

## Editorial

# Pentecostalisation and Faith in the Global South

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### Introduction

Provided that we adopt a broad and inclusive definition of Pentecostal and Pentecostalism (Anderson 2002; 2004), there remains no doubt that Pentecostalism (including Charismatic and Neo-Pentecostal forms) has become the dominant expression of Christianity in Africa. This is acknowledged by friend and foe alike. For instance, Asamoah-Gyadu (2007) celebrates the pentecostalisation of mainline churches while Arnett (2017) laments the same, but neither denies the fact that the Christian faith in Africa wears Pentecostal-Charismatic garb.

### Pentecostalisation Webinar

In response to this reality and motivated by a sense that the time is right to explore more deeply what Spirit-dependence should mean for the Seminary, we organised an academic webinar at which scholarly reflections on pentecostalisation in the African church were presented. Titled “Pentecostalisation and Faith in the Global South,” the event ran from 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> June 2018, and represented a paradigm-breaking moment for SATS. We crossed the Rubicon in two senses.

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

Firstly, harnessing technology to host a conversation that involved scholars and delegates from all around the world changes the rules of engagement for scholarly dialogue. At minimal cost, scholars presented from America, England, France, Ghana, South Africa, and the Congo, while ninety-nine delegates participated from many nations. The conversation was as rich and bi-directional as at any live conference.

Secondly, we had a deep sense that this was a divinely orchestrated moment in the seminary's priority to become a more contextually-sensitive and culturally-diverse voice. Our dream of the Global South rising as a thought leader for the church began to be realised. We experienced six superb presentations by black African theologians who can hold their own in any academic forum. This was a first instalment, a foretaste of the potential SATS has, to contribute to transformative theological thought on our continent. As recently as last year, this was not even a blip on the radar of possibilities at SATS. We sense that God is doing a new thing. We do not despise the day of small beginnings.

## Presenters and Presentations

On day one, Dr Craig S. Keener (Asbury Theological Seminary) delivered a plenary address titled, 'The Pentecost Paradigm for Pentecostalism'. Anchored in Luke-Acts, Keener walked us through themes related to baptism in the Spirit as a prerequisite for cross-cultural mission. Underscored in Keener's address was the continuity of this phenomenon from Luke's day to the present. The zenith was an appeal to the cultivation and preservation of a unity born of the Spirit within a sacrificially loving community, the church.

Dr Jesse Kipimo (SATS) examined pentecostalisation in Francophone Africa, using the Congo Evangelistic Mission (CEM) as a case study. Dr Robert Falconer (SATS) reflected on the Holy Spirit's role in inaugurated eschatology and how this intersects with an enchanted African society. Falconer called for a broader view of the Spirit, embracing *charismata*, while seeing the renewal of the cosmos in Christ as key.

Dr Annang Asumang (SATS) called for adjustment in theological education in the Global South. In a balanced and insightful paper, he sought to build bridges between the Global North and the Global South, centred on an appreciation of pentecostalisation as a work of God.

Dr Pretorius (SATS) spoke on the nexus between science and faith, particularly the relationship between neuroscience and the Holy

Spirit, calling for further dialogue and interdisciplinary research between traditionally disparate fields.

On day two, Prof Marius Nel (Northwest University) delivered a plenary address titled, 'Pentecostalisation's Pastoral Response to the Challenges of South African Xenophobia'. Launching from an analysis of neo-Pentecostals' use of neo-prophecy, Nel argued for the therapeutic role played by prophecy in attending to the victims of xenophobia. This was a content-rich paper deserving of multiple reads, one whose implications are pertinent to the contemporary southern African experience.

Dr Modisa Mzondi (SATS) shared some historical insights regarding the pentecostalisation of the African church. His presentation looked at Enoch Sontonga's song and prayer 'Nkosi sikelel' iAfrica'. Mzondi underlined how the pentecostalisation of the church in Africa is a divine answer to this song and prayer.

In a balanced and Bible-based presentation, Dr Collium Banda (Northwest University) cautioned against attempting to complement Christ's salvific works by using anointed mantles, as seen in the practices of a few African Pentecostal prophets. He warned against the excesses of these prophetic figures while calling for a renewed appreciation of the cross of Christ.

Dr Elijah Dube (UNISA) spoke on flamboyant prophets in both South Africa and Zimbabwe, addressing their abuse of authority. Dube looked at public sentiment and legislation that has been tabled to regulate these prophets. Dube also encouraged the church not to leave regulation to lawmakers but to be more active and vocal in curtailing the excesses.

Finally, Dr Kevin Smith (SATS) presented on spiritual warfare as understood in neo-Pentecostal circles and how this compares to Ephesians. He recognised the silence of many Occidental commentators on the supernatural, while equally lamenting the overindulgences of some neo-Pentecostals on the matter.

## Present Publication

We were privileged to provide a platform through which academics, church leaders, students, and thought leaders could engage with well-informed scholars. Like the blacksmith who knows full well to strike the iron whilst it is still hot, we aim to continue the conversation through several avenues, chief of which is this special edition of *Conspectus*, aptly titled "Anvil Lectures: Pentecostal and Faith in the Global South." From this, our hope is that the church in the Global South would be encouraged to serve Christ faithfully, aided by the sanctifying and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

## Conclusion

We are a people who believe in the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Through the presentations, we experienced a range of sentiments. We recognised God authentically at work in the Global South and we appreciated the many positive contributions of African Pentecostal churches. We voiced concerns about a variety of abusive and unbiblical trends and practices. Most of all, we heard the call of God for the church in the Global South to take up the mantle of theological and missionary leadership. In response to this call, we echoed the sentiments of Isaiah and Martin Luther—‘here we are, Lord; send us’ and ‘here we stand [to serve]; we can do no other’.