

Postmodernism and Faith: An Evaluation of the Auto-Positioning of Pentecostalism and its Sacred Boundaries in Ghana



Lawrence Boakye¹ 

¹ Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon - Accra, Ghana.

ABSTRACT

The past 30-40 years have seen a growth in Pentecostalism in Ghana. It has been good news for the growth of Christianity, but it has also not eluded the postmodernist influences on faith, belief, and theology. Part of this influence which is redefining the precincts of Christianity can be attributed to the concepts of 'narrativism' and 'postsecularism', which are described as ramifications of postmodernism. This work examines the current religious atmosphere in Ghana and other influences which expound the dynamisms that are changing the basis of Christian faith, religion, and socio-cultural practices. The foremost interest is to analytically use the postmodern concept to explain the new phase of religion and other influences of Pentecostalism in Ghana today. And how the determinants of postmodern tendencies have influence local and microscopic forms of religious undercurrents in society. It brings to light the new theological and philosophical grounds on which new philosophies can enhance new directives and conjectures for the understanding and growth of religion and culture in the African context.

Correspondence:
Lawrence Boakye
Email: lboakye@ug.edu.gh

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INTRODUCTION

Pentecostalism¹ in Ghana is growing exponentially, interacting in a very determined way with the society and culture². This interface, which can also be described as an intense co-existence of the secular and the sacred, has become remarkably interesting to observe. Theologians and Philosophers are advocating the need to look into the 'rapport and growth'³ as well as what is described as other determining factors of the phenomenon. What is happening in Africa and other parts of the world as regards to Christianity has also led to contradictory conjectures and declarations from scholars like Durkheim who for example has predicted that the so-called growth currently seen in religion can be described unfortunately as defective and very soon it will be relinquished to small corners of the earth.⁴ From a different perspective, the author has come across the writings of Norris and Inglehart who have accentuated that what is seen as growth in Christianity is real, but this kind of growth will actually continue to expand amongst the poor and the underprivileged in the developing areas of the world.⁵

Moreover, other scholars like Philip Jenkins has also made positive and quite convincing evaluation on this issue. In his work, *The Next Christendom* based on analysis and synthesis of geographic and demographic data, he comes to a conclusion that by 2050 the world will see the coming of new form of Christianity which is more globalized.⁶ He explains that the new form of Christianity will be very different from what the world has experienced for the past

¹ Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Current Development within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana*, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 12ff.

² Asamoah-Gyadu, *Current Development within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana*.

³ Jaco Beyers, 'The Church and the Secular: The effect of the post-secular on Christianity', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70 no 1, (2014): 1.

⁴ Jaco Beyers, 'Obituaries and Predictions: A Sociological Perspective on the Future of Religion', *Acta Theologica* (online version) 33 no. 1, (2013):1.

⁵ Jaco Beyers, 'The Church and the Secular', 2.

⁶ Peter Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity (The Future of Christianity Trilogy)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 67.

centuries. He sustains that Christianity of the southern hemisphere implying Africa and the Latin Americas is growing and will continue to grow. As a result, these areas of the world will eventually boast of containing half of the Christian population of the world, in effect propounding a new shift of the geographical centre of Christianity.

Even though Christian religion began gradually in the northern part of Africa after its formation as far back as the 1st Century AD, it was until the 1500s after the first millennium that saw a quick spread by the missionaries from Europe to the indigenes of Africa and the Americas as well as the Asian region.⁷ As missionary activities took off as far as till the early years of the 20th century, the missionary churches still dominated most especially in the continent of Africa and the southern hemisphere.⁸ The Church in the southern hemisphere began to grow and even European and American Christians did not fully realize the magnitude of the growth.⁹ In the course of this growth, it became evident how new indigenous converts in Africa and other parts of the world began to take initiative to spread the faith on their own lands digging deep roots for their faith. The manifestation of growth became very significant from the 1950s and the validation of the faith of indigenous people of the global south has come this far through resistance and even sometimes martyrdom. It is within this setting that Pentecostalism has sprung in full vigour in Africa and in Ghana.¹⁰ However, scholars from the mainstream northern hemisphere Christian scholarship failed in many instances to acknowledge this new impression of Pentecostalism and Christianity in general.

Secularism and other ideological factors of modernisation also contributed to this effect by making continuous assumptions that Christianity has been on the edge of deterioration and is meant to decline and disappear. These same modernistic ideas equally projected that traditional Christianity has been irrelevant in a scientific and reason based society. The solution secularism provided for Christianity decades ago was for the Christian religion to abandon the so-called outdated supernaturalism (doctrine and morality), change belief in miracles and become more modern. But as is seen today, the opposite is rather what is being experienced. The belief in miracles and the conservative practice of supernatural doctrines and morality are actually driving the growth of the Church most especially in Africa. In Ghana today, the significant evidence in vibrancy and activity going on everywhere is evident and all that can be said is that, the centre of modern day Christianity is in Africa and the Latin Americas but not Europe and North America just as Jenkins has predicted.

The vibrant restructuring of Pentecostalism and charismatic churches in Africa is here to stay. Besides these churches will continue to have huge influences. The predictions are – can it be said the exuberant nature of Christianity today in Africa and for that matter Ghana is a reflection of Christianity closer to its true origin than what has been introduced by the westerners previously? It is for this reason the author investigates and studies this topic. The intention is to look into the various possible determinants of the growth within the framework of postmodernism. It is of the hope that the research into this thematic area will eventually clarify misunderstandings and even the lack of acceptance displayed by the western world as regards to the great transformation happening in African Christianity. This work discusses the indicators and the dynamisms of Pentecostalism, the changing basis of faith practice and socio-cultural beliefs of the people. The study is analytic and descriptive, and also historical. The author intends to research into various forms of literature and data to explain what is classified as the re-defining of faith and belief in Ghana and Africa as a whole. The impact and tendencies of local religious under-currents that are changing doctrines, theology, and faith practices are also evaluated in this research.

DEFINING PENTECOSTALISM AS A GIFT OF GRACE

The core values of Pentecostalism as a Christian practice emphasise salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit. And in which pneumatic phenomena including ‘speaking in tongues’, prophecies, visions, healing and miracles in general perceived as standing in historic continuity. A practice that comes with the experiences of the early church as found especially in the Acts of Apostles that are sought, accepted, valued, and consciously encouraged among members as signifying the presence of God and experience of his spirit.¹¹

Members of Pentecostal churches will always claim the relevance of transformative character that comes along with the formal acceptance into membership. It claims the Holy Spirit as the source of their vitalizing energy, in other words the Pentecostal movement is endorsed with the expression charismatic, which comes from the word ‘*charismata*’, meaning ‘gifts of grace’. The word charismatic came to be used referring to renewal prayer fellowships and par-movements that emerged and started operating within and without orthodox churches.¹² It is believed that when one

⁷ John Hildebrandt, *History of the Church in Africa*. (Achimota: Christian Press, 1981),5.

⁸ Hildebrandt, *History of the Church in Africa*, 5.

⁹ Peter Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 67.

¹⁰ 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), 22.

¹¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Current Development*, 12.

¹² Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretation from an African Context*, accessed July 20, 2018. https://openlibrary.org/publishers/Regnum_Africa, 6.

becomes a member he or she captures a new experience with the spirit. From this experience the person gets into the path of orienting their lives towards a new spiritual encounter with God.¹³ This encounter strengthens their belief in God seeming to be a whole new understanding and a higher experience of the transcendence. When this new dynamic growth happens, the person claims to be born again or have an experience of ‘new life in Christ’,¹⁴ which also comes along with ‘speaking in tongues’, ‘the gift of healing’, ‘the reception of messages from God’, the insatiable desire to ‘read the bible’, to pray, and to ‘join in fellowship with like-minded believers’.¹⁵

After becoming fully accepted, Pentecostals find a new life in Christ becoming extremely cognoscente of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis here is the Holy Spirit experienced by the individual but it is not a doctrinal affirmation which is understood through pedagogical instructions designed and taught by the leaders of the church.¹⁶ The new phenomenon can be described as a new impulse, a spirit of renewal and a source of vitalizing breath, and energy.¹⁷ The dynamics of Pentecostalism can be put into three categories to enhance an authentic understanding and transformation in the individual. The first step is that the Holy Spirit becomes very instrumental with the personal transformation of the individual. Secondly, there is a vivid and authentic manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit through worship and personal body experience of the individual, and thirdly, the manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit is seen through healing, deliverance, and prayer breakthroughs.¹⁸

Pentecostalism has become truly the most exciting and dominant stream of Christianity in the 21st century, a century in which many scholars and theologians testify that the rise of Pentecostalism has truly reshaped Christianity. This era has seen the astonishing escalation and global shift in Christian religion as well as the revival and renewal of Christianity.¹⁹ The concept of the Holy Spirit being the main source of renewal and empowerment has brought a huge change, and as at today, most of these Pentecostal churches that started as small churches have grown to become mega-churches. Most of these churches also have leaders who have charismatic personalities and are able to impact their members spiritually through their motivational speeches and preaching. They conduct their church services in grand style with modern decoration including the usage of flat screen televisions on the walls, big choirs and music instruments that make it rather exhilarating to be present. The congregants of Pentecostal churches have a majority of youngsters who are mostly disenchanted by the orthodox churches and their religious traditions and conservatism. Out of these vibrant churches in Ghana for example have emerged fellowships like the Full Gospel Men’s Fellowship and the Aglow Women’s Fellowship.

DEVELOPMENT OF PENTECOSTALISM IN GHANA

Prior to the advent of Pentecostalism, there was a precursor of some notable movements of churches known as the African Initiated Churches also known as African Indigenous Churches (AICs). At that time, the various reasons for the emergence of the AICs had a very important connotation to religious doctrines and practices. And the indigenes who pushed for the establishment of these new churches came to a conclusion that their religious and cultural needs were not met within their orthodox churches.²⁰ The religious needs were described as the inability of the western church leaders to introduce Christianity into the Ghanaian/African context appropriately to make Christ more meaningful to the local people. The misapprehension of the African culture by the white missionaries who came to Africa in the early 18th and 19th century caused the whole agenda of evangelization to be less attractive to the indigenous people. Some scholars even wrote to testify that western Christianity was resisted because the missionaries failed to exhibit true love and compassion for the local people.

In effect the insensitivity of the good news message to the culture, its inadequacy to fall in line with African cosmology dampened the effectiveness on the people.²¹ Clifton Clark gives a specific example on this relating to certain attitudes of the missionaries as regards to the disbelief in witchcraft and the works of evil spirits in the communities. He quotes Peter W. Wyllie²² in his study on prophetic healing that, what actually led to the emergence of churches like Mosama Disco Cristo Church (MDCC), was due to the dissatisfaction with the missionary churches and their inability to provide common and practical solutions to the problems of the local people. Indigenes complained and even described the missionary pastoral care as lacking credibility, superficial and impoverished. Consequently, it became a general perception that the missionary church had failed to understand and confront different issues and the complex

¹³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 5.

¹⁴ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Current Development*, 13.

¹⁵ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Current Development*, 13.

¹⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Current Development*, 13.

¹⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Current Development*, 14.

¹⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 6.

¹⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 3-4.

²⁰ Clifton R. Clark, ‘African Indigenous Churches in Ghana – Past, Present and Future’, *Journal of African Instituted Church Theology*, Vol. II, No. 1, (2006), 2.

²¹ Clark, *African Indigenous Churches in Ghana – Past, Present and Future*, 2.

²² Clark, *African Indigenous Churches in Ghana – Past, Present and Future*, 2. quotes Robert W. Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana*, (Ann Arbor, M.I: Edwards Brothers, 1980), 21.

facets of the existential struggles of the African person.

It is in no doubt that the new indigenous initiated churches gained grounds and grew quickly due to how local pastors were able to relate and explain the Christian religion within the indigenous perceptions of cosmology and soteriology.²³ Before Christianity came to the shores of the African continent, the indigenes had developed their own practices of seeking spiritual assistance from various gods in their communities. When the indigenes were converted by the missionaries they were made to understand that the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the sole solution to all their existential problems including material and spiritual needs definitely sounded to be a great news. However, later on the indigenes realized that the way the missionaries represented this message of evangelization did not work to their satisfaction. Further on, there was a continuous condescending attitudes and racial discrimination displayed by the missionaries. There were speculations that some African ministers were treated as second-class members of the church. This façade of discrimination manifested in their exercise in authority, salary appropriation, and other aspects of human rapport. It also became very clear the kind of conflict of interest the missionaries began to exhibit in the participation of the quick expanding interest in the issue of Europe's agenda in the scramble for Africa.²⁴

The missionaries failed to recognize the various elements of tradition, religion and culture, which is supposed to give true identity to the African Christian.²⁵ The unfavourable or to be more specific the negative perception of the African Christians precipitated the quest to secede from the major orthodox churches for control and to possibly express themselves in their religious faith as they deem fit for themselves.²⁶ These and other factors triggered the desire for the converted indigenes to seek independency in the search for a new form of spiritual growth.²⁷ And they increasingly developed their self-conscious sense of identity and a new ethos of their own as regards to growth in faith and belief in God.

Just as postmodernism portrays, the feeling of the western missionary as authoritarian universalizing the gospel narrative became no more viable amongst the African people. There were misgivings towards their evangelization approach which made the early 20th century become an era that purported some form of religious emancipation self-designed by the indigene Christian to motivate a change. This was revolutionary, heralding the emergence of 'little narratives' (or micronarratives, *petits récits*) of faith and belief established in localized representations. In the middle of all these resistance, the missionaries made the indigenes believe that independence for the African Church was not readily obtainable.²⁸ According to Clark, some of the early churches that stood up and claimed freedom from the missionaries popularly identified as "The African Reformation" included National Baptist Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and the Nigerian Church, and among these also included Ethiopianism.²⁹ This African Reformation success can also be attributed to the ability of the initial pastors who succeeded the missionaries, finding creative ways and means to Africanize a version of the orthodox churches. According to Amanor, sequentially, the 1920s saw the emergence of the Zionist Aladura prophets who emphasized on pneumatic experiences, eventually leading to the beginning of prophetism. Then finally in the 1970s came the birth of the third wave and emergence also known or classified today as the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement.

GROWTH AND STRENGTH OF PENTECOSTALISM IN GHANA

It has been observed that Pentecostalism and charismatic churches in the sub-Saharan have been vigorously expanding since the 1980s.³⁰ In the middle of this growth, Ghana is no exception. As was attested by the 2010 census, almost 30% of the Ghanaian population were Pentecostal Christians. Today one can be sure this percentage has gone up especially in the southern part of Ghana where Pentecostalism is booming every day. It is interesting to note that apart from the recognized churches and temples where daily worship and other religious activities take place, one will find private house compounds, school classrooms, and other social centres within the cities being used for worship and church services. Some of these worships services take place around charismatic leaders who inspire the people to embrace the power of the Holy Spirit and its empowerment through the spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, healing, spiritual deliverances, and prophecy.³¹

Pentecostals in Ghana depict passion and energetic soul-winning adventures³² and one will often hear their leaders preaching loudly daily on radio and television stations. The content of their message basically centres on the end times

²³ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity, Studies in African Pentecostal Christianity*, Vol 1, (Accra: CPCS, 2001), 1.

²⁴ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity, Studies in African Pentecostal Christianity*, 12.

²⁵ Clark, *African Indigenous Churches in Ghana*, 4.

²⁶ Clark, *African Indigenous Churches in Ghana*, 4.

²⁷ Clark, *African Indigenous Churches in Ghana*, 3.

²⁸ Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 439.

²⁹ James Darkwa Amanor, 'Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation', (Accra-Ghana, International Theological Seminary), 12, accessed May 10, 2018. <http://www.pctii.org>.

³⁰ Amanor, 'Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation', 12.

³¹ Amanor, 'Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation', 12.

³² Amanor, 'Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation', 12.

and the need for mankind to repent and accept salvation. Some move from house to house in different neighbourhoods, from school to school including elementary schools and university campuses and one would find some preachers on public transports within the city and even from inter-city. Most of these preachers rely on the donations given them at the instant. This is how these churches, popularly known as one-man churches begin and manifest the characteristic of (*petits récits*) little narratives. With time, they define themselves as masters of the faith in their own little ways and then gradually become leaders of mega churches. As one tours around Accra today it is very remarkable to see elegant and huge church edifices, which surprisingly belong to some pastors who started their evangelisation on street corners.

Definitely, this has come with a form of territorialisation influence with an intense mediation of various charismatic leaders who today fill the society with their exuberant enthusiasm with words of salvation, the need for piety, spiritual empowerment, and prosperity for the people all in the name of Jesus. In Accra today, it is very vivid to see remarkable signs of Pentecostal revival on huge billboards inviting the people to church conferences. One will also find Christian bumper stickers on cars, gospel music becoming heavily patronized, as well as devotional literature being sold on the roadsides and in all bookstores in the city. This is what is described as the pillars of the third wave of Pentecostalism in Ghana today.³³

The scenario described above depicts the situation of growth and expansion of the new phase of Christian religion in Ghana and other parts of the continent. Without any exaggeration, it is justified to describe Pentecostalism in Ghana today as immensely alive, and this phenomena has rapport with postmodern influences. The break away from Christian orthodoxy, the hunger for a spirituality and faith that is saddled with some 'Africaness' for the African brought about a form of dispersal.³⁴ A dispersal, which today has also provided a new shape and spectrum wider and broader embodying in a highly visible manner the heterogeneous, but compressed with changed ideology of what religious faith and believe means to the African. Thus, this boundless expansion of the new phase of African Christianity and zeal in the country has also come along with a lack of centralized authority that is able to distinguish orthodoxy from heresy, and inspiration from transpiration. This has also actually enveloped the Ghanaian society, pushing its religio-cultural dimension into a new space that may also come with some form of unpredictability. Today the Ghanaian religious space is experiencing a situation just as Foucault will describe as the era of 'incitement to speak'.³⁵ Thus Pentecostal leaders, churches, and interdenominational organizations have succeeded in establishing more general standards for the functioning of the Christian church in Ghana, and it seems everyone has something to say on the subject of spirituality and faith in the public sphere.³⁶

POSTMODERNISM, THEOLOGY, AND PENTECOSTALISM

The Collapse of Meta-narrative (Grand Narrative)

Many scholars find it difficult to define postmodernism, this is due to the fact that the term is used in many different ways to mean different positions. However, the interest in this regard is to see how the idea of postmodernism relates to religion. The author defines postmodernism as; 'currents of philosophical, intellectual, and literary schools that have appeared after postmodern, structuralism, semiotics and linguistics. It has undermined Western metaphysics, and the destruction of the central arguments that dominated ancient and modern Western thought, such as language, identity, origin, voice, religion and mind.'³⁷ The interest here is to focus on the rapport between postmodernism and religious belief which have a strong positive and authentic connection.³⁸ The dynamics of postmodernism in one way or the other has come a long way to change the tenets of religion to a high degree. Nevertheless, it is not only religion, one can also talk of its rapport with knowledge, literature, as well as theology and culture. As contested by Sweetman, postmodernism is a movement with a central theme that examines objective rationality and identity, and the working out of the implications and their critique for central questions in philosophy, literature, and culture.³⁹ Just as Jean-François Lyotard has indicated, postmodernism can be defined as a condition, which is characterized by an incredulity toward metanarrative. Meta-narrative in this case is a theory that tries to provide a totalizing, and comprehensive account to various historical events, as well as experiences, social, and cultural phenomena based on the appeal to universal truth and universal values.⁴⁰ It is described as universal because of the fact that it can be applied to a wide range of thoughts, which include religious doctrine and belief, universal reasoning, and many more. This definition finely given by Lyotard gives the assurance that unlike Foucault, Derrida, and Barthes, postmodernism has a strong relationship with

³³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Current Development* 13.

³⁴ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Current Development* 13.

³⁵ Michel Foucault, *History of sexuality: Volume 1*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 18.

³⁶ Bruno M.N. Reinhardt, *Tapping into the Anointing: Pentecostal Pedagogy, Connectivity, and Power in Contemporary Ghana*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2013), 2-5.

³⁷ Abdulazim N. Elaati, 'Postmodernism Theory,' *ResearchGate*, (June, 2016), 1, accessed July 6, 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303812364_Postmodernism_Theory

³⁸ James K.A. Smith, 'A Little Story about Metanarrative: Lyotard, Religion and Postmodernism Revisited', *Faith and Philosophy*, 18, No. 3 (2001): 353-368.

³⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, 'Postmodernism, and Religion', *Philosophia Christi*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (2005), 135.

⁴⁰ Lyotard, 'Postmodernism, and Religion', *Philosophia Christi*, 135.

metaphysical claims including the concept of God and other religious prerogatives.⁴¹ This author believes Lyotard's incredulity towards meta-narrative provides the latitude to open up the on-going discussing on postmodernism and metanarrative. In the discussion is the main idea that no particular worldview can claim to have the ultimate truth because what is classified as the meanings that are constitutive of a worldview cannot be known to be true objectively. There is no objective truth, because all forms of knowledge possessed in this world for Lyotard and other post-modern adherents are contextual. Thus knowledge is influenced by culture, as well as tradition of a people. In the same way too, knowledge is influenced by language, biases, background concepts, and many other circumstantial situations.⁴² Accordingly, what is deemed to be true in one culture as regards to morality or even as regards to religion may not be applicable in another culture and content and interpretation can change as regards to truth. And as such, culture, tradition, and different circumstances of a particular community tend to influence the development of the moral views and values of that society.⁴³

Postmodernism thus rejects the idea of absoluteness and objectivity. The influence of this phenomena on truth and meaning has been able to change to a very high degree, and has undermined general claims that for many centuries have been known to have objectivity and universality. The rejection of objectivity and universality which Lyotard calls metanarrative also declares the rejection of all forms of theories that have universalistic tendencies or foundational theories including religion, science, politics, art, music and many more. Thus as stated before this shift of paradigm from modernity is inspired by the very description provided as incredulity towards metanarratives.⁴⁴ The incredulity as described by Lyotard is the repercussion of human progress, which has come a long way to create a form of totalization and the universalization of ideas and knowledge. Lyotard's narrativism contends that knowledge in general has become a commodity, and it consequently becomes a means of empowerment. Thus instead of describing knowledge as the grand narrative and as super-authoritative in itself, whereby it pushes on to even establish their political, socio-cultural, as well as religious views as absolute truth one begins to see things differently from this point on. When the development of the post-modern condition is assessed, it is seen that from this moment onwards, individual pacesetters in different areas of knowledge and study begin to design and introduce their own mini narratives in the form of liberating themselves from the modern condition, thus the new term narrativism. The term implying something which is narrated, for instance a story narrated by someone without any fulcrum influencing its authenticity.

This new terminology comes with a new way of looking at the world affirming that there are no more grand theories or basically universal truths that have the capacity to define the total and fundamental truths and facts about a specific human society and culture. In other words, narrativism gives room to relevant features of small world views as well as small quasi-insignificant institutions to prove their authenticity and their relevance to the human society. The dynamic change is equally relatable to religious interpretation of doctrine and faith. Thus, the way Christian religion in Ghana today keeps on splitting into different modes and growing into different units may have an underlying dynamism that can be interpreted with the theories being introduced in this research. This is where religion is seen as similar to other areas of institutional knowledge systems refusing hierarchy of knowledge and replaced by heterogeneous interpretations and perspectives of faith and belief. Thus, the dismantling of meta-narrative of knowledge and interpretations opens new multi-faceted contributions from the society. A new mode is developed whereby the voices of local narratives and mini-narratives gain the opportunity to express themselves and be legitimized.⁴⁵

Postmodernism and 'Pentecostalisation'

It has been shown already in this research the rationale behind the growth of Christianity in the African context. However, at this point, the researcher relates the growth with current contemporary social theory; secularism, and the dynamics that may exist between religion, secularism and postsecularism.⁴⁶ Secularism rejects religion, or the belief that religion should not be part of the affairs of the state or part of public education. However, postsecularism is described as a condition or an era, which contemporaneously depicts the co-existence of religious and secular worldviews and the promoting of both religious and secular outlooks on society and politics.⁴⁷ Jürgen Habermas also used the term postsecularism to define the current times of which the idea of modernism is seen as falling apart and giving way to postmodernism. Thus, postmodernism comes with postsecularism which seeks to repair many unsuccessful theoretical as well as ideological stratification on religion to create a new peaceful dialogue and tolerant coexistence between the

⁴¹ Lyotard, 'Postmodernism, and Religion', *Philosophia Christi*, 135.

⁴² Lyotard, 'Postmodernism, and Religion', *Philosophia Christi*, 135.

⁴³ Lyotard, 'Postmodernism, and Religion', *Philosophia Christi*, 135.

⁴⁴ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1984), introduction xxiv.

⁴⁵ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, xxiv.

⁴⁶ Peter L. Berger, (ed). *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, (Washington DC, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Ethics and Public Policy Centre; W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1999), 6ff.

⁴⁷ Kristina Stoeckl, *Defining The Postsecular*, (This is a paper presented at the seminar at the Academy of Sciences in Moscow in February, 2011, accessed October 2, 2018. http://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/stoeckl_en.pdf), p. 2.

spheres of faith and reason.⁴⁸ In this situation postmodern scholars such as Habermas insists that both religious and secularists should not exclude each other, but must learn to tolerate and coexist, putting both religious and secular perspectives on even ground sharing equal importance.

This discussion is equally affirmed in the works of communitarian political philosophers like Michael Walzer, Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor who argue that religion needs to obtain a legitimate voice in the public sphere. For these scholars, the reason why religion deserves this space is based on the fact that religion is an indispensable ingredient to any form of public discourse – in effect the absence of religion can actually affect the enforcement of morality in the society.⁴⁹ Stoeckl explains that humanity understands postsecularism even better when it looks at the relationship between religious actors and institutions which actually bring into play here the fact of religious pluralism as part of nation building and the claim of religious space.⁵⁰

Postsecular society as proposed by Rosati can also be described as a multi-religious society. Multi-religious society in this context refers to the new level of blending of indigenous traditional practices and the diasporic religious institutions or missionary churches.⁵¹ Thus, what Habermas will say about this is that, when religious pluralism takes place in the society, the next feasible thing to happen is the establishment of the impact of religion on the political life of the community. Postsecularism in this case considered within the African perspective is not solely related to mere change of the atmosphere and the openness towards religious freedom, but also the change of the consciousness of the people and society in a whole.⁵² It has been noted that even in Ghana today, religious convictions change and shape public opinion and policies in so many ways. Effectively, its impact on interventions of the socio-cultural atmosphere of the society has become consequently remarkable and cannot be ignored as regards to its impact in the country today. What Christian Pentecostalism stands for is not solely the organizations of prayer meetings, church services on Sunday, and going around for crusades but equally relevant in producing an extensive impact on all avenues of the society. Since the new churches have huge congregations, political leaders always find it very keen to seek their approval and collaboration in their political endeavours. One interesting episode that happened in Ghana relates to this sub-topic. In the early days of 2019, some charismatic pastors (Reverend Isaac Bempah and Prophet Nigel Gaisie) in particular came out with prophecies which indicated that some notable Ghanaians including the former presidents John Agyekum Kuffour and John Mahama as well as the national Chief Imam of the Muslim community will die before the end of the year 2019. It was interesting to notice the negative uproar from the public, immediately these prophecies became public resulting in a serious youth attack against one of the afore-mentioned pastors Reverend Owusu Bempah's church.⁵³ In trying to avert the controversy, the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (hereinafter referred to as GPCC) headed by Rev. Paul Frimpong Manso, had to come out and condemn the prophecies. He further admonished men of God who claim to be speaking in the name of God through prophetic declarations, to use due diligence and abide by the tenets of the Bible in making such declarations and utterances to avert the possibility of creating panic and fear in the nation.⁵⁴

One of the country's popular newspaper, "The Guardian," issued a publication on the 13th of February 2019, with the caption "Gospel glamour: How Nigeria's Pastors Wield Political Power". The article featured the famous elegant pastor Chris Okotie few days before the incoming presidential election in Nigeria. The article describes how Rev. Okotie as at 2003 has run for the presidential seat in Nigeria for four consecutive times. The article further explained that due to the exponential growth of Pentecostals making up about 35% of all Christians in Africa, (according to the world Christian database), the leaders of these new churches are wielding enormous power or influence when it comes to politics, and this new turn is what many describe as the 'pentecolisation' of politics. It has become a trend, which depicts how democratic processes in some African countries are being shaped by powerful pastors. Some weigh in on political situations during sermon time and some even instruct their church members which way to vote.⁵⁵ In the political arena in Nigeria one would be surprised to hear certain influential pastors like Yemi Osinbajo, Tunde Bakare, and David Oyedepo seriously involved in political debates, similarly in Ghana you could hear Charismatic church

⁴⁸ Kristina Stoeckl, *Defining The Postsecular*, 4.

⁴⁹ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A defense of Pluralism and Equality*, (United States: Basic Books Publishers, 1983); Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Charles Taylor, *Source of The self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁵⁰ Kristina Stoeckl, *Defining The Postsecular*, 3.

⁵¹ Massimo Rosati. "Longing for a Postsecular Condition: Italy and the Postsecular". A paper presented at a workshop on *Politics, Culture and Religion in the Postsecular Society*, University of Bologna, 2011.

⁵² Eduardo Mandieta, 'A Post Secular World Society? On the Philosophical Significance of Postsecular Consciousness and the multicultural World Society': an interview with Jurgen Habermas', translated by Mathias Fritsch, in *The Immanent Frame, Social Science Research Council*, 3, accessed January 18, 2018. <https://tif.ssrc.org/2010/02/03/a-postsecular-world-society>.

⁵³ Graphic Online, "Pentecostal Charismatic Council declares fasting and prayers to avert "dooms day" prophecies" - Jan 03, 2019, accessed February 15, 2019. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghana-news-pentecostal-charismatic-council-declares-fasting-and-prayers-to-avert-dooms-day-prophecies.html>

⁵⁴ *Pentecostal Charismatic Council declares fasting and prayers to avert "dooms day" prophecies.*

⁵⁵ *Pentecostal Charismatic Council declares fasting and prayers to avert "dooms day" prophecies.*

leaders like Bishop Agyin-Asare, Dr. Mensah Otabil, as well as Archbishop Duncan Williams and the like who have a say in politics. And since they have big following whatever they say comes with a great backing from their admirers and followers. Thus, this close rapport established between politics and church is described by many today as the ‘inter-religious political bromance.’⁵⁶ In a nutshell, as the Christian church is growing exponentially its ability to gain or participate in state power and governance has become feasible for the Christian church.⁵⁷

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this work was to reasonably show how Christianity has survived its establishment against all odds and has succeeded to a great extent in indigenizing itself and being truly dynamic in faith growth in Africa.⁵⁸ The number of African Christians is growing at around 2.36 percent annually, which would lead us to project a doubling of the continent’s Christian population in less than thirty years. If these figures are extrapolated to the year 2025, the African predominance becomes still more noticeable. There would be around 2.6 billion Christians, of whom 595 million would live in Africa. Thus by 2050, Christianity will be chiefly the religion of Africa and the African diaspora.⁵⁹ Philip Jenkins once said; African numerical dominance within the Christian faith will arrive sooner than he had argued before in his works,⁶⁰ and Eduardo Mandieta has affirmed that religion in the south has truly transformed itself,⁶¹ implying that by recapturing and opening up its domain it has come to maintain a remarkable public influence and relevance. Thus the over confidential secular outlook that has prevailed in many societies including Africa is now seeing the impact of Christian religion redefining its space.⁶² The way to confront the new phase of Christian religion is to implement a strategy or a shift of the society to embrace the change. This has become a new learning experience which has to evolve into an atmosphere of mutual respect, communication and cooperation from the Africa people of different faiths and backgrounds.⁶³

CONCLUSION

This work reveals that what is seen today in the growth in Christianity provides different paths and different interpretation of how to discover the gift of faith.⁶⁴ What is been experienced today affirms that every religion is equally valid and can become equally powerful on their own without any being controlled by any form of the so-called universal truth. According to some theologians God’s spirit works in all forms of religions in the world and actually produces a common and fundamental religious experience to all.⁶⁵ Religion from this point of view can be seen as experience that is putatively an apprehension of the divine presence within the believer’s human experience. It is not an inference to a general truth, but a ‘divine-human encounter.’⁶⁶ In this case, the person can understand God in a private way through a profound understanding of the totality of human life experiences.

The author concludes on Hick assertion that the issue of faith growth springs from a relativistic point of view. The idea that each one having the right to claim a unique encounter or experience with God is worthy of respect and listening to. As such God of the Christian is believed to know each single individual personally and he blesses whoever he chooses to bless.⁶⁷ The relationship between postmodernism and religion today affirms that the ideal way to faith and believe in God is much more individualistic, because the only way one can ascertain authenticity of faith is through an encounter which is more meaningful from the individual perspective than from a collective point of view. The process of becoming aware of God, if not to destroy the frail autonomy of the human personality must involve the individual’s own freely responding insight and assent.⁶⁸ Christianity and the spread of churches in Africa can be understood from this point of view, thus the faith can be defined to be close to the idea of general revelation but much more tangible to a particular aspect of general revelation, which is known as specific revelation. Pentecostalism is teaching that the

⁵⁶ Ebenezer Obadare, *Pentecostal Republic: Religion and the Struggle for State Power in Nigeria*, (London: Zed Books, 2018), 15.

⁵⁷ Ruth Maclean and Eromo Egbejule, “Gospel Glamour How Nigerians Pastors Wield Political Power”, February 15, 2019. www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/13/

⁵⁸ Samson A Fatokun, ‘Christianity in Africa: A Historical Appraisal’, (October 2005), *Verbum et Ecclesia*, Vol. 2, No. 26, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269965860_Christianity_in_Africa_a_historical_appraisal-accessed May 9, 2020.

⁵⁹ Philip Jenkins, ‘Believing in the Global South’, December 2006, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2006/12/believing-in-the-global-south>.

⁶⁰ Philip Jenkins, ‘The Future of World Christianity Is African’, (2020), www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/future-christianity-african

⁶¹ Eduardo Mandieta, ‘Spiritual Politics and Post-secular Authenticity: Foucault and Habermas on Postmetaphysical Religion’, *Exploring the Post-Secular*, (New Heaven, US: Yale University Press, 2009), 2, 11 and 12.

⁶² Jürgen Habermas, ‘A Post-secular Society-What does that mean?’ A lecture delivered at the Istanbul Seminars organized by Reset Dialogues on Civilizations in Istanbul, June 206, 2008, accessed October 22, 2018. <https://www.resetdoc.org/story/a-post-secular-society-what-does-that-mean>.

⁶³ Jürgen Habermas, J., Religion in the Public Sphere, *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 14, No. 1, (2006): 12, accessed April 22, 2018. https://www.sandiego.edu/pdf/pdf_library/habermaslecture031105

⁶⁴ Keith E. Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 67-68,

⁶⁵ John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988) 98.

⁶⁶ Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 98.

⁶⁷ Soren Kierkegaard, On the Dedication to ‘That Single Individual’, translated by Charles K. Bellinger, (1846) p.2-3, accessed November 15, 2018. <https://www.sorenkierkegaard.nl/artikelen/Engels>.

⁶⁸ John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), 65.

meaning religion can be interpreted and experienced in various ways, in the same way too faith and belief in God is seen. So, for the believer, the world is infused with the awareness of the divine presence everywhere,⁶⁹ and it is from this fundamental belief that Pentecostalism takes energy to dominate today in the religious space.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Lawrence Boakye, PhD., is a Lecturer at the University of Ghana – Department for the Study of Religions, Legon, Accra Ghana.

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⁶⁹ Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 105.

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