

# Ministering effectively in the context of Pentecostalism in Africa: A reformed missional reflection

**Author:**

T. Derrick Mashau<sup>1,2</sup>

**Affiliations:**

<sup>1</sup>School for Ecclesiastical Sciences, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, University of South Africa, South Africa

**Correspondence to:**

Derrick Mashau

**Email:**

derrick.mashau@nwu.ac.za

**Postal address:**

PO Box 20004, Noordbrug 2522, South Africa

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Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon with a large following in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. The rise, growth and influence of Pentecostalism in Africa are enormous and have, without fear of contradiction, become one of the dominant expressions of Christianity on the continent. A contextual analysis of Christianity in Africa showed that the African soil is more fertile for this movement. Its manifestation ranges from classical Pentecostalism (first wave), to the charismatic movement (second wave) and the charismatic renewal movements (third wave). Its growth in Africa came with a fair number of missiological challenges to evangelical reformed churches, and therefore this article sought to sketch this movement by providing a historical perspective on Pentecostalism, a contextual analysis of Pentecostalism in Africa, issues and challenges in Pentecostalism, and concludes by looking closely at a reformed missional reflection, thereby providing some nuances as to how best one can minister effectively in the context of Pentecostalism. This article called for evangelical reformed churches to exercise the spirit of discernment whilst dealing with the influence of Pentecostalism, but at the same time to learn from this movement the zeal for mission and the role of the Holy Spirit in mission.

**Reformatoriese missionale nadenke oor effektiewe bediening in die konteks van Afrika Pentekostalisme.**

Pentekostalisme is 'n globale fenomeen met 'n groot aanhang in Noord-Amerika, Latyns Amerika, Asië, Afrika en ander wêrelddele. Die opkoms, groei en invloed van Pentekostalisme in Afrika was geweldig en het een van die dominante gedaantes van Christenskap op die kontinent geword. 'n Kontekstuele analise van Christenskap in Afrika wys dat Afrika meer vatbaar was vir hierdie tendens. Die manifestasie daarvan ryk van klassieke Pentekostalisme (eerste golf), tot die charismatiese beweging (tweede golf) en die charismatiese herlewingsbewegings (derde golf). Die groei hiervan het 'n goeie aantal missiologiese uitdagings meegebring vir evangeliese gereformeerde kerke. Gevolglik het hierdie artikel gepoog om die tendens uit te wys deur 'n historiese perspektief op Pentekostalisme te bied, gevolg deur 'n kontekstuele analise van Pentekostalisme in Afrika, 'n bespreking van vraagstukke en uitdagings binne Pentekostalisme, en ter afsluiting 'n gereformeerde missiologiese oorweging hiervan, met klem op hoe bediening die beste kan plaasvind binne die konteks van Pentekostalisme. Die artikel het evangeliese gereformeerdes opgeroep om 'n gees van onderskeiding te openbaar wanneer hulle te doen kry met Pentekostalisme terwyl hulle terselfdertyd uit hierdie groep se ywer met sending en die rol van die Heilige Gees daarin geleer het.

## Introduction

African Christianity is complex in history, structure, doctrines and practices. Denominations on the continent range from mission churches (mainline churches planted by Western missionaries), Pentecostals (including a whole range of charismatic churches and ministries) to African Independent or Initiated Churches (AICs), which are either more traditional in outlook, or Pentecostal, or both. The fastest growing amongst all are churches of Pentecostal descent (Asamoah-Gyadu 2007:128). Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon with a large following in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. Reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa include amongst others (1) emphasis on the 'flexibility of the spirit', which enables it to transplant itself easily onto any cultural context; (2) emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit, especially the power to provide deliverance not only from sin, but also demonic attacks, demon possession, and poverty through healing and prosperity promises; and (3) spontaneity and communal participation in worship.

The growth of Pentecostalism in Africa poses major missiological challenges for mainline churches (Kalu 2007:5), evangelical reformed denominations included. Whereas some evangelical reformed churches are experiencing a nosedive in terms of church growth, new Pentecostal churches are

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planted and growing in numbers on a daily basis in the same context. They have in some instances managed to pull substantial numbers from mainline churches, whilst other believers choose to embrace charismatic practices without leaving their churches. In South Africa for instance, such churches have managed to attract many young people from mainline churches through spontaneity and dynamism in worship, which includes contemporary music and dance. Apart from those that join churches of Pentecostal descent, it should also be noted that there are those who leave churches of Pentecostal descent, citing lack of depth in terms of true biblical teachings in the movement. Critics of this movement vary from outright rejection to mixed acceptance of all manifestations of the Spirit within the movement. The summary provided by Williams (2005b) says it all:

(1) Baptism with the Holy Spirit: some hold that it is improper, biblically and theologically, to refer to this as an experience possibly subsequent to conversion; others claim that whereas Spirit baptism may be a second experience, the primary purpose is not empowering, but sanctification; (2) Speaking in tongues: some do not recognise *glossolalia* as having any longer a connection with Spirit baptism (the book of Acts being viewed as transitional) but consider it as only a lesser gift of the Holy Spirit available to some, or no longer available at all; and (3) Spiritual gifts: some divide the spiritual gifts into 'temporary' and 'permanent', claiming that the former have been withdrawn, whereas the latter continue; tongues and prophecy in particular are said to have ceased with the completion of the canon of Scripture. (p. 6)

Warfield (1972:5) clearly indicated that it was the characterising peculiarity, specifically of the Apostolic Church, and it belonged therefore to the apostolic age.

With the foregoing discourse in mind, a serious missiological question for mainline churches, including evangelical reformed churches on the continent and elsewhere in the world arises: 'How can one minister effectively in the context of Pentecostalism?' This missiological question is a call for the church of every age to exercise discernment as outlined in 1 John 4:1. In answering our main question, the following will be attended to: (1) a historical perspective on Pentecostalism; (2) a contextual analysis of Pentecostalism in Africa; (3) issues and challenges in Pentecostalism; and in conclusion (4) a reformed missional reflection on Pentecostal challenges. This will provide some nuances as to how best one can minister effectively in the context of Pentecostalism.

## Pentecostalism: A historical perspective

The term 'Pentecostalism' is not always acceptable to Pentecostals, who generally tend to refer to the movement as 'Pentecost' (Clark & Lederle 1989:7). However, for the purposes of this article it will be used. It refers to an experience of the Spirit in which at least two subsequent and different crisis experiences in the life of the believer are emphasised. The first is conversion, whilst the second experience is frequently referred to as Spirit baptism. The two experiences are only explained in terms of the reception of the Holy Spirit as pointed out in the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline teaching on the charismata (McNamee 1974:xi).

In brief, Pentecostalism should be understood as experiential Christianity. This experience culminates in the baptism of the believer in the Holy Spirit, which is evidenced as at Pentecost by speaking in tongues. The experience should then continue in the exercise of the spiritual gifts privately and also publicly at the Pentecostal gatherings where the gifts have their most significant sphere of operation (Bruner 1970:21). Therefore, at the heart of Pentecostal conviction lies the fact that the New Testament record is a blueprint of what should happen in every generation of the Christian's life until the end of times. This means that Christians today should continue to experience the remarkable spiritual manifestations recorded in the New Testament, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, nature miracles and visions. The emphasis in Pentecostalism is therefore, on the conversion experience and the exceptional physical phenomena accompanying this experience (McNamee 1974:18; cf. Van Wyk 1986:4).

Pentecostalism as a 19th and 20th century phenomenon can be traced back to the beginning of Christianity. From a historical perspective, traces can be found in all major trends in the history of the Christian church, that is, in the Early church, Middle Ages, Reformation and post-Reformation. Methodism was in actual fact the modern soil on which Pentecostalism flourished (Bruner 1970:46). This is confirmed by the historical theologian Donald Dayton (1987), who traces the historical roots of Pentecostalism to Wesleyanism and American revival movements of the 19th century. We shall therefore for the purpose of this article offer a short survey of such a history.

## Charismatic renewal movements in church history

### Montanism

Montanism is the manifestation of a recurring phenomenon in the church that, for want of a better term, is called '*illumination*' or '*enthusiasm*', and is characterised by a conviction on the part of its devotees that (1) they are a spiritual elite called to restore the church to its primitive simplicity, (2) they are under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, and (3) in their circle the charismatic gifts common during the period of the church's first fervour have been renewed. It was a sectarian group of the 2nd century in the history of the Christian church, and was subsequently named after its founder and first prophet, Montanus (c. 170). Montanus and his followers became ecstatic and uttered strange things, prophesied and some of them also claimed to have had conversations with angels and with God. Montanus began ecstatic prophesying in the spirit in the village of Ardabav in southern Phrygia and was joined shortly thereafter by two prophetesses, Maximilla and Priscilla (Groh 1990:622). One of its converts, who is known in the history of the church by the name Tertullian, acknowledged that the Montanists had merited in one way or the other from prophetic gifts (Budgen 1989:117; cf. Gromacki 1973:14). The adherents of this movement believed in the continued existence of the charismata. They were concerned with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which they saw in the transports of their prophets. According to Aland (1992:570) the most characteristic traits of this movement were *glossolalia* and a spiritual language tending to ecstasy and enthusiasm.

Montanus and some of his followers, notably the women Priscilla and Maximilla, were seized by religious raptures and, in the course of ecstasy, spoke in strange tongues and uttered prophecies that the sectarians regarded as oracles of the Holy Spirit (Richardson 1983:382; cf. Walker 1992:69).

### Anabaptism

Anabaptism is a phenomenon which came from the Reformation of the 16th century, its adherents are known to be of the radical wing of the Reformation because of their impatience with the Reformation that Luther and Zwingli were trying to bring about in the traditional Roman Catholic Church. They demanded a much more radical break with old beliefs and practices. These radical religious reformers received the collective name of 'Anabaptists' because they were totally against infant baptism. It drew attention to the fact that most of them practiced adult baptism – 'baptism again' – as opposed to the infant baptism of the Catholics, the Lutherans and the Zwinglians (Randell 1989:74).

One of the distinguishing features of Anabaptism was that its adherents did not regard the Bible as paramount. They were not content with the Reformation's emphasis on Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*), but maintained that the inward voice of the Holy Spirit takes precedence over the external word of scripture (Culpepper 1977:41; cf. Heath 1895:2; Randell 1989:75). They were equally prepared to recognise the validity of visions and inner voices. Culpepper (1977:41) is of the opinion that Thomas Müntzer was one of the earliest Anabaptists, who cherished such experiences and gifts as visions, dreams, ecstatic utterance, and inspired exegesis. The disconnection between Word and Spirit as propagated by the Anabaptists prompted Calvin to take a clear stance on the question of prophecy. The divergent Anabaptist view on the prophetic office was that a prophet should predict the future and bring about new revelation. Calvin responded by pointing out that prophecy is a particular gift for interpreting scriptures and applying them to the present context. According to Calvin therefore, prophecy is not what the Anabaptists thought it was. It is rather a charisma, knowledge of exegesis closely related to application in the contemporary situation. The prophet remains subject to the authority of the Holy Scriptures and nothing else (Balke 1973:245).

### Pentecostalism in the 20th century (first wave)

The technical use of the word Pentecostalism started in the 20th century. Pentecostals may disagree as to whether the Pentecostal revival started in North Carolina in 1896; in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901; or in Azusa Street, Los Angeles in 1906. According to Möller (1998:179–180) the beginning of Pentecostalism can be dated back to 1901 when Agnes Ozman was baptised in the Spirit and spoke in tongues. This happened in Topeka, Kansas, United States of America (USA), in the Bethel Bible School where Charles F. Parham was the principal. It is further documented that the manifestations of the Spirit occurred in an old building in 312 Azusa Street in 1906–1909, namely: salvation, healings, baptism in the Spirit and the accompanying tongues. The most striking facet of

Pentecostalism, however, is that all Pentecostals agree that the Pentecostal experience is not a religious innovation, and that in one form or another it has always manifested within the history of the Christian church (Clark & Lederle 1989:7; cf. McNamee 1974:16).

### Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement (second wave)

The term charismatic is derived from the Greek word *charismata*, which refers to spiritual gifts. It is used to refer to the movement in Christendom that emphasises the renewal of *charisms*: the charismatic renewal. The concept 'charismatic movement', therefore, is an expression used to refer to a movement within historic churches and it manifests itself principally in the practice of praying for the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and in the exercise of the charisms – such as prophecy, praying for healing, tongues and other miraculous gifts (Faricy 1983:91).

According to Culpepper (1977:51) the current charismatic movement is the offspring of Pentecostalism. He reckons that had there been no Pentecostalism, probably there would have been no charismatic movement. That is why it is said to be the second wave of spiritual revival after Pentecostalism, which took the world by storm during the first half of the 20th century. The same sentiments are echoed by Buys (1986:19, 26) when he notes that anyone who seeks to understand the charismatic movement should have a thorough knowledge of Pentecostalism. There is a strong bond that exists between the two movements. That is basically why this movement is also referred to as neo-Pentecostalism. The two movements also share the same history. The charismatic movement gained momentum in the 1950s and 1960s. On the American scene, for instance, it is said to have started to attract broad attention in 1960, with the national publicity given to the ministry of the Reverend Dennis Bennet, an Episcopalian in Van Nuys, California. From then onwards it made inroads into traditional or historic mainline churches across denominational divides (Williams 2005a:1).

The bond that exists between Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement does not imply that the two are one and the same thing. There are common traits between the two, but at the same time there are differences also. One of the fundamental differences concerns the nature of the two. It is common practice amongst the Pentecostals to start new churches, whilst this is not the case with neo-Pentecostalism. According to Van Wyk (1986:5) the charismatic movement is not schismatic in nature, it seeks to remain and operate from within traditional churches in order to bring about spiritual renewal. Consequently, Williams (2005b:4) notes that one of the most striking features of the charismatic movement is the resurgence of a deep unity of spirit across traditional and denominational barriers. Accordingly, it is a 'spiritual ecumenism,' not organisational or ecclesiastical ecumenism. It operates from within the historic churches, such as Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox. As for its profile within the historic churches, Williams (2005a:1) notes the following: (1)

The recovery of liveliness and freshness in Christian faith; (2) a striking renewal of the community of believers as a fellowship (*koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit; (3) the manifestation of a wide range of 'spiritual gifts,' with parallels drawn from 1 Corinthians 12–14; (4) the experience of 'baptism in the Holy Spirit,' often accompanied by 'tongues' as a radical spiritual renewal; (5) the re-emergence of a spiritual unity that essentially transcends denominational barriers; (6) the rediscovery of a dynamic for bearing comprehensive witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ; and (7) the revitalisation of the eschatological perspective.

There are also a number of parachurch organisations that promote the charismatic tendencies within the broader spectrum of the entire church community worldwide. These are charismatic groups that operate from outside the established churches. One of the well-known established groups operating from outside the mainline church that Möller mentions is the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, started by an American, Demos Shakarian, who also served as its president (Möller 1983:23).

### **Pentecostalism and the Charismatic renewal movements today (third wave)**

The third wave of Pentecostalism is called the 'Signs and Wonders Movement' and the 'Vineyard Movement'. According to Peter Wagner (in Lee 2001:172), this is the wave that emerged in the eighties of the 20th century. It centres on the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit being experienced in the life of the church (amongst evangelicals and other Christians) without church members becoming either Pentecostal or charismatic. This is a movement that has experienced enormous growth. The emphasis in this movement is on 'power evangelism', which entails that the gospel is explained and demonstrated by way of supernatural signs and wonders. The gifts of prophecy and healing are firmly emphasised. Some of its high profile leaders include amongst others, John Wimber, Peter Wagner and Paul Cain, to name a few. These charismatic renewal movements took the world by storm through tele-evangelism and mass crusades during which they continued to bombard people with messages of divine healing and prosperity. They find a fertile soil in the African context because cultural world view, religion and healing are inextricably linked. An important function of religion is said to bring restoration in the face of brokenness or damage to man's body, relationships and social and spiritual networks (Ukah 2007:14). One of the most popular ministries of this nature in South Africa, the Christ Embassy, has opened a large healing school in Randburg (Gauteng) where people from all over the world experiencing ill health throng for healing. Whilst some of these churches claim to heal all diseases without exception, others make a claim to a particular set of diseases. Prophets like T.B. Joshua of Nigeria claim to heal dreadful diseases such as HIV and AIDS, which is very prevalent in the sub-Saharan Africa. Access to the testimonies section on SCOAN blog of Prophet T.B. Joshua provides pictures and records of such claims. One such testimony recorded is of a woman, Mrs Motunrayo Sowemimo, who appeared with medical reports

detailing her condition before and after prayer. The medical report from the Federal Ministry of Health in Lagos showed her condition on 15 June 2010 to be HIV positive, and then following prayer at The SCOAN, the same hospital confirmed her to be negative to HIV three months later on 22 September 2010 (Scoan Blog 2011).

## **Pentecostalism in Africa: Contextual analysis**

Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon that thrives on African soil. According to the Pew Forum (2006), Pentecostalism's dramatic expansion has left almost no part of sub-Saharan Africa unaffected. It is growing rapidly in such countries as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo. The impact of Pentecostalism in Africa is enormous, and therefore it is very difficult to ignore this phenomenon. A contextual analysis of this movement on African soil points to the following:

### **The face of Pentecostalism on African soil**

The origin of Pentecostalism in Africa can be traced back to the early part of the 20th century. This is well captured in the following words by Cédric Mayrargue (2008):

The first Western missionaries arrived on the continent in the 1910s. Missionaries from the (American) Assemblies Church of God first arrived in Liberia in 1914 and in Burkina Faso in 1921. British missionaries arrived in Nigeria and Ghana in the 1930s. Another very early presence is to be found in South Africa starting from 1908. The first Pentecostal communities date from these times, be it local groups linked to western Churches, those which became autonomous Churches or indigenous Churches influenced by Pentecostal missionaries. (p. 3)

African Pentecostalism is directly linked to the classical form of Pentecostalism of the 20th century. It is an expression of evangelical Christianity that seeks to lay emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in all its operations. Unlike classical Pentecostalism, which is commonly defined in terms of the doctrine of the 'initial evidence' – of speaking in tongues – African Pentecostalism must be seen as a much broader movement that operates in a much broader context, and one that manifests all three waves outlined above. Individual and personal experience in conversion as accompanied by baptism with the Holy Spirit (which is sometimes accompanied by speaking in tongues) and embodied in the performance of extraordinary miracles is very much central to their teachings. Emphasis is on the working of the Holy Spirit in the being and all the operations of the believers.

The spirituality of Pentecostalism in Africa has its roots in the spirituality of 19th century African American slave religion. According to Walter Hollenweger (1972), the main features of this form of spirituality include an oral liturgy and a narrative theology and witness, maximum participation of the whole community in worship and service, visions and dreams in public worship, and an understanding of the relationship between body and mind as manifested by healing through prayer. The main attraction of Pentecostalism in Africa is its



ability to transform and adapt to the cultural context of the indigenous people. This is largely because 'freedom in spirit' often allows them space to be more flexible in developing their own culturally relevant forms of expression (Shorter 1975:24) as noted in the introduction. Distinctions can be made between the various categories of African Pentecostal churches, for example: (1) Pentecostal mission churches such as the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Faith Mission. These churches were initiated by non-African missionaries, and are part of larger Pentecostal denominations with direct links to classical Pentecostals; (2) the new Pentecostal churches with no connection with classical Pentecostals. These are churches that are more recent in origin like the Grace Bible Church and Praise Tabernacle Church in South Africa; and (3) the African Initiated Churches, which for various reasons are defined as 'Spirit-type churches' and 'Zionist', 'Zion-type' or 'Apostolic' churches, like the Zion Christian Church in South Africa (Shorter 1975:37).

All these churches can be categorised under the umbrella of the Pentecostal movement in Africa because they all emphasise the working of the Holy Spirit. However, it should be noted at this stage that they vary from one another in terms of their *modus operandi*. Classical Pentecostals are firm on 'speaking in tongues' as initial evidence of baptism with the Holy Spirit. The new Pentecostal churches on the other hand emphasise the power and the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church, and their leaders replicate more of what American televangelists do. The last category, mostly the African Initiated Churches, which are known to be Pentecostals with some degree of qualification, commonly use objects like holy water, ropes and articles in their healing practices. This element is not common in the first two categories of the Pentecostal movement mentioned above.

### **The missionary character of Pentecostalism in Africa**

Pentecostalism, with its theology of the resurgence of the charismata in the life of the church today, has given birth to the renewal vigour in worship, renewed interest in realising spiritual gifts in congregational life, and new motivation for evangelism and missions. Pentecostals in Africa are therefore very mission-minded and use very aggressive forms of evangelism and proselytism, as noted by Allan Anderson (2004). In Pentecostal strategy, evangelism takes the highest priority. In Pentecostal theology, evangelism means to go out and reach the 'lost' for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. This approach to mission includes personal witnessing, crusades and large tent campaigns wherein healing is promised. Many thousands of African preachers from the Pentecostal circle emphasise the manifestation of divine power through healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues and other Pentecostal phenomena. Exorcism and protection from evil are amongst the most prominent features of the Pentecostal gospel and are the most important of their evangelism and church recruitment tactics. This is the most relevant message for a poverty-stricken continent, which at the same time faces malnutrition, malaria, tuberculosis and the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

## **Issues and challenges in Pentecostalism**

The teachings and practices of Pentecostalism contain certain features, promises and problems that distinguish it from other forms of expression of Christianity, and for the purpose of this article, the following can be mentioned:

### **Salvation**

One of the basic tenets with regard to the teachings of the Pentecostals is salvation that is earned by faith in Christ. Belief in Christ is essential for one to receive salvation and inherit eternal life. The emphasis is on being born again or regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. The call to repent, believe and accept Christ as personal Saviour and Lord is critical in their preaching. All their major evangelistic crusades in Africa and elsewhere in the world are characterised by public calls for sinners to come and receive Christ as they surrender their lives to him.

### **Baptism with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and other spiritual gifts**

Pentecostal beliefs and practices centre on their teaching regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Williams (1983:205) is of the opinion that there is common recognition of baptism with the Holy Spirit as a distinctive Christian experience. The Spirit baptism is the event or experience that is said to occur either at the time of conversion as a 'second crisis experience' or a 'second blessing'. Classical Pentecostalism teaches that the initial evidence of Spirit baptism is speaking in tongues. It continues to say that a person who has been baptised by the Holy Spirit is also endowed with spiritual gifts (*charismata*). There is general consensus amongst Pentecostal figures such as David du Plessis, Harold Horton and Donald Gee that the gifts of the Spirit are the result of baptism of the Holy Spirit in a believer.

As for the purpose of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a South African Pentecostal theologian, Francois Möller, notes that they are given (1) to make Christ known and for his glory (Möller 1983:65). In this regard he follows Oral Roberts (as quoted in Möller 1997:142), who writes that the ultimate purpose of every gift of the Spirit is to reveal Jesus Christ, to testify of Him and to enable believers to be more complete in Him. In this regard, the emphasis laid amongst Pentecostals is that the *charismata* are not intended to exalt an individual as some kind of miracle worker, but to exalt Jesus as Lord and King; (2) the equipment of the believer to be of service by becoming a witness of Christ (Möller 1983:65); (3) to authenticate the preached Word (Möller 1983:65). To emphasise this point, Möller (1983) quoted Donald Gee who writes that:

The ultimate and full purpose of spiritual gifts thus stands revealed. They are to bring men face to face with the reality of the Invisible God ... to make the unbeliever equally conscious that God cannot be forgotten and that sin dare not be trifled with. (p. 6)

Charismata are, therefore a sign to the unbelievers; (4) the edification of the entire church and also individual believers in their private spheres, with an eye to true worship (Möller 1983:65); and (5) to cater for men's needs (*ibid.*).

J. Rodman Williams (1983:206–207), who represents more the second wave of Pentecostalism, expatiates on the above-mentioned by pointing out the following reasons as to why the charismata were given to the church, namely: (1) they function as the direct expression and action of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual gifts accordingly, make for a dynamic, vital community life; (2) they are given for the edification of the Christian community. Each member functioning properly is essential to the full life of the body; (3) when all members of the Church community exercise their charismata, it makes for total ministry. It is not just the few (e.g. pastors, elders, deacons) who should be channels for the Spirit's manifestation, but each person in the community; (4) they are given for the sake of spontaneity in worship, dynamism in ministry, and rich fellowship with one another. The charismata, therefore, should be exercised in the body of Christ, where the above can be achieved by a particular Christian community; and (5) to bring the church to 'high voltage' Christianity. It is through the exercise of these spiritual gifts that the church comes alive to 'high voltage' Christianity: an extraordinary sense of the exalted Lord's presence in the Spirit moving powerfully amongst his people. All the gifts of the Spirit are viewed as extraordinary, supernatural and permanent. The implication is that all charismata are equal and therefore, all the gifts of the Spirit should earnestly be desired. Williams (1983:208) asserts that the spiritual gifts will not cease until we see him 'face to face'; then they will be no longer needed for the edification of the community.

## Healing and prosperity

As much as divine healing is proclaimed and administered within classical Pentecostalism (first wave) and the charismatic movement (second wave), it is in the third wave of Pentecostalism where healing and prosperity is highly popularised. This wave is common in Africa as reflected in the following words:

Healing has become a budding church industry, with healing pastors criss-crossing the African continent in mega-events sometimes called 'crusades' of healing. New satellite television channels beam recorded and live healing services and healing stories from both local and international sources. (Maluleke & Nadar 2007:1)

Any form of illness is attached to issues of demonic attacks and faith, with powerful prayers and faith as vehicles to bring about deliverance. Exorcism is exercised to deliver those who are under demonic attacks and are possessed by the demons. Those who are not cured as they are prayed for are accused of a lack of faith. The third wave face of Pentecostalism on African soil is able to lure the poor masses by promising people total health and wealth. God's will and his blessings for all is that everyone must be healthy and rich and therefore believers are coerced to exercise their faith without reservation: 'Name-it-Claim-it'. However, it is unfortunate that in most cases the poor masses in Africa

are naming it whilst evangelists, apostles, prophets and preachers, as they are commonly known, are claiming – with the poor masses getting poorer and the prophets getting richer and going about boosting about their wealth as a living testimony of the power of faith. In the blog post by Isaac Phiri and Joe Maxwell, 'Africa's rapid embrace of prosperity Pentecostalism provokes concern and hope', an example of Pastor Michael Okonkwo of Nigeria is recorded (Phiri & Maxwell 2007).

## A reformed missional reflection

The rise and growth of Pentecostalism in the global context, especially on African soil, should present any evangelical reformed missional church with the opportunity to do introspection and strategically map out how best she can minister effectively in the context of this phenomenon. This is a missiological challenge that is unavoidable, especially in the context where Pentecostal churches experience tremendous growth whilst reformed churches are either stagnant or experience a nosedive in terms of numbers. This is relevant in the context in which Pentecostal churches are thrilled to do mission work, whilst the majority of evangelical reformed churches have lost the spark and zeal for missions. A reformed church in such a context can do the following:

- *Acknowledge the existence, rise and growth of Pentecostalism* in the African or any other context where it serves. The existence of Pentecostalism in any context should not be viewed as a threat, but a challenge that presents any reformed church with the opportunity to minister faithfully and effectively to its context.
- *Exercise the spirit of discernment.* Reformed churches everywhere in the world are called to exercise discernment or test the spirits as outlined in 1 John 4:1. The power of reformed discernment lies in the primacy of the Word ministry that cannot be divorced from the ministry of the Spirit. Maris (1992:274) was therefore correct to note that the Word of God is the co-ordinate of faith as well as of experience. Main tenets of Pentecostal beliefs and practices must therefore be tested by scripture. The Word of God must shed light with regard to their teachings regarding salvation (regeneration), baptism of the Spirit, speaking in tongues and other spiritual gifts (including their teachings on healing and prosperity). In this regard it is clear that reformed theology teaches that (1) salvation is the gift of God that comes through faith as worked by Holy Spirit when the Word of God is communicated (Mashau 2009:98). In Calvinism, the Spirit is the first gift that brings about conversion, repentance, adoption and new birth in all believers. Christ is the author of salvation and the centre of the gospel, but as He received the fullness of the Spirit and shares the gifts of the Spirit with those who accept the gospel, it might be said that the Holy Spirit is the means of the gospel (Baird 1960:128); (2) the entire Christian church is a charismatic church endowed with spiritual gifts and that it is the Triune God who is the source and distributor of these gifts. When speaking of the gifts of the Spirit, Calvin ([1583]1867:464) points out that there is no inconsistency in ascribing the glory

of those gifts to the Father, inasmuch as He is the author of them, and at the same time ascribing them to Christ, to whom they have been entrusted, that he may bestow them on his people; (3) God distributes to each one of the believers a certain limited portion of the spiritual gifts. Each receives a certain measure to serve the entire body of Christ, the church. Being thus dependant on each other, people find it necessary to throw their individual gifts into the common stock, and thus render mutual aid (Calvin [1849]1854:271). True faith therefore calls every individual member to service. The rediscovery of the office of believers and their active participation in the life of the church must receive serious attention (Mashau 2008:95). Believers must be allowed space to use their spiritual gifts to benefit the entire body of Christ, but we must guard against the misuse of such gifts. Ministries such as small groups, children, youth, women, marriage, music, prayer and many more should be introduced in churches to allow space for members to unleash their potentials.

- Appreciate the kind of missionary zeal within Pentecostalism and *call for renewal and new commitment to the biblical calling of reaching out* and witnessing to the power of the resurrected Christ to the world and to the very end. The Lord's will is to save humanity, and therefore we must never be happy when our churches are stagnant and not growing. Spiritual and numerical growth are very much part of God's salvation plan. We must make a conscious decision to participate in the mission of God in the world. We must, as we participate in mission, recommit to hold seriously the truth of God's Word regarding issues of salvation, baptism of the Spirit and other spiritual gifts. The preaching of the Word and education ministry amongst church members, adherents of Pentecostalism and those who are yet to be evangelised will prove to be critical in our context, the 21st century, where the anti-Christ seems to be on a rampage to deceive many through false teachings.
- The *rediscovery of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission* as something that is forced on the reformed agenda by Pentecostals should be appreciated. We must not shy away from acknowledging the third person in the Trinity of God and his role in mission because of the pitfalls of Pentecostalism. The Holy Spirit is the one who calls, equips and empowers believers for Christian mission. The Holy Spirit ministers in and through us as instruments in the hands of the missionary God, who has the heart for the gospel and the heart for the world. Through the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit continues to gather God's church from eternity to eternity. As the church participates in the harvesting process, she must do so prayerfully so that the Lord of the harvest will bring life wherever he deems fit. It must be clear that conversion is not a human project. It belongs to God, who, through the preaching of the Word through words and deeds continues to awaken his elect to life through the working of the Holy Spirit.
- On the question of *the continuity of the charismata*, reformed theology maintains that the times of the extraordinary

gifts have passed. Reference is made in particular to those gifts that were given to authenticate Christ's ministry and the Word. Mashau (2000:102) concludes that the 'Charismata which were given to authenticate the ministry of Christ on earth (Jn 20:30–31) and the apostolic ministry (2 Cor 12:12) served their foundational purpose (Eph 2:20).' There is logic in such a position, but it should also be noted that reformed theology leaves room for the Spirit of God to operate as he wills (1 Cor 12:11). The manifestation of the Spirit of God cannot be restricted to a particular epoch in history; in mission fields and in extraordinary circumstances the Spirit of God can still bring forth such charismata. In such a case, the call to discern the Spirit should be exercised with scripture as a measure as already noted above. This call applies to all extraordinary gifts claimed by tele-evangelists, apostles and prophets of our time. It is our responsibility to point out all the pitfalls of Pentecostalism.

- It should be pointed out at this stage that the spirituality of the charismatics reflects a 'low view' of God and his sovereignty and therefore easily becomes manipulative. The most important antidote for the Armenian heresies in the Pentecostal and charismatic type churches is to preach and teach the doctrines of the sovereign grace of God (the Supremacy of God) and maintain a biblical spirituality of the *fear of God* (Ec 5:7; 8:12; 12:13; Gn 22:12; Dt 6:2; 10:12; Ps 111:10; 112:1; 145:11; 1 Pt 2:17; Rv 19:5 ff.).
- An open door for reformed churches to be instrumental in facilitating a corrective to the Pentecostal and charismatic type churches may be to accelerate and multiply a wide variety of non-formal models of in-service theological training to millions of untrained Pentecostal and charismatic type churches leaders in Africa. This aspect of theological training should be seen as completing the great commission of Matthew 28:19 (teaching them to obey all things). This can help Pentecostal and charismatic type churches to obtain a more holistic biblical approach in their ministry of the gospel.

## Conclusion

The rise, growth and influence of Pentecostalism are enormous in most parts of the world, and its impact is also felt amongst evangelical reformed churches. As to how best one can minister effectively in the context of Pentecostalism in Africa, a solution may be to create tension that is paradoxically placed, namely: (1) the temptation to embrace Pentecostalism because of all the positive elements that it brings to church revitalisation; and (2) the call to assess this movement and point out all its pitfalls in the light of the scriptures. The latter is more important if we want to remain true to the reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*.

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