



# Honorary degree qualifications from unaccredited institutions: Anathema for Pentecostal self-discovery

Kelebogile Thomas Resane  
University of the Free State, South Africa  
[resanekt@ufs.ac.za](mailto:resanekt@ufs.ac.za)

## Abstract

There are Pentecostal leaders claiming academic and ecclesial titles such as Dr, Prof, Bishop, Apostle, etc. These honorary degrees are offered by some unaccredited institutions claiming some international status. The phenomenon concerns the Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology. Exorbitant amounts are paid for these bogus qualifications. The problem is hereby addressed by first giving some practical examples of those awarded these qualifications. The second part paints a short history of Pentecostal education and the rise of intellectual tendencies. The third part elaborates on the South African legislature of accreditation of institutions of learning, who qualifies to confer honorary qualifications, and the application of these qualifications. Addressing this problem, church leaders should familiarize themselves with the accreditation processes of institutions and qualifications in South Africa and be aware of the trap of commercialisation of the gospel within the Pentecostal communities these days.

## Keywords

*Honorary degrees; Pentecostal education; fake institutions; accreditation*

## 1. Introduction

The word “Pentecostal” in this article is used as an umbrella term covering the Classical Pentecostals, Charismatics, Neo-Pentecostals, Neo-Charismatics, and New Prophetic movements. It comprises of Christians who claim to embrace the works of the Holy Spirit in the first-century church as described in Acts and elsewhere in the New Testament as relevant and normative for contemporary Christians (Kgatle 2018:1;

Hittenberger 2001:218). This is the tradition that evolved out of what is historically referred to as the Azusa Street revival of the early twentieth century. The movement is part of the Protestant movement and holds to broader evangelical dogma – especially to pneumatology. This Pentecostal tradition is well noted for charismatic manifestation, without being aided by any academic acquirement or acumen, and therefore sees no need for theological education as a prerequisite for ministerial formation. Hence many opt for honorary qualifications. Honorary degrees may be conferred upon the individuals who achieved distinction intellectually, creatively, educationally, commercially or through distinct service to humanity and cosmos at large (environment, quality of life, conservation of creation etc.).

## **2. The current scenarios**

It has become noticeable in public space of many pastors and even some politicians carrying the titles such as Dr, Prof, Bishop, Apostle etc. Titles such as Dr and Prof are encircled within the academia, while the Bishop, Apostle, Prophet etc. are strictly ecclesiastical. Van Rensburg (2021), the former Principal of South African Theological Seminary, and currently the Project Director of Re-Forma mentions his bafflement as he travels through the African continent and encountering the antithesis of the example that Jesus set:

I have encountered the following titles: Chief Apostle, Senior Apostle, Head Apostle, Lead Apostle, Senior Prophet, Head Prophet, Visionary and Prophet, Visionary Pastor, Lead Visionary, Visionary Apostle, and the list goes on. Apart from these terms being unbiblical, they reflect an underlying evil, namely the desire for position and power.

The fake qualifications and unaccredited institutions debacle is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. Over the past three decades the country has witnessed a steady flow of qualification scandals involving politicians, pastors, and public servants. Ecclesiastical leaders and civil leaders constantly appear in the media, claiming titles they have earned through unaccredited institutions.

According to *Times of Swaziland* newspaper (Ndlela 2012), from around 2012, the common name offering fake degrees in the name of Honorary Doctorates, was Bishop Keith Harrington who married the South African television actor, Sophie Ndaba. The marriage did not last long. The Bishop awarded fifteen Church leaders and at least two senior members of the royal family who are holders of the “doctor of divinity” degrees. Most, if not all recipients paid between R2 000 and R6 000. The newspaper continued to report that “controversial Bishop Harrington had been awarding fake degrees to high-profiled individuals, both in Africa and internationally.” These doctorates were awarded on behalf of the non-existing International Theological Seminary of California, US, (ITSC). The physical address given by Harrington in his credentials is not a college or university, but an empty parking lot.

News24 (28 January 2016) reported that several institutions had been discontinued by the Department of Higher Education due to their illegitimacy and unaccredited status. Many pastors discovered that their theological qualifications are revealed to be less worth than the paper they are printed on.

An unaccredited institution known as Isibusiso Solwazi School of Theology claiming accreditation with St Martin’s Centre for Research & Accreditation Commission, also claiming accreditation with the International Association for Biblical Education; further claiming to be affiliated with Brainae University, USA, continues to award honorary degrees. On their website, they state:

We offer the Honorary Doctorate Degree, which is conferred upon distinguished Pastors, Evangelists, Bishops, Apostles, Prophets, Bible Teachers, community leaders, Humanitarians, Government leaders, Business men and women or anyone who have made significant contributions in their respective fields or for the extension of God’s Kingdom, Civic services, Business, and community.

We do not sell the Doctorate, but we honour the great work the individual has done. We ask for a donation to support our international Ministries and Humanitarian Aid Ministry.

Their website provides a very long list of people awarded these fake degrees. By reading the citation above, one need not be an academic skyrocket to see that awarding these degrees is expected to be accompanied or followed by some commercial exchange in the name of “donation”. What shocks academia is to see that the institution offers honorary doctorates, professorships, and “earned” PhDs.

On 22 May 2018 some traditional leaders from the Eastern Cape received honorary doctorates from one unaccredited institution called Trinity International Bible University (Tanana 2018). These traditional leaders were all bestowed with honorary Doctor of Philosophy in leadership and governance by the internationally accredited church, which is also affiliated to New World Mission Dunamis International University. One can easily read between the lines that this institution is a fake with two different names, affiliated to the church or accredited by a church.

Archbishop Prof. Emmanuel Christian Ketsekile of the unknown and non-accredited Emmanuel Christian University has been conferring unaccredited doctorates to many naïve pastors in and around the Free State Province, and other territories (Resane 2017a:3). This institution is listed nowhere in all accredited sites – either conditionally or a revoked registration. Their website claims that it is an institution led by a SAQA accredited religious professional whose name is Archbishop Dr. Prof E. C. Ketsekile. Under About Us on their website, one picks up clearly that interchangeable names of affiliation are one of the red flags of fake and bogus operations. The assembling of the titles of this leader does not only raises eyebrows, but also sends the message of falsely acquired status. The titles ‘Dr’ and ‘Prof’ are usually not used together for the same person.

South African artists, businesspeople, and politicians are always the target. For instance, it was reported that the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande retorted:

The Department of Higher Education and Training has learnt with dismay the reported story in Sowetan on counterfeit Doctoral degrees to Mr. Bheki and Linah Ngcobo who are also known South African Maskandi musicians, by a university operating illegally in Johannesburg and not accredited on Programmes offerings.

The department affirms that this university called Anointed University owned by Nigerian nationals (Mr. George Aladeoba and his wife) is an illegal university, it is not accredited and with no registration number. Their Programmes are therefore not recognised (Skillsportals 2014)

The famous entrepreneur and reality TV star, Shawn Mkhize (MaMkhize) was conferred with an honorary doctorate in philosophy for her “good deeds” by the Good Shepherd College of Religion, Culture and Training (Ncwane 2021). It turned out that the college is not registered with the Department of Higher Education as a private higher education institution. According to the Argus newspaper, it does not even have a website or education domain and has no authority to issue PhD in philosophy. Like many of its kind, it is now subjected to the Department’s investigation (Baloyi 2021).

Recently, the South African public was horrified to learn of the City of Johannesburg Manager for Roads Agency, Tshepo Mahanuke’s doctoral degree is a fake. The social media was abuzz, but reality finally came out to reveal that:

- Mahanuke’s December 2019 honorary doctorate from the Trinity International University of Ambassadors (TIUA) can be bought for a small “support honorarium”. Trinity, a poorly ranked evangelical Christian university in the US, says “the expedient way of showing the world your knowledge, abilities, experience and talents is with your degree and use of your title”.
- His resumé and CV also claim he has a master’s degree in “Competitive Intelligence” from ACI College, Harvard Business School. Harvard does not offer such a master’s degree and ACI (Academy for Competitive Intelligence) is a separate college.
- At a farewell ahead of his appointment at the JRA, Mahanuke was also called “Professor” – in December 2021, TIUA also conferred Mahanuke with the title of a professorship in “Business Intelligence and Strategic Alliance” (Haffajee 2022).

These scenarios paint the picture of leaders who are title-conscious, attempting to gain these titles effortlessly, without sweat even though these

titles do not carry any substance or qualitative academic achievements that can be quantified.

### 3. Pentecostals and academia

Pentecostals and academia are generally like oil and water. Sun (2000:227) highlights this that ‘many early Pentecostals felt that formal theological training was to be avoided at all costs since it would stifle the Spirit-filled life.’ Pentecostalism has links to Fundamentalism, and therefore is ‘marked by a strong anti-intellectualism that persists even to the present day’ (Kärkkäinen 2002:7). Frestadius (2021:56) captures it that ‘The movement has been shaped by a strong current of anti-intellectualism, but it has also established and supported training institutions from its inception.’ These sound like sweeping statements and/or an oxymoron. To counteract that, let it be known that from its historical roots Pentecostals had continued to build Bible schools, and recently are embarking on building seminaries and institutions of higher learning. According to Kay (2004:230), Pentecostal doctrine was first defined at Bethel College in Topeka, Kansas, immediately after Azusa Street revival (1906-1913). However, in these attempts, they overlook the substance and the basis of the fundamentals of education. Their curriculum content follows the precepts and standards of conservative evangelical praxis. This is confirmed by Kay (2004:231) that “Pentecostal scholasticism was associated with a narrow Bible-based curriculum and with an unadventurous pedagogy.” It will be justifiable for one to cite affirmatively that “Pentecostal theological education is formalized through the work of seminaries and Bible schools and its main aim is to train Christian leaders and pastors for the work of the ministry” (Asamoah – Gyadu 2017:4). Studying the history of Evangelical and Pentecostal missions, one realises that the era of Bible Institute movement continues to be one reason for expansion of classical Pentecostalism (Witmer in Hakes 1979:379), especially the Assemblies of God denomination, which planted many churches in the First and Third World through the Bible Schools education. This is also confirmed by Hobe (2019:29) that ‘theological education has been, and continues to be, the heart of the Assemblies of God foreign missions’ strategy.’ This is also confirmed by Resane (2018:2) that “the AOG internationally embraced theological

training as a way of ministerial formation and missionary expansion, regardless of Pentecostal reservation towards education elitism.”

One needs a full study of the history of theological education in the Full Gospel Church in South Africa. This classical Pentecostal denomination made some serious efforts to ensure that their ministerial workers receive good Bible training. Van Niekerk (1984:11) referred to this development that “the FGC has a proud history with regards to the education and training of its ministers.” From 1920, the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in South Africa embarked on Bible School Training under a certain Scott Moffat. Since then ‘theological education went through different theoretical and practical changes’ (Erasmus 1996:25). However, AFM did not require any theological education, as there was a clear hierarchy, starting with every church member as a witness, then a local preacher, deacon, elder and finally an overseer (Burger & Nel 2008:385).

#### **4. Ordination into Christian Higher Service**

In the mainline church polity, Pentecostals are mainly congregational, sometimes with a bit of Episcopalian and/or synodical tendencies interspersed. The classical Pentecostals are ecclesiastically structured in this mould. The later Pentecostal community expressions are congregational as they are the independent charismatic churches in operation. However, the latest polity expressions have entered the forays of Episcopalians where many Pentecostal leaders address themselves as Archbishops, Bishops, Apostles, Prophets, etc.

Mzondi (2019:101) captures it that after 1994 when the country became open to the continent, a new flavour of Pentecostalism was infused into South African Pentecostal landscape, especially in regard to leadership styles. For instance, Gladstone Botswana with Assemblies of God background embraced Pentecostal Episcopalianism in 1995. He recently embraced the Sabbatarian principle of regarding Saturday as a day of worship. Mosa Sono of Grace Bible Church, out of Apostolic Faith Mission also embraced Pentecostal Episcopalianism later. Raymond Vanda, also from Assemblies of God embraced the practice of apostleship. While the secession of young leaders from classical Pentecostalism was at its height, the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) from USA surfaced in South Africa. It emphasised the

fivefold ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11–12. The office of Apostle and Prophet was elevated and captured the minds of young Pentecostal leaders.

Mzondi (2019:101) is of a strong opinion that the NAR arrival opened a plethora of names like apostle, prophet, pastors, evangelists, bishops, archbishops, Dr, Prof etc. This is in contrast with the mainline denominations, where for one to become a Bishop or the Archbishop, there are some processes to be followed. For instance, according to the Roman Catholic Church Law, Bishops are required to be 35 years old, ordained at least five years prior and hold a doctorate in theology. A candidate has to be outstanding in solid faith, good morals, piety, zeal for souls, wisdom, prudence, and human values (Boetner 1962). In the Anglican Canon 18 (2019) regarding the Admission to the orders of bishop, priest and deacon, every priest who is to be consecrated as a bishop shall:

3. be at least forty years of age,
4. have at least a bachelor's degree in theology or the equivalent,
5. have been ordained and in full time ministry for not less than ten years,
6. be leading (and to have led) a sound Christian spiritual and social life,
7. have a good reputation and be a person of integrity,
8. have experience in pastoral ministry,
9. have administrative ability, and
10. have received the necessary clearances after searches of the public registers referred to in Canon

On the other hand, many of these Pentecostal leaders were Bible College graduates where the curriculum was always hermeneutically bounded or circumscribed. Most of their *alma maters* ceased to exist due to new government regulations of registration and accreditation. Resane (2017b:1) notes that 'most of the leaders of this movement are the educated elite – though, in non-theological fields, the training they receive embraces what in the social psychology of education is known as Bloom's taxonomy,' which involves three domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor



(Head, Heart, and Hand). Instead of applying this taxonomy in their ministries, unfortunately, and unpredictably, the emerging Pentecostal leaders became title-conscious, and one way was to obtain a doctoral degree without academic work, or become a bishop without the proper ecclesiastical processes. Due to some South African education regulations and restrictions, especially in the area of conferring honorary degrees, these leaders turned to some foreign institutions, some of these institutions been either pseudonymou or fictitious. A good example is that of Harrington's International Theological Seminary of California (ITSC), which has been discovered to be neither a college nor university, with physical address identified as an empty parking lot. The plethora of titles tumbled down on Pentecostal establishments like a roaring storm. Leaders started to carry titles and qualifications that are fake and unaccredited. All these titles came with monetary exchanges and lies. Payments still continue to be a prerogative for conferments, and local universities facilities are hired for the fake qualifications graduation occasions to give impression of the legitimacy of these conferments.

## **5. Warnings against fake qualifications**

There are negative implications to obtaining a fake qualification or a degree. It does not matter whether these qualifications are honorary or dubbed legitimate. One should be vigilant towards fraudulent qualifications as they carry a heavy tone of commercialisation or commodification of theology or gospel. These qualifications do not open doors for employment, and possess a highly negative impact on one's career, as well as personal and professional reputation. It opens one for legal action and forensic investigation. While the Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology authorities are trying to clamp down on these bogus institutions, Pentecostals need to be vigilant to avoid falling prey to these scams. The following red flags are cautions that the institution or qualification it offers are not legitimate:

### **5.1 The lack of recognised accreditation**

Occasionally, these institutions claim accreditation or affiliation to suspicious quality assurance entities. Most of these entities are foreign, and the USA is always reported as the place where accrediting entities are based. The red flag here is that of the exaggerated and numerous

claims on accreditation in order to lend credibility to the college. All the institutions mentioned above under the current scenarios carry the red flags of genuine accreditation. South Africans, especially those from the Pentecostal communities should desist from any association with any institution where local tuition centres purport to offer “qualifications” on behalf of “foreign” and “international” universities. A good example is that of Ketssekile’s Emmanuel Christian University claiming affiliation with a particular Zambian university. The public is warned of any institution that claims or insists on the continued and undue emphasis on “international accreditation” and “international qualifications”. International accreditation must be traceable and known by the national accreditation, which in South Africa, is monitored by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA Evaluation of Foreign Qualifications, 2023).

## 5.2 The durability of obtaining the qualification

Normally, a degree programme takes three to four years to complete. These institutions promise achieving a degree within a short period. One needs to complete 120 credit hours for a degree – an impossible achievement within a few months. A quality academic module, subject, or a course are validated by examinations, assignments, and assessments to complete. An application form is questionable if it does not require information or proof of formal schooling, identity documents, etc. Diplomas and Degrees offered in a short period of time making it possible to receive several degrees in one year is a sign of the bogus or illegitimate institution. This is a sad situation that is pictured by Resane (2017b:3):

The Neo-Pentecostal Charismatics in attempts to balance their divine calling with authentic ministerial training, especially from the 1990s, embraced commercialised courses, for obvious reasons such as the nature of these courses’ short-term, simplicity, popularity, and accessibility through the Internet. Any institution that promises you a completion of a degree within several months without much academic effort on your part, is likely that it may be fake (Nzimande 2014).

### **5.3 Fake institutions ask you to pay a lump sum upfront**

Under normal circumstances, any university or institution, if they award you an honorary qualification, do not require full, upfront payment for their conferred qualifications. It is an honour they bestow on you. They take care of your transportation to the graduation venue and will pay for your accommodation, if need be. The bogus institutions demand payment for the honour they intend to bestow on you, “because monetary gain is the focus rather than real impartation of ministerial development” (Resane 2017b:2). For the normal qualification, students are charged per credit hour -either by class or semester. The red flag here is that any institution that requires full payment before starting your degree raises some question marks. Honorary degrees are not paid for.

### **5.4 Questionable or incomplete contact details**

Legal educational operations have full contact details on their website such as phone numbers, legitimate physical and/or postal addresses, email address etc. Most of the bogus institutions lack or have insufficient traceable contact details. A good example here is that of Harrington’s ITSC which was discovered to be a parking lot. The Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology (DHES) warns prospective students, and the public for that matter to be weary of official-looking bogus colleges that use seals, crests, letterhead and logos used by legitimate institutions such as the DHES, public universities and public colleges. The absence of the verifiable physical address for the legal entity claiming to be the institution of learning or the accrediting body is a fake (Ncwane 2021).

### **5.5 Suspicious admissions criteria are rife among scam institutions**

Admission is always made easy, without considering applicants’ educational background. These institutions use working individuals to use their work experience (Recognition of Prior Learning) as credit for their degrees, articulating them faster towards graduation at a cheaper price. The danger here is the overemphasis on real life experience without articulation or mastery in the subjects of degrees conferred (Baloyi, 2021).

## 6. The honorary degrees and South African legislation

*Each institution or university set its criteria, guidelines, processes, and appointment for honouring an individual.* There are several envisaged accomplishments and purposes for a public university in awarding honorary degrees. Primarily, the institution awarding an honorary degree pays tribute to those whose character and vocation exemplify professional, intellectual, or artistic achievement. It also awards these degrees as a token of recognition and appreciation to those who have made significant contributions to society, the state, and the University itself. In its search for honourees, the university highlights the diverse ways in which such contributions can be made, and it sends a message that principles, values, and contributions are important. Well-chosen honourees affirm and dignify the awarding university's own achievements and priorities (Northwest University, 2020).

But the general rule is that an honorary doctorate is a recognition bestowed on a recipient who does not complete the qualified requirements for such a degree. The institution does so in recognition of the recipient's tireless conviction, profound achievements, and contributions to society in a particular field. For instance, Nelson Mandela received about 260 awards, including honorary doctoral degrees for his anti-apartheid activism and for promotion of global peace. Thabo Mbeki, the second president of democratic South Africa, received many honorary doctorates based on his sound economic policies and placing Africa on a global agenda. When he received an honorary doctorate at the former Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit (now University of Johannesburg), he declared: "I am confident that this University, which I join today as an honorary member, will play its role to help to transform our country into a winning nation" (South African History Online 1999).

Institutions of higher learning can award an honorary degree, after waiving all the institutional requirements for such a degree. It is always a doctorate. The honorary degree is conferred as an award of honouring an individual for a specific contribution to that institution or to the public in general. The degree can be listed in one's Curriculum Vitae, not as an educational achievement, but as an award. This justifies Dhondt's (2013:117) that:

an honorary degree can be defined as “an academic degree conferred by a university institution, at its own initiative, without cost to the recipient, to honour someone renowned for his or her merits in the field of science, culture, politics, economics, religion or defence, without examinations or dissertations, but also without any rights connected to the degree.”

This citation spells out that an honorary degree is not paid for, there is no commercial exchange or agreement between the awarding institution and the honouree. According to South African Higher Education Act of 1997 (65C) under Honorary degrees we learn:

- (1) Subject to its institutional statute, a public higher education institution may, without examination, confer honorary degrees of master or doctor in any faculty upon any person whom the public higher education institution may deem worthy of such a degree.
- (2) The award of a degree contemplated in subsection (1) does not entitle the holder to practice any profession.

The scrutiny of this legislation informs the public of some main facts regarding honorary degrees. First, only the public university, not a private institution is authorised to confer the honorary degrees. It is therefore illegal for any private institution to award any person an honorary degree. In fact, Section 66 subsequent to this act clearly states:

(1) Any person other than a higher education institution, who, without the authority of a higher education institution –

1. offers or pretends to offer any higher education programme or part thereof;
2. purports to confer a qualification granted by a higher education institution, or in collaboration with a higher education institution; or
3. purports to perform an act on behalf of a higher education institution, *is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction to a sentence which may be imposed for fraud* (Italics are mine).

This justifies the rationale for these degrees or those who confer them as fraud or fraudsters. The awarded degrees by private institutions are therefore illegitimate and carry no worth. They are actually a disrespect

to those who receive them, especially if they have purchased them. The recipients become the victims of academic commercialisation. These degrees belittle those who sweat under academic work, because they are issued to individuals for the sheer sake of popularity, especially if these degrees are awarded to celebrities who do not possess any clue of academic completion. You can imagine a celebrity called “Dr” but can hardly express him/herself on the international academic platform. Again, these degrees encourage a gap between the rich and the poor, since they are issued to individuals who are richer or have achieved outside of education. Social discrimination is inevitable in this kind of selective awarding.

Second, the honorary person should have been subjected to scrutiny, analyses, and convincingly deserves the honour. Each university has policies, procedures, and a special task group to scrutinise the proposed recipient, and this may take time as some thorough assessments are undertaken to validate the qualification for a person to be awarded the degree. These processes are in place to satisfy the government policy under Higher Education Act on honorary degrees.

Thirdly, the honorary degree does not authorise an honorary person to become a professional practitioner in the field under which a degree is awarded. The recipient is not a specialist in the study area. He or she was never admitted in the field of scholarship in a particular area of academic specialisation. It is therefore necessary to bear in mind that pastors who carry these titles (which is supposed to be a matter between them and the institution that awarded them) are not professionals in any area of theological field. They cannot claim expertise or acumen in theology or any field under which the degree is awarded. Therefore, they are not theologians or scholars at all.

Fourthly, it becomes clear that the honorary degree is an award, not an academic achievement, therefore cannot be used to address that honorary person in any interaction. According to Oxford Brooks University Regulations, “It is not customary...for recipients of an honorary doctorate to adopt the prefix ‘Dr’ (Wikipedia/Honorary Degrees) as a title to be used in public or official documentations.” According to Prof. Thabo Ditsele of Tshwane University of Technology, when interviewed by Clement Manyathela of Newzroom Afrika, (YouTube Interview, 2023) the honoured

person is not allowed to be addressed with that title in public. It is only the institution that has awarded a person with an honorary degree that can use that title in correspondence with that particular institution. Prof Ditsele made a good example of the former President Mandela who rebuked people in public whenever they called him “Dr” by telling them that they never honoured him, so cannot use that title to address him (He was conferred with 62 honorary degrees).

One title that has surfaced among some Pentecostal leaders lately is “Professor”. The usage of this title in this manner clearly demonstrates the ignorance of what a professor is. Prof. Ditsele informs us that professorship is not a title, but a position. One has to be exposed to deep and wide academic rhetoric to be awarded professorship by the institution in which she is involved. The work includes teaching, research, community involvement, and demonstration of expertise in the particular subject. An adjunct Professor is an invited person into the faculty to do some institutional work – either academically or administratively. Again, only the awarding institution can address that visiting lecturer or service provider as Adjunct Professor.

South Africa does not allow any private institution to call itself a “university”, but one comes across a number of them such as Calvary University, Emmanuel Christian University, Jubilee University, Anointed University etc. Their names carrying this designation already indicate their bogus status (Ditsele 2014).

## **7. Why Pentecostals are attracted to fake honorary degrees?**

The postmodern era is full of complexities and intricacies. It is the culture through which Christian theology finds itself. This culture is captured by Oladejo-Babalola 2020:154)

The culture of the postmodern time is a complex one. This complexity covers its meaning, doctrines and structure, and timeframe. The intricacy and multiplicity of this way of life inform its complication.

The postmodern society is largely educated. Many youngsters sitting on the pews on Sunday are academically well-versed. They appreciate theology and preaching that is holistic by considering scientific, ethical, aesthetic,

and socio-cultural perceptions, since they find themselves in communities that are multicultural and multireligious. The uneducated or less educated pastor may not reach this postmodern generation. Some Pentecostal pastors may not even be in possession of a college diploma in Biblical Studies but led by experience and a sense of calling. Most are noted for subjectivizing hermeneutics (Archer 2009:98). They want to be on par with the generation they attempt to reach, but certain realities of life work against them. They are too old to resume studies; they may not be eloquent with a teaching and learning language such as English; they might not have an alternative to switch jobs as preaching is the only discipline they are familiar with, etc. So shortcuts to qualifications seem to be an answer. Fraudulent online programmes of obtaining a master's degree within a very short period of time seems to be the solution. "The Neo-Pentecostal Charismatics had for decades become victims of the sub-standard and unaccredited online courses" (Resane 2017b:5). They are willing to pay some exorbitant amounts to earn a "Dr", "Prof", "Apostle", "Bishop", etc. title. This opens up a path for or to commercialisation of theology.

It is clear that South African government policy of higher education does not allow any private institution to award any honorary degree (Ditsele 2023). This comes at a time when qualification is a requirement for any person providing any psycho-social service, of which preaching is one of them, as it encapsulates spiritual work dealing with people's emotional traumas. These institutions are well-aware of this regulation, hence resorting to claims of international accreditation. Some of them are denominationally based while others are either a one-man show or a family business. Their accreditation is always not genuine, and they lure the prospective students by claiming conditional registration with the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) or that they are extensions of one particular overseas institution.

Their curriculum is another area of concern. Most of the content is not theological but mere Bible Study material (Nel 2016:2). The New Apostolic Reformation departed from the mainstream curriculum content of theological training. In defence of their curriculum, Wagner (1999:235) labels the theological scholarship the tombstone markers. For him, the New Apostolic Reformation curriculum brings forth a new impartation, not information. He argues that the curriculum and the institution should



impart life, vision, and anointing to students. These are the rudiments that can be followed and grasped by any person who dislikes applying rationality in biblical hermeneutics. However, the truth remains: “The work of faith and the work of reason both form the believer, and both are the focus of theological education” (Dunsmuir & McCoy in Naidoo 2015:30).

## 8. Conclusions and recommendations

This article tries to conscientize the Pentecostal and Charismatic pastors of the rampant fake honorary degrees offered to them by unaccredited institutions. It shows that generally Pentecostals, though anti-intellectual, had always believed in Bible training as a prerequisite for ministerial formation. They are to be informed of the government policy that regulates accreditation and the conferment of honorary degrees. Red flags are waved to warn church leaders of the academic scams syphoning money from them to be awarded some fraudulent academic or ecclesial titles, with highlights that should anyone be awarded the honorary degree, how and where to use it. Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders are invited to familiarize themselves with the policies of the South African Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology. Understanding of the policy will help Pentecostal and Charismatics to know:

1. Honorary degrees are not academic achievements, but awards, therefore, cannot be listed on one’s Curriculum Vitae as academic milestones. They should be listed under awards rather.
2. Any honorary degree that you pay for is not an honour. It is a scam.
3. Honorary degrees are not titles to be used in public. Only the institution that has conferred the degree on any person can use it in correspondence with that particular person.
4. Only the public university registered as such in South Africa can confer the honorary degrees on any citizen after thorough scrutiny as per prescriptions of that university in line with the Higher Education Act 1997/2001. No private college or any institution is legally allowed to confer an honorary degree, even if it claims accreditation elsewhere.

5. Leaders are to check for the accreditation status of any institution before they embark on any form of study with that institution. Continuing and graduating at an unaccredited institution is punishable by law. A graduate will end up with a worthless certificate paper that is not recognised by any employment agency in South Africa
6. Shy away from any professorship by any institution, unless it is an institution you are engaged with through the areas of teaching and learning, research, and community involvement. No institution, except a public university, can make one a professor.
7. It is illegal in South Africa for any institution to call itself a “university”. Only the public institutions of higher learning are legally called a university. So, be careful of any institution calling itself a university. It is illegal, therefore operates as a fake issuing fake qualifications.

These points above have a consonancy with Dhondt (2013:122) that “The logical conclusion to this was that they would never be regarded as full members of the academic community.” The bottom line remains that “there is an ever-increasing need for engagement by Charismatics in academic dialogue” (Naidoo 2012:143). Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders, though many are educated in other fields, need to take theological education seriously in order to meet the challenges of holistic preparation for relevant Christian ministry. They are to pursue a curriculum that is relevant to the local and global communities they serve (Das 2015:1). To a certain degree, their passion needs to be rationally directed in order to find themselves in academia without compromising their spiritualities and joyful excitement of their encounter with God.

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