

Power-Purity Pneumatology for African Pentecostalism

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Abstract

Africa once again occupies a strategic place in the history of Christianity as one of its chief centres when the religion is somewhat receding in the West. This development is reminiscent of the pivotal role the continent had earlier played in the formative years of Christianity. Historical records show that places such as Alexandria, Carthage, Hippo and Ethiopia produced prominent Christian theologians of that time. As Christianity today grows in Africa, there is a noticeable increase in the influence of African Pentecostalism that is shaping African Christianity. However, the current growth of African Christianity has yet to translate into the widespread and holistic significance it exerted in the early centuries, as African Christianity still attracts the stereotype of being “a mile wide, but only one inch deep”. Therefore, this paper employs historical analysis to present a power-purity pneumatology to reinvigorate African Pentecostalism and, in turn, impact African Christianity generally.

Introduction

Studies have duly recognised that Christianity's centre of gravity has shifted to the global South, with Africa, Asia, Latin, and Oceania as new centres (Oden 2010:10; Daugherty 2013:13). The shift is due to the remarkable growth of Christianity in these new centres, which had smaller Christian populations at the turn of the twentieth century. As Gonzalez (2002:9) puts it, “A hundred years ago, there were less than 10 million Christians in Africa, less than 22

million in Asia, and some 5 million in Oceania; now those numbers have risen to 360 million, 312 million, and 22 million respectively". The trend is expected to continue, with the number of African Christians projected to grow around 2.5 per cent annually, which by 2025 would double the continent's Christian population, reaching almost a billion adherents (Jenkins 2011:2). It is unarguable that African Pentecostalism (a collection of diverse movements that acknowledge the centrality and gifts of the Holy Spirit but also incorporates indigenous elements from African religion and culture [Biri 2013:37] has played a significant role in stimulating the growth of Christianity in Africa.

Integrating African beliefs and rituals has made African Pentecostalism attractive and acceptable to many African Christians across various denominations, including the mission churches which have adopted Pentecostal practices such as loud and rigorous prayer, deliverance, prolonged singing, clapping, prophecy, "seed-sowing", testimonies, and visible participation in public spaces. However, African Pentecostalism also rejects some aspects of the African beliefs and rituals. Sometimes it positions itself as a vanguard to liberate those oppressed by certain beliefs and ritual practices prevalent in traditional religions. As such, there are both continuities and discontinuities in its integration of African beliefs and rituals (Anderson 2020:273).

Judging by the current reality, African Pentecostalism will likely continue to shape African Christianity in the foreseeable future. The growing influence of African Pentecostalism has made it the face of African Christianity. As Togarasei (2024:157) correctly observes, "Pentecostalism seems to be the most influential form of Christianity and responsible for the public expression of Christianity in Africa". Despite its influence on the growth of African Christianity, African Pentecostalism betrays some noticeable weaknesses that require some treatment to reposition it for a more significant impact. It is, therefore, imperative to channel concerted efforts towards strengthening African Pentecostalism by refining its theology, which drives its spirituality and practices. Since Pentecostalism prides itself on being a movement of the Spirit, it is helpful to direct efforts to its theology of the Spirit (pneumatology).

Wariboko and Afolayan (2020:6) mention four approaches to interpreting Pentecostalism: those who interpret Pentecostalism through its most substantial theological perspective (e.g. Amos Young and Frank Macchia); those who read it through its theoretically most accessible point (e.g. Ruth Marshall and Nimi Wariboko); those who interpret it at its contextually most engaged corner (e.g. Matthews Ojo and Allan Anderson); and the newer approach that cuts diagonally through the three other approaches, represented by J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. This paper falls within the first approach as it draws, on the one hand, from the biblical text, particularly the perspectives on the Holy Spirit found in the writings of Paul and Luke, and, on the other hand, from the African spirituality of power and purity. Paul and Luke are significant because their perspectives form the bulk of pneumatology in the New Testament. Their emphases are connected and complementary rather than mutually exclusive. It must be admitted that Pentecostalism in Africa differs from one region to another. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe some common experiences and practices among Pentecostals across the continent, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Brief History and Growth of African Pentecostalism

Pentecostal studies initially traced the roots of Pentecostalism to the North American event of Azusa Street, Los Angeles, in 1906-1913. However, it has recently been recognised that there were diverse points of origin worldwide, drawing from diverse ecclesial and theological traditions before and after the Azusa Street revival (Lord 2018:225). Recognising the diverse origins of Pentecostalism lends credence to the claim that Africa already had indigenous Pentecostals before western Pentecostal missions came to Africa (Kalu 2008:11-13). Beginning in the early 1900s, several charismatic revivalist leaders in different parts of Africa founded new “churches of the Spirit”, differently called “Spirit,” “Spiritual,” “Zion,” “Apostolic,” “Aladura,” “Roho” and so on, which were more religious in motivation and origin, and seldom shared the overtly political and reactionary stance of the earlier independent churches (Anderson 2015:56).

These charismatic revivalist leaders in different parts of Africa focused on religious and social needs rather than politics. Their churches experienced

manifestations of the Spirit, such as healings, prophecies, and influential preachers, that resonated with African worshippers. These charismatic leaders are sometimes called forerunners or pioneers of African Pentecostalism. William Wade Harris and Sampson Oppong of the Gold Coast (Ghana), Garrick Sokari Braide and Joseph Ayo Babalola of Nigeria, Samuel Mutendi of Zimbabwe, Simon Kimbugu of the Belgian Congo, Alice Lenshina of Zambia, John Chilembwe of Central Africa, and Isaiah Shembe of South Africa belong to this category (Omenyo 2014:133-134).

As noted earlier, there are many diverse groups of churches within African Pentecostalism, and it is pertinent to observe the difficulty in categorising them because their evolution, types, and characteristics vary in different regions. This reality often poses a classification challenge to scholars, resulting in different classifications (Togarasei 2024:151, 157). Attention to periodisation is one way to mitigate the difficulty of categorising churches within African Pentecostalism. Anderson (2015:65-67) identifies different types of African Pentecostalism: African independent “Spirit” churches, classic Pentecostals, older church charismatics, and neo-Pentecostal and neo-charismatic churches. Asproulis and Devenish (2020:89) mention three waves of African Pentecostalism: classic Pentecostalism, African Independent Churches (AICs), and Charismatic movements. Omenyo and Atiemo (2006:55-68) identify the following streams of African Pentecostalism: the African Instituted Churches (AICs) or *Aladura* churches, the classical Pentecostal movements (e.g. Assemblies of God, the Apostolic Faith Mission and others), trans-denominational fellowship (e.g. Full Business Men’s Fellowship International, Women Aglow Fellowship International and others), charismatic renewal groups in the mainline churches, independent neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches and ministries started by local initiatives, and neo-prophetism, the latest form of Pentecostal movements, which is an amalgamation of forms of ministries of the AICs and neo-Pentecostal churches. However, it is pertinent to state that researchers writing on individual churches within African Pentecostalism should pay close attention to how these churches prefer to identify themselves to clarify the classification issue further.

Although the growth and popularity of African Pentecostalism results from several factors, including the African worldview and existential experience, one significant impetus for the rise of African Pentecostalism is the failure of

missionary Christianity to speak to the African soul and its realities because it did not understand African culture. Thus, it may be correct to assert that African Pentecostalism primarily emerged as a response to the failings of missionary Christianity, which often conveyed teachings irrelevant to African customs. Anderson (2001:28-29) explains that the missionaries were not prepared to concede any parallel between African society and biblical faith and thus stifled any African attempts to express Christianity in a way other than missionary Christianity. African charismatic/spirit-movement leaders championed the African expression of Christianity by emphasising the connection between the realities of the Bible and African cultures. As a result, the indigenous approach of incorporating elements from indigenous religions led to the growth of African Pentecostalism and created a unique religious experience reflecting the continent's cultural and spiritual landscape (Kalu 2008:2). While acknowledging that many scholars see the emergence of Spirit-type churches as a reaction, Anderson (2015:65) posits that it is better to construe the expansion of African Pentecostalism as the spread of pertinent biblical messages and African interpretations rather than a hostile response to Western missionary efforts and colonialism.

Reflecting on the current state of Pentecostalism generally will help us appreciate its evolution over the last century. Standard descriptions of Pentecostalism emphasise the experience of the Spirit and spiritual gifts. Initially, Pentecostals held the doctrine of subsequence, that is, the Spirit-baptism of believers is a distinct experience after conversion. However, recently, they no longer hold firmly the doctrine of subsequence. Instead, they emphasise the experience of Spirit-baptism, which may coincide with conversion or come later. Stronstad (2019:3) notes that three distinctives marked classic Pentecostalism: the conviction that the contemporary experience should be identical to that of apostolic Christianity, the separation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit from sanctification, and that tongues-speaking is indisputable evidence or proof of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Stronstad's characteristic traits are present in African Pentecostalism but a detailed observation reveals that the typical features of African Pentecostalism also include an emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongue, the use of spiritual gifts, divine/faith healing, deliverance theology, prosperity gospel, a literal hermeneutic, and a "name it and claim it" theology (Sande 2023:n.p.).

Sketching A Power-Purity Pneumatology for African Pentecostalism

Old Testament Background

In sketching a power-purity pneumatology for African Pentecostalism, this paper considers Paul's and Luke's thoughts on the Holy Spirit in the context of the African worldview of power and purity. However, it is instructive to note that the Old Testament provides a background for Paul's and Luke's understandings of the Spirit. Therefore, a brief Old Testament background is necessary. The Old Testament uses symbols, images, metaphors, and stories to describe the Spirit and its activities. The Hebrew term *ruach* and the Greek *pneuma* carry similar meanings of breath, air, wind, or spirit. The Spirit is the life force and the power that enables humans to perform the supernatural (Dunbar 2009:26). The *ruach* also operated as a charismatic power that came upon individuals in the Old Testament (Judg. 14:6; Isa. 6:34) to equip them for mighty works, releasing them from threatening forces, and giving them prophetic visions (Exod. 31:3; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 14:6; 1 Sam. 16:13; Prov. 8:22-31; Isa. 11:1-8; 32:15-20; 42:1-4; 49:1-6; Ezek. 3:12; 8:3; 11:1, 19; 18:31; 36:36; 37:1-14; Dan. 6:3; Joel 2:28-32; Dunbar 2009:26).

The Spirit's activities in the Old Testament encompass creation, prophecy, and God's presence. It is involved in the creation of the world, giving life to animals and humankind (Gen. 1:2; 2:7; Job 33:4; Pss. 33:6; 104:29-30; Isa. 34:16; Parker 1988:316; Eichrodt 1979:47-48). The Spirit also inspired prophecy, serving as the source of prophetic activity (Numb. 24:2; 2 Sam. 23:2; Isa. 61:1-4; Ezek. 2:2; Mic. 3:8; Turner 1996:6). The Old Testament also highlighted the Spirit's connection to the Messiah as the messianic figure is anointed and empowered by the Spirit of God (Isa 11:1-8; 42:1-4; 49:1-6), and the Spirit heals and restores God's people (Ezek 18:31). In the Old Testament the Spirit is also equated with God's presence, representing his presence among his people. In Isaiah 63:10-14, the author equates God's presence with God's Spirit (Fee 1994:909). The Spirit's activities and presence are significant themes in the Old Testament, laying the foundation for understanding the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

Nevertheless, the Old Testament also promises a new and broader outpouring of the Spirit in the future (Joel 2:28-32). Though powerful and influential, the Spirit's ministry was intermittent in the Old Testament, coming upon selected individuals to empower them for specific purposes. That would change to more comprehensive and continuous empowerment of the Spirit in the future, which would occur with the coming of the Messiah.

The Spirit in Luke

It is common for scholars to identify Luke's primary emphasis on the Spirit as empowering believers with inspired speech (tongues) to witness to Christ vis-à-vis the ethical or renewing function of the Spirit in Paul's writings (Shelton 2000:4-5, 157; Stronstad 2019:123). Johnson (2011:54) says, "Of all the New Testament writings, however, none so thoroughly develops the understanding of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of prophecy as does Luke-Acts." Luke associates the Spirit with tangible effects and ecstatic manifestations, indicating that such manifestations are expected where the Spirit is present. Also, scholars seem to have a fair consensus that Luke uniquely presents the Spirit in Old Testament and Judaistic terms (Kienzler 2015:26; Philip 2005:10). Luke understands the Old Testament perspective and Jewish concepts of God's presence, which empowers God's people to fulfil their divine purpose and carefully presents Jesus as a chief example of that. Thus, the Messiah's empowerment by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the good news of God's kingdom and heal the sick, exorcise the demon-possessed, and raise the dead are signs that the forces of evil are being defeated.

Luke explains that when Jesus ascended heaven, he received the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured it out on his disciples who were waiting in Jerusalem. By the outpouring of the Spirit, the disciples received power and the gifts of the Spirit to boldly proclaim the gospel and perform miracles. With the empowerment of the disciples, evil forces continue to be defeated. Peter's speech on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36, especially v. 33) and his speech at Cornelius' house (Acts 10:38) affirm God's generous empowerment through the Holy Spirit to God's Messiah, Jesus, and to those who believe in him. Mainville (2013:2, 26) stresses that Luke's pneumatological discourse has its originality in Acts 2:33 and that the significance of its content holds the key to interpreting Luke's pneumatology. Significantly, Luke shows that the empowerment of the disciples, which began on the Day of Pentecost, fulfils the

Old Testament prophecy of Joel (2:28-29), emphasising the Holy Spirit's broader role in the new dispensation occasioned by the Jesus event. In Peter's Pentecost speech (Acts 2:33), Luke presents the Spirit as being released at the insistence of the exalted Jesus. Therefore, the Holy Spirit in Luke is the "life and causal principle, which inaugurated and advanced the people of God" (Binz 2016:39). It is crucial that Luke connected the Spirit with the activities of Jesus when he was on earth and after he ascended (Storm 2014:14). There was nothing meaningful the apostles and the nascent group of believers could do without the Spirit's involvement, direction, and empowerment. The Spirit inspired disciples to speak God's words and proclaim the Christ event that they had witnessed first-hand.

Although the prophetic role of the Spirit is evident in Luke's writings, the ethical (purifying/cleansing) dimension of the Spirit is also present, though implicitly. However, this point has been neglected by many to accentuate the prophetic and miraculous role of the Spirit in Luke, probably to set Luke against Paul and vice-versa. A key contribution of this paper is that while Luke comes off as emphasising the Spirit's prophetic empowerment of the believers for witness through inspired speech and the miraculous, scrutiny reveals that the ethical function of the Spirit is also part of Luke's outlook. It will suffice here to cite two evidences for the purifying role of the Spirit in Luke. The first is from Luke's purpose. Luke states that he wrote in his gospel about "all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1), which may imply that in his second volume (Acts), Luke writes about what Jesus continues to do through his faithful disciples (Marshall 2008:20).

The Spirit's descent on the disciples empowered them to serve as witnesses to what Jesus had taught, including his resurrection and ascension. The witnessing or proclamation of Jesus by the disciples would require them to prove through their speech and behaviour (lifestyle) how Jesus had lived his holy life, exercised the power of the Spirit to establish the kingdom of God and deliver people from the forces of darkness, and taught people about God's kingdom. Thus, Jesus' statement that the Spirit would empower them to become his witnesses includes enabling them to replicate Jesus' holy living. Interpreters agree that Luke has a special use of the word "martyr" in that he shows that witness concerning Jesus can only be given "if the meaning of the facts is appreciated, so that the witness takes the form of believing, evangelistic

confession”, implying that Jesus’ witnesses to the fact of his life have lived through them, understood them, and accepted them (Strathmann 1985:567). The second evidence comes from the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Luke’s inclusion of the story reveals his understanding of the Spirit cleansing God’s people. Since the Spirit’s descent on Pentecost Day, he has been the divine presence that dwells among God’s people and is the source of their lives and holiness (Kienzler 2015:116).

The Spirit in Paul

Paul is regarded as deserving more than other New Testament writers, the title, “the theologian of the Spirit” because of his prominent use of the term *pneuma*, which far exceeds that of the Old Testament and the rest of the New Testament, and the profound implication the term has to his theology and mission (Philip 2005:1). Although opinions differ among scholars regarding the origins and development of Paul’s pneumatology, many accept that Paul’s sources include Hellenistic, Jewish, and early Christian traditions. However, Paul’s Damascus Road experience transformed all these sources. Philip (2005:25) correctly asserts that Paul’s pneumatology begins with his conviction that he was called and commissioned to preach to the Gentiles and that God has given the Spirit to the Gentiles. Paul knew that that revelation could come apart from the Torah. Paul’s understanding of the Holy Spirit is broader because he sees the Spirit’s influence encompassing various aspects of life, including Spirit Christology, charismatic gifting, illumination, divine revelation, and moral transformation. Also, interpreters often observe that Paul’s pneumatological emphasis is on the Spirit’s role in the believer’s conversion, his status in Christ, and the ethical renewal of the believer in Christ. That means that Paul’s main emphasis was that the Spirit is God’s presence and effective power in the believer, which controls him to obey God. That is to say, the Spirit actively empowers believers for righteous living (Raben 2013:2, 171). While such an assertion may be correct, it must not be overstated to lose the fact that other emphases or nuances are also present in Paul’s pneumatology.

Paul speaks of the indwelling Spirit as the mediator of God’s presence and moral character in the believer’s life. The arrival of the Spirit in conjunction with the Jesus event and exaltation is evidence of God’s renewed presence among his people, the new or restored Israel (Eph. 1:13; Gal. 3:14). As Fee (2000:99) rightly comments, the coming of the Spirit meant that the New

Covenant promises of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, where God's Spirit would indwell his people's hearts and cause them to obey, had been fulfilled. Similarly, the coming of the Spirit indicates that Joel's prophecy about the pouring of the Spirit on all God's people (old and young, men and women, slave and free) so they would function as prophets had been fulfilled.

As noted earlier, the ethical emphasis on the Spirit's role in the believer is not the only teaching of Paul's pneumatology. Paul's robust treatment of the Spirit's role includes the miraculous empowerment of believers. We find that Paul's writings reference the Spirit's ethical and prophetic roles as he uses various metaphors to help unpack God's Spirit, which is pervasive in his theology. As such, *pneuma* in Paul's writings does not offer itself to a uniform description, even though his communities were familiar with the Spirit. Thus, "the Spirit is spoken of as the cause or vehicle of the effects of God's saving activity, like joy (1 Thess 1:6), the various charisms (1 Cor 12:3-11), and prayer and song (1 Cor 14:2, 13-15)" (Maloney 2014:78). Twelftree (2019:137) usefully explains that Paul often use the words Spirit and power together in the context of the Spirit being responsible for unusual or miraculous activity. He notes that Paul's inclusion of the Spirit, in his expression "Spirit and power" in 1 Corinthians 2:4, rather than simply saying power, draws attention to the divine origin of the miracles. Therefore, it is correct to say that the Spirit in Paul's writing empowers believers for purity and power.

Power and Purity in African Spirituality

Paris (1995:22) explains, "The spirituality of a people refers to the animating and integrative power that constitute the principal frame of meaning for individual and collective experiences". The African concept of spirits includes God, lesser deities, ancestors, and evil spirits. God is the highest spirit-being and creator with absolute will and power over all creation. The concept recognises that the spiritual and the natural are intertwined, a recognition that spirits and spiritual forces do not exist exclusively outside the natural. Thus, for Africans, life, in its entirety, is wrapped up with the spiritual in view. Because the spiritual pervades the material, it leaves the material agencies with little or no control over events (Owusu-Gyamfi 2023:4). Mbiti (2015:42) mentions that Africans believe that there is power in the universe whose ultimate is God. It is

a mystical power because it is hidden and mysterious. Spirits and some human beings have access to this power. Those with this power can sometimes see extraordinary things and perform wonders. This belief in the spirits places on every person the necessity to access and rely on the spiritual for a meaningful and successful life in the material world. It means that the spiritual realm is where power resides, and people will always need to connect to it to draw power to overcome challenges in their daily endeavours. Good spirits give fortunes to the people. People need their power and protection against the malevolent forces of witchcraft and sorcerers. This African concept of the spirits is compatible with the biblical perspective of spirits as both affirm the existence of good and evil spirits having powers to influence happenings in the material world. Both also recognise that God is the supreme Spirit who gives the power to defeat all forces of darkness. The connection between the biblical and African worldviews makes it easy for African Pentecostalism to promote the power of the Holy Spirit in delivering people from demonic oppression, healing from sickness, and giving divine favour and security. The notion within the African concept that power is neutral until one decides how to use it seems to alert every African not to be indifferent to it because some, like witches and sorcerers, may use it negatively (Olupona 2014:52).

The African concept of purity connects closely to the belief in the existence of God, the supreme being and creator of the universe. God is holy, and holiness accounts for his transcendence, which warrants using intermediaries, including divinities and ancestors who also uphold purity and demand the same from worshippers. This belief explains the abundance of strict rules of purity imposed on everyone involved in performing rituals directed to God as one of the most striking aspects of African worship. Undeniably, the traditional African religion abounds with rites of purification and prohibitions regarding the rules of cleanliness (Nkulu-N'sengha 2009:289). Some commentators attempt to distinguish between classic Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals, claiming that the former focuses on holiness and purity while the latter emphasises healing, deliverance, wealth, and prosperity (Nyanni 2020:n.p.). But the current reality blurs any such demarcation to a great extent. It is, therefore, imperative to accentuate both purity and holiness in the work of the Spirit.

Implications of the Power-Purity Pneumatology

This paper's presentation of a power-purity theology has significant implications for beliefs and practices within African Pentecostalism. Thus, this section highlights how the insights of the paper's proposal can influence and contribute to African Pentecostalism. Some selected key areas that the study will impact are discussed below.

Prosperity gospel

Nel (2020:75, 76, 180) has traced the popularity of Africans' prevailing interest in the prosperity gospel to the American prosperity teachers' influence through their creative use of the media to reach their worldwide audience, African worldview and traditional religion, and the desire to prosper in an impoverished postcolonial Africa. However, the conceptualisation of the prosperity gospel and its practice by many of its protagonists seems faulty. The faulty aspects of the theology in theory and practice include cherry-picking verses of Scriptures without holistic consideration of biblical text to satisfy the quest for material wealth, making wealth acquisition the central goal of the Gospel, and using whatever means available to enrich themselves, including preachers extorting members. The prosperity gospel is not declining in Africa because it promises to deliver religious adherents from poverty, sickness and oppression in the face of poor and harsh socioeconomic conditions. It is no exaggeration to say that the prosperity gospel in Africa promotes the extortion of worshippers through various commercialisation methods. The commercialisation of worship plays out in many ways by imbuing spiritual experience with various business venture ideas such as parishioners buying forms at exorbitant prices to gain access to the pastor, selling specialised anointing/healing oil, handkerchiefs, customised factory-made clothes for different age groups. Abimbola (2020:207) notes that Nigerian Pentecostalism "provides the entrepreneurial acknowledgement and theorisation of the profound impact of capital on Nigerian religious imagination". The concerning part of this phenomenon is that mainline churches have imbibed this commercialisation malady.

Nevertheless, some commentators opine that the prosperity gospel is not without its positive impacts. Togarasei (2024:154-155) contends that the

prosperity gospel contributes to poverty alleviation in Africa, gives economic and social relevance to Christianity against early Pentecostalism's lack of social conscience, and serves as a postcolonial challenge to the missionaries who hypocritically preached to Africans that "our home is in heaven" while they, the missionaries, amassed land and other earthly treasures.

Because the idea of prosperity is biblical, the prosperity gospel should not be tossed away; correcting its flaws and purging its unholy desires needs to be done. Here lies the implication of a power-purity theology, which can ensure that prosperity is sought holistically in tandem with the teachings of the Bible. Such a theology will correct the aberration of isolating prosperity as a stand-alone concept from the rest of the canon. This theology can help keep Christians focused on their need for holiness and sanctification, which will dissuade them from greed and corruption. The same Holy Spirit who gives believers the power to speak in tongues and cast out demons also empowers them to cleanse themselves or be cleansed from sinful acts that weigh them down. Also, power-purity pneumatology recognises prosperity in spiritual wealth, which is visible in godly character, because perseverance in suffering on account of righteousness or doing God's will is part of biblical prosperity.

Overemphasis on Individual Experiences

Pentecostalism, generally, including the African brand, is known for its recognition of the believers' experience in appropriating the move and power of God in human affairs. Nel (2020:39) remarks that the reality of God for Africans is a given because they believe God is an integral part of their daily lives. So, African Pentecostals have appropriated beliefs about God regarding the Jesus event bringing regeneration and the promise of eternal life, and other spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues and deliverance from the forces of evil. Nel (2020:39) adds, "In African spirituality, the living God authenticates God's power and presence in signs and wonders, especially healing". It may be correct to assert that experiencing God in these diverse dimensions with some tangible results has made African Pentecostals more comfortable with speech/orality in its various forms (testimony, story, song, preaching, praise, and speaking in unknown tongues) than with definition, concept, thesis system, philosophy and methodology that dominate scholarly enterprises. Nevertheless, such an apparent anti-intellectualism may be mitigated by the claim that Pentecostals do not outrightly discard the rational pursuit of

meaning, but they question the dominance of reason alone as a proper and sufficient instrument for the discernment of truth (Vondey 2012:140).

No doubt, African Pentecostals have robustly harnessed this feature of Pentecostalism since they place considerable attention and emphasis on the believers' experience, which is gained through various activities, including dreams, trances, singing, dance, prophesy, and prayer. As such, African Pentecostalism is regarded as having an embodied theology that combines the word of God and the lived experiences of the believers (Kgatlle 2023:142). However, African Pentecostalism's over-dependence on this experiential phenomenon to the detriment of sound biblical precepts creates much confusion and doubt about its many practices. Overemphasis or over-reliance on the experiences of individual believers to show God's workings downplays the need to weigh such experiences against the rule and will of God as revealed in the Scripture. Notably, the desire for holiness in power-purity pneumatology will enhance the willingness to check if individual or collective experiences fit the truth of the Scripture before making an experience a standard belief or faith practice.

“Bogus” miracles and prophecies

One of the critical characteristics of Pentecostals generally is the belief that the miraculous interventions in the Bible have not ceased and are repeatable in the contemporary period. They contend that the decrease in the miraculous results from the “unwillingness of believers to accept their validity and to facilitate their operation” (Warrington 2008:70). However, fake miracles by Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal preachers in Africa, projected on their church-owned televisions and social media platforms, pose a severe challenge to the positive impact and image of Christianity in Africa. Ademiluka (2023:179) avers that the quest for miracles among Nigerian Christians has become a social menace as many have fallen victim to fake miracle workers. Describing the situation in Zimbabwe, Gunda and Machingura (2013:16-17) state how prophets Emmanuel Makandiwa of the United Family International Church and Uebert Angel of the Spirit Embassy respectively would claim to have the spiritual wherewithal to make their members experience miracle money in their pockets and bank accounts and facilitate quick conception and delivery of a baby within three days. Vengeyi (2013:65) expatiates on such strange miracles, including claims of healing HIV/AIDS cancer, causing instant weight

loss of up to 30 kgs, raising the dead, and calling house, identity, and car registration numbers of worshippers during church services.

Such scenarios are not restricted to southern Africa as West African prophets such as the late T. B. Joshua of the Synagogue of All Nations and Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy, both in Nigeria, had set some examples of displaying “miracles” through a visual and aestheticised performance before worshippers, which is televised to a broader audience nationally and beyond. Two decades ago, Oyakhilome’s televised miracles tagged “Atmosphere of Miracles” (ATM), projected on the Nigerian Television Authority and other stations, were banned by the National Broadcasting Commission because such miracles were unverified and were damaging to the health of the citizenry. Until the ban, the miracle program was a daily show on about twenty television stations. “The ban did not stop Oyakhilome from keeping his slots on the air, replacing the ATM with Teaching Programme and LoveWorld. The ATM also continued to run twice a week on Ghana’s Metro TV and throughout the week on LoveWorld Christian Network, a satellite channel owned by Oyakhilome. It also runs on TBN in South Africa” (Nlobalnews, 2012).

A power-purity pneumatology implies that since the work of the Spirit is to edify believers, expand God’s kingdom, and glorify God, seeking to stage miracles is unholy, ungodly, and an attempt to glorify Satan and the human ego, all of which are contrary to the Scripture. The point to stress is that while African Pentecostal preachers and believers should recognise that while the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to perform healing and related miracles when he so wishes, the need to be purity-conscious will restrain preachers from staged or fake miracles that glorify themselves and the kingdom of Satan.

Lack of Formal Theological Education for African Pentecostal Preachers

This paper shows the significance of doing theology to strengthen faith and practices that align with the Bible. The corollary of the study is that African Pentecostal preachers need to embrace sound and relevant theology to help them study Scripture correctly and articulate their perspectives. This path of theological enterprise has already taken root among Western Pentecostals. However, in Africa, from its beginning until now, Pentecostal and charismatic leaders have usually emerged with little or no formal theological training. All they needed was to believe the Bible, declare God’s counsel, and see God

practically intervening in the spiritual and social needs of the people to whom they minister. Commenting on the contemporary Nigerian context, Abimbola (2020:202) says, “There are no clear, firm distinctive structures and doctrinal espousers that broadly define what Nigerian Pentecostalism is or not because it is difficult to define what should normatively qualify as Nigerian Pentecostalism”. Asproulis and Devenish’s (2020:88) remark presses the point further that Pentecostalism in Africa, especially southern Africa, lacks theological training, resulting in a lack of literature that expresses African Pentecostal theology and missiology written by Africans except some handful of biographical and hagiographical writings, thereby relying on the thought-processes of outsiders (non-Africans or Africans raised in the West). Many commentators state that an anti-intellectual bias against theological education characterised early Pentecostals. The focus on experience by the Pentecostals is capable of producing “a faith that is anti-intellectual, ignores sound hermeneutical principles for biblical interpretation, and can be overtly emotional” (First 2019:36).

While there has been some significant change among Western Pentecostals in embracing theological analysis and presentation, such cannot be said about African Pentecostalism. It is a common trend that most Pentecostal leaders emerge as pastors of their congregations without prior theological education. In Nigerian, though many neo-Pentecostal pastors (including W. F. Kumuyi of the Deeper Life Bible Church, Enoch Adejare Adeboye of the Redeemed Church of God (RCCG), David Oyedepo of the Living Faith Worldwide, D.K. Olukoya of the Mountain of Fire and Prayer Ministry) have a university education up to a terminal degree, they did not have formal theological education when they started as pastors of their churches. They followed the preaching and practices of some famous American Pentecostal and prosperity preachers they considered mentors. It was a quick fix for these leaders without specialised knowledge of theology. That route also appealed to them because most of the existing mainline or mission churches believed to be anti-spiritual, suppressing the revival of God’s move and power happening through them, and the Scriptures already set an example. Not only that, the mainline churches in Africa at that time, due to the influence of Western theology, were denying African realities such as witchcraft, a position which made Pentecostal and charismatic leaders query the benefit of formal theological training for effective pastoral leadership.

However, the trend seems to be changing as virtually all the mega Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have established Bible colleges to train pastoral and ministerial leadership. Kalu's (2008:25) report refers to this development when he mentions that a master's degree program designed for church pastors at the West African Theological Seminary, Lagos, witnessed many more bishops than the number expected came from Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Kenya. Nevertheless, compared to the mission churches, theological training of Pentecostal and charismatic leaders in Africa has largely remained minimal, done within a short period and focusing on the experiential, not minding whether or not certain practices conform with the teachings and principles of the New Testament for the people of God. The lack of formal theological education for pastors is grim even today.

On the other hand, while pastors in the mission/mainline churches always get formal theological, their assimilation of Western anti-supernatural stance to the Bible, occasioned by overemphasis on rationalism in Western theology, has made their preaching ineffective and validates the suspicion of Pentecostals. Perhaps this is because theological education in the mission theological schools over a considerable time has maintained the contents or curricula bequeathed to them by their missionary-founders centuries earlier. The theological colleges or seminaries have primarily remained as tailored by their Western missionaries and have done little to nothing to review their curricula to reflect African perspectives, which are in tandem with the Bible. Thus, theological education for pastoral leadership continues to suffer and is yet to be fully appreciated by many pastors. Willson (2023) says the global scene is also arresting: 85 per cent of the world's pastors have no formal theological training, yet hundreds of thousands preach every Sunday without adequate resources and training for many worshippers globally.

Conclusion

This study has argued that formulating theology to strengthen African Pentecostalism is a helpful task that scholars should consider seriously because more work needs to be done. That is the way to go now, considering the massive influence of African Pentecostalism on African Christianity. This paper's specific contribution is the proposal of the power-purity pneumatology

derived from Paul and Luke's perspectives and the perspective of power and purity in African spirituality. The power-purity theology stresses that the same Holy Spirit is God's agent of equipping believers for power/prophetic manifestations and holy living as they bear witness to Jesus Christ in their respective communities. Such a theology is biblically sound and contextually relevant, and it can make a total Christian manifest the gifts and fruit of the Spirit in a manner that transforms the individual believer and his community. It is hoped that such a balanced perspective can help African Pentecostalism to be biblically sound and contextually relevant.

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