


The African background of Pentecostal theology: A critical perspective



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African Traditional Religion (ATR) represents a primal worldview that encapsulates a certain culturally-innate sense of the world of transcendence and involves belief in a sacramental 'enchanted' universe in which the physical is indicative of spiritual realities, in contrast to western Christianity, that to a certain extent abandoned belief in malevolent powers. The assumption is that Africans live in an 'intentional world' where nothing happens by chance; all events have spiritual causes. Negative events can be resisted by imprecatory prayers and curses. Sacred and secular realities are inseparable. For this reason, it is argued that pneumatic Christianity is close to the grain of African culture and its worldview resonates with the indigenous worldview. In this article, the African background of Pentecostal theology is investigated. By operating within a worldview that allows ample space for the invisible world determining what happens in the visible world, African Pentecostalism was endeared to Africans. For Africans, what happens on earth is directly interrelated with what happens in the dimension of the spiritual, agreeing with the cosmic principalities and powers that provide the mystical causality of a worldview found in the New Testament. The African Pentecostal narrative is concerned with the solution of personal and societal problems that is interpreted in terms of the African view of rulers, authorities, evil powers, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces in the heavenly realm that focuses on how the spirit world impinges on the visible world to hinder or foster human flourishing. Pentecostalism's pneumatic spirituality is discussed from a critical theological perspective.

Keywords: Evil powers; African worldview; Demons; Ancestors; Evil spirits; Cosmic powers; Authorities.

Introduction

Western Christianity, as also found in Africa in missionary churches, predominantly white churches and most theological faculties and seminaries determined by Western theological endeavours, have to a certain extent abandoned the belief in malevolent powers. They view demons as simply a metaphor in which people previously tried to explain various phenomena that we now know have psychological causes (Unger 1953:90–92; Vogt 1995). Gatumu (2009:168–208) describes three strategies used to oppose the idea of demons as an ontological reality in Jesus' ministry: The basic idea of the mythic theory that the narratives concerning Jesus' expulsion of demons are merely symbolic and not to be taken literally; that when Jesus spoke of demon possession he just accommodated the prevalent ignorance and superstition of his audience, without thereby affirming the literal truth of contemporary beliefs; and that demon possession is a mere psychological delusion of the victim. This view is due in part to westerners' acceptance of a worldview established during the *Aufklärung* and determined by the rule of science and technology that operates within a closed scheme of cause and effect, and that does not allow room for supernatural intervention or any event that cannot be explained in terms of a mechanistic outlook with its closed view of the universe (Ansberry & Hays 2013:207). However, at the same time Western societies are presently experiencing a paradigm shift in the form of postmodernism that serves as a critique of the hegemony of a modernist worldview associated with positivistic philosophy, a mechanistic outlook and historicist view of the Bible. Postmodernism does not critique reason and rationality per se, but the hegemony of rationalism as the only way of interpreting the world and human life.

The Global South, consisting of the continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America with its surrounding islands, is defined by the remarkable similarity of a worldview as far as it makes abundant provision for an ever-present spirit world and constant fear of serious harm caused

by spirits with evil intent, a worldview with seeming parallels to that of biblical writers (as found, e.g. in Eph 6:12; Col 2:15).¹ This makes Pentecostalism with its pneumatic spirituality an attractive alternative both to older forms of Christianity and to pre-Christian religions with its emphasis on deliverance and exorcism. However, one may judge Pentecostalism's overemphasis on deliverance or the sometimes bizarre practices involved in its ministry (Anderson 2011:31).² These practices suggest that there are existential challenges and questions raised in Africa for which traditional Western forms of Christianity have no adequate answers.

Indigenous (Initiated, Independent or Instituted) African Churches (AICs) since the turn of the 20th century have been sustaining African traditional beliefs in an 'enchanted universe' (as social scientists refer to the worldview that dominates the Global South), with the powers of evil that constantly interfere in human destinies for ill. The reason for this is because it interpreted Christianity in terms of African traditional religions (ATR) and traditional worldviews, and in relation to traditional goals (Omenyo 2014:136). The AICs, as passive resistance to Western colonialism vindicated Africanness by focusing on ATR and the claim that African religion is the authentic repository of the African personality (Bediako 1995:14).³ This is not true of most missionary churches where (at least at face value) conversion to Christianity implied that the values and moral standards of 'Western civilisation' were also to be accepted. As Williamson (1965) explains:

The invitation to accept the Christian religion was also a call to participate in a western interpretation of reality. Thus converts were not merely required to abandon the worship of many gods for the worship of One God, but were taught to look upon traditional religion as the worship of nonentities. The missionary enterprise was seeking to implant its Christianity by the method of ... a European world-view. (p. 170)

To become a Christian was to become less 'African' and 'more civilised', in Western terms. In indigenous churches that succeeded the missionary churches, including the Spirit-type churches within AICs and African Pentecostalism itself, however, the impact of elements of the African worldview⁴ can clearly be seen. It is demonstrated, for example in the experiential worship of the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal fray.

1.The difference is vividly demonstrated by the practice of 'invoking the spirits' that took place at the World Council of Churches' assembly in Canberra in 1991 and that reflected the worldview of the Majority World that not many westerners appreciated (see Kim 2004).

2.The rapid rate of growth of Pentecostalism accelerated dramatically in the last quarter of the 20th century, especially in the Global South. For example, in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, Pentecostals and charismatics amount to over 60% of Protestants, according to the Pew Forum's 2006 survey. Pentecostals prefer to speak of the ministry of deliverance rather than exorcism.

3.Bediako (1992:59) thinks that modern African theology also emerged as a response to defining African Christian identity, by attempting to integrate indigenous values into the church (Bosch 1991:451).

4.It is a valid question whether it is possible to generalise when one speaks about African worldview and traditional religions. Although ample room should be left for diversity within African practice, it is, however, also true that there is a certain unity of thought, which appears to pervade Africa in a way that is quite unlike anything perceived in Europe, Asia or the Americas. This makes it possible and viable to speak of 'African traditional thought and religion' in a general way, without denying the particularism of different parts of Africa (Anderson 1991:11).

African roots of Pentecostal spirituality

Hollenweger (1994:210) argues that its black roots and respect for its African heritage had been and still are being responsible for the unprecedented growth of the Pentecostal movement in the Third World. It began with the significant contribution of the Afro-American William J. Seymour to the 1906 Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, US, making Pentecostalism the only worldwide Christian church movement initiated by a black person (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013:143).⁵ The influence of Seymour's black spirituality should be acknowledged. Cox (1995:100) refers to this close affinity between Pentecostal spirituality and primal piety in terms of inter alia Seymour's spirituality. He describes how long-suppressed currents of archetypal human religiousness had resurfaced in a new form and under explicitly Christian auspices. Seymour, son of freed slaves, had grown up in a southern black religious culture (Alvarado 2016:338). In this culture, an extraordinary synthesis of indigenous African elements had already been incorporated into Protestant Christian worship such as trance, ecstasy, visions, dreams and healings in continuity with similar biblical practices. African Americans also did not retain these primal practices merely as heirlooms but adapted and transformed their African spirituality with its respect for the spiritual in the new environment (Anderson 2013:231).

Another aspect of Pentecostals' belief is that they have always allowed for and expected that the historical biblical events were to be re-enacted in the contemporary church, creating the expectation for signs and wonders to be repeated in modern times. When they read the narrative of Jonah, for instance their expectation is that God can save a modern-day believer from drowning, say in financial challenges, by sending another fish like in Jonah's case. And when they are not well, they expect that God would heal them like God did in the days of Elijah, Jesus and Peter. Their worldview allows for a continuation of supernatural intervention and miracles contra a mechanistic and materialistic worldview that does not allow for any 'supernatural phenomena' to occur outside the accepted system of indictable cause and effect (Lataster 2013:31) or the cessationist theology of some Reformed theological traditions (e.g., Calvin 1965:23; Kuyper 1941:189; Warfield 1953:6).

The question that continuationism poses, is about the sustainability of such an anti-scientific worldview in times when some miraculous healings are scientifically tested and found wanting, apart from placebo cures from psychosomatic illnesses (see Morton 2012:110). The typical Pentecostal epistemology can also be criticised as naïve if it uncritically adopts the 1st-century worldview with all its corollaries, including a view about the (lack of) rights of women and slaves, and a mythical and superstitious image of the earth and its relation to the rest of creation. To speak of a transcendent word

5.Not all researchers agree that Pentecostalism originated (exclusively) in the US or that Azusa Street played the most important role in its originating. However, the significance of William Seymour in the early Pentecostal movement can, in my opinion, not be contested (Anderson 2013:114).

that goes beyond all human words may also imply a sort of docetic view of the Bible (Cargal 1993:173–174) that deems it necessary that a positivist-mechanistic and rationalist-modernist philosophical paradigm be renounced to read the Bible from the viewpoint of this epistemology.

According to Cox (1995:11), religion is an invaluable window into understanding human behaviour because people live according to patterns of value and meaning without which life would not make sense. African Pentecostal religion makes sense when viewed against the backdrop of the resilience of primal religious ideas even in a society that is determined by scientific developments and its technological products. Primal spirituality constitutes the substructure of Pentecostal religion in Africa and gives it a distinctive quality, Cox (1995:32) observes, making it impossible to understand Pentecostal spirituality without taking note of the influence of Africa's primal spirituality.

Harold Turner (1977:30–32) proposes a framework for understanding primal spirituality that I concur with, as authentically religious rather than as merely epiphenomena of the social organisation of preliterate societies. Its features are a sense of kinship with nature; the deep sense that human beings are finite, weak and impure or sinful and stand in need of a power not their own; the conviction that humans are not alone in the universe, for there is a spiritual world of powers and beings more ultimate than them; the belief that humans can enter into relationship with the benevolent spirits to receive protection from evil forces; the acute sense of the reality of the afterlife; and the conviction that humans live in a sacramental universe without any sharp dichotomy between the physical and spiritual. Blyden (1908:180) then argues, 'The intercommunion between the people of the earth and those in the spiritual sphere is a cardinal belief of the African and will never be uprooted'. The primal imagination thus encapsulates a certain culturally-innate sense of the world of transcendence and involves belief in a sacramental 'enchanted' universe in which the physical is indicative of spiritual realities. The assumption is that Africans live in an 'intentional world' where nothing happens by chance as, for instance, also demonstrated in the interpretation of the dreams in the Book of Daniel, where what happens on earth is a reflection of what happens in the spiritual sphere.⁶

In the primal worldview, all events have spiritual causes. Negative events are thus to be resisted by imprecatory prayers and curses. Primal spirituality also emphasises that the holy is non-rational and can only be experienced, not cognitively fully understood or contained in human language. Sacred and secular realities are inseparable. Pentecostal spirituality in the non-literate cultures of the Global South shares the orientation of primal religions towards the experiential, the direct involvement of the supernatural in everyday events and the potential of divine transformative influence on

6. In Daniel 10:13, for example, the angel explains that the duration of the misery experienced by Daniel has to do with the angel being opposed by the prince of the kingdom of Persia, until Michael, one of the chief angels, came to assist the angel (Hanson 1979:9–12; LaCocque 1988:88).

the natural order, allowing for miracles and healings to be expected as a daily occurrence. It links onto concepts in ATR without syncretising all its contents.

Some African scholars view the Supreme Being of ATR as monotheistic, in the same sense as God revealed in the Bible (Burnett 2000:34), and ATR as *praeparatio evangelica* on the same level as the Old Testament (Han & Beyers 2017:11). Mbiti (1978:282), for example, affirms that ATR reflects God's witness among African people through the ages and Bediako (1995:82, 83) calls ATR a serious preparation for the gospel in Africa, as the major religious substratum for the idiom and existential experience of Christianity in African life. However, in my opinion such perceptions are generalisations that do not do justice to the diversity of ATR or to the concept of the New Testamental fulfilment of the Old Testament. African Pentecostalism as a rule accepts that ATR provide a certain contact point or a meeting place for communicating the gospel, providing a spirituality that links with the gospel and that African religiosity provides the religious groundwork, vocabulary, insights, aspirations and direction for the Christian gospel but at the same time it should scrutinise all ATR beliefs at the hand of the Bible.

Cursing the enemy in order to be successful in one's own endeavours toward health, promotion, employment opportunities and a suitable marriage partner has always been a part of indigenous spirituality. Pentecostal spirituality simply changes the curses into biblical injunctions. Many African Pentecostals believe in ancestral or bloodline curses, underpinned by the belief that some of the consequences of sins committed by progenitors (or ancestors) are recurrent in their family lines in the form of chronic and hereditary diseases, emotional excesses and allergies, frequent miscarriages and untimely deaths, suicidal tendencies and persistent poverty (Onyinah 2002b:119). The belief is justified for some Christians in terms of Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9–10; 28, that the Lord God is a jealous God who punishes children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren for the sins of parents who hated God. Pentecostals believe in the immediacy of God's presence and God's willingness to heal. The prayer for deliverance from curses is a part of the ministry of salvation to believers. In a holistic sense (Gaba 1978:394), deliverance paves the way for prosperity, the fulfilment of divine destiny and an effective transition to eternal life after death (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013:157).

That does not mean that African Pentecostals justify all indigenous practices. Rather, it betrays a penchant for the religious sentiments and expressions of the Hebrew Bible with its undeniably close proximity to primal religious ideas, and a holistic worldview, including those found in Africa (Idowu 1963:116). African salvific goals are often evident in libation prayers, which focus on material blessings and prosperity. These traditional goals did not change when Africa accepted Christianity on its own terms in the post-missional era (Walls 1996:86). For instance, while sacrifice lies at the heart of primal religions, tithes and offerings are

interpreted by Pentecostal spirituality to serve similar purposes as gifts offered to God with the purpose to earn God's blessings of well-being and prosperity.

For this reason, Pentecostalism has become popular in Africa because it functions (unintentionally, for the most part) with a worldview that resonates strongly with familiar ways of being religious, resulting in Pentecostalism contributing to the process of reshaping spirituality in the 21st century (Cox 1995:xv). It offers a way of understanding the world in terms of benevolent and malevolent powers, that provides one with a means to manipulate the powers to a certain extent for one's own benefit. Pentecostals' prerequisite of Spirit baptism also takes spirit possession seriously, a phenomenon that Africans had been experimenting with for a long time. For this reason, most African initiatives in Christianity have had a pneumatic orientation. Pneumatic Christianity is closer to the grain of African culture and its worldview resonates closely with the indigenous primal worldview.

African Pentecostalism share its theological foundations with Western Pentecostalism, such as believing in the biblical position of a personal devil (Satan) and his messengers, called demons or evil spirits. However, it acquired some characteristics influenced by traditional religious worldviews and modes of spirituality, making it necessary to distinguish between African Pentecostalism and Pentecostalism in Africa. African Pentecostalism refers to the distinctive modes of being Pentecostal that have come about as a result of processing and assimilating some African religious and cultural values such as the extended family life and the significance of the dead (Baëta 1955:53; Asamoah-Gyadu 2013:140). In assimilating some elements of primal spirituality, African Pentecostalism can be (and has been) suspected of syncretism that sacrifices the integrity of its proclamation of the gospel. For that reason, it is imperative that its theological perspectives should be subjected to a thorough and ongoing critical debate.

The creative transformation of Christianity into an African faith utilised two elements in African religious culture effectively, namely the belief in invisible spiritual forces, especially malevolent spiritual powers, and the belief in the efficacy of ritual action (Ray 1993:268). The world of spiritual forces and authorities is very real for Africans, with benevolent spirits serving as a source of strength, life and protection and requires that one enters into relationship with the benevolent spiritual world to share in its powers and receive protection from evil forces by these transcendent helpers (Bediako 1995:94).

Ritual, on the other hand, is supposed to have an efficacious effect by attracting and appeasing benevolent powers and repelling malevolent ones. Prayers, offerings and sacrifices do not only say things, they are supposed (and expected) to do things (Ray 1993:268). Sacred space is created where the forces of the invisible spiritual world can be brought into the

visible world and effectively controlled and manipulated. Africans still visit shrines, prophets and diviners such as witch-doctors and utilise rituals to seek cures for their ills and get answers to their questions and guidance for the important decisions they have to make in their daily lives (Ray 1993:268), and to offer sacrifices to assure ancestor benevolence (Burnett 2000:62). Previously they visited the *sangoma*, now pneumatic spirituality permits them to solicit help from the God of the Bible through the power of the Spirit of Christ. By operating within a worldview that allows ample space for the invisible world determining what happens in the visible world, African Pentecostalism was endeared to many Africans.

Meyer (1999) illustrates how the choice for a great majority of Africans between mission Christianity and the independent churches in Ghana was decided by how successful they were able to fill the gap in dealing with evil as traditional religion did. Traditional religion with its rituals and remedies were geared towards answering the questions and queries and solving the problems thrown up by African life, problems arising from a sense of enfeeblement and vulnerability (Baëta 1962:135). Pentecostalism provided a distinctive way of life through the mediation of the all-powerful Spirit and biblical material was submitted to the regenerative capacity of African perception (Sanneh 1983:180). By retaining the basic African cultural ideas regarding the character of the universe, the forces functional in it, their possibilities and the mode of their operation, African Pentecostalism provided in the needs, cravings and hopes of Africans.

African neo-Pentecostal churches

The end of the 20th century saw the rise and flourishing of neo-Pentecostal churches with mostly urban-centered mega-sized churches employing innovative appropriations of modern sophisticated media technologies to market itself. Their leadership are flashy and well-educated although not always theologically well-informed in the Western sense of the word. They attract Africa's upwardly mobile youth and *nouveau riche* middle class with their international outlook, transnational networks and emphasis on success, wealth and prosperity as indices of God's blessings (Walls 2002:92). As one of the heirs of African Pentecostalism, they share primal spirituality's concerns in many areas. For instance, illness and barrenness are interpreted as spiritual phenomena requiring divine intervention. The prophets of the neo-Pentecostal churches serve as the equivalent of Africa's diviners, the witch-doctors and *sangomas* that create sacred spaces and ritual contexts where the devil, demons, evil spirits, spiritual authorities and witches who disturb life, nature and the normal biological functions of the body are fought in Jesus' name. The prophet declares that the barren woman is under a curse, or a witch has spiritually removed her womb in order to steal the glory of motherhood from her, and the woman is ministered to with deliverance and healing. The language used in the diagnosis of the causes of illness is related directly to the language and symbols in the Bible and of witchcraft in traditional religions. The African Pentecostal narrative is

concerned with the solutions of personal problems, like impotence, infertility, mental or physical illnesses, failure at work or in relationships, possession or other problems arising from occult practices and it interprets these problems and its solutions in terms of the African worldview and settings.

Pentecostal discourse reinterprets terms used in ATR, translating spirits, minor gods and (with some also) ancestors from a Christian perspective into demons that need to be exorcised (Meyer 1999:xvii). In many Pentecostal churches, deliverance is practised to varying degrees, and in spite of personal misgivings about some of the methods used, the liberating value of the ministry of deliverance cannot be denied, confronting the real existential needs and fears of people in a ritually understandable, and therefore psychologically satisfying manner (Daneel 1990:220). In the words of Sundkler (1976:318–319) in his classical study, it set Africans free from fear, witches and the power of darkness and ‘conferring a freedom from an inner dependence on European tokens of grace and favour, to aim for higher things and a finer sensitivity’.

That a person is demonised, normally manifests during prayer in various ways. According to Anderson (2011:33), it may include shouting and screaming, restlessness, violent contortions of the body, jumping, falling to the ground, running around, and even an unkempt or unwashed appearance. Ample room is created in the worship service for ministry to such people although they often are also referred to prayer rooms where specialists of deliverance and prophets minister to them. Here they are interviewed about past associations with the occult, often by way of a questionnaire, and given pastoral counsel followed by prolonged prayer for deliverance, sometimes implying many hours of spiritual warfare to get rid of the offending demon (Onyinah 2002a:238, 252).

While West African neo-Pentecostals identify witchcraft, evil spirits and ancestral curses as the cause of ‘bondage’ of all sorts of illnesses, afflictions and aberrant practice and the work of Satan and his demons, in South Africa the ancestors play a more important role in popular religion, and spirits are not as prominent here. Traditionally ancestors were viewed as the guardians and protectors of their surviving families, bringing harm to those who ignore the instructions that they give through dreams or diviners. Some South Africans still commemorate their ancestors whose sanction has a fearful control over people’s lives. They practise ancestor rituals in order to be rid of disturbing visitations by the ancestors (Daneel 1990:220). African churches have been responding to the reality of ancestors in two antithetical ways, by accommodating their veneration and teaching that the ancestors still play an important role and need to be respected and obeyed, and by confrontation and rejection of the commemoration of ancestors. The vast majority Pentecostals fall in the last group. They view demon possession and ancestor possession as the same thing; the ‘ancestor’ is in fact a demon impersonating departed relatives that needs to be

exorcised in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Spirit (Anderson 2011:34). For Pentecostals, deliverance is the result of a confrontation between the Holy Spirit and the so-called ‘ancestors,’ providing certain relief from psychological stress and becoming a major incentive for conversion to Pentecostal Christianity for many Africans. Some have argued that Pentecostals’ ministry of deliverance represents a resurgence of ancestor worship (see Anderson 2000:196–198). However, it is contended that African Pentecostalism rather points to a dialogue and confrontation between the Christian faith and the old beliefs in spirits and ancestors.

African Pentecostalism and evil

Some Western thought to a certain extent lacks a functional category for superhuman activity other than that of the supreme, sovereign God, despite the prevalence of evil forces in the Bible and in other cultures as well. It does not possess an intermediate category between God and the natural world (Keener 2016:88), a view that many Western missionaries in the spirit of cultural imperialism tried to enforce on their African converts. Many Africans perceived missionaries’ attitude towards the African cultural-religious traditions as derogatory and rejected what they experience as the imposition of Western ecclesial-cultural values on the church in Africa (Han & Beyers 2017:8). In the Global South including Africa the category of spiritual phenomena like spirits and demons plays a significant role, according to Pilch (2004:17), and spirit-possession beliefs, defined as ‘any altered state of consciousness indigenously interpreted in terms of the influence of an alien spirit’ (Crapanzano 1977:7) and altered states of consciousness, are found in many societies (Ward 1989:126). Mbiti (1970:275–276) conclusively dismisses westerners’ denial of spirits and witchcraft as ignorance. Many Africans report encounters with spirits as genuine experiences and the fear of witchcraft is overwhelming (Anderson 2011:38).

In Africa, power encounters with the God of the Bible turned many followers of ATR to Christianity as they experienced that the God of the Bible is more powerful than African spirits, deities and diviners (Burnett 2000:41; Koschorke, Ludwig & Delgado 2007:223–224). Such experiences also influence how believers approach what they view as analogous actions in the Bible (Keener 2016:90). In contrast to some Western theologians, Africans experience the biblical narratives of demon possession as objective accounts of actual experiences that are comparable with their own experience, and not as mere myths. People read the Bible as a function of their worldview. African readings of the deliverance and healing narratives in the Gospels and Acts probably prove closer to the world in which the New Testament originated than do some Western materialist interpretations. The African worldview may be rejected or viewed as a potential opportunity to enrich their own reading of biblical narratives.

The African primal vision of diabolic dualism believed that fundamentally all things shared the same nature and the

same interaction, one upon another. Nature, humanity and the unseen were inseparably involved in one another in a total community of cosmic oneness (Taylor 1963:72). Salvation in Africa consisted of freedom from evil powers that hindered human beings from achieving well-being (Ndiokwere 1981:239–243). Their holistic worldview focused on how the spirit world impinged on the visible world to hinder or foster human flourishing. Evil spirits intended to do people harm and as a result, Africans were always looking for ways to protect themselves from these threats (Turaki 1999:183).

When confronted by these challenges, Pentecostal believers need to engage with the spirit world for solutions of salvation or deliverance. Christians fight against the evil forces of ancestors, witchcraft, evil spirits, hobgoblins and Satan (Frahm-Arp 2016:271–272) by consulting the divinatory practices of the prophet in order to find out what is the cause of the misfortune and how to counteract it effectively. They reject the solution of old types of spirit possession, divination as practised by traditional healers, the ancestors, traditional medicines and charms (Anderson 2013:108). The aversion of mishaps is coined as a 'breakthrough', and its acquirement may require compensation of some sort (Saracco 2007:323). Traditionally Africans used charms or ornaments from witch-doctors to prevent the evil forces from harming them. Now it is not uncommon for Pentecostal Christians to use protective medicines, charms, and amulets to secure them and their property against the presence of evil powers (Adamo 2018:3–5). In Gifford's terms (2004:108), prophets manipulate people's destinies and behaviour, preserving some of the significant preoccupations and concerns of the traditional healer but transposed into a new setting and with a new practice based on a Christian theology.

In African Pentecostalism, salvation is translated holistically into prosperity and wealth, dignity, fertility and a happy marriage, security, vitality, healing and health, equilibrium in the cosmos as well as eternal life that awaits the believer after death. Pentecostals recognise the connection between salvation, wholeness and holiness. In demonstrating this connection, Maddocks (1990:7) defines health as a foretaste of the wholeness to come, when the kingdom of God will be established, and creation healed or made whole. The *shalom* of the kingdom consists of prosperity, bodily health, contentedness, good relations between nations and human beings, and spiritual salvation (Duncan 1988:37), while holiness is a reflection of the holy God and the other-worldly equipment of human beings, to be more whole in this world (Maddocks 1990:12–14).

In other words, African Pentecostal soteriology consists of two elements: an imminent element emphasising ministering to the 'this-worldly' needs of believers,⁷ and an eschatological element consisting of the expectation of the imminent second

coming of Christ that introduces eternal life for believers. The 'this-worldly' needs of human beings are regarded in a holistic sense so that salvation is concerned with any challenge that people may face, whether physical, spiritual, emotional, social, legal or psychological. It includes healing in the holistic sense, with spiritual well-being and material prosperity. The fact is that salvation in a holistic sense is the main motivation why people worship in Africa (as Wepener 2013:91 also argues).

Pentecostal Christians visit prophets to seek spiritual direction and acquire knowledge about the spiritual causes of their mishaps (Quayesi-Amakye 2013:246). Prophets provide spiritual and psychological support that calms confused minds and empowers believers to embrace the future with confidence. It promises blessings that are accessed by living a faithful Christian life that engages God's power against the evil forces that threaten believers' well-being (Frahm-Arp 2016:269). However, it may also complicate gaining access to God, requiring the necessary context of sacred space for contact with the heavenly realm that is claimed by the prophet (Ray 1993:270). This also explains neo-Pentecostals' preference for prayer centres, as sacred spaces where prophets and other therapeutic offices offer their services (Bediako 1995:23).

Conclusion

Pentecostalism is effectively changing the face of African Christianity, and it has been argued that one of the important reasons for its success in reaching Africans is its pneumatic spirituality that relates to the primal African spirituality and worldview. It operates with the assumption of the existence of unseen authorities, evil cosmic powers and benevolent spiritual forces. Its prophets replace the divinatory services of ATR, providing believers with the needed information about the source of their misfortunes and solutions to appease malevolent spirits. By staying within the orbits of an African worldview, it succeeds in traditionalising Christianity within African culture. As in the African worldview, it accepts a sense of cosmic oneness, where fundamentally all things share the same nature and the same interaction one upon another. It is a hierarchy of power but not of being, for all are one, all are here, and all are now. No clear distinction is made between sacred and secular, natural and supernatural, for nature, human beings and the unseen are inseparably involved in one another in a total community of communality. Within the African worldview, African ideas of the Holy Spirit and the world are not far removed from the biblical revelation, in the opinion of Anderson (1991:5). The challenges of daily life have their provenance in the spirit world and evil spirits intending to do people harm, require that Pentecostal believers look for ways to protect themselves from these threats. They fight against the evil forces by living a good Christian life, effective prayer that engages God's power against the evil forces that threaten believers' well-being, faithfully attending church services and group Bible studies, and giving generously to the church. It has been argued

7.Han and Beyers (2017:20) correctly asserts that ATR are mainly concerned with human life and welfare in the here and now, with the human being at the centre of anthropocentric African ontology. In ATR, human acts of worshipping God are pragmatic and utilitarian rather than spiritual. The same applies to Pentecostal spirituality; it can also be anthropocentric instead of Christocentric if ample provision is not made for an emphasis on Christ as the exclusive focus of worship.

that African Pentecostalism does not necessarily represent a syncretistic utilisation of aspects of African primal spirituality although the possibility exists that it might and did happen, requiring the ability to discern spirits (1 Cor 12:10) and to critically evaluate its theology and praxis.

African Pentecostalism also demonstrates the distinction between Western and primal worldviews and epistemologies, offering Western theologians the opportunity to enrich their hermeneutical and exegetical perspectives with another worldview with close affinity to the worldview characteristic of parts of the Bible.

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