character development. Consequently, the study advocates for Ghanaian Pentecostal leaders to promote a more balanced emphasis on the dual roles of the Holy Spirit: not only as a facilitator of charismatic gifts but also as a vital agent in the moral and ethical formation of adherents. This approach aims to enhance the theological understanding and practical application of pneumatology

in the context of Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. This work is a must-read for both theologians and ecclesial practitioners.

The concluding article, titled “Pentecostal Spirituality and the Theology of Prayer: Continuities and Discontinuities of African Indigenous Spirituality,” is authored by Joseph T. I. Buerthey. This piece is based on his PhD thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. In this article, Buerthey argues that there are both continuities and discontinuities between traditional African indigenous prayer practices and the emerging Pentecostal and neo-Prophetic practices observed in Ghana. He concludes that while the evolving landscape of African Pentecostal prayer is intricately linked to themes inherent in the African religious system, it also shows divergences in specific aspects of worship. This exploration provides valuable insights into the dynamics of spiritual expression within contemporary African Christianity. This research represents a significant contribution to knowledge in the field of African Pentecostal theology.

This special volume of the *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* represents a significant advancement in African Pentecostal-Charismatic scholarship. The diverse range of topics explored by these emerging scholars not only highlights the vibrancy inherent in Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity but also effectively addresses pressing contemporary issues that resonate with the current challenges facing the church. Each scholarly article enriches our understanding of how African Pentecostalism interacts with societal and theological concerns, including meaningful engagement with folk Islam, fostering ecological stewardship, and navigating the complexities of moral character development and ecclesiastical discipline. The insights extracted from these studies reflect a robust commitment to amalgamating rigorous scholarly inquiry with pragmatic applications and spiritual edification, thereby enhancing the overarching route of the Pentecostal community. As these nascent scholars refine their theoretical frameworks and foster dialogue, they are strategically positioned to exert a significant influence on both local and global discourses pertaining to the future of Pentecostalism in Africa. The PRF not only reveals Pentecost University’s dedication to cultivating a vibrant academic milieu but also establishes itself as an essential conduit for thought leadership within the Pentecostal community. This inaugural volume unveils the boundless prospects that await as scholars undertake the pressing task of grappling with the complexities of faith and communal identity, ensuring that Pentecostal Christianity maintains its relevance and responsiveness within the sociocultural contexts it inhabits.

Christian Tsekpoe

Associate Editor

Beyond Eco-Pneumatology: An Examination of Scripture with 'Green Eyes' Towards the Development of an African Pentecostal Ecotheology⁶

Emmanuel Awudi

Abstract

Historically, the role of religious communities in ecological discourse and responses to environmental crises has been significantly underwhelming. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that any comprehensive ecological dialogue must incorporate these communities. Recent research indicates that the Pentecostal tradition, in particular, has largely remained passive with respect to eco-care and eco-mission. This community tend to prioritise evangelistic endeavours, often relegating creation care to a secondary concern associated with a niche group. This paper argues that such oversight stems from a deficient ecotheological framework within the Pentecostal tradition. The primary objective of this study is to explore the underlying factors contributing to this inadequacy of ecotheology among African Pentecostals and to propose viable responses. The research is grounded in empirical data collected through fieldwork involving four classical Pentecostal churches and four Indigenous African Churches. The goal is to extract valuable insights from established paradigms within the Indigenous communities and from scriptural interpretations to inform the development of an African Pentecostal Ecotheology. This article elucidates that the prevalent inactivity of Pentecostals in ecological initiatives is fundamentally linked to their anthropocentric interpretation of Scripture. By analysing the doctrinal frameworks of the four classical Pentecostal churches, the paper offers reinterpretations aimed at fostering a more profound engagement with ecological issues. It further outlines strategic approaches to transition eco-care from a peripheral aspect of theology to a central component of mission, advocating for the integration of ecological principles into practical theological discourse. This shift is essential for cultivating eco-conscious cultures within the African church context.

Keywords: Classical African Pentecostal Churches, Eco-mission, Ecotheology, Indigenous African Churches

How to cite this article: Awudi, Emmanuel. "Beyond Eco-Pneumatology: An Examination of Scripture with 'Green Eyes' Towards the Development of an African Pentecostal Ecotheology." *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 5, no. 2 (2025): 1-19.

⁶ Emmanuel Awudi, "Beyond Eco-Pneumatology: An Examination of Scripture with 'Green Eyes' and the Eco-Praxis of Some Indigenous African Churches Towards the Development of an African Pentecostal Ecotheology" (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Akrofi-Christaller Institute, Akropong-Akuapem, 2023).

Introduction

The 20th and 21st centuries have seen the emergence of numerous epidemics, including the Spanish Flu, SARS, MERS, Bird Flu, H1N1, Lassa fever, Ebola, and the recent outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19). The zoonotic nature of these emerging epidemics and pandemics highlights the inequitable treatment of both animals and plants. Consequently, the ongoing destruction of forest resources and the introduction of toxins into the food chain have significant implications for the planet and its inhabitants. Howell and Koroma highlight that prior to the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in 2014, extensive deforestation had occurred, severely impacting wildlife habitats in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.⁷ They argue that before the EVD outbreak, the loss of dense forests in these regions caused fruit bats to move closer to human habitations.⁸ These West African countries experienced substantial infrastructure loss over many years of conflict and war before the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in the region. Similarly, a group of researchers concluded in a study, “Conflict and its aftermath are among the factors that increase the opportunity for the Ebola virus to transmit from a forest animal to a human by disrupting livelihoods and living arrangements.”⁹ Therefore, there is a correlation between the destruction of forest resources, the disruption of the food web during these conflicts, and the outbreak of EVD.

Eco-violence by the human species has significantly contributed to the world’s ecological crises. These crises include global warming, ozone layer depletion, soil erosion, poisoning of food webs and chains, overconsumption of non-renewable resources, radioactive contamination, high carbon emissions, deforestation, desertification, habitat loss,¹⁰ and other forms of ecocide that threaten the lives of both humans and non-human species. In addition to consuming more natural resources than the planet can regenerate in a year, humanity is producing more waste than the Earth can decompose. The World Bank estimated that the world generated 2.24 billion tonnes of solid waste in 2020, which equates to 0.79 kilograms per person per day. They anticipate this figure will rise to 3.88 billion tonnes by 2050,¹¹ representing a 73

⁷ Allison M. Howell and Karim Kelvin Koroma, “The West African Ebola Virus Outbreak: Context, Response and Christian Responsibility – The Experience of the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone”, *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (June 2015), 6-7.

⁸ Howell and Koroma, “The West African Ebola Virus Outbreak”, 7.

⁹ Barbara McPake, Sophie Witter, Sarah Ssali, Haja Wurie, Justine Namakula and Freddie Ssengooba, “Ebola in the Context of Conflict Affected States and Health Systems: Case Studies of Northern Uganda and Sierra Leone”, *Conflict and Health* (August 2015), Accessed 10 November 2022, <https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-015-0052-7>

¹⁰ Mark Wallace, “The Wounded Spirit’ as the Basis for Hope in an Age of Radical Ecology”, in Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (eds.), *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans* (Harvard: CSWR, 2000), 52.

¹¹ World Bank, “Solid Waste Management”, (February 2022), Accessed 3 December 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/brief/solid-waste-management>

percent increase from 2020. Humans have effectively transformed the oceans into convenient sewers. These realities must motivate all Christian traditions to re-evaluate how they practice their faith.¹² Thus, in recent times, Pentecostals have begun a search for an appropriate theology that will shape the worldviews of their adherents about the natural world.

The Inadequacy of Eco-Pneumatology

The overarching problem this paper investigates is the lack of a comprehensive Pentecostal response to ecological crises. Ecotheology among African Pentecostals is inadequate and contributes to their indifference towards ecological issues.¹³ In other words, Classical African Pentecostal theology has yet to fully embrace eco-theology, though some Pentecostal churches occasionally organise clean-up and tree-planting activities.

From the early stages of the movement until now, Pentecostals have carried the mandate of the Great Commission with urgency but with little or no theological reflection on science and technology.¹⁴ Though their understanding of the imminent return of Christ has motivated them to undertake missions, it has also somewhat blurred their vision for engaging in actions that improve life on earth, as they believe that the earth and its inhabitants will soon give way to a new heaven and earth.¹⁵ They view recent ecological crises as the fulfilment of certain end-time prophecies, suggesting that nothing can be done to rescue the situation.¹⁶ This has created some blind spots in their mission practices. Their focus, therefore, has always been on proclaiming the Good News, baptising and nurturing new believers, with little or no emphasis on saving the life of the groaning earth.

The lack of pragmatic biblical responses to ecological crises among African Pentecostals primarily stems from an absence of comprehensive and integrative biblical insights regarding eco-care and eco-mission.¹⁷ Their mission practice has yet

¹² Solomon Victus, *Eco-Theology and the Scriptures; A Revisit of Christian Response* (Bali Nagar, New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2014), 5.

¹³ See also Awudi, "Looking at Scripture with", 52.

¹⁴ Amos Young, "Pentecostal Voices in Theology – Science Conversation", *Zygon* Vol. 43, No. 4 (December 2008), 875-877 (876). Though, occasionally, some articles are written, especially in the West for Pentecostals to incorporate ecological issues in their missions' paradigm.

¹⁵ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Pentecostal Mission: A Theological Appraisal", in Lord Elorm Donkor and Clifton R. Clarke (eds.), *African Pentecostal Mission Maturing: Essays in Honour of Apostle Opoku Onyiah* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 28-49 (32). See also, Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo, "Redeemed from the Earth? Environmental Change and Salvation Theology in African Christianity", *Scriptura* Vol. 111 (2012), 348-361 (349), Accessed 16 May 2017, <http://www.scriptura.journals.ac.za/pup/article/>. See also Awudi, "Looking at Scripture with", 51.

¹⁶ Shane Clifton, "Preaching the 'Full Gospel' in the Context of Global Environmental Crises", in Amos Yong (ed.), *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Ground: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 117-134 (117).

¹⁷ Awudi, "Looking at Scripture with 'Green Eyes'", 80.

to incorporate eco-mission as a fundamental aspect of their mission to the marginalised. As previously noted, African Pentecostal doctrines have not fully acknowledged ecotheology, although certain Christian traditions in Africa, such as the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and other African Instituted Churches (AICs), have successfully integrated biblical perspectives with traditional ecological concepts. However, the accelerating degradation of the Earth requires that all Christian traditions, including Pentecostalism—which is the fastest-growing church tradition in both Africa and world Christianity—pay significant attention to addressing this issue.¹⁸

Notwithstanding this, some Pentecostal scholars have begun researching the relationship between Pentecostal theology and ecology. Scholars like Amos Young¹⁹, Steven M. Studebaker²⁰, Andrew Ray Williams²¹, and Aaron Jason Swoboda²² have analysed the compatibility between ecology and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) to develop a Pentecostal eco-theology. After Williams reviewed Swoboda's 'Tongues and Trees', and Clark Pinnock's 'Cosmic Pneumatology', he proposed eco-pneumatology as the way forward for a Pentecostal ecotheology.²³ Similarly, Swoboda suggests that Pentecostals can develop eco-theology from Pneumatology, which he refers to as Eco-Glossolalia,²⁴ or Tongues and Trees²⁵ in two separate publications.

However, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen has critiqued efforts to portray pneumatology as the central focus of Pentecostalism. He asserts, "Against the assumption of uninformed outside observers, pneumatology does not necessarily represent the center of Pentecostal Spirituality."²⁶ He argues that Christology is, in fact, the heart of Pentecostal spirituality. Consequently, while the works of Williams and Swoboda primarily reflect Western perspectives on pneumatology, limiting ecological discussions to its connection with pneumatology creates the impression that pneumatology encompasses the entirety of Pentecostal theology. Although it has the

¹⁸ Allan Heaton Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3.

¹⁹ Yong, "Pentecostal Voices in the Theology-Science Conversation", 875-877.

²⁰ Steven M. Studebaker, "The Spirit in Creation: A Unified Theology of Grace and Creation Care", *Zygon*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (December 2008), 943-959.

²¹ Andrew Ray Williams, "Flame of Creation: Pentecostal Ecotheology in Dialogue with Clark Pinnock's Pneumatology", *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* Vol. 26, (2017), 272-285, Accessed 20 January 2020, <https://brill.com/downloadpdf/journal/pent/26/2/article-pdf>

²² Aaron Jason Swoboda, "Tongues and Trees: Towards a Green Pentecostal Pneumatology" (Unpublished PhD Thesis, College of Arts and Law, the University of Birmingham, 2011).

²³ Williams, "Flame of Creation", 272-285.

²⁴ A. J. Swoboda, "Eco-Glossolalia: Emerging Twenty-First Century Pentecostal and Charismatic Ecotheology", *Rural Theology*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2011), Accessed 21 July 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1558/ruth.v9i2.101>.

²⁵ Swoboda, "Tongues and Trees".

²⁶ See also Kärkkäinen, "Pentecostal Mission", 32.

potential to articulate the Spirit's role in creation and its enlivening aspects, it falls short of addressing the biblical understanding of the earth's deterioration, which is rooted in the breakdown of relationships resulting from humanity's fall. Thus, it does not fully encompass discussions on the reconciliation and redemption of all creation through the finished work of Christ, nor does it consider how all creation will be impacted by the second coming of Christ.

Similarly, calls for contextualisation of the "Full Gospel" to make it environment-friendly are commendable,²⁷ but aside from the fact that expatiations of the "Full Gospel" usually exclude the doctrine of God, they also neglect Christ's role in the *creatio ex nihilo*. Thus, any response to ecological crises developed from just the four or five elements of the "Full Gospel" or pneumatology not only renders such an eco-praxis narrow and inadequate but also does not represent a holistic Pentecostal theology. Therefore, African Pentecostals need to develop a comprehensive response that embraces major Christian doctrines with an integrated view of nature from *creatio* to *nova creatio*.

Sources of Data

This research forms part of my doctoral dissertation and employs a qualitative methodology, integrating both secondary and primary data sources. Adopting an "indigenizing approach," the study examines the eco-management practices of four indigenous churches across Africa: The Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) and the OSSA-Madih Church (OMC) in Ghana, along with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and the African Apostolic Church (AAEC) in Zimbabwe, as documented by Marthinus L. Daneel.²⁸

Secondary data, consisting of literary resources related to the AAEC's efforts in combating environmental degradation and reclaiming degraded lands in Zimbabwe, were sourced from the Johannes Zimmermann Library at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture. To gather information pertinent to the EOTC, the researcher engaged with Aemere Asherbir Alemayehu, a Research and Administration Officer at the Centre for Ancient Christianity and Ethiopian Studies (CACES) at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (EGST), as well as Yared Kibret, a Council Member at the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Patriarchate Head

²⁷ See Shane Clifton, "Preaching the 'Full Gospel' in the Context of Global Environmental Crises", in Amos Yong (ed.), *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Ground: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 117-134. See also Jeffrey S. Lamp, "Jesus as Sanctifier: Creation Care and the Fivefold Gospel", in A. J. Swoboda (ed.), *Blood Cries Out: Pentecostals, Ecology and the Groans of Creation* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 152-168.

²⁸ The indigenizing process relates to drawing upon traditions of indigenous people and making use of them. See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, Second Edition (London: Zed Books, 2012), 146.

Office. Their contributions were vital in obtaining literary materials concerning the historical significance of the EOTC's 'church forests.'

This research utilised an approach that primarily leveraged qualitative data sourced from in-depth interviews, complemented by personal observations. The initial phase involved interviews with two clergy members from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), Aemere Asherbir Alemayehu and Yared Kibret, focusing on the historical context and theological foundations underpinning the conservation practices of extensive wetland areas in Ethiopia.

Subsequently, a combination of both random and purposive sampling techniques was employed to select a sample of eight (8) clergymen and fourteen (14) church members from the Motse Womb of God's Church (MDCC). The selected clergymen, comprising church leaders including the senior prophet and the general overseer, were all based in Gomoa Muzano, the MDCC's administrative headquarters. The fourteen respondents included three (3) lay leaders responsible for overseeing the sacred forest at Gomoa Oguan, in addition to eleven (11) church members residing in the same area.

Regarding the OMC, this research intentionally selected and conducted interviews with four (4) of its leaders. Additionally, four (4) scholars from the four classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana (Assemblies of God, Christ Apostolic Church, The Apostolic Church, and the Church of Pentecost) were also purposively sampled and interviewed. Furthermore, through random sampling, I interviewed ninety-six (96) ministers from these four Ghanaian Classical Pentecostal churches using open-ended interview guides. The ministers were selected from all regions in Ghana, with twenty-four (24) representatives from each church. This sampling was organized by dividing the country into eight regions: Northern, Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti, Volta, Eastern, Central, Western, and Greater Accra.²⁹

The researcher categorized the data according to various denominations and organizations, employing a 'thematic analytic framework' for analysis. This methodology facilitated the identification of underlying themes, patterns, and relational dynamics across the responses derived from the selected doctrines.³⁰ In addition to examining the original Hebrew and Greek texts that inform these doctrines, the researcher also utilised the Akuapem Twi translation of the Bible to enhance certain interpretative aspects. Finally, insights drawn from Akan and Ewe

²⁹ The leaders of the Ossa-Madih church did not allow me to interview the members of the church except the leaders. Part of their reservations was that the church was misrepresented in previous research. Thus, the three leaders of the church were keenly interested in whatever information the other leaders were communicating. They agreed to grant the interview based on the assurance that access to the data collected in both its raw and final forms would be given to them.

³⁰ Uwe Flick (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Data Analysis* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publication Ltd., 2014), 147.

primal eco-praxes were integrated, allowing for a contextualisation of the developing ecotheology.

Interpretive Framework

The theocentric model guided the selection of materials, interpretations, and the offering of alternative explanations for the selected doctrines. I chose the theocentric model as an alternative approach to address the weaknesses inherent in the stewardship, biocentric, and ecocentric models, which are the commonly used frameworks in the field of ecology. The eco-stewardship model has some potential in addressing environmental concerns and remains the most prevalent model within the church. However, as early as 1992, Clare Palmer contends that “It is this very destruction that brings me to question another associated belief: that man is ultimately in control of the natural world – or, to phrase it another way, that man can be a steward.”³¹ The challenge with the model lies in the recurring depiction of the human species at the heart of stewardship. It illustrates an absentee Creator who has left everything in the hands of humans.³² Thus, the stewardship model appears not to recognise the immanence of the Creator and his active role in the management of the universe.

Biocentrism, on the other hand, makes a case for eco-valuing based on the importance of all lives (biotic), while the ecocentric model values all creation, whether biotic or abiotic.³³ According to Patrick Curry, “Ecocentric ethics, like biocentrism, is non-anthropocentric. However, it differs from biocentrism in that ecocentric or green ethics are taken as objects of ethical concern as holistic entities, and those entities include integral components as animate.”³⁴ The ecocentric framework's weakness lies in its attempt to value all creation, both animate and inanimate, while omitting the God factor, from which all life originates, rendering the model theologically deficient. Consequently, the biocentric, ecocentric, or stewardship models are unable to reconcile creation with the Creator adequately.³⁵

The theocentric model, which forms the interpretive framework of this work, according to Richard Young, “... teaches that God is the centre of the universe and

³¹ Clare Palmer, ‘Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics’, in Ian Ball, Margaret Goodall and Clare Palmer and John Reader (eds.), *The Earth Beneath: A Critical Guide to Green Theology* (London: SPCK, 1992), 67-86 (80).

³² Ernst Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology: At Home on Earth?* (Burlington, England: Ashgate, 2005), 215.

³³ Victorinus, *Eco-Theology and the Scriptures*, 117.

³⁴ Patrick Curry, *Ecological Ethics: An Introduction (2nd Edition)* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), 92.

³⁵ Andrew J. Hoffman and Lloyd E. Sandelands, “Getting Right with Nature: Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism and Theocentrism”, *Organisation & Environment* (October 2004), 1-22, Accessed 27 March 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/.251378575_Getting_Right_with_Nature_Anthropocentrism_Ecocentrism_and_Theocentrism

that he alone is the Source and Upholder of meaning, purpose, values, and ethics, as well as the unifying principle of the cosmos.”³⁶ With this model, every creature, whether biotic or abiotic, exists and discovers its purpose in God. Similarly, Ebenezer Y. Blasus asserts that in the theocentric worldview, Christians’ love for God and concern for His creation serve as the motivation for creation care.³⁷ He argues, “Motivation for Christians to care for creation is inferable from the teaching that Christians are to obey and please God as well as seek his righteousness as their love for God in all their relationships in the ecosystem.”³⁸ Francis A. Schaeffer’s tree analogy demonstrates this clearly:

Secular man may say he cares for the tree because if he cuts it down his cities will not be able to breathe. ... But the Christian stands in front of the tree, and has an emotional reaction towards it, because the tree has a real value in itself, being a creature made by God. I have this in common with the tree: we were made by God and not just cast up by chance.³⁹

Thus, theocentrism explains the relationship between nature, humanity, and God. It does not recognize humanity as the zenith of creation and has more biblical support than other models cited earlier.⁴⁰ Hoffman and Sandelands add that within the theocentric framework, “Man and nature are related in God. Sharing the same Father, they relate as siblings in love and mutual respect. There are no grounds to suppose one excludes or dominates the other. Man does not lord over nature, and nature does not lord over man. God lords over both.”⁴¹ The merit of this model is that, aside from addressing the dichotomy between human and other-than-human creation created by the Western enlightenment,⁴² theocentrism connects with the idea of kinship with nature,⁴³ attesting that one cannot delineate the reconciliation of humanity to God from the other-than-human creation.

³⁶ Richard A. Young, *Healing the Earth: A Theocentric Perspective on Environmental Problems and their Solutions* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 128.

³⁷ Ebenezer Yaw Blasus, “The Bible and Caring for the Land: African Theocology as Christian Impulsion for Creation Care”, in Benjamin Abotchie Ntneh, Mark S. Aidoo, and Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh (eds.), *Essays on the Land, Ecotheology, and Traditions in Africa* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publications, 2019), 70-93 (77).

³⁸ Blasus, “The Bible and Caring for the Land”, 76.

³⁹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970), 77-78.

⁴⁰ See the book of Job chapters 38 to 40, Psalm 41:1 and Revelation 4:11. In Revelation 4:11, the twenty-four elders sing the purpose for which all things were created, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created” (ESV).

⁴¹ Hoffman and Sandelands, “Getting Right with Nature”, 18-19.

⁴² Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How we Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 46.

⁴³ Blasus, “The Bible and Caring for the Land”, 79. See also Harold Turner, “The Primal Religion of the World and their Study”, in *Australian Essays in World Religions* (Bedford Park: Australian Association for the Study of Religion, 1997), 27-37 (32).

This model enables the African Christian to understand that, just as sin impacts both the land and its inhabitants, salvation and any doctrine designed to draw humanity closer to the Creator cannot be separated from the other-than-human creation. Moreover, it follows that every Christian doctrine aimed at reconciling creation with the Creator must be guided by God's love, as expressed in the theocentric model. The doctrine of God serves as the foundation for all Christian teachings. Consequently, this model shaped the interpretation of data from the African Independent Churches (AICs) and the reimagining of selected doctrines from the four Classical Pentecostal churches.

Reasons for a Dearth of Ecotheology among Pentecostals

First, the study found that, among Pentecostals, eco-care is regarded as secondary to activities focused on winning souls. While some Pentecostal and Charismatic churches participate in creation care campaigns, as previously discussed, they tend to view these annual events as subordinate to evangelistic efforts, which diminishes their overall impact. In essence, the majority of Pentecostals and Charismatics prioritise evangelistic activities over initiatives aimed at addressing environmental concerns.⁴⁴ The inadequacies in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology can be primarily attributed to two factors: the established dichotomy between the sacred and the secular realms, and the anthropocentric inclinations prevalent in their core theological doctrines.

Second, the analysis of the content of Pentecostals' Christology regarding the 'Full Gospel' reveals a notable lack of ecological ethos in its formulation. According to Steven Jack Land, the 'Full Gospel' encompasses five elements: salvation, sanctification, healing, Holy Spirit baptism, and eschatology.⁴⁵ However, this tradition often conflates the elements of sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, presenting the 'Full Gospel' as portraying Jesus as the Saviour, the Healer, the Baptizer of the Holy Spirit, and the Soon-Coming King. As a result, it is sometimes referred to as the 'Four-Square Gospel.' Despite this, there is a significant absence of a component addressing the *creatio* (creation) role of Christ, leading to an anthropocentric focus in the 'Full Gospel.' This perspective is a primary reason for the inadequacy of ecotheology within the classical Pentecostal tradition. Consequently, both Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals tend to view other activities, including social actions aimed at environmental preservation, as pre-evangelistic rather than integral to the gospel message.

Third, in a substantial portion of soteriological literature, Pentecostal-Charismatic theologians and preachers primarily concentrate on the theme of human reconciliation with the Divine. This focus was also distinctly reflected in the findings from the

⁴⁴ Awudi, "Beyond Eco-Pneumatology", 179.

⁴⁵ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), 7.

interviews that were conducted. Interviewee 1 posited, “If you talk about the redemption of all creation, it makes it difficult because redemption has to do with only human beings. However, when human beings are redeemed, they should be able to take good care of all creation. The love a person has for God helps the person to take care of all creation.”⁴⁶ The predominant understanding of salvation is often shaped by anthropocentric interpretations of the doctrine of sin. Nonetheless, theologians such as Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda, alongside various eco-theologians, contend that the scope of salvation extends beyond mere delineations of life and death.⁴⁷ They argue, “To limit salvation to humans alone is to short-change both Scripture and our theological traditions.”⁴⁸ The scholars assert that “Even as both humanity and other creatures are recipients of divine judgment in Genesis 3, so both are recipients of a divine covenantal promise in Genesis 9.”⁴⁹ They further argue that salvation encompasses two dimensions: the salvation of the soul, which relates to our fate after death, and the salvation of creation beyond humanity, which involves realising God’s kingdom in the present. If the sin of the first couple caused a rift between God and the universe, then the salvation of the soul is inherently connected to the salvation of the entire cosmos.

Fourth, The doctrine of divine healing, much like the doctrine of salvation, is fundamentally anthropocentric and restricts the application of any other means beyond prayer for its efficacy. The Church of Pentecost (CoP) articulates its stance on healing as follows: “The healing of sicknesses and diseases is provided for God’s people in the atoning death of Christ. The church is, however, not opposed to soliciting the help of qualified medical practitioners (2 Ki. 20:7; Mk. 9:12; Lk. 10:34; Col. 4:14).”⁵⁰ This explanation excludes the healing of the other-than-human species. Opoku Onyinah, in expounding the doctrine of divine healing, explains it as “...the healing of a physical or psychosomatic disease or condition through prayer.”⁵¹ Onyinah’s definition encapsulates the dominant perspective on healing within Classical Ghanaian Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. This interpretation notably delineates the scope of divine healing, specifically omitting the restorative aspects concerning other-than-human creation. As such, the framework focuses predominantly on healing as it pertains to human beings, thereby excluding ecological or broader cosmological considerations from its understanding of divine intervention.

⁴⁶ Interviewee 10 of the CoP, Interview by Emmanuel Awudi, June 30 2022.

⁴⁷ Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler and A. J. Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 131.

⁴⁸ Brunner, Butler and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 131.

⁴⁹ Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 132.

⁵⁰ The Church of Pentecost, *The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost* (Accra: Pentecost Press Limited, 2016), 9.

⁵¹ Opoku Onyinah, “Faith, Healing and Mission: Perspectives from the Bible”, in J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Ed.) *Christian Missions Ecumenism in Ghana: Essays in Honor of Robert K. Aboagye-Mensah* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2009), 213.

Fifth, Pentecostals' conception of Holy Spirit baptism, as evident in the tenets of the four Classical Ghanaian Pentecostal churches, is that Jesus gives the believer power to evangelise and to cast out demons.⁵² They assert that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is available to all believers and encourage every member to passionately pursue this experience, with speaking in tongues as evidence. This perspective led early African Pentecostals to label the traditions, rules, rituals, and regulations that preserved sacred forests and water bodies as demonic, believing they should be exorcised through the power of the Holy Spirit. Rather than embracing or adapting these primal environmental practices, they condemned them without offering any viable alternatives.

Lastly, while eschatological beliefs significantly drive the evangelistic efforts of numerous Pentecostal congregations, they also influence the degree of commitment these communities exhibit towards creation care. Within the Pentecostal-Charismatic circles, the dominant understanding of eschatology is the "salvation of the souls of the righteous from the torment of hell, followed by a total destruction of the present heaven and earth."⁵³ For instance, the Apostolic Hymn 297 clearly expresses the notion of eschatology as a flight to heaven.

<p><i>Akwantu bi wɔ hɔ a ye betu enyɛ, wiase ha akwantu no bi Soro hɔ akwantu na yeretwen</i></p> <p><i>Anigye ben na saa da no beye</i></p>	<p>There is a journey we shall make It is not an earthly journey It is the journey to heaven that we await What a joy would that day be</p>
<p><i>Sɛ sum hyɛ kabii ma apranaa bobom, Ma Kristo mu awufu sɔre kan,</i></p>	<p>When darkness appears and thunder strikes For the dead in Christ to arise first</p>
<p><i>Na se yene wɔn bom kɔhyia Kristo a Anigye ben na saa da no beye⁵⁴</i></p>	<p>And we together with them meet Christ What a joy would that day be</p>

⁵² See Assemblies of God, Ghana, *Constitution and Bye-Laws* (Accra, Ghana: The Assemblies of God Literature Centre Ltd., 2013), 14. The Church of Pentecost, *The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost* (Accra: The General Council of the Church of Pentecost, 2016), 9. The Apostolic Church-Ghana, *Constitution* (Accra, Ghana: The Apostolic Church-Ghana General Headquarters, 2020), 4. Christ Apostolic Church International, *Constitution* (Accra, Ghana: Christ Apostolic Church International, 2019), 7.

⁵³ Awudi, "Beyond Eco-Pneumatology", 189.

⁵⁴ The Apostolic Church – Ghana, *Apostolic Twi Hymnal*, (Accra: The Apostolic Church – Ghana, 2008), 117.

Similarly, Ben-Willie Golo argues that this understanding of eschatology makes Pentecostals pre-occupied with the winning of souls and preparing them for heaven.⁵⁵ However, “An understanding of salvation as a flight from the earth and its inhabitants potentially leads to the exploitation of creation or less interest in what happens to them.”⁵⁶ One aspect of eschatology that affects Pentecostals’ zeal for eco-care is where humanity will spend eternity. The dominant view among Pentecostals and Charismatics is that believers will spend eternity in heaven. This perspective on eschatology has also created several blind spots in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology and has influenced how they relate to earthly matters.

Conclusion: Emerging African Pentecostal Ecotheology

In my thesis, I concluded that for meaningful and lasting environmental change, it is essential for creation care to transcend mere actions such as campaigns and clean-up initiatives; it must evolve into a lifestyle commitment. A pivotal strategy for achieving this transformation lies in integrating eco-theology within the core tenets and doctrinal frameworks of diverse church traditions. Embracing eco-theology can fundamentally alter the ethical and theological discourse surrounding environmental stewardship, fostering a holistic approach to sustainability that aligns spiritual beliefs with ecological responsibility.⁵⁷ In the succeeding paragraphs, I shall propose strategies for maximising the impact of Classical Pentecostal ecclesiology on creation care.

First, the ‘Full Gospel’ of Pentecostals requires a reinterpretation. The exclusion of ecological framework in the ‘Full Gospel’ renders it a ‘Half-Gospel.’⁵⁸ To make the Full Gospel more ecological, I argue for a sixth component: Christ the Creator. Instead of viewing the Full Gospel as simply pentagonal or four-square, I propose a new paradigm – the Hexagonal Gospel. This includes Jesus as the Creator, Saviour, Healer, Baptizer of the Holy Spirit, Sanctifier, and Soon-Coming King.⁵⁹ Christ the Creator has several biblical backings (Prov. 8:22-31; Jn. 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-16; Eph. 1:10; Heb. 1:2) and cannot be ignored as a component of the Full Gospel.

Second, the elimination of anthropocentric tendencies in the major doctrines of the Pentecostal tradition. The paragraphs below suggest ways other doctrines could be reimagined:

⁵⁵ Ben-Willie Kweku Golo, “The Groaning Earth and the Greening of Neo-Pentecostalism in Twenty-First-Century Ghana”, *PentecoStudies*, 197-216 (201). Accessed 20 January 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1558/ptcs.v1312.197>.

⁵⁶ Awudi, “Beyond Eco-Pneumatology”, 177.

⁵⁷ Awudi, “Beyond Eco-Pneumatology”, 195.

⁵⁸ Awudi, “Beyond Eco-Pneumatology”, 97.

⁵⁹ Awudi, “Beyond Eco-Pneumatology”, 184.

Theo-Ecology: Theo-Ecology suggests that God is the Creator and Owner of the universe and all its inhabitants as attested to in the scriptures (Gen.1:1-30; 2:-1-15; Deut. 10:14; Job 38-40:34 and Ps. 24:1). The creation narrative which begins with *Bereshit Elohim* (in the beginning God) is pointing to God as the originator of everything in the universe. Claus Westermann's observation that this phrase answers several puzzles in the narrative is true, as the intention of the narrator was not to give a vivid description of what took place but to draw attention to the fact that everything began with God.⁶⁰ It highlights the attributes of God and how they inform creation care. God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. These show that the all-powerful Creator is capable of providing for all his creation. He is present within his creation, providing for and guarding each of them. The Omniscient God knows every single creation, regardless of its location. This also prompts accountability in the mind of the individual. His omnipresence shows that he has not absconded from his creation but is immanent within it and caring for each one of his creatures. His communicable attributes include loving, merciful, kindness, compassionate, gracious, and slow to anger (Ps. 145:8-11). He shares these attributes with humanity, which shows that humanity, as viceroys, must reign over the rest of creation with the same attributes.

Eco-Harmatology: Eco-Harmatology defines sin as trespassing, missing the mark, or failing to measure up to God's ethical or moral standards that govern his household (*oikos*).⁶¹ These moral and ethical standards include God's revealed laws and prohibitions that govern the ecosystem. Thus, *eco-hamartia* (eco-sin) relates to humanity's failure to live up to God's expectations in tilling and guarding the earth or upsetting the equilibrium in the ecosystem. It also shows that there is a communal impact of sin that extends to the other-than-human community. The sin of Adam had ripple effects on the relationships between God and humanity; God and all creation; human being and fellow human beings; human beings and their inner selves; the human species and the other-than-human species; and lastly, the relationships that existed among the other-than-human species within the ecosystem.⁶² It shows that sin affects nature, as seen in God's words to Solomon on how he intends to punish their disobedience (2 Chr. 7:13-14).

The text suggests that plagues, the emergence of unusual and infectious diseases, locust infestations, floods, droughts, and consequently, famine and reduced agricultural output, can be interpreted as consequences of moral transgressions. Within a biblical framework, instances like the Great Flood during Noah's era and the

⁶⁰ Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 7.

⁶¹ Awudi, "Beyond Eco-pneumatology", 182.

⁶² See Allison Howell, "The Bible and Care Creation", in Jonathan Pauline Hoggarth, Fergus Macdonald, Bill Mitchell and Knud Jørgensen (eds), *Bible in Mission* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2013), 168-177 (176). See also Eric B. Antwi, *Human Creation in the Image of God: The Asante Perspective* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2018), 66-69.

annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah exemplify how sin can disrupt entire ecosystems, adversely affecting other-than-human species alongside human communities. Furthermore, the biblical account of a three-and-a-half-year drought in Samaria illustrates the profound and multifaceted impacts of sin on environmental conditions (1 Kgs. 16-17).

Similarly, the plagues that descended upon Egypt served to impact not only human beings but also the land, water bodies, and livestock. This illustrates that whenever God pronounces judgment due to sin, both the land and its inhabitants suffer. However, just as sin adversely affects the land and its ecological community, forgiveness brings about healing for all. The process of forgiveness begins with the confession of sin, and it is essential to include the acknowledgement of ecological sins or transgressions against the inhabitants of the ecosystem. Consequently, reconciliation in Christ is inherently tied to our reconciliation with all of creation, with Christ as the head of this restoration.

Eco-Christology: The rupture of relationships resulted in the expectation of a Messiah to mend all the affected relationships. The emphasis has always been, “Christ came to save sinners, and not Christ came to save the world.”⁶³ In other words, the church has always presented Christ as the Saviour of the fallen human community and not the fallen cosmos. Christ is the Creator of the universe (Pro. 8:22-31; Jn. 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-16; Eph. 1:10; Heb. 1:2). Christ demonstrated this through the several miracles he performed, including calming the storm, (Mk. 4:35-41), walking on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:22-36), and the cursing of the fig tree (Matt. 21:18-22, cf. Mk. 11:12-25). He demonstrated his love for all creation through his unique relationship with the natural world. This relationship is evident in his use of natural objects in his parables and teachings, and there were occasions when he explained how the triune God cares for the birds and the lilies. (Matt. 6:26-28). On other occasions, he went into solitude on mountaintops (Matt. 5:1-7:27; 17:1-12) and beaches (Matt. 13:1-25; Lk. 5:4, 5; Mk. 1:4). He also lived with the wild in the wilderness (Mk. 1:12, 13). His incarnation is a lesson for humanity to humble themselves and live in peace with the other-than-human species. His incarnation shows how he shared in the suffering of all creation.

Eco-Soteriology: Eco-Soteriology focuses on how the redemption of humanity is intertwined and inseparably linked to the redemption of the suffering creation. The salvation of humans has always been connected to that of the non-human community; they are intimately bound together. The two major events that as the typology of salvation in Christ are the flood in Gen. 7:1-5 and the liberation of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 12:38). In both cases, human beings were saved alongside other living organisms.

⁶³ Awudi, “Beyond Eco-Pneumatology”, 183.

Eco-Therapeutology: Healing through either prayer or medication can be perceived as divine. The Greek adjective, *theikós* (divine), used to describe healing, presupposes that divine healing encompasses any form of healing in which God is actively involved. Thus, whether through surgery, medication, diet, or prayer, it is divine because the entire healing process relies on God. I assert that divine healing involves utilising all spiritual and medical procedures to achieve restoration. Consequently, if all healing processes are viewed as God's intervention, then any form of healing – miraculous or medicinal – is divine. The ill health of the ecosystem results from humanity's sins (including both actions and inactions). Not only does 2 Chr. 7:13-14 indicate that the consequences of sin include plagues, droughts, and locust invasions, but it also highlights that sin impacts all creation. The healing of the land and its inhabitants, whether through prayer or by means of organic or scientific methods, is divine. Therefore, divine healing is not restricted to the human community. Finally, healing may also encompass the restoration of broken relationships. In both the Old Testament and traditional African worldviews, ill health can be perceived as a consequence of fractured relationships.

Eco-Pneumatology: Although Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit empowers believers for service, the service's scope is confined to the human community. This article argues that this scope of service should extend to all members of the ecosystem, recognising that serving all of creation is serving God. Pentecostal churches also regard the Spirit's empowerment as 'fuel' for the mission, but the whole mission enterprise is limited to saving the lost and transforming lives. The Holy Spirit is the Creator of the universe. He was intricately involved in the creation of the universe and everything within it. This role began with the plurality in the Godhead (*Elohim*), indicating the Spirit's involvement in creation (Gen. 1:1). Thus, for Julie C. Ma and Wonsuk Ma, the Word and the Spirit were with God as the creator, the Trinity.⁶⁴ The Spirit hovered over the chaotic universe to bring order and harmony (Gen. 1:2). The Holy Spirit transformed the desolation (*tohuw*), vacuity (*bohuw*), and total darkness (*choshek*) and brought order to the surface of the earth. Eco-Pneumatology emphasises the Spirit's role in giving life to all creation (Gen. 6:1, Job 33:4). The Spirit also saves life as he receded the floodwaters to save Noah and other creation on earth (Gen. 8:1). In the NT, the Apostle John explains that the *Pneuma* gives life (Jn. 6:63), which is reaffirmed by the Paul, the apostle in 2 Corinthians 3:6 (cf. Rom. 8:11). The Spirit of God sustains, renews, vivifies, and keeps creation thriving (Ps. 104:29-30). Creation ceases to exist when the Spirit of God departs (Job 34:14, 15; cf. 27:3). The Spirit is, therefore, present in the world to help creation bloom, flourish, and thrive while sustaining it (Is. 32:15-20).

⁶⁴ Julie C. Ma and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford : Regnum Books International, 2010), 24.

Eco-Eschatology: The doctrine of eschatology influences how Christians live their lives on earth, as it addresses several questions about the meaning of life here and in the afterlife.⁶⁵ It is a major motivation for evangelistic activities within many churches, including the four selected classical Pentecostal churches in Ghana. From the creation story and the typologies of the second coming, Scripture does not envision a world where humans would exist without other-than-human species. Thus, eco-eschatology incorporates the whole cosmos into the *nova creatio*. The return of Christ will be 'impromptu' rather than 'soon', as explained earlier. This is supported by Jesus' two major parables in response to a question on his return (Matt. 25:1-13; 14-30). Juxtaposing these parables with the analogy of the event as the coming of the thief in 2 Pet. 3:10a and the Greek word *tachu* used in Rev. 22:12 implies that Christ's second coming will be unannounced, impromptu, and neither quick nor soon.

The second coming of Christ will result in the refinement or renewal of creation rather than total annihilation. The events include fire burning up the earth. This has more to do with refinement/purification than destruction (see Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:1-3; 4:1). Humanity will spend eternity with creation. In the event of Christ's *parousia* (1 Thess. 4:13-16; 1 Cor. 15:51-54), believers will meet the Lord in the skies (Matt. 24:31) and return with him to rule the earth. Since eschatology is time for accountability (Rev. 22:12), there is a need to understand that this accountability may cover how humanity cares for creation. The second coming of Christ is not about pronouncing a destructive judgment on earth but a creative judgment that would purge the world of evil for righteousness to reign in the universe.

Recent scholarship increasingly recognises that the epicentre of Christian vitality is shifting to the Global South, particularly within the majority world. This shift underscores the imperative for Southern theologians to contextualise the Gospel and articulate indigenous theologies that resonate with local experiences and socio-cultural dynamics. While Pentecostals have made strides in this area, there is still considerable scope for development, particularly in African Pentecostal Ecotheology.

Pentecostalism significantly contributes to Christian vitality in Africa, and with its growing numbers and influence, it is well positioned to lead the development of appropriate and holistic ecological missiologies for eco-mission. Although the Pentecostal tradition is known for its ability to thrive consistently on continuities from the primal faith, much work still needs to be done on African primal eco-values and biblical injunctions.

To transition eco-mission from the fringes to the mainstream of Pentecostal mission, the core doctrines of the tradition must fully embrace ecology, as discussed in this

⁶⁵ John Polkinghorne, *The God of Hope and the End of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 140.

thesis. My thesis has sought to address this gap and develop pertinent theologies within the African Pentecostal tradition as responses to eco-crises, guiding eco-mission across the continent. It is crucial for assisting Pentecostals in Africa to draw from their own resources and satisfy their needs for a more robust environmental theology within the tradition.

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Folk Muslims' Presence in Ghana and its Missiological Implications for Pentecostals⁶⁶

Dieudonne Komla Nuekpe

Abstract

This study examines the presence of folk Muslims in Ghana and explores the missiological implications for Pentecostals. Historically, Ghana was viewed as a stronghold against Islam in Africa; however, this resistance has diminished, as evidenced by the significant presence of Islam in the region. While Christian-Muslim relationships in Ghana are generally amicable, tensions, misunderstandings, and conflicts can arise when Christians share the gospel with Muslims or attempt to proselytise using local mission approaches. This research aims to raise awareness of the Muslim community in Ghana and highlight areas of misunderstanding and ignorance. By doing so, it illustrates how Pentecostals, who represent the fastest-growing segment of Christians in Ghana, can effectively and respectfully engage with Ghanaian Muslims in the context of sharing the gospel. This study integrates findings from intercultural studies, Islamic studies, Pentecostal missiology, church history, cultural anthropology, and biblical theology. A comprehensive descriptive and analytical review of existing literature illustrates that the majority of Ghanaian Muslims identify as folk Muslims – individuals who have retained certain elements of African Traditional Religion (ATR) alongside their Islamic beliefs. As a result, these folk Muslims exhibit a power-oriented disposition akin to that found in Pentecostal communities, as both groups are deeply influenced by a shared spiritual heritage rooted in ATR practices. The paper posits that this common ground presents significant opportunities for Pentecostals to engage with Muslims regarding the gospel. It delineates four distinct types of engagement: (1) theological engagement through truth encounters that emphasise grace, love, and respect, (2) relational engagement through acts of service that meet existential needs, (3) power engagement through experiential encounters that address spiritual and practical needs, and (4) discipleship engagement that highlights the transformative and sustaining power of the Holy Spirit.

Keywords: Folk Islam, Pentecostals, Christian-Muslim, Power Encounter, Missiological Implications

How to cite this article: Nuekpe, Dieudonne Komla. "Folk Muslims' Presence in Ghana and its Missiological Implications for Pentecostals." *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 5, no. 2 (2025): 20-35.

⁶⁶ Dieudonne Komla Nuekpe, "The Presence of Folk Muslims in Ghana and Its Missiological Implications for Pentecostals" (PhD diss, Torch Trinity Graduate University, Seoul, 2021).

Introduction

Christians and Muslims in Ghana have historically enjoyed a largely harmonious relationship, during which Ghanaian Christians typically refrained from engaging in evangelism targeting Muslims. Three key elements have contributed to maintaining peace between these two communities in Ghana: cultural community, cooperative education, and political alliance. For most Ghanaians, ethnic or tribal identity takes precedence over religious identity. Hence, Ghanaians tend to view one another as brothers and sisters bound by a shared national identity before acknowledging their specific religious affiliations. This prioritisation of communal identity is consistently reinforced in the public sphere—at markets, farms, funerals, and cultural celebrations—creating a solid foundation for Christians to build healthy relationships with Muslims within their communities.

In the context of institutional dynamics, Ghana's cooperative education system brings together Muslim and Christian students in the same high schools, where they are all introduced to African Traditional Religions (ATR), Christianity, and Islam. This inclusive environment fosters shared understanding and helps to mitigate interreligious tensions. Additionally, the practice of appointing both Muslims and Christians to elite government positions has significantly contributed to the peaceful coexistence of different faith communities in Ghana, thereby preventing conflicts that could arise from one religious group exerting political dominance over the other.

Despite the generally peaceful atmosphere fostered by societal mechanisms, tensions between Christians and Muslims continue to emerge in Ghana, particularly as both faiths seek to attract converts and as Islam experiences rapid growth in the region. The central thesis of this work posits that a shared spiritual heritage rooted in ATR has created meaningful intersections between the practices of Pentecostals and folk Muslims. When these intersections are properly understood, they can serve as effective bridges for Pentecostals to share the gospel with folk Muslims. This research aims to raise awareness and mitigate misunderstandings stemming from ignorance in Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana, while also developing a mission strategy for Pentecostals to engage folk Muslims with the gospel.

This study presents a comprehensive descriptive and analytical examination of the literature, revealing that Ghanaian Muslims are primarily folk Muslims—individuals who have retained many traditional African religious (ATR) practices even after converting to Islam. As such, folk Muslims share a power-oriented mindset similar to that of Pentecostals, with both groups drawing from the rich spiritual heritage of ATR practices in Ghana. This common heritage offers a foundation for Pentecostals to effectively engage with Muslims through the gospel. The study outlines four specific avenues for engagement: theological discussions (truth encounters) approached with gentleness and respect, acts of loving service that address existential needs, power

encounters that fulfil experiential needs, and pathways for discipleship that emphasise the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit.

The Historical Development of Christianity in Ghana and the Influence of Pentecostalism

Before the arrival of Western missionaries and the introduction of Christianity in January 1842, the people of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) held a religious worldview that emphasised the concept of a supreme God and salvation from harm, or the punishment lesser gods could inflict.⁶⁷ In light of this, the evangelistic efforts of early Western missionaries could not effectively address the spiritual needs of the people of Ghana despite their success in offering socio-economic development. Therefore, the quest for spiritual solutions that align with the African spirituality and worldview resulted in the rise of African revival movements, which eventually led to the establishment of African independent churches, paving the way for Ghanaian Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal movements. The ministries of William Wade Harris, John Swatson, and Sampson Opong introduced the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal movements, which significantly contributed to a nominal Christian practice centred around prosperity gospel teachings.⁶⁸

The centre of gravity of Christianity has shifted to the Southern Hemisphere, primarily driven by the Pentecostal movement. Allan Heaton Anderson describes Pentecostalism as the fastest-growing religious movement globally, leading the charge in worldwide Christian outreach in the twenty-first century.⁶⁹ By the mid-twenty-first century, the most populous Christian regions are expected to be in the Southern Hemisphere, particularly in Africa and South America.⁷⁰ According to Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, the remarkable growth of Christianity and its transformation within Africa can be attributed to the influence of Pentecostalism.⁷¹ However, it is important to note that the increase in the Christian population in the Southern Hemisphere does not necessarily correlate with a decline in the Muslim population, as one might anticipate.

The Church of Pentecost (CoP), one of the local manifestations of African Pentecostalism, has emerged as the largest Protestant church in Ghana, boasting a

⁶⁷ Dieudonne Komla Nuekpe, *Lived Islam in Africa and Its Missiological Implications for Pentecostals*, (Cumbria: Langham Publishing, 2023), 25.

⁶⁸ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra, Ghana: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2015), chap.1, Kindle.

⁶⁹ Allan Heaton Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

⁷⁰ Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 9.

⁷¹ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Pentecostalism and the Missiological Significance of Religious Experience: The Case of Ghana's Church of Pentecost," *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* 12, no. 1, (July/December 2002): 30.

robust missionary presence orientation.⁷² With adherents constituting almost ten percent of the overall Christian population, the CoP holds a significant position within Ghana's religious landscape.⁷³ The church is distinguished by its vibrant liturgical practices, extensive community engagement programmes, and steadfast dedication to spiritual development, thereby reinforcing its role as a significant spiritual hub in the nation. Ghanaian Pentecostalism has significantly influenced the growth of Christianity in Ghana. A key factor contributing to the rise of the Church of Pentecost (CoP) is the emphasis on pneumatic phenomena – highlighting the Holy Spirit's role in mission, signs and wonders, and power encounters during evangelism. The success of the CoP is primarily based on “conversional” growth through soul-winning and evangelistic efforts.⁷⁴

While the Muslim population in Ghana continues to expand, the Pentecostal community has struggled to engage effectively with Muslims due to a lack of sufficient awareness and effective evangelistic practices. Given their considerable contribution to Christian growth in Ghana, a deeper understanding of Islam and the adoption of appropriate engagement methods will enable Pentecostals to witness more effectively to Muslims with the gospel.

The Development of Islam and the Nature of the Christian-Muslim Relationship in Ghana

During the early spread of Islam in Africa in the mid-seventh century, it was geographically confined to North Africa.⁷⁵ Samuel Zwemer has observed that Islam has not emerged victorious but vanquished,⁷⁶ a religion that was on the brink of extinction because, from its inception, it contained “the germs of death.”⁷⁷ However, rather than its anticipated decline, Islam has undergone a resurgence and rapid growth that has made its presence felt globally and in Ghana. This expansion of Islam in Africa, particularly in Ghana, is an undeniable reality. Although John Spencer Trimingham once described Ghana as a “resistant belt” to Muslims' influence in Africa,⁷⁸ it did not remain as observed. Ghana's resistant belt has gradually eroded, as evidenced by the increasing number of mosques in the capital city, Accra. John

⁷² Ghana Evangelical Committee, Ghana Evangelical Committee, “Survey of Churches,” Facing the Unfinished Task of the Church in Ghana (Accra: Assemblies of God Literature, 1989), 122.

⁷³ CoP, Chairman Apostle Eric Nyamekye, State of the Church Address, 17th session of the Extraordinary Council Meetings, Pentecost Conventions Centre, Gomoah-Fetteh, May 4, 2021.

⁷⁴ Ghana Evangelical Committee, “Survey of Churches,” Facing the Unfinished Task of the Church in Ghana (Accra: Assemblies of God Literature, 1993), 23.

⁷⁵ Nehemiah Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, eds, *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 2.

⁷⁶ Samuel Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam* (New York: McMillan, 1920), 18.

⁷⁷ Samuel M. Zwemer, *The Disintegration of Islam* (New York: Chicago, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1916), 7.

⁷⁸ J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 19.

Azumah has observed that there is scarcely a village in Ghana today where one cannot find Muslims, whether as a minority or a majority.⁷⁹

The collapse of this resistance belt carries significant missiological implications for Christians in Ghana. One of the primary motivations that led Christian missionaries to West Africa in the early fifteenth century was their desire to curtail the spread of Islam in Africa.⁸⁰ This objective was reiterated at the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, which emphasised that the “whole strategy of Christian mission in Africa should be viewed in relation to Islam.”⁸¹ If an appropriate awareness is not cultivated among Ghanaians, a country once regarded as a Christian stronghold may transition toward becoming a Muslim nation. This awareness is particularly crucial for Pentecostals, given their fervent approach to evangelism and their shared historical and spiritual connections with folk Muslims.

An evaluation of the growth of world religions by country from 1900 to 2050 indicates that the number of Muslims is projected to increase from 0.2 billion to 2.5 billion people. During this period, the global population is expected to grow nearly six-fold, while the Muslim population will grow more than twelve-fold.⁸² In comparison, Islam has significantly outpaced Christianity in growth, largely due to the trends in family size; Christians in Western countries tend to have fewer children, resulting in lower birth rates compared to Muslim families, which typically have larger families. Moreover, conversions to Islam through marriage, persuasion, or personal conviction contribute to only about ten percent of its growth, with nearly ninety percent of the growth attributed to higher birth rates.⁸³

The influence of Islam is evident across various sectors in Ghana. In recent years, Muslims have actively pursued a secular agenda aimed at implementing Islamic education systems, leading the Ghanaian government to progressively establish Islamic education units that oversee government-funded schools teaching both English and Arabic. Since Ghana’s independence, the international Muslim community has shown a strong interest in the country, strategically supporting Islamic initiatives through government loans and various aid to Muslim NGOs. They have also contributed to Ghana’s agricultural and health sectors, among others. Notably, for the first time in 1996, the Parliament of Ghana granted two statutory

⁷⁹ John Azumah, “Controversy and Restraint in Ghana,” *Transformation* 17, no. 1 (January 2000): 23–26.

⁸⁰ K. B. C. Onwubiko, *History of West Africa, Book Two* (Accra, Ghana: Africana Publishing, 1985), 199.

⁸¹ Onwubiko, *History of West Africa*, 199.

⁸² Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends, and Possibilities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 40.

⁸³ Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church*, 40.

holidays for Muslims—*Eid-al-Fitr* and *Eid-al-Adha*—highlighting the increasing influence of Islam in the nation.⁸⁴

As of 2002, the Coalition of Muslim Associations (CMA) reported that the Muslim population in Ghana comprised forty-five percent of the nation's 21 million population.⁸⁵ Although this figure was contradicted by the Ghana Statistical Service's census conducted in 2000, the widespread distribution of Muslims across the country—particularly their significant presence and influence in the northern regions—supports the CMA's assertion.⁸⁶ Since the year 2000, Ghana has seen the election of two Muslim vice presidents under the New Patriotic Party. The influence of Islam in Ghana is increasingly evident, demonstrated by the active participation of Muslims in politics and various government ministries. All Ghanaians are expected to contribute to nation-building and engage in political processes. It is important for Christians to consider the implications of their involvement in this context.

In the 2008 parliamentary elections, Muslims secured twenty-one seats, which ultimately enhanced their political influence and provided them with greater capacity to promote their doctrinal beliefs and gain acceptance among the populace.⁸⁷ According to the Pew Research Center's 2010 religious demographics, Christians accounted for 74.9 percent of Ghana's population, while Muslims represented only 15.8 percent. By 2020, the Christian demographic had decreased to 73.6 percent, whereas the Muslim population had grown to 17.5 percent. Projections for 2050 suggest that the Muslim population may significantly rise to 22.3 percent (approximately 11,030,000 individuals), while the Christian population is expected to decline to 67.8 percent (around 34,490,000 individuals).⁸⁸ Despite various efforts by Christian groups to engage with Muslims, Islam continues to expand in Ghana, often leading to tensions during outreach attempts by adherents of both faiths.

The Nature of Islam in Ghana

Zwemer observes that "Islam in its contacts with animism has not been the victor but rather the vanquished."⁸⁹ Over seventy per cent of Muslims are influenced by the folk

⁸⁴ Elom Dovlo and Alfred Ofori Asante, "Reinterpreting the Straight Path: Ghanaian Muslim Converts in Mission to Muslims," *Exchange* 32, no. 3 (July 2003): 216.

⁸⁵ Elom Dovlo and Alfred Ofori Asante, "Reinterpreting the Straight Path: Ghanaian Muslim Converts in Mission to Muslims," *Exchange* 32, no. 3 (July 2003): 216.

⁸⁶ Dovlo and Asante, "Reinterpreting," 32, 216.

⁸⁷ Mohammad Saani Ibrahim, "The Decline of Sufism in West Africa: Some Factors Contributing to the Political and Social Ascendancy of Wahhabist Islam in Northern Ghana" (PhD diss., McGill University, Montreal, October 2011), 2. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

⁸⁸ Pew Research Center, "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections 2010-2050," (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2016), accessed April 8, 2021, http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/ghana#/?affiliations_religion_id=0&affiliations_year=2050®ion_name=All%20Countries&restrictions_year=2016.

⁸⁹ Zwemer, *Influence of Animism*, quoted in Twumasi, "Understanding Folk Islam," 49.

culture of Islam,⁹⁰ and its practices create opportunities for engagement between Christians and Muslims. Many people perceive Muslims as a monolithic group, with a fixed image of Islam deeply ingrained in their minds. However, the private lives of Muslims reveal a reality that goes beyond rigid orthodoxy. Across the globe, Muslims seek a practical form of Islam that addresses their everyday needs—one that transcends mere cognitive guidelines and practices, filling the gaps in their spiritual lives rather than leaving them empty.⁹¹ Musk summed up the practices of folk Islam as follows:

Popular Islam has added a whole life-way of animistic beliefs and practices. The use of the rosary for divining and healing, the use of amulets and talismans, the use of a hair-cuttings and nail-trimmings, the belief and practice of saint-worship, the use of charms, knots, magic, sorcery, the exorcism of demons, the practice of tree and stone worship, cursing and blessing these and many other animistic practices belie the gap between the theological religion and the actual religion.⁹²

Although all Muslims participate in the ritual practices of the five pillars, Ghanaian folk Muslims ascribe different meanings to these general practices and view them as instruments for liberation. The diverse practices reflect the felt needs of folk Muslims. As Musk describes,

The ideal [orthodox] Islam has few resources for dealing with the everyday concerns and nightly dreads of ordinary Muslims; popular Islam, on the contrary, knows an abundance of remedies. Each local community recognizes practitioners who can provide the charms or ceremonies necessary to effect peace of mind and to restore equilibrium. It operates in the realm of human beings with needs and fears that inform and are informed by their outlook on life.⁹³

The fear of the evil eye, the unknown, malevolent spirits, and the powerlessness against the influence of jinn reflect the insecurities felt in the face of an uncertain future among folk Muslims. This struggle is intertwined with a desire for healing and strength to overcome these perceived evil forces, alongside a profound sense of the meaninglessness of life itself. Regardless of the various expressions of Islam, these sentiments are often deeply rooted in the specific African cultural heritage of the community. For instance, Sufi Islam is often referred to as “African Islam” because it has integrated numerous elements of African Traditional Religion (ATR).⁹⁴ Although

⁹⁰ Philip L. Parshall, *Bridges to Islam: Christian Perspective on Folk Islam* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 3.

⁹¹ Parshall, *Bridges to Islam*, 3.

⁹² Parshall, *Bridges to Islam*, 2.

⁹³ Musk, *The Unseen Faces of Islam: Sharing the Gospel with Ordinary Muslims*, 238.

⁹⁴ D. Westerlund and E. Rosander, eds., “African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounter Between Sufis and Islamists” (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997), 1-4.

the Wahhabi form of Islam has gained traction in certain regions of northern Ghana, particularly in Tamale, due to sociopolitical factors, Sufism remains the dominant expression of Islam in Ghana.⁹⁵ Its practices closely resemble those found in folk Islam. Sufism, often described as “Muslim mysticism,”⁹⁶ embodies the pursuit of understanding deeper truths and communion with the divine through intuition and contemplation.⁹⁷

Christian-Muslim Relations

Many Christians tend to have a negative reaction towards Muslims, as seen throughout history. With a significant number of Evangelicals, particularly Pentecostals, now residing in Africa, it is crucial for African Christians to develop effective strategies for winning and discipling Muslims. The Protestant mission movement was inspired by William Carey’s challenge to Protestant churches to take action.⁹⁸ Pentecostals in Ghana need a similar challenge to become aware of the influence of Islam in Ghana and in neighbouring countries like Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire. Christians must not wait until Islam takes over with suicide bombers before they rise up to evangelize Muslims. If the battle must be won and the next generation saved from the dangers of Boko Haram, ISIS, and civil wars (religio-political wars) that others have already faced, then a mission to Muslims must be taken seriously now.⁹⁹ In light of the above, this author aims to raise awareness of Muslims’ influence in Ghana and develop an effective method of engaging Muslims with the gospel.

Jesus instructed the disciples, “Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit” (Jn. 15:1-2). Pentecostalism, along with the Church of Pentecost (CoP), which embodies the local expression of Pentecostalism in Ghana, represents a branch of the vine actively producing fruit in its mission to reach the world. To increase its fruitfulness, the CoP must undergo “pruning” through a deeper understanding of Islam and the refinement of effective mission practices designed to engage Muslims with the gospel.

Despite occasional tensions arising from attempts by Muslims or Christians to convert each other, the two faith communities have largely maintained a cordial relationship in Ghana. Christianity first made its way to the upper northern regions of the country from Burkina Faso in 1906. Meanwhile, Muslim communities in Ghana did not begin

⁹⁵ Mohammad Saani Ibrahim, “The Decline of Sufism in West Africa: Some Factors Contributing to the Political and Social Ascendancy of Wahhabist Islam in Northern Ghana” (PhD diss., McGill University, Montreal, October 2011), 6. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

⁹⁶ Eric Geoffrey, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2010), 2.

⁹⁷ Geoffrey, *Introduction to Sufism*, 2

⁹⁸ Johnstone, Patrick, “Look at the Fields” in Woodberry, *From Seed to Fruit*, 33.

⁹⁹ Dieudonne Komla Nuekpe, *Lived Islam in Africa and Its Missiological Implications for Pentecostals*, (Cumbria: Langham Publishing, 2023), 14.

their interactions with Christian ministry until 1912, facilitated by the Basel Mission, and later in the 1930s through the Assemblies of God Mission.¹⁰⁰ Until 1952, Christians in Ghana did not engage Muslims in fervent evangelism.¹⁰¹ The *da'wah*—Islam's equivalent to Christian evangelism—is carried out with significantly greater effectiveness than Christian missions. As noted, Islamic missions have established schools and mosques throughout the country and provide various welfare services to villages, particularly in the northern regions, using these initiatives as a means to spread the Islamic faith. However, this proactive approach is often overshadowed by negative perceptions, as some view it through a derogatory lens, equating it with terrorism. Such negative attitudes toward Muslims foster mistrust and lead to numerous missed opportunities for evangelism.¹⁰²

The conflict between Muslims and Christians in Ghana is rooted not only in religious differences but also in political, international, and external factors. Countries such as Iran, Libya, and Saudi Arabia, while ostensibly providing financial support to various Muslim organisations, have also introduced their own Islamic political and religious rivalries into the nation. This interference contributes to divisions, as illustrated by the Tijaniyya-Qadariyya controversies in Ghana.¹⁰³

Three mechanisms have been instrumental in sustaining interfaith harmony between Christians and Muslims in Ghana: cultural community, cooperative education, and political alliance.¹⁰⁴ Historically, Ghanaians have embraced an integrated communal lifestyle, which facilitates the establishment of positive relationships with the Muslim population. A significant aspect of this dynamic is the prioritisation of national or tribal identity over religious affiliation, enabling Ghanaians to identify first and foremost as brothers and sisters before considering religious distinctions.¹⁰⁵ This emphasis on shared communal identity manifests prominently in various social contexts, such as markets, agricultural activities, funerals, and traditional celebrations, effectively fostering social cohesion. Notably, the call to prayer from the *muezzin* serves as a unifying auditory cue, rousing both Ghanaian Christians for their morning devotions and Muslims for the *fajr* (dawn prayer), further illustrating the interplay of religious practices within the broader cultural framework.

¹⁰⁰ Yakubu Rahman, "Ghana," in *The African Christian and Islam*, ed. John Azumah and Lamin Sanneh (Castle: Langham Monographs, 2013), 307.

¹⁰¹ Dovlo and Asante, "Reinterpreting," 32, 218.

¹⁰² Nuekpe, "Muslim Christian Encounter in Ghana," *Torch Trinity Center for Islamic Studies Journal* 12, no. 2 (September 2019):195.

¹⁰³ Patrick J. Ryan, "The Mystical Theology of Tijani Sufism and Its Social Significance in West Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30, no. 2 (May 2000): 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Nuekpe, "Muslim Christian Encounter," 12:195.

¹⁰⁵ Yakubu Rahman, "Ghana," in *The African Christian and Islam*, ed. John Azumah and Lamin Sanneh (Castle: Langham Monographs, 2013), 80.

In some families, members may adhere to different faiths; while one may attend the mosque, another might go to a Christian chapel. Ghanaian Christians often host their Muslim neighbours during significant occasions such as Christmas, Easter, weddings, naming ceremonies, and child dedications. Similarly, Muslims graciously invite their Christian counterparts to celebrate festivals like *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*. It is not uncommon to see Muslims attending church during the ordination of a priest within their community. Participation in these events tends to be influenced more by tribal or communal identity than by religious affiliation. Ghana's cooperative education system allows both Muslim and Christian students to attend the same high schools, where they are exposed to African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity, and Islam alike.¹⁰⁶ This also helps reduce religious tensions between Christians and Muslims in Ghana. The Ghanaian practice of including both Muslims and Christians in elite government positions has greatly contributed to the peaceful coexistence of these two groups.¹⁰⁷

Methods for Sharing the Gospel with Folk Muslims

Historically, there have been various approaches to sharing the gospel with Muslims. One such approach is the direct method, which involves a non-confrontational proclamation of the gospel message. This method necessitates an attitude shift that embraces understanding, respect, and empathetic consideration towards Muslims. On the other hand, the indirect approach utilises truths found in the Qur'an as a bridge for dialogue.¹⁰⁸ This strategy encourages the use of these truths to foster a connection between Muslims' understanding and the biblical perspective on the birth of Jesus, his nature and sonship, his crucifixion, death, resurrection, and his anticipated return.

Pentecostals have the ability to identify and address the theological needs of folk Muslims. This includes an understanding of God's self-revelation as the one God and the concept of *tawhīd* (the oneness of God), as well as the similarities and differences in the portrayal of Jesus in both the Qur'an and the Bible. While Muslims do not accept Jesus as the Son of God, they hold him in high esteem as a prophet. Consequently, a deep understanding of the Qur'anic perspective on Jesus, including his birth and life, is essential for meaningful engagement with folk Muslims. Just as many Christians around the world misunderstand the Bible, so too do many Muslims lack clarity about their own Scripture. Although Muslims reject the crucifixion and death of Jesus, there is no consensus among Islamic scholars on these events. This open-ended nature of the discussion presents a valuable opportunity for Pentecostals to connect with folk Muslims and share the core message of the gospel.

¹⁰⁶ Abdul-Hamid Mustapha, "Christian-Muslim Relationship in Ghana: A Model for World Dialogue and Peace," (Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies 1, no. 1 (June 2011): 21-32.

¹⁰⁷ Nuekpe, "Muslim Christian Encounter," 12.

¹⁰⁸ Sam Schlorff, *Missiological Models in Ministry to Muslims* (Upper Darby, PA: Middle East Resources, 2006), 19.

Nonetheless, a theological understanding of Jesus Christ holds significance for folk Muslims only when he is presented in a manner that resonates with their cultural context. Furthermore, given the contentious interpretation of the Spirit in the Qur'an and the limited understanding among Muslims regarding the Holy Spirit and His works, the Holy Spirit can serve as a productive entry point for engaging Muslims with the gospel.

The Qur'an advocates for the recitation of God's revelation (Qur'an 13:39). Proclaiming the truth of God's word audibly to the ears of people has the power to inspire conviction: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). The Word of God, unlike the Qur'an, is not just a revelation from God but is God incarnate (Jn. 1:1). It carries divine authority and has the ability to deeply inspire listeners (Heb. 4:12). For example, Saint Augustine recognised God speaking directly to him through the hearing and reading of the Word of God:

While agonizing in his garden over his moral failure, he heard a child in a nearby house repeat[ing] in a sing-song voice the refrain, *Tolle lege* ("Pick up and read"). There was a book on the letters of Paul on a bench and Augustine picked it up and read, "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh" (Rom. 13:13-14).¹⁰⁹

Augustine's conversion and baptism serve as a powerful example of the transformative potential of the Word of God. Similarly, sharing the unadulterated message of God with folk Muslims can lead to profound conviction, personal transformation, and a commitment to follow Jesus. The Word carries with it the inherent power of God to save. However, because Ghanaian folk Muslims tend to be power-oriented, they require more than just this message to be open to the gospel. Charles H. Kraft emphasises that power-oriented individuals seek compelling evidence of power, rather than relying solely on reasoning or academic knowledge.¹¹⁰ Folks Muslims in Ghana are driven by a desire for power, making power encounters an effective method for sharing the gospel with them. The religious beliefs and practices of Ghanaian Muslims are significantly influenced by religio-magical traditions rooted in African Traditional Religion (ATR). While they observe the five pillars of Islam like all Muslims, Ghanaian Muslims interpret these practices differently, viewing them as pathways to liberation from evil forces. Often grappling

¹⁰⁹ Everett Ferguson, *Church History*, vol. 1, *From Christ to the Pre-Reformation: The Rise and Growth of the Church in Its Cultural, Intellectual, and Political Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 270.

¹¹⁰ Charles H. Kraft, *Power Encounter in Spiritual Warfare* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 2.

with fear and insecurity regarding an uncertain future and malevolent powers, they seek healing, empowerment, and blessings to navigate these challenges. As a form of protection, they worship saints and ancestors and often rely on charms, amulets, and the guidance of *malams*.

The Qur'an encourages Muslims to honour the earlier Scriptures, including the New Testament (5:44-47).¹¹¹ Consequently, the miraculous works in the life of Jesus serve as a pathway for folk Muslims to gain an understanding of salvation through Him. Pentecostal practices such as healing, deliverance, prayer, and fasting—rooted in biblical teachings—can address the experiential needs of folk Muslims. In a post-pandemic context, power encounters focused on healing and deliverance may provide an effective means to share the gospel with folk Muslims, especially given their ongoing pursuit of healing.

Pentecostals in Ghana can undoubtedly utilise the gifts of the Holy Spirit and power encounters to share the gospel with folk Muslims. These gifts are not solely controlled by individuals to wield at their discretion; rather, they manifest as God sovereignly permits, serving to edify the church and glorify Him. While power encounters remain a highly effective method for evangelising Muslims, Christians must continually depend on the written Word of God to cultivate a deeper relationship with Him. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that folk Muslims are sustained and delivered from evil.

Grace and love are key avenues for sharing the gospel with Ghanaian folk Muslims. Biblical truth must be conveyed with grace and love, founded upon the Scriptures:

But in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame. (1 Pet. 3:15-16).

Sharing the gospel with grace and truth entails “being all things to all men.” This means engaging with the culture of folk Muslims, dining with them (Gal 2:11-16), honouring them (1 Pet 2:17), considering them better than oneself (Phil 2:3), serving them as Christ served the world (Gal 5:13), and taking no offence at them (1 Cor 10:32). Becoming all things to folk Muslims (1 Cor 9:22) does not suggest abandoning the core values of the gospel; rather, it places a responsibility on the proclaimer of the gospel to willingly enter into the lives and circumstances of others. In the context of folk Muslims in Ghana, particularly those from the northern regions, this suggests that

¹¹¹ David W. Shenk, *Journeys of the Muslim Nation and the Christian Church: Exploring the Mission of Two Communities* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2003), 107.

Pentecostals from the south who aim to engage with them should consider exchanging a toothbrush for a chewing stick, a Kente cloth for a northern smock, and Coca-Cola for kola nuts—elements that are integral to the cultural identity of folk Muslims.¹¹² Furthermore, it may involve observing fasting and prayer during the month of Ramadan to seek divine intervention for spiritual revival, transforming everyday encounters into powerful experiences.

The exemplary lifestyle of the witness is essential for effectively sharing the gospel with folk Muslims. The character of the gospel presenter is as significant as the message they present. Therefore, embodying a Christlike character is crucial for those who wish to evangelise among folk Muslims. Christians must clearly demonstrate that they possess the light that dispels darkness and corruption in the world. When folk Muslims observe Christians leading transparent lives in politics, church, business, and family, they will be drawn to the Jesus that Christians profess.

Conclusion

This research indicates that Ghanaian Muslims possess distinct characteristics shaped by the local cultural context. They represent a group of non-orthodox Muslims who remain closely connected to their original beliefs rooted in African Traditional Religion (ATR), thus identifying as folk Muslims. The shared spiritual and cultural heritage with Ghanaian Christians, particularly Pentecostals, serves as a foundation for Christians to engage in gospel sharing with Ghanaian Muslims. Culturally and politically, these two communities coexist in harmony and peace, supported by their collective cultural framework, cooperative education initiatives, and an integrative political alliance that includes followers of both faiths. However, tensions can arise when Christians attempt to proselytise Muslims, using traditional methods of polemic evangelism.

This work has contributed to the identification of the existential, experiential, and theological needs of folk Muslims, illuminating the convergences and divergences in a Christological context. It demonstrates the potential bridges that Pentecostals can utilise to engage folk Muslims with the gospel in a respectful and non-confrontational manner, fostering peaceful coexistence between these two missionary faiths.

¹¹² Dretke, *Christian Approach*, 148; Kente cloth is a special textile made from hand-woven strips of silk and cotton. Historically, it was used in the south, particularly in the Ashanti region of Ghana, during funerals and various festivals. The smock is a garment worn by both men and women in Ghana, especially in the northern region. The kola nut is the fruit of the kola tree and is primarily used in traditional and cultural ceremonies among those in the northern region. Chewing sticks were traditionally employed to remove plaque from accessible areas of the teeth before toothbrushes became common in the cities of Ghana.

Crucially, the findings indicate that both direct and indirect confrontational approaches are generally ineffective in reaching folk Muslims. Instead, employing conversational and apologetic methodologies that prioritise the development of friendships tends to yield more favourable outcomes in gospel sharing.

Meeting the existential needs of folk Muslims presents a valuable opportunity to share the gospel with them. Christians should identify the loving services they can offer to folk Muslims and take practical steps to address their needs. Given that Ghanaian folk Muslims have a strong orientation towards power, engaging them through power encounters that fulfil their experiential needs is essential. The influence of darkness is prevalent in their worldview; thus, this work elucidates how power encounters can effectively reach folk Muslims within the Ghanaian context. However, it is important to note that power encounters should serve as a starting point for engaging folk Muslims with the gospel; they are not the ultimate goal but rather a means to achieve it.

This research sought to identify a specific approach for engaging folk Muslims in Ghana with the gospel. However, it is essential to understand that proclamation should not be regarded merely as an act of humans but as the work of the Holy Spirit, who leads individuals to conviction and conversion through God's grace. The engagement of Christians with Muslims serves as a means of proclaiming the gospel and demonstrating the true worth and nature of Jesus. While proclamation is a human endeavour, conviction and the resulting conversion to Christianity are ultimately acts of God. I, therefore, cannot sincerely propose a single approach as the definitive method for winning Ghanaian Muslims to Christ. The ways of God are distinct from human ways (Isa 55:8), and the most effective strategy for reaching one individual may differ from another due to various factors, such as specific cultural differences, the spiritual maturity of both Muslims and Christians and their respective knowledge of the Qur'an and the Bible. Ultimately, the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit is what preserves folk Muslims in their relationship with Jesus, regardless of whether they experience healing, deliverance, or face material hardships.

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An Evaluation of the Impact of Disciple-Making on the Work Ethic of Ghanaian Christians: A Case Study of The Church of Pentecost - Ghana

Samuel Kodzo Gakpetor

Abstract

This study aimed to assess the extent to which the disciple-making processes within Ghanaian churches have contributed to the development of a positive work ethic among their members, specifically focusing on The Church of Pentecost, Ghana. Through a comprehensive review of literature and empirical data, the research revealed that many Christians and churches experience a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, a lack of intentional discipleship, and the negative influence of certain cultural traits in Ghana, among other factors. The findings indicate that a cohesive and holistic disciple-making strategy – which encompasses all aspects of life – is essential to address these challenges. Within The Church of Pentecost, the Workers' Guilds serve as a valuable platform to equip members with a positive work ethic, ultimately aiming to transform the workplace.

Keywords: Disciple-Making, Work Ethic, Work Ethics, Discipleship, Theology of Work.

How to cite this article: Gakpetor, Samuel Kodzo. "An Evaluation of the Impact of Disciple-Making on the Work Ethic of Ghanaian Christians: A Case Study of The Church of Pentecost - Ghana." *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 5, no. 2 (2025): 36-46.

Introduction, Background and Motivation

This study aimed to assess the extent to which the disciple-making process within Ghanaian Churches has contributed to transforming the lives of their members, particularly in terms of their positive work ethic in the marketplace, with a specific focus on The Church of Pentecost, Ghana (CoP). The motivation for this research stemmed from a desire to understand and address the apparent disconnect between the high Christian population and the perceived limited impact on society, particularly in the workplace. It sought to evaluate the disciple-making process to determine whether it could account for this incongruence. This inquiry was further motivated by the May Day speech delivered by the former President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo, on May 1, 2017, during the Workers' Day celebrations in Accra, where he expressed concern about the attitude of the Ghanaian public worker:

... we arrive at work late and then spend the first hour in prayer; we are clock-watchers and leave in the middle of critical work because it is the official closing time. Everything comes to a stop when it rains, and we seem to expect the rest of the world also to stop.... We have no respect for the hours set aside for work...we pray, we eat, and we visit during working hours. We spend hours chatting on the telephone when customers are waiting to be served, thereby increasing our labour costs. We take a week off for every funeral. And then we wonder why we are not competitive. There is the petty stealing of paper, envelopes, tea, milk and other equipment. There is the reckless use of office vehicles. Employees show no inclination to protecting the things that are in the offices and factories and extreme reluctance to stand up for what we know to be right in our workplaces in general.¹¹³

The attitudes highlighted by the president—such as tardiness, petty theft, poor customer service, and a disregard for time—do not accurately reflect the demeanour of Christians who have undergone proper discipleship. These traits, echoed in various forms by different public officials, are not representative of Christians, who are called to be the “salt of the earth and light of the world” (Matt. 5:13–16). Consequently, the aim of this study is to examine and clarify the apparent disconnect between the large Christian population and its seemingly minimal influence on society, particularly in the workplace. Could the issue stem from a lack of intentional disciple-making? The concept of work ethic may be used to validate this, particularly in light of complaints regarding the poor work ethic observed among Ghanaians. Both religion and culture significantly influence key economic factors, including attitudes toward work and productivity, saving and investment practices, entrepreneurship, and governance.¹¹⁴ Specifically, Christianity affects development in three crucial areas: its impact on culture, its influence on mental models, and its effect on work ethic.¹¹⁵

The study was structured into seven chapters. Chapter one provided a comprehensive overview of the research, highlighting the necessity of the study and outlining the methodology employed. It also presented the background of the research, formulated the research questions, delineated the purpose of the study, and detailed the design and methodology. Chapter two offered a review of the field of practical theology, which was relatively new to the researcher. This chapter established practical theology as a valid and credible theological discipline, similar to other fields. It became evident

¹¹³ Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, “May Day Celebration Speech” (speech, Accra, Ghana, May 1, 2017), accessed February, 20, 2020, www.presidency.gov.gh/index.php.

¹¹⁴ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 1930); Stephen Adei, “Religion, Culture and Development,” in *Religion and Government in Africa: A Christian Response*, ed. Delanyo Adadevoh, 249-267 (Accra: ILF Publishers, 2009).

¹¹⁵ Stephen Adei, “The Impact of Christianity on National Development with Special Reference to the Role of Pentecostalism” (presentation, Christ Apostolic Church International, Second Public Anim Memorial Lectures, Accra, Ghana, 2015).

that practical theology plays an essential role in the effective dissemination of the Gospel throughout Africa.

Chapter three, titled “Biblical and Contemporary Foundations of Disciple-Making,” aimed to outline the process of disciple-making within the church. The chapter explored the definitions, significance, and characteristics of both disciples and disciple-making churches, as well as the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of any disciple-making system. Additionally, it provided historical evidence of the church’s involvement in disciple-making in Ghana, specifically highlighting the efforts of the Methodist Church and the Assemblies of God Church. The Church of Pentecost served as the central case study, detailing its humble beginnings, the origins of its disciple-making initiatives, and the various structures, manuals, personnel, and training programs established to enhance disciple-making efforts. The chapter suggested that, as a key institution providing a prophetic voice in a nation where over 70% of the population identifies as Christian, the church could significantly impact its sphere of influence if Christians are effectively disciplined within the local assembly.

In chapter four, the research delved into the theology of work, work ethic, and the various dimensions of work ethics, as well as the significance of these constructs for Africa. The chapter highlighted the challenges and contributing factors associated with them. Drawing on literature evidence from the Ghanaian context, it was noted that both work ethic and work ethics in Ghana do not align with the strong Christian profession found within the community. This discrepancy is largely attributed to a lack of effective disciple-making efforts within the churches. Consequently, there exists a stark contrast between the highly professed Christian faith and the deeply lacking Christian expression of that faith in Ghana.

In chapter five, a comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions is presented. Utilising Atlas.ti for data analysis, the chapter systematically categorises responses derived from a rigorous coding process. The interview questions explored several critical themes, including participants’ interpretations of disciple-making, the defining characteristics of a disciple, the attributes of a disciple-making church, and concepts surrounding work ethic. Specific focus areas included the nuances of Ghanaian work ethic, distinctions between Christian and secular work ethics, and the influence of Ghanaian culture on work ethic perceptions. Additionally, the chapter examines various factors that affect work ethic, the role of the church in shaping work ethic, and the contributions of disciple-making to work ethic development. The analysis also delves into the rationale for incorporating lessons on work ethic into discipleship curricula, alongside recommendations for specific content to be included in church discipleship manuals. The twelve thematic areas served as a framework for analysing the generated data. The individual perspectives were integrated to form a cohesive

understanding of both similarities and differences, along with their implications for work ethic and the state of disciple-making in shaping that ethic. Participants generally concurred that the Ghanaian work ethic is lacking, attributing this to cultural influences, technological advancements, and the role of the church. However, they expressed confidence in the church's disciple-making initiatives as a means to transform the negative work ethic into a positive one. These insights provided the foundation for the discussions and observations presented by the researcher, which are elaborated upon in chapter six.

In chapter six, the data collected in relation to the literature reviewed in chapters three and four were analysed. The findings indicated that the work ethic among Ghanaians is low despite a significant Christian population. The chapter identified several contributing factors, including the dichotomous views many Christians hold regarding sacred and secular matters, a lack of intentional discipleship within the churches, and the negative influence of certain aspects of Ghanaian culture. Additional factors included the churches' inadequate focus on transformation, poor remuneration for workers, and the absence of effective monitoring structures in the workplace. A pressing concern highlighted was the potential church attendance fatigue experienced by many members of The Church of Pentecost, attributed to an overload of activities occurring almost every day of the week. It was noted that leadership is actively working to limit activities and designate some days for reflection on teachings received, allowing members to engage more meaningfully with their spheres of influence. Chapter seven provided a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for the entire study.

Methodological Baselines

The research conducted was qualitative in nature. In the study, interviews were carried out with five (5) Presiding Elders and five (5) discipleship group leaders from five (5) Pentecost International Worship Centres (PIWCs) in Ghana. The PIWCs serve as English-speaking and cross-cultural ministries of the Church of Pentecost, primarily established for individuals of non-Ghanaian cultural backgrounds, as well as for Ghanaians who prefer to worship in a multicultural environment. Currently, there are forty-three (43) PIWCs across Ghana. The selected centres were from the Greater Accra Region (PIWC Sakumono and PIWC Accra), Ashanti Region (PIWC New Tafo and PIWC Asokwa), and Eastern Region (PIWC Koforidua). These congregations were chosen for several reasons, including their English-speaking nature, which facilitated the interview process, the fact that most members belong to the working class in both public and private sectors, the effectiveness of their disciple-making processes due to abundant human resources, and the presence of resident pastors, unlike many other local assemblies.

The sampling procedure employed was purposeful sampling, which allowed the researcher to select participants based on predefined characteristics pertinent to the study. This method enabled the researcher to identify individuals who could provide the most relevant and insightful responses to the research questions, thereby fulfilling the objectives of the interviews. A total of five Christian leaders in Ghana were selected through this procedure, contributing to a broader perspective on the research topic. In total, the research involved fifteen (15) interviewees. Furthermore, three focus groups were convened at PIWC Asokwa to gather the experiences and opinions of Christian workers from the public sector, private sector, and entrepreneurial backgrounds concerning specific issues closely related to the research questions. The value of conducting focus groups lies in their capacity to deliver in-depth insights within a constrained timeframe, fostering an environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings on matters of mutual interest.¹¹⁶

Research Findings

In the context of this research, work ethic is defined as the virtues or moral principles related to hard work and diligence.¹¹⁷ Miller, Woehr, and Hudspeth describe work ethic as encompassing a spectrum of beliefs and attitudes that are reflected in workplace behaviours.¹¹⁸ Consequently, work ethic can be viewed as a collection of values, principles, attitudes, and behaviours that arise from individual beliefs, motivating and guiding the execution of work tasks. While some individuals may exhibit a work ethic that is not explicitly Christian, it can still act as a motivating force.¹¹⁹ Thus, a strong work ethic is a fundamental component of an individual's personal values, rooted in the belief in the intrinsic value of work, rather than merely its rewards. Although it is primarily secular in nature, it may occasionally have its origins in religious principles, as exemplified by the Protestant work ethic, which emphasises hard work and frugality as expressions of one's faith.

The research distinguishes between "work ethic" and "work ethics." Work ethic refers to the belief that one should diligently work beyond minimum expectations, striving for excellence in all aspects of labour. In contrast, work ethics pertain to the "ethics of

¹¹⁶ Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne E. Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 11th ed. (Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2015), 283.

¹¹⁷ Ramona Pučėtaitė and Anna-Maija Lämsä, "Developing Organizational Trust through Advancement of Employees' Work Ethic in a Post-Socialist Context," *Journal of Business Ethics* 82, no. 2 (2008): 325-337, cited in Joseph Ankamah-Lomotey, *Ghanaian Work Ethic under the Microscope: A Comparison of Ghanaian Work Ethic in American Multinational Companies and Ghanaian Companies in Ghana* (Saarbrücken: Academic Publishing, 2017), 20.

¹¹⁸ David J. Miller, Debrah J. Woehr, and Natasha Hudspeth, "The Meaning and Measurement of Work Ethic: Construction and Initial Validation of a Multidimensional Inventory," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 60, no. 3 (2002): 5.

¹¹⁹ Louise Kretzschmar, "Religious and Secular Moral Value Systems for Professional and Business Ethics," in *Ethics for Accountants and Auditors*, ed. Sophie Wanjogu et al. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

the workplace” and are generally understood today as a set of moral standards applicable to various trades, professions, or job classifications.¹²⁰ Thus, work ethic is primarily intrinsic, while work ethics are extrinsic. For example, an individual with a strong work ethic would maintain a positive attitude regardless of whether the work environment has established ethical codes.

Thus, a person with a strong work ethic exemplifies genuine work ethics, while someone who merely adheres to work ethics may not truly possess a strong work ethic; they might simply be following organisational rules. Individuals who exhibit work ethics without a foundational work ethic often require close supervision to perform at their best. A solid understanding of the theology of work can instil in Christians a robust work ethic, as they recognise their work as a calling—an opportunity to fulfil God’s Kingdom purpose. Such individuals believe that their work contributes to an eternal inheritance by serving Christ and their neighbours through their daily tasks (Col. 3:23–24). With this belief, they are likely to show diligence, honesty, integrity, and excellence, regardless of whether anyone is observing them.

The work ethic observed in Ghanaian workplaces has, unfortunately, not been exemplary, leading to criticism from several prominent figures at various levels.¹²¹ Research indicates that the Ghanaian work ethic is marked by issues such as tardiness, a lack of ownership over tasks, insufficient diligence, the misappropriation of working hours, and the misuse of workplace resources for personal purposes without permission. Additionally, there tends to be a tendency to make excuses for avoiding work, along with a concerning lack of integrity and honesty, among other challenges. These findings pose a significant challenge to the Christian community in Ghana, a country with a majority of its population identifying as Christian. It appears that Christians have not sufficiently embodied a positive work ethic that could effectively permeate and transform the workplace, reflecting the kingdom values they are taught in church.

The empirical part of the research aligned well with the literature. Overall, all interviewees indicated that the work ethic among Ghanaians is relatively low, despite the country’s significant Christian population. Several factors were identified as contributing to this perception, including the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular that many Christians uphold, the lack of intentional discipleship within the churches, and the adverse effects of certain cultural aspects in Ghana. Additional

¹²⁰ CAPS Module 2, “Describe Work Ethics,” Temple University, accessed March 24, 2025, <https://education.temple.edu/sites/education/files/documents/02CAPS.pdf>.

¹²¹ A. Abongo, “Ghana: Minister Demands New Work Ethic from GWCL Workers,” AllAfrica, October 19, 2009, <https://allafrica.com/stories/200910190076.html>; Emmanuel Kwesi Aning, “An Overview of the Ghana Police Service,” *Journal of Security Sector Management* 4, no. 2 (2006): 1-37; S.N. Woode, *Values Standards and Practices in Ghanaian Organisational Life* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2012).

contributing factors include insufficient focus from churches on personal transformation, inadequate compensation, and the absence of effective monitoring structures in the workplace.

The interviews indicated that churches in Ghana have influenced work ethic in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side, it was observed that some churches encouraged their members to embody Christ-like principles in their workplaces and acknowledged and rewarded those who excelled professionally. Conversely, the interviews also revealed that certain churches contributed to a decline in Christian standards by overloading their members with numerous programs and activities on holidays, as well as frequent prayer meetings almost every day. Some of their weekday activities take place at various times, prompting many members to leave work before the official closing time to attend or to stop by briefly before reporting late. Furthermore, the prosperity gospel is believed to have negatively influenced work ethic, as it promises wealth without stressing the importance of diligence and excellence in one's efforts. A notable drawback of the churches' impact on the work ethic in Ghana is their insufficient focus on cultivating genuine discipleship.

Evaluating the Disciple-making in The Church of Pentecost

The research assessed the disciple-making system of the CoP, and the following observations were made:

- a) **Integrated Discipleship Curriculum:** It has been noted that the current manual of the CoP is organised around the annual themes, which have served the church effectively. However, a significant challenge arises in that individuals who join the church at a later date may miss out on the material that has already been studied. The study highlights the necessity for the CoP, aligning with standard disciple-making practices, to develop a comprehensive, sequential manual that is interconnected with the primary themes of discipleship and accessible to all members of the CoP.
- b) **Defining the Portrait of a Disciple:** One of the essential characteristics of a disciple-making church is its provision of a clear definition and representation of a disciple. This clarity ensures that everyone uses a common and accurate framework to assess who qualifies as a disciple. The study revealed that the CoP currently lacks this definition and will need to establish one to improve its effectiveness in disciple-making.
- c) **Synchronisation of Disciple-making Structures:** The research revealed that the disciple-making systems within the CoP operate independently, without coordination with other groups. Additionally, all discipleship groups are open,

allowing new members to join at any time. The key challenge arising from this openness is that when new members join the group, it may impact the group's intimacy. Existing members may hesitate to share personal issues due to uncertainties regarding the confidentiality of new participants. To address this, the CoP should synchronise all disciple-making groups, including Home Cells, Bible Study Groups, New Converts, and Ministries.

- d) **Intentional Development of Disciple-making Leaders:** The research highlighted that effective training for Discipleship Group leaders poses a challenge. It noted that the current system of weekly and monthly training sessions is not yielding satisfactory results. Issues such as a lack of coordination, improper prioritisation, and work overload have contributed to low commitment among some ministers and lay leaders, which hampers the effectiveness of preparatory classes and participation from certain leaders. Additionally, there is a significant absence of a leadership manual for training disciple-makers. This gap in the disciple-making process within the CoP needs to be addressed through the development of a comprehensive training plan for those involved in disciple-making.
- e) **The Place of The Pentecost Workers Guilds (PEWG):** The PEWG is one of the ministries of the church under Vision 2023, the CoP's five-year vision document from 2018-2023.¹²² The purpose of forming the Workers Guilds is to mobilise and unite church members from various professional backgrounds, creating a platform for training and mentoring. This initiative aims to equip members to reform their respective workplaces with the values and principles of the Kingdom of God while performing their duties with professionalism and diligence. Research has shown that the rationale behind the PEWG's formation provides an excellent framework for the Church of Pentecost to instil a positive work ethic in its members, ultimately transforming the workplace.

Recommendations

To ensure that disciple-making in the church positively affects the work ethic of Christians in Ghana, particularly within The Church of Pentecost, the following recommendations were made based on the research:

- a) To position disciple-making as a core ministry of the Church, it is essential to build all aspects of ministry to revolve around this objective. This integration requires a cohesive framework where personal devotions, pulpit ministry, discipleship cohorts, and age-specific ministries operate in a synchronised manner. Such alignment will enhance the Church's overall effectiveness in fostering spiritual growth and community.

¹²² The Church of Pentecost, *Pentecost Workers Guild Document* (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2019).

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- b) To integrate and synchronise all ministries – Children, Youth, Women, and Men – particularly in the area of curriculum development. This approach will facilitate a long-term vision that takes into account the needs of each group in relation to the others, with each preceding group laying the groundwork for the subsequent one.
 - c) To create space for members to engage with other spheres of their lives, it is essential to recognise that while our understanding of ecclesiology has expanded to acknowledge the Church as both ‘gathered’ and ‘scattered,’ this has not been fully integrated into our church activities. Although the doctrinal aspects of our ecclesiology are evolving, this change has yet to translate into practical applications within our church life. Currently, as indicated by the data, many church activities are centred solely on the church premises, which limits opportunities for members to attend to other facets of their lives and ministries.
 - d) To intentionally mentor and disciple future disciple-makers with a well-structured curriculum designed to equip them with essential disciple-making skills. The current preparatory class model lacks effectiveness and intentionality in their training.
 - e) To intentionally enhance the family life ministry as a centre for equipping the next generation in purposeful discipleship. This may involve empowering parents to serve as conduits of blessings for their children and providing families with devotional materials that encompass all aspects of their lives, suitable for use by the entire family.
 - f) To review and refocus the Pentecost Workers Guilds, providing it with a dedicated space within the local church for the intentional equipping of Christian workers with Kingdom values to effect change in the workplace. A manual could be developed for their meetings as part of the disciple-making ministry. For example, the various guilds could come together once a month during the Discipleship Group meeting at the church to discuss the challenges they face in being ‘salt and light’ in their communities.
 - g) To establish a Christian Education Unit for the Church of Pentecost, it is essential to recognise that intentional disciple-making churches around the world often have dedicated units for full-time staff who are wholly committed to driving the disciple-making vision. This demonstrates a strong commitment to the church’s mission. Without such a unit, the responsible team may struggle to devote their full attention to the demands of this core ministry.
 - h) To review the curriculum of the Pentecost School of Theology and Mission (PSTM) to emphasise intentional disciple-making and a theology of work as essential

components in the training of ministers. This focus will equip them to effectively lead the disciple-making vision when they are assigned to congregations. Additionally, PSTM might consider integrating the training of church officers and operating as a “local church-based seminary” throughout the year, with facilitators available at the district level. This approach would promote continuous leadership development on a weekly or monthly basis at locations convenient for church workers.

Conclusion

This research aimed to assess the impact of discipleship on the work ethic of Ghanaian Christians. The findings indicated that, despite a significant Christian population, the work ethic among Ghanaians remains low. Several contributing factors were identified, including the dichotomous perception many Christians hold regarding attitudes toward sacred versus secular matters, the lack of intentional discipleship practices within churches, and the adverse effects of certain aspects of Ghanaian culture. There is a noticeable lack of focus on transformation within churches, alongside issues such as inadequate remuneration and the absence of effective monitoring structures in the workplace. This thesis suggests that if churches were to prioritise intentional discipleship, meaningful change could occur. For those in the Church of Pentecost who are somewhat committed, the Pentecost Workers Guild offers a promising opportunity to enhance members’ work ethic and drive transformation in the workplace.

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Sexual Misconduct Suspension: The Impact of Guilt on Members of the Church of Pentecost, Ghana

Philip Osei-Korsah

Abstract

The research involved 13 respondents and examined the impact of guilt resulting from suspensions related to sexual misconduct among church members, specifically focusing on The Church of Pentecost (CoP) in Axim. The church practices disciplining members by suspending those found guilty of sexual misconduct, including premarital and extramarital relationships. The study explored the conditions affecting members who had been suspended for such behaviour. Subjective evidence was gathered through in-depth interviews with respondents who were members of The Church of Pentecost in Axim and had experienced suspension for sexual misconduct. A hermeneutical phenomenological approach was adopted for this qualitative study. Existing studies on sexual misconduct and church discipline reveal varying prevalence rates within the church. Notably, The Church of Pentecost in Axim has a suspension prevalence rate of 4% attributed to sexual misconduct. A significant emotional experience reported by those who have been suspended is guilt, a conclusion further supported by scriptural evidence. However, research specifically addressing guilt among suspended church members remains limited. The findings indicate that suspending individuals for sexual misconduct serves as a disciplinary measure employed by the church to confront sexual sin. This study will contribute to the existing literature on the effects of guilt among suspended members and offer recommendations for appropriate pastoral care.

Keywords: Sexual misconduct, suspension, discipline, guilt, healing.

How to cite this article: Osei-Korsah, Philip. "Sexual Misconduct Suspension: The Impact of Guilt on Members of the Church of Pentecost, Ghana." *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 5, no. 2 (2025): 47-54.

Introduction

Church discipline for sexual misconduct has been extensively studied over the past few decades, revealing significant variances in prevalence rates across different congregations. However, most studies have inadequately addressed the psychological impact of guilt on individuals subjected to disciplinary actions. An unpublished report from the office of The Church of Pentecost in Axim indicates that 4% of its members are currently under suspension due to sexual misconduct. Within the context of The Church of Pentecost, suspension entails the temporary cessation of an individual's involvement in leadership functions and church-related activities as a consequence of violations of church doctrines, including sexual immorality. This form of public disciplinary action aims to foster an environment of repentance and

introspection, distinguishing the Church of Pentecost's approach from other denominations that may opt for more private resolutions to similar issues.

The church community is tasked with addressing the issue of sin through various disciplinary measures, including suspension, which is subsequently accompanied by pastoral care aimed at reformation and healing. Observations from ecclesiastical practices in Ghana suggest that disciplinary actions may result in individuals feeling profoundly forsaken in their Christian faith. Suspended congregants have reported feelings of neglect; however, church leadership contends that the primary objective of suspension is to effect correction, thereby safeguarding the moral integrity of the entire congregation. Thus, discipline should not be seen as punitive retribution for offences but rather as a means to promote personal accountability, encourage healing, and ultimately restore individuals to a state of fellowship and renewed commitment within the Christian faith.

Furthermore, the leadership of The Church of Pentecost contends that suspension is consistent with biblical standards of discipline and restoration, as outlined in Gal. 6:1. However, critics argue that the lack of adequate social support increases emotional distress and fosters feelings of isolation among suspended members. Importantly, there is a notable absence of empirical research examining the psychological consequences of guilt on individuals facing suspension due to sexual misconduct, despite such disciplinary actions being a core component of church practice. This study advocates for the development of a pastoral care counselling framework aimed at facilitating emotional healing for those affected and promoting their successful reintegration into the church community.

In this study, the researcher sought to engage closely with participants who are members of The Church of Pentecost in Axim, gathering subjective evidence through interviews. The study specifically (1) examined the impact of guilt arising from the sexual misconduct suspension on the suspended member of The Church of Pentecost in Axim, (2) explored the activities within the church community that facilitate healing for the suspended member, and (3) investigated the roles and actions of pastors in providing supportive or crisis care to the suspended member within The Church of Pentecost, Ghana.

Methodology

The study employs an interpretive qualitative framework, utilising primary data gathered from semi-structured in-depth interviews. These interviews, lasting between 45 and 60 minutes, were conducted with 13 suspended members of the CoP. This qualitative methodology is supported by scholars advocating for an inductive approach that prioritises personal significance and underscores the necessity of

faithfully capturing the complexities inherent in the phenomenon under investigation.¹²³ A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives based on their leadership roles and experiences with suspension.

The research focused on non-numerical data gathered from members of The Church of Pentecost in Axim, specifically examining the impact of guilt felt by individuals following their suspension for sexual misconduct. Interview responses were systematically transcribed and analysed through thematic content analysis, revealing consistent emotional, social, and spiritual patterns among the suspended members.

To enhance the validity of participant narratives, we cross-referenced their accounts with pastoral records and church circulars, ensuring alignment with the documented disciplinary procedures. This methodological triangulation allowed for a comprehensive examination of the primary themes and concerns articulated by the suspended individuals, highlighting the multifaceted nature of their experiences.

Research Findings

The findings of the research are summarised as follows:

a) The Impact of Guilt from the Sexual Misconduct Suspension on the Individual Suspended Member

The study revealed that suspensions for sexual misconduct serve as a disciplinary measure implemented by the church to mitigate instances of sexual immorality. In an effort to uphold the moral standards of its congregation, the church has established programmes designed to address and reduce inappropriate behaviours, including sexual misconduct. It was observed that individuals occupying leadership positions – such as worship leaders or those responsible for Scripture readings during services – are prohibited from performing these roles during the suspension period. This approach highlights the church’s commitment to maintaining ethical leadership and accountability among its members.

b) Impact of Sexual Misconduct Suspension

The study highlighted the effects of sexual misconduct suspension on the victims. Specifically, it was clear that the suspension elicited emotional responses, including feelings of sadness and shock at the time of the pronouncement. These feelings of shock may stem from the manner in which the suspension announcements are

¹²³ John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008).

communicated. The findings indicated that those who were suspended experienced a variety of emotional reactions. Victims reported feelings of shame, guilt, sadness, and anger upon hearing the announcements.

The findings indicate that suspensions resulting from sexual misconduct significantly impact an individual's spiritual well-being and relationship with God. Following such suspensions, a notable trend emerges among congregation members to distance themselves from the individuals involved, often labelling them as sinners. Participants reported that after the suspension announcement, many church members began to withdraw social support, leading to outright neglect, even among former close associates. This social ostracism has precipitated profound feelings of isolation in the victims, creating a sense of disownment from the church community.

The research underscores the crucial role of social support in facilitating the reintegration of individuals suspended for sexual misconduct back into the church community. While participants generally reported a lack of substantial support, it was indicated that a handful of church leaders and, in some instances, pastors, provided the necessary assistance. This support network has been identified as a vital component in the reconciliation process, enabling affected individuals to reconnect with the broader societal context. According to the findings, pastoral care facilitates the reintegration of victims into the church both during and after their suspension. This care is driven by compassion, kindness, and mercy towards ill and suffering churchgoers, as well as the broader community. Pastoral care is essential because those who have experienced sexual misconduct are believed to have endured moral harm.

Conclusion

In the historical context of missionary endeavours in Ghana, several churches implemented sexual misconduct suspension as a disciplinary mechanism. This form of suspension functioned as a critical instrument for the early Pentecostal churches in safeguarding the integrity and sanctity of their congregational communities. Its deterrent effect was substantial, promoting an environment conducive to repentance and restoration, while also ensuring the preservation of church unity and social cohesion. Although criticisms have arisen regarding the severity of this approach, it can be argued that such measures were indispensable. Given the myriad challenges the nascent churches encountered in establishing themselves as foundational bastions of strength and faith within their communities, sexual misconduct suspension was seen as a necessary corrective to uphold moral standards and community integrity. The early Christian communities confronted numerous challenges in their efforts to uphold the sanctity and stability of their congregations. One of the disciplinary measures employed to safeguard these communities against disruptive and

detrimental behaviours was the suspension for sexual misconduct. This form of discipline entailed a temporary or permanent revocation of a leadership position or the ability to participate in church worship activities. Suspension was chiefly applied to transgressions such as adultery, theft, and slander, which were perceived to jeopardise the moral and spiritual integrity of the church body.

The early Pentecostal churches in Ghana were fundamentally structured around a collective adherence to faith and the teachings of Jesus Christ. To maintain communal integrity, leaders would expel members whose behaviour disrupted the harmony or contradicted doctrinal principles. The practice of suspending individuals for sexual misconduct served to uphold the unity and moral standards of the congregation, ensuring that all members were accountable to the same ethical guidelines. Additionally, these churches prioritised the preservation of their religious traditions and the sanctity of the church community. Implementing suspensions for moral infractions was considered necessary to safeguard the church's integrity and protect it from the potential corruption posed by unrepentant or immoral individuals. The implementation of suspension due to sexual misconduct served as a significant deterrent for other members who might have contemplated similar misconduct. By publicly addressing the transgressions of offenders, the church aimed to instil a sense of accountability and fear regarding the repercussions of immoral actions. While enforcing accountability was critical, early Pentecostal church doctrine also emphasised the principles of repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. The suspension was perceived as a juncture for offenders to engage in introspection regarding their behaviour and seek divine forgiveness. In certain instances, individuals demonstrating authentic remorse and a commitment to restitution were subsequently reintegrated into the community through restorative practices.

The Church of Pentecost, one of the largest churches in Ghana, is known for its strict adherence to moral standards and beliefs without compromise. One of the church's more controversial practices is the suspension of members for sexual misconduct; this approach has faced criticism as being outdated. However, supporters argue that it serves as a deterrent for believers and helps to maintain moral integrity. As a religious organisation, The Church of Pentecost upholds its values for several reasons, which can be traced back to the core principles of Christianity, as well as the church's mission and vision.

Foremost, The Church of Pentecost acknowledges the critical role that moral frameworks and belief systems play in the spiritual maturation and development of its congregants. As a Christian institution, it prioritises biblical teachings and the principles of righteousness and holiness, which are essential for the ongoing sanctification of believers, aligning them more closely with Christ's likeness. Furthermore, The Church of Pentecost endorses its moral and ethical standards as a

guiding compass for its members. It asserts that adherence to the Word of God is a fundamental obligation for Christians and that through the exhibition of virtuous conduct, believers effectively testify to their faith and engage in meaningful evangelistic efforts. Additionally, the preservation of its moral and doctrinal stances is crucial for maintaining the church's spiritual heritage and identity. As a distinct Pentecostal denomination, it possesses unique cultural practices, beliefs, and theological tenets that set it apart from other Christian entities. Therefore, adherence to its institutional values is imperative for sustaining its unique identity and perpetuating the legacy established by its founders. Moreover, the Church of Pentecost aims to provide a robust and stable foundation for its members. By steadfastly upholding its principles, the church seeks to equip individuals with a solid basis from which to navigate life's challenges while fostering a deeper relationship with God.

Finally, The Church of Pentecost upholds a set of moral and ethical standards aimed at safeguarding the well-being of its congregation. Recognising that deviations from these values can lead to moral degradation, spiritual stagnation, and disconnection from the divine, the church prioritises strict adherence to its principles to foster holistic member development and growth. This study has indicated that suspension as a disciplinary measure for sexual misconduct, while intended to uphold church standards, can adversely impact victims. Such suspensions are associated with negative emotional outcomes, including grief, anger, and regret. Moreover, victims may experience unforeseen repercussions that can deteriorate their relationship with God, potentially leading them to distance themselves from God.

To mitigate these unintended consequences for both the individuals affected and the church community, it is imperative for The Church of Pentecost, along with other Christian denominations that enforce suspensions for sexual misconduct, to reevaluate this disciplinary approach. Enhancements to this process could include the establishment of a robust support system, codified within the church's standing orders or by-laws. Furthermore, it is essential that pastoral staff receive comprehensive training in pastoral care, ensuring that these principles are effectively integrated into their ministry practices.

Recommendations

In light of the concluding findings, several recommendations are proposed for both The Church of Pentecost and future research avenues. First, it is imperative that church authorities develop and implement explicit guidelines governing the suspension process. This should include a well-structured discipleship framework that addresses the social, emotional, and spiritual needs of congregants during the suspension period. Such a framework is vital for facilitating effective restoration while

providing comprehensive pastoral care. Additionally, a clear delineation of roles for key stakeholders—namely, the Pastor, church leaders, and the broader congregation—is essential. Second, the integrity of the suspension process must be prioritised to ensure fairness and justice. This necessitates providing a platform for the affected church member to voice their perspective and engage with the allegations made against them. Hearings should be overseen by an impartial adjudicative body, with decisions based on transparent and objective criteria. Third, the rights and beliefs of the suspended church member must be duly respected throughout the process. Fourth, transparency and accountability are crucial in the execution of the suspension process. This can be achieved by publicly disclosing the procedures and making them accessible to all stakeholders. Regular updates on the progress and outcomes of the suspension process should be communicated to the congregation to foster trust and clarity. Fifth, the process must be evaluated for its effectiveness in achieving the intended outcomes, including ensuring adherence to established restoration and reconciliation protocols throughout the suspension.

Finally, future research on the suspension of sexual misconduct in the church should focus on several key areas: identifying and addressing inappropriate behaviour, implementing preventative measures to reduce the occurrence of such misconduct, and providing support for both victims and perpetrators. By taking these steps, religious organisations can foster church communities that are safe and inclusive for all members.

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Rural Pastors, Family Welfare and Pastoral Care Equity Challenges: The Case of Three Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana

Job Wiredu

Abstract

Equity in pastoral care has emerged as a vital aspect of pastoral work, and its importance cannot be overstated, as it ensures the holistic well-being of all pastors and their families. The call to Christian ministry often comes with various challenges, and effective pastoral care is expected from church leadership, particularly in rural mission contexts. There is a prevalent perception that pastors in rural missions receive less financial and social support compared to their counterparts in urban areas. As a result, many pastors in certain churches tend to decline rural assignments and prefer to remain in urban settings. Others, who are unable to refuse rural postings due to the administrative structures of their churches, fulfil their calling out of necessity. This situation has become a significant burden for both church leaders and their pastors. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the challenges faced by pastors and their families serving in rural areas within three classical Pentecostal Ghanaian churches: The Church of Pentecost, The Apostolic Church of Ghana, and Christ Apostolic Church International. The goal is to gain insight into their perspectives on this issue. It is noteworthy that many pastors were hesitant to discuss their experiences due to concerns about potential victimisation or being perceived as 'carnally minded' despite assurances of confidentiality. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of literature addressing this sensitive topic, which has motivated this research.

Keywords: Rural, Pastors Family, Equity challenges, Policy Generalisation, Spirituality.

How to cite this article: Wiredu, Job. "Rural Pastors, Family Welfare and Pastoral Care Equity Challenges: The Case of Three Classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana." *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 5, no. 2 (2025): 55-64.

Introduction

From antiquity to the dawn of humankind, the responsibility of pastoral care equity has emerged as a vital phenomenon that should not be underestimated, as it addresses the holistic needs of individuals. This responsibility has been essential throughout history. Beginning with the Garden of Eden, God, the Creator, has shown a consistent concern for priestly care both before and after humanity's fall (Gen. 3:8). The Creator's concern for sinful human beings was evident when Abel killed his brother Cain, prompting God to inquire about Abel's whereabouts (Gen. 4:9). Throughout human history, God has guided the course of human affairs in various ways across many dispensations, urging His chosen people to adhere to His paths.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Carly L. Crouch, "Genesis 1:26-7 As a Statement of Humanity's Divine Parentage," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 61, no. 1 (April 1, 2010): 1-15, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flp185>.

Since ancient times, the role of the priest has been integral in guiding communities in adherence to divine principles and providing solace during periods of distress. The evolution of pastoral ministry across different epochs has significantly enhanced human development across multiple dimensions—psychological, sociological, philosophical, and spiritual. This multifaceted impact highlights the vital function of pastoral care in fostering holistic well-being and addressing the complexities of human experience.¹²⁵ Priests existed in ancient times, long before the Old Testament priesthood, and there was always the appropriate priest at any given moment.¹²⁶ The institution of the priesthood is sacred, and God, who established it, deeply concerns Himself with its integrity. He demonstrates His pastoral care in various ways, such as by providing a harmonious environment—like the Garden of Eden—for humanity to tend. God explicitly revealed the potential consequences of disobedience, warning against the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). Furthermore, He showcased His pastoral role through His personal visits to the created beings in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8).

Statement of the Research Problem

One of the key responsibilities of any religious organisation is to establish policies that foster the spirituality of its members. It is important to recognize that every religious person, particularly Christians, seeks to adhere to the principles of their faith in their pursuit of pleasing God, the ultimate Being. This pursuit is what this research defines as meaningful spirituality. However, what are the consequences when a pastor tasked with guiding his congregation towards this meaningful spirituality is not spiritually oriented due to various human and social challenges?

Churches are known to play significant roles in the Ghanaian community. Most Ghanaians revere their churches and pastors because they occupy a central place in their lives, regardless of the size of the worship venue. However, churches with small populations in rural areas encounter more complex challenges compared to their counterparts in urban settings. This is primarily due to their geographical locations. Pastors in these underprivileged areas face numerous difficulties in their efforts to meet the needs and demands of their families and congregants. In extreme circumstances, pastors, particularly those in full-time ministry, experience high levels of stress that result in “burnout”.¹²⁷ A significant number of pastors, particularly in

¹²⁵ Carl Oslon, *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion* (Holly J. Allen Publishers, 2003), 345; Robert A. Segal, *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* (Blackwell Publishers, 2006), 180; Segal, *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, 133.

¹²⁶ Răducă, “Teologia Pastorală Și Misiunea Bisericii,” 160; Cosmin Santi, “Vocation and Spiritual Qualities of Priest, Canon Condition for the Effective Pastoral Missionary Work,” *Teologia* 61, no. 4 (2014): 138–56, 145.

¹²⁷ Arno F. Wittig and Gary S. Belkin, *Introduction to Psychology* (McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 2002).

rural communities in Ghana, face burnout and often leave their vocation. However, there has been limited research addressing the phenomenon of burnout from the perspective of active clergy.

The classical Pentecostal churches, including The Church of Pentecost (CoP), Christ Apostolic Church International (CACI), and The Apostolic Church of Ghana (TAC-GH), have a commendable history of employing a significant number of pastors throughout the country, in both urban and rural areas. The Church of Pentecost is leading this effort.¹²⁸ Personal observations and experiences regarding the phenomenon of continuous classical Pentecostal rural pastoral care in Ghana has highlighted several significant issues. Firstly, many rural pastoral seats are located in areas that lack essential facilities such as healthcare, quality education, market centres, and reliable mobile network communication. Secondly, a substantial number of rural pastors depend on bank loans to support their children's education from basic schools to tertiary education. Those who cannot afford such costs due to financial constraints risk jeopardising their children's futures by providing only a limited education, which often fails to meet the highest standards. Lastly, amidst these challenges, their immediate supervisors—who often lack rural experience—struggle to comprehend the predicaments faced by rural pastors. This leads to unrealistic expectations for performance, akin to that of their urban counterparts, who benefit from a wealth of available resources for minimal effort. Additionally, policies are occasionally crafted with an urban focus, neglecting the unique needs of rural pastors. These factors underscore the urgent need to investigate how classical Pentecostal churches in Ghana fulfil their pastoral care responsibilities. This includes an emphasis on the holistic well-being of their pastors, families, and congregants to foster spiritual growth, particularly in light of God's concern for the priesthood as outlined in the Old Testament.

Research Objective

The primary objective of the study was “to ascertain the level of unequal treatment among classical Pentecostal rural pastors and its possible effect on their meaningful spirituality.” Specifically, the study sought:

- a. To determine the extent to which the existing support system addresses the needs of rural classical Pentecostal pastors and their families.
- b. To ascertain the equitable distribution of resources (financial, human, etc.) among rural Pastors of classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana,
- c. To find out the effects of periodic generalisation of church policies by church administrators concerning both rural and urban pastors.

¹²⁸ The Church of Pentecost, 2019 Chairman's Report.

- d. To identify the challenges that rural pastors and their families encounter as a result of spending many years in rural areas in Ghana.

Methodology

Dannels has suggested that the design of a research study shapes the selection of participants, the variables considered, and how those variables are manipulated. It also dictates the methods of data collection and analysis, as well as the control of external variables, all of which are essential for addressing the research problem.¹²⁹ This study employs a qualitative research methodology. A qualitative study may be characterised as “a systematic empirical inquiry aimed at creating a coherent, essentially descriptive explanation to inform the perception of a social or cultural phenomenon by the researchers.”¹³⁰ Qualitative research serves as a valuable approach to understanding the perspectives that inform a given problem while also offering various insights and potential solutions. As an inductive method, it allows researchers to explore the diverse dimensions of a particular condition. Additionally, it encompasses a range of data collection and analytical techniques that use purposive sampling, as well as open-ended and semi-structured interviews.

Data Collection Procedure

Data for the study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The research utilised participatory observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and focus group discussions to collect primary data. The participatory observation method enables researchers to record the natural behaviours of the group being studied, allowing them to gather insights that might not be easily accessible through a detached observational approach. This method creates an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the statements made by the study participants.¹³¹

With the assistance of other pastors who have primarily served in rural areas of Ghana across various districts within the selected regions, exploratory visits were conducted in the study districts for informal discussions with predetermined stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews, featuring both open-ended and closed-ended questions, were administered to selected respondents. This approach was chosen to gain a deeper

¹²⁹ Sharon A. Dannels, *Research Design. The Reviewer's Guide to Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences* (Routledge, 2018), 402-416.

¹³⁰ Dannels, *Research Design. The Reviewer's Guide to Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences*, 404-416.

¹³¹ Corrine Glesne, *Becoming Qualitative Researcher: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (New York: Pearson Education, 2011), 131.

understanding of the decisions, attitudes, and opinions of those interviewed.¹³² Additionally, the researcher conducted a focus group discussion to gather data. This session was facilitated by a moderator, with the support of an observer responsible for taking notes during the conversation and ensuring that no details were overlooked by the moderator. With the consent of the participants, the discussions were also audiotaped.

To collect secondary data, a comprehensive review and discussion of relevant literature on the subject was conducted. This literature included previous studies, journal and newspaper articles, manuals, statutory tools, policy documents, and management plans pertinent to the topic under investigation. It was anticipated that this secondary data would enhance the reliability and validity of the primary data collected.¹³³ It also offered valuable insight into the field of study and the issues related to the core research objectives, relevant literature, the methodology for the general survey, and the research findings.

Research Sample

In terms of the data collection procedure, the study was conducted in the Ahafo, Ashanti, and Eastern Regions of Ghana. For this research, three rural districts and one urban district were purposefully selected from each of the regions. A purposive sampling technique, also known as judgment sampling, was employed to select the respondents. This approach was chosen due to the specific qualities possessed by the participants.¹³⁴ This sampling method allowed for the selection of respondents who are available, belong to the relevant stakeholder groups being analysed, and best align with the study's objectives.¹³⁵

Research Findings

The respondents interviewed revealed various challenges faced alongside their families as they carried out their pastoral duties in rural areas. Among these challenges, the three most significant are presented as follows:

a) Falling Educational Standards of Rural Pastors' Children

Pastors and their spouses unanimously affirmed that they had received a divine calling. They also expressed that they had no authority to share their opinions

¹³² Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill, *A Research Methods for Business Students*, vol. 5 (New York: Prentice Hall, 2009).

¹³³ Burke Johnson and Lisa A. Turner, "Data Collection Strategies in Mixed Methods Research," in *Handbook of Mixed Methods*, ed. A.M. Tashakkori and C.B. Teddlie, 2003.

¹³⁴ Ilker Etikan, Sulaiman Abubakar Musa, and Rukayya Sunusi Alkassim, "Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling," *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1-4.

¹³⁵ Jennifer Neville and David Jensen, "Relational Dependency Networks.," *Journal of Machine Learning Research* 8, no. 3 (2007).

regarding the church's transfer procedures and were unable to influence or propose their posting locations. Until their transfer was officially announced, they remained unaware of where they would be assigned. Additionally, the availability or lack of certain social amenities was often unknown to the pastor until they arrived at the new location. The problem arose when the standard of education fell short of expectations. The minister, who is also a husband and father, desires the best for his children, hoping they will be able to support him in his old age, just as the Psalmist sang: "And now, in my old age, don't set me aside. Don't abandon me when my strength is failing" (Ps. 71-9 NLT). In the Akan dialect of Ghana, it is said, "*se obi hwe wo ma wo se fifi a, wo nso hwe no ma ne se ntutu,*" which is literally translated as, "If someone takes care of you to grow teeth, you must take care of him or her when his or her teeth are falling out." This is an African concept which encourages parents to work hard and secure a brighter future for their wards. Some people go so far as to care for other people's children, following an Akan proverb that states: *obi nnim nea Dbehwe obi daakye*, which is translated as "no one knows who will take care of someone in the future." Some respondents lamented that their hopes had become a mirage due to their current situation.¹³⁶

It is undeniable that higher education significantly enhances life opportunities. Education cultivates the mind, refines one's thoughts, and strengthens character and interpersonal behaviours. Additionally, it provides valuable knowledge across various fields. Consequently, a lack of education may hinder one's ability to secure a respectable profession. Educated individuals are often considered a vital resource for a nation's development.¹³⁷ Given these points, it is clear that every caring parent desires the best for their child. However, this is not always a reality. Many children of rural pastors face significant challenges in accessing quality education.

b) Pastors Children's Spiritual Formation Decline

The issue surrounding the education of pastors' children has raised significant concerns, as these pastors often worry about their children being exposed to ungodly environments. To avoid jeopardizing their children's education, many pastors choose to leave them in the care of relatives or friends in towns and cities. Unfortunately, these guardians are often not devout Christians, which can lead to a weakening of the Christian foundation that the parents have worked hard to establish. Consequently, the children may become wayward and difficult to manage, ultimately shaking their spiritual foundations. Paul emphasizes the importance of a church leader's household being above reproach in the book of Timothy (1 Timothy 3:2a,4). It is therefore unacceptable, troubling, and contrary to the expectations of a Christian leader for the

¹³⁶ All the ten pastors, Ten pastors wives and some of their children interviewed narrated similar experiences on how they have battled with funding their children's education.

¹³⁷ Abdulghani Al-shuaibi, "The Importance of Education, Salala College of Technology," 2014. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260075970_The_Importance_of_Education

child of a pastor to exhibit deviant behavior. However, due to various compelling circumstances, some children may find themselves in difficult situations that tarnish their parents' ministerial integrity. This does not imply that children who live with their parents are always exemplary; rather, the likelihood of deviant behaviours tends to increase among those lacking parental care. What benefit does a minister gain from positively impacting the lives of others if it comes at the expense of their own household?

According to the respondents, this issue has persisted for many years, yet there appears to be a lack of systems established by church leadership to address the challenges faced by rural pastors, ultimately making life in rural areas more favourable for them. Given that rural communities will continue to exist, rural pastoral care will remain a vital concern. Therefore, classical Pentecostal Churches, in contrast to Neo-Pentecostal churches that typically prioritise urban settings, should strategically plan their initiatives to ensure that pastors assigned to rural areas do not feel neglected or unsupported. It is, therefore, time that classical Pentecostal churches and other Christian organisations address this problem to avoid inequality among pastors.

c) Generalization of Church Policies on Rural Pastors, their Families and the Church

Policies serve as vital frameworks for guidance, consistency, accountability, efficiency, and clarity in the operation of any organisation, and the Church is no exception. Policy documents, such as the constitution and related materials, play a crucial role in the daily functioning of the organisation; their absence can lead to significant organisational challenges. The foundation of such policies can be traced back to the Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue, which is documented in Ex. 20:1-17 and reiterated in Deut. 5:1-21. These commandments were entrusted to Moses to instruct the people of Israel on how God intended for them to live and behave. The policies clearly addressed a wide range of issues, including those concerning orphans, widows, strangers, and others. Jesus did not abolish the law; rather, he fulfilled it, as stated in Matt. 5:17. Based on findings from interviews conducted, this paper presents various recommendations that, if implemented, could help minimise the challenges of marginalisation faced by pastors, their families, and church congregants, thereby enhancing their holistic development and promoting equitable distribution of resources.

Recommendations

The leadership of classical Pentecostal churches in Ghana must address the existing gap to promote the holistic development of all pastors, irrespective of their positions. The churches should strive to support all their pastors in any location. Consequently,

ministers would be more willing to accept postings, whether in urban or rural settings. The following paragraphs will present various recommendations aimed at improving the living conditions for rural pastors in Ghana.

a) *The Need for Pentecostal Model Basic Schools in Every Regional Capital*

During the research, it was discovered that most locations visited did not have model basic schools. This creates problems for pastors who are posted to such locations and further widens the gap of equal development. The establishment of model educational facilities would go a long way to solve the burden of pastors finding good schools to educate their children.

All three churches, particularly the Church of Pentecost, have made significant efforts to support their pastors in rural areas. However, there remains ample work to be done to establish model educational facilities at all levels, from basic education to tertiary institutions. Many respondents expressed concern that their children's futures have been negatively impacted – both physically and spiritually – due to frequent postings to rural areas, compounded by the inadequate educational system currently in place, as indicated by the collected data. It is crucial to address this issue, as a pastor's assignment should not hinder their children's education.

Churches should prioritise alleviating the challenges faced by rural pastors by establishing model schools in every regional capital. These Christian institutions, staffed with dedicated Christian educators, would provide a holistic educational experience aimed at cultivating scholars who are also committed Christians, thereby supporting both the church and the nation. The early missionaries set a standard for classical Pentecostals to follow. Notably, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), recognised as a leader in quality education in the country, indicates that integrating chaplaincy services – first introduced by missionaries – contributes significantly to holistic educational development across all pre-tertiary levels. The chaplaincy services effectively promoted the development of Christian morality and character in academic settings, resulting in a transformative scholarship that Asare refers to as 'the Presbyterian discipline' in the 19th century.¹³⁸ By the close of the 20th century, secularisation eroded the Presbyterian disciplinary scholarship and similar "Christian educational systems in Africa." At the turn of the 21st century, both church and political leaders sought a return to Christian holistic and moral transformational education, recognising that its absence has had a significant negative impact on the moral fibre of society nation.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Bruce Asare, "The Birth and Development of Formal Education," in *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana and National Development*, ed. K. Nkansa-Kyeremanteng (Accra: Presbyterian Press, 1994), 66.

¹³⁹ Kofi Sraku-Lartey, "Foreword" to Ebenezer Y. Blasu (Ed.), *Inside Out: A Devotional Guide for PUCC Students and Teachers* (Accra: Presbyterian Press, 2012), i; Esther Megill, *Education in the African Church* (London: Chapman, 1976), 4; Christine Churcher, "Restoring Presbyterian Discipline - The Way Forward," in *Uprooting the Thorns of Indiscipline; The Church's Combat* (Accra: Presbyterian Church of

b) The Need to Categorise Policies by the Churches

Instances where a general rule applies universally to all pastors and environments, regardless of their location, often place one group at a disadvantage, leading to feelings of discontentment and potential burnout. In the three churches studied, it became clear that while the Church of Pentecost (CoP) excels in providing accommodation for pastors and church buildings for the community, as well as offering some financial incentives to rural community churches, others are still lagging behind. Thus, additional efforts are needed to ensure equity across the board. The researcher strongly encourages other classical Pentecostal churches to follow the example set by the Church of Pentecost (CoP) in their efforts to improve the quality of life for pastors serving in rural areas. Until the *parousia* (παρουσία) of the Lord Jesus, which represents the hope of the church of Christ, pastoral assignments in rural communities will persist among classical Pentecostal churches. Those affected should embrace these transitions with an open mind, as, in due course, they will come to understand the rationale behind such changes, regardless of the circumstances involved.¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

This paper has examined the challenges of family welfare and pastoral care equity faced by rural and urban pastors within classical Pentecostal churches in Ghana. Following the discussion and recommendations presented, it is evident that classical Pentecostal pastoral caregivers bear a significant responsibility to critically evaluate the church's periodic policies. This evaluation is necessary to align with general standards that would benefit both urban and rural missions. Addressing this issue will help remedy the tendency to generalise policies that do not adequately address the specific needs of rural pastors and their families, acknowledging that the church serves not only urban centres but also rural communities where these pastors reside.

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Ghana Public Relations Unit, 2003), Hon. Christine Churcher was a minister of state responsible for basic, secondary and girl child education under the National Patriotic Party's regime in Ghana, between 2001 and 2008.

¹⁴⁰ Christian Stettler, "Review: The Parousia and Its Rereadings. The Development of the Eschatological Consciousness in the Writings of the New Testament," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 54, no. 1 (April 1, 2003): 268–70, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/54.1.268>.

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The Holy Spirit in Moral Character Formation: Perceptions within Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity

Patrick Tetteh Kudadjie

Abstract

The research explored the understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in shaping moral character formation among Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians. It aimed to determine whether individual Pentecostals are aware of the Holy Spirit's presence in their Christian formation process. The study involved one hundred and fifty (150) respondents from three prominent Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches: Assemblies of God, Ghana, The Church of Pentecost (COP), and the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC). Findings indicated that a majority of the respondents were not conscious of the Holy Spirit's role in moral character formation; instead, they were more aware of the ministerial or charismatic functions of the Spirit. The study advocates for Pentecostal churches in Ghana to maintain and enhance their teachings on the Holy Spirit. It encourages Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic church leaders to guide their congregants in giving equal attention to both the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, while also conducting research to thoroughly examine their members' grasp of the foundational doctrines of the Pentecostal faith.

Keywords: Moral character, Holy Spirit, Pentecostals, Charismatics, Christian formation

How to cite this article: Kudadjie, Patrick Tetteh. "The Holy Spirit in Moral Character Formation: Perceptions within Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity." *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 5, no. 2 (2025): 65-76.

Introduction

Given the remarkable growth of the Christian mission in Africa, and specifically in Ghana, there is a hopeful expectation that Christian spirituality will foster social morality and help liberate the continent from the moral decay that has long afflicted it. However, this has not been the prevailing reality. In many African nations, including Ghana, Christian mission and spirituality coexist alongside social injustice, which is often exacerbated by government corruption.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ See Kwadwo Konadu-Agyeman, *The Political Economy of Ghana in the Post Independent Period: Description and Analysis of the Decadence of the Political Economy of Ghana and Survival Techniques of the Citizens* (Legon: University of Ghana, 1984) and Kwadwo Konadu-Agyemang, *IMF and World Bank Sponsored Structural Adjustment Program in Africa: Ghana's Experience 1983-1999* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Douglas Rimmer, *Staying Poor: Ghana's Political Economy 1950-1990* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1992); Jeffery Herbst, *The Politics of Reform in Ghana 1982-1991* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); E. Gyimah-Boadi, *Ghana under PNDC Rule* (Dakar: Codesiria, 1993); Donald Ronald Rothchild, ed. *Ghana: The Political Economy of Recovery* (London: Lynne Rienner Pub., 1991); Paul Gifford, *African*

A report from West African theologians and church leaders, representing both Catholic and Protestant traditions, prepared for the centennial of the World Missionary Conference (Edinburgh 2010), highlights the apparent divide between spirituality and morality in West African Christianity.¹⁴² This situation also prompts inquiries into how Christian spirituality and discipleship are reflected in social or public morality.¹⁴³

In light of this, many have questioned the integrity of Christianity in various African nations, particularly in Ghana. Alfred Koduah characterises the situation in various ways, describing it as a superficial religion, lacking in character and marked by hypocrisy. He critiques it as a corrupt form of faith that is devoid of love, mercy, justice, holiness, righteousness, kindness, and goodness, focusing instead on a conspicuous display of spiritual gifts while neglecting the essential demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Eric Nyamekye asserts that churches in Ghana cannot escape accountability for the moral decline in the country. He notes that while all branches of government should regard the church as a pillar of truth and a foundational guide, the reality is often the opposite, with the church frequently contributing to national deterioration.¹⁴⁵

Scholars and Christian leaders have put forth several arguments to explore the reasons for the separation of spirituality from morality, particularly in African Pentecostalism and Christianity as a whole. For example, Paul Gifford attributes the lack of social morality among Ghanaian Pentecostals to their adoption of the African traditional worldview.¹⁴⁶ He argues that Ghanaian Pentecostalism, through its prophetic ministry, has leveraged aspects of African Traditional Religion, which tends to perceive salvation primarily in terms of this-worldly realities.¹⁴⁷

He asserts that these prophets present themselves as anointed individuals – both men and women – of God, capable of assisting their followers in meeting certain expectations. He explains that, consequently, the “notion of sin hardly arises” in their ministries.¹⁴⁸ According to Roland Green, the African worldview hinders the moral

Christianity: Its Public Role (London: C. Hurst, 1998); Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in Globalizing African Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

¹⁴² Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Report of West African Consultation*. <http://www.Edinburgh2010.org/en/study-themes/9-mission-spiritual-and-spirituality-and-authentic-discipleship/westafrica-consultation.html>, 10 July 2018.

¹⁴³ Asamoah-Gyadu, 'Report of West African'.

¹⁴⁴ Alfred Koduah, *Demonstrating the Character of God* (Accr: Cobby Kay Enterprise, 2016), 2.

¹⁴⁵ Eric Nyamekye, <http://mobile.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchives/Blame-the-church-for-Ghana-s-rot-Pentecost-Chairman-676284>, 13 August, 2018.

¹⁴⁶ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, Chapters 4 and 7.

¹⁴⁷ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 109.

¹⁴⁸ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 109.

reasoning found in African Christianity.¹⁴⁹ Abraham Elorm-Donkor, on the other hand, attributes this issue to the misrepresentation of Akan traditional beliefs by Ghanaian Pentecostals.¹⁵⁰ He argues that the “Deliverance Theology” espoused by Ghanaian Pentecostals significantly distorts the Akan traditional system. As a result, he contends that many Christians focus on religion as a means to address their existential needs, rather than striving to transform their inner selves and cultivate moral character.¹⁵¹

While these explanations may hold some truth, it seems that the understanding of the Holy Spirit’s work within Ghanaian Pentecostalism may contribute to the issue at hand. Given the emphasis on the Holy Spirit in their lives, it is anticipated that Pentecostal-Charismatics will reflect the true character of God in both their private and public conduct. This expectation arises from the belief that the Holy Spirit empowers believers to live morally upright lives.

Statement of the Research Problem

In Ghana, approximately 9.7 million individuals identify as Pentecostals, constituting about 31.6% of the nation’s total population.¹⁵² As membership continues to rise, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are significantly influencing other Christian denominations. This influence is evident as cinema halls, warehouses, and classrooms have been repurposed into chapels.¹⁵³ The Protestant and Roman Catholic churches have particularly felt the impact of Pentecostal worship styles. Scholars Asamoah-Gyadu and Omenyo describe this phenomenon as the “Pentecostalization of Ghanaian Christianity” and “Pentecost outside Pentecostalism,” respectively.¹⁵⁴

The background of this study highlights a paradox: despite the growth of Christianity in Ghana, social morality remains a significant challenge in the public sphere. An examination of newspapers provides undeniable evidence that the ethical standards of some Christian leaders fall short of expectations. Additionally, ethnographic studies indicate that Pentecostal communities grapple with various moral issues,

¹⁴⁹ Ronald Green, ‘Religion and Morality in the African Traditional Setting’, *JRA*, vol. 14, No. 1 (March 1983), 1-23(6).

¹⁵⁰ Lord Abraham Elorm-Donkor, ‘Christian Morality in Ghanaian Pentecostalism: A Theological Analysis of Virtue Theory as a Framework Integrating Christian and Akan Moral Schemes’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2011), 7.

¹⁵¹ Elorm-Donkor, ‘Christian Morality in Ghanaian Pentecostalism’, 7

¹⁵² 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.

¹⁵³ For instance, Lighthouse Chapel, Winners Chapel, Winners Ghana, and Royalhouse Chapel have all transformed warehouses into Chapels.

¹⁵⁴ 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.

including marital infidelity, divorce, fornication, theft, and power struggles, among others. For example, Dela Quampah conducted research on the ethical dimensions of leadership in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana, using public opinions and reports from daily publications. The findings reveal troubling issues such as moral decline, materialism, superstition, greed, and power struggles within Pentecostal and Charismatic leadership.¹⁵⁵

Furthermore, while Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Ghana emphasises that the Holy Spirit grants believers both charismatic gifts and the power to lead a Christian life, followers often seem to prioritise the former, viewing the latter as a secondary concern.

Methodology

The study integrated Christian ethics, historical narrative, and theological analysis to study the problem. The primary method for data collection involved interviewing 150 respondents from three Pentecostal-Charismatic churches: the Assemblies of God Church, The Church of Pentecost, and the International Central Gospel Church. The sample comprised approximately thirty church leaders and one hundred and twenty (120) members. A detailed interview guide was developed to gather insights on Pentecostal-Charismatic views of the Holy Spirit's role in moral character formation, with questions presented in both *Mfantse* and English. Open-ended questions allowed respondents the flexibility to express their views freely. Participant observation and the author's pastoral experience were also utilised to complement the data collected. The analysis of the data was conducted qualitatively.

Theoretical Framework

The Christian ethical system serves as the foundational theoretical framework for this research. It encompasses the application of Christian principles to discern right from wrong. As Norman L. Geisler notes, Christian ethics defines what is considered morally good or bad from a Christian perspective.¹⁵⁶ Christian ethics, according to David Atkinson and David Field, "is where God's action is always regarded as the basis for human action."¹⁵⁷ In Christian ethics, the Bible's depiction of God serves as the benchmark for moral behaviour. In this context, what is right is what God approves of, and what is wrong is what He disapproves of. Christian ethics uses the Bible as the foundation for filtering philosophical ideas and principles. It integrates philosophy with theology and aims to promote a morality based on biblical principles.

¹⁵⁵ Dela Quampah, 'Ethical Dimension of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Leadership in Ghana' (PhD Thesis, University of Ghana, 2012).

¹⁵⁶ Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989), 17.

¹⁵⁷ David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (eds.), *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 115.

David Wright presents two justifications for using the Bible in ethics: first, because it offers relevant insights into ethical matters, and second, because Christians are committed to its authority.¹⁵⁸ In a similar vein, David Cook contends that “the Christian believes that the Bible has something to say to the world and mankind and that something carries authority”.¹⁵⁹ He asserts that, despite objections to the Bible’s authority, it is evident that Christians consult the Bible when making moral decisions and judgements.¹⁶⁰ Christian moral decisions rely on biblical moral precepts, which are found in the Bible.¹⁶¹ This research adopts the biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit’s work as a standard to assess Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic views on the Holy Spirit’s role in moral character formation.

Research Findings

The study examined the perceptions of Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in the formation of moral character. The primary objective was to determine whether these Christians are aware of the Holy Spirit’s involvement in this process and to what extent he plays a role. To achieve this goal, the research first sought to explore their understanding of what constitutes good character. The findings indicated that respondents generally possessed a solid understanding of good character, perceiving it primarily as the enactment of socially acceptable behaviour. However, it was noted that their definitions were somewhat broad, not confined solely to a Christian perspective. Some responses reflected influences from African primal beliefs as well as philosophical and moral viewpoints. One could argue that these more general interpretations of good character may pose challenges, as, from a Christian standpoint, the definition of good character should be based on God’s word rather than societal norms or human opinions.

It was further observed that a significant number of respondents were unable to connect good character formation to the Holy Spirit. This became evident when they were asked to explain how good character formation occurs. This suggests that respondents were not fully aware of the Holy Spirit’s influence on moral character development. However, it does not imply that they lacked knowledge of the Holy Spirit’s role in this context. In fact, when respondents were specifically asked about how the Holy Spirit contributes to moral character formation, a considerable number were able to articulate this connection. The findings indicate that respondents were not unaware of the Spirit’s role in moral character development; rather, they were not

¹⁵⁸ David F. Wright, *Essays in Evangelical Social Ethics* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1978), 39.

¹⁵⁹ David Cook, *Moral Maze: A Way of Exploring Christian Ethics* (London: WBC Print Ltd, 1989), 46.

¹⁶⁰ Cook, *Moral Maze*, 46.

¹⁶¹ Cook, *Moral Maze*, 46.

consciously mindful of it. This oversight could risk a complete disregard for the Spirit's involvement in the process of moral character formation.

The study further revealed that a notable portion of the respondents viewed *glossolalia* as the definitive evidence of baptism in the Spirit. Specifically, out of 150 respondents, 135 (90%) expressed this belief. This reflects a misunderstanding of the teachings within their respective churches. While these churches recognise *glossolalia* as an initial sign of being baptised in the Holy Spirit, respondents perceived it as the ultimate confirmation of this experience. Such a perception may impact their Christian lives, as they are likely to prioritize this aspect of the Spirit's work at the expense of focusing on moral character development.

It was further observed that 131 (87%) of the respondents were more mindful of the ministerial functions aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit than the moral character formation functions. This came up when they were asked to state the works of the Holy Spirit they could remember. It came out that ministerial functions such as praying, preaching, evangelism, speaking in tongues, and overcoming evil spirits were mentioned. It, therefore, gives the impression that respondents were interested in these aspects of the work of the Spirit.

The findings indicated that respondents held varying opinions regarding which aspects of the Holy Spirit—specifically the fruit and gifts—should be emphasised. While some believed that all works of the Holy Spirit are significant, the majority leaned towards a preference between the fruit and the gifts. Notably, 98 respondents favoured the gifts as the aspect that should receive greater emphasis. Elorm-Donkor suggests that this preference may be influenced by the cultural background of Ghanaian Pentecostals. He argues that the primal background of Ghanaian Pentecostals does not enable them to relate moral character formation to the Holy Spirit. He states that “the traditional scheme of Ghanaian Christians shapes the expectations they bring to Scripture, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit”.¹⁶² He explains that in Ghanaian Pentecostalism, “the persons and works of Jesus and the Holy Spirit are pitched against the powers of darkness.”¹⁶³ Consequently, the work of the Holy Spirit in meeting the existential needs of Pentecostals seems to be their priority rather than “what he does about their innate weakness to live in accordance with the image of God in them.”¹⁶⁴

The findings further indicate that the respective churches had intentional structures for moral character formation. This suggests that the churches are not only focused on the ‘power’ or ministerial functions but also on the moral development of their

¹⁶² Elorm-Donkor, *Christian Morality in Ghanaian Pentecostalism*, 181.

¹⁶³ Elorm-Donkor, *Christian Morality in Ghanaian Pentecostalism*, 181.

¹⁶⁴ Elorm-Donkor, *Christian Morality in Ghanaian Pentecostalism*, 180.

adherents. However, the study revealed that 89 (59%) of the respondents were unaware of most of the structures. They were primarily concerned with the more evident ones, such as preaching the word of God. This gives the impression that respondents were not attentive to the moral character formation structures.

The findings also highlight several foundational aspects that contribute to these perceptions. Six key factors were identified and discussed. One significant factor is the misconceptions surrounding church traditions. The data indicates that respondents often referenced their respective churches when articulating their views. However, it became evident that many had misinterpreted their churches' teachings. For instance, 102 respondents (68%) who regarded *glossolalia* as the ultimate manifestation of the Holy Spirit were misrepresenting their churches' doctrine, which states that speaking in tongues is merely an initial sign of Spirit baptism. While the churches do uphold this belief, they clearly teach that it is only the first sign. They encourage their members to pursue both the fruits and the gifts of the Spirit. It was noted that a significant number of respondents rarely read the Bible, and as a result, they derived their theological understandings primarily from preachers. In this situation, the preacher's perspective is likely to shape their views on the Holy Spirit.

Implications of Findings

The following section outlines implications aimed at addressing the challenges associated with perceptions of the Holy Spirit within the context of Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. These implications encompass considerations for mission work, scholarly engagement within the Christian community, guidance for congregants, and recommendations for future research.

Implications for Mission

Christian mission extends beyond merely demonstrating power over evil spirits or showcasing spiritual gifts. It is not solely about acquiring material possessions or addressing physical issues, such as healing illnesses. In the words of Andrew Walls, Christian mission involves redirecting every facet of humanity toward God.¹⁶⁵ This indicates that the mission's goal is to help humanity embody the full image of God. The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in achieving this objective. Elorm-Donkor highlights this by stating that "the Holy Spirit is God coming to humanity in an inward way, to enlighten and strengthen it, enabling it to return to God and abide in Him."¹⁶⁶ Through His work with believers, the Holy Spirit transforms individuals to reflect both the power and character of God. The power of God is manifested through the

¹⁶⁵ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2017), 28.

¹⁶⁶ Elorm-Donkor, *Christian Morality in Ghanaian Pentecostalism*, 197.

gifts of the Spirit, while His character is evident in the fruit of the Spirit. Consequently, Christian mission must ultimately lead believers to embody both the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit.

However, the findings revealed that Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatics possess a strong awareness of the ministerial works of the Holy Spirit. However, it was also noted that 135 respondents, representing 90%, did not associate moral character with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is recommended that Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in Ghana intensify their teachings on the Holy Spirit. In line with their constitutions, these churches should encourage their members to give equal weight to the fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit. While the Holy Spirit is a frequently addressed topic within Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, church leadership should not diminish their focus on this important subject. They might consider establishing annual themes centred around the Holy Spirit, focusing on its fruits and gifts. For example, from 2010 to 2020, the Assemblies of God dedicated a decade to teaching about the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁷ It was noted that this extensive teaching significantly impacted their members, as they exhibited a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit compared to members of the other two churches. Leadership at all levels should strive to intentionally present a balanced perspective on the Holy Spirit in their teachings and statements. This intentional approach will gradually shape the perceptions of their members, as theological beliefs are often influenced by what is emphasised from the pulpit.

The study revealed that the African primal consciousness of respondents served as a foundation for the highlighted perceptions. Therefore, it is suggested that Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana should not underestimate the primal orientations of their adherents. They ought to conduct comprehensive research in every locality where their churches are situated to understand how the primal beliefs are influencing their members. Those that have a positive influence should be reinforced, while those with a negative impact should be addressed through the lens of Scripture.

The findings further revealed that misconceptions about church doctrine partly contributed to these perceptions. It suggests that Pentecostal-Charismatic churches should educate their followers regarding their theological beliefs. Their theological position on the Holy Spirit should be communicated clearly to them.

Additionally, we observed that respondents' perceptions were influenced by what we termed 'pulpit theology.' The findings revealed that a significant number of adherents do not develop their theologies based on Scripture but rather from what they hear from the pulpit. This indicates a need for the pulpit to be strengthened. Regular

¹⁶⁷ Emmanuel Baidoo, Interview, 27 April, 2021.

theological education should be provided for both ordained and lay leaders, enabling their followers to consistently receive sound teachings from the pulpit.

It was further identified that Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatics are influenced by some common Holy Spirit-related texts that are primarily charismatic in nature. It was observed that the only shared text regarding the moral character of the Holy Spirit is Gal. 5:22-23. There is a need to encourage the development of elaborate teaching on the moral dimension of the Holy Spirit's work.

The survey also found that the understanding of a spiritual person within Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is problematic. They view a spiritual person as one who demonstrates the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, in their quest for spirituality, they tend to prioritize spiritual gifts. As explained earlier in chapter eight, this perception does not align with the biblical view. Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana should address this issue by teaching their followers a more holistic understanding of what it means to be spiritual.

Finally, Pentecostal-Charismatic leadership should articulate the ultimate purpose of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers to their congregants. Members need to grasp the overarching goal of the Christian life and the significant role the Holy Spirit fulfills in that journey. They should be educated on the fact that the ultimate aim of the Holy Spirit is to ensure believers' salvation, which is achieved through faith in Christ and adherence to God's word. By understanding this, they will come to appreciate the moral aspect of the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit.

Implications for Christian Scholarship

Despite the extensive scholarly literature about Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in Ghana, the predominant emphasis has been on aspects such as religious typology and their economic, social, and cultural impacts. There is still a significant lack of focused research on their understanding of the Holy Spirit in relation to moral formation. This study aims to address this gap in the existing literature, offering a nuanced exploration of their theological perspectives on the role of the Holy Spirit in shaping moral values within their ministry.

Moreover, this serves as a valuable resource for African Christianity as a whole and Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatics specifically. It illustrates how Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians in Ghana understand the role of the Holy Spirit in shaping moral character. The findings indicate that while many Pentecostals in Ghana recognize the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit, they tend to place greater emphasis on the gifts. This perspective may impact their moral character formation, as they

typically do not associate the Holy Spirit with moral considerations. The study also delves into the reasons behind these perceptions. Armed with this understanding, leaders within Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic churches can develop relevant theological approaches to address these concerns.

More importantly, the study has shown that there remains a strong affinity between African primal consciousness and Christianity. The survey revealed that respondents' perceptions of the Holy Spirit were, to some extent, influenced by their primal consciousness. This will assist churches in Africa in taking the African primal worldviews of their congregations seriously.

Implications for Church Members

Both the fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit deserve equal attention from church members, as each holds significant value. The spiritual gifts, in particular, enable individuals to experience God's power, which can strengthen their faith and guide them toward the Kingdom of God. Conversely, the fruit of the Spirit helps individuals maintain their identity as true disciples of Christ. It is essential for them to understand the ultimate goal of the Holy Spirit if they wish to collaborate effectively in living the Christian life. It is important for believers to recognize that the Holy Spirit was sent to guarantee the certainty of their salvation. The primary purpose of the Spirit is to help them strive toward the standard set before them, which is to emulate Christ. The fruit of the Spirit enables them to fulfil this divine work. While spiritual gifts are essential for ministry, they do not guarantee eternal salvation. Therefore, as they seek the spiritual gifts necessary for their ministry, they should remain mindful of the fruit of the Spirit.

Additionally, they should understand how Christian moral character develops. It should not be viewed as a solitary work of the Holy Spirit. They need to recognise that it is a collective activity involving both the Holy Spirit and the believer. Undoubtedly, they have a role to fulfill. In their daily walk as believers, they should allow the Holy Spirit to guide them. They should remain receptive to the Spirit's promptings. They ought to be conscious of their specific roles in shaping moral character. These include submitting to the Spirit, modelling God's character, acting in a way that reflects Christ, regularly reading the Bible, demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit, and sincerely participating in the Lord's Supper.

Conclusion

The study examined perceptions of the Holy Spirit in the formation of moral character within Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. It found that respondents had a good understanding of moral character. However, apart from a few who defined it

from a Christian viewpoint, the majority provided general responses. It identified African primal consciousness as an influential factor. In terms of sources of good character, mentions included God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, parents, home, school, the Holy Spirit, personal effort, learning from elders, and society. The findings indicated that most respondents did not associate good character with the Holy Spirit. We interpreted this to suggest that they were unaware of the Holy Spirit's role in moral character formation

After interacting with respondents, the general observation was that they were more aware of the ministerial functions of the Holy Spirit than of the moral ones. This conclusion was based on an analysis of responses gathered during the fieldwork. Significantly, when asked to mention the works of the Holy Spirit they remembered, most respondents highlighted the ministerial functions. We reflected on the findings and identified some reasons for these perceptions. The study concluded that the understanding of the Holy Spirit in moral character formation within Ghanaian Pentecostal Christianity may not foster positive moral development as a function of the Holy Spirit. Implications of the findings for mission have been assessed, and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana were encouraged to provide sufficient teachings on this aspect of their theology.

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

Joseph T. I. Buertery

Abstract

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

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

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

Introduction

The main argument of this study is that the African Pentecostal understanding and practice of prayer, which is essential to Pentecostal spirituality and theology, has been influenced by African Indigenous religious worldviews (AIR).¹⁶⁸ Therefore, a deeper understanding of the theology of prayer within African Pentecostal Spirituality can be

¹⁶⁸ African Indigenous religions are commonly referred to as African Traditional Religions. There are debates about whether this terminology should be African Traditional Religions or Religion. In recent studies, ATR has even been avoided altogether for 'Indigenous Religions' because it is considered a problematic term.

attained by exploring it through the framework of the African Traditional cosmological model. This study specifically investigates the practice of prayer in Pentecostal traditions in Ghana, such as the Church of Pentecost (CoP) and the emerging neo-Pentecostal movements. While researchers like Jack Steve Land¹⁶⁹ and Daniel Albrecht¹⁷⁰ have made significant contributions to the study of Pentecostal Spirituality, there remains a notable gap in research focusing on the influence of African indigenous religions on this Pentecostal spirituality.

According to Poloma and Lee, prayer serves as a means for created beings to communicate with their Creator.¹⁷¹ Also, Baesler¹⁷² rightly points out that prayer has been a part of every recorded society throughout history.¹⁷³ Undoubtedly, the most common method of praying in Christianity involves the recitation of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6: 9-15). In historical mission churches, prayer is often guided by prayer books. In contrast, the Pentecostal community emphasises the spontaneous nature of prayer, which is believed to be inspired and spoken under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, Pentecostal spirituality in prayer is inherently experiential, influenced by the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Albrecht and Howards define Pentecostal spirituality as the means by which Pentecostals connect with God, shaped by their beliefs, practices, sensibilities, and values.¹⁷⁴ A Pentecostal's beliefs influence their perception of God, while their actions serve as a way to encounter Him.¹⁷⁵ The unique sensibilities and values of each Pentecostal community establish their distinctive habits, defining how they relate to and respond to the Spirit of God.¹⁷⁶ Foster notes that Pentecostal spirituality can be understood as a profound connection with God, achieved through a powerful form of prayer.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, any discussion of Pentecostal spirituality must include the concepts of the Holy Spirit and prayer, as these two elements are central to the intricate and multifaceted nature of spirituality.¹⁷⁸

¹⁶⁹ Steve J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), 35.

¹⁷⁰ Daniel E. Albrecht, "Pentecostal Spirituality: Looking through the Lens of Ritual," *Pneuma* 14, no. 2 (1999): 110.

¹⁷¹ Margaret M. Poloma and Mathew T. Lee, "Prophetic Prayers as Two-Way Communication with the Divine," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 35, no. 3 (2012): 271-94.

¹⁷² James E. Baesler, "An Introduction to Prayer Research in Communication: Functions, Contexts, and Possibilities," *The Journal of Communication and Religion* 35, no. 3 (2012): 202-8.

¹⁷³ Douglas L. Kelly, "Prophetic Prayer as a Two-Way Communication with the Divine," *The Journal of Communication and Religion* 35, no. 3 (2012): 272-95.

¹⁷⁴ Daniel E. Albrecht and Evan B. Howards, "Pentecostal Spirituality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, ed. Cecil M. Robeck and Amos Yong (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 235-54.

¹⁷⁵ Albrecht and Howards, "Pentecostal Spirituality," 236.

¹⁷⁶ Albrecht, "Looking through the Lens," 15.

¹⁷⁷ Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1992), 1-3.

¹⁷⁸ Kees Waaijman, "Spirituality- a Multifaceted Phenomenon: Interdisciplinary Explorations," *Studies in Spirituality* 17 (2007): 1-113, <https://doi.org/10.2143/SIS.17.0.2024643>.

Regarding spirituality in Ghana, the Church of Pentecost (CoP) emerged within the country's religious and cultural context at a time when missionaries associated with historical mission churches disapproved of 'abisa,'¹⁷⁹ a prevalent traditional practice. The CoP responded to this contemporary religio-cultural challenge by organising intensive prayer sessions, which were theologically endorsed as an alternative solution. This approach served as a catalyst for the church's growth and popularity, providing the local indigenous population with viable solutions and religio-cultural options. Over time, however, the rise of neo-Pentecostal, neo-Prophetic, and deliverance ministries has introduced new prayer practices within the church.¹⁸⁰

These practices include 'breaking prayers' (*bubu wɔn*), 'binding prayers' (*kyekyere wɔn*), and 'trampling prayers'¹⁸¹ (*tɪtia wɔn so*) activities that resemble the spirituality of African indigenous religions. These behaviours resemble AIR Spirituality, which this research calls 'encultured positivisation.' Some of these new prayer practices seem to be variations of the traditional Pentecostal spirituality of prayer, which initially emphasised the lived emotions experienced during encounters with the Holy Spirit.¹⁸² Even though the CoP believes that Pentecostal spirituality begins with speaking in tongues,¹⁸³ which is also the most significant aspect of Pentecostal prayer.¹⁸⁴ Most of these neo-prophetic churches engage in what is termed¹⁸⁵ 'glossolalic abuse' (praying amiss).

Methodological Considerations

This study employed a conceptual research approach within systematic theology to reexamine established notions of prayer spirituality.¹⁸⁶ Conceptual research focuses on abstract ideas and theories, serving as a tool for philosophers to generate new

¹⁷⁹ *Abisa* is an Akan term for divinatory consultation. This is a practice in which local people seek prophetic advice on poignant issues of life.

¹⁸⁰ Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, ed. Christopher John Thomas (Blandford: Deo Publishing, 2012).

¹⁸¹ Opoku Onyinah, *Spiritual Warfare: A Centre for Pentecostal Theology Short Introduction* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2012), 197-98.

¹⁸² Christian Tsekpoe, "Pentecostal Christians' Response to Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana: The Contribution of Apostle Professor Opoku Onyinah," in *African Pentecostalism Mission Maturing Essays in Honour of Aps Prof Opoku Onyinah*, ed. L.D. Donkor and R.C. Clark (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 142.

¹⁸³ Daniel O. Walker, "Baptism, Gifts and Fruit of the Holy Spirit," in *Tenets of the Church of Pentecost*, ed. Opoku Onyinah et al. (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2019), 225-87.

¹⁸⁴ Okyere Walker, "Stoking the Fire of the Holy Spirit, in the Fear of God in the Local Church," in *Repositioning the Local Church for Maximum Impact in the Nations*, ed. Eric Nyamekye, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2022).

¹⁸⁵ Joseph T. I. Buertey, "Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities with Reference to African Traditional Religious Practices and Pentecostal Theologies of Prayer in Ghana" (PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2023), 284.

¹⁸⁶ Basilius Kasera, "Towards a Contextualised Conceptualisation of Social Justice for Post-Apartheid Namibia with Reference to Allan Boesak's Framing of Justice" (PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2021), <https://scholar.sun.ac.za>.

concepts or reinterpret existing ones.¹⁸⁷ This method involves analysing and interpreting available information on a subject, often negating the need for a new field study. By utilising abstraction, conceptual research seeks to interpret theories and models, thereby generating new frameworks or rethinking previous ones from a philosophical standpoint.¹⁸⁸

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research draws on the continuity-discontinuity concepts articulated by Andrew Walls and Kwame Bediako.¹⁸⁹¹⁹⁰ This theory provides a vital lens through which to examine the interactions between Christianity and indigenous cultures, particularly in Africa. Scholars like Walls and Bediako have explored the relationship between Christianity—especially its Pentecostal expressions—and Indigenous Religions. Their writings examine how ancient and contemporary religious systems engage with one another, highlighting instances where Christian theology assimilates indigenous elements and where Christian beliefs diverge significantly from traditional practices.

Andrew Walls,¹⁹¹ a renowned historian of Christianity in Africa, articulated the indigenous and pilgrimage concepts that form the basis of the continuity-discontinuity paradigm.¹⁹² He argues that the indigenising principle signifies that when Christianity is introduced into a new cultural context, it assimilates elements of the original culture, thereby becoming regionally relevant. Conversely, the pilgrim principle highlights Christianity's transformative nature, which challenges and alters societal conventions that contradict biblical teachings.¹⁹³ This duality results in both continuities, where Christianity integrates indigenous spiritual practices, and discontinuities, where it requires a departure from certain traditional customs. Walls illustrates that African Christianity has consistently emphasised the supernatural, encompassing healing, prophecy, and deliverance ministries, which are deeply rooted in African Indigenous Religions.¹⁹⁴ However, it has also rejected practices such as ancestral worship, polytheism, and specific ceremonial traditions that conflict with biblical monotheism.

¹⁸⁷ C. R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Technique*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: New Age Publishers, 2004).

¹⁸⁸ Perkins Muredzi, "Research and the Concept of Research," (Paper presented at the Innovative & Quality Research Methods for the 21st Century Workshop, African Association of Universities, March 2019), 21, doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.25310.28483.

¹⁸⁹ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

¹⁹⁰ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

¹⁹¹ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 1.

¹⁹² Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 1.

¹⁹³ Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

¹⁹⁴ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 1.

Kwame Bediako elaborates on Walls's framework by highlighting the development of African Christian identity through the interaction between Christian theology and indigenous spiritual traditions. He argues that understanding the African religious experience is essential for grasping the essence of African Christianity, as traditional religious beliefs provide a foundational context for Christian theology.¹⁹⁵ In his influential work, 'Theology and Identity,' Bediako examines the challenges encountered by early African theologians in reconciling their newly adopted Christian faith with their cultural heritage.¹⁹⁶

Bediako highlights numerous similarities between African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity, including the belief in a Supreme Being, the roles of prophets and priests in providing spiritual guidance, and the emphasis on communal aspects of religion.¹⁹⁷ However, he also acknowledges significant discontinuities, particularly in the rejection of ancestral veneration, divination, and specific ceremonial sacrifices that conflict with Christian doctrines.¹⁹⁸ He views African Pentecostalism as a reflection of this continuity-discontinuity dynamic, wherein elements of African Traditional Religion—such as fervent prayer, healing, and exorcism—are incorporated into Christian worship, even as theological frameworks evolve towards biblical revelation.

The model proposed by Walls and Bediako regarding continuity and discontinuity proves to be highly valuable for examining African Pentecostal spirituality and its connection to African Indigenous Religion. This relationship is maintained through a focus on divine intervention, spiritual warfare, and prophetic revelation. Within this context, prayer often mirrors traditional African practices of invoking spiritual power, including collective intercession, nocturnal vigils, and fasting.¹⁹⁹ However, discontinuities emerge due to the exclusive emphasis on Christ as the sole mediator, which excludes other mediators such as ancestors or spirits.

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

¹⁹⁵ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*.

¹⁹⁶ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992).

¹⁹⁷ Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 1.

¹⁹⁸ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 1.

¹⁹⁹ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Charismatic Spirituality," in *Studies on Religions in Africa* (Supplement of the Journal of Religion in Africa), ed. Paul Gifford, Marc R. Spindler, and Ingrid Lawrie, vol. 27 (Boston: Brill, 2005), 65.

particularly in relation to its views on prayer, spiritual warfare, and divine intervention.

African Traditional Religious Spirituality and Pentecostalism

African Traditional Religions (ATR) can hardly be separated from the ordinary African.²⁰⁰ ATR's cosmic vision has instilled a sense of awe and has significantly influenced the worldview, rituals, and lifestyles of many Africans. They engage in prayer driven by the belief that the world comprises both natural and supernatural elements, with the physical realm being contingent upon the supernatural. According to this perspective, nothing occurs in the physical world without prior orchestration in the realms of the supernatural.²⁰¹ Therefore, African traditionalists pray for human survival, social and cultural acceptance, and community preservation. They ask for abundant food, wealth, rain, successful hunting, clothing, long life, fertility, marriage, and family growth.²⁰² They pray against evil omens, diseases, misfortunes, death, disasters, epidemics, plagues, aversion to war, success in war, peace, community evil detection, and to protect and preserve the community.²⁰³

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

ATR and Christianity both espouse monotheism, though this similarity is somewhat superficial. Despite their significant differences, African Pentecostal Spirituality may have incorporated certain elements of ATR. According to Mbiti, ATR profoundly influences converts who are transitioning to Christianity. Many Christian converts often struggle to fully grasp Christian teachings about God without a foundational understanding of ATR.²⁰⁴ As a result, the African perception of God is seen as interconnected with the Christian concept,²⁰⁵ a notion referred to as "preparatio evangelica," where many hypothesise that the God of ATR embodies monotheism.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁰ Anthony Chiorazzi, "The Spirituality of Africa," *The Harvard Gazette*, October 6, 2015.

²⁰¹ Wyatt MacGaffey and Mariam Goshadze, "African Traditional Religion," *Oxford Bibliographies*, August 9, 2022, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846733/obo-9780199846733-0064.xml>.

²⁰² Christopher Ampadu, *Africa Religiosity and Africa Development: Understanding Africa Traditional Religion and Its Effects on Africa Development* (Accra: Sonlife Ghana Ltd, 2019), 21.

²⁰³ Ampadu, *Africa Religiosity and Africa Development*, 23.

²⁰⁴ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1975).

²⁰⁵ John S. Mbiti, "The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion," *Christian Century* 97, no. 27 (1980): 817-20.

²⁰⁶ Y.S. Han and J. Beyers, "A Critical Evaluation of the Understanding of God in J. S. Mbiti's Theology," *Acta Theologica* 37, no. 2 (2017): 22-24.

Understanding this Supreme Being is essential for effective evangelism, especially considering that ATR has historically facilitated the spread of the gospel in Africa.²⁰⁷

The African God may be viewed as monotheistic if He has not relinquished His authority and dominion to subordinate deities. The concept of an African monotheistic God can be upheld, provided He is not seen as indifferent to human issues and the cosmos. The confidence in a Supreme Being within African Traditional Religion (ATR) is unequivocal. In ATR, immediate needs-based prayers are directed toward lower deities rather than the Supreme Being. Adewuya,²⁰⁸ Wariboko,²⁰⁹ and Meyer²¹⁰ describe the relationship with the Christian God as an abstract response to prayer that tends to be slow, stemming from the inaccessibility of this God. This perception has led neo-Pentecostals to incorporate ritualistic prayer in hopes of achieving greater efficacy and effectiveness.

Pentecostal Theology and Spirituality

Pentecostals are typically people of the Spirit,²¹¹ expressing this spirituality primarily through prayer, especially in the Spirit.²¹² As prayer serves as the chief theological action for Pentecostals, contextualising their theology may seem subjective. Since nearly all Pentecostal activities centre around the Spirit, believers must remain continually filled to receive divine guidance that leads them into all truth through prayer. The Spirit-driven Ghanaian Pentecostal spirituality is thus characterised as pneumato-liturgical, pneumato-biblical, pneumato-democratic, and theocratic. Consequently, the Spirit directs the liturgy of their services, provides a hermeneutical understanding of the Bible, and encourages widespread participation during services and leadership roles within the Church. Furthermore, Pentecostals hold that the Holy Spirit initiates the sanctification process at conversion, and as such, speaking in tongues should lead to a life characterised by holiness in various aspects, including dress, ministry, giving, and discipline. Thus, Pentecostal spirituality and theology are intrinsically intertwined, forming two sides of the same coin—mutually complementary and reciprocally dependent; one cannot be fully understood without reference to the other. Thus, Pentecostal spirituality is “a means by which a person

²⁰⁷ Joel D. Heck, “Praeparatio Evangelica,” in C. S. Lewis: *Light-Bearer in the Shadowlands*, ed. Angus J. L. Menuge, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Wheaton: Crossway, 1987), 3.

²⁰⁸ Ayodeji J. Adewuya, “The Spiritual Powers of Ephesians 6:10-18 in the Light of African Pentecostal Spirituality,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 22, no. 2 (2012): 251–58.

²⁰⁹ Nimi Wariboko, “Pentecostalism in Africa,” Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History, last modified October 26, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.120>.

²¹⁰ Birgit Meyer, “Religious and Secular, ‘Spiritual’ and ‘Physical’ in Ghana,” in *What Matters? Ethnographies of Values in a (Not so) Secular Age*, ed. Courtney Bender and Ann Taves (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 86–115.

²¹¹ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*.

²¹² Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism Origins and Development Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005).

elevates the inner self through a deeper connection with the divinity, society, fellowship, or group, to achieve physical and spiritual growth and satisfaction; and discover meaning for life, both physically and transcendentally.”²¹³

Pentecostal theology is intricate and multifaceted. The complexities of Pentecostal spirituality become evident when they seek to theologise their prayer, which is motivated by an effective Spirit element experienced through the Holy Spirit. Buertey conceptualises Pentecostal theology in this research as a fourfold framework: rooted in the Trinitarian theology of God, the Christocentric Full Gospel, the experience of the Spirit, and the Bible. Understanding the nature of God is essential for grasping pneumatic theology, Christology, and biblical interpretation within Pentecostalism. Thus, prayer serves as a vital link between humanity and God, facilitated by the Spirit, Christ, and the Scriptures. As a Spirit-driven practice, Pentecostal prayer can manifest in various forms—through intelligible words, in silence, or as unintelligible utterances.²¹⁴ Classical Pentecostals believe that the concept of the Spirit propels their prayer from contemplation through meditation to *glossolalia*.²¹⁵ Pentecostals express their aspirations to God through diverse forms, such as praise, thanksgiving, confession, worship, intercession, petition, inquiry, spiritual warfare, healing, exorcism, blessing, and Holy Spirit prayer, all aimed at manifesting miracles and calling upon divine assistance for humanity. Furthermore, Pentecostals view ‘the Lord’s Prayer’ as both comprehensive and succinct, asserting that it encapsulates a wealth of ideas within few words, functioning as a compound metaphoric PUSSEH (pray until something spectacular happens) and PULL (pray until let loose) prayer.²¹⁶

Thus, Pentecostal theology on prayer seeks a cognitive understanding of its purpose and examines its epistemology, practices, viewpoints, and beliefs. It also involves recognising the ontology of prayer by comprehending its nature, concepts, forms, and praxis through the adoption of affirmative activities and Christian prayer experiences. According to Buertey, Ghanaian Pentecostal prayer is described as “transactionally Trinitarian,” “heuristically experiential,” “lyrically doxological,” “biblically consequential,” and “spontaneously glossolalic.”²¹⁷ Neo-Pentecostal prayers are often loud, shouted, and accompanied by drums and music, believed to attract God’s attention.²¹⁸

²¹³ Buertey, “Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities,” 284.

²¹⁴ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 170.

²¹⁵ Buertey, “Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities,” 207

²¹⁶ Peter Rigwell Joe-Andah, *Plugged into the Power of Prayer: The Greatest Untapped Power on Earth* (Sydney: The Church of Pentecost, Australia, 2018), 18.

²¹⁷ Buertey, “Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities,” 298.

²¹⁸ Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, “Prophetic Practices in Contemporary Pentecostalism in Ghana,” *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* 6 (2015): 57.

Neo-Pentecostals believe that many individuals engage in prayer, and to capture God's attention, one must "out-shout" others, expressing their needs through intense emotional outbursts, both physically and with the use of biblical texts. They adhere to a Christological model of prayer, emulating Jesus, who prayed loudly during his time on earth – experiencing deep groans (Heb. 5:7-8) and sweating profusely (Lk. 22:44), often retreating to mountains and secluded places (Lk. 22:44).²¹⁹ Pentecostals assert that prayer can compel demons to flee (Lk. 4:35; Mk. 9:25), challenge the names of demons (Mk. 5:7-8), and involve physical acts, such as placing hands in someone's ears and touching their tongue (Mk. 7:32-35).

Continuities and Discontinuities of ATR on Pentecostal Prayer

Walls²²⁰ and Bediako²²¹ have argued that African Pentecostalism shares similarities with African indigenous religions. Just as traditional Africans are wary of negativity in their environment due to their cosmological understanding of evil, neo-Pentecostals are similarly driven by prayer.²²² This suspicion of evil fosters an affinity for transactions, rites, and rituals within the African context, impacting spirituality and drawing individuals toward neo-prophetic churches rather than classical Pentecostal ones.

Due to the belief among Africans that evil permeates all aspects of existence, African Indigenous religious practices such as *akwankyerε* (medium consultants), *mpata* (pacification), and *banbo* (divine counsel and protection) have emerged within the neo-Pentecostal and neo-prophetic landscape as a means of overcoming the nocturnal activities of the evil one. These practices have led to the rise of neo-prophetic figures, known as "prayer giants," who have created 'prayer markets' as a form of 'prayer outsourcing', and 'prayer monetisation' as described by Buertey.²²³ Nel draws a parallel between these 'neo-prophetic giants' and the 'witch doctors'²²⁴ in the African indigenous religious systems. Just as individuals within these indigenous communities may seek out a witch doctor when they perceive that 'witchcraft' is obstructing their prayers, neo-Pentecostals similarly turn to a 'prayer giant or prophet' as a crucial intermediary in their spiritual journey.²²⁵ Thus, many Ghanaians turn to neo-prophets for guidance when they face unusual illnesses, encounter obstacles in their pursuit of prosperity, or believe they are hindered by witchcraft or ancestral

²¹⁹ James Osei Amaniampong, "The Prayer Ministry of Jesus and the Early Church" (paper presented at the CoP Prayer Leader's Seminar at PCC, Accra, 2013), 14.

²²⁰ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 1.

²²¹ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 1.

²²² Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 35.

²²³ Buertey, "Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities," 244.

²²⁴ Marius Nel, "African Pentecostal Spirituality as a Mystical Tradition: How Regaining Its Roots Could Benefit Pentecostals," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76, no. 4 (2020): 1-10.

²²⁵ Girish Daswani, *Looking Back, Moving Forward: Transformation and Ethical Practices in the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

spirits. This practice reflects a continuity of African indigenous religion.²²⁶ In Ghana, the neo-prophetic prayer leaders play a central role in prayer activities and commercial responses. These emerging neo-prophetic practices, which encompass sacramental, transactional, ecstatic, and imprecatory prayers, have contributed to the ongoing influence of African Indigenous Religion within contemporary neo-Pentecostalism.

Despite this, there are discontinuities in African indigenous religious systems within neo-Pentecostal prayer, as not all neo-prophetic practices are grounded in African indigenous religions; instead, some practices align more closely with the broader global Christian tradition.²²⁷ For instance, although singing, drumming, dancing, and the use of instruments are closely linked to the spiritual activities of Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals, and neo-prophetic groups, all other mainstream churches also incorporate these elements into their worship. Indeed, one could argue that the soul of Africans is akin to music, with a strong inclination to dance at the sound of it. However, it would be unfair to describe Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal, or neo-prophetic praise, worship, and dancing as an absolute continuity of African indigenous practices and religions.²²⁸

The above characteristics, therefore, affirm the writings of Walls and Bediako that there are continuities and discontinuities regarding the Pentecostal inclination towards African traditional practices and religion.²²⁹²³⁰ It can be established that although the quest for supernatural encounters and the desire for healing, breakthroughs, and deliverances are fundamentally rooted in African indigenous religion, there are discontinuities in specific ceremonial practices, sacrifices, and divinations that contrast with Pentecostal practices.²³¹

Conclusions

This research investigated the conceptual framework of Pentecostal theology of prayer, focusing on its intrinsic spirituality and the interplay with elements of African traditional spirituality. The study identifies that a pivotal aspect of Pentecostal spirituality is the concept of “prayer in the Holy Ghost,” underscoring its foundational

²²⁶ Daswani, *Looking Back, Moving Forward*, 15.

²²⁷ Joseph Teye Ignatius Buertey and Len D. Hansen, “Keeping Time: Prayers and Social Vitality in the Ashanti Aɔaɛ Festival,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 36, no. 4 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2024.2391761>.

²²⁸ Buertey, “Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities,” 244.

²²⁹ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 1.

²³⁰ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 1.

²³¹ Joseph T.I. Buertey, Len D. Hansen, and Lord E. Donkor, “A Theological Review of the Religio-Cultural Practices of Prayer and Social Identity of the Asantes during the Aɔaɛ Festival,” *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2023): 145–63, <https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-7644/2023/v4n2a8>.

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

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