




Assessing Ghanaian Primal Consciousness: A Key Factor in Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity

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ABSTRACT

The article examined the influence of the Ghanaian primal consciousness on Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. Although the primal religion seems to have lost its physical presence in the Ghanaian religious space, its ideologies and tenets continue to be alive in the lives of many Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians. Relying on the researcher's pastoral experience, personal observations and by paying attention to some sayings and proverbs of some Pentecostals, the study identified the extent to which primal consciousness affects Pentecostal Christianity in Ghana. It discovered that while some elements of the primal religion are closely related to Christianity and may thus positively affect it, others appear to be in opposition to biblical truth and may thus affect it negatively. The study posits that a good knowledge of the reality of the effect of the primal consciousness by Pentecostal-Charismatic churches would advance the Christian mission in Africa. The article adds to existing literature on the impact of the primal religion on Christianity.

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INTRODUCTION

History and contemporary trends have shown that the Ghanaian primal religion had largely influenced Ghanaian Pentecostal Christianity. A critical assessment of the practical lives of many Pentecostal Christians in Ghana may undoubtedly lead to the conclusion that they are not only guided by the Holy Bible but also, by their primal consciousness. Kingsley Larbi, writing on this, observes that “when it comes to the spirituality of Ghanaian Pentecostals, it is influenced by two sources; the Bible and primal worldview.”¹ In a similar vein, Allan Anderson notes that Pentecostals and other Christians in Africa continue to hold fast to the fundamental belief in a spiritual realm that impedes their efforts to advance spiritually and economically.² They then perceive their faith to be in opposition to and a method of escaping from that world, leading them to confront this realm of bad spirits and ideas.³ Indicating the influence of the African primal consciousness on Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, Emmanuel Anim, after a critical reflection on the prosperity gospel among Ghanaian Charismatic churches, concludes that it was largely influenced by their primal aspirations rather than the American neo-Pentecostal theology.⁴

Although the proclamation of the biblical messages has had a profound impact on African religion, particularly for those who have become Christians or were born in Christian families, the impact has been partial

¹ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, vol. 1 (CPCS, 2001), 426.

² Allan Heaton Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism* (Cham: : Springer International Publishing, 2018), 182.

³ Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism*, 182.

⁴ Emmanuel K. Anim, “The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination,” *Pentvars Business Journal* 4, no. 2 (2010), 66.

and inadequate in most cases.⁵ A critical reflection of the lives of many African Christians indicates that they live in ‘two worlds’, the Christian world and the African primal world, that is, they attempt to integrate the primal consciousness into their spirituality and their theological system.⁶ It is not uncommon to hear some Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians in Ghana justifying their actions by citing primal principles. For instance, some Pentecostals often cite the Akan saying, ‘*se wo soro awaregyaee a, wo nya cyere pa* (if you fear divorce, you will not get a good wife) as justification for divorce. For instance, a deacon in the researcher’s church cited the above Akan saying as the basis for wanting to divorce his wife. This influence has also been felt in the interpretation and understanding of Christian concepts and doctrines.

The reality of the primal consciousness wielding influence on African Christianity emanates from the fact that it is a substructure of the Christian faith, that is, primal spirituality has served as a springboard for African Christian spirituality in general.⁷ According to Gillian Bediako, primal religion serves as the fundamental foundation for all subsequent religious experience. It offers universal, fundamental components of human understanding of the transcendent and the world, as well as crucial religious insights that can be built upon or suppressed but cannot be replaced.⁸

Based on the above, the article aims to examine some key elements or features of the Ghanaian primal religion and establish areas that affect Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. It begins with a discussion of Ghanaian primal religion, followed by elements of the Ghanaian spiritual world, Ghanaian primal spirituality, the concept of personhood and implications of findings for the Christian mission.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the critical technique of theological reflection. The theological reflection technique analyses a situation and then suggests theological and pastoral responses to that circumstance.⁹ Relying on pastoral engagements with church members, personal observations, sayings and proverbs, the study critically analysed the features of the primal religion and points out areas of influence on Pentecostal Christianity.

Ghanaian Primal Religion

Ghanaian primal religion, as used in this article, refers to the indigenous religions or native religious beliefs of the Ghanaian people. Although one is not ignorant about the difficulty in discussing the primal religious systems in Ghana generally due to their multiplicity and diversity, it is, however, possible to discuss a unified Ghanaian primal religion. The possibility lies in the fact that most of the primal religious systems in West Africa in general and Ghana in particular have common features.¹⁰ Comparisons with other West African religious systems reveal similarities in the divine reality. For example, the Ewe of southern Ghana and Togo, the Ga and the Dangme of Ghana, the Fon of Benin, and the Yoruba of Nigeria are in many ways related and share one another’s worldview. This view is supported by Godwin Nukunya, who claims that while supernatural beliefs and practices exist in Ghana on many different levels and take many different forms, some general categories, such as the Supreme God, smaller gods, ancestors, witchcraft, oracles, magic, and sorcery, can be isolated.¹¹ Relying on the harmonies within the features in primal religions in Ghana, the study discusses Ghanaian primal religion from a general perspective rather than focusing on a particular ethnic group. This general approach is also justified because Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians are found in all ethnic groups in Ghana. Thus, examples from any ethnic group will be cited to make a case where applicable.

Elements of the Ghanaian Primal Spiritual World

The Ghanaian primal spiritual world comprises certain elements that come up to make it a complete whole. The primal people of Ghana have a spiritual worldview because “there is the strong belief that people are surrounded by a host of spirit-beings – some good, some evil – which can influence the lives of the living for good or for

⁵ Klaus Nurnberger, *Christ and the Ancestors in a Changing Africa: The Living Dead and the Living God* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2007), 40.

⁶ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 76.

⁷ Andrew F. Walls, “Primal Religions as the Substructure of Christianity: Theological and Phenomenological Perspective December,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 11, no. 2 (2008): 1–4, 2.

⁸ Gillian M. Bediako, “All Believers Are Primalists Underneath: Towards a New Appreciation of the OT as Primal Religion” (Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 2007), 1.

⁹ J.D. Whitehead and E.E. Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York : Seabury Press, 1998); Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflections: Sources* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 268.

¹⁰ E. Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions* (Onitsha: IMICO Publishers, 1987), 46.

¹¹ G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, 2nd ed. (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2007), 55.

ill.”¹² The elements of the spiritual world of West African religions as discussed by Parrinder include the Supreme God, divinities or gods, ancestors, charms or amulets (other spiritual powers).¹³ Since this categorisation covers the Ghanaian context, the discussion will follow that order. The following elements will be discussed and an attempt will be made to evaluate their impact on Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity.

a. God

The idea of God is a common belief in Ghanaian pre-Christian religion. All primal societies in Ghana believe in the existence of a Supreme Being. This is a fact that a child in the Ghanaian pre-Christian society does not need to be told. In Ghana, the Akan express this as “*obi kyere abofra Nyame*”, which translates as “no one shows the child God”. This implies that the idea of God is common knowledge in Akan primal religion. Asare Opoku rightly captures this when he states that the idea of God is “firmly entrenched in the religious beliefs of West African peoples and may be regarded as fundamental to their religious systems.”¹⁴ God is conceived to be a powerful creative force with an unknown origin. God is regarded as the ultimate creator (*Bɔlɔ*, in Dangme) and owner (*asase wura*, in Akan). He is thought to be immanent; thus, he is believed to be present and active in the affairs of humans.¹⁵ God is conceived generally as the preserver of the universe as well as responsible for its sustenance. Among the Akan, he is seen to be the giver of the sun (*amowia*), the giver of water (*amonsu*), the giver of rain (*totrobonsu*), and the reliable one (*twereampong*).¹⁶

Symbolically, God is believed to reside in the sky (heaven). For instance, among the Ewe of Ghana, he is referred to as ‘*Mawu dzifotɔ*’ (the God of the sky). The association of God with the sky is also found in Akan religious beliefs. This notion is presented in what Robert Fisher calls the myth of separation, which tells the story of the Old Woman pounding fufu and hitting the nose of *Nyame* (God) with her pestle.¹⁷ To avoid being further abused by the Old Woman, *Nyame* ascended higher in the sky.¹⁸ This notwithstanding, his omnipresence is also acknowledged in most Ghanaian pre-Christian societies. For example, among the Dangme of Ghana, one often hears sayings such as ‘*Mawu ɲe hefiahe*’ – God is everywhere. Reflecting on God’s omnipresence from the Ewe-Dome perspective, Ganusah asserts that the frequency with which people refer to *Mawu* in difficult and pleasant situations seems to suggest that *Mawu* is also not too far from the created beings.¹⁹ It may, therefore, be concluded that to Ghanaian primal people, although God is believed to live in the sky, he nonetheless makes himself available to those who call on him. The Akan adage, “*ɛ wopese woka asem kyere Nyame a, ka kyere mframa*” meaning “If you want to talk to God, say it to the wind” sums this up.

A critical examination of the concept of God in Ghanaian primal religion indicates that He is not alien to them. According to Lamin Sanneh, Africans can eloquently describe God in their proverbs, and stories, and they revere God in worship and sacrifices.²⁰ From the above discussions, it is apparent that the Ghanaian primal conception of God is not too distinct from that of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. Ghanaian primal people share with Pentecostals the view of a monotheistic God, who is responsible for the creation of the universe as well as its sustenance. They also share with Pentecostals the view that God is everywhere and is closer to them and, therefore, direct communication with him is possible.

At this point, one can agree with Fisher and other African scholars that there are “homologies between Western-type philosophies and theologies and African modes of thought.”²¹ Nevertheless, some challenges can be observed with aspects of the notion of God within the Ghanaian primal religion. These challenges are not with their conception per se but have to do with their application. The first is regarding communication with God. Although Ghanaian primal people believe that God is closer to them and that communication with him is

¹² Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Church in Ghana*. (Boekencentrum: Zoetermeer, The Netherlands, 2002), 26.

¹³ E. G. Parrinder, *West African Religion* (London: Oxford Universities Press, 1949), 16.

¹⁴ Kofi Asare Opoku, *West Africa Traditional Religion* (Accra: FEP International Private Limited, 1978), 19.

¹⁵ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism...*, 26.

¹⁶ David Westerlund, *African Religion in African Scholarship: A Preliminary Study of the Religious and Political Background* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1985), 33.

¹⁷ Robert B. Fisher, *West African Religious Traditions: Focus on the Akan of Ghana* (New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 138.

¹⁸ Fisher, *West African Religious Traditions: Focus on the Akan of Ghana*, 138.

¹⁹ Rebecca Yawa Ganusah, *Christ Meets the Ewe-Dome of Ghana: A Theological and Ethical Reflection on the Rites of Birth and Initiation into Womanhood* (Accra: Legon Theological Studies, 2008), 21.

²⁰ Lamin Sanneh, “Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture,” *American Society of Missiology Series, No. 13* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1990), 4.

²¹ Fisher, *West African Religious Traditions: Focus on the Akan of Ghana*, 133.

possible, many times, in times of trouble, some often run to intermediaries for intervention. The general belief is that these intermediaries are closer to God and, therefore, stand in a better position to invoke God's active presence in their situations. This notion undoubtedly has been imported into Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. Although some of these churches teach their members to personally pray to God or seek his face in times of trouble, some of them over-depend on their leaders for everything. The over-dependence on Christian leaders may thwart their spiritual growth. It may also allow some Pentecostal leaders to take advantage of their members and abuse them.

The second challenge is about how they hear God's voice. Due to the lack of a written scripture in the primal religion, they often rely on messages from the diviners or the traditional priests as coming from God. Some Pentecostal-Charismatics in Ghana have brought this practice into their newfound faith. Although they have the Bible that contains the word of God, which they are to read regularly to know the will of God, they prefer sitting at the feet of prophets and Christian leaders to give them divine direction. The prophets are seen to be "mediators of supernatural power, people with 'eyes to see' into the invisible realm and who bring communication from that spiritual realm into the human/physical realm."²² Asamoah-Gyadu describes Pentecostal prophets as "charismatic figures who function as the Christian equivalents of traditional priests and diviners."²³ Due to these expected functions of prophets in Ghanaian Pentecostalism, they are usually taken seriously and their ministries are well patronised. The challenge with this ministry is that sometimes in their attempt to give directions, they say things that have no basis in scripture, thereby misdirecting their followers. In Ghanaian primal religion, it is a general belief that God had handed the direct cares of the world to divinities or gods, the *abosom* (Akan), *trɔwo* (Ewe) and *wodzi* (Ga).²⁴

b. Divinities or gods

Common to all primal religions in Ghana is the belief in gods, sometimes called divinities. These are considered to be non-human spirits and are sometimes referred to as children or agents of God. It is believed generally that the divinities were created by God to fulfil specific functions.²⁵ The gods, unlike the Supreme Being, usually operate within shrines, which develop into organisations involving priests, congregations and fellowship.²⁶ Most of them live in or are associated with, natural objects like rivers, ponds, lagoons, forests, rocks and the sea.²⁷ The association with these objects does not imply that the objects are also worshipped. The gods could be put into the following categories: i. Deities of an entire state; ii. Deities of towns; iii. Deities of Clan, lineage, or family.²⁸

In general, people believe that the gods can solve a variety of social and personal issues, expose witches, and attest to the reality of an event. They are also thought to possess harmful abilities. It should, however, be noted, that they do not possess absolute powers. They are controlled by the Supreme Being and He is the source of their powers.²⁹ Due to their limitation in power, they are not able to solve all problems. The ability of a god or deity to function by way of bringing material and spiritual success depends greatly on its significance in a given community.³⁰ If a particular god loses its potency, it is usually discarded. Generally, the gods or divinities are managed or 'owned' by ritual specialists who are called *asofo* or *abosomfo*.³¹ Additionally, there are *akomfo* (priests and priestesses) who serve as intermediaries between humans and the gods. By speaking with meta-empirical creatures on behalf of followers for sacral mediation, prophecy, healing, exorcism, diagnosis, the restoration to wholeness of unwell and troubled people, and general pastoral care, according to Cephas Omenyo, *akomfo* help society.³²

²² J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit* (Fortress Press, 2015), 85. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1ddcnfx>.

²³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, 85.

²⁴ Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, 56.

²⁵ Opoku, *West Africa Traditional Religion*, 54.

²⁶ Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, 56.

²⁷ Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, 56.

²⁸ Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), 15.

²⁹ Emmanuel Abraham, "Aspirations and Concerns in African Cultural Life," in *Persons and Community, Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*, ed. Kwesi et. al. Wiredu (Washington D. C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), 207–22, 210.

³⁰ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism...*, 27.

³¹ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism...*, 27.

³² Cephas N. Omenyo, "Akan Religion," in *Encyclopaedia of African and African-American Religions*, ed. Stephen D. Glazier (New York: Routledge, 2011), 28.

The primal belief in gods has implications for Ghanaian Pentecostal Christianity. This is seen in the area of expectations of priests. Ghanaian Pentecostal Christians can comprehend and relate with priests better because of their primal understanding of the functions of priests. This notwithstanding, the belief in gods poses some real challenges to Ghanaian Christianity. One of them, as pointed out earlier, has to do with the overdependence on Christian leaders. Another challenge is about members' loyalty to their churches. As discussed earlier, in the primal religion, devotees' commitment and loyalty to a god is dependent on its ability to provide for their needs. They usually discard the gods when they fail to satisfy them. This practice has found its way into Ghanaian Pentecostalism. The scenario is that when people become members of a particular church and they realise that their needs are not met, they move from that church to join another. This has led to a phenomenon called "Christian mobility" or "church movement". The problem is not with people leaving one church for another but has to do with putting their faith in Christian leaders to provide for their needs instead of earnestly seeking God themselves.

Another challenge with the belief in gods, which has consequences for Ghanaian Pentecostalism is the belief that the gods have their speciality. Though the smaller gods are multi-purpose in their work and achievements, some tend to specialize.³³ For example, some gods specialise in fishing, war, harvest and fertility. This notion is real in Ghanaian Christianity. There are some Christians who think that certain leaders are specialised in certain areas. This has created the problem of what may be termed 'multiple' or 'affiliated' membership. This is a situation where people belong to a particular church but are also affiliated with other churches because they feel the leaders have some gifts that their leaders do not have. As a result, they may not allow themselves to be grounded in the word of God which could grant them the very things they chase after. Lastly, due to the belief that the gods have the power to solve problems, some Pentecostal Christians continue to consult them when they are in trouble, leading to idolatry which is detestable in Christianity.

c. Other Spirit Powers

In African societies, there is a belief in other spirit forces represented by amulets, talismans, or beads that might be hanging at the entrance of a home or chamber or worn around the waist, the wrist, or the neck.³⁴ The Akan call them *asuman* and they are believed to protect users by warding off evil as well as using them to harm others. Their source of power is believed to have come from small forest beings with backward feet (*mmotia*, Akan; *abɔɔ*, Dangme) or the spirit of plants and trees or other supernatural beings such as terrifying giants (*sasabonsam*, Akan).³⁵ The *mmotia* are believed to assume personalities and are not wholly evil, but could inflict punishment. On the other side, *sasabonsam* is thought to be an evil spirit or forest monster that lives in the forest and has a terrifying appearance, including an animal head with long black hair, a fiery mouth and long tongue, and a long snake-like tail.³⁶

There is also a strong belief among Ghanaian primal people in witchcraft. Witches are people, of both sexes, who are thought to have innate supernatural abilities that they may employ (intentionally or unintentionally) to harm others or to their advantage.³⁷ They are known in Akan as *abayifo* (witches) and *abayibonsam* (wizard), in Ewe as *adze* (witchcraft) and *adzeto* (witch), and in Ada as *aze* (witchcraft) and *azetse* (witch). It is believed that witchcraft could be acquired through several means. Some common ones include i. coming into contact with personal items, for example, headkerchief, hair and beads; ii. food; iii. could be given freely as a gift; iv. it can also be bought.

The belief in these spirit forces to some extent has created the awareness of Satan and his cohorts in Ghanaian Pentecostalism, hence encouraging a serious prayer life in believers. At the same time, it has equally created some real challenges. In the first place, the belief has led to the creation of unnecessary fear and panic among Pentecostals leading to the use of protective substances such as "anointing oil", "holy water", stickers, hand bands, rings and so on. These substances which are given by prophets are believed to protect users from evil spirits. The problem with this practice is that it makes people put their faith in these objects instead of in Christ and his word. Another challenge with the belief in these spirit forces, especially, the belief in witchcraft, is that it creates divisions in families as a result of witchcraft accusations or suspicions, hence, affecting the beautiful African communal life.

³³ Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, 56.

³⁴ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism...*, 28.

³⁵ R. S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 28.

³⁶ Opoku, *West Africa Traditional Religion*, 54.

³⁷ Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, 58.

Opoku Onyinah describes these beliefs as the devil's schemes, which are strongholds that he built into people's minds to block them from receiving the truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.³⁸ He asserts that the strongholds are so powerful that only divine power will break them.³⁹ Onyinah thinks that to overcome these beliefs which he calls strongholds, believers need to appropriate Jesus' victory in everyday life by faith as well as the use of the Scripture.⁴⁰ This is significant because they are the aspects of spirits that Ghanaian Pentecostal Christians are frequently concerned about and which often represent their felt needs.

d. Ghanaian Primal Spirituality

Ghanaian primal spirituality, as used here, refers to how Ghanaian indigenous societies perceive the supernatural world they live in and their relationship with it. Many Ghanaian communities see the world as a place where things are interconnected and where things and occurrences have commonalities. Because nature, man, and the unseen are all interconnected as one community, they do not believe it is possible to distinguish between the holy and secular, the natural and the supernatural.⁴¹ That is to say that there is no separation between the empirical and the meta-empirical. Their spirituality admits that beliefs and practices touch on and inform every facet of human life, thereby the impossibility of distinguishing Ghanaian religion from everyday encounters. Comparing African and European worldviews, John Pobee observes that "the sphere of the supernatural is much broader in the African cultures than in any European context. This is why Africans have been castigated as given to superstition."⁴² The study shall focus on three aspects of their spirituality; causality, salvation and adaptability.

Causality in primal religion refers to explanations given to occurrences or events in society. Primal societies in Ghana generally tend to give spiritual explanations to almost every event that happens. To these people, nothing happens without a cause. All other causes of illness, including those that are entirely physiological, are thought to be the result of things like predetermined fate, ancestral retribution, and witchcraft.⁴³ This belief is often reflected in the Akan saying 'ennyɛ kwa', meaning, it is not without a cause. In light of this, they hold that every occurrence on earth can be linked to a supernatural force operating in the spirit world. What makes it difficult is the view that there are external hostile agencies more powerful than humans who work through other humans to cause them mayhem. Consequently, "the activities of charmers, enchanters, sorcerers, and witches are directed against humans to prevent them from enjoying the abundant life, or to prevent him from fulfilling his *nkrabea* (destiny)."⁴⁴ Given this, the emphasis of their religious practice is placed on developing a personal edge through the use of the power inherent in the spirit force.⁴⁵ This reduces the whole idea of religion in Ghana to a "power-seeking enterprise". Due to this orientation, the activities of diviners and traditional priests are very significant in primal societies. The diviner is said to be able to predict illnesses, disasters, and other ills that are thought to be brought on by the fury of various types of spirits.⁴⁶ The traditional priest is also reputed to have knowledge of herbs, and charms against witchcraft, attends to the gods, and serves as their medium and mouthpiece to assist people in need.⁴⁷ Emmanuel Lartey identifies medicine as a key function of traditional priests in Africa: the ability to correctly diagnose and give precise remedies for various sicknesses.⁴⁸ To adequately perform this task, the process "usually requires consultation with spirits and "reading" the spiritual realm.⁴⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu explains that "such activity was initially associated with the AICs but is now also increasingly associated with the work of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian prophets."⁵⁰ Another dimension of primal spirituality which is crucial to the study is the concept of salvation. The fulfilment of immediate existential requirements is a prerequisite for salvation among Ghana's primal societies. Their

³⁸ Opoku, Onyinah, *Spiritual Warfare* (Accra: Advocate Publishing Ltd, 2008), 147.

³⁹ Opoku, Onyinah, *Spiritual Warfare* (Accra: Advocate Publishing Ltd, 2008), 148.

⁴⁰ Opoku, Onyinah, *Spiritual Warfare* (Accra: Advocate Publishing Ltd, 2008), 147.

⁴¹ Allan Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African Context* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1994), 4.

⁴² John S. Pobee, *Skenosis: Christian Faith in an African Context* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1992), 65.

⁴³ J. N. Kudadjie, "Does Religion Determine Morality in African Societies? A Viewpoint," in *Religion in a Pluralist Society*, ed. J.S. Pobee (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 62.

⁴⁴ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 428.

⁴⁵ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 428.

⁴⁶ Max Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in West Africa* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1989), 64.

⁴⁷ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism...*, 30.

⁴⁸ Emmanuel Y Lartey, "Healing: Tradition and Pentecostalism in Africa Today," *International Review of Mission* 75, no. 297 (1986): 75-81, 75.

⁴⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, 86.

⁵⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, 86.

conception of salvation entails enjoying a long life, energy, vigour and health; a life of happiness and felicity; enjoying prosperity, that is, wealth and material possessions, including children; enjoying a life of peace and tranquillity; and enjoying a life free from disturbance.⁵¹ It also includes the ability to ward off evil. To them, religion should be able to make life worth living, to protect one from evil spirits and other life-threatening issues as mentioned above. This viewpoint is a result of their conception of the universe as a realm populated by both good and evil spirits that have an impact on how people live their lives, depending on their intentions.⁵² As a result, many primal societies in Ghana seek to maintain a harmonious relationship with community members as well as with the mystical forces believed to control and ensure a life of vitality. They thought that this could be accomplished by various sacrifices made for atonement and reconciliation.⁵³ Observably, the concept of salvation in African primal religion generally, does not follow the Christian notion of being salvaged from original sin.⁵⁴ It is all about the realisation of what constitutes a good life in the here and now.

A significant aspect of Ghanaian primal spirituality, which has consequences for contemporary Pentecostalism, is its adaptability. African primal religion generally is dynamic, hence, its ability to adjust and accommodate any religion that seems to enhance it. Writing on this subject, Kwame Bediako notes that “Historical studies of African primal religions, far from being ‘passive traditional cosmologies’, have, been dynamic institutions, able to adapt and respond to new situations and human needs in society.”⁵⁵ Many primal religions in Ghana are accommodating, dynamic and very adaptable. This is so because, the primary focus of the primal religions in Africa generally, is the provision of material prosperity. In this regard, any religion that appears to address this need is often accepted.

Primal spirituality, as discussed, has a remarkable influence on Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. A critical reflection on the beliefs, actions and attitudes of some Ghanaian Pentecostals indicates a strong belief in the primal concept of causality. Informal interaction with thirty (30) Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians drawn from The Church of Pentecost, Assemblies of God, and International Central Gospel Church indicate a strong admission to the fact that some deaths, sickness and other misfortunes have spiritual explanations. Also, the researcher’s experience with his congregation shows that they have a strong belief in the primal concept of causality. When they have an issue and they are assisted through prayer and counselling, they sometimes want the pastor to believe that ‘something’ is responsible for their predicaments. For example, a couple who had had three miscarriages and was being taken through prayers and counselling revealed that they suspected the husband’s ex-wife to be responsible for that. Some continue to believe that nothing happens without a cause. As such, they tend to read spiritual meaning into almost everything. Some still believe in the presence of both human and spirit forces that constantly team up to work against their progress. Pentecostals with this mindset are always in search of ‘power’ to deal with these forces. As a result, their form of Christianity appears to be “power-focused”. Asamoah-Gyadu makes a similar observation when he writes that:

Contemporary Pentecostalism is generally depicted in modern mass media as a religion of power. Its functionaries are people with influence over both physical and spiritual entities as a result of the experience of the Spirit. ... the Pentecostal pastor symbolises the presence of alternative, more auspicious and more potent forms of religious power, especially in the confrontation between agents of Christianity and demonised traditional religions.⁵⁶

The reality of spirit forces working against believers is a reality in the Bible and the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, Acts 10: 38 reads “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all *who were under the power of the devil* because God was with him” (NIV). This text confirms the fact that people could be influenced by evil forces, hence the need to be delivered.

This notwithstanding, the Bible does not want believers to be overburdened with the presence of evil forces that work against them. It could make them live in perpetual fear and be unproductive. Similarly, believers who always think that everything has a cause may end up blaming others for their predicaments in life without taking up personal responsibilities or finding out the actual cause of their predicaments. For example, it has been indicated earlier that a church member suspected her husband’s ex-wife to be responsible for her continuous miscarriages. In her case, she did not go to the hospital so that the actual cause could be diagnosed.

⁵¹ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 428.

⁵² Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism...*, 30.

⁵³ Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1990), 35.

⁵⁴ J. S. Mbiti, *Some Reflections on African Experience of Salvation* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), 113.

⁵⁵ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 212.

⁵⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, 86.

Instead, she resorted to prayers and finding ways to avoid the ‘suspected’ enemy. Additionally, the belief makes some Pentecostals spend too much time at prayer camps or centres in an attempt to deal with the ‘perceived cause’. When one watches Pentecostal prayer meetings, one sees the desire of worshippers to be told that something is responsible for their predicaments. A common feature of Pentecostal prayer meetings is a session on prophecies and directions where the prophet mentions the names of individuals, reveals their predicaments and goes ahead to give spiritual directions. Sometimes, they spend hours at these sessions. This has led to the breeding of “questionable personalities” purporting to be men of God with the power to deal with troubling issues.

Another area of concern is the effect of the primal concept of salvation. It has earlier on been pointed out that the primal concept of salvation mostly focuses on the existential *here* and *now*, that is, the enjoyment of a good life here on earth. The concept has some influence on Pentecostal Christianity.

Focusing on the primal notion of salvation's beneficial impact on Pentecostalism, Larbi claims that it appears to have served as a *praeparatio evangelica* for the Pentecostal concept of salvation.⁵⁷ This relates to the source of the “good life” or ‘blessings’ and how it comes about. From a primal perspective, the gods or ancestors are the sources of “good life” and it comes about by maintaining a harmonious relationship with them. Depending on the type of interaction between the gods and humanity, the gods or ancestors are considered to bestow or withhold prosperity.⁵⁸ Larbi explains that:

Fertility of the land, abundance of harvest, fruitfulness of the womb, and protection are all experienced through a proper relationship with the deity and ancestors. This relationship is maintained through proper ritual behaviour. Purificatory rites are thus a mechanism created to maintain ritual equilibrium between the gods and the ancestors on the one hand and humanity on the other.⁵⁹

Ghanaian Pentecostals share with primal religion in the area of material prosperity as an element of salvation. Besides, both Pentecostals and the primal religion appear to have a common stance when it comes to the source and means of material prosperity. Just as the latter attributes the source to the gods or ancestors and the means through peaceful relations with the gods, the former acknowledges God the creator as the source of material prosperity and believers participate in it through proper ritual behaviour, which includes righteous living, the payment of tithes, first fruits, and offerings. It may, therefore be, said that although they have similar views on the way salvation comes about, the sources differ. Pentecostals find redemption through God the creator, but primal societies do it through conventional ways like divinities, the mediating function of ancestors, and the usage of charms and amulets. Pentecostals find redemption through God the creator, but primal societies do it through conventional ways like divinities, the mediating function of ancestors, and the usage of charms and amulets.⁶⁰

Apart from seeing salvation as a provision of existential needs, the Pentecostal conception of salvation also involves the belief in “other-worldliness”. Pentecostals believe that believers should not only think about life here and now but should also prepare for the hereafter or life in heaven. Although the concept of life after death exists in the primal religion through the concept of ancestorship, mostly, the devotees tend to focus on their life here on earth. This background appears to have sunk deeply into contemporary Pentecostals. The ‘Born Again’ and the Second Coming of Christ consciousness which initially characterised Ghanaian Pentecostalism appears to be gradually losing its essence. Rather, what is happening, as observed by Asamoah-Gyadu, is “how to succeed and prosper in life, making use of Spirit-given talents, abilities, opportunities, contacts and the like to achieve those ‘destinies’ to which God has called people.”⁶¹

Finally, the adaptability of Ghanaian primal religion also has some positive as well as negative impacts on Pentecostalism. Positively, it has made it easier for the Pentecostal faith which provides some solutions to the aspirations of primal people to be accepted. For example, the ability of Pentecostals to deliver people from sickness and the enemy's power at prayer meetings, supported by personal testimonies, has made many primal people accept the Pentecostal faith.

However, because the primal religion allows its adherents to easily seek solutions from other religious traditions, Pentecostals from such backgrounds easily visit churches that appear to have what they seek regardless of the source of their powers. For example, during Pentecostal prayer meetings, a session is opened to first-timers to introduce themselves. Most times, in their introductions, they indicate that they belong to other

⁵⁷ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 428.

⁵⁸ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 429.

⁵⁹ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 429.

⁶⁰ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 424.

⁶¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit*, 36.

churches but just came for the prayer meeting. Such people usually do not join the church permanently but patronise the prayer meetings. These issues have been pointed out to have implications for the Christian mission in Ghana.

Implications of Findings for Christian Mission in Ghana

The issues discussed above have implications for the church in Ghana. First, it indicates the reality of the influence of primal consciousness on Pentecostal Christianity. It reveals that although people may adhere to the Pentecostal faith, they are not completely separated from their primal consciousness. Pentecostal Churches should not be complacent that they have successfully overcome the Ghanaian primal religion. Second, they should research the primal religions of the societies where they have congregations to know what their beliefs and values are. This will help them ascertain the views that seem contrary to the Christian faith and those that could be used to enhance it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Gleaning from the above discussions, the study makes the following recommendations:

- a. Research into the Primal Beliefs of their adherents: Pentecostal-Charismatic churches should endeavour to find out the primal beliefs that control their followers. Since every community has its unique primal beliefs and values, the churches could consider researching the beliefs and values in each community in which their churches are built. This would help them to have empirical insight into the primal beliefs controlling their followers.
- b. Education and discipleship: Comprehensive biblical teachings and discipleship programs should be provided within these churches. This will help individuals gain solid biblical comprehension of their faith and differentiate between primal beliefs and biblical teachings.
- c. Pastoral guidance: Pentecostal-Charismatic churches should offer pastoral guidance to address the concerns and conflicts arising from primal beliefs.
- d. Integration of positive cultural expressions: There should be the integration of cultural expressions such as music, dance, positive values, or traditional attire, within Pentecostal-Charismatic worship services. These indicate their respect for positive cultural heritage while keeping to their biblical stance.
- e. Prayer and spiritual warfare: There is a need to sound out the importance of prayer and spiritual warfare in overcoming the influence of traditional beliefs that are detrimental to the Christian faith. Pentecostal churches should teach their adherents to pray against any negative spiritual influences associated with traditional practices while relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to provide guidance and strength.
- f. Role modeling: Encourage Pentecostal-Charismatic leaders and members who have successfully navigated traditional beliefs to become role models for others. Their experiences and testimonies can inspire and provide practical guidance to those seeking to align their faith with biblical teachings.

CONCLUSION

The study has examined key elements of the Ghanaian primal religion and explained that Pentecostals' knowledge of these elements continues to influence their lives. It further indicated that some of the elements help to comprehend Christian concepts whereas others endanger it. The study recommends that the former could be harnessed to advance the Christian faith. Pentecostal-Charismatic churches were encouraged to research the primal beliefs of the communities in which their churches are sited, engage in comprehensive biblical teachings and discipleship programs, offer pastoral guidance to address the concerns and conflicts arising from primal beliefs, integrate positive cultural expressions in their services, sound out the importance of prayer and spiritual warfare in overcoming the influence of traditional beliefs and encourage role modeling. It must be stated that addressing primal beliefs within a Pentecostal-Charismatic context requires sensitivity, respect, and a holistic approach. The aim is to lead members to a deeper understanding of the identity in Christ while appreciating their cultural heritage.

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