

THROWING THE BABY OUT WITH THE BATHWATER: CULTURAL REORIENTATION  
OF BLACK PENTECOSTALISM IN THE APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION OF SOUTH  
AFRICA (1940 - 1975)

by

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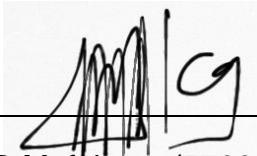
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## Declaration

I declare that the dissertation, *Throwing out the baby with the bathwater: Cultural reorientation of black Pentecostalism in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (1940 – 1975)*, is my own work, and that all sources consulted have been duly acknowledged. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification, nor at any other higher education institution.



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Date

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## **Summary**

The Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of South Africa was established in 1908 and is regarded as the source from which Zionist and Apostolic Churches sprang. A study of archival records and secondary sources leads to a conclusion that the black Section of the AFM was, for many decades since its inception, almost indistinguishable from these churches in their beliefs, practices and appearance. The processes to rid the AFM of Zionism, which began in 1929, and were intensified from the 1940s, led to black Pentecostalism shedding most of its Zionist-like beliefs and practices to become an evangelical Pentecostal movement oddly aligned to white interests and expectations. These changes took place at the expense of black agency which Zionist-like Pentecostalism represented and was a testimony thereof. Central to the idea of agency is possession of an interest or idea and power to pursue this interest or realise one's idea. The loss of agency by black Pentecostals is lamentable; this study calls for a reawakening that will mobilise among others, black Pentecostals' cultural resources in theologising and expressing the gospel mandate in a reawakening Africa.

## **Key terms**

African, Africanisation, agency, Apostolic Faith Mission; black, change, culture, indigenous, Pentecostalism, westernisation, Zionism

## **Abbreviations**

AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AGSA	Assemblies of God in South Africa
AIC	African independent/initiated/indigenous/instituted churches
AME	African Methodist Episcopal Church
ATR	African Traditional Religion
AZM	American Zulu Mission
CCACZ	Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion
CCCZ	Christian Catholic Church in Zion
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
RAFM	Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission
St John AFM	Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission
St Paul AFM	Saint Paul Apostolic Faith Mission
ZAC	Zion Apostolic Church
ZACSA	Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa
ZAFM	Zion Apostolic Faith Mission
ZCC	Zion Christian Church

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Research problem

Pentecostalism<sup>1</sup> is regarded by Amanor (2013), Anderson (2005), Larbi (2002) and Mathole (2005), as a branch of the evangelical<sup>2</sup> movement. In South Africa, the Apostolic Faith Mission<sup>3</sup> (AFM) of South Africa is the oldest and one of the largest Pentecostal denominations (Moripe, 1994:xiii; Anderson, 2004:108). However, the fact that Pentecostalism is evangelical may have obscured a very different experience and expression of faith by black Pentecostals of the AFM—at least until the 1970s. Consequently, it may also have deprived scholars and practitioners of the Pentecostal faith of interesting insights regarding change within the movement and possible implications for the Zionist and Apostolic<sup>4</sup> churches. The mention of the Zionist and Apostolic churches here is because of their “historical and theological links with the AFM” (Anderson, 2004:107-108) and the possibility that black Pentecostalism may have had a lot in common with these churches, at least until the 1970s.

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<sup>1</sup> Pentecostalism is an evangelistically active worldwide Christian movement born out of the 1906 Asuza street revival in Los Angeles, United States of America (USA) (Botha, 2007:296). Its theological base was that of the Holiness movement which initially sought to revive American Methodism (Botha, 2007:296). The characteristic Pentecostal teaching was that baptism in the Holy Spirit was evidenced by speaking in languages unfamiliar to the speaker and it was taught that every Christian must seek this experience (Oosthuizen, 1987:21; Lapoorta, 1996:169; Machingura, 2011:18).

<sup>2</sup> According to Bebbington (1989) as quoted by Harris (2008:201), the evangelical movement or evangelicalism is characterised by “conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be termed crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.”

<sup>3</sup> The AFM of South Africa is a Pentecostal denomination founded by American missionaries (who were former Zionists and had been at the Asuza Revival before they left America) in 1908 in Johannesburg (Nel, 2005:140). It inherited most if not all white South African congregations of Alexander Dowie’s Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, most Black Zionists and their Pastor, PL le Roux (Hollenweger, 1972:120; Anderson & Pillay, 1997:230; Nel, 2005:140; Burger & Nel, 2008:28).

<sup>4</sup> According to Nel (2005:127), the Zionist and Apostolic churches make up the majority in church and membership numbers of the African Independent/Indigenous/Instituted/Initiated Churches (AICs) in South Africa. The founders of most of these churches were once members and preachers in the AFM. Thus their theology is in the main still that of the AFM and Dowie’s Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion which the AFM assumed (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:228; Anderson, 2004:108). In this study, the terms Zionist, Zionism and Apostolic will be used interchangeably.

In this study, I focus on the period between 1940 and 1975 of the AFM history. Within this period, the first South African president of the AFM, Pieter le Roux, who had led this church for 29 years, died (Burger & Nel, 2008). He had ordained some of the early black Zionist Church founders and saw them leave the AFM to establish their own denominations (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994:190). Between the late 1930s and mid-1940s, two major black apostolic denominations emerged from the AFM: Saint John's Apostolic Faith Mission of Christina Nku (St John AFM) and the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission (RAFM) (Moripe, 1994:57; Anderson & Pillay, 1997:232). This happened in the context of an AFM which appeared increasingly hostile to black expressions of Pentecostalism (Moripe, 1994:67). At the close of the 1960s, black Pentecostalism was well on its way to completely shedding its beliefs and practices; therefore its identity of many years.

Considering events and issues characteristic of the period from 1940 to 1975, I suggest that black Pentecostalism in the AFM, though currently evangelical, has a non-evangelical past generally fitting descriptions of Zionism. Literature on the AFM, written by both insiders and outsiders, hints at this possibility, but shies away from explicitly identifying the past of black Pentecostalism as having been Zionist.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, reading Burger and Nel (2008), there are indications that AFM officials spent considerable energy countering what the researcher thinks were obviously Zionist practices. One is left wondering whether these (unacknowledged Zionist) practices were mere aberrations in black Pentecostalism or characteristic of it. Furthermore, one wonders how these (unacknowledged Zionist) practices were accounted for, both in terms of their origin, similarity and/or dissimilarity to Zionism. Lastly, however black Pentecostalism manifested itself, for whom was that a problem, why was it a problem and how was it dealt with? The study seeks answers to these questions.

## **1.2 Justification**

The AFM has exerted a huge influence, albeit unintentional, on the religious landscape in 20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa by giving rise to many AICs of the Zionist and

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<sup>5</sup> Anderson (2001:116), in speaking about the Apostolics of John Marange in Zimbabwe, points out that their physical appearance was reminiscent of earlier AFM preachers in that country. Hwata (2005:99) speaks about Black Pentecostalism in the AFM in Zimbabwe before the 1970s as having been indistinguishable from Zion-Apostolics. Interestingly, during the period he refers to, the AFM in Zimbabwe and among black South Africans was one movement (Burger & Nel, 2008:226).

Apostolic type (Anderson, 2004; Burger & Nel, 2008). These churches, accounting for an increasing number of black Christians in the country, were at first suspected of being “bridges back to African traditional religion” (ATR) (Togarasei, 2005:372). Even the AFM denounced them, considering them not to be Pentecostal (Bond, 1974:13-14). Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an increasing number of scholars of African Christianity began to perceive these churches positively as “agents of Africanisation of the gospel” (Anderson, 2004:108; Isichei, 2004:201). This is a positive development, which promises healing to the otherwise battered identities of these African Christians. It is important to note that those who are re-appraising the identity and contribution of these churches are scholars in the field of Church History and Missiology.

Interestingly, reading Burger and Nel (2008), one is immediately struck by how black AFM Pentecostals of the 1940s followed practices which appear similar to those of the Zionist and Apostolic churches. Scholars have shown interest in the Zionist and Apostolic church movement starting with Bengt Sundkler in 1948. Through research, misunderstandings of the nature and practice of Christianity within this movement as well as pejorative labelling have been largely relegated to the past. However, not much interest has gone into researching black AFM Pentecostals, who might have also suffered the indignity of mislabelling and the suspicion of their Christian credentials like their brethren in Zion-Apostolic churches. These Pentecostals are evangelical now.<sup>6</sup> To establish then that they have not always been evangelical Pentecostals, that in fact they were once Zionist, may imply that they too were at the cutting edge of indigenisation of the gospel in Africa. It also makes it possible to wonder whether evangelicalisation was a reversal of gains made by indigenisation of the gospel or not? Does this suggest a possibility of Zion-Apostolic churches becoming evangelicalised, therefore abandoning the indigenisation project? These questions are not central to this study but are part of many that may be asked once this study is completed.

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<sup>6</sup> According to Hwata (2005:110), the AFM in Zimbabwe increasingly became a New Testament and Christ-centred Pentecostal movement in the 1970s. The shift was significant as Black Pentecostals, both in the independent Zionist churches and the AFM, had shown an inclination towards the Old Testament—which is acknowledged as closer to the African traditional world-view and practices (Poewe, 1988:148; Khathide, 2010:44; Burger & Nel, 2008:244). In the same period, the black AFM in South Africa was also going through the same change due to the evangelical ministries of Richard Ngidi, Reinhard Bonnke and others (Anderson, 2002:171, footnote).

### **1.3 Limitations**

The study limits itself to the subject of black Pentecostalism in the AFM of South Africa during a period between 1940 and 1975. This was a time in which changes to the belief and expression of black Pentecostalism in this church took place. The challenge that may be encountered relates to the possible unavailability of some primary documents due to damage during the relocation of the AFM archives from Lyndhurst to Auckland Park.

### **1.4 Aims and objectives**

The study seeks to provide plausibility to the argument that black Pentecostalism in the AFM, which is now evangelical, had a Zionist non-evangelical past. The following objectives, seen to contribute in building plausibility around the above argument, will be pursued:

- To discuss how literature describes Zionism and black Pentecostalism in the AFM
- To determine how literature accounts for the similarities and differences between Zionism and black Pentecostalism in the AFM
- To establish if literature indicates who had a problem with a 'possibly Zionist' black Pentecostalism, their reasons and how 'the problem' was then dealt with.

### **1.5 Research methods**

In this section, a brief survey of available methods for researching history is offered and their differences discussed. Thereafter the choice of the most suitable method for this study is discussed, along with the reasons for that choice. Lastly, how the method of choice is used in this study is discussed.

#### **1.5.1 Methods available for researching history**

Strydom and Delport (2011:376) list three methods, which have relevance to the study of history: "interviewing, document study and secondary analysis." They present the usefulness of interviewing as lying in the retrieval of memories of events a person might have participated in or observed (Strydom & Delport, 2011:376). If either a participant or an observer had already documented the events, then

document study or secondary analysis methods apply (Strydom & Delpont (2011:377). These methods are discussed below.

### **1.5.2 A discussion of various methods**

The methods are listed in the order they shall be discussed: interview, secondary analysis and documentary study.

#### **1.5.2.1 Interview**

The use of an interview as a data gathering method in history is long established. Most early histories of many nations existed in the form of stories passed down from one generation to another before they were documented in written form (Ritchie, 2003:20). It was due to Leopold von Ranke's influence that interview based history was relegated to mere fiction (Ritchie, 2003:20) because of his emphasis on document studies as the basis of scientific history. The existence of many undocumented experiences of the then colonial and now post-colonial states and various marginalised social groupings, even in the West, stood as a challenge to Rankean historiography (Ritchie, 2003:20,23). Only the rise of the Annales school of history, with its focus on social history, released historians from the stranglehold of Rankean document based historiography, thereby creating a situation where interviews as a data gathering method increasingly became mainstream again (Ritchie, 2003:23; Roberts, 2004).

#### **1.5.2.2 Secondary analysis**

According to Strydom & Delpont (2011:384), secondary analysis consists of two subcategories: existing data analysis and content analysis. The former is used to analyse already "processed data" whereas the latter is for analysis of "existing formal sources" (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:384). The aim behind the analysis of already existing and processed data is not to understand or even to confirm the findings derived from the said data. Instead, it is to generate a different perspective to the one already derived from the data (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:384). Content analysis, on the other hand, brings into the human and social sciences a kind of objectivity characteristic of quantitative research by enabling description and enumeration of components of text (Elos & Kyngas, 2008:108).

### **1.5.2.3 Document study**

Document study or analysis is a data gathering tool concerned with already existing documents (Strydom & Delpport, 2011:377). These may be interview transcripts, personal, organisational and public documents or academic works (Strydom & Delpport, 2011:377). They are classed as primary and secondary sources. Letters, reports, magazines and minutes, amongst others, are regarded as primary sources (Strydom & Delpport, 2011:377). Either a participant in or an observer of a moment or an activity creates such sources with potential historical significance (Strydom & Delpport, 2011:377). Journal articles, theses, books, etcetera, are considered secondary sources because these reflect on primary sources (Strydom & Delpport (2011:377). The method asks questions of content and the document in which it is found with the intention of understanding the meaning of textual content in the light of contextual factors surrounding its production, dissemination, use and consequences (Wharton, 2006:80). The aim of using this method is threefold. First, it is used for information seeking and drawing together important information on the topic; second, for critical appraisal of the content and lastly, to identify areas of overlap and controversy in the literature (Bowen, 2009).

### **1.5.3 Suitable method for the study**

At this point, reiteration of the aims and objectives of this research is important to indicate what the chosen method is. The study intends to scrutinise relevant literature regarding Zionism and early black Pentecostalism in the AFM. The purpose is to discuss how the two are described in relation to each other; account for their similarity/dissimilarity and then to establish who found Zionism problematic (in the context of Pentecostalism), their reasons and how they resolved their difficulties. In light of the above, interviewing is not a suitable method for this study. But neither is secondary analysis, as I am not aware of the existence of processed data which could be re-analysed for this study (Strydom & Delpport, 2011:384). Furthermore, the concern of content analysis with issues of frequency falls outside the perimeters of the questions of “how” and “why” which are being asked here (Strydom & Delpport, 2011:380). Therefore, document study or analysis is the method of choice because its aims agree with those adopted for this study.

#### 1.5.4 Data analysis

The suitability of document study becomes apparent in Bowen's (2009:28) description of the method as "finding, selecting, making sense of and synthesising of data contained in documents." The study does require that relevant data be "found, selected, interpreted and synthesized" (Bowen, 2009:28). It was hoped that documents of interest would include church minutes, reports and magazines available from the AFM archives in Auckland Park. These served as primary sources. Besides these, dissertations, journal articles and books on Zionism and the AFM served as secondary sources and were available at libraries and electronic depositories of various universities.

As Bowen (2009:33) warns against naively using documents without establishing their "authorship, target audience, their purpose and contribution," the documents referred to above were evaluated to establish their relevance and to understand contextual factors involved in their "creation, preservation, dissemination, use and effect" (Wharton, 2006:80). In other words, questions relating to whether a document was written by who it claims as its author or not (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:380) and whether the said author was qualified to pronounce on the subject matter or not, were asked (Bombaro, 2012:8). Further questions asked concerned the sources these authors consulted (Bombaro, 2012:8), the identity of their target audiences (Bowen, 2009:33) and the agendas behind the creation of the documents concerned (Bowen, 2009:33). The last and important question was whether there is a contribution to the study being undertaken (Bombaro, 2012:8).

Evaluating documents does not exhaust the scope of document study. The text itself needs "interpretation in order to arrive at its meaning" (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:381). This is not to suggest that meaning resides objectively in the texts to be analysed. It is, rather, contingent upon contextual factors surrounding both the writer and the reader. The interpretive process required to derive meaning is called "textual analysis" (Wharton, 2006:80; Strydom & Delpont, 2011:382). It works by critically reading and re-reading texts, labelling relevant data and interpreting it (Bowen, 2009:32; Strydom & Delpont, 2011:382). The above description outlines how each document deemed helpful towards answering the research questions was dealt with.



### **1.5.5 Theoretical framework**

The study is informed by a theoretical framework drawing from an inclusive Pentecostalist view which was first propounded by Hollenweger (1972) and popularized by Anderson (2000) and black theological perspective with its concern for black agency and liberation. The inclusive Pentecostalist view puts “the experience of the spirit in life and ministry” at the centre of defining Pentecostalism (Anderson, 2000:37,260). This way, the identified boundaries, which label some as Pentecostal and others as Zionist and/or Zion-Apostolic, become transcended. The black theological perspective assumes the agency of black people as well as the presence of God and his activity among them for their liberation (Cone, 1990:83-84; Molobi, 2000:2). This agrees well with the view, which can be assumed, that those early black Pentecostals and Zionists (broadly defined) had of themselves in their relationship with the God of the Bible.

### **1.6 Literature review**

This literature review is primarily based on the works of Anderson (2000, 2004), Hwata (2005), De Wet (1989) and Maxwell (2006) as well as Burger and Nel (2008). The researcher’s interest was particularly in descriptions of beliefs and practices of early black Pentecostalism found in these works. The question of change in black Pentecostalism, which the study pursues, assumes similarities in beliefs and practices between this tradition and Zionism. The researcher chose not to consult well-known authorities, like Sundkler and Oosthuizen, on the black Zionist Church movement for this review, but to focus on the less researched aspect of classical Pentecostalism—which is black Pentecostalism. The basis for this action was Larbi’s (2002:145) assertion that much is known about the AIC movement, of which the black Zionist Church movement constitutes the majority, a view the researcher also holds. The review has three focuses prior to discussing a possible gap in our knowledge. The first subheading represents Anderson’s (2004) argument that Zion-Apostolic Christianity is Pentecostal. In the second subheading, the Pentecostal status of Zion-Apostolic Christianity is rejected, a position well-articulated by Larbi (2002) among others. Black Pentecostalism, which for the first seven decades of the AFM, could be said to have been Zionist, is caught between the two positions and is the subject of the third subheading. These are discussed in the same order as above.

### **1.6.1 Zion – Apostolic Christianity is Pentecostal**

Allan Anderson has contributed much to understanding black Pentecostalism in South Africa through monographs like *Moya* (1991), *Bazalwane* (1992), *Tumelo* (1993), *Zion and Pentecost* (2000), *African Reformation* (2001) and *Introduction to Global Pentecostalism* (2004). He has popularised the term “African Pentecostalism” by which he refers to three types of black Pentecostal churches, namely: those associated with white Pentecostalism, newer black independent Pentecostal fellowships and lastly, Zion-Apostolic churches (Anderson, 2000:37,260; 2004:105). All these churches cater for Africans and place emphasis on the role of the Spirit in church life (Anderson, 2000:37). Scholars such as Moripe (1996a), Khorommbi (2001) and Togarasei (2005) agree with Anderson (2000) in conceptualising these churches as belonging to the Pentecostal family. Consideration of Zion-Apostolic churches as African Pentecostals did not originate with Anderson but with Hollenweger (1972:171) who was the first scholar to include these churches under the Pentecostal label. These scholars not only recognise the centrality of the Holy Spirit to the life and ministry of these churches, they also recognise that Zion-Apostolic churches are rooted in Pentecostalism, especially the AFM, and Dowie’s Zion Church which preceded the AFM. According to Anderson (2004:104), arguing for inclusion of these churches under Pentecostalism is not to ignore their deviation from how mainstream Pentecostalism presents itself, as he considers this deviation a “contextualisation of the gospel.” Therefore, Zion-Apostolic Christianity is not just Pentecostal, but a Pentecostalism contextualised into the African indigenous situation.

### **1.6.2 Zion-Apostolic Christianity is not Pentecostal**

According to Hollenweger (1972) and Bond (1974), the designation of Zion-Apostolic churches as “African Pentecostals” received a challenge from Francois Moller who was a president of the AFM in the 1960s and August Kast, a missionary in the Assemblies of God during the same period. In their challenge, these leaders appealed to the negative attitude with which black denominational Pentecostals regarded followers of the Zion-Apostolic tradition. Furthermore, these leaders claim that the Zion-Apostolic church movement exercised a pseudo-charismatic ministry powered by ancestral spirits and not the Holy Spirit (Hollenweger, 1972:171). This specific claim targeted the exact issue that made it possible for Hollenweger (1972)

to classify Zion-Apostolic Christianity as Pentecostal—the charismatic phenomena attending to the ministry of these churches. The following scholars are some of those who concur with the Pentecostal denominational leaders of the 1970s in refusing Pentecostal status to Zion-Apostolics: Bond (1974), Larbi (2002), Maxwell (2006) as well as Burger and Nel (2008). To these writers, (African) Pentecostalism is evangelical (Larbi, 2002:145; Maxwell, 2006:10). Hence, according to Anderson (2005:69), in this school of thought, “only classical Pentecostals and New Pentecostals of the 1980s and later, qualify as Pentecostal.” For Larbi (2002:151), including Zionists under the Pentecostal label “distorts the identity of those rightfully called Pentecostal.” Bond (1974:14), Moripe (1996a:xiii) and Anderson (2005:69) confirm the dislike and exclusion of Zion-Apostolic Christians from “the Pentecostal commonwealth” by members of classical Pentecostal denominations and of the new Pentecostal churches. From this position, Pentecostalism and Zionism are wholly different. In fact, the Christian standing of the Zionist churches remains suspect.

### **1.6.3 What about black Pentecostals in the AFM?**

Larbi’s (2002) challenge to Anderson’s (2000) lumping together of Zionists and Pentecostals (both classic and new) echoes the present position of black Pentecostals regarding Zionists. Black Pentecostals do not identify Zionists as members of a fraternal movement because the latter use symbols and means in their liturgy and ministry while the former do not. Interestingly, the writings of De Wet (1989), Maxwell (2006), Hwata (2005), Burger and Nel (2008) as well as Molobi and Chikane (2008), allude to the existence of beliefs and practices which were Zionist-like, in the AFM until the 1960s. Seeing this allusion through the opposing positions of Larbi (2002) and Maxwell (2006) on the one side and Anderson (2008) on the other side, imply that there was a time when black Pentecostalism in the AFM was different to its present evangelical expression.

### **1.6.4 Knowledge gap**

Any discussion on Zion-Apostolic Christianity on the one hand and Pentecostalism on the other, leaves out a significant chunk of black Pentecostal history in the AFM. The reason for the invisibility of the Zionist-like black Pentecostalism in the AFM may be that researchers of Charismatic Christianity mostly study the AFM and Pentecostalism in its official representation as part of the

evangelical movement. As such, the Zionist-like beliefs and practices of black Pentecostalism in the AFM and the longevity of their existence become hidden away. Where acknowledgement of similarities between Zionism and black Pentecostalism was made, the focus was mostly limited to the first decade of the AFM. The innovations that later came to be associated with black Zionism were just starting then. Therefore, the question of how and why black Pentecostalism in the AFM shed its Zionist-like beliefs and practices to become evangelical, has not received adequate attention. This research seeks to contribute to the study of Pentecostal history in South Africa by seeking answers to the abovementioned questions.

### **1.7 Chapter breakdown**

The dissertation is divided into six chapters including introduction and conclusion. In Chapter One, the research problem is introduced together with the methodology, aims and objectives. A brief literature review is also presented.

Chapter Two provides an historical overview of the AFM that it discusses through the following themes: the origins of the AFM, significant personalities and their contribution in the early years of the AFM, other notable personalities in its history of 110 years and lastly, its involvement in the South African politics of race.

Chapter Three is a discourse on phenomena associated with black Pentecostalism from the inception of the AFM until the 1940s and highlights the remarkable similarity to the beliefs and practices of the black Christian Zionist Church movement.

Chapter Four presents possible explanations for the origin and existence of similarities and dissimilarities of black Pentecostalism and black Zionism. In doing so, emphasis is placed on the similarity to or differences from the former to the latter and not an equal assessment of their (dis)similarities to each other. The conclusion arrived at, in explaining the (dis)similarities of Zionism to black Pentecostalism in the AFM, revolves around the centrality of black agency grounded in common history, theology, liturgy, socio-economic and African religio-cultural background as well as proximity to White Pentecostal ideas and leadership.

Chapter Five argues that the white missionary leadership of the AFM found Zionist-Pentecostalism objectionable for various reasons. Several strategies, which

they adopted for transforming black Pentecostalism away from its Zionist expression, are discussed as well as the black response to this effort and its significance.

Chapter Six concludes the study with discussions of findings per objective, implications, limitations and recommendations.

## **1.8 Definition of terms**

**1.8.1 Zionism** – This term refers to the Afro-Christian religio-cultural church movement deriving from the teachings of John Alexander Dowie, and influenced by Pentecostalism. It includes the Zion-Apostolic church movements.

**1.8.2 Pentecostalisation** – The term ‘pentecostalisation’ here refers to the appearance of phenomena typically associated with the Pentecostal movement in the Roman Catholic and historic Protestant churches.

**1.8.3 Evangelicalisation** – This term refers to a process by which a church or group of people begin to espouse belief in a dramatic experience of salvation and other tenets of evangelicalism.

**1.8.4 Black or blacks**– The term black or blacks is used interchangeably with African or Africans respectively.

**1.8.5 Bantu, Native, Non-white** – The abovementioned terms are used historically and not derogatively.

**1.8.6 Agency** – This term defines the capacity possessed by individuals or groups to act towards realisation of their interests.

## Chapter 2

### An overview of the AFM of South Africa

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, my intention is to provide an historical overview of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of South Africa. This overview, though attempting to remain within a chronological framework, is theme driven. Since the AFM comes from a past of racial divisions where the church was divided according to racial categories, the overview does not attempt comprehensiveness. Research still needs to be done to record histories of the various racial sections of the AFM before comprehensiveness can be claimed. The overview is presented in terms of an African indigenous perspective and an agenda in order to highlight what, in my view, should matter in the narrative of black Pentecostalism in the AFM. The following themes are discussed: the origins of the AFM, significant personalities and their contribution in the early years of the AFM, other notable personalities in its history of 110 years and lastly, its involvement in the South African politics of race. The discussion of these topics again follows the same order as above.

#### 2.2 The origins of the AFM

The AFM is a classical Pentecostal denomination that was founded in Johannesburg in 1908.<sup>7</sup> It has spread to 28 nations across the world, which include countries such as the USA, United Kingdom and Australia (Admin, 2015). The discussion of its origins takes place under the following headings and in the order presented: AFM origins, its establishment and the reasons hind its establishment.

##### 2.2.1 AFM origins

The question of where the AFM came from is an interesting one because in some quarters, it has been taken for granted that Pentecostalism is an American export, and the AFM being a Pentecostal denomination, must have stemmed from America as well. Indeed, Charles Parham in America first used the name “Apostolic

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<sup>7</sup> Classical Pentecostalism is a term used to differentiate movements displaying Pentecostal phenomena which later developed within the Roman Catholic, Anglican and other historic Protestant churches, as well as the emergence of non-denominational congregations with Pentecostal phenomena from the earlier movement that emerged from the Azusa Street Revival in 1906 (Anderson, 2008:23).

Faith Mission” in association with Pentecostalism at least seven years before it came to be used in South Africa (Burger & Nel, 2008:66).<sup>8</sup> The ministry of the American Pentecostal missionaries at whose revival services the AFM emerged adds to this interesting dynamic, for they regarded themselves as Apostolic Faith missionaries<sup>9</sup> (Burger & Nel, 2008:63). However, Burger (1999:22) regards the AFM as “a church indigenous to South Africa.” By this, he means that it did not originate in another country and had no administrative links with any foreign church.

In the next few paragraphs, the question of where the AFM originated will be sequentially addressed under the following subheadings:

- Pentecostalism as an American export
- The synonymy of the name “Apostolic Faith Mission” with Pentecostalism
- The indigeneity and foreignness of the AFM

### **2.2.1.1 Pentecostalism: an American export?**

Knowing where Pentecostalism started and the circumstances surrounding its beginnings is important because it allows one to determine the influence its origin has on the movement, and to decide whether to allow or not, and to what extent, this influence on oneself. Traditionally, Pentecostalism has been regarded as an American movement exported to the rest of the world. However, acceding to the American origin of Pentecostalism privileges Western forms at the expense of various other expressions of the movement across the world (Anderson, 2004:13; Uka, 2007:10). Because of the above, other expressions of Pentecostalism were seen and treated as aberrations that require correction and standardisation to the American version. This may be seen where Bond (1974:14) as well as Burger and Nel (2008:36) provide an example of a situation in which another form of Pentecostalism, Zionism to be specific, was denied recognition because it did not fit

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<sup>8</sup> Johannes Buchler, the founder of Zion Church in Johannesburg and a one-time follower of Alexander Dowie, wanted to register the name for his church in 1902 as a way of distancing himself from Dowie’s Zion Church (Sundkler, 1976:31). However, the Secretary for Native Affairs in the Transvaal declined. Ngada and Mofokeng’s (2001:12) ignorance of the Secretary’s refusal to register the name creates an impression that the current AFM church grew from Buchler’s congregation. A problem arising out of this incorrect impression is that there is no explanation about Buchler’s whereabouts when Daniel Bryant replaced him as Dowie’s representative and later when Lake *et al.*, took over Bryant’s church and the name Apostolic Faith Mission became popular.

<sup>9</sup> The Apostolic Faith newsletter of May 1908 referred to these missionaries as Apostolic Faith missionaries (Noble, 1991:56).

the definitions of what was considered standard in the Southern African context. African Zionists were denied the status of being Pentecostals by the leaders of the three main South African Pentecostal denominations in the 1970s (Hollenweger, 1972:145). When this rejection happened, a project to correct black Pentecostalism and bring it up to a standard acceptable to white missionaries and the white controlled AFM was in its advanced stages.

The critics of the American origin theory argue that other places experienced their own Pentecostal revival independent of, and sometimes even earlier than, Los Angeles (Robeck, 2014:22). Robeck (2014:22) cites the following revivals: the Welsh revival (1904-1905), the Kashia Hills revival in northern India (1905), Pandita Rambai's Mission in Mukti, India (1905-1906), "among the pietist Scandinavians of North Dakota and Minnesota (USA)" in 1906, Hebden mission in Toronto (1906), Pyongyang, North Korea (1907) and "among Methodists in Valparaiso, Chile (1909)." According to Robeck (2014:24), all these revivals lacked "Parham's dogma" although glossolalia and other Pentecostal phenomena manifested. Parham's dogma of glossolalia as biblical evidence of Spirit baptism characterised the movement born in Topeka, Kansas in 1901 (Burger & Nel, 2008:17). The Asuza Street Mission in Los Angeles amplified and internationalised this movement in 1906 (Botha, 2007:296; Burger & Nel, 2008:18).

Despite being predisposed to accept the arguments of the critics of the American origin of Pentecostalism because of the opening their arguments allow towards recognition of different forms of Pentecostalism or what Uka (2007:9) and Omenyo (2014:133) call Pentecostals, the narrating of the history of the AFM requires acknowledgement of its foundation in, and continued endorsement of, Parham's dogma. The consequence of the AFM espousing Parham's dogma is its exclusivist view of who or what is Pentecostal, as will be observed. According to Parham's dogma, which became fundamental Pentecostal teaching, Christian believers could experience Spirit baptism of which the initial evidence was the recipient speaking a spirit inspired, yet unfamiliar language—glossolalia (Oosthuizen, 1987:21; Lapoorta, 1996:169; Machingura, 2011:18).

The revivals mentioned earlier displayed Pentecostal phenomena. In other words, phenomenologically, the American movement brought nothing new to the experience of these revivals. Still, Pentecostalism came to be so called after Parham's doctrinal innovation that considered glossolalia to be the initial evidence of



Spirit baptism (Friesen, 2009:48). The proponents of this doctrine wanted every believer to seek the experience to certify their belief that they had received Spirit baptism (Watt, 2001:93). According to Friesen (2009:47), it is for that reason that Parham held the view that John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was not baptised in the Holy Spirit. Linking glossolalia with Spirit baptism and making it mandatory was the unique contribution of American Pentecostalism (Friesen, 2009:44). In every place that the American form of Pentecostalism influenced, the identifying mark has been the doctrine of initial evidence. Therefore, classical Pentecostalism is an American export.

### **2.2.1.2 The synonymity of the name “Apostolic Faith Mission” and Pentecostalism**

In the early days of the American Pentecostal movement, the name “Apostolic Faith mission or movement” was used interchangeably with the label “Pentecost” (Anderson, 2000:60) but fell into disuse across the world (De Wet, 1989:57; Burger & Nel, 2008:62-63). As far as can be ascertained, Charles Parham, a Methodist minister who had joined the ranks of the Methodist breakaway Holiness movement (Lapoorta, 1996:25), coined the name in 1901 for his revival campaigns and his newsletter in which he taught that glossolalia was the initial sign of Spirit baptism (De Wet, 1989:14; Anderson & Pillay, 1997:228). Parham was following in the footsteps of B.H. Irwin, of the Fire-Baptised Holiness Church, who taught Spirit baptism as a third blessing which was distinct from sanctification (Synan, 1971:61-62). At the time, the standard Holiness teaching regarded sanctification and Spirit baptism as the same (McPherson, 2013:43-45). Parham’s Apostolic Faith Mission stood at the threshold of a major revival in which the name of his mission and its teachings would be catapulted onto a global stage in 1906.

A black Holiness minister, William Seymour, was central to bringing Parham’s teaching and the name “Apostolic Faith Mission” to national and international consciousness (De Wet, 1989:16; Anderson & Pillay, 1997:228; Robeck, 2014:21). He had adopted Parham’s ‘initial sign’ doctrine in 1905, while a student at Parham’s Bible school in Houston (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:228). In 1906, Seymour led a revival in Los Angeles which attracted eager believers, church leaders and missionaries from across the Americas and beyond (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:228). He also adopted the name “Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission” for his church, adding only “Gospel” (Burger & Nel, 2008:23). This revival reached fifty nations, including

South Africa, in two years as those who had been at the epicentre of the Pentecostal revival dispersed to distant lands (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:228). The same name, “Apostolic Faith Mission/Movement,” came to be used in South Africa from 1908 by American Pentecostal missionaries. Some of those who encountered the South African Pentecostal revival then took the name and the teaching as far afield as Kenya and Australia<sup>10</sup> (Burger & Nel, 2008:209; Clifton, 2009:65).

Burger and Nel (2008:64-65) explain why the Pentecostal movement shed the name “Apostolic Faith,” so that today few Western churches use it. According to them, some churches with the name “Apostolic Faith” adopted the controversial “British-Israel doctrine” while others abandoned Trinitarian orthodoxy for a modalistic view of God. In South Africa, the AFM almost dropped the name due to it being confused with Edward Irving’s Apostolic Church which later split into Old and New Apostolic churches (Burger & Nel, 2008:65). The penchant amongst the churches in the emerging black Zionist Movement to use the names “Apostolic” and “Faith” did not help matters either (Burger & Nel, 2008:65). The compromise made by the Executive Council of the AFM was to use and market the abbreviation “AFM” in the place of “Apostolic Faith Mission” or “AGS”—short for “Apostoliese Geloofsending” in Afrikaans (Burger & Nel, 2008:65).

### **2.2.1.3 The indigeneity and foreignness of the AFM**

Despite Burger and Nel’s (2008) argument that the AFM derived its name from the American Pentecostal revival, De Wet (1989:39) and Clark (2001:81) assert “...the AFM is indigenous to South Africa.” Behind this assertion is the fact that the American Pentecostal missionaries who founded the AFM had not been sent by any church or mission society (Anderson and Pillay, 1997:229; Burger & Nel, 2008:54). The control of this fledgling church was wholly vested in its Executive Council which first sat on 27 May 1909 and remained under the leadership of Tom Hezmalhalch until 1910, followed by John Lake until 1913 when he returned to America (Burger & Nel, 2008:35). After five years of American leadership over the AFM, the last remaining American left it in the hands of South African leadership with Pieter le Roux as president (Clark, 2005:148). Clark’s (2009:175) argument for the indigeneity of the

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<sup>10</sup> Fred van Eck, sometimes rendered “van Eyk,” was the pastor of the AFM congregation in Durban before he went to Australia as a missionary in 1926 (Ngomane, 2013:24). It was because of his motivation that the AFM in Australia was formed as a consolidation of several already existing Pentecostal churches (Clifton, 2009:65). He ceased being a minister of the AFM in South Africa in 1930 (Notice, 1930:9).

AFM uses a different tactic. He downplays the influence of the Pentecostal missionaries in favour of the influence of Andrew Murray's Keswickian holiness and healing charismaticism as well as of Dowie's theology and practices; the latter were assumed by the AFM in its absorbing of most South African Zionist congregations. He writes:

[b]ecause the local Zionist churches, under Le Roux's leadership, had joined the new AFM en masse; the influence from their roots was probably as strong as, or stronger than that of Lake and Hezmalhalch. The major influence on Le Roux had been Andrew Murray... (Clark, 2009:175).

The above statement by Clark (2009) highlights John Lake's underlying approach in the formation of the AFM as one of consolidation of a South African renewal movement that already existed. Lake and Hezmalhalch introduced to this movement the American Pentecostal doctrinal innovation of tongues as evidence of Spirit baptism as well as giving the movement a name somewhat like the American one (De Wet, 1989:57; Burger & Nel, 20008:62-63). To the degree that the AFM held onto the Parhamite doctrine of tongues, yet stood in no formal relationship to any external Pentecostal body, instead exercising self-governance, self-support and self-propagation, terming it an indigenous church is understandable (De Wet, 1989:39). The three 'selves' just mentioned originated with Henry Venn of the Church Missionary Society in Britain as goals which Protestant missions were to pursue towards raising "indigenous churches" in foreign lands (De Wet, 1989:303). The challenge of calling the AFM an indigenous church, when referring to the way it began, lies in whether or not Henry Venn foresaw a situation where a colonial church could meet the "three-selves" criteria and still exclude those truly indigenous to the area, as was the case with the AFM.

The racial and political setup of the AFM, which turned it into a white church with black adherents who were objects of its missions, problematizes the applicability of indigenous status to this church, at least in the early years. Burger's (1999:22) use of the term "indigenous" in reference to blacks serves as an example. Writing in the context of the spread of Pentecostalism among blacks, he says: "Pentecostalism easily became clothed in indigenous form" (Burger, 1999:22). In Burger and Nel (2008:220), where they write: "... missionaries and black evangelists ... faced great hardships in bringing the gospel to the indigenous people of Southern Africa," it can be assumed that "indigenous people" referred to blacks on the following grounds: the

missionary practice of the day was to seek the conversion of people other than white (Clark, 2005:148). Furthermore, the racial situation of the day would not allow for black evangelists to preach to whites. Burton (1934:x) as well as Burger and Nel (2008:41) record how John Lake brought Elias Letwaba into a white meeting once only for the latter to be howled at and epithets hurled against him. It was to the credit of Lake that he threatened to leave the meeting if Letwaba was not given an audience. This threat calmed the rowdy crowd somewhat. Concluding that blacks were the indigenous people referred to in Burger and Nel (2008) above, is further strengthened by the analysis of how De Wet (1989) uses the concept. In more than eight instances where the concept “indigenous” appears in his thesis, De Wet (1989) relates it to blacks. This isolates his use of the concept to refer to the AFM as an indigenous church although clearly it existed as a colonial church. The question then becomes, was the AFM “indigenous” in terms of openness to, and appropriation of its tenets and ethos, by blacks in a manner that suggested that they had taken ownership of the church? The answer, deriving from black experience of the AFM for many decades from its inception and its records, is negative. The AFM carried itself as a white church with a ‘non-white’ mission department which later became the African, Indian and Coloured daughter churches or sections.

The claimed indigeneity of the AFM was complicated by developments in this church, which soon indicated that black culture was not exactly welcome, because black leaders were side-lined while their thoughts and practices were policed by white missionaries (Motshetshane, 2015:83). Considering that it has been attested as fact that the Pentecostalism coming out of Azusa Street was influenced by the African American spirituality with its roots in an African religio-cultural world, Pentecostalism broadly affirmed black culture (Burpeau, 2002:ii). Its spiritual phenomena found resonance in the cultural milieu of black people. Its teaching and practice of healing made sense to people whose background deemed sickness to have spiritual origin and cure (Togarasei, 2005:371). Although the AFM, as a Pentecostal church, retained these Pentecostal traits, its mission was increasingly experienced as denying freedom of response grounded in, and making sense of, black culture. Those blacks who insisted on responding to the Pentecostal gospel as Africans, comfortable within their cultural framework, found it better to leave the AFM for their own churches (Clark, 2009:176). Therefore, this church which was supposedly indigenous, was not indigenous enough for its African indigenous members. While supposedly

homegrown, because it was a self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating South African church, the AFM was nevertheless experienced as foreign by blacks whose response to the Pentecostal gospel preached by the AFM, received a negative appraisal.

### **2.2.2 How the AFM came into being**

The taking over of the Zionist congregations by the founding missionaries of the AFM has already been addressed. Besides these Zionist congregations, many poor Afrikaners who had experienced the revivals in the DRC, in 1860, 1874 and 1884, became attracted to the new movement and constituted a significant majority of the white membership (Kalu, 2008:56). This was because the DRC leadership had turned against the charismatic revivalist religion of Andrew Murray Jr. (Burpeau, 2002:99). Another reason for the attractiveness of the AFM to many poor Afrikaners, according to De Wet (1989:42) and (Els, 2007:112), was the neglect they felt from the DRC which believed in uplifting its Afrikaner base through educational programmes. Unfortunately for the DRC, the needs and priorities of the poor were different, while the AFM seemed to have connected to these easily (Burger & Nel, 2008:29).

John G. Lake was a Canadian whose family migrated to the USA in 1886 (Burger & Nel, 2008:30). His family's experience with sickness, which killed eight of the sixteen siblings (Burpeau, 2002:48), created a desire for divine healing and brought him into contact with one of the foremost 19<sup>th</sup> century advocates of divine healing, Alexander Dowie (Burger & Nel, 2008:30). Lake ended up being apprenticed to Dowie (Burger & Nel, 2008:31). Although De Wet (1989:46), Erasmus (1996:34), Lapoorta (1996:24), Anderson and Pillay (1997:228), Nel (2015:155) and Motshetshane (2015:68) declare that Lake was an elder in Dowie's Zion Church, nowhere does he appear as such in the *Leaves of Healing* newsletter covering the period 1897 to October 1905. Rather, he was ordained as a deacon on 19 July 1900 (Dowie, 1900:410) and still appeared as such in the directory of ordained officers of Zion Church on 5 March 1904 (Dowie, 1904a:617). He encountered Pentecostalism in 1906 when Parham was conducting a campaign in Zion City which introduced his Pentecostal initial evidence doctrine to followers of Zionism (Nel, 2015:155). Parham's well-established healing ministry served as a drawcard that attracted about 3500 Zionists to embrace his Pentecostal teaching, including John Lake (Nel, 2015:155).

In 1907, Lake decided to undertake a missionary trip to Africa. There are two opposing views concerning this trip to (South) Africa. One view seeks to portray Lake's coming to this continent as miraculous and providential. According to this view, Lake's decision to travel to Africa was the result of a mystical encounter where a voice said to him, "go to Africa" and an accompanying string of miraculous provisions followed (Nel, 2015:155). The first such provision was that of the \$2000 fare which Lake and Hezmalhalch did not possess when they undertook to embark on the journey. The second was that of the \$125 required by the South African authorities that an immigrant family must have before entering the country—Lake received this amount as he was disembarking from the ship (Liardon, 1996:161). The third happened when they arrived in Johannesburg and were miraculously met by an American missionary, Mrs Goodenough, who offered the Lakes accommodation because, it is held, the Lord spoken to her about them (De Wet, 1989:48).

Another view is put forward by Sundkler (1976:56) who thinks that Lake made the decision to come to Africa after talking to Daniel Bryant, a fellow minister in Zion Church and an overseer of Dowie's South African Zion Church with whom he was "in constant contact." Nel (2015:156) appears to consider it a possibility that Bryant and Lake had spoken about the latter taking over the former's Johannesburg congregation. The opposite argument asserts that Bryant and the John G. Lake party missed each other as they travelled within almost the same time-frame, but in opposite directions.<sup>11</sup> This does not do away with the possibility that they had talked about Lake coming to South Africa, considering their "constant contact" (Sundkler, 1976:56). According to Burpeau (2002:106), Bryant had already urged his congregation to seek "to go deeper with the Holy Spirit" before he left for America. It can be assumed that Bryant knew of the Pentecostal revival in Asuza and must have been aware of the Pentecostal forays into Zion City in the same year. Although the attitude of the leaders of the Zion Church in Zion City was adversarial towards the Pentecostal revival (Burpeau, 2002:62), Bryant's statement to his congregation may

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<sup>11</sup> De Wet (1989:28) is the commentator who acknowledges that the two knew each other and indicates that they 'missed each other' as Bryant had left for the USA. He does not delve into the motivations of Lake *et al.*, coming to South Africa. Burpeau (2002:106) also writes about Bryant leaving his post in April of 1908, thus going in the opposite direction to Lake *et al.*, whose relationship with Bryant is portrayed as going as far back as the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The writer likewise nowhere addresses the issue of what sparked Lake's motivation to come to (South) Africa. Burpeau's (2002:106) words that "[b]efore departing, Bryant urged his congregants to pray for that deeper experience in God possible through Holy Spirit baptism..." could suggest a possible knowledge of Lake's coming to Johannesburg and bringing a Pentecostal revival.

have indicated his openness to it and willingness to prepare his congregation for the coming of Lake.

Lake and a company of 16 others arrived in Cape Town on 14 May 1908, then journeyed first to Pretoria before settling in Johannesburg (Hwata, 2005:21-22). His first organised meeting was on the 25 May 1908 in Johannesburg (Hwata, 2005:22), at a black chapel belonging to the American Zulu Mission (Motshetshane, 2015:76). The area in which this chapel was located was a racially mixed slum, though predominantly black (Chikane, 2008a:15). They later relocated the revival meetings to a bigger facility, at the corner of Bree and Von Wielligh streets, which the white Zionists were hiring from the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company (Chikane, 2008a:16). From this base, the Pentecostal message spread across the country and beyond, converting most Zionist congregations that were not under the authority of Edgar Mahon or Johannes Buchler<sup>12</sup> to the AFM (Clark, 2009:176; Hwata, 2005:23). Although white Zionists who turned Pentecostal seem to have fully identified themselves with the new movement, their black counterparts who were under Pieter le Roux still preferred their identity as Zionists despite their Pentecostal experience (Burger & Nel, 2008:91).

Interestingly, Lake's Pentecostalism was heavily Zionist, influenced as it was by Alexander Dowie's peculiar holiness theology and healing ministry (Kalu, 2008:56; Clark, 2009:175-176; Nel, 2015:154). However, Lake was not as outspoken against the medical establishment as Dowie was despite keeping Dowie's attitude of not seeking medical help intact. He also retained Dowie's other taboos on pork eating, alcohol and tobacco consumption in his ministry and leadership of the new Pentecostal movement, together with Dowie's adult threefold immersive baptism (Lapoorta, 1996:169; Pretorius & Jafta, 1997:217; Clark, 2009:176).

John Lake's dominance of the AFM in its early years is interesting, considering that he only became its official leader and pastor of Central Tabernacle in 1910 and was gone by 1913 (Burger & Nel, 2008:35,49). Having taken over the Zionist congregation shortly after their arrival, the missionary team elected Lake's elderly compatriot, Tom Hezmalhalch, as the pastor of the Central Tabernacle and president

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<sup>12</sup> Kalu (2008:56) credits Johannes Buchler with the founding of the Zion churches. He asserts that initially, the name 'Zion' had nothing to do with Dowie's church. Instead, it was taken from "an old Moravian hymnbook." He acknowledges, however, that Buchler did later contact Dowie after coming across the latter's *Leaves of Healing Newsletter*. From this contact, Buchler was appointed a representative of Dowie's church in South Africa. He resigned from Dowie's church after a visit to Zion City and was then succeeded by Daniel Bryant who was sent to South Africa by Dowie.

of the AFM in 1909 (Burger & Nel, 2008:35). Burger and Nel (2008:35) speak of Lake's forceful personality, which, when contrasted with the gentleness of Tom Hezmalhalch, may explain his dominance even during the latter's presidency.

The pastor of Central Tabernacle was also the president of the AFM and he worked together with the Executive Council which also doubled as the local church board of Central Tabernacle (Burger, 1999:17). In the four to five years of American leadership over the AFM, the Executive Council did not have a constitution and the church was not registered with authorities. An attempt to adopt a constitution was first made in 1909 (De Wet, 1989:55). However, it was only in 1912 that a constitution was adopted which paved a way for registration in 1913, albeit not as a church—but as an unlimited company (De Wet, 1989:55). In Burger and Nel (2008), the events of the first five years of the AFM seem to revolve around Lake more than Tom Hezmalhalch or any other person.

By the time Lake left South Africa in 1913, he had influenced the South African parliament of Louis Botha to adopt the USA reservation system to deal with the “native question” (Sundkler, 1976:54). He had partially succeeded in trying to spread the Pentecostal experience to other church formations (Maxwell, 1999:250). He had brought William Leshega, of the African Native Baptist Church and Edward Lion, a Sotho Zionist with a vast healing ministry, under the umbrella of his Pentecostal church. Lion was appointed to head the AFM in Lesotho in 1912 (Pretorius & Jafta, 1997:215; Burger & Nel, 2008:204). Leshega is claimed to have baptised and ordained Isaiah Shembe who went on to establish the largest Zulu AIC with Zionist inclinations in 1910 (Kau, 1999:14). Lake had further presided over the concession that allowed the Zion Congregation in Wakkerstroom to retain the name ‘Zion’ while at the same time joining the AFM (Sundkler, 1976:54). However, he had failed to maintain the non-racialism of the revival which gave birth to the AFM (Chikane, 2008b:35). Though he had an opportunity to influence the decision makers that his protégé, Elias Letwaba, should succeed him as president of the AFM, he favoured Pieter le Roux instead (Burger & Nel, 2008:92).

### **2.2.3 Reasons behind the establishment of the AFM**

Why did Lake and company establish the AFM? This question is even more pertinent since the AFM was founded upon existing Dowie's Zion existing theology and congregations, as noted earlier. These congregations came into the AFM fold



when they embraced the Pentecostal teaching of glossolalia as initial evidence of receiving the Spirit, which was raised to a level of a 'must have experience' (Lapoorta, 1996:51; Burger & Nel, 2008:202; Johnson, 2014:275). Burger and Nel (2008:54) believe Lake *et al.*, had not expected to find a Western civilization and established churches when they came to South Africa and that some of these were black founded and led. They almost seem to suggest that Lake *et al.* were thrown off balance regarding the original intention of conducting mission work among the blacks.

At the time when undertaking missions was about bringing the gospel to non-white populations and gathering them into a church<sup>13</sup>, Lake's ministry did not achieve this. His claimed evangelistic campaigns among blacks did not result in a black church. The longest time he ministered to a predominantly black audience was in Doornfontein, at an already existing congregation (Lapoorta, 1996:50). Even then, the blacks there were soon outnumbered by whites and due to capacity issues, Lake *et al.* began dividing the congregation into home groups spread across the city before taking over the Zion Tabernacle at the corner of Bree and Von Wielligh streets (De Wet, 1989:52, 57).

Lake proceeded to pastor this white, formerly Zionist, congregation in Bree Street (De Wet, 1989:37; Burger & Nel, 2008:41).<sup>14</sup> From this base, he won other (mostly white) Zionist congregations to Pentecostalism and the AFM (De Wet, 1989:38; Maxwell, 1999:247). He also attracted some Ethiopian congregations (Maxwell, 1999:247). Therefore, it can be argued that although Lake might have intended to undertake missionary work in South Africa, what he ended up doing was the pentecostalisation of certain churches and the consolidation of (some of) them under the AFM umbrella. The leaving of some black Zionists in the first decade of the AFM could then be considered the unravelling of Lake's dream of the AFM as a Pentecostal umbrella over ministers and groupings with diverse racial, cultural and church backgrounds. This was a dream he adopted when he discovered that South Africa already had established and evangelistically involved Christian churches (Burger & Nel, 2008:54-55).

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<sup>13</sup> Nel (2014:110) indicates that the AFM subscribed to the idea of missions as gospel work among blacks.

<sup>14</sup> It is clear from reading Burger and Nel (2008:41) that Lake moved away from his original intention "to do mission work" and became "head of the White church." The "missionary tours" they say he often took, were preaching excursions with no record of their success.

## 2.3 The significant personalities at the beginning of the AFM

In this section, the focus falls on identifying persons who contributed to the AFM in its early years. Among them are the first three presidents of the AFM, Tom Hezmalhalch, John Lake and Pieter le Roux. These three men, all former members and leaders in Alexander Dowie's Zion Church, led the AFM for a combined period of thirty-five years (Sundkler, 1976:17; Burger & Nel 2008:91, 96). These presidents and their contribution to the AFM are not discussed here as other sources contain this information.<sup>15</sup> Instead, the focus is on the following persons whose contributions assist in making sense of the topic of the study: Elias Letwaba, Edward Lion, Elias Mahlangu, Daniel Nkonyane and Frank Dugmore.

### 2.3.1 Elias Letwaba

The name of Elias Letwaba (1870–1959) occupies a somewhat elevated position in the annals of the AFM. This is not without cause as Letwaba was John Lake's understudy, a seasoned minister with almost two decades of pastoral ministry before he joined the AFM in 1909 (Burger & Nel, 2008:207). Letwaba was an ardent evangelist who had a large following (Morton, 2016:2), a pioneer of theological education in the AFM who founded Patmos Bible School in 1924<sup>16</sup> (Burton, 1934:93-94), and an overseer over Waterberg, the Soutpansberg and Middleburg (Transvaal) churches for almost fifty years—a vast area (Burton, 1934:90). Unlike others discussed below, Letwaba was of Lutheran background and training, spent almost two decades in Bapedi Lutheran Church and some time in Samuel Brander's Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion and the Zion Apostolic Church (Lindsay, 1972; Morton, 2016:3).

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<sup>15</sup> The story of John Lake and his role in the establishment of the AFM, is found in Lindsay's *John G Lake: An apostle to Africa* (1972). It is also found in Burpeau's *Historical study of John Graham Lake* (2002), Burger and Nel's *Fire falls in Africa* (2008), Morton's *The devil who heals* (2012) and Nel's *Remembering and commemorating the theological legacy of John G Lake* (2015). Burger and Nel (2008) have also written about Tom Hezmalhalch and Pieter le Roux, while Nel, (2005) and Le Roux (2007) wrote about Pieter le Roux.

<sup>16</sup> The date of the opening of Letwaba's school varies depending on the source. The *Pentecostal Evangel* of 1928 carries a report from the pen of one CB Fockler, an Assemblies of God missionary. According to him, Letwaba opened his school in 1926 (Anon, 1928). De Wet (1989:68) puts the opening of the school in 1930. But Hatwa (2005:105) mentions 1924. I settled on 1924 following Hatwa (2005) because Nel (2014:112) mentions that PL le Roux gave a report of attending the opening of Letwaba's school to the Executive Committee in 1924.

### **2.3.2 Edward Lion**

Another person who was highly regarded by John Lake but later fell afoul of the AFM leadership is Edward Lion. Different writers have variously rendered his surname. He was born Edward Motaung, but according to Sundkler (1976:65), anglicised his surname as a way to distance himself from his brothers with whom he had experienced conflict. Edgar Mahon, a white Zionist who operated from a farm near Harrismith, converted and baptised Lion, who then returned to his home country of Lesotho where he began ministering in miracles and attracting a large following (Sundkler, 1976:65). In 1910, Lion met the AFM while in Johannesburg (Sundkler, 1976:65), was wooed, won over and appointed its overseer for Lesotho in 1912 (*The Comforter and Messenger of Hope = The Comforter*, 1921). Mahlangu's 1918 Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa (ZACSA) conference, held in Verulam (Natal), elected Lion to oversee its work in the Orange Free State (Silwana, 1918:3). Because of this election, Lion came to act as both the AFM's Lesotho overseer and ZACSA's Orange Free State overseer. Proof of his continued oversight of Lesotho AFM is found in the AFM's newsletter, *The Comforter*, August 1921 (De Wet, 1989:126). It carried the nine-month-old story of Lion's sacking by the AFM for failure to co-operate with AFM's headquarters. The reason for his sacking was that unlike "other native leaders," he "would not subordinate himself to white leadership." Consequently, he was replaced with a white missionary.

### **2.3.3 Daniel Nkonyane, Elias Mahlangu and Ignatius Lekganyane**

Daniel Nkonyane and Elias Mahlangu, former ministry workers with le Roux in the Wakkerstroom Zion Church, which had become a branch of the AFM, led the Africanisation of the Zionist-Pentecostal gospel they inherited from le Roux (Anderson, 2004:107; Molobi & Mahlobo, 2008:42). This greatly exasperated le Roux and created friction between him and the black leaders who were coming into their own (Kiernan, 1994:73; Ngada & Mofokeng, 2001:13-14). The result was Nkonyane founding his Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion in Charlestown in 1910 and Mahlangu the ZACSA, supposedly in 1917 (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:231; Sullivan, 2013:38). Mahlangu may not have established the ZACSA in the year 1917; instead, ZACSA may have come into existence in 1918 at a conference held in Verulam, (Natal) (Silwana, 1918:3). This conference was presided over by Pieter le Roux; its purpose was to elect an executive committee (Silwana, 1918:3).

Lekganyane was baptised by Elias Mahlangu in Boksburg in 1912 and credentialed by Pieter le Roux in 1916 (Moripe, 1996b:156; Anderson & Pillay, 1997:231-232). At the time of receiving his ministerial credentials, he had already planted a ZAC branch in his hometown, which he led until he left Mahlangu for Edward Lion's ZAFM (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:232),<sup>17</sup> only to leave there in 1924 to establish the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) (Moripe, 1996a:20; Anderson & Pillay, 1997:232). Contrary to Liardon's (1996) statement that John Lake established ZCC as a black arm of the AFM, it is noticeable that Lekganyane established it many years later, after being a member and minister in other Zionist churches.

#### **2.3.4 Frank Dugmore**

Frank Dugmore, a white, former Methodist preacher, was the general secretary of the AFM from 1913 to 1920 (Burger & Nel, 2008:100). He was also appointed by the white Executive Council as a missions' superintendent from 1916 to 1919 and again from 29 July 1920 to February 1923 (De Wet, 1989:116-117). According to Burger and Nel (2008:221), his major contribution to the black AFM was in structuring it according to Methodist orders, a structure which was only reviewed and changed in 1961. Killingray (2011:96) presents a letter quoted from Anderson (2007) in which Dugmore was proud of the AFM's approach to native leadership which he contrasted with other white missions in the country. He wrote the letter in 1916 when the AFM missions were still led by a 'non-racial' structure of three whites and three blacks (De Wet, 1989:95). Unfortunately, his pride was short-lived as the AFM released a statement in 1917 that it stood for segregation of the races (Burger & Nel, 2008:199). It also replaced the seemingly non-racial structure with an all-white one from the same year until 1962, when two black ministers were elected onto the Executive Committee (Burger & Nel, 2008:222).

#### **2.4 Other notable personalities in the AFM's history**

Over the course of its history, people whose contribution deserves acknowledgement have led the AFM, like any other church. An existing challenge is that which was noted earlier when discussing significant personalities at the beginning of the AFM: information about black leaders remains scant. That

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<sup>17</sup> Moripe (1996a:19) records 1917 as the year Lekganyane parted ways with Mahlangu and joined Lion's ZAFM. Although writers such as Anderson and Pillay (1997:232) put 1920 as the year Lekganyane left ZAC to join ZAFM, De Visser (2000:24) supports the 1917 date and bases the date on an entry in the official history of the ZCC as recorded in the ZCC Family Bible.

notwithstanding, the aim of this last section of the chapter is to identify notable personalities in the AFM's history. In doing so, those already discussed under the subheading "significant personalities" have been omitted in favour of "others" beside them: Samson Ntanzi, Richard Ngidi and Frank Chikane. The last two together with Elias Letwaba are the most frequently mentioned black Pentecostal leaders in the AFM.

#### **2.4.1 Samson Ntanzi**

Samson Ntanzi was a school principal at Ekutuleni in Zululand. He was introduced to Pentecostal doctrine in 1914 and baptised, by triple immersion, by Peter Mkwanyane, one of the Wakkerstroom leaders (Molobi, 2008b:13). His conversion cost him his position as principal (Molobi, 2008b:13). This could have been due to the school belonging to another mission unrelated to Pentecostalism. Ntanzi was ordained into the AFM ministry by Pieter le Roux in 1916 and proceeded to serve as an evangelist for forty-seven years (Klaver, 1965:18). He is singled out as having been opposed to the white robes used by Mahlangu's people and as having spoken out against them in the 1915 meeting in which a merger between the AFM and ZAC was discussed (Klaver, 1965:18). He continued to speak out against this church uniform for many years thereafter.

#### **2.4.2 Richard Ngidi**

Richard Ngidi (1921 – 1985) came from a Congregational church background. He is one of the three black Pentecostal leaders acknowledged in the history of the AFM, the others being Elias Letwaba and Frank Chikane (Morton, 2016:2). After his conversion to Pentecostalism under Nicholas Bhengu in 1956 (Khathide, 2010:32), he did not stay long in the Congregational Church since the leadership disapproved of his preaching (Khathide, 2010:36). Richard, as well as his nephew Alpheus Ngidi, left with members of their family to form an independent congregation which ended up affiliated to the AFM (Khathide, 2010:43). From the time of his ordination in 1965 to his death in 1985 (Khathide, 2010:53), Ngidi was to make such a mark on the AFM that his name remains an inspiration to many black pastors in the AFM. Burger and Nel (2008:256) credit him with planting 176 congregations in the twenty-year period during which he was an ordained minister in the AFM.

### **2.4.3 Frank Chikane**

Frank Chikane was born into an AFM pastoral family in 1951 (Sider & Chikane, 1988:9; Admin, 2013). By the age of eighteen, he was the secretary of the governing body of the local congregation. He became sensitised to the “contradictions of life in the South Africa” of his day in which racism and oppression characterised black-white relationships and where the church was caught in the same situation (Sider & Chikane, 1988:10; Chikane, 2012). He was ordained in 1980 but was defrocked shortly thereafter and detained by the security police several times for undertaking ministry that sought to respond holistically to the needs of his community (Sider & Chikane, 1988:11; Lapoorta, 1996:71; Burger & Nel, 2008:273). During his suspension from the ordained ministry of the AFM, Chikane played various roles within anti-apartheid, pro-liberation Christian organisations such as the Institute for Contextual Theology, the United Democratic Front and the South African Council of Churches (Chikane, 2012:262-263). He was elected president of the AFM Composite Division<sup>18</sup> in 1993, thus ending a decade long exile from the AFM (Burger & Nel, 2008:426). After the successful union of the Composite Division and the White Section of the AFM in 1996, Chikane became deputy president until 1999 (Burger & Nel, 2008:431).

### **2.5 The AFM and the politics of race**

In this section, my intention is to locate the AFM within the South African politics of race, discuss the ways these politics played themselves out in this church and the reasons for these as well as the consequences thereof. This section will show that despite the racially integrated beginnings of this Pentecostal church, the AFM adopted the posture of a colonial church and for many years, was a colonial-type church. As such, it could not and did not avoid the schisms by those black leaders who thought the treatment of blacks in white led colonial churches was unjust and that they needed to be by themselves. It will further be demonstrated that even those who remained ‘members,’<sup>19</sup> were not oblivious to the negative effects of the AFM’s politics of race and did register their unhappiness.

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<sup>18</sup> The Composite Division resulted from the coming together of the African, Indian and Coloured AFM churches after a setback in the talks to create a structurally united non-racial AFM church (Lapoorta, 1996:114; Els, 2007:56).

<sup>19</sup> Blacks belonging to the AFM had since 1913, when the church registered as an unlimited company (Burger & Nel, 2008:80), been regarded as adherents, not as members (Chikane,

### 2.5.1 Locating the AFM in the 20<sup>th</sup> century South African politics of race

South Africa is known for the now defunct, brutal race-based, exploitative system known as Apartheid, which purported to provide space for black people to develop by themselves, in accordance with their culture, without the interference of whites (De Wet, 1989:270). It is also known for the overcoming of this oppressive system in 1994 and an ongoing project of building one non-racial country where various communities ever since have been struggling to be reconciled into one nation. While apartheid per se legislatively formalised a milieu of racial oppression, in fact this exploitative situation had existed since the beginning of colonisation of South Africa. An important question, which this section addresses, concerns the location of the AFM in the politics of race, which have characterised South Africa, particularly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is singled out because this is the time in which the AFM came into existence.

Before discussing the development of the politics of race in 20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa, it is important to note that the people of South Africa had lived for hundreds of years within a milieu of exploitative race based politics. The arrival of the Dutch East India Company and the settlement of the Cape in 1652 soon led to the subjugation of the Khoisan and their inclusion into the colonial state (Davenport, 1978:5). The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw frontier wars and the expansion of colonial rule towards the north and east of the Southern African subcontinent (Davenport, 1978:5). Many black kingdoms lost their lands and animals, not only through war but also through taxation (Morton, 2014:27). The *difaqane* wars, started by King Shaka in the 1820s, did not help the position of black people and neither did the two wars between the British Empire and the Afrikaner republics in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal in 1880 and 1899 (Davenport, 1978:10).

The experience of colonialism was one in which both the coloniser and the colonised lost their humanity, the former by their will to oppress and the latter by being oppressed (Lapoorta, 1996:161). The coloniser took the spoils politically, economically, religiously and culturally. Politically, blacks had no say in how they were governed. Only the Cape had given a *limited* franchise<sup>20</sup> to some blacks between

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2008:40). This state of affairs remained in place until 1985 when two sections were created under one constitution, thus giving blacks the right to membership for the first time (Els, 2007:56).

<sup>20</sup> Although all men who qualified according to law could vote, the majority of blacks could not because of contingencies such as lack of knowledge of their rights, long distances from their rural

1853 and 1936 (Fraser, 2013). After the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, blacks in the Cape lost the limited franchise they had, with the Coloureds losing it in the 1950s (Fraser, 2013). The withholding of the right to vote was itself dehumanising and resulted in increased political strife. The Land Act of 1913 and the resulting land dispossession and creation of a cheap black labour pool exacerbated the plight of black people (Plaatje, 1914; Motshetshane, 2015:52).

The segregationist policies of previous white Union governments were intensified under the rule of the National Party that took over the reins of government in 1948 (Davenport, 1978:257). The body of laws this party promulgated concerning blacks, after taking over the government, as previously mentioned, embodied a political ideology called Apartheid. Supposedly, with apartheid, blacks were given space to develop by themselves, in accordance with their culture, without the interference of whites (De Wet, 1989:270). Starting in 1963, the so-called native reserves that had been created earlier became tribal homelands with hypothetical semi-independence for some and independence for others (Davenport, 1978:301). These reserves, and later the homelands, became places for children, women and the elderly as the menfolk spent most of their lives providing cheap labour to the emerging modern industrial complex in the cities (Davenport, 1978:295; Motshetshane, 2015:52). Seen from the point of view of a unified South African territory, their creation also served the cause of black political disenfranchisement, as they were not considered citizens (Davenport, 1978:76). For whites, black political disenfranchisement meant, inter alia, that they could live without fear of being politically overwhelmed by the more numerous blacks while continuing to exercise economic and political power in black areas (Davenport, 1978:76, 176).<sup>21</sup>

Where did the AFM fit in with all these factors? The AFM came into being in 1908 (Poewe, 1988:147), just two years before the birth of the Union of South Africa, a white colonial state under the British crown, in which blacks were marginal. The AFM found the processes of dispossession already afoot. As a church that was founded in a non-racial environment (Poewe, 1988:148), and believed that what was being experienced at its revivals was the power of God and a re-enactment of ancient

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homes to voting stations, increasingly difficult voting requirements and including that one also had to be a landowner (Fraser, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Davenport (1978:76) speaks of the anxiety of the colonists in Natal due to the huge numbers of the Natives and Indians. This made Natal a legally harsher environment for blacks than the Cape. The newly formed Union of South Africa excluded blacks from equal participation as citizens.



New Testament religion (De Wet, 1989:58), its silence in the face of black marginalisation was problematic. The formation of a white ruled Union of South Africa marginalised the black population politically while the passing of the Natives Land Act of 1913 decimated it economically. In the face of laws meant to dispossess blacks and create inequality between races, the AFM chose to be a white church in support of a white state (Kgatlé, 2015:182). The AFM did this in direct opposition to the gospel imperatives and in negation of Pentecostal ethos (Lapoorta, 1996:54).

### **2.5.2 The way the politics of race played out in the AFM**

As concerned as the AFM was with the restoration of apostolic Christianity and its belief that it was a conduit of Pentecostal power, it lacked boldness to proclaim and embody the fullness of the true gospel of Christ. A racially integrated revival and ministrations of the ordinance of water baptism soon gave way to racial discrimination and eventual segregation (Lapoorta, 1996:52). Poewe (1988:147) implicates Lake in the emergence of this corrosive state of affairs by stating that he “argued for racially separated sections all under the umbrella of the AFM.” Though Burger and Nel (2008:41) attempt to portray Lake as not being racist, and he seems not to have thought himself one, no record of his objection to the developments under his charge exists. Instead, as mentioned, he is said to have written a letter to Louis Botha, the Prime Minister of the Union, advising him about the establishment of native reserves as in America, as a solution to South Africa’s race issues (Sundkler, 1976:54; Burpeau, 2002:21). The AFM, having aligned itself with the interests of the white state, resolved in its council meeting held on 4 – 17 July 1917 that it stood against racial equality (Burger & Nel, 2008:199)!

The AFM’s racism cost it its black leaders and followers. The first to go was Daniel Nkonyane in 1910, although according to Poewe (1988:147) as well as Anderson and Pillay (1997:237), the AFM’s records indicate that the first split occurred in 1917. Nkonyane established the Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion at Charlestown in Kwazulu-Natal, with Edgar Mahon helping him to buy the farm that would serve as his head-quarters (Sundkler, 1976:57). Then in 1917, after a failed attempt to heal the rift between the AFM and Elias Mahlangu, he left and established The Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa (ZACSA) (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:231). In 1918, Andrew Oliphant, one of the only three blacks to be members of the National Missionary Council before 1962, left and formed the Apostolic Faith Assembly of South Africa (Erasmus, 1996:30; Morton, 2016:10).

Edward Lion left the AFM in 1920 and established the ZAFM<sup>22</sup> (Burger & Nel, 2008:205; Molobi, Mahlobo & Skhosana, 2008:82-83). James Molantoa established the Khobiso Apostolic Faith Mission in 1935 (AFM Native Conference, 1936). In 1939, Christina Nku left to start the Saint John's Apostolic Faith Mission (St. John's AFM) (Masondo, 2015:232). She was not an ordained minister but a member of the AFM and a prophet. In 1946, a group of six pastors left and formed what later came to be known as the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission (Moripe, 1994:57, 69). All these leaders left because the AFM chose to betray its non-racial beginnings in South Africa as well as those of the entire movement in America.

Despite the parting of ways between Elias Mahlangu's ZACSA and the AFM in 1917, which supposedly took thousands of black members away from the AFM (Morton, 2016:11), there were still some black leaders who remained, and the black membership of the AFM is said to derive from their labours. Few of them were with Le Roux in Wakkerstroom. It is not clear why they remained while others left because their experiences were not any different. As an example, one should reiterate that Pieter le Roux writes about how Elias Letwaba was "howled at" and was almost driven away by the whites who were at a meeting to which Lake brought him to give an address (Burton, 1934:x). Although Letwaba was educated (Maxwell, 2006:51), had pastoral experience of 19 years before coming to the AFM,<sup>23</sup> and his healing abilities were acknowledged to be rivalled only by those of his mentor, Lake, he did not become the president of the AFM after John Lake, and he was overlooked for the post of missionary superintendent (Motshetshane, 2015:87). The missionary committee on which he sat as a member, together with three whites and two other blacks, was dissolved and replaced in 1917 by an all-white committee until 1962 (Burger & Nel, 2008:201,234). Even then, the newly formed Executive committee contained only two blacks, M Mtsweni and T Mukwena, to four white missionaries (Burger & Nel 2008:236).

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<sup>22</sup> Anderson and Pillay (1997:231), incorrectly, state that the ZAFM emerged from the ZACSA. That cannot be the case as Lion was the overseer of the AFM in Lesotho until 1920/21, according to the AFM's magazine, *The Comforter* of 1921, as cited in Burger and Nel (2008:205). Burger and Nel (2008:205) suggest that Lion had already started operating under this name as early as 1912, the same year he was brought into the AFM with his Zionists and made the leader of the AFM in Lesotho.

<sup>23</sup> Letwaba came into the AFM from Bapedi Lutheran Church (Burger & Nel, 2008:207) where he had spent most if not all the previous nineteen years as a pastor. Bapedi Lutheran Church was an Ethiopian church founded by Johannes Winter, a German missionary and Martinus Sebushane, one of the first two black pastors to be ordained by the Berlin Mission (Malunga, 2003:49,52).

In 1924,<sup>24</sup> Elias Letwaba built and ran a school on his farm in Potgietersrus (Nel, 2014:112). Some of his ministry students attended Bible and ministry classes in the evening and taught in the primary school, which he had also built next to the Bible school, during the day (Burton, 1934:94; Hwata, 2005:105; Nel, 2014:112). The above notwithstanding, when the church officially decided to train its ministers, they turned to other (white) people and not to him. It could be argued that he established and ran his school as a district leader and mostly for his district (De Wet, 1989:130); further that the other schools that came later and were led by whites followed the same principle—a district leader taking initiative for the benefit of his district. To this, my answer would be to point out that firstly, in those districts led by white missionaries, the educational plight of blacks could not have differed from that in Letwaba’s district. Yet he established a school and they did not. Secondly, Letwaba’s leadership of a district for almost fifty years, was not because of recognition of his abilities and training per se. If it had been, he could have been appointed to run those officially established ministry training institutions which came after his own—he possessed the requisite experience. Letwaba owed his unchallenged district leadership position to the inhospitability of the Waterberg area (to whites) because of malaria (Burger & Nel, 2008:207).

The period immediately after the death of Le Roux appears to have been a contentious one for blacks in the AFM. This observation is based on the increasingly harsher tone of resolutions taken between 1943 and 1958 by the Native Conference against practices peculiar to black Pentecostals. Ministers were threatened with withdrawals of their credentials for failing to discontinue practices which, though making sense to their black followers and members, did not pass the muster of what a Pentecostal was from a white perspective (Burger & Nel, 2008:245). Six black pastors withdrew and formed a new denomination (Moripe, 1994:57), the Bantu AFM, which was later renamed *Reformed* AFM (Moripe, 1994:69). It seceded in protest over ‘white domination of the religious, social and political’ life of blacks (Moripe, 1994:57, 67). From 1959 to 1968, there appears to have been a change in tactics towards more teaching via “annual spiritual conferences.” The all-white Missionary

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<sup>24</sup> I took the date for the running of Patmos Bible School from *Pentecostal Evangel* by Anon (he/she was relaying CB Fockler’s report). Hwata (2005:105) on the other hand, reports the year as 1924. His date might be correct as Nel (2014:112) cites the fact that Le Roux gave a report about attending the opening of this school to the Executive Council in 1924 already. De Wet (1989:130) mentions 1930 as the date when Letwaba began operating his Bible School. Chetty (2002:26) also mentions 1930 and appears to have taken this from *Christianity in the years before union* by Pillay (1994:191).

Council set the agenda of these conferences (Burger & Nel, 2008:232) and white conference speakers executed it. The participating blacks only did so as interpreters. This period coincided with the formation of the Bantu Executive Committee in 1962, which provided oversight to the black church, albeit staffed by four whites and two blacks (Burger & Nel, 2008:236).<sup>25</sup> District leadership by blacks only became a reality in 1980 (Nel, 2014:124).

Despite the glaring need for trained preachers and pastors, it was only in 1954 that the AFM made ministry training compulsory (Nel, 2014:112). Even then, the standard was intentionally kept low as is evident from the following quotation taken from the minutes of the General Conference in 1944 about “native education”: “[t]he mission stands for a lower education...” (De Wet, 1989:170). Whereas white students for the ministry were expected to have matriculated before or after ministry training, but certainly before ordination (Erasmus, 1996:80; Burger & Nel, 2008:218), blacks had to make do with just standard six or today’s grade eight requirement at the most (Erasmus, 1996:80). When white students were offered a theoretical training for two years, black students were given just one year, which became three years only in 1984 (Burger & Nel, 2008:391; Nel & Janse van Rensburg, 2016, para.17). This compulsory ministry education, which was under white direction, secured for the AFM a much desired and awaited victory over vestiges of earlier forms of black Pentecostalism. In 1991, students demanded to be trained in liberation theology (Erasmus, 1996:94; Nel & Janse van Rensburg, 2016, para.23). Although this was not granted, it led to the resignation of Ron Kinnear, a white missionary and principal of the college, and the appointment of George Mahlobo as the second black principal of a ministers’ training institution after Letwaba (Nel, 2014:119).

### **2.5.3 Reasons behind the way politics of race played out in the AFM**

The politics of race played out in the manner they did in the AFM because of the following possible reasons: white cultural imperialism, Afrikaner Calvinism and the uncritical acceptance of authority. These three are somewhat linked to each other. Following hereafter is a short discussion of each one, in the order in which they appear above.

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<sup>25</sup> The number of black representatives in the Executive Council grew to three in the second meeting of the council in 1962. Thereafter, there was increasing representation of blacks so that by 1964, there were five black members while the number of whites in council remained four (Minutes of the Executive Committee, AFM Bantu Church, 21 Nov. 1962, 12 Sept. 1963).

Firstly, the politics of race played out in the way they did in the AFM because of white cultural imperialism. Western missions have *othered* Africans based on religio-cultural difference. African culture has been judged heathen; therefore deserving of modification at best or eradication at worst. White colonial Christianity regarded itself as a force for the good of the African, perceiving its mission to be civilisation, through Christianisation, of the indigenous population (Motshetshane, 2013:4). This civilising mission sought to make an African into the image of the European without according him or her the full benefits enjoyed by Europeans in church and society. European names, clothing styles or appearance, languages, working in what fitted European ideas of a job, and so forth, became symbolic of white cultural imperialism, which was accepted and propagated without question even in the AFM. The AFM was thus a colonial church, standing for the superiority of white persons, their culture and government, as attested by the following quotation from the minutes of the White Executive Council quoted in Lapoorta (1996:53): “...we do not teach or encourage social equality between whites and Natives.”

Secondly, the politics of race played out in the way they did in the AFM because most of its white members were Afrikaners. Fundamental in Afrikaner ethnicity was a form of Calvinism informed by historical experience of religious persecution in Europe, British imperialism, battles with indigenous kingdoms and rural living (De Wet, 1989:172-174). Williams (1991:para.4) talks of how Afrikaner Calvinism escaped the influence of the Enlightenment, which swept across Europe and America due to geographic isolation. These people’s experience with the British and the constant threat from indigenous kingdoms forged an identity closely related to that of ancient Israel. They, in their view of themselves became an elect community, the chosen nation (Williams, 1991:para.23). The Old Testament was legalistically applied, from which the idea of segregation and the other features that came to characterise apartheid emerged and were nurtured (Williams, 1991:para.23). The AFM inherited many poor Afrikaners from the DRC which had already enacted segregation in its 1857 synod (Davenport, 1997:66). Lake considered Afrikaners’ “tough racial segregationist attitudes” a problem but still lauded their knowledge of “the natives” as advantageous over the expatriate missionaries (Burger & Nel, 2008:200). No wonder that the AFM betrayed the non-racialism of Jerusalem, Asuza Street and Doornfontein revivals, for it was argued that “the Afrikaners understood the context better” (Lapoorta, 1996:160; Burger & Nel, 2008:200).

Thirdly, the AFM was in a stronger position to advocate for the rights of all its members without fear of deportation because it was a home-grown church. Understandably, foreign Pentecostal missionaries would have risked deportation and the possibility of their work not surviving had they insisted to defy state laws (Watt, 2001:70). The two American missionaries, who were instrumental in the formation of the AFM, led it just for the first five years, after which they returned to America, leaving behind them a church unaffiliated with any other one anywhere else and in the hands of South African leadership. However, its politics of race meant that it only raised concerns about state laws that affected its doctrinal beliefs and not the socio-political and economic conditions of its black members. The first example of prioritisation of its beliefs over the wellbeing of all its members was the notice the AFM gave to the relevant authorities in 1919 regarding the right of its members not to go through mandatory vaccination as that was opposed to the church's beliefs (De Wet 1989:79). The petition the AFM submitted for its members not to be required to bear roles in both world wars serves as the second example (Burger & Nel, 2008:120). These instances indicate that the AFM was not uncritical in its acceptance of state authority. However, on those matters that affected black lives, such as the Natives Land Act of 1913 and many similar Acts, the AFM chose to conform.

#### **2.5.4 Results of the AFM's politics of race**

The AFM's politics of race negatively affected the theological maturity of the majority of its members, the growth of the church as a whole, and its witness to the rule of God in South Africa. Each of the above assertions are examined here.

The AFM's politics of race had an adverse influence on the theological maturity of the majority of its members who were black. Amongst its black ministers, there were some well-educated men who could attend to the biblical literacy and some theological sophistication of the majority of its members. These were ministers such as Samson Ntanzi, who was a "principal of a school at Ekutuleni," Zululand when he joined the AFM in 1914 (Klaver, 1965:18). There was Elias Letwaba, who had trained for ministry with the Lutherans (Anon 1928, De Wet, 1989:65) and later, Frank Chikane who when a student, saw the necessity of developing a hermeneutic that would rescue the Bible from white supremacist interpretations and nurture his faith for ministry in an oppressive environment (Chikane, 2012:48-49). The facts that some of these black leaders were not given space to rise as national leaders, and their endeavours for the education of the majority, were restricted by absurd

resolutions (Letwaba), and certain prominent ones were defrocked (Chikane) (Chikane, 2012:98), thereby delegitimised them in the eyes of members who needed them most. This removed the possibility of a theologically mature membership from the AFM.

The politics of race hindered the growth of the AFM. Evidence is found in the following observations: the black leaders who left the AFM went on to establish their own denominations with hundreds of thousands of adherents across the country and beyond (Killingray, 2011:96). Burger and Nel (2008:209) record the story of much growth of the AFM in East Africa, under black leadership, in eleven years between 1961 and 1972. A white missionary, C Nielsen, introduced the AFM in Kenya in 1958, but withdrew from the country after three years; yet, when missionaries reconnected with the work in East Africa in 1972, there were 100 000 members. The story of explosive numerical church growth where white missionaries had ceased to supervise has been attested to in other places such as China (Killingray, 2011:93).

The AFM's politics of race negatively affected its witness to the rule of God in South Africa, a country which at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, like America, was a racist society in which the humanity of blacks was of little consequence (Lapoorta, 1996:36,57-58). Pentecostalism in both countries emerged out of a non-racial revival, with a black foundation. This was the witness to the rule of God that racist societies needed to be confronted with. However, as De Wet (1989:269) asserts, "accommodating apartheid in the Church certainly compromised the AFM's witness and credibility in black society." He adds,

[t]hat immense damage was done by the apartheid system is an understatement. How can one ever determine the degradation that this system of racial prejudice, exploitation and oppression had on the dignity of blacks? Migratory labour forced the separation of families for months, with unmentionable social ills like adultery, homosexuality, illegitimate children, divorce, etc., that followed. All of this, together with unequal economic and political opportunities, had a very serious effect on the church (De Wet, 1989:269).

It becomes interesting, in an awkward sense, to notice that the above-mentioned 'social ills' constitute some of the 'sins' Pentecostals frowned on and preached against. Yet the church was party to either the creation or increase of the same by actively ignoring the one true sign of Pentecost (and genuine Christianity), which was the non-racialism of the Jerusalem, Asuza Street and Doornfontein outpourings of the Spirit (Lapoorta, 1996:160). This has robbed Pentecostalism, and

specifically the AFM, of its true significance in a country still recovering from a racist past.

## **2.6 The unity years**

The once racially divided church came together into a structural unity in 1996 after negotiations that started in 1974 (Lapoorta, 1996:92; Burger and Nel, 2008:405). The combining of the Coloured, Indian and African sections to comprise the Composite Division in 1993 preceded this unity (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:234). Frank Chikane, who was at that point still defrocked, was elected the president of this division; when the white section united with the Composite Division (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:234), he was elected vice president of the united AFM while Isak Burger was elected president (Burger & Nel, 2008:365). The researcher writes twenty years after the AFM became a united church. It now has its first African president, Pastor George Mahlobo, who was elected in 2016 (Mahlobo, 2016:4). In his first online pastoral letter, he emphasises the need to fully realise racial unity on the ground (Mahlobo, 2016:4). The reason behind Mahlobo's call was the continued existence of racially segregated congregations across South Africa (Clark, 2009:183). Although pastors meet in non-racial forums of regional and national structures, and regional boards have been constituted non-racially, this contact is yet to filter down to members of congregations of this church (Nel, 2012).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I set out to provide an historical overview of the AFM of South Africa. Themes such as the origins of the AFM, significant personalities who contributed to the AFM in its early years, the politics of race in the AFM and other notable persons in its history of 110 years, were explored.

The AFM was described as a homegrown denomination with a theology and a name from the USA. Claims of indigeneity were problematised by pointing out the cultural estrangement of many black members of the AFM which resulted in some leaving to establish their own churches. Lake's ministry was argued to have been more a pentecostalising mission than a converting and church planting one.

Regarding those people who contributed in the early years of the AFM as well as others who stood out in the entire history of the AFM, it was noted that written sources have generally favoured Westerners and, in the AFM, whites. There is much written, therefore known, about many white Pentecostal leaders. What demonstrates



this rather well is the way in which only Elias Letwaba, Richard Ngidi and Frank Chikane dominate AFM history, particularly where black Pentecostals are concerned—an improbable situation! Lastly, the AFM's politics of race were disastrous both to the black members who only officially became members almost eighty years later and to the church's witness to God's rule in South Africa (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:234).

## Chapter 3

### Zionism and early black Pentecostalism compared

#### 3.1 Introduction

Reading De Wet's 1989 PhD thesis on *The Apostolic Faith Mission in Africa (1908 – 1980)*, Molobi and Chikane's *Oral history of the South African Apostolic Faith Mission (2008)* as well as Burger and Nel's *The fire falls in Africa (2008)*, brings the reader face to face with depictions of early black Pentecostalism in the AFM. However, the emerging portrait is reminiscent of Zionism as described in Sundkler's *Bantu prophets (1961)* and *Zulu Zion (1976)*, Oosthuizen's *The birth of Christian Zionism in South Africa (1987)*, and Anderson's *Zion and Pentecost (2000)*. The comparison of early black Pentecostalism in the AFM and Zionism has not been attempted. Hence, this chapter aims to discuss phenomena associated with black Pentecostalism from the inception of the AFM until the 1940s and to argue the remarkable similarity between black Pentecostalism and Zionism. Realisation of this aim serves as a base upon which the subject of the re-orientation of black Pentecostalism in the AFM, which is the focus of the dissertation, is to be dealt with in later chapters.

To understand the relationship of Zionism and Pentecostalism, it is important to return to the beginnings of these movements in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two places, Wakkerstroom and Doornfontein, serve as epicentres of these movements respectively. The importance of both these places for Zionism and Pentecostalism is explored.

#### 3.2 The importance of Wakkerstroom and Doornfontein in the beginnings of Zionism and black Pentecostalism

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, South Africa contained three centres of Zionist activity; only one would become important in the development of black Zionism; Wakkerstroom. The prominence of Wakkerstroom raises a question regarding Johannesburg and Harrismith, where Johannes Buchler and Edgar Mahon were respectively based and active in Zionist work: what about these places?

### 3.2.1 Johannes Buchler's Zion Church in Johannesburg

In 1895, a year before the establishment of the famous Christian Catholic Church in Zion (CCCZ) of Alexander Dowie, Johannes Buchler established Zion Church in Johannesburg (Sundkler, 1976:29). Initially, Buchler's Zion Church "had no links to Dowie's" (Sullivan, 2013:32). But after coming across Dowie's newsletter, *Leaves of Healing*, which was being circulated worldwide, Buchler established relations with Dowie in 1897 (Sundkler, 1976:29). Dowie appointed him as Zion's representative for South Africa in the same year (Dowie, 1897:287; Pretorius & Jafta, 1997:17). Then Buchler introduced Pieter le Roux and later Edgar Mahon, his brother in law, to Dowie's theology (Pretorius & Jafta, 1997:217; Lynch, 2010, para.15; Motshetshane, 2015:62). The three of them became important role players in Zionism gaining a foothold in South Africa (Motshetshane, 2015:57).

Buchler's relationship with Dowie did not last long because he left him in 1900 after a visit to Zion City, Chicago, developing a dislike for the personality cult developing around him (Dowie, 1900:723; Ngada & Mofokeng, 2001:12; Motshetshane, 2015:58).<sup>26</sup> Dowie sent Daniel Bryant, an American Zion minister, to Johannesburg to oversee the interests of his Zion Church in 1904 (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994:188). Owing to the fallout between Dowie and Buchler, the latter attempted to register a new name for his church: the Apostolic Faith Mission (Sundkler, 1976:31; De Wet, 1989:32; Burger & Nel, 2008:62; Lynch, 2010, para.17).<sup>27</sup> According to Lynch (2010, para.18), he had already used a similar name (SA Faith Mission),<sup>28</sup> both for his healing home established in 1898 in Booyens' Reserve, Johannesburg, and the church he established in Kroonstad in the same year, under which he also gathered converts between 1899 and 1902 when he was away from Johannesburg. The Transvaal's Native Affairs Secretary declined to register the name (Sundkler, 1976:31), resulting in the name "Zion Church" continuing to be used until Buchler's

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<sup>26</sup> According to De Wet (1989:31), Burger and Nel (2008:27), Buchler left Dowie's church in 1902. However, Buchler's resignation had already been submitted and publicised in the *Leaves of Healing* newsletter of 31 March 1900.

<sup>27</sup> Although Sundkler (1976:31) indicates in the footnote that Buchler's application to have his church renamed "Apostolic Faith Mission" was declined, he does not say whether this had any effect on the use of the name by Buchler or not. Consequently, Ngada and Mofokeng (2001:12) regard the Apostolic Faith Mission of Lake and Hezmalhalch as being the same as Buchler's, or at least a splinter group thereof. Their argument does not mention Daniel Bryant's Zion Church.

<sup>28</sup> It is not clear what SA in "SA Faith Mission" stands for. De Wet (1989:31), Mofokeng and Ngada (2001:12) and Burger and Nel (2008:52) believe Buchler wanted to rename his church "Apostolic Faith Mission." Accepting this explanation leaves the "S" unexplained. Alternatively, it could be that the "SA" simply stands for South Africa.

death in 1944 (Death of founder of Zion Church, 1944:4). After his death, the church adopted the name, “The Free Baptist Church of South Africa.”<sup>29</sup>

That Buchler’s ministry was to the Coloured and white communities rather than Africans (Sundkler, 1976:31; De Wet, 1989:31; Lynch, 2010, para.14) may be important in explaining the low profile Johannesburg came to have in the Zionist universe. This leaves Harrismith, another centre of Zionist activity under Edgar Mahon, which is the subject of the next section.

### **3.2.2 Edgar Mahon’s Zion Church in Harrismith**

Edgar Mahon was both a convert of Johannes Buchler and his brother-in-law. He became an important player in the origin of the Zionist movement among the Sothos. In 1898, while in Pietermaritzburg, he fell sick, was visited by Buchler who not only succeeded in healing him but also baptised him, an act which led to him being released from the Salvation Army as it did not believe in baptism (Armitage, 1976:60; Moripe, 1996a:13-14). By this time, Buchler had become a serious follower of Alexander Dowie’s teachings, which he also introduced to Mahon. Relieved of his charge in Pietermaritzburg, Mahon went to Harrismith in the Eastern Free State, bought a farm and began ministering to the many Africans imprisoned at the war camp in the area (Sullivan, 2013:36). His ministry reached as far as Lesotho. His foremost Sotho convert, Edward Lion, became, as indicated, a distinguished healer and a founder of his own church, the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission (ZAFM) in 1920, after some years as the overseer of the AFM’s work in Lesotho (Sundkler, 1976:65). Mahon also worked with Paul Mabiletsa, a “Sotho-Tswana” Zionist considered “an intellectual among black Zionists,” who also established his own church and opened schools in Alexandra (Sundkler, 1976:58-59).

Together with Pieter le Roux, Mahon joined Alexander Dowie’s church under the leadership of Rev Daniel Bryant. Bryant even baptised 60 Zionists in Harrismith before going to Lesotho where he also baptised Chief Molapo and his wife (Sundkler, 1976:40; Sullivan, 2013:31). In 1908, when Bryant returned to the USA and Le Roux joined the Pentecostals, Mahon continued the work of Zion (Sundkler, 1976:33). He later rebranded his section of the Zion Church the “Mahon Mission,” and ended up

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<sup>29</sup> The name “Free Baptist Church” first appeared in the *Rand Daily Mail* in 1953 and appears to have been used interchangeably with the older one, “Zion Church,” as it appears in the same newspaper in 1956 and 1958 while the new one appeared again in 1957. From 1959, only “Free Baptist Church” appears (Rand Daily Mail, 22 May 1953, p.2; 21 July 1956, p.3; 19 March 1957, p.2; 17 June 1958, p.13; 5 June 1959, p.11).

working closely with the Baptists (Sullivan, 2013:48). As a result, Harrismith fell out of the Zionist universe too, leaving only Wakkerstroom.

Of the three centres of Zionist activity in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wakkerstroom loomed large in the story of the beginnings of black Zionism, possibly because both Buchler and Mahon stayed on with their respective charges. Further, as intimated, Buchler's Zion Church was focused on the Coloured and white communities (Sundkler, 1976:31). Wakkerstroom gave Southern Africa its first cohort of black Zionist Church founders.

### **3.2.3 Pieter le Roux's Zion Church in Wakkerstroom**

Pieter le Roux, a former DRC missionary in charge of a mission congregation in Wakkerstroom called Zion Church, started an independent black congregation in 1903 that, few years later, became the springboard for the black Zionist movement (Sundkler, 1976:42). According to Sundkler (1976:44), this congregation grew rapidly. He indicates that this congregation started with 150 members but refrains from providing the numbers to which they grew. Oosthuizen (1987:20), on the other hand, gives the starting number as 400 members and asserts that by 1905, the congregation had grown to 5000 members. Pretorius and Jafta (1997:217) as well as Anderson (2004:106) follow Oosthuizen's numbers. This figure is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, Sundkler (1976:44) speaks of Le Roux being followed into Dowie's Zion Church by 150 members. Secondly, he mentions that "Le Roux himself estimated that he" went independent with "three-quarters" of his DRC mission members, a figure of about 1500, if Oosthuizen's (1987:19) statement that "between 1893 and 1900, Le Roux grew his DRC mission congregation to 2000<sup>30</sup> members" is taken into consideration. Both Sundkler's (1976:44) 150 members and Oosthuizen's (1987:20) 400 require a major leap of faith to arrive at 5000 members in three years. However, Le Roux's estimate of "three quarters" which works out to 1500 members is within the range of possibility (Sundkler, 1976:44). It may be that Sundkler (1976) mistakenly deprived the number 1500 of a zero to make it 150.

Pieter le Roux, who was ordained as an elder in the Zion Church while his wife was ordained as an evangelist on 31 July 1904 by Daniel Bryant, had black evangelists, some with their own congregations, working with him (Dowie, 1904b:855). In his report to the General Overseer of Zion, Alexander Dowie, Bryant

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<sup>30</sup> Sundkler (1976:24) writes in the footnote that he heard it from Le Roux himself that in his 7 years of ministry as a DRC missionary, he had sprinkled 2000 Natives.

mentioned “three able native evangelists, who give their whole time to the work, besides many whom [Le Roux] sends out ....” These were: Daniel Nkonyane, “whose church was almost five kilometres” from Wakkerstroom, Muneli Ngobese, with a church of two hundred in Zandspruit, thirty-two kilometres from Wakkerstroom and Fred Lutuli (Dowie, 1904b:855). The above information is important in that it highlights the presence of black Zionist leaders so early in the history of Zionism and the fact that Le Roux did not minister to one congregation, meeting under one roof, but multiple congregations under black leadership.

The year 1906 saw Bryant going back to America for almost ten months, leaving Le Roux in charge of his Johannesburg congregation and as the acting overseer of Zion in South Africa (Sundkler, 1976:42). This prolonged absence from Wakkerstroom was to be first of the many absences caused by events in the Johannesburg Zion congregation. His absences loosened his tight control over developments among the Zionists in Wakkerstroom and led to the appearance of phenomena, which have become peculiar to black Zionism. As Sundkler (1976:50) writes:

[o]n his return from the Rand, Le Roux found in the Wakkerstroom Zion one group in white robes, seated on one side, and others in ordinary clothes sitting on the opposite side.

The white robes came from prophecies and visions, followed by use of coloured apparel in healing as well as staffs, which were initially utilised as protection against lightning but then became healing tools (Kiernan, 1994:69). Other innovations, which had appeared in the absence of Le Roux, included the use of “prophecy as a diagnostic, healing and edification tool” (Kiernan, 1994:69). Kiernan (1994:69) asserts that Le Roux “disapproved strongly” of these developments.

The arrival of John Lake in Johannesburg and the embracing of Pentecostal doctrine by the Zionist congregation there piqued Pieter le Roux’s curiosity (Sundkler, 1976:52-53; Burger & Nel, 2008:91). He came over to this city, became convinced of the Pentecostal doctrine and joined the movement (Sundkler, 1976:53). Nonetheless, he did not stop his involvement with his Wakkerstroom Zionist congregation until 1913 when he left for Johannesburg to pastor the former Zion Tabernacle, which had become the mother assembly of the newly formed Pentecostal church, the AFM (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:230; Maxwell, 1999:250; Burger & Nel, 2008:74, 94). Between 1913 and 1926, “Le Roux would make periodic appearances at

Wakkerstroom, where his wife was still based and was involved with the congregation” (Sundkler, 1976:42; Burger & Nel, 2008:94). By this time, several former black Zionist leaders from the Wakkerstroom group had become independent.

### **3.2.4 The significance of Wakkerstroom**

Wakkerstroom, a ‘mother’ of black Zionism, was a place of real African empowerment whereas Doornfontein, the ‘ground zero’ of Pentecostal revival in Southern Africa, became a place of African disempowerment. This is the argument Motshetshane (2015) appears to be advocating. Using his argument as a lens yields an interesting view of the evolution of Zionism and black Pentecostalism.

Wakkerstroom starts out as a place of conviction and defiance: conviction, because here Pieter le Roux chose to oppose his church’s (DRC’s) position regarding “the truth of divine healing” (Sundkler, 1976:21). This truth, though known from the pen of Dr Andrew Murray, who was the moderator of the church, was not to be taught openly and certainly not to blacks (Nel, 2005; Burger & Nel, 2008). Le Roux defied the missionary committee and conviction won. In 1900, the experience of this truth was brought home to the Le Roux family by the ministrations of Charles Sangweni, one of the congregants, to his supposedly dying daughter (Sundkler, 1976:22). Her healing emboldened them to resign their posts as missionaries for the DRC, despite exposing themselves to the intolerable hardships they were later to encounter.

Oosthuizen (1987:19) gives credit for the growth of the Wakkerstroom Zion Church to “dedicated black preachers” who took “the message of Zion far and wide.” Divine healing, as was being taught and practised among these believers, resonated with their African spiritual background, a point which Manala (2006:104) emphasises, that “African traditional religion must be taken seriously” for it “sets the tone of how an African sees and experiences the world.” Of the other Christian missions undertaken among Africans, none had as positively articulated themselves on divine healing as the Zionists did. African leadership, with Eurocentric theological formation which some continued even after going independent, displayed the same dismissive mentality to the existential needs of the African context as that of white missionaries (Manala, 2006:58).

The message of Zion transformed the characters of these African converts, their socio-economic relations (Sundkler, 1976:43), and best of all, made sense

culturally and spiritually—just as Manala (2006:104) says: “African religion ... colours all aspects of life.” Thus, when Pieter le Roux resigned from Zion in favour of the newly established Pentecostal work called the AFM, black Zionists in Wakkerstroom defied Le Roux and the leaders of this newly formed church by seeking to retain their identity as Zionists (Sundkler, 1976:53; Oosthuizen, 1987; Kiernan, 1994:69). Oosthuizen (1987:26) goes further to explain the importance of the name 'Zion' to the Wakkerstroom congregation thus: "Zion symbolized protection." This was not a superstitious exercise as names convey great significance for Africans. The name 'Zion' invoked the sense of the sacred, images of supernatural interactions and victory over persecutions resulting from holding Zionist beliefs. The holding on to the 'Zion' name could also be taking a stance against being fully swallowed by a structure perceived to be overtly racist; as Erasmus (1996:34) points out:

[n]ot only was the name 'Zion' an important factor, but equally important was the strong domination by the 'whites,' who enforced westernised thinking on the Africans without their consent.

The AFM had, by this time, already separated the races at communion and the baptismal pool (Sundkler, 1976:54)—something which the Zionists in Wakkerstroom could have frowned upon considering their relations with the Le Roux family and the non-racialism of Dowie's Zion. Whatever their reasons, their defiance forced a concession from the leaders of the AFM: that the work in Wakkerstroom should remain with the label 'Zion' (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:230). Conviction won again—this time matters were different as, from 1910, some of these men began operating independently from their former leader. This was the beginning of black Zionism (Motshetshane, 2015:67).

### **3.2.5 The significance of Doornfontein**

Doornfontein is important to the history of black Pentecostalism because it was the original site of the first Pentecostal revival in the country and among African believers. As has been mentioned it is well attested that the American Pentecostal missionaries, led by John Lake and Tom Hezmalhalch, preached and started the Pentecostal revival at a “Native chapel” in 1908 (Nichol, 1966:50). Sundkler (1976:52)<sup>31</sup> concurs with Nichol (1966) in describing the venue of the first Pentecostal revival in South Africa as the “Native Chapel.” De Wet (1989:51) writes

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<sup>31</sup> Sundkler, (1976:52) footnotes his reference as being the AFM's newsletter called “*The Comforter*” of October 1913 supported by the minutes of the AFM.



that Lake et al. “started their ministry in a church for black people.” Anderson (2000:60) calls it a “black Zionist Church,” with Chikane (2008a:15) as well as Burger and Nel (2008:55) seeing it as a “predominantly black Zionist Church” while for Erasmus (1996:27), it was simply a “building in Doornfontein” where “all races attended the services, although the majority were black.” The blackness of the congregation, seen against the racist background and the subsequent intermingling of races hungry for revival, makes the Doornfontein revival analogous to the Asuza Street revival (Erasmus, 1996:27; Burpeau, 2002:22; Chikane, 2008a:15) in its power to demonstrate God’s choice to lift up social outcasts and overcome entrenched racial prejudice. If the narrative of the advent of South Africa’s first Pentecostal revival had ended with the racial intermingling (Burpeau, 2002:22), it would have been a good story, but as in America, racism made its appearance and reduced the miracle of Pentecost merely to glossolalia.

Before consideration of how a positive narrative turned sour for black Pentecostals, the issue of the religious affiliation of the black Doornfontein congregation before the Pentecostal revival needs consideration. Was it Zionist as Anderson (2000:60), Chikane (2008a:15) as well as Burger and Nel (2008:55) maintain, or not? According to Van Staden (1980:3), David du Plessis<sup>32</sup> wrote that the Goodenough family established “the African church in ... Doornfontein.” It was to this church that the Goodenough family invited Lake to minister because, according to Motshetshane (2015:76), its “Zulu pastor was on leave.” The Goodenoughs belonged to the American Board of Missions, which operated as the American Zulu Mission (AZM) (Collins, 1978:77; Motshetshane, 2015:75). According to this line of thought, the Doornfontein Native Chapel belonged to AZM. Burpeau (2002:118) corroborates this when he writes about the chapel “sometimes [being called] ‘Congregational American Mission.’”<sup>33</sup> Since the church affiliation of the Goodenoughs was with AZM, the Zionist identity of the Doornfontein congregation becomes debatable despite Burpeau’s (2002:118) synthesis in which the Zion church, “sometimes called ‘Congregational American Mission,’” is made the owner of the chapel. What cannot be disputed, though, is that the black church in Doornfontein became the herald and

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<sup>32</sup> Du Plessis was a former General Secretary of the AFM from 1936 to 1947 (Burger & Nel, 2008:126).

<sup>33</sup> It is clear from Motshetshane (2015:75) that the chapel could not have been a Zionist Church. Of the different names he mentions, none suggest any links with such a Church. Instead, the (white) Zionists come to this chapel later upon hearing about the Pentecostal revival and invited John Lake to their church, which became the centre of the dissemination of Pentecostalism (Motshetshane, 2015:78).

launching pad of the Pentecostal movement in Southern Africa—a witness to the transcendence of the racial, socio-economic and cultural boundaries of early 20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa as it was in this chapel that different races intermingled in search of the Pentecostal blessing.

The importance of Doornfontein to the history of black Pentecostalism further lies in it becoming a place where blacks were “squeezed out of the blessing of Pentecost” (Motshetshane, 2015:76), and after a stint at the white Zion Tabernacle in Bree Street, they were banished back to, leading to subsequent inhumane treatment by white (Pentecostal) missionaries. De Wet (1989:52) writes about the increased crowd, mostly white, attending the revival at Doornfontein, the establishment of cottage meetings and subsequent relocation of the revival to the white Zion Tabernacle at Bree Street in Johannesburg. From the influx of white Zionists, the black worshippers “became timid and ... crowded out,” although a semblance of racial mixing remained evident (Poewe, 1988:148; Motshetshane, 2015:76). This mixing continued even when the meeting relocated to the Tabernacle at Bree Street, until steps were taken to introduce segregation (Erasmus, 1996:27). Blacks were to be served Holy Communion after whites, baptised after them and ultimately were sent back to Doornfontein to worship separately in a building leased from Mrs Goodenough (De Wet, 1989:60; Erasmus, 1996:27). De Wet (1989:61) comments on the conditions she imposed on the black worshippers who were to use the hall thus: “[a]mongst the conditions of the lease was that they were not supposed to open the back doors, use water or the latrines.” He concludes by saying that Mrs Goodenough’s behaviour was motivated by racism.

On the basis of the above, Doornfontein also stood as a witness to the erosion of the Pentecostal promise of racial inclusion and dignity as the AFM introduced racial segregation within months of the revival. The black Pentecostals were marginalised and the stature of the white former Zion Tabernacle at Bree Street rose to that of the mother assembly of the new Pentecostal church, the AFM (Erasmus, 1996:27; Anderson & Pillay, 1997:230).

### **3.3 The AFM’s revolving door**

The first decade of the AFM presents a contradictory reality in that it appears that on the one hand, attempts were made to bring the Pentecostal message and experience to other church formations (Burpeau, 2002:16) while on the other, some

black Zionists were moving away from the AFM to establish their own denominations (Poewe, 1988:147). Lake's initial plan of undertaking missionary work among the indigenous population was not going smoothly because of active mission work even by indigenous clergy. He turned to pentecostalising other churches (Burpeau, 2002:16) and inviting independent black churches to join the AFM. Hence, De Wet (1989:63) tells of a circular, written in Zulu and Sotho, which the AFM issued in order to invite black churches to join it. In the same way, it is recorded that Lake addressed the Anglican church, the 1909 African Methodist Episcopal (AME) conference in Bloemfontein (Maxwell, 1999:250), a congregation of the African Native Baptist Church (of William Leshega) in Boksburg, and many white Zionist congregations from Krugersdorp to Cape Town (Maxwell, 1999:247), all with the intention of pentecostalising them.

Maxwell (1999:247), who paints a picture of the spread of early South African Pentecostalism, attests to Lake's pentecostalising mission as a "take over [of] a tabernacle or church." He writes about an Afrikaner missionary associated with the AFM thus:

In November 1909 ... Kretschmar<sup>34</sup> wrote a remarkable report on the expansion of the movement into the Orange River Colony: 'whole native churches have been converted, and whole native churches have given their hearts to God' (Maxwell, 1999:249).

Clearly, assuming that churches were constituted by the converted, what Kretschmar calls "conversion" by "whole native churches" must imply pentecostalisation and not a turning to Christ by these churches. It is probable that Kretschmar was referring to the forty-five AME ministers and their congregations who were unhappy with the authorities of their denomination, were addressed by Lake at their Bloemfontein conference in 1909, and decided to join the AFM (Maxwell, 1999:250-251). This probability is strengthened when one considers that Kretschmar was based in the Orange Free State and served with John Lake as a member of the council of the AFM (De Wet, 1989:62). Surely, he would have been at the conference in 1909 to witness such a historical spectacle of forty-five congregations joining the AFM en masse.

Lake's forays into the established churches and seeking to introduce Pentecost, did not yield the desired results as Burger and Nel (2008:55) state [that the Americans]

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<sup>34</sup> Whereas Maxwell (1999) renders this name 'Kretschmar,' De Wet (1989:62) writes it as 'Kretzman.'

...did not anticipate the vehement reaction of the historical churches and the steps they took against their members who attended services conducted by the Pentecostal brothers.

The withdrawal of some black Zionists, after a concession was made that they keep to the label 'Zion' instead of adopting the AFM name (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:230), must have been disappointing and represented the unravelling of a dream. The AFM showed interest in bringing in and keeping black Zionists as part of the white led Pentecostal movement; hence their attempt to merge with the Zion Apostolic Church under Elias Mahlangu in 1915 and 1916 (Klaver, 1965:15). The Zionists were not willing to play second fiddle and rejected these invitations. In the document, *50 years of blessing in the Bantu Church*, the Zion Apostolic Church appears in the meeting or conference of 1915 where it was decided that a meeting was to be called between ZAC and the AFM Native Conference, which was under white supervision. They wanted to discuss co-operation (Klaver, 1965:15); the meeting took place on 8th December 1915. It nevertheless failed to achieve its intended co-operation, despite the overwhelming support by the AFM delegation (Klaver, 1965:15). Although the reasons for the rejection of the move by the ZAC are not clear in the document, it may be because the AFM had rejected the prophecy that ZAC be the leading church in the merger and the vehemence of Samson Ntanzi against the use of a church uniform (Klaver, 1965:18).

To decipher the reason why some black leaders chose to stay on in the AFM while others left is difficult. That there were indignities visited upon blacks both in the church and in society is beyond question. The demand for cheap labour by capital and the state's willingness to enact laws such as the Land Act of 1913, which pushed many black men to offer their labour for a pittance as well as the complicity of missionary Christianity, is well known (Jabavu, 1928). According to (Plaatje, 1914:21), it became "unlawful for Natives to buy or lease land, except in scheduled native areas." Even in those areas, he notes the difficulty of doing so. The call Lake et al. made to black churches to join the AFM fitted well with the designs of the state that black organisations should not be independent of white control (Sundkler, 1961:70; De Wet, 1989:63). Access to land for church and school buildings as well as appointments as marriage officers were intentionally made difficult for black pastors and churches to have unless they were under white leadership (Sundkler, 1961:70). It is plausible that the above played a role in encouraging black churches to join the AFM.

Maxwell (1999:250) states that some of the forty-five AME congregations that had joined the AFM after the 1909 Bloemfontein AME Conference left “as soon as they received funding.” Burton (1934), referring to the receipt of funds, speaks of a “large cash injection” being made by Lake. How probable is it that some of the congregations that had joined the AFM would leave under this circumstance, so that it appears their sole reason for joining was monetary? They would need to have received large amounts of money to achieve whatever their goals were, for them to leave immediately.

Even then, it makes no sense why they would opt to leave as doing so would not facilitate access to church and school sites as well as to other benefits potentially accruing to being part of a white led church. On the other hand, these AME congregations already had experience of being under benefactors who gained more from the relationship with those they were meant to benefit. Is it not possible that the forty-five former AME ministers and their congregations left the AFM because it failed to fulfil some unknown promises made when they were lured into its organisation? It could also be that the congregations that left did so because they could not accept the racism levelled against blacks. In that case, whether a group stayed or walked out of the AFM boiled down to the personal propensity and choice of the leader concerned. An illustration of this would be Edward Lion, about whom Burger and Nel (2008:205) report that “[i]t was a problem ... to submit to authority and to obey the rules and laws of the AFM.” He left. Yet Elias Letwaba, a man who endured racial abuse in ministering to white audiences (Burton, 1934:60), considered whites “benefactors of his people” and remained a member of the AFM until his death in 1959 (De Wet, 1989:71).

The difference between the groups that left the AFM and those that remained lay in the independence of the former from white supervision and interventions. This favoured unhindered indigenisation of the Zionist-Pentecostal gospel received from white Zionist and Pentecostal missionaries. Bond (1974:14) decries the indigenisation project undertaken by the independents and blames the missionaries’ failure in Bible teaching and organisation for the appearance of what he calls “primitive tribal religion” and a “garbled form of Christianity.” Interestingly, despite the claimed “tight control” of white missionaries, those remaining in the AFM lived semi-independently due to “vast distances and absence or shortage of means of transport” to convey missionaries to remote villages and farms (De Wet, 1989:124). The rapidity

with which black converts spread the Pentecostal message and established new congregations rendered attempts at control ineffective (De Wet, 1989:124). This allowed for indigenisation among black Pentecostals in the AFM—something reluctantly acknowledged by Hwata (2005:99) as “Zionist infiltration.”

### 3.4 The founding leaders of Zion and black Pentecostalism

The role played by white Zionists such as Pieter le Roux, Edgar Mahon, Johannes Buchler and John Lake in the emergence of the black Zionist movement has been acknowledged. It has also been noted earlier that most black Zionist fathers stemmed from Le Roux’s Zion Church in Wakkerstroom. The focus of this section is therefore on black Zionist leaders who worked with Le Roux, later parted ways with him and established their own churches, as well as on some early black Pentecostal leaders. It needs to be remembered that though these leaders are discussed separately, they were actually part of the same Zionist-Pentecostal movement under John Lake and Pieter le Roux.

#### 3.4.1 Fountainheads of black Zionism

The following names emerge whenever the beginnings of black Zionism are discussed: Daniel Nkonyane, Elias Mahlangu, Paulo Mabilitsa,<sup>35</sup> JC Phillips, Ezra Mbonambi,<sup>36</sup> Edward Lion<sup>37</sup> (who, according to Anderson (2004:107) came out of Elias Mahlangu's church to form his own),<sup>38</sup> and Ignatius Lekganyane (who at first

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<sup>35</sup> Sundkler (1961:49) stated that Mabilitsa was “the best educated of the lot” but did not indicate what grade he passed, only that he could write English. Besides this, he then mentioned the founding of a school in Alexander by Mabilitsa. Sundkler (1961:49) further notes that Mabilitsa was of royal blood.

<sup>36</sup> Sundkler (1976:85) speaks of Mbonambi in the context of discussing Job Chiliza of the African Gospel Church. Job had been a member of Mbonambi's Zionist Church, which Sundkler describes as one of the most “uMoya [Spirit] charged and less reputable.” He does not elaborate further. According to a newspaper article, *Esaze Mdhloti* (1915:3), Pieter le Roux visited Mdhloti where Mbonambi was stationed, and a church building and a school were planned to be built. Le Roux is mentioned as the overseer (*umngameli*) of the AFM while Mbonambi is credited with the establishment of many AFM congregations in “KwaZulu.”

<sup>37</sup> Edgar Mahon won Edward Lion to Zion (Moripe, 1996a:14). He later met with Lake and was brought into the fold of the AFM—being already an established Zionist healer and evangelist (Burger & Nel, 2008:204).

<sup>38</sup> The idea that Edward Lion seceded from Elias Mahlangu is problematic for three reasons: the year of secession is placed at 1920. However, Lekganyane left Mahlangu's ZACSA in 1917 for Lion's ZAFM (Moripe, 1996b:156; Sundkler, 1976:65). His leaving Mahlangu would not make sense if Lion had still been under the former's leadership. Secondly, Kgatle (2016:50) mentions Lion's Basotho delegation as having attended the AFM's 1918 Native Conference. Thirdly, the official magazine of the AFM as quoted by De Wet (1989:126), wrote in 1921 that Lion had ceased co-operating with its headquarters nine months previously. This points to Lion having been still affiliated with the AFM in 1920, not ZACSA.

was supervised by Elias Mahlangu but affiliated with Edward Lion before establishing Zion Christian Church).

Of all these early Zionist leaders, only Lion's church used the full name of the AFM together with Zion. The leaders who left the AFM during and after World War 2 later followed this trend. The rest of them were clearly showing closer affinity to Dowie's church in the manner they named their churches.<sup>39</sup> For example, Daniel Nkonyane named his church "Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion." This was the name of Dowie's church in America but without the "Holy Spirit" part. Elias Mahlangu named his church the "Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa." This was close to the name of Dowie's South African church—of course without "of South Africa." Paulo Mabiletsa's church was "Holy Apostolic Church in Zion" while Phillips had his named "Holy Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion" (Anderson, 2001:97).

The list of black Zionist leaders would be incomplete without Christinah Nku of the Saint John AFM, who was baptised in 1924 into the AFM by Rev Nkitseng and remained in the AFM until she founded her St John's AFM in 1939 (Landman, 2006:3); and P Mosito, EJ Mokoena, T Taupedi, J Moropa and A Masilo, who together founded the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission (RAFM) in 1946 (Moripe, 1994:57). There is a possibility of a forgotten earlier secession that gave birth to Saint Paul AFM under one Prophet Petros Mloi (Matsepe, 2004:16). This church supposedly left a church called "Five Apostles Church of America" in 1926; the latter's headquarters are in Evaton. The inclusion of Nku, Mloi and the RAFM six is based on an expanded meaning of Zionism (Sundkler, 1976:92) adopted in this research to encompass Apostolic Churches deriving from the AFM during or after World War 2.

The oldest Zionist churches were established between 1910 and 1925 by black ministers who served with le Roux in Dowie's CCCZ and followed him into Pentecostalism, albeit hesitantly (Isichei, 2004:202). The earliest of the black Zionist founders with clear connections to the AFM was Daniel Nkonyane who left Le Roux and the AFM around 1910, followed by Elias Mahlangu in 1917 (Anderson, 2004:107) and Edward Lion in 1920 (Anderson & Pillay, 1997:231).

The churches they established came to be classified by scholars as "Zion cities" to differentiate them from the "Zion-Apostolic type" which emerged after the Second World War (Pretorius & Jafta, 1997:218). The distinction does not accomplish

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<sup>39</sup> See Anderson, A.H. 2004. *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, p.107. The information includes the years of cessation and names of the churches these men established.

much as the latter churches also hold pilgrimages to their headquarters. The RAFM stands out as the only one of these churches that does not conduct such pilgrimages. The Zion cities aimed at creating spaces of freedom where believers could congregate, build community with each other, and worship God (Pretorius & Jafta, 1997:217). At the core of these churches was a concern for healing effected through "spiritual means" (Isichei, 2004:204). Daniel Nkonyane led the way in the establishment of a Zion City in Charlestown in 1910, which Pretorius and Jafta (1997:218) consider prototypical of the rest.

### **3.4.2 Fountainheads of early black Pentecostalism**

The discussion of early black Pentecostalism takes place in the context of the AFM that experienced some of its black leaders leaving and forming Zionist churches. Leaving the AFM meant freedom from strictures imposed by white supervision,<sup>40</sup> thus enabling them to continue the process of contextualisation of the Pentecostal message and practice into indigenous culture. Among those who remained in the AFM, were Elias Letwaba, Shezi, Charlie Sangweni,<sup>41</sup> Samson Ntanzi,<sup>42</sup> Petros Mkwanyane (Maxwell, 2006:43), Andrew Oliphant and John Moroane<sup>43</sup> (Morton, 2016:10), all mentioned within the first decade of the AFM.

Oliphant and Moroane were overseers together with Letwaba in the "Native Council" of six, which was put together in 1910. In keeping with the spirit of the times, the three black overseers were regarded as assistants to the three white members of the Council (De Wet, 1989:95; Molobi, 2008b:9; Morton, 2016:10). They did not last in this role as Oliphant left in 1918 after his failed proposal that the "Native Conference" secede from the AFM (Erasmus, 1996:30). He was in favour of greater powers for black ministers in matters affecting their people and had, consequently, issued ordination certificates to ministers. This right was reserved to the white Executive Council (Erasmus, 1996:30). Moroane was accused of being an Ethiopian minister (Sundkler, 1976:46). The accusation was based on his failure to observe the taboos against use of medicine, smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages (Sundkler,

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<sup>40</sup> Here Pieter le Roux's consternation at the developments among Zulu Zionists comes to mind.

<sup>41</sup> Charlie Sangweni was one of the Wakkerstroom Zionists who remained in the AFM. It appears he moved to the Rand and pastored a church in Soweto (Klaver, 1965:25).

<sup>42</sup> According to Klaver (1965:25), Ntanzi was already educated when he converted to Pentecostalism in 1914. He was ordained into the ministry of the AFM in 1916 by PL le Roux.

<sup>43</sup> Sundkler (1976:46), in a direct quote probably from an AFM source, renders the name as Moroane whereas Molobi renders it Mowane. In both instances, it is not clear what sources were used.



1976:46). He might have left the AFM after this accusation as his name appears nowhere. After the pastoral oversight of Moroane and Oliphant, the AFM closed the door to blacks becoming overseers—only retaining Letwaba until his death in 1959 (De Wet, 1989:71).

### 3.5 Characterisation of early black Pentecostalism and Zionism

The situation in Wakkerstroom provides a window into developments among the early Zionists and black Pentecostals in the AFM, which puts into context the supposed “Zionist influence,” because the AFM built on the foundation of Zion congregations and theology (Burger & Nel, 2008:28). According to Chikane (2008a:21), the former Zion Apostolic Church, which refused to part with the name ‘Zion’ when its leader, Pieter le Roux, joined the Pentecostals, became “AFM in Zion” or “Zion AFM.” The name “Zion AFM” is better associated with Edward Lion, firstly as the name of the AFM in Lesotho during his pastoral oversight (Burger & Nel, 2008:250); secondly as the name of his independent denomination after 1920 (Sundkler, 1976:65). The Zulu Zionists, who clung to the name ‘Zion’ and were under the leadership of Elias Mahlangu, used “Zion Apostolic Church” while they were still working closely with the AFM (Erasmus, 1996:33). After their secession, they added “of South Africa” to this name. Black Zionism as is known today would later emerge from this source. Le Roux’s reaction to certain liturgical developments, which had taken place in his absence, particularly the staffs carried by Nkonyane Zionists, created the first fissure as Molobi and Chikane (2008a:21) write that

[w]hen le Roux returned from the revival in Johannesburg he disapproved of the practice of carrying *izikhali*.<sup>44</sup> This led to a rift between the Nkonyane and the Magubane groups. Nkonyane broke the relationship with the AFM whilst the Magubane group remained.

Among the black leaders who worked with Pieter le Roux were those who agreed with his restrained approach to the activity of the Spirit while others favoured a generous response to perceived spiritual urges within them.

#### 3.5.1 Characterisation of black Pentecostalism

Part of understanding the characterisation of black (classical) Pentecostalism requires appreciating the presence of blacks at the founding of the AFM in 1908. Els (2007:56) correctly writes of blacks being there at the beginning of the revival,

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<sup>44</sup> The word “*izikhali*” translates into “weapons” but refers to the long sticks the Zionists carry as a liturgical prop believed to ward away evil and sometimes used in healing (Draper, 2016:58-59).

although he does not mention in what capacities. From this revival, Pentecostalism is said to have spread rapidly among blacks (Burger, 1999:22; Els, 2007:56), with Burger (1999:22) attributing the growth to two factors: the “missionary mindedness” of both John Lake and Pieter le Roux as well as the “attractiveness” of Pentecostalism to the Africans. Although no elaboration is given, he describes the result of this attractiveness as “Pentecostalism easily [becoming] clothed in indigenous form” (Burger, 1999:22), a significant point to remember in the discussion on the characterisation of black Pentecostalism.

The above statement by Burger (1999:22) points to the exercise of agency by early black Pentecostals, the majority of whom preferred the name ‘Zion’ and were associated with Le Roux’s Zionist work in Wakkerstroom (Erasmus, 1996:33). Indigenisation emerged from them, given opportunity by Le Roux’s absences from the area because of the events at the Zion Tabernacle in Johannesburg (Kiernan, 1994:69). Sundkler (1976:53) describes Nkonyane as the de facto leader of Zionists in Wakkerstroom during these absences and credits him with introducing several innovations. Le Roux was so “strongly” opposed to the liturgical innovations that he was inclined to dismiss those responsible (Kiernan, 1994:69)—but he did not. However, the disagreement over these innovations led to Nkonyane leaving the AFM in 1910 (Chikane, 2008a:21) and to the beginnings of black Zionism (Maxwell, 1999:252).

For Moripe (1996b:155), the Zionist innovations around the use of prophecy as a “diagnostic, healing and edification tool” (Kiernan, 1994:69), and of visions and dreams (Poewe, 1988:149) “play a very important role in the life of an African.” From these visions, dreams and prophecies came, such as “white robes followed by use of coloured apparel in healing as well as staffs” (Kiernan, 1994:69). The secessions by Nkonyane and later by others, did not do away with Africanised Pentecostalism as is evident in the church documents used in the writings of De Wet (1989), Khathide (2010), Burger and Nel (2008), etc.

The AFM’s Native Conference of 1929 stands out as a watershed moment in which certain practices, thought to be unbecoming of Pentecostals, were confronted and prohibited (Burger & Nel, 2008:243; Molobi, 2008a:7). The discussions of these practices and their prohibition were again picked up and amplified almost fifteen years later in the 1940s (Burger & Nel, 2008:243). The issues concerned the “habit” or “custom” among blacks of “wearing waist coats, clerical collars,” cords, sashes,

surplices and carrying of crosses, with prayer women wearing special frocks (De Wet, 1989:107,112). Burger and Nel (2008:242-249) further record shoe removal during communion, feet washing, widespread use of holy water, beating of drums, dancing around the sick and instances of polygamy. Khathide (2010:44) adds a description of the black AFM Pentecostals in Natal, as it was then known, now KwaZulu-Natal, in the 1950s as inclined "to follow more the teaching[s] of the Law in the Old Testament than ... of the New Testament" and proceeds to describe how men had "long hair and long beards."

The above descriptions of black Pentecostalism amplify and confirm Anderson's (2001:16) and Maxwell's (2006:54) words that Zion-Apostolics in South Africa and Zimbabwe looked "the same as the early Pentecostal leaders who donned white robes, carried staffs, had shaved heads, long beards and taught Old Testament laws." Next to "Pentecostal" and in parenthesis, he writes "AFM" as indication that the black AFM must have had a general Zionist appearance, both in South Africa and Zimbabwe. These descriptions, though sounding unusual to modern Pentecostals, give an idea of the appearance of black believers, common in the AFM until the 1950s when the quest to rid the church of this look was in earnest (Klaver, 1965:16). Indigenisation of Pentecostalism was born from African inspiration, innovativeness, and mutual influence with and from fraternal bodies in the Ethiopian and independent Zion-Apostolic traditions with which black Pentecostals interacted.

### **3.5.2 Characterisation of Zionism**

In Southern Africa, Christian Zionism historically refers to an African church tradition steeped in the teachings of Alexander Dowie of the Christian Catholic Church from Zion City near Chicago, USA, and the AFM of South Africa (Sundkler, 1961:54; Armitage, 1976:62-63; Kiernan, 1994:73). Before the advent of Pentecostalism, Zionists believed in the imminent coming of Christ and practised triple immersion, divine healing, avoidance of both traditional and Western medicine, pork, alcohol as well as tobacco in accordance with the teachings of Alexander Dowie, the Zionist Church founder (Oosthuizen, 1987:21). The AFM took these teachings in *toto* (Clark, 2009:175-176), with the addition of the baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by glossolalia (Lapoorta, 1996:169). Pieter le Roux joined the AFM with his black Zionists who were soon baptised in the Holy Spirit, thus becoming Pentecostal (Morton, 2014:29). However, those who would become the founding

fathers of black Zionism parted ways with Le Roux and the new Pentecostal church, the AFM, which he had joined (Motshetshane, 2015:67).

Black Zionism was part of the move by African Christians of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to assert their agency in religio-cultural, socio-economic and political matters against missionary Christianity. It followed the emergence of the Ethiopian church movement yet differed with it in that the Ethiopians kept to the liturgies of the Western mission churches from which they had seceded (Sundkler, 1976:16). They were also educated and held to a pan-African outlook while black Zionist leaders were more oriented towards African traditional culture, believed in the Pentecostal inspiration of the Spirit and were generally less educated (Sundkler, 1961:125). Bengt Sundkler led the way in opening the world of black Zionism to scholarly interest and initially considered it a “bridge back to heathenism” (Sundkler, 1961:55) but subsequently appraised it positively, according to Togarasei (2005:372). This positive appraisal of the Zionists began with Hollenweger (1972) labelling the movement ‘African Pentecostal’, a tradition Anderson (2000) continued. The reaction of the leaders of the three main Pentecostal denominations, the AFM, Full Gospel and Assemblies of God, was immediate and scathing:

[a]ll the Bantu groups as mentioned in your manuscript are not Pentecostal. It is a grave mistake to classify all ecstatic African groups under Pentecost....I must reject with all seriousness the referring to these Zionists as “Pentecostal Churches” (Hollenweger, 1972:171).

The denouncers were objecting to a religion which felt at home in the Old Testament, had its beliefs based on it, and appeared more African (Sundkler, 1961:277; Poewe, 1988:148,150). In the Old Testament, Zionists found inspiration and confirmation for their visions, dreams and prophecies. Consequently, they adopted the following practices: wearing church uniforms; removal of shoes when at holy places (Poewe, 1988:149); carrying of the prophet's staff (Isichei, 2004:197); sacramentally using water baptism—which was by triple immersion—as means of incorporation into the believing community and of cleansing (Anderson, 2000:48); wearing of long hair and beards by men; and avoiding pork, alcohol, smoking as well as medicine. Abstinence from pork, alcohol, smoking and use of medicine were derived from Dowie's Zion Church (Lapoorta, 1996:169).

Anderson (2000:48-49) further describes Zionism as having no formal theological position, conceiving salvation as healing of sickness and deliverance from evil, which is emphasised and mediated through symbolic objects. The Bible, the

uniform, its colour, the staff, the water and immersive baptism, have all been used symbolically in the rituals of Zionism (Isichei, 2004:197), something that attracted denunciation of Zionism as “unChristian,” “heathen,” an embarrassment to Western Pentecostal sensibilities, and so forth (Hollenweger, 1972:171; Larbi, 2002:150). Anderson (2004:108) describes all the above as the “biggest distinguishing features of these churches.” Some of these practices are said to have been behind Pieter le Roux leaving the CCACZ for the AFM (Isichei, 2004:201), a point whose importance lies in its underscoring the early appearance of Zionist peculiarities.

### **3.5.3 Differences in characterisation of early black Pentecostalism and Zionism**

There do not seem to be differences in the characterisations of early black Pentecostalism and Zionism. However, the possibility exists that there were congregations that did not wear church uniforms and did not appear generally Zionist because of leaders such as Samson Ntanzu, who, as early as 1915, vehemently opposed church uniform and possibly other Zionist practices in the AFM and continued to do so even in the late 1940s (Klaver, 1965:18; Burger & Nel, 2008:243). His stance, like that of Paul Mabiletsa, once a member of Nkonyane’s uniform wearing, staff bearing Zionists, was in line with Pieter le Roux’s (Sundkler, 1976:59). The number of such congregations though, would be negligible considering that even the celebrated Elias Letwaba acknowledged his liking for the uniform and his wife’s role in its introduction (Burger & Nel, 2008:243). This is important considering that Morton (2016) credits Letwaba with single-handedly increasing the AFM’s black membership after the departure of the Zionists.

## **3.6 Conclusion**

The main aim of this chapter was to uncover and present the similarities between early black Pentecostalism in the AFM and Zionism. To do so, it was necessary to go back to Wakkerstroom and Doornfontein, two places of significance to both movements, discuss the founding leaders with a view to locating them within the context of the Zionist-Pentecostal synthesis that was the AFM in its early years, then discuss the characterisation of these movements. How these two movements were characterised in literature is critically important to the argument the dissertation wants to advance—that black Pentecostalism was Zionist and that there was cultural

reorientation that resulted in evangelical Pentecostalism becoming pervasive in the AFM.

Below is a tabular representation of how Zionism and early black Pentecostalism compared in specific categories, appearing in the left-hand column. Only Pentecostal writers whose work refers specifically to the AFM have been cited in the third column.<sup>45</sup>

**Table 3.1 Comparison between Zionism and black Pentecostalism until 1960s**

	<b>Zionism</b>	<b>(Early) black Pentecostalism (1908 – 1960s)</b>
<b>Theological parentage</b>	Dowie and the AFM	Dowie and the AFM
<b>Cultural orientation</b>	African traditional	African traditional, tombstone unveilings, feasts of condolences
<b>Biblical orientation</b>	Old Testament, Spirit-centred – dreams, visions and prophecy	Old Testament, Spirit-centred
<b>Soteriology</b>	Baptismal regeneration	Baptismal regeneration
<b>Educational status</b>	Low to no education	Low to no education
<b>Socio-economic status</b>	Poor	Poor
<b>Appearance (Uniform)</b>	Blue, white and green colours Dustcoats, collars, sashes, surplices and crosses	Blue, white colours, Waistcoats, collars, sashes, surplices and crosses
<b>Appearance (Facial)</b>	Long hair, long beard	Long hair, long beard
<b>Baptism</b>	Adult triple immersion in a river	Adult triple immersion in a river/dam
<b>Taboos</b>	Abstain from pork, alcohol, smoking	Abstain from pork, alcohol, smoking
<b>Healing (attitude)</b>	No doctor or medicine	No doctor or medicine
<b>Healing (Means)</b>	Laying hands, holy water, ash, cords, prophetic staff	Laying hands, holy water, dancing around the sick

<sup>45</sup> All but one of these writers are members of the AFM.

## Chapter 4

### Similarities and differences of Zionism and black Pentecostalism in the AFM

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter argued for the similarities found between black Pentecostalism in the AFM and Zionism based on comparisons in what has been written about the two movements. However, it did not explore the reasons for the similarities or dissimilarities of these movements. In this chapter, possible explanations are given for the origin and existence of these. In doing so, emphasis is placed on black Pentecostalism's similarity or difference to Zionism and not on an equal assessment of their (dis)similarities to each other. Pentecostal leaders have advanced some of these explanations while others come from the pens of scholars of Pentecostalism. The researcher has also taken the liberty to advance, based on existing information, further explanations which are intended to function together with some of those already proposed. Lastly, the role played by racialised oversight, leadership structures, access to material resources and ministry training is also discussed in relation to differences between the two movements. The conclusion arrived at, in explaining the (dis)similarities of Zionism to (from) black Pentecostalism in the AFM, revolves around the centrality of black agency grounded in common history, theology, liturgy, socio-economic and African religio-cultural background as well as proximity to white Pentecostal ideas and leadership.

Before proceeding to the explanations, it is important to present a portrait of early black Pentecostalism as it emerged from the consulted literature.

#### 4.2 The emerging picture of early black Pentecostalism

The following picture emerges from the previous chapter: the pastors wore clergy collars, a not-so-surprising fact as the then President of the AFM, Pieter le Roux, wore one himself (see photo between pages 48 and 49 of Sundkler's *Zulu Zion* (1976)). The 1929 Native Conference spoke against clergy collars and church uniforms among other things (Klaver, 1965:16; Burger & Nel, 2008:243; Molobi, 2008c:105). However, Le Roux seemed to have had a tolerance for both, firstly because he wore a collar himself and secondly, because according to Molobi and Chikane (2008a:21), when faced with congregations belonging to two of his

Wakkerstroom leaders wearing church uniform, his anger was directed against the use of prophetic staffs, not other targets. This was before or at about 1910 as Nkonyane was still in the AFM then. The men wore waistcoats,<sup>46</sup> with older ones possibly having long beards. The older women wore white hats, blue blouses with white collars and black skirts while the young ones put on white hats, blue collars, white blouses and black skirts (photos in the possession of the researcher).

Interestingly, the pattern of the AFM women's church uniform bore a resemblance to the Methodist Women's Manyano uniform, which Mkhwanazi (2002:35) describes as "a white hat, a white bib (collar) and a black skirt." Mkhwanazi's (2002) description leaves out one item which is unmistakable to anyone who knows Methodist Women's Manyano uniform, the red blouse. Lebeloane and Madise (2008:7) mention it in their description of differences between Methodist Women's Manyano uniform and that of the Young Women's Manyano of the same church. The black colour of the AFM women's skirt raises one's curiosity because black was never part of the Zionist colour scheme. Despite the inexplicable black skirt, these women's uniform with its blue and white colours showed the historic association with the Zionist Church movement (Anderson, 2000:49).

Attending a church service of the early black Pentecostals, one would have heard beating of drums, seen washing of feet, healing by means of holy water and "dancing around the sick," besides laying on of hands (Burger & Nel, 2008:249). They believed in the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Spirit, and experienced visions, dreams and prophecies. They shunned pork, alcoholic beverages, smoking and the use of medicine (Burger & Nel, 2008:249). The black pastorate officiated over "unveiling of tombstones" and "feasts of condolences" (Burger & Nel, 2008:246). Some of the members were in polygamous marriages; hence the decision to refuse them baptism and a rule that Pastors must be married to one wife, and only through Christian rites (Burger & Nel, 2008:242).

### **4.3 Explaining the origins of similarities in Zionism and early black**

#### **Pentecostalism in the AFM**

The above portrait of early black Pentecostalism in the AFM differs markedly from the way in which black Pentecostals have been presenting themselves for

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<sup>46</sup> Although in all the literature describing the wearing of waistcoats by the AFM men, none mentions its colour, the researcher possesses a photograph, which shows them wearing light blue waistcoats.



decades. Maxwell (2006:54) writes of the similarities of the early black Pentecostalism in the AFM and Zionism in one line only, making it easy to overlook. In most literature apart from De Wet (1989) as well as Burger and Nel (2008), the view one gets of (classical) Pentecostals hardly suggests the picture this study is foregrounding. Even these authors treat the Zionism of early black Pentecostals as a momentary lapse and not something constitutive of black Pentecostalism.

How did black Pentecostalism come to be remarkably like Zionism? The sections following hereafter attempt an answer to the above question by exploring the following explanations deduced from various scholars: Zionist infiltration, mutual exchange between Zionism and Pentecostalism, missionary failure, liturgical ‘copyism’ and black exercise of spiritual as well as cultural agency.

#### **4.3.1 Zionist infiltration of black Pentecostalism**

Hwata (2005), a pastor of the AFM in Zimbabwe, writes about the “Phases of Pentecostalism” through which his denomination has gone. Of the four phases he discusses, major categories are the Spirit-centred and Christ-centred phases in Pentecostalism. In his view, the AFM in Zimbabwe was Spirit-centred until the 1970s when it took on a Christ-centred focus (Hwata, 2005:144-145)—something that was true also for the South African black AFM.<sup>47</sup> He describes the Spirit-centred phase positively in terms of holiness, healings, and exorcisms, and the like (Hwata, 2005:109-110). He also describes this phase as having been characterised by “emotionalism” (Hwata, 2005:102), “inclination towards African culture” and a

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<sup>47</sup> The Zimbabwe AFM was not a separate jurisdiction from the AFM in South Africa. Willard Wilson, the white missionary who oversaw the work in Zimbabwe from 1938 (Maxwell, 2006:55), sat on the executive council in South Africa (Burger & Nel, 2008). Even in the days of the superintendence of E Gschwend (1971 – 1989) who allowed the black AFM in other countries to alter regulations, he would not permit a unilateral change of the constitution governing the black AFM in South Africa, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and etcetera. (De Wet, 1989:119). Black Pentecostals in all these countries were in contact with each other due to the migrant labour system that drew men from the surrounding countries into South Africa. Another argument for the similarity of Black Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe and South Africa specifically may be inferred from Mathole (2005). He presents Nicholas Bhengu of AGSA as the father of evangelical Pentecostalism—a Christ-centred form of Pentecostalism that emerged in the 1940s (Mathole, 2005:184). Richard Ngidi of the AFM was his convert (Mathole, 2005:184; Burger & Nel, 2008:253). Ngidi’s contribution to a different form of Pentecostalism in the AFM is immense, as evidenced by the 176 congregations he planted between 1972 and 1984 (Burger and Nel, 2008:256). He also influenced and later worked with Reinhard Bonnke (Burger & Nel, 2005:256), whom De Wet (1989:120) credits with criss-crossing South Africa, planting new black AFM churches from 1975. These three, Bhengu (AGSA), Ngidi and Bonnke (both AFM), are credited by Mathole (2005:184,190) with the rise of evangelical Pentecostalism across the continent. This was at a time when the Zimbabwe AFM was also becoming Christ-centred in its theology and practice.

spirituality dominated by the Old Testament. He then seems to blame the Zionists and Apostolics: that they infiltrated and influenced the AFM (Hwata, 2005:112).

Leaders of another Pentecostal denomination, the United Apostolic Faith Church in South Africa, shared Hwata's (2005) view of Zionist influence over their black Pentecostal members. Anderson (2000:63) tells a story of how on a pastoral tour in Swaziland, a pastor's son brought a cup of water for him to bless. During another trip he took with another black pastor, a congregation wearing green and white uniforms welcomed them. They (the pastors) spoke to the people about the uniforms to which the latter proceeded to take them off, possibly to put them back on once the pastors had left. Even in this case, these black Pentecostal expressions were seen, by this denomination (at least its leaders), as "Zionist influences from outside" (Anderson, 2000:82).

The descriptions of these goings-on, which Hwata (2005) blames on infiltration of the AFM by Zionists, find an echo in Khathide's (2010) descriptions of black Pentecostals in Kwazulu-Natal in the 1950s. There again, these descriptions are associated with Zionism. The consequence brought about by this "infiltration," according to Hwata (2005:99), was the "difficulty to differentiate between black AFM members and the Zionists." This could not have been the problem of the members themselves or of black leaders. Burger and Nel (2008:226) hint at who would have benefited from the distinctions between Zionists and black Pentecostals—white missionary leaders. According to these writers, government officials mistook Zionists for AFM members and this threatened the work of the missionaries (Burger & Nel, 2008:226). It is not clear how the missionary work would have been harmed though. However, the historical context was that of the AFM, which was desperately seeking to be accepted as a church by both the Afrikaner Reformed Churches and government. From its inception to this period, the AFM was registered as a company and not a church. Its low view of historic churches ensured that it never felt any loss at not being registered as a church (Burger & Nel, 2008:64), happy to regard itself as a mission until a new generation succeeded the pioneer generation in the 1940s (Burger & Nel, 2008:135-136). The attitude change the AFM went through in the 1940s led to it identifying more closely with Afrikanerdom, which was experiencing a rise in nationalistic sentiment (Lapoorta, 1996:54; Burger & Nel, 2008:135). During this period, especially in the 1950s, some classical Pentecostal habits, such as clapping of hands while singing, were rejected by the white section of the AFM and

Dutch Reformed style architecture, including pulpits, was introduced (Maxwell, 1999:252; Burger & Nel, 2008:134-145). Therefore, the quest for acceptance by, and the need to be regarded as respectable by, the Afrikaner Reformed Churches, government and society may have been drivers behind the need to differentiate between the AFM's black members and Zionists, in tandem with divorcing itself from its earlier Pentecostal practices. The above raises the issue of whether this makes Hwata (2005) to be correct in blaming an extraneous source for the existence of Zionist-like beliefs and practices in the AFM? The answer may lie in the next topic.

#### **4.3.2 Mutual exchange between Zionism and Pentecostalism**

Hinting at possible similarities between Zionism and black Pentecostalism in the AFM, Maxwell (1999:252), a Pentecostal and a historian, asserts that the AFM did not have black members except for the ones under Mahlangu's Zion Apostolic Church. This was before Mahlangu left the AFM. As indicated, Pieter le Roux's attitude towards some liturgical innovations introduced by black ministers in his Wakkerstroom congregation, amongst whom was Mahlangu, led to several of them departing from the AFM and subsequently founding the black-led Zionist movement (Maxwell, 1999:252). According to Maxwell (1999:252), the AFM had "symbiotic" relations and "exchanged members and ideas" with the independent black Zionist movement.

Indeed, a relationship did exist between the AFM and the Zionist Church between 1909 and 1915. Anderson and Pillay (1997:230) report that in 1909, the two entered into an agreement to recognise each other's credentials. As part of this agreement, Pieter le Roux was to continue as ZAC missionary in the Transvaal. By this time most, if not all, white Zionist congregations had joined the AFM (Clark, 2009:176), leaving ZAC as a mostly black movement. Le Roux attracted most of the black following of ZAC who strangely went with him to the Pentecostals but refused to part with the name 'Zion' (Erasmus, 1996:33). The American overseer of the South African Zion Church, Modred Powell (Sundkler, 1976:59; Millard, 1995:109), even became a member of the AFM council in 1909 (Blake, 2005:51) and was the editor of its magazine from 1910 to 1911 (Powell, 1910:2; Lake, 1911a). Cracks appeared in the relationship between these two movements in 1915 when Modred Powell differed from le Roux regarding the ordination of one Elija Mdlalose (Sundkler, 1976:71). Thereafter, he accused Le Roux of misleading black Zionists by his use of the name "ZAC" when he had effectively defected to the AFM (De Wet, 1989:34)—a possible

reference to Le Roux's relocation to Johannesburg in 1913 to take the post of lead Pastor of Central Tabernacle and the President of the AFM (Maxwell, 1999:250). In the same year, 1915, the two movements discussed merging—something favoured by the AFM delegates while ZAC preferred co-operation with the Pentecostals and maintenance of its independence (De Wet, 1989:34).

This period between 1909 and 1915 is the only one in which Maxwell's (1999:252) claim of "exchange of membership and ideas" between the AFM and Zionism would have made sense as it almost suggests a working relationship between the two. Outside of this period, there could not have been an intentional exchange of membership between the two because black Zionists left the AFM, almost in protest. Therefore, whatever "exchange of membership" that was supposed to have happened could only have been because of members of each body abandoning the other. Even then, any influence from a member of the other camp suggests sufficient similarity between the two movements already—something that is not acknowledged.

The plausibility of Maxwell's (1999) claim of "symbiosis" between Zionists and the AFM outside of the 1909 – 1915 period exists at a level other than the institutional one. The AFM as an institution was under white control. Its white members and missionaries could not be in a symbiotic relationship with black Zionism. However, his assertion makes sense in reference to black Pentecostals when considering his other claim that local congregations of the AFM enjoyed relative autonomy (Maxwell, 1999:252). This autonomy would not have existed deliberately, but as De Wet (1989:124) explains, would have developed because of missionaries' lack of adequate resources to cover distances involved and the rapid spreading of the work. In this context of seclusion from constant monitoring by white missionaries, the possibility did exist for mutual influence to be exerted by people with sufficient similarities in culture and church background, resulting in a common practice of "feet-washing, women purification rituals, wearing of robes and carrying of staffs as well as following the Laws of Moses" (Maxwell, 1999:252).

#### **4.3.3 Missionary failure to educate and organise black Pentecostals**

Writing in the early 1970s, Hollenweger (1972:151) seems to have startled white Pentecostal denominational leaders with his assertion that Zionists were Pentecostals—"African Pentecostals" to be precise. These leaders opposed this

ascription. Bond (1974:14), who is described by Watt (2001:62) as a chairman of the Assemblies of God from 1967 to 1987, perceives Zionism as “holding onto a degenerated Christian teaching,” thus representing a “garbled form of Christianity” and “primitive tribal religion.” Bond (1974) further tells of the attitude of Pentecostals towards Zionist Churches and the people he blames for the existence of Zionist Churches, as follows:

...no Pentecostal church would accept kinship with them although it is most probable that the old-time Pentecostal missionaries in South Africa must bear some degree of responsibility for their existence. Most of these old-time Pentecostal missionaries who ‘brought light of Pentecost’ to South Africa did not do a good job of Bible teaching nor of church organisation. They failed to ground their converts in scripture and they failed to establish a viable relationship with the indigenous peoples they sought to help.

By “Pentecostal church,” Bond (1974) refers to the white-led Pentecostal denominations including their black followers. Anderson (2005:69) describes the attitude of black evangelical Pentecostals<sup>48</sup> as being distrustful and dismissive of Zionists. He ascribes the origin of this attitude to white Pentecostals. Concerning the “old time Pentecostal missionaries” Bond (1974) refers to, one may think of John Lake, a man who was considered as being “more Zionist,” than Tom Hezmalhalch (Kalu, 2008:56) and Pieter le Roux who, though of a subdued and restrained nature (Ngada & Mofokeng, 2001:13), played an important role in the birth of the black Zionist movement (Sundkler, 1976:66). The combined duration of the white Zionist leadership of Hezmalhalch, Lake and Le Roux over the AFM, was thirty-five years.

Interestingly, the missionary failure to “train [their black converts] in Bible knowledge and organisation” did not affect only Zionism as Bond (1974) seems to suggest. Black Pentecostalism in the AFM was affected also by the same failure. In the thirty-five years of the leadership of Hezmalhalch, Lake and Le Roux, the AFM held a low view of formal education, including that for the ministry (Hwata, 2005:106); hence it was “not compulsory” (Burger & Nel, 2008:217). This was despite there having been concerns about the quality of Bible knowledge in the black section of the AFM as early as 1914. Although Le Roux was reportedly concerned about this too (De Wet, 1989:129), his use of annual ministers’ conferences as

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<sup>48</sup> The phrase ‘Black evangelical Pentecostals’ refers to denominational Pentecostals in churches like the AFM, Assemblies of God, Full Gospel Church of God, etcetera and the neo Pentecostal ministries such as Grace Bible Church. All these consider themselves to be born again and while they share the same concern for the ministry of the Holy Spirit and healing as the Zionists, they doubt the Christian credentials of the latter (Anderson, 2005:69).

teaching platforms paled in comparison to Letwaba's initiative in building and operating a ministry school in 1924 (Hwata, 2005:105). This school was not even considered as an official training facility because of the predominant anti-education bias in the AFM at the time (Hwata, 2005:106).

The AFM expected overseers to give basic training to black ministry workers, though they themselves were untrained (De Wet, 1989:130). The "geographic spread of the work, its rapid growth and lack of good transportation" for the missionaries, meant that blacks received insufficient training (De Wet, 1989:124). This led to a situation described by De Wet (1989:125) in the following manner: "black workers were on their own—preaching what they thought was right and doing what they thought best." One could be mistaken for thinking that the above describes Zionists, but it portrays the situation in the AFM, among black Pentecostals. If Zionists had developed a "garbled form of Christianity" as Bond (1974:14) says occurred, due to training and organisational oversight being neglected by missionaries, by the same argument black Pentecostals "developed a garbled form of Christianity." This so called "garbled form of Christianity" has received a positive appraisal by some missiologists who conclude that it represents a "contextualization of the gospel into indigenous African culture" (Clark, 2001:81,95; Anderson 2004:108; Uka, 2007:9).

#### **4.3.4 Liturgical 'copyism' by black Pentecostals**

One other way in which the look and practices of early black Pentecostalism can be explained is through the concept of copying or 'copyism.' As an explanation, copyism credits black Pentecostals with some agency even though it suggests lack of originality. In Sundkler (1976:51), Pieter le Roux seems to subscribe to this view regarding the adoption of church uniform because he considered its adoption and other related paraphernalia as "romanisms." Makhubu (1988:86) echoes Le Roux with his insinuation that the appearance of church uniform among Zionists might have been brought about by seeing the liturgical vestments worn by "Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Presbyterians." He notes the leading role played by Methodists in introducing church uniforms (Makhubu, 1988:86), which, according to Mkhwanazi (2002:34-35), they adopted in 1908. Brown (1996) seems to advance a similar view to that of Makhubu (1988). He refers to the possible role of "liturgical vestments worn by missionaries" and "religious literature ... targeted to children" in the adoption of robes by Shembe and by extension, black Zionists (Brown,

1996:229). Maxwell (1999:251) agrees with Brown regarding the role of religious literature and adds the influence of Dowie—both through photographs of the Johannesburg Zion Tabernacle choir with its white flowing gowns as well as his priestly garments which appeared in his newsletter, *Leaves of Healing* (Oosthuizen, 1987:29). Burger and Nel (2008:249) also seem to subscribe to the same explanation regarding the use of holy water which they acknowledge to have been “widespread” among black Pentecostals of the AFM. For them, this practice derived from the Roman Catholic Church and “independent churches.”

Makhubu (1988), Brown (1996) and Maxwell (1999) were addressing the appearance of church uniform among Zionists and not among black Pentecostals of the AFM. However, their views are mentioned above because Zionists were, at first, members of the AFM and the appearance of church uniform among them took place while they were still in this church, a point acknowledged by Maxwell (1999:252). Locating them with their uniforms in the AFM, challenges the view that black Pentecostals were influenced from outside, as the two were once one. The departure of Zionists from the AFM did not do away with the Africanisation of Pentecostalism in this church, as is evident in the descriptions of De Wet (1989), Khathide (2010) as well as Burger and Nel (2008). Therefore, it is difficult to imagine black Pentecostals copying from Zionists or any other source—save Alexander Dowie, who was the progenitor of both black Zionism and black Pentecostalism. What these other explanations do is to ignore the role of the Holy Spirit in the origin or adoption of church uniform and other supposed Zionist peculiarities. This is the main complaint of the AICs in their booklet, *African Independent Churches* (1985:16), that what has been written about the origin of their churches and their practices neglects the role of the Spirit in favour of other explanations. This will be discussed under “black agency” later in the chapter.

#### **4.3.5 Historico–theological and liturgical links between Zionism and black Pentecostalism**

In his *Zion and Pentecost*, Anderson (2000:80) speaks of the common theological and historical parentage of Zionism and Pentecostalism in South Africa. His evidence revolves around the roles of Pieter le Roux and John Lake, both of whom had been ministers in Alexander Dowie’s Zion Church as noted earlier. These two converted most Zion congregations in South Africa to Pentecostalism and founded the AFM upon an adventist, levitical and charismatic theology and a practice

of triple immersion—all as taught by Dowie (Maxwell, 1999:251; Burger & Nel, 2008:28; Anderson, 2008:27-28; Clark, 2009:175-176; Matsepe, 2004:5). Although the founders of black Zionism separated from the AFM, they continued its teachings and practices (Oosthuizen, 1987:35). This is what Anderson (2000:80) refers to when he writes about common historico-theological and liturgical links between the AFM and Zionist churches.

The raising of this argument of such links between Zionism and Pentecostalism, which Lapoorta (1996:168-169) and Moripe (1996a:xiii) also acknowledge in their writings, was intended to advocate for an extension of the Pentecostal label to include Zionist churches (Larbi, 2002:146). Although arguing for historical, theological and liturgical links, Anderson (2004:108) concedes the existence of a gap, between Zionism and Pentecostalism, due to Zionists' penchant for use of "symbols and rituals" and the abhorrence of the same by Pentecostals. Here he agrees with denominational Pentecostals, their leaders of the 1970s and scholars such as Larbi (2002) and Maxwell (2006) who consider this penchant a deviation. Larbi (2002) and the Pentecostal denominational leaders rejected the Pentecostal credentials of Zionists, but not so Maxwell (2006). Maxwell's (2006:52) view is of a nuanced progressive deviation from the initial look and teaching of Pentecostalism through the influence of either the Zionists or the Old Testament. Although for Anderson (2004:108), the developing Zionist peculiarities, which he seems to accept as deviating from Pentecostalism, express "authentic African Christianity," a view Moripe (1996b:160) expresses too, for Larbi (2002:150) and the Pentecostal denominational leaders (Bond, 1974:14), they were perceived as a falling away from true (Pentecostal) Christianity.

There is no evidence that Anderson (2000) intended his argument regarding common links to explain the relationship of Zionism and early black Pentecostalism specifically. His invocation of the 'former-white-Zionist-leaders-turned-Pentecostal' and Dowie's signature teachings of divine healing and taboos mentioned earlier, without including black Pentecostals-turned-Zionist founders and the existence of Zionist peculiarities in the AFM, serves as the basis of this observation. In the previous chapter of this study, black Pentecostalism in the AFM was shown to have exhibited what were thought to be Zionist peculiarities, even as late as the 1960s. Anderson (2000) does not factor this into his argument for common historico-theological and liturgical links between Zionism and Pentecostalism—perhaps



because the latter, blind to its indebtedness to white and Western culture and refusing to accept the possibility and validity of other forms, needed to be negotiated with.

It is clear though, that the liturgical links of Zionism and Pentecostalism were not restricted to the practices in the first few years of the AFM but continued until the 1950s before the AFM successfully pressured its black Pentecostals to shed their Zionist look and practices. Instead of Zionism “developing away from Pentecostalism over time” as Anderson (2008:25) states, it was black Pentecostalism that “developed away,” under duress, to conform to the white Pentecostal expectation. The portrait of black Pentecostalism presented earlier in this chapter serves as evidence of a Zionist black AFM, particularly considering it was put together from the disapproving deliberations of various leadership structures of the AFM in the 1940s and 1950s.

#### **4.4 (De)merits of the explanations regarding the emerging portrait of black Pentecostalism?**

Naturally, the above explanations cannot have equal merit in explaining the origin of Zionist peculiarities in the AFM. This section attempts to evaluate which of these explanations is believable.

##### **4.4.1 Zionist infiltration**

Of the five explanations offered above, the one proposing “Zionist infiltration” is least convincing because it portrays early black Pentecostals as hapless people who could just be “infiltrated.” Infiltration also suggests subversive intentionality by the Zionists, but facts do not support such intention. Why would any Zionist, having left the AFM for independent ministry, covertly come back into the AFM to introduce the peculiarities of Zion to members of a church they had abandoned? Would it not be easier to convince the hapless black Pentecostals to leave the AFM for the newly established Zionist churches instead? These are rhetorical questions, which assume the answer to be a “no,” because Zionists could not have influenced black Pentecostals, certainly not by infiltration.

##### **4.4.2 Mutual exchange**

The view that there was “mutual exchange” between Zionism and black Pentecostalism does have some merit if one is aware of the length of time during which the two movements were similar. The challenge is that Maxwell (1999:252) seems uninterested in shining light on the matter. He speaks of “exchange of

members and ideas” between the two movements and notes that the external appearance of Zionists in Zimbabwe was like that of “early AFM preachers” with their “white robes, long beard and staff” but does not indicate the extent in time of that appearance. There is an implication that for the period Maxwell (1999) is considering, the AFM (in Zimbabwe) no longer had the look, and perhaps the message also, of its “early ... preachers.” The impression left by Maxwell (1999) with his reference to “early AFM preachers” is that of a period when Elias Mahlangu, who is credited with the introduction of “white robes, long beard and staffs,” was still part of the AFM. With Mahlangu’s departure from the AFM, it becomes unclear what the “exchange of members and ideas” between the AFM and Zionism involved, unless one recognises black Pentecostalism as having been Zionist for decades since the inception of the AFM—something Maxwell (1999) does not necessarily do.

#### **4.4.3 Missionary failure**

The notion of missionary failure to organise and train Zionists in the Bible, espoused by Bond (1974) who was the chairman of AGSA at the time of publication of his article, has been deduced from the writings of De Wet (1989) also to have applied to black Pentecostals in the AFM. Accepting that the development of peculiar Zionist symbolism and practice emerged in an environment of minimal to “no white missionary involvement” makes sense, but only if taken together with other factors that have not been discussed above. These include an African religio-cultural background, the socio-economic location of these black Zionists and Pentecostals as well as the exercise of agency that the AFM had instilled in its teaching on the “priesthood of all believers” (Maxwell, 1999:248).

However, in raising the issue of missionary failure, Bond (1974:14) did not include black AFM Pentecostals, because at the time he wrote, the project of reorientation of black Pentecostalism away from Zionism had been proceeding for a few decades already. This project could easily have been seen as correcting the ‘failure’ that gave birth to a “pretentious and aberrant form of Christianity with heathenish manifestations that was Zionism” (Bond, 1974:14), with which the AFM had been infected. Despite the white Pentecostal denominational leaders’ negative views, that which Bond (1974) considered missionary failure was a providential opportunity which black Pentecostals, both inside and outside the AFM, seized and gave an authentic African response to. However, labelling it a missionary failure already hinted at a need for missionary correction which, in the case of the AFM, had

already started when Bond (1974) wrote. Supposedly, the independence of the Zionists was a hindrance to the much-needed missionary correction.

#### 4.4.4 Copyism

There is some merit in the attribution of Zionist expression of black Pentecostalism to copying from the available religious literature of the early 1900s and other church traditions. The picture of Alexander Dowie with his High Priestly garments on the pages of his church's newsletter, *Leaves of Healing*, may indeed have exercised some influence as Sundkler (1976:48) proposes, particularly regarding the use of blue, white and gold colours. The use of blue and white colours came to be pervasive in Zionist churches (Anderson, 2000:49), although green was another favoured colour. It may further be the case, as mentioned, that the sight of the Zion Tabernacle choir in Johannesburg, with its "flowing white robes," did have an influence too, as Oosthuizen (1987:29) argues. The comment about copying from Sunday school drawings infantilises these believers though. Nevertheless, one can concede that the appearance of church uniform, among other peculiarities, did not take place in a vacuum.

The pattern of the uniform worn by black Pentecostals of both sexes seemed to take after that of the Methodist Women's Manyano and Young Men's Guild. As previously noted, Mkhwanazi (2002:35) describes the Methodist Women's Manyano uniform as "a white hat, white bib and black skirt." He leaves out the conspicuous red blouse for which Methodist women are famous for. Madise and Lebeloane (2008:123) mention the red blouse for the women and in Madise (1999:29), the red waistcoat worn by members of the Young Men's Guild is mentioned. The black Pentecostals in the AFM used blue in their uniforms where the Methodists utilised red.

This similarity in patterns between the AFM uniform and the Methodist Women and Men's Guilds may suggest copying. According to Mkhwanazi (2002:34), the Methodist Women's Guild adopted their uniform just after 1908 whereas the Methodist Young Men's Guild only adopted their red waistcoat in 1938 (Madise, 2013:359). It is not clear when black Pentecostals adopted the uniform and how exactly it looked. Indications are that it appeared among the Wakkerstroom Zionists while they were part of the AFM as early as from 1910. Pieter le Roux's horror at finding some of his followers wearing church uniforms and carrying staffs during one

of his visits from Johannesburg and the fact that Nkonyane was still in the AFM is significant (Sundkler, 1976:50). He left the AFM around 1910 (Sundkler, 1976:56, footnote). Further, the insistence by Samson Ntanzu that Mahlangu Zionists should abandon the uniform took place in 1915—while they were still part of the AFM (Klaver, 1965:16). Any mention of the uniform during this period refers to the “white flowing robe” often associated with Mahlangu and there is mention of green belts among the Nkonyane and Magubane congregations in Wakkerstroom around 1910 (Molobi & Mahlobo, 2008:42).

Whether black Pentecostals copied from other church traditions or not, it is important to take note of the sources they themselves mention for the developments amongst them. In Sundkler (1976:48–49), the appearance of church uniform and other Zionist paraphernalia comes as their own initiative under the inspiration of the Spirit either through a dream, a vision or prophecy and interaction with Scripture.

#### **4.4.5 Historico-theological and liturgical links**

Historico-theological and liturgical links constitute Anderson’s (1993:5) argument for the inclusion of Zionism into a broad definition of Pentecostalism. Although there are those who resist efforts to include Zionism into the Pentecostal fraternity, there are scholars who stand with him. In this study, this argument is applied in the context of explaining the similarities between the two movements. However, this explanation alone fails to account for the similarities of black Pentecostalism to Zionism, especially regarding the liturgical aspect. For Anderson (2004:108), this aspect was the one in which Zionism “developed away” from Pentecostalism by introduction of symbolic practices and items in its liturgy. The evidence presented in this study however suggests otherwise. Zionism did not develop away from Pentecostalism per se, but from white Pentecostalism. The fact that the AFM leadership worked to rid black Pentecostalism of what they considered Zionist “tendencies,” to quote Khathide (2010:44), argues for a shared and similar developmental path, particularly around liturgy.

#### **4.5 Search for other explanations**

The explanations explored so far, although they have varying degrees of plausibility in accounting for the similarities between Zionism and black Pentecostalism in the AFM, still leave out an important cluster of explanations. This cluster comprises the argument for the African religio-cultural and socio-economic

background of black people in South Africa, as well as their taking responsibility for their response to the gospel.

#### **4.5.1 Religio-cultural roots**

Zionists and black Pentecostals were primarily Africans, not by living on the continent named Africa, but by the specific religio-cultural orientation and practices characteristic of the inhabitants of the continent over millennia. At the centre of African cosmology is the Elevated One, with the ancestors as emissaries and family or clan elders as well as other spiritual functionaries serving as priests and mediators (Thorpe, 1991:4). Within this cosmology, the spiritual and mundane are intertwined (Clark, 2001:81). The spirit pervades both the animate and inanimate and life is lived in reverence towards this pervasive spirit. Any malady experienced, is considered to have a spiritual origin (Togarasei, 2005:371) and can only be healed after the counsel of, or a ritual performed by, a spiritual functionary whose aim is restoration of balance (Thorpe, 1991:107). Adherence to instruction by spiritual functionaries who also include elders is critical to the functioning of an African society (Thorpe, 1991:106).

Africans needed no convincing about the creator God of the Bible, whom they immediately recognised as being the same as the Elevated One of the African religio-cultural world (Thorpe, 1991:108-110). Gospel values such as the love of neighbour, hospitality to strangers, and so forth were familiar to them, echoing the values of Ubuntu (Thorpe, 1991:110-111). The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ was easily understood in the light of their various sacrifices. The entrance of the Zionist-Pentecostal gospel with its concern for the body and its promise and exercise of spiritual power resonated deeply with the African religio-cultural world (Clark, 2001:82). Therefore, African cosmology aided the reception of the Christian gospel.

Writing about the conditions under which blacks received the gospel in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Walls (1996:90) paints a picture of disruption and powerlessness resulting from “white military victories, introduction of migratory labour and exposure to white people’s diseases.” Accepting Christianity was an adaptive mechanism into a new world, declares Walls (1996:91). The Bible and liturgical practices of the missionaries held great fascination as trade tools of the new religion, promising power to overcome challenges present in the African context and to secure success (Walls, 1996:91). The problem with missionary preaching was that it sought

rather to combat the supposed superstitions of Africans which were thought to be inspired by their cosmology, than speak holistically and meaningfully to Africans. Kalu (2005:261) blames the Enlightenment assumptions undergirding missionary Christianity. Because of these assumptions, missionaries ignored African needs, thereby rendering the gospel they preached powerless and irrelevant. One of the results was seen in African Christians going to church on Sundays while patronising traditional agencies and their solutions (Manala, 2006:50).

The translation of the Bible into African languages, certainly the greatest single contribution missionaries made to African Christianity, rescued Christianity from irrelevance. Africans discovered a world familiar to theirs in many ways—in both the Old Testament and the Gospels (Sundkler, 1961:277). It was a world of taboos, sacrifices, powerful men and women, prophets, spirits, miracles, and so forth. (Poewe, 1988:149; Moripe, 1996b:157). Africans warmed up to this Biblical world and later, spurred on by the Zionist-Pentecostal gospel, appropriated Christianity for themselves and spread it (Walls, 1996:92). Though the missionaries were pleased to have made Scripture available in African languages and were gratified by the interest the indigenous population showed, they were nonetheless upset with what African Christians did with the Bible—which to them appeared to be a superstitious appropriation of Scripture, breeding a syncretistic Christianity (Sundkler, 1961:55; Bond, 1974; Moripe, 1996b:157, Burger & Nel, 2008:36). Neither mainline nor Pentecostal missionaries could rejoice in the rapid growth of a Christianity derived from “early 20<sup>th</sup> century African preachers’ cultural assumptions and their understanding of missionary teaching” (Brock, 2005:132).

Of the churches embodying African Christianity, the two main traditions are Ethiopian Churches and the Zionist Churches. The former, though deemed to have maintained the doctrines, liturgies and government systems of their erstwhile missionary denominations (Duncan, 2015:199), had to respond somewhat to the deep yearnings of their members—resulting in what Sundkler (1961:55) says are affinities between these churches and the latter. Although black Zionists also kept to the doctrines of their Zionist-Pentecostal AFM heritage, they interpreted them within their cultural milieu and allowed their culture to inform further developments in expression of their faith (Togarasei, 2005:372). Hence, they bore the brunt of being considered “bridges to heathenism” which Sundkler (1961) initially believed to be the case, though he later recanted from holding this view, according to Togarasei

(2005:372). However, denominational Pentecostals and independent charismatics, influenced by the white leaders of the AFM, AGSA and the Full Gospel Church of God in the 1970s, maintained this attitude (Hollenweger, 1972; Bond, 1974). Interestingly, although it is customary to see Zionists as those who took the liberty to interpret their faith in terms of their culture and allowed it to inform further developments of the former (Togarasei, 2005:372), this also occurred among black Pentecostals who remained in the AFM. Understandably, both shared the same historico-theological background (Lapoorta, 1996:168; Moripe, 1996a:xiii; Anderson, 2004:106–108) and also participated in the common African cultural milieu (Khathide, 2010:44; Togarasei, 2005:372).

#### **4.5.2 The socio-economic situation**

Zionism and early black Pentecostalism not only had the above features in common, but also drew members from the same pool of the socio-economically marginalised black communities who had received little or no education. This is important in the quest to explain the similarities of black Pentecostalism with Zionism.

In describing the socio-economic condition of the people the AFM served, De Wet (1989:44) writes that “it must ... be noted that ... the AFM ... found fertile ground amongst the black community who were ... poor and disinherited.” Not only were black Pentecostals poor, they were also generally illiterate (Hwata, 2005:144-145). Despite their poverty and illiteracy, Hwata (2005:102,109) praises the depth of their spirituality and faith, albeit describing it as having been “emotional,” “riddled with spiritualised interpretations of Scripture” and “problematic doctrines” born of a “reading of Scripture which lack[ed] proper analysis.” His depiction of black Pentecostals resonates with Togarasei’s (2005:350) depiction of Zionism as mainly a movement of the rural illiterate poor whose understanding of Scripture has been questioned and concluded to be amiss. It is interesting how Hwata (2005:109) still credits those black Pentecostals with faith and holiness whereas Zionists hardly received credit. The same can be observed in Khathide (2010:44) who, despite their “Zionist tendencies,” credits black Pentecostals of the 1950s with genuine faith and holiness.

The similar socio-economic situation of both black Pentecostals and Zionists framed their experiences and affected their response to challenges found in their similar context. In such a context, church uniform, a liturgical matter in which the

Spirit was supposedly involved (Sundkler, 1976:48-49), is also found to be a response to the socio-economic challenges wrought by poverty (Molobi & Mahlobo, 2008:46). According to Makhubu (1988:86), among the AICs, church uniform was meant to shield the poor from the pressure to spend beyond their means on their Sunday wear. He supports this by narrating the following:

I remember meeting an old widow who used to wear a uniform, but now no longer does as her church has abandoned uniforms. She related to me how she was struggling to keep up with the expensive wear on Sundays and at conferences. She told me how she missed the simple, inexpensive ... uniform she was accustomed to (Makhubu, 1988:86-87).

Molobi and Mahlobo (2008:46) in their oral history of the AFM, confirm what Makhubu (1988) says about the role played by church uniform among the poor—that it aided the worship of God by taking attention away from concerns about what to wear.

According to Madise (2001:123), rural poverty and distance from health amenities located in towns and cities favoured the continued patronage of traditional healing. Even where these facilities were within reach, the philosophy behind Western medicine made little sense to blacks whose culture knew no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:91,677; Madise, 2001:125). To them, sickness was spiritual and its cure was likewise spiritual (Togarasei, 2005:371). Luckily, the Zionist-Pentecostal spirituality was agreeable to the African perception of the origin of disease in the spirit realm and provided spiritual means of healing (Clark, 2009:81). Because of this, Zionist-Pentecostals were able to shun Western and African traditional medicine at the same time while operating within an African cosmological framework (Madise, 2001:125; Hwata, 2005:98; Clark, 2009:81). Daneel (1970:44) and Togarasei (2005:372) concur that Zionists operated within the same framework as African traditionalists, drawing their healing methods from the same source while, according to Sundkler (1961:55), combating traditionalists at the same time. Black Pentecostals used holy water for healing (Burger & Nel, 2008:249) within this same context.

Lack of education in those early years was not the preserve of Zionists and black Pentecostals alone, but was also endemic among white missionaries of the AFM (Hwata, 2005:102). The AFM was, for some years, not interested in formal education—not even for ministry. Although it came to operate mission schools, it was



not as keen on education as a tool of evangelisation as the mainline missionaries were. Burger and Nel (2008:203) note that it ran schools attached to several mission stations in 1920. In the 1940s, missionaries were still asking for more schools because “natives ... refused to listen to missionaries who did not provide schools for their children” (Burger & Nel, 2008:204) and the AFM was mainly interested in evangelisation. Its apocalyptic beliefs drove it to focus on “get[ting] souls saved as fast as possible,” with the result that the “work [grew] so rapidly, ... faster than [they] could follow it up with supervision” (Burger & Nel, 2008:202). This situation reinforced the lowly station of blacks but at the same time afforded them the opportunity to draw from their own cultural resources rather than those of whites.

#### **4.5.3 Black agency in appropriation and spread of Zionist-Pentecostal gospel**

Black Zionist-like Pentecostalism was a spirit-empowered exercise in self-agency that threatened white control over definitions and expressions of what it meant to be Pentecostal in the AFM. Blacks were not passive recipients of the Zionist-Pentecostal gospel because the AFM laid emphasis on the ministry of all the converted. For many years, the sole requirement after conversion was Spirit baptism, which Hollenweger (1972:150) acknowledges as having been easily fulfilled by many blacks. The consequence was the spread of Pentecostalism across Southern Africa because of these spirit-filled black Christians (Chikane, 2008b:37), most of whom were simple mine labourers (De Wet, 1989:53-54,271; Larbi, 2002:142). Although presented as having been deficient in Bible knowledge, Hwata (2005:109) and Khathide (2010:44) consider their experience of the Spirit, their faith and holiness to have been genuine. Even their inclination towards the Old Testament appears to have been grounded in full awareness of their African audiences’ Hebraic cultural affinities (African Independent Churches, 1985:21). This led to the so called Zionist peculiarities. However, Poewe (1988) and Kiernan (1994:76) show that instead of these peculiarities being African intrusions, they were actually African interpretations, aided by the Old Testament, of the very Evangelical Protestantism they had received.

Black Pentecostalism with its characteristic Zionist-like beliefs and practices was an exercise in spiritual agency. For example, black Pentecostals pointed at the Spirit as the inspirer, by vision, dream or prophecy, of the adaptations they made in response to the gospel they received (Poewe, 1988:149; Molobi & Mahlobo, 2008:46). Sundkler (1976:48-49) reports about the introduction of church uniform, crosses, diagnostic use of prophecy, attending worship services barefoot, and so on.

Even the continuation of observing taboos around alcohol, smoking, eating pork and use of medicine, was itself confirmed to Nkonyane and others by the Spirit, according to Sundkler (1976:49-51). In the same way, Anderson (2000:65) writes that Elias Letwaba built an educational facility for black children and a seminary for black pastors because he “felt led by God to do so.” Interestingly, the white leadership at that time did not believe in the value of education. It would take years before they established an official training facility. Poewe (1988:148) is on record that Africans adopted the many Zionist peculiarities, which sat well with African culture, because Scripture, at least the Old Testament, was agreeable. Claiming sanction of Scripture and the guidance of the Spirit, blacks took ownership of the gospel and gave birth to a Pentecostalism agreeable to African sensibilities, while not outside the bounds of the Pentecostal gospel and spirituality.

#### **4.6 Explaining the differences between Zionism and early black Pentecostalism**

As much as Zionism and black Pentecostalism were similar in many ways, there were differences brought about by ideological oversight, leadership structure, access (or not) to Bible and ministry training as well as material resources. These four are discussed below.

##### **4.6.1 Ideological oversight**

From its inception, the AFM placed oversight of blacks at the regional and national levels in the hands of white missionary leadership (Lapoorta, 1996:52; Burger & Nel, 2008:233). The situation was only different in those regions where Elias Letwaba was the leader: Waterberg, Middleburg and Soutpansberg (Burton, 1934:90). This sufficed for as long as he was overseeing any of these regions. As mentioned, the highest leadership rank a black pastor could reach was as an assistant to a white overseer. From 1917, the national leadership of the black AFM was wholly white and remained so until the 1960s when an Executive Committee was formed which included some blacks (Burger & Nel, 2008:236). The 1970s saw white missionaries who were also district chairmen assisted by black leaders such as Richard Ngidi, D Nyamazane and J Mhlongo. These men appeared in an AFM missionary periodical called *Progress*<sup>49</sup> (1974) as assistants to CF du Toit, JP Kleynhans and LJ Scott respectively. The subordination of black clergy to white

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<sup>49</sup> The researcher saw the pictures on a page, which had the name ‘Progress’, and the year ‘1974’ as a footer. This page was in the possession of an elderly pastor of the AFM in Vereeniging. The periodical and its details could not be secured.

leadership was a government requirement issued in the aftermath of the Bambatha rebellion in which the government suspected black religious formations to have played a role (Davenport, 1978:153-154; De Wet, 1989:63; Millard, 1995:60-63; Pretorius & Jafta, 1997:215).

During all the years of white leadership over black Pentecostals, the latter were treated as children who could not be trusted with responsibility over their own affairs (Lapoorta, 1996:52). De Wet (1989:279) acknowledges this and points to its negative outcome as “local leadership never develop[ing] as it ought to have” done. Citing Bavinck (1960), De Wet (1989:279) states that “continued missionary oversight was an artificial” way of keeping “the young church ... immature.” Although Burger and Nel (2008:220,232-233) acknowledge the paternalism of white leadership over black Pentecostals, they make light of it because of the financial and material benefits the latter received. Exposure to inferiorising and racialised leadership, which came with such benefits, contradicted the experiences of black Pentecostal Zionists who had been with Pieter le Roux in Wakkerstroom. In Zion, before the formation of the AFM, they were central to decisions that affected their lives (Clark, 2005:144). In the words of the Daniel Bryant who was sent from the American Zion Church to oversee its South African chapter, “blacks in Zion were already paying tithes” when he got to South Africa in 1904 and running “self-supporting and self-propagating congregations” (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994:188). With the formation of the AFM, which built on the infrastructure and membership of the Zion Church (Maxwell, 1999:247), the black Zionists-turned-Pentecostal became marginal in the decision-making processes and structures of the new church (Clark, 2005:144). They became objects instead of subjects of mission. For those who left the racialized paternalism of the AFM behind and led themselves in their various church formations (Anderson, 2004:107), they were able to pursue their objectives unencumbered, albeit with difficulty since they were less resourced than those who stayed. Those who remained became recipients of white paternal benevolence, which unfortunately exposed them to affronts to their dignity.

#### **4.6.2 Access to material resources**

To reiterate, proximity to whites differentiated black Pentecostals from Zionists as it often meant possible access to material resources for the former. So long as whites were in charge, they did not mind spending on blacks under their charge, in the name of missions. From this angle, Burger and Nel (2008:220) write about

“benign white paternalism” as black Pentecostals appeared to benefit from the presence and leadership of white missionaries. They write:

Even though the history of the black Section is one of paternalistic control by whites, it is also the history of the ‘mother-Church’ taking care of the ‘daughter-Church’ with goodwill and through investment of time and finances (Burger & Nel, 2008:220).

Maxwell (2006:55) writes about the impact of the arrival of the Wilson brothers in Zimbabwe<sup>50</sup> in 1938. They were AFM missionaries from South Africa. On their arrival, they wanted to differentiate between dependent Zionists (black Pentecostals in the AFM) and independent Zionists (the Vapostori and other related groups) by using material resources to get rid of perceived Zionist appearance and practices among those in the AFM. These missionaries erected church buildings, resumed schooling and sent some AFM pastors to attend training in Johannesburg while utilising annual conventions to curb what they saw as Zionist practices (Maxwell, 2006:54). Acquiring sites and erecting churches was successful in differentiating black Pentecostals and Zionists in Zimbabwe after the government was convinced that the AFM operated normally like any church back in South Africa (Maxwell, 1999:259). The fear the government had of black independent clergy, of whom Zionists made up a greater number (Maxwell, 1999:257)<sup>51</sup>, meant continued lack of recognition and no access to sites on which to build churches. Writing about the South African situation, Burger and Nel (2008:228) note that “the White Section ... did help” in the acquisition of church sites, erection of simple halls to be used as church buildings and building of the manses for its black pastors. Black Pentecostal pastors such as Elias Letwaba and DS Mokoena were awarded marriage licences as early as the 1920s (De Wet, 1989:68; Anderson, 2000:65) because of their affiliation with the AFM, a white church—albeit it preferred to be regarded as a mission and not a church (Burger & Nel, 2008:64).

Although Maxwell (2006:54) asserts that Zionism (in Zimbabwe) and the AFM had the same look and message in the early years, the independence of the former

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<sup>50</sup> The name “Zimbabwe” is used retrospectively. The country now called Zimbabwe came to be officially so called only at the end of white minority rule in 1980 (“Zimbabwean Independence Day,” 2011). Before then, it was known as Rhodesia—named after Cecil John Rhodes whose British-South Africa Company had annexed the kingdoms of the Matabele and the Shonas and created Rhodesia in 1888 – 1893 (Davenport, 1978:136).

<sup>51</sup> Maxwell (1999:257-259) explains the attitude of the Zimbabwean colonial government, hostile to the AFM in general and specifically its black clergy, as being centred on relations with independent Christian movements, low education, lack of observance of territorial missionary fields of established churches and general failure to be part of the civilising mission.

from the white controlled AFM prevented them from accessing resources. The following reasons, which De Wet (1989:63-64) presents as having been motivators behind AICs seeking affiliation with the AFM in its first decade of existence, highlight the challenges that the Zionists must have faced because of their independence:

- The need for government recognition which would bring reduced rail fares, permission to buy wine, appointment as marriage officers
- Access to church sites which could only be permitted if a mission was under white supervision
- Possibility of theological training which they had hoped would then make it possible for them to be licensed as marriage officers
- Possible financial assistance to build churches.

Independence by black churches was characterised by deprivation and a lack of resources. Therefore, Zionism desperately needed these while black Pentecostals in the AFM were spared this desperation because white missionaries mobilised resources on their behalf. Over time, this access to resources created a chasm between the otherwise kindred movements, initially separated only by distance from white power.

The decline of Zionist practices in the AFM corresponded with the “tightening missionary grip” as those who would not comply left the church (Maxwell 2006:55). It appears as if the leaders of the secessionist AFMs preferred dignity with fewer resources to indignity with many resources. This is apt when one considers the lengths to which (some) missionaries went to impose their form of Pentecostalism. Willard Wilson, an American missionary serving the AFM, came to a conference in 1957 at Umtali, Zimbabwe, and proceeded to shave beards off grown men as if they were children (Maxwell, 2006:55). This was a flagrant disregard and disrespect for the bodily integrity of these black ministers.

#### **4.6.3 Access to Bible and Ministry training**

Bond (1974:14) blames “early Pentecostal missionaries” for their “failure to teach the Bible to their black followers” as being responsible for the emergence of black Zionism. Indeed, Bible and ministry training made a difference among black Pentecostals in the AFM. This training took place through annual conferences (De Wet, 1989:38; Erasmus, 1996:3) and from 1924, by undergoing ministry training at Letwaba’s Patmos Bible School (Hwata, 2005:105). The majority, if not all those, who

left the AFM and constituted the Zionist movement, had no way to receive Biblical input that was afforded the black AFM pastors. The emphasis on spiritual giftedness for ministry and the tendency to split away by those so gifted, made it difficult for anyone to make a progressive Biblical input to Zionism (De Wet, 1989:38). However, Zionists had great respect for the Bible, despite their inability in some instances to read it (Poewe, 1988:150). Years later, they wanted the AFM to train them in the Bible and organisational skills (Burger & Nel, 2008:247), but the AFM did not think highly of this opportunity, choosing to delegate the secretary of the black AFM to form “a separate association for them, if and when this would become necessary” (Burger & Nel, 2008:247). This response was inappropriate to the felt needs of Zionists for which they sought help from the AFM.

#### **4.6.4 Leadership structure**

The Zionist movement was made up of many different churches with differing structures and offices. Anderson (2000:48-49) describes the Zionist churches as led by bishops and prophets. Although the office of the bishop suggests bureaucracy, among the Zionists it was charismatic. The founding leader of a Zionist denomination would have had a vision, a dream, or a prophecy to start a church, often focused on the healing gift (Sundkler, 1961:109). Besides the charismatic nature of Zionist leadership, it was also dynastic (Sundkler, 1961:104). This hinted at clear choice of favouring an African leadership model in which succession is kept within the family of the founder as demonstrated by the following examples: Lion’s family in the ZAFM (Molobi, Mahlobo & Skhosana, 2008:84-85), Lekganyane’s in the ZCC (Sundkler, 1976:66) and Shembe’s in the African Baptist Nazareth Church (Sundkler, 1961:111). This was contrary to the experience of black Pentecostals in the AFM whose structures were determined and presided over by white leaders and were not specifically ecclesiastical as the AFM had registered under company law in 1913 (Burger & Nel, 2008:182). Anderson (2000:41) captures the situation well when he says, “from their ‘white’ parent bodies they tend to have inherited highly developed organisational structures, often with an abundance of functionaries and committees, and a complex constitution.”

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, a portrait of black Pentecostalism within the AFM was presented and various explanations were given for its similarities and

dissimilarities to Zionism. Pentecostal leaders have advanced some of these explanations while others came from the pens of researchers into Pentecostalism. The merits and/or demerits of these explanations were discussed and new explanations added, which were meant to function together with some of those already proposed. The similarities of Zionism and black Pentecostalism find better explanations through acknowledging black agency grounded in “common historico-theological and liturgical links” and common religio-cultural as well as socio-economic backgrounds of the members of the two movements. Indeed, the possibility exists of the black Pentecostalism adapting certain practices, as may have been the case with the appearance of the uniform. The differences of these two movements were most obviously in the white domination of black Pentecostalism and the independence of Zionists therefrom. Besides leadership dominated by whites, the AFM made use of modern bureaucratic structures while Zionism drew from African organisational ideas and was more inclined towards charismatic structures. Proximity to whites gave black Pentecostals access to material resources and ministry training, which their Zionist counterparts could not access, thus further differentiating between these two movements.

## Chapter 5

### Black Zionist-like Pentecostalism: a problem and its solution

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter sought to explain the similarities and dissimilarities between Zionism and black Pentecostalism extant in the AFM until the 1960s. Black Pentecostalism in the AFM began to shift from a Zionist-like form to an evangelical one, starting after the death of Pieter le Roux in 1943. The process of change was characterised by conflict and resistance within the ranks of black Pentecostals as change was demanded and driven from outside themselves. In this chapter, answers are provided to the following questions: who found Zionist-Pentecostalism problematic? How did they react to it and why? It will be shown that the white missionary leadership found Zionist-Pentecostalism objectionable for various reasons. Several strategies, which they adopted to transform black Pentecostalism away from its Zionist expression, will be discussed as well as the black response to this effort and the significance thereof.

#### 5.2 Reactions to black Pentecostalism

Rev Klaver, who was a white missionary and the treasurer of the black AFM's Executive Committee formed in 1962 (Burger & Nel, 2008:234), writes in his opening statement to the article celebrating "the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Bantu Church": "[i]n our work we have the old problem of the wearing of uniforms" (Klaver, 1965:16). He proceeds to mention the prohibition against the wearing of church uniform by the 1929 AFM Native Conference and the intensified effort to deal decisively with the "problem" in the 1940s as well as the subsequent departing of a group of pastors who, he concludes, "would not be taught by Scriptures" (Klaver, 1965:16). The significance of Klaver's (1965:16) opening words lies in its challenge to identify the "we" that "own[s] the work" (referring to the black AFM) and that had a "problem with church uniform." It further draws attention to the tenacity of the problem and makes it important to seek explanations for such. This section identifies Klaver's (1965) "we" with the white missionary leadership of the AFM and discusses reasons.



### 5.2.1 White missionary leaders as problem bearers

The context within which Klaver (1965) wrote was that of aggressive white domination over blacks, both in the church and society. The National Party had declared South Africa a republic and had withdrawn it from the British Commonwealth in 1961 (Davenport, 1978:289). Black political leaders had been jailed and some black communities relocated to make way for white settlement. Black Christians had been prohibited from attending church services in towns—an act that affected mostly the English-speaking churches because of their multiracial memberships in towns (De Gruchy, 1986:89). The AFM and the Afrikaner Reformed Churches were not affected as they had incorporated segregation into their organisation. Burger and Nel (2008:233) confirm the domination of blacks by whites, especially within the AFM, thus: "for many decades the control of the black work was in the hands of whites." They proceed to furnish details of how whites controlled the black AFM: "[t]he White Executive Council appointed a missionary superintendent who presided over an all-white missionary council elected in an all-white Annual Missionary Conference" (Burger & Nel, 2008:231). The Missionary Council, although established to "look after the affairs of the Bantu Church," had to seek the approval of the White Executive Council before implementing its decisions (Burger & Nel, 2008:228-233). Therefore, only that which received the sanction of the white leadership was allowable in the black AFM.

Klaver and other white missionaries represented the AFM as an institution, which according to its constitution at that point, was a white church (*The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (Private) Act 24, 1961:4*). Therefore, the "we" in Klaver's (1965) article referred to the institutional voice, which, though expressing white ideas and experience of Pentecostalism, considered itself normative and as such, did not need to identify itself as white. White Pentecostalism, as institutionalised and operating in the AFM, created a situation, which fitted Matsepe's (2004:17) description of the historical experience of South African missionary Christianity as one of colonialist oppression in the church. Colonial relationships favoured white ideas, culture and leadership while denigrating to the point of denial 'non-white' ideas, culture and leadership (Matsepe, 2004:17). Such an environment fostered grievances against white domination; this was true also in the black AFM where black agency in governance, hermeneutics and liturgical development was frustrated. Two specific events illustrate the frustration of black agency in governance, hermeneutics

and liturgical development. The first was the handling of the recommendations of the Native Missionary Committee elected by the Native Conference of 1927 in Mooi Street Tabernacle in Johannesburg. The second was the handling of the black ministers' practice of blessing water for healing by the 1942 and 1943 conference (AFM Native Conference, 1942, 1943).

The Native Missionary Committee elected in 1927 recommended to the 1928 Native Conference that Elias Letwaba, who had already been an overseer for a long time, must enjoy the same powers as white overseers. The committee further recommended that white ministers must desist from licensing black preachers who came to the Rand for jobs without consulting black ministers with whom these men fellowshiped (AFM Native Conference, 1928). Another recommendation was that no black ministry candidate should be ordained who had not attended the Patmos Seminary. Lastly, it recommended that black ministers be issued with permanent ordination certificates as opposed to issuing certificates valid for a year only. These recommendations, although seemingly constructive, created a panic among the white missionaries in the conference, especially AW Preller who was the superintendent (AFM Native Conference, 1928). He unilaterally ruled out equal treatment of overseer Letwaba, saying that this was opposed to government legislation. He also led the conference to retain the practice of issuing ordination certificates valid only for a year. Although the issue of ministry candidates being required to attend Patmos Seminary was accepted by the conference (AFM Native Conference, 1928), there was no willingness to enforce it, as evident from the resolution of the 1934 Native Conference held at Western Native Township. According to this resolution, anyone who had served for a long period in the church, was faithful in tithing and testified to the baptism in the Holy Spirit with requisite evidence, would be ordained upon recommendation by their district (AFM Native Conference, 1935). At the time, white missionaries led all districts (De Wet, 1989:70), except for one under Letwaba.<sup>52</sup> All of them, except Letwaba, were members of the missionary council that held an annual conference presided over by the missionary committee (Burger & Nel, 2008:231). This entire missionary structure preferred to dictate the agenda for the black church (Burger & Nel, 2008:232). All these frustrated the good initiatives by blacks to develop and strengthen the AFM.

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<sup>52</sup> De Wet (1989:135) mentions a decision of the white Executive Council taken in 1925 in which, in the absence of a white missionary overseer over the black district, the overseer of the white district was to assume oversight responsibility of the black one.

The other illustration of how black agency was frustrated under a white colonial church regime related to black hermeneutics and liturgical developments. Black hermeneutics is here understood as a way of reading the bible in a manner that empowers a black Christian to thrive as a member of the community-in-struggle, informed by and affirming the African world-view (West, 2003:ix-x). Black hermeneutics could only be a result of ordinary black Pentecostal worshippers seeking to apply what they read and understood from the Bible into their lives (West, 2003:ix-x). Their assumptions were products of their culture, social location and experience of both. Black Pentecostals in the AFM developed certain practices, which they shared with the black Zionist Churches who occupied the same *sitz im leben* with them. These were robes and the other practices mentioned in the third chapter. Some of these practices were not as widespread in the AFM by the 1930s, while others remained part of black Pentecostalism for a few decades more. For white missionaries to think that these practices had no underlying theological beliefs which developed in the interaction between Scripture and the cultural context of these black believers, as Poewe (1988:149-150), Walls (1996:92) and Isichei (2004:197) declare, was to lack imagination. Adopting a negative and dismissive attitude towards these practices and the underlying theology without respectfully engaging with the black Pentecostals, unjustifiably assumed the superiority of the missionaries' own situation, belief and practices emanating from their background. This assumed superiority was not unique to AFM missionaries but was characteristic of black and white relationships in all areas of life under colonialism and apartheid. Duncan's (2015:205) explanation of colonialism as "an administrative structure and psychological instrument that humiliated and wounded the soul and made the victim dependent on the master figure" captures the contradiction in the promise of missionary Christianity and the experience of black Christians. Colonial subjects, including Christianised ones, have suffered loss of identity, cultural confusion, white mimicry, inability if not unwillingness to venture a thought unless assured of its acceptability to white colonial masters. A situation such as this makes a mockery of the gospel.

The 1942 Native Conference afforded black ministers an opportunity to provide scriptural support for their practices (AFM Native Conference, 1942). The purpose of the exercise was not necessarily to listen deeply and credit these ministers with genuine concern to serve God and their people as led by the Holy

Spirit. They were instead labelled as “ministers of Satan” (AFM Native Conference, 1942). This may have led to the 1943 conference taking on an inquisitorial tone against black ministers. They were asked whether they knew their bible, or the resolution of the 1942 conference, or anyone who practised the same as them (AFM Native Conference, 1943). The trust and defence that some of these black ministers experienced, that they had been led by the Spirit in the use of elements such as water for healing, was shattered to the point where one of them asked for exorcism upon himself (AFM Native Conference, 1943). Confessing to recently stopping the forbidden practices attracted questions requiring evidence and witnesses from the Superintendent (AFM Native Conference, 1943). No wonder when a new Policy and Instructions were issued in 1946, which codified prohibitions against the practices, mentioned earlier, several ministers seceded and formed a new denomination, then called the Bantu Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (Moripe, 1994:57). According to Klaver (1965:16), representing the missionary consensus, these ministers were deemed as “not want[ing] to be taught by Scriptures.” An alternative view stemmed from the pen of the former chairman of the first Conference Committee, James Molantwa, who reportedly wrote to the government and charged the AFM with passing rules that were onerous for black people (AFM Native Conference, 1936).

The obviously Zionist black Pentecostalism described in the previous chapter was a counter and a challenge to the white Pentecostalism espoused by the AFM missionaries. The prohibition against Zionist-like practices within the AFM which Klaver (1965:16) mentions as having been issued by the 1929 Native Conference and the many other resolutions surrounding these practices thereafter, illustrate the challenge black Pentecostalism presented to the missionaries. Although Klaver (1965) makes the 1929 prohibition a conference resolution, there are signs that it may have been imposed upon the conference. Firstly, of all the resolutions recorded of that conference, only this one did not have the phrase “it was proposed that ...” and/or “it was agreed that ...” (AFM Native Conference, 1929). Secondly, this prohibition, recorded as the last action before the closing of a session, seems unrelated to anything before it. Nevertheless, when the meeting reconvened for another session, the minutes were adopted without raising any alarm. Thirdly, the superintendent in a later session admitted to his deep dislike of the same things supposedly prohibited by the conference in an earlier session (AFM Native Conference, 1929). Fourthly, the 1930 conference initially rejected the minutes of the

1929 conference as incorrect although no explanation was given as to what exactly made them incorrect (AFM Native Conference, 1930).

It appears to have been normal for some superintendents to issue declarations, particularly against the beliefs and practices of black Pentecostals, without subjecting their declarations to the normal procedures of the conference. The following instances serve as evidence:

- In 1928, the minutes of the conference portray Superintendent AW Preller as unilaterally responding to the recommendations of the Native Conference Committee that had been meant for the entire conference to respond to (AFM Native Conference, 1928). He unilaterally dismissed the just request for Letwaba to be accorded the same powers as white overseers by claiming that the government would not allow this.
- The 1929 National Conference prohibition against what most scholars regard as Zionist distinctive appearance and practices has already been referred to.
- In 1931, Pieter le Roux, who had retired from being a mission superintendent but remained an overseer of one of the districts and the president of the AFM, made two declarations to the conference. The first concerned the requirements for ordination. He told the conference that “[f]rom now” no one would be “ordained who was not baptised in the Spirit and had not attended Patmos Seminary” (AFM Native Conference, 1931). The second declaration related to unmarried evangelists. It is unclear whether the term “unmarried” should be understood to mean not married according to Western tradition or not, although this might have been the point. He told the conference that from 1933 no one unmarried would be issued an ordination certificate (AFM Native Conference, 1932). The effect of this declaration would be the defrocking of ministers based on not recognising black customs. The third declaration concerned prayer for the sick. Pieter le Roux issued a ban on “pray[ing] for the sick in the water”—a practice which may have affinities with the Zionist healing ritual which involves praying for the sick while also dipping them in the river water (AFM Native Conference, 1931; West, 1975:95).

The above instances and others demonstrate the unwillingness of the missionaries to treat black ministers as fellow ministers equal to them. Overseer D Bosman’s response to the 1928 Native Conference, in reply to a recommendation to give Letwaba the same power as white overseers and a question about Bible and

ministry training for whites, equated blacks to a “small buck” and “children” who could not teach “the big buck” or “parents” what to do (AFM Native Conference, 1928). This was the clearest statement that missionaries, and the rest of the black church they operated within, stood in a parent-child relationship. As conferences transformed into class rooms and not a meeting, black ministers increasingly took on the persona of confused students. In these conferences, white missionaries adopted the posture of teachers and parents over black ministers. It became the former’s responsibility to shape the behaviour and the look of these black Pentecostal ministers. It took white missionaries a long time to achieve their goals and, even then, not all of them. Klaver (1965:16) admits to the existence of a long standing “problem” which he narrows down to “the wearing of church uniform,” in 1965. Barely three years after Klaver’s article, the AFM conceded defeat on the issue of church uniform; hence its 1968 Conference resolved to uphold the right to membership for its uniformed members (Burger & Nel, 2008:244). Was it coincidence that at this point the number of black representatives in the Executive Committee of the black AFM surpassed that of whites (AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1967) and had been increasing since 1963 (AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1963)? If this played any role in the decision, it could signal a possibility that had the black AFM been led by blacks earlier, it could have been spared the trauma of the 1940s through to the 1960s. It could have further avoided the splitting away of the Bantu AFM (now Reformed AFM).

### **5.2.2 Reasons for the white missionary leadership reaction**

White missionaries reacted negatively to black Pentecostalism because they had difficulty with how it looked and expressed itself. This section discusses several reasons to explain missionary reaction towards black Pentecostalism. These reasons included doubting the maturity of black Pentecostal converts and ministers; considering the response blacks gave to the gospel generally as aberrant and an affront to white respectability; lastly, the threat to white control of black AFM by a Pentecostalism grounded in black agency. All these points are expanded on below.

#### **5.2.2.1 Suspicion towards the understanding of the gospel and Christian maturity of blacks**

By 1911, the AFM had five hundred ministers, of whom three hundred and fifty were black (Lake, 1911b:7). The presence of black preachers so early in the history of the AFM was because they were not new converts. Men such as Fred Luthuli, Joel

Ngobese, Daniel Nkonyane, Edward Lion, to mention a few, had been ministers for some time in the Zionist Church under Pieter le Roux and Edgar Mahon before they came into the fold of the AFM (Sundkler, 1976:56-57,65; Oosthuizen, 1987:19). Letwaba, Moroane and some forty-five ministers in the Orange Free State as well as many others, originated from the Ethiopian Church movement (Sundkler, 1976:55; De Wet, 1989:62; Morton, 2016:2). Pieter le Roux reportedly acknowledged the genuineness of their experience of the Spirit (Burger & Nel, 2008:36) and these men soon translated Pentecostalism into a fast growing “indigenous movement” (Burger & Nel, 2008:201). The African religio-cultural world informed this indigenisation process and resulted in the peculiar form of Pentecostalism called black Zionism (Anderson, 2005:69). For Pieter le Roux, the emergence of black Zionism pointed to the need for “blacks to be controlled” for fear of what they would do “when left to themselves” (Sundkler, 1976:50). This invokes images of naughty children who should not be trusted with the home without adult oversight as they might burn it down. The distrust exemplified by Le Roux’s sentiment led to blacks being deprived of meaningful leadership roles beyond the congregational level as they were constantly under interventionist supervision (Morton, 2016:8).

The reservation of leadership roles for whites, despite the concomitant numerical domination of blacks in church circles, was sometimes justified by appealing to the lack of maturity of the latter which in some instances went hand in hand with suspicion of black comprehension of the gospel. The missionaries located the supposed lack of maturity in the lingering effects of, and attitude towards, African cultural practices, as well as relationship with and response to the African world-view, which black ministers held. In the eye of missionaries, prolonged probation and continued missionary oversight of black ministers, even after ordination, was a solution (Oosthuizen, 2000:3; Duncan, 2015:3). The problem with this, says Lahouel (1986:682), was infantilisation of black ministers and denial of their subjectivity. The recommendation of the Native Affairs Commission regarding independent black churches in the aftermath of 1906 Bambatha uprising, that no black minister must be without white missionary supervision, served as endorsement of white domination in church circles (Du Plessis, 1911:459). The AFM’s participation in this religion of domination started with its invitation of black independent church groups in its first decade of existence (De Wet, 1989:63). It continued into the 1950s and 1960s by privileging white leadership, understanding and practice of Pentecostalism over that

of blacks, hence Zionist-like forms and practices were attacked and banned with white missionaries in the forefront of the charge. The question once asked in the 1943 Conference, of one black minister, as to whether he knew the Bible or not, because of his Zionist-like practices, was itself a belittling (AFM Native Conference, 1943), not only of his knowledge of the Bible but also of his contextual interpretation. When some attendants pointed out the biblical inspiration of some of their Zionist-like practices, the missionaries dismissed them as belonging to invalid Old Testament practices and sealed their response by pointing out that these practices belonged to the Jews and none was Jewish in the conference (AFM Native Conference, 1937). This was self-defeating logic as blacks could have argued that neither were blacks white.

### **5.2.2.2 Aberrant black Pentecostal response**

Clearly, white missionary leaders of the AFM, in their self-allocated responsibility of being teachers and guardians of black Pentecostalism, watched in dismay, the appearance of robes, sashes and long stick crosses, etcetera. Confronted with these, Pieter le Roux's reaction, as early as 1910, was to want to excommunicate all whom he deemed responsible for this aberrant behaviour (Sundkler, 1976:51). Daniel Nkonyane was the leader of the first group to manifest this supposedly aberrant behaviour (Ngada & Mofokeng, 2001:14). His leaving the AFM gave the missionaries a momentary relief only to be disturbed by Elias Mahlangu's championing of white robes and walking barefoot during church services, especially during Holy Communion (Klaver, 1965:18). This group completed its severance from the AFM in 1918.<sup>53</sup> Although between then and 1929, it appears that nothing was said about the appearance and practices of black Pentecostalism, the 1929 conference regarded it as "custom," albeit unacceptable, the issue "of wearing long white blouses, robes, and carrying of crosses" (Burger & Nel, 2008:243). The 1943 Missionary Conference ruled against all these, deeming them unscriptural (De Wet, 1989:107,112). Its decisions were distilled into a "*Handbook for the Natives*" in

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<sup>53</sup> Anderson (2004:107) has given 1917 as the year Elias Mahlangu severed ties with the AFM. He calls it the first recorded split from the AFM. Notwithstanding this, Elias Mahlangu and company had begun the journey away from the AFM when they rejected working together with the Native Conference in 1915 (AFM Native Conference, 1915). The choice for dating the complete severance of Elias Mahlangu's Zion Church from the AFM to 1918 is because the then President of the AFM, Pieter le Roux, presided over a Conference in Verulam, Natal, in 1918 (Silwana, 12 July 1918). From this conference he facilitated setting up an Executive Committee and election of provincial overseers of this new church.



1946. Despite codifying prohibitions of Zionist-like practices, Burger and Nel (2008:245) note that “the issue of special garments for believers” found itself “often discussed in the meetings of the different councils of the black Section” which continued denouncing this and other associated practices vehemently.

### **5.2.2.3 Affront to the quest for white Pentecostal respectability**

Despite the British winning the 1899 – 1902 war against Afrikaners in the two Boer republics of Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Transvaal), the latter group steadily strategised towards eventual domination of the politics of the Union of South Africa and later, the Republic. The 1940s saw the ascendancy of Afrikaner nationalism through the National Party, which proceeded to win the 1948 elections (Burger & Nel, 2008:152-153). The same period, the 1940s and 1950s, was that in which the AFM embraced Afrikaner nationalism as its white membership was predominantly Afrikaner (Anderson, 2004:10; Anofuechi, 2015:21). Members of the white AFM were encouraged to participate in community structures such as school boards (Burger & Nel, 2008:147). Young educated Afrikaner Pentecostal pastors successfully introduced architectural and liturgical changes more in line with the Afrikaner Reformed Churches in the quest for respectability and acceptance (Maxwell, 2006:45; Burger & Nel, 2008:138-139).

It appears as if the discouraging of any appearance of “Zionism” among black Pentecostals in general, and specifically the condemnation of black Pentecostal prayer women with their church uniform (De Wet, 1989:107), served the purpose of cleaning up the way the AFM was seen and received by the Afrikaner society (Maxwell, 2006:45). The view of the 1949 conference that the wearing of church uniform was “confusing” because Zionist Churches also wore it (Burger & Nel, 2008:243) serves as evidence when seen in the light of Burger and Nel’s (2008:226) statement that

Government officials of the Native Affairs Department in some districts mistakenly viewed unregistered Native churches and ‘their practices’ as being sponsored by the AFM, to the detriment of Overseers and their work.

It appears that the only people to be confused by the wearing of church uniform were the government officials and possibly missionaries too, as it is unthinkable that the wearers of this uniform could ever be confused by it.

#### **5.2.2.4 Black Pentecostal agency as a threat to white control**

The arrangement of power relations in the black AFM was such that it favoured white missionary leaders while frustrating black agency,<sup>54</sup> particularly when white control seemed to be threatened. Emirbayer and Mische's (1998:963) definition of agency clarifies the threat black agency posed to white control. They define it as the capacity to make decisions in the present which make available one's past to the service of one's future interest. Therefore, black Pentecostal agency was an actualisation of a belief in the capacity of blacks to chart their way in matters of faith, practice and governance of the black AFM using their own resources, which produced a Zionist form of Pentecostalism. With the AFM structured for the exercise of white missionary agency, black agency could only exist as mimicry. Bhabha (1984:128) explains mimicry as a subconscious adoption of the ways of the master resulting in the mimic subject occupying a perpetual twilight zone of disappointingly falling short of the master's expectation while no longer living from a base of personal authenticity. Attempts by black Pentecostals at rising above mimicry and asserting their own agency were threatening to the white status quo. In the next paragraphs, evidence of black Pentecostal agency in the AFM will be discussed together with how the response by missionary leaders suggested that black agency was a threat to be contained.

Black Pentecostal agency in the AFM led an ambiguous existence because it had expressed itself in an identifiably Zionist way while simultaneously trying to keep within the boundaries of what was acceptable to white missionaries. The minutes of various conferences and committees, from 1929 to 1968 mention the previously mentioned beliefs and practices, which serve as signs of Zionism among black Pentecostals of the AFM (AFM Native Conference, 1929, 1936, 1942, 1943, 1947; AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1968). Some of these practices, especially the wearing of church uniform, which according to Klaver (1965:16) received special attention, persisted until 1968 when a resolution to cease treating the robed members of the AFM as if they did not belong, was taken (AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1968). This testifies to the depth of determination to exercise agency in the matters of faith and culture—an exercise for which black Pentecostals thought

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<sup>54</sup> For example, although the black AFM had an executive committee that supposedly ran the church on behalf of the Conference, the missionaries made up a super structure whose decisions could not be debated, thus leaving the Executive Committee only the room to "[take] note of the decisions" (AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1969).

they did not need permission. These beliefs and practices could not have been peripheral to black Pentecostals in the AFM as the records testify to this church expending a lot of energy in the eradication of these practices over many years, even suffering splits in the process of combating them (Klaver, 1965). For all the years, starting with 1929, the mention of these beliefs and practices was accompanied by prohibitions, threats and outright harassment by missionaries. Hence, black agency was progressively a dying trait as it buckled under missionary curbs.

The emergence and persistence of Zionist peculiarities among black AFM Pentecostals finds an explanation in the adaptable nature of Pentecostalism. This adaptability assists it to take whatever shape is dictated by the culture and context of the recipients (Maxwell, 1999:244; Poloma, 2006:3; Mashau, 2013, Introduction). For the AFM, its commitment to the ministry of all Spirit baptised believers and the exercise of agency by black believers turned its Pentecostalism into a black Zionist-like movement. De Wet's (1989:125) statement about the "rapid spread of the Pentecostal gospel over Southern Africa and white missionary inability to supervise the movement," together with the strong traditional cultural orientation of most black members of the AFM who had not been influenced much by education, made the Zionist-like form and practice of Pentecostalism discussed in this study possible. However, the white missionary leadership of the AFM was negative towards these developments as can be deduced from the condemnations by various councils of Zionist-like innovations within the church (Burger & Nel, 2008:245). These missionary leaders had put themselves in a position to police the development of black Pentecostals in a manner uncharacteristic of the accessible and adaptable nature of Pentecostal spirituality, thereby privileging their own understanding and culturally conditioned responses.

De Wet (1989:129) records the leadership's concern over the low quality of Bible knowledge among black Pentecostals "as early as 1920." The half-hearted support given to Letwaba's seminary by the white church officials (De Wet, 1989:130; Erasmus, 1996:3) suggests that the concern of the white leadership might have been for the kind of Bible knowledge which would mould black Pentecostals into a form wholly comprehensible to white missionary expectations of Pentecostalism. This observation could further explain why the black initiative in establishing the AFM's first seminary in 1924 was not considered official and why its closing in 1935 (Hwata, 2005:105) appear to have paved a way for the start of official and mandatory ministry

training under white leadership. Were white missionary leaders secretly disappointed that Letwaba, despite his accomplishments and role as the educator of black Pentecostal ministers, did not stem the tide of Zionist-like developments among black Pentecostals? Erasmus (1996:59) hints at such a possibility when he states that “missionaries thought Letwaba’s school was not useful.” Consequently, the resumption of black ministry training in the 1940s took place under white principals and remained so until the early 1990s.

The responses given by the white leadership of the AFM amounted to denying the work of the Spirit in black Pentecostals, ridiculing their understandings of Scripture and condemning contextualisation of liturgy and ministry to the African situation. The insistence by black Pentecostals on living out their faith and carrying out the ministry among their people in a manner appropriate to them attracted threats of expulsion (Burger & Nel, 2008:245). For example, the 1942 Native Conference resolved to suspend the ordination certificates of any worker found practising the blessing of water and its use for healing (AFM Native Conference, 1942). According to Molobi (2008c:105), even well-considered advice given by Rev Joseph Mabena at one of the conferences in the 1930s, that it would be wise to teach for change and not pressure or threaten for change, went unheeded. Mabena spoke around the same time that Letwaba’s school was closed to give way to ministry education under white leadership, which coincided with the use of coercion away from the way black Pentecostalism presented itself. Clearly, black agency in education, liturgical transformation and gospel appropriation took control away from whites and threatened their designs of how black Pentecostals in the AFM were to be and act.

Through their exercise of self-agency, black women Pentecostals wore their blue and white church uniform to protect the dignity of the poor among them, to challenge each other to regular church attendance and overall “compliance with certain spiritual standards” as well as facilitate ease of identification (Molobi & Mahlobo, 2008:46; Molobi, Skhosana & Kekana, 2008:69). Their Thursday church services, to which they would wear their church uniforms (Molobi & Mahlobo, 2008:46), were an expression of ecumenical solidarity as women groups from other churches also used the same day and, as is evident today, may have held these services together. This unity amongst black women Pentecostals was targeted by the white leadership, even pressuring black pastors with threats of being defrocked

(Burger & Nel, 2008:249), should they not successfully dissuade the women in their congregations from wearing church uniforms (Burger & Nel, 2008:244-245).

### **5.2.3 Ways and means in which white missionary leadership reacted to black Pentecostalism**

The white missionary leadership of the black AFM reacted to the Zionist look and expression of faith among black Pentecostals in various ways. These included mobilisations of institutional machinery in three directions: threats of expulsion, prohibitive conference and council resolutions as well as education. The above remedial methods notwithstanding, blacks tenaciously held on to the practice of wearing church uniform, eventually leading to a conference resolution to accommodate it. These matters are all discussed hereunder.

#### **5.2.3.1 Threats of expulsion**

Threatening expulsion was one other mechanism used to coerce black Pentecostals into submission to a form of Pentecostalism which conformed to missionary expectations. Pieter le Roux was the first official to want to expel a black minister, Daniel Nkonyane, over the introduction of innovations which later characterised black Zionism (Sundkler, 1976:50). It is not clear whether Le Roux did expel Nkonyane or not. However, the latter did leave the AFM in 1910. According to Sundkler (1976:56), the AFM sent Le Roux to retrieve the ordination certificate from Nkonyane—something that suggests that he may have left in protest over Le Roux's remonstrances against him, if not as a result of being expelled. Morton (2014:31) portrays Nkonyane as having held strong views about his own leadership over that of whites and possessing a desire to establish a Zion City for his followers. The possibility exists that because of his strong views and his vision, he might have not taken kindly to being rebuked over the changes he had introduced.

The AFM missionary leadership later pursued an aggressive implementation of the 1946 Policy until 1961 when a new one was drawn up which restructured the black AFM along the lines of the White Section. Until then, Burger and Nel (2008) report that the organisation of the ministry of the black AFM had echoes of Methodism with ministers, evangelists, preachers and class leaders. By the time the 1961 policy was implemented, the reorientation of black experience and expression of Pentecostalism was in full swing. Initially, the Missionary Council of 1943 had included in the policy clauses that spoke against the wearing of clergy collars and

waistcoats by black ministers (De Wet, 1989:108). This requirement was then deleted from the policy but with the expectation that missionary leaders would “discourage” black ministers from continuing the practice (De Wet, 1989:108). However, the words directed to practices associated with the prayer women were harsher. Take for example the following resolution cited from the minutes of the 1943 Missionary Council meeting by De Wet (1989:107): “we strongly condemn the wearing of a special frock by the Class leaders....” All these practices, primarily unwanted by the white missionary leadership of the AFM, were condemned as “unscriptural” (De Wet, 1989:112) and “evil” (Burger & Nel, 2008:243). Those not complying were considered “unwilling to be taught by Scriptures” (Klaver, 1965:16) and were threatened with revocation of ordination certificates—an action equivalent to expelling them from the ministry of the AFM (AFM Native Conference, 1942; Burger & Nel, 2008:249).

### **5.2.3.2 Sanctions by leadership structures**

The indigenisation of Pentecostal liturgy did not end with the departure of Nkonyane in 1910; various objections, initially originating with individuals but later being issued by councils and conferences, were registered against indigenisation. Evangelist Samson Ntanzu was the second person, after Pieter le Roux, to object to the adoption of what later became the characteristic look of black Zionism. He denounced the wearing of uniforms in the meeting between the Native Conference and the Zionists under Mahlangu in 1915. His views were resented by the Mahlangu group and are thought to have contributed to this group refusing a merger with the AFM (Burger & Nel, 2008:246; Molobi, 2008a:6). The Mahlangu group had introduced the wearing of white robes and taking off their shoes during worship services (AFM Native Conference, 1920), while the Magubane group continued wearing the uniform as they used to when Nkonyane was still in the AFM (Molobi & Mahlobo, 2008:42).

The other objection was made by the 1929 Native Conference which pronounced against uniforms, etcetera, and pointed out that these had become a “habit” among black Pentecostals (De Wet, 1989:107; Burger & Nel, 2008:243; Molobi, 2008a:7). These Zionist practices received attention at conferences and committees from 1929 until 1968 when the Bantu Executive Committee conceded the deep-seated determination by the “robed” members not to let go of their church uniform (Klaver, 1965:16; AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1968). Deliberate steps to transform black Pentecostalism away from the portraiture in this study were taken,

starting with the introduction of a new *Native Policy and Instructions* in 1946. The policy discussion began in 1943 and continued until 1945. When it was tabled at the 1946 conference, a secession happened (Klaver, 1965:16; De Wet, 1989:112; Moripe, 1994:57). In 1968, the Executive Committee admitted that the continued opposition to church uniform was dividing the church and resolved to desist from pursuing the matter further (AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1968). This admission implied that the numbers of robed members had not decreased despite years of ill-treatment. It also cast a shadow on the soundness of the arguments used by the leadership, especially white missionary leadership.

### **5.2.3.3 Education**

Education in the AFM played a political role, particularly when it came to its black members. Initially, the AFM's white leadership had maintained an aversion to "educated ministry" because they believed education to be antithetical to the life of the Spirit into which every Pentecostal was called (Hwata, 2005:106). This position was insensitive to the needs of black AFM members as they came from a non-literary culture and were mostly illiterate. It privileged whites with their literary background and made them teachers of blacks by default. Overseer Letwaba's initiative to open a Bible School in 1924 was admirable and helpful (Hwata, 2005:105). However, his initiative was not embraced and adopted as a national project. The resolutions taken in 1929 and 1931, to make attending Letwaba's Bible School a prerequisite for ordination into the ministry, suffered from lack of enforcement (AFM Native Conference, 1929, 1931). Ten years from the founding of the first Bible School in the AFM, the 1934 Native Conference ignored this school by taking the resolution to admit into ministry candidates with evidence of Spirit baptism and long history of faithfulness and tithing (AFM Native Conference, 1935). The school then closed in 1935 (Hwata, 2005:105)—possibly deprived of students. Erasmus (1996:59), citing the minutes of the Missionary Committee (1935), provides the reason for the closure of Letwaba's school as "missionaries not finding it useful." Erasmus (1996:59) further wonders whether there was any interaction with Letwaba before the decision to close his school. This closure paved a way for starting a Bible School under missionary supervision that became the official ministry training institution for black ministers in the AFM (De Wet, 1989:130). The reason given for closing the Letwaba's school and the starting of another one under white leadership suggest the existence of a sinister motive, discussed below.

The move from aversion to educated ministry to embracing it was laudable. The direct result of this change of heart was the founding of the white Apostolic Bible College (ABC) in 1950 and six other Bible schools between 1951 and 1969, where blacks were trained (Hwata, 2005:106). However, considering that the AFM had already expressed a position in 1944 that it “stood against higher education in support of lower education” for blacks (De Wet, 1989:170), the taking over of black ministry training afforded the AFM continued ascendancy and entrenchment of white domination. This was achieved through lower requirements for entry into black ministry compared to white ministry, a curriculum unresponsive to the black context and appointment of white principals until 1991. In 1976 and again in 1991/1992, students rioted against the quality and content of ministry education they were receiving (Erasmus, 1996:94; Lapoorta, 1996:104). With blacks dethroned from determining the meaning of the Bible in their own context (contextual Bible appropriation), Scripture was then used to denigrate black Pentecostalism which had been born as a response to African sensitivities in favour of a Pentecostalism sensitive to white missionary ideology.

Schooling was not to be the only avenue through which blacks were (re)educated against Zionist-Pentecostalism. A special teaching platform was created in 1965 called the ‘Spiritual Conference’ (AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1965). Whereas the usual conference devoted time to preaching, reports and administration, the Spiritual Conference was to be an annual conference focussed on biblical teaching; questions were to be taken and lecture notes distributed to conference attendees (AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1966:23). The Executive Committee assigned the responsibility for drawing up the programme, determining and allocating speakers to the Bible school principal (AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1965). Speakers were mostly white and addressed specific topics determined by the Missionary Committee (AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1966:23). The participation of blacks in these conferences mostly took the form of a mere audience, while a few would serve as interpreters for white preachers (AFM Bantu Executive Committee, 1966:23). Occasionally, a black minister would preach but without a pre-determined topic.

#### **5.2.3.4 Accommodation**

After years of driving change in the appearance and practices of black Pentecostalism, the 1968 Bantu Workers Conference gave up the combat against the



wearing of church uniform—concluding that “nobody should be judged, neither the one who wore the uniform nor the one who did not wear it” (Burger & Nel, 2008:244). This struggle had taken an oppositional posture against black Pentecostal women specifically. Black male pastors had been threatened with removal from ministry because of their supposed failure to rein in these women members in their congregations. De Wet (1989:88) explains that, as in the AICs, women were in the majority in the congregations and were influential. Therefore, the 1968 decision by the leadership to quit fighting the use of church uniform was a victory for women’s power. They had survived disparaging remarks and immense pressure on their spirituality, and at the end, when their right to the membership of the church was reaffirmed (not that it needed to be) despite their continued wearing of uniforms, this exposed the interpretation of Scripture, by which they had been condemned, to have been an exercise in white male chauvinism.

### **5.3 In search of historic black Pentecostal voice**

A survey of primary documents available at the AFM archives and relevant to this study yielded little information regarding the presence of black Pentecostals, particularly as agents in the unfolding story of the AFM. The same reality is reproduced in the studies conducted so far, mostly because of their reliance on existing documents, which are limited to records of councils and conferences. A need exists for studies informed by oral history which will do justice to the existence and activity of black Pentecostals in the AFM. Due to this study also being documentary, it was a challenge to attempt to highlight black voices and have them speak loudly in relation to the subject of this study. A way around this has been to conceptualise black voices as oral and behavioural. The oral component emerges in the words ascribed to a speaker while the behavioural manifests itself in the actions ascribed to the actor concerned. In this way, the words attributed to a black Pentecostal and the significance of their actions become important in understanding their voice for or against the need for change in the expression of black Pentecostalism.

#### **5.3.1 Black Pentecostal voices in support of black interest and message**

What blacks thought and said or did in the light of the racist onslaught at Doornfontein and Central Tabernacle at the beginning of the AFM is not known. In Wakkerstroom, according to Morton (2014:30), Daniel Nkonyane aggressively considered himself on a par with, if not better than whites. This emerged in the

interview with two of his contemporaries which Morton (2014) refers to in his article. Nkonyane ignored the limitations placed on the movement of blacks by the colonial government, which required that they carry passes issued by white magistrates. Morton (2014:31) records a complaint by one government official that Nkonyane issued passes for his own evangelists to travel all over Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal), while he himself refused to carry one.

Elias Mahlangu refused to merge with the AFM in 1915 because, according to Klaver (1965:15,18), the AFM would not accede to his leadership of the merged entity as per the prophecy uttered in the conference of the same year. The AFM was eager for the merger, which was in effect the swallowing of Zionists into a racial structure that was to their detriment. Erasmus (1996:34) points this out when he writes that the white dominated AFM “enforced westernised thinking on the Africans without their consent.” If the AFM had acceded to Mahlangu’s leadership of the merged entity, this would have been a triumph of black charismatic leadership against race inspired leadership and structures. This failed 1915 meeting sealed the fate of the pretence of unity between Zionists and white Pentecostals as the former left to form their own denominations. This led to the first recorded Zionist split by Mahlangu, inaccurately dated to 1917 by writers such as Anderson (2004:107). Newspaper evidence points to Le Roux continuing to work with Mahlangu until 1918 when the latter’s church, at a conference presided over by Le Roux, elected an Executive Committee with Elias Mahlangu overseeing the Transvaal, Edward Lion overseeing the Free State, Ezra Mbonambi overseeing Natal, and two others (Silwana, 1918:3). The article was written by an eye-witness of the proceedings of the meeting.

Black pastors were not in agreement with how white missionary leaders perceived black Pentecostalism and the decisions the latter were taking to make it agreeable to white sensibilities. Andrew Oliphant was “in constant conflict with the 'White' Executive Council about white control over the work among black people” (Erasmus, 1996:30). He preferred that blacks oversee their own church affairs. Edward Lion, who since 1912 had been overseeing the AFM’s work in Lesotho, was replaced with a white missionary because he “would not subordinate himself to the Mission like other Natives” (Burger & Nel, 2008:205). Although the departure of the prophetess, Christinah Nku, and the subsequent establishment of her Saint John AFM Church in 1939 is credited to the visions she experienced (Masondo,

2015:232), a possibility exists that Pieter le Roux's objections to her "rapturous prophetic displays" contributed to her departure (Sundkler, 1976:81). Joseph Mabena was opposed to the strong-arm tactics of missionary leadership. He favoured achieving change through teaching black Pentecostals the perceived wrongs in their expression and conduct of the faith (Molobi, 2008c:105). Elias Letwaba expressed his liking for the uniform and indicated that his wife had introduced the custom of blue dresses (Burger & Nel, 2008:243). He was in favour of the practice of feet washing as early as 1920 (AFM Native Conference, 1920). In all the literature consulted, the only black voice raised against the Zionistic innovations of black Pentecostals is that of the now KwaZulu-Natal Evangelist, Samson Ntanzi, who remained steadfast in his opposition from 1915 to 1949 (Burger & Nel, 2008:243).

The struggle by black Pentecostals to determine the expression of their faith in ways agreeable to themselves faced an increasingly negative and aggressive response from the AFM. According to Klaver (1965:16), "the most challenging time was in 1945 when the church discussed practices" which, this study argues, constituted black Pentecostalism and were like Zionism. The opinion of white leaders about those who ended up leaving the church was that they did "not want to be taught by Scriptures" (Klaver, 1965:16). This opinion was conveyed in the mid-1960s, an era in which the AFM had taken over education for black ministers and put it in white hands. At the time, education itself was a tool for ridding the AFM of Zionism. Therefore, the stage was set to regard those holding onto Zionist-Pentecostalism, both inside and outside the AFM, as scripturally ignorant and spiritually compromised. Indeed, this happened, as evidenced by the casting of doubt on the Christianity of the Zionists and crediting their charismatic gifts to African Traditional Religion (Hollenweger, 1972:149; Bond, 1974:14).

Black Pentecostals' determination to express their faith meaningfully led some leaders to leave and form their own denominations when faced with the intransigence of the AFM. Their doing so was the immediate context of the statement that "those who left the AFM did not want to be taught by Scriptures." Klaver (1965) seems to focus on the events of the 1940s, which he refers to as "the most challenging as the AFM brought the issue of church uniform and other Zionist practices" to a head. By the clause "those who left," reference was being made to P Mosito of Krugersdorp, EJ Mokoena of Kroonstad, T Taupedi of Lichtenburg, J Moropa of Bushbuckridge and A Masilo of Boksburg who seceded in 1946 and formed a new denomination, the

Reformed AFM (Moripe, 1994:68). Of course, the statement could have applied to all who had left the AFM due to frustration with white missionary leadership, which refused, to accord full agency to blacks. These blacks objected to the negative views held by the white AFM leadership and missionaries regarding uniform and other Zionistic innovations.

Elias Letwaba presents an interesting case when considering black voices on Pentecostalism extant in those years. He was educated, experienced in ministry, an initiator of education in a church, which at that time cared little about the value thereof (De Wet, 1989:130; Anderson, 2000:65; Hwata, 2005:105). He was sought after by Ethiopians and abused by whites, while still considering them benefactors to blacks. In the records, he is made to speak only about holiness and little else. His recorded entry regarding the contentious issue of church uniform indicated his liking and ascribing the appearance of the uniform to his wife (Burger & Nel, 2008:243). However, he was prepared to let it go on the grounds of the ceremony attached to it. This anti-ceremony attitude was more of a white missionary issue than his own, yet he was willing to give way. How was it possible, though, that a black leader of fifty years as head of a district, seated in the missionary council overseeing the black church and the conferences of the latter, never pronounced on any other issue of importance to himself and the church but that of holiness? This is improbable.

Certain moments and situations would have presented Letwaba with opportunities if not challenges to present his thoughts. For example, his establishment of a facility for primary education and ministry training was one such moment (Anderson, 2000:65). Burton (1934:95) indicates that besides English, Dutch and an in-depth study of the Bible, Letwaba sought to introduce his students to history as he also offered Egyptian, Graeco-Roman and Church histories. This presented an opportunity to become aware of his vision of a black Pentecostal minister and to understand how this related to the missionary vision of the same.

### **5.3.2 Significance of black Pentecostal voices/activities**

The question of the significance of black voices and activities since the inception of the AFM in 1908 to the 1970s, when only remnants of Zionist-like Pentecostalism remained, is a difficult one. One reason could be that black voices were supposed to speak in white tones, failing which they were delegitimised. Those who represented a contradictory voice and trajectory of Pentecostalism ended up

outside the AFM. The representation of reasons leading to their ejection initially emanated through the formal channels of the organisation that ejected them. The scarcity of documents conveying the perspectives of those who left creates a situation in which it is difficult to assess the significance of black voices in the immediate context of action. These voices, which spoke and acted in favour of a Pentecostalism sensitive to African proclivities, were overwhelmed by the winds of change and a new form of Pentecostalism, sanctioned by the white missionary leadership: evangelical Pentecostalism.

The new form of Pentecostalism found its advocates among those blacks who were not as poor or illiterate. These found Zionism and black Pentecostalism—which were at the time versions of one another—unattractive (Hwata, 2005:106; Togarasei, 2005:372). Khathide (2010:44) confirms this in his book, *What a giant of faith*, when he writes about Richard Ngidi who was educated and to whom the Zionist inclined Pentecostalism of the 1950s in the Kwazulu-Natal AFM was “unattractive.” Another educated black Pentecostal, Samson Ntanzi, who was a school principal when he converted to Pentecostalism in 1914, voiced standing objections to the use of robes, staffs, etc. from as early as 1915 (Klaver, 1965:18; Burger & Nel, 2008:243). Interestingly, though Letwaba was educated, he seemed to have been accommodating, hence acknowledging his liking for church uniform and his wife’s instrumentality in its existence. His death in 1959 closed an important chapter in black Pentecostalism whose adherents knew how to dream and take initiative to realise the dream unencumbered by others’ agendas.

Writing twenty years into the new order of a racially united AFM inaugurated in 1996, the black voices whose significance was denied appear vindicated by history when one considers the AFM’s doctrine of unity in diversity, cessation of persecution of robed members and black leadership.

The point raised by Oliphant in 1918, of the right of every community to determine its response to the voice of God (Erasmus, 1996:30), has since the adoption of the new constitution in 2000, become the AFM’s principle of unity in diversity. However, the adoption of this principle arose from the need of some in the white sector of the united AFM to create safe space for preserving Afrikaner culture, language and control. The non-racial membership of the united AFM with the constitutional privileging of English as medium of communication had something to do with the advocacy of the principle of unity in diversity. The victory of black

Pentecostal women to continue wearing their church uniform as per the resolution of the 1968 conference (Burger & Nel, 2008) was an invocation of this principle although, at the time, it was not as advocated as it came to be from the year 2000. The references to scripture, by missionaries, upon which the uniform and other expressions of black Pentecostalism were condemned, were thrown into question when the 1968 Native Conference conceded defeat by its recognition of equal status to membership of the same church by those who preferred to wear a church uniform (Burger & Nel, 2008). The white leaders' universalising hermeneutic that appeared to advance westernisation in the matters of faith and culture among black Pentecostals was dealt a blow.

#### **5.4 The rise of evangelical Pentecostalism in the black AFM**

The death of Zionist-like Pentecostalism did not occur suddenly but unfolded gradually from the Doornfontein days when blacks found themselves outnumbered at a revival where they were the primary hosts and recipients (Burpeau, 2002:118,120). The move from the squalid and poor yet multiracial Doornfontein suburb to a "white" Tabernacle in town (De Wet, 1989:52), became symbolic of a shift away from the 'down and out' people with whom Pentecostalism has come to be associated. From then on, the town (read "white") Pentecostals assumed the parent role over black Pentecostals despite the latter being in the majority, having more ministers, among whom was Elias Letwaba (Lake, 1911b:7). He could have led the whole movement considering his background and training (Burton, 1934:22,28; De Wet, 1989:65-66,70,95; Maxwell, 2006:51). Even as black Pentecostalism was growing in its articulation of being in accord with African sensibilities, processes to undermine it were also afoot and they ultimately won the day. This was the reason the president of the AFM in the 1960s, Francois Moller, denied Zionists a Pentecostal status while acknowledging the blacks in the AFM as Pentecostals (Lapoorta, 1996:169) because the latter had already embraced an evangelicalist form extant among whites Pentecostals.

Considered from one perspective, what was happening to black Pentecostalism was a restoration of its evangelical roots. Several commentators on Pentecostalism have noted its evangelical roots and theology. For example, speaking on the relationship of Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism, Lapoorta (1996:172) states: "Pentecostalism is evangelical"—this, in agreement with Nichol (1966:3) who had already considered Pentecostals doctrinally evangelical. Larbi (2002:145) and

Amanor (2013) both define Pentecostals as evangelical Christians with a belief in continuity of apostolic gifts. Evangelical Pentecostalism is described as Bible based (Larbi, 2002:147; Mathole, 2005:198), Christ centred (Larbi, 2002:147; Hwata, 2005) and individualistic (Lapoorta, 1996; Mathole, 2005:196), spirituality oriented towards modern urban life (Omenyo, 2014:137). Belief in the Spirit is promoted, as is the necessity to discern the spirits (Larbi, 2002:147). Alcohol, ancestors, polygamy, secret societies, use of symbolism in liturgy are all shunned (Larbi, 2002:148). The above definition has been put together from scholars of African Pentecostalism, a religious phenomenon that gained popularity across African cities in the 1970s and has been labelled “born again Pentecostalism” (Van Dijk, 2000) and Evangelical Pentecostalism (Mathole, 2005).

Although Nichol (1966:50) cites John Lake and Tom Hezmalhalch as having been responsible for introducing Pentecostalism to South Africa, Mathole (2005:184) names Nicholas Bhengu of the Assemblies of God as a pioneer of the evangelical Pentecostal movement among Africans. One of Bhengu’s most famous AFM converts was Richard Ngidi about whom Mathole (2005:184) says: “Richard Ngidi himself in his formative years of evangelical Pentecostalism was inspired and influenced by Nicholas Bhengu.” Both Bhengu and Ngidi would lead to tremendous numerical growth of Pentecostalism through their tent campaigns and church planting endeavours, which, in the AFM, coincided with the ongoing reorientation programme of Zionist-Pentecostalism (Mathole, 2005:184). Besides planting well over hundred churches in Natal, Ngidi also inspired Reinhard Bonnke to launch an evangelistic-healing ministry (Burger & Nel, 2008:256; Bonnke, 2009:237). According to De Wet (1989:120), Bonnke’s ministry “gave tremendous impetus to numerical growth of the AFM in Africa.”

Reinhard Bonnke was a German Pentecostal missionary working for the AFM in Lesotho in the 1960s (De Wet, 1989:145; Seutloali, 2008:79). In 1975, he launched the Christ for All Nations evangelistic ministry and travelled across South Africa (Khathide, 2010:82), preaching a form of Pentecostalism which agreed with and was for many years championed by the AFM leadership among black Pentecostals. Bonnke’s ministry activities coincided with increased interest and activity by North American Pentecostal para-church organisations in schools and universities, not only in South Africa, but also across the continent (Anderson, 2002:170; Omenyo, 2014:137-138). The activities of these para-church organisations and preachers

resulted in explosive growth of denominational Pentecostal churches, charismatisation of some mainline churches and the laying of foundations for the emergence of independent charismatic churches. The relatively better-educated and urbanised youth converted to Pentecostalism; the AFM was one of the beneficiaries. Their entry constituted a permanent shift away from the Old Testament and African traditional orientation, to the New Testament and westernised orientation in black Pentecostal belief and practice, mainly because of the westernising influence of education and increasing urbanisation.

### **5.5 Zionist-Pentecostalism and Evangelical Pentecostalism compared**

In one sense, the rise of evangelical Pentecostalism among black Pentecostals could be merely a reassertion of a true tradition, expressed in the white section of the AFM. As such, the Zionist-Pentecostalism described in this study would constitute an unfortunate episode of falling away, to which the resurgence of the evangelical form was a necessary correction and a restoration. Whereas Zionist-Pentecostalism held to an Afrocentric world-view and was at home in the Old Testament Scriptures (Sundkler, 1961:277; Poewe, 1988:148), evangelical Pentecostalism repudiated both the Old Testament's traditionalism and symbolism as well as the African world-view as informants of faith. The New Testament and the Western world-view had an upper hand in this expression of Pentecostalism (Larbi, 2002:147; Hwata, 2005). Whereas black Zionist-like Pentecostalism was generally the faith of the elderly—as deduced from the long beards adorning men—as well as of the illiterate and the poor, evangelical Pentecostalism was the faith of the younger and literate and therefore (relatively) upwardly mobile blacks. These younger black evangelical Pentecostals were as embarrassed by the practice of Zionist spirituality as white missionaries working among them were (Hwata, 2005:105; Khathide, 2010:44). The rising evangelicalism was a literate faith subsisting in “my Bible says” (Anderson, 1993:31), whereas Zionism was symbolic and subjective, using the language of dreams, visions and prophecy. These were the wildcard in black Pentecostalism; once it was weaned off them and shifted away from the Old Testament to the New Testament, it became domesticated to white expectation. The table below provides a quick glance on the dissimilarities between Zionist-like and evangelical forms of Pentecostalism as discussed above.



**Table 5.1 Comparison of Zionist-like and evangelical forms of Pentecostalism**

	<b>(Early) black Pentecostalism (1908 - 1940s)</b>	<b>The black Pentecostalism (1975 - Present)</b>
<b>Theological parentage</b>	Dowie and the AFM	(White) AFM
<b>Cultural orientation</b>	African traditional, tombstone unveilings, feasts of condolences	Afro-Western, "opposed to traditional religious practices"
<b>Biblical orientation</b>	Old Testament Spirit-centred	New Testament, Christ-centred
<b>Educational Status</b>	Low to no education	Literate
<b>Socio-economic status</b>	Poor	Improving
<b>Appearance (Uniform)</b>	Blue and white in colour. Waistcoats, collars, sashes, surplices and crosses	No uniform Reject use of staffs
<b>Appearance (Facial)</b>	Long hair, long beard	Not applicable
<b>Baptism</b>	Adult triple immersion in a river/dam	Adult triple baptism in a baptistery
<b>Taboos</b>	Abstain from pork, alcohol, smoking	Abstain from alcohol, smoking
<b>Healing (attitude)</b>	No doctor or medicine	Not applicable
<b>Healing (Means)</b>	Laying hands, holy water, dancing around the sick	Reject any symbolic objects and allow only laying on of hands

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter sought to answer the question regarding reorientation of black Pentecostalism from a Zionist to an evangelical form. Pentecostalism in the AFM was found to have been Western in orientation. This mindset was embodied in the bureaucratic structures staffed by white missionaries who themselves acted as proxies of the white AFM through its Executive Council. White Pentecostals regarded black Pentecostal expressions of faith with suspicion. Black embodiment of the Pentecostal faith was seen as aberrant and an affront to the respectability white Pentecostals wanted in the eyes of white society, especially that the AFM be included as the fourth church in Afrikanerdom. In the quest to (re)gain control over black

Pentecostalism, white bureaucratic power threatened expulsion of dissenters. It also (re)educated blacks into white ideas of what the appropriate response to Pentecostalism was supposed to be. Black assertion of agency and resistance to being cowed by white Pentecostalism produced several victims, some of whom chose to leave the AFM while others remained. The rise of evangelical Pentecostalism was thus a reassertion of white control over black Pentecostalism.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

#### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of the study has been to provide plausibility to the argument that black Pentecostalism in the AFM, which is now evangelical, had a Zionist, non-evangelical past. The Zionism referred to is the African Christian religio-cultural synthesis of Pentecostalism and the teachings of John Alexander Dowie of Zion City, Illinois, in proximity to Chicago, and his Zion Church, mostly pioneered by black ministers who had worked with Pieter le Roux in Wakkerstroom. There was no interest in arguing whether Zionism was evangelical or not. Instead, the generally accepted position of not including Zionism among movements closely associated with Evangelicalism was assumed. Change is implicit in the argument of the non-evangelical past of black Pentecostalism precisely because the Pentecostalism presented in the AFM today is of the evangelical kind. Therefore, the notion behind asserting the plausibility of the non-evangelical past of black Pentecostalism was to enable a focus on the change that took place in order to understand the means by which it happened and the reasons for it.

The study was of a documentary nature. Archival and secondary sources, which could shed light on black Pentecostalism in the AFM in relation to Zionism, were scrutinised. These sources were read and the study put together informed by a black perspective with its concern for black agency, towards a future in which all God's people can sit at the table as true equals. Furthermore, the study was approached from a perspective championed by Allan Anderson in which all Christian movements with an emphasis on the Holy Spirit and related phenomena are regarded as Pentecostal.

Three objectives related to the following question were identified and pursued: if black Pentecostalism in the AFM was Zionist, and in consequence non-evangelical, how and why did it become evangelical? The objectives were to discuss descriptions of Zionism and black Pentecostalism, determine how the similarities and differences between the two were explained and identify who encountered difficulty with a 'possibly Zionist' Pentecostalism, how they solved this issue and why it was a problem. The period between 1940 and 1975 was the focus of the study; reasons

have been provided for this choice. Besides the background on the AFM, which the study furnished in a separate chapter, a chapter was dedicated to each objective. Following hereafter are major findings, per objective, and a comment on the limitations of the study as well as recommendations for further research.

## **6.2 Findings per objective**

### **6.2.1 Objective 1: To discuss how literature describes Zionism and black Pentecostalism in the AFM.**

The above objective was the subject of Chapter 3. The aim was to uncover and present the similarities between early black Pentecostalism in the AFM and Zionism. To do this, it was necessary to hark back to Wakkerstroom and Doornfontein, two places of significance to both movements, to discuss the founding leaders with a view to locating them within the context of the Zionist-Pentecostal synthesis that was the AFM in its early years, and subsequently discuss the characterisation of these movements. How these two movements were characterised in literature was critically important to the argument of this dissertation—that black Pentecostalism was Zionist and that cultural reorientation occurred, which resulted in evangelical Pentecostalism becoming pervasive in the AFM. Setting black Pentecostalism in the AFM side by side with Zionism showed remarkable similarities between the two—enough to conclude that the former was indeed Zionist (see table 3.1). Of great significance was the fact that Zionism then (and even now) had an African traditionalist aspect to it. Therefore, a Zionist-black-Pentecostalism also displayed such a cultural orientation. Accepting this helps to make sense of the changes that transpired from the 1940s to the 1970s as an exercise in re-orientation of black Pentecostalism away from African traditionalist culture to a westernised one.

### **6.2.2 Objective 2: To determine how literature accounts for the similarities and differences between Zionism and black Pentecostalism in the AFM.**

Chapter 4 concerned itself with the above objective. In it, a portrait of black Pentecostalism within the AFM was presented and various explanations given for its similarities and dissimilarities to Zionism. Explanations stemmed from two sources: denominational Pentecostal leaders of the late 1960s and early 1970s as well as scholars who studied Pentecostalism. Because the chapter was not just surveying existing explanations for similarities and dissimilarities of Zionism and black

Pentecostalism, it also synthesised probable explanations from existing ones. The similarities of Zionism and black Pentecostalism before and during the period under study find better explanation through acknowledging black agency grounded in “common historico-theological and liturgical links” as well as the “common religio-cultural” and socio-economic backgrounds of the members of the two movements. The differences of these two movements lay in white domination of black Pentecostalism and the independence of Zionists therefrom. Besides leadership dominated by whites, the AFM put modern bureaucratic structures in place, while Zionism drew from African organisational ideas and was more inclined towards charismatic structures. Proximity to whites afforded black Pentecostals access to material resources and ministry training to which their Zionist counterparts had no access. With these, black Pentecostalism developed away from its Zionist base and increasingly became part of the born-again movement in attitude, appearance and activities.

### **6.2.3 Objective 3: To establish if literature indicates who had a problem with a ‘possibly Zionist’ black Pentecostalism, their reasons and how ‘the problem’ was then dealt with.**

In Chapter 5, which has the above objective as its subject, Pentecostalism in the AFM was found to have been white, therefore Western in orientation. The bureaucratic structures staffed by white missionaries embodied this orientation. In the quest to (re)gain control over black Pentecostalism, bureaucratic power was used to threaten expulsion of black ministers who insisted on a Pentecostalism that made sense of their Africanness and to (re)educate them into white ideas of what an appropriate response to Pentecostalism was supposed to be. Black assertion of agency and resistance to being cowed by white Pentecostalism produced victims, some of whom chose to leave the AFM while others remained behind. The rejection of Zionist-Pentecostalism, that fruit of black agency, came at a cost that the AFM is yet to fully comprehend. The seeming violence of the years of transition from the Zionism of black Pentecostalism to the institutionally acceptable evangelical Pentecostalism broke down black agency—an act of throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water. The once Zionist black Pentecostalism was now evangelical. Table 5.1 captured the differences between these two forms of Pentecostalism that have been experienced in the black AFM.

### 6.3 The implications of the findings

The rise of evangelical Pentecostalism was thus a reassertion of white control over black Pentecostalism. This white control contradicted the adaptive spirit and African nature of Pentecostalism itself. For as long as white control existed and (maybe) still exist/s, it asked/ asks black Africans to not respond to the most African of the varieties of Christian spiritualities, in a manner comprehensible to themselves. It demanded a response filtered through white lenses—an abnormal and probably unjust situation as white Pentecostals never, in the history of the movement, had to contend with cultural filters foreign to themselves. If white control of black Pentecostalism continued from those years when it reasserted itself at the expense of black agency, questions regarding there ever being a possibility for mature black Pentecostal contribution (within the AFM and beyond) to leadership and theological development in the age of an African Renaissance shall remain unanswered.

What this study moots then, is the need for black Pentecostals to seize the day and reflect on the deficiencies introduced by evangelicalisation of their faith, particularly in relation to the African world-view and culture. This necessity was born out of the corrosive individualist and triumphalist assumptions accompanying the historic black experience of evangelicalism in the AFM. As evangelicalisation of black Pentecostalism in the AFM was forced, it is therefore a product of violence. A religion born in violence fails at love, forgiveness, respect, and belonging. It relates better to commands, judgement and fear which alienates. Only black Pentecostals can and must act on their historic experience of evangelicalisation that robbed them of the contribution their African world-view and culture could have made to Pentecostal being and mission. Not to do so is to continue rendering the African world-view and culture irrelevant to the theology and mission of the Pentecostal church as well as perpetuating harm to black Pentecostals and the recipients of their evangelism.

Black Pentecostals need to decide if they wish to identify with the ongoing process of incarnating the gospel in Africa. This task demands that they see themselves through their African eyes and not through the filters imputed by westernised missionary Christianity. The lauding of AICs, and particularly black Zionism, as being in the forefront of Africanising Christianity challenges black Pentecostals to a conversation they would be best advised to enter; firstly, for greater ecumenicity with a kindred movement; secondly and in humility, to learn from a movement on the cutting edge of real theological dialogue between Christianity and

the African world-view. Lastly, in the spirit of Elias Letwaba who pioneered theological training in the AFM, black Pentecostals need to pioneer and support educational projects and other platforms that address problems endemic to their Africanness. It cannot be that they remain consumers of theological questions and answers they did not help generate, or do not determine their importance to the project of black Christian maturity and witness in a reawakening Africa.

#### **6.4 Limitations and recommendations**

This study may be the first to attempt to understand the transition of black Pentecostalism from Zionism into the current evangelical expression. Its scope was limited to the study of primary and secondary documents with an obvious consequence that the most important sources came from white pens. Consequently, the study offers little if anything in terms of expanding the list of black role players in the drama of the Pentecostal movement in South Africa, especially the AFM. These leaders' existence and impact on the religious landscape has been acknowledged in the literature, albeit as nameless actors. What remains is the challenge of identifying them, listening in to their testimony and re-engaging the written record to produce a holistic history of the Pentecostal movement, especially the AFM.

Despite its limitations, the achievement of the aims of this study makes it possible to raise further questions and research topics, which are important to the understanding of black Pentecostalism in the AFM and South[ern] Africa. For example, how did those who lived through the reorientation of black Pentecostalism view and experience this process? How did black women, who seemed to receive harsher treatment by the church owing to their use of special clothes as uniform, bring the leadership to concede defeat? Further, why is it that the uniform disappeared in the AFM after black Pentecostals won a protracted battle against white male leadership that sought to either disrobe or disenfranchise, in particular, black women Pentecostals? Who were the apostles of evangelicalism among black Pentecostals in the AFM and how have their thoughts and activities aided or abetted black agency since the inception of the AFM? Lastly, how has black agency expressed itself in the now pervasive evangelicalism of black Pentecostals in the AFM since the 1970s?

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