

# **Spirit Baptism and Power**

Luke's Concept of Spirit and Power reflected in  
The Church of Pentecost with specific references to the Church of  
Pentecost in Birmingham, England.

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*[Version abbreviated. The field study in Birmingham, UK, omitted.  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The rise of missionary activities in Sub-Saharan Africa eventually led to the emergence of Pentecostalism and Pentecostal churches in that region including the Church of Pentecost [CoP] in Ghana. In a culture where there are strong emphasis on spirit activities and their impact on the physical world, Pentecostal doctrines of Spirit baptism and power along with other Pentecostal liturgies have made Pentecostalism attractive to Ghanaians. With branches in over eighty nations across the continents, the Church of Pentecost is a model example of an African Pentecostal church which has contributed significantly to understanding Pneumatology within the African churches, both at home and in the Diaspora. This paper examines the Lukan concept of Spirit baptism and power in church praxis by undertaking research on the Church of Pentecost and specifically its Birmingham branch. The thesis begins by exploring Spirit baptism as power for service/witness from a Lukan perspective. This leads to investigating the concept of Spirit and Power in the Ghanaian socio-cultural context. The study shows how the quest for power in the Akan cultural and social praxis has influenced church praxis. The paper argues that though the church praxis differs from the Lukan concept, there still remains a positive amalgamation of Spirit and power between church and culture.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

As an African Pentecostal living in Britain, the concept of Spirit and power remains central to my beliefs. Specifically within Ghanaian cosmology the word power, denotes supernatural ability that appears to strengthen the inner being and fosters a sense of authority and victory over demonic influences. Moreover, a spiritually powerful person is said to have access to the Holy Spirit or the spirit world. For the African Christian and in particular Pentecostals, the power that comes from the Holy Spirit is essential for effective and successful living. Furthermore, from my Pentecostal background there have been frequent messages, conferences and retreats with the theme of ‘Spirit and Power’. In many African Pentecostal churches both indigenous and in the Diaspora, members are encouraged to pray in the power of the Spirit, dance in the power of the Spirit and preachers are encouraged to preach in the power of the Spirit. Thus the theme of ‘Spirit and Power’ pervades every part of the service of most African/Ghanaian Pentecostal churches.

This brings into focus the ongoing debate on the purpose of Spirit baptism and the promise of power in Luke-Acts. This debate which arguably began with Dunn’s thesis in 1970 has had various scholarly, pastoral and lay contributions over the last four decades. The crux of Dunn’s argument is that Pentecostals have construed a theology of Spirit baptism and power which to some degree is scriptural but on the main flows from their personal experiences. Menzies, along with other Pentecostal scholars has argued with Dunn over these issues, pointing to scriptures such as Acts 2, 8, 19 as proof of Spirit baptism being subsequent to salvation and significantly for the purpose of witnessing. Herein lies the crux of the matter: Has the Ghanaian concept of Spirit and power in church praxis emerged as a result of Lukan Pneumatology [*the study of the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit*] or is there an underlying cultural influence to Ghanaian Pentecostal approach to Spirit baptism and Power?

## **The Problem and Hypothesis**

For the Ghanaian, to achieve success in life one needs to have recourse to supernatural power or to ‘spiritually powerful persons’ such as the traditional priests for guidance. The belief in malevolent and benevolent powers means that people often run to these traditional priests who are thought of as having contact with the spirit world to seek protection and favours. In Ghana, like in most parts of Africa, life revolves around religion and the relationship between the spirit and physical worlds. Evil is understood to be real and tangible and expresses itself in everyday events and mishaps such as accidents, unemployment, illness, witchcraft, financial difficulties, and barrenness.

Since 1828, when the Basel Missionaries arrived in Ghana, there has been a rise of other successful missionaries. However, to all intents and purposes, these western missionaries along with the mainline churches, though propagating a gospel message of hope yet failed to address the cultural and social needs of the people. The prominent Ghanaian sociologist, Professor Kofi Busia, succinctly puts it this way:

Those who have been responsible for the propagation of the Christian gospel in other lands and culture have not shown sufficient awareness of the need for an encounter between the Christian religion and the cosmology of the peoples outside European culture and traditions. It is this which has made Christianity either alien or superficial or both.

Busia is not alone in his observation. S.G Williams supports this conclusion when he bemoans the failure of western missionaries’ ability to deal with the African primal religion and the belief in spirits.

This study attempts to investigate the concept of Spirit and power in Luke/Acts and how the promise of Spirit and power has impacted Pentecostalism in Ghana using the Church of Pentecost as a case study. Underlying the Ghanaian cosmological and socio-religious beliefs is the concept of power as essential for good and successful living. (3). Underlying the praxis of the Church of

Pentecost is the belief in the power of the Spirit as essential for effective Christian life and ministry.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Spirit Baptism and Power: The Lukan Debate**

#### **Introduction**

The discussions surrounding the role of the Spirit and to be precise, Baptism in the Holy Spirit (BHS) in Luke-Acts have gone on for decades and seem over debated and exhausted. Since Dunn's thesis in 1970, the discussion has stretched over decades and many voices have been heard over this period. Pentecostals and in recent years Charismatics have joined in the debate to attempt to dissect and in many ways disagree with Dunn's argument. The key Pentecostal voices including Penney, Shelton, Stronstad and Menzies see the role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts as essentially prophetic and missiological.

Dunn and others including Kummel, Stott, Wenk, and Turner have to some degree, successfully posited and countered this missionary position and argued for a wider recognition of the socio-ethical and soteriological work of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. There is no need to repeat each scholar's contribution towards the subject in this thesis for two reasons. Firstly Atkinson has with remarkable brevity and skill, summarised the key debaters in his recent work. Secondly, this thesis is limited to and is within the scope of BHS and Power debate and therefore does not focus in depth on the wider soteriological role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts and elsewhere in the New Testament as a whole.

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#### **Spirit and Power: The Spirit at the Centre of Luke-Acts**

Within the opening verses of Acts, Luke swiftly introduces his readers to the work of the Holy Spirit. Here, the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in isolation but with reference to power. This is not the first time in Lukan writing that the Holy Spirit is mentioned within the context of power.

Consequently, though the phrase Spirit and power is not used frequently in Luke-Acts, Peter's speech in Acts 10:37 succinctly

describes the ministry of Jesus as one that was inspired by the Holy Spirit and power. ....

**2.3.4 The Spirit and Pentecost**

In Luke-Acts, the climax of the Spirit’s work in terms of its universal appeal can arguably be seen on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Luke describes the events that happened on Pentecost as the outpouring of the Spirit promised by Jesus before His ascension. For many Pentecostals, this event described in Acts 2:1-39, is the *sine qua non* of Pentecostalism. The phrase ‘Baptism in/with the Holy Spirit’ has its roots firmly established and traced to the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit came upon the disciples. Macchia notes, ‘I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that this understanding of Spirit baptism has imprinted itself on the Pentecostal psyche as the crown jewel of Pentecostal distinctive’. Put simply for Pentecostals regardless of the interpretation of this event, Pentecost implies power for service.

However, Dunn and others, see Pentecost as primarily a confirmation of the disciple’s conversion and initiation into God’s kingdom. With references to Acts, Stronstad provides a strong argument that the Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost not as a source of new conversion but rather as a source for effective witness. Stronstad perhaps offers a wider and stronger argument than Menzies on this particular event because whereas Menzies limits the Spirit at Pentecost to empowerment for prophecy, Stronstad includes empowerment not only to prophesy but to equip believers for charismatic activities and divine service. Stronstad is supported by Gunkel<sup>14</sup> and Haya-Prats, with the latter providing a solid foundation for Menzies’ pneumatological works.

**Spirit Baptism and Power: why was the Spirit given at Pentecost?**

In his two volume work Luke concludes his gospel with instructions from the risen Jesus to his disciples to wait for the promise of the Father, and subsequently until they are clothed with power. This instruction comes after Jesus commanded them to preach repentance and forgiveness and to be witnesses to all nations. The underlying question here is: why is δύναμις, ‘power’ associated with the promise of the Spirit (Acts 1:8)? For Menzies, the answer is

adumbrated in the Lukan text. The Spirit was given to enable prophecy and mission. Though Luke is not explicit about the Spirit's work in the disciples prior to Pentecost, they seem to have momentarily experienced the power given to Jesus for his ministry. Turner rightly describes this as Luke's 'cautious hint of the Spirit's work in the lives of the disciples' prior to their Pentecostal reception'.

## **2.4 Implications of Spirit Baptism and Power in Acts**

The coming of the Spirit was at Pentecost and Luke describes it as the occasion where the Spirit was poured out on the disciples to equip and empower them for their missionary task. The effects of Pentecost were immediate and visibly inspiring. Filled with power from the Holy Spirit, the disciples faced their community proclaiming the message of the resurrection with accompanying signs and wonders. Acts amply illustrates the immediate, subjective and often visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit inspired the disciples and gave them power to preach the gospel in a powerful and intelligible manner.

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### **2.4.3 Charismatic activity and Prophecy**

In Acts 8:15, Peter prays for the Samaritans to receive the Spirit. The narrative indicates that the Samaritans' had already believed the preaching of Philip who had previously been described as full of the Spirit (Acts 6:-5). In this episode, there seem to be some charismatic evidence of Spirit baptism hence Simon's reaction (Acts 8:18-19). Dunn points to the soteriological [*study of the doctrine of salvation*] nature of the gift of Spirit by asserting that the Samaritans were not really Christians until they received the Spirit. Despite Dunn's assertion, it is clear that there was nothing lacking in Philip's preaching or the Samaritans' conversation (Acts 8:12). Dunn's argument does not only impugn the Samaritans' faith as false but it also denigrates the ministry of Philip and the message he preached. The Samaritans conversion and their reception of the Spirit were followed by visible evidence. Though the evidence that characterized their reception of the Spirit is not clearly stated, Luke suggests that it was so dramatic to the point of astonishing even Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:18, cf.13:4-12; 16:16- 18; 19:11-20).<sup>137</sup>

Hence there seem to be evidential signs, albeit proclamation or visible manifestation, that characterized their reception of the Spirit.

Furthermore in Acts 10, Luke describes the outpouring of the Spirit on Cornelius' household as charismatic evidence of BHS and power. In Acts 11, Peter explains the Cornelius household had experienced a fulfilment of Jesus' promise to baptise his followers in the Holy Spirit. Arguably, Peter sees this event as evidence of Gentile inclusion into God's kingdom as partakers together with Israel in mission. Notably, after they had received the Spirit, they burst out speaking in tongues and praising God (Acts 10:46, cf. 2:8), an indication of Spirit inspired utterance in Luke/Acts.

Additionally, the outpouring of the Spirit on the Ephesians in Acts 19 is followed by prophecy and glossolalia (Acts 19:6). These believers had received John's baptism but not Spirit baptism. Dunn's argument that these Christians fall short of their full salvation experience because they had not received the Holy Spirit is unpersuasive. Paul is aware of the Spirit's role in salvation (Romans 8:9; Galatians 3:2-4), however he appears to enquire not of their faith in Jesus but of the power that comes from the Spirit baptism to enable inspired proclamation and charismatic activities.

Subsequently, Paul does not only baptise them in the name of the Lord, he also prays for them to receive the Holy Spirit. It seems that Paul was satisfied when he heard them speak in tongues and prophecy. Luke has again made his point; proclamation is at the heart of 'Spirit baptism and power'. The Ephesians had now received the power that comes with the gift of the Spirit to proclaim God's mighty acts. Lee accurately notes that Luke's focus on these passages does not point explicitly to Gentiles being equipped by the Spirit to witness. However, Luke appears to be consistent with inspired proclamation and charismatic activity, whether it is glossolalia, prophecy or witness subsequent to reception of the Spirit (Acts 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 19).

## **Conclusion**

Whilst it is difficult to critically evaluate Luke's entire pneumatology within the space limit of this chapter, I have looked at four key events and examined Luke's intentions and intended message. It has been seen that Luke portrays Jesus as the anticipated Messiah full of the Spirit. For Luke, Jesus' birth and life can be

summed up as Spirit empowered. I have also shown that on the whole, although Luke does not precisely define and describe each occasion of the filling of the Spirit as intended for missionary purpose, the foundation established at and before Pentecost provides enough evidence to support the missionary claim.

Jesus acknowledged the Spirit on his life as empowerment for service. He further gave his disciples authority and power to engage in their mission. Significantly and crucial to this thesis, Jesus promised his disciples power when the Spirit comes on them. For Luke, Pentecost is a key moment in the redemptive plans of God's kingdom because, on that day the Spirit was given to the church. Furthermore power had become available to all believers for proclamation, prophecy, divine utterances and the miraculous. In order words anyone who is baptised in the Spirit is expected to continue the missionary work of Jesus in word and deed.

## **Chapter 3: The Origins and Growth of the Church of Pentecost**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Having looked at Pentecost as a pivotal moment in Christian history, this chapter discusses the rise of Pentecostalism, *the emergence of Pentecostalism in Ghana*, its impact on the people and the origins of the Church of Pentecost. In doing so, it examines the cultural, social and religious background of the Akan people of Ghana as an example of the general Ghanaian culture. The purpose of this section is to lay a foundation for the field work in the subsequent chapter.

### **3.2 The Rise of Pentecostalism**

Atkinson notes 'If humanity's history on this earth continues long enough, then perhaps it will look back at the twentieth century and judge that church history's greatest single phenomenon was the extraordinary appearance, rise, growth and spread of world Pentecostalism'.

Atkinson aptly summarises the important place Pentecostalism has taken not only in Christian history but world history. The general consensus places Pentecostal origins at the turn of the twentieth century though various revival movements had been sighted and



recorded prior to that era. One school of thought holds that contemporary Pentecostalism began with Charles Fox Parham, who was a firm advocate of Spirit baptism accompanied by the initial evidence of speaking in tongues, whilst others attribute the Pentecostal revival to William Seymour, a student of Charles Parham.

Parham developed the doctrine of Spirit baptism initially evidenced by speaking in tongues after Agnes Ozman, a student at his Bible College, began to speak in tongues when hands were laid on her to receive the Holy Spirit. This incident led Parham to dogmatize the teaching of 'speaking in tongues' as the evidence of Spirit baptism. Dayton asserts that although there were experiences of speaking in tongues in the Church, they were neither marginalized nor accepted. Thus the phenomenon of speaking in tongues was not unknown at the time yet it was not widely recognized.

Parham's initial evidence doctrine attracted many Christians who had a deep hunger for a revival of the outpouring of the Spirit similar to Pentecost in Acts 2. Among such people was William Seymour who received baptism of the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues. Seymour who came from the Holiness Christian background believed that sanctification and Spirit baptism was synonymous. However, Seymour at this point acknowledged that although the Spirit had sanctified believers, they had not yet received the means of divine empowerment which resulted in the manifestations of speaking in tongues and witnessing which come with Spirit baptism.

Under Seymour's leadership the Azusa Street revival set in motion a global Pentecostal movement, which has become the dominant missionary form of Christianity since the twentieth century. The key element in both Parham and Seymour's theology and practice was the belief that the Holy Spirit empowered believers for proclamation. Such proclamation included prophecy, preaching of the gospel, glossolalia and xenolalia. For Parham, xenolalia (*the ability to speak an unlearned yet identifiable language*) and glossolalia (*speaking in strange tongues*) represented the seal of divine enablement and power in Christian missions for service.

Whilst acknowledging the work of Parham and Seymour, Hollenweger, Cerillo and Anderson among others argue that the origins of Pentecostalism cannot be confined to North America but

to multiple locations and individuals. This is because there are recordings of Pentecostal revivals in Latin America which date back to 1858, in India (Mukti Revival, 1905-7) and others. Recently, Anderson has referred to the origins of Pentecostalism as polynucleated [*multi-faceted*] and argued for the recognition of Pentecostalism as a multidimensional missionary movement. Although Anderson makes four central assumptions regarding the origins of Pentecostalism, he acknowledges that the Azusa Street revival was pivotal in the creation of ‘... a distinct Pentecostal identity’.

From a slightly different perspective and without denigrating the other revivals, Robeck has argued incessantly for the recognition of Azusa Street as the birth place of Pentecostalism. For Robeck, the proliferation of missionaries and missionary activities that sprung from Azusa Street makes it plausible to assume that Azusa Street is the birth of the global Pentecostal movement.

Speaking from an African context, Ogbu Kalu a prominent Nigerian Pentecostal scholar observes that ‘...there had been charismatic ministries which had no link to Azusa Street but emerged in the pressure of primal religion and culture of the Christian message’. Kalu is right in his observation however, as both Anderson and Robeck have noted, as early as 1908, two years after the Azusa street revival started, there were congregations in South Africa and West African countries such as Liberia which were linked to Azusa Street. Thus, although the root of modern Pentecostalism cannot be strictly confined to North America, it is credible to assume that to a large extent, events in Azusa Street shaped the Pentecostal movement as it is known today.

### **3.3 The Emergence of Pentecostalism in Ghana**

One cannot be certain of the date or beginnings of Pentecostalism in Ghana, however, it is safe to assume that the rise of what can be seen as Pentecostal churches was evident in the early twentieth century. Since then, Ghanaian Pentecostalism has blossomed to the point that Omenyo depicts Christianity in Ghana within the context of Pentecostalism. Before classical Pentecostalism came to Africa as a whole, there were charismatic activities seen in the lives of people frequently referred to as ‘prophets’. These

‘prophets’ emerged from the lower strata of society with little or no education and theological training yet according to Kalu, ‘...they tilled the soil on which modern Pentecostalism thrives’. Notable among these people were William Wade-Harris of Liberia, Simon Kimbangu of Congo, Joseph Babalalo of Nigeria and Joseph Appiah of Ghana.

For their followers, these men and their practices represented the presence and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit similar to the disciples’ and early church experience after Pentecost. In the case of Kimbangu, Martin notes,

As far as the followers of Kimbangu were concerned, nothing less than a new Pentecost had come. The Holy Spirit had evidently descended on Simon Kimbangu and had given him authority to heal and preach.

These prophets were usually associated with African religious traditional worship and often labelled as ‘traditional priests’. Their charismatic activities such as ecstatic noise, singing, jumping and their ability to prophesy made some people identify them with traditional priests. However, it is their reliance on the Holy Spirit as well as their biblical preaching that distinguished them from their traditional counterparts.

In Ghana, the visit of William Wade-Harris notably described as ‘the Black Elijah’ in 1914 was significant. His ecstatic and charismatic style of worship was to him and his followers, a Spirit-filled alternative to the mainstream evangelical Church’s inability to embrace the Holy Spirit. Such was the impact of Wade-Harris’ ministry that people were said to be receiving baptism in the Holy Spirit. One such case was Casely Hayford, a leading barrister who was a Methodist. After receiving what he believed to be the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he described and concluded that Wade-Harris’ ministry ‘...is not a revival. It is Pentecost’. The rise of these practices and prophets led to what is known as the Spiritual Churches in Ghana otherwise known as African Initiated Churches (AIC) or African Instituted Churches. These are locally known as ‘Sunsum Sore’ (Akan) or ‘Mumu Solemo’ (Ga), meaning Spirit Churches.

Onyinah describes the mainstay of these prophetic churches and practices as healing and exorcism. For them and their followers, the power of the Spirit was present in their lives to heal the sick and cast out demons. However, in Ghanaian Christianity, due to the ritualistic practices of these prophetic movements they are regarded as neither Pentecostals nor Charismatics hence their exclusion from the Ghana Pentecostal Council (GPC). Cephas Omenyo has attempted to clarify Ghanaian entecostal/Charismatic movements by grouping them into five main strands.

1. The Spiritual/Prophetic Churches (AIC)
2. The Classical Pentecostal Churches
3. The Neo-Pentecostal Inter-Denominational Fellowships
4. Charismatic Renewal Groups in the mainline churches
5. The Independent Charismatic Churches.

According to Cephas Omenyo, this is the chronological order in which the churches and movements sprung up in Ghana. In this chronological order, the Church of Pentecost (CoP), which is the focal point of this study, is one of the churches that emerged from the Classical Pentecostal strand, a strand that saw the emergence of the three apostolic churches. Omenyo is however quick to add that no single typology can be perfectly comprehensive because African Pentecostalism is constantly evolving. Recently, Anderson has highlighted the fact that the Neo Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches (NPC) are not fundamentally different from the Holy Spirit movements and the so-called ‘prophet-healing’ and ‘spiritual churches’ that preceded it in African Initiated Churches but it is a continuation of them in very different contexts. Furthermore, according to Anderson ‘The Spirit Churches have much in common with the classical Pentecostals and their history is inextricably tied up with them’. It is clear that for Anderson there are similarities within the NPC’s, Spirit Churches and classical Pentecostal churches.

Overall, to accurately define Pentecostalism is a futile exercise as Yong concludes ‘It is difficult, if not well-nigh impossible, to essentialise Pentecostalism conceptually’. Yet, one thing is common in all these strands and that is the belief, practice and manifestations of Spirit activities in their church praxis. Larbi describes this as ‘Drinking from the same theological melting pot’. The core of these

activities include speaking in tongues, prophecy, ecstatic praise accompanied with jumping, shaking and clapping as well as loud prayers. Though the practices and style of worship of these movements may vary, the connecting feature is their emphases on the Holy Spirit in all their endeavours.

Crucial to the manifestations of the Holy Spirit especially in the classical Pentecostal churches in Ghana is the power he brings and works through his people. This power is seen in proclamation: speaking in tongues and prophecy, authority over evil that is; healing, deliverance and exorcism. Furthermore, power is seen in recourse to divine protection and favour and ability to succeed in life. Fundamentally, their understanding of the power the Holy Spirit brings has not just derived from biblical concept but their cultural, social and anthropological settings.

### **3.4 Spirit and Power: The Ghanaian Concept before the Church of Pentecost**

An understanding of the concept of Spirit and power in the Church of Pentecost requires background knowledge of the Ghanaian concept of spirits and cosmology. Kalu rightly asserts that 'People appropriate the gospel from their cultural world views'. De Waal Malefijt states that 'the religious symbolism, sacred images, mythical ideologies and cultural behaviour are not significantly detached from culture'. Thus in order to grasp the concept of Spirit and power in the church's praxis, it is essential to understand the concept of spirit within the Ghanaian context.

Ghana presently comprises over seventy ethno-linguistic groupings and over one hundred ethnic groupings of which the Akan people are considered to be the largest. Other prominent ethnic groups include the Mossi, the Ewe, and the Ga. Formerly known as the Gold Coast, Ghana gained independence from the British in 1957 after being a British Colony for over one hundred years (1844-1957).<sup>189</sup> In Ghana, the 'Asante kingdom,' part of the Akan ethnic group was one of the well organised and established kingdoms not only within the Gold Coast at the time but within Africa as a whole. Boakyee-Yiadom notes that the early Asante kingdom had arguably developed their '...basic social and cosmological institutions' prior to the arrival of the Europeans. Pobeey rightly observes that 'Religion is all-pervasive in the Akan society' and as the largest

ethnic group in Ghana, suffice to say that a closer look at their concept of spirit will shed light on the Ghanaian outlook as a whole.

### 3.4.1 The Akan Concept of God, Spirit and Power

Arguably Akan pneumatology is derived mainly from the Akan understanding of the spirit world. Contrary to some Western characterisations of African understanding of God and the Holy Spirit, the Akans believe in a personal ‘Supreme Being’. Due to the vast nature of the Akan religious tradition, this section discusses the parts relevant to this thesis. The Akan concept of the spirit, spirit world and power is hierarchical in structure. First is the Supreme Being. This Supreme Being, ‘Onyankopon’ or ‘Onyame’ the creator and supplier of grace *odomakoma*. He has the final authority of the universe and significantly every good thing comes from him. He is most powerful and controls all events in the universe. Mbiti sees this ‘Supreme Being’ as ‘God’, the one who sits on top of the hierarchy of power beneath whom are the spirits, lesser gods and human beings.

Second is the lesser gods or *abosom*. Pobee notes that the most potent among the spirits of the Akan religion are the lesser gods and the sacrifices offered to them. Though Pobee is right in this Akan belief, he fails to explain the origin of the belief and concept of these lesser gods. The belief is that though this Supreme Being was closer to people, he was disturbed and pushed further away by the persistent hammering of a pestle by a woman who was pounding *fufu*. Onyinah rightly asserts that ‘if the Polish anthropologist Malinowski’s argument that “Myth is a concept of reality” finds any place in Akan culture, it begins here’. In this story, the Akan religious tradition has its own story of the origin of sin reminiscent of the Genesis account of the woman and the serpent in the Bible. Essentially, though the Supreme Being retreated to Heaven, he did not abscond from mankind entirely. He has since delegated his power to the *abosom* who act as God’s representatives on earth.

According to McCaskie, these *abosom* otherwise known as ‘spirit sons of God’ manifest their power through the sky, rivers, trees, animals and other objects of nature. The *abosom* do not live in these objects however, they are consulted at these specific locations. The classification of the location of these *abosom* is in line with Kalu’s observation of the relationship between deities and

communities through ecology. According to Kalu, since religion is relational to community and culture, one of the key areas in which the Supreme Being relates to his people is through ecology.

Onyinah gives a vivid description of the activities of lesser gods and spirits in his work on witchcraft and demonology in Ghana. The powers and activities of these *abosom* are instantaneous. It is seen as both beneficial and dangerous. Long life, procreation and good fortune is said to be a result of obedience to the Supreme Being through one of these gods whilst premature death, misfortune and disaster was attributed to sin and disobedience to these spirits.

Thus a battle of the gods had begun. People were consulting these deities such as river gods, forest gods and rock gods for healing and protection. They went there to seek for power to be able to do what their neighbour could not do. The more powerful a person became through affiliation with these gods, the wealthier and more secure they were. This power is seen in authority over evil and evil spirits, healing, recourse to divine protection, wealth, and the ability to succeed in life.

This search for power was both good and evil and leads to the third and fourth elements in the hierarchy of spirits which is the belief in ancestors and the use of talismans *asuman*. The ancestors are honoured and respected. However the talismans are objects such as wristbands, necklaces, small pieces of stone which are believed to inherit powers from the gods and the deities. People wear the talismans for protection and good luck. The final part of this hierarchical structure is the *okomfo*, traditional priest/prophet, who acts as a mouth piece for the gods and ancestors.

The *okomfo* is the mouthpiece of the unseen *abosom*. Onyinah aptly notes that 'Though security and protection is not always assured, the Akans came under the tutelage of these spirit forces'. Hence any alternative to this power must provide the same or more potent protection from evil spirits and evil consequences as well as provide wealth, health and happiness. Essentially, power is perceived in the *okomfo*'s words: that is prophecy and authority over evil including exorcism. The *abosom* are also believed to have power to invoke vengeance upon those they perceive as deserving.

Though caution must be taken against generalisation, to the Ghanaian, the threat of being confronted by evil spirits and

supernatural forces means that one needs a more potent power to counter any negative influence. Furthermore the traditional understanding where persons with wealth are held in high esteem serves as a catalyst for people to seek any spiritual assistance available to succeed in life. Pobee rightly asserts that for the Akans, the Supreme Being is the most potent force. He has the final authority in every situation. The challenge however has been how to access the power and activate the power of the Supreme Being in their lives.

### **3.4.2 Spirit Possession and Akan Traditional Worship: The Akan Parallel to Holy Spirit Baptism**

Among the Akans, the *okomfo* is known to be the one in whom the *abosom*, spirit of the gods dwells and communicates. The *okomfo* is thus the mediator between the unseen spirits and the people. In some cases, the *obosom*, forcefully possess the *okomfo* in order to warn the people of impending dangers. However, in most cases possession takes place at the request of the *okomfo*. This is done on the day of *Abisa*, 'Consultation', where people travel to the *okomfo* for guidance. The process of possession is significant. The *okomfo* dances to music, usually loud drumming, singing and shouting from the people. During such activities, the *obosom* takes possession of the *okomfo*'s mind and personality and then the *okomfo* begins to utter words, express symbols and display ecstatic behaviour.

Krings opines that there has been evidence where the *okomfo* utters strange words and languages unknown to him but understood by the people he is speaking to. Conversely, the *okomfo* receives instructions which are sometimes unintelligible to the people thus requiring an interpreter to decipher the meaning to the clients. This is reminiscent of events at Pentecost when the disciples were accused of being drunk and speaking strange words (Acts 2:11-13) as well as Parham's view of *xenolalia* and *glossolalia*. These ecstatic manifestations; rhythmic swaying of the body usually to the tune of music, hand-clapping, leaping, dancing, poignant cries and at times shouting are crucial to the spirit possessed priest. Firstly, it is believed that the spirit must be activated to come and dwell in the priest; Secondly, uttering of words that includes accurate predictions of future events are signs for the gathered crowd to believe that the



*okomfo* has power and supernatural ability. This is also a sign of the *okomfo*'s credibility and part of the reason why people listen to him or her.

On examining these practices, Fink concludes that 'It is hard to decide whether this involves psychical powers or an increased perceptivity of the medium, or independent spiritual forces, telepathy or a combination of these'. The belief of the people is that their priest has been possessed by the spirit *abosom*, to do them good. Three significant observations need to be made at this point. First, the local name for the traditional priest *okomfo* is imperative. It is derived from '*kom*' which means to prophesy, and '*fo*' which means a person. Thus *okomfo* refers to a person who prophesies.

Second, the manifestations that characterise the moment or process of possession are remarkable. There are loud noises, clapping of hands, drumming and other ecstatic manifestations. Such practices were seen in Seymour's Azusa Street years, and are seen in the church today, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Thirdly, the evidence of the power of the spirit on these priests is pertinent. For them, the supernatural manifestations of uttering divine words, such as predicting future events (prophecy), performing exorcisms and healing the sick are all *bona fide* signs of the spirit possessed priest.

There now emerges a pattern of the Akan concept of Spirit and power reminiscent to Pentecost and the manifestations that occurred thereafter. The prophetic utterances of these priests upon receiving the spirit seem to mirror Luke's description of Spirit-filled people characterised by prophetic utterances in Luke-Acts. Furthermore the accompanying results of healing and setting the oppressed free are seen in both contexts. These socio-cultural and religious practices surprisingly were practised before the emergence of classical Pentecostal churches and crucially before the arrival of western missionaries in Ghana.

### **3.5 The Origins of the Church of Pentecost Ghana [CoP]**

By 1937, at a time when CoP was not yet established under the name of CoP but Ghana Apostolic Church, Christianity had spread considerably in Ghana. Since much work has been done on this subject, this paper will limit itself to the origins of CoP.<sup>218</sup>

The Church of Pentecost traces its origins to 1937 when the missionary pioneer, James McKeown and his wife Sophia arrived on the shores of Ghana, then known as the Gold Coast. However, prior to McKeown's arrival the roots of the church can be traced further back to a Pentecostal movements which started during the intervening period of the two World Wars. Classical Pentecostal churches emerged in Ghana shortly after events in Azusa Street. The Assemblies of God (AG) and other denominations such as the Church of God in Christ and International Pentecostal holiness were active in the early days of Ghanaian Pentecostalism.

### **3.5.1 Peter Anim: the foundations of the Church of Pentecost**

Another major force that contributed to the spread of Pentecostalism in West Africa was Faith Tabernacle Church, USA. The main teaching of the Faith Tabernacle Church was divine healing through absolute faith. In 1917, Peter Anim, a local Presbyterian, claimed to have been healed from a longstanding ailment through reading and believing the divine healing teaching expressed in the magazine called *Sword of the Spirit*. Anim subsequently started a church that became affiliated to the Faith Tabernacle Church in the USA. In 1922, he adopted the name Faith Tabernacle and by 1925 Anim's Faith Tabernacle church had branches in large parts of the Gold Coast particularly in the Akan suburbs.

There was a significant turn of events in 1926, when Peter Anim discovered the teachings of the Holy Spirit in another magazine this time, by the Apostolic Faith Church in the USA. These readings enlightened Anim and the leadership of his church on the personality and manifestations of the Holy Spirit as well as other Christian doctrines such as sin, salvation and eschatology. However, it was Anim's desire to know more about the Holy Spirit that prompted anxiety in the Faith Tabernacle Church in the USA. Anim had received healing and embarked on a healing ministry however, he desired power that comes with baptism of the Holy Spirit. Essentially Anim's request to know more about the Holy Spirit was rejected and he was subsequently expelled from having any association with the Faith Tabernacle Church in the USA.

It is unclear exactly why the church in USA declined Anim's request. Was this a power struggle, mistrust, or simply prejudice? Anim notes:

I was faced with the necessity of contending for a deeper faith and greater spiritual power than what my primary religious experience was able to afford, and I began to seek with such trepidation to know more about the Holy Ghost.

Larbi has suggested that perhaps the church in USA had heard of the ambivalent nature in which some prophets in Africa and Gold Coast were practising in the name of the Holy Spirit and power. Consequently the Faith Tabernacle Church viewed the *glossolalia* experience that accompanied Spirit baptism as satanic.

Anim eventually joined the Nigerian leader David Odubanjo and made contact with the Apostolic Church in the UK for a representative to teach them more about the Holy Spirit. Anim's contact with the Faith Tabernacle and Apostolic Church had been through correspondence. Anim subsequently met with representatives from the Apostolic Church in Nigeria through collaboration of David Odubanjo. The events that followed were crucial in the establishment of the Apostolic Church in the Gold Coast.

### **3.5.2 Peter Anim, Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Apostolic Church**

On Anim's return to the Gold Coast, he preached incessantly on BHS until a breakthrough occurred in 1932. A member of his church, Stephen Owiredo, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Brekumanso, a village near Asamankese while he was praying for his sick child. This was followed by Anim's own sons who also received the BHS. Subsequently, in August and September of 1932, the Faith Tabernacle church organised prayer meetings at which a number of people received BHS including women who prophesied and spoke in tongues. News of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit spread to the Faith Tabernacle churches in the Central, Ashanti, Western and Eastern Regions where members and other local Christians dashed to experience this phenomenon.

In 1935, after Peter Anim and his Faith Tabernacle Church received George Perfect and subsequently the Missionary Secretary

of the Apostolic Church in Bradford, UK, to Ghana, Anim and his leadership requested for a resident missionary who would help establish and consolidate the doctrines and precepts of the Apostolic Church on the Gold Coast. It is uncertain why Anim felt the need to request for a resident missionary, given that he was effectively ministering in the power of the Spirit and seeing fruits. Reflecting on this and other similar associations, Kalu notes that, it was common for African churches to connect with Western world for prestige, legitimisation as well as funds and resources. It is observed that prior to the arrival of a resident missionary, Anim's organisation had spread across many regions of the Gold Coast.

Larbi has shown that before McKeown's arrival, Anim's movement had a strong emphasis on prayer, belief in divine healing without any recourse to medicine, strong evangelistic ethos and BHS with evidential tongues. Thus it can be argued that although there had been missionary activities in Ghana in the early twentieth century, Peter Anim can be reckoned as the native father of classical Pentecostalism in Ghana.

In 1937, James McKeown and his wife Sophie were sent as missionaries to Anim's Apostolic Church in the Gold Coast. McKeown settled in well with Anim and the Apostolic Church, however, significant doctrinal differences began to create division between them. Though McKeown and the Apostolic Church in UK believed in divine healing, it was Anim's added stipulation of complete abstinence from medicine either curative or preventive that appeared to cause a stumbling block for McKeown. The issue of 'divine healing only' eventually caused Anim and his followers to end their affiliation with the Apostolic Church in 1939. Anim subsequently named his church Christ Apostolic Church whilst McKeown maintained the Apostolic Church Gold Coast.

### **3.5.3 James McKeown: Towards the Church of Pentecost**

Following the split, McKeown relocated to Winneba in the Central Region and continued with extensive evangelism. Under McKeown's leadership, the Apostolic Church grew tremendously with branches emerging all over the country. Bredwa-Mensah notes that the period 1939 to 1953 was characterized by intense growth both spiritually and territorially. It was during this period that the

headquarters of the church was moved from Cape-Coast to Accra (1948). By 1952, the Apostolic Church was effectively in all the regions of the Gold Coast. However with such rapid growth came many challenges and in 1951, McKeown prophesied:

From the branches of [the tree] there hangs fruit. But there are still birds in the air, and they want a place to rest. There are snakes in the grass and they want the little birds, so they have to climb the tree. There are many insects-they want the fruit. There are diseases carried by the insects that feed off the life of the fruit. Can God preserve and keep that which has been planted from all these evils?

McKeown foretold of the impending crises and challenges that beset the church. McKeown's church invited the Latter Rain movement to Ghana. Events following their visit eventually led to the dismissal of James McKeown from the Apostolic Church, with its mission office in Bradford. On hearing of McKeown's dismissal, the Ghanaians invited him to lead them. This led to a break from the Apostolic Church. Thus, there were two Apostolic churches in Ghana: The Ghana Apostolic Church and the Apostolic Church of Ghana. In the midst of these squabbles emerged the demand for an African Chairman. Eventually, on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1962, the Ghana Apostolic church changed its name to The Church of Pentecost (CoP).

### **3.6 Spirit and Power: The Legacies of Peter Anim and James McKeown on the Church of Pentecost**

It has been seen that though James McKeown is the accepted and recognised founder of CoP, Peter Anim played a pivotal role in laying the foundations for McKeown. Since both Anim and McKeown were influenced by the Apostolic Church's emphasis on Holy Spirit baptism and power, it is imperative to investigate their teachings and doctrines they left in the church.

#### **3.6.1 Peter Anim: Spirit Baptism as Power for Mission**

The era of Peter Anim was characterised by the drive and desire for Spirit baptism with evidential tongues. This is in line with Anderson's observation that 'Speaking in tongues was the most distinctive and central preoccupation of early Pentecostal

experience'. Thus from Pentecost to Seymour's Azusa Street and to Anim, most Pentecostal preachers recognised Spirit baptism followed by *glossolalia* as the status quo and a *sine quo non* for Pentecostals.<sup>243</sup> Anim did not only believe and preach BHS with evidential tongues but he also taught that the power that comes from the baptism was for witness.

Anim was convinced of this new phenomenon after he witnessed the outpouring of the Spirit during his visit to Nigeria. Though it took a considerable amount of time for Anim to personally see this experience on the Gold Coast, his reception of the Spirit baptism was a turning point in his ministry. In an event which mirrors the Azusa street revival where Seymour had seen these phenomena at Charles Parham's church, Anim and his church were now experiencing not only Spirit baptism but also other supernatural phenomena such as prophecy, healing and deliverance, similar to the early church post Pentecost. In fact, Anim reportedly believed that his new found experience was a continuation and a passing of the baton from the early Pentecostals. Anim frequently appealed to Acts 1:8 and stressed the importance of Spirit baptism and power as essential for witnessing.

In his work on African Pentecostalism, Kalu observes that 'Naturally, the early Pentecostals traced their genealogy to a recovery of the character of the early church'. Outside the New Testament, Spirit baptism has been associated with power as early as 1870 when the Holiness teacher Asa Mahan taught that the purpose of BHS was to empower the believer to preach, pray, worship and sing spiritual songs. This same theme was later picked up by revivalists such as Dwight L. Moody, R. A. Torrey and J. Wilbur Chapman who believed and taught that BHS is primarily an empowerment for mission. Bredwa Mensa rightly opines that though miracles and other supernatural manifestations such as prophecy and speaking in tongues were evident, the underlying factor in this new found experience was 'power' and 'witness'. This experience was so convincing that people left their work and travelled up to 160 miles to experience and receive this BHS.

Notable among them was James Kwaku-Gyimah of the Presbyterian Church who received Baptism of the Spirit and was subsequently dismissed from his Presbyterian church. He was

labelled a lunatic due to his ecstatic joy and manifestations yet he persevered in his quest to lead others to Christ. He subsequently won over some of his colleagues in the Presbyterian Church who also got baptised in Spirit and started a new fellowship. Though they did not merge with Anim's Faith Tabernacle Church, the Asamankese group occasionally shared fellowship with Anim.

This era was so phenomenal that it was referred to as 'The Holy Ghost Dispensation' by Anim's group and resulted in numerical growth. For Anim and his group, BHS meant power for service. As Menzies notes, 'Luke declares that we should expect to be a community of witnesses, empowered by the Spirit of Pentecost. This expectation is missiological rather than soteriological in nature, for it is defined by the character of the Pentecostal gift'. This was the case in Anim's ministry as people got saved, they were baptised and they went out to evangelise. There are many other accounts of people who left their jobs after their Spirit baptism experience and planted churches in other areas.

What marks Anim's era as great is that Anim found a new form of power through prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit. Unlike the traditional priests, Anim's power was power not in the context of authority over evil spirits and for prosperity although it may be included therein, but essentially, power to witness and become partakers of the command of Jesus given to his disciples. This was arguably a paradigm shift. It appears that Peter Anim had succeeded in presenting BHS as power not only for healing and protection but effectively for evangelism.

### **3.6.2 Anim: Spirit and Power: Prayer and the Miraculous**

For Anim's group, the Spirit and the power was not only for missionary activity but essential for the works of miracles. Seeking power for service was tantamount to seeking power for healing, exorcism, deliverance and significantly having power over evil spirits. This was done through effective prayer. In a seminar on early Pentecostalism in Ghana, Koduah notes that to be Pentecostal in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century meant power over evil spirits. This power was attractive to new and prospective believers who saw that the Power of the Holy Spirit was more potent than that of the *abosom*.

### **3.6.3 Spirit and Power: Power for Divine Healing**

Anim also left a strong legacy on divine healing in the church. Subsequent to receiving his own healing through divine means, Anim believed that anyone could be healed without need for medication. During Anim's era, most indigenous people had no recourse to medicine. Like most African countries, in 1933, approximately 75% of Ghanaians had no access to proper health care. Most of the medicines were traditional herbs and the belief that the herbs were influenced by the traditional priests made Christians reluctant to take them.

According to Macchia,

By making healing an important aspect of the church's mission, the Pentecostal movement became a haven for those who were dissatisfied with the decline of emphasis on healing in the mainstream evangelical churches.

Macchia's observation about global witness is relevant for the Ghanaian context. Anim's emphasis on divine healing thus attracted more converts to the church and many people who attended his church testified to receiving divine healing. This is a trait of Pentecostal churches as Dayton notes,

More characteristic of Pentecostalism than the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit, is its celebration of miracles, of divine healing as part of God's salvation and as evidence of the presence of divine power in the church.

This was the case in Anim's church and more members were added as a result of receiving their healing. Overall, Anim's legacy can be summed up as: Spirit baptism as power for witness, prayer, divine healing and the miraculous. This Spirit baptism is evidenced by speaking in tongues and endowment of power for the miraculous.

### **3.7 Theology of James McKeown: McKeown's Church of Pentecost**

Leonard notes that McKeown did not have any theological training or missionary background. Furthermore, his lack of writing and his view on education as trivial to ministry meant that a systematic theology of McKeown could not be successfully obtained.



However, accounts of interviews and witnesses during his ministry provide key areas that shaped and characterised his ministry.

### 3.7.1 One God

McKeown believed in the triune God, Father, Son and Spirit. He laid emphasis on God as the one who has power to change lives. McKeown's belief in God is essentially very similar to the traditional belief in the Supreme Being (*Onyakopong*) as the supreme one. In an interview with Norman Christie, McKeown notes that though the indigenous Ghanaian sought to worship God, their understanding of God as transcendent meant that they viewed God from the periphery. McKeown therefore taught that God was not as far from his people as the Akan concept made him out to be. Furthermore, and most importantly, God had reconciled humanity to himself through the death and resurrection of Christ.

This was arguably McKeown's greatest challenge: That is, to present Christ as the High Priest. Since in the Akan concept, God communicated to the people through the traditional priests (*okomfo*) via the *abosom* or ancestors. McKeown had the task of preaching Christ as the only and perfect mediator between people and the Supreme God. Thus his message was centred on Christ and the crucifixion. He preached forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, righteousness and his second coming. The power of Jesus was thus more powerful to transform lives and bring about the healing and protection from evil forces that people sort fervently from the lesser gods and traditional priests.

### 3.7.2 Holiness

McKeown's theology and teaching on holiness was arguably what attracted many criticisms of his ministry both prior to and subsequent to his early encounters with the local structures. Onyinah notes that one of McKeown's favourite scriptures on holiness was Hebrews 12:14b 'without holiness no one will see God'. It seems that though McKeown opted to contextualise the gospel, he struggled with what he saw as the 'ungodly' lifestyle of the people.

Again McKeown saw the polygamous life style and the telling of lies as unhealthy. Although McKeown had resigned from the Apostolic Church in UK, he remained faithful to their doctrine and ethical rigours that shaped him. The Apostolic Church in UK was

known for their strict organisational structure and early Methodists' discipline in matters of moral behaviour, ethics and holiness. Thus, members of the church who were seen in questionable places such as local bars and public houses along with those known to be engaged in perpetual sin were excommunicated from the church.

The implications of McKeown's strong emphasis on holiness made the CoP stand out as a church recognized for its uncompromising attitude towards immorality. Asamoah-Gyadu, an African scholar and a Methodist minister, asserts that:

The Ghanaian public image of the CoP is that of a Church which is making up for some of the failures and weaknesses—particularly in the area of morality—which have come to be associated with the *Sunsum sorè* [Spiritual churches] and even the traditional mission churches.

The teachings of McKeown were thus reminiscent of the early Methodists teaching on perfect sanctification. Another implication of McKeown's emphasis on holiness is the legacy it has left in terms of worship. A key song for the Women's Movement in the church is based on holiness. In its English translation, the song is summarised as, 'As you walk along life's journey remember to be holy unto the Lord'. Furthermore, the official greeting of the Women's Movement carries the same message. The leader or minister shouts 'Holiness!' and the members respond 'Unto the Lord'. Prophet James Amaniampong, a current member of the Executive Council of CoP concludes that, above other reasons, it was the doctrine of holiness that set the Church of Pentecost apart from its contemporary churches at the time.

### **3.7.3 Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

McKeown's strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit and specifically baptism in the Spirit was evident from the outset of his ministry in Ghana and has left a lasting legacy. McKeown was sent to Ghana at the request from Anim to know more about the Holy Spirit. Thus, remaining true to his Pentecostal roots, McKeown maintained and taught the Holy Spirit and Spirit baptism as essential for Christian living and ministry. He stressed on the Holy Spirit as a person not a force. This was crucial because in the indigenous setting, the spirit was perceived as a 'spirit-force' and not a person.

Anderson observes that though in theory, African Pentecostalism recognises the person of the Holy Spirit, in practise they turn to speak of the Spirit in terms of power and force. This is arguably due to lack of biblical teaching from the onset rather than deliberate deviation. McKeown's task was to present the Holy spirit not as a 'spirit-force' but as a person who comes to the aid of another. McKeown further postulated that 'Once we have a strong set of people who really know Jesus and the Holy Spirit, everything else will follow'.

Here, McKeown's strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit mirrors not only that of Paul to the Christians in Ephesus (Acts 19), but also the early Pentecostals. The evidence of speaking in tongues and proclamation is reflected in the writings and doctrines of other prominent Pentecostals such as Spittler, Menzies, Stronstad and Shelton. Spittler, the North American Pentecostal, for example, notes, 'Pentecostal success in mission can be laid to their divine personal religious experience'. By this, Spittler points to the importance of Spirit baptism as an experience that shapes and characterizes Pentecostals. Members were prayed for to receive BHS, encouraged to speak in tongues and significantly to be witnesses of what they had experienced.

Like Anim, McKeown taught and practiced Baptism in the Spirit evidenced with signs as power for missions. McKeown also believed and taught the manifestations of the power of the Spirit in healing and the miraculous. Significantly McKeown did not subscribe to Anim's doctrine of divine healing only. Furthermore McKeown added prayer as a key component of the power element. Thus in McKeown's CoP, the members prayed for power from the Holy Spirit, they prayed to receive power for missions and they prayed to remain holy in the light of his emphasis on holiness. Thus for both McKeown and Anim, Spirit baptism and the power the Holy Spirit brings to believers is vital. It is power for witnessing; performing miracles and especially in McKeown's case, power to effect holiness.

### **3.8 The Church of Pentecost Today**

Since its inception, the church has experienced tremendous growth over the years. A survey in 1993 by the Ghana Evangelism committee revealed that the CoP was the largest protestant church and the most attended church in Ghana.<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, Kalu<sup>281</sup> and

Leonard regard the church as the largest in Ghana and one of the largest in West Africa whilst Anderson concludes that the CoP is the largest classical Pentecostal church in Ghana. At their last council meeting in May 2013 the chairman of the church reported that the overall adult membership of the church was 2,252,228.

In an interview with the current chairman, Apostle Dr. Opoku Onyinah alluded to the fact that the growth of the church is largely due to the teachings and understanding of the Holy Spirit as director of missions. Yet, Onyinah was quick to add that his vision for the church was not entirely about power but rather, about holiness. In his first five year term (2008-2013), Onyinah has picked up on McKeown's teachings on holiness and emphasised the closeness of God 'the Supreme Being' to his people, his love for them, and the need for the people to relate to him as father and the imperative to become like him. Onyinah postulated further that the church expects its members to be active in evangelism and to start branches of the church wherever they are.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

It has been seen that though the origins of Pentecostalism is credited to events in and surrounding Parham and Seymour, Pentecostal activities have been recognised in different parts of the world in different forms. The emergence of Pentecostalism in Ghana coincided with the Ghanaian traditional concept of Spirit and power. Ghanaian cosmology which mainly derived from the Akan cosmological understanding became a pivotal part of the culture. The people's quest for power to protect them against evil and provide good will for them became a platform to build on with the introduction of Pentecostalism. The African Initiated Churches along with their prophets to a large extent provided an alternative to the power sought by the people from the *okomfo* and the traditional priests.

The arrival of western missionaries provided a stern challenge to the traditional system. It was men such as Peter Anim, and subsequently James McKeown who ultimately shaped Ghanaian Pentecostalism and the Church of Pentecost. Both men played a key role in emphasising the power of the Holy Spirit and Spirit baptism as essential for Christian living and growth. They both laid emphasis on power as the ability to witness and holiness as life transforming

power. It is against this background that the CoP has spread throughout 86 other countries in the world including the United Kingdom.

.....

### **5.7.1 Spirit and Power: Power to do the Miraculous**

It is true that African cosmology is plagued with uncertainty and no matter how hard one tries to be protected through traditional medicine, or as in the case of Ghanaians the *okomfo* or traditional priests, one cannot be certain if their claims of power is stronger than their adversary. Subsequently, as Anderson notes, ‘the Africans, with their precarious visions of a human world besieged by evil forces sought more potent protectors’.

Omenyo notes that contrary to reports that Christianity was not taking root in Africa, Africans embraced Christianity because it resonated with their world view. In Ghana, people were beginning to embrace the gospel as a means of salvation as well as means to overcoming Satan’s powers and receiving blessings from God. Ghanaian Christians thus tend to see God as the Supreme Being, who is all powerful and is interested in every area of their lives. Hence, Spirit baptism became the means by which people received this power from God. BHS was vital because it did not only guarantee power from God, but it also meant that people could receive deliverance from Satan, sickness, misfortune and in turn receive wealth, favour and blessings from God.

Donkor takes his cue from Max Assimeng who rightly asserts that

Pentecostalism provides important catalyst for Africans, in offering scriptural interpretations which were fully accommodating of the indigenous preoccupations than did any of the mainline churches. They were able to provide a Christian basis for the assimilation of Christian procedures into traditional concerns.

Meyer notes that the historic missionaries’ inability to incorporate the Holy Spirit’s work and power to cast out demons, ward off evil and protect people was a catalyst to entice the indigenous people into Pentecostalism since Pentecostals offered ministry opportunities

that saw visible acts of power and manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Asamoah-Gyadu has also added that the rise of the Spiritual churches in Ghana was largely due to their appeal in meeting the needs of the indigenous people who sought power and acts of power through the Holy Spirit.

### **5.7.2 Spirit and Power: Power to Effect Holiness**

Though power as a concept is vital to the Ghanaian society, Pobe is right in asserting that seeking power for the sake of power is avoided and classed as egocentric in the church. Central to CoP members is the desire to experience the Holy Spirit in their lives outside of church. There is a strong sense of the Spirit's power necessary for fighting temptation and the sins of the flesh. This belief corresponds with the work of non-Pentecostals including Stott and notably Dunn who have successfully championed this view with Wenk arguing for a wider recognition of the socio-ethical element to the gift of the Spirit.

Significantly, this view of the Spirit's power in effecting holiness has emerged from McKeown's strict doctrine on holiness. Members of BCoP are constantly reminded that the Holy Spirit will not dwell in them if they smoke, drink and engage in other immoral activities such as premarital sex and adultery. Onyinah admits that the church's concept on holiness may be considered by some as fundamentalism. Nevertheless Onyinah asserts that such a concept on the work of the Holy Spirit in the individuals' lives has been key to the CoP's doctrinal statements and beliefs.

CoP and all its branches continue to stress the importance of the Holy Spirit's power and work in the individual to deal with sin and live holy lives. Onyinah attributes this to McKeown, who although he embraced the Ghanaian culture, yet did not compromise with negative cultural practices such as polygamous marriage and excessive drinking. Such practices are preached against and members who indulge in them are disciplined. The belief here is that when one receives power which comes from the Holy Spirit, one should be able to deal with such cravings and urges to indulge in sin.

### **5.7.3 Spirit and Power: A Positive Fusion of Gospel and Culture**

African Pentecostalism from its beginnings has sought this encounter of power with a living God through the power of the Holy

Spirit. Speaking about his own experience, Peter Anim (1890-1984), a ‘founding father of Pentecostalism in Ghana’<sup>590</sup> and from whose group emerged CoP opines that:

I was faced with the necessity of contending for a deeper faith and greater spiritual power than what primary religious experience was able to afford, and I began to seek with such trepidation to know more about the Holy Ghost.

Anim believed in the laying on of hands as important in the process of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit and other spiritual gifts. Later on McKeown, the founder of CoP also continued to preach the importance of Holy Spirit baptism and Power. Although Beckmann points out that Spirit baptism and power along with speaking in tongues was introduced to the indigenous church by western missionaries, the evidence suggests the contrary. Before McKeown arrived in Ghana, Anim and his group had already assumed strong emphasis on divine healing without recourse to any medicine. Their belief was that through prayer, the Holy Spirit’s power could deliver any and every sickness. Anim’s own testimony of being healed from a chronic stomach illness after his Spirit baptism experience prompted him to reach that conclusion. The power of the Holy Spirit was thus seen as the most potent of the powers in the cosmos.

Onyinah rightly notes that what made the concept of Spirit baptism and power more attractive to the Ghanaian was that power had become available not only to the traditional priests but rather power had become available to all believers. Significantly, with the Spirit’s power, all believers were potential prophets. This affirms Stronstad’s ‘prophet-hood of all believers’ in the Ghanaian context. This is vital, because ‘Without the power of the Holy Spirit, African Christians can easily revert to the religion of the ancestors’. For the Ghanaian Christian, the concept of power is absolutely essential.

In the Akan religious worship, power came upon only the priest or priestess. Furthermore, the Spiritual/Spirit-type churches that provided an alternative for disgruntled followers of the Western missionaries also provided an agent usually the prophet through whom God will speak and manifest his power. However, with the emergence of Pentecostalism and CoP to be precise, there was a

significant difference to the concept of the Spirit’s power. Power had become available to all people through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This power was received by praying and asking God to give the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. ....

Referring to the practices of the CoP, Onyinah aptly concludes; ‘The Church’s emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a means of protection and of power against evil forces, and its stress on Ghanaian indigenous way of worship made it stand out in Ghanaian society’ and in the Diaspora. In this context, it can be concluded that the cultural background of protection from evil and seeking good health and prosperity has to a large degree influenced the interpretation and implications of power from the Holy Spirit.

**5.9 Conclusion**

It has been seen that to a large extent culture has played a very vital role in shaping the programs and worship style of the church services and the perceptions of the members. Though the gospel has been embraced in its entirety and sincerely, nevertheless, a contextualisation has occurred which makes it more appealing to Africans and African-led churches such as the Church of Pentecost. The power of the Spirit enables believers to pray, empowers them to overcome life difficulties and gives them supernatural ability and assurance over sin, evil spirits and misfortune in life.

**Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions**

This study has explored the concept of Spirit and power in church praxis using Luke-Acts as a basis to determine the concept of power given to believers at or after Spirit baptism. ....

In the process of doing this, an investigation of the Ghanaian pre-Christian cosmology, social, cultural and religious practises was carried out. This demonstrated that there were similarities between pre-western missionaries’ Christianity and events on the day of Pentecost. The similarities mainly featured ecstatic manifestations such as tongues, prophecy and the miraculous. The traditional worship and religious practices were based on the belief in a Supreme Being, who delegated his powers through spirit beings and entities. Significantly, it was seen that, there was a strong emphasis



on the relationship between the spirit world and the physical world. Nearly all physical occurrences were the result of supernatural spirit events.

To the Akans in Ghana, physical life is rooted and linked to the spirit world. Life is therefore power. To have power from the spirit world leads to a successful life. Sicknesses, misfortunes, lack of money, barrenness are all attributed to the presence of evil and evil powers. What the Akan traditional worship has shown is that people felt the need to seek God or this Supreme Being through powerful mediums. It is here that the Ghanaian desire for a spirit-filled life full of power from the Supreme Being through his mediators comes from. Thus from the outset, power was not connected to any form of witnessing.

This led to an examination of the emergence of western missionaries and Pentecostalism in Ghana. It was seen that though the western missionaries brought the gospel to Ghana, they failed to fully and accurately meet the spiritual thirst and hunger of the people. Subsequently, the AICs emerged with a solution to amalgamate Pentecostal liturgy with traditional practices. It was during these times that Pentecostalism and the Church of Pentecost emerged. It has been seen that during the early days of the CoP, Spirit baptism was preached as an essential recourse to witnessing. More than that, in Anim and McKeown's era, the demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power in healing and in the miraculous was essential. It proved that the Holy Spirit's power was more potent than the powers of the spirits that the traditional religious worship was presenting to the people.

The ministry of James McKeown, who became the eventual founder of the CoP, complimented the foundations Peter Anim had laid. McKeown's greatest challenge was to present Christ as the high priest since in the Akan concept, God communicated to the people through the *okomfo* via the *abosom*. McKeown had the task of preaching Christ as the only way to the supreme God. The power of Jesus was thus more influential to transform lives. Significantly, McKeown presented the Holy Spirit as the person and power who brings about the healing and protection from evil forces that people sought fervently from the lesser gods and traditional priests.

Furthermore McKeown emphasised that the key to obtaining the Spirit's power was through Baptism in the Spirit. This baptism ensured not only power to overcome evil spirits but also power to live holy lives, speak in tongues, prophesy, pray effectively and become witnesses.

*By contextualizing the gospel in cultural forms*, it appears that the church has not compromised the truth of the gospel but rather reached out to many indigenous people and also their people in the Diaspora. Luke's concept of Spirit and power has very strong similarities to the Ghanaian culture. The power has been embraced not as power for witness. The power is also for protection, exorcism, healing and the miraculous. In this sense, just as Jesus and the early church beginning from Pentecost had power to preach and demonstrate the miraculous, the CoP see themselves seeking power for the same effect, even if the power is more for the latter.

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