


Charismatic preacher and traditional healer: Syncretic competitors for spirituality



Author:

Kelebogile T. Resane¹ 

Affiliation:

¹Department of Historical and Constructive Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Kelebogile Resane,
resanekt@ufs.ac.za

Dates:

Received: 04 June 2025

Accepted: 22 July 2025

Published: 30 Jan. 2026

How to cite this article:

Resane, K.T., 2026, 'Charismatic preacher and traditional healer: Syncretic competitors for spirituality', *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3(1), a76. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v3i1.76>

Copyright:

© 2026. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Background: Some charismatic pastors consult traditional healers to obtain power, prosperity and protection against the cosmic powers and social attacks.

Objectives: This article unpacks the rationale behind charismatic preachers' engagement with African spirituality. This syncretic practice is not only done by preachers, but by their followers too. The objectives are basically to identify reasons for syncretism within or by charismatic pastors.

Method: Through the literature study and social media, three major reasons for this engagement, which are power, prosperity and protection are identified, analysed and unpacked for scholarly research. Pentecostal and charismatic hermeneutics briefly highlighted and pointed out as a loophole that leads to these syncretic practices. The lack of mentoring and competition in the spiritual realm will also be highlighted as the power working against genuine Christian spirituality.

Results: African spirituality is still an ongoing field of research for scholars, especially those in Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies. A lack of theological in-depth, mentoring and spirit of competition are addressed to alleviate syncretism.

Conclusion: It is proposed that the pastor pursue sound theological education, submit himself under spiritually mature mentor for ministerial formation and desist from the competing forces of darkness by consulting a traditional healer. These three proposals are a measuring tool that charismatics should utilise in order to outweigh the deceptions embedded in and through syncretism.

Contribution: This article warns against syncretic religion within charismatic faith that comes through deceptive desires for followership, fame, miracles and control.

Keywords: charismatic pastor; witchdoctor; syncretism; theology; power; prosperity; protection.

Introduction

It has become popular on social media to read, see, and hear of some charismatic preachers consulting traditional healers. This has become an African charismatic spirituality phenomenon. For instance, recently a video of a renowned South African pastor's visit to Kwaku Bonsam's shrine has surfaced online. Kwaku Bonsam, in the video, indicated that the pastor had visited his shrine to seek spiritual powers. The online report states:

Renowned Ghanaian spiritualist Kwaku Bonsam has unveiled a South African pastor who visited his shrine to seek spiritual powers. During a TikTok live session, the well-known spiritualist interacted with his visitor, who indicated he heads a church called Bethesda Church in South Africa.¹

In South Sudan, *One Citizen Daily Newspaper*² carried a story of a pastor who was born into a family of traditional healers and was being trained to become a traditional healer himself. During his training, he wore bracelets, believing that his survival depended on them. He also kept various items under his bed that he used for ancestral worship and traditional healing, such as traditional medicines, clothing, homemade beer, and snuff.

At the same time, this pastor was attending a Bible college in order to become a pastor. As part of his studies, he was assigned to read and analyse the book of Joshua in the Bible. Upon reading this

1. <https://yen.com.gh/people/264647-popular-south-african-pastor-visit-ghanaian-witch-doctor-kwaku-bonsams-shrine-spiritual-powers/>.

2. Journey of faith: A pastor's transformation from a family of witch doctors – One Citizen Daily Newspaper.

Note: The manuscript is a contribution to the topical collection titled 'The Challenge of Syncretism in Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism,' under the expert guidance of guest editors, Prof. Marius Nel and Prof. Mookgo Solomon Kgatle.

story (Jos 7), the pastor reflected on his own life and the items he kept under his bed for ancestral worship. He realised that, just like Achan, he was guilty of disobedience and hiding things from God. This revelation made him aware that God was not distant but intimately aware of everything, including the items under his bed. The pastor recognised that God sees both our good deeds and our sins.

This story is amazing and talks to our topic. He was a traditional healer, but at the same time attending the Bible college to become a pastor, probably acknowledging the invisible move of the Spirit as the power behind the scenes – his witchcraft tactics.

Theology of power in African worldview is a broad dialogical theme. Resane (2020:92–96) elaborates on this power. Africans yearn for power over forces of darkness and structural wickedness. 'Power is associated with the liberation by the Holy Spirit from the shackles of darkness in personal and social experiences' (Resane 2020:93).

In South Africa, there is a narrative of Pastor Makhado Sinthumule Ramabulana of Apostolic Faith Mission. He wrote a book titled *Church Mafia. Captured by Secret Powers* (2018) about his journeys, and has come out into public through radios, television stations, and newspapers. He assisted the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Commission) explaining and unravelling some knotty issues during testimonies of people who experienced religious abuse. His journeys to Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, were to seek powers of attracting huge followership. This is the man who was brought up in classical Pentecostal faith, but later delved into witchcraft, mixing Christian faith with African traditional spiritualities by engaging with traditional healers.

The pastor of the Rivers of Living Waters Church in Evaton, Archbishop Stephen Bafana Zondo, south of Johannesburg was recently accused before the CRL Commission for rape, witchcraft, working with demons and dead people, using holy oil with traces of human blood and that the church was allegedly guarded by the spirits of dead people, which he used as monitoring spirits in the guise of doves, owls and bats.³

The Old Testament Saul, the first king of Israel, worshipped the God of Israel and felt losing power to David and the Philistines. The Old Testament narrative of 1 Samuel 28 tells that the Philistines declared war against Israel. King Saul sought guidance from God but received no answer. This prompted him to consult a medium at Endor. This medium or a spiritist could recall the dead spirits as in this narrative; she summoned the spirit of the deceased prophet Samuel, who told Saul that he together with his sons will die in a battle the next day. It was out of desperation that Saul

consulted the traditional healer. Because this was disobedience to God, as the use of occultism and communication with the dead are condemned and castigated in the Bible (Ex 22:18; Lv 19:31; Dt 18:10–12; Gl 5:19–21), Saul had to pay the price tragically. Like charismatic pastors, Saul consulted a traditional healer during the night, using the darkness to cover their disobedience to the Lord. Pastors consult at night, and always far away where they are not known. These pastors know and worship God, but feel incapable of witnessing God's power to demonstrate their message, hence devise Plan B, which is acquiring power from other sources. The narrative reveals the collusion of cultural hegemony and religious value systems 'buttressing the prevailing ethical codes against practices deemed as occult or supernatural' (Diko 2024:12). Contextually, there were complexities of indigenous belief systems within the multicultural society and spiritual practices (worshipping God) at that time. This is syncretic religion to the core – worshipper of one true God during the day (publicly, a religious value system), but seeking intervention from forces of darkness at night (privately, a cultural hegemony).

A pertinent question posed by any epistemologist is seeking rationale behind this pastor-spiritist collusion. As it can be assumed, this kind of collaboration is the mixture of Christian faith and traditional beliefs. This is known as syncretism. Webster's Online Dictionary gives the definition of syncretism:

[A]s the combination of different forms of belief or practice. It involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the context of religion. Additionally, it can refer to the combining of different religions, cultures, or ideas.⁴

It is not just an ideology but a practice of merging or assimilating various beliefs, thoughts or worldviews to either authenticate or nullify theological, mythological or religious traditions. Droogers (1989:9–22), by giving the historical genesis of syncretism, continues to define it as the combination of various forms of religions. Kato (1975:134) also avers that syncretism 'means combining the elements of many religions into one'. A seasoned missionary in west and east Africa, Wilbur O'Donovan (2000a), mentions that:

People from a non-Christian background are often tempted to simply add Christianity to the religious system from which they have come. The result is a mixture of both religions. Syncretism is the name given to this mixture of two or more religions. (p. 254)

Subliminal thread in syncretism is asserting an underlying unity or inclusivity of other faiths. It specifically denotes a more integrated merging of beliefs into a unified system or a cohesive belief system. In this context, it is a belief that demonstrates or embraces cultural acceptance of an alien or previous tradition that was previously tabooed as a negative force against truth propositioned. Charismatics as the latest articulates of Pentecostal faith are classically evangelical drawing a clear distinction between the gospel of Jesus Christ and the powers of darkness such as witchcraft, demons, and

3. Former pastor tells CRL Commission that Archbishop Zondo allegedly works with 'demons and dead people' – SABC News – Breaking news, special reports, world, business, sport coverage of all South African current events. Africa's news leader.

4. [https://www.bing.com/search/WebsterDictionary/Definition of syncretism](https://www.bing.com/search/WebsterDictionary/Definition%20of%20syncretism) (Viewed 21 Aug 2025).

any cosmic power that works against the light of the gospel. That is why Resane (2022b:57) highlights that 'Many of these evangelicals are converted from these strongholds and hate how they were victimised under these powers'.

The cosmos, which is the human habitat, is teemed with much deceit and falsehood. Ministry in Africa is within a context influenced by spirits and African traditional religions in their varieties of operations. The modern charismatic preacher is caught up in the situation where religiosity is not on the surface, but operational in subtle, though forceful ways. They are consulted by their members and seekers of deliverance; and these people come with high expectations. African pastors generally love quick-fixes and will do everything even going all the way to get powers even if they must dine with the devil just to please people.

Africans are generally spiritual people, and therefore highly religious and always seek spiritual solutions. To them, all problems are spiritual and need spiritual solutions through a spiritual medium such as a traditional healer or a pastor. Traditional healer is believed to have a special access to God, the spirit world and the ancestors. He is:

[A]ble to make contact with the spirit world in order to guarantee protection from evil spirits, to ensure good luck in a job interview or even to lift a curse someone else might have placed on you. The sangoma is able to provide blessing, healing, deliverance and protection (among other things).⁵

This conviction is entrenched within African worldview. Because the pastor is a religious person, he or she is expected to have some spiritual access to God, in order to offer spiritual solutions. This put some tremendous pressure on charismatic pastor, hence resorting to traditional healer for responding positively to the needs of those consulting him; but also, for self-empowerment as we argue in this article. The context in which a charismatic preacher operates is itself syncretic. O'Donovan (2000a) points this out:

Many African Christians fall into the temptation of syncretism today when they claim to follow Christ but continue to go to the witch doctor for help, or to use fetishes, magic, charms, divination and even sorcery in a time of personal crisis. When Christians combine their Christian belief with these traditional practices, they are practising syncretism. (p. 256)

The recent observable practices by some charismatic pastors articulate towards the conclusion that syncretism is becoming a prevalent phenomenon in charismatic faith. When the pastor and the traditional healer connive for mutual benefit, either for power, commercial gain or any form of potency, it becomes a syncretic practice.

The argument in this article is based on Resane's (2022b) elucidation that:

Whenever an African consult a witch doctor, it is for power to control their enemies and gain power and prestige in the community. The second reason for consultation is protection

against nature and spiritual attacks such as witchcraft. The aim is to drive away spirits or come to a truce with them so that they leave the victim alone. The third reason for consultation is for prosperity to control others or to be revered. (p. 57)

Pastor and power

Resane avers that 'power is one of the reasons for seeking intervention by either Jesus or the traditional healer'. The power referred to here is different from the power claimed by classical Pentecostals. Their notion of power is the energy imparted by the Holy Spirit with consequences such as boldness in evangelism, holiness of living, and miraculous signs and wonders. Pentecostal appellation comes from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost when those who were once filled with fear became emboldened for Christ, and they went out in power to proclaim the gospel of Christ. 'Power is one of the hallmarks of the gospel' (Ukachi 2013:38). Power associated with Charismatics is the one seen 'as a force for revitalisation and renewal within their own church traditions'⁶ This is, unfortunately, the power that is open to abuse because it can be made manipulatable through orchestrations of miracles, as recently observed in some Charismatic churches perpetuating strange practices, of which some are clearly discerned as witchcraft techniques. This is a pivotal argument in this article that the charismatic leaders consult traditional healers in order to demonstrate some perceived physical manifestations of power. This is an examination of the rationale behind these syncretic tendencies of the pastor and traditional healer's liaison activities.

One of the main reasons the charismatic resorts to syncretic practices such as conniving with the traditional healer is seeking power. African concept of power is beyond ordinary imagination. Placide Tempels (1959:44–45) expatiates African concept of power as 'vital force' or 'life force' which focuses on the value and potency of life. This concept is associated with the Spirit, which is understood as a 'mysterious force which is sought and mediated in the cultic gatherings' (Beyerhaus 1969:74). Tempels (1959:45) denotes that religious leaders pursue power to 'acquire *life, strength or vital force, to live strongly* that they are to make life stronger, or to assure that force shall remain perpetually in one's posterity'. One notable Pentecostal theologian, Anderson (1990), highlights the reality that:

To Africans, our life, our very existence is inextricably tied up with our power. To live is to have power; to be sick or to die is to have less of it. (p. 67)

Power is not just a supernatural imagination, but a personal concreteness. Boesak (1977:41), although referring to Black Theology, is correct that power is a relational reality dealing with concrete relations in our socio-historical world.

5. <https://www.pastorfish.co.za/2013/10/25/pastors-as-christian-traditionalhealers-in-africa>.

6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/charismaticmovement>, viewed 16 May 2025.

This power is sought for followership, fame, performance of miracles and control over people:

- To attract members and keep them for more money. Followership boosts the ego of pastors. More members mean opulence. Pastors go to the traditional healer to attract a large crowd even if it means selling their souls to the devil. 'Truth is sacrificed while lies, deceit are now potent weapons used by the founders and leaders of the churches and other autonomous Christian religious groups for manipulating their followers' (Achor 2017:1). Some charismatic pastors 'secretly consult the traditional healer to win masses of followers and to manipulate or control them' (Resane 2020:94). One can remember the personal testimony of Pastor Ramabulana who coveted a huge followership by consulting traditional healers in Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique.
- Fame is a trap for many charismatic preachers. They put fame before or above the ministry. Many African charismatic pastors treat themselves as politicians, using all the politician protocols such as driving flashy cars, having bodyguards, living in mansions and travelling around the world not caring for the needs of the flocks under their care. Resane (in Kgatle, Nel & Banda 2022) gives a vivid example of this politician's fame that the charismatic preacher aspires, and embraces should it become a reality:

They reside in upmarket suburbs, and travel to church in a convoy that even some heads of state cannot afford. In some big cities, even law enforcement officers are booked to accompany these pastor celebrities, especially when they go to special meetings or to church. A SowetanLive article gives a good example of how Lukau enjoys VIP status, even being afforded a motorcycle escort when he gets driven to church. (p. 174)

Deep in their consciences, this kind of a pastor will devise some means of sustaining this lifestyle, and the spiritual consultation for assurance is sought from the traditional healer. The reasons for the charismatic pastor's consulting a traditional healer are summarised that 'Christianity is being used as a tool towards amassing money, fame and cheap popularity' (Diara, Onukwufor & Uroko 2020:2):

- The other reason for seeking power is to acquire the ability to perform miracles. Africans are lately blinded by miracles to such an extent that doctrinal substance is overshadowed by miracles. The biblical instruction of 'we live by faith, not by sight' (2 Cor 5:7) is subjected to miracles that are always suspicious as they mostly demonstrate some orchestrations. Many people experience crises in their lives. They turn to the church to obtain answers or solutions to their problems:

Desperation drives people to believe every false teaching hoping that it might work out for their best. When people are desperate in a difficult situation, they are prone to do whatever advice comes their way. (Ndhlovu 2023:57)

Their problems overwhelm the pastor, who, out of desperation, consults the traditional healer who can impart some power to him for reaching out to these people in need. The pastor ends up preying upon and exploiting these desperate seekers of solutions by using some 'intricately designed mechanisms and machinations of psychological predominance' (Lambert 2003:233). The preacher is forced to go the extra mile to authenticate his or her ability to perform the miracles that are like instruments of intervention in peoples' miseries, desperations, and crises:

The prophet claims that due to his direct contact with God, he received miraculous power as well as special revelation knowledge hidden from all other people. It changes him into a diviner in African terms, providing an acute need of many Africans for special knowledge about the causes of their mishaps and misfortunes, and ways to handle them. (Nel 2023:7)

People do not seek Christ, but miracles. They are not interested in Christ's person, but in his tasks. Who he is, is not as important as what he can do for me. That is where Charismatic Christology and soteriology become disjointed. Most of these miracles, healings, and deliverances are paid for, therefore questioning their authenticity. They are tools for commercialisation of the gospel, as pointed out by Achor (2017) that:

[S]cenarios that depict commercialization of religion can be illustrated fully 'when adherents of the Christian faith pay for the supposedly religious services rendered to them by 'men and women of God'. (p. 1)

The fourth rationale for pastors seeking power is for control over people. 'Power is in most cases sought for manipulation purposes' (Resane 2020:94). This is the reason behind using charms, items such as photos or emblems on clothes, car rear windows, car bumpers, household utensils, among others. These emblems indoctrinate or inculcate some reverence in people's consciences towards the pastor. They are designed to control people so that they can do the bidding of the pastor, ultimately idolising a pastor. Although these items are for commercialisation of the gospel, as Tagwirei (2022:5) asserts: 'The pursuit of business led a number of gospel ministers to sell anointing oil, bangles, handkerchiefs and similar objects or divine healing, protection and blessings', they are dictated with controlling nuances, demanding a special respect or treatment.

In psychology, this is known as apotheosis, the same as in theology it is called deification. Basically, it means to exalt someone to a divine rank or stature (Lambert 2003:236). It is an excessive admiration that exalts a leader to a status equal to God within the structure and the internal organisation of a particular group. Followers who are under the pastor's control idolise him or her by paying homage such as lying on the floor to welcome the pastor, carrying the pastor on the shoulders when he enters the place of worship, forming a guard of honour for the pastor, among others. Nel (2023:2) is right that 'Their authority is unchallengeable because

they accord the same power and authority to the Bible and their private revelations that they call 'rhema' and 'revelation knowledge'. All these idolising practices are manners of pastor seeking to be worshipped, revered – the feeling that boosts up his ego and elevates him to fame. The pastor's goal is the absolute submission of the followers with the primary premise of effecting the absolute authority (Lambert 2003:249).

Prosperity and pastor

Literature on prosperity gospel is in manifolds, and theological assertions had been made regarding it. Prosperity theology is a syncretistic form of Christianity. Basically, prosperity theology is 'the teaching that God does not want any of his children to be poor or to lack anything they may desire' (O'Donovan 2000b:237). However, it is important to note that one of the major reasons for the charismatic pastor to visit the traditional healer is seeking wealth. Wealth accumulation has taken priority over soul winning or God's kingdom building. The effect of control over people manifests itself through subjecting people to making pledges, promises, or planting seed irrationally. 'Members are required to sign covenant agreements pledging allegiance and financial support to the leadership and the ministry' (Lambert 2003:250). A charismatic pastor conniving with the traditional healer encourages members of his church to tithe their monthly income. Kgatle (2025) points out that:

... the larger portion of the proceeds of the tithes are used for the benefit of the prophets rather than of the members of the new prophetic churches in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa. (p. 1)

The pastor pleads with the traditional healer for the abilities to charm people so that they may become obedient in tithing.

Hermeneutical applications are cleverly designed to coerce members into dropping more money. For instance, prosperity preachers' Old Testament texts include Psalm 23:1; 34:9; Deuteronomy 28:1–8; while in the New Testament, they use Matthew 7:7–8, Mark 11:24; and some epistles, especially Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians. However, their hermeneutics show some errors when texts are often quoted out of context to substantiate the idea; or when eschewal reading of passages, texts or verses are brought into play to make teaching sound biblical. According to Nel (2023:2), 'They interpret the Bible with their new hermeneutical principle that every believer should be healthy, rich, happy and prosperous'.

Many charismatic preachers continue to develop a theology of affluence called prosperity gospel (Ayegboyin 2006:73), in order to become wealthy in their personal capacity. All their *kerygmatic* initiatives point towards them benefiting wealthily. Mashau and Kgatle (2019) capture this:

Prosperity gospel has given birth to the culture of greed and consumption. Prophecies are given to business persons about their prosperity, but the rationale behind this is that when they succeed, the prophets will also prosper. (p. 4)

This message of prosperity is cleverly designed that once a person is born again, individuals are promised:

[A] comprehensive solution to all their worries on condition that they become born again and give generously to the religious leader in exchange for material and spiritual blessings in the form of healing, wealth, abundant life, success and earthly promotion. (Cezula 2015: 141; Ukah 2007:12)

This widens the gulf between the rich and the poor, 'and the purveyors of the prosperity message will be benefitting themselves rather than others' (Yong 2011:28).

Protection and pastor

Many Africans, even after conversion to Christianity, continue to believe their lives' vulnerabilities to witchcraft. Hence, one constantly hears statements such as *Le fa gone re dumela, re batho*, meaning although we are believers, we are still Africans. The belief is that African spiritual problems need African spirituality for solutions. Conviction here is that faith in God does not dislodge believers from African traditions or even spirituality. With the assumption that some congregants, although confessing faith in Christ, may possess some potencies to bewitch the pastor, the pastor needs some protective armour from the traditional healer in order to be safe. This is exacerbated by the African understanding that basic biblical Christianity is too cerebral and non-experiential. The Christian message seems to be powerless against forces that cause suffering. On the other hand, African spiritual religions are believed to protect adherents from spiritual forces' negative influence in their daily lives (Nel 2023:2; Taylor 1963:21–22). This is highlighted by Diko (2024:4) that 'certain witch doctors or traditional healers may potentially take advantage of vulnerable people, promising protection from witchcraft in exchange for money or other resources'.

However, the pastor's protection is not only against spiritual or cosmic powers. It is also about enemies that may be political, social or even familial. In other words, the charismatic pastor knows that what he is doing might be against the law of the state, especially in the area of human rights. He or she knows that the society may gang up against the ministry, or there might be some jealousies from families or relatives. This drives pastors to resorting to heavily armed bodyguards, or in some instances even employing some government organs such as the police escorts, as is seen in the case of Pastor Alph Lukau.⁷ Another example to cite here is that of Prophet 'Mboro' Paseka Motsoeneng of Ktlehong, near Johannesburg, accompanied by three men wielding two pangas and an AK-47 rifle, stormed into the school yard, forcefully removing his two grandchildren. The incident led to the arrest of the pastor and four of his accomplices, and the burning down of his church known as Incredible Happenings. The case is still proceeding in court.⁸ This case has some

7.JMPD admits 'Resurrection Pastor' Alph Lukau's police escort was 'wrong' | The Citizen, viewed 02 June 2025.

8.<https://www.citizen.co.za/Prophet-Mboro-swings-pangas-at-school>, viewed 29 May 2025.

political overtones with societal disgruntlements and familial references, hence the pastor wielding a *panga* for self-defence and heavily guarded for protection against the society should they revolt against him. The scenarios call for some form of spiritual reinforcement, hence traditional healer's involvement even in these physically perceived protocols.

Conclusion: How to escape?

As demonstrated by the pastor that Charismatic Christianity is riddled with syncretism, demonstrate by the pastor who connives with the traditional healer. Reasons for these interactions include the desires for followership, fame, performance of miracles and control over people. What sparks these desires is the pursuit for power, prosperity and protection. The fundamental problem is cited by Van der Watt (in Kroesbergen 2016):

In the charismatic sector, you start up and report to no one, you report to heaven. If I have a calling tonight, by tomorrow I can buy a tent and a sound system, I can call myself a bishop, a prophet, whatever – and I'm good to go ... It can't be like that when you have access to vulnerable people. (p. 227)

The scenario pictured here is exacerbated by the lack or absence of regulation of religion in South Africa. Van der Watt (in Kroesbergen 2016:227) highlights the fact that 'Religious institutions and activities often lead to opportunistic entrepreneurship, corruption and exploitation of the vulnerable':

- *The primary concern is the lack of theological training:* Many charismatic pastors never exposed themselves to formal biblical training and ministerial formation. Their calling and ministry are immediate and without acquiring faith substance; they launch themselves into the ministry, hence misguided, unregulated and untheological hermeneutics. It is unfortunate that for them 'The biblical data must be accepted as it is. The core of interpretation is literal acceptance of what is written. Nothing must be explained from the metaphysical stance' (Resane 2017:2). Despite this assumption, they are still haunted by African spirituality that needs African solutions through a medium such as the traditional healer.

- *A lack of mentoring:* Many charismatic pastors start up and report to no one; they report to heaven. They echo Engstrom and Rohrer's (1989) words:

Most people have no argument about being accountable to God. He is our Father; He is perfect; He has every right to check up on us to see if we are on course. But when we think of giving account to anyone here on earth, that can be a touchy matter. Those independent types who are self-made men and women find it especially hard to bare their souls to a self-appointed overseer. (pp. 29–30)

Because there is no accountability, liaisons, interactions, interfaces and collaborations are not limited, guided or channelled for the good of the pastor. A lack of accountability opens a plethora of consultations that may not

be spiritually in line with one's faith. It is therefore advised that charismatic pastors embrace accountability by submitting themselves under some spiritually mature mentors who can guide them into biblical spiritual disciplines. Charismatic pastors need to find biblical and spiritual roots by finding or growing under a real-life experienced individual who can guide and advise, helping to build a successful ministry career and a solid footing in the community or society (Resane 2010:24) where to find and know the meaning of identity with the one and only true God – the jealous God who cannot share his glory with any other, as the Bible says 'I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols' (Is 42:8). God himself does not praise idols or share his glory with any other god. He does not have a god of his own choice or design that he worships, for he himself is God. As a jealous God, syncretic religion is a taboo as it splits the oneness of God into multiple deities to be revered or put on equal footing with him.

- *Competition within a spiritual realm:* There is no doubt that charismatic faith is a pneumatic faith. The Spirit is at the centre of all its belief system. Dealings and deliberations revolve around the Spirit, which is like African spirituality where the spirit is at the centre of all life dynamics. Resane (2020:96) elaborates this that the crisis of conscience for African Christianity is the power of the Holy Spirit over one's personal need and the competitiveness 'of the Holy Spirit with other forces such as demonic powers, traditional healer's schemes, or other hidden mysteries associated with innate powers active in human affairs'. The charismatic pastor's sense of insecurity and a lack of faith in the power of the cross drive him to the secret consultation with the traditional healer. Charismatic pastors need to take heed of Resane's (2020) exhortation:

The power of the Spirit (or from God) is not given for tyrannical purposes but for empowerment to live sustainably in a sinful environment. The tyrannical desire for power elevates the human ego and undermines the transcendence of God. Desires to possess power for selfish gains and egoistic fulfilment makes God too small, as if God has normal human power, only infinitely greater. (p. 101)

The problem of the charismatic pastor seeking or consulting a traditional healer is a syncretic religion, violating the glory of God and his oneness. It is therefore proposed that the pastor pursue sound theological education, submit himself under a spiritually mature mentor for ministerial formation, and desist from competing with forces of darkness by consulting a traditional healer.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author, K.T.R., serves as an editorial board member of this journal. The peer review process for this submission was handled independently, and the author had no involvement in the editorial decision-making process for this manuscript. The author has no other competing interests to declare.

Author's contribution

K.T.R. the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency, or that of the publisher. The author is responsible for this article's results, findings, and content.

References

- Achor, P.N., 2017, 'Church commercialization in Nigeria: Implications for public relations practice', *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion* 28, 1–11, viewed 2 April 2025, from www.iiste.org
- Anderson, A., 1990, 'Pentecostal pneumatology and African power concepts: Continuity or change?', *Missionalia* 19(1), 65–74.
- Ayegboyin, D., 2006, 'A rethinking of prosperity teaching in the new Pentecostal churches in Nigeria', *Black Theology* 4(1), 70–86. <https://doi.org/10.1558/blth.2006.4.1.70>
- Beyerhaus, P., 1969, 'An approach to the African independent church movement', *Ministry* 9, 73–77.
- Boesak, A.A., 1977, *Farewell to innocence*, Raven Press, Johannesburg.
- Cezula, N., 2015, 'Reading the Bible in the African context: Assessing Africa's love affair with prosperity Gospel', *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 1(2), 131–153. <https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2015.v1n2.a06>
- Diara, B., Onukwufor, M. & Uroko, F., 2020, 'The structural advancement of religious communities and the commercialisation of the Christian religion in Nigeria', *Theologia Viatorum* 44(1), a31. <https://doi.org/10.4102/tv.v44i1.31>
- Diko, M., 2024, 'The first time I called myself a "Witch" was the most magical moment of my life: Unmasking the influence of Christianity in the persecution of witches through cultural hegemony', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 50(3), 21. <https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/15675#15675>
- Droogers, A., 1989, 'Syncretism: The problem of definition, the definition of the problem', in J.D. Gort, H.M. Vroom, R. Fernhout & A. Wessels (eds.), *Dialogue and syncretism: An interdisciplinary approach*, pp. 7–25, William B Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Engstrom, T.W. & Rohrer N.B., 1989, *The fine art of mentoring: Passing on to others what God has given to you*, Wolgemuth and Hyatt Publishers, Inc., Brentwood, TN.
- Kato, B.H., 1975, *Theological pitfalls in Africa*, Evangel: Publishing House, Kisumu, Kenya.
- Kgatle, M.S., 2025, 'Reimagining tithing in the selected new prophetic churches in South Africa: A social scientific approach', *Scriptura* 124(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.7833/124-1-2173>
- Lambert, S., 2003, *Charismatic captivation: Authoritarian abuse and psychological enslavement in Neo-Pentecostal churches. How to recognise and be free from it!* Truth Publications, Jupiter, FL.
- Mashau T.D. & Kgatle, M.S., 2019, 'Prosperity gospel and the culture of greed in post-colonial Africa: Constructing an alternative African Christian Theology of Ubuntu', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40(1), a1901. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1901>
- Ndhlovu, J., 2023, *Guarding the purity of the Gospel against syncretism*, Fothane Books, Pretoria.
- Nel, M., 2023, 'The prosperity message as a syncretistic deviation to the Gospel of Jesus', *Religions* 14, 346. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030346>
- O'Donovan, W., 2000a, *Biblical Christianity in African perspective*, The Paternoster Press, Carlisle.
- O'Donovan, W., 2000b, *Biblical Christianity in modern Africa*, The Paternoster Press, Carlisle.
- Ramabulana, M.S., 2018, *Church Mafia. Captured by secret powers. An untold African narrative*, Khado & Sons, Pretoria.
- Resane, K.T., 2010, *Mentoring: A journey to the best one can be*, AcadSa Publishing, Kempton Park.
- Resane, K.T., 2017, 'Commercialisation of theological education as a challenge in the NeoPentecostal Charismatic churches', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73(3), a4548. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4548>
- Resane, K.T., 2020, *South African Christian experiences: From colonialism to democracy*, Sunbonani Scholar, Bloemfontein.
- Resane, K.T., 2022a, 'Christ and the neo-Pentecostal preacher on the platform: Catechists or celebrities?', in M.S. Kgatle, M. Nel & C. Banda (eds.), *Christological paradigm shifts in prophetic Pentecostalism in South Africa*, pp. 163–181, Routledge, Oxon.
- Resane, K.T., 2022b, 'Evangelicals in Africa encountering new prophetic churches. African Evangelical Churches', *The South African Baptist Journal of Theology* 31, 46–63.
- Taylor, J.V., 1963, *The primal vision: Christian presence amid African religion*, SCM, London.
- Tempels, P., 1959, *Bantu philosophy*, Presence Africaine, Paris.
- Tagwirei, K., 2022, 'Beyond tithes and offerings: Revolutionising the economics of Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78(4), a7211. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7211>
- Ukah, A., 2007, *African Christianities: Features, promises and problems*, viewed 23 May 2025, <http://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de/Dateien/AP79.pdf>.
- Ukachi, A.C., 2013, *The best is yet to come: Pentecostal and Charismatic revivals in Nigeria from 1914–1990s*, Xulon Press, Maitland, FL.
- Van der Watt, G., 2016, 'A South African response to the articles on "Evaluating Prophecy Today" and "Prophets of God on Neo-Diviners? A theological assessment of prophecy in Zambia Today"', in H. Kroesbergen (ed.), *Prophecy today: Reflections from a Southern African context*, pp. 225–229, Christian Literature Fund Publishers, Wellington.
- Yong, A., 2012, 'A typology of prosperity theology: A religious economy of global renewal or a renewal economics?', in K. Attanasi & A. Yong (eds.), *Pentecostalism and prosperity. Palgrave Macmillan's Christianities of the World*, pp. 15–33, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY