

Money matters in Pentecostal circles

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Abstract

This article focuses on a number of different but interrelated issues concerning Pentecostalism. Noteworthy, in terms of money matters, are references to the fact that Pentecostalism started among mostly poor people. However, it is clear that right from the start the Movement grew phenomenally in terms of adherents and in its ability to acquire large sums of money. Gradually the Movement also gained respect among people from other levels of society. These developments caused changes in the way money matters were dealt with. A new theology – not accepted by all Pentecostals – was developed. Within some variations of the "Prosperity Gospel", God's blessings as well as success in life are measured along monetary lines. This article tries to explore these developments. It also refers to a research report on the importance of the money power of Pentecostals in South Africa, showing how this Movement has become an important factor in the lives of millions of South Africans. Specific references are made to the financial buying power of Pentecostals and the megachurch buildings that are being erected at present. At the end, comments are presented on how new theologies closely related to money issues will influence Pentecostalism as well as other churches theologically and in practical terms in the future.

Humble beginnings

For the purposes of this article, it is important to remember the generally accepted notion that the modern Pentecostal Movement originally started among poor people. Lederle (2010:1) refers to the "ragtag groups of parishioners" who experienced remarkable manifestations of the Spirit in Los

Angeles during April 1906.¹ They renovated an old livery stable in order to have a place for their meetings. Synan (1997:97) also mentions this building, saying that it was an old, abandoned African Methodist Episcopal Church building at 312 Azusa Street, which was secured. The building was the first black Methodist church building constructed in the city. It was located in a downtown business section and had most recently been used as a combined tenement house and livery stable. By 1906, the old two-storey building was a shambles. The windows and doors were broken and debris littered the floor, but in many ways it was ideal as a meeting place. It was far from residential areas and could be used for the all-night gatherings that characterised the early Pentecostals. It also had the rough-hewn atmosphere of the camp meetings that Holiness people had grown accustomed to. Another advantage of the “Azusa Stable” was that the poorest of the lower classes could come to it and not be intimidated by the stained-glass trappings of traditional churches. Synan (1997:93,96) further refers to the leader of the Movement by saying that in 1905, Seymore was a poverty-stricken southern black with one eye damaged by smallpox. On his arrival in Los Angeles (February 1906), he had nowhere to stay as he had no money for lodging. Hollenweger (1999:40) says that Seymore was born the son of former slaves from Centerville, Louisiana. Seymore and others around him suffered bitterly. Innumerable brutalities took place around him, many of them instigated by Christians.

Although the Azusa Street phenomenon is very important in terms of the early development of Pentecostalism in many parts of the world, one should also take into account that Anderson (2004:9–14) has indicated that there are biases in Pentecostal history, that myths have developed around the concept of Azusa Street but also that there were many “Jerusalems” (Anderson 2004:15) all over the world – many of which actually preceded the events in North America or were independent of them. It should be noted that what was described above, in terms of poor and lower class people and small buildings, also applied to these other beginnings in other parts of the world. For instance, Anderson (2004:16) refers to the notion that in China, Pentecostalism has accelerated in terms of the development of “indigenous churches” – thus, poor people – particularly because Pentecostals were closer to the “traditional folk religiosity” with its “lively sense of the supernatural” than other churches were.

Whatever the origins of Pentecostalism were, it soon became very clear that a missionary zeal developed, partly based on the belief that a worldwide revival had started. Some of the implications were that missionaries would go out to every corner of the world to proclaim the news.

¹ Cf. Synan (1997:97–106) for what happened during the 1906–1909 Azusa Street revival. Cf also Burger (1987:72–82), who discussed the early beginnings with references to the initial development of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

Synan (1997:129–142) describes some of the earliest developments along these lines in a chapter entitled “Missionaries of the one way ticket”. With almost no money and no resources at their disposal, these people wanted to share with others what God had done to them.

New faces of Pentecostalism

Many changes have occurred within Pentecostalism since those early beginnings with its non-racial and ecumenical origins and its interracial fellowship (cf. Anderson 2004:19). For instance, the missionaries did go to many parts of the world and a whole plethora of denominations, churches and groups have started to develop – at first among poor and marginalised groups. However, quite a number of changes have occurred during the last hundred years. It is understandable that money played a major role in these processes. Although it would be impossible to describe in detail the use of and attitudes towards the use of material things, it would be beneficial to look at some of the major trends and the theologies that accompanied the changes.

In order to explore the topic, three different but closely related issues will be investigated: (1) the growth of the Pentecostal Movement, (2) the “Prosperity Gospel” and (3) a research project on the role and influence of money in Pentecostal circles in South Africa.

Number of adherents

Researchers have shown staggering figures indicating phenomenal numerical growth during the previous century. Furthermore, predicted future trends in this regard make for interesting reading.

In his discussion of the global picture of Pentecostalism, Anderson (1999:19) says that the Pentecostal movement had made an enormous impact on the shape of world Christianity by the close of the twentieth century. He also quotes the well-known statistician of Christianity, David Barrett,² who estimated that there were an estimated 74 million “Pentecostals/Charismatics” or 6% of the worlds Christian population in 1970. However, Barrett revised his figures 27 years later (in 1997) by indicating that this figure had reached 497 million or 27% of the Christian population. This means that by then there were more Pentecostals than the total number of Protestants and Anglicans combined. Anderson (1999:19) refers to two of these reports. In the last one, Barrett projects that according to trends the figure of Pentecostals is likely to rise to 1 140 million or 44% of the total number of Christians by 2025. According to Anderson (1999:19), “Pentecostalism is

² Cf. DB Barrett. Noteworthy in this respect is also DB Barrett's *Annual statistical table on global mission* published by the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*.

therefore fast becoming the dominant expression of Christianity and one of the most extraordinary religious phenomena in the world of any time.” The same sentiment is echoed by Synan (1997:279–298) in his discussion of Barrett’s tables as well as by data gathered from other sources.

Large congregations, many denominations and new networks

In his 1997 publication Synan (1997:287) also points out that the Pentecostals have excelled in producing the world’s largest “megachurches”, and lists the five largest local congregations in the world with a membership that varies between 85 000 and 700 000. At that stage the worship attendance of the Yoido Full Gospel Church was 240 000 per week. At present, this particular local church is still the largest, with a membership of about 1 million people.³ The Lakewood Church in Houston (USA), an interdenominational church with Pentecostal roots, has about 47 000 members at present.⁴

It would be a big mistake to look at the numbers of only the megachurches, or gigachurches as some of the bigger ones are called.

In recent years, the greatest quantitative growth of Pentecostalism has been in sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia, South Korea and especially in Latin America, where the growth has been so phenomenal that scholars are asking whether the whole continent is turning Pentecostal (Anderson 1999:21).

An interesting observation by Anderson (1999:28) in this regard is that many, if not most, of the rapidly growing Christian churches in the Third World are Pentecostal, indigenous, and operate independently of western Pentecostalism.

Furthermore – and this deserves special attention – a large number of informal networks have developed alongside some formal denominations. Very often strong and gifted people, sometimes called “apostles”, “prophets”, “bishops”, “archbishops” or just “leaders of streams” or “leaders of ministries”, have also come to the fore. Examples of such groupings within the white and coloured Pentecostal communities in South Africa are those under the leadership of Ray McCauley,⁵ Fred Roberts,⁶ Johan Geysler

³ Wikipedia: Yoidu Full Gospel Church. Retrieved 20 June 2011

⁴ Wikipedia: Lakewood Church. Retrieved 20 June 2011

⁵ For instance, see the network of Rhema churches in the country as well as the network of individuals and groups related to the International Federation of Christian Churches <http://www.rhema.co.za/DisplayLink.aspx?group=About Us&name=IFCC>.

⁶ See the thesis by G James (James 2007): *And God said "Let there be charismatics in the city": a study into the practice and presence of a charismatic megachurch in the city of Durban*. The thesis focuses on the activities of Durban Christian Centre, led by Dr Roberts.

(Mosaic Church, Randburg), Allen Platt,⁷ Jacobus Brouwers (Jubilee Life Ministries, Cape Town) and so forth.⁸ Within the black community there are many more such groupings. If one includes the AICs in this category of Pentecostals, the list becomes endless. Very often this development is linked to the number of churches that leaders have under their direct influence or have planted personally or through their respective networks. Thus, it is not uncommon that leaders may tell one that they have planted ten or twenty or more churches and that they personally, or in one way or another, provide oversight to a huge number of pastors and churches. Thus it is fair to say that new kinds of denominations, to which pastors and congregations have different levels of loyalty, are developing at the moment. This is actually a very important trend within the religious landscape of South Africa and will definitely have an impact on the future tendencies in this and other countries.⁹

Since there is most often a strong emphasis – through preaching, teaching, written word, TV broadcasts and various other ways – on tithing, to the church and/or particularly to the leaders within these groups, one can only imagine what the financial implications are going to be in the long run. Examples of stories and rumours will be provided below.

Social transformation and prosperous Pentecostals

One other factor that needs our attention is the position of Pentecostals in society. Synan (1997:187) says that although they began as total outcasts, they were to gain a status of suspicious toleration, followed eventually by full acceptance by the community. The early history of the Pentecostals in society was in reality a story of mutual rejection. The Pentecostals rejected society because they believed it to be corrupt, wicked, hostile and hopelessly lost, while society rejected the Pentecostals because it believed them to be insanely fanatical, self-righteous, doctrinally mistaken and emotionally unstable. Referring to Pentecostals in the USA, Synan (1997:203) adds that the experience of the Pentecostals closely fulfilled the dictum of Ernst Troeltsch that “the really creative, church-forming religious movements are the work of the lower strata”.

⁷ The Doxa Deo group of churches has developed 17 campuses of which three are in London and one in Auckland, New Zealand. (Doxa Deo)

⁸ Not identical to these groups but often similar are the networks of Christian churches. A Google search on International Fellowship of Christian Churches or International Federation of Christian (International Federation of Christian Churches) gives an indication of how many churches and groups make use of these terms or form part of such groupings.

⁹ For similar developments in other countries see Anderson (1999:27–29). See also Peter Wagner's observation, quoted by Synan (1997:290–291), that there is a shift to a “post denominational” era for the churches, in the sense that some large evangelical and charismatic congregations seem to function outside the historic denominational networks.

The above could also apply to the white component of Pentecostals in South Africa, who since the 1940s have made a concerted effort to be accepted within higher social classes. Within the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, this development was led by Pastor Justus du Plessis (cf. Burger 1987:316–346, Van der Spuy 1985:154–165, Theron 1989:312–323)¹⁰. This change in thinking impacted on the liturgy of the church and eventually contributed to a schism in the church. However, it should also be noted that, since the start of the Neo-Pentecostal Movement and the Charismatic Movement, acceptance within the wider society has been much easier. For instance, see the processes of gradual acceptance of the Charismatic Movement within mainstream circles in a chapter entitled “From opposition to acceptance” by Quebedeaux (1983:193–210).

The growth of Pentecostal churches and the fact that many Pentecostals acquired unprecedented financial resources soon showed up in large and expensive church buildings. Pentecostals were increasingly seen in leadership positions in industry, business, finance and education. A number of them have become millionaires. They began to show up in places where they had not been seen before. There were even Pentecostals in the professions: for the first time, there were Pentecostal lawyers, medical doctors and university professors (Synan 1997:221–222).

Although it can be assumed that the same kind of social dynamic occurred within black Pentecostal circles, Anderson (1999b:89–107) shows how much more severe, painful and difficult it must have been for black Pentecostals to experience rejection, not only from white people in general but also from white Pentecostals.

To a certain extent the growth and development of Pentecostalism can be accounted for within the theories regarding cultural transformation and development. However, the one aspect that is attracting more and more attention is related to the issue of financial matters. Thus the important point with regard to this article is that the growth in numbers, social status, big church buildings, institutions and missions all over the world relates very directly to the issue of money. Billions of dollars and/or South African rand are moved around, preached about, given as tithes and offerings, collected and used in various ways.

Evaluations from different perspectives

The developments within Pentecostalism as described above deserve our attention, and not only for historical reasons. The present trends will also

¹⁰ For similar developments in the USA see also Synan (1997:212), who says that the desire for respectability and fellowship with mainline churches often led to a muting of such Pentecostal distinctives as speaking in tongues, prophesying and praying for the sick.

impact on the future of the church in South Africa, and at this stage it will be beneficial to be aware of possible scenarios. Therefore we will now have to look at different criticisms on the topic.

The Prosperity Gospel

It is very important to note that not all people who associate themselves in some or other form with the broad description “Pentecostal”, “Charismatic” or “Neo-Pentecostal” agree with what is sometimes proclaimed under such names as the “Prosperity Gospel”, the “Word of Faith movements” or the “Health and wealth Gospel”.

- Negative opinions

It is also not the intention of this article to describe in detail what the historical and theological developments were with regard to this movement within Pentecostalism. Suffice it to say that severe criticisms have come from many individuals and groups within Pentecostalism. Numerous sources could be listed in this regard. For instance, Horn (1989), writing as a Pentecostal himself, describes the historical development of the Faith Movement and its relation to the Pentecostal Movement in his *From rags to riches*. Interestingly enough, some of the main reasons for the breach between classical Pentecostals and the Healing evangelists (including those who later became prominent in the Faith movement) revolved around the claims of the evangelists regarding financial prosperity, claims which were coupled with their extraordinary fundraising methods (Horn 1989:5–6). Synan (1997:223) raises the interesting point that Oral Roberts's healing and television ministry aroused concern among Catholic bishops and leaders of other denominations because of its popularity and because they became aware of the large sums that flowed to the ministry of this Pentecostal evangelist. Horn (1989:6–57) further convincingly shows how the Healing evangelists laid the foundation for the later faith message and how this message relates to questions of medical help, doubt and those who do not receive healing, to teachings on the new birth, realised eschatology and the doctrine of prosperity itself. He thus assesses the developments in the broader Pentecostal movement from an anti-capitalistic and anti-prosperity theology to the theology of the Faith movement. The observations by Synan (1997:289-290) on the rise and fall of some of the “Televangelists” and the millions of dollars that each ministry annually took from their viewing audiences are also noteworthy.

Horn (1989:85–112) also points out some specific implications of the theological presuppositions of the Faith movement for some central doctrines

within these circles. He quotes several other authors who vehemently opposed its teachings in this regard.¹¹ Some of those who voiced their criticisms are Anderson (1987), Barron (1987), Clark (1983), Farah (1980), Fee (1979) and Moriarty (1992:297–315) in a chapter on “The health and wealth craze”, as well as many others.

Developments within these groups do also not escape the – sometimes negative – attention of the secular press and of religious publications. In a recent article entitled “Paparazzi pastors”, *City Press* journalist Seabi describes how some of the more “successful” pastors are treated like celebrities, how some of them live and behave like the rich and famous and how they are gaining fame and fortune that comes with being the fêted leader of a large church.

When you consider the fact that Pastor Chris Oyakhilome of the Christ Embassy Church sold out the 94 000-seater FNB stadium [Johannesburg], during his Night of the Bliss event last month, you get the full scope of just how much star power a pastor holds (Seabi 2011:12–13).

Apart from Ray McCauley, other pastors who are referred to include Vusi Dube, Barnabas Lekganyane, Mosa Sono, Vimbeni Shembe, Clayton Modise, singer Reverend Benjamin Dube, Jerome Liberty, Fred Roberts, Prophet Paseka Motsoeneng and Apostle Simon Mokoena. Some of their actions and the results of their messages are described as “lavish life-styles, complete with bodyguards”. Another comment refers to one who travels in style in a fleet of white Mercedes-Benzes with a crew of bodyguards. Apart from some theological criticisms that are also offered in the article, the comment by Prof Manala is interesting in that he says that the celebrity pastors have managed to grasp the essence of African spirituality. This includes the belief in a priest's ability to heal all kinds of illnesses, promoting spirituality through praise and song, and the concept of giving offerings so that God or your ancestors can look favourably upon you.

Anderson (1999c:209) approaches this issue from a different angle. He first refers to Hollenweger's (1999:178–183, 188–190) position and then says that the problems regarding the Prosperity Gospel lie largely in its ideology in the West, and particularly in white North America, where it has been identified with the success ethic of capitalism. He continues by saying that one notorious manifestation of this ethic is the Prosperity Gospel, often an overt display of human greed in danger of corrupting the Christian gospel

¹¹ For instance, see the title of the 1979 publication by Fee, namely *The disease of the health and wealth gospel*.

beyond recognition, and that many Western Pentecostals, particularly in North America, have succumbed to it.

At this stage it should be reiterated that not all people who associate themselves with Pentecostalism benefit from these teachings. The reason for a focus on the Faith movement is only to illustrate how important this subsection of the Pentecostal message has become. A full research programme on the Faith teaching and its consequences should be initiated.¹²

- A more positive evaluation

Miller and Yamamori (2007:175–177) fully acknowledge that the expression of Pentecostalism described above is rife with the exploitation of poor and desperately ill people.¹³ However, in a chapter entitled “Born in the image of God: democracy and upward mobility” (Miller & Yamamori 2007:160–183), they offer examples of individuals and groups who have benefited in more than one way from their commitments to Christ and to financial stability, and how they have experienced upward mobility. They use the term “progressive Pentecostals” in this regard for people and churches that have active social ministries and who take money matters very seriously (Miller & Yamamori 2007:1). See also their discussion of Weber’s thoughts on *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* as applied to some of the Pentecostal groups that they studied. “Our experience of being around Pentecostals is quite different from Weber’s description of the Puritan” (Miller & Yamamori 2007:171–172). They continue by saying that while Pentecostals follow a rather strict ethic, they are having a good time doing it. They further mention the joyous music, the hugging and the fact that the Pentecostals are anything but emotionally repressed. They also value the warmth of their community life, the ecstatic worship and their openness to visions from the Holy Spirit, all of which enable them to think outside of the box. “In fact, while they may not be political revolutionaries, they often think in visionary ways as expressed in the megachurches that they build, the networks of franchise churches that they birth, and their grandiose vision to save the world for Jesus.”

In their investigation Miller and Yamamori (2007:176–177) found people who were undoubtedly healed in Prosperity Gospel churches and heard consistent testimonies of people blessed financially as a result of their

¹² For instance, see the thesis by James (2007) who focused on the activities of the Durban Christian Centre in this regard. Lederle (2010:146–156) also offers a very valuable theological discussion on some of the theological points at issue.

¹³ Examples of such practices relate closely to the experiences of people mentioned in the previous paragraphs.

faithful tithing. Therefore, they also ask how an outside observer should view or understand such claims. They continue:

Presumably one might ask whether the act of tithing resulted directly in an individual's prosperity or whether leading a disciplined life enables that individual to have surplus capital, from which he or she could pay tithes. Correlation is often mistaken for causation, even among social scientists.

They also quote other observers who say that Prosperity Gospel preachers provoke poor people to think in new ways, to have hope for the future and to start organising their lives in ways that allow for upward social mobility. Some of the preachers even give sound advice regarding lifestyle changes, budgeting, family planning and business investments.

Preliminary conclusion

It has already been said that a full evaluation of the Prosperity teaching and its consequences cannot be made in one academic article. A comment by Lederle, however, deserves our attention. He says that one of the most ignored and underestimated factors in the history of spiritual awakenings is simply the natural process of maturation and self-correction that sometimes occurs (Lederle 2010:160). The works of De Arteaga (1992:214–263) and King (2001, 2008) are good examples of theological reasoning that show that some of the teachings found in the Prosperity Gospel are very near to what most other evangelicals base their theologies on.

Another interesting comment comes from Andrew Wommack, someone who could also be classified as a person who used to have close ties with Faith theologies. In an e-mail letter to his supporters (Wommack 2011:1), he says that he watched a fundraising event held by a Christian network, and that he was appalled. “I saw manipulation that makes con men look honest, and it was all done in the name of the Lord with tears and lots of hype. It really grieved me, as I know it would many of you”, and:

What really upset me was that these tactics work. The body of Christ responds to this type of appeal with big bucks, and that's why ministers do this: It works. There are organisations receiving hundreds of millions of dollars per year through gimmicks, lies, and manipulation. That says volumes about the immaturity in the body of Christ.

This also illustrates that there is a balanced view which is maturing within these circles.

Pentecostal money power draws attention

If one looks beyond the issues related to the Prosperity Gospel, another world appears on the horizon. It is clear that in most instances this other face of Pentecostalism is linked to a grass-roots movement. This other dimension is of the utmost importance and needs further scrutiny. Because of the exploratory nature of this article, the research project discussed below will only be reported on in general terms at first. However, the findings will contribute to the general conclusions reached. The main idea is to show how from the roots of early Pentecostalism, through the development of a theology that emphasis wealth, success, social status and prosperity for believers, the lives of many ordinary church members have been touched in remarkable ways.

A research project initiated by the Centre for Development and Enterprise

The discussions about the role and influence of money within religious circles, especially Pentecostalism, have not only drawn the attention of theologians and others interested in religion and society. It is evident that Big Business is also very aware of the monetary and developmental potential that Pentecostalism can offer. This is in sharp contrast to the situation in the early part of the previous century, when Pentecostals were despised because of their low social status, lack of education, precarious financial position and so forth. This new interest has particularly been shown in the comprehensive research project launched by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE).¹⁴ It is noteworthy that this Centre, which claims to be one of South Africa's leading think tanks, and which focuses on critical national development issues and their relationship to economic growth and democratic consolidation, should embark on such a study in order to evaluate the potential of Pentecostalism within those paradigms. Also note the comment that the centre "has gained recognition as an authoritative voice in economic and social development policy, and is now 'read and heard' at the very highest levels of government, including the cabinet". In a notification, the Centre also says that from 2005 to 2008 it conducted a major study of the explosive growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in South Africa. The results have been compiled in the CDE publication *Under the radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa and its potential social and economic role* (March 2008). To mark the launch of these publications, and the conclusion of the project, CDE

¹⁴ Through examining South African realities and international experience, CDE formulates practical policy proposals outlining ways in which South Africa can tackle major social and economic challenges. CDE has a special focus on the role of business and markets in development. The centre, based in Johannesburg, was established in 1995 with core funding from South African businesses. (Centre for Development and Enterprise).

invited three international experts to South Africa to host a public lecture and participate in a workshop on the growth of Pentecostalism and its potential developmental role. They were: (a) Professor Peter Berger, professor of sociology and theology at Boston University, and director of its Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs; (Prof Berger is CDE's international associate and has helped guide its study of Pentecostalism), (b) Professor David Martin, professor emeritus of sociology at the London School of Economics; and (c) Professor Matthews Ojo, head of the department of divinity of the Regent University College of Science and Technology in Accra, Ghana.¹⁵

“Under the radar”

About the report itself, *Under the radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa and its potential social and economic role*, the CDE says:

This project has revealed a world of activity, energy, and entrepreneurship previously unknown to this otherwise well-informed South African think-tank. Flying under the radar screens of politicians, intellectuals, academics, and journalists are a large number of institutions and individuals that are actively concerned about and working on questions of values and personal behaviour. These concerns include family life, personal responsibility, unemployment, skills creation, and a range of other national concerns.

This report describes CDE's project, places it in context, outlines its findings, and suggests ways in which policy debates in South Africa might take account of the phenomenal rise of Pentecostal Christian churches.

It is not possible to summarise the findings of the report in this particular context. Actually, one should also remember that the report itself is an edited and abridged version of a comprehensive research report on this project. The full-length report was written by Professor Lawrence Schlemmer, who also designed, conducted and reported on the survey components of the research. We will only refer to some of the main findings and highlighted

¹⁵ On 10 March 2008, Prof Berger gave a public lecture at the University of the Witwatersrand, hosted by CDE and the Platform for Public Deliberation, entitled [*Faith and development: a global perspective*](#). An edited version of his lecture and the subsequent discussion appears in a separate CDE publication with the same title. On 11 March, CDE held a workshop on the social and economic impact of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in South Africa. It was addressed by Prof Martin, Prof Ojo and Prof Schlemmer. Prof Berger participated in the subsequent discussion. The edited proceedings of the workshop appear in this publication. (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2008)

marginal notes within the report. Schlemmer's (2008) report is entitled *Dormant capital: Pentecostalism in South Africa and its potential social and economic role*. This report was mainly based on a number of other research projects of which the one by Balcomb was the most important.¹⁶ See also Balcomb's (2007:30-42) reflections on the same issue in his *Well healed and well-heeled: Pentecostals in the new South Africa – their message, structures and modes of socio-political intervention*.

Under the radar (2008) presents us with a number of striking catch-phrases as well as photographs of small and big church buildings. We will now quote a couple of these in order to highlight some of the most important findings:

- (1) Does the silent revolution in the world of faith, spiritual experience and religious organisation have positive spin-offs in the world of work and enterprise (p 9)?
- (2) Both the old and new Pentecostal movements are growing far more rapidly than the Christian community as a whole, which in turn is growing more rapidly than the population (p 15).

¹⁶ It seems that Schlemmer's report was initially entitled *The Pentecostal movement in South Africa: regeneration, empowerment, or a spiritual sidetrack?* (2008). The other background reports titles are of major significance. See the particulars below:

- Tony Balcomb, *Interviews with South African Pentecostal pastors and leaders – analysis and impressions* (2005).
- Phil Bonner, Tshepo Moloi and Godfrey Dlulane, *Faith for development: provisional report on Pentecostal churches in Tembisa and Katlehong* (2004).
- Timothy Clynick and Tshepo Moloi, *Anointed for business: South African "new" Pentecostals in the marketplace* (2006).
- William R Domeris, *The church and the spirit of entrepreneurship: a study of selected Christian communities in South Africa* (1999).
- William R Domeris and Paul Germond, *Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity – a South African survey* (2006).
- Paul Germond and Steven de Gruchy, *Review of the literature on the social contribution of African-initiated churches (African Independent Churches) in South Africa* (2001).
- Riaan Ingram, Hudson Mathebula, Lehasa Mokoena and Attie van Niekerk, *The impact of Pentecostalism on society, with special reference to their impact on black economic empowerment – a case study in Witbank* (2004).
- Riaan Ingram, *The social, economic, political and personal potential of Pentecostalism* (2006).
- Lawrence Schlemmer and Monica Bot, *Faith, social consciousness and progress: a case study of members of the Pentecostal, African Zionist and other churches in Hout Bay, South Africa* (2004).
- Lawrence Schlemmer, *The wider impact of faith: an investigation among members of Pentecostal and other denominations in Gauteng* (2006).
- Attie van Niekerk, Montagu Murray and Lehasa Mokoena, *Views of politicians and social activists from a Charismatic and Pentecostal background* (2006).

- (3) Pentecostal churches have features unique to Africa, due to a degree of cross-fertilisation between them and African Independent Churches (p 16).
- (4) The capacities built up and stored in the religious group may take two or three generations to come to fruition (p 17).
- (5) Responses from both surveys suggest that tithing encourages deferred gratification, financial planning and discipline in handling family and personal finances (p 19).
- (6) In socioeconomic terms, the New Pentecostals are positioned midway between the Old Pentecostals and the mainstream denominations (p 22).
- (7) It is remarkable how little South Africans in general and members of the mainstream churches in particular know about Pentecostal churches and their members (p 23).
- (8) A vital function of Pentecostalism is that it has provided an avenue for the recognition and integration of marginalised people (p 26).
- (9) Responses to our surveys suggested that religion had done far more to improve lives and morale than the political programmes and promises of recent years (p 27).
- (10) Pentecostalism and other denominations have indeed protected the family, the home, and the personal spheres of millions of people (p 30).
- (11) One of the most striking themes emerging from our research is that Pentecostalism encourages a sense of agency in its participants (p 31).
- (12) Of all the denominations, the Pentecostal churches are probably best able to reach out to South Africa's marginalised communities (p 34).

Photographs of different church buildings are included in the report.¹⁷ The key themes addressed in the report, profiles, the important criteria used and the results were also listed but are not included here.

¹⁷ For instance, see the building of "The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God" nearing completion in Diepkloof, Soweto. With a capacity of 8 000, this is said to be the biggest church in the country. Launched in Brazil in 1977, and established in at least 80 countries, this movement already has more than 200 branches in South Africa, and church officials say at least one new church is being built every week (pp 6, 7). A photograph of the "The Grace Bible Church" in Pimville, Soweto is also shown. Subsidiary buildings are still under construction. According to church spokespersons, the complex will also be used for community related activities, notably poverty alleviation, skills development and youth

This exploratory character of this article does not allow for an in-depth discussion of the material listed above. However, it is clear that what has been detected in the report is that major changes have occurred in the lives of Pentecostals during the last number of decades. The quotes show that a great number of Pentecostals in South Africa are very active as far as money matters are involved, and that many worship in church buildings that do not resemble the humble beginnings of Pentecostalism in any way. Pentecostalism has indeed become a force to be reckoned with in terms of its influence in money matters.

Evaluation

Dynamic developments and unfair criticism

We have looked at some features of the Prosperity Gospel and noted some severe criticisms. What should also be taken into account is the comment by Anderson (1999c:214):

Looking at Pentecostalism from this global perspective makes the “prosperity gospel” and an identification with capitalistic ideology somewhat inconsequential and only found in a fringe minority. It can never be construed as the core of global Pentecostalism – its essence is to be found elsewhere.

This simply means that one should not judge the Pentecostalism movement as a whole and its relationship to financial issues on the basis of one aspect of its development, namely the Prosperity Gospel.

On a similar note, one should also be cautious not to criticise too easily. For example, see the much discredited research report by Morran and Schlemmer entitled *Faith for the fearful?* (1984). Horn (1989) as well as Hexham and Poewe (1994:50-69, in a chapter “Charismatic churches in South Africa: a critique of criticisms and problems of bias”), show clearly how and why biases and presuppositions can influence research on Pentecostals and Charismatics.

Other opinions

empowerment. Additional facilities will include a computer school, youth hall, children's facility, lecture halls, a distribution centre for the poor and a gymnasium (p11). Photographs of storefront churches in Hillbrow appear on pages 14, 28 and 29. The Rhema Church building is on page 20 and tent churches on pp 32 and 33.

The study by Miller and Yamamori (2007:172–173) also helps us by reminding us that Weber created a very useful typology that distinguishes mystical and ascetic religions on the one hand, and otherworldly versus inner-worldly religious orientations on the other hand. The important thing is that they use Weber's typology because it allows one to differentiate various strains of Pentecostalism. They contrast Prosperity Gospel Pentecostals with other groups, and say that they tend to be more inner-worldly, wanting their payoff now rather than postponing it until the next life, and that, in addition, they include a strong element of mysticism in their belief in the supernatural. According to them, Progressive Pentecostals are notable because they tend to span a number of Weber's categories – which may be part of their success. They are mystical but they also promote an ascetic lifestyle that is both otherworldly and inner-worldly: “We believe Progressive Pentecostals might be identified as Joyous Inner Worldly Mystics who nevertheless practice a rather ascetic lifestyle.”

Lederle (2010:205) offers another perspective that should be taken seriously. Firstly, he agrees with Cephas Omenyo of Ghana that the Pentecostal experience is becoming “mainline” Christianity in Africa, not merely in numbers but more importantly in spirituality, theology and practice – a phenomenon which is repeated across the “Majority World”. Secondly, he says that the cutting edge of this movement is no longer Classical Pentecostalism or the denominational Charismatic Renewal. The momentum has shifted to the Independent Charismatic Churches. Thirdly, he indicates “that the baton of global leadership has passed to the Word of Faith movement. The mantle of leadership of the whole Pentecostal-Charismatic movement has fallen on these Faith ministries”. Lederle (2010:206–224) describes his own mellowing down of criticism against this viewpoint, but also shows how the movement has matured in many respects and how its leaders have become more balanced over time. Lederle (2010:220–224) also voices his opinion that the word “prosperity” has in fact become thoroughly discredited and that in the future, people may prefer to speak of a holistic gospel. He further proposes that new terminology be introduced. We should distinguish between “Gods comprehensive blessing” and what has come to be known as the Prosperity Gospel.

Conclusion

It is clear from this exploratory overview that a number of conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, from a start with very meagre resources at its disposal, Pentecostalism has grown and acquired staggering numbers of adherents. Secondly, it is obvious that the movement has become a factor to be taken seriously when issues relating to social mobility and social upliftment are discussed. Thirdly, a new theology is being developed in order to undergird

the present trends. The outcome and end result of the “Prosperity Gospel” are still to be decided in the light of opposing evaluations within Pentecostalism. Fourthly, it is clear that Pentecostalism in South Africa as a whole has grown to an economic force in its own right; and fifthly, it has also been suggested that new insights gained from Pentecostalism might influence other theologies in terms of a better understanding of a more comprehensive Gospel message. This means that other churches will also eventually be influenced by what is happening with regard to financial issues in Pentecostal circles. It goes without saying that more research is necessary in order to better understand the impact of these trends.

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