




Are they Pentecostal? A theological perspective on the inclusion or exclusion of Zionist African Independent Churches into the Pentecostal tradition

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Abstract

One of the contended issues in Pentecostal studies is the exclusion or inclusion of African Independent Churches (AICs) as part of the Pentecostal tradition. This article resuscitates this old debate by looking specifically into the inclusion or exclusion of Zionist AICs in the Pentecostal tradition to make a theological contribution. This will be achieved by briefly discussing the Zionist AICs in the South African context. The various factors that contribute to who or what qualifies to be Pentecostal will be discussed by conceptualising Pentecostal identity. In other words, the research question to be answered is on top of which mountain do we stand to include or exclude Zionist AICs in the Pentecostal tradition? Therefore, this article will discuss the theological criteria used to include the Zionist AICs in Pentecostalism. Similarly, the theological criteria for the exclusion of the Zionist AICs will be discussed in detail. The aim and objective of this article are to attempt to answer the question are Zionist AICs Pentecostal? This will have implications for the study of Pentecostal theology in the South African context. Data was collected by reviewing and analysing literature on the AICs and their relationship with the Pentecostal tradition within a theological framework.

Keywords: Pentecostal theology, Pentecostal identity, Zionism, African Independent Churches, Zionist churches.

Introduction

The African Independent Churches (AICs) or other uses such as “African Initiated Churches” “African Instituted Churches” or “African Indigenous Churches” emerged as a response to the oppression of black people. As opposed to the Western missional churches in Africa, many Africans have found resonance with the AICs as they presented the gospel relevantly to them. Anderson (2001a:46) explains that AICs “arose primarily as a political and administrative reaction to European mission-founded churches”. Some AICs have emerged as a form of resistance to political oppression that resulted in ecclesial oppression, particularly in the South African context (Anderson, 2001b, 2001c; Chitando, 2004; Mwaura, 2004). Most of the classical Pentecostal churches in South Africa followed racial segregation that divided the population according to the colour of their skin into white, black, coloured, and Indian segments (Kgatle, 2019). Early Pentecostal churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa followed the same pattern hence so many AICs emerged from the same church. This is one of the factors that contributed to the proliferation of AICs at the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore, together with other Pan-Africanist movements, the AICs emerged not only to resist the oppression but to also seek the liberation of black people, in essence, the liberation of the oppressed (Bongmba, 2012:214). It is for this reason that these churches



have played a major role in the religious landscape in South Africa and elsewhere in the continent. In addition, these churches continue to grow in the continent in the 21st century with great influence on world Christianity.

However ecclesiastical polity is not the only rationale for the foundation and proliferation of the AICs. These churches were started in a quest to minister the gospel relevantly to the African people. This makes the AICs, the indigenous force of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These churches should be defined as the Christian movement in Africa that sought to de-westernise the presentation of the gospel by making the same relevant in the African context (Anderson, 2001). Divine healing is one of how AICs sought to present the gospel as a mechanism that provided solutions to African problems such as witchcraft, sorcery, misfortune, and so forth (Daneel, 2019). This is because Africans do link the challenges of sickness and diseases to the spirit realm (Anderson, 2018). Togarasei (2018:102) explains that “Africans believe that there is always a spiritual link to whatever problems and joys an individual experiences”. Hence, when faced with sickness and diseases, they do not always rely on modern medicine for solutions. This is the reason for the popularity of the AICs particularly their practice of divine healing in tracing the cause and solution of sickness and diseases to the spirit realm. This is why divine healing remains the most important factor of traction attracting many Africans to the AICs. Consequently, divine healing also known as faith healing to this day remains a fundamental theological rationale for the growth of the AICs. Because in ministering divine healing, the AICs filled the gap that Western missionary churches could not for many decades. Another factor for the proliferation of AICs closer to divine healing is prophecy which is responsible for diagnosing the root cause of sickness to prescribe the specific healing products. Therefore, in the AICs, prophecy is both diagnostic and prescriptive. Both functions of prophecy in the AICs have been responsible for the growth of these churches.

However, even with their growth and influence in the religious landscape in Africa, the literature review with very few exceptions demonstrates that AICs are not always included as part of the Pentecostal tradition. Kealotswe (2014) was bold to point out that by referring to AICs, she does not include Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches. While Asamoah-Gyadu (2015:100), a leading Pentecostal scholar in Africa explained that “The reason why the AICs are not always included within the Pentecostal family is because of the perceived proximity of their healing and prophetic practices to traditional methods”. Other scholars have been sympathetic to speaks of AICs as part of the broader Pentecostal movement (Müller, 2024) or even Pentecostal-type AICs (Molobi, 2011 cf Müller, 2018) or referring to AICs as Pentecostal-type churches (Anderson, 1995, 2000b). This necessitates a theological inquisition into the rationale behind the inclusion or exclusion of the AICs in the Pentecostal tradition. This article uses the Zionist AICs to explore this debate. The article will give historical background on the Zionist AICs to establish their relevance for this study. The different aspects of who qualifies to be Pentecostal will equally be explored in this article within the conceptual framework of Pentecostal identity. There will be a thorough discussion on the criteria for the inclusion of the Zionist AICs into the Pentecostal tradition. Similarly, the criteria for the exclusion of the Zionist AICs will be discussed in detail. The aim is to establish if the Zionist AICs are Pentecostal and the implications for their inclusion or exclusion. Therefore, this is a literary analysis within the theological framework. The article will also rely on the qualitative use of secondary sources here as well. In the next section, the article gives the historical background to the Zionist AICs in the South African context.

Zionist AICs in the South African Context

There are different types of AICs in the South African context and elsewhere in the continent such as messianic churches, Ethiopian-type churches, Aladura churches, and Spirit-type churches. The messianic AICs are known for their adoration of their leader and their dependence on the leader who sort of resembles the person of Jesus Christ or rather becomes the messiah of his or her followers. In this way, the leader plays the role of the mediator



(Oosthuizen, 1992; Anderson, 1999; Anderson 2000a, Daneel, 2000). The idea of a black leader as a mediator is popular in the African context as some believe it liberates them from colonialism which is confused with Western forms of Christianity. One such example is the Nazareth Baptist Church of Isaiah Shembe in KwaZulu-Natal whose emphasis on the leader has contributed to the church known as the “Shembe church” and the followers as the “adherents of Shembe” (Kumalo & Mujinga, 2017). The Ethiopian-type AICs emphasise their foundation in the African continent and that the churches in Africa should be led by black people (Oosthuizen, 2000). The Aladura AICs are found mainly in the Nigerian context with an emphasis on prayer and some reference to the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the evidence of speaking in tongues (Anderson 1991). In the Nigerian context, these are churches such as the Christ Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim movement, Celestial Church of Christ, and Church of the Lord (Adogame, 2000, Adedibu, Akindolie, & Olujobi, 2022).

Anderson (1991a:3) defines the Spirit-type churches as the prophetic movements that depend on the Holy Spirit as a source of revelation in prophecy. In addition, these are churches that will perceive the Holy Spirit as the one who is involved in the believer’s everyday life (Anderson, 1991a:8). The Spirit-type churches also emphasise the prophetic figure as the one leading the church through the prophetic gift and other gifts such as healing and so forth (Anderson, 2018:43). The Ethiopian AICs are the direct opposite of the “Spirit-type churches” because they do not emphasize the revelation by the Spirit rather their foundation in Africa (Anderson, 2018:43). Anderson (2018:43) and in his other works (1991a, 1991b, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c) would use the appellation “AICs” to refer generally to independent churches in Africa which include independent Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Africa. I would be hesitant to follow the same route because the latter would directly label all Pentecostal and charismatic movements that were started by Africans as AICs. For example, churches such as Grace Bible Church, although started in Africa by an African leader, Bishop Musa Sono in Soweto would not be considered an AIC in the same way the Zion Christian Church started by Bishop Engenas Lekganyane or the African Gospel Church of Job Chiliza would (Kgatle 2019). It is, therefore, important to categorise the AICs not only by their independence but by also taking into cognizance the various characteristics that make up this movement.

It is in the category of the Spirit-type churches that we find Zionist AICs and the Apostolic churches. The Apostolic AICs should not be confused with the Apostolic Faith Mission or any other fivefold ministry that believes in the Apostolic office or rather the office of the Apostle. The Apostolic AICs which are also known as the “vapositori” in Zimbabwe are known for worshipping in mountains, and water streams and for their wearing of church uniforms particularly green and white or blue and white or even white only garments (Anderson 1991, 2018; Musoni, 2019). Some of the Apostolic AICs are also known for playing drums in their worship. In this article, the focus is on the Zionist AICs. Anderson (2018:9) reiterates the point that Zionist AICs are “churches with an emphasis on the power of the Spirit and spiritual, supernatural gifts”. This is a distinct factor separating the Zionist AICs from other AICs such as the Ethiopian type that do not put such an emphasis.

There are many Zionist AICs in South Africa bearing the characteristics such as listed above. The largest and most popular Zionist AIC is the Zion Christian Church of Bishop Engenas Lekganyane. According to Anderson at the beginning of the 21st century, the Zion Christian Church was the largest AIC comprising about 10% of the Christian population (Anderson, 2018:52). Anderson (2018:52) continues to say that the AICs together with the Pentecostal group of churches make about half of the Christian population in South Africa. However, the Zion Christian Church is popular even outside South African borders in other countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, and so forth. However, the main research question remains, are these churches Pentecostal? This question can be answered by first exploring the Pentecostal identity to understand the various characteristics that make a church or movement Pentecostal.



Pentecostal identity

Pneumatology

Pentecostals around the world are known for their emphasis on the direct relationship with God through the work of the Holy Spirit (Menziés & Menziés 2000). This aspect has made Pentecostalism known as the movement of the Spirit (Anderson, 2013) and Pentecostals around the world to be known as the people of the Spirit (Kärkkäinen 2018). Vondey (2012) speaks of a Spirit-driven reality in Pentecostalism while Kay (2011) speaks of the Spirit as an integral part of Pentecostal theology. This is the reason why Pentecostals pay attention to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the initial evidence of speaking in tongues (McGee 2008 cf Macchia 1998). The emphasis on the Holy Spirit is popularly known as pneumatology or simply the theology of the Spirit. Pneumatology makes a Pentecostal theology very distinct from others in the Christian tradition (Yong, 2014 cf Yong, 2020). This does not mean that other Christian traditions do not talk about the Holy Spirit but do not put an emphasis on the latter the same way Pentecostalism has done over the years. Hence, while Pentecostalism is part of the Protestant movement, it is quite distinct from other protestant churches. This also explains the reason why charismatic renewals and charismatic movements would be known as mainline churches that have embraced the theology of the Spirit together with the gifts of the Holy Spirit including speaking in tongues. Similarly, Pentecostalisation is known as the concept where mainline churches adopt Pentecostalist and pneumatic experiences such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and divine healing. This in my view has become the important hallmark of Pentecostalism which in a way also separates Pentecostals from traditional evangelicals. On the other hand, also something that has been able to unite the different strands of Pentecostalism across the globe.

Holistic salvation

While it is true that all the Christian traditions do speak of salvation, what makes Pentecostalism distinct is the expression of salvation beyond the redemption from sin. According to Vondey (2017), the contribution of the Pentecostal movement to salvation is that salvation is not only theorised by expressed on the altar to include healing and deliverance as part of the saving grace of Christ. This is related to the full gospel in Pentecostalism where Christ is presented as the saviour, the healer, the Spirit baptiser, the sanctifier, and the soon-coming king. This makes salvation in Pentecostalism to be conceptualised and practised beyond the forgiveness of sins. In addition, this makes salvation in Pentecostalism not only include the human spirit but the human soul and the human body as well (Yong, 2005). In addition, it is the same reason that in recent years, salvation in Pentecostalism has moved beyond anthropocentric salvation to also include biocentric soteriology (Swoboda, 2019). Therefore, when Pentecostals say that they are saved, they mean that the body, the soul, and the spirit are all saved. It is for this reason that Pentecostal salvation is not limited to conversion but also includes other aspects of life in the life of the believer. Therefore, the converted in Pentecostal circles is oriented to think beyond conversion but to also demand other aspects of salvation because of the same redemptive work of Christ. It is from this understanding of holistic salvation that Pentecostals emphasize divine healing. Among neo-Pentecostals in Africa, this has also made them emphasise the ministry of deliverance in the quest to preach holistic salvation.

Lively liturgy

Worship in Pentecostal liturgy is not done to fulfil a liturgical rite but as an encounter between the human and the divine (Nel, 2016). For Pentecostal a moment in worship is a moment to



appear before the presence of God and to have an encounter with God. It is believed that the time for worship is the moment to release the presence of God through the Holy Spirit. This also makes a Pentecostal liturgy to be a pneumatological worship in the reliance of the Holy Spirit in worship. It is for this reason that worship in Pentecostal liturgy goes beyond the formal program into something very spontaneous, lively, and jovial experience through the same work of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals seek transformation in worship rather than a fulfillment of the program, hence, theirs is Spirit-filled and Spirit-led worship. Hence, even if they would be a hymn book in the Pentecostal liturgy, the same is not allowed to dictate the move of the Spirit but rather is subservient to the work and the move of the Holy Spirit. The songs that have been arranged to be sung in the Pentecostal service are not rigidly followed to allow the movement of the Spirit. This has made the Pentecostal worship in a Pentecostal liturgy to be distinct from the liturgy in other Christian traditions. Therefore, a lively liturgy performed with the use of different musical instruments in Pentecostal liturgy can also be considered an important factor in Pentecostal identity.

Hermeneutics of experience

Pentecostal's approach to the Bible is also pneumatological as it is not only based on the scientific methods of interpretation but also the experience of the Holy Spirit. Yong (2017) refers to the Holy Spirit as a hermeneutical Spirit that can bring the interpretation to the believer who is filled by the same Spirit. Therefore, the experience with the Holy Spirit is important in Pentecostalism not only for the pneumatic experiences such as speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy but also for the interpretation of scriptures. However, I must point out that this should not be misunderstood as being anti-intellectual but rather as the quest not only to hear from science but also to hear from the Holy Spirit. It only means that scientific methods are not the end point in Pentecostal hermeneutics as Pentecostals across the globe also depend on the work of the Holy Spirit to give them insight into the scriptures. Pentecostals depend on the Holy Spirit for the interpretation of scriptures in addition to biblical interpretation methods such as historical and grammatical interpretation, narratology, and exegesis (Archer, 2001, 2004). This makes the Pentecostal hermeneutics to be founded not only on methodological grounds but also on historical, pneumatological, and spiritual experiences as well. Therefore, the hermeneutics of experience can also be regarded as an important factor contributing to the distinctiveness of Pentecostal identity.

Pneumatological eschatology

Lastly, the Pentecostal identity is known for its emphasis on what one may call pneumatological eschatology amid eschatological positions such as inaugurated eschatology, realized eschatology, and future eschatology. The Holy Spirit is that eschatological Spirit who bridges not only the past and the present but also the future with His presence (Vondey, 2005:393). Pentecostal eschatology is less concerned with articulating a theology of the transcendence of God but a theology of His immanence through the work of the Holy Spirit (Ricchie, 2020). Althouse (2012) explains that the Holy Spirit brings a collapse of his transcendence and brings an inauguration of his immanence. The End has arrived already in the person of the Spirit, bestowed by the eschatological and Spirit-endowed prophet, Jesus Christ. Therefore, this confirms the narrative that Pneumatology is the main tenet of Pentecostal theology. Because there is again a link between the eschatological expectations and the role of the Holy Spirit. Pneumatological eschatology is mainly based on a theology of the "kingdom here" as opposed to the "kingdom there" and it is also a theology of the "kingdom now" as opposed to the "kingdom then". The proponents of this theology among Pentecostals believe that for the believer to experience the victory of the kingdom of God, they do not have to wait for the second coming of Christ but they can receive it in the here and the now through the presence of the Holy Spirit. This too although is not a general position of all Pentecostals around the world, it is something that can be considered uniquely Pentecostal.



Theological criteria for the inclusion of the Zionist AICs in Pentecostalism

There are historical connections linking the Zionist AICs with the Pentecostal churches (Maxwell, 1999; Anderson, 2000; Mofokeng & Madise, 2018; Kgatle, 2021). In South Africa, the Zionists have links with the Apostolic Faith Mission with the Zionist movement playing a preparatory role for the flourishing of the Pentecostal movement. According to de Wet (1989), this preparatory role played by the Zionist movement cannot be underestimated and should therefore be part of the history of the Pentecostal movement. When John G. Lake started in Johannesburg, the first church building (called the Central Tabernacle) used for fellowship then belonged to the Zionist movement. Therefore, the Zionist movement prepared for the establishment of churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission. This makes the Zionist AICs and the Pentecostal movement very much inseparable in the South African context. In addition, these links are not only visible in the South African context, elsewhere in countries such as Malawi, Strohbahn (2016:43) there are also connections between Zionism and Pentecostalism. The two movements have always learned and inspired one another over the years. It is this connection that makes it possible for the inclusion of the Zionist AICs in the Pentecostal movement in South Africa. It almost makes it impossible for any discussion on Pentecostalism to continue without the inclusion of the Zionist AICs in the South African context.

The Zionist AICs are people of the Holy Spirit which is one of the traits of Pentecostalism. The dependence on the Holy Spirit in prayer and prophecy makes these churches more oriented towards the Pentecostal movement. This makes the Zionist AICs center their theology on pneumatology, the theology of the Spirit. According to Anderson (2018:223), some of the members of the Zionist AICs have confessed that they have received the Holy Spirit as they too can speak in other tongues. More like on the day of the Pentecost in the book of Acts, the Zionist AICs believe that when they gather in prayer, singing, and praising God, the Holy Spirit can come into their lives. Anderson (2018:223) explains that "For some Zionist and Apostolic members, the Holy Spirit came while members were singing, clapping, dancing, or praying. Signs of the Spirit's presence were jumping, shaking, falling to the ground, prophesying, the ability to heal, and other signs of power." This puts the Zionist AICs in the same category as the Pentecostal churches in the belief in the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the evidence of speaking in other tongues. In addition, Lukhaimane (1980) points out that in the early inception of the Zion Christian Church when so many believers did not understand the Bible because of illiteracy, many would rely on the interpretation of the Bible through experience with the Holy Spirit. This means that hermeneutics in churches such as the Zion Christian Churches follow the hermeneutics of experience the same way as it is the case in many Pentecostal churches around the world. Therefore the hermeneutics of experience as an approach to the biblical interpretation can be considered a factor for the inclusion of the Zionist AICs into the Pentecostal tradition.

Lastly, there is a common ground between the Zionist churches and the Pentecostal churches, particularly among the blacks about the liturgical approach. This relates to the music, worship, clapping of hands, dancing, and even the preaching of the word of God. Anderson (2018:193) explains that this is the reason he would include these churches in the category of Pentecostalism not as a way of imposing them on the movement but to illustrate their resemblances in liturgy. While contemporary Pentecostals in South Africa use musical instruments in their worship as compared to the Zionist AICs, the theological basis of their songs, sermons, and so forth remains the same. Meaning, that both Zionist AICs and Pentecostals perform liturgy not as a way of fulfilling liturgical obligations but to reach out to the sick, and the depressed. It is for this reason that worship service in both religious groups comes with the promise of healing and deliverance in the life of the believer. Therefore, liturgy is another theological factor making it possible for the inclusion of the Zionist AICs in the



Pentecostal tradition. The next section discusses the rationale behind the exclusion of the Zionist AICs in the Pentecostal tradition.

Theological criteria for the exclusion of the Zionist AICs in Pentecostalism

The Zionist AICs do practice holistic salvation, particularly the practice of divine healing as a quest to reach out to human beings as body, soul, and spirit. However, the Zionist AICs use products such as water in divine healing which is not common in many classical Pentecostal churches in South Africa. Other than water there are several healing rituals performed in these churches for the healing and deliverance of the church members. Anderson (2018:137) explains:

Deliverance was achieved through the use of symbols like holy water, ashes, ropes, staffs, and whips to drive away evil spirits. Instructions given by church leaders were also to be carried out carefully before deliverance was obtained. The symbols used in healing were almost invariably believed to be powerless without faith in God; the objects were not usually seen as having any intrinsic power in themselves.

The use of symbols in divine healing can also give the impression that it is the healing products that provide healing to the believer as opposed to the person of Christ providing healing to an individual. Therefore, although the Zionist AICs might seem to be practicing holistic salvation, the excessive use of healing products makes them different from the classical Pentecostal churches. Therefore, the use of healing products would cause the Zionist AICs to be excluded from conventional Pentecostalism in a South African context.

Another challenge is that while most Zionist AICs indeed believe in pneumatology, it is still important for most of them to make a pronouncement in making a distinction between the Holy Spirit and other spirits. Because in African pneumatology Umoya in Zulu or Moya in Northern Sotho can refer to any spirit. Thus, while many Pentecostal churches are clear in making a distinction between the Holy Spirit and evil spirits, most of the Zionist AICs have not yet made it clear to differentiate between the Holy Spirit and other spirits including the ancestral spirits. Anderson (2018:99) in Zionist AICs like the Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission there is an embracement of ancestral spirits and therefore when calling “umoya” or “moya”, it would not be absolute that indeed a pastor, prophet, or church minister is referring to the Holy Spirit. Similarly, in Zionist AICs like the Zion Christian Church, prophets have the propensity of saying “ke tlelwa ke moya”, which loosely translates as “am being filled by a spirit”. This again is not absolute as to whether the prophet is referring to a general spirit, ancestral spirit, evil spirit, or the Holy Spirit. Since some Zionist AICs have already made a confession that God cannot do anything without the help of ancestors (Anderson 2018:84), it is therefore not clear in their pneumatology if indeed they are referring to the Holy Spirit. It is a challenge since according to Anderson (2018:96) “For some members of Zionist and Apostolic churches in particular, ancestors still play an important role and should be respected and obeyed. They are the mediators for God, who sometimes reveal the will of God to people, and who inspire the prophets”. Therefore when the Zionist AICs refer to “spirit”, we will have to ask which spirit? Are they referring to the Holy Spirit or any other spirit? This too is a serious matter that can make the Zionist AICs to be excluded in the Pentecostal tradition.

Are Zionist AICs Pentecostal?

This question depends on the criteria used before concluding. If we consider the historical connections between the Zionist AICs and the Pentecostal movement, then the Zionist AICs would be Pentecostal. If we consider Pentecostalism as the embracement of the Holy Spirit and its ecstatic experiences such as speaking in tongues, then the Zionist AICs are



Pentecostal in that approach. In addition, the Zionist AICs can be considered Pentecostal given the resemblances in the liturgical approaches, particularly the singing, dancing, and even sermons. However, being Pentecostal goes beyond the belief in the Holy Spirit and the liturgical approaches, it is also about the total reliance on the person of Christ in healing. In most Zionist AICs there is too much reliance on the healing products such as water and the performance of other rituals in healing and deliverance. Another challenge is that the Zionist AICs do not make a distinction between the Holy Spirit and other spirits in their pneumatology. Hence, some would still acknowledge the role of the ancestors in helping the believer which is not common in Pentecostalism. These reasons become the rationale for counting the Zionist AICs outside the groupings of the Pentecostal sub-traditions. It seems to me that there is a stronger rationale for the exclusion of the Zionist AICs into the Pentecostal tradition than there is for their inclusion. In the next section, the article discusses the Pentecostal theological implications for the inclusion or exclusion of the Zionist AICs in the Pentecostal tradition.

Pentecostal theological implications

The inclusion or the exclusion of Zionist AICs in the Pentecostal tradition has some Pentecostal theological implications. The first issue is the materiality of religion particularly in healing and deliverance as utilised by Zionist AICs and other Pentecostal groups such as neo-Pentecostals. There is a need for the development of the Pentecostal theology of materiality so that it is clear when the use of products in healing and deliverance is acceptable or not acceptable. The second issue is the clarity of pneumatology so that there is a clear distinction between the Holy Spirit and other spirits including ancestral spirits. For now, it is not clear among many Zionist AICs as to which spirit are they referring to especially when using the vernacular *Umoya* or *moya* which can mean anything in African pneumatology. This is important as there can be a claim of being used by the Holy Spirit but in reality, it is not the Holy Spirit but other spirits. These theological issues need to be dealt with in the context of Pentecostal theology rather than being dismissive because they are practiced by Zionist AICs for example.

Whatever position is taken by Pentecostals as practitioners of faith or scholars as insiders, it should not be used as a theological judgment on Zionist AICs. In other words, the exclusion should not lead to some form of discrimination towards the Zionist AICs as they remain relevant and influential in the Christian tradition. In addition, this is the religious group that prepared the ground for the establishment of the Pentecostal movement in the South African context. Thus, the movement should be acknowledged and appreciated instead of condemning them for the criteria that disqualify them as Pentecostals. Therefore, it would be erroneous to discriminate against all the members of the Zionist AICs. Who are we to condemn other church traditions? On which mountain are we standing to be able to discriminate against others or exclude them from a sense of belonging in the South African Pentecostal context? Therefore, the inclusion or exclusion of the Zionist AICs is not a simple matter but rather should be discussed by considering all theological factors before concluding. Lastly, the discussion on the inclusion or exclusion of the Zionist AICs should also include a clear definition of a Pentecostal identity, or should we speak of Pentecostal identities?

Inconclusive remarks

The conclusion is very inconclusive. One cannot conclude that the Zionist AICs are Pentecostal or not. This position depends on what we consider to be a Pentecostal identity. Although I have done my best to formulate a Pentecostal identity, this too is not conclusive and not exhaustive. In addition, the answer to the question if Zionist AICs are Pentecostals is also dependent on the criteria set out for their inclusion. The criteria in this article are based on pneumatology, hermeneutics of experience, and lively liturgy. The criteria for their exclusion include the use of healing rituals in divine healing. Therefore, the exclusion or inclusion of Zionist AICs in the Pentecostal tradition is not a simple matter, the various factors for their



inclusion and exclusion should be taken into consideration with serious implications for Pentecostal theology in the South African context. It is even more difficult when many of the Zionist AICs have not yet pronounced themselves on important issues such as eschatology which is one of the important aspects of Pentecostal identity. This calls for an exploration of the Pentecostal theology of materiality to determine when are healing rituals permissible or not as it is not only the Zionist AICs using the same but neo-Pentecostals as well. There is a need for the Zionist AICs to make pronouncements on their pneumatology so that it is clear which spirit are they referring to as “*moya*” can refer to any spirit in the spirit realm. Therefore, when referring to the Holy Spirit, this should be a clear position in these churches. Therefore, when anyone asks: are Zionist AICs Pentecostal? The answer should be “It depends on the criteria for their inclusion or exclusion”.

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