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# Black Pentecostal reflections on the inward-looking approach in classical Pentecostalism

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## ABSTRACT

This article problematises the inward-looking approach adopted by classical Pentecostalism in a South African context. A literature review on White-led classical Pentecostal churches reveals that in their early development, these churches were inward-looking and only concentrated on their theology of Spirit baptism, evangelism, and eschatological expectations. This inward-looking approach made classical Pentecostalism passive in response to socio-economic and socio-political issues. Issues such as racial segregation and economic challenges are highlighted here to demonstrate classical Pentecostalism's non-engagement. The aim of this article is the rationale the benefits for classical Pentecostal churches in broadening their ways of engaging with South African society. This can be done by learning from African Independent Pentecostal Churches whose theology on socio-economic and socio-political issues is exceedingly outward-looking. These lessons have implications for Blackness as they demonstrate that Black leaders can change their circumstances without the supervision of Whiteness.

## KEYWORDS

Classical pentecostalism; African Independent Pentecostal Churches; social action; inward-looking; outward-looking; blackness

## Introduction

Classical Pentecostalism in a South African context refers to churches that were started by missionaries such as John G Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch at the beginning of the twentieth century. These include churches such as the “Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa”, the “South African Assemblies of God” and the “Full Gospel in South Africa”. These churches have a strong theology of Spirit baptism, evangelism and eschatology. The argument in this article is that this theology, specifically the eschatological expectation, has made these churches inward looking forsaking another important aspect of the churches mission, namely social responsibility. In addition, it is the inward-looking approach that has made these churches silent on issues of racial segregation, which affected many of Black people in post-apartheid South Africa. This article problematises this inward-looking approach by pointing out that classical Pentecostalism was out of touch with the realities of the Black people in South Africa. Consequently, this implies that western or missionary-founded churches in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa, are sometimes irrelevant to a certain degree to the needs of most Black people.

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Contrary to the inward-looking approach in classical Pentecostalism, African Independent Pentecostal Churches have been involved in the ministry of social action, that is taking part in the socio-economic development and socio-political issues in different African countries across the continent, and of course, in South Africa itself. This article aims to demonstrate how classical Pentecostalism in South Africa can learn from African Independent Pentecostal Churches in moving towards greater involvement in social action. These lessons have some implications for Blackness. This means that the Black leaders, who started African Independent Pentecostal Churches are capable of leading churches, contrary to the popular perception that Black people cannot lead. This implies that Blackness can thrive without the assistance of Whiteness. The aforementioned will be accomplished by introducing the inward-looking approach in classical Pentecostalism, the theological rationale behind this approach, a discussion on its disengagement with social issues, and the proposal for a Pentecostal theology of social action as practised by African Independent Pentecostal Churches', namely, an outward-looking approach.

### **The Inward-looking Approach in Classical Pentecostalism**

An inward-looking approach is an attitude of an organisation, in this instance, a church that looks at its interests as opposed to looking to the interests of others. In the context of classical Pentecostal churches, the notion of these churches is focusing their mission on themselves instead of looking at the other aspects of life other than internal affairs. Inward looking is an attitude of perceiving participation in social life as unrelated to the mission goals of the church.<sup>1</sup> In other words, looking at social action as otherworldly because, in this approach, the mission is only defined in terms of what the church does for itself. In supporting the inward-looking approach, classical Pentecostal churches encourage their "followers to focus on personal discipline and contributions in time and money to the movement with little attention to the transcendental, to theology or religion's contribution to society".<sup>2</sup> Saayman explains that in South Africa churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission adopted an approach that only looked at their own best interests.<sup>3</sup> In addition, these churches looked at internal interests by ignoring the external challenges that affected the very same church people.

In this article, the inward-looking approach is discussed by looking at the reasons that caused classical Pentecostal churches to look inwardly instead of taking part in other social and political aspects of life in the South African context. This approach is used here to demonstrate that classical Pentecostal churches have been inactive politically and socially because of focusing on their internal affairs. The inward-looking approach in classical Pentecostalism is compared with the outward-looking approach in African Independent Pentecostal Churches.

A few churches, specifically from western Africa, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Lighthouse Chapel and others were sampled to discuss their outward-looking approach. The aim is to demonstrate the capability of the African leaders in these churches to bring economic transformation and development. In the next

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<sup>1</sup>Hunt, "Deprivation and Western Pentecostalism Revisited".

<sup>2</sup>Lehmann, "Religion as Heritage, Religion as Belief".

<sup>3</sup>Saayman, "Some Reflections on the Development".

section, the article explores the rationale behind the inward-looking approach in classical Pentecostalism. In other words, what are the main reasons that caused classical Pentecostal churches not to take part in the external issues that affected society and, indirectly, the same members of these churches?

### **The Theological Rationale Behind the Inward-looking Approach**

Classical Pentecostal churches concentrated greatly on the theology of Spirit baptism and the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. The early Pentecostals in South Africa took after the Azusa Street Revival in embracing the full gospel of divine healing, Spirit baptism and holiness.<sup>4</sup> This kind of theology is more internal than external, in other words, it contributes to the inward-looking nature of classical Pentecostal churches. This theology causes classical Pentecostals to spiritualise important issues that require action as it puts much reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit. In classical Pentecostalism, believers delegate matters that they need to do themselves to the Holy Spirit. Not everything needs to be done by the Holy Spirit; some of the work needs to be done by people. God himself in his plan of salvation uses human beings to reach out to one another. God does not delegate these responsibilities to the Holy Spirit, but trusts humanity to engage in partnership with God to help achieve God's aims. This does not mean that it is wrong to be Spirit baptised, but the Holy Spirit is there to empower believers to participate in social responsibilities. The development will not come just because people are filled with the Holy Spirit or because they speak in tongues. The change will come when believers are active in their communities and society in general. Contrary to the inward-looking approach among classical Pentecostal churches in South Africa, the biblical text encourages believers to become witnesses to others after receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). This means that the Holy Spirit empowers believers to be more outward-looking than becoming inward-looking.

Classical Pentecostals believed that the coming of Christ was imminent, thus they concentrated on the spiritual instead of the material or the physical. Early Pentecostals were living their lives preparing for the rapture and reaching heaven, hence a focus on living a holy life rather than concentrating on the things of the world. Equally, this kind of theology made them concentrate on their eschatological expectations. The eschatological expectations also contributed to early Pentecostals believing that God will come and solve all the problems of the world. This view dismisses the human role in solving earthly problems as previously discussed, with such issues delegated to the domain of the divine. According to Frahm-Arp, this caused classical Pentecostals to engage in a form of millennialism<sup>5</sup> in which believers expected millennial change to be ushered in through an outside agent, in this case, God, rather than through their efforts to change the world. This led to the development of Revival Pentecostalism as a conservative, reactionary world-rejecting movement.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Elijah Fil, *The Rise of the Global South*.

<sup>5</sup>The concept of millennialism as embraced by early Pentecostals refers to a belief by Pentecostalism that there is a period whereby God or the divine will come as related to the second coming of Christ to solve all the challenges of the world. Based on apocalyptic books, there is also a belief that millennialism will make the destruction of Satan and the reigning of believers over a specific period.

<sup>6</sup>Frahm-Arp, *Professional Women in South African Pentecostal Charismatic Churches*.

Consequently, this made them irresponsible with their earthly responsibilities because they were hoping for heavenly intervention. These eschatological expectations in classical Pentecostalism are deeply linked to a realised eschatology that believes in the “here and now”, instead of the “then and there”.<sup>7</sup> A realised eschatology in classical Pentecostalism is not materialistic compared to Independent Pentecostalism or even, most recently, prophetic Pentecostalism, but it is otherworldly. However, what is important in this article is the link between eschatological expectations and inward-looking approaches among classical Pentecostals. This attitude has recently changed since most early Pentecostals have lived for a long time to see that the coming of Christ is not as imminent as they expected. Nonetheless, the attitude as argued here made them neglect their earthly responsibilities.

The eschatological expectations made early Pentecostal concentrate on evangelism and preaching for the sake of converting people rather than empowering them economically and taking part in other aspects of social responsibilities. Anderson explains, “unfortunately, the emphasis on self-propagation through evangelism and church growth has sometimes resulted in Pentecostals being inward-looking, triumphalistic and seemingly unconcerned or oblivious to the serious issues of their socio-political contexts, especially where there were oppressive governments”.<sup>8</sup> With this evangelistic posture, classical Pentecostal churches have not concentrated on social and economic activities, calling them the things of the world.<sup>9</sup> Patterson and Rybarczyk explain that classical Pentecostals demonstrated a passionate desire to become intimate with a holy God and to provide a clear and consistent witness to their neighbours, and therefore were extremely concerned about ridding their personal lives of worldly behaviour and influences.<sup>10</sup> Of course, this kind of theology worked for them in terms of a motif to live a holy life that is entirely dependent on God.

This approach made Pentecostalism expand in terms of numerical growth as evangelism was strong in early Pentecostalism even more so than in recent years. It cannot be emphasised enough that the eschatological expectations became a tool in the hand of the Lord for Pentecostals to reach as many souls as they could at that time. Johnson states, “If the mission of God is God’s purpose to restore all creation, then eschatology describes the actualization of his intent”.<sup>11</sup>

This means that eschatology, specifically the imminent coming of Jesus, became an instrument for people to draw near to God. And this in a way made the mission of God possible on earth, including for classical Pentecostals in South Africa. The biblical message of reaching out to the unsaved became practical or was propelled by the urgent expectation of the coming of the Lord.<sup>12</sup> However, the challenge is the inward-looking approach among classical Pentecostals as caused by the eschatological expectations and the evangelistic approach. The challenge is that the zeal to preach to the unsaved and fulfil the great commission became an impediment among classical Pentecostals to take part in social activities because they were in hurry to get to heaven. The challenge is that this approach produces some level of an inward-looking posture,

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<sup>7</sup>Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*; Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations*.

<sup>8</sup>Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 200.

<sup>9</sup>Halldorf, *Pentecostal Politics in a Secular World*, 224.

<sup>10</sup>Patterson and Rybarczyk, *The future of Pentecostalism in the United States*, 202.

<sup>11</sup>Van Johnson, “Eschatology and Mission.

<sup>12</sup>van der Laan, “What is Left Behind?”.

which instead of living wisely with the world, they have decided to live separated from reality, divorced from what is happening in the world. Early Pentecostals reached out to people to prepare them for heaven instead of helping them to deal with their current needs here on earth.

## The Inward-looking Approach and Disengagement with Political and Economic Issues

South Africa suffered the challenge of racial segregation that lasted many decades until the coming of democracy in 1994 as ushered in by the African National Congress.<sup>13</sup> Early Pentecostalism in South Africa started as a non-racial movement just like the Azusa Street Revival, however, as time went by, the movement became divided according to racial lines. This attitude had many classical Pentecostal churches adopting a non-confrontational approach towards socio-political issues, specifically, racial segregation in South Africa. This arose because classical Pentecostal churches could not confront the demon that exists in their own ranks. On the contrary, some members of these churches became part of the system that contributed to the oppression of most Black people in South Africa. Consequently, leaders such as Adrian Vlok<sup>14</sup> supported the apartheid system instead of being in confrontation with it. Resane points out, “White Pentecostals were, except for a few voices, generally passive towards racial segregation”.<sup>15</sup> But equally some early Black Pentecostals such as Elias Letwaba, saw political engagement as a sin and a deviation from the mission of the church.<sup>16</sup> This happened when society expected help and answers to come from the church, however, classical Pentecostal churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission became inactive.

Classical Pentecostalism has been disengaged with socio-economic issues, and economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment and inequality.<sup>17</sup> South Africa, like many other African countries, is faced with economic challenges that do not exonerate the members of classical Pentecostal churches. Challenges like these are not only the responsibility of the government but churches can become an alternative voice to address these economic challenges. However, Pentecostal churches until recently were not as active in contributing or dealing with these challenges because of their inward-looking approach. On the contrary, in dividing their churches according to racial lines, these churches have contributed to the economic inequalities that exist in South Africa today. South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world where the White minority own the strategic sectors of the country and most Black people are poor. This problem started during apartheid whereby economic opportunities were only given to Whites while the Black majority suffered. In addition, classical Pentecostal

<sup>13</sup>The African National Congress is the party that was started in 1912 as a liberation movement. The party through its democratically elected president Nelson Mandela ushered South Africa in to a democracy after many years of racial oppression by the apartheid government of the National Party.

<sup>14</sup>Adriaan Vlok was the minister of law and order during apartheid South Africa and was also tasked with assassinating black people in South Africa, including the former secretary of South African Council of Churches, Frank Chikane. See Kgatle, “Servant Leadership”.

<sup>15</sup>Resane, “Pentecostals and Apartheid”.

<sup>16</sup>Kaunda, “Towards Pentecopolitanism”.

<sup>17</sup>Kgatle, *The Fourth Pentecostal Wave in South Africa*. Previously, classical Pentecostals did not engage in the solution of socio-economic challenges. It is only recently that churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa has started to engage in works of charity. See Kgatle, “A Practical Theological Approach”.

churches are themselves unequal with most White congregations being rich, and most Black churches being poor. Therefore, instead of contributing towards a solution to economic challenges in South Africa, classical Pentecostal churches have become an agent that propels these challenges through the racial divisions that are still present.

Classical Pentecostalism, until recently, has been disengaged with the issues of economic and sustainable development, such as building schools or universities, the development of an alternative banking system, and so forth.<sup>18</sup> Unlike other Christian traditions, there is not much involvement in matters of sustainable development among classical Pentecostal churches. Again, this is because Pentecostals were eager to go to heaven and meet their master instead of building schools and taking part in practical, human development. The Centre for Development Enterprise (CDE) in Kaunda concluded that the “movement remains underutilised as a social capital resource for economic development in South Africa”.<sup>19</sup> Classical Pentecostal churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God have massive buildings for church gatherings. However, the big question remains, how do these impressive forms of infrastructure contribute towards economic and sustainable development? Most of the time, these buildings are empty mid-week waiting to be occupied by believers on Sundays. This means that they are not as useful to economic and sustainable development as they are supposed to be in South Africa. The real development will come when these churches start building schools, universities, and other centres for economic and sustainable development. This raises another challenge, educational development.

Classical Pentecostalism, until recently, has been disengaged with the educational development in South Africa because people were preparing to go to heaven and did not see the importance of education.<sup>20</sup> Hence, Pentecostalism in that period grew among the lower class and people without formal education. And by education here, one does not only refer to theological education and the training of pastors but formal education. On the contrary, education is central if any organisation or even the country were to be serious about issues of economic and sustainable development. Classical Pentecostalism did not recognise this, contributing to granting most if not all Black people Bantu education,<sup>21</sup> during apartheid. This Bantu education has contributed to the lack of development among Black people in South Africa. Their White counterparts received the best education providing them with the opportunity to occupy the best positions in companies and government departments. These realities have not changed even in a democratic South Africa: there are still White schools and Black schools, and there is still a White economy of the wealthy, and a Black economy of the poor, linked with the inward-looking of classical Pentecostalism in this article. These realities can change, however, specifically when looking at the outward-looking approach adopted by African Independent Pentecostal Churches as discussed below.

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<sup>18</sup>Kgatle, “The Relationship Between the Economic Strand”.

<sup>19</sup>Centre for Development Enterprise, *Dormant Capital*.

<sup>20</sup>Topf, “Fundamentalism, Marginalization, and Eschatology”. Cf Marius Nel, “Pentecostal Theology as *contradictio in terminis*”.

<sup>21</sup>The Bantu education system during apartheid South Africa is one that was designed to give Black people an inferior education to prepare them for jobs that do not require skills, while their White counterparts were trained to become lawyers, doctors, engineers and so forth.

## Outward-looking Approach: Lessons from African Independent Pentecostalism

The majority of African Independent Pentecostal Churches specifically churches such as the “Redeemed Christian Church of God of Enoch Adeboye” in Nigeria<sup>22</sup>, “Lighthouse chapel” in Ghana and other African countries have an outward-looking approach. The outward-looking approach is the opposite of the inward-looking approach because instead of focusing on the internal affairs of the church, an effort is made to also reach out to society through outreach programmes. An outward-looking approach means that the mission of the church is not only confined to the business of the church but stretches out to the world to meet the needs of the people.<sup>23</sup> This means that there is an interaction between what is happening in the world and the mission of the church, in contrast to inward-looking that moves away from the world. Florez explains further by saying that “an outward-looking vision propels the church to reflect upon and engage with the social reality outside its temples’ doors, a reality characterised by economic insecurity and inequality, violence, oppression, and desperation”.<sup>24</sup> Thus, with the outward-looking approach, the church has an outward responsibility towards the burning issues in communities rather than folding her arms. This definition supports the premise of this article arguing that African Independent Pentecostal Churches are more outward-looking than classical Pentecostal churches.

The outward-looking approach among African Independent Pentecostal Churches allows them to engage with political affairs in their countries, with some members of the church holding key positions in government. Ajibade mentions that in Nigerian society, Pentecostals are sensitising their members to the need to be politically aware and to be well-positioned to influence the way things are done in national politics and governance. This goes beyond the former regular practice of praying for the government.<sup>25</sup>

This is important in influencing policy in the right direction rather than criticising the government from a distance without participation. African Independent Pentecostal Churches unlike classical Pentecostal churches are using the political office for the advancement of the Kingdom of God instead of using political influence to oppress Black people. As discussed in the preceding sections, classical Pentecostal churches use positions in government to oppress Black people in South Africa. In this case, the political influence from the ecclesiastical office is used negatively. In addition, the Black leaders in African Independent Pentecostal Churches boldly approach the political sphere without fear as opposed to the Black leaders in classical Pentecostal churches who saw participation in politics and confrontation of the apartheid system as a sin.

The outward-looking approach in these churches involves them in greater involvement in socio-economic issues such as employment and other pressing concerns. In other words, African Independent Pentecostal Churches make an effort to prepare their members for the workplace, including internal training on how the corporate world functions for those who are unemployed. Furthermore, these churches have an entrepreneurship wing

<sup>22</sup>According to Clarke, the Redeemed Christian Church of God “boasts of having 14,000 churches in Nigeria (4,000,000 members) and 350 churches in Britain and America respectively, as well as churches in other European countries”. Clarke, “Old Wine and New Wine Skins”.

<sup>23</sup>Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*.

<sup>24</sup>Florez, *Lived Religion, Pentecostalism, and Social Activism*.

<sup>25</sup>Ajibade, “The Role of Pentecostalism in Sustainable Development”.



that creates employment for their youth. Ajibade gives an example of “Deeper Christian Life Bible Church” and many more that “provide employment opportunities to people through the establishment of banks, printing presses and lots more”.<sup>26</sup>

Many other African Independent Pentecostal Churches have created job opportunities in different sectors of the church’s economy. Hence, when churches closed during the Covid-19 pandemic, many church workers lost employment because churches were not in operation. African Independent Pentecostal Churches not only offer a spiritual place for fellowship but also employment opportunities for people. Consequently, these churches can reduce unemployment in different countries in Africa, while governments on the continent struggle with increasing unemployment rates. Furthermore, addressing the issue of unemployment among Blacks, together with the entrepreneurship spirit among African Independent Pentecostal Churches, will go a long way in addressing the challenges of inequality in Africa. This will not happen by only relying on the government to provide jobs as is the approach among classical Pentecostals who have been quiet on matters such as unemployment, poverty and structural inequality.

Finally, African Independent Pentecostal Churches are involved in economic and sustainable development such as building schools and universities in their countries. Churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Lighthouse Chapel and others have been involved in building schools and universities in their countries and throughout the world. Some of these churches have started private banks that cater for the lower-income class in their communities. Adeboye summarises the Redeemed Christian Church of God’s involvement as follows:

- RCCG Apapa family has established River Bank Nursery and Primary School (in addition to its existing 30 schools); and Hope Centre (a primary school) at Makoko.
- They equipped 500 public primary school libraries in Lagos State while partnering with other churches to equip an additional 250 schools.
- They provide scholarship opportunities for the youth, e.g. the so-called Wisdom Group Scholarship (from Secondary to University). Fifty-one students have benefited so far.
- Adult literacy programmes, summer volunteer programmes and youth empowerment programmes are offered.
- They endowed four professorial chairs of mathematics (in honour of Pastor E. A. Adeboye) at the universities of Lagos, Ibadan, Ife and Nsukka (at ₦50 million each, equalling about R120,000).<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah mention Ghanaian Independent Pentecostal Churches that have been involved with economic and sustainable development over the years:

International Central Gospel Church, which has one of the top private universities in Ghana, Lighthouse Chapel International, which has built a hospital, Action Faith Chapel International, which has a university college, and Perez Chapel International,

which has acquired a university college and some elementary schools.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Adeboye, “A Starving Man Cannot Shout Halleluyah”, 129.

<sup>28</sup>Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah. “Pentecostalism and Sustainable Development”.

Therefore, these churches are active in economic and sustainable development in the form of starting schools, universities and private banks. This is not the case among classical Pentecostal churches, which have done the opposite in the past by perpetuating Bantu education among Black people in South Africa and by only affording opportunities to a select few instead of the suffering Black majority. This has implications for Blackness as discussed in the following section.

### **Lessons for Classical Pentecostalism**

Classical Pentecostalism can learn from the African Independent Pentecostal Churches to move away from a very conservative and inward-looking approach as discussed in the preceding sections. This means that the Pentecostal theology of Spirit baptism, eschatology and evangelism should not be used to the detriment of the classical Pentecostal churches by ignoring other social responsibilities of the church. Rather, classical Pentecostals should understand the baptism of the Spirit as empowering believers to take part in the important issues in society such as socio-economic and socio-political issues. Classical Pentecostals should not reach out to people for conversion and leading them to heaven but should endeavor to minister to their current needs. The current need of the people as identified by African Independent Pentecostal Churches are schools, universities, clinics, and other forms of educational and societal development. Furthermore, by becoming outward-looking, classical Pentecostal churches are more likely to benefit from reaching out to the wider South African society than just spiritually ministering to their church members. The churches will be playing an important role in becoming relevant to the context in which they are located and with the potential to expand to other regions. In other words, an outward-looking approach as adopted by African Independent Pentecostal Churches has the potential for the growth and expansion of the church. Whereas remaining inward-looking has the potential to limit the growth and expansion of the church to other regions of the world.

### **Implications for Blackness**

The lessons from African Independent Pentecostal Churches imply that Black leaders are capable of leading as opposed to the popular saying that Blacks do not have the capacity to do so. Black leaders do better when compared to White missionaries. This means that transformation and development in Africa happen when Black leaders rise to do things for themselves, the same way leaders such as Enoch Adeboye are doing. This will bring about change instead of waiting for western missionaries to come and build a church, a school or a university in Africa. Black leaders in Africa have a higher potential for success compared to predominantly White western missionaries because they understand the context in which they are operating and can do things for themselves. The capability of the leaders in African Independent Pentecostal Churches in changing the shape and colour of the continent implies that Blackness alone is beautiful and is sufficient; it does not need the help of Whiteness. There is a popular saying among the Sotho people that “*sehlare sa Mosotho ke lehowa*” loosely translated as “the black man’s medicine is the white man”. This saying implies that for Black leadership to succeed, it must be supported by Whiteness within its ranks. However, African Independent Pentecostal

Churches are proving this saying wrong by doing things for themselves without the supervision of the White man. Pastors in these churches are thriving by being creative and being visionaries in their churches and on their own. Their churches and the role they play in economic and sustainable development have become a model even for churches outside Africa. Hence, churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God are succeeding across the African diaspora. This church has become one of the biggest migration churches in Europe based on its outward-looking approach and the ability and capability of its Black leadership.

As more churches embrace an outward-looking approach, the possibility arises of addressing the current challenges facing the continent. This means that African problems can be more productively solved by African people in an African context. The African continent has the potential to become even brighter when Pentecostal churches on the continent are in discontinuity with colonial oppressive systems of the past and the present. In other words, they discontinue capitalist and neoliberal policies that seek to enrich the few Black elites while most of the wider Black populace continue to suffer. This means that schools and universities should not be started to only benefit the pastors' families but should benefit all the people in the context where they are initiated. These schools should be affordable to African people, not just the elite. In addition, Africa will also become brighter by not relying on Whiteness but through a sustained form of African unity. This means that churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God should not work in isolation but in collaboration with other Independent Pentecostal churches in Africa to increase their impact on sustainable and economic development.

## **Conclusion**

Classical Pentecostal churches adopted an inward-looking or conservative approach towards socio-political and socio-economic issues as informed by their theology of Spirit baptism, evangelism and eschatological expectations. Classical Pentecostals perceived the coming of Christ as imminent, hence they concentrated on the preaching of the gospel and Spirit baptism. With this approach, they neglected the realities of life, specifically in a South African context where issues such as racial segregation, poverty, inequality and unemployment are burning issues. This kind of approach has alienated many Black people causing them to leave and start their own churches. To turn this around, classical Pentecostal churches can learn from African Independent Pentecostal Churches who have adopted an outward approach demonstrated in their theology of social action. Classical Pentecostal churches can learn that being Spirit baptised does not have to lead to disengagement in socio-economic and socio-political issues. These lessons have some implications on Blackness, that is, the capability of Black leadership. This implies that the western perceptions of Black people as lacking leadership skills and their associated capabilities, must change in postcolonial Africa.

## **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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