

Racism and the Development of Pentecostalism in South Africa: A Socio-Historical Analysis

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Abstract

The historical role of the church in South Africa regarding the development of colonial racism and apartheid is well documented. South African Christianity and the concomitant ecclesiastical developments and counter-developments were directly influenced by the changing socio-political circumstances. The mainline or historical churches, including Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, were members of the South African Council of Churches that rejected and opposed apartheid. Some Pentecostal denominations were fundamentalists who believed personal salvation and private prayer would save the country. In practice, these Pentecostal churches were either largely silent or apolitical about the apartheid situation, or they isolated and segregated themselves. In reality, whether they acknowledged it or not, they were part and parcel of the system of white benefit and black oppression. This paper, therefore, attempts to investigate this phenomenon and also to put forward a theological praxis in the context of diversity.

Keywords: Colonialism; Apartheid; racism; development; Pentecostalism

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Introduction

According to Roy (2017:149), who provides a framework for explaining the emergence of apartheid in South Africa, the term “apartheid” has come to be associated with negative connotations, much as the terms “Pharisee,” “Inquisition,” “Propaganda,” “Fascism,” and “Fundamentalism.” Apartheid was ideologically underpinned by a Christian nationalist ideology, which, through a narrow and distorted reading of the Bible, attempted to justify racial separation in terms of the ‘calling’ and ‘mission’ of Afrikaner self-determination and self-preservation in an African context (Hofmeyr and Pillay 1994:246). In other words, the Bible has been misused to suppress, degrade, devastate, and oppress the Blacks. Kretzschmar and Hulley (1998:154) define ideology as a “world-view or mindset, which serves the vital political, economic, social and psychological interest of my group, often at the expense of the other group.” According to Hofmeyr and Pillay (1994:248), H.F. Verwoerd played a pivotal role in the establishment of apartheid. Many Afrikaners gave him the status of both a political and religious leader, which was typical of apartheid ideology. An endeavour was made to preserve and safeguard what was regarded as Afrikaner identity and culture through apartheid. Rising out of the ashes of defeat by the British, Afrikaner nationalism organised itself to gain political power to promote the interests of the Afrikaner people and culture (Roy 2017:113). Roy (ibid) further stresses that this they achieved in 1948, after winning an election in which most of the voters were White, they instituted a policy of dividing the country into group areas. There is a call for equal development and freedom of cultural expression, but the way it was implemented made this impossible, and as a result, apartheid-made laws forced the different racial groups to live separately and develop separately, and grossly unequally too.

Naudé (2010:70) asserts that apartheid was an all-encompassing regime that affected every facet of society and the individual. Manavhela (2009:4), quoting Loubser (1996: 321–337), defines Apartheid as a utopian, totalitarian system intending the unilateral separation of the black and white races in South Africa. At the height of apartheid, numerous laws regulated where people could live, whom they could marry, which schools they could attend, what type of work they were allowed to do, and ultimately – and perhaps most fundamentally what they ought to think. Manavhela (2009) rightly confirms this by stating that:

In a general sense, white South Africans used the Apartheid approach in defense of what they believed to be their country. It was a system that maintained that people of different colour, races, and culture should stay separate, each group on its own. In this case, whites and blacks had to be separated by any means and under all circumstances. White South Africans had to live their lives without interference from blacks. Whites were considered as superior, and should not be disturbed or troubled by anyone. They viewed black people who opposed this system as communists or anarchists. Whites with this attitude considered blacks who rebelled as a serious threat to their lives and their accumulated wealth, and many other aspects as well.

Naudé (2010:70) further maintains that this situation was justified on biblical and theological grounds to the extent that some apartheid measures were put in place by the National Party government at the request of White reformed churches, for example, the Immorality Act, which forbade sexual relations between people of different races.

Perryman (1995:31) confirms that many Christians used the alleged curse of Ham as the legal grounds to outlaw marriages between Blacks and Whites (Genesis 9:18-29), while others used it to deny Blacks the position of priesthood within their denomination, and still others used this logic to justify indenturing Blacks as slaves. To clarify this, Atkinson et al. (1996: 313) state that racial discrimination, whether in a subtle form or the extreme form of apartheid, is also a denial of God's creative purposes for humanity. This paper, therefore, attempts to look at the role of apartheid in the development of classical Pentecostalism in South Africa and to put forward a theological praxis for a relevant Pentecostal witness in the context of diversity.

Ecclesiastical Developments and Racism

According to Hofmeyr and Pillay (1994:172), conversion and ecclesiastical affiliation formed an important bridge between the traditional small-scale and large-scale society for black South Africans. Chetty (2002:103) concluded that because "the black community has always been viewed as missionary objects, much of their history is only oral and very vague as far as ecclesiastical developments are concerned." Although Whites were the minority in the classical Pentecostal denominations in South Africa yet, in terms of structural functionalism, organisational development, and ecclesiastical government, the reins of power predominantly continued to be in their hands. According to Anderson (2012:3), despite the overwhelming majority, African leadership has not been given space to emerge, which has inevitably resulted in an increasing distance between black and white Pentecostals in the same denomination.

This may be interpreted as the result of fear amongst the minority white membership and the majority black membership. However, it makes it necessary to wonder what the purpose of the mission among blacks had been, and also how scriptures were interpreted and implemented in this regard. Indeed, it can be said that there was a lack of inclusiveness from the very beginning. While some black leaders, Johannes Thusaga and Rev. J Mlambo, as well as Rev. E Mkhwanazi, may have been instrumental in the founding and growth of some classical Pentecostal churches, their contributions were not adequately acknowledged and documented in the published history of these denominations.

The other reason for this is that even when blacks were appointed and recognised as pastors and leaders, they were regarded as inferior due to their inferior theological education or no education at all. Hofmeyr and Pillay (1994:172) further identified that Africans tolerated social subordination, partly because the emerging society was still unfamiliar and partly because it was believed to be a short, temporary phase until

Africans became more educated. Nkomo (1990:2-3) attributed the poor education of blacks to the following:

The accession of the National Party in 1948 brought about a qualitative change in every aspect of life. In the education domain, segregated and inferior schooling was legislated, providing an ideological cornerstone for social segregation, economic exploitation, and political oppression, calibrated according to location in the racially hierarchical social system. Education historically served as an instrument to ensure white domination over all blacks. Blacks attended poorly constructed and overcrowded school facilities with poor instruction and performance.

Observing what Nkomo is saying above, it is obvious to recognise the Eurocentrism that has guided the classical Pentecostal movement because it has consistently made little room for anyone but the dominant racial group in the church when it comes to leadership in the hierarchical structures. On the ecclesiastical level, qualifications were used as a tool to fortify the domination of white Pentecostals. As it stands, there is still a need for ecclesiastical reform within the classical Pentecostal church. In the words of Kumalo (2006:264), we conclude that,

For any church to be relevant in a changing society it needs to undergo a process of transformation in its ecclesiology and this in turn will lead to a mission that will bring social transformation. It is not enough for the church to embark on the changing of its structures and focus on ministry without looking at its nature and theological and missiological foundations.

Development of Pentecostalism and Racism

Conceptualizing Pentecostalism is a methodological problem that requires some attention (Wilkinson 2006:278). When trying to make sense of Pentecostalism, Anderson (2001:423) argues that one of the issues emerging in the study of Pentecostalism is understanding the term 'Pentecostal' itself. According to Niewoudt (1999:15), the term Pentecostalism (and therefore also the term Pentecostal) is derivative of the word 'Pentecost', and although they are related to a degree, the action and content of the two concepts are radically different. The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1999:376) explains Pentecost "as the culmination of the feast of weeks (Exodus 34:22, Deuteronomy 16:10)." This is contextually supported by Niewoudt (ibid) that apart from the obvious grammatical similarities between "Pentecost" and "Pentecostalism", the primary differentiation of the two, lies in the fact that the former is a Jewish festival celebrated at a designated time in the Jewish year, whilst the latter refers to a Christian religious movement which finds its doctrinal origin in Acts 2:1-13. The term 'Pentecostal Theology', therefore, already refers to a certain point of departure (Burger 2011: 1). According to Robeck (2007:75):

In recent years, scholars seeking to understand the origins of Pentecostalism have been engaged in a debate about whether there is a centre – geographical, or even a theological

centre from which the Pentecostal Movement spread around the world at the beginning of the 20th century. They have wondered what meaning if any, might be ascribed to such a centre should they agree on what it is. Several suggestions have been proposed to explain the origin of the Pentecostal Movement. Some, especially scholars in England and South Africa, have argued that one can draw a more or less straight line from the work of Edward Irving, who formed the Catholic Apostolic Church in 1832, to the current Pentecostal movement. Other scholars, notably some from the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), have argued for the priority of a revival that took place among a group who gathered at the Shearer Schoolhouse in Tennessee in 1886.

Hollenweger (1986: 3-12) has divided Pentecostalism into three main streams: the classical Pentecostal denominations, the charismatic movements within traditional churches, and the new emerging indigenous non-white churches. In conjunction with what Hollenweger said, Anderson (1992:7) contextually asserts that there are at least three distinct types of African Pentecostal churches in South Africa, described as follows:

1. *Pentecostal Mission Churches*, so called because of their origins in predominantly white ‘mission’ churches, and also sometimes known as ‘classical Pentecostal churches’. The Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), The Full Gospel Church of God (FGC), and the (South African) Assemblies of God (AOG) are part of this category (Anderson 1992:8).
2. *Independent Pentecostal churches* have exclusively black leadership and are independent of white control. They, too, emphasise the power and the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit and are mostly small, independent churches, although some are rapidly growing, and some have already become sizable churches and
3. *Indigenous Pentecostal-type churches*, also known as ‘Spirit-type’ churches or ‘Zionist-type’ churches. These are independent African churches with historical and theological roots in the classical Pentecostal movement. However, they have moved further away from this movement in several respects over the years and may not be regarded as ‘Pentecostal’ without further qualification.

This paper, therefore, concerns itself with the classical Pentecostal church in South Africa. The classical Pentecostals, which had their origins in the US at the beginning of the century, have since grown into the largest family of Protestant Christians in the world (Burgess and McGee 1989:219 -220). According to Anderson (1992:7), “American writers have used the term ‘Classical Pentecostals’ to distinguish between newer ‘Neo-Pentecostal’ churches and Charismatics and the ‘original’ and older Pentecostal churches.” The teaching of the classical Pentecostals regarding the role and ministry “of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer” is what they claim distinguishes them from the rest of Christendom (Thomas 2001:3). As Niewoudt (1999:17) asserts:

All traditional and classical Pentecostal movements interpret the historical event of (Acts 2), as the commencement of the Pentecostal movement as we know it today. Therefore Pentecostalism, while referring to the historical event of the feast of Pentecost, actually refers to the phenomenon of the Pentecost of Acts 2 and the resultant inclusion of this experience into the dogmatic belief codes of Christianity.

As already mentioned above, the three oldest Pentecostal churches in South Africa, namely the AFM, the FGC, and the AOG, “all began as independent missions, at first mainly to black South Africans, and steadily grew into fully-fledged denominations” (Hofmeyr and Pillay: 1994:193). Anderson (1992:7) refers to them as the Pentecostal mission churches, so called because of their origins in predominantly white ‘mission’ churches, and also known as ‘classical Pentecostal churches’ because of their shared similarities and experiences as well as both their historical trace to either the Azusa Street revival of 1906 or the experiences at Bethel Bible College, Topeka Kansas, 1901. The classical Pentecostals are a very active and growing phenomenon in South Africa and played a significant role in the emergence of some newer groups (Anderson 2005: 69).

According to Roy (2017:202), “a spiritual dynamic that has continued to expand and evolve new forms that have increasingly influenced the church and the world was the released by the rise of Pentecostalism at the beginning of the twentieth century.”

Roberts (1991:3) recorded that “the extension of the church in South Africa carried on unabated, despite South Africa’s political problems from 1948 onwards, as the separation of races became a government priority and was enforced by the law.” According to Chetty (2002:35), the 1948 Separate of Race Act became another dilemma in the history of the Pentecostal church. The Full Gospel Church, in particular, is a typical example in this regard: Separated departments that were placed under white superintendents, divided into four sections (White, Black, Indian, and Coloured) and separate theological colleges. The FGC became one of the most racially stratified churches in South Africa by embracing policies which disadvantaged so many and caused grief and pain to a greater majority of South Africans, Blacks in particular. The separation of races in the church became a contentious issue. Many black, Indian, coloured, and a few white churches were outraged when the church opted to follow the status quo of the then-racist government. Anderson (1992:85), quoting (Watt 1991:6) when emphasising the apartheid issue in the Assemblies of God, declared that:

At the beginning of its history the AOG in South Africa was purely a covering, or a ‘co-operative fellowship’ for various foreign Pentecostal missionary organizations, with White missionaries from Europe and America preaching to Black converts whom they controlled and organised into churches. Unlike the other major Pentecostal mission churches in this country, however, the AOG was not a church divided into ‘mother’ (White) and ‘daughter’ (Black) churches. But the division of the organisation was into different autonomous associations or ‘groups’ as a result of the work of particularly

gifted leaders and missionaries. The 'groups', however, were divided into racial lines and reflected the division in South African society.

According to Anderson (1993:76), the sad reality is that in South Africa, that which should have been a testimony to the unity, reconciliation, and dignity of all believers in Christ actually became a virtual opponent of the truths. The Pentecostal church followed the practices of the apartheid society, with very little credibility of the Kingdom of God (Venter 2004: 113). Instead of uttering a prophetic cry for justice to the ugly system of government that was to divide and rule South Africa for almost half a century, Pentecostalism can be seen to have acquiesced to the society of its day, becoming a bastion of apartheid mores (Anderson 1993:76). It is indeed unfortunate to notice that the Bible was used for suppression, degradation, and exploitation of human beings.

This was indeed a heresy, theologically rationalised, as is nowhere more evident than in what Skosana (2006:10) called the re-engineering of society as a whole. This makes it all the more difficult to understand how many Christian people and few churches supported the policy of apartheid and proclaimed it just and Christian (Roy 2017:149). That is why Anderson (1993:76) is not hesitant to say that Black Pentecostals silently withdrew to the independent church movements, or else, to their new-found Pentecostal spirituality that offered no solutions to what were seen as political questions. According to many theologians, the rise of Independent Churches indicates some people's attempt to break away from a white-dominated theological world (Nel 1994: 139).

Pentecostalism and its apolitical stance

According to Anderson (1992:8), the Pentecostal churches such as the AFM, FGC, and the AOG followed the pattern of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa by having separate White, Black, Indian, and 'Coloured' churches. The 'non-white' churches were dominated organisationally and financially by the 'White' church. Anderson, in the *Cyber Journal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* accessed on the (31st March 2021) further confirms this by stating that:

White-controlled Pentecostal denominations were at least sympathetic to the government that guaranteed their continued dominance and privilege. The oppression of the majority of South Africans in this political system went unnoticed and participation in politics (other than the politics of the White government) was 'sinful', The swart gevaar ('Black danger') was thought to be everywhere present. African nationalism and Black political aspirations were 'Communist' inspired, evil invisible forces, and therefore part of the 'Antichrist' Christianity. The glaring structural sin of the apartheid system was unrecognised, and those Christians who dared to speak against it were at best 'liberals', but more often were declared to be dangerous, Communist-inspired proponents of 'liberation theology', another anti-Christian ideology that amounted to the seduction of 'biblical' Christianity by evil forces.

According to Chikane (2000:17), right-wing groups amongst Pentecostals and evangelicals put their energies into trying to discredit all those who opposed apartheid and worked for justice and equality in the country. The White Pentecostals preferred the status quo because they were part and parcel of the system of white benefit and black oppression (Venter 2004:111). Whilst other churches were working as God's instruments to witness against the evil system of apartheid, declaring the theological justification thereof a heresy, Pentecostals, in the main, failed to bear a true testimony against this painful suffering by claiming to be apolitical (Chikane 2000:17). By being apolitical here we mean having no interest or involvement in political affairs. Venter (2004:111) further explains that Pentecostal denominations were fundamentalists who believed personal salvation and private prayer would save the country. As a result, they became largely silent, isolated, segregated, and apolitical. Not only were White Pentecostals enjoying the apartheid privilege and the apartheid comfort zone, but the most disappointing thing is that some of the Black Pentecostal pioneers did not use their influence to challenge their White counterparts in this regard.

For instance, according to Watt (1991:155) in Anderson (1992:47), Nicholas Bhengu was a former African Nationalist who founded the AOG and turned it into an indigenous African church; he also forbade his members to have any political affiliation and rarely made socio-political statements, but he did believe that the Gospel would free Black people from economic and political oppression as well as through non-violence, good relations with White people, and adherence to the law. Both during and after his passing, Bhengu's decision to stay out of politics drew a lot of criticism (Roy 2017:129).

Another outstanding Black leader in the history of the AFM, Elias Letwaba, like many Africans of his time, did not object to racist affronts but appeared to have adopted a neutral stance to politico-social issues and fostered the apolitical attitude that characterised some (but not all) Pentecostals under the apartheid system (Anderson 1992:38).

Against the above background in the final analysis, in the words of Resane (2018:3), "White Pentecostals were, except for few voices, generally passive towards racial segregation. The policies of the apartheid state protected their comfort zones and their supremacist egos of preserving their European-ness and ethnic identity."

Pentecostalism and black oppression

Black people in Pentecostalism were oppressed at the hands of many white Christians, especially during racial segregation. These are the Christians who claimed to know God and have a good relationship with Him, yet they oppressed others. There are many white Christian leaders in the Pentecostal churches who received direct instructions to oppress and torture black people. One such leader is Adriaan Vlok, who received an instruction to torture Frank Chikane during the racial segregation in South Africa (Kgatle 2018). Elphick et al. (1997:240) put it this way:

The South African Pentecostal movement acquiesced in the social system of apartheid South Africa. Its early integration and fellowship were short-lived. Black people were denied basic human rights in the very churches in which they had found freedom in the Spirit. In consequence, many African Pentecostals withdrew to the AICs or found comfort in their new-found Pentecostal “spirituality” and remained for the most [part “other-worldly”].

Therefore, it is correct to say that Pentecostalism, even though it grew during the times of racial segregation, did so at the expense of the oppression of black people. It is also correct to say that instead of addressing the problem of black oppression at that time, Pentecostal churches added pain to the wound. Elphick et al. (1997:241) continue to say:

South African Pentecostalism, despite denials of some, has its roots in a marginalised and underprivileged society struggling to find dignity and identity. It expanded among oppressed African people who were neglected, misunderstood, and deprived of anything but token leadership by their white Pentecostal “masters”, who had ignored biblical concepts like the priesthood of all believers and the equality of all people in Christ.

Thus, it is very surprising that although the classical Pentecostal churches were attended by black people in their majority, it was white pastors and missionaries who led them (Frahm-Arp 2010:56). Even in the black churches of many classical Pentecostal churches, it was the white missionaries who were appointed as overseers of such work. Black people, even though many of them had a calling to serve as presiding pastors, they were only recognised as workers, not pastors.

However, it must be noted that Pentecostalism did not begin in this way for both the Azusa Street Revival and the early beginnings of the Pentecostal movement in South Africa. When the missionaries, John G Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch, first arrived in South Africa, they were inspired by the interactivity of the Azusa Street Revival, where people from different backgrounds, colours of skin, and places of origin were gathered together in prayer of the Spirit (Kgatle 2016). However, given the departure of the two missionaries, most of the classical Pentecostal churches moved towards racial segregation that existed in South African politics. In addition, the oppression gesture gained momentum as many of the leaders in the classical Pentecostal churches who were politically inclined took part in the executive of their churches. Some of these leaders had positions in government that supported racial segregation while serving in the executive of the church at the same time. These leaders soon adopted political segregation into their churches, and hence, these churches moved towards ecclesiastical oppression. Thus, black oppression continued for a long time in these churches that claimed to be spirit-filled.

The oppression of black people in South Africa and other minority groups was based on the theology of white privilege with the combination of white theology in contrast to Christian theology (Welty 2005:71 cf Kgatle 2017:5). By white theology in this paper,

we refer to the use of bible by white people to encourage the oppression of black people while claiming to be Christians. Christian theology is based on a proper analysis of biblical accounts and a proper study of theological disciplines such as missiology, church history, and systematic and practical theology. Consequently, white theology was used to justify the brutal acts of apartheid towards the black majority (Paul 2006:80). Hence, there was a domination of the white people towards the black people using the very same academic white epistemologies (Howard 2006:175). As many could not make a distinction between white theology and Christian theology, it made some perceive Christianity during oppression as a bad religion. Some made a connection between the Christian mission and the coloniser.

This oppression continued among most of the Pentecostal churches in South Africa even though the black people were a majority in these churches (Richardson 2013:44). However, most black people saw an alternative in the black theology of liberation. The formation of structures such as black consciousness, black theology of liberation, and other movements served as a rejection of the oppression by black people (see Anderson and Hollenweger 1999:50). Black people rejected a kind of Christianity that seems to be advocating for their oppression through the use of biblical text and white theology. In perceiving the oppressive white theology by white missionaries, the black people opted for creating their black theology that would deal with oppression on the one hand and support their liberation on the other. Hence, black theology of liberation played a role in the liberation of black people in South Africa and the subsequent democracy that happened in 1994. However, it cannot be the work of black people alone to ensure that we move from liberation to reconstruction, reconciliation, and unity in the context of diversity; it is the work of all the people of South Africa, black and white. In the next section, we provide a framework for the possibility of a Pentecostal theological praxis advocating for reconstruction, reconciliation, and unity in the context of diversity.

Pentecostal Theological Praxis in the Context of Diversity

Pentecostal churches in South Africa need to move towards the Pentecostal theological praxis that will recognise all the different races and language groups in South Africa. Thus, an ecumenical dialogue is possible for these Pentecostal churches that will unite both black and white. First, there should be a real reconciliation that recognises the groups that have been oppressed in the past and ensures that they receive proper justice. Pentecostals should not vaguely speak of unity or reconciliation without proper actions without that reconciliation. The confessional reconciliation should be followed, but proper restitution towards many of the black people who have been oppressed in the past (Horn 1994:28). According to Boesak (2015:I), it is no longer possible for a Christian church of any tradition to maintain “a bland kind of innocence, hiding the painful truths of oppression behind a facade of myths and real or imagined anxieties”. In other words, we can no longer pretend that unity has happened while the majority of the black people did not receive restitution. This kind of restitution must not only happen

at the higher echelons of power but also for ordinary people on the ground who have suffered oppression.

Second, structural or organisational unity must translate to true spiritual unity. Hocken et al. (2019:140) speak of spiritual unity as opposed to organisational or structural unity, which refers to unity based on the work of the Holy Spirit. If we go back to the origin of Pentecostalism, we will realise that what united Pentecostals from all the corners of the world was the works of the Holy Spirit, such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the speaking of other tongues. Thus, the origin of Pentecostalism has a connection to the unity of people, and when Pentecostal denominations reconnect with that origin, they become united in their diversity. Besides, most of the Pentecostal churches in South Africa have moved towards unity as organisations, but it is only a structural unity. In this kind of unity, there remains some form of division among them with implications that they have not yet reached full unity. Therefore, structural unity is not the end itself, but there is a need to follow the very organisational unity that took place in various churches. This is not to undermine efforts by the Pentecostal denominations in South Africa to unite against all odds, but they will need to move further than such a structural unity.

Third, there is a need for the inclusion of ecumenism in the Pentecostal theological education, where students and pastors will be conscientised to move towards unity. This means that unity cannot be a once-off transaction; there is a need for this to be included in the curriculum so that students can learn it in their studies and put it into practice in their churches. Bongmba (2020) suggests that ecumenical theology can speak to the life of churches through ecumenical formation and learning. This aspect is closely connected to the strategic importance of theological education. It is therefore crucial for the development of church leadership with competencies to engage in both ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.” For future development, Frestadius (2020: 84) argues that Pentecostals can potentially play a key role in re-visioning the future of ecumenism.

Fourth, the Pentecostal tradition in South Africa needs to move towards what we call an integrated Pentecostal theology. By this, we refer to a theology that will recognise all the different contexts in which theology is studied and apply them in those specific contexts. According to Vondey (2014:1), Pentecostal theology is marked by an inherent struggle for both self-realisation as well as unity and ecumenical integration. Therefore, integration in theology will help reach unity in many of the diversified theologies in a South African context. It is not possible, therefore, in a country that is full of many different social groups to speak of one theology. However, different social contexts can be brought together and recognised as one thing or belonging to one structure in the Pentecostal tradition. We are calling here for dialogue among the Pentecostal denominations. Discussions can be initiated from the leadership level but communicated to various structures of the church for the implementation of integration.

Lastly, in light of the above-mentioned dimensions of unity in diversity, an ecumenical dialogue should continue among various Pentecostal denominations in South Africa. If, indeed, the structural unity that took place by uniting the various sections in various Pentecostal denominations did not bring true unity, there is, therefore, a need to continue with the ecumenical dialogue. In addition, this dialogue should extend beyond the well-recognised denominations into many other non-denominational Pentecostals located in South Africa. Dempster (2011:165) add that there is a need to move towards “broader expressions of unity, including greater Pentecostal-charismatic unity, greater Evangelical Unity, greater Ecumenical unity, and greater international unity”. The main Pentecostal denominations should embrace other streams, such as New Prophetic Churches, in the interest of Christian unity in South Africa. When the Pentecostal tradition is united in the true sense of the word, this will help bring unity to the whole body of Christ across all denominations.

Conclusion

The Pentecostal denominations, such as the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, the Full Gospel, and the Assemblies of God, were not that active in opposing the system that oppressed the black people in South Africa. This was investigated through the development of the Pentecostal movement in South Africa. The finding is that these Pentecostal denominations intentionally or unintentionally took part in the oppressive system of apartheid that benefited the few white people and saw the oppression of many people. In this paper, we suggest that moving forward, the Pentecostal churches should move beyond the confessional reconciliation into a reconciliation that takes into consideration the restitution for black people. There is also a need to move from a structural unity into a true unity that was signified by the coming together of all believers regardless of race, colour, and place of origin. We also propose here that ecumenism should be included in the theological education curriculum. And that a Pentecostal theology in South Africa should be integrated. Lastly, there is a need to continue with the ecumenical dialogue among all Pentecostal denominations, including all non-denominational Pentecostals.

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