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Mookgo Solomon Kgatle

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Prophethood of All Believers in Early Christianity and Its Implication for Neo-Pentecostal Prophecy: A Pneumatological Imagination Approach

Mookgo Solomon Kgatle

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9556-6597>

University of South Africa

kgatls@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

Contrary to the individualistic contemporary practices of prophecy, the practice of prophecy in early Christianity, particularly the Pentecost narrative in Luke-Acts, was a function of all believers. This approach is framed here as the prophethood of all believers using a pneumatological imagination. The approach is relevant to address the challenges of the individualistic approach in the contemporary practices of neo-Pentecostal prophecy. These challenges are highlighted here to point out abuses of prophecy in the twenty-first century. The Pentecost narrative in the early church in Luke-Acts is introduced as the background to this study. The article demonstrates that the pneumatic experiences including prophecy which come through the baptism of the Holy Spirit are experienced by all believers. This is a ground for the prophethood of all believers in early Christianity in Luke-Acts. However, the contemporary practice of prophecy in African neo-Pentecostalism is more individualistic than inclusive. The aim of this article is to propose an inclusive approach as was the practice of the early Christians in Luke-Acts.

Keywords: early Christianity; neo-Pentecostalism; pneumatological imagination; prophecy; prophethood; Spirit baptism

Introduction

Prophecy was a popular practice in both the Old and the New Testaments. It refers to the message conveyed by God to his people. The prophet becomes the messenger to communicate the specific message to the people of God.¹ Throughout the Bible (Old and New Testaments), God spoke to his people through the mouth of the prophet. Gentile explains, “In both New Testament times and in the contemporary Church, the prophecy refers to an inspired spoken message that God brings to a person or a group of people through a Spirit-filled Christian.”² The understanding of prophecy as the word coming from God means that prophecy is divine and sacred, it is understood not as a word from a human being but from the deity. However, the sacredness of prophecy does not necessarily mean that prophecy or prophets cannot be questioned. In addition, the sacredness of prophecy does not mean that the prophet alone should be the one speaking, hence the proposal of the prophethood of all believers in contemporary practices of prophecy. This approach is proposed here in contrast to the individualistic practices of prophecy and as a remedy to the abuses of prophecy in the twenty-first century.

In early Christianity, prophecy was practiced as part of the pneumatic experiences that came because of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This article argues that prophecy in early Christianity involved the participation of all believers as opposed to the individualistic contemporary practice of prophecy. This argument is based on the Pentecost narrative which is found in Luke-Acts. This narrative will be introduced as a way of providing the background to this study. In addition, the article will show that the Pentecost narrative is a foundation for the pneumatic experiences including the gift of prophecy. The article will demonstrate that the gift of prophecy was a function of all believers. The contemporary practices of the gift of prophecy will be highlighted to demonstrate the individualistic approaches in the African neo-Pentecostal churches. The article will also introduce the pneumatological imagination which is discussed here in the context of the practice of prophecy. The aim of the article is to show through pneumatological imagination that the prophethood of all believers as was practiced by the early Christians is relevant for the practice of prophecy in the twenty-first century particularly among the neo-Pentecostal churches.

The Pentecost Narrative in Early Christianity

Pentecost is a festival marking the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus Christ and other believers.³ It is believed therefore that all believers who accept the Lord Jesus Christ will also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in the same

1 James Watts and Paul R. House, eds., *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John DW Watts* (London: A&C Black, 1996), 162.

2 Ernest Gentile, *Your Sons and Daughters Shall Prophesy: Prophetic Gifts in Ministry Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 11.

3 Akiti Glory Alamu, “‘Putting Old Wine in New Wine Skins’: The Place of African Indigenous Churches in the Nigerian Pentecostals,” *African Renaissance* 16, no. 2 (2019).

way that early Christians did. Therefore, the promise of the Holy Spirit was not only made to the early Christians but even to generations to come after the ascension of Jesus Christ. Peter, in his sermon made this declaration in Acts 2:39: “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39, New International Version). The Pentecost narrative refers to the events around the promise of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Christ in early Christianity. The early Christians were promised that when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they would receive power; thus a Pentecost narrative is an empowerment moment with the Holy Spirit. The early Christians were also promised that when the Holy Spirit comes, they would be able to witness to others through the same power of the Holy Spirit. All these will happen as a result of being baptised in the Holy Spirit as per the promise in Luke 3:16. Therefore, the signs of the Holy Spirit become manifest after the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Put differently, the Holy Spirit becomes an agent in which the gifts and experiences of Pentecost become active in the life of the early Christian believer.

It should be reiterated that the Pentecost narrative in early Christianity also refers to the pneumatic experiences that happened because of receiving the Holy Spirit.⁴ One of the pneumatic experiences is the gift of speaking in tongues which is debated between glossolalia (strange tongues) and xenolalia (foreign tongues).⁵ Acts 2 refers to known languages used by believers and understood by listeners, although the speakers did not understand what they were saying. On the contrary, in 1 Cor 14, the focus is on speaking in unknown languages, usually referred to as heavenly languages, where interpretation became necessary to understand it. However, this is not the focus of this article except to point out that those who receive the Holy Spirit were also able to speak in other tongues according to Acts 2:1–4. Evidence for speaking in tongues is also found in Acts 10:44 where all Christian believers who listened to Peter explaining Spirit baptism were baptised and spoke in other tongues. In the same text, it says that they were able to glorify God because of receiving the Holy Spirit, which makes prayer or worship also a pneumatic experience. The other pneumatic experience in Acts is when Paul prayed for the believers to receive the Holy Spirit and they prophesied because of Spirit baptism. Acts 19:6 states clearly, “When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (New International Version). In this case, prophecy becomes a pneumatic experience that comes when one is baptised with the Holy Spirit. Other pneumatic experiences include healing and the performance of other miracles which happened as a result of being Spirit baptised and Spirit-filled.

4 Robert Paul Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 1989). Cf. Amos Yong, *The Hermeneutical Spirit: Theological Interpretation and Scriptural Imagination for the 21st Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017).

5 Francis Machingura, “‘All of Them Were Filled with the Holy Spirit and Began to Speak in Other Tongues’ (Acts 2: 4): Glossolalia as a Defining Characteristic of Zimbabwean Pentecostalism,” in *Aspects of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe*, ed. L. Togarasei (Cham: Springer, 2018), 91–109.

Therefore, prophecy is believed to be part of the Pentecost narrative which was exercised through the coming of the Holy Spirit.⁶ After all, the Holy Spirit is also a prophetic Spirit, meaning he is able to reveal the word of God to the believer.⁷ Hence, a Spirit-filled believer in early Christianity was also expected to receive a revelation from God through the same Holy Spirit.⁸ This is because Luke-Acts makes reference to people prophesying as a result of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Luke-Acts does not make reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit as a special gift to a special individual in early Christianity. This creates an opportunity for anyone who is baptised in the Holy Spirit to prophesy in the same way that they are able to speak in other tongues. By this, one is not dismissive of the prophetic office which is occupied by a particular prophet but this should not be overemphasised at the expense of the prophethood of all believers in Luke-Acts. As much as there is a prophetic office elsewhere in the biblical texts, the prophethood of all believers should also be considered as it happened in early Christianity in Luke-Acts.

The Prophethood of All Believers in Early Christianity

The practice of prophecy as derived from the Pentecost narrative as it happened in early Christianity shows that different groups received different empowerment.⁹ First, all believers received the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to become prophetic witnesses. Acts 1:8 states clearly that the disciples should wait in Jerusalem to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. After receiving such power, they are expected to witness to others who have not yet received the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The prophetic witness in Acts 1:8 is not the activity of a select few but all believers who have receive the power of the Holy Spirit are expected to be witnesses. Lum puts it as follows:

The Acts 2 account is interpreted in light of Acts 1:8 where all believers are declared to be empowered witnesses of the gospel to the world. Believers thus function as a representative of God and continue to speak for God to the world.¹⁰

6 Peter Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days: Pentecostal Eschatology in Conversation With Jürgen Moltmann* (London: A&C Black, 2003).

7 Marius Nel, "Comparison Between the Respective Views of John Calvin and Classical Pentecostals on the Role of the Holy Spirit in Reading the Bible," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021): a6327.

8 James Dunn, *Baptism in Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London: SCM Press, 2013). Cf. James Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious And Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997).

9 Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke's Charismatic Theology* (London: A&C Black, 1999). Cf. Marius Nel, "Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, Early Christianity and Contemporary Pentecostalism: A Question about Continuity and Discontinuity," LitNet, 19/10/2017, <https://www.litnet.co.za/prophesy-hebrew-bible-early-christianity-contemporary-pentecostalism-question-continuity-discontinuity/>.

10 Li Ming Dennis Lum, *The Practice of Prophecy: An Empirical-Theological Study of Pentecostals in Singapore* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 35.

Chammah Kaunda calls this a mission witness to illustrate that witnessing to the world is not the work of an individual but all believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit.¹¹ This has been the strength of Pentecostalism since its beginning, where all believers are expected to become witnesses to the world. However, some of the neo-Pentecostal churches are reversing the prophethood of all believers by focusing on the individual prophet.

Second, all the believers were baptised in the Holy Spirit and experienced the pneumatic experiences including the gift of prophecy.¹² The Holy Spirit activates the gifts through baptism of the same Spirit. Acts 2:1–4 makes reference to all believers receiving the Holy Spirit and being able to speak with other tongues. In addition, the believers in early Christianity were able to understand each other even when they spoke different languages and came from different nations. They were able to communicate what God was saying at that moment to each other. Therefore, the prophetic word was communicated from one believer to another without a hierarchy of the prophetic office. It must be emphasised that the Holy Spirit did not fall on a select few. Similarly, the pneumatic experiences were not only experienced by a select few but all the believers were able to receive utterances from the Holy Spirit. This means that all believers who are baptised by the Holy Spirit are able to receive the prophetic word from the Holy Spirit. Although there is a distinction between speaking in tongues and prophetic words, the fact that they could understand each other means that this was not an ordinary speaking in tongues but also an audible word coming from God in the Pentecost narrative.

Third, Peter’s sermon refers to Joel 2:28 which points to the gift of prophecy being apportioned to all sons and daughters, not only a select few.¹³ Peter reminded the believers in early Christianity that the Pentecost pneumatic experiences were prophesied in Joel 2:28 that in the last days, God will pour out his spirit upon all flesh, and sons and daughters will be able to prophesy. It must be noted here that the practice of prophecy in both Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 is not reserved for a select few but is a promise upon believers regardless of their age, race, gender, and other demographics. Therefore, the practice of prophecy in early Christianity particularly in Luke-Acts is also relevant in addressing issues of gender inequality and other forms of discrimination. Peter went further to explain that this promise is not only for the early Christians but even for future generations. Peter made these explanations because many were astounded at the pneumatic experiences that were happening to the believers from different nations. When Peter said this centuries ago, he was also pointing to the generations in the twenty-first century that the promise of the Holy Spirit and its pneumatic experiences are also relevant to twenty-first-century practices. However, some of the practices in the twenty-

11 Chammah Kaunda, “Mission as Witness,” *The Expository Times* 134, no. 7 (2023): 299–308.

12 Sheryl Joanne Arthur, “A Pneumatological Study on an Elim Pentecostal Congregation’s Lived Experience of Spirit Baptism with ‘Signs Following,’” (PhD diss., University of Roehampton, 2022).

13 Mike Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic: A Balanced, Biblical Guide to Using and Nurturing Dreams, Revelations and Spiritual Gifts as God Intended* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma Media, 2008).

first century have deviated from the practices of early Christianity. The next section highlights some of the deviations in contemporary practices of prophecy in neo-Pentecostalism.

Contemporary Practices of Prophecy in Neo-Pentecostalism

Neo-Pentecostalism is discussed here as a movement in Africa that emphasises the performance of miracles, the individualistic prophethood, the ministry of healing, and the ministry of deliverance.¹⁴ In addition, the pneumatic experiences are overemphasised in these churches, particularly the so-called demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit also known as ecstatic experiences with people falling and rolling down.¹⁵ These are churches that discourage the preaching of the word but emphasise the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ However, ideally, the word is inspired by the same Holy Spirit, hence the love of the Holy Spirit is expected to be informed by the love for the word of God in scriptures. Neo-Pentecostalism is part of the Pentecostal movement but with some distinctions from other sub-traditions like the classical Pentecostal churches. These churches continue to grow and spread throughout sub-Saharan Africa in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the continent. One of the expressions of neo-Pentecostalism is new prophetic churches which are known for emphasising the prophetic gift in their theology. In new prophetic churches, there is emphasis on the prophetic gift, prophetic titles, prophetic consultations, prophetic deliverance, prophetic miracles, and prophetic products.¹⁷

The new prophetic churches are known for their adoration of the person of the prophet sometimes at the expense of the person of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸ The person of the prophet is important in these churches as there is much dependence on popular prophets in the twenty-first century. It is this reliance on the person of the prophet that makes the practice of prophecy among these churches too individualistic. Hence, some of the prophets such as Prophet Shepherd Bushiri have come with titles such as “major one” to illustrate that he is better than other prophets. In addition, the use of titles such as this places a dependence on the prophet by the believers and followers of these churches. In addition, these prophets have come to be known as

14 Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, *The Fourth Pentecostal Wave in South Africa: A Critical Engagement* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019). Cf. Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, *Pentecostalism and Cultism in South Africa* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

15 Philomena Njeri Mwaura, “African Instituted Churches in East Africa,” *Studies in World Christianity* 10, no. 2 (2004): 160–84.

16 Collium Banda, “Regenerated Without Being Recreated? A Soteriological Analysis of the African Neo-Pentecostal Teaching on Generational Curses,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76, no. 3 (2020): a5941.

17 Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, “Reimagining the Practice of Pentecostal Prophecy in Southern Africa: A Critical Engagement,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75, no. 4 (2019): a5183.

18 Vhumani Magezi, and Collium Banda, “Competing with Christ? A Critical Christological Analysis of the Reliance on Pentecostal Prophets in Zimbabwe,” *In die Skriflig* 51, no. 2 (2017): 1–10.

powerful “men of God” and others as powerful “women of God.” Again, these appellations are made so that there will be much dependency on the person of the prophet as the one who alone can hear God and others must just listen and obey as the prophet commands them.

In the practice of prophecy, the new prophetic churches are known for emphasising the prophetic office being occupied by a specific person.¹⁹ It is for this reason that the practice of prophecy in these churches is more individualistic than being a prophethood of all believers. Prophets such as Shepherd Bushiri, Alph Lukau, Walter Magaya, Emmanuel Makandiwa, and others have personalised the gift of prophecy, closing the door for the gift to be practiced by other believers. In these churches, it is very rare to see other people prophesying as the practice of prophecy is limited to the major prophet or his wife. This means that the new prophetic churches within neo-Pentecostalism are more individualistic in their approach to prophecy as opposed to the prophethood of all believers as it happened in early Christianity. This calls for a different approach among the new prophetic churches and neo-Pentecostalism in general in reimagining the practice of prophecy. This article describes how this is possible through the framework of pneumatological imagination.

Framing Pneumatological Imagination in the Context of Prophecy

The pneumatological imagination is a theoretical framework whose foundation and pioneering are attributed to Lucien Richard.²⁰ However, it was a Pentecostal theologian, Amos Yong, who popularised the pneumatological imagination as an orientation to God, human beings, and the environment.²¹ This article focuses on the orientation to God and human beings to demonstrate that the practice of prophecy is not only informed by divine revelation from God but also by how human beings account for each other. In this way, prophecy is not only understood as divine revelation but also the role of human participation in that revelation. Pneumatological imagination is important for the connection between God and human beings in the practice of prophecy.²² It is also important for the connection between human beings and others in the practice of the

19 Hulisani Ramantswana, “Prophets Praying For, or Preying On People’s Faith: A Reflection on Prophetic Ministry in the South African Context,” *In die Skriflig* 53, no. 4 (2018): 1–8. Cf. Ezra Chitando and Kudzai Biri, “Walter Magaya’s Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe: A Preliminary Study with Particular Reference to Ecumenism,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42, no. 2 (2016): 72–85.

20 Amos Yong, “The Pneumatological Imagination: The Logic of Pentecostal Theology,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 152–62.

21 Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 29. Cf. Yong, “The Pneumatological Imagination,” 152; cf. Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014).

22 Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

same. This means that the pneumatological imagination is a relevant theory in advocating for prophecy in which all believers are active in its practice. This means that pneumatological imagination is relevant in making prophecy the participation of all believers. In pneumatological imagination, the prophet is not the only one who speaks to God but all other believers can speak to him and communicate the same message to each other.

Pneumatological imagination is an imagination connected to the Pentecostal theology of pneumatology.²³ Pneumatology is a branch of Christian theology that acknowledges the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation and other aspects of theology.²⁴ In addition, it is an acknowledgment of the role played by the Holy Spirit in trinitarian theology. In simple terms, it is not only God, the Father, and God, the Son but also God, the Holy Spirit that is active in the plan of salvation. In this context, it is an acknowledgment of the role of the Holy Spirit in the practice of the gift of prophecy. This means that pneumatological imagination is centred on the Pentecostal theology of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is at the centre of this imagination as the one who empowers the believer in the gift of prophecy. It is for this reason that the pneumatological imagination is an imagination based on the Pentecost narrative in Luke-Acts. The event of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the pneumatic experiences that followed the events all inform aspects of the pneumatological imagination.²⁵ In this article, pneumatological imagination is relevant for the discussion on the practice of prophecy in neo-Pentecostalism in Africa, because prophecy in the New Testament happens as a result of being baptised in the Holy Spirit. In the next section, the pneumatological imagination is discussed in the context of the prophethood of all believers as it was the practice by early Christianity.

Prophethood of All Believers: A Pneumatological Imagination

All believers in the early church were part of prophethood and priesthood even though not all of them could prophesy. This kind of prophecy is not centred on the particular prophet occupying the prophetic office but on all spirit-filled believers. This opens room for the prophetic word to be authenticated by others as it is not only based on the prophet. The prophethood of all believers also helps in ascertaining that indeed the prophecy is founded on the work of the Holy Spirit. Some prophets in neo-Pentecostal churches have confused the prophetic word from God with divination in African traditional religions.²⁶ Therefore, when there is participation of other believers, they will

23 Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 78. Paul Baker, *Pentecostal Imagination and the Retrieval of Identity: Towards a Pneumatology of History* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2023).

24 Donald Gelpi, *The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 5.

25 Chammah Kaunda, *The Nation That Fears God Prospers: A Critique of Zambian Pentecostal Theological Imaginations* (London: Fortress Press, 2019), 4.

26 Cephas Omenyo, "Man of God Prophesy Unto Me: The Prophetic Phenomenon in African Christianity," *Studies in World Christianity* 17, no. 1 (2011): 30–49. Cf. Mookgo Solomon Kgatle,

help in bearing witness to the prophetic word in ensuring that it is indeed from the Holy Spirit. This is because not all prophets speak as sent by God. Some prophets, as God spoke through the mouth of Jeremiah, have sent themselves. Jeremiah 23:21 states: “I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied” (New International Version). This means that a prophet can speak a prophetic word without being sent by God and without God speaking to them, hence the importance of the prophethood of all believers.

The practice of prophecy in contemporary neo-Pentecostal churches is expected to follow the practice of early Christianity. This means that the Holy Spirit is supposed to be the foundation of the practice of the gift of prophecy. After all, the gift of prophecy is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.²⁷ In the same way that the believers received the Holy Spirit and prophesied in early Christianity, it is expected that prophecy in the neo-Pentecostal churches will follow Spirit baptism.²⁸ Similarly, the practice of the gift of prophecy in neo-Pentecostal churches is expected to be the participation of all believers. If the neo-Pentecostal churches in the twenty-first century believe that the Holy Spirit is the one who activates the gifts of the Holy Spirit and since the Spirit is upon all believers, then all believers should be able to prophesy. In the Pentecost narrative, all believers received the Holy Spirit and were involved in pneumatic experiences, including the practice of prophecy. There can never be a separation between the gift of prophecy and the work of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, there is no separation between the pneumatic experiences such as the “speaking of tongues” and prophecy. If they all spoke in tongues, it means they all can take part in the gift of prophecy. Any attempt to assign the practice of the gift of prophecy to a select few individuals is an attempt to discredit the participation of all believers in the gift of prophecy.

The participation of all believers in the practice of prophecy helps in making the prophets accountable to all believers in the body of Christ. This means that the participation of all believers in the prophetic gift will also assist in dealing with various challenges of accountability by some prophets in neo-Pentecostal churches. The prophethood of all believers means that the prophet will not individualise the practice of prophecy. Therefore, the prophet will not be able to abuse other believers on the ground that they only speak to God. In the prophethood of all believers, God can speak to anyone and any believer can communicate with God. There is no room for the special word given by a special prophet in the prophethood of all believers. There is no major or minor prophet as all have received the Holy Spirit and can therefore hear the voice

“Consultations in New Prophetic Churches and African Traditional Religions: A Case Study of Divine Healing in Assessing Syncretistic Practices in the South African Context,” *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 400.

27 Andrew Cooper Fix, *Prophecy and Reason: The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 174.

28 Maria Frahm-Arp, “Pneumatology and Prophetic Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity during COVID-19 in South Africa,” in *The Use and Abuse of the Spirit in Pentecostalism*, ed. Mookgo S. Kgatle and Allan H. Anderson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 150–74.

of God through the same Spirit. This means that there is no dependence on one single prophet as all can receive the prophetic word. This will make the believers place their dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit so that they too can hear God and can also speak the prophetic word.

In Africa, where so many false prophets have emerged in the twenty-first century and have deceived many unsuspecting recipients of prophecies, the prophethood of all believers will be able to deal with the falsehood in prophecy. In other words, when all believers can receive the word from God as inspired by the Holy Spirit, they will be able to identify false prophets by the same Holy Spirit. The spirit-filled believer is expected to discern between the true prophetic word and the false prophetic word. Similarly, the spirit-filled believer through a pneumatological imagination can discern between the true prophet and the false prophet. The prophethood of all believers is pivotal in activating discernment among believers which is important in dealing with the falsehood in the practice of prophecy. This will help in making the practice of prophecy an activity not only between God and the prophet but between fellow believers as it happened in early Christianity. This is possible through the pneumatological imagination as a theoretical framework based on our orientation to God, human beings, and the environment.

Conclusion

This article studied the prophethood of all believers in the practice of prophecy. The literature review demonstrates that the Pentecost narrative in Luke-Acts is a foundation for the prophethood of all believers. Therefore, the practice of prophecy in early Christianity was the participation of all believers as opposed to the individualistic practice of prophecy. This approach is relevant in addressing the challenges of individualistic practices of prophecy in neo-Pentecostalism. The individualistic practices of prophecy in neo-Pentecostalism produce forms of abuse such as the dependence on the person of the prophet rather than the dependence on the redemptive work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. This study showed through a pneumatological imagination that the practice of prophecy should involve all believers who are full of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the practice of prophecy in the twenty-first century cannot be an individualistic one but should incorporate all the believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit the same way the early Christians practiced prophecy. This study is important in illustrating the important role played by the prophethood of all believers in early Christianity which is a relevant approach for the practice of prophecy in the twenty-first century.

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