The Use and Abuse of the Spirit in Pentecostalism

This book is a pneumatological reflection on the use and abuse of the Spirit in light of the abuse of religion within South African Pentecostalism. Both emerging and well-established scholars of South African Pentecostalism are brought together to reflect on pneumatology from various approaches, which includes among others: historical, biblical, migration, commercialisation of religion, discernment of spirits and human flourishing.

From a broader understanding of the function of the Holy Spirit in different streams of Pentecostalism, the argument is that this function has changed with the emergence of the new Prophetic churches in South Africa.

This is a fascinating insight into one of the major emerging worldwide religious movements. As such, it will be of great interest to academics in Pentecostal Studies, Christian Studies, Theology, and Religious Studies as well as African Studies and the Sociology of Religion.

Mookgo S. Kgatle is Associate Professor of Missiology at the University of South Africa (UNISA). He completed his PhD (Theology) from the University of Pretoria in 2016. Kgatle is a National Research Foundation (NRF) Y-Rated researcher (2019–2024) in the area of African Pentecostalism. He is the visiting scholar at the Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies-University of Birmingham (2020–2021). Kgatle has published several peer-reviewed articles in various high impact journals and the book The Fourth Pentecostal Wave in South Africa: A Critical Engagement (Routledge, 2019).

Allan H. Anderson is Emeritus Professor of Mission and Pentecostal Studies at the University of Birmingham, an internationally well-known scholar in the study of worldwide Pentecostalism, with particular interest in southern Africa. He is the author of nine books (translated into four languages) and many articles, and has joint-edited four collections on global Pentecostalism. He is a founder-member of the European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism, was editor of PentecoStudies, and serves on the international editorial board of five academic journals.
The Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies series brings high quality research monograph publishing back into focus for authors, international libraries, and student, academic and research readers. This open-ended monograph series presents cutting-edge research from both established and new authors in the field. With specialist focus yet clear contextual presentation of contemporary research, books in the series take research into important new directions and open the field to new critical debate within the discipline, in areas of related study, and in key areas for contemporary society.

Catholic Social Teaching and Theologies of Peace in Northern Ireland
Cardinal Cahal Daly and the Pursuit of the Peaceable Kingdom
Maria Power

Contextual Theology
Skills and Practices of Liberating Faith
Edited by Sigurd Bergmann and Mika Vähäkangas

Multi-Religious Perspectives on a Global Ethic
In Search of a Common Morality
Edited by Myriam Renaud and William Schweiker

Sustainable Development Goals and the Catholic Church
Catholic Social Teaching and the UN’s Agenda 2030
Edited by Katarzyna Cichos, Jarosław A. Sobkowiak, Radosław Zenderowski, Ryszard F. Sadowski, Beata Zbarachewicz and Stanisław Dziekoński

The Use and Abuse of the Spirit in Pentecostalism
A South African Perspective
Edited by Mookgo S. Kgatle and Allan H. Anderson

For more information about this series, please visit: www.routledge.com/religion/series/RCRITREL
The Use and Abuse of the Spirit in Pentecostalism
A South African Perspective

Edited by Mookgo S. Kgatle and Allan H. Anderson
Contents

Acknowledgements vii
List of abbreviations viii
List of contributors ix

1 Introduction: the abuse of the Spirit in some New Prophetic Churches in South African Pentecostalism 1
MOOKGO S. KGATLE AND ALLAN H. ANDERSON

2 “The weird you shall always have”: a historical look into the causative factors behind neo-prophetic scandals in South Africa 24
THABANG R. MOFOKENG

3 The abuse of the Spirit: an immigration-imported new wave or a development of pre-existing local beliefs? 53
ELISE B. KISUNGU

4 Whence have all the prophets come?: a reflection on neo-prophets and their oracular forms 73
HULISANI RAMANTSWANA AND ITHAPELENG SEBETSELI

5 “Simon the Sorcerer offered them money” (Acts 8:19): some Pentecostals have gone commercial instead of evangelical 93
KELEBOGILE T. RESANE

6 Mission as discernment of spirits in the advent of the abuse of prophecy within Newer Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity in South Africa 115
THEMBA SHINGANGE
Contents

7 Rethinking the Seven Angels Ministry's praxis of pneumatology as seen through the lens of decoloniality 131
BEKITHEMBA DUBE

8 Pneumatology and Prophetic Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity during COVID-19 in South Africa 150
MARIA FRAHM-ARP

9 The poor's weapon against inequality?: a critique of the public role of neo-Pentecostalism in unequal South Africa 175
COLLIUM BANDA

Epilogue 203
MOOKGO S. KGATLE AND ALLAN H. ANDERSON

Index 205
Acknowledgements

This book is not only the success of the vision and leadership of the editors but of a collective work by all participants who took part in the project. First of all, we want to appreciate all the contributors of the nine chapters in this book for their commitment and diligence in working on their chapters until finalisation. Second, we want to thank the University of South Africa language-editing department for editing all the chapters before we sent the final submission to the publisher. Last, the book followed a double-blind review for all the individual chapters (i.e. the identity of both the authors and the reviewers were not revealed to each other). We therefore want to thank all the reviewers who had the expertise and interest in the chapters they reviewed.
Abbreviations

ABH  African Biblical Hermeneutics
AFM  Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa
AIC  African Independent Churches
ANA  African News Agency
AOG  Assemblies of God
ASGISA Accelerated Shared Growth In South Africa
ATR  African Traditional Religions
COVID-19 Corona Virus Disease 2019
CRL  Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities
DA   Discourse Analysis
ECG  Enlightened Christian Gathering
FGC  Full Gospel Church
GBC  Grace Bible Church
GEAR Growth, Employment and Redistribution
KPMI Kingdom Prayer Ministries International
NPCC Newer Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity
NAR  New Apostolic Reformation
NDP  National Development Plan
NPC  Neo Pentecostal Churches
NPM  Neo-Prophetic Movement
NRM  New Religious Movements
NT   New Testament
OT   Old Testament
PAIC Pentecostal-type African Independent Churches
PCC  Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity
PPCC Prophetic Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity
PHD  Power Healing and Deliverance
PFN  Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria
SABC South African Broadcasting Corporation
SAM  Seven Angels Ministry
SANP South African neo-Pentecostal
SAPCC South African Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity
SCOAN Synagogue Church of All Nations
ZCC  Zion Christian Church
Contributors

Allan H. Anderson is Emeritus Professor of Mission and Pentecostal Studies at the University of Birmingham, an internationally well-known scholar in the study of worldwide Pentecostalism, with particular interest in southern Africa. He is the author of nine books (translated into four languages) and many articles, and has joint-edited four collections on global Pentecostalism. He is a founder-member of the European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism, was editor of PentecoStudies, and serves on the international editorial board of five academic journals.

Collium Banda is a Post-doctoral research Fellow in the Faculty of Theology at North-West University, South Africa, and Adjunct Lecturer at Theological College of Zimbabwe. He is an emerging researcher with interests in African Pentecostalism, Christian doctrines in the African public space, African traditional religions, African indigenous knowledge systems and Christianity in African contexts of poverty.

Bekithemba Dube is a Senior Lecturer at the faculty of Education at the University of the Free State (UFS), a guest editor of ALTERNATION journal, Managing Editor and Co-ordinator for the International Society for Studies in Rural Contexts. He holds a PhD in Curriculum Studies from UFS. He is a scholar in the field of Education focusing on Sociology, Philosophy of Education and Religion. He has published several peer-reviewed articles in international journals in the same areas.

Maria Frahm-Arp is an Associate Professor in the Department of Religion Studies at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. She is the author of Professional Women in South African Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity (Brill 2010). Her research areas include Pentecostal Charismatic Churches in South Africa with a particular focus on development, politics and gender in these churches.

Mookgo S. Kgatle is Associate Professor of Missiology at the University of South Africa (UNISA). He completed his PhD (Theology) from the University of Pretoria in 2016. Kgatle is a National Research Foundation (NRF) Y Rated researcher (2019–2024) in the area of African Pentecostalism. He is the visiting scholar at the Centre for Pentecostal and
Contributors


Elise B. Kisungu is a Masters student at University of South Africa. Her interest in urban ministry and migration prompted her to carry out a research on Congolese churches in Gauteng, South Africa. In addition, she has interest for academic contributions that join efforts with the South African voices that rise on the global scale in the commitment of breaking misconceptions about African Pentecostalism and calling on the movement to stand on a biblical ground.

Thabang R. Mofokeng holds an MTh degree in Church History and is currently doing his PhD studies with the University of South Africa. He lectures Ancient, Medieval and Modern Church History at the North-West University. His research interest is the intersection of Pentecostalism with socio-political and cultural dimensions.

Hulisani Ramantswana is Associate Professor of Old Testament in the Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies at the University of South Africa. He obtained his PhD (Hermeneutical and Biblical Interpretation) at the Westminster Theological Seminary Glenside, United States of America in 2010. His research interests are inter alia on African Biblical Hermeneutics, decolonial readings of the Bible, Pentateuch and creation narratives. He is chief editor for *Old Testament Essays* journal.

Kelebogile T. Resane obtained his PhD (Theology) (Dogmatics and Christian Ethics) in 2008. For 31 years (1979–2010), he served in Youth for Christ International. He was a Teaching and Learning Manager for the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of the Free State for five years (2014–2018), and continues as a Research Fellow at the same university. His research interests are broadly on the New Apostolic Reformation, Pentecostal theology and public theology in general. Currently serving at Bible League International/South Africa.

Ithapelen Sebetseli is a Masters student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). His areas of interest are inculturation, biblical hermeneutics, Pentateuch, Prophets, poverty eradication, and slavery in modern and ancient times. He has served as a lecturer, research assistant, and postgraduate assistant at UNISA.

Themba Shingange is a Senior Personnel Practitioner – Employee Health and Wellness and the Limpopo Provincial Power House- Research and Innovation Coordinator at the South African Police Services (SAPS). He obtained PhD in Missiology from the University of South Africa. He is an emerging researcher in the area of African Pentecostalism, Mission and Gender and Post- Heteronormative mission praxis. He has presented papers in local conferences addressing similar topics.
1 Introduction

The abuse of the Spirit in some New Prophetic Churches in South African Pentecostalism

Mookgo S. Kgatle and Allan H. Anderson

1.1 The use and abuse of the Spirit

Since 2014, South Africa has experienced the abuse of religion by some prophets of New Prophetic Churches (NPCs) within South African Pentecostalism. These prophets have promoted such practices as eating grass, drinking petrol, eating snakes, walking on air, resurrecting “dead” bodies and so forth. There have been attempts by scholars to address the issue of the abuse of religion in post-colonial South Africa but they have not related the matter to the “abuse of the Spirit”. Therefore, this book on the abuse of the Spirit is an important contribution to South African Pentecostal scholarship. Here, the connection between the abuse of religion and the abuse of the Spirit is clear because all NPC prophets who have engaged in the outrageous acts above have said that “the Spirit” had instructed them to do so. Some prophets were even so bold as to tell a young girl or any woman for that matter that “the Spirit of God” had instructed them to sleep with them. In arguing against the use of the Holy Spirit to perform unusual acts, this book has coined the phrase “the abuse of the Spirit”. However, in order to understand the abuse of the Spirit by NPCs, it is first necessary to study the function of the Holy Spirit in the history of South African Pentecostalism. It is equally important to study the hermeneutics of South African Pentecostalism in order to connect its biblical understanding with the abuse of the Spirit as is happening within NPCs. The studies in this book will assist in making proper recommendations on how to deal with the “abuse of the Spirit”.

1.2 Research justification

In the wake of the abuse of religion by some NPC prophets within South African Pentecostalism, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (the CRL Rights Commission) in South Africa began two investigations: on the commercialisation of religion and on the abuse of people. The contribution of this book to these two investigations is to provide the link between both the commercialisation of religion and the abuse of people with the abuse of the Spirit within South African Pentecostalism. This book focuses on the abuse of the
Spirit particularly as is happening among NPCs in South Africa. However, while we pay attention to NPCs, we also acknowledge the function of the Spirit in other streams of Pentecostalism like classical Pentecostalism, African Initiated Churches (AICs) and the Charismatics. Most of the chapters will address the abuse of the Spirit from different angles like church history, biblical studies, migration studies, discernment of spirits, commercialisation of religion, and the economics of Pentecostalism. The contributors are experts in South African Pentecostalism as both insiders (i.e. within the Pentecostal tradition) and outsiders (i.e. involved in Pentecostal research).

The abuse of religion is not distinctly South African as there is abuse of religion elsewhere in the continent, with some countries engaging in conflicts that involve the loss of lives in the name of religion. Similarly, the abuse of religion is not new in South Africa as the masters of apartheid used the Bible and the name of God to oppress black people, take their land and isolate them from certain economic activities. What is new in this book is the connection between the abuse of religion and the Holy Spirit in South African Pentecostalism. In addition, this connection is peculiar to the NPCs, which Kgatle calls “the fourth Pentecostal wave in South Africa”. The connection is affirmed by the consistent assertions by many NPC prophets that they were led by the Holy Spirit to engage in their outrageous acts. This book seeks to understand this phenomenon of being “led by the Holy Spirit” to engage in the abuse of religion. It is therefore pivotal to discuss the abuse of religion by the NPCs in order to connect it to the abuse of the Spirit.

1.3 The Holy Spirit as the foundation of Pentecostalism

Biblical events like the baptism of the Holy Spirit as recorded in the book of Acts and elsewhere attested to the Holy Spirit as the foundation of Pentecostalism. Pentecostal scholars regard the Holy Spirit as the core of Pentecostal theology, defining Pentecostalism as a movement that exists based on a direct relationship with God through the experiential encounters between the Holy Spirit and a born-again believer. Yong states that the Holy Spirit is the key in understanding the Pentecostal movement as a whole, including among those who do not regard themselves as Pentecostal. Macchia has made us understand the distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal theology by stating that the Holy Spirit serves as the power that activates the gifts of the Spirit like speaking in tongues and healing. Cartledge regards the personal relationship with the Holy Spirit as the key feature of global Pentecostalism. Stephenson states that the Holy Spirit makes it possible for believers to become active in the world and brings coherence to other fundamental beliefs of Pentecostalism. Thus, the Holy Spirit is the one who makes it possible for a connection between the believer and their God.

The Holy Spirit occupies an important space in African Pentecostalism in all its different streams, whether classical, African Independent Churches
or Charismatics, the Holy Spirit is at the centre. In African Pentecostalism, God manifests himself to believers through the power and the work of the Holy Spirit. African Pentecostal scholars have also acknowledged the Holy Spirit as the foundation of African Pentecostalism. One such scholar is Ogbu Kalu who stated that in Africa, healing, miracles and deliverance take place among believers because of the Holy Spirit. Nel adds that the reading and understanding of scriptures in African Pentecostalism happen because of the work of the Holy Spirit. Writing on Nigerian Pentecostalism, Nimi Wariboko states that the power of the Holy Spirit is basically sought to deal with other gods and preserve believers against other spiritual forces. According to Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu the work of the Holy Spirit is very much connected to Christology because the ministry of Jesus is realised through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Whereas the above aspects of African Pentecostalism have received attention, the abuse of the Holy Spirit among NPCs in post-colonial South Africa has not been addressed. We have to ask an important question: does the Holy Spirit genuinely use NPC prophets or are they extending African magical powers in the name of the Holy Spirit? There have been attempts by scholars to address the issue of the abuse of religion in post-colonial South Africa but they have not related the matter to the “abuse of the Spirit”. Therefore, the abuse of the Spirit as outlined in this book makes an important contribution to South African Pentecostal scholarship.

1.4 South African Pentecostalism

In 1908, South Africa was one of the first countries on the continent to receive Pentecostalism. Pentecostals in South Africa include first classical Pentecostals of several denominations, the three largest being the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God, and the Full Gospel Church of God. These were churches founded by European and American Pentecostal missionaries in the early twentieth century. Second, “Pentecostalism” also includes various new Charismatic churches and many non-aligned churches which include the new category presented in this book, the New Prophetic Churches. However, about a third of South African Christianity consists of the third category of almost entirely African “Zionist” and “Apostolic” churches, including the largest denomination in the country, the Zion Christian Church and other large denominations like the St Engenas Zion Christian Church and the St John Apostolic Faith Mission. There are between 4000 and 7000 smaller church organisations of a similar type, many of them house churches which form socially meaningful groups in rural villages but especially in the urban sprawls, where people can find an “extended family” that gives them a sense of belonging and identity.

Almost all of these different kinds of churches, like Pentecostal churches everywhere, emphasise the power of the Spirit in the church, especially
manifested through such phenomena as healing, prophecy, exorcism and speaking in tongues.\textsuperscript{28} The independent African churches have maintained both historical and theological affinities with Pentecostalism while developing in quite different and distinctive directions. The South African Pentecostal movement, including the many African churches that have emanated from it, is not a North American imposition but collectively one of the most significant African expressions of Christianity today, where at least 15 million people identify with a form of Pentecostalism or Spirit-oriented Christianity.

Returning to the second category above, this rapidly growing new form of African Christianity, that of independent Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and “ministries”, plays an increasingly significant role.\textsuperscript{29} This movement emerged in the 1970s and has become a significant expression of Christianity on the continent, especially in Africa’s cities. We cannot understand African Christianity today without also understanding this movement of revival and renewal. In the South African context, these newer Pentecostal movements are not fundamentally different from the Holy Spirit movements and “Spirit” churches that preceded them in the African Initiated Churches (AICs), but are rather a continuation of them in a quite different situation. Classical Pentecostalism has influenced some of their leaders, and many of them are well educated. However, the older “Spirit” AICs, the classical Pentecostals and the Charismatic churches have all responded to existential needs in the African milieu. Not only do they all represent a response to the inequalities of power and class accentuated during the apartheid system, but they have also all offered a personal encounter with God through the power of the Spirit, healing from sickness and deliverance from evil in all its manifestations, whether spiritual, social or structural – although most of these churches do not really emphasise the social and structural manifestations of evil. This is not to say that there are no tensions or differences between the “new” and the “old” churches – there certainly are, as neither are usually willing to acknowledge any affinity with each other.\textsuperscript{30} At an early stage, classical Pentecostals demonised the Zionist and Apostolic churches, mainly because of their distinctive church apparel and symbolic healing practices which these mainly white Pentecostals saw as unscriptural and “heathen”. They passed on these prejudices to their African fellow-members, so that today most Pentecostals and Charismatics do not consider members of these African churches to be Pentecostal and in many cases reject them as fellow Christians, for they are not seen as bazalwane or “born again”.\textsuperscript{31} These high walls of separation still need to be broken down.

The classical or denominational Pentecostals still are a very active and growing phenomenon in South Africa, and played a significant role in the emergence of some of the newer groups. Many of the key players in the new Pentecostal churches like Bishop Stephen Zondo were members of Pentecostal denominations. Classical Pentecostals have operated in South Africa for most of the twentieth century. Most of these churches trace their historical
Introduction

The origins to the impetus generated by the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles which sent out missionaries to fifty nations within two years. The connections between the classical Pentecostal movement and AICs throughout Africa have been demonstrated in earlier studies. Some of these classical Pentecostal churches have become vibrant and rapidly expanding African churches, in particular the Assemblies of God, which operates in most countries of Sub-Saharan Africa including South Africa, and has become an African church in its own right, largely through the enormous contribution of Nicholas Bhengu (1909–86). It is generally recognised that throughout the history of AICs there has been a predominance of Pentecostal features and phenomena, but in South Africa it is very difficult to draw lines between different “types” of churches using phenomenological or theological criteria.

1.5 The Holy Spirit in the sub-traditions of South African Pentecostalism

Classical Pentecostal churches see the role of the Holy Spirit especially in Spirit baptism and the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues. Moreover, the Holy Spirit plays a major role in the fellowship of believers, in scripture reading and during prayer meetings. In the Pentecostal African Independent Churches (PAIC), another term for the second category above, the Holy Spirit is central to spiritual experiences like healing, prophecy, deliverance, and other miracles. Furthermore, with few exceptions, some PAICs juxtapose the work of the Holy Spirit with African culture, African traditional religions and African indigenous knowledge. Nonetheless, the PAICs are included in the broader framework of Pentecostalism because of their reference to the work of the Holy Spirit and salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. In independent Charismatic churches like the Rhema Bible Church in Randburg, the Grace Bible Church in Soweto and numerous others across South Africa, the Holy Spirit is the one who apportions gifts equally among the believers. The main difference among these sub-traditions is that in the PAICs and Charismatic movements Spirit baptism and the doctrine of initial evidence are not emphasised in the same way as in classical Pentecostal churches.

1.6 An introduction to New Prophetic Churches in South Africa

1.6.1 Characterisation of NPCs

NPCs are different from the other three streams or sub-traditions of South African Pentecostalism, but one still classifies them as Pentecostal if the prophetic is considered as one of the characteristics of Pentecostalism. It represents a recent development within Pentecostalism which has seen the rise of churches that are more inclined towards the prophetic tradition. These
churches are characterised by four emphases: First, they practice what most of their leaders call forensic prophecy or one-on-one prophecy, where believers receive direct prophecy that involves their daily living, including personal information like cell phone number, car registration number and so forth. Second, their deliverance ministry, unlike other streams, is based on consultations where they charge around R7000 or more per consultation. Thus, members can consult a prophet to receive counselling or direction for their lives but they will need to pay a certain fee depending on the level of their problems. Third, one of the common miracles that these prophets perform while ministering on the podium is “miracle money” that appears in people’s accounts without them working for it. Finally, as opposed to the usual titles like Reverend, Pastor and so forth in other traditions, they are known for their love of fashionable prophetic titles. Prophet Shepherd Bushiri is known as “Major One” and others, for example, as “Seer One” or “Mzansi Prophet.”

1.6.2 Some prominent figures in the NPCs

There are numerous figures in the NPCs, we are not even able to quantify them here; however, it is important to note that of all the NPC prophets, Prophet Shepherd Bushiri is the most popular in South Africa. Bushiri is a Malawian-born minister of the gospel who operates in Pretoria and lives in one of the most affluent suburbs in South Africa, Sandton, drives several expensive cars, and owns a private jet. Bushiri is not only the founder of Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG) but also owns and runs a number of companies and has invested in different types of businesses. What actually makes Bushiri so popular is that he has mastered “the art of prophecy” as his followers call him “Major One” signifying that no one can prophesy as he can. Bushiri’s popularity only reached such a high level when he came to South Africa; before that he was just an ordinary man following his spiritual father Urbert Angel, a Zimbabwean-born prophet who is currently ministering in the United Kingdom. Angel has since handed over his prophetic baton to Bushiri, calling himself a retired professor of prophecy.

The second figure whom we are highlighting in this chapter is Pastor Lesego Daniel of Rabboni Centre Ministries in the Soshanguve township north of Pretoria. Lesego was born on 15 May 1972 and, unlike Bushiri who grew up outside South Africa in Malawi, Lesego is a South African who grew up in Garankuwa, another township near Pretoria, and did some studies at South African institutions. After completing his studies, Lesego was involved in ministry that included prayer for the sick, prophecy, deliverance and preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Lesego has been involved in ministry for more than twenty years and has served under other senior pastors. However, it was only in 2002 that he felt a calling to start his own ministry where he was fully in charge without supervision.
Introduction

network are figures like Penuel Mnguni of End Time Disciples Ministries. Mnguni is famous because of his allegiance to Lesego as the latter regards him as his spiritual son. Another figure within Lesego’s network is Lethebo Rabalago of Mount Zion General Assembly (MZGA), someone who carries similar spiritual DNA. Lesego has numerous other spiritual sons, scattered throughout South Africa, especially in townships and villages.

Other figures include the Congolese but South African-based Pastor Alph Lukau who together with his wife ministers in Sandton, north of Johannesburg. Lukau, born on 25 October 1975, is the founder and senior pastor of Alleluia Ministries International which, according to their website, is based on the Bible and rooted in the Word of God. Like Bushiri, Lukau owns several luxury cars that he often posts photos of on Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms. He lives in a big mansion and has a net worth of millions. Lukau is so connected that even the former president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, once visited his church and asked for prayers.

Another prominent pastor is Paseka Motsoeneng, also known as Pastor Mboro, born on 8 April 1968 and the founder and senior pastor of Incredible Happenings, situated in Katlehong near Germiston, east of Johannesburg. The last pastor to mention here is the Nigerian-born Pastor Tim Omotoso, senior pastor of Jesus Dominion International, based in Durban, South Africa. Other than teaching the Word and praying for people, Omotoso is also known for his singing and instrumental performances. He formed a musical group in his church that has won music awards. At the time of writing he was being prosecuted for alleged sexual harassment.

1.6.3 Impact of the NPCs in South Africa

The NPCs are having a great impact in South African Pentecostalism in terms of membership. For example, Bushiri’s ECG has a massive following which is in the millions according to their official website. The NPCs attract different kinds of members in their daily services attended by all ages. What seems to be the major driver behind the NPC’s popularity is the practice of prophecy, because many South Africans prefer to receive a prophetic word rather than to listen to a formal sermon. Therefore, in the NPCs the poor come with the hope that they will receive a prophecy that can make them rich, and the rich with the hope that they can protect their wealth. In South Africa, people will even drive from other provinces to come to these churches in order to receive a prophecy for their lives. In addition, the NPCs have great followings in other African countries where members flock to their services. What is interesting is the growing number of international visitors from the global north, from countries like the United Kingdom, United States of America and others. For those who do not personally come to South Africa, they can follow these prophets on their TV channels.
1.7 The abuse of religion in the NPCs

Since 2014, South African society has been taken by storm by abusive religious practices as practiced by the NPC prophets in South African Pentecostalism. For example, Pastor Daniel Lesego fed his congregants with grass and made some drink petrol, arguing that when prayed for, both grass and petrol become bread and wine used for Holy Communion. His spiritual son Penuel Mnguni fed his congregants with live snakes and made others lie down while he drove his car over them. Another outrageous example happened when Lethebo Rabalao sprayed a brand of insecticide called Doom on the congregants in the name of healing them. Other examples showing the abuse of religion is the allegation that Bushiri illegally transports R50 million to his home country, Malawi, on a weekly basis. Most recently, Pastor Alph Lukau hit news headlines after he claimed to have raised a dead person in what came to be called “#resurrection challenge.”

There is also a tendency among male prophets of touching the private parts of their female followers whenever they say prayers for them. One of the well-known NPC prophets, Paseka Motseoneng, exhibits this tendency. When praying for his female members, he touches their private parts and calls them “biscuits.” Most of the time, the prophets do these things to illustrate that through a sexual encounter, God will deliver female members from barrenness and other challenges. Another example of the abuse of women by the NPC prophets can be seen in the ongoing trial of Tim Omotoso, whom Cheryl Zondi and other young girls have accused of rape and sexual harassment. The Omotoso trial has touched many people in society and has painted a grim picture of the NPC prophets, especially since the trial has been broadcast live on television.

1.8 The abuse of the Spirit in the NPCs

There is a link between the abuse of religion as stated above and the abuse of the Spirit. Most of the NPC prophets who did these acts connect their actions with the Holy Spirit. They refer to the Holy Spirit so that the audience cannot connect their practices to other sources like divination in African Traditional Religion (ATR). They manipulate congregants to believe that these abuses emanate from the spiritual and prophetic revelation they have received for a particular service. Lesego claimed to have heard from God through the Holy Spirit when he fed his congregants grass, stating that the grass would have harmed them if God had not instructed him to do that. Lesego was quoted as saying, “When the Holy Spirit comes you will be able to see. Do not worry when people criticise you because they cannot see the Spirit of truth, they could not welcome or understand.” In a similar way, Lethebo Rabalao claimed to have heard a voice from the Holy Spirit when he sprayed insecticide upon a congregation whose members were looking
for healing. When asked why he sprayed insect repellent on his congregants, Lethebo said,

Doom is just a name, but when you speak to it, it becomes a healing product. People get healed and delivered through Doom. It is not by might nor by power, but by the Holy Spirit. Through spraying the Doom, I anoint them.73

Therefore, the prophets see and interpret everything around them as spiritual and related to the work of the Holy Spirit. This aspect of the NPCs has left many unsuspecting followers very vulnerable, as they do not want to fight against the work of the Holy Spirit.74 Therefore, whenever they deliver a message, the NPC prophets will always refer to the Holy Spirit in order to make their message very believable to the people.

There is also a link between the abuse of women among the NPCs and the abuse of the Spirit, as perpetrators often claim that the Holy Spirit told them to sleep with their congregants. Concepts like healing and deliverance are used as ways to manipulate the followers in order to abuse and harass them in a sexual manner.75 What is also common among some of these pastors is to tell their members that an evil spirit has possessed their bodies and in order to receive their deliverance, they have to sleep with the pastor.76 One of the pastors claimed to be “obeying prophetic/spiritual injunction to do the will of God, which is to impregnate any one chosen and revealed by the Holy Spirit, irrespective of whether the woman is married or not”.77 The connection to the Holy Spirit makes any word spoken by the pastor to any of their followers believable, and therefore women fall prey to sexual abuse. In this instance, it is difficult to go against the word of the prophet because it will be like going against the word of God because the prophet hears from God through the Holy Spirit.

1.9 Approaches in dealing with abuse of the Spirit in the NPCs

This book uses different approaches to study the abuse of the Spirit in Pentecostalism. The first is the historical approach that looks at the history of South African Pentecostalism from its beginning. This is not an easy task given the complexities of South African Pentecostalism.78 It means that a historian has to look at various streams of Pentecostalism in the South African context, including classical Pentecostal churches, AICs, Charismatics, with an ability to connect them with current developments like the NPCs. Classical Pentecostalism is connected to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century American Pentecostalism and a historian should be able to make such a connection.79 We should also understand South African Pentecostal history within the context of broader Protestant movements and also within the broader history of Christianity in South Africa.80 This will help us
to distinguish some Pentecostal churches from (for example) mainline missional churches in South Africa, as the latter (like some classical Pentecostal denominations) are imported forms of Christianity from the west.81

The second approach is that of African Biblical Hermeneutics (ABH), the rereading of the Christian scriptures from a premeditatedly Afrocentric perspective. It is contextual, since interpretation is always done in a particular context. Specifically, it means that the analysis of the biblical text is done from the perspective of an African worldview and culture.82 It is called ABH because the interpreters of the Bible should be able to borrow from African culture, African indigenous knowledge and an African religious context.83 Masenya and Ramantswana add that ABH should be a decolonial reading of the Bible that is able to use African heritage, African wisdom84 and be rooted in an African context.85 The African context in this instance is not only defined by location but by a determination to address African issues from a biblical perspective; thus ABH should guard against interpretations of westernised African eyes.86 An ABH approach must explore the concept of the abuse of the Spirit from biblical perspectives and be able to apply it to an African context. An ABH should be a contextual reading that addresses current issues within Pentecostalism by remaining true to biblical teachings and faith in God.87 An African Pentecostal biblical scholar should be able to connect without prejudice the issues concerning Pentecostalism with what is written in the Bible about those issues.

The third approach is the migration approach, given the fact that South Africa is an attractive destination for many African migrants, including pastors who are planning to start churches outside their home countries. Therefore, this approach has to look at how the African continent is affecting the landscape of the practice of pneumatology in South African Pentecostalism, compared to the influence of other continents. The migration approach should also be able to look at the migrant Pentecostal churches in South Africa and how such churches treat the issue of pneumatology. For example, the problems identified in this book of the abuse of the Spirit probably started elsewhere on the continent and have been reproduced in South Africa.88 A scholar looking at the issues of migration and diaspora should be able to address other dynamics like xenophobia, Afrophobia and other challenges related to the abuse of the Spirit in South African Pentecostalism.89 In addition, such a scholar should be able to explore issues of intercultural encounters, transnationalism and decolonisation within South African Pentecostalism, where pneumatology responds to the interaction between various people of different cultural backgrounds.90

The fourth approach is what the New Testament (1 Corinthians 12) describes as the “discernment of spirits”, which is an approach that should try to assess the type of spirit or Spirit that operates upon NPC prophets. Scholars in this approach explore the role of the Holy Spirit in discernment with the aim of distinguishing between various spirits. In addition, the approach is used to discern between a real prophet and a false one.
Moreover, this approach is also used to discover true Christians from those who are not, and to assist followers of NPCs to identify the motives behind their prophets. This approach should look at the development of the theology of discernment, especially the works of Ignatius of Loyola and others on discernment. The approach will also look at the practice of discernment in other churches like the Roman Catholic Church in order to apply it to NPCs. This approach is related to ABH discussed above, because scholars here can look at scriptures that speak about discernment, interpret them and apply them to NPCs. Discernment is important not only for scholarship but also to assist church members on the ground to know the spirit behind the words of the NPC prophets.

The fifth approach is one that considers the commercialisation of religion; this means that services provided to members by a church body have a price tag, overtly or covertly. For members of the NPCs to buy such services, there is an attachment of spiritual benefits attached to the price tag in order to encourage the members to buy those services. Since some NPC pastors began the abuse of the Spirit, the CRL Rights Commission was given a government mandate to investigate the commercialisation and commodification of religion, whereby many pastors are involved in the selling of various products in the church like oil, water, and clothes. These materials are used for the healing and deliverance of the congregants, but they have to pay a certain fee to access them. In addition, some NPC pastors charge members a certain amount to consult them in a prophetic session, where their problems are diagnosed and given a spiritual prescription. Scholars in this approach must study how the abuse of the Spirit is related to the commercialisation and commodification of religion within the NPCs.

The sixth approach is the economic strength of Pentecostalism according to Benyah, who writes:

Despite the criticisms that are mounted to some of the practices relating to religious commercialization and commodification, there is no doubt that religion, in some instances, has produced the very kind of results or solutions people want to their problems.

What are the reasons behind the success of Pentecostal churches even in the midst of neoliberalism for example? How can Pentecostal churches be used to solve problems like inequality, poverty and unemployment in South Africa? What is the relationship between the abuse of the Spirit and the economic role played by the NPC in South Africa?

1.10 Outline of chapters

In this first chapter, Mookgo S. Kgatle and Allan H. Anderson have introduced the subject of the abuse of the Spirit as practiced by some NPCs within South African Pentecostalism. In order to understand the abuse of