

## Keynote Address

# Pentecostal Prophecy: A Pastoral Response to the Challenges of South African Xenophobia

Marius Nel

### Abstract

Displacement is a challenge that many countries in Africa face, and in times of crisis citizens of these countries tend to cool their anger and frustration *inter alia* through violent acts of xenophobia. Another feature of the African scene (as a part of the global south) is the growth of the Pentecostal movement in its diverse forms, with classical Pentecostals, charismatic Pentecostals in mainline churches, neo-pentecostal groups already outnumbering members of the Roman Catholic Church in Africa, and the effect of a process of pentecostalisation followed by some mainline churches to integrate Pentecostal practices in order to keep their members. It is argued that prophecy forms an integral element in the contribution of the neo-pentecostal movement to the solution of displacement and the resultant xenophobia as a problem in Africa. Prophecy stands in the service of neo-pentecostals' emphasis on salvation and healing, within the wider context of African cosmology's view of a spirit world well populated by good and evil spirits and animating the seen world. Evil spirits are causative for the occurrence of some cases of death, barrenness, illnesses and other misfortunes; the prophet can decipher and uncover the human and spiritual causes of events and prescribe a possible way to overcome them. Prophecy provides guidance for the displaced as

### About the Author<sup>1</sup>

*DTh (UNISA); DD (UP); PhD (UP);  
PhD (Radboud University)*

Prof Nel holds doctorates in Practical Theology, Church history, Old Testament, and New Testament. He is a pastor of the AFM of SA. He was a lecturer at Auckland Park Theological Seminary for 23 years. He is the chair, Ecumenism: Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism and research professor at the Unit for Reformed Theology, Faculty of Theology, Potchefstroom campus, North-West University. His specializing fields are apocalypticism in the Old and New Testament, history of the Pentecostal movement, and Pentecostal hermeneutics.

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

well as for those who are challenged to accept and welcome the displaced strangers in their world. The benefits as well as shortcomings of pentecostal prophecy as a pastoral response to xenophobia are described and evaluated.

## 1. Introduction

A feature of the African scene (as a part of the global south) is the growth of the Pentecostal movement in its diverse forms, with classical Pentecostals, charismatics in so-called mainline churches, and neo-pentecostal groups already outnumbering members of the Roman Catholic Church in Africa. The process of pentecostalisation is even being followed by many established so-called mainline denominations to prevent further loss of their members to Pentecostal groups, illustrating the pentecostalising trend of Christianity on the continent.

The pentecostalisation of African Christianity has been called the African Reformation of the twenty-first century, which has fundamentally altered the character of African Christianity. To give an idea of the extent of African pentecostalisation, if the so-called African 'Spirit' or Spirit-type churches are added, more than half of Zimbabwe's population belong to African Pentecostal churches, 40 percent of South Africa's, over a third of Kenya's, followed by the DRC, Nigeria, Ghana and Zambia, with over a quarter of the population being Pentecostals, according to Allan Anderson. The majority of church migration goes in the Pentecostal direction, and the historic mission churches have adopted charismatic forms such as the gifts of the Spirit, gospel music, and evangelical fellowships and ministries to counteract the loss of members who look for Pentecostal life.

The pentecostalisation of Protestant Christianity is a result of a combination of factors such as the loosening of the grip of naturalism and rationalism on Western culture, leading to a renewed openness and desire for direct encounters with the supernatural, particularly among young people. Globalisation is another factor that brought believers from all over the world into contact with each other through immigration, global networks of leaders, conferences, and mission agencies. A third consideration is that in a highly competitive and pluralistic global religious economy, large denominations matter less and networks of charismatic leaders offering the most potent forms of spiritual experience matter more. Those neo-pentecostal leaders developing the most innovative spiritual practices are independent from oversight by bureaucracies (which tend to squash such practices),

and can influence other leaders across denominations through leadership conferences, electronic media, and self-published books, all easily accessible through the Internet. However, this is not only positive, as will be argued later.

I would like to discuss an issue that is relevant for Africa (and the global south as such) against the background of pentecostalisation. Many African countries are characterised by the challenge of displacement and displaced persons. In South Africa we experience time and again that during political, economic and social crises, some citizens tend to cool their anger and frustration *inter alia* through violent acts of xenophobia, endangering the lives and possessions of such displaced persons. I will investigate the challenge of displaced people and xenophobia, specifically from the viewpoint of pentecostalisation, to ask the question: How does African pentecostalism react to the challenges of displacement? Does it contribute to the problem or to its solution?

I limit my discussion to prophecy as a significant and integral element that characterises African pentecostalism for the reason that prophetism is an integral feature of the African pentecostalisation process, especially as found in neo-pentecostalism, an integral feature of African pentecostalism. Prophecy stands in the service of African Pentecostals' emphasis on salvation and healing. I describe the phenomenon of prophecy before evaluating its benefits and shortcomings as a pastoral response to xenophobia. The discussion is limited to the South African context, but the phenomenon is endemic to the global south.

## 2. Xenophobia in South Africa

Africa has been experiencing the challenges of displacement and migration for many centuries. Legal entries of foreigners into South Africa increased dramatically after 1994, and most of the foreigners who entered the country came from Africa, mainly from countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region (Crush 2008:1; Dodson and Crush 2016:279). In 2013, the number of international immigrants in South Africa, according to the United Nations, was more than 2.3 million and between 2000 and 2013 this population group had been growing at a rate of 6.7% per annum (Gordon 2016:4; 2017:19–20).

Estimates of the total number of irregular (or undocumented) migrants present in South Africa range from 1 million to an implausible 10 million; it is impossible to quantify it because of the

clandestine nature of irregular cross-border entry or overstaying (Dodson and Crush 2016:279).

In 2010, out of 180 000 asylum seekers, close to 150 000 were Zimbabweans. In 2015, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported 114 512 recognised refugees and 798 080 asylum-seekers in South Africa, with the DRC and Somalia as the main sources (Dodson and Crush 2016:280), while unofficial numbers representing illegal refugees are likely to be in the millions. Without sufficient governmental support these people mostly self-settle in urban areas among other poor people (Labys, Dreyer and Burns 2017:697).

The South African government policy can be regarded as resistant if not directly hostile to immigration, contributing to a pervasive climate of xenophobia (Idehe and Osaghae 2015:83), targeting primarily immigrants of African origin. A word in local vocabulary, *Makwerekwere*, became a derogatory term used for a black person who cannot demonstrate mastery of local South African languages and who hails from a country assumed to be economically and culturally backward in relation to South Africa, to buttress the deep-seated resentment for foreigners (2015:80).

Xenophobia is characterised by a negative attitude, a dislike, fear or hatred towards foreigners. It is an outburst of negative collective ideas, social stereotypes and prejudices often disguised with the phenomenon of nationalism (Idehe and Osaghae 2015:79). Foreigners are viewed as 'stealing jobs', and the idea is widespread that migrant entrepreneurs pose a threat to South African-owned spaza shops, a myth that Crush, Chikanda and Skinner (2015) in a detailed and careful manner debunk through well-researched data. The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) reports that xenophobic attacks in South Africa are fuelled by two myths about foreigners, that foreign nationals take jobs that should be reserved for South Africans, driving up unemployment numbers, and that foreign nationals are an important cause of the high levels of crime in the country (Kangwa 2016:539). A survey in 2006 showed that 47% of South Africans supported the deportation of foreign nationals, and 74% supported a policy of deportation for any immigrant not contributing economically to the country (Idehe and Osaghae 2015:80; Dodson and Crush 2016:285). Crush (2008) finds that while 48% of South Africans saw migrants from neighbouring nations as a criminal threat, 29% believe these migrants are carriers of diseases, while 15% reported losing jobs to foreigners. The Afrobarometer survey of 2011 submitted that 45% of South Africans strongly do not want foreigners to live in the country because jobs are taken away from them by foreigners, 36%

would dynamically prevent foreigners establishing businesses in their neighbourhoods, and 33% would actively attempt to stop foreigners from settling in their neighbourhoods (Ejoke and Ani 2017:171). Even former President Nelson Mandela hinted that undocumented foreigners are responsible for crime in South Africa, according to Harris (2002). Former Home Affairs Minister and leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), Mangosuthu Buthelezi, once stated that ‘all Nigerian immigrants are criminals and drug traffickers’ (Tella and Ogunnubi, 2014:154). The South African state represents a ‘protectionist’ position for its own citizens, with the introduction of restrictive immigration policies and considerable resources to border control (Gordon 2016:2) and by tacitly promoting nativism (Gordon 2017:31), which underscores the implementation of various regulatory and policing responses that undermine and negatively affect migrant entrepreneurship. It is based on high levels of negative perceptions about migrants and, more specifically, about migrant-owned businesses. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) states explicitly that there is no evidence that foreign nationals are responsible for the rise in crime and unemployment. On the contrary, research shows that migrants are twice as likely to be entrepreneurs than South African nationals, and their small and medium size businesses actively contribute to generate employment and boost the local and national economy, as they employ on average five to six people.<sup>2</sup> The immigration policy has been informed by discourses that depict immigration as harmful to development (Klotz 2012).

<sup>2</sup> <https://southafrica.iom.int/>;  
accessed 2018-02-08

Xenophobic sentiments have been incubated and allowed to mature, misguiding the direction in which South Africa needs to move and undermining the ethos of black brotherhood rooted in Africa socialism and communalism (Idehe and Osaghae 2015:87). Politicians and officials have blamed illegal immigrants for placing strain on state resources and engaging in criminal activities (Dodson and Crush 2016:285). As explanations of xenophobia, research refers to economic and material factors such as poor blacks vying for jobs with immigrants who are sometimes better qualified or more willing to work hard for less remuneration, social factors where the ‘other’ in post-apartheid South Africa is redefined as ‘foreign Africans’, and political factors such as a lack of political leadership and elite discourses on immigration (Dodson and Crush 2016:286–288). Gordon (2016:12–14) looks at xenophobia from the perspective of individual wellbeing and concludes that anti-immigrant sentiment can be explained as coming from a lack of intergroup contact, stereotypes about immigration and immigrants, a general weakening of race relations in the country and the enormous inequality and poverty

found among millions of South Africans. Immigrants and refugees experience everyday forms of discrimination from fellow-citizens and officials, as well as in accessing those state services and rights to which they are legally entitled. 'In the absence of concerted public activism or political leadership, popular xenophobia and official schizophrenia on immigration are likely to persist' (Dodson and Crush 2016:289).

Post-apartheid South Africa experiences many service delivery protests which are at times accompanied by violence (Saloojee 2016:263), as well as deliberate attacks on immigrants (2016:273). In 2004/5 (from April to April), there were 7 382 peaceful protests and 662 protests with unrest, in 2010/11 there were 11 681 peaceful and 973 violent protests, in 2012/3 there were 10 517 peaceful and 1 882 violent protests and in 2013/4 there were 11 688 peaceful and 1 907 violent protests. The acceleration in violent protests is significant (2016:269). Between 2009 and 2012 there were 2.95 unrest incidents a day, an increase of 40% more than the average of 2.1 unrest incidents a day recorded for the period from 2004 to 2009. The top grievances by protesters were about housing, water and sanitation, political representation and electricity, and they centre on unaccountable and corrupt local government and issues of community safety (2016:271). In 1998, a Mozambican immigrant was thrown from a moving train and two Senegalese were electrocuted in an attempt to escape the violence unleashed on them by a group of South Africans returning from an 'Unemployed Masses of South Africa' rally in Pretoria. In 2008, xenophobic attacks began in Johannesburg and spread to other cities such as Pretoria and Cape Town. Both citizens and non-South African citizens lost their lives and valuable property was destroyed. The 2015 attacks were ostensibly triggered by a speech of Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini on 30 March 2015 in which he allegedly asked foreigners to pack their bags and go back to their countries because they were enjoying South African resources at the expense of locals (Tella 2016:142–3). He allegedly said, 'I would like to ask the South African government to help us. We must deal with our own lice in our heads. Let's take out the ants and leave them in the sun. We ask that immigrants must take their bags and go where they come from.'<sup>3</sup>

Kangwa (2016:535) expresses an opinion held by many, that the South African government has failed to maintain the values and principles of democracy over and above the perennial rhetoric that characterises electoral speeches. Scholars identify individual frustrations with social and economic conditions in the country as drivers behind anti-immigrant hostility and violence (Gordon 2016:5). Xenophobic attacks which portray the open hatred of

**3** <https://www.herald.co.zw/zwelithini-likens-immigrants-to-lice-ants/>; *The Herald*, 17 April 2015; accessed 2018-02-23.

African people not of South African heritage were mainly perpetrated by poor South Africans of African heritage on other poor African people living with and around them (Chiweshe 2016:133; Gordon 2016:2). Jean Pierre Misago, a researcher at the African Centre for Migration and Society, estimates that about 350 African foreigner nationals have been killed in xenophobic attacks from 2008 to 2015 (in Baker 2015).

Phakathi (2010) finds that some of the perpetrators of xenophobia are members of churches, while many victims of xenophobia look to the local church for safety and practical assistance in the aftermath of attacks.

### 3. Pentecostal Prophecy as a Pastoral Response to Xenophobia

In what way does neo-prophetism respond to the challenge of xenophobia and the plight of the displaced? Kangwa (2016:543) argues that as the church took a leading role in dismantling apartheid in South Africa it should now help shape democracy and dismantle the uglier aspects of liberal democracy in post-apartheid South Africa. 'African Christianity must add its voice to the call for a continent in which there is less pain and suffering. The church can help to transform Africa into a fountain of life' (p. 543). It has to challenge ruling governments, in some instances characterised by corruption and state plundering, pressing them to deliver meaningful development that is of benefit to citizens.

Ejoke and Ani (2017:180) are also of the opinion that the South African government needs strong support from outside authorities like the church, to assist *inter alia* in curbing the menace of xenophobia by staging powerful anti-xenophobic campaigns that accentuate important African values such as *ubuntu*. The social norm of *ubuntu* entrenched in the Xhosa saying, '*Umntu ngumntu ngabantu*' (every individual becomes because of others), denotes peace and coexistence and needs to be reinforced and mainstreamed.

It is argued that one of the most distinguishing characteristics of neo-pentecostalist churches is their prophetism, which is also their primary pastoral response to social challenges such as xenophobia. 'Prophecy in Africa also often becomes an extremely effective form of pastoral therapy and counsel, mostly practised in private, a moral corrective and an indispensable facet of Christian ministry. It can become an expression of care and concern for the needy; and in countless cases, it actually brings relief' (Anderson 1996:180).

Neo-prophetism is not only word-based; it includes acts of healing, exorcism and deliverance based on the belief in God as the great power that can overcome any power of destruction, with a pneumatological soteriology expressed in interventionist terms (Sakupapa 2016:120). Anderson (2016:305) remarks that an African religion that does not promise deliverance from evil or promote health and prosperity is a dysfunctional religion without any future; hence the prosperity gospel has flooded the economically poorest continent. It is directly related to the religious world of Africa that is holistic. Everything is invested with religious meaning, and there is no clear-cut division between spiritual and secular. Its spirituality is pragmatic, practical and this-worldly (Anderson 2016:315). The African holistic worldview does not allow for separation between secular and religious, requiring of neo-pentecostalism to include also the political on its agenda. It formulates a dream of the coming kingdom of heaven with healing, wholeness and holiness in its wake, and it shows a prerogative for displaced and disenfranchised people. And the local church provides a place of spiritual security and personal community for all people, including migrants (Anderson 2016:312), because Christians are strangers in an alien land like Israel in Egypt and they seek the prosperity of a strange country like Israel in Babylonian exile (Yong 2010:254). Prophecies are concerned with God's intervention due to its interventionist view of divine causality. Believers make pilgrimages to prophets who claim to meet the needs of people because of their direct contact with God.

African prophets assumed a new role in terms of challenges such as HIV, AIDS and xenophobia. These challenges are perceived as a kind of hermeneutical key with which neo-pentecostals interpret the Bible (Anderson 2001:223), operating on the assumption that God wants to meet his people's needs in a direct manner. In this sense, neo-pentecostalist prophets have become an innovative alternative to traditional healers (Anderson 2001:224).

Labys, Dreyer and Burns (2017:698) state that as daily recipients of xenophobia and violent crime, refugees in South Africa are at risk of mental illness. Some studies have explored their psychological wellbeing; for example, in Johannesburg 77 refugees were surveyed and research reported that 66% of them were in need of mental health care; high rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (69%), anxiety (91%) and depression (74%) were found in clients of a centre for torture survivors; and in Durban, a high prevalence of depression (54%), anxiety (49%) and PTSD (25%) symptoms were found in 335 refugees. Forced migration, low social support and socioeconomic hardships (including food insecurity) were the main risk factors for poor mental health



outcomes in this population group. In their own research, Labys, Dreyer and Burns (2017:701) finds that migrants have difficulties with xenophobia/racism, work, physical safety, housing exploitation and healthcare. The impact of these difficulties was seen in psychological effects such as feelings of worry, stress, fear, emotional pain, anger and an inability to cope (Labys, Dreyer and Burns 2017:703–707). Most of their interviewees (78%) reported that religion formed an essential part of migrants' lives. The church meeting was key for meeting friends, praying, feeling blessed, feeling happy and regaining hope. One participant who attended church every evening and Sunday mornings stated, 'They [Pentecostal church] give you lots of hope'. Praying (39%) and faith were further sources of strength, joy, and hope, providing reassurance that was crucial for survival.

#### 4. An Evaluation of Prophecy as a Pastoral Response to Xenophobia

(Kaunda 2016:8) makes the important remark that any attempt by the church to change society involves creating new ways of being in the world and new possibilities for socio-economic transformation in order to find a remedy for the persistent social ill of the horrific and destructive phenomenon of xenophobia. One of the primary ways neo-pentecostals react to this phenomenon is through their practice of prophetism, as stated above. Other ways of prophetic politics employed by neo-pentecostalism include involvement in schools, clinics and hospitals, labour unions, self-help groups and development and relief organisations, and by influencing personal morality, nurturing civic responsibility, working for the alleviation of poverty, promoting education and advocating for peace and justice (Yong 2010:248).

In analysing neo-pentecostalist prophetism, Ngong (2010:147) argues that it promotes an African spiritualistic worldview that does not pay sufficient attention to the scientific imagination. With its emphasis on physical healing it does not allow for the successes of medical science, while at the same time its ascription in a wholesale manner of socio-economic and political challenges to the demonic as neo-pentecostalist prophets customarily do, cannot be upheld (Mana 2004:96). African Traditional Religion (ATR) pacifies evil deities and ghosts with animal sacrifices, necromancy, spiritism and ritualism, and some have asserted that the African Initiated Churches (AIC) inappropriately mix the Christian faith with ATR by serving the same agenda. The African worldview explains misfortune in terms of the influence of evil spirits, necessitating their pacification. If neo-pentecostalism

indiscriminately intends to pacify evil spirits without an unapologetic commitment to biblical finality of authority, it would degenerate into a syncretisation with questionable beliefs and practices (Quayesi-Amakye 2016:294).

However, the remark generalises and does not take into account that many neo-pentecostalist prophets do allow room for the contribution of medical science and the reality of sociopolitical and economic woes due to hard-core capitalism and greedy politicians. And when they are faced with the challenge of xenophobia in their communities they address the problems forcibly.

Still there is some truth in the remark; while providing for this-worldly needs of individuals the causes of their challenges may not be spiritualised, to such an extent that blame is shifted onto evil spirits and contemporary human beings need not accept responsibility for their own lives, as taught by Derek Prince and the Nigerian Emeka Nwakpa (Quayesi-Amakye 2016:301). It is not enough to cast out the demon of xenophobia; believers need to hear the important gospel message again and again that all people are to be treated with dignity because they have been created in the image of God. Mana (2004:97) proposes that a bridge should be erected by neo-pentecostalists between popular expectations of deliverance and theoretical analyses of liberation and reconstruction by the church in order to transform hearts and minds in the building of peaceful and flourishing societies that accommodate migrants as well. What is needed is prophetic politics informed by Pentecostal spirituality and piety that engages the public sphere boldly and provides all kinds of counter-cultural and counter-conventional communities where the displaced experience companionship and solidarity in the form of 'family' and as a counter-history, counter-ethics and counter-ontology to that of the myth of secularism (Yong 2010:228). The result will be that Pentecostal communities function as alternative 'cities' that either intentionally ignore the broader political realities or set out to provide forms of socio-political and economic solidarity for people who otherwise find themselves on the margins of the *polis* as conventionally defined (Yong 2010:13).

Another argument is that neo-prophetism's emphasis on prosperity may disqualify it from reaching the disenfranchised and marginalised such as most immigrants are, because of its appearance as a rich church and a rich man's church. 'Unfortunately, Christians, especially those from Pentecostal-Charismatic circles, are not very keen to confront social and political causes of poverty on the continent', writes Kangwa (2016:544). What should be kept in mind is that when neo-

pentecostals concentrate on this-worldly needs of believers, their prophecies most of the time provide guidance derived from the Bible although it must be admitted that Scripture might be misappropriated, as Quayesi-Amakye (2013:247) explains. As explained, this-worldly challenges then become the hermeneutical key to the interpretation of the Bible, in a historicist way where the social-historical background and horizon of the text is ignored and it is interpreted as though it was written exclusively for contemporary believers. It also characterises a large part of the sermons in neo-pentecostal churches. The way to address this issue is probably by bringing the importance of a sound theological training for all neo-pentecostal pastors, prophets and apostles to the attention of the movement's leaders, a difficult task since it is not organised into alliances or denominations, as is the case with classical pentecostalism.

In most cases, neo-prophets do not have any or only loose connections with church mother-bodies, implying that they are not answerable to anyone and they use market techniques to ply their ministries (Zulu 2016:103). The lack of accountability and transparency is harming the neo-pentecostal movement and the behaviour of a few prophets is discrediting the movement as a whole. For instance, a few cases have been reported of prophets who exploited the trust of their clients by abusing and assaulting them sexually or emotionally, or requiring exorbitant payment for their healing prayers (Mwale and Chita 2016:52-53). An example can be found in the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG). In 2000 the South African Human Rights Commission found that the church exploited the poor financially and performed rituals that amount to forms of psychological conditioning. After a legal battle, the Commission had to retract its findings (cf. Van Wyk 2014 for full details). Prophetic practices should be normalised and regulated; some of the implications discussed by Yong (2010:250–251) are that the church provides a site where Spirit-filled believers are emboldened to bear prophetic witness and learn how to live prophetically in the Spirit, but also to engage the world external to the church, providing a prophetic alternative to the world's conventions of corruption, patronage and oligarchy and empowered by charitable works sensitive to larger socio-structural projects and tasks, even when it implies confrontation with the principalities and powers when necessary.

That there are excesses and abuses within the neo-pentecostal movement that are perpetuated by some prophets cannot be denied. Presumably turning water into wine, ordering believers to drink petrol and paraffin to prove their faith according to Mark 16:17–18, turning water into petrol, turning a snake into

chocolate, walking on thin air, 'healing' cancer, HIV and AIDS, 'raising' the dead and predicting soccer and election results are some of the excesses that received wide and negative coverage in the daily Southern African press (Mwale and Chita 2016:51; Zulu 2016:104), doing damage to the Pentecostal movement as a whole. Its most prominent leaders should be encouraged to organise the movement to such an extent that it can protect itself from swindlers and charlatans that damage its reputation with the public and governments. A tragic example is the Ngcobo Killings of 21 February 2018 where five policemen and an off-duty soldier were shot during an attack on a police station in Ngcobo, between Mthatha and Komani (previously Queenstown) in the Eastern Cape. During the attack, ten firearms and a police van were stolen from the police station, before an ATM a short distance from the police station was robbed.<sup>4</sup> Seven suspects were eventually killed and ten others arrested after a shootout with police at the town's Mancoba church, including one of the church's leaders. His brother confirmed his involvement with the gang who killed the policemen. Their motive was presumably to access funds because of the dire financial straits of the church. The South African Council of Churches says it lodged a complaint with government over the Seven Angels Church, but was ignored. Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities (CRL) chairwoman Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva reacted to the events at eNgcobo and said the church had already been probed in 2016 and authorities were alerted to children living at the church and not attending school. The committee suggested that the government should regulate church leadership by way of registration. The co-operative governance and traditional affairs portfolio committee of Parliament responded to the committee's report by stating that the state could not prescribe when it came to beliefs and religious convictions because of the value of religious liberty enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic, but it unanimously condemned the abuse of vulnerability by religious leaders.<sup>5</sup>

Another negative feature of neo-pentecostalist prophetism is the emphasis on the charisma and person of the individual prophet, also in advertisements of the ministry, and the accompanying adoration and veneration of the prophet. One of the important distinctions between the phenomenon of prophecy in the classical and neo-pentecostalist movements is the former's emphasis on prophecy as a gift to the church by way of the participation of all believers and the latter's emphasis on the permanent office of the prophet. The prophets' status might also lead to their enrichment and personal gain through gifts presented to them in order to

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/five-police-dead-in-attack-on-station>; accessed 2018-02-26.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.enca.com/south-africa/parliament-slams-crl-chairs-comment-on-engcobo>; accessed 2018-02-26.

secure their services or as gratuity for supposed services (Banda 2016:221); Quayesi-Amakye (2016:303) refers to it as ‘prophetic monetization’ (cf. the critical work of Chitando, Gunda and Kügler 2013).

Some of the positive benefits of neo-prophetism should also be described. Neo-pentecostalist churches purposefully do not take denominational issues seriously, out of consideration for the postmodern sentiment of respect for people with different opinions. Doctrinal differences play only a peripheral role, because as part of the Pentecostal movement the emphasis is on people meeting the truth in the person of Christ rather than in the Bible. Perhaps the neo-pentecostalist movement may serve as a catalyst for ecumenical engagement between Christians.

While it is true that African Pentecostals in the past were mostly apathetic towards social concerns, they have awakened to their civic obligations (Quayesi-Amakye 2016:296). Examples of the neo-prophets’ concern for the underprivileged and disenfranchised are evident. Several neo-prophets’ involvement in issues of social justice, their financial contribution to projects for the benefit of migrants and their relationship with African political leaders have received much publicity. It can be accepted that these leaders were influenced in a positive way by emphasising issues related to social justice. For instance, Cyril Ramaphosa visited the Shembe Church on 2 May 2017 where he met with the leadership. In his speech before the congregation he said, ‘This church has always led the way in teaching the youth the value of hard work, the importance of education and the significance of ethical conduct...’ He called the church a ‘nation-building institution’, and an ‘African asset and national treasure’ that provides practical solutions to our complex socio-economic challenges’, that is averse to wickedness, malicious gossip, public spats by leaders and disrespect of one by another.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/catch-it-live-ramaphosa-joins-congregants-in-celebrating-the-life-of-prophet-isaiah>; accessed 2018-02-27.

However, in general it is true that neo-prophets should address more publicly structural, political, economic and social issues that cause poverty, ethnic violence, xenophobia and other forms of violence that characterise Africa. It can be accepted that their prophetic task includes guidance in terms of xenophobia as it relates to individuals rather than interpreting their prophetic task to include consideration of social ethics and structural challenges that should also enjoy their consideration.

It cannot be denied that neo-prophetism also contributes to transformation effects on the lives of its members including migrants, as demonstrated by sociological research (cf. Massey and Higgins 2011; Portes 2008). Social and cultural capital generated in neo-pentecostalist churches leads to upward social mobility,

especially by way of entrepreneurship, of individuals, families and eventually whole communities (Portes 2008:15). For instance, His People Christian Ministries' vision is to transform the world by having committed Christians in positions of leadership. To realise their goal, they present workshops, seminars, conferences and courses aimed at helping young people develop so that they would have the skills needed to become leaders in their chosen careers. They teach them how to budget their money so that they would be able to tithe and meet their financial commitments, negotiation skills, time management skills, how to develop a personal brand and how to begin and manage a small business. Research in 2003–2004 showed that most members of the church described these social-skills-development courses as the most valuable part of their church life (Frahm-Arp 2016:272–273). In many cases the beneficiaries of neo-prophetism were the disadvantaged and marginalised, who were offered hope. However, there should also be a concerted effort by neo-prophets to address factors that rob people of the fullness of life, such as poor governance, poverty, unemployment, corruption, crime, HIV and AIDS and the erosion of African value systems (Kangwa 2016:545).

## 6. Synthesis

By way of concluding, increasing numbers of legal and illegal immigrants live in South Africa, facing the possibility of xenophobic acts which portray the open hatred of African people not of South African heritage by mostly poor South Africans. In evaluating prophecy as a Pentecostal pastoral response to xenophobia, it was noted that while neo-prophetism provides for this-worldly needs of individuals the causes of their challenges are at times spiritualised to such an extent that their clients are absolved from accepting responsibility for their own lives. It was argued that the demon of xenophobia should not only be cast out; believers need to learn that the gospel demands that all people, including immigrants, should be treated with dignity, because they have been created in the image of God. The needs of people also serve as the hermeneutical key in a historicist way to interpret the Bible, a feature that emphasises the necessity of a sound theological training for all neo-pentecostal leaders.

The lack of accountability and transparency in terms of excesses and abuses by neo-prophets that is harming the neo-pentecostal movement was noted, and it was proposed that prominent leaders should be encouraged to organise the movement into alliances to protect it from charlatans. The emphasis on the charisma and person of the individual prophet might lead to personal

enrichment, necessitating supervision by church mother bodies that should be established.

On the positive side, for neo-pentecostals doctrinal differences play only a peripheral role because of their emphasis on the experiential as a precondition for doing theology, making ecumenical engagements with other Christians possible. They are also concerned about the underprivileged and disenfranchised, in many instances funding projects that serve the needs of migrants. However, neo-prophets hardly address structural political, economic and social issues, because their ministry is aimed at individuals. Neo-prophetism also contributes to transformation in the lives of its members, and the beneficiaries are the disadvantaged and marginalised.

## Reference List

- Anderson A 1996. The hermeneutical processes of Pentecostal-type African Initiated Churches in South Africa. *Missionalia* 24 (2):171–185.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2001. *African reformation: African initiated Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*. Trenton: Africa World Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2007. *Spreading fires: The missionary nature of early pentecostalism*. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- Anderson AH 2016. The Spirit and the African spiritual world. In V Synan, A Yong, and JK Asamoah-Gyadu (eds), *Global renewal Christianity: Spirit-empowered movements past, present, and future*, vol. 3: Africa, 304–320. Lake Mary: Charisma House.
- Asamoah-Gyadu JK 2013. *Contemporary pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African context*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock.
- Baeta CG 1962. *Prophetism in Ghana: A study of some spiritual churches*. London: SCM.
- Baker A 2015. Brutal murder is sparked by anti-immigrant rage in South Africa, <http://time.com/3828398/xenophobia-south-africa/>, 2018-02-22.
- Banda L 2016. Prophets of God or neo-diviners? A theological assessment of prophecy in Zambia today. In H Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African*

*context*, 208–229 (Special edition of Word and Context Journal). Wellington: Christian Literature Fund.

Barrett D 1970. AD 2000: 350 Million Christians in Africa? *International Review of Mission* (59)39–54.

Brueggemann W 2001. *The prophetic imagination* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Minneapolis: Fortress.

Chitando E, Gunda M, and Kügler J 2013. *Prophets, profits, and the Bible in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Chiweshe MK 2016. Social positionality and xenophobia: The case of rugby player Tendai Mtawarira in South Africa. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 9(7):132–149.

Cox H 1995. *Fire from heaven: The rise of pentecostal spirituality and the reshaping of religion in the twenty-first century*. Cambridge: Da Capo.

Crush J (ed.) 2008. The perfect storm: The relationship of xenophobia in South Africa. *Southern African Migration project*, [http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/South\\_Africa\\_09\\_03\\_30\\_the\\_perfect\\_storm.pdf](http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/South_Africa_09_03_30_the_perfect_storm.pdf), 2018-02-23.

Crush J, Chikanda A, and Skinner C (eds.) 2015. *Mean streets: Migration, xenophobia and informality in South Africa*. Cape Town: Southern African Migration Programme.

De Villiers E 2016. Do the prophetic and reformist approaches in Christian ethics exclude one another? A responsibility ethics attempt at reconciliation. In H Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African context*, 148–162. (Special edition of Word and Context Journal). Wellington: Christian Literature Fund.

Dodson B and Crush J 2016. Migration to South Africa since 1994: Realities, policies and public attitudes. In T Kepe, M Levin, and B von Lieres (eds.), *Domains of freedom: Justice, citizenship and social change in South Africa*, 277–297. Claremont, South Africa: UCT Press.

Duncan D 1988. *Health and healing: A ministry to wholeness* (Pastoral care and ethical issues). Edinburgh: Saint Andrew.

Ejoke UP and Ani KJ 2017. A historical and theoretical analysis of xenophobia in South Africa. *Journal of Gender, Information and Development in Africa* 6 (1–2):163–185.



- Ellington DW 2016. Be cautious about prophets but zealous to prophesy: 1 Corinthians 14 and today's questions about prophecy. In H Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African context*, 174–190 (special edition of Word and Context Journal). Wellington: Christian Literature Fund.
- Fee G 1994. *God's empowering presence: The Holy Spirit in the letters of Paul*. Peabody: Hendrickson.
- Frahm-Arp M 2016. The rise of the megachurches in South Africa. In V Synan, A Yong, and JK Asamoah-Gyadu (eds), *Global renewal Christianity: Spirit-empowered movements past, present, and future* (vol. 3) Africa, 263–284. Lake Mary: Charisma House.
- Gifford P 2011. Healing in African pentecostalism: The victorious living of David Oyedepo. In CG Brown (ed.), *Global pentecostal and charismatic healing*, pp. 251–266. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gordon SL 2016. Understanding evaluations of foreigners in modern South Africa: The relationship between subjective wellbeing and xenophobia. *Journal of Happiness Studies* 17 (6).
- Gordon S 2017. A desire for isolation? Mass public attitudes in South Africa toward immigration levels. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 15(1):18–35.
- Grady JL 2013. Five ways prosperity gospel is hurting Africa. *Charisma*. <http://www.charismamag.com/blogs/fire-in-my-bones/19113-5-ways-the-prosperity-gospel-is-hurting-africa>; accessed 2018-02-22.
- Harris B 2002. Xenophobia: A new pathology for a new South Africa? In D Hook and G Eagle (eds.), *Psychopathology and social prejudice*, 169–84. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Ideheu RO and Osaghae FSO 2015, Xenophobia in South Africa: Re-thinking the Nigeria foreign policy of Afrocentrism. *African Research Review* 9(4):78–91,
- Kalu O 2008. *African pentecostalism: An introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kangwa J 2016. African democracy and political exploitation: An appraisal of xenophobia and the removal of the Rhodes Statue in South Africa. *The Expository Times* 127(11):534–545

- Kaunda CJ 2016. Enabling liminality prophetic witness to xenophobia: Proposing a missiological Spirit response for the church in South Africa. *KOERS—Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* 81(1):1–9.
- Klotz A 2012. South Africa as an immigration state. *Politikon* 39 (2):189–208.
- Kroesbergen H 2016. Prophecy today; reflections from a Southern African context: An introduction. In H Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African context*, 1–26 (special edition of Word and Context Journal). Wellington: Christian Literature Fund.
- Kroesbergen-Kamps J 2016. Prophetic struggles: Zambian pastors' diverse views on prophecy. In H Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African context*, 28–40, (Special edition of Word and Context Journal). Wellington: Christian Literature Fund.
- Labys CA, Dreyer C, and Burns JK 2017. At zero and turning in circles: refugee experiences and coping in Durban, South Africa. *Transcultural psychiatry* 54(5–6):696–714.
- Lindblom J 1962. *Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting world, church and local mission*. London: SCM.
- Maddocks M 1990. *The Christian healing ministry* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: SPCK.
- Mana K 2004. *Christians and churches of Africa: Salvation in Christ and building a new African society*. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- Massey DS and Higgins ME 2011. The effect of immigration on religious beliefs and practice: A theologizing or alienating experience. *Social Science Research* 40(5):1371–1389.
- Muindi S 2012. The nature and significance of prophecy in pentecostal-charismatic experience: An empirical-biblical study. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham.
- Mwale N and Chita J 2016. Religion and the media: The portrayal of prophecy in the Zambian media. In H Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African context*, 41–63, (special edition of Word and Context Journal). Wellington: Christian Literature Fund.
- Ndiokwere N 1981. *Prophecy and revolution: The role of prophets in the African churches and in biblical tradition*. London: SPCK.

- Nel M 2017. The pentecostal movement's view of the continuity of tongues in Acts and 1 Corinthians. *In die Skriflig* 51(1)a:21–98.
- Ngong D 2006. In quest of wholeness: African Christians in the new Christianity. *Review & Expositor* 103(3):519–540.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2010. *The Holy Spirit and salvation in African Christian theology: Imagining a new hopeful future for Africa*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Omenyo C 2011. Man of God, prophesy unto me: The prophetic phenomenon in African Christianity. *Studies of World Christianity* 17(1):30–49.
- Oosthuizen G 1992. *The healer-prophet in Afro-Christian churches*. Leiden: Brill.
- Phakathi S 2010. The response of churches to the May 2008 xenophobic violence. [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/app/uploads/2010/07/1\\_1\\_Church\\_c.pdf](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/app/uploads/2010/07/1_1_Church_c.pdf); accessed 2018-02-22.
- Portes A 2008. Migration and social change: Some conceptual reflections. Keynote address to the conference on Theorizing Key Migration Debates, Oxford University, July 1, 2008, 1–47. <https://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/files/events/portes.pdf>; accessed 2018-02-27.
- Quayesi-Amakye J 2013. *Christology and evil in Ghana: Towards a Pentecostal public theology*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2014. Coping with evil in Ghanaian pentecostalism. *Exchange* 43:254–272.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2016. Nativizing' the gospel: Pentecostalism and theology in Africa. In V Synan, A Yong, and JK Asamoah-Gyadu (eds.), *Global renewal Christianity: Spirit-empowered movements past, present, and future* (vol. 3): Africa, 287–303. Lake Mary: Charisma House.
- Sakupapa T 2016. Prophets in the Zambian/African context: A survey from an ecumenical perspective. In H Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African context*, 113–128. (special edition of Word and Context Journal). Wellington: Christian Literature Fund.
- Saloojee A 2016. Social protests and the exercise of citizenship in South Africa. In T Kepe, M Levin, and B von Lieres (eds.), *Domains of freedom: Justice, citizenship and social change in South Africa*, 259–276. Claremont: UCT Press.

- Saracco JN 2007. Prosperity theology. In J Corrie (ed.), *Dictionary of mission theology: Evangelical frontiers*, 322–326. Nottingham: IVP.
- Soko LRK 2016. Culture and the practice of prophecy today: A challenge of Christianity in Zambia. In H Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African context*, 89–98, (special edition of Word and Context Journal). Wellington: Christian Literature Fund.
- Sundkler B 1961. *Bantu prophets in South Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor JV 1963. *The primal vision: Christian presence and African religion*. London: SCM.
- Tella O and Ogunnubi O 2014. Hegemony or survival: South Africa's soft power and the challenge of xenophobia. *Africa Insight* 44(3):145–63.
- Tella O 2016. Understanding xenophobia in South Africa: The individual, the state and the international system. *Insight on Africa* 8(2):142–158.
- Turaki Y 1999. *Christianity and African gods*. Potchefstroom: PU for CHE.
- Van Wyk I 2014. *The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in South Africa: A church of strangers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wepener C 2013. Liturgical 'reform' in sub-Saharan Africa: Some observations on worship, language and culture. *Studia Liturgica* 44(1–2):82–95.
- Wepener C and Barnard M 2016. Worship in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC): A descriptive exploration of a prophetic phenomenon. In H Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African context*, 74–88 (special edition of Word and Context Journal). Wellington: Christian Literature Fund.
- Yong A 2010. *In the days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and political theology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.
- Zulu E 2016. Sow a seed and prosper? A critical examination of the trends, practices of 'prophecy' in a Zambian context. In H Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African context*, 99–112 (special edition of Word and Context Journal). Wellington: Christian Literature Fund.