



Bridging the fire: A Wesleyan lens on Pentecostal Theology and its implications for discipleship in the Methodist Church Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the growing Pentecostal and charismatic influence within The Methodist Church Ghana, with specific attention to renewal movements such as the “Prayer Tower.” Its purpose is to explore how Pentecostal spirituality can be constructively integrated into Methodist discipleship without compromising Wesleyan theological identity. The research adopted a qualitative, literature-based methodology grounded in hermeneutical and theological analysis, interpreting key Wesleyan and Pentecostal texts to identify convergences and divergences in doctrine and spirituality. Although limited by the absence of fieldwork, the study’s conceptual aim was to develop a theological framework for Spirit-led renewal within Ghana Methodism. Findings reveal shared emphases on sanctification, experiential faith, and openness to the Holy Spirit, alongside differences concerning Spirit baptism and *glossolalia*. The study proposes contextual strategies for integrating Pentecostal vitality through “Prayer Tower” fellowships, pneumatological education, and Spirit-empowered discipleship within Wesleyan ecclesiology. It recommends intentional theological dialogue, leadership training in charismatic discernment, and structured incorporation of spiritual gifts into Ghanaian Methodist worship and formation. The study contributes to scholarship by advancing Wesleyan–Pentecostal dialogue in Africa, providing a framework for charismatic integration in historic mission churches, and offering a model for Spirit-driven discipleship that bridges Wesleyan holiness with Pentecostal fervour for transformative renewal.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Wesleyan theology, Methodist Church Ghana, Holy Spirit, discipleship

INTRODUCTION

The Methodist Church Ghana (hereinafter, MCG) is experiencing a significant theological and liturgical transformation influenced by Pentecostal and charismatic currents. This phenomenon, termed the “charismatization” of mainline churches, is exemplified by congregants who blend Sunday Methodist

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PUBLICATION HISTORY - Received : 1st July, 2025 | Accepted: 3rd February, 2026 | Published: 31st March, 2026.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE - Afenyi-Donkor, Fiifi. “Bridging the fire: A Wesleyan lens on Pentecostal Theology and its implications for discipleship in the Methodist Church Ghana.” *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 12, no.2 (2026): <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20261224>

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worship with weekday participation in Pentecostal-style prayer meetings.¹ Within the MCG, this renewal is institutionalized through groups like “Prayer Tower”, whose objective is to reinvigorate worship through Pentecostal spiritual expressions.

While intended to revive what some regard as spiritually dormant churches, these charismatic expressions have stirred theological and liturgical tension. Critics have raised concerns over excessive emotionalism, loud prayer services, indiscriminate *glossolalia*, and the introduction of theologically questionable teachings.² Historically, MCG’s cessationist leanings create friction with such practices.³ The expulsion of William Egyanka Appiah in 1923 underscores this conflict. A Methodist catechist, Appiah was dismissed for exhibiting Pentecostal phenomena, including visions and prophecy; his subsequent founding of the Mussama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) stands as a pivotal moment in the rise of African Instituted Churches.⁴ His rejection by Methodist authorities, who viewed his spirituality as occult, reveals a long-standing absence of a robust theological framework for dealing with charismatic manifestations within MCG.

This study emerges in response to that gap, proposing a theological bridge through a Wesleyan reinterpretation of Pentecostalism. The aim is to explore whether Pentecostal spirituality can be harmonized with Wesleyan doctrine in a way that enriches discipleship and church vitality. Theologically, this proposal is not without precedent. Scholars such as Donald English have observed that Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification significantly influenced early Pentecostal theology.⁵ This suggests that the perceived antagonism between Methodist and Pentecostal traditions may stem from historical misinterpretations rather than fundamental doctrinal divergence. Indeed, the contemporary posture of the MCG reflects an increasing receptivity to Pentecostal-style renewal, with the Church’s 2021 theme “Teaching Everyone to Live Like Christ” underscored by a subtheme emphasizing “The Role of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).”⁶ This highlights an evolving ecclesial consciousness open to Spirit-led practices for the sake of spiritual and numerical growth. Thus, this study asks: Can a Wesleyan interpretation of Pentecostal theology offer a legitimate framework for charismatic renewal in the MCG that remains faithful to Methodist tradition? And further: Could such a synthesis foster discipleship and growth while safeguarding doctrinal integrity?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pentecostalism is among the most dynamic movements in contemporary global Christianity. The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* observes that it has “arguably been the fastest growing religious movement in the world.”⁷ In Ghana, where around 70 percent of the population identifies as Christian,⁸ Pentecostal and charismatic movements have significantly shaped the religious landscape. Their growth is fueled by transnational networks, personal religious experience, and decentralized evangelistic efforts.⁹

The missionary dynamism of Pentecostalism is grounded in Acts 1:8, linking the Holy Spirit’s empowerment to Christian witness.¹⁰ Pentecostal communities interpret this as a call to active mission,

¹ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 28-29.

² Paul Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity, New Edition: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (Indiana University Press, 2004), 5-8.

³ Allan H. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15-19.

⁴ Cephas Omenyo, “Man of the Spirit: The Life and Ministry of William Egyanka Appiah,” *Studies in World Christianity* 8, no. 2 (2002): 145–62.

⁵ Donald English, “Wesley, Fletcher, and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 30, no. 1 (2021): 181–205.

⁶ Methodist Church Ghana, “Annual Conference Theme Document,” *Accessed via Church Archives*, 2021.

⁷ Allan H. Anderson, “Pentecostalism,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 3rd ed., ed. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 649.

⁸ Ghana Statistical Service, *2021 Population and Housing Census: General Report* (Accra: GSS, 2021).

⁹ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 15–19; Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 28–29; Paul Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 5–8.

¹⁰ Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 39.

emphasizing the experiential reception of spiritual power for evangelism and discipleship.¹¹ This global orientation is reflected in church naming conventions such as “International,” “Worldwide,” or “Global.”¹² While growth and evangelism are central, questions arise regarding the depth of discipleship in historic mission churches like the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG).¹³

Doctrinally, Pentecostalism emphasizes spiritual gifts (*charismata*), particularly those in 1 Corinthians 12.¹⁴ Classical Pentecostalism stresses *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues) as “initial evidence” of Spirit baptism, derived from Acts 2:1–4.¹⁵ This belief, while not universal, has strongly shaped Pentecostal identity, particularly in early expressions of the movement.¹⁶

In the African context, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu provides a nuanced assessment. He describes Pentecostalism as “in transition,” marked by both “pains and glories.”¹⁷ Pentecostalism revitalizes African Christianity but also generates excesses, such as the rise of prosperity theology, which may fall short of sound biblical standards.¹⁸ However, Asamoah-Gyadu’s work offers limited engagement with implications for historic mission churches confronting Pentecostal growth.¹⁹

In *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, Asamoah-Gyadu advances “pneumatological Christology,” interpreting the work of the Holy Spirit through the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.²⁰ This integration of pneumatology and Christology provides a corrective to tendencies that overemphasize experiential dimensions at the expense of doctrinal coherence.²¹

Historic mission churches, including MCG and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, have permitted internal charismatic renewal groups in response to membership loss to independent and African-initiated churches such as the Mussama Disco Christo Church.²² Despite institutional acceptance, these renewal groups often lack a fully articulated theological framework, raising concerns about ecclesial coherence and identity. This study addresses these gaps by examining Pentecostal theology from a Wesleyan perspective, emphasizing implications for discipleship within MCG.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a qualitative, literature-based methodology to investigate the theological and historical interface between Pentecostalism and Wesleyan traditions within MCG. Qualitative inquiry allows for an in-depth exploration of theological patterns, historical developments, and ecclesial practices, using words and texts as primary units of analysis rather than numerical data.²³

At the core of this approach lies the hermeneutical method, understood as the science and art of textual interpretation.²⁴ Influenced by the thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer, hermeneutics in this context is both dialogical and reflexive, requiring the interpreter to engage in a continual conversation with the text, shaped by historical consciousness and theological intentionality.²⁵ As Anthony Thiselton argues, hermeneutics

¹¹ J. Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspectives on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa* (Oxford, London: Regnum Africa, 2015), xi.

¹² Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, xi.

¹³ Cephas Omenyo, “Man of the Spirit: The Life and Ministry of William Egyanka Appiah,” *Studies in World Christianity* 8, no. 2 (2002): 145–62.

¹⁴ Anderson, “Pentecostalism,” 650.

¹⁵ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 104–108.

¹⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, xi; Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 60.

¹⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, xi.

¹⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, xi.

¹⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford, London: Regnum Africa, 2013), 13, 44–50.

²⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 44–50.

²¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 44–50.

²² Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 46; Omenyo, “Man of the Spirit,” 145–162

²³ John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016), 44–47.

²⁴ Alan. Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 36–37.

²⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, ed. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 271–289.

involves not only decoding a text's propositional content but also entering into the horizons of meaning that inform its context and reception.²⁶

This methodology enabled the researcher to recognize personal presuppositions and, where necessary, suspend them to appreciate the text's internal logic and theological voice. The interpretative process is thus iterative and relational, with meaning unfolding as prior assumptions are tested against deeper engagement with the source material.²⁷

The data for this study was drawn exclusively from existing scholarly literature. This included books, peer-reviewed journal articles, doctoral theses, and conference proceedings that provide substantial theological and historical insight into Pentecostal and Wesleyan traditions. To supplement this, the study utilized reference works (e.g., theological dictionaries and encyclopedias) for definitional clarity.

Although the research is non-empirical, it was grounded in historical-theological analysis, offering a multidisciplinary perspective that integrates biblical interpretation, doctrinal reflection, and ecclesial history. The absence of fieldwork is acknowledged as a methodological limitation; however, this was mitigated by the study's aim to develop a theoretical framework for ecclesial renewal rather than to conduct a sociological survey.

Ultimately, this methodology seeks to construct a theologically coherent and historically grounded framework for assessing the integration of Pentecostal spirituality within Wesleyan ecclesiology in the Ghanaian context.

Biblical And Theological Foundations of Pentecostal Theology

Biblical Foundations

This section examines the interpretive lens through which Pentecostal scholars read Scripture, arguing that Pentecostal theology operates through three primary hermeneutical keys: promise, fulfillment, and experience.²⁸

Promise

This begins with the Promise of the Father, Jesus' declaration of the Holy Spirit's coming in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4–5. These texts establish that the Holy Spirit is a divine gift for the empowerment of believers. The Gospel of John further elaborates this promise by introducing the *Paraclete* (John 14–16), highlighting the Spirit's role in guiding, comforting, and teaching.²⁹ Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:14–39) identifies the outpouring of the Spirit as the fulfillment of Joel 2:28, signifying a transition from the Old Testament model of selective empowerment to a universal Spirit-baptism available to all believers.³⁰ This shift is foundational to Pentecostal theology, which regards the Spirit's work as inclusive and empowering.³¹

Fulfillment

The fulfillment of the promise is actualized in Acts 2, where the one hundred and twenty disciples receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. Peter interprets this as the realization of Joel's prophecy and as the initiation of the Church's mission.³² Dayton emphasizes that Pentecost marks a democratization of spiritual power, aligning with the global, inclusive vision of Pentecostal evangelism.³³ Hollenweger explains that this event signifies a fundamental theological shift: from a hierarchical, institutional model to one emphasizing

²⁶ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 9–44.

²⁷ Werner Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Developments and Significance* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1994), 98.

²⁸ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013), 44–50.

²⁹ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 112.

³⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 49.

³¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 46.

³² Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 56.

³³ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 39.

charismatic, Spirit-led empowerment for all believers.³⁴ The Holy Spirit thus becomes the energizing force for global Christian witness, as affirmed in Acts 1:8.³⁵

Experience

The experiential dimension of Pentecostalism is central to its theology. Acts 2:37–39 illustrates how listeners are invited into a transformative encounter with the Holy Spirit. This pattern of Spirit-baptism followed by visible manifestations, prayer (Acts 4:31), tongues (Acts 10:44), or laying on of hands (Acts 8:17), repeats across Acts, reinforcing the Pentecostal emphasis on tangible spiritual experiences.³⁶ Hollenweger stresses the Lukan theological framework, which prioritizes narrative experience over doctrinal formulations. This approach makes Pentecostalism distinctively reliant on the Acts narrative to inform theology and practice.³⁷

Theological Foundations

Donald Dayton critiques reductionist views of Pentecostalism as merely about *glossolalia*. He locates its roots in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, identifying three theological streams:

1. **Three Works of Grace:** Conversion, Entire Sanctification, and Spirit Baptism.
2. **Two Works of Grace:** Conversion (including justification and sanctification) and Spirit Baptism.
3. **Oneness Theology:** A non-Trinitarian view emphasizing Jesus as the sole divine manifestation.³⁸

The Pentecostal Fellowship of North America articulates these in the Full Gospel doctrine, portraying Jesus as Saviour, Sanctifier, Baptizer, Healer, and Soon Coming King.³⁹ Wolfgang Vondey interprets the Full Gospel as a narrative theology, a lived theology emphasizing experience and transformation over rigid dogma.⁴⁰ Warrington reinforces this by arguing that Pentecostal theology is relational and experiential, rather than confessional or creedal. It derives authority from testimony, encounter, and healing, which make it both practical and theological.⁴¹

Toward A Wesleyan Theology of The Holy Spirit

This section presents an analysis of Wesleyan pneumatology, focusing on the Holy Spirit's role in John Wesley's *ordo salutis* (Order of Salvation) and his views on the Gifts of the Spirit.

John Wesley's *Ordo Salutis*

Wesley's order of salvation includes prevenient grace, justification and new birth, assurance of salvation, sanctification, and entire sanctification.⁴²

Prevenient Grace

Prevenient grace is defined as “the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him.”⁴³ As such, it is grace that precedes salvation and awakens the human consciousness to sin. Theologically, prevenient grace may be viewed along a spectrum. At one end, it is seen as a divine power enabling human initiative, the ability to turn toward God

³⁴ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 104.

³⁵ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 46.

³⁶ Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, 108.

³⁷ Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, 97.

³⁸ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 58.

³⁹ Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 43.

⁴⁰ Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 45.

⁴¹ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 67-72.

⁴² Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 45.

⁴³ Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 488.

⁴³ Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 33.

and act righteously.⁴⁴This position accentuates human agency under grace. Conversely, the other end of the spectrum stresses humanity's incapacity to move toward God apart from divine intervention. In this view, grace functions solely as God's gracious movement towards a resistant humanity, breaking through human sinfulness.⁴⁵ A mediating view situates prevenient grace in the conscience, suggesting that it awakens awareness of sin and may lead to repentance.⁴⁶

The researcher maintains that, across all these models, the defining attribute of prevenient grace remains God's initiative. It is not coercive but rather cultivates a spiritual environment in which a response to salvation becomes possible. The human will be thus enabled but not overridden. This enabling power, importantly, is understood to be the work of the Holy Spirit. Leo G. Cox supports this, asserting, "Grace is also to be seen as a power of God operative in the lives of men. For this reason, there is a close relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God."⁴⁷

The biblical underpinning of prevenient grace may be seen in John 16:8, where the Holy Spirit is described as convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. This convicting ministry aligns with the nature of prevenient grace as the Spirit's activity in awakening the heart to its need for God.⁴⁸ Hence, prevenient grace is the Spirit's work.

John Wesley in his sermon "Free Grace" (1739), posits that prevenient grace is both "free in all" and "free for all."⁴⁹ "Free in all" emphasizes that grace is unmerited, echoing the outpouring of the Spirit, which is not contingent on the good works of the recipient. "Free for all" highlights its universal availability, standing in deliberate opposition to Calvinist predestination, and affirming the Spirit's inclusive mission, particularly evidenced at Pentecost, where people of all nations heard the gospel in their own language (Acts 2:8).⁵⁰

Williams further affirms the Spirit's role in prevenient grace but distinguishes it from the Spirit's more explicit operations at justification. He argues that the Spirit works hiddenly in prevenient grace to convict of sin, and only at justification does the Spirit begin the "proper work" that leads to regeneration and new birth.⁵¹ Prevenient grace is understood as God's Spirit-empowered initiative that gently awakens the sinner, convicts the heart, and creates the possibility of salvation without determining the response.

Justification and New Birth

In his sermon "Justification by Faith (1746)", John Wesley defines justification as "pardon, the forgiveness of sins."⁵² He emphasizes its Christocentric nature: "It is that act of God the Father whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of His Son, he showeth forth his righteousness..."⁵³ Justification and the new birth, though distinct, are theologically inseparable in Wesley's framework. In his sermon "The New Birth (1760)," Wesley clarifies: "the former relating to that great work which God does for us, in forgiving our sins; the latter to the great work which God does in us, renewing our fallen nature."⁵⁴ While justification is an external declaration, new birth is an internal transformation wrought by the Holy Spirit. Wesley considers both events to occur simultaneously in the experience of conversion, even though in logical order,

⁴⁴ Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 33.

⁴⁵ Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 33.

⁴⁶ Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 33.

⁴⁷ Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 33.

⁴⁸ Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise Of Pentecostal Spirituality And The Reshaping Of Religion In The Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995), 144. <https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=srbYAAAAMAAJ>.

⁴⁹ Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 50.

⁵⁰ Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 50.

⁵¹ Collin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Today: A Study of the Wesleyan Tradition in the Light of Current Theological Dialogue* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 99.

⁵² Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 115.

⁵³ Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 115.

⁵⁴ Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 336.

justification precedes new birth.⁵⁵ This sequencing allows the believer first to apprehend divine pardon before experiencing inward renewal.

Collin Williams supports this view, asserting that whether conversion is instantaneous or gradual, it must lead to a tangible change in the individual.⁵⁶ Perhaps, this transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit. In agreement, Williams draws an analogy to natural birth: just as sensory perception exists before birth but only becomes active after it, so too spiritual awareness emerges fully only through the regenerative work of the Spirit.⁵⁷ Conclusively, Wesleyan theology affirms that justification and new birth are essential, interconnected aspects of Christian salvation. Justification is God's act of forgiveness through Christ which is made a reality in the believers' life by the Holy Spirit; new birth is the Spirit's transformative work within. Both are rooted in faith through Christ and actualized in experience by the Holy Spirit.

Christian Assurance

According to A.S. Yates, it was during the Aldersgate Street experience that Wesley received an assurance of salvation.⁵⁸ Thomas Langford affirms this, observing that "prior to his Aldersgate experience, he tenaciously sought personal certainty of his salvation in terms of the sincerity of his faith; after Aldersgate, he preached assurance of God's justification as a necessary aspect of Christian experience."⁵⁹ While Wesley initially regarded assurance as essential to salvation, he later revised his view, considering assurance more as a privilege than a requirement.⁶⁰

Two key sermons frame Wesley's theology of assurance: "The Witness of the Spirit, I (1746)" and "The Witness of the Spirit, II (1763)". Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater note that the first sermon was crafted as a rebuttal to criticisms, particularly those of George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, who accused Wesley of religious enthusiasm.⁶¹ Wesley grounds his argument in Romans 8:16, a verse he frequently cited: "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."⁶² As Langford asserts, this text served as the cornerstone of Wesley's doctrine of assurance.⁶²

Outler and Heitzenrater emphasize that Wesley sought to clarify the distinction between the subjective witness of the believer's spirit and the objective witness of the Holy Spirit.⁶³ Wesley avoids the extremes of rationalism and emotionalism, instead affirming "a both/and solution, stressing the believers' own consciousness of God's favour but even more strongly the priority of the Spirit's prevenient and direct witness as the necessary precondition of any feelings of assurance."⁶⁴ In other words, Wesley posits that divine assurance is rooted primarily in the direct activity of the Holy Spirit, not merely in human introspection.

The second sermon, according to Outler and Heitzenrater, is not merely a continuation but a "major revision" of the first.⁶⁵ This time, Wesley shifts his emphasis from the inner witness of the Spirit to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23) as the concrete evidence of Christian assurance.⁶⁶ Assurance, therefore, must be verified by a transformed character and life.

Collins Williams identifies two crucial components in Wesley's theology of assurance. First, "the testimony of the Holy Spirit is antecedent to the testimony of our human spirit."⁶⁷ This is clearly illustrated in "The Witness of the Spirit I," where Wesley writes:

⁵⁵ Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 336.

⁵⁶ Williams, *John Wesley's Today*, 101.

⁵⁷ Williams, *John Wesley's Today*, 101.

⁵⁸ A.S. Yates, *The Doctrine of Assurance* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 7-11.

⁵⁹ Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 36.

⁶⁰ Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 36.

⁶¹ Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 145.

⁶² Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 36.

⁶³ Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 145.

⁶⁴ Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 145.

⁶⁵ Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 145.

⁶⁶ Williams, *John Wesley's Today*, 109.

⁶⁷ Williams, *John Wesley's Today*, 109.

The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly ‘witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God’; ... and we cannot know his pardoning love to us till his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Since, therefore, this ‘testimony of his Spirit’ must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or the ‘testimony of our spirit’ concerning them.⁶⁸

From this, the researcher infers that the testimony of the Spirit constitutes a spiritual awareness, initiated by God, that affirms the believer’s identity as a child of God. In contrast, the testimony of our spirit is a subjective confirmation through personal emotion and moral reflection. The priority of the Spirit’s witness establishes divine assurance as the foundation upon which human confidence rests.

Second, Williams identifies four scriptural tests that serve as “objective” indicators to distinguish true assurance from self-deception:

- Repentance or conviction of sin
- A radical inner transformation
- The fruit of the Spirit
- Newness of outward life⁶⁹

These criteria reinforce the understanding that Christian assurance is not a fleeting emotional state, but a verifiable experience grounded in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. It manifests through repentance, regeneration, character transformation, and a reformed life. Notably absent from these marks is any reference to the gifts of the Spirit. This omission suggests a theological prioritization: Wesley appears to elevate the fruit of the Spirit over the gifts, possibly to avoid the spiritual elitism and instability often associated with charismatic excesses.

John Wesley’s theology of assurance integrates spiritual experience with ethical transformation. Assurance is grounded in the Spirit’s testimony, validated by the believer’s moral renewal, and best discerned through the enduring fruit of the Spirit, rather than transient spiritual gifts.

Sanctification and Entire Sanctification

Thomas Langford conceives sanctification as two-dimensional, rooted in the dual imperative of the Great Commandment: love for God and neighbour (Matt. 22:37–40).⁷⁰ This love is the activity of the Holy Ghost as demonstrated in the “Character of a Methodist”, “A Methodist is one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him...”⁷¹ Lawrence W. Wood agrees in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, that Wesley equates perfect love with being filled with the Holy Spirit.⁷² He further links the manifestation of the “fruit of the Spirit” to Christian perfection, observing, “It is the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ that is the witness of the children of God ‘in the highest sense’...”⁷³ Agreeably, it is those entirely sanctified who fully manifest the fruit of the Spirit, indicating spiritual maturity and Spirit-filled living. In sum, both sanctification and entire sanctification are works of the Holy Spirit, shaping believers toward perfect love and holiness. Langford affirms that this vision of sanctification is central to Wesley’s goal for discipleship.⁷⁴ Harold Lindström corroborates this in his analysis of Wesley’s *Ordo Salutis*, noting that Methodist societies were organized into “classes, bands and select bands,” which aligned with stages of salvation: “first repentance, justification and entire sanctification.”⁷⁵ This structural alignment indicates a practical link between Wesley’s pneumatology and discipleship strategies.

⁶⁸ Outler and Heitzenrater, *John Wesley’s Sermons*, 149.

⁶⁹ Williams, *John Wesley’s Today*, 110.

⁷⁰ Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 41.

⁷¹ John Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* (Philadelphia: Johnston & Justice for William Glendinning, 1793), 1.

⁷² Lawrence W. Wood, “The Wesleyan View,” in *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, ed. Louis Dupre and Don Saliers (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 102.

⁷³ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: : Epworth Press, 1766), 55.

⁷⁴ Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 36.

⁷⁵ Harold Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), 122.

The researcher finds that Wesley's theology of sanctification and entire sanctification is inextricably tied to his pneumatology and discipleship methods. Sanctification is not only a theological claim but also a practical framework for forming Spirit-filled disciples who live out perfect love in community as facilitated by the Spirit.

John Wesley and the Gifts of the Spirit

John Wesley engaged deeply with the subject of the Gifts of the Spirit, maintaining that their presence extended beyond the apostolic age and into the life of the Church throughout Christian history. In his *Letter to Dr. Conyers Middleton* (1749), Wesley responded to Middleton's "Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers Which Are Supposed to Have Subsisted in the Christian Church," a treatise asserting the cessation of extraordinary gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and miraculous healing after the apostolic period.⁷⁶ Wesley issued a thorough 79-page rebuttal, documenting evidence from early Church Fathers such as St. Clement, St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, St. Hermas, and Justin Martyr, who he argued possessed "extraordinary gifts of a sort."⁷⁷

Wesley rejected the Cessationist view, arguing that the decline in miraculous gifts stemmed not from divine design but from spiritual lethargy: "The real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church, was not because they were no longer needed, but because the love of many was waxed cold."⁷⁸ Thus, Wesley insisted that these gifts were not confined to the apostolic age, but were intended for the ongoing life of the Church, contingent on spiritual vitality and love.

This same emphasis surfaces in his sermon *Scriptural Christianity*, preached on August 24, 1744, at Oxford University, where Wesley drew from Acts 4:31 to illustrate the continuing activity of the Holy Spirit: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."⁷⁹ He compared this with Acts 2:1–4, asserting that just as the apostles had been filled on Pentecost, they were again filled in Acts 4. Wesley's core concern, however, appears to have been not only the gifts but also the fruit of the Spirit. He stated that they were filled to bear "those holy fruits of the Spirit."⁸⁰ The researcher, therefore, observes that although Wesley strongly advocates for the gifts of the Spirit in the contemporary Christian life, he places theological and practical priority on the fruit of the Spirit as evidence of a Spirit-filled life.

Wesley again addressed this theme in his "Letter to Bishop Warburton (1762)," written in response to Warburton's accusation that Methodists were "laying claim to almost every apostolic gift...as they were possessed of old."⁸¹ Wesley denied such full possession but clarified that divine intervention, even miraculous in nature, was still observable in his ministry. He cited instances of healing from fevers and headaches, as well as deliverance from the demonic spirit of laughter, stating that "God now hears and answers prayer even beyond the ordinary course of nature."⁸² In summary, Wesley's pneumatology holds that the gifts of the Spirit remain operative but must be complemented with holy character. The researcher is of the view that for Wesley, authentic Christian experience is ultimately measured not only by *charismata* but by the consistent manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit. Without this, the gifts lose their credibility and purpose within the life of the Church.

Comparative Study of Pentecostal and Wesleyan Theologies

This section explores the theological convergences and divergences between Pentecostal Theology and the Wesleyan Theology of the Holy Spirit, with a focus on their implications for discipleship in MCG. The

⁷⁶ Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 55.

⁷⁷ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 112.

⁷⁸ Robert K. Aboagye Mensah, *John Wesley the Charismatic* (Accra: Adwinsa Publications, 1992), 28; Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 44 & 58.

⁷⁹ Aboagye Mensah, *John Wesley the Charismatic*, 28.

⁸⁰ Aboagye Mensah, *John Wesley the Charismatic*, 29.

⁸¹ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 44.

⁸² Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:89

analysis begins with John Fletcher's writings, continues with the Wesleyan-Holiness Movement, and culminates in a comparison of both traditions.

The Writings of John Fletcher

John Fletcher, one of Wesley's closest theological collaborators, played a significant role in articulating the doctrine of Entire Sanctification and linking it to Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Fletcher asserted that Entire Sanctification could occur instantaneously and that such an experience paralleled the Pentecost event in Acts 2.⁸³ Wesley accepted Fletcher's emphasis on sanctification but disagreed with his distinction between justification and Spirit baptism. Wesley argued that every true believer, at the moment of justification, receives the Holy Spirit.⁸⁴ He wrote, "It is certain that every babe in Christ has received the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit witnesses with his spirit that he is a child of God. But he has not obtained Christian Perfection."⁸⁵ Thus for John Wesley, one receives Spirit Baptism when he/she is justified.

Theological Foundations of Fletcher's Writings

Fletcher's theology is rooted in Dispensationalism, which he developed in a Trinitarian framework: the Father (Creation), the Son (Redemption), and the Holy Spirit (Sanctification).⁸⁶ Donald Dayton notes that Fletcher considered these three dispensations crucial for understanding divine revelation.⁸⁷ Laurence Wood expands this by suggesting Fletcher viewed the Apostle's Creed as a progressive narrative of Christian experience.⁸⁸ This framework marks a pneumatocentric shift in Fletcher's theology, in contrast to Wesley's Christocentric focus.

Wesleyan-Holiness Movement

The Wesleyan-Holiness Movement emerged in 19th-century America, emphasizing Christian Perfection and Spirit-filled living. It was deeply influenced by Wesley's theology but took on experiential and revivalist dimensions, including Camp Meetings and *Glossolalia*.⁸⁹ Melvin Dieter notes that the movement's adoption of Pentecostal paradigms was not foreign to Wesleyanism but a natural evolution of Wesley's teaching on sanctification.⁹⁰ Despite this continuity, the movement shifted focus to tongue-speaking as initial evidence of Holy Spirit baptism, diverging from Wesley's emphasis on the Fruit of the Spirit.⁹¹

Differences and Similarities between Pentecostal and Wesleyan Theologies

Differences

- 1. Tongue-Speaking as Evidence:** Pentecostals cite Acts 2:4 to argue that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of Spirit baptism.⁹² Wesleyans, however, emphasize character transformation, with the Fruit of the Spirit being the true mark of divine indwelling.⁹³
- 2. Post-Conversion Baptism in the Spirit:** Pentecostals maintain that Spirit baptism occurs after conversion, often in a dramatic experience. Fletcher supported this view via his dispensational theology.⁹⁴ In contrast, Wesley saw Spirit baptism as part of justification, with later experiences viewed as deepening sanctification.⁹⁵

⁸³ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:142.

⁸⁴ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:143

⁸⁵ John Fletcher, *Works of the Reverend John Fletcher*, ed. Jackson (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1984), 89.

⁸⁶ Fletcher, *Works of the Reverend John Fletcher*, 89.

⁸⁷ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 112.

⁸⁸ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 113.

⁸⁹ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 74.

⁹⁰ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 74-75.

⁹¹ Wood, "The Wesleyan View," 113.

⁹² Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 67.

⁹³ Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 143-144.

⁹⁴ Wood, "The Wesleyan View," 132.

⁹⁵ Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise Of Pentecostal Spirituality And The Reshaping Of Religion In The Twenty-First Century*, 78.

Similarities

- 1. Personal Experience of God:** Both traditions emphasize personal encounters with God. Pentecostals focus on miracles and tongues, while Wesleyans highlight assurance, love, and holiness.⁹⁶
- 2. The Role of the Spirit in Sanctification:** Both affirm the Holy Spirit as the agent of transformation. Wesley's *ordo salutis*, understood by John Wesley as a divinely guided process culminating in sanctified character evident in spiritual fruit, and Pentecostal Spirit baptism, with its emphasis on empowerment for prayer, mission, and spiritual gifts, both aim at enhancing discipleship through the Spirit's active work.⁹⁷
- 3. Democratization of the Spirit**
Pentecostalism and Wesleyanism both advocate for the universal availability of the Spirit. Asamoah-Gyadu affirms that this democratization enables all believers to engage in ministry.⁹⁸

Implications for Discipleship in MCG: A Synthesis of Wesleyan and Pentecostal Traditions

The theological intersection of Wesleyanism and Pentecostalism offers both challenges and opportunities for discipleship within MCG. While Wesleyan theology emphasizes sanctification and structured spiritual formation, Pentecostalism contributes a dynamic spirituality through charismatic gifts and Spirit-led evangelism. A cohesive discipleship model must therefore preserve Wesleyan doctrinal integrity while integrating Pentecostal vibrancy.⁹⁹

A central tension lies in the divergent emphases on the Fruit of the Spirit (Wesleyanism) and the Gifts of the Spirit (Pentecostalism). To bridge this, the suggestion is that MCG revise its discipleship curriculum to include both holiness teachings and instruction on spiritual gifts. Weekly class meetings can facilitate spiritual accountability while creating space for testimonies of healing and prophecy. Moreover, mentorship programs involving leaders trained in both traditions can nurture younger ministers in holiness and spiritual empowerment alike.¹⁰⁰

Evangelism presents another area for integrative reform. While Methodist tradition underscores moral witness and disciplined living, Pentecostalism foregrounds Spirit-empowered outreach manifested through healing, prophecy, and deliverance. Strategic fusion would involve establishing evangelism task forces trained in charismatic ministry under Methodist oversight, organizing miracle services within Methodist missions, and deploying Spirit-led outreach teams to underserved communities.¹⁰¹ This approach would enable MCG to maintain theological coherence while engaging Ghana's spiritual and missional landscape dynamically.

Doctrinal misunderstandings, particularly concerning Spirit Baptism and *glossolalia*, have historically hindered theological integration. To address this, MCG should implement structured pneumatological education initiatives, including seminars on both Wesleyan and Pentecostal pneumatologies, leadership training for Prayer Tower facilitators, the development of theological resources, and organized dialogue forums between traditional and charismatic leaders.¹⁰² Such programs aim to foster mutual understanding and theological maturity within Wesleyan ecclesiology.

Finally, effective integration requires structural governance that accommodates charismatic expressions without undermining Methodist order. Wesleyan ecclesiology, characterized by class meetings, bands, societies, and conference systems, must adapt to formally include Prayer Towers within its oversight structures. Oversight committees, such as the Leaders' Meeting, should monitor theological and pastoral

⁹⁶ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 94.

⁹⁷ Kendell Healy, "Wesleyan Ordo Salutis (Order of Salvation)," accessed March 18, 2021, <https://kendellhealy.com/2021/03/18/wesleyan-ordo-salutis-order-of-salvation/>; Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 42.

⁹⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 60.

⁹⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 60; Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 245–48.

¹⁰⁰ Dayton, *Theological Roots*, 75.

¹⁰¹ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 197–200.

¹⁰² Cheryl Bridges Johns, "The Spirit and the Word: A Pentecostal Perspective on Pneumatological Hermeneutics," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1, no. 1 (1992): 73–96.

fidelity, while Spirit-led worship can be encouraged within a structured liturgical framework.¹⁰³ This governance model allows charismatic spirituality to flourish in a context of doctrinal accountability and ecclesial order.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the integration of Pentecostal theology into MCG is both theologically feasible and ecclesially constructive when interpreted through a Wesleyan framework. Historically rooted tensions exemplified by the 1923 expulsion of William Egyanka Appiah underscore the longstanding challenges MCG has faced in engaging charismatic expressions. However, John Wesley's own affirmation of spiritual gifts beyond the apostolic age and his emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit provide a doctrinal basis for such integration.

The research proposes a structured synthesis that includes curriculum reform, Spirit-led evangelism, and governance adaptations. This model preserves Wesleyan doctrinal integrity while embracing the charismatic vitality characteristic of Ghana's contemporary religious landscape. Although limited by its literature-based methodology, the study contributes a viable theological framework for Spirit-empowered discipleship and ecclesial renewal within MCG.

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¹⁰³ David Lowes Watson, *Class Leaders: Recovering a Tradition* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1991), 17-24; Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 64-66.

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