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Inaugurated Eschatology within South African Pentecostalism

Futuristic and Realised Eschatological Approaches in Equilibrium

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Abstract

Pentecostal eschatology differs from one sub-tradition of Pentecostalism to the other in a South African context. Sub-traditions such as classical Pentecostalism and the New Prophetic Churches (NPCs) have been engaged in more than one form of eschatology. The differences are explored here to understand their implications for Pentecostal eschatology. The Pentecostal prophets in NPCs do not exclusively focus on a futuristic eschatological approach as opposed to classical Pentecostalism. Pentecostal prophets in NPCs embrace a realised eschatology of the kingdom in the here and the now. The challenge is that this approach presents some form of abuse in these churches. How do we address these abuses emanating from an overemphasised realised eschatology? How do we deal with the tensions between realised eschatology and futuristic

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eschatology? What could be the relevant eschatology that balances both extremes of a futuristic eschatology and realised eschatology? These questions are addressed here through an inaugurated eschatology.

Keywords

classical Pentecostalism – realised eschatology – future eschatology – New Prophetic Churches – inaugurated eschatology

1 Introduction

Comprising a heterogenous aggregation of Christian churches that subscribe to the experience of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts, among other propria, the Pentecostal movement in South Africa has grown in leaps and bounds over the last century.¹ A vital eschatology is one of the primary traits Pentecostals of every hue share.² However, in keeping with their eclectic composition, Pentecostals do not exhibit a unitary eschatological theology either. Rather, a variety of eschatological approaches are evident across the movement's broad spectrum. That said, this article explores two predominant eschatological schools in vogue within the South African context today. The goal is to inquire into the purpose, possibility, and process of integrating these eschatological approaches. Thus, following a discussion of the eschatological variations extant within South African Pentecostalism, this article will consider the prevailing tension between the two eschatological poles, then focus on the nature and implications of the New Prophetic Churches' 'realised eschatology', before positing the silhouette of an inaugurated eschatology by way of wrapping up.

Meanwhile, a brief consideration of the rationale for exploring the integration of these different eschatological renditions is necessary. First, such an exploration can enable Pentecostal (and other) scholars to gain a deeper understanding of the nuances of Pentecostal theology and particularly of the dynamic interaction between eschatology and societal engagement. Second, Pentecostal practitioners (such as pastors and leaders) can develop a better understanding of their congregants' eschatological presuppositions,

1 Allan. H. Anderson, 'New African Initiated Pentecostalism and Charismatics in South Africa', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35.1 (2005), pp. 66–92.

2 Kenneth. J. Archer, 'A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology: Method and Manner', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9.3 (2007), pp. 301–14.

expectations, and doctrinal deficits. Third, Pentecostal scholars and practitioners from opposite eschatological poles can potentially develop mutual respect's theological viewpoints and be mutually enriched in their theory and praxis. Such mutual enrichment can only bode well for the health of the broader South African and global church as well as for the well-being of society at large.

2 Eschatological Approaches within South African Pentecostalism

South African scholar Marius Nel renders eschatology as 'concerned with the culmination of divine activity in the last days ending in the return of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of God'.³ Also writing from a South African perspective, Arnold Meiring points out that apocalyptic eschatology embraces both the vertical and horizontal axes of reality and history – thus comprehending historical events within the framework of the vertical axis of cosmic conflict.⁴ Whereas the vertical axis is meant the powers of good and evil understood to be operating above and below, the horizontal axis is meant the past and the future.⁵ General Christian eschatology can be understood in two main ways, namely, as *realised eschatology* (which believes that the words and deeds of Jesus and his followers attest that the kingdom of God is fully present in the world); and as *futuristic or apocalyptic eschatology* (which anticipates God's universal final judgment, destruction of the known world, and the dawn of a brand new world).⁶ An inaugurated eschatology holds that despite the evil, chaos, and suffering prevalent in the world, believers can still find evidence for the presence and work of God through the Spirit on earth.⁷ Similarly, Robert Falconer describes an inaugurated eschatology as 'the tight tension of the kingdom today and the kingdom to come'.⁸ This end-time theology holds that the church is an eschatological community, empowered by the eschatological

3 Marius Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations: He is Coming Back Again!* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), p. xv.

4 Arnold. M. Meiring, 'An Apocalyptic Agenda for Mission in Our Time', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 41.1 (2020), pp. 1–8.

5 Meiring, 'An Apocalyptic Agenda for Mission in Our Time', p. 3.

6 Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*, p. xv.

7 Meiring, 'An Apocalyptic Agenda for Mission in Our Time', p. 3.

8 Robert Falconer, 'Veni Sanctus Spiritus: The coming of the Holy Spirit in Inaugurated Eschatology and the Emergence of an Enchanted African Christian Society', *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 18.2 (2018), pp. 95–114.

Spirit, and living in the tension of two resurrections – that of Christ and that of the church at the *Parousia*⁹.

3 Futuristic Eschatology

Mathew Clark maintains that the apocalyptic identity of Pentecostalism originally gave it a robust chiliastic and futuristic outlook.¹⁰ That means Pentecostals have historically not only been apocalyptic but also millennialist and futuristic in their eschatology. For example, a confession of faith by the classical Pentecostal church, Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa demonstrates a futuristic standpoint. The confession of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa states,

We believe at the time appointed by God, Jesus Christ will come to take away his Church. In a day of judgment, Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead. We believe in the resurrection of the body eternal life for the righteous and eternal punishment for the wicked. We believe in the new heaven and the new earth where God will reign in glory.¹¹

However, over the years their eschatological beliefs have oscillated between a futuristic eschatology influenced by fundamentalist dispensationalism and a realised eschatology.¹² Yet, Charismatics that sprang out of mainline churches from the 1960s and 1970s did not automatically embrace the futuristic eschatology of their classical Pentecostal cousins but tended to adhere to their parent churches' inaugurated eschatology.¹³ Concerning conservative fundamentalism, considered synonymous with biblicism, Nel explains that the tradition believes in the Bible's divine, verbal, literal, and mechanical inspiration – disregarding the human element as well as the sociocultural context in shaping the Scriptures and considering every detail as inerrant, infallible, and applicable to contemporary situations.¹⁴ As for fundamentalist dispensationalism, it pertains to a theological framework that divides God's plan for humanity and history into distinct periods called dispensations, such

9 Falconer, 'Veni Sanctus Spiritus', p. 97.

10 Mathew S. Clark, 'An Investigation into the Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic' (PhD Thesis, Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1997), pp. 132, 284.

11 www.afm-ags.org/about-us/confessions-of-faith.

12 Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*, p. xvii.

13 Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*, p. xix.

14 Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*, pp. 66–67.

that the revelation given in one dispensation is separate from any previous or future ages.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that this theology was influenced by cessationism, the belief that the *charismata* ceased with the early church's first generation, contrary to Pentecostals' belief in the continuity of the gifts of the Spirit from the Day of Pentecost until the *Parousia*.¹⁶

Another critical strand in South African futuristic eschatology concerns what Arnold Meiring calls apocalyptic determinism – to wit, God's decisive and universal victory over the evil one, the introduction of the eternal glory and eradication of every resistance to God, the fulfillment of various eschatological events in God's calendar, and the rapid movement of history towards the eschaton and consummation according to God's prior determination.¹⁷ Thus, according to this view, history is not necessarily random. Nor is it purely in human hands. Furthermore, from a Pentecostal viewpoint, the role of the Spirit in eschatology is of paramount importance. For instance, Falconer points out that the Holy Spirit – referred to as the 'eschatological gift' *par excellence* that guarantees a glorious future – plays a crucial role in the transformation and realisation of the new creation that began with Jesus' resurrection, which turn served as the first fruits of humanity's future resurrection.¹⁸ Despite present suffering, the Spirit enables believers to experience the 'fruit of the Spirit' as a preview of the joy and blessedness to come as Jesus' resurrection marked the beginning of the end and the turning of the ages.¹⁹ Thus, the Spirit serves as a guarantor and guarantee of our future inheritance – the 'down payment' for the future consummation of resurrection life.²⁰

4 Realised Eschatology

A realised eschatology, among other things, the resurrection of Jesus means the end time has been introduced already, the coming age of the kingdom of God is no longer futuristic but is available to contemporary Christians.²¹ According to Mathew Clark,²² this framework typical of Charismatic churches in South Africa and abroad, which he calls a 'radical unrealistic realised eschatology',

15 Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*, p 135.

16 Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*, p. 135.

17 Meiring, 'An Apocalyptic Agenda for Mission in Our Time', p. 3.

18 Falconer, 'Veni Sanctus Spiritus', p. 98.

19 Falconer, 'Veni Sanctus Spiritus', p. 98.

20 Falconer, 'Veni Sanctus Spiritus', p. 98.

21 Meiring, 'An Apocalyptic Agenda for Mission in Our Time', p. 3.

22 Clark, 'Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic', p. 70.

tends to assert, 'God wants to give His children heaven on earth here and now'. Nico Botha shares another nuance of a realised eschatological approach that is relevant to the South African context, if not globally. This approach acknowledges the symbolic and metaphoric nature of mission as depicted in biblical apocalyptic texts such that interpreters are not preoccupied with watertight eschatological boxes.²³ Thus, when the Book of Revelation, for instance, is read according to this approach, exegetes are not under pressure to fit world events into neat categories (such as dispensations). Rather, their goal is to *forthtell* the message of salvation, peace, and justice through the cosmic Christ in their contexts, rather than seeking to *foretell* specifics in God's eschatological calendar.²⁴ Stated otherwise, the Christian mission is more about *proclaiming* the good news of God's love for the world rather than *predicting* the divine schedule of end-time events, as North American fundamentalists tend to do. Echoing this approach, Arnold Meiring suggests that eschatological ethics should be protreptic such that believers are radically transformed, dedicated to their faith, and committed to resisting conformity to the world – as opposed to a paraenetic ethic which tends to pamper believers, potentially inducing a false sense of security.²⁵

5 The Tension in the Eschatological Approaches

The two dominant strands of Pentecostal eschatology in vogue – the kingdom 'not yet' (futuristic) and the kingdom 'now' (realised) – exist within a tensive relationship. For instance, Glenn Balfour avers that truth is found in the tension of acknowledging the arrival of the kingdom of God as demonstrated by the present-day manifestation of signs and wonders as well as believers experiencing the Holy Spirit's righteousness, peace and joy (Rom. 14.17) in this life on one hand, versus simultaneously anticipating the imminent *Parousia* (1 Cor. 16.22), on the other hand.²⁶ As Pentecostals wrestle with the inevitable tension emanating from the diverse eschatological meanings and perspectives in the Scriptures, the challenge is to respect the language of a realised eschatology while also respecting the language of an imminent futuristic anticipation.²⁷ This eschatological tension includes the temptations to complacency, lack of

23 Nico A. Botha, 'Mission as Prophecy: Reading the Apocalypse as Forthtelling rather than Foretelling', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 33.2 (2005), pp. 315–28.

24 Botha, 'Mission as Prophecy', p. 320.

25 Meiring, 'An Apocalyptic Agenda for Mission in Our Time', p. 3.

26 Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*, p. 139.

27 Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*, p. 140.

missional motivation, and loss of hope for the future, on one hand, as well as the temptation to view social action as unnecessary considering the imminent second coming.²⁸ How can Pentecostals live in the ‘now’ of the kingdom of God and represent the ‘not yet’ of the kingdom as if the future already exists? How can the notion of the transformation of society through the realised kingdom of God coexist with the notion of the apocalyptic, sovereign breaking into the world by the kingdom at the eschaton? How can the church avoid fostering a posture of escapism from a world doomed for annihilation and instead foster a posture of responsibility to the world as witnesses that are empowered by the Spirit in Christ’s inaugurated kingdom and imminent consummation? Such is the tension Pentecostal scholars, ministers, and parishioners must grapple with.²⁹

It is noteworthy that the eschatological tension prevailing among African Pentecostals also manifests concerning a realised eschatology in the context of African Traditional Religions (ATR). For instance, the tension pertains to what Falconer calls the Pentecostalisation of African churches, including Pentecostals’ understanding that the Holy Spirit transcends African Traditional cosmologies, without denying their reality, thus forcing African scholars and practitioners to rethink the contextualisation of the gospel in the African setting without compromising its integrity.³⁰ Along the same lines, there is tension stemming from the temptation for Christian syncretism with African traditional spirituality.³¹ How does this arise? Among other ways, tension arises as Pentecostal practitioners, not intimidated by the real powers evidenced in and through ATR, seek to enforce the superior power and presence of the eschatological Spirit (such as from a realised eschatological point of view), without necessarily alienating seekers.

Another source of tension stems from realised eschatology’s proclivity towards prosperity theology and capitalism in African contexts riddled with abject poverty, corruption, and social inequality.³² Thus, there is often also tension when the ‘wealth and health’ message advocated by some Pentecostal ministers contradicts the marginalisation of the poor and neglect of the disadvantaged.³³ In the same vein, Mathew Clark points out that the Faith

28 Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*, p. 151.

29 Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*, p. 151; Williams, Stephen. ‘Jesus is Coming Soon: Toward Revisioning Pentecostal Eschatology for Postmodern Ministry and Mission’, *Vanguard Journal of Theology and Ministry* 1.2 (2022), pp. 28–39.

30 Falconer, ‘Veni Sanctus Spiritus’, p. 100.

31 Falconer, ‘Veni Sanctus Spiritus’, p. 101.

32 Falconer, ‘Veni Sanctus Spiritus’, p. 102.

33 Falconer, ‘Veni Sanctus Spiritus’, p. 102.

Movement's realised eschatology induces the Bride of Christ to celebrate the presence of the Spirit now at the expense of expecting the joy of meeting the heavenly Bridegroom at the Parousia.³⁴ Moreover, an emphasis on the eschatological role of the Spirit at the expense of Christ as the baptiser in the Spirit, coupled with a non-Christocentric eschatological expectation, such as the promotion of a prophetic community that is not simultaneously a discipleship community, potentially results in an activist community without a recognisable Christian identity.³⁵ Likewise, realised eschatologists run the risk of appreciating the power of Christ's resurrection (Easter) while declining their participation in His sufferings (Good Friday).³⁶ That means when the *delight* that emanates from the Spirit's power is disconnected from sacrificial *discipleship*, the anticipation of the Second Coming suffers.³⁷ Arguing that Pentecostal hermeneutics must be done within the context of a charismatic community, Mathew Clark maintains that in the first place, Joel's promise of the Spirit is eschatological in tone, that the Spirit is received by an eschatological community, that the Gospels portray Jesus' earthly ministry using decidedly eschatological language, that Pentecostals have an eschatological emphasis on Christ and the Spirit, and that Pentecostal eschatology is inherently apocalyptic – therefore, contemporary Pentecostalism should be revised to restore its apocalyptic ethos.³⁸

6 Realised Eschatology in New Prophetic Churches

As opposed to a futuristic eschatology is a realised eschatology.³⁹ This approach in new prophetic churches is understood as the preaching of the gospel and pronouncements of prophecies that depict the kingdom as already here in the present. New Prophetic Churches such as the Enlightened Christian Gathering of Shepherd Bushiri, and Alleluia Ministries International of Alph Lukau have not pronounced themselves officially on this eschatological position. However, it is evident in their sermons presentations and prophecies that there are more inclined towards the realised eschatology. In other words, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus have already confirmed the coming of

34 Clark, 'Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic', p. 200.

35 Clark, 'Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic', p. 200.

36 Clark, 'Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic', p. 200.

37 Clark, 'Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic', p. 200.

38 Clark, 'Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic', p. 194.

39 Mookgo S. Kgatle, 'Peculiarities in the Pentecostal Tradition: Disciplinary and Decolonial Perspectives in a South African Context', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 43.1 (2022), pp. 1–8.

the Kingdom of God.⁴⁰ The new prophetic churches are using this approach to advocate for an eschatology that already acknowledges the victory of Jesus Christ in the present not in the futuristic sense alone. These churches do not only hope for the justice that will come with the second coming of Christ but are already in the present moment.⁴¹ The prophets in new prophetic churches are using this kind of approach in giving hope to their congregants and followers already faced with so many challenges in Africa. This also gives hope to the many people who facing injustices in the world, because they do not have to wait for the apocalyptical eschatology but can receive justice in the present moment.⁴² In the end, this approach benefits the believers and followers of these churches in resolving their challenges in the here-and-now rather than in the there-and-then.⁴³

Therefore, the realised eschatology should be understood in the context of helping the believers and the followers of new prophetic churches to cope with the realities of life in the present moment.⁴⁴ This is possible in Pentecostalism since many believers are already used to the ever-present God through the work of the Holy Spirit. Hence, they do not see the need of waiting for the apocalyptical victory if the Holy Spirit is already here through the Pentecost event. It is for this reason that a realised eschatology is popular in the context of the African Pentecostals particularly, new prophetic churches in South Africa. In other words, the followers of these churches are happy to receive help in the present instead of waiting for apocalyptical help. Given the challenges of poverty, unemployment, inequalities, pandemics, and so forth, the followers of these churches are happy to receive solutions in the present than to receive the apocalyptical solution.⁴⁵ In situations like these, the realised eschatology

40 Alina Roxana Lupu, 'The Time of the Second Coming and the Members of the Sanhedrin' (MA Thesis, Andrews University, 2018), p. 18.

41 Babatunde A. Adedibu and Benson O. Igboin, 'Eschato-Praxis and Accountability: A Study of Neo-African Pentecostal Movement in the Light of Prosperity Gospel', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40.1 (2019), pp. 1–8. cf. John. W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (London: Fortress Press, 2002), p. 210.

42 Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell (eds.), *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies: World without End* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), p. 100; cf. Mookgo. S. Kgatle, *Pentecostalism and Cultism in South Africa* (cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), p. 81.

43 Marthinus. L. Daneel, 'African Independent Church Pneumatology and the Salvation of all Creation', *International Review of Mission* 82.326 (1993), pp. 143–66.

44 Andrew Williams, 'Greening the Apocalypse: A Pentecostal Eco-Eschatological Exploration', *PentecoStudies* 17.2 (2018), pp. 205–29.

45 Glenn Balfour, 'Pentecostal Eschatology Revisited', *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 31.2 (2011), pp. 127–40.

becomes a better option as compared to an apocalyptic eschatology.⁴⁶ South Africa is not exonerated from these challenges, hence, the new prophetic churches have become popular in the last two decades. They are popular because they do not preach an apocalyptic heaven but rather the heaven that is already on earth.⁴⁷

It is for the same reasons listed above that the message of the apocalyptic victory has not found resonance with many believers in South Africa and other African countries. The people are very much familiar with the Jesus that can help them in the now and the here rather than the Jesus that will help them in the future. The different needs that people have in the current moment make it difficult for people to hope in the eschatological expectation that will help in the future.⁴⁸ Rather, they assimilate with something that happens now in the present and something that gives them hope for the present solutions. The prophets in new prophetic churches have taken advantage of this dimension and continue to preach the ever-present Jesus through the Holy Spirit as opposed to the Jesus of the future. In addition, the followers of these churches are happy that Jesus can bring justice to the world in the present instead of only hoping for apocalyptic justice.

Therefore, the Pentecost event and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are one of the major contributors to the preaching and emphasis of a realised eschatology as opposed to a futuristic eschatology. The Pentecost event which many Pentecostals believe is continuous is an enabler of a realised eschatology. Therefore, the new prophetic churches do not only practice a realised eschatology in solving contemporary challenges but also in being consistent with the works of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the futuristic eschatology is made manifest in the present time through the Pentecost.⁴⁹ It is, therefore, this reason that makes the new prophetic churches not wait for the futuristic eschatology because they can already experience its fullness in the present. In this context, the Holy Spirit is presented as the ever-present Spirit of God who makes the future to be visible in the present. It is believed among the new prophetic churches that when the Holy Spirit comes upon the believer, the invisible becomes visible. The challenge is that this approach has produced

46 Michael Horton, *The Law of Perfect Freedom: Relating to God and Others through the Ten Commandments* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), p. 249.

47 Mookgo S. Kgatle, 'New Paradigms of Pneumatological Ecclesiology brought about by New Prophetic Churches within South African Pentecostalism', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 41.1 (2020), pp. 1–6.

48 Daneel, 'African Independent Church Pneumatology', p. 152.

49 Frank Senn (ed.), *Protestant Spiritual Traditions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020), II, p. 159.

some dangerous faith practices and many controversial miracles among new prophetic churches in the past two decades. These challenges are highlighted in the next section to propose an inaugurated eschatology.

7 The Challenges of Extreme Practices of a Realised Eschatology

The overemphasis of a realised eschatology in new prophetic churches has somehow produced an emphasis on the gospel of materialism, the gospel of the tangible things.⁵⁰ The focus is no longer on the person of Christ in attaining salvation but the focus is now on what Christ can do for them.⁵¹ The Jesus of the new prophetic churches must bless a believer with a new car, a new house, a promotion at work, and many other tangible things. This causes a shift from the person of Christ to a dependence on things that Christ can provide to the believers. This is connected to a realised eschatology because it is believed that the conquest of Jesus should manifest in the present through tangible blessings. In other words, the victory of Jesus on the cross does not only provide eternal salvation but can bless a believer with material things. This causes a derailment from the gospel of Christ to the gospel of material things. This produces some connection between an overemphasis on a realised eschatology and the teachings of prosperity.

Therefore, the zeal for things to happen in the present has caused an overemphasis on the teachings of the prosperity gospel. An overemphasis on a realised eschatology rather than a futuristic eschatology causes an overemphasis on the physical blessing rather than a spiritual blessing. Consequently, the believers in new prophetic churches end up focusing on the physical blessing at the expense of a spiritual blessing. Meaning, the focus on the material things at the expense of the salvation of the soul. Therefore, an attainment of the material things becomes the goal of the eschatological reality in new prophetic churches.⁵² This causes an alteration of the eschatological message when there is a materialistic emphasis on the preaching of the gospel.⁵³

50 Mookgo S. Kgate, 'Triumphalist Theology in the Context of Prophetic Pentecostalism in South Africa', *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 41.2 (2021), pp. 141–52.

51 Collium Banda, 'Doctrine as Security? A Systematic Theological Critique of the Operational Theological Framework of the Controversial South African Neo-Pentecostal Prophets', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77.4 (2021), pp. 1–11.

52 Nelson Makukula, 'The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement in Zambia: Oral History of its Emergence, Evolution, Development, and Ethos (1940s–2010s)' (PhD Thesis, University of Chester, 2018), p. 141.

53 Daneel, 'African Independent Church Pneumatology', p. 152.

In addition, it causes a move away from an eschatology of the future including the second coming of the Lord.⁵⁴ The main question is that do the followers of the prophets in new prophetic churches know about the second coming of Christ or whether are they only concerned about the physical blessings they can attain at the moment.

The challenge is that even with this overemphasis on realised eschatology and prosperity teachings, it is only the prosperity teachers that prosper but most of their congregants continue to suffer.⁵⁵ The overemphasis on realised eschatology in new prophetic churches makes the prophets prosper while their followers are suffering. The members continue to claim blessings, but it is their prophets who continue to live lavish lifestyles benefiting from a materialistic gospel.⁵⁶ Prophets such as Alph Lukau, Shepherd Bushiri, and others have benefitted from an overemphasis on realised eschatology. This is a great challenge because each time the members try to emulate their leaders, they end up losing their possessions in money scams organised by the same prophets. Therefore, the overemphasis on the realised eschatology cause members to fall into trouble as opposed to a futuristic expectation.⁵⁷ In the end, even their future expectation is snatched away through this overemphasis on the realised eschatology as it is done by prophets in new prophetic churches.⁵⁸

The main challenge of an overemphasized realised eschatology is the performance of dangerous faith practices and controversial miracles which do not happen among Pentecostal churches that do not overemphasise realised eschatology. In other words, the emphasis on the kingdom that has already happened has caused some prophets to perform dangerous faith practices and bizarre miracles.⁵⁹ One of the prophets who is involved in the overemphasis of the realised eschatology is Paseka Motsoeneng. The pastor took pictures to

54 Roland Owusu Ansah, 'The Usage of Anointing Oil in some Charismatic and Neo-Prophetic Churches in Kumasi in the Context of Leviticus 8:1–12, and James 5:14–15' (PhD Dissertation, University of Ghana, 2011), p. 34.

55 Thinandavha D. Mashau and Mookgo S. Kgatle, 'Prosperity Gospel and the Culture of Greed in Post-Colonial Africa: Constructing an Alternative African Christian Theology of Ubuntu', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40.1 (2019), pp. 1–8.

56 Kgatle, 'New Paradigms of Pneumatological Ecclesiology', p. 4.

57 Clive T. Zimunya and Joyline Gwara, 'Pentecostalism, Prophets, and the Distressing Zimbabwean Milieu', in Ezra Chitando, Masiwa R. Gunda, and J. Kügler (eds.), *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe: Festschrift for Aynos Masotcha Moyo* (Bible in Africa Studies 12; University of Bamberg Press, 2014), pp. 16–40.

58 Marie-Louise Martin, 'The Biblical Concept of Messianism and Messianism in Southern Africa' (University of Namibia, 1964), p. 158; cf. Daneel, 'African Independent Church Pneumatology', p. 153.

59 Makukula, 'The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement in Zambia', p. 209.

prove that he was with God in heaven experiencing a realised eschatology.⁶⁰ Motsoeneng did this not only to prove to his followers that heaven has come here on earth but also to acquire income. He went on to announce to his followers that the pictures depicting him in heaven would be available for R5000 (about 250 USD).⁶¹ Other prophets in new prophetic churches in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa have also taken pictures claiming that they saw God in heaven. Some of them have dialed God during their church services demonstrating that they do not have to wait for futuristic eschatology to see God but can see him or call him and take pictures to prove such experiences.⁶² Many other practices have been performed by prophets in new prophetic churches in proving that heaven is not an eschatological expectation, it is already here on earth in the present.⁶³ This calls for a new approach that will bring a balance between futuristic eschatology and realised eschatology. This will help to deal with many extreme practices of a realised eschatology among new prophetic churches as demonstrated in the next section.

8 Framing an Inaugurated Eschatology

An inaugurated eschatology is an eschatological approach that acknowledges the kingdom of God in both the already and the not yet.⁶⁴ The approach was popularized by George Eldon Ladd as an eschatology of both the present and the future.⁶⁵ An inaugurated eschatology is an approach according to Ladd that is ‘not only an eschatological gift belonging to the Age to Come; it is also a gift to be received in the present’.⁶⁶ It is an approach that suggests that although the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus introduce the kingdom, its full experience will be realised in the eschaton. Easley, Kendell, and Cox say, ‘this approach

60 BBC, ‘South African Preacher Mocked after Charging for “Heavenly” Photos’, available at www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-35944680, viewed on 1 April 2016.

61 BBC, ‘South African Preacher Mocked’; cf Kgatle, *Pentecostal theology*.

62 *The Times*, ‘Zimbabwean Pastor “Talks to God on his Mobile Phone”’, available at www.thetimes.co.uk/article/zimbabwean-pastor-talks-to-god-on-his-mobile-phone-j6hsbmbdb7, viewed on 24 May 2017.

63 Kelebogile T. Resane, ‘And They Shall Make you Eat Grass like Oxen’ (Daniel 4:24): Reflections on Recent Practices in some New Charismatic Churches’, *Pharos Journal of Theology* 98.1 (2017), pp. 1–17.

64 Larry R. McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology: Discerning the Way Forward* (JPTSUP 39; Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 200–91.

65 George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 70.

66 Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 70.

insists that the kingdom was inaugurated on earth through the ministry the ministry of Jesus. However, his kingdom will not be consummated until Jesus's return'.⁶⁷ Given this definition, it means that an inaugurated eschatology brings together both the realized eschatology and the futuristic eschatology in equilibrium. This means an acknowledgment of both the kingdom in the present and its full experience in the future.

An inaugurated eschatology is suggested here as a theoretical framework that brings the positive aspects of a futuristic eschatology and realized eschatology. An inaugurated eschatology is relevant for finding a balance between the two extremes of futuristic eschatology and realised eschatology. We need to avoid a completely futuristic eschatology as much as we should avoid a completely realised eschatology. This is an avoidance of a complete focus on the future at the expense of earthly responsibility. Ladd points out that the complete focus on future eschatology produces a lack of relevance for contemporary Christian life and challenges.⁶⁸ An inaugurated eschatology is an avoidance of a realised eschatology that produces materialism and other controversial practices in an African context. An inaugurated eschatology can be used in finding a balance between a futuristic eschatology and a realised eschatology, making it an eschatology in equilibrium. An inaugurated eschatology is used here as an approach that helps in easing the tension that exists between future eschatology and realised eschatology as the aspects of both are acknowledged.

9 Towards an Inaugurated Eschatology in South African Pentecostalism

The futuristic eschatology and realized eschatology are brought together in the development of an Inaugurated eschatology. This means that we cannot do away with a realized eschatology given its positive aspects such as bringing much hope among the believers in new prophetic churches.⁶⁹ The believers and followers of the new prophetic churches have hope through the realized eschatology that many of their challenges in Africa can be resolved in the current moment. However, the positive aspects of this approach should not be hijacked by the prophets in new prophetic churches but should rather

67 Kendell Easley and Steven L. Cox, *HCSB Harmony of the Gospels* (B&H Publishing Group, 2006), p. 104.

68 George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996).

69 Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: A&C Black, 2008), p. 322.

be balanced in an integrative and transformative way.⁷⁰ This approach is proposed here because it does not only emphasize the Kingdom in the already here but still acknowledges that the kingdom in its fullness is yet to come. This means that a realized eschatology that seeks solutions to the African problems in the now should not be done at the expense of the kingdom that is yet to come. As much as there is value in dealing with the current challenges in the present, it does not mean that the final future expectation is not important in the eschatological discourses.

Therefore, an inaugurated eschatology does not do away with futuristic eschatology. According to Althouse,

The eschatological future, pictured in such concepts as the eschaton, the kingdom of God, the Parousia and the new heaven and new earth, has the power to transform this present 'god forsaken' world, while providing hope for the future when God's glory and righteousness will be finally revealed.⁷¹

This means that hope does not only come with the realised eschatology only, but it is also activated through the hope of the future. The believers can deal with the current challenges in the world by hoping for the future victory that is coming with the eschaton.

An eschatological theology in new prophetic churches cannot only be based on the kingdom now message but should also consider the futuristic expectation, hence the importance of the inaugurated eschatology.⁷² This is important in striking a balance between realized eschatology and futuristic eschatology. This means that as much as the kingdom is already here it is still expected in the future because its fullness is not yet realized in the present moment. This is possible according to Dempster, *et al*, when there is a balance between the scriptural texts on the realized eschatology and the futuristic eschatology.⁷³ McQueen concurs Pentecostals need to 'develop an eschatology that is faithful to current biblical scholarship as well as to the historical and

⁷⁰ Althouse and Waddell (eds.), *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatologies*, p. 374. Cf Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

⁷¹ Peter Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days: Pentecostal Eschatology in Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann* (JPTSup 25; London: Continuum Publishing, 2003), p. 2.

⁷² Kenneth Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (JPTSup 28; London: Continuum Publishing, 2004), p. 123.

⁷³ Murray Dempster, B.D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (eds.), *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), p. 214.

theological ethos of the Pentecostal movement'.⁷⁴ In other words, the realized eschatology itself is not a wrong approach but it should not be overemphasized at the expense of a futuristic eschatology.⁷⁵ But rather a balance should be pursued between the two through an inaugurated eschatology that is biblically sound.

As previously discussed, a realized eschatology is necessary in helping new prophetic churches to not only focus on the future but in helping their communities in dealing with the current challenges in Africa.⁷⁶ But this approach should be balanced with the idea of futuristic eschatology to avoid dangerous faith practices, controversial miracles, and the emphasis on the prosperity gospel. Furthermore, the realized eschatology is also important for an eschatology that does not only take care of human beings alone but also the environment.⁷⁷ Therefore, a balance between realised eschatology and futuristic eschatology is a balance between an eschatology of the future and an eschatology of the present that also include the current environmental crisis.⁷⁸ In other words, a balanced eschatology will be able to find a balance between the eschatological expectation of the future and the earthly responsibilities of the present. When this happens, there will be no need to perform controversial miracles in the claim of the realised eschatology and there will be no need to focus on the gospel of materialism. In addition, this balance is important according to Hunter and Robeck in maintaining the message of the soon-coming king.⁷⁹

However, the inaugurated eschatology is not only relevant for dealing with extremes in the new prophetic churches; it also promises to bring a balance to classical Pentecostalism. The focus on the futuristic eschatology in classical Pentecostalism at times comes at the expense of neglecting the current challenges in the hope that change will come with the eschaton. In other words, when the futuristic eschatology encourages classical Pentecostalism to only focus on the second coming of Christ for example by not responding to the current challenges, it's problematic. It is also problematic when the futuristic eschatology makes classical Pentecostalism to be more inward-looking in

74 McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, p. 16.

75 Jullie Ma and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Regnum Studies in Mission; Oxford: 1517 Media, 2010), p. 281.

76 Christopher Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

77 Tony Richie, *Essentials of Pentecostal Theology: An Eternal and Unchanging Lord Powerfully Present & Active by the Holy Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020).

78 Daneel, 'African Independent Church Pneumatology', p. 143.

79 Harold D. Hunter and Cecil. M. Robeck Jr. (eds.), *The Azusa Street Revival and its Legacy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), p. 240.

relation to burning issues in society. Therefore, the inaugurated eschatology in this stream of Pentecostalism brings that balance between the eschatological expectations and earthly responsibilities of the church in the present moment. The inaugurated eschatology as much as it hopes in the future, it also sees the need for addressing the current challenges faced by believers in the present.

10 Conclusion

This article evaluated the eschatological approaches within South African Pentecostalism by focusing on classical Pentecostalism and the new prophetic churches. Classical Pentecostalism are churches such as Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa while new prophetic churches are churches such as Enlightened Christian Gathering and Alleluia Ministries International. There are various approaches to eschatology in Pentecostalism, but the discussions in this article were limited to realised eschatology and futuristic eschatology. While the classical Pentecostal churches are futuristic in their eschatological approach, the new prophetic churches do not exclusively focus on the futuristic eschatology that expects the victory to come with the second coming of Christ but rather on the here and the now. These churches emphasise the realised eschatology as they believe that the life, death, and resurrection of Christ are enough to experience victory in the here and the now. However, the focus on a realised eschatology has brought some level of abuse and the performance of unusual miracles and gimmicks in these churches. To find the balance between a futuristic eschatology and a realised eschatology, this article proposed an inaugurated eschatology that suggests that although the kingdom of God has already come, its full experience will only manifest with the second coming of Christ. The inaugurated eschatology challenges our view of both futuristic and realised eschatology in pursuit of the balance between the two approaches. This approach is necessary in new prophetic churches to deal with challenges of dangerous faith practices, controversial miracles, and the emphasis on the prosperity gospel. The approach is also necessary in classical Pentecostalism for the need to address the current challenges by not only focusing on the future eschaton.