

## GHANA'S NEO-PROPHETIC PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY: FUTURE PROSPECTS

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### ABSTRACT

Pentecostalism has received lots of scholarship. Yet, there is scanty scholarship on Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity irrespective of its steadily growth and development in the religious field of Ghana. In Ghana today, prophets who belong to this Christian tradition are seen to engage in commercialising religious items and services, perform strange religious practices in their churches, demonise and verbally abuse each other using different media platforms. These disgusting situations raise the question of the possible future prospects of this brand of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity given the way its leaders approach and express Christianity today. It is in the light of this that this paper sets out to examine this brand of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity and outline some prospects it is likely to experience in the future.

**Keywords:** *Christianity, future, Ghana, Neo-Prophetism, Pentecostalism, prospects.*

### INTRODUCTION

In almost every corner in Ghana today is flooded with; Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches, Mosques, and Traditional Shrines<sup>2</sup>. The insurgence and upsurge of the proliferation of these religious edifices and their corresponding activities are generally the fruit of the nature of Ghana's religious field. Characteristically, the field is liberal, open, and lacks rigorous state regulation. It is also characterised by a fierce struggle for religious hegemony by its agents and institutions that are often in the minority, the exchange of abusive language among pastors/prophets<sup>3</sup>, aggressive religious competition for capital, commercialisation of religious items and services, and the struggle for desirable resources by religious individuals, institutions and agents<sup>4</sup>. These observations resonate directly with Pierre Bourdieu's emphasis he made on how "institutionalised religions seek to monopolise religious fields by imposing on the laity an 'orthodox' worldview and by denouncing as 'heretical' any alternative worldviews that competitors seek to propagate among the same laity"<sup>5</sup>.

As already underscored above, the liberal and free nature of Ghana's religious field has given room for the insurgence of different forms of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christian traditions that are mainly characterised by different religious beliefs and practices that usually sway from the mainline Christianity. A brand of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christian tradition that appears to have lagged behind in scholarship is Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity which is this paper's focus. In Ghana today, prophets who belong to this Christian tradition are seen to engage in commercialising religious items and services, perform strange religious practices in their churches, demonise and verbally abuse each using different media platforms. These disgusting situations raise the question of the possible future prospects of this brand of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity given the way its leaders approach and express Christianity today?

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<sup>2</sup> Karen Lauterbach, *Wealth and Worth*, 91-92.

<sup>3</sup> WinCharles Coker, & Theophilus Nartey, *When Men of God Go Wild*, 555-559.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Kafui Wuaku, *Selling Krishna in Ghana's Religious Market*, 339-340; Karen Lauterbach, *Wealth and Worth*, 95.

<sup>5</sup> Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion*, 56.

It is in the light of this that this paper sets out to examine this brand of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity and outline some prospects it is likely to experience in the future.

Methodologically, the paper relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources of data were derived mainly from participatory observation in the church services of Neo-Prophetic churches in Kumasi, and Accra. Secondary sources of data were gathered from journal articles, thesis, and published books. The paper is structured into seven sections. The first is the introduction, followed by a discussion on the phenomenon of prophetism, prophetism in African Traditional Religion, Neo-prophetism in Ghana, discussions on the teachings and practices in Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity, Neo-prophetic leaders in Ghana's religious field, future prospects and the conclusion.

This paper is significant because it contributes to academic literature on Neo-Prophetism in Ghana. The findings of the paper help to open up more discussions on what can be done to shape this brand of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity given its future prospects and the fact that it appeals to majority of Ghanaian Christians and addresses their existential problems.

### Prophetism

Prophetism is a religious phenomenon that involves an individual who is supernaturally endowed with extra-sensory capabilities that enables him/her to perform supernatural functions. It involves the supernatural ability to gain spiritual insight of spiritual matters and the use of the knowledge thus gained to improve the human situation in the material realm. In prophetism, the individual thus equipped, is extra-sensitive to the operations, will, intentions and directions of the possessing supernatural power that in this context, is the Holy Spirit<sup>6</sup>. This definition reflects Baëta's<sup>7</sup> description of prophetism as a phenomenon that includes the person who secures a following because of the individual's claim to have the ability of revealing hidden things and predicting the future.

### Prophetism in African Traditional Religion: The Ghanaian Experience

The conventional belief has been that the phenomenon of prophetism in Ghana and Africa originated from ancient Israel<sup>8</sup>. This is because it is a practice that Yahweh had instituted among the children of Israel. Given this, it logically follows that prophetism was introduced in Ghana as a result of missionary activities.

However, the position of this paper is that prior to the official introduction of Christianity in Gold Coast (present day Ghana), prophetism was in existence and was reflected in African Traditional Religion<sup>9</sup>. Opoku Onyinah<sup>10</sup> who reviewed Christian Baëta's conceptualisation of prophetism in Ghana pointed out that Baëta had described prophetism as a religious phenomenon that is characterised by a person's aptitude to secure a following because of the person's claim to have the ability of revealing hidden things and predicting the future (i.e. divinatory consultation, *abisa*). According to Baëta, divinatory consultation, *abisa* is an important aspect of prophetism, which also reflects an integral aspect of the religious life of Ghanaians and Africans.

According to Gideon Tetteh, in African Traditional Religion are religious functionaries called *Akɔmfo*<sup>11</sup>. Etymologically, the Akan word: *Ɔkɔmfo* the singular of *Akɔmfo* (plural) is made of a prefix 'Ɔ' which is used to mean 's/he', and a stem word 'kɔm' which connotes 'hunger', 'fasting' (which means seeking visions through prayers), 'invoking the presence of the divine', and to 'prophecy'. The suffix 'fo', which is sometimes used to mean 'one who' makes the word a noun agent. 'Ɔkɔmfo' is associated with a traditional

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak*, 24.

<sup>7</sup> See Christian G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 6-7.

<sup>8</sup> Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 26.

<sup>9</sup> Gideon Tetteh, *Analysing Perspectives on Evil*, 63.

<sup>10</sup> Opoku Onyinah, *Back to Prophetism*, 146.

<sup>11</sup> Gideon Tetteh, *Analysing Perspectives on Evil*, 63.

priest or priestess (generally perceived to be a medicine man or woman of a sort) who works with the gods, *Abosom*<sup>12</sup>. The traditional priest/priestess, *Okomfo* was expected to serve the community by playing the role as an intermediary between the gods and the entire community; prophesy through divine inspiration<sup>13</sup>, predict fortunes and heals the sick.

Old Testament scholars such as David Petersen<sup>14</sup>, Johannes Lindblom, and John Bright have depicted prophetism as intermediation between the divine world and human society. These scholars showed that the predominant duty of the prophet was to hear from the divinity (God, the gods or ancestors) and communicate the message to human beings. From the above analysis, it can be argued that the concept of prophetism as reflected in African Traditional Religion in Ghana can be likened to the concept of prophetism as reflected in ancient Israel. This analysis solidifies the claim that prophetism is not a recent phenomenon prior to the inception of Christianity in Ghana.

### Neo-Prophetism in Ghana

Neo-Prophetism as already indicated is a genre of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity as that which constitutes a new manifestation of prophetism in contemporary African Christianity grounding its beliefs and practices in an African worldview while exemplifying a high degree of hybridity in practices of the older African Independent Churches (AICs), Classical Pentecostal Churches and Neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches<sup>15</sup>.

Neo-Prophetism in Ghana's religious field began with the insurgence of the phenomenon of Prophetism, which was characterised by different phases; each surfacing to provide palpable solutions to people. Although some scholars such as Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi<sup>16</sup> and Johnson Asamoah-Gyadu, have differently categorised the classifications of the Christian renewal movements leading to the emergence of Neo-Prophetism in Ghana into three phases, in this paper I will stick to the six phases as shown by Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh<sup>17</sup>.

The first phase of Christian prophetism in Ghana occurred with the emergence of the African Initiated Churches (AICs). The AICs were characterised by a strong prophetic ministry<sup>18</sup>. This phase is commonly noted as the starting of prophetism in Ghana's Christianity<sup>19</sup>. Prophets like Samuel Nyankson, William Wade Harris, John Swatson, and Sampson Oppong<sup>20</sup> inaugurated the prophetic movement in Axim, and Apollonia in Nzema in the year 1914<sup>21</sup>. Gideon Tetteh<sup>22</sup> and Johnson K. Asamoah-Gyadu<sup>23</sup> have indicated the primary reason that gave birth to this first phase of prophetism in Ghana's Christianity. They attributed the emergence of the African Initiated/Instituted Churches (AICs) to the inability of the Mission Christianity to provide palpable solutions to the spiritual problems of converts. This situation led most of the converts to come out with solutions to their fears through prayer and was motivated by craving for a higher spirituality.

Their gatherings soon developed into bible study groups in the mainline churches. Some of the leaders who were prophetic figures broke away from the mainline churches and formed independent

<sup>12</sup> See: John D. K. Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, 38.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak*, 63-64.

<sup>14</sup> David L. Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy*, 25.

<sup>15</sup> Cephas Narh Omenyo, & Wonderful A. Arthur, *The Bible Says!*, 50-51.

<sup>16</sup> Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *The Development of Ghanaian Pentecostalism*: 59.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, *Hermeneutics of Re-enacting Biblical Text(s)*, 47-53.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak*, 39.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak*, 55. See also Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, *Socio-Rhetorical Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:26-40*, 77.

<sup>20</sup> Christian G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 27-30.

<sup>21</sup> James Anquandah, "The Ghana Independent/Pentecostal Movement", 22.

<sup>22</sup> Gideon Tetteh, *Analysing Perspectives on Evil*, 64.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Pentecostalism and the Missiological Significance*, 38.

churches, which emphasised both the operation of the Holy Spirit in church, and the lives of believers<sup>24</sup>. James Annorbah-Sarpei<sup>25</sup> has indicated that their activities were mainly concentrated in rural areas. This may be due to the low level of education by their leaders or the desire to eradicate idol worship, which was more rampant in the rural areas.

Ogbu Kalu<sup>26</sup> also observed that the advent of these prophets “tilled the soil on which modern Pentecostalism thrives”. In other words, the prophets considered the Ghanaian culture as they responded to the gospel and so felt the resonance between charismatic religious and biblical worldviews. This means, Ghanaian cultural ingredients such as language, dancing, among others, were used in Christian worship services in the midst of pneumatic activities<sup>27</sup>. The prophets were gifted with supernatural power from God, hence their religious activities were characterised by miracles, wonders, healing and revelations. This vibrant display of the power of God in their prophetic ministries attracted great following into their ministry<sup>28</sup>. Cephas N. Omenyo<sup>29</sup> observes:

The Prophets attracted large followings due to their respective spectacular manner of ministry, which was reminiscent of a traditional priest using Christian resources, thus making them acceptable to both some traditionalists and Christians. The African Prophets demonstrated extraordinary powers that portrayed them as ‘powerful’ men of God who were close to God, and as a result were able to diagnose ailments, trace their sources and causes as well as deliver victims from their dismal situations.

These prophets had the ability to perform extra-ordinary feats and provided the needs of the local people as they addressed the worldview, which is common to them. This was a definite reason why their ministries were considered unique and important in the history of prophetism in Ghana. However, after about 50 years of existence and popularity, the activities of these prophets waned<sup>30</sup>. Three chief reasons were attributed to their decline. First, newer Pentecostal churches demonised the prophets’ religious practices as occultic and ritualistic. This is primarily because their religious practices were identified with the African religio-cultural practices<sup>31</sup>. Besides, there was the difficulty of finding replacements after the death of the prophetic leaders<sup>32</sup>.

The demise of these prophets ushered in the second phase of prophetic renewal. This phase – Classical Pentecostalism, emerged through the activities of Apostle Peter Anim. The prophetic ministries of James McKeown, Prophet Gilbert Ablorh Lawson whose prophet /healing group came to be known as the Divine Healer’s Church, and Prophet John Mensah who formed the Church of Christ (Spiritual Movement) influenced this phase of prophetism<sup>33</sup>. This phase emphasised divine healing. The prophets selected text(s) that bordered on God’s promise of healing and good health and were interpreted from the worldview of the leader and audience. Biblical stories that concerned healing were interpreted as proofs

<sup>24</sup> Peter White, & Cornelius J. P. Niemandt, *The Role of the Holy Spirit in Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches*, 476.

<sup>25</sup> James Annorbah-Sarpei, “*The Rise of Prophetism*”, 27, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, x.

<sup>27</sup> James Anquandah, *The Ghana Independent/Pentecostal Movement*: 22-26.

<sup>28</sup> See: Ogbu Kalu, *African Christianity*, 285-287; Christian G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 28-32, 65-66.

<sup>29</sup> Cephas Narh Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 69-72.

<sup>30</sup> See: Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 29-30.

<sup>31</sup> See: Cephas Narh Omenyo & Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, *Claiming Religious Space*, 67.

<sup>32</sup> Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 65-66.

<sup>33</sup> Quayesi-Amakye, Joseph. *Let the Prophet Speak*, 40.

and examples for the leaders to exercise the gifts of healing; and the sick were to have faith in expecting healing<sup>34</sup>.

The third phase of prophetism was characterised by revival of Christian fellowships in tertiary institutions. Samuel B. Adubofour<sup>35</sup> in his doctoral thesis, “Evangelical Para-Church Movement in Ghanaian Christianity: (1950 to Early 1990’s)” for example, discussed the eminence of the revival of Inter-Hall Christian Fellowship in the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi in the 1990’s. He contended that the Inter-Hall Christian Fellowship “attracted reactions which range from derogatory remarks to outright condemnation”<sup>36</sup>. In this third phase, emphasis was placed on the prophet-hood of all believers. Although the leaders in this phase were quite enlightened, they were not theologically educated. Scripture interpretation was largely dependent on the experiences of the leader with the Holy Spirit, with emphasis on lexical meaning of key words in the chosen texts<sup>37</sup>. Joseph Quayesi-Amakye<sup>38</sup> intimates that this third phase of prophetism was basically experienced at the tertiary level in Ghana.

The fourth phase was vibrant in denominational prayer camps/centres of the Church of Pentecost. Opoku Onyinah and Emmanuel K. Larbi have observed that these camps/centres arose in response to the ‘witchdemonology’<sup>39</sup> of the 1980’s and ‘90s. The camps/centres served as ‘safe havens’ for a great majority of troubled and perplexed Ghanaians who resorted to them for special- time-of-prayers in the expectation of receiving answers from God to their numerous existential needs. Notable examples included Prophetess Grace Adu’s Adumfa Prayer Camp located in the Central Region, Mama Grace’s Agape Prayer Camp at Ablekuma, Elder Okyere’s Salvation Prayer Centre, Elder Dan’s Paradise Spiritual, Revival and Healing Centre, all in Accra, and Elder Andoh’s Down Town Prayer Revival Centre at Kasoa<sup>40</sup>.

Paul Gifford<sup>41</sup> refers to the fifth phase as Ghana’s New Christianity. Progenitors of this ‘New Christianity’, otherwise called ‘Neo-Prophetism’ include Prophet Bernard Opoku Nsiah, Elisha Salifu Amoako, Isaac Anto, Eric Nana Kwesi Amponsah, and Isaac Owusu-Bempah, among others<sup>42</sup>. Bill Hamon<sup>43</sup> had indicated that this phase was called so because it commenced in the 1990’s with indigenous Charismatic Ghanaian prophets, and Christian programmes coupled with a charisma that could attract large following. In other words, the phase ushered in prophets who linked almost every statement they made with prophecy. It is not surprising that churches whose leaders did not possess such prophetic charisma were invariably forced by their members to declare prophetic utterances into their lives<sup>44</sup>.

Phase six emerged in the 2000’s. It was characterised by a resurgence of a new form of prophetism called Neo-Prophetism. This study’s unit of analysis also belongs to this phase of prophetism in Ghana’s Christianity. Ebenezer Adarkwa Yiadom, Bishop Daniel Obinim, Bishop Daniel Bonigas, and Prophet Gabriel Akwasi Sarpong are the prophetic figures of this phase. However, many of these prophets reject the view that they emerged in the 2000’s arguing, among other things, that they had begun their prophetic

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, *Hermeneutics of Re-enacting Biblical Text(s)*, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Brefo Adubofour, *Evangelical Para-Church Movement in Ghanaian Christianity*, 183.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 187.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 187.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak*, 40.

<sup>39</sup> Opoku Onyinah, “*Akan Witchcraft and the Concept of Exorcism in the Church of Pentecost*”, 253, 293-294. Opoku Onyinah defines the word witchdemonology as the synthesis of the practices and beliefs of African witchcraft, and Western Christian concepts of demonology and exorcism.

<sup>40</sup> See: Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, *Hermeneutics of Re-enacting Biblical Text(s)*, 6; Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, *Prophetism in Ghana Today*, 59-81.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 90.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Perry Kweku Okyerefo, “*The Role of Pentecostal Churches as an Influential Arm of Civil Society in Ghana*”, 77-80.

<sup>43</sup> Bill Hamon, *Prophets and the Prophetic Movement*, 138.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 90.



ministries prior to the year 2000. Come what may, the argument remains that it was in the year 2000 they gained popularity and influence in Ghana's Christianity.

This phase appears to attract most criticism. Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh<sup>45</sup> observed that the criticism is the fruit of the frequent demand of money from church members and others before accessing the services of the prophets, and the sale of prophylactics at exorbitant rate<sup>46</sup>. Besides, some of the prophets engage in immoral acts, exhibition of extravagant lifestyle, and lack financial accountability to members. The phase is characterised by vibrant and effective use of the media (television, radio, erection and conspicuous display of big billboards and internet), regular weekday church services, 'miracles', and emphasis on the acquisition and use of Christian religious items/products.

In Ghana today, Neo-Prophetic Pentecostalism is growing rapidly. One primary reason that accounts for such a rapid growth is that this type of Pentecostal Christianity is relevant to the Ghanaian religious context. This means, it is able to provide the expected religious, emotional, psychological and social solutions to the problems of majority of the Ghanaian populace that seeks their services. Second, it is practical and consistent with most sections of the Ghanaian populace. Third, Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity involves the use of a primarily oral form of communication (i.e. the Twi language). Besides, it provides the youth with the opportunity to exercise their gifts and talents<sup>47</sup>. Moreover, the tendency to schism, internal competition, getting members from historic churches and the benefits from population growth can be attributed to the reasons for their rapid growth and expansion<sup>48</sup>.

Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic movements are generally classified into two categories. The first is those that began and have remained largely independent or autonomous, evangelistic and revivalist entities which virtually function as denominations or churches. Even at their burgeoning state, they often deny such identification and insist on being regarded as "ministries". They consider themselves as adjuncts to the effort of the existing churches. Their membership is drawn from already established churches, although a few of them may also be people who were little more than nominal Christians, or never really belong to any church. The Gospel Revival and Christian Hope Ministries are instances. The second category consists of full-fledged independent denominational, Neo-Prophetic Ministries that have turned into churches. They may be described as the ultimate Neo-Prophetic Churches. Most, if not all, of them began as ministries. They are generally characterised by indigenous leadership, management and control<sup>49</sup>.

### Teachings and Practices

Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity places emphasis on theological concepts/teachings such as enemy, *ɔtamfo*, spiritual guidance, *akwankyere*, anointing, *ngosra*, prosperity, *yiedie* and exorcism and healing<sup>50</sup>.

Enemy, *ɔtamfo* (singular), enemies *Atamfo* (plural) is perceived in Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity as either a human person or a spiritual being (an agent of Satan) who causes harm to people. Frimpong Wiafe and Harriet Clotey<sup>51</sup> have corroborated this explanation and argued that the enemy, *ɔtamfo* is either physical, spiritual, or both physical and spiritual in nature and ranges from the world (devil), members of one's family, people outside the family and one's own self<sup>52</sup>. This

<sup>45</sup> Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, "A Study of 'Prophetism in the Gospels and Ga South Municipal Area, 198.

<sup>46</sup> See: Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, *Contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi*, 62–68.

<sup>47</sup> Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Renewal within African Christianity, 96-130.

<sup>48</sup> Kalu U. Ogbu, *African Christianity*, 285-287.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak*, 24.

<sup>50</sup> Gideon Tetteh, *Analysing Perspectives on Evil*, 76.

<sup>51</sup> Frimpong Wiafe, & Harriet Clotey, *Ghanaian Christian Understanding of the Concept of Enemy with Reference to Psalm 35: 1 – 10*, 1708-1709.

<sup>52</sup> See: Matthew 10:36. Revised Standard Version Bible.

understanding of who an enemy, *Ɔtamfo* is, influences Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic pastors/prophets and Christians to do anything possible to deal with it since it is apparently responsible for causing its victim's mishaps (such as; bareness in women, insanity, poverty, failure, sicknesses, and death)<sup>53</sup>.

Besides the concept of enemy, *Ɔtamfo* is spiritual guidance, *akwankyerɛ*. Cephas N. Omenyo and Abamfo Atiemo<sup>54</sup>, and Simon Kouessan Degbe<sup>55</sup> have depicted spiritual guidance, *akwankyerɛ* as a practice whereby a prophet gives 'spiritual' information/directive to a person. The information/directive provides explanation and solution to one's problem. Spiritual guidance, *akwankyerɛ* comes in two forms. The first form involves one-on-one meeting with a prophet where the client relates his/her problems to the prophet for spiritual guidance, *akwankyerɛ* to be given him/her. The second form involves a prophet declaring that God has spoken and given to him spiritual guidance, *akwankyerɛ* for the entire church. Here, congregants are expected to see the prophet on one-on-one basis to be given the directives/guidelines. In Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre like the other Neo-Prophetic churches for instance, Prophet Ebenezer Adarkwa Yiadom does not give spiritual guidance, *akwankyerɛ* openly during sermons. Instead, he prophesies and indicates God's spiritual guidance, *akwankyerɛ* without comprehensive details. This requires participation of the entire congregation.

Neo-Propheticism teaches that every mishap has both physical and spiritual dimensions. The only way to deal with the mishap is through spiritual guidance, *akwankyerɛ*. Here, one is expected to acquire blessed handkerchiefs, stickers, headgear, anointing oil, anointed eggs, and brassieres among others. These supposed consecrated religious items are used to mediate the divine and are believed to be a spiritual support for prosperity, success and victory<sup>56</sup>. Moreover, one is expected to follow the spiritual guidance, *akwankyerɛ* meticulously to get rid of the mishap. A mistake would render the desired results futile. In other words, one has to meticulously follow the steps involved in spiritual guidance, *akwankyerɛ* without any mistake.

Anointing, *ngosra* is a very common religious practice in Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity. This practice is believed to invoke the presence and power of God unto the believer<sup>57</sup>. The practice also facilitates 'impartation' of spiritual gifts to empower the believer to realise wealth, obtain healing and see visions<sup>58</sup>. The anointing oil is the main religious item used for this purpose. Cephas N. Omenyo and Wonderful Arthur<sup>59</sup> have observed that anointing oil is usually applied on one's forehead, ailing part of the body and on the palms. This is done for healing, and blessing purposes. In some rare cases, the anointing oil is taken orally to mediate healing. In Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre, like the other Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches, anointing comes in different forms apart from what Cephas N. Omenyo and Wonderful Arthur have identified. It depends on the kind of problem one is experiencing. In most cases, Prophets either pour the anointing oil on a person's head, feet, palm, on the floor, or smear it on a person's body. Some notable anointing oils include; Separator of fight and collector of fights, *Ɔpata ko agye ko abɔwobo*, Iron cuts iron, *Dadie bi twa dadie*, and breaking oil. Roland Owusu Ansah also identified; *back to sender*, light for my path, *me kwan so hann*, fire quencher, *odumgya*, and wrestling, *atentam*<sup>60</sup> as the anointing oils that Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic churches use. These

<sup>53</sup> Cephas Narh Omenyo & Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, *Claiming Religious Space*, 62.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 62.

<sup>55</sup> Simon Kouessan Degbe, *Sumsum Akwankyerɛ*, 273-274.

<sup>56</sup> Gideon Tetteh, *Analysing Perspectives on Evil*, 79.

<sup>57</sup> Gideon Tetteh, *Analysing Perspectives on Evil*, 80.

<sup>58</sup> David B. Stiles-Ocran, "Prophetism in Ghana", 96.

<sup>59</sup> Cephas Narh Omenyo, & Wonderful A. Arthur, *The Bible Says!*, 56.

<sup>60</sup> Roland Owusu-Ansah, *The Usage of Anointing Oil in some Charismatic and Neo-Prophetic Churches in Kumasi*, 154.

oils are believed to possess supernatural powers that enhance businesses, protect and resist malevolent spirit attacks, provide favour, and render successes to users.

The practice of healing and deliverance is another characteristic of Neo-Propheticism. Abamfo Atiemo<sup>61</sup> has pointed out two major forms of healing and deliverance. They are mass and individual types. The author indicates that mass healing and deliverance takes place in the church or at special revival services or crusade grounds. In most cases, healing and deliverance is officiated by a ‘deliverance team’ or ‘prayer warriors’<sup>62</sup> led by a deliverance leader who may be a prophet or is believed to be Holy Spirit-filled. Demon-possessed and sick persons are respectively exorcised and prayed for by the deliverance, and healing team.

In Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre, Anointed Palace Chapel, Eagle Life Ministry, and True Word Prophetic Fire Ministries like the other Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches for instance, associate pastors are tasked to perform mass healing and deliverance. Personal or individual deliverance involves a one-on-one session with the Prophet. Generally, individual deliverance is preceded by a counselling session, which aids the prophet to be abreast with the cause of his client’s problem(s). Anointing oil is mostly used during deliverance and healing services. There are also instances brassieres, headgears, handkerchief, soft drink (Fanta, Coca-Cola), well-water, *aburamu nsuo*, stickers, hand bangles and chains are used as a medium of deliverance and healing for religious consumers<sup>63</sup>. Gideon Tetteh has also observed that in some instances, prophets use honey, porridge, oranges, apples, bananas, boiled egg, toilet soap and lime to administer healing and deliverance to their clients<sup>64</sup>.

Another concept that has gained prominence in Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity as already indicated is prosperity, *yiedie*<sup>65</sup>. This concept thrives on the presupposition that a Christian is obliged to be prosperous materially, physically, and spiritually by virtue of his/her relationship with God. Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians hold the belief that prosperity, *yiedie* is only actualised when one has successfully dealt with one’s enemies, *atamfo* and has meticulously pursued his/her spiritual guidance, *akwankyerε* without any fiasco. This explains why, desperate Ghanaian religious consumers patronise any religious products and services capable of effecting their successes.

### Neo-Prophets in Ghana’s Religious Field

A religious field refers to a “space of action” often constructed around explicit categories of frames<sup>66</sup>. Fields can also be autonomous or inter-related<sup>67</sup>. Pierre Bourdieu has defined ‘field’ to mean an arena of competition for the production, acquisition, circulation, and appropriation of religious goods, services, knowledge “connections” or status, and the competitive positions held by actors enhance their struggle to accumulate, monopolise and dominate different kinds of capital<sup>68</sup>. He further observes that fields are also structured spaces of dominant and subordinate positions based on types and amounts of capital.

As already indicated, there is struggle for hegemony by Prophets in Neo-Prophetic Christianity. This is evident in the supposed healing practices and performance of ‘miracles’, prophecies, and the regular televised and aired programmes of the Prophets. Besides, they engage in open contest among themselves

<sup>61</sup> Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, “*Mmusuyi and Deliverance*”, 103.

<sup>62</sup> Gideon Tetteh, *Analysing Perspectives on Evil*, 83. See: P. Atakora, *Neo-Propheticism and the Mission-Established Churches in Ghana*, 53.

<sup>63</sup> Personal observation in some Neo-Prophetic Churches in Ghana.

<sup>64</sup> Gideon Tetteh, *Analysing Perspectives on Evil*, 83. See: P. Atakora, *Neo-Propheticism and the Mission-Established Churches in Ghana*, 53.

<sup>65</sup> Cephas Narh Omenyo, & Wonderful A. Arthur, *The Bible Says!*, 56.

<sup>66</sup> Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion*, 44.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 45.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 42-46.



on the one hand, and traditional priests on the other<sup>69</sup>. Moreover, they display their wealth in the houses, and cars they possess, and in the way they dress. These are covertly done to depict which one among them is powerful and to be patronised<sup>70</sup>.

Besides, Prophets in Neo-Prophetic Christianity are engaged in regular exchange of abusive language and insinuations. WinCharles Cooker and Theophilus Nartey<sup>71</sup> have shown in their research how some Prophets/Pastors in Ghana verbally abuse themselves on live-radio broadcast as self-defence to some alleged accusations levelled against them. Prophets in Neo-Prophetic Christianity commercialise religious items and services to earn much wealth. They do this by selling anointing oil and eggs at expensive prices. In Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre for instance, Prophet Ebenezer Adarkwa Yiadom sells a bottle of *Dadie bi twa dadie* anointing oil for GH ₵ 20, GH ₵50, GH ₵100 and GH ₵200, and *Opata ko agye ko abowobo* (anointing oil and eggs) for GH ₵500, GH ₵1,000, and GH ₵2,000.

### Future Prospects

Christianity in Ghana today appears to be disgusting. This is because of the way many Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic pastors/prophets and adherents express it. It is also disgusting in the sense that many of the prophets/pastors that belong to this Christian tradition engage in a culture of abusive exchanges, perform strange religious practices; commanding wedding rings and passports to appear in church, instruct congregants to carry cement bags as punishment for refusing to stake lottery numbers, manipulate their congregants, give out lottery numbers, and engage in sexual relations with their congregants. By analysing their religious practices and activities, my argument is that the future prospects of Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity is bleak, irrespective of some positive contributions they are making by addressing the existential problems of desperate religious consumers in Ghana.

Futuristically, Neo-Prophetic Christianity will breed and witness a category of young charlatan Prophets who will provide weird Christian ideologies and interpretations to Bible scriptures to win and abuse desperate Ghanaian religious consumers. This is because Christianity in Ghana tilts more to a business agenda where many religious leaders use their position and take advantage of the naivety of desperate religious consumers to dupe and manipulate them of their wealth to become rich. Besides, many Ghanaian religious consumers express much interest in miracles, and are enthused with prophets who give *akwankyerε*, perform miracles and give fascinating prophecies. Based on this, the outspoken youth will then proclaim themselves Prophets and find fair and foul means to acquire spiritual powers to perform miracles, reveal people's problems and secrets, and prophesy to get a great following.

Further to note, Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Christianity will produce 'fake Christians'. These will be people who will not be spirit-filled, and without proper understanding of the Bible and Christianity as a whole. Rather, they will be people who will express much interest in prosperity gospel, miracles, spiritual protection, *akwankyerε*, and have more faith and depend on their prophets instead of Jesus Christ. This is because in Ghana today, Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic churches teach their congregants and stress on concepts such as prosperity, *yiedie*, spiritual guidance, *akwankyerε*, and miracles. In this regard, religious consumers are motivated by the need to get rich, experience booming business, and dealing with their enemies instead of seeking God's kingdom and obeying His commandments. This attitude sways away from the: seek ye first God's kingdom, and all other things will be provided.

<sup>69</sup>Peacefmonline.com. *2 Pastors Fight: You'll Go to Hell/Your Mother*. Available at <http://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/local/social/200910/28393.php> (October 6, 2009), Accessed on December 5, 2017. See: Ghanaweb.com, *Obinim Begs Kwaku Bonsam* available at <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Obinim-begs-Kwaku-Bonsam-217328> (Sunday, 28 August 2011), Accessed on December 5, 2017.

<sup>70</sup> Karen Lauterbach, *Wealth and Worth*, 95.

<sup>71</sup> WinCharles Coker, & Theophilus Nartey, *When Men of God go Wild*, 555-559.

Finally, Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity will suffer strong opposition and rebellion from its adherents. The fruit of this opposition will be borne out of the consciousness desperate religious consumers will regain having realised that for long, they have been hypnotised, manipulated, abused, tricked, and indoctrinated by prophets who have played on their minds to recurrently sell same religious items to tackle their unresolved problems. In several Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic churches that I joined their weekday church service, I observed that a particular type of anointing oil was sold to congregants over and over again to address same problem. Besides, the congregants were never perturbed buying same oil severally. In other words, they expressed so much confidence in the oil and the prophet. For them, anything the prophet prescribes is the best and must be bought and used. But the question is, if the anointing oil possesses power to solve people's problem at once, why then must congregants be convinced always to buy the same oil over and over again? This shows how desperate religious consumers are daily manipulated, deceived and hypnotised to believe that there is much power in the anointing oils they buy than Jesus Christ.

I must emphasise that inasmuch as my argument is that the future of Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Ghana is bleak, one positive thing that needs to be underscored is that many spiritual-related problems and chronic ailments outside the reach of Western medicine will be addressed. This will help the country Ghana to spend less on some chronic ailments that are incurable which drains the state's monetary resources.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper examined Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity and suggested some future prospects. The paper was motivated on the premise that majority of neo-prophets in Ghana's religious field engage in commercialisation of religion, strange religious practices, seek for hegemony, compete and verbally abuse each other. The activities by these prophets raised the question of the possible future prospects of this brand of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity given the way its leaders approach and express Christianity today? Based on the examination of the activities of neo-prophets in Ghana, the paper argued that the future prospects of this brand of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity is bleak, irrespective of some positive contributions they are presently making. The paper, however suggests that for the future to be bright for Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity, whose religious contributions will help Ghana, there should be rigorous state regulatory measures that can check the religious activities of all the religions in the country. This will do away the abuses and the excesses and bring sanity in the religious field of Ghana. Such regulation will only materialise in the absence of *politicisation of religion* and *religionisation of politics*. Frankly speaking, it would be of great necessity if Ghana adopts the stringent measures Paul Kagame, the President of Rwanda, has taken to control and close down about 6000 churches whose majority of its religious leaders lack professional and theological education, but are conspicuously engaged in commercialising religious items and manipulating desperate religious consumers.

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