



New Charismatic Movement in South Africa: Flourishing leaves, withering fruit

Kelebogile Thomas Resane ¹ 

¹ Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

This article provides a brief history and the nature of the New Charismatic Movement in South Africa. It calls their success flourishing leaves, and their weakness withering fruit. Flourishing leaves represent quantitative growth, while withering fruit signifies a decreasing qualitative character. The research addresses the lack of balance between works and character, which many scholars in the field overlook. Through interdisciplinary literature and media reports, this study identifies seven reasons for Charismatics flourishing. These are mostly within the socio-cultural context in which worshippers exist. These reasons include the human need for intimate connection, pastoral care, desire to learn, and limited patriarchy and legalism. Embracing modernity, balanced with indigeneity, together with modern technology, are the last two contributory factors to growth. The withering fruit is analysed in areas of celebrity cult and moral failure, especially in the area of sexuality. The remedial recommendation is proper governance with accountability and mentoring, credible accreditation, and ethical teaching. The scholarly contribution is the understanding of theological implications for the character of the practitioners. The conclusion is the need to maintain balance between quantitative and qualitative growth, moral leadership and proper governance for accountability.

Keywords: New Charismatic, Pentecostal Movement, Spirit, Growth

INTRODUCTION

This paper identifies a research gap in which the rationale behind quantitative and qualitative growth is rarely and scantily addressed. It limits itself to the broader category of New Charismatics without pointing to specific groupings based on polity, doctrine or origin. New Charismatics is the category of the latest Pentecostal branch. These are not traditional Charismatics who emerged within the mainline denominations after experiencing the Spirit and opted to remain within their mainline denominations. Charismatics were the result of the Spirit's wave of the 1960s and slowly disappeared at the dawn of the twenty-first century. New Charismatics are the new Spirit churches led by individuals who branched off from the mainline denominations, Classical Pentecostals and other Charismatic groups. They are found within all South African demographics with unfamiliar names, led by those who either wholly or partially embrace the fivefold ministries of Ephesians 5:12-13. Scholars who engage in the New Charismatic phenomenon at the national front include Solomon Kgatle (University of South Africa), Kelebogile Resane (University of the Free State),

CORRESPONDENCE – Kelebogile Thomas Resane **Email:** resanekt@ufs.ac.za

PUBLICATION HISTORY - Received : 22nd February, 2026 | Accepted: 18th August, 2026 | Published: 23rd October, 2026.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE – Resane, Kelebogile Thomas. "New Charismatic Movement in South Africa: Flourishing leaves, withering fruit," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 12, no.9 (2026): 385 – 395. <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20261291>

COPYRIGHT AND LICENSING - © 2026 The Author(s). Published and Maintained by Noyam Journals.

This is an open access article under the CCBY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Collium Banda (North-West University), Peter White (Stellenbosch University), Irvin Chetty (University of Fort Hare), Maria Frahm-Arp (University of Johannesburg), etc. Continental scholars include J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Chammah Kaunda, Ezra Chitando, etc. At the international level, they include the likes of Peter Wagner, Michael Moriarty, Vinson Synan, etc. The paper presents a valuable and timely contribution to the study of African Pentecostalism and New Charismatic Christianity in understanding the theological implications for the character of the practitioners who are pastors. The discussions revolve around factors contributing to both quantitative and qualitative growth of the New Charismatic churches.

METHODOLOGY

The term 'New Charismatics' is used to differentiate this church phenomenon from classical Pentecostals and other Charismatic categorisations such as New Apostolic Reformation, the Latter Rain Movement, etc. The study is historical to inform readers that the charismatic faith is dynamic and continues to evolve. The historical analysis of the nature of the New Charismatic Movement is important to understand the reasons for its growth. Literature is abundant on the Charismatic Movement, but very little on the rationale behind explosive growth. The selection of literature is limited to the latest Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. The literature mainly focuses on charismatic studies by various scholars interested in the field. However, some sources from Pentecostal studies outside of the Charismatic contexts are considered because of their relevance to this study. Through intradisciplinary literature analysis, a metaphor of 'flourishing leaves' is used for their growth, and 'withering fruit' for their failure in character, especially leadership and morality. This study did not involve any human or animal participants, though it considered ethical issues when discussing sensitive or controversial factors. Through this historical and contextual analysis, the study contributes to scholarship by showing that there are lessons to learn and dangers to avoid in theological applications where morality can be used to authenticate charismatic ethos.

DISCUSSION

What makes the New Charismatics flourish?

The study is a concerned voice responding to some anomalies in the religious world. The intention of this article is not to judge or condemn, but to educate on the positives and the negatives of the New Charismatic phenomenon; hence, sources used are from all spectrums or different theological persuasions. Engaging the sources led to the following reasons for New Charismatic growth:

1. Desire for intimate connection

To address human desire for intimate connection, the New Charismatics emphasise home cells or home groups. The meetings are small and intimate. Connections can be a home, office, restaurant, factory floor, etc. Moriarty points out that 'Warm friendships and close associations are what people are looking for. The first characteristic most people look for in a church is a friendly, warm, and loving environment. Charismatics are champions in this area.'¹ Intimacy with God satisfies human need through intimacy with one another. Knowledge, articulation and expertise in theology cannot replace brotherly love. Intimacy is alive, dynamic and nurturing. Indeed, 'the tight fellowship that characterises charismatic groups has largely contributed to their growth and success.'² For many New Charismatics, the church is not a parochial community, but believers in public demonstrating Christ's love. Wagner speaks of this faith praxis as 'market-place Christianity' with kingdom vision.³ Resane elaborates on Wagner's assertion: 'People minister where they are. There is no division between the sacred and spiritual spheres of influence. There is no such thing as

¹ Michael G Moriarty, "The New Charismatics: A Concerned Voice Responds to Dangerous New Trends," (*No Title*), 1992.

² Moriarty, "The New Charismatics: A Concerned Voice Responds to Dangerous New Trends."

³ Peter Wagner, a church strategist and a missiologist is a champion of New Apostolic Reformation. He promotes dominion theology that the church's mandate is both cultural and evangelistic in focus. His two books: *Dominion: How Kingdom Action Can Change the World* (2008) and *Churchquake!* (1999) reveal his 'marketplace Christianity' concept.

secular businesspeople and spiritual church people.’⁴ People fulfil their emotional needs by turning a marketplace into a spiritual connection opportunity. Because of their spatial influence, these Christians are found everywhere, even outside the church confines, as confirmed by Myer:

There are many fivefold gifts at work in the marketplace, and often there is no place given for them to function in the local church. They flourish in the marketplace, and the local church continues without their gift or input.⁵

The intention is to influence and change the environment, not for personal aggrandisement, but as the gateway to social transformation and transference of wealth.⁶ For them, the kingdom vision transcends denominational structures and politics. The small settings in which the kingdom principles are defined, shared, and promoted knit them together into a fellowship (*koinonia*) where emotional attachments for support are also felt cognitively, assured and affirmed. This is one of the limitations of mainline Christianity, which Charismatics dub cold, dry, unappealing and irrelevant to their situation.

2. Receiving pastoral care

People like to belong to the church where they are visible, recognised and cared for. Although there may be some variations, the New Charismatics value small fellowships where one feels free to be transparent and share joys, hurts, and achievements. This sharing is followed by affirmation and assurance of support. Since the New Charismatics go beyond traditional Sunday liturgical services by meeting daily in public spaces, they find themselves pastorally cared for.

The everyday understanding of pastoral ministry is pastoral care. Pastoral care encompasses all that is done in pastoral ministry, such as *diakonia*, counselling, teaching, guiding, leading, healing, sustaining, reconciling, nurturing and liberating.⁷

Pastoral care in small groups is not a professional task for experts but people’s compassion to meet the needs of those seeking support. For them, ‘Pastoral care is therefore premised on practical compassion for others in need’, not a professional service provided by a professional counsellor such as a pastor, a priest or an apostle.⁸ The New Charismatics flourish on what McClure calls communal-contextual pastoral care, which is ‘a communal responsibility of church members in a model of care for all by all rather than the privilege of the ordained.’⁹ In the face of social injustice, sometimes interpreted as demonic by Charismatics, solace is found in the intimate fellowship of receiving pastoral care that connects with their everyday struggles and experiences for social justice.¹⁰ This is particularly true in Africa, where suffering is not an individual experience, but suffering in and with a group to which one belongs.¹¹ Healing is expected to be holistic because the nature of the sickness is understood to be holistic within the community context.¹² The bottom line remains that the New Charismatics find small groups that offer support that addresses emotional, spiritual, and sometimes physical needs.

⁴ Kelebogile Thomas Resane, “A Critical Analysis of the Ecclesiology of the Emerging Apostolic Churches with Special Reference to the Notion of the Fivefold Ministry” (University of Pretoria, 2008).

⁵ Ron Myer, *Fivefold Ministry Made Practical: How to Release Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers to Equip Today’s Church* (House to House Publications, 2013).

⁶ Resane, “A Critical Analysis of the Ecclesiology of the Emerging Apostolic Churches with Special Reference to the Notion of the Fivefold Ministry.”

⁷ Herbert Moyo, “The Lutheran Church and Situational Holistic Pastoral Ministry in Africa,” *Anthology of Pastoral Ministry and Leadership*, 2023, 15–33.

⁸ Moyo, “The Lutheran Church and Situational Holistic Pastoral Ministry in Africa.”

⁹ Barbara McClure, “Pastoral Care,” *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, 2012, 269–78.

¹⁰ Daniël Johannes Louw, *Wholeness in Hope Care: On Nurturing the Beauty of the Human Soul in Spiritual Healing*, vol. 3 (LIT Verlag Münster, 2015).

¹¹ S. John Mbiti, “African Religions and Philosophy” (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc, 1990).

¹² Mongane Wally Serote, “Briefing on Traditional Healing. Parliamentary Monitoring Group Held on 23 October 2001” (University of Venda, 2001).

3. The Desire to Learn

These churches promote education by assisting their members who wish to acquire some development in soft or hard skills. Most of their pastors are members of the educated elite, though not necessarily in the theological field. New Charismatics respond to their individual and social needs both emotionally and intellectually. Short, internally designed learning courses are preferred to theological rhetoric to meet their specific cognitive needs. For instance, there are special workshops for ushers, worship leaders, new believers, candidates for baptism, marital counselling, parents willing to dedicate their babies, etc. The contents are scriptural texts rather than theological or historical explorations.

Resane expounds Wagner's defence of the Charismatics lack of theological ambition by stating that they move from theological education to equipping ministers.¹³ In his book, *Changing Church*, Wagner critiques theological education in the spheres of academia, critical mind, monastery mindset, intellectualism in leadership, and ordination.¹⁴ The New Charismatics, like their predecessors (Classical Pentecostals), are not convinced that their theology of the Holy Spirit is best defended on an academic level. Despite this reservation about academic theological education, the New Charismatics have responded faithfully to apprentice-style training because they are not accustomed to the elite practice of seminary-level education.¹⁵ They are reputable for effectively using imitation, modelling, training and other informal learning styles. Educational requirements never substitute for spiritual gifts as the basis for ordaining new ministers.¹⁶ The desire to learn is there, but not attaining qualifications as a step of achievement or maturity, or as a necessity for ministry or missional engagement.

4. Limited patriarchal biases

Many Christians are still trapped in a patriarchy where leadership is male-dominated. Women are marginalised and are to be perceived as *non-persons*. Classical Pentecostals and some mainline denominations find it difficult to accommodate female leadership. Women in these faith communities often encounter gender discrimination because of conventional interpretations of texts such as 1 Timothy 2:11–15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. Women usually find themselves victims of a patriarchal system of socialisation, with male dominance that does not appear to be challengeable, in most cases. New Charismatics are the offshoots of Classical Pentecostalism and mainline Christianity, therefore adhering to 'theology of submission'. This is pointed out by Khosa-Nkatini:

Theological barriers play a significant role in the challenges faced by women in Pentecostal leadership. Many Pentecostal denominations adhere to a 'theology of submission', which posits that women should submit to male authority within both the home and the church.¹⁷

However, patriarchal biases are limited within the New Charismatic Churches, since some of their churches are led by women, and this is done exceedingly well. They do not struggle with female leadership as some mainline denominations and Classical Pentecostal Churches do. In South Africa, the late Pastor Irene Tshifhiwa was the most powerful South African pastor, who led a powerful deliverance ministry. The second South African female pastor marked for ministry success is Pastor Mpfariseni Mukhuba of Unity Fellowship Church, based in Soweto, with her church branches mushrooming all over South Africa.

¹³ Resane, *Emerging Apostolic churches*, 107.

¹⁴ Charles Peter Wagner, *Changing Church*, (Ventura: Regal Books, 2004).

¹⁵ Resane, *Emerging Apostolic churches*, 110

¹⁶ Resane, *Emerging Apostolic churches*, 111

¹⁷ Hundzukani P. Khosa-Nkatini, "An Investigation into the Challenges Confronting Women-Led Ministries within Pentecostalism," *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 31, 2026), <https://doi.org/10.4102/AJOPS.v3i1.101>.

5. Limited legalistic demands

While some traditional denominations and Classical Pentecostals are still cocooned in legalistic descriptions on clothing, adornment, asceticism, etc., the New Charismatics have already gone beyond that by allowing freedom of expression, especially in the area of clothing. Many New Charismatic believers attach no adornment prescriptions to their followers. Ladies freely wear expensive jewellery, make-up, assorted pants of different lengths, etc. Males are free to come to church in their jeans, shorts, short sleeves, hairstyles, takkies (rubber-soled athletic shoes), sandals, etc. Many New Charismatic preachers ascend the pulpits with golf T-shirts, tireless shirts, no jackets, and sometimes short trousers.

The seating arrangement is not categorised or regimented according to gender, age or position in the church. These observances are strong in typical African churches, where traditions of segregation are still practised. The New Charismatics emphasise families sitting together on the pews.

Architectural design is one of the features unimagined by the New Charismatics. They abhor cathedral designs because they dictate seating arrangements and limit creativity, especially during the church service. The internal and external aesthetics display creativity for the New Charismatics. No pulpits are mounted on the floors. These are replaced by portable lecterns and/or beautifully designed glass pulpits meticulously embedded in the floor and rise only when the preacher comes to use them. Trueheart in *Atlantic Monthly* (August 1996) wrote a provocative article with the title: *The Next Church*. On page 37, he recorded:

No spires. No crosses. No robes. No clerical collars. No hard pews. No kneelers. No biblical gobbledygook. No prayer by rote. No fire, no brimstone. No pipe organs. No dreary eighteenth-century hymns. No forced solemnity. No Sunday finery. No collection plates... *The Next Church*, as the independent and entrepreneurial congregations that are adopting these new forms might collectively be called, is drawing a lot of people.¹⁸

Traditional African churches still wear colonial vests for different ranks of leadership. This includes choirs that must have specific uniform colours or robes. With the New Charismatics, distinctions based on one's role are not considered. Instead of choirs with robes or paraphernalia, the Worship Team uses no colours, or they follow a colour theme.

6. The balance between indigeneity and modernity

Although mainline Christianity holds on to strict liturgical worship and follows the Order of Service, New Charismatics embrace the modern style of worship, such as contemporary African gospel music and imported modern music such as Hillsong, Planetshakers, Michael W. Smith, Ron Kenoly, Israel Houston, etc. Instead of liturgical processes and procedures during worship, New Charismatics' worship is dominated by 'spontaneity.' This is not just a burst into singing in the Spirit or a manifestation of speaking in tongues, but some new modes and techniques of worship to praise the Lord. Moriarty refers to this: 'They offer new experiences, new revelations, new insights regarding church design, structure, and purpose, and even new forms of evangelism...' ¹⁹ Open ministry is another dynamic that balances indigeneity and modernity. Many preachers preach in English with a parallel translation to the local indigenous language. In some settings, worshippers are allowed or encouraged to read the Bible in their native tongues. Multilingualism in African New Charismatic circles is a cherry on top for church services, either in small groups or in plenary sessions.

7. Media and Communication

The New Charismatics are into modern technology; in fact, they are the church of the technocrats. Throughout history, Pentecostal movements have demonstrated remarkable adaptability in embracing emerging communication technologies, emphasising that their experiences and emotional expressions find natural alignment with these emerging technologies, since these technologies prioritise immediacy and

¹⁸ Charles Trueheart, "The Next Church, *Atlantic Monthly*, August Issue 278 No 2," 1996, 37–58.

¹⁹ Moriarty, "The New Charismatics: A Concerned Voice Responds to Dangerous New Trends."

sensory engagement.²⁰ Technology, with its bombardments, has become part and parcel of humanity. There is no escape for any facet of life from technology, including spirituality and sociality. This is captured by Mudau & Tshifhumulo:

Advancements in digital technology are generating chances for unparalleled expression and community development. Contemporary, adaptable and dynamic Pentecostal churches actively employ technology to enhance their theological impact and societal perception.²¹

The New Charismatics are marked by technological applications in communications, using modern media platforms. Their preachers cannot deliver sermons without a microphone. A good charismatic church should have a good sound system, good musical instruments, a data projector, etc. Information through data analytics is used to tailor sermons, Bible study programmes, and community services to better address the spiritual and practical needs of the congregation.²²

Visual and acoustic (sight and sound) occupy a central place in Charismatic experiences of the numinous.²³ The interior décor with different colours captures the eye of the beholder or the visitor to the worship space. Resane visualises this space as follows:

There is an ongoing exodus from the tiny country church to a massive auditorium with some tinted glass, special lights, colours that merge, and glossy furniture items, including soft seats/sofas that make congregants very comfortable.²⁴

New Charismatics broadly embrace technology, use it, and welcome it as a tool for church life both internally and externally. For them, 'The rapid advancement of technology and digital culture is transforming how people communicate, connect and experience community.'²⁵

The withering fruit among the New Charismatics

Charismatic studies are not complete without reference to *charismata* (gifts) and *karpos* (fruit). Unfortunately, the tendency is an overemphasis on *charismata* with less concentration on the fruit. Pentecostal progenies such as the New Charismatics agree that 'spiritual renewal flourished in the church as believers entered a new dimension of Christian experience by exercising charismata, God's restored gifts to the church.'²⁶ The quantitative growth was never questioned, as it was and continues to be regarded as the fruit of the discovery of God's mystery for church growth. Despite the quantitative growth of New Charismatic communities, there is a lack of qualitative life judged by celebrity and morality.

1. The celebrity cult

This comes in different names, such as 'man or woman of God' syndrome or a personality cult. Resane highlights that 'Celebrityism is a formal religious veneration or worship. It is a system of religious beliefs and rituals with adherents. A celebrity commands enormous influence on people across all socio-cultural

²⁰ Heidi A. Campbell and Alessandra Vitullo, "Assessing Changes in the Study of Religious Communities in Digital Religion Studies," *Church, Communication and Culture* 1, no. 1 (January 26, 2016): 73–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2016.1181301>.

²¹ Ndidzulafhi Mudau and Rendani Tshifhumulo, "Technology's Influence on Pentecostalism: Shaping Perception and Religious Impact," *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2, no. 1 (June 27, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v2i1.50>.

²² Buti D. Mulutsi, "Pentecostal Doctrine in Apostles' Creed and the 4IR: CFC and the River Church as Case Studies," *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2, no. 1 (July 30, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.V2i1.58>.

²³ Katrien Pype, "The Liveliness of Pentecostal-Charismatic Popular Culture in Africa," *Pentecostalism in Africa: Presence and Impact of Pneumatic Christianity in Postcolonial Societies*, 2015, 345–78.

²⁴ Kelebogile Thomas Resane, "Beauty and Justice in Modern Pentecostal Theological Themes: No Loggerheads," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 102 (n.d.).

²⁵ Vincent Miller, *Understanding Digital Culture* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2020); Rendani Nthakheni and C. Mudau, "Pneumatology in the digital age: Reimagining the Holy Spirit's role in Trinitarian theology," *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2(1), a53. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v2i1.53> (2025), 5.

²⁶ Moriarty, "The New Charismatics: A Concerned Voice Responds to Dangerous New Trends."

divides.²⁷ One characteristic that stands out is that the church belongs to the founder or a leader. Church life belongs to and revolves around the leader. ‘The commander Pastor is a celebrity whose attitudes, ego, and authority revolve around him, not around God.’²⁸ The leader is the central figure, as Moriarty substantiates: ‘The display of miracles had become so outlandish that revival meetings had turned into personality cults.’²⁹ Celebrity cult or worship is a dynamic and prevalent phenomenon in the South African Pentecostal-Charismatic landscape. This is attested by Resane, who states that:

South Africa’s fast-growing religion is celebrity worship. From gossip magazines, entertainment TV, and blogs to adverts featuring famous faces, the stars, including pastors, prophets, apostles, etc., are the new gods and goddesses.³⁰

Celebrity culture and lifestyle are equated with spiritual leadership. Several scholars, such as Resane, Kobo, Mofokeng, Kisungu and Shingange, have already referenced celebrity cult as a concern for spiritual and moral formation.³¹ The culture of New Charismatic leaders is characterised by prestige, opulence and classicism. This life encompasses luxurious living, fashion, wellness, international travel, etc. Pastors always set trends in fashion and beauty, influencing global style choices. These preachers put on expensive jewellery, designer outfits, and expensive manicures and pedicures. They go for expensive automobiles. The pastor demands and receives VIP treatment, always walking on a red-carpet roll-out. His seat on the stage or in the middle of the front row is elevated and appears as a royal throne lined with golden edges or trimmings. The Pastor’s wife is treated as the First Lady of the church, given all the accolades her husband receives.

On the other hand, spiritual leadership integrates spiritual or inner values with the external life of leadership. It emphasises values, attitudes, behaviours and morals. It guides followers with a strong sense of purpose and meaning, aiming to impact individuals, organisations and communities positively. The values that drive spiritual leadership include compassion, humility, and integrity. Since these are intrinsic values, they focus on the positive outcomes in and for others, having no egoistic or parochial aspirations. They exhibit love, humility, service to others, integrity, purpose and community.

When some characteristics of New Charismatic leaders are compared with spiritual leadership, there are more differences than similarities. For instance, while Charismatic leaders mobilise people around them, spiritual leaders move people from where they are to where God wants them to be.³² After all, spiritual leadership moves people on to God’s agenda.³³ Modern charismatic leaders move people towards their own agenda, hence developing into celebrity cultists where people see leaders instead of seeing God. Spiritual leaders understand God’s will that followers should be led into the paths of pursuing God’s purposes.

Spiritual leadership is shepherd leadership. A shepherd does not lead from the ivory tower. He does not live in the mansion while the sheep live in the arid, squalid terrain with no pastures or water, not to mention the shade for protection against the heat. According to D’Souza, ‘The shepherd lives among the sheep. He shares the hardships, the risks and the dangers the sheep face. He also leads them through personal presence and intimate acquaintance.’³⁴ Spiritual leaders are there to care, encourage and guide. These three

²⁷ Kelebogile Resane, “‘And They Shall Make You Eat Grass like Oxen’ (Daniel 4: 24): Reflections on Recent Practices in Some New Charismatic Churches,” 2017.

²⁸ Resane, “‘And They Shall Make You Eat Grass like Oxen’ (Daniel 4: 24): Reflections on Recent Practices in Some New Charismatic Churches, 5.”

²⁹ Moriarty, “The New Charismatics: A Concerned Voice Responds to Dangerous New Trends, 35.”

³⁰ Resane, “‘And They Shall Make You Eat Grass like Oxen’ (Daniel 4: 24): Reflections on Recent Practices in Some New Charismatic Churches, 3.”

³¹ Resane, “‘And They Shall Make You Eat Grass like Oxen’ (Daniel 4: 24): Reflections on Recent Practices in Some New Charismatic Churches.” Fundiswa A. Kobo, “Spirituality Trapped in Androcentric Celebrity Cults in South Africa Post-1994,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 75, no. 3 (December 12, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i3.5593>. *Prophetic Churches in South African Pentecostalism* (Abingdon, Oxon/ New York: Routledge, 2021) edited by Kgatle and Anderson. These are Thabang Richard Mofokeng (24-52), Elsie. B Kisungu (53-72), Themba Shingange ((115 – 130).

³² Henry T Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda* (B&H Publishing Group, 2001).

³³ Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda*, 20.

³⁴ Anthony D’Souza, *Leaders for Today Hope for Tomorrow, Empowering and Empowered Leadership* (Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2005), 5.

tasks cannot be undertaken remotely. Resane stresses that ‘a shepherd refers to a keeper of sheep. This is the person who tends, feeds, or guards the flocks.’³⁵ Kinnison alludes to the idea that a shepherd leader is deeply concerned with the needs of those under their care, both physically and spiritually, as an expression of responsibility for their spiritual well-being.³⁶ One of the challenges of New Charismatic leadership is residing far away from the congregation and having no personal touch with the congregants. Most pastors come to church through the side door, straight to the pulpit, and exit the same route after the sermon. The pastor is never part of praise and worship with the church, coming in just to preach and nothing else. This leaves the impression that he or she is only a preacher, not a worshipper. The fundamental truth remains: the pastor must have the community at heart, as Boaheng and Osei assert: ‘Leaders must therefore work to satisfy their selfish interests; they must have the community at heart.’³⁷ ‘The welfare of the sheep (those led) becomes a Priority.’³⁸ The quality of one’s leadership depends on the effect of the leadership on the life of the community.’ Spiritual leadership is not mentioned only by the success or wealth of leaders, but by the qualitative impact made on others. Resane highlights:

Shepherd leadership is sending others to the front to take the lead in areas where they are the strongest. It is both a quality and an action of deliberate efforts to develop others. It is a leadership sense of responsibility entrusted by God to map the way for a brighter and better future for emerging leaders.³⁹

The poverty of leadership qualities in the New Charismatic community is a concern ecclesiologically, missiologically and spiritually. It is a vacuum that leaves the lives of the followers either shallow or vulnerable to heresy. Social media and the press regularly release incidents of Charismatic leaders failing in leadership, especially in the areas of finances, morality, and general human abuse. There are reports that some of these churches are closing overnight because the pastor is running away from some scandalous insinuations. These are all signs of a lack of or poor leadership where the pastor becomes a celebrity, a demigod, an untouchable servant of God.

2. Moral failure

It is of great concern within Charismatic communities that pastors with flourishing ministries become morally tainted, whether incidents are justified or unjustified. The servant of God must be above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2; 5:7 and Titus 1:6-7), which means blameless and free from any legitimate accusation. The secular press is inundated with stories of pastors trapped in some form of sexual misbehaviour. The Charismatic pastoral career is marred by divorce, fornication, adultery, immorality, and the general promiscuous lifestyle among pastors. Madikwa of The Sowetan Newspaper reported:

We have read with disbelief stories of alleged fornication and divorce about Charismatic leaders such as Rhema Bible Church Pastor Ray McCauley, Malibongwe Gwabe, Jabu Hlongwana, Xola Nzo, Prophet Mboro, Benjamin Dube and Keke Phoofole among others.⁴⁰

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) in South Africa investigates cases of sexual abuse under the pretext of spiritual guidance. The Commission recently welcomed the 59-year-old Pastor Mandelisa Mabhale’s sentence of ten life imprisonment terms for nine counts of rape and one count of attempted rape, seven five-year terms for seven counts of sexual assault, and seven five-year terms for exposure of a child to

³⁵ K. Thomas Resane, “Leadership for the Church: The Shepherd Model,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (February 20, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2045>.

³⁶ Quentin P Kinnison, “Shepherd or One of the Sheep—Revisiting the Biblical Metaphor of the Pastorate,” *Journal of Religious Leadership*, 9: 1 (Spring), 2010, 59 - 91.

³⁷ Isaac Boaheng and Isaac Justice Osei, “A Study of John 21:15-17: Toward a Shepherd Model of Christian Ministry,” *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, November 28, 2022, 636–47, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20223129>.

³⁸ Kelebogile T. Resane, “Servant Leadership and Shepherd Leadership: The Missing Dynamic in Pastoral Integrity in South Africa Today,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76, no. 1 (March 12, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i1.5608>.

³⁹ Resane, “Servant Leadership and Shepherd Leadership: The Missing Dynamic in Pastoral Integrity in South Africa Today.”

⁴⁰ Z. Madikwa, “When Pastors Divorce,” 2012. <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/good life/2012/01/10/when-pastors-divorce> (Accessed: 3 February, 2026).

pornography between 2020 and 2022. The accused pastor lured children to his rented premises under the pretence of assisting them with some tasks and under the guise of offering spiritual or pastoral guidance.⁴¹

The Commission has also noted with grave concern the recent arrests and sentencing of self-appointed prophets and pastors in different provinces, especially in Limpopo, Free State and North West. This includes life imprisonment of a 47-year old Pastor Albert Tamsane on two counts for raping an 11-year-old girl,⁴² and three life sentences handed to Fezile Zozi in North West for raping women and minors between 2021 and 2023 under the guise of spiritual revivals.⁴³ In addition, Confidence Monyela of Limpopo was convicted of two counts of raping minors between the ages of 14 and 19.⁴⁴ These incidents bring into the spotlight the systemic moral failures that confront those who trust some spiritual leaders in the Charismatic Movement. These incidents continue to spark widespread outrage and concern. Spiritual leaders entrusted with spiritual guidance egregiously betray that trust. This raises fundamental ethical questions about accountability, moral leadership, and the vulnerability of people seeking guidance. It raises fundamental questions about the abuse and sexual exploitation of women and minors at the hands of Charismatic leaders operating as self-proclaimed prophets and pastors.

And it is business as usual for them. ‘The fact remains that marital infidelity and divorce among the Charismatic pastors is increasing at an alarming rate and that no discipline is taken to remedy the situation.’⁴⁵ Questions arise as to what contributes to these moral failures. Resane captures deficiencies within the Charismatic communities such as a lack of accountability, mentoring, and ethics regarding the institution of marriage, a lack or limitation of ministerial formation, a lack of sound governance structures, and the detachment from sociocultural values.⁴⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is hereby recommended that the New Charismatics learn and embrace *governance structures that require accountability and mentoring*. They are encouraged to practically take steps to identify mature Christian leaders who can speak into their lives with the intention of supporting them through life crises.

These leaders also need some credible *ministerial accreditation*. Many New Charismatic leaders run their churches as independent entities; pastors are always their pioneers. They are the ones who planted those churches. Most of them operate without authority to give an account.

It is recommended that they take theological studies to learn *pastoral and ministerial ethics*. These ethics cover areas such as spiritual leadership, sexual purity, technological applications, people management skills, etc.

CONCLUSION

This paper is an invaluable and timely contribution to the study of New Charismatic Christianity in African Pentecostalism. The reality is that the Charismatic Movement is flourishing, though morally it is withering. The discussions revolved around factors that contributed to both quantitative and qualitative growth of the New Charismatic churches. This calls for modern church leadership to balance between the quantitative and the qualitative growth of the church.

New Charismatics challenge mainstream Christianity to re-evaluate outdated tendencies in dealing with moral church leadership. There should be a balance between embracing fundamentals of faith and technology in the church’s communication culture.

⁴¹ <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/gender-commission-welcomes-conviction-serial-rapist-pastor> (Accessed 2 February 2026)

⁴² <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2025-05-26-pastor-who-raped-11-year-old-girl-sentenced-to-life-imprisonment/> (Accessed 3 February 2026)

⁴³ <https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/the-star-south-africa-early-edition/20250115/281844354287780> (Accessed 5 February 2026)

⁴⁴ <https://www.citizen.co.za/letaba-herald/news-headlines/local-news/2025/07/31/limpopo-prophet-gets-double-life-sentence-for-child-rape/> (Accessed 4 February 2026).

⁴⁵ Kelebogile T Resane, “Marital Fidelity and Chastity: The Missing Ethology in Charismatic Pastoral Leadership,” *STJ | Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 4, no. 1 (June 30, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2018.v4n1.a16>.

⁴⁶ Resane, “Marital Fidelity and Chastity: The Missing Ethology in Charismatic Pastoral Leadership.”

There should be serious caution when leaders become celebrities and are detached from the followers. Governance, mentoring, and accreditation should be implemented to allay moral failures.

Future research should look into the dynamic demographic changes in the New Charismatic Movement. The phenomenon of multiculturalism within the New Charismatic Movement in racially polarised South Africa, and the city church explosion under the young, vibrant, black charismatic pioneers are the research themes to be explored.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blackaby, Henry T., and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*. B&H Publishing Group, 2001.
- Boaheng, Isaac, and Isaac Justice Osei. "A Study of John 21:15-17: Toward a Shepherd Model of Christian Ministry." *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, November 28, 2022, 636–47. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20223129>.
- Campbell, Heidi A., and Alessandra Vitullo. "Assessing Changes in the Study of Religious Communities in Digital Religion Studies." *Church, Communication and Culture* 1, no. 1 (January 26, 2016): 73–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2016.1181301>.
- D'Souza Anthony, A. *Leaders for Today Hope for Tomorrow. Empowering and Empowered Leadership*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2005.
- Kgatle, Mookgo Solomon and Anderson, Allan. H (Eds.). *The abuse of the Spirit in some New Prophetic Churches in South African Pentecostalism*, Abingdon, Oxon/ New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Khosa-Nkatini, Hundzukani P. "An Investigation into the Challenges Confronting Women-Led Ministries within Pentecostalism." *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 31, 2026). <https://doi.org/10.4102/AJOPS.v3i1.101>.
- Kinnison, Quentin P. "Shepherd or One of the Sheep—Revisiting the Biblical Metaphor of the Pastorate." *Journal of Religious Leadership*, 9: 1 (Spring), 2010.
- Kisungu, Elsie B. 'The abuse of the Spirit: an immigration-imported new wave or a development of pre-existing local beliefs?' in M.S. Kgatle and A. H. Anderson (Eds.), *The abuse of the Spirit in some New Prophetic Churches in South African Pentecostalism*, Abingdon, Oxon/ New York: Routledge, 2021: 53-72
- Kobo, Fundiswa A. "Spirituality Trapped in Androcentric Celebrity Cults in South Africa Post-1994." *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 75, no. 3 (December 12, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i3.5593>.
- Louw, Daniël Johannes. *Wholeness in Hope Care: On Nurturing the Beauty of the Human Soul in Spiritual Healing*. Vol. 3. LIT Verlag Münster, 2015.
- Madikwa, Z. "When Pastors Divorce," 2012.
- Mbiti, S. John. "African Religions and Philosophy." New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1990.
- McClure, Barbara. "Pastoral Care." *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, 2012, 269–78.
- Miller, Vincent. *Understanding Digital Culture*. SAGE Publications Ltd, 2020.
- Mofokeng, Thabang Richard. "The weird you shall always have": a historical look into the causative factors behind neo-prophetic scandals in South Africa, in M.S. Kgatle and A. H. Anderson (Eds), *The abuse of the Spirit in some New Prophetic Churches in South African Pentecostalism*, Abingdon, Oxon/ New York: Routledge, (2021), 24-52
- Moriarty, Michael G. "The New Charismatics: A Concerned Voice Responds to Dangerous New Trends." (No Title), 1992.
- Moyo, Herbert. "The Lutheran Church and Situational Holistic Pastoral Ministry in Africa." *Anthology of Pastoral Ministry and Leadership*, 2023, 15–33.
- Mudau, Ndidzulafhi, and Rendani Tshifhumulo. "Technology's Influence on Pentecostalism: Shaping Perception and Religious Impact." *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2, no. 1 (June 27, 2025). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v2i1.50>.

- Mulutsi, Buti D. "Pentecostal Doctrine in Apostles' Creed and the 4IR: CFC and the River Church as Case Studies." *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2, no. 1 (July 30, 2025). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v2i1.58>.
- Myer, Ron. *Fivefold Ministry Made Practical: How to Release Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers to Equip Today's Church*. House to House Publications, 2013.
- Nthakheni, Rendani C. and Mudau Ndidzulafhi. 'Pneumatology in the digital age: Reimagining the Holy Spirit's role in Trinitarian theology', *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2(1), a53. 2025. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v2i1.53>
- Pype, Katrien. "The Liveliness of Pentecostal-Charismatic Popular Culture in Africa." *Pentecostalism in Africa: Presence and Impact of Pneumatic Christianity in Postcolonial Societies*, 2015, 345–78.
- Resane, Kelebogile Thomas. "A Critical Analysis of the Ecclesiology of the Emerging Apostolic Churches with Special Reference to the Notion of the Fivefold Ministry." PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria, 2008.
- _____. "“And They Shall Make You Eat Grass like Oxen’(Daniel 4: 24): Reflections on Recent Practices in Some New Charismatic Churches,” 2017.
- _____. "Beauty and Justice in Modern Pentecostal Theological Themes: No Loggerheads."
- _____. "Leadership for the Church: The Shepherd Model." *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (February 20, 2014). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2045>.
- _____. "Marital Fidelity and Chastity: The Missing Ethology in Charismatic Pastoral Leadership." *STJ | Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 4, no. 1 (June 30, 2018). <https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2018.v4n1.a16>.
- _____. "Servant Leadership and Shepherd Leadership: The Missing Dynamic in Pastoral Integrity in South Africa Today." *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76, no. 1 (March 12, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i1.5608>.
- _____. *Pharos Journal of Theology* 102 (n.d.). [http://: www.pharosjot.com](http://www.pharosjot.com), 2021.
- Serote, Mongane Wally. "Briefing on Traditional Healing. Parliamentary Monitoring Group Held on 23 October 2001." University of Venda, 2001.
- Shingange, Themba. 'Mission as discernment of spirits in the advent of the abuse of prophecy within Newer Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity in South Africa', in M.S. Kgatle and A. H. Anderson (Eds.). *The abuse of the Spirit in some New Prophetic Churches in South African Pentecostalism*, Abingdon, Oxon/ New York: Routledge, 2021: 115-130
- Trueheart, Charles. The Next Church, Atlantic Monthly, August Issue 278 No 2, 1996, 37–58.
- Wagner, Charles Peter. *Changing Church*, Ventura: Regal Books, 2004.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Kelebogile Thomas Resane holds a PhD (Theology) from the University of Pretoria. He served at Youth for Christ International for 31 years. He was a Teaching and Learning Manager in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, where he continues as a Research Fellow in the Department of Historical and Constructive Theology. His research focuses on Pentecostal Theologies and Public Theology. Resane published close to 100 articles in academic journals and authored three books. In 2022, he retired as a South African National Director of Bible League International. In September 2023, he was appointed as Editor-in-Chief for the African Journal for Pentecostal Studies. He is married to Tabby and they have 3 grown-up children.