

African Pentecostal Mission and New Religious Movements

A critical scrutiny of threats and opportunities to evangelization in dialogue with Allen Heaton Anderson

Themba Shingange¹

Abstract

Allan Heaton Anderson's contribution to the African Pentecostal Mission (APM) is considered in this article. This task is done by engaging Anderson in a dialogue with other scholars who have interest in African Pentecostalism. Anderson's views promulgate the pneumatocentric nature and primacy of evangelization within the APM which is the focus of this article.. Additionally, his views are also used to argue that the advent of New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Africa posed serious threats to APM and theology. The NRM have tarnished the pneumatocentric image of evangelization and impeded its primacy. However, the article simultaneously identifies opportunities that can be drawn within the same threats to reform the APM and theology.

Key words: African Pentecostal Mission, Pentecostal theology, Missiology, Evangelization, New religious movements

1. Introduction

This article is written in honour of Allen Heaton Anderson. It acknowledges his contribution to the African Pentecostal Mission (APM) and theology. His remarkable scholarly and theological works are used to analyse the current crisis faced by evangelization within the African Pentecostal context. This task is done at a time when African Pentecostalism, in particular, its core aspect of evangelization is threatened by the advent of New Religious Movements (NRMs). The advent of NRMs in Africa has brought several threats to the entire African Pentecostal Christian community. However, this article only focuses on the threats that have tarnished the image of what Anderson (2003:2) calls the “pneumatocentric mission”/African Pentecostal Evangelization (APE) and those that impede its primacy within the APM. These threats are critically scrutinised in the light of Anderson's views of APM and theology to delineate opportunities amid this crisis. This is envisaged to serve as missiological responses that can contribute to the reformation of the current APM and theology. The main argument of the article epitomises Bosch's (1991:188) as-

¹ DrThemba Shingange can be contacted at shingange9@gmail.com

sersion that “the Christian church in general and mission, in particular, are today confronted with issues they have never even dreamt of and which are crying for responses that are both relevant to the times and in harmony with the essence of Christian faith”.

Therefore, this article honours Anderson by engaging him in a dialogue with other scholars who have an interest in African Pentecostalism. The dialogue aims to identify missiological responses which can be relevant to the current crisis within the APM. These responses, however, have to be in harmony with the essence of the Christian faith to contribute to the reformation of the APM and theology. Perhaps, they can also contribute to the restoration of the image of APE and revive its dwindling primacy. As a point of departure, the article briefly locates Anderson’s contribution to APM and theology. It then discusses the notions of APM and theology in light of Anderson’s view, this is followed by the reflections on the advent of NRMs in Africa. The article further scrutinises some threats brought by NRMs to APE. Subsequently, it identifies opportunities that can be discovered from the same state of affairs. Finally, the article presents the possibility of using these opportunities to reform APM and theology by developing a new shape of mission that retains the fundamental elements of African Pentecostalism.

2. Locating Anderson’s contribution

Anderson’s honour in this article emanates from an acknowledgement of his remarkable contribution to APM and theology. His tireless and selfless involvement within the APM is demonstrated by a vast number of references made to his work by different scholars both in Africa and abroad. As an example of recognition of his remarkable contribution to African Pentecostalism, Kgatle and Mofokeng (2019:3) termed one of his views as an “Andersonian perspective”. It was also another “Andersonian perspective” that succeeded in clearly demarcating the categories of African Pentecostal Christianity (APC). Therefore, this article uses some of his perspectives in approaching the subject under discussion. Anderson demarcated the APC into three major sub-traditions, namely African Indigenous Pentecostalism, Classical Pentecostalism, and Charismatic Churches (Anderson, 2004:2-3). However, he also acknowledged the category of neo-Pentecostalism (Anderson, 2004:11). It was neo-Pentecostalism that has shed more light on the impact of the NRMs on the entire APM and theology. Anderson did not only succeed in articulating these APC categories, however, he also contributed to the history, mission, and theology of the APC. His work is considered in this article as having a major role to play in responding to the current crisis faced by APM and theology.

Once more, the honour is also credited to the grace which God imparted in Anderson’s life that made him contribute to African Pentecostalism within the theolog-

ical circles. Amongst others, Anderson's contribution made the APM and theology gain an audience, not only in the African theological terrains, equally, he also contributed to their recognition within the global theological academic spaces and platforms. Amongst the vast collections of his academic writings, conference papers, books, journal articles, entries on dictionaries, and encyclopedias are his papers titled *The Gospel and Culture in Pentecostal Mission in the Third world* (Anderson, 1999), to name but a few. In this paper, Anderson managed to clearly expatiate on the relationship between the gospel and culture and between the Christian faith and other faiths. Yet again, in his other article titled *Structures and Patterns in Pentecostal Mission* (Anderson, 2004), he managed to provide a clear definition of what makes APM unique. His contribution to African Pentecostal scholarship is so vast that it cannot be covered by the scope of this article. This article only brings a glimpse of his perspectives in addressing the current subject. It is indisputable that Anderson succeeded in dismantling the alienation of APM and theology within the general academic theological spaces. This alienation was correctly observed by Masenya (2005:36) who argued; "in scholarly theological endeavours, Pentecostal Christian praxis receives little or no attention at all". It can be concluded that his contribution authenticates the APM and theology, and in the process, dispels the rhetoric that often pushes the APM and theology away from the academic and theological spheres. Henceforth, this article uses Anderson's perspectives to critically scrutinise the current realities within the APM and theology to bring reformation.

3. African Pentecostal Mission (APM)

Anderson's understanding of APM can be summed up as an emphasis on the primacy of evangelization, the theology of the Spirit manifesting through Pentecostal practices and manifestations of healing, signs, wonders, and its missional ability to respond to the existential needs of the African audience (Anderson, 1993:28). His perspective depicts the APM and theology as having unique identities. It is their unique characteristics that make them different from other forms of mission endeavours and theologies emanating especially from the Western Christian traditions. The possibility that missions can display different peculiarities depending on their contexts is embedded in Bosch's ideology of *Mission in Many Modes* (Bosch, 1991:511). This view sees missions as capable of taking different shapes and forms in different contexts and times. Again, highlighting this uniqueness demonstrates that God's mission is indeed pluriverse. This has led Bosch to conclude that mission can best be defined in terms of "mission as" rather than "mission is" (Bosch, 1991:8). In the same breath, the conceptualisation of mission as evangelization was also opined by Bosch (1991:512). Notably, it is the glaring Spirit-centeredness of APE that renders it pneumatocentric.

4. African Pentecostal Evangelization (APE)

The pneumatocentric APE has always been an indispensable and forceful tool for APM. This is true since “the Pentecostals added pneumatological and missiological dimensions before eschatological one” (Anderson, 2009:524). Anderson further called it an “aggressive evangelization”, maintaining that all Pentecostal mission strategy places evangelism as its highest priority (Anderson, 2003:7). Again, in his article titled *Some Reflections on the Development of the Pentecostal Mission Model in South Africa*, Saayman writes:

One of the outstanding strong points of Pentecostalism from a missiological point of view is the strong evangelistic drive that characterized the Pentecostal movement. From its inception, Pentecostal groups and churches understood themselves to be mission movements; mission understood especially as evangelization. (Saayman, 1993:51).

Saayman’s assertion encompasses the primacy of evangelization within African Pentecostalism. Anderson concurred with him when asserting that “Pentecostals are notorious for aggressive forms of evangelism” (Anderson, 2003:7). These assertions emphasise the critical role of evangelization within African Pentecostalism. Both Anderson and Saayman’s arguments signify the common views on the primacy of evangelization espoused by different scholars interested in APM and theology. For instance, De Wet and others also maintained that “all Pentecostal missionary strategy is concentrated on evangelism” (De Wet, 1989:355-356). Evangelizations is still the core of APM even today. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the African Pentecostal evangelistic message is entrenched in the theme of salvation.

5. Evangelization and salvation

Evangelization within the APM emphasises the need for a person’s salvation. This is commonly known as “the born-again experience” (Anderson, 2004:244; 2009:530-531). This notion of salvation was well captured by Anderson and Ontwang (1993:3) who emphasised that “people in Pentecostal churches (in particular) often state that they like going to church because it is the place where they found salvation, where salvation is preached and where their spiritual needs are met” (Anderson & Ontwang, 1993:17). Again, they also highlighted that “a fundamental theme emphasized in most Pentecostal preaching, is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, or what members often describe as preaching salvation” (Anderson & Ontwang, 1993:32). However, salvation in the context of APE is understood not as exclusively referring to the salvation of souls. It is also understood in terms of holistic salvation that includes salvation from evil spirits, witchcraft and evil spells

(Kgatle, 2020:1-2). This holistic salvation was well articulated by Anderson when opining that “salvation called ‘full salvation’, is an all-embracing term in Pentecostalism, and usually means a sense of wellbeing evidenced in freedom from sickness, poverty and misfortune” (Anderson, 2009:526). Meyer (2004:456) echoed similar sentiments when indicating that “many Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (PCC) devote much room to deliverance from satanic forces”. It follows then, that the salvation promulgated by APC carries an expectation of freedom from demonic spirits that often hold people captive.

Diverse platforms are used within the African Pentecostal circles to promulgate the message of salvation. The platforms that are commonly used for this purpose include the revival tent campaigns, open-air meetings, house-to-house visits, preaching in buses and trains, schools, and hospital ministries. African Pentecostal Evangelists are also known for their use of technological devices such as smartphones, television, radio, and other media platforms to spread the gospel and evangelize the world (Anderson, 2004:1). Yet again, Kgatle (2018) and Mashau and Kgatle (2019:3) maintained that the growth of prosperity gospel in Africa is fueled by the use of media. The recent lockdown in South Africa which happened as a result of the government’s endeavour to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) demonstrated the maximal use of these innovative ways for evangelization. This happened after South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, announced imposed restrictions on social gatherings such as funerals, weddings, church services, and religious celebrations often conducted in places of worship. Evangelization continued immediately within the APM through the use of virtual platforms and social media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp. These innovations were possible as Uka (2020:451) observed that Pentecostal churches are already entrenched in media and commercial communication networks with a strong social media presence. Uka further maintains that many Pentecostal churches own and operate satellite radio and television broadcasting networks, as well as social media apps. Therefore, resorting to these communication media channels was a mere continuation of a well-developed and organised practice. Salvation is understood within the APM and theology as the work of the Holy Spirit.

6. The theology of the Spirit

The type of evangelization that marks the existence of the APM is driven by the reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit (Anderson, 2004:235). Indeed, the pneumatocentric evangelization is credited for the remarkable expansion of APC. The rapid growth of African Pentecostalism was observed by Anderson as being at a range where at least ten million people in the region could be identified with a form of Pentecostal-

ism or Spirit-oriented Christianity (Anderson, 2004:3). The same reality was earlier observed by Saayman who pointed out that it was estimated that within 90 years, the growth of the Pentecostal/charismatic movement was at the range of around 200 million members worldwide and 19 million new members each year (Saayman, 1993:41). These numbers have rapidly grown to the point where Pentecostalism is now regarded as one of the largest forms of Christianity in the world today (Anderson, 2001:83-90). This is demonstrated by the reality that the population of Pentecostal-charismatic Christians in sub-Saharan Africa was recently estimated at 115 million (Uka, 2020:437-438). The Holy Spirit plays a major role not only in defining the essence of Pentecostalism but, also in defining its evangelization, mission strategies, and theology. Indeed, “a fundamental presupposition of all Pentecostal mission and theology is the emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit” (Anderson, 2002:525).

Thus, the pneumatocentric evangelization is entrenched in the notion that Pentecostal Christians are sent and led by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel message of salvation. It is as Anderson reckoned that evangelism for African Pentecostals means “to go out and reach the ‘lost’ for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit” (Anderson, 2004:238). Failure to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit when doing evangelism can only dismantle APM of its most definitive factor. This reality is traceable from Anderson’s assertion that Pentecostals place primary emphasis on being “sent by the Spirit” and depend more on what is described as the Spirit’s leading than on formal arrangements. Evangelists are simply doing their work because the Spirit directs them to it, often through some spiritual revelation like a prophecy, a dream, or a vision, and even through an audible voice that is often perceived to be that of God (Anderson, 2003:2). Therefore, African Pentecostal Evangelists are qualified and enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to reach out to communities with the gospel message of salvation.

The term “African Pentecostal Evangelists” is used within the APM not exclusively about some special charismatic leaders who happen to be called and sometimes have the gift of an evangelist. APC also regard ordinary Christians who go around testifying about the power of God as evangelists. Indeed, Anderson correctly observed this and, thus, warned that the swift growth of African Pentecostalism should not be regarded as a consequence of the efforts of a few charismatic leaders. However, it should be seen as a diligent and hard work of a vast number of ordinary women and men who networked across regional and national boundaries, proclaiming the same message they heard from their leaders (Anderson, 2001:93). This is similar to what the Apostle Paul told Timothy when instructing him to entrust the message he heard him preach before many witnesses to reliable people who will, in turn, pass it to others (2 Timothy 2:2). Ordinary Pentecostal Christians are entrusted with the gospel message as heralds of the salvation message they heard from their leaders. It is also interesting to note that those who are sent do not nec-

essarily go to other countries to convert sinners, on the contrary, these Christians preach the gospel message in their local communities and everywhere they find themselves. In that case, every believer becomes a missionary/evangelist by being filled by the Holy Spirit and willingness to preach the gospel. It is as Anderson asserted that missionaries were mostly untrained, and the only requirement was the baptism in the Spirit and a divine call (Anderson, 2003:7). The reliance on the Holy Spirit has made African Pentecostals go out in an endeavour to win the world for Christ. However, it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that confirms the presence of God in their midst by accompanying their message with healing and miracles.

7. Healing and miracles

Healing and miracles are regarded as significant in confirming the authenticity of the proclaimed message of salvation preached by Pentecostal Christians. This is similar to the narrative in the Book of Acts where “everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles” (Acts 2:43). Signs and wonders happened after Peter, one of the disciples finished preaching his evangelistic message. In the same way, that healing and miracles confirmed that God was on Peter’s side, Pentecostal Christians consider “healing and miracles as a sign of God’s” presence in their mission endeavours. Again, those who receive healing, often consider it as a miracle, and miracles are a sign of God’s existence. For that reason, healing and protection from evil spirits are among the noticeable features of African Pentecostalism (Anderson, 2009:532). Both healing and miracles continue to attract the masses to the spirit and prophetic-type churches. The reality is that all different sub-traditions of APC in all its diverse forms emphasise the importance of healing, signs, and wonders. Even in classical Pentecostal churches, healing is still regarded as an integral part of evangelization.

In churches like the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and Assemblies of God (AOG), slots for praying for the sick are still set aside during evangelistic campaigns. It is also common for Christians who receive healing to give testimonies of how they were healed after being prayed for. Anderson observed well and concluded; “in fact, the divine healing ministry became in time a characteristic feature of Pentecostal mission” (Anderson, 1993:46). This explains why the South African Evangelist Nicholas Bhengu who pioneered the AOG within the Black South African communities believed that divine healing, signs, and wonders were proof that God existed (Anderson, 1993:46). Indeed, some of the people join Pentecostal churches solely for healing and miracles. Therefore, “healing and miracles are deemed to be the sign of the grace of the Spirit given to believers to manifest the compassion of Christ for the suffering world” (Anderson, 2004:493). This is true as Pentecostals see healing as the good news for the poor and afflicted (Anderson, 2003:5). African

Pentecostals do not only see poverty in terms of being poor in spirit, however, they also see it as including the struggle for existential needs and livelihood.

8. Responding to socio-political and existential needs

Anderson referred to the ability of APE to meet the existential needs as “the Pentecostal full gospel” (Anderson, 2009:525). However, he also reckoned that most Pentecostals just like the famous German-American Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke did not often make socio-political pronouncements (Anderson, 2004:9). It was the same with Reverend Nicholas Bhengu (Lephoko, 2006:69). In addition, Musa Sono, the leader of Grace Bible Church in Soweto in South Africa was reluctant to be involved in socio-political issues in his early years (Anderson, 200:14). The Pentecostal full gospel, however, means that Christ associates with every need and the suffering of the people, this includes socio-political needs. For that reason, the Eurocentric gospel promulgated mainly by Classical Pentecostalism often does not appeal much to Africans who are after solutions for their daily problems whenever they go to church. Consequently, African Pentecostal evangelistic messages aim at responding to what Africans often experience as the void left by a rationalist Western form of Christianity (Anderson, 2001:90; Nel, 2018:21). Indeed, Anderson is correct when asserting that “traditional African communities were to a large extent health-oriented and in African traditional religions, rituals, for healing and protection were the most prominent ones” (Anderson, 2001:89). Therefore, evangelistic message is only understood as liberating for Africans if it provides solutions for their socio-political and existential needs. These responses to African people’s needs are essentially associated with the “anointed Christ” and missional evangelization.

It was the anointed Christ who declared that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. He was anointed to proclaim good news to the poor. The same Christ was also sent to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and to set the oppressed free (Luke 4:18). It is this freedom that makes most Africans relate to an evangelistic message of salvation. The relevance of Christ in African Pentecostal evangelism is rooted in the presence of healing of the sick, deliverance of the people from their plight, and responses to social ills such as poverty, oppression, and witchcraft. Lamentably, the advent of NRMs presented similar characteristics although with some ulterior motives. This has brought a predicament and confusion as separating between the APM – these NRMs are now difficult if not impossible.

9. The advent of New Religious Movements (NRMs)

It is also important to look at how Anderson understood the concept of NRMs concerning APM and theology. However, the background of the term is critical at this juncture if ambiguity is to be circumvented. This phenomenon thrived in the global

society, and it gained popularity in Africa and African Pentecostalism. It came within the African Pentecostalism disguising as bringing solutions to African people's socio-economic problems. It should be noted though that NRMs manifest differently and come in many forms and shapes within different contexts. Chitando observed that NRMs are multivalence in nature and thus, concluded; "it requires another narrative to exhaust the difficulties posed by the label 'New Religious Movements' to the study of Christianity in Africa" (Chitando, 2005:14). He further concluded that using the term without qualifying the sense in which it is applied will only add to the existing confusion (Chitando, 2005:14).

In adherence to Chitando's advice, the use of the term NRMs in this article is qualified. The term has been used to refer to the emergence of diverse religious movements within the African region and in the global religious spheres alike. It was used within the African context when applied amongst others by Chetty who used the term "NRMs about the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)" in South Africa. In his usage, Chetty gave examples of the emergence of New Covenant Ministries International (NCMI), Grace International (GI), Congress World Breakthrough Network (CWBN), and Judah Kingdom Alliance (JKA) (Chetty, 2013:190-191). On the other hand, Chitando contended that the term has also been applied to African Independent Churches (AICs); whilst in the global religious studies, it is often associated with the emerging spiritual traditions that include Hare Krishnas, Jehovah's Witnesses, Rastafarianism, and it covers esotericism in Africa (Chitando, 2005:13-14). However, the NRMs have emerged differently in the context of African Pentecostalism.

10. New religious movements and African Pentecostalism

The shape and form of Pentecostalism in Africa is constantly changing and presenting new dynamics. Anderson took cognisance of these changes and, therefore, recommended a constant analysis of this phenomenon (Anderson, 2004:23). The analysis is not only for addressing the dynamics presented by globalisation and migration to African Pentecostalism as Anderson highlighted (Anderson, 2004:23); however, it should also be done to comprehend different phenomena found in African Pentecostalism. One of the phenomena to be analysed is the NRMs. Kgatle (2020) provided concise and precise characteristics of the NRMs in South Africa which clarify their ambiguities. He associated the NRMs with the resurgence of new types of churches that cannot be classified within the classical, AIC's, and Charismatic Pentecostal categories. He, therefore, maintained that the New Pentecostal Churches (NPCs) fall within the 'fourth wave', and are characterised by new prophetism that includes prophetic titles, prophetic consultations, prophetic objects, and prophetic miracles (Kgatle, 2020:2). Other scholars categorised this phenom-

enon under the broad umbrella of neo-Pentecostalism. Amongst these scholars, Masenya (2005); Resane (2017); Banda (2018); Kgatle (2017); Dube (2019); Mofokeng (2021) and Shingange (2021) to name but a few, demonstrated that there is a close link between neo-Pentecostalism and the NRMs in Africa.

The NRMs within African Pentecostalism are fundamentally known for the upsurge of what Kgatle calls “unusual practices within some neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa” (Kgatle, 2017). The term “unusual practices” is correctly defined by Kisungu (2021:53) as encompassing any questionable practices within neo-Pentecostal churches that disturb the church in general as well as the society. Therefore, the „unusual practices” become a distinct characteristic of the NRMs that separate them from the rest of other Pentecostal categories. These practices include amongst others, that of Pastor Daniel Lesego who fed his congregants with grass and made some to drink petrol, arguing that when prayed for, both grass and petrol become the bread and wine used for Holy Communion (Kgatle & Anderson, 2021:8; Pondani, 2019). Nevertheless, Dube (2019:29) demonstrated that this phenomenon is not exclusively South African. The “unusual practices” are also common even within other African Pentecostal contexts. He maintained that in the news in South Africa and Zimbabwe, stories of weird things done by the modern-day flamboyant prophets are often told (Dube, 2019:29). The list of new churches associated with NRMs and their prominent self-proclaimed prophets is endless suffice to note that, of all these prophets; prophet Shepherd Bushiri of the Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG) and Pastor Lesego Daniel of Rabboni Centre Ministries are the most popular in South Africa (Kgatle & Anderson, 2021:6). The NRMs remain classified as Pentecostal because they still maintain most of the elements of Pentecostalism (Kgatle & Anderson, 2021:5). Regrettably, it is their maintenance of these elements that have contributed to the current threats faced by African Pentecostal evangelism. Again, the actions of these prophets have demonstrated that there is a link between the abuse of religion and the abuse of the Spirit within African Pentecostalism (Kgatle & Anderson, 2021:8). It is the same link that has posed threats to evangelization in Africa as addressed in the next section.

11. Threats posed to Pentecostal evangelization

Evangelization in Africa is now under serious threats which manifest in twofold streams. Firstly, the threats target the pneumatocentric image of Pentecostal evangelization. In this regard, society is left in bewilderment as it grapples with distinguishing between the true and the pseudo-gospel that often camouflages as genuine. The pneumatocentric image of Pentecostal evangelization has been tarnished by the abuse of the Spirit. This is demonstrated by the actions of self-proclaimed Pentecostal prophets who perform their “unusual practices” whilst connecting their actions with the Holy Spirit. These prophets often do this to disguise and make their audience un-

able to connect their practices to other spiritual sources like divination and witchcraft (Kgatle & Anderson, 2021:8). Their practices are, nevertheless, questionable because although they are conducted in the name of Christianity, they continue to tarnish its image (Kisungu, 2021:53). The unusual practices in South Africa went further to the point that it attracted the attention of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities (otherwise known as the CRL Rights Commission). The former chairperson of the CRL Rights Commission, Ms. Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva, bemoaned their existence when she lamented that “the recent news, reports, and articles in the media about preachers have left a large portion of society questioning whether religion has become a commercial institution or commodity to enrich a few” (CRL Rights Commission, 2017:4).

Secondly, these threats also target the primacy of evangelization. This happens as Pentecostal Christians are now treated with suspicion by the society that has developed a lack of interest in listening to Biblical-oriented messages of salvation. This has developed into animosity between Christians and society. The animosity emanated from the generalised perception of African Pentecostalism. The reality is that members of society now view all African Pentecostals as having ulterior motives when they preach the gospel. Likewise, they also use a misconstrued blanket approach which portrays all African Pentecostal Christians as mischievous. Lamentably, this has resulted in closing doors for genuine evangelization to thrive in Africa. Pentecostal Christians who genuinely carry out the missional mandate of preaching the gospel that is entrenched in the adage; “Go into the all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15) are now often perceived to be driven by the popular ambitions characterising the self-proclaimed prophets and their self-enriching schemes. For that reason, evangelistic campaigns are gradually diminishing within most African countries. Rather than focusing on preaching the gospel, African Pentecostal Christians now channel their energies and resources to the defence of their existence and to mend their tarnished image. This has, however, developed into a crisis that derails the preaching of the gospel and left society in bewilderment. Undeniably, African society has begun to feel the repercussions of the abuse of religion and the Spirit.

12. The abuse of religion and the Spirit

The self-proclaimed prophets within the NRMs abuse religion and the Spirit by conducting unusual practices under the guise of being directed by the Holy Spirit. In most cases, these prophets claim that the Holy Spirit guides them when they utter deceiving prophetic messages to their desperate followers. In reality, their actions can be equated with the corruption that the Apostle Peter referred to during the day of Pentecost when he warned the crowd to save themselves from the corrupt generation (Acts 2:40). This is true as these prophets lure their unsuspecting followers and rob them of

their money. They do this whilst promising them God's blessings in exchange for material wealth. It was correctly observed by Dube (2019) that these prophets and their movements generally exhibit extortionist tendencies, such as manipulating religious adherents to give up all their possessions through the promise that they will receive greater returns. Unfortunately, the money donated by their followers is often used to maintain the lavish lifestyle of these prophets (Dube, 2019:4). These extortions often happen when these prophets abuse prophecy to achieve their selfish ambitions.

13. The abuse of prophecy

Kgatle and Anderson (2021:17) correctly captured this predicament when asserting that what seems to be the major driver behind the NPCs popularity is the practice of prophecy. It was also Nel's view that prophecy stands in the service of neo-Pentecostals' emphasis on salvation and healing, within the wider context of African cosmology's view of a spirit world well populated by good and evil spirits and animating the seen world" (Nel, 2018:20). Indeed, many Africans have developed a preference for receiving prophetic messages rather than listening to formal sermons because they can easily relate to a spirit world rather than to mere dogmatism. This spirit world is also associated with the powers that can deal with poverty and social ills. Kgatle and Anderson (2021:7) maintained that "in the NPCs, the poor come with the hope that they will receive a prophecy that can make them rich and the rich with the hope that they can protect their wealth". This is contrary to the use of prophecy in the past, Christians then used prophecy for the edification of the body of Christ as the Apostle Paul highlighted in Ephesians 4:12; "Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers to equip his people for the work of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up". Contrary to this view, is that the abuse of prophecy stands to benefit an individual prophet at the expense of the whole church. This is exacerbated by the desire of most people who prefer receiving individual prophecies which come with promises of material blessings. Often than not, these prophecies concern only the health and wealth of the recipients and do not address their spiritual wellbeing. The NRMs are thus gaining followers by appealing to the desire for prophetic messages. This, however, happens to the detriment of the other African Pentecostal categories that continually lose followers who are lured by pseudo-healing and miracles.

14. Pseudo- healing and miracles

Healing and miracles have always played a major role in the advancement of APM for ages. This was earlier observed by Anderson (2009:532) when asserting that "thousands of preachers have emphasized the manifestation of divine power through healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues and other Pentecostal phenomena". However, the

current narrative attests that the self-proclaim prophets have gone to an extent of staging healing and miracles for their selfish benefit (Ramantswana, 2019). This reality is true within the NRMs who twist the manifestation of the divine power to achieve their notorious motives. Regrettably, these pseudo healing and miracles continue to tarnish the image of APM. Most people flock to the NRMs with the hope of receiving miracles without even questioning their sources. The truth is that some Pentecostal prophets go to an extent of consulting with sorcerers and evoking evil spirits to gain powers to perform miracles and to lure followers. The desire to become rich and famous has led many unsuspecting followers to fall prey to these devious prophets.

15. Empty promises of blessings and wealth

Anderson correctly observed that by preaching messages that promise solutions for present needs, Pentecostal preachers are heeded, and the full gospel is readily accepted (Anderson, 2009:533). However, this observation has now taken a different turn, it is no longer the full gospel that is readily accepted, on the contrary, promises of blessings and wealth have become the acceptable message to the masses. People are now rejecting the genuine gospel message in favour of false teachings. This happens even though most of the promises made by self-proclaimed prophets do not materialise. Although the followers of the NRMs are gullible to the empty promises made by the self-proclaimed prophets, society is gradually becoming suspicious of the NRMs and their prophets. This happens because the promises of blessings and wealth usually end up in vain. Some people now begin to notice that they are merely being lured into buying religious artefacts that do not even benefit them. This is true as Shingange (2021:121) observed that the selling of religious artefacts such as bracelets, rings, calendars, holy water, and oil is merely used by Pentecostal prophets to lure followers and make them believe that they will receive blessings and wealth in return. Lamentably, the money raised from these commercial activities goes to individual pastors. These pastors use a strategy that Mashau and Kgatle (2019:3) bluntly called “name it, claim it syndrome”. Although the followers are told to claim blessings after giving their offerings, it is these pastors who are sure to receive money from the followers (Mashau & Kgatle, 2019:3). Undesirably, because of such practices, some people in society are beginning to question the existence of God and the relevance of Christianity. The paradoxical question arising from these realities is that, are there any opportunities for African Pentecostal Evangelization amid this crisis? The next sections will address this question.

16. Opportunities to evangelization

Remarkably, African Pentecostal Christians can still discover opportunities amid their current crisis. Looking retrospectively at the history of Christianity, in particu-

lar Pentecostalism, it is apparent that Christians have faced serious crisis before. However, Christians in the past always found creative ways to address their crisis. They always sought responses that were relevant to their times and contexts (Bosch, 1991:188). The contemporary APC can, therefore, learn from the early Christian communities who did not merely sit back and lament when they were persecuted, rather, they went on preaching the Word of God wherever they went as they were scattered and forced to leave their homes because of persecutions (Acts 8:4). The truth is that lamenting the threats caused by the NRMs to evangelization is not even an option for contemporary African Pentecostal Christians. These Christians can still find opportunities to advance the gospel message only if they are willing to confront the undesired tendencies that contributed to the current situation. Amongst these tendencies to be confronted is the overemphasis of the Holy Spirit whilst neglecting balancing it with in-depth Biblical teachings that take cognisance of sound African wisdom and practices.

17. Applying the African Biblical Hermeneutics (ABH)

The balance between the need for the Holy Spirit and the in-depth Biblical teachings that consider African worldview as a point of departure can be found in African Biblical Hermeneutics (ABH).

African Pentecostal Christians can use ABH to confront their current crisis. This will mean that Biblical interpretations and their applications should take African wisdom and realities as a core factor in the process. These Christians need to return to the dependency on the Bible; however, they should also seek to strike a balance between the importance of the Word of God, the need for Spirit, and the African realities. This will mean the contextualisation of reading the Bible in the light of the primacy of the Spirit whilst taking cognisance of the unique needs and realities of African people. Anderson (2001:89) also reinforced the need for ABH by constantly showing that in the past, Pentecostalism, for example, the AIC's presented a form of Christianity that Africans were able to relate to and so, they were attracted to it. Again, the AIC's managed to permeate the continent by appealing to African experiences and the needs of African people (Anderson, 2001:90). Magezi and Banda (2017:7) observed that to a large extent, the prominence of Pentecostalism in Africa was the results of the old Christological problem of Western white foreignness and remoteness of Jesus Christ in Africa that left him irrelevant to the unique contextual of felt needs. Consequently, the ABH can effectively address the gap between the remoteness of Christ and Africans.

Anderson and Kgatle are of the view that African Pentecostals should be able to apply ABH to African contexts to address emerging pressing issues within Pentecostalism. However, they should do this whilst remaining true to Biblical teachings and

faith in God (Kgatle & Anderson, 2021:10). This implies that African Pentecostal Biblical scholars should connect without partiality the concerns of African people with the need for the Spirit and what is written in the Bible (Kgatle & Anderson, 2021:10). This can address the concern raised by Dube (2014:4) that “some Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (PCCs) use the Spirit as an excuse for not studying or analyzing concrete social contexts in their Biblical interpretation”. The application of ABH can happen when the APC begin to take the responsibility of correcting the current imbalances. This can also address the existing gullibility amongst the followers of the NRMs demonstrated by accepting every word told by these prophets without questioning anything. This has eventually blinded them from discerning the spirits behind the teachings, practices, and manifestations of the self-proclaimed Pentecostal prophets (Shingange, 2021:119). The reality is that miracles are to be scrutinised to discern if there are any demonic manifestations and to establish their theological validity. It is true that “miracles cannot verify themselves; they need an external extraordinary authority to validate them” (Resane, 2017:6).

African Pentecostal Christians are presented with an opportunity to restore their reliance on the Bible as the Word of God. This restoration is similar to that of the past African Pentecostals who continually looked retrospectively on the Bible as their guiding post (Saayman, 1993:52). Anderson (1999:226) shared similar sentiments when maintaining that “Pentecostals in the Third World usually define their practices by reference to the Bible”. The restoration of the reliance on the Bible can contribute to correcting the wrongs presented by the NRMs, similar to the believers in Acts 8:4 who continued to preach the gospel amid persecutions and suffering. The APC should strive to continue to preach an unadulterated gospel message of salvation. This will in the process brings enlightenment to the society that is currently groping in the dark. It is the same enlightenment that can enable people to distinguish true evangelization from pseudo-prophecies. The genuine gospel message can enlighten the African continent and the entire world. This can also redirect communities to the light of God’s salvation and lead to the reformation of the APM and theology.

18. Reforming the African Pentecostal Mission (APM) and theology

The challenges brought by the NRMs present another opportunity that can contribute to the reformation of APM and theology. This can perhaps pave a way for transforming the current narrative. Nevertheless, the envisaged reformation of APM and theology does not suggest that Pentecostal Christians have to develop a new Pentecostalism. On the contrary, reformation in this case entails retrospective scrutiny to the original forms of African Pentecostalism. Then, use the knowledge gained from the past to transform the current realities and redefine the prospects of APM

and theology. In reverting to the historic past, African Pentecostal Christians will also need to wipe out, form, and reform certain practices such as pseudo-healing and miracles which define the current realities. This can only present a new shape of APM and theology, however, the core elements will remain intact.

18.1 The wiping out stage

The wiping out stage requires the boldness to confront false teachings emanating from the self-proclaimed prophets. This confrontation should be informed by the in-depth knowledge of the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Again, to accomplish the wiping out stage, pulpits, theological seminaries, and local churches, Bible study groups should be geared to expose the wrongs presented by the current narrative. This can help in reinforcing the right Biblical-based Pentecostal doctrines. However, in the process of exposing the wrongs, African wisdom, the past Pentecostal experiences, and Biblical principles should guide the process. This should be regarded as a missional act in a venture of finding God already at work amongst the contemporary African people. Rather than portraying evangelists as the exclusive bearers of solutions to the current challenges, wiping out also means that every individual Christian has a role to play in finding solutions. The challenging part, however, will be the Pentecostal Christian's willingness to address the current situation without fear or favour. This will be like what Masenya and Ramantswana (2015:2) referred to when they spoke about the "hermeneutist who choose not to run away from their African identity and contexts". The realities and challenges facing APC can only be addressed by African Pentecostal Christians using African, Pentecostal, and Biblical wisdom.

18.2 The forming stage

Then, the forming stage necessitates a creative discernment that strengthens the positive aspects found in the current African Pentecostalism. This is an act of reverting to Biblical teachings, Biblical studies, and in-depth theological reflection of the current realities within African Pentecostalism. It is an application of ABH in the context of the abuse of religion and the Spirit in Africa. In the same breath, it can also be equated to "the resurrection of the Word" which Masenya and Ramantswana (2015:2) saw as a room given to Biblical texts to address and transform an African person in new and creative ways. This room is an affirmation that serves as a relevant response to what Anderson called for when expressing a dire need for a thorough analysis of the new shapes of African Pentecostalism (Anderson, 2004:23). The same analysis should in particular focus on the NRMs manifesting in the New Pentecostal Churches (NPCs) in Africa (Kgatle, 2020: 1-10; Kgatle & Anderson, 2021:5).

18.3 The reformation stage

The final stage of reformation encompasses the reinstatement of correct use of religion and the Spirit. This will manifest in the correct use of the elements of healing, miracles, responses to socio-political and existential needs of the society and Biblical Prophecy. However, in reinstating these elements, there is a need to pray for the guidance of the Spirit. This will help Pentecostal Christians to discern helpful practices which can transform the abuse of Spirit and religion. There are helpful elements that can be discerned from the situation brought by the NRMs. For example, Nel (2018:32) observes that neo-prophetism contributes to the transformation of the lives of its members because the beneficiaries of that transformation are disadvantaged and marginalized. Another example can be found in the same unusual practices of self-proclaimed prophets. Their actions and false dependency on the Holy Spirit can be used to juxtapose Biblical prophecy and false prophecy when churches teach about prophecy. On the other hand, the unusual practices can serve as clear examples of the abuse of the Spirit and religion which challenges Christian to identify and strengthen the correct use of the Spirit. This stage again presents a challenge to scholars interested in African Pentecostal studies and theology to engage in systematic research projects that will enlighten Christians about this phenomenon. The insight presented in the recent study titled: "The Use and Abuse of the Spirit in Pentecostalism: A South African Perspective (Kgatle and Anderson 2021) demonstrates that the task of reforming the current APM and theology can be possible. Surely, a new APM and theology can emerge in a paradoxical new yet, also old African Pentecostal mission. This mission is old because of embracing certain elements of both the past, it is also new because it seeks to reform current APM and theology thus developing something new.

19. Pneumato-Afrocentric evangelization (PAE)

The new paradoxical evangelization that emerges after the above-mentioned three stages is rooted in the past Pentecostal experiences, reformed present realities, prospects of APM, and theology that embraces African wisdom, knowledge and experiences. This realigns the current use of healing, miracles, and responses to socio-political and existential needs of African people with the past and the future. About the past, Anderson (2009:527) observed that "early Pentecostal preachers, especially the mass healing evangelists, expected miracles to accompany their evangelism". This expectation was made in line with sound Biblical principles. The prospects of APM and theology is characterised by the continued emphasis on the primacy of the Holy Spirit, Biblical prophecy, Biblical healing, genuine miracles, and responding to the socio-political and existential needs of African communities when engaged in evangelism. However, the Bible remains the yardstick on the use

of all these elements. Additionally, the element of prophecy which is one of the attractions to the NRMs is not to be entirely discarded. Biblical examples of prophecy should rather be used to expose false prophecy. On the other hand, Pentecostal Christians should embrace what Kgatle (2019:5-6) calls the “prophecy of love” that discourages the exploitation of finances of the people, the “prophecy of humility” that encourages humility amongst prophets, and the “approved prophecy” that is based on Biblical scriptures. Subsequently, a new form of evangelization that takes the primacy of the Spirit and African wisdom and experiences can emerge.

The reformed evangelization can be rightly called “the Pneumato-Afrocentric Evangelization” (PAE). This type of evangelization emerges from the notion of combining the need for the Spirit, the Bible, and the African ethic of *Ubuntu*. This is an integral part of the new evangelization that maintains reliance in the Spirit yet, recognises the importance of *Ubuntu* enshrined in the adage; “I am because you are”. African Pentecostal evangelization, therefore, should not only give promises of going to heaven and promises of wealth and fortune as is currently the case; rather, evangelization should also address the socio-political needs of the people by discouraging selfishness and greed. The essence of the PAE, thus, adds to Kgatle’s list of prophecies (Kgatle, 2019:5-6), the “prophecy of *Ubuntu*” which brings to the current Spirit-centred evangelism the important element of African ethic of humanness (Lenkabula, 2010:114; Khomba, 2011:242). In the same vein, Gathongo (2003:5-11) aptly provided an understanding of *Ubuntu* and how it operated in different African settings. *Ubuntu* is also supported by the Biblical rule; “Do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12). Furthermore, PAE also takes *Ubuntu* as espoused by Mashau and Kgatle (2019:4) who saw it as an antidote to the culture of greed in the prosperity gospel, in that in *Ubuntu*, the leader of the congregation needs to value people regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, social status etc. In the same breath, Pentecostal prophets and evangelists need to respect their followers by treating them as fellow-human-beings and believers. Therefore, *Ubuntu*, the Spirit, and the Word should define the PAE. This can be seen as the reformation of APM and theology, and can also be made part of APC teachings and doctrines.

The same reformation can help in wiping out the inhumane practices portrayed by self-proclaimed prophets. The reformation also promotes the African values of being neighbourly enshrined in *Ubuntu* and supported by the Bible (Matthew 7:12). Again, the PAE recognises the need to address the socio-political and existential needs of the people whilst emphasising the need for being missional. Being missional is understood in line with the Andersonian view emphasising the need for evangelization to respond to people’s needs holistically (Anderson, 2001:90; 2003:6; 2004:239; 2009:222). The missional focus of PAE will not only respond

to the current threats posed to evangelization manifesting through the abuse of religion and the Spirit, however, it will also be an honour to Anderson and ensuring that his contribution to APM and theology were not in vain.

20. Conclusion

The contribution made by Allan Heaton Anderson to APM and theology is recognised at a very critical time in the history of the APM. This is true as the advent of NRMs in Africa has brought both threats and opportunities to evangelization. This article has argued that Anderson's views of the primacy of evangelization and its pneuma-centric image within APM are now threatened. This has happened because of the upsurge of controversial practices of the self-proclaimed Pentecostal prophets. The whole predicament has, however, left the entire society in bewilderment. There is now a dire need for African Pentecostal Christians to make efforts that will lead to the realisation of opportunities brought by this predicament. These opportunities can be in the willingness of these Christians to confront their tendency of overemphasising the need for the Holy Spirit at the expense of in-depth Biblical studies and African wisdom. Additionally, they can also find these opportunities if they are prepared to wipe out, form, and reform the APM. Sitting back and lamenting about the current crisis is not an option for the African Pentecostal Christians. Moreover, throwing everything within the NRMs and simply labelling it as garbage will not help either. They should rather acknowledge the helpful elements and expose and discard the wrong ones. This can happen to realign the current APM and put it in a position where it can be able to adequately respond to the current crisis brought by the NRMs. Eventually, a paradoxical old, yet new Pneumato-Afrocentric evangelization can emerge with the emphasis on the primacy of the Holy Spirit, and the Word when doing evangelization, however, considering the African ethic of *Ubuntu* as an impetus for focusing on the African people's socio-political and existential needs. In this way, Anderson will continually be honoured within African Pentecostalism and its scholarly endeavours.

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