

Convoluting Pentecost? An Analysis of Akan Indigenous Worldviews in Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Praxes

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Abstract

In this paper, I argue that the reason for the success and the failure of Pentecostalism on the African continent, particularly in Ghana, is because of its interaction with the Akan indigenous cosmology. A critical examination of this on-going phenomenon begs the question as to whether this interaction between Akan indigenous and Pentecostal worldviews could be convoluted, considering the myriads of practices that take place in churches identified with this strand of Christianity? There is also a critical examination of the sociological posture of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches arising from its praxes and the needed socio-theological response to correct them.

KEY WORDS: Akan, Pentecostal, Indigenous Religions, Sociotheological, Culture, Sociological Posture, Continuity, Charismatic

Introduction

Perhaps as its antecedent in the biblical narrative, Pentecost was marked with some kind of confusion when there was ‘a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind’, ‘cloven tongues of fire’ on those gathered at the upper room, each filled with the Holy Spirit as each was given utterance’, and people from different countries around the world gathered, could hear the sermon of the Apostle Peter in their own language and asked, ‘what is the meaning of this? It seems that the same question is fundamentally still being asked by observers and some insiders alike of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches due to some problematic praxes within the churches.

In spite of trying to make sense of some of the problematic praxes, in the last half century Pentecostal-Charismatic churches have become dominant on the landscape of Christianity in Africa and Ghana in particular. These Churches often described as Pentecostal-Charismatic now ‘defy any rigid categorization since a whole range of churches, which emphasise the continuous reality of the power and manifestations of the Holy Spirit in church life qualify to be described as Pentecostal-Charismatic’.¹

¹ Kwabena J. Amanor, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Ghana and the African Culture: Confrontation or Compromise”? *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18, (2009): 123–140.

‘African Pentecostalism’ has been described as a term used very broadly to include ‘Pentecostal mission churches’ which was started by white Pentecostal missionaries in the early twentieth century. ‘Independent Pentecostal churches’ initiated by native Africans, and ‘indigenous Pentecostal-type churches’ have historically, theologically been linked liturgically with the Pentecostal movement, all of which highlight the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit in the church.²

Pentecostalism in Ghana has similar characteristics. It involves Western mission initiated or Western sponsored churches such as the Assemblies of God Churches, the Apostolic Church and the Church of Pentecost; Prophet-healing or indigenous churches initiated by Africans, collectively known as, African Initiated Churches (AICs), such as, the Apostles Revelations Society, and the Musama Disco Christo Church, and the latter day independent charismatic churches, the leading ones including the International God’s Way Church, Victory Bible Church, International Central Gospel Church, Believers of Anointed Palace Chapel, Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre Church, Royalhouse Chapel International, Action Chapel International, Perez Chapel International, the Lighthouse Chapel, International and the Calvary Charismatic Church. The Pentecostal-charismatic renewal has claimed the largest following in Africa, moving into every denomination of the Church. It has become one of the most significant expressions of Christianity in Africa.³

This phenomenal growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches has led to creation of more ‘sacred spaces’ for these congregations where purpose built leisure centres, schools, offices, and industrial buildings are being converted partly or entirely into sacred places of worship.⁴ Perhaps this is because of the shift in the point of greatest importance and activity of the Christian faith in Africa⁵. The astounding growth of African Christianity since the turn of the twentieth century has served to confirm Barrett’s observation that ‘by AD 2000 the centre of gravity of the Christian faith would have shifted markedly southwards, not only resulting in Christianity becoming the dominant religion of Africa, but also its context would transform into a primarily non-Western faith.’⁶

Further, the reason Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity has earned the credential of being a non-Western faith is paradoxically rooted in its immediate religious past. The Indigenous religions of Africa, have acted both as midwife and mother of Pentecostalism. In other words, the Indigenous religions created viable contexts for its emergence and subsequent growth. However, the indigenous religious context also poses significant challenges to Pentecostalism where certain indigenous practices have found its way into the latter. I examine the ethos of the African Indigenous Religions, focusing on Akan Indigenous Cosmologies and Communities as a context, and specifically analyse examples of the indigenous religious world views in Pentecostal praxis such as:

² A.H. Anderson, “BAZALWANE: African Pentecostals in South Africa”, in A.H. Anderson, *African Pentecostalism and the Ancestors: Confrontation or Compromise?*, A Paper read at the Annual Conference of the Southern African Missiological Society, January (1993): 2.

³ Gerrie te Haar, “Standing Up for Jesus: A Survey of New Developments in Christianity in Ghana”, *Exchange* 23.3 (1994): 221-40; Asamoah-Gyadu, J. K. ‘The Church in the African State: The Pentecostal/Charismatic Experience in Ghana’, *Journal of African Christian Thought* 1.2 (1998): 51-57 (51); Gifford Paul, *African Christianity: Its Public Role*. (London: Hurst, 1998), pp. 31.

⁴ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics : Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana*. (Leiden : Brill, 2005), pp. 27.

⁵ David B. Barrett, "Ad 2000 : 350 Million Christians in Africa," *International Review of Mission* 59, 233 (1970).

⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, “African Charismatics”, pp.9.

divination, warding off of malevolent spirits, spiritual power demonstration and libation recitations in one breath; the dangers of the contemporary sociological posture of the churches; and the practical socio-theological response to avoid permanent damage to Pentecostalism.

Akan Indigenous Cosmologies and Communities in Context

The Akans form the largest ethnic group in Ghana. They include the Akyem, Asante, Akwamu, Akuapem, Brong, Assin, Denkyira, Wassa who speak the Twi language. The core of the religious ideas of the Akan can be applicable to the various ethnic groups of Ghana and generally to the traditional African perception of reality as a whole.⁷ The Akan hold the view that their world is inhabited by powerful supernatural forces that affect their daily lives in the realm of the living either for evil or for good. The interaction between the spirit realm and the realm of humans gives room to mediums such as priests and priestesses (Akomfo) of the shrines, medicine men (Adinsifo), to play a mediatory role between the world of humans and of the spirits. The Akan hold a dualistic world-view that is 'interpenetrating and inseparable, yet with distinguishable parts.'⁸ Meaning, the Akan believe in the existence of two worlds, which are in constant interaction with one another, and occurrences in each affect the other and yet are distinct from each other. The two realms are engaged through revelations and responses as humans search for salvation in a precarious world'.⁹

Besides the expressions of their relationships with these distinct but interpenetrating worlds, the Akan believe in one Supreme Being who is *Onyankopon*.¹⁰ This is contrary to the observations of the early missionaries, that the Akan's are polytheistic.¹¹ However, there are gods who serve as mediums between the supreme being and them. These entities have varying levels of involvement and reverence in the life of the people from domestic to community-wide roles.

The idea that the gods are involved in the community of the, is emulated by the Akan who sees himself or herself first as an integral part of a community before considering his or her individuality.¹² This sense of community is essential to the existence of Ghanaian traditional societies, because it defines its shared humanity on the basis of communality. It is to that effect that Mbiti in his *African Religions and Philosophy*, states that:

Traditional religions are not primarily for the individual but for his community of which he is part. To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do

⁷ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, "The Nature of Continuity and Discontinuity of Ghanaian Pentecostal Concept of Salvation in African Cosmology", *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5, 1 (2002):88.

⁸ Cyril C. Okorochoa, *The Meaning of Religious Conversion in Africa : The Case of the Igbo of Nigeria*. (Aldershot : Avebury, 1987): 52.

⁹ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "The Evil You Have Done Can Ruin the Whole Clan?: African Cosmology, Community, and Christianity in Achebe's Things Fall Apart", *Studies in World Christianity* 16, 1 (2010): 52.

¹⁰ Johannes Christaller, *Theology and Identity : The Impact of Culture Upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa*. (Oxford : Regnum Books, 1992): 291-292.

¹¹ Edward Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion : Illustrated from the Beliefs and Practices of the Yoruba, Ewe, Akan and Kindred Peoples*. (London : Epworth Press, 1949., 1949): 12.

¹² Harry Sawyerr and John Parratt, *The Practice of Presence* (Grand Rapids : W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996): 117.

so involve participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community, and in traditional society there are no irreligious people. A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kinships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence. To be without one of these corporate elements of life is to be out of the whole picture.¹³

To complete the cycle of harmony in any community there is the need to be at peace with the gods and with fellow members of one's community. The ancestors are happy, the vital force is strong, and there is harmony in the land and in creation.¹⁴ And any individual said to disturb this harmony could be seen as an enemy of the community, as epitomised by Okwonko, a character in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.¹⁵ Instances where cosmic disharmony and imbalance occur, the elders and leaders of families and clans resort to appeasing the ancestors and god's by performing certain specific rituals to avert the imminent consequences.

Indigenous Religions Contexts and Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches

There have been scholars such as Miller who in the past have described African societies as animistic and claimed that the recognition of spirits in their cosmology means that they serve many spirits and therefore the emphasis of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostalism, 'has a liberating impact on people who experience themselves as being controlled by multiple spirits'.¹⁶ Others trivialise the whole phenomenon of the growth and rapid spread of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches as an 'Americanisation', which shows the lack of understanding of African indigenous societies.¹⁷ These assertions in themselves undermine the understanding of Gifford, Miller and other Western observers and writers about the context within which these Pentecostal-Charismatics find their expression - the indigenous African society. This lack of understanding by Western scholars such as Gifford is the source of the agitation for a Christianity that fit into the African religious worldview.¹⁸

Contrary to these Western scholars, Pentecostalism may have partially fulfilled the conditions for growth for any religion in our world today: its ability 'to include and transform at least certain elements of preexisting religions, which still retain a strong grip on the cultural subconscious demands', and its predisposition to 'equip people to live in rapidly changing societies'.¹⁹

¹³ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*. (London : Heinemann, 1969), pp. 2.

¹⁴ Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion : The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll : Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 81.

¹⁵ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart / Chinua Achebe*, African Writers Series: 1 (London : Heinemann, 1958).

¹⁶ Donald Miller, "The New Face of Global Christianity: The Emergence of the Progressive Pentecostalism" An interview published by the Pew Research Centre, April 2006. See <http://www.pewforum.org/2006/04/12/the-new-face-of-global-christianity-the-emergence-of-progressive-pentecostalism>. Accessed on 25.10.2015.

¹⁷ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role*. (Hurst; Indiana Univ Pr, 1998).

¹⁸ Ogbu U. Kalu "Yabbing the Pentecostals: Paul Gifford's Image of Ghana's New Christianity", *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* 15, 1 (2005), pp. 3-15.

¹⁹ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*. (London: Cassell, 1996), pp. 219.

To this end, it is therefore not surprising that the beliefs and praxis of Pentecostal-Charismatics in Ghana has been influenced by the indigenous religions, as the world-view developed by people within the concurrent and intertwining contexts of the indigenous religions and Christianity persist with them and cannot be repressed. Fields note, 'though it is not difficult by warfare, foreign administration, modern industry and other means, to smash up an ancient religious organisation, the ideas which sustained it are not easily destroyed. They are only disbanded, vagrant and unattached. But given sufficient sense of need, they will mobilise again'²⁰. Therefore, it makes sense to say, Pentecostalism is an inculturated Christianity.²¹ As its history of recent times suggests that there has been a blurring of the differences that were so prominent regarding liturgy and practice of mainline historic churches from that of the neo-Pentecostal churches.²² The indigenous religious worldviews to an extent have shaped the beliefs and practices of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, and this trend has not been confined to Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. It is a 'supra-denominational phenomenon, because of the appeal to primal expectations'.²³ Further, Gyekye encapsulates this fact of this discussion by stating that,

Traditional African religions do not appear to be concerned about the kind of life that will be led by the immortal soul. They present no elaborate doctrines about what are referred to in other religions as 'the last things' (in Western Theology, 'eschatology') ... In silence to the contrast on matters relating to the destiny of the soul in afterlife, the emphasis on the pursuit and attainment of human well-being in this world is unrelenting.²⁴

Considering the fact that Indigenous religions have shaped Pentecostal-Charismatic beliefs, it is not surprising that the focus of these Pentecostal-Charismatic churches is on the existential realities of their members and not so much of the afterlife, although they believe in an afterlife. This assertion is contrary to the claim that 'despite social change, African traditions manage to hold its own against new influences', creating the erroneous impression that these Christianity and African Indigenous religions are antagonistic to each other, and are not affected by their co-existence, not to talk about its reshaping of one another.²⁵ In many instances the two religions are held side by side in the communities.²⁶

²⁰ M. J. Field, "Some New Shrines of the Gold Coast and Their Significance", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 13, 2 (1940):138-149.

²¹ Allan Anderson, "Evangelism and the Growth of Pentecostalism in Africa", http://www.artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/publications/evangelism_and_the_growth_of_pen.htm. Accessed on 25.06.2018.

²² Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal of the Mainline Churches in Ghana*. (Boekencentrum: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum Zoetermeer, 2002), pp. 330.

²³ Emmanuel K. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*. (Accra: CPCS. 2001), pp. 44-45.

²⁴ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sakofa Publishing Company, 1998), pp. 14.

²⁵ John S. Pobee and Emmanuel H. Mends, "Social Change and African Traditional Religion," *SA: Sociological Analysis* 38, no. 1 (1977): 1-17.

²⁶ Pobee and Mends, "Social Change and African Traditional Religion", p.5.

Comparative Analysis of Indigenous Religious Worldviews in Pentecostal-Charismatic Praxes

The mutual influences of Akan Indigenous religions on Pentecostalism and vice versa seems more conciliatory than it is an interposition. It is worth noting that names given to certain indigenous religious practices are different from what they are called in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches although the practices are strikingly similar and to the same end. The comparative analysis is done of some specific praxes of the Akan Indigenous religions and Pentecostal-Charismatics.

Divination and Prophetic Consultation

The idea of spiritual causation is an integral part of the life of the Akan and therefore drives them towards divination. To the Akan, not only does divination take place to understand past events, it also serves as an enquiry into causes that cannot be explained, things unknown hidden from sight or removed in space, appropriate conduct in critical situations, including the healing of illness, determining the times and modes of religious worship, making choices of persons of particular tasks and of future events²⁷. Divination is practiced in many different forms even among the Akans. Amongst the Akan the priests of the shrines also serves as diviners who have days set aside for personal consultations with clients.

The kinds of problems, for which people go to see indigenous priests are diverse and the people come from diverse backgrounds. The advertisement of services on their website portray them to play multiple functional roles for their clients and adherents. Such roles include: a doctor, nurse, counsellor, finance manager, seer, and a mediator among others²⁸. Many of the practices discussed above of the indigenous religions is very similar to what correspondingly play out among the neo-Pentecostals. Among Pentecostal-Charismatics, the practice of seeking the cause of evil occurrences, power to deal with it or to avert any future reoccurrence and the search for one's destiny through divination has been designated 'prophetism'.²⁹ Again Indigenous religions and the Pentecostal-Charismatics, both have strong leadership and control over their 'organisations' and their followers revere them as such. These individuals according to Baeta:

Are endowed with a striking personality and the ability to impose his own will on others believing himself, and believed by others to be a special agent of some supernatural being or force, will emerge from time to time and secure a following. Powers traditionally credited to such persons, of healing, revealing hidden things, predicting the future, cursing and blessing effectually, etc., will be attributed to him whether he claims them or not. Some will make a more successful showing than others. Such things as the above-mentioned endowment, inward illumination, a sense of divine vocation, spontaneous enthusiasm . . . are facts of life and have their effects in African society.³⁰

²⁷Barbara Tedlock, "Divination as a Way of Knowing: Embodiment, Visualisation, Narrative, and Interpretation", *Folklore* 112, 2 (2001):189.

²⁸ See list of functions and areas of expertise at <http://www.kwakubonsam.com/service.php>

²⁹ Cephias N. Omenyo, "Man of God Prophesy Unto Me: The Prophetic Phenomenon in African Christianity," *Studies in World Christianity* 17, 1 (2011): 30.

³⁰ C. G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana : A Study of Some "Spiritual" Churches*. (London : S.C.M. Press, 1962), pp. 6.

They have positioned themselves as religious specialist who are in ‘touch with the source and channels of power in the universe’³¹ and can therefore provide direction popularly known as ‘*akwankyerɛ*’ to individuals to avert calamities. In a sense they believe God can do all things, because he rules the universe and everything in it. The description given by Baeta of these prophets seems to fit the description likely to be given to the indigenous religions priests. It must be stated that Baeta in his research was referring to the leaders of the African initiated Churches who are referred to as the ‘*Sunsum Sore*’ whose leaders were mostly referred to as prophets. Although there a lot of similarities that can be drawn between the Pentecostal-Charismatic prophets and that of the *Sunsum Sore*, not many Pentecostal-Charismatic leaders may want to be associated with the former. The reason being that these leaders claim the practices of sumsum Sore are very much similar to the Indigenous religions.

However, these Pentecostal-Charismatic prophets can be said to have taken on the characteristics and form of the priests within a different agency in order to maintain relevance to their adherents and followers. For that matter, the exercise of authority as a special agent of some supernatural being or force with certain spiritual endowments moved seamlessly from the indigenous religious priests to the Pentecostal-Charismatics with ingenuity. Notwithstanding, the perception of a convoluted Pentecostal-Charismatic praxes of observers.

Warding off Malevolent Spirits and Deliverance

In as much as the warding off of malevolent spirits has been a dominant feature in indigenous religious practices, it looks as though there has been a shift of this practice to the Pentecostal-Charismatics. That is not to suggest that the practice no longer features in Akan Indigenous religions but has been legitimised through a different agency, which is the Pentecostal-Charismatics. The indigenous religious belief of spiritual causality explains every situation of mishap and misfortune as having a spiritual source. Therefore, present difficulties and suffering of an individual can be equated to an ancestral or generational curse. This kind of religious expression as mentioned earlier has found its way into the worldview of Pentecostal-Charismatics. Asamoah-Gyadu states that in response to the indigenous belief in generational or ancestral curses as expressed by the elder of the shrine, ‘African Pentecostals, through the ministry of "healing and deliverance", provide the ritual context within which such presumably "irreversible curses" on people's lives are broken by the power of the Spirit, in order that victims may be freed to enjoy the abundance of life that is available in Christ’,³² There is however resurgence through a conscious repackaging effort to claim originality of the practice.

A 2010 survey by the Association of Religion Data Archive state the 19.3% of the population in Ghana are adherents of Indigenous religions as against 61.2% being Christians. The statistics show a decline in the patronage of the Indigenous religions. The problem of the statistics quoted above is that, where does it place the Afrikania Mission which registers as a church and yet have beliefs and practices that are a synthesis of the Indigenous religions and Christianity.

³¹ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa : The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp. 106.

³²J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Mission to "Set the Captives Free": Healing, Deliverance, and Generational Curses in Ghanaian Pentecostalism", *International Review of Mission* 93 (2004): 391.

Within Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, an easy adaptability of Pentecostal theology to different cultural situations partly accounts for its success in African countries such as Ghana with its traditional 'super-naturalistic worldviews'. Historic mission Christianity has generally been dismissive of African traditional world-views on the reality of demons and witchcraft as figments of people's imagination. Pentecostalism, on the other hand, evokes powerful responses in Africa because it affirms the "enchanted" worldview of indigenous peoples by taking these views seriously, and presenting an interventionist theology through which the fears and insecurities of African Christians are dealt with.³³ There is however an impression created by Onyinah, as though the momentum for deliverance from witchcraft influences has shifted entirely from the Indigenous religious practitioners to the Pentecostal-Charismatics and that view is problematic.³⁴

Therefore, the adoption of deliverance ministry within the Pentecostal churches have not necessarily replaced the anti-witchcraft shrines, although it is acknowledged that there has been some significant shift. This may be due to aesthetic reasons such as the environment within which the exorcism or deliverance take place, and not the efficacy.

Spiritual Power Display through Miracles

Leslie Newbigin, outlines three main persuasions in the history of the Christian church based on their theological distinctive. He states that Roman Catholicism emphasises on structure, ritual and the sacraments, 'orthodox' Protestantism focuses on the centrality of scripture, and Pentecostalism has a pivotal belief that 'the Christian life is a matter of the experienced power and presence of the Holy Spirit today'.³⁵ Nevertheless, the African Pentecostal experience has been very peculiar because of its emphasis on power, which is informed by its 'cultural context that holds ardently to belief in a universe alive with benevolent and malevolent powers'.³⁶ As a result, 'Christians in Africa have found the categories of power, dominion and alleviation of suffering by the power of the Spirit relevant in the general struggle with fears and insecurities within a universe in which supernatural evil is considered hyperactive'.³⁷ Some Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and their leaders believe that Christians need to be experiencing the 'power of God' as a sign of differentiation from the rest of the world's religions and often use biblical motifs such as Elijah and the widow at Zarephath; Moses and the crossing of the Red Sea; Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus; Paul and Silas release from prison.³⁸

As scholars such as Asamoah-Gyadu, Corten and Marshall-Fratani have stated, the practices, which make the neo-Pentecostal churches unique are defined within this prevailing context. Kalu goes further to emphasise by inference how strong the influence of the indigenous religions has been in the shaping of African Pentecostalism and yet

³³ Gifford, "African Christianity: Its Public Role", pp. 329.

³⁴ Opoku Onyinah, "Deliverance as a Way of Confronting Witchcraft in Modern Africa: Ghana as a Case History", *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5, 1 (2002): 109-110.

³⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church*. (London : SCM Press, 1964), pp. 95.

³⁶ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Signs, Wonders, and Ministry: The Gospel in the Power of the Spirit", *Evangelical Review of Theology* 33, 1 (2009): 33.

³⁷ André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost : Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*. (London : Hurst, 2001), pp. 5.

³⁸ Information obtained from <http://www.royalhousechapel.org/Events.aspx>. Accessed on 20 June 2011.

these ardent followers have succeeded to ‘creatively weave the Christ figure into the African universe as the person who could rescue, the *Agyenkwa*, as the Akans would say’.³⁹ Kalu is mindful of the influence of Indigenous religions in reshaping Africa Christianity, but he is not however dismissive of the fact that these indigenous religions continue to thrive and their respective practitioners undoubtedly are still in the business of displaying power and working miracles.

Pentecostalism provides alternate ritual contexts within which the consequences of evil and spirit possession may be dealt with. Thus in Ghana, the Pentecostal-Charismatic phenomenon of healing and deliverance has been consciously integrated into the evangelising efforts of many Christian traditions, pressurising even historic mission denominations to hold national evangelistic crusades that emphasise the power of the gospel in acts of deliverance⁴⁰. This assertion and that of the Indigenous adherents, indicates that Pentecostal-Charismatic churches have not replaced the indigenous religious beliefs and practice or even edged them out of the business of providing supernatural solutions to people’s problems but rather held side by side. And where this similarity is drawn is where on the surface Pentecostalism may seem convoluted. One thing without question though is that, the Pentecostal message of God’s life-giving power, which delivers from evil and allows one to feel safe in a hostile world, is relevant to the existential world of Africa⁴¹.

Libation and its language use in prayer

A poignant feature of indigenous religions as expressed by its practitioners is libation. It is the pouring of alcoholic drink or water or even both at times, or the offering of food to the spirit-beings, all this done with prayer and incantation. ‘Libation is poured by the individual or social group to his or their own ancestors. To pour libation to another’s ancestors is considered most inhospitable, indeed hostile and amounting to a declaration of war on the ancestors of another group. This is because libation is another reminder that the family consists of the living, the dead and unborn’.⁴² Libation as in Christian prayer is an acknowledgement of the dependence of the living on supernatural forces that exist in the Akan universe. Libation characterises almost every facet and aspect of life of the Akan. For instance, ‘before and after travel, libation is poured to the ancestors to seek their blessings or in thanksgiving for the blessings on the journey. On such occasions there is no need for a ritual specialist to make the sacrifice’⁴³. As illustrated with my grandmother’s anecdote individuals could pour libation privately for different purposes and needs. On the other hand, Pobee adds that ‘at the tribal level the cult of the ancestors is mediated by a ritual specialist such as the chief, linguist or priest’.⁴⁴

Libation is poured in the presence of others who utter their concurrence with the sentiments of the prayer in such phrases as *Ampaara*, it is the truth or *Yonn*, yes, indeed⁴⁵;

³⁹ O. U. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism : An Introduction*. (New York : Oxford University Press, 2008., 2008), pp. ix.

⁴⁰ Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Signs, Wonders, and Ministry: The Gospel in the Power of the Spirit", pp. 36.

⁴¹ Yusufu Turaki, *Christianity and African Gods: A Method in Theology*, Wetenskaplike Bydraes Van Die Pu Vir Cho. Reeks F2, Brosjyre Van Die Instituut Vir Reformatoriese Studies (Potchefstroom, South Africa: PU vir CHO, 1999), pp. 281.

⁴² Pobee, “Aspects of African Traditional Religion”, pp.10.

⁴³ Ibid. pp.10

⁴⁴ Ibid. pp.10

⁴⁵Pobee, “Aspects of African Traditional Religion,” pp.11.

Siompa, truly or *wyie*, well spoken. In other words, such ejaculations are the Amen of the congregation to the address to the spirit-beings which is also an occurrence in Christian prayers especially among the neo-Pentecostals.⁴⁶

In the libation prayer, one would realise that reference is made to ‘the snake’ presumably ‘the snake-devil’ as presented in the Biblical narrative of the Adam and Eve being deceived by the devil in the garden. The inclusion of ‘the snake’ in the libation prayer narrative can be explained as a contemporary addition, which reflects the influence of Christianity on Indigenous religious practices.

Beyond certain individuals resorting to libation pouring, the language used by some members and congregation of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, can be said to have been borrowed from those practitioners who pour libation at community and state functions. The accompanying petition and supplications said during libation are often very rich in language vocabulary and carries nuances that depict the rich cultural heritage of the community.

Taking a view of the above praxes, there is no doubt that they give a convoluted outlook of Pentecostal-Charismatic beliefs and praxes in Ghana, where one would have thought that they were distinct from the Indigenous religions. This therefore may present a challenge for some who on the surface may just describe the praxes of Pentecostal-Charismatics as nothing new whilst others may also consider it as ingenuity from the perspective of contextualisation.

The Dangerous Sociological Posture of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Praxes

The convoluted outlook of Pentecostal-Charismatic praxes is not only as a result of the mixture of what could be considered from the Akan indigenous religions within its praxes. It is also however, the sociological posture the church has assumed within society.

The position of the influences of the Akan indigenous religions is known except that sometimes it is generalised without specific examples as indicated in the previous section. Approaching the sociological posture of the Pentecostal-Charismatic from a positivist perspective, the indigenous religions instil a sense of community in its members as the Akan sees themselves as part of a community before they consider their individuality. Unfortunately, some of these Pentecostal-Charismatic praxes such as deliverance, spiritual power display, prophetic consultation, and the adoption of libation prayer patterns within the churches has negatively affected families and in some instances torn them apart. Unlike the movement in Latin America in the immediate past;

The Pentecostal experience was credited with significant motivational change in members of both parent and satellite groups. The middle-class organizers began to conceive their task as conversion to Christ" instead of as "concern for the poor." The squatters began to abandon an individualistic materialism which emulates the middle class for an increasing communitarianism and pride of status.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid.pp.11

⁴⁷ Thomas J. Csordas, Religion and the World System: The Pentecostal Ethic and the Spirit of Monopoly Capital. *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1992): 3-24.

These Pentecostal-Charismatics have assumed a penchant for creating a class system through the display of material possessions, thus destroying the sense of community which the African indigenous communities have so guarded, a situation which Meyer has described as “an enmeshment with capitalism”.⁴⁸ This “enmeshment with capitalism” has created a subtle competition where some leaders of these Pentecostal-Charismatic churches publicise their new cars, homes, holiday travels to Europe, Asia and North America as a measure of God’s blessings and a result of their faithfulness to God. There have been instances where one “Man of God” after the other have imported Roll Royces to cement their superiority and in the process creating a class system through the struggles for superiority of who is most favoured and blessed by God.⁴⁹

Further to the fallout of this class system creation, these leaders of the churches have given themselves names to portray their effectiveness in dealing with the devil or friendliness with their members and the public at large, such as Kumchacha, whose real name is Nicholas Osei; Charismatic Don Shatta Wale, real name Rev Obofour.⁵⁰ Others have also move deeper into adopting names and designations which poses theological questions to the interpretation of the symbolisms used in specific biblical narratives, such as ‘Angel’ Daniel Obinim who claims has graduated from being a prophet to an Angel.⁵¹ The danger in these claims and lifestyle of these leaders poses a sociological problem in that, these material possessions are thought to be from God without making any allusions whatsoever to the monetary giving of their members. They derive their economic status that propels and establish them in a higher class in society from the socio-religious capital against the theology of “this earth is our home” as they preach.

Nevertheless, some of the churches and their leaders embark on other social intervention programmes such as the International Central Gospel Church’s Central Aid which has the largest scholarship Scheme for students in the country; Royallhouse Chapel’s Compassionate Ministry, which attends to prisoners and the homeless; Perez Chapel International, International Central Gospel Church and Action Chapel International for instance, have established Universities to assist in building of human capital for national development.

There have also been questions asked of “social interventions” such as giving out cars to already successful individuals normally streamed live via social media platforms in their Sunday services with huge audiences, which only goes to promote the pastors and their ministries.

The posture of these churches is exacerbated by the fact that, there are no known government-backed established regulatory body to provide check and balance for churches in Ghana. Therefore, although one could have thought that the traces of

⁴⁸ Birgit Meyer, Pentecostalism and Neo-Liberal Capitalism: Faith, Prosperity and Vision in African Pentecostal- Charismatic Churches, *Journal for the Study of Religion* 20, 2 (2009):5 – 28.

⁴⁹ Unknown, Rev. Obofour Also Shows Off His New Rolls-Royce Ghost And Other Collection Of Cars To Challenge Obinim. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/Angel-Obinim-acquires-a-Rolls-Royce-662560>; and also <http://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/showbiz/news/201806/355668.php>. Accessed 02.07.2018.

⁵⁰ See <https://yen.com.gh/107352-i-members-church-sunday-kumchacha-cries.html>; also <https://starrfmonline.com/2018/04/18/video-pastor-performs-taking-over-in-church>. Accessed on 03.07.2018.

⁵¹ See <https://www.pulse.com.gh/entertainment/angel-obinim-bishop-turns-40-here-are-12-controversial-things-about-him-id7226468.html>. Accessed 04.07.2018.

indigenous religious practices in Pentecostal-Charismatic praxes give it a convoluted outlook, it is this posture that confounds people and makes them to ask “what is the meaning of this”? This calls for a socio-theological response to this posture.

Practical Socio-Theological Response to De-convolute Pentecostal-Charismatic Praxes

The thinking of some of the founding figures of social studies—most notably Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Karl Marx as some points interrogated religion and social theories.⁵² Most of the sociological work on religion in the first half of the twentieth century, however, tended to be reductionist and unappreciative of the impact of religious ideas and imagery.⁵³ The result was that overtime sociologist excluded theology from their analysis until;

Roland Robertson could proclaim that a new departure in the field of sociology was developing that he dubbed “sociotheology.” What he had in mind was the kind of work done by Peter Berger in “The Social Construction of Reality and The Sacred Canopy,” and also by Robert Bellah in Tokugawa Religion and Beyond Belief, in taking seriously the religious dimension of social reality.⁵⁴

Ultimately, it is important for there to be “sociotheological turn” in analysing praxes of Pentecostal-Charismatics giving them a particular sociological posture in their communities. This would involve incorporating into the social analysis of these groups to attempt to understand the reality of their specific worldview.⁵⁵ Considering the indiscipline and in somewhat the social mayhem some of these Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in Ghana and their leaders have caused, there is the need for some kind of a sociological approach that does not merely acknowledges faith, but assist in changing the way social reality is perceived from a religious frame of reference and possibly the way religious reality is perceived from a social frame of reference. This may call for some politically-backed measures as part of the refereeing process to create cosmic harmony to preserve social structures.⁵⁶

⁵² Durkheim attempted to immerse himself in the thinking of tribal societies to understand the socioreligious significance of totemic symbols (Emile Durkheim. [1912] 1915. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph Ward Swain. New York: The Free Press.). *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells. New York: The Free Press; [1915] 1951. *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. New York: The Free Press; [1916]. 1958. *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*. New York: The Free Press.). Karl Marx took seriously the relationship of ideological frameworks of thought to social structure, especially in his analysis of the role of religion in the German peasant’s revolt (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. 1939. *The German Ideology*. Ed. R. Pascal. New York: International Publishers.).

⁵³ Mark Juergensmeyer, “The Sociotheological Turn”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81, 4, (2013): 939–948.

⁵⁴ Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*. New York, NY: Free Press. 1957.; Robert Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post- Traditional World*. New York, NY: Harper and Row. 1970. Peter Berger and Thmas Langman, *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York, NY: Anchor Books. 1967.; Peter Berger, *Religions in Global Society*. London, UK: Routledge. 2006.

⁵⁵ Mona Kanwal Sheikh, “Sociotheology: The Significance of Religious Worldviews”, E-International Relations, the world’s leading open access website for students and scholars of international politics. See https://www.e-ir.info/2015/12/14/sociotheology-the-significance-of-religious-worldviews/#_edn5. Accessed 02.07.2018.

These measures may include; the setting up of the United Kingdom style Charity Commission which regulates the conduct of churches and trustees of the churches according to the charity laws of the country. The Charity Commission has systems that collect data for monitoring and evaluation of the charities through annual returns and financial reporting.⁵⁷

The establishment of a similar entity as in the United Kingdom would assist the public to hold Pastors and leaders accountable to the trustees of the Pentecostal Charismatic churches. Also the Charities Commission by recommendation to government could pass legislation to develop some requisite qualifications criteria for leaders and pastors to be as in Rwanda to be set by the Charities commission as an agency of government.⁵⁸

Finally, there could be effective churches umbrella bodies which all church must belong. This regulatory body must be of theological repute to call to order deviant leaders and churches who violate social norms to undermine sound communal life to create a cosmic disharmony. The process could involve strengthening any existing on-going ecumenical discussion to straighten out issues of misconduct within these Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership as they could be familiar with the polity of the churches.⁵⁹

Summary and Conclusion

The niche of the Pentecostal-Charismatics has been their ability to place their belief and praxes within the Akan traditional context to make meaning to their converts. This fact lends credence to the observation that there exists some continuity of indigenous religious praxis in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana.

To this end it is clear that African indigenous religions are not an interposition but rather a conciliatory as they provide the Pentecostal-Charismatics the platform for their praxis within the sphere of African indigenous beliefs and praxis.

However, this conciliation makes Pentecostalism to look convoluted, because one would not expect to identify certain beliefs and practices of the Akan indigenous religions within the praxes of Pentecostal-Charismatics especially when they claim the holy scriptures as the main source of instruction. In addition, the sociological posture of Pentecostal-Charismatics in an attempt to differentiate from the Akan indigenous religions and to authenticate their ministries, has veered into acts that rather denigrate Christian ministry and to undermine their receptibility by the sections of society. These acts, have led to the construction and deepening of unhelpful social class system that is responsible for the feeling of despondency and neglect among the poor, which is alien to Akan indigenous religious societies. This in the process creates a cosmic disharmony as

⁵⁷ See Charities Commission in England and Wales at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prepare-a-charity-annual-return>.

⁵⁸ See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-43225067> and <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2018/04/26/rwandan-government-closes-6000-decrepit-churches-requires-degrees-for-pastors>. Accessed 01.07.2018.

⁵⁹ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, "African Pentecostalism in the Context of Global Pentecostal Ecumenical Fraternity: Challenges and Opportunities". *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 24, 2, (2002).

the Akan sees one's well-being directly linked to their relationship with others in the community and the ancestors and gods who are deemed closer to the supreme being.

These raised above, calls for a sociotheological response as a programme of action indicated above to complement existing efforts to mitigate the fallout from the Praxes and sociological posture of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana. It is a response to answer the question of "what is the meaning of this?", from both insiders and outsiders as it was case in the biblical narrative of what happened on the day of Pentecost.

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