

Peculiarities in the Pentecostal tradition: Disciplinary and decolonial perspectives in a South African context

**Author:**Mookgo S. Kgatle¹ **Affiliation:**

¹Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History, and Missiology, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Mookgo Kgatle,
kgatls@unisa.ac.za

Dates:

Received: 24 Feb. 2022

Accepted: 21 June 2022

Published: 26 July 2022

How to cite this article:

Kgatle, M.S., 2022, 'Peculiarities in the Pentecostal tradition: Disciplinary and decolonial perspectives in a South African context', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 43(1), a2519. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v43i1.2519>

Copyright:

© 2022. The Author.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

The African Pentecostal tradition as a distinct movement within the Protestant tradition is discussed here from disciplinary and decolonial perspectives. The characteristics that inform this distinction are explored to show that Pentecostalism is part of the Protestant tradition but distinct from other streams within this tradition. In addition, the different types and streams that exist within the broader Pentecostal movement such as classical Pentecostalism, African Independent Pentecostalism, Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches and prophetic Pentecostalism are highlighted to demonstrate peculiarities. These distinctions help not to generalise when addressing the challenges and weaknesses of a specific Pentecostal sub-tradition. However, it is these distinctions in Pentecostalism that enable both insiders and outsiders to engage in an interdisciplinary study within theological disciplines and multidisciplinary study between theology and other disciplines. The distinctions in Pentecostalism assist African scholars in thoroughly engaging in decolonial discourses within theological studies in order to highlight challenges and provide solutions.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This article demonstrates that the peculiarities in the Pentecostal tradition and sub-traditions in Africa serve as an opportunity for an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary study of theology. In addition, these peculiarities – despite their challenges – are a trigger for the decolonisation of theological education and knowledge systems in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa.

Keywords: African Pentecostalism; peculiarities; decoloniality; disciplinarily; theology.

Introduction

Kwame Bediako (1995:190), in his book *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a non-Western Religion*, stated that 'Christianity's centre of gravity has shifted in the modern world from the Northern continents to the South, with Africa playing a dominant role in the resurgence of the faith'. African Pentecostalism is one of the major role players in this shift of Christianity's centre of gravity and the resurgence of the faith. Furthermore, African Pentecostalism is influencing the growth of Christianity on the African continent and the diaspora. Statistics illustrate this point. By the late 20th century, according to Anderson (2001):

[I]t was estimated that about 10% of the South African population were Pentecostal belonging to the main denominations such as the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, the South African Assemblies of God, the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa. (p. 93)

By the beginning of the 21st century, according to Anderson (2004:151), it was estimated that about '30% of the population were Pentecostal with some of them identifying themselves as charismatic'. According to Wariboko (2017), in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*:

[I]n 2015, the population of Pentecostals in Africa was estimated at 202.92 million, constituting 35.32 percent of the continent's Christian population of 574.52 million and 17.11 percent of total continent's population of 1.19 billion. (p. 5)

Pentecostalism in South Africa came to the fore in 1908 with the arrival of two American missionaries, John G. Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch who started the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, the largest Pentecostal denomination, followed by the South African Assemblies of God and the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa (see Anderson 1992). Lake and Hezmalhalch built on the foundation laid by John Alexander Dowie and his Christian Catholic Church in Zion started in 1895 and overseen by Daniel Bryant in 1904. This foundation was further strengthened by Pieter le Roux together with other black Zionists such as Daniel Nkonyane, Paul Mabilitsa, Elias Mahlangu, Titus Msibi, Edward Motaung and Engenas Lekganyane (Khorommbi 2001:20; cf. Moripe 1996:xiv). Both missionaries were under the tutelage of the African-American

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

preacher William Seymour of the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles prior to their arrival in South Africa. At the Azusa Street Revival, Seymour preached the message of the Pentecostal experience, that is, the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues, divine healing and salvation (Kgatle 2016a:322). This message together with the attitude of non-racialism espoused at Azusa Street is what made Pentecostalism in its early development find resonance among black people in a South African context. However, as the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa failed to maintain non-racialism and leaned towards racial segregation in the country at that time, most black leaders broke away to start the Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion in 1910, the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission in 1920, the Zion Christian Church and many more (Kgatle 2016b:2). Pentecostalism is continuing to grow in South Africa and other parts of the continent as highlighted in the statistics above regardless of cessations in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and other Pentecostal denominations.

However, the following questions might arise, specifically from outsiders: What is Pentecostalism exactly? How is the Pentecostal tradition different from other Protestant traditions? Can we speak of the hegemony of one Pentecostal tradition, or do we have different Pentecostal traditions in the broader Pentecostal movement? Why is it that the recent developments of prophetism within South African Pentecostalism are quite distinct from other Pentecostal traditions? How do these distinctions help in terms of an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary study of theology? How does this help in terms of decoloniality discourses? In the next sections, I attempt to answer these questions and offer a way forward.

Framing peculiarities within Pentecostalism

The word 'peculiarity' is used here as a theory to frame the peculiarities in the African Pentecostal tradition from disciplinary and decolonial perspectives. The peculiarity of theory speaks of the unique features and characteristics of an entity as opposed to others. Wacker (1998:361) calls it 'a uniqueness virtue', which recognises that 'there are still some differences of opinion in a theory's exact nature'. The peculiarity theoretical framework is used here to highlight the distinct features or characteristics of Pentecostalism. However, there is no attempt here to highlight the distinctions that exist between Pentecostalism and other Christian traditions as such will be stating the obvious. The crux of the matter is an inquisition on whether Pentecostalism is different from other protestant traditions; here peculiarity theory becomes useful. Furthermore, the peculiarity theory is used to highlight different features that exist within the Pentecostal movement to differentiate between Pentecostal sub-traditions. The peculiarities that exist both in the protestant traditions and within Pentecostalism are pivotal in addressing Pentecostal challenges without generalisations. Simultaneously, these peculiarities are useful in the decolonisation of the theological

discipline and its interaction with other disciplines. Consequently, the peculiarity theory can be used by Pentecostal scholars as they grapple with so many distinctions that exist within Pentecostalism in different African contexts and elsewhere. In other words, this theory is important because Pentecostalism, as Allan Anderson (2010:13) pointed out, has many 'varieties, taxonomies and definitions'.

Pentecostalism as a peculiar Protestant tradition

Pentecostalism is part of the Protestant tradition specifically on features such as the belief in the authority of the Bible and the need for confession of sins and the belief in the Lord Jesus Christ in the attainment of salvation (see Nel 2020). However, Pentecostalism is somehow different from other Protestant traditions. The five features of Pentecostalism, namely salvation, sanctification, Spirit baptism, divine healing and the second coming are not so distinct that they make the tradition completely different as some scholars would suggest. If this were the case, it would have implied that there is no salvation, sanctification, Spirit baptism, divine healing and eschatology in other Protestant traditions that would obviously not have been true. But what then makes Pentecostalism different? It would probably be more correct to say that Pentecostals practise salvation, sanctification, Spirit baptism, divine healing and eschatology in a way that is distinctly different from other Protestant traditions.

Pentecostals, regardless of their sub-traditions, do practise a realised eschatology that believes in the kingdom and its victory made available to believers in the present rather than in the distant future. However, it is important to distinguish the notions of realised eschatology in Pentecostalism – in classical Pentecostalism, realised eschatology is spiritual and otherworldly. Classical Pentecostals want to experience the full presence of God in the present world and the full power of the kingdom of God in this present world, but still practice 'I would rather have Jesus than worldly riches'. Classical Pentecostals saw/see themselves as strangers/pilgrims in this world going home and sanctification meant the power to forsake the world and be able to journey home unhindered, to receive the golden crown. On the other hand, realised eschatology in prophetic and independent Pentecostalism is materialistic where to be a blessed Christian is to experience prosperity in material possession and health. The difference in their realised eschatology is reflected in burials – prophets are buried in golden caskets something that will never happen among classical Pentecostals.

A realised eschatology is in contrast with a future eschatology that perceives the kingdom with the second coming of Christ and the ultimate victory of all believers. Instead of waiting for the ultimate end, Pentecostals endeavour to experience the kingdom of God, the victory of Christ, in the here and now. This has also been referred to by Pentecostals as Kingdom-now theology (see Balfour 2011). A realised eschatology is also captured in the song, 'mopholosi', sang

by the late gospel artist, Oleseng Shuping (2004). In one verse, he sings '*re tswaletswe mopholosi, konyana ya Modimo, mmuso wa magodimo o fihlile*', which means 'the Saviour is born, the Lamb of God and therefore the kingdom of heaven has come'. The kingdom of God in the here and the now is more popular among Pentecostals than the kingdom of God in the there and the then. But who needs the kingdom of God in the future when it is already here in the present? Therefore, in the context of poverty, sicknesses and other kinds of suffering, a realised eschatology finds resonance in many different African contexts.

A realised eschatology makes Pentecostals not to speak of salvation only referring to repentance and conversion or simply the 'salvation of the souls' but a 'multifaceted salvation'. Hence, the concepts of healing, deliverance and prosperity are part of this manifold salvation. It is this approach to salvation that has given way to a prosperity theology among Pentecostals because Pentecostals define salvation not only in terms of spiritual prosperity, but also in terms of physical prosperity that includes health and wealth. Therefore, Pentecostals are distinct as they see salvation and the atonement of Christ as having the ability to solve the everyday problems that people encounter in their lives. Salvation in the African Pentecostal tradition is not only spiritual but also touches on the emotional and mental aspects of being human. Consequently, according to Anderson (2004:231; cf. eds. Anderson & Tang 2005), they proclaim, 'a holistic salvation that encompasses all of life in this existence'. Anderson and Otwang (1993) state that it is this salvation of body, soul and spirit that has made Pentecostalism so attractive in Africa.

Pentecostalism is a movement centred on the Pentecostal experience that is activated by the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues (Vondey 2017:260). Asamoah-Gyadu (2007:128) explains that 'success of Pentecostalism, particularly in African countries, such as Ghana, is largely because of its emphasis on the experience of the Spirit'. In the end, Pentecostals see concepts such as love, Christ, the Holy Spirit, biblical texts and other aspects in terms of experience. Therefore, Pentecostalism is not grounded in dogma where its theology is caught up in the intellectual and abstract interpretation of doctrine but rather in the reciprocal relationship between doctrine and spirituality. Therefore, Pentecostal theology is defined as a dynamic one that brings out experiences of Pentecostals on the ground. It is for this reason that Pentecostal theology is better understood from experience than from its theory. Pentecostalism is known for sermons that are lively, powerful prayers, an active audience, spiritual songs and loud music.

This Pentecostal experience as informed by the Spirit baptism makes way for Pentecostals to engage in the hermeneutics of experience that mainly interprets scripture through the influence of the Holy Spirit (see Kgatle & Mofokeng 2019). This kind of interpretation must not be misconstrued as a lack of scientific understanding of scriptures but rather as emphasising the role of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics. The

scientific study is a necessary step in interpretation, but it is not complete unless complemented by the work and revelation of the Holy Spirit (see Nel & Van Rensburg 2016). In Pentecostalism, the believers already have prioritised the work of the Holy Spirit in aspects such as church meetings, Bible study and prayer that makes the hermeneutics of experience possible (see Gräbe 2005). Thus, Pentecostals move from a mere interpretation of scripture in a scientific way into a revelation through the work of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis in the hermeneutics of experience is to maintain a healthy relationship with the Holy Spirit to attain this revelation where things that are not known become revealed to the believer (see Wenk 2003).

Peculiarities in the Pentecostal sub-traditions

Not only is the African Pentecostal tradition a unique movement within the Protestant tradition but the different sub-traditions that make up the Pentecostal movement are also distinct from one another. Pentecostalism in South Africa as mentioned in the introduction started with the coming of a couple of American missionaries to this country. The Pentecostal churches that were started in this period belonged to what became known as Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity or Pentecostal Mission Churches, or even what is commonly known as classical Pentecostalism (see Anderson 2002; cf. Frahm-Arp 2010). These include denominations such as the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, the South African Assemblies of God in South Africa and the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa. These main Pentecostal denominations are also found in some other African countries, while there are other classical Pentecostal denominations elsewhere in Africa too such as the Church of Pentecost in Ghana. These are all churches that believe in the fundamental teachings of the Holy Spirit such as salvation, sanctification and the eschatological expectations of the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, these are the churches that have preached the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues (see Kgatle 2020).

The second category is the African Independent Pentecostal Churches. These churches have specific Pentecostal features and should be separated from the Zionist, Ethiopian, messianic, spirit and apostolic African Initiated Churches (AICS). The most distinct feature of these churches is their origin in Africa and a lack of affiliation or association with foreign missionaries as opposed to classical Pentecostalism. Ogbu Kalu (2008:17; cf. Adogame 2010:498), quoted in Kgatle (2021b:175), speaks of some of these churches as representing 'a form of Pentecostalism that never connected with the western culture'. Kalu points to churches in 'Congo, Nigeria, and Ghana that do not even know about the Azusa Street Revival but are Pentecostal in their nature'. The other difference between classical Pentecostalism and African Initiated Pentecostalism lies in the liturgy as these churches have indigenised the gospel in their songs and their style of worship. Most of their preachers specifically in South

African townships use indigenous languages when preaching the gospel; otherwise, there will be an interpreter who translates from English into a local language. This is not the case in classical Pentecostal churches located in the suburbs. These churches have maintained the fundamental teachings of Pentecostalism such as the baptism in the Holy Spirit even though they do not emphasise initial evidence of speaking in other tongues in the same way as classical Pentecostalism. Some of them use rituals when it comes to divine healing that is another difference from the classical Pentecostals.

The third category is that of the Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches, which should be differentiated from the charismatic renewals or neo-Pentecostals in the global north. These are churches that have retained the Pentecostal teachings as embraced by classical Pentecostals but emphasise the gifts of the Holy Spirit and prosperity theology (Kgatle 2020a). Some of these churches have commonalities with the word of faith movement (see Asamoah-Gyadu 2019) of Essek William Kenyon, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Creflo Dollar, Joel Osteen and others. In South Africa, these are churches like the Grace Bible Church founded by Bishop Mosa Sono in Soweto, Hope Restoration in Kempton Park founded by Simphiwe Mathebula, Christian Revival Church in Pretoria, The Potter's House Christian Church in Polokwane, Christian Fellowship Church Johannesburg, Church on the Hill in Mbombela, Durban Christian Centre and the Rhema Bible Church founded by Ray McCauley in Randburg. There are also other Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in the townships of South Africa and elsewhere in Africa.

The last category is prophetic Pentecostalism, which comprised of the New Prophetic Churches and arguably the most controversial sub-tradition (see Kgatle 2019a). Some scholars have thrown the last category outside the boundaries of Pentecostalism and prefer to call them cults (see Kgatle 2021a). However, because some of them still preach baptism in the Holy Spirit and do speak in other tongues, they are discussed under the broader Pentecostal movement. The unique features of prophetic Pentecostalism are one-on-one prophecy, one-on-one deliverance and consultations (Kgatle 2019b), where members pay a certain fee (Tsekpoe 2019:284), miracle money, prophetic titles such as Major 1, Seer 1, Papa, Daddy, with some prophets even claiming superiority over biblical prophets (Banda 2020a:1) and others. Prophecy is the most significant feature of these churches and has been the source of growth for prophetic Pentecostalism in South Africa. Even pastors who initially did not prophesy begin to engage in one-on-one prophetic ministry when they align themselves with these types of churches. These are churches like the Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG) of Prophet Shepherd Bushiri (Dube 2020:42; cf. Ramantswana 2019:4). Other well-known ones are Alleluia Ministries of Pastor Alph Lukau in Randburg, Rabboni Ministries of Pastor Lesego Daniel in Soshanguve, Incredible Happenings of Pastor Paseka Motsoeneng and many others. These types of churches also exist in Zimbabwe, Ghana, Nigeria and

elsewhere in Africa (see Omenyo & Arthur 2013; cf. Quayesi-Amakye 2015; cf. Chitando & Biri 2016).

Peculiarities and disciplinarity

Given its peculiarities, the African Pentecostal tradition is well placed for an interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinarity study of theology, which is framed that is, here as a disciplinarity perspective. Firstly, the distinctions that exist in the African Pentecostal tradition allow Pentecostal scholars to be engaged in an interdisciplinary study. In other words, and as Anderson (2004:263) puts it, 'probably more than most other subjects, Pentecostalism has been studied in an interdisciplinary way, and no discipline can rely on its own resources exclusively'. Therefore, Pentecostalism given its peculiarities is suited for an interdisciplinary study between the main six disciplines of theology, namely church history, missiology, systematic theology, New Testament, Old Testament and practical theology. The development of the sub-traditions in the African Pentecostal tradition has been studied from a church-historical perspective. The conduct of prophets in New Prophetic Churches has been compared with that of the Old Testament prophets. Equally the conduct of the prophets in New Prophetic Churches has been studied within systematic theology to evaluate their ethics. The Pentecostal missions have always been studied juxtaposed with the mission of the early church in the New Testament. African Pentecostal ecclesiology has been studied within the discipline of practical theology. This proves that Pentecostal scholarship is involved in an interdisciplinary study of Pentecostalism and various theological disciplines.

Secondly, Pentecostalism given its peculiarities is also well suited for a multidisciplinary approach involving other disciplines outside theology. In this regard, Anderson (2004) says:

[S]ocial scientists with their emphasis on empirical evidence are essential for a proper understanding of Pentecostalism. The literature on Pentecostalism has been enriched by the proliferation of social scientific studies since the 1960s, particularly in the disciplines of social history, anthropology and sociology. (p. 263)

In addition, social scientists, anthropologists, sociologists and others in Africa and worldwide have started to show interest in Pentecostal studies. In the end, there is an interaction between Pentecostalism and other sciences ensuring that the field of study is not limited to theologians. Thus, one can say that the future of African Pentecostal scholarship lies with African scholars using a multidisciplinary approach involving theology and other fields of study. A multidisciplinary study, for example, will open up opportunities for interaction between 'African Pentecostalism and economics', 'Pentecostalism and human rights', 'Pentecostalism and development', 'Pentecostalism and politics', 'Pentecostalism and media', 'Pentecostalism and Gender', 'Pentecostalism and migration' and so forth.

Thirdly, Pentecostalism is one tradition that has been able to cross the barriers of disciplines to engage in a transdisciplinary

approach. Pentecostal scholars move beyond the basic knowledge and understanding of the theological disciplines to include other forms of knowledge (Vondey 2012:10). Given the pneumatological approach and a hermeneutics of experience, Pentecostal scholarship can break out of the conventional theological disciplines and establish its own new way of doing theology and spirituality. Thus, the pneumatological aspect of Pentecostal theology presents an opportunity to move beyond the theological disciplines in doing the theology of the Spirit. However, Pentecostal scholars need to be cautious that this kind of scholarship does not take place in isolation from the realities that happen on the ground. In other words, the theology of the Spirit should avoid at all costs becoming a theology of the ivory tower or worse, a theology of the sky that is insensitive to societal challenges.

Pentecostalism should not only be studied by Pentecostals or so-called 'insiders'. It can be immensely enriched by critical reflection done by 'outsiders' as the objectivity of insiders can sometimes be questionable. Furthermore, the church in Africa is increasingly being pentecostalised as many non-Pentecostal churches have adopted some Pentecostal practices such as praise and worship, replacement of hymns with choruses, motivational preaching instead of confrontational preaching, mass prayer in public worship, lifting of hands during praise and worship time and speaking in tongues. The prosperity gospel rejection of poverty has infiltrated mainline churches. The contribution of outsiders is therefore important as they are more likely not to sing praises to Pentecostal growth and impact but to give their honest reflections.

A lack of objectivity by insiders happens when African Pentecostal scholars cannot differentiate between being a Pentecostal believer and being a researcher studying African Pentecostalism. To remain objective, African Pentecostal scholars as insiders need to suspend their faith commitment and positive attitude towards their tradition in order to listen to other voices, specifically those with whom they disagree. In other words, they need to remain insiders as it relates to their faith but become outsiders when it relates to research. But equally, outsiders should not be quick to condemn Pentecostalism and to generalise without proper engagement. The outsider should not be judgmental to the beliefs and practices of African Pentecostalism just because it is such a different kind of tradition. Outsiders need to first understand how and why African Pentecostal believers and consumers engage in a practice before arriving at a conclusion. In addition, the voices of African Pentecostal believers, even when outsiders disagree with their perspectives, need to be heard before any conclusions are drawn.

Peculiarities and decoloniality

Decoloniality means that the curriculum needs to be transformed in order to be relevant to the African context. In the context of Pentecostalism, decoloniality can be defined as freeing the movement from the colonial hegemony in order

to make it relevant to the African context. According to Heleta (2016:4) in Kgatle (2018), 'Most universities still follow the hegemonic 'Eurocentric epistemic canon' that 'attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production'. This kind of curriculum has failed to produce students that will be able to be critical in their field and make an impact on the continent. Within theological studies, Mbiti's (1976) example of an African pastor who was trained in western epistemologies and failed to solve the challenges of demon possession is a perfect example. Therefore, there is a need to do away with a curriculum that seeks to promote white supremacy and dominance as was the case during the colonial and apartheid years. There is a need, in other words, to do away with a curriculum that does not address African problems. However, a diagnosis of the challenges posed by the curriculum and a need for transformation has been done before. The challenge now is how do we decolonise and how do we transform the curriculum? The African Pentecostal tradition offers us an opportunity to develop a curriculum designed to meet the educational needs of Africans. In other words, as we engage churches started by Africans in Africa such as the ones highlighted in the preceding sections, we are engaged in a decoloniality project.

In his book, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West*, the late Lamin Sanneh (2003) suggests three other ways of decolonising and transforming the curriculum. Firstly, it is the use of African languages. In support of this aspect, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1992) points out:

... the choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe. (p. 4)

In other words, the use of isiZulu, Sesotho, Shona, Igbo, Oromo, Akan, Yoruba, Swahili and other African languages is important in the development of a curriculum that will be relevant to an African context. In this regard, the African Pentecostal tradition is important because the sermons and songs are often presented and sang in local languages. In addition, Pentecostalism has an ability to interpret what I call the 'language of the field' into local languages, meaning Pentecostal concepts such as Spirit baptism, holistic salvation and a realised eschatology are communicated in local words such as 'bana ba moya', 'ba pholoswa', 'bazwalane', 'bagethwa' and so forth.

Secondly, Sanneh (2003) suggests what he calls 'African agency', which refers to Africans leading the charge of scholarship without a western or a foreign influence. This means that even our very own National Research Foundation (NRF)'s rating criterion needs to focus on an African agenda rather than a western one. International recognition and leadership should refer to publications in journals of international standing, that is web of science and Scopus rather than publications in journals located in the global north. This is important because African scholarship should be done by African scholars as informed by African experiences on an African platform. This means that we can no longer allow

others to dictate our stories and how such stories should be told. This is possible when African scholars emerge, establish and lead scholarly projects that will drive a decoloniality agenda. This will mean that we need to oversee our own scholarship because when the story is told by westerners, there is a risk of not telling it the way it should be told. There is always the risk of misinterpretation, misrepresentation and misunderstanding of what has been being communicated by the original storyteller. Again, Pentecostalism is instrumental in this instance whereby scholars in the field have an opportunity to tell the story of African Pentecostal experiences. Opportunities exist in initiating projects, institutes and centres on African Pentecostalism including African Initiated Churches.

Thirdly, Sanneh (2003) suggests the indigenisation of the gospel as a tool towards decoloniality. Indigenisation and local appropriation of the gospel according to Sanneh (2003:10) stand in contrast to what he calls 'missionary transmission and direction'; it should be the 'indigenous discovery of Christianity rather than the Christian discovery of indigenous societies'. Pentecostalism is better placed to indigenise the gospel because it can minister the gospel in a way that is relevant in an African context. Pentecostal musicians have over the years been developing their own music in groups such as joyous celebrations of Lindelani Mkhize, Jabu Hlongane and Mthunzi ka Namba and Spirit praise of Benjamin Dube and numerous artists. These groups have made a huge contribution in the localisation of contemporary gospel music and congregational singing. Furthermore, the recent developments within South African Pentecostalism have helped African Pentecostal intellectuals and scholars to develop new knowledge in a unique way. The emergence of prophetic churches including their abuse of religion has been framed and discussed in a way that has not been done before. Furthermore, indigenisation of the gospel should be infused with the African oral structures and traditions. This is the strength of the Pentecostal tradition as it embraces according to Macchia (2009:10; cf. Archer 2011)

[A]n oral liturgy: in the music, participation of every believer; narrative theology and witness: sermons and testimonies; reconciliatory and participatory community; visions and dreams; as well as healing and deliverance. (p. 10)

Indigenisation of the gospel is closer to what others have coined as African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS), which focuses on the development of knowledge. Therefore, a professorship should be defined beyond professing knowledge towards the development of knowledge. The main question is not about professing knowledge, but whose knowledge we are professing. In order to produce our own knowledge, a University in Africa should develop African intellectuals by granting them time not only to read and write but to think deeply about African experiences to turn them into knowledge systems. Universities in Africa should caution against overburdening their academics with administration. We should ask ourselves if our universities are administrative institutions that require academic support or if they are academic institutions that require administrative

support. If the latter is what we want, then we need competent administrative support, decentralised ICT infrastructure and personnel and a centralised call centre to take student queries in order to ensure that African intellectuals remain faithful to the development of knowledge. In addition, African universities do not only require decolonisation and transformation but also depoliticisation. Universities in Africa should be delivered from political influence that sometimes compromises the academic project and agenda. Equally, academics should not confuse responsible scholarship with political activism.

Peculiar challenges in the African Pentecostal tradition

Pentecostalism, because it offers us an opportunity for decoloniality and disciplinarity, is not a holy movement. Pentecostalism has its own very peculiar challenges. The theology of Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues in the Pentecostal tradition, specifically classical Pentecostalism has made the movement to be very conservative or inward looking. Pentecostalism especially in its early stages only concentrated on their theology of Spirit baptism, evangelism and eschatological expectations. This inward-looking approach caused classical Pentecostalism to become passive regarding the socio-economic and socio-political issues of the time, and contextual issues such as racial segregation, gender-based violence, poverty, inequality and unemployment were not properly addressed. Even prominent and influential early black leaders such as Elias Letwaba (1870–1958) were comfortable in the theology of the Spirit, evangelism and divine healing but very silent on the issues of racism, black oppression and black discrimination of the time.

The second challenge is the dangerous faith practices by prophetic Pentecostalism or the New Prophetic Churches such as the eating of snakes, drinking of petrol, touching of women's private parts while praying for them, claims of resurrection and so forth (see Kgatle 2017; Resane 2017a). There is a connection between the dangerous faith practices and the misinterpretation of the biblical texts. Many of the prophets who were engaged in the above-mentioned practices used the biblical text to justify their actions. One of them is Pastor Daniel Lesego who said that the grass and the petrol turn into bread and wine used for holy communion, misquoting the Bible on holy communion. In addition, most prophets have the propensity of defending themselves by misquoting Psalm 105:15, 'do not touch my anointed ones'. Thus, there is a deliberate abuse of the Bible coupled with proof-texting to perpetuate the dangerous faith practices. These prophets read into the Bible to justify their actions instead of reading from the Bible. In other words, they conduct eisegesis instead of exegesis. Furthermore, these dangerous faith practices are being done in the name of the Spirit. The prophets in the New Prophetic Churches make a clear connection between these dangerous faith practices and the Spirit, mentioning that 'the Spirit' had instructed them to perform these. Some prophets were sometimes even so bold as to tell a

young girl (or any woman for that matter) that 'the Spirit of God' had instructed them to sleep with them. In other words, the song 'wa ntaela moya', 'the spirit is instructing me' was used in an unholy way. Yet these prophets knew what they were doing because the reference to the Holy Spirit was done in such a way that the audience could not connect their practices to anything opposed to God and Christian values (see Kgatle & Anderson 2020). Nonetheless, these dangerous faith practices have left many followers of these churches in a very vulnerable position.

The third peculiar challenge is the lack of critical and scientific theological training among some Pentecostal pastors, specifically prophets in the New Prophetic Churches (see Kgatle 2021c). While classical Pentecostals will prescribe a minimum qualification for the presiding pastor in a local assembly, prophetic Pentecostals take pride in the calling they received from God and some sound equipment, then they set to start and lead a church. They do not place a value in the rigorous formal theological training of pastors but only their direct relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. Some of these pastors have a perception that enrolling in a university or seminary for a degree in Theology will decrease their anointing, hence their negative attitude towards theological training. On the contrary, some of these pastors have fake qualifications that they have acquired from degree mills in foreign countries such as the United States of America. It is astounding that while they shy away from enrolling for formal and accredited qualifications here at home, they are willing to pay a large amount of money for a fake doctoral degree. Hence, some of the pastors go by the titles of Doctor or the Professor even when they did not study to earn such degrees or titles.

The final challenge under discussion is the commercialisation of the gospel (see Masenya & Masenya 2018; Mashau & Kgatle 2019; Resane 2017b). Pentecostalism in its varieties has been involved in the commercialisation of religion. However, a distinction should be made between the holistic salvation that includes the prosperity message and the commercialisation of the gospel. Where scholars make an error of judgment is to think that the prosperity message directly translates into the commercialisation of the gospel. The prosperity message is the communication of the gospel that seeks to move Africans out of poverty into health and prosperity; this message is consistent with the biblical message. The Bible teaches that tithing and sowing seeds can lead to blessings of material prosperity. The commercialisation of the gospel happens when some classical Pentecostals and newer charismatics abuse the paying of tithes and offerings to enrich themselves. Some prophets in New Prophetic Churches sell healing products such as anointing oil, anointing water, and so forth to buy mansions and Maseratis for their daughters and wives. It is commercialisation when these products are used to move believers from their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ into believing in the man or woman of God (see Banda 2020b). In other words, consumers buy these

products believing that they carry specific powers of the prophet. In this way, the gospel is no longer Christocentric and pneumatocentric but humanistic.

African Pentecostal tradition: Beyond Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues

In order to move beyond Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues in the context of disciplinarity and decoloniality, there is a need to address contextual issues such as racism, gender-based violence, social injustice, poverty and even the recent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. In other words, instead of an exclusively futuristic eschatology in classical Pentecostalism, there is a need for an eschatology that takes seriously the present unpleasant realities such as racism. Similarly, instead of an overly this-worldly focused spirituality in New Prophetic Churches, there is a need for an eschatological framework that does not cancel the hope for future heaven for present worldly comfort. In South Africa, for example, the issues around racism have not disappeared with the coming of democracy in 1994 but still exist in society. In classical Pentecostal churches like the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, racism did not vanish with the unification of the church in 1996 or the washing of Frank Chikane's feet by Adriaan Vlok as ideas of racism still exist like the independent networks that support white privilege and white supremacy. But sometimes white supremacy thrives because it works with black elites whose job is to suppress fellow black people and black excellence (see Malcolm 1963).

Racism exists in Pentecostal scholarship where editors of leading Pentecostal journals in the global north can reject a manuscript based on the colour of the author's skin and find reasons for such rejection later. Sometimes these editors only want to use African scholars as peer reviewers but are not willing to publish their work. These editors are often willing to accept articles for conference presentations but not for publication. They are also willing to accept book reviews but often not peer-reviewed articles in the same way that they are willing to read and paraphrase but not quote and cite African Pentecostal scholars. These issues cannot continue to hide behind spiritual concepts like the baptism in the Spirit and the speaking in tongues. This kind of gatekeeping in scholarship needs to be overcome.

Peculiar challenges and the role of the South African government

Both the public and the government are concerned by the dangerous faith practices taking place among the New Prophetic Churches and are investigating measures of addressing them through the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (the CRL Rights Commission). The CRL Rights Commission in South Africa, according to Kgatle and Anderson (2020:2), began 'two investigations: on the

commercialisation of religion and on the abuse of people'. Furthermore, the activities of the CRL Rights Commission in monitoring religious events in South Africa include several public hearings on these dangerous faith practices. While these activities of the CRL Rights Commission might be perceived as government's efforts to deal with the dangerous faith practices on one hand, others might perceive them as the government's interference in religious matters on the other.

The government of South Africa should not regulate churches as this will be perceived as infringing on the freedom of religion as enshrined in the Constitution. The government should rather rely on its legal system to deal with dangerous faith practices that have criminal elements such as money laundering, sexual abuses and so forth. The government is responsible in ensuring that its immigration laws and border gates are strengthened to prevent illegal immigration. The government should leave to church bodies such as the South African Council of Churches, the Council of African Instituted Churches of Southern Africa, the Alliance of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in South Africa, the National Interfaith Council of South Africa and the pastors fraternal in local communities to deal with dangerous faith acts that are ostensibly doctrinal in nature. In cases where a parachurch does not affiliate with a church body, the government should encourage such affiliation including the formation of new church bodies. Some Pentecostal pastors might argue, for example, that the South African Council of Churches and other councils do not represent them; in such cases, they should be encouraged to form new bodies where Pentecostal pastors can be represented and held accountable. In simple terms, the church like any other organisation should be granted the freedom to run its own affairs without government interference.

The role of government is oversight and where necessary to provide administrative and financial support. Government could perhaps place a demand that all pastors entering ministry should have a minimum qualification in the form of a diploma or even a degree in theology as some challenges are a consequence of some Pentecostal pastors' lack of theological training. Government should play an important role in the closure of unaccredited institutions of higher learning responsible to produce fake qualifications. The government has not demonstrated any seriousness in dealing with this problem as no decisive steps have been taken against it. The government should make it illegal to call oneself doctor or professor without proper qualifications. The South African Revenue Service (SARS) should ensure that even though churches registered as non-profit organisations (NPO) do not pay tax, pastors like any other employee should pay tax. In addition, businesses operating as subsidiaries of the church structure such as factories that manufacture anointing oil and water should pay tax as well.

Conclusion

African Pentecostal tradition is indeed a distinct movement within the broader Protestant tradition in Africa. In other

words, Pentecostalism should be treated as part of the Protestant tradition although it is quite different from the other streams in this tradition. The difference is informed by the emphasis of a direct relationship with God through the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the baptism of the Holy Spirit becomes a catalyst in enabling a believer to be in a direct relationship with God. However, even with this main feature of the Pentecostal movement, there are still few factors that separate different Pentecostal sub-traditions from one another. Furthermore, the recent developments of prophetic titles, prophetic deliverance, forensic prophecy and prophetic miracles encapsulated in prophetic Pentecostalism should also be interpreted within the broader Pentecostal movement but distinct from other sub-traditions. These and other differences help us to engage with Pentecostalism in an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary way. Most importantly, the different distinctions within Pentecostalism help to decolonise theological education in order to offer a relevant curriculum in an African context. Therefore, the peculiarities in the African Pentecostal tradition make it suitable for discussions on disciplinarity and decoloniality.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology for the support provided in conducting this research.

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

Author's contributions

M.S.K. is the sole author of this article.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee, University of South Africa, 01 July 2019. Reference number: 2019-CHS-90343018-Dept.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

References

- Adogame, A., 2010, 'Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in a global perspective', in B.S. Turner (ed.), *The new Blackwell companion to the sociology of religion*, pp. 498–518, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ.
- Anderson, A., 2001, *African reformation: African initiated Christianity in the 20th century*, Africa World Press, Trenton, NJ.
- Anderson, A., 2010, 'Varieties, taxonomies, and definitions', in A. Anderson, M. Bergunder, A.F. Droogers & C. van der Laan (eds.), *Studying global Pentecostalism: Theories and methods*, pp. 13–29, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Anderson, A. & Otwang, S., 1993, *TUMELO: The faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*, University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Anderson, A.H., 1992, *Bazalwane: African Pentecostals in South Africa*, University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Anderson, A.H., 2002, 'The newer Pentecostal and Charismatic churches: The shape of future Christianity in Africa?', *Pneuma* 24(2), 167–184. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700740260388027>
- Anderson A.H., 2004, *An introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Anderson, A.H. & Tang, E., (eds.), 2005, *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic face of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 3, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford.
- Archer, K.J., 2011, *The gospel revisited: Towards a Pentecostal theology of worship and witness*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR.
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J.K., 2007, '"Hearing in our own tongues the wonderful works of God": Pentecost, ecumenism and renewal in African Christianity', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 35(3), 128–145.
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J.K., 2019, 'God is big in Africa: Pentecostal mega churches and a changing religious landscape', *Material Religion* 15(3), 390–392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2019.1590012>
- Balfour, G., 2011, 'Pentecostal eschatology revisited', *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 31(2), 127–140. <https://doi.org/10.1179/jep.2011.31.2.002>
- Banda, C., 2020a, 'Unsafe spaces? An ecclesiological evaluation and response to recent controversial practices in some South African neo-Pentecostal churches', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 41(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v41i1.2108>
- Banda, C., 2020b, 'Mediating God's relationality? A trinitarian perichoretic critique of the reliance on anointed objects in African neo-Pentecostalism', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i1.5856>
- Bediako, K., 1995, *Christianity in Africa: The renewal of a non-Western religion*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Chitando, E. & Biri, K., 2016, 'Walter Magaya's prophetic healing and deliverance (PHD) Ministries and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe: A preliminary study with particular reference to ecumenism', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42(2), 72–85. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2412-4265/2016/829>
- Dube, B., 2020, '"Go and prophesy in your own land": Foreign prophets and popularism in South Africa. Evoking the need of Jonathanic Theology for peaceful resolution of difference', *Religions* 11(1), 42. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010042>
- Frahm-Arp, M., 2010, *Professional women in South African Pentecostal Charismatic churches*, Brill, Leiden.
- Gräbe, P., 2005, 'A perspective from Regent University's Ph.D. program in renewal studies: Theology in the light of the renewing work of the holy spirit', *Pneuma* 27(2), 124–129. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157007405774270248>
- Heleta, S., 2016, 'Decolonisation of higher education: Dismantling epistemic violence and Eurocentrism in South Africa', *Transformation in Higher Education* 1(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v1i1.9>
- Kalu, O., 2008, *African Pentecostalism: An introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Kgatle, M.S., 2016a, 'The influence of Azusa Street revival in the early developments of the Apostolic faith mission of South Africa', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 44(3), 321–335. <https://doi.org/10.7832/44-3-156>
- Kgatle, M.S., 2016b, 'Sociological and theological factors that caused schisms in the Apostolic faith mission of South Africa', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2412-4265/2016/1216>
- Kgatle, M.S., 2017, 'The unusual practices within some Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa: Reflections and recommendations', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73(3), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4656>
- Kgatle, M.S., 2018, 'Integrating African Pentecostalism into the theological education of South African Universities: An urgent task', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 74(3), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i3.5130>
- Kgatle, S., 2019a, *The fourth Pentecostal wave in South Africa: A critical engagement*, Routledge, Abingdon.
- Kgatle, M.S., 2019b, 'Reimagining the practice of Pentecostal prophecy in Southern Africa: A critical engagement', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 75(4), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5183>
- Kgatle, M.S., 2020, 'New paradigms of pneumatological ecclesiology brought about by New Prophetic Churches within South African Pentecostalism', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 41(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v41i1.2053>
- Kgatle, M.S., 2021a, *Pentecostalism and cultism in South Africa*, Palgrave, Basel.
- Kgatle, M.S., 2021b, 'Spirituality of liberation in African Pentecostal worship and its implications for Black Theology', *Black Theology* 19(2), 168–180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14769948.2021.1955178>
- Kgatle, M.S., 2021c, 'The balance between theory and praxis in South African Pentecostalism: Patmos Bible School as a model', *Acta Theologica* 31, 84–98. <http://doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.sup31.6>
- Kgatle, M.S. & Anderson, A.H., 2020, 'Introduction: The abuse of the spirit by some New Prophetic Churches in South African Pentecostalism', in M.S. Kgatle & A.H. Anderson (eds.), *The use and abuse of the Spirit in Pentecostalism: South African perspective. Routledge new critical thinking in religion, theology and biblical studies series*, pp. 1–23, Routledge, Abingdon.
- Kgatle, M.S. & Mofokeng, T.R., 2019, 'Towards a decolonial hermeneutic of experience in African Pentecostal Christianity: A South African perspective', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(4), a5473. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5473>
- Khorommbi, N.L., 2001, 'Lutherans and Pentecostals in mission amongst the Vhavenda: A comparative study in missionary methods', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of South Africa.
- Macchia, F.D., 2009, *Baptized in the spirit: A global Pentecostal theology*, Zondervan Academic, Grand rapids, MI.
- Malcolm, X., 1963, 'Message to the grass roots', in *Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference. Group on Advanced Leadership*, King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, 10 November.
- Masenya, M. & Masenya, M., 2018, 'Church breakaways as a prototype of commercialisation and commodification of religion in the Pentecostal Church movement in South Africa: Considering curricula offerings for pastors', *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 4(2), 633–654. <https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2018.v4n2.a29>
- Mashau, T.D. & Kgatle, M.S., 2019, 'Prosperity gospel and the culture of greed in post-colonial Africa: Constructing an alternative African Christian theology of Ubuntu', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1901>
- Mbiti, J.S., 1976, 'Theological impotence and the universality of the church', in G.H. Anderson & T.F. Stransky (eds.), *Mission trends no. 3*, pp. 6–18, Paulist Press, New York, NY.
- Moripe, S., 1996, 'The organisation and management of the Zion Christian Church', Doctoral thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Nel, M., 2020, 'African Pentecostal spirituality as a mystical tradition: How regaining its roots could benefit Pentecostals', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76(4), a5904. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i4.5904>
- Nel, M. & Janse van Rensburg, F., 2016, 'Integrating spirituality and rationality: The long and arduous journey of the historical development of theological training in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa', *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 50(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v50i2.1943>
- Omenyo, C.N. & Arthur, W.A., 2013, 'The Bible says! Neo-prophetic hermeneutics in Africa', *Studies in World Christianity* 19(1), 50–70. <https://doi.org/10.3366/swc.2013.0038>
- Quayesi-Amakye, J., 2015, 'Propheticism in Ghana's New Prophetic Churches', *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 35(2), 162–173. <https://doi.org/10.1179/18124461152.00000000019>
- Ramantswana, H., 2019, 'Prophets praying for, or preying on people's faith: A reflection on prophetic ministry in the South African context', *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 53(4), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v53i4.2495>
- Resane, K.T., 2017a, '"And they shall make you eat grass like oxen" (Daniel 4:24): Reflections on recent practices in some New Charismatic Churches', *Pharos Journal of Theology* 98(1), 1–17.
- Resane, K.T., 2017b, 'Commercialisation of theological education as a challenge in the Neo-Pentecostal Charismatic Churches', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73(3), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4548>
- Sanneh, L., 2003, *Whose religion is Christianity? The gospel beyond the West*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Grand Rapids, MI.
- Shuping, O., 2004, *Mopholosi*, viewed 14 September 2019, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hw1_Xo_Se3Q.
- Tsekpoe, C., 2019, 'Contemporary prophetic and deliverance Ministry challenges in Africa', *Transformation* 36(4), 280–291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378819866217>
- Vondey, W., 2012, *Pentecostalism: A guide for the perplexed*, A & C Black, London.
- Vondey, W., 2017, *Pentecostal theology: Living the full Gospel*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London.
- Wacker, J.G., 1998, 'A definition of theory: Research guidelines for different theory-building research methods in operations management', *Journal of Operations Management* 16(4), 361–385. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-6963\(98\)00019-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-6963(98)00019-9)
- Wariboko, N., 2017, 'Pentecostalism in Africa', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*, African history, pp. 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.120>
- Wa Thiong'o, N., 1992, *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*, East African Publishers, Nairobi.
- Wenk, M., 2003, 'Do we need a distinct European Pentecostal/Charismatic approach to theological education?', *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 33(1), 58–71. <https://doi.org/10.1179/jep.2003.23.1.005>