

CONTEMPORARY PENTECOSTAL LEADERSHIP:
THE APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA
AS CASE STUDY

Mathew Clark

1. Introduction

The notion and discussion of “leadership” has been a major and enduring theme in politics and commerce since the 1990’s. That this would have side-effects in Christian deliberations, and particularly in the dynamic situation that is Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity, was inevitable. The influence of leadership *gurus* such as Maxwell (whose leadership experience began in the church), the growth of the so-called *New Apostolic Paradigm* of leadership, as well as the tendency for larger churches to operate in similar paradigms to commercial enterprises, have all given stature to this theme.

In South Africa the largest Pentecostal church, the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM), adopted a Constitution in October 2000 (AFM 2000) in which the theme of leadership became overt and dominant. The Executive Council was renamed the *National Leadership Forum*, and the Regional Councils were renamed *Regional Leadership Forums*. The senior local pastor of each assembly is now termed the *assembly leader*, whereas previously all accredited ministers and part-time ministers were simply referred to as *workers*. The largest representative body, called the Workers Council and which met annually, now became known as the *General Business Meeting* and convenes only tri-annually. Whereas it previously consisted of every accredited minister together with delegations from every local assembly board, it now consists of a significantly smaller group. Most of its powers have been removed and given to the National Leadership Forum, while the day-to-day running of the church as a denomination is the task of the four *National Office Bearers* (President, Vice-president, General Secretary and General Treasurer) who enjoy significant executive authority of their own.

The notion behind this change was that the “real work” of God in the church was the result of anointed and visionary leadership, the influence and effect of strong leaders who would fulfil the role of apostles, “fathers” and mentors in the church. The unspoken implications were that ministers and Christian workers who were not such anointed and visionary leaders would find their (lesser?) role as followers under the mantle of the “anointed” leaders.

According to the consistent theology of this paradigm, God raises up such leaders, their leadership becomes self-evident, and there is no real place for a democratic practice of electing leaders. Ideally, leaders would be “recognised” for their capabilities and vision, indeed it would be impossible to overlook and deny it, such would be its impact. In practice the AFM has retained an election process for electing national leaders. This process is also influenced by the generally unspoken need to ensure that the four office-bearers of the church always represent the significant ethnic groups within the church. There is also a process for electing leaders within at least those Regional Leadership Forums which are constituted geographically. Official regional forums could now also be constituted non-geographically, consisting theoretically of local churches that share a peculiar ministry philosophy. The real leaders of such regions until now have been *ex officio* leaders, normally the senior pastors of urban mega-churches, who network with a number of local assemblies nation-wide that look to them for leadership and mentorship.

Since the most powerful body in the AFM is the National Leadership Forum, the actual process of church governance in the denomination is a hybridised form of the New Apostolic Paradigm crossed with the Presbyterian system of government. The Forum consists of four elected persons (the National Office Bearers, who are ethnically representative) plus a body of ministers of whom some are elected (from geographical regions) and others are not – at least, not in any meaningful sense (from non-geographical “networks”). This leads to some inconsistencies, in that the some leaders need to give hearing to their democratic base (allowing politics, demagoguery and populism to play a role), while others enjoy an unquestioned authority based on their role in large urban churches – a role not necessarily uninfluenced by politics, demagoguery and populism.

I was inspired to undertake this paper by the courageous contribution of Cecil M. Robeck (2004) “An emerging magisterium? The case of the Assemblies of God,” an article that held up the final publication of the collection in which it appeared because of the church politics involved. That paper and this present contribution show that the tensions between the so-called “intellectual” arm of Pentecostal ministry and the “executive” arm are never far below the surface. Indeed, as in secular society, they are

arm are never far below the surface. Indeed, as in secular society, they are probably natural enemies of and irritants to each other. I have been an interested observer of the dynamics of leadership in the AFM since the day the 2000 Constitution was adopted, and after 5 years of its implementation believe that the time has come to evaluate its implementation from a theological perspective.

The methodology of this paper is consistent with that of systematic theology, in the sub-discipline of ecclesiology. This will also be an exercise in narrative theology, a method frequently used in contemporary systematic theology and ethics, as defined by Fackre 1983:343, Metz 1980:207-208, and Cone 1975:90-91. It is not an attempt at Practical Theological research, where quantitative or qualitative research methods might be expected: this is not data-gathering but an evaluation and comparison of philosophies and values.

2. The Influence of Significant Personalities in the History of the AFM

The use of the term "leader" can be rather loose, with one person's leader being another person's demagogue. In this section the preferred term is "significant personalities", since the people discussed here made their mark on the AFM for good or for ill, or both. The following summary is derived from data obtained from Chikane 1988, Burger 1990, Anderson 1992, and Burpeau 2004, as well as from my own 33 years of ordained ministry in the AFM as pastor and teacher.

2.1 J G Lake

John Lake was the founder of the AFM in South Africa in the sense that under his ministry the denomination was formed and the existing Zionist churches led by P L Le Roux became part of the new movement.

The positive contribution of Lake to leadership was his powerful healing ministry, his selfless care for the emerging ministers of the movement, and his ability to interact with secular leadership outside of the AFM.

The negative aspects of his leadership were his poor relationship with his fellow-worker Thomas Hezmalhalch, and the sufferings inflicted on his family through his absolute commitment to the ministry of the AFM. Some have argued that his own prejudices encouraged the racial split that eventually took place in 1919 – however, I would contend that he was not in South Africa long enough for that to be the case, and that sufficient prejudice could be found in the country without needing encouragement from outside.

2.2 P L Le Roux

Le Roux was the undoubted leader of the AFM from the time of

Lake's departure until his own death. A former student of Andrew Murray, he managed to incorporate in his ministry sober teaching, mature leadership and dynamic Pentecostal vision. During this period the AFM became established as a Pentecostal denomination.

The saddest episodes of his leadership were the eventual withdrawal of a large portion of the African membership of the AFM (many his own Zionist converts that had joined the AFM with him) in 1919, and the *Latter Rain* schism of 1928.

2.3 Elias Letwaba

Elias Letwaba was one of the first Black leaders of the AFM, a man whose ministry in the northern parts of the country led to the establishment of a large African church. Letwaba was a humble man who accepted the racial indignities imposed upon him by the White church leaders.

His influence in the church was his powerfully charismatic evangelistic ministry, and the (mostly ignored) fact that it was his vision that established the first Bible School in the AFM in 1930, Patmos Bible School, for the training of African pastors. The first "official" (White) training established was not launched until 2 decades later, delayed by anti-intellectual sentiment in the White church.

2.4 Mrs. Fraser

This formidable person led a large number of AFM members into conflict with AFM officials on the issue of Holy Spirit-inspired prophecy. Eventually the conflict led to a schism in which the *Latter Rain* movement found its expression in South Africa in 1928. Her women followers wear blue dresses and until today are known as *Blourokkies* (Blue Dresses) by the general and Christian public.

The single positive contribution of this person to the AFM was an awakened re-emphasis upon the work and presence of the Holy Spirit in church and ministry, together with the caution that such work and presence can never be assumed (as the *Latter Rain* people were assuming) outside of the parameters spelled out in the Scriptures.

2.5 J T du Plessis and G R W Wessels

These two strong personalities are considered together because their joint influence shaped the AFM for at least two decades – the 1950's and 1960's. Both were men of powerful ministry and undoubted leadership influence. Their major contribution was to soften the sectarian image of the AFM within the Reformed-dominated religious world of South African Afrikanerdom.

Du Plessis is seen as the father of the so-called *New Order* in AFM liturgy and style of being "church." He was a strong proponent of theological education for ministers, of a less extrovert Pentecostal liturgy, and of closer relationship with the other Afrikaans churches. Under his influence many church services became quieter and more "respectable", churches were built to look like Reformed church buildings, many even incorporated large pipe-organs. The annual conferences, while he was General Secretary of the movement, became more staid, the music more professional and less populist, the preaching less extrovert.

Wessels' influence on the AFM paralleled du Plessis's, but more especially in the area of politics. He was a powerful, popular and influential preacher in the AFM who, while Vice-president of the church, was approached by the ruling National Party to accept a seat in the Senate of the South African parliament. Their aim was apparently to win the growing Pentecostal vote among Afrikaners, his to help the government resist the advance of "godless communism". Where du Plessis promoted a religious social merging of Afrikaner Pentecostals with their Reformed peers, Wessels helped the AFM become a church with unswerving loyalty to Afrikaner Nationalist aspirations. At this time many spoke of the AFM as the "fourth Afrikaans church" after the 3 Reformed churches (despite its large Black, Coloured, English and Indian membership).

The influence of these men is still evaluated ambivalently within the movement. The effect of Wessels' political involvement was to alienate the non-Afrikaner membership of the movement, as well as those Afrikaners who did not support the National Party. This led to a eventual radicalisation of some younger Black pastors (e.g. Frank Chikane), the eventual loss of most of the English membership, and a major schism of Afrikaner members who (among other grievances) did not support his politics. However, it also led to the AFM being allowed to register as a religious denomination (as opposed to its registration under the Companies Act in 1908) with all the benefits this brought to its public ministry. These included access to the state-controlled airwaves, entrance to ministry in the security forces, hospitals and prisons as chaplains and lay-workers, etc.

The effect of du Plessis's vision for the AFM was to give overtly religious impetus to those who disliked the political direction the church was taking, since many of them were also sceptical of his liturgical and church-government programme. du Plessis was ruthless in dealing with those who disagreed with him, and the tension between his New Order and the inevitable Old Order reaction dominated discussion in the AFM for close on 20 years. In 1958 a major schism occurred in the AFM in which members disgruntled by both the liturgical and political developments in the church left to form the Pentecostal Protestant Church.

2.6 F P Möller

F P Möller served as President of the AFM for 22 years, retiring in 1988. He entered the AFM as a young man in the early 1950's, and was educated above average in terms of the membership of the church. He soon added two doctoral qualifications in Theology to his PhD in Psychology, and by his retirement was the unquestioned arbiter on most issues within the church. In his earlier years as President he was somewhat overshadowed by the towering personality of J T du Plessis, and he never really convinced many die-hard Old Order ministers of his own Pentecostal credentials. However, during the last decade of his leadership there were few who could or would raise their opinions to counter his. Under his leadership theological education was established as normative in the AFM, the harsh legislation with regard to divorce in the ministry was considerably softened, and his (often unique) *Dogmatics* became the standard work on doctrine within the church.

His leadership provided some dark moments for the church. The Executive Council at his initiative took a large loan in foreign currency, hoping to benefit from the differential in interest rates between Europe and S Africa. The collapse of the S African currency soon left the church in massive debt, leading to the closest thing to a popular revolt among ministers that Möller ever experienced. His support for the National Party government continued the alienation of Blacks and non-Afrikaners from the church. And some of the peculiar elements in his *Dogmatics* still bedevil attempts by one AFM seminary to attract students from other Pentecostal groups. However, it is indubitable that during the time of his presidency the AFM matured as a church. By the time of his retirement the church, in its general culture, had become too large and mature to be directed or moved by any one personality. Elections at all levels were less fiercely contested, theological training provided a more confident and secure type of minister, and most "waves" that broke on the shores of the church were treated with sufficient scepticism for them never to be able to shake the entire church. He was probably the last modernist leader of the denomination, retaining a principled stand on most issues as opposed to a primarily populist or pragmatic approach.

2.7 Frank Chikane

Frank Chikane, like G R Wessels, influenced the AFM primarily because of his socio-political awareness and involvement. Chikane's experience of his church indicated the depth of racial division within the church, when the Afrikaner nationalist leadership of the church assumed that involvement in or support of any other ideological direction than the Afrikaner nationalist cause was just cause for disciplinary action. Whereas previous dissenters from this simple assumption had left the church (e.g. the Black Zionists in

1919 and the White non-nationalists in 1958), Chikane remained committed to the church and to confronting its dominant Afrikaner ethos.

Chikane eventually became the unchallenged leader of the Black church, and at the time of racial unity in the AFM in 1996 was elected by the total church as Vice-president of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

2.8 Other Persons and Tendencies

Two non-South Africans also had their effect on the church. Shortly after the schism of 1928 caused by the *Latter Rain* movement, Donald Gee visited the country. His solid teaching and gentlemanlike demeanour were a strong contrast to the often raucous denunciations of the *Blourokkies*, and to him can be attributed the eventual stabilisation of the denomination within more acceptable parameters of being Pentecostal.

William Branham's visit in the early 1950s impacted both the denomination and the nation. The miraculous aspects of his ministry were undeniable, and he gained numerous followers in the country. However, when some of his followers pronounced him to be an infallible prophet of God, and urged that his non-Trinitarian views be adopted by the wider church, the leadership and membership of the AFM turned from him.

During the 1950s and 1960s the culture of "crusade evangelisation" became strong in South Africa. Within the AFM a number of personalities made their name as tent-evangelists, notably Rassie Erasmus, Philip Gerber and (much later and on the fringes of the AFM) Nikkie van der Westhuizen. Many preachers and members who identified with such extrovert and often frenetic forms of Pentecostalism associated themselves with these persons, creating various sub-cultures within the church. This movement also provided something of a counterweight to the New Order tendencies. The spectacular moral failure of many of the more notable evangelists undermined any permanent influence they might have had. Perhaps the most lasting effect they had was reinforcing the notion among Pentecostals that the ideal church service was a "crusade convention" service – what Afrikaners called *konferensie*. When the Faith Movement arrived in Johannesburg in 1979 and established itself by means of a year-long crusade-type convention, its manner of doing liturgy appealed strongly to this sentiment among Pentecostals.

3. Trends since 1970

3.1 Old and New Order

The liturgical and church-order debate around the New Order and Old Order was settled in the AFM in the early 1970s, not so much by the victory of the Old Order but by the dissipation of the New Order. Much of what the

New Order stood for in terms of a higher sense of social standing and worth among Pentecostals became social reality anyway, as Afrikaners became socially upwardly mobile in the 1960's. However, liturgically the New Order failed, and is found only in remnants in the AFM, some of whom have adopted a "seeker-sensitive" approach to ministry. Its failure in this area can be attributed to a few factors: the retirement of its tireless advocate J T du Plessis; the powerful "old-time Pentecostal" ministry of Paul Schoch at the AFM General Conferences of 1970 and 1971; and the eruption onto the scene of the Faith Movement, whose extrovert liturgies rapidly became, if not the norm, at least the ideal among many Pentecostal assemblies.

3.2 Sentiments Toward Decentralisation

During the "reign" of F P Moller and J T du Plessis, the AFM became an extremely centralised church. On paper a Presbyterian system of church government was in place, but in reality more and more influence was concentrated in the hands of a few people. Few could compete with Moller's erudition, and du Plessis's determined personality was often too strong to resist. However, the massive misreckoning of the foreign loan debacle in the 1980s led to ever-louder insistence among the rank-and-file pastorate for decentralisation of power in the church. Apart from some cosmetic moves, this was never really achieved in any meaningful way until 2000, where the same constitution that lauded the right of "anointed leaders" to be unshackled from central oversight (beyond the collegial) also gave to local assemblies the right to develop their own local church policies.

At the same time the 2000 constitution recognised the right of individuals, assemblies and regions to pursue their ministry according to differing "ministry philosophies." The denomination thereby simply acknowledged on paper what existed in fact: there was no longer such a thing as a typical AFM pastor, AFM assembly or even AFM region. Varying philosophies were thus accommodated in the broader church: seeker-sensitive, Faith paradigm, Presbyterian, classical Pentecostal, and anything in between.

3.3 Nationalism and Eventual Church Unity

The commitment of Moller and du Plessis to Afrikaner Nationalist politics – including the policy of Separate Development better known as *Apartheid* – was left largely unchallenged in the White church after the departure of most dissenters in the schism of 1958. However, it was not unchallenged in the so-called "daughter churches" or "mission churches", the Black, Coloured and Indian sections of the AFM. These had developed since 1919 as separate institutions, and while eventually they had parallel governing institutions to the White AFM (each had its own Workers Council,

Executive Council and regional councils) they were very much dependent on the White church. In fact, the Missions Superintendent of the AFM was usually *ex officio* the chairman (therefore President) of the daughter churches' Workers and Executive councils.

A growing sentiment of criticism of this racial division in the AFM became an influential groundswell as Black nationalism began to challenge its Afrikaner counterpart. Probably the most significant personality to emerge at this time was Frank Chikane, whose objections to the face of apartheid in the church eventually led him to the stage of national politics: firstly as General Secretary of the SACC, and latterly as the Director General within the office of the President of S Africa. After being debated at AFM Workers Councils for over a decade, racial unity became a reality in the AFM in 1996, probably more as a recognition of political realities in post-apartheid S Africa than as a genuine Christian concession by the White membership.

3.4 The Emergence of the New Apostolic Paradigm

In the 1990s some influential AFM pastors began to take notice of the rapid growth of the Assemblies of God in Australia. One of these pastors was Bert Wort, acknowledged as the mentor of the president of the AFM who followed F P Moller, Isak Burger. The AOG in Australia, particularly through the articulate contribution of David Cartledge, ascribed its growth to the adoption of what Peter Wagner termed "the New Apostolic Paradigm". The sentiment soon became established in influential circles in South Africa that individuals and churches, "released" from the "bonds" of restrictive Presbyterian-style church government, could freely follow their anointing and vision and accomplish great things for the Lord. This sentiment was fuelled by pressure to decentralise after the foreign loan debacle, as well as the apparent success of mega-church pastors in the urban centres of South Africa. For many the unfettered and prolific ministry of the leaders of the larger Faith-churches was an ideal they aspired to, and soon there was growing pressure to take the New Apostolic Paradigm seriously as an option within the AFM.

The first church leader to take serious strides in this direction was Ronnie Naidoo. As chairman of the Indian section of the AFM before unity, this influential man had presided as moderator over a growing Indian Pentecostal community, been instrumental in establishing meaningful theological training for its pastors, and become personal mentor of many pastors and local churches that were planted under his chairmanship. In the mid-1990s he became convinced that the office of apostle should be once again officially recognised in the AFM, and was personally ordained by a local representative of the Apostolic movement (Andre Pelser) as Apostle Naidoo -- a title that appears on his letterheads and business cards. As a

member of the Committee for Doctrine, Ethics and Liturgy of the AFM, as well as of its Executive Council, Naidoo found regular opportunity to express his views on this matter.

The 2000 constitution was therefore adopted by a denomination that was in many ways in a post(-modern?) situation: post-apartheid, post-centralised, post-Afrikaner nationalist, post-New Order, post-classical Pentecostal, post-racially divided.

4. The Implementation of the AFM's 2000 Constitution

In October 2000 the Workers Council adopted the new constitution for the Apostolic Faith Mission of SA. The immediate factors leading to the compilation and acceptance of this constitution were:

1.) The influence of the Australian AOG, especially its significant numerical growth. This was attributed to the adoption of the New Apostolic Paradigm in which the senior pastor of the Hills mega-church in Sydney was recognised as the "anointed vision-bearer" for Australia. The mentor of the AFM of SA's president was particularly influential in emphasising the potential value of this paradigm for the AFM.

2.) A few leaders of urban mega-churches in the AFM had become restless in their relationship with the structures of the AFM. They insisted that they found the collegial Presbyterian system stifling of their initiatives and vision. Some had even held back the financial contributions for which their assemblies were responsible to regional and central bodies, on the grounds that these funds were not managed according to their own ministry philosophies. This was not a new trend in the AFM, various more-or-less "successful" pastors had expressed such sentiments during the history of the movement. This was the first time, however, that they were given a serious hearing and public exposure by a more sympathetic church leadership that was keen to maintain the unity of the AFM.

3.) There was a growing sense in the denomination that the grouping of local churches into geographical regional councils was too arbitrary. Many felt that that a networking option should be extended to those local churches which desired to be linked together on the basis of commonality of ministry philosophy. In effect this meant that some large urban churches gathered a group

of local assemblies around themselves either as a partnership, or as a “covering” of the local pastor by a “father” or “apostolic figure”, or both.

4.) The aspect of the New Apostolic Paradigm that had received particular emphasis in the AFM was its emphasis on the role of mentors, “father” figures and “apostolic personalities.” It was felt by many that local church leadership needed to operate under the care and direction of such figures, and that only a few personalities in the church were able to fulfil such a role.

5.) After the racial unity of the church was achieved in 1996 it was noted that the Annual Workers Council had become unwieldy. If every person who could be delegated by local churches and ministries were to attend, it would be in excess of 2000 delegates – in reality, it was never much more than 1200 that did attend. The language of communication and record was also English, which was the first language of less than 5% of pastors in the church. It was felt that a decentralised church with a streamlined Workers Council which met less regularly would be more credible than a large annual meeting in which many were reluctant to participate because of a lack of proficiency in English. Since many of the more influential leaders lacked this proficiency, this became a major issue.

6.) The denomination had developed a number of standing committees over the years, some directly involved in ministry (which had become elaborate departments such as a missions department) and others which met for specialised issues – such as the Committee for Doctrine, Ethics and Liturgy. Many felt that the consistent application of the New Apostolic Paradigm, as well as the pressure to decentralise, made such committees and departments obsolete. Their work could best be done by the “anointed leadership” (in consultation with whomsoever they desired, if they felt they needed advice) and in the context of the various networks.

The 2000 Constitution was negotiated over various forums and presented in 1999 to the Workers Council as a draft resolution. Various suggestions were made for its modification, many of which diluted the more radical implications of the New Apostolic Paradigm. During the 2000 Workers Council many ministers of the church had serious reservations about the intent and impact of such a resolution, especially some of the African leaders such as Frank Chikane who saw it as a major divergence from the collegial

ethos of the AFM. Most theologians in the church were also basically sceptical of the “apostolic” themes, whereas many appreciated the emphasis on local church autonomy. After an impassioned plea by the President, Isak Burger, and the reticence of the African leaders and academics in the face of that plea, the constitution was adopted and became applicable from 1st October, 2000.

The implementation of this constitution had the following immediate implications and effects:

1.) All workers within the church found themselves categorised as “leaders” and/or part of “leadership forums.” This was true of the elected office-bearers of the church, the Executive Council, the regional councils, and local church boards. What had been a buzzword now became a crucial aspect of the denomination’s self-understanding.

2.) The philosophy of church leadership within the denomination became a hybrid (or paradox) of democratic Presbyterian thinking (national office-bearers and geographical regional leaders and their committees were elected by delegates) and New Apostolic thinking (leaders of the new non-geographical networks were assumed to be the anointed leaders whom the other “lesser” leaders in those networks had chosen to recognise as their mentors or “anointed covering.”) Once gathered in the National Leadership Forum, both types of leaders appear to be regarded as authentic.

3.) In the application of leadership, there has been a clearly visible emphasis on the vision, authority and privileges of leaders rather than on their commitment to faithful and sacrificial service to those they ostensibly lead and mentor. This has become clear in the reluctance of particularly the non-geographical network leaders to be of assistance when local churches under their leadership suffer discipline issues or doctrinal problems. The chequered history of the Shelly Beach assembly, which experienced numerous disciplinary problems in the early 2000’s and which was sadly neglected by the leadership of the non-geographical network it had chosen to join, is an example of this.

4.) Some mega-church leaders instituted a headhunting policy, targeting medium and large local churches in particular,

persuading them to join their networks. This led to these churches deserting the geographical regions in large numbers, leaving many such regions with one or two financially viable (White Afrikaans) assemblies and a large number of impoverished (Black) churches.

5.) The impact of the previous point was the re-establishment of racial divisions within the church, but now on an ostensibly voluntary basis. Many medium and large local churches simply abandoned the challenges of regional racial unity in favour of joining networks consisting primarily of White Afrikaans churches.

6.) The face of church government in the AFM has changed from being primarily collegial and Presbyterian to becoming authoritarian and Episcopalian. Whereas beforehand the elected leadership was to a large extent (even if only in ideal) considered to exist to give expression to the wishes of those who elected them, the explicit intention of the New Apostolic Paradigm has been to harness the membership into the visions and causes of the leadership.

7.) The pastors of smaller to medium local churches accepted an implicit insult to themselves when adopting the 2000 Constitution. The unspoken message was that they had neither importance nor influence in the denomination beyond what they could discover under the umbrella of some visibly "anointed" figure. This was articulated by the President in his address to the Council in 2000: "I used to listen to numerous advisers, but now I have decided to only pay attention to those who can demonstrate to me what they have achieved as leaders..." In its context, this was a clear statement that urban mega-church leaders would be preferred advisors to the President, a partiality that previous Presidents of the AFM had gone out of their way to resist.

5. The AFM after 5 years of the 2000 Constitution

It is now just over 5 years since the 2000 Constitution was implemented. This is sufficient time for significant trends and effects to become clear. I offer the following as a critique of developments during this period:

1.) The AFM's own statistics show that the "real work" of the church is being done in smaller churches under less significant leadership. This is true if by "real work" is intended the salvation

of sinners, their baptism in water, and their baptism in the Holy Spirit. Probably the most significant mega-church in the AFM, and the one in which teaching on leadership is a major activity, is the *Mosaiek* church in Johannesburg. With membership in excess of 4000, a fulltime leadership team of a dozen ordained ministers, and an annual budget in excess of R12 million, the leaders state that about 100 people per year experience salvation in *Mosaiek*, directly from an "un-churched" state.¹ This would be about the same number of such people who would be saved in total in any 10 small churches in the AFM of less than 100 members. The comparison becomes even more invidious in the case of *Mosaiek*, since its adoption of the Willow Creek seeker-sensitive ministry philosophy relegates baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit to non-crucial issues, which is certainly not the case in the small churches.

2.) The ambivalence surrounding the role and authority of the National Office Bearers has never been resolved. How are they to be viewed: as charismatically-endowed "apostolic" figures or as elected officials? With what authority do they speak: may they be viewed as impartial spokesmen of the Holy Spirit, or do they need to continually probe the sentiments of the church with a view to acceptance? The manner in which the discussion in the denomination concerning the "generational curses" was approached highlights this ambivalence. At the Seminar on Generational Curses called by the National Office Bearers in March 2004 at Kempton Park, while privately agreeing with local theologians that the teaching on such curses was theologically insupportable, all four office-bearers independently told the theologians: "Yes, to you it is clear-cut, but we have to deal with the matter as leaders..." This response intimates that considerations other than those of principle governed the response of these leaders.

3.) The fact that by unspoken agreement the National Office Bearers should reflect the major ethnic groups that constitute the membership of the AFM further bedevils the issue. Are the office-bearers the most capable or competent leaders, or the merely most appropriate in terms of racial sensitivity? If there is any connotation

¹ These figures were given to me independently and separately by two of the pastors of that church, Dr Johan Geysler (senior pastor and assembly leader) and Dr Gert Basson.

How can any such Christian, least of all contemporary Pentecostal leaders, have become so blind to the essentiality of humility as the core value for any follower of Jesus Christ? Many Pentecostal and charismatic leaders seem to play lip-service to the ideal, consulting PRO's who advise them on how to project a humble image, what Watkins refers to above as "talk that marks those traits instead of action."

Johnson & VanVonderen have attempted to challenge the abuse of assumed spiritual authority.

There are spiritual systems in which what people think, how they feel and what they need or want does not matter. People's needs go unmet. In these systems, the members are there to meet the needs of the leaders: needs for power, importance, intimacy, value – really *self*-related needs. (Johnson and VanVonderen 1991:23)

I do not believe that the leadership of the AFM has yet become abusive in this sense. However, I do believe that a paradigm and ethos that emphasises leadership, especially apostolic leadership, will always tend eventually to dwell and hinge upon the prerogatives, dignity, power and authority of leaders rather than upon the needs of the so-called led. Church history has shown this to be the case over and over again e.g. the Zwickau prophets of the 16th century and Irvingism in the 19th and 20th centuries.

What suggestions can be offered to help the AFM orient itself in the light of the weaknesses of the present paradigm? I would (humbly?) offer the following:

- 1.) The current leadership of the denomination needs to call a national convention on church government, ethos and paradigm. This could begin with informal discussions e.g. among academics and leaders and between academics and leaders, and eventuate in a forum in which the debate can be widened and publicised in a meaningful and participative manner.
- 2.) The wider denomination needs to publicly and meaningfully recommit itself to establishing a Biblically exegetical and deductive approach to Christian leadership and service, as opposed to the populist and glitzy presentations that have tended to mar the church scene and which usually reinforce the power and authority aspects of spiritual leadership as opposed to humility and service.
- 3.) A constitutional debate needs to be initiated culminating

in a fully representative business meeting of all workers, departments and assemblies in the AFM in which a revised constitution might be debated and adopted in which "leadership" as a theme is replaced by collegiality and service.

4.) The small and medium church workers, who are mainly underpaid and humble, need to be reaffirmed as valuable in their own right, since it is they who are presently bearing the major part of the ministry of the Kingdom of God. These people often need as much help and equipping as they can acquire, and have already demonstrated that they have that most essential element of Christian leadership: a humble and a servile heart. In the face of the insults heaped upon them by a constitution that has elevated publicly-visible and assertive leaders who usually demand their dignity be respected, these small church leaders have remained loyal and faithful to their denomination, prepared to lose all dignity, affluence and influence as they humbly continue to serve the Lord who called them and those whom they draw into the benefits of His Kingdom. Here are the true heroes of the faith.

This paper is being presented at a conference in Asia in which non-Western Pentecostals are deliberating about the first century of Pentecostalism and the new century that lies ahead. I am well aware that the leadership values which are natural to myself as a White westerner are those of the liberal Anglo-Saxon school, where leaders are normally subjected to the ongoing scrutiny of their followers and rapidly replaced when they fail to provide the service expected. Authoritarian leaders (such as Margaret Thatcher) are permitted as long as they deliver – when they appear to become too arrogant and demanding, they are usually soon removed.

I am also well aware that in many parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America this culture of leader-critique is not so evident. It is often considered disloyal, indeed even treasonous, to criticise the conduct and prerogatives of leaders.

What liberal westerners make of leadership, and what non-westerners from cultures that express a greater respect for leaders make of it, needs to be sidelined in any meaningful theological debate on leadership in the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostal scholarship and current leadership need, in partnership, to search the Scriptures to discover what the God of the Scriptures, and the Spirit which breathed into existence both the Scriptures and the Pentecostal movement, have to say on this matter. What is clear is that, if we wish to maintain our witness to Jesus Christ in the century that lies ahead, we need to brush up a public image of Pentecostal Christianity already tarnished by leadership failures. We need to affirm leadership values

which are based on Scripture. If we do this we might even discover that, in God's work, leaders are actually not so very important after all.

Bibliography

- AFM 2000. *Constitution of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, a church incorporated in terms of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (Private) Act 24 of 1961, as amended 1 October 2000.*
- Anderson, A H 1992. *Bazalwane: African pentecostals in South Africa.* Pretoria: Unisa.
- Burger, I vd M 1990. *Geloofsgeskiedenis van die Apostoliese Geloof Sending van Suid Afrika.* Johannesburg: Evangelie Uitgewers.
- Burpeau, K P 2004. *God's showman: a historical study of John G Lake and South African / American Pentecostalism.* Oslo: Refleks.
- Chikane, F 1988. *No life of my own.* Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers.
- Cone, J H 1975. *God of the oppressed.* New York: Seabury Press
- Fackre, G 1983. Narrative theology, *Religion in Life* 37, 340-355.
- Johnson, D & VanVonderen, J 1991. *The subtle power of spiritual abuse: Recognising and escaping spiritual manipulation and false spiritual authority within the church.* Minneapolis: Bethany House.
- Ma, W & Menzies R P 2004. *The Spirit and spirituality: Essays in honour of Russell P. Spittler.* London: T&T Clark.
- Metz, J B 1980. *Faith in history and society: Towards a practical fundamental theology.* London: Burns and Oates
- Robeck, C M 2004. "An emerging magisterium? The case of the Assemblies of God" in Ma & Menzies 2004, pp 212-252.
- Watkins, S 2006. "Ken Lay still isn't listening: Enron's whistle-blower responds to the verdict." *Time*, 5th June 2006, p 45.