

AFRICAN WORLDVIEW AND CHRISTIAN PNEUMATOLOGY:
DIVERGENCES AND CONVERGENCES

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Introduction

The phenomenal success of Christianity in Africa has not brought desired moral standards into African societies. A report drawn up for the centenary of the World Missionary Conference (Edinburgh 2010) by West African theologians and church leaders from both Catholic and Protestant traditions, reveals that there is an apparent separation between spirituality and morality in the lives of many African Christians.¹ Some scholars believe that the African worldview has some influence on the moral attitude of African Christians and that it is time theologians respond to this issue.² However, they have not explained how the African worldview causes Christians to separate morality from spirituality. This paper attempts to do just that.

In this paper I argue that the separation of spirituality from morality in African Christian praxis is due to an inapt appropriation of the African traditional worldview by many African Christians. I have chosen the way Ghanaian Pentecostals appropriate the Akan traditional worldview in their Christian praxis as an example. I show how their appropriation of the African worldview influences their view of the Holy Spirit, a situation that accounts for the moral inconsistencies observable in many African Christians.³

Christian Morality in Africa

Political and social corruption in Africa is well-known.⁴ Matthews Ojo has lamented that Christian spirituality in African societies has not been able to address issues of bad political

¹ Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Report of West African Consultation*.

<http://www.Edinburgh2010.org/en/study-themes/9-mission-spirituality-and-authentic-discipleship/westafrica-consultation.html>. Accessed on August 1st 2009.

² Rolland Green, "Religion and Morality in the African Traditional Setting", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 14: 1 (1983); Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in Globalising African Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 170. Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way we Think about and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 267.

³ See; Lord Elorm-Donkor, "Christian Morality in African Pentecostalism: A Theological Analysis of Virtue Theory as a Framework for Integrating Christian and Akan Moral Schemes", (PhD. Thesis, The University of Manchester, 2011), chapter 1 and 2.

⁴ See; Kwadwo Ewusi, *The Political Economy of Ghana in the Post Independent Period: Description and Analysis of the Decadence of the Political Economy of Ghana and Survival Techniques of the Citizens* (Legon: University of Ghana, 1984); Kwadwo Konadu-Agyemang, *IMF and World Bank Sponsored Structural Adjustment Program in Africa: Ghana's Experience 1983-1999* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Douglas Rimmer, *Staying Poor: Ghana's Political Economy 1950-1990* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1992); Jeffrey Herbst, *The Politics of Reform in Ghana 1982-1991* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); E. Gyimah-Boadi, *Ghana Under PNDC Rule* (Dakar: Codesria, 1993); Donald Rothchild, (ed.)

leadership and entrenched moral corruption among Christians. He affirms that Christian spirituality and morality are not kept together in this context. Ojo attributes the separation of morality from spirituality among African Christians to the influence of the African traditional religious heritage.⁵ Gifford has also indicated the lack of social responsibility among Ghanaian Pentecostals and blamed it on the appropriation of the African traditional worldview into Christian praxis.⁶ Moreover, Green has observed that the African worldview creates problems for moral reasoning in African Christianity.⁷

Being aware of this issue, Kalu posited that since the traditional belief system still influences behaviour and social policy in contemporary African societies, an in-depth study of its prominence and resilience is necessary.⁸ Tennent agrees when he states that an explicit response to the challenges posed by traditional beliefs, such as the belief in the reality of evil spirits, to theological reflection in Africa is now central and not peripheral to the church's theological task.⁹ The question is how the traditional worldview influences the moral thought and action of Christians and how the issue is to be addressed?

At least, two responses may be considered. First, theologians may regard the African worldview as incompatible with Christian moral thought and replace African traditional moral thought with a Western Universalist moral paradigm, as was tried without success by the missionary and imperialist forces.¹⁰ Second, theologians may focus rather on analysing how the African worldview has been appropriated into Christian praxis within particular Christian traditions, in order to find an explanation and a solution to the situation. The second approach is more desirable. This is because previous efforts to replace the African traditional moral scheme with the Western ethical system largely failed.¹¹

Akan Worldview and Religious Expectations

To explain the reason for the separation of morality from spirituality, a brief description of the Akan worldview is necessary. The Akan traditional religion reflects the worldview that hosts of spirit beings, both malevolent and beneficent, inhabit the universe and that people's circumstances can be determined by forces beyond their control. This belief in the finitude of humans causes relentless longing in people for a power that can deliver them from their

Ghana: the Political Economy of Recovery (London: Lynne Rienner Pub., 1991); Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: C. Hurst, 1998).

⁵ Matthews Ojo, "African Spirituality, Socio-Political Experience and Mission", (A Paper Presented at the West Africa Consultation on Edinburgh 2010 at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture: March 23-25, 2009), 1-19.

⁶ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, chapters 4 and 7.

⁷ Green, "Religion and Morality", 6.

⁸ Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 170.

⁹ Tennent, *Theology in the Context*, 267.

¹⁰ See S. G Williamson., *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith: A Comparative Study of the Impact of Two Religions* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1965) and Neville Richardson, "Can Christian Ethics finds its Way in Africa?", *Journal of Theology in Southern Africa* 95 (1996), 37 – 54.

¹¹ Hanna W. Kinoti, "African Morality: Past and Present", in J. N. K Mugambi and A. Nasimiyu-Wasike eds. *Moral and Ethical Issues in African Christianity: Exploratory Essays in Moral Theology* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1999), 76.

limiting condition and place them in life-affirming conditions where they can grow towards authentic humanity.¹² Thus, there is a constant need for people to placate the divinities to their own advantage for power. Anderson states correctly that “To the African, one’s life, one’s very existence – in other words, one’s being – is inextricably tied up with one’s power. To live is to have power; to be sick or to die is to have less of it”.¹³

Diedrich Westermann noted that the African belief in the finiteness of humans to defend themselves against malevolent spiritual forces is an important motivation for religious practices.¹⁴ In the Akan traditional context, religious attitudes tend to be teleological as rituals are always aimed at achieving the practical ends of general wellbeing - success or prosperity in life.¹⁵ In the traditional Akan community almost every communal event is connected with religion. Events such as birth, death, marriage, widowhood, harvest and appointments of people to political offices have a religious dimension to them.¹⁶ Akans see religion as a reliable means to preserve life in its totality.¹⁷ In Akan terms, life takes on a wider meaning. *Nkwa*, the vernacular word for life, means among other things: long life, health, wealth, prosperity, happiness, felicity, riches, peace, children and freedom from perturbation.¹⁸ Here, life is synonymous with wellbeing, which is the basis, the central motivation and the pivotal point for religion. “Life is the one great thing which matters. To preserve life is the real aim of religious practice”.¹⁹ Wellbeing in life is guaranteed by a congenial moral relationship between humans and the spirit entities of their community. It is believed that when left on their own to provide for the spiritual, physical and psycho-social resources that they need for mastering their environment, humans are found to be limited and inadequate. Therefore, there is constant need for a moral relationship that is both interdependent and interconnected.

Although, concern for human wellbeing is central to religious pursuits, this is never divorced from the existence of other entities such as the Supreme Being, lesser deities and ancestors. The unending relational networks that exist between humans and these other entities or realms make the religious life of traditional Akans not just anthropocentric but also cosmic or, rather, theocentric.²⁰ In this context, religion is essentially related to problem-solving, and its validity and potency are judged according to its ability to resolve problems relating to the

¹² Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflection on Theology in Africa* (4th Print) (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 42.

¹³ Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in African Context* (Pretoria: UNISA, 1991), 61.

¹⁴ Diedrich Westermann, *Africa and Christianity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 76 -78; Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 83.

¹⁵ Asamoah-Gyadu, “‘Christ is the Answer’ What is the Question?: A Ghanaian Airways Prayer Vigil and its Implications for Religion, Evil and Public Space”, *JRA* 31: 1 (2005), 114.

¹⁶ Pobe, *African Theology*, 44.

¹⁷ Kwesi Dickson (ed.) *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith: A Comparative Study of the Impact of two Religions* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press 1965), 96 – 97; Benedict Sentuma, “Mission as Service to Life: Reflection from an African Worldview”, *Exchange* 32: 2 (2004), 182.

¹⁸ Larbi, “The Nature of Continuity”.

¹⁹ Westermann, *Africa and Christianity*, 80.

²⁰ Bujo, *Foundations of An African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2001): 2.

wellbeing of individuals and their communities.²¹ Hence, the constant need for spiritual succour to help humans overcome the impediments of life. Obviously, to a large extent, this worldview tinkers African Christian thought. This is evident in the way African Pentecostals appropriate the traditional worldview into Christian praxis.

A Pentecostal Appropriation of the African traditional heritage

Scholars of African Christianity agree that Pentecostalism has been effective in Africa, because it addresses the relevant concerns that Africans have about working out how to live in a spiritually hostile environment.²² It is argued that, because Africans believe their world is filled with fearsome and unpredictable occurrences which demand answers, only a soteriology that seeks to proclaim a message of deliverance from sin, sickness, and all forms of oppression and from every fear of evil that haunts people, is relevant in Africa.²³ Among African Pentecostals, salvation entails a "... sense of well-being evidenced in freedom from sickness, poverty, misfortune as well as in deliverance from sin and evil".²⁴ This form of Christian expression is inspired to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of Africans and to offer solutions to, and ways for coping with problems in a threatening and hostile world.²⁵ This approach is a direct response to the African worldview.

In Pentecostal circles, there is a belief that the Christian life is fraught with the ongoing struggles between God and local or territorial [demonic] spirits.²⁶ As such, Ghanaian Pentecostals perceive salvation as an ongoing process which is teleological. For them, salvation presupposes a linear growth that is at the same time troubled with resistance from evil spirit entities. So, there is need for close monitoring to ensure that salvation proceeds uninterrupted.²⁷ The growth in salvation is always expected to manifest in righteousness, good health, abundant wealth and general success in life. For this reason, there is a persistent need to identify and eliminate anything that impedes these manifestations.

²¹ Oduyoye, "Three Cardinal Issues of Mission in Africa", in Robert J. Schreiter (ed.), *Mission in the Third Millennium* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 51; Kalu, "Preserving a Worldview", 127; Dickson, *Akan Religion*, 96; Sentuma, "Mission as Service", 180 - 185.

²² See; Allan Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost: The Spirituality and Experience of Pentecostal and Zionist Apostolic Churches in South Africa* (Pretoria: UNISA, 2000); Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Trenton: African World Press, 2001); Anderson, "African Initiated Churches of the Spirit and Pneumatology", *Word and World* 23: 2 (2003), 178 -184; Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, chapters 9, 10 and 11; Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, chapter 5, 6 and 7.

²³ Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, 274.

²⁴ Anderson, and Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 215.

²⁵ Anderson, *An Introduction*, 199.

²⁶ Joel Robins, "Globalisation of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004), 117 -143. In the northern Hemisphere, John Wimber and Peter Wagner, a former Professor at the Fuller Theological Seminary, are strong proponents of such beliefs. See; Wagner, *Confronting the Powers* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996); *Wrestling with Dark Angels: Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Supernatural in Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990).

²⁷ Ruth Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and the Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism", *JRA* 28: 3 (1998), 285.

For instance, when a Christian suffers or is frustrated by ongoing problems such as sickness, business failure, unemployment, academic failure, or other similar situations, it is interpreted as oppression by evil and demonic spirits on that person's life (demonic oppression).²⁸ Basically, they teach that both oppression and possession are caused by generational and ancestral curses that emanate from the spiritual covenant one's forebears may have entered into knowingly or unknowingly. These curses can only be cancelled through the 'deliverance' ritual, which removes all spiritual impediments for the Christian to live a successful life.²⁹ Whereas the traditional scheme sees congenial moral relationship between humans and the spirits entities as the means of guaranteeing wellbeing, Pentecostals break that relationship deliberately.

Ghanaian Pentecostals and Christian Doctrine

That these Christians apply the Christian doctrines directly to their African worldview in this way does not mean that they do not understand or believe in orthodox Christian teaching. Members of all the Pentecostal churches understand original sin in Christian terms. They believe that it is only by faith in Jesus Christ and repentance from their sins that they are saved by the grace of God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Like most Pentecostals elsewhere, Ghanaian Pentecostals are evangelical. They identify scriptures as the ultimate authority in matters of doctrine, spirituality and ethics. Ghanaian Pentecostals believe that the bible is divinely inspired and authoritative for teaching, correction and direction. They insist on the contemporary and contextual relevance of the word of God.

They also highlight the death of Christ as the only source of redemption, and focus on conversion and a subsequent life-changing religious experience evidenced in speaking in tongues. Like other evangelicals, they actively engage in sharing the Christian gospel through evangelism.³⁰ They see their missionary task as taking the gospel to the unsaved, having dominion over principalities and setting captives free by casting out demonic entities and healing the sick. In doing these, they expect the same signs and wonders that followed the New Testament apostles to follow their proclamation today, especially in their effort to set the captives free from the alleged wicked spirits of the African cosmos.³¹ Characteristically, Ghanaian Pentecostals appropriate the bible literally to suit their schema - their fight against the demonic realm. In this approach they could rightly be described as Biblicist, conversionist, crucicentric and particularly pneumacentric.³² Why is it then that Christian morality does not flow naturally from their Christian understanding?

The answer is that the African world view has a major influence on the understanding that most African Christians have of the person and works of the Holy Spirit. This situation confuses what Christians consider as the goal of religious practice. Generally, when Africans accept the gospel message as mediated to them initially through Western emissaries, they

²⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 167.

²⁹ Robins, "On the Paradoxes", 225. Onyinah, *Akan Witchcraft*, chapters 3 and 4 describes the actual 'deliverance' ritual. Although the ritual is important the scope of this work does not permit a thorough description of it.

³⁰ Alistair E. McGrath, *An Introduction to Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 331.

³¹ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 424.

³² David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 1-19.

sign up to holding the Western/Christian worldview without abandoning their African worldview. To a very large extent, commitment to the Christian faith is also an acceptance of Western worldview, philosophy and ethics, which rivals the Akan traditional worldview conceptually and metaphysically. Undoubtedly, Christians who hold other worldviews in addition to the Christian/Western worldview are bound to face moral dilemmas in their Christian moral praxis, especially if they have not integrated these worldviews congenially. Since, the appropriation of the African traditional worldview for Christian praxis is done without a deeper understanding of the worldview, often the contextualised praxis that emerges fails to provide adequate answers for contemporary moral issues. I will use the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to show how this happens.

African Pneumatology

All Pentecostals focus on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. However, African Pentecostals have certain perspectives of the Holy Spirit that is comprehensible only in relation to their traditional worldview. Chigor Chike, has recently completed a PhD research at the University of Birmingham on the understanding that Africans have of the work and person of the Holy Spirit.³³ His findings are very important for any discussion on African pneumatology because of its scope. It covers not only Pentecostals but also African Catholics, Methodists, Anglicans Baptists etc. He found similarities in their views on the Holy Spirit. Since they are from different Christian backgrounds, this similarity can only be accounted for by the African traditional religious heritage that they have in common. Chike shows that although their denominational backgrounds affect their pneumatology to some extent, it was obvious that all the participants are heavily influenced by the African worldview.

Clifton Clark also studied the understanding of the Holy Spirit among Indigenous churches in Ghana. He concluded that for African Christians, unless the Christian faith is able to help them to emerge victorious in the battle against the African world, it fails to bring the salvation they require and will appreciate.³⁴ Since the African worldview sees life as a spiritual battle, Africans see the Holy Spirit as helping believers to overcome the work of the evil spirits, especially to ensure that they have material prosperity.³⁵ They focus on the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit and how it might be used to deal with the evil spirits of the African cosmos. In this way it can be said that they have a local theology.³⁶

Most Pentecostals' understanding is that the Holy Spirit meets existential needs in the African spirit world. It is also believed that by the power of the Holy Spirit those who have faith in Jesus Christ can do almost everything if they had enough faith.³⁷ The Holy Spirit also, "illuminates, empowers, protects, works wonders and gives guidance" to the believer. Although they believe that the Holy Spirit gives the believer "power to lead a holy life and to

³³ Chigor Chike, *African Pneumatology in the British Context: A Contemporary Study* (PhD. Thesis: The University of Birmingham, 2011), 124-127.

³⁴ Clark, *African Christology*, 83.

³⁵ Chike, *African Pneumatology*, 224-225.

³⁶ See; Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002).

³⁷ Omoyajawo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*, 98.

conquer sin”, their focus is on the power to overcome the impediments of life on earth.³⁸ Harold Turner’s study of African Indigenous/Spiritual churches also reveals that they see the Holy Spirit mainly as a source of power to save people from the evil spirits of the African cosmos.³⁹ The Holy Spirit is regarded as a means of healing and protection. Anderson asserts rightly that Africans flock only to the Pentecostal churches where the prophet-leaders constantly demonstrate spiritual power to meet their existential needs such as healing and liberation from other spiritual disturbances. Essentially, the Holy Spirit is understood as the source of God’s power which is given so that personal needs and all other forms of powerlessness can be addressed.⁴⁰

It can be seen that the thought of conquering the devil and his emissaries, the demons, is prominent in the pneumatology of African Christians. What Jesus does about the existential issues that Africans struggle with, is more important for many African Christians than what he does about their innate moral weakness that frustrates their efforts to live in accordance with the moral image of God. Among African Christians generally the emphasis on the persons and works of the Holy Spirit is directed against the powers of darkness, as if the assumed victory over evil spirits is the most important goal of salvation.

By responding mainly to the alleged roles that evil spirits play in the causality of events, African Pentecostal expression is not able to offer a coherent and consistent account of human responsibility for the moral and social issues that confront Africans. Usually, this way of thinking absolves people from wrong doing by blaming everything on evil spirits. When human beings are relegated to the status of mere subservient entities whose capacity for decision and action is said to be influenced by forces beyond them, then an important theological understanding of humanity, a reliable framework for Christian morality, is lost.

Not that it is wrong for them to appropriate their religio-cultural heritage into Christian praxis. Usually, people who understand themselves as members of a particular tradition or followers of a certain religion who have inherited the worldview of their predecessors always try to make sense of it by using it to respond to practical moral questions.⁴¹ So, Africans are right to appropriate their religio-cultural heritage for Christian praxis. However, the problem, which African theologians have not yet addressed, is that in using Christian doctrines to respond to African traditional religious needs, two incompatible conceptions were brought together without a theoretical framework for integrating them. Because this integration has not been done properly an epistemological crises has occurred.

Whenever a tradition is no longer able to offer its adherents satisfying answers to their moral questions an epistemological crisis is said to have occurred.⁴² Arguably, this crisis occurs in African Christian praxis because the epistemologies of Western/Christian and African traditional worldviews has not been synchronised congenially. This stand off happens whenever a religious way of knowing is uncritically related to scientific or naturalistic way of knowing. Thomas Aquinas dealt successfully with a similar situation when Aristotelian virtue

³⁸ Omoyajawo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*, 98.

³⁹ Turner, *African Independent Churches*, 340.

⁴⁰ Anderson, “African Initiated”, 181 - 182.

⁴¹ Lutz, *Tradition*, 3.

⁴² MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998, repr. 2003), 362.

ethics met with Augustinian theology of total depravity in the Middle Ages.⁴³ Aquinas' success was due to his deep understanding of the two traditions. Scholars of African Christianity must seek this double understanding in order to facilitate a seamless integration of the two traditions.

The problem with the Pentecostal appropriation is that it fails to show understanding of the African traditional scheme. In the Akan traditional scheme, spiritual protection and benevolence is guaranteed by one's consistent moral deeds. So, morality is central to wellbeing. For instance, the misfortunes, sicknesses and deaths that people are anxious about, are mostly believed to be caused by their own immoral handling of other people or spirits in their community. Kalu explains this:

Affliction is a pivotal issue in the theology of the African primal world. It can be caused by a contravention of moral code. For instance matters such as stealing, incest, and other social forms of wrongdoing such as breakdowns in social relations are abominations to the earth deity. One found guilty of any of these may be visited with different forms of individual or communal affliction including, political instability, economic disaster, upsurge in the mortality rate, an increase in robbery and other unwholesome social facts which are regarded as disease, requiring diagnosis and spiritual cure.⁴⁴

Traditional Akans believe that people who have good moral character and are able to live in accordance with the moral beliefs and norms of their community endear themselves to both spirits and humans to the extent that even witchery and sorcery cannot harm them. According to traditional thought, if humans had a good grip on morality in the first place, the work of evil spirits in enforcing morality would have been unnecessary.⁴⁵ So, it stands to reason that in the traditional scheme, the most essential need that people have is the power to live morally with other people and the spirit beings so that they will constantly receive the spiritual support and benevolence of the deities, which they need for human wellbeing. The only reason there is constant fear of attacks from evil spirits in the traditional scheme is that humans are aware of their inherent moral weakness – that no matter how they tried they still could not consistently live up to the moral ideal. They will always fall short of the moral ideal and incur the wrath of the spirits.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the traditional scheme lacks a coherent account by which it explains the moral condition of humanity in terms of human separation from God. Instead, it explains all human predicaments in relation to social estrangement from other humans and spirit entities. The only solution for dealing with this condition lies in human's own effort. This lack of framework for explaining the human moral condition is the greatest opportunity for Christian mission that I think has been missed so far. Questions concerning how humanity and the spirits relate, and why the spirits unleash negative attacks on human beings, cannot be avoided in any serious theological reflection in African Christianity. Instead of disregarding these traditional beliefs as illusions Christian theologians should accept, challenge and provide Christian answers to them.

⁴³ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?*

⁴⁴ Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 177-78.

⁴⁵ Wiredu, "Moral Foundations", 194.

If African Christians understand that in their traditional scheme, the misfortunes and spiritual attacks that humans fear are consequences of their own conduct, they would have focused on ways to improve their innate weakness to live in accordance with the moral ideal. In looking for a Christian answer, they would have focused more on the doctrine of sanctification, especially, as espoused by John Wesley. Instead, they search for power to avert the assumed misfortunes that evil spirits bring upon humans. But the search should have been for power that enables humanity to treat the ‘cause of their disease, not the symptoms’.

Divergences

The Christian belief in the creation of humanity in the image of God offers a better hope for the human moral condition. It presupposes that humans already had a sense of and full capacity for Godly morality. Though it accepts that humanity is limited in at least two ways. Firstly, humanity is limited by sin. This includes personal disobedience or turning away from God, and corporate sin caused by corrupted social structures, institutions and other social relationships.⁴⁶ In turning away from God, humanity is locked up in self-centredness and obsessed with personal security and existential needs. This imprisonment of the self is caused by original sin. Sin affects the totality of human emotions, passions, reason, and intellect.

The second limitation is that humanity is not totally free in its decisions and actions. In its freedom, humanity has the capacity to contradict the purpose of God. This condition corrupts human capacity for practical reasoning thereby frustrating God’s intention for humanity. God’s intention is that humans enjoy “... mutuality in intimate affairs, brotherhood and sisterhood in public affairs and fellowship with the divine”.⁴⁷ These relationships are possible because humans are essentially dialectic of spirit and body. The spirit element in humanity is its capacity to transcend its finitude imaginatively and to relate reflexively to itself and also to God.⁴⁸ Humans are embodiments as well as transcendent beings.

Unlike the African traditional scheme, in the Christian scheme the possibility that human beings can transcend their natural limitations (finitude) and be able to relate to self and God in order to have the power to live their moral life is kept open. The Christian tradition unambiguously attributes the innate weakness for moral aptitude in humanity to its turning away from God. It teaches that the only way of resolving the problem is by the return of humanity to God for fellowship. This return must be a personal decision that starts with repentance. Although God has initiated the resolution of this issue, it is up to individuals to co-operate with divine grace to desire for and devote themselves to a constant relationship with God, their neighbours and the ecology in which they live. In this way, the Christian truth places the responsibility of human limitedness on humanity but not on any external spirit forces.

When the innate weakness that limits human capacity for moral reasoning and good relationship with God, ecology and neighbour is seen as a result of sin, then the life and character of Jesus Christ becomes central to Christian praxis. It is only then also, that the role of the Holy Spirit in helping believers to embody the character of Christ can be regarded as indispensable to our salvation. But, because of their focus on evil spirits, they appropriate

⁴⁶ Kotva Jnr., *The Christian Case*, 90.

⁴⁷ Browning, *A Fundamental*, 146.

⁴⁸ Browning, *A Fundamental*, 144.

Jesus Christ as *osahene* (a war lord or a field marshal) who has overcome the powers and principalities, disarming them by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ Instead of trying to embody the character of Jesus, they focus on his power against evil forces and emphasise a view of the Holy Spirit that they think meets the needs of the African world.⁵⁰

In the traditional scheme healing implies restoration of the equilibrium in the strained relationship between humans, environment, ecology and the spirit realm.⁵¹ In other words, the traditional scheme sees morality as the means to human wellbeing and happiness. Therefore, morality and religious practice is inseparable. But in the Pentecostal appropriation, although human wellbeing is still their preoccupation they have replaced morality with their war against evil spirits. They now believe that human wellbeing is by the grace of God. The only hindrance to wellbeing and success in life is the evil spirits. This is where the problem of the separation of morality from spirituality may be found. It is a misunderstanding of both the African traditional scheme and Christian doctrine.

Conclusion

It has been shown that the African traditional worldview still influences African Christian thought and encourages a situation when spirituality and morality may be separated. This is because theologians have not integrated the two worldviews in a way that clearly makes Christian moral character the important goal that it is in Christian praxis. Solution of the human moral condition does not lie only in human return to God or salvation, but a constant nurturing of the renewed innate capacity for moral reasoning. However, because Pentecostals focus mainly on forces external to the self, the crucial need for the nurturing of the inner graces for Christian moral action is lacking. Due to the nature of contextualisation in African Christianity, a coherent account of soteriology that makes the manifestation of the moral image of God the true essence of Christian praxis, is difficult to emerge.

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⁴⁹ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 425.

⁵⁰ Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, 22.

⁵¹ Appiah-Kubi, *Man Cures*, 12; Also see; Clark, *African Christology*, 123.

- _____. *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*. Trenton: African World Press, 2001.
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