

A socio-historical analysis of the sections in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa from 1908 to the present



Author:
Mookgo S. Kgatle¹

Affiliation:
¹Department of New Testament Studies, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Mookgo Kgatle,
kgatles@yahoo.com

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The article presents a socio-historical analysis of the sections in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of South Africa from 1908 to the present. In order to achieve this, the article studies the relationship between the South African social politics and the ecclesiastical politics. It demonstrates how the AFM got divided into sections. The sections are the white, mixed race, Indian and black sections. The four sections in the AFM were not equal in power and responsibilities. The white section of the church was the major and domineering section of the AFM. Although other sections like mixed race and Indian were also inferior to the white section, the black section was the most inferior and marginalised section. The article also studies how the divisions in the AFM were addressed and solved. The purpose is to demonstrate how the church that was once divided into sections according to racial groups was able to move into unity.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This article makes a valuable scholarly contribution to the ongoing research on the history of the AFM in the field of church history. It juxtaposes church history with the problems facing society today like racial segregation and how such problems can be addressed and solved.

Introduction

The Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of South Africa is an African Pentecostal Christian church founded by American missionaries in 1908. The early developments of the AFM are linked to John G. Lake and Thomas Hezmalhach who played a major role as missionaries from the United States. Prior to their trip to South Africa, John G. Lake and Thomas Hezmalhach had contact with both John Alexander Dowie of Zion City, Chicago, and William Seymour of the Azusa Street Revival, Los Angeles (Oosthuizen 1987:11; cf. Roy 2000:121). Since the departure of the American missionaries, the AFM suffered division that lasted for more than 80 years from 1908 until 1996.

The AFM was divided into four main sections, namely the black, mixed race, Indian and white sections, before 1996. These sections came as a result of racial segregation and discrimination. The church started as interracial in the beginning, but as time went by it became segregated along colour lines (Paul 2006:78). The four sections of the AFM were not equal in power and responsibilities. The white section of the church was the major and domineering section in the AFM. Positions in the Executive Council of the AFM were reserved for white missionaries (Erasmus 1996:44).

These white missionaries were also appointed to oversee the work started by black pastors. Black leaders were not given an opportunity to take part in the high echelons of the church (De Wet 1989:96). Decisions were taken on their behalf without their consent because they were not members of such decision-making bodies of the church. The black people were regarded as adherents and not members of the church as only white people could become full members of the church (Kgatle 2015:195). The system and structure of the AFM was designed to promote monopoly by the minority group of the church.

Many pastors in the black section were dissatisfied in the church because they did not participate in leadership positions and as a result decided to start their own organisations or churches

Note: Mookgo Solomon Kgatle is a PhD (New Testament) graduate and research associate at the Department of New Testament Studies, University of Pretoria. This article flows from his PhD thesis titled *Servant leadership in Mark 10:35–45 applied to African Pentecostal Christianity*, completed under the supervision of Prof. Dr Ernest van Eck.

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(Kgatle 2016a:1). The black section in the AFM among other sections was an inferior section and therefore a marginalised community. Although other sections like mixed race and Indian were also inferior to the white section, the black section was the most inferior section. In order to achieve a socio-historical analysis of these sections, every section is carefully analysed and unpacked by studying the primary sources of the history of the AFM. The article pays attention to the constitutional, structural and leadership developments of each section. The purpose is to demonstrate how the church that was once divided into sections according to racial groups was able to move into unity.

The influence of South African social politics on Apostolic Faith Mission

South Africa was segregated into different racial groups. Segregation denotes a complex amalgamation of political, ideological and administrative strategies designed to maintain and entrench white supremacy at every level. It was elaborated in the context of South Africa's experience of rapid industrialisation and was intended to defend the prevailing social order from the threat posed by the growth of a potentially militant African proletariat. As an ideological justification of political inequality, segregation was founded on a dual principle: firstly, that the recognition of an African's right to land ownership which was conditional on the sacrifice of their claims for common citizenship; secondly, that Africans were the wards of their white 'trustees', under whose benevolent guidance they would be encouraged to develop autonomously (Dubow 1989:1 cf Kgatle 2016b).

Racial segregation was an economic policy for societal advantage through political, ideological and administrative strategies. Sibeko and Haddad (1997:84) add that the system of apartheid guaranteed that political, economic and cultural powers were controlled by the white minority. Social deprivation was heightened even further by the policy of separate development resulting in the forced removal of millions of people from their homes. A restrictive urbanisation policy directed towards African people was implemented through pass laws and influx control measures (Kgatle 2016b).

Through the vein of religion, for example, the apartheid system in South Africa enabled white people to establish superiority in a land where they were, in fact, the minority. Through the system, white people would come to possess 87% of South Africa's land and wealth, leaving the black African population a diminutive 13%. This system of classification proved economically beneficial for white people (Howard 2006:143). Africans were a majority, and as a result, they could not be marginalised without segregation. The purpose of racial segregation was to divide the African majority into ethnic groups and to channel African political and economic aspirations towards the bantu-stands which would be the 'homelands' for those ethnic groups. A further purpose was to deprive all Africans of South African

citizenship, thereby turning African workers in white areas into 'foreign' visitors (Maylam 2001:195 cf Kgatle 2016b).

Although segregation was predicated on perceptions of racial difference and was developed in the aftermath of colonial conquest, South African segregation was not just racial subordination. Its underlying principle was the enforced separation, not just subordination, of black people and white people in the spheres of work, residence and government (Worden 2012:80). Racial segregation was reinforced by the increasing institutionalisation of apartheid policies. This was especially so after the gazetting of the so-called church clause of the Native Laws Amendment Bill in 1957, which attempted to force racial segregation by restricting 'black' people from attending services in designated white residential areas (Czegledy 2008:289 cf Kgatle 2016b).

The laws and policies of racial segregation influenced the church in a negative way. In the AFM, a paternalistic policy undergirded with racial overtones was sometimes forced upon the church by the state (De Wet 1989:164). In addition to practices in the country at that time and self-generated separation for reasons of language and cultural differences, leaders in the AFM to a certain extent were stimulated by societal and racial mindsets (Chandomba 2007:23 cf Kgatle 2016b). The socio-political context of South Africa at that time caused the leaders of the church to take decisions that are not biblical but political.

In its early development, the AFM has been characterised by a strong conformity to white societal policy of racial segregation. The effects of this policy are evident in the sectional division existent within the AFM and are indicative of the organisation's close alliance with the political philosophy of the status quo. Together with its ideological bias, the church's theological conservatives have precluded it from involving itself in affirmative socio-political action in an apartheid ridden society (Reddy 1992:3).

At the end, the church instead of becoming an example to the state in their relationship with the state conformed to the standard of racial segregation. The church ceased to become a prophetic voice to the state and correct its wrongdoings. The church could not correct the state because they were practising the very same acts of segregation. However, there were few individuals who confronted the status quo until racial segregation was defeated in 1994.

How the Apostolic Faith Mission got segregated

The AFM started as a non-racial church. Early attempts to introduce racial separation in worship were resisted by the founding missionaries. When the missionaries left the country to return to their homelands, the church was set on a course of racial separation in compliance with the racial ideology of the country. Protests by black people were not heeded because a paternalistic mentality characterised the

white churches involvement with regard to the black church (Paul 2006:78 cf Kgatle 2016b).

The position of American missionaries on either prohibiting or permitting racial segregation is argued by the fact that the founding missionaries in the person of John G. Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch made a strong case for separate works among black, mixed race, Indian and white congregations though under the umbrella of the AFM (Poewe 1988:147). In 1908 and 1909, AFM adopted policies that would doom its considerable initial growth in the more distant future. By the time John G. Lake departed from South Africa in 1913, many black leaders had already formed their own groups (Kgatle 2016b).

The minutes dated 17 September 1908, apparently at Lake's instigation, according to Roy (2000:122), show that the missionaries supported racial segregation. Lake spoke of the necessity of getting adequate accommodation for the holding of services in Doornfontein, especially for the mixed race people. Less than 2 months later, they decided that, 'the baptism of natives shall in future take place after the baptism of the white people'. At the executive meeting in February 1909, it was decided that the superintendent over the 'native work' must be white. The minutes of July 1909 read: 'in future, the baptism of whites, coloured, Indians and Natives shall be separate' (Kgatle 2016b).

However, it might be true that the poor missionaries were under social pressure because Pentecostals, like other churches in South Africa during apartheid, yielded to the pressures from white society and developed racially segregated churches. The AFM is a striking example of the differences in outlooks of white and black members of the same church (Anderson 2001:3).

Horn (1991:5) clarifies that during the first few months, white and non-white were even baptised together; however, at the end of 1908 some Afrikaans speaking brothers came onto the Executive Council. The fact that they understood the history and the nature of the racial feelings in South Africa better possibly contributed to the gradual separation of the races. It is possibly correct to conclude that the pioneers deviated from non-racialism because of white racist pressure rather than theological conviction (Kgatle 2016b).

Another aspect of racial segregation was seen in the membership of the AFM as exemplified by Matika (2004:70) that until 1991, only white people could be legal members of the AFM. The church participated freely in the repressive government of racial segregation. It was eager to promote good relations with the traditional Afrikaner churches, especially the Dutch Reformed Church (Kgatle 2016b).

In 1944, 4 years before the National Party government took over, the AFM took a resolution that the mission stands for segregation that highlighted its support for the philosophy of apartheid. The fact that the black, Indian and mixed races are saved does not render them European. The church also

asserted its support for Bantu Education, that is, Native Education: The mission stands for a lower education (for black people) but is definitely against a higher education (Kgatle 2016b).

The AFM continued with the mission practice of 'daughter churches', similar to that practised by the Dutch Reformed Churches. The practice led to the establishment of four major groupings in the AFM: the white (parent) church, a large black daughter church, a mixed race daughter church and an Indian daughter church. The black church consisted of many different components, ordered primarily by language and region (Clark 2005:144). A separate meeting hall was opened in which services could be held. It was a reversal of the initial interracial character of the movement that supported interracial worship between the movement's adherents. In addition, the AFM instituted a series of racially motivated policies and structures whose effect was to fundamentally change the way in which persons participated in the church (Richardson 2013:29 cf Kgatle 2016b).

It is understood here that although the AFM started as a racially integrated church, the American missionaries adopted racial policies that were socially acceptable at that time to divide the church into four main sections, namely the black, mixed race, Indian and white sections. They did not do so because they believe in racial segregation. Therefore the meetings in the early AFM were non-racial, it is only at the departure of the American missionaries that the AFM became segregated (Kgatle 2016b).

Divisions in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

White section

The black mineworkers' strike of 1946 lamed the country's economy, and in 1947, the Natives' Representative Council demanded the removal of all discriminatory laws. In 1948, the Fagan Commission recommended that the government should stabilise the black urban population to prevent widespread rebellion over the long term. In the same year, the Sauer Committee, established by the National Party, recommended the policy of separate development or apartheid as a solution to the 'black problem'. This led to comprehensive apartheid laws regulating most aspects of black people lives from 1948 onwards (Burger & Nel 2008:247).

The AFM conformed to the *status quo* of the National Party. The social equality between white people, Indian, mixed race and black people was not promoted by the mission. It was discouraged altogether. God is no respecter of persons, and in all races, there are people who fear God. Although the gospel is proclaimed to all people of all races without exception, the mission has made provision for its white, Indian, mixed race and black members to worship God in their own separate places of worship, where sacraments are administered to them (Lapoorta 1996:57). The Missionaries

decided that it was imperative that all members and pastors of the AFM should subject themselves to the laws of the land, as long as such laws did not directly interfere directly with the preaching of the gospel of Christ as taught by scriptures. It was decided that relevant scriptural references should be inserted along with this instruction.¹

Boundaries between races were sanctified and were accepted as a natural part of God's ordering of the universe. A collection of biblical verses was used to justify as well as explain God's desire to keep races of people segregated (Welty 2005:46). By 1960, the white section in the AFM church had evolved into what was practically an Afrikaans church. As the apartheid policies of the governing party in South Africa led to further segregation of the country, the AFM became a South African Afrikaans church that supports racism (Chandomba 2007:38). The racial segregation did not only make impact in the AFM but in African Pentecostalism as a whole. Racial segregation has with few exceptions divided white from black Pentecostalism in South Africa (Yong 2006:22).

Many white people were convinced that there was no way people of different races could unite because of their differences. For the white section, it was obvious that God wanted a variety of races, each with its own purpose. Racial integration was sin. AFM leaders were defending the mental, emotional and spiritual superiority of the white race, all based on the scriptures. White Pentecostals not only acquiesced to the apartheid ideology but also actively defended it.

The involvement of the white section in 'mission' activities in terms of relationships with their local black churches also meant that institutionalised segregation did not necessarily imply total segregation. The relationship was extremely paternalistic, but the discrepancy in economic resources between the white and the black sections during the period under discussion left little alternative. The fact was that some very close relationships and friendships developed between white and black Pentecostals even in a segregated church environment (Clark 2005:153).

It was only in 1983 that the white section decided to draw up a new constitution for all the sections of the church, with the result that the AFM would have only one name. The constitution would be valid for every section, even though each section would have its own policy, as required by its own needs. The new constitution could not be altered without the consent of all sections, and a two-thirds majority would be needed in every respective Workers' Council. The new constitution would also provide for a General Council, with annual meetings and the task to serve as a forum for fostering better co-operation between the difference sections (Burger & Nel 2008:333).

In 1992, the white Workers' Council also approved a strategy for the involvement of the AFM in the poverty issue in South Africa, providing local assemblies with plans to combat

1.Minutes of the Missionaries in Conference, held at Central Tabernacle, Johannesburg, 27 March 1961, p. 90.

poverty within their constituencies.² The poverty issue in South Africa had to become a priority within the AFM, because it would open doors to the South African public. Biblical principles had to be brought to the attention of party politicians. Divisions as far as the church was concerned had to be along the lines of faith in Christ and not colour or race.³

In 1993, further changes were approved to structures in the local assembly and District. The Dorcas Council, responsible for welfare work in the local assembly and community, changed its name to the Welfare Council, providing for women as well as men to participate in this function.⁴ The District Council also changed its name to Regional Council (with the chairperson becoming the Regional Chair), and the Executive Council changed its name to the National Leadership Forum.⁵

The functions of the National Leadership Forum were defined thus: to create a context within the church for spiritual and strategic leadership; to be a guardian of doctrinal, ethical and liturgical matters in the church; to be the guardian of ministerial training; to determine curricula; to set minimum training requirements for entry to the ministry; to accredit training institutions and evaluate the final training product; to facilitate the ministry of pastors to pastors; to promote ecumenical relations; to convene an annual National Leadership Conference and manage the affairs of the church and to decide on all matters that give rise to different interpretations.⁶

In 1994, the principle of decentralisation was approved as the principle upon which the AFM would be founded, as a result of a long process of strategic reflection. The process of devolving power from the highest to the lowest structures continued and was managed by the Executive Council with a mandate from the Workers' Council. The function of hierarchical higher councils was to promote fellowship, while all issues that could be handled by the local assembly should not be discussed and decided at the level of those councils. The possibility be investigated that statutory bodies function as legal personae in their own right and that the National Office Bearers' positions become part-time in order that assemblies would benefit financially (Burger & Nel 2008:339).

Mixed race section

Mixed race people were allowed to attend church with white people compared to black people who were not (De Wet 1989:166). Mixed race people were segregated in the AFM but because of colour and many other similar cultural traits they were treated better compared to other sections especially the 'black section'.

Both the 'mixed race' and 'white' church spoke the same language and basically shared the same culture. They also

2.Minutes of the Workers' Council, Addendum 4, pp. 150–153.

3.Minutes of the Workers' Council, 21 April 1992, pp. 2, 4.

4.Minutes of the Workers' Council, 14 April 1993, p. 273, Resolution 30.

5.Minutes of the Workers' Council, 15 April 1993, p. 275, Resolution 35.

6.Minutes of the National Leadership Forum, 13–16 November 2000. Appendix F3.p. 16.

shared the same faith in Jesus Christ, were baptised through triune immersion and baptised in the same Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. Given these reasons, the mixed race church thought that it would be easy for it to unite with the white church given the above-mentioned reasons. In contrast, the unity issue was deeper than race and colour (Lapoorta 1996:92). It means that even colour and language did not necessarily benefit the mixed race section of the AFM during racial segregation.

The white section racially separated with the mixed race section regardless of many similarities between the two sections. In the years between 1924 and 1949, racial separation continued in the AFM. Even though most of the 'mixed race people' spoke Afrikaans, there was a tendency to keep the races apart. The white Executive Council even resolved that white people should be discouraged to worship in the 'mixed race people' assemblies (Lapoorta 1996:64). In the same way, the white section controlled the black section. The chairman and leader was always an appointment made by the white Executive Council. He served as chairman of both the Workers' Council and Executive Council. It was also at the 1969 Workers' Council, after the adoption of the constitution, that the first mixed race Executive Council came into being. Prior to this, the advisory board governed the mixed race work (Burger & Nel 2008:281).

When Pastor E.J. Gschwend took over the leadership in 1969, it was the beginning of a new era in the mixed race section. It can be said that he took the mixed race section away from the control and management of the Missions Department and put it in a position where the mixed race Executive Council could lead and manage the mixed race section. With the growth of the mixed race work in the country, more districts were demarcated. This resulted in more missionaries being appointed as overseers. Many of these missionaries contributed positively to the extension of the mixed race work. New assemblies were planted and new church buildings were erected (Burger & Nel 2008:281).

Pastor D.W. Patrick served as vice chairperson of the mixed race Workers' Council from 1969 until his retirement in 1977. Pastor C.A. Botes served as general secretary from 1969 until his retirement in 1982. In 1985, the Workers' Council elected all four office bearers for the first time whereby Pastor E.J. Gschwend served ex officio as moderator. Change came in 1990 in the last Workers' Council election of the mixed race section whereby J.J. Lapoorta was appointed as moderator of the section (Burger & Nel 2008:282). This brought growth in the mixed race section. In 1992, the mixed race section consisted of 102 assemblies, 93 branch assemblies, 161 Sunday Schools and 105 Young people's Unions. This work started under difficult situations, but God blessed it with 39 pastors, 15 probationary pastors, 8 evangelists, 78 church buildings and 37 parsonages (Burger & Nel 2008:306).

Indian section

The Indian people who were brought to Natal between 1860 and 1911 to aid its struggling agricultural industry

were socially and politically discriminated against. They encountered bitter anti-Asiatic resistance in the 19th century in Natal. They were threatened with repatriation to India for the first half of this century. Their movement and domicile were legally controlled and they were disenfranchised. For example, during the 1960s, 176 000 Indian people were moved under the *Group Areas Act* from the city and resettled in Indian areas. Their land was reclaimed for either white settlement or the development of industry (Pillay 1987:42).

In the AFM, the Indian section was represented by white missionaries without their consent. The constitution governs them without any input. There was also a loss of membership due to racism in the church. In addition, members on the ground also were confronted daily with a racism problem, and it seems that the church was lagging behind the government in advocating change (Lapoorta 1996:103). This shows that the Indian section was also oppressed by a system of autocratic leadership and centralising all the structures and section of the AFM under the Executive Council. Even other councils like the Missionary Council were also ruled and governed by white people and were designed to oppress other sections based on colour and race.

The revised Articles of Association of the AFM in 1946 defined members of the Indian mission as 'adherents'. The members of the AFM shall be composed of 200 000 persons of European descent. The non-European, which includes the Indian mission, shall be governed by separate policies and instructions and drawn up for the aforesaid communities by the Executive Council in consultation with the Missionary Council and approved by the General Workers' Council. The church was not racially exclusive, but the policy of the AFM was not one of racial integration. An AFM church for the black people existed with another AFM church for white people in the same surrounding area as the AFM continued with separate and racially exclusive churches (Burger & Nel 2008:312).

The Indian section was governed by a separate policy. Instructions were formulated and drawn up by the Executive Council in consultation with the Missionary Council. There was paternalism exercised by the white people over the Indian mission whereby the Indian church coexisted with the mother church of the white people. The Missionary Council, through Missionary Overseers, controlled the Indian section. Each assembly in the white section was expected to involve itself in mission to the nearest 'non-white' AFM church. Such missionary activities were coordinated and controlled by the mission department (Burger & Nel 2008:318).

The Indian daughter church in the AFM thrived as a daughter church during the period of racial segregation, although some of the restrictions on leadership brought some limitations. Once the church dissolved its separate racial sections and united as a non-racial church, the single greatest loser became the Indian church. As a small minority within the nation and the church, the daughter church concept protected them and allowed the development of their own

training institution. Powerful and effective Indian church leaders, and of meaningful interaction between Indian congregations, were trained. This protection does not exist anymore, and the continued success of the Indian work in the AFM is one of the critical challenges facing the denomination in the 20th century (Clark 2005:156).

The Indian mission church continued to grow in the midst of racial segregation in the AFM. The apartheid system did not disadvantage all the sections. On the contrary, other sections like the Indian section benefited from such a system and would have loved to stay longer in the system. The system was a favour to others while it was a disgrace to some like the black section. It was a win situation for some and loss for others. In the decades following 1946, AFM churches were planted in many Indian areas, predominantly in Natal and with few struggling churches in Transvaal (Burger & Nel 2008:314).

In 1955, there were 6865 members of the AFM Indian Section, 17 full-time workers and 19 fully-fledged assemblies. In 1980, there were 12 000 members, 34 full-time workers and 33 assemblies with many outreach works, hundredfold increase within 25 years. The Indian section was also responsible for outreaches to Mauritius and India. The year 1985 saw the establishment of a head office at Covenant Bible College which brought an improvement in administration. During the 1990s, various departments blossomed and grew. The pioneer pastors experienced several struggles mainly a lack of transportation. The AFM's policy of establishing self-supporting churches caused hardship for the early pastors, because they were completely dependent upon the income generated in the local assembly through tithes and offerings (Burger & Nel 2008:314).

Black section

The paternalistic approach to missions in the AFM was clearly demonstrated by two facts. Firstly, the fact that the black Council consisted of 50% white people to assist 50% black people. In other words, the minority white people led the majority of black people. Secondly, the fact that every decision of the black Council had to be first confirmed by the white Executive Council before implementation. This meant that even if the decision did not go in their favour, the black section could not reverse such a decision (De Wet 1989:96).

The power of the white missionaries increased in the mission committee. The firm hold white people had on black people was reinforced. Only white people were allowed to assume important positions in mission work. The participation of black leaders in the mission work was very minimal. Black people were only seen as mission targets and not participants (Erasmus 1996:44). It means that there was a difference between the ways in which the white section treated the black section compared to other sections of the church.

All the minutes of the meetings of the Missionary Council in the black section, as well as the Workers Council, had to be

approved by the white Executive Council and no decision could be implemented without the approval of white people. The first time the Missionary Council discussed the need for an Executive Council for the 'Natives' was in 1947, but it was decided to leave the matter till the next conference. By 1962, the Indian and mixed race sections had already received the right to form an Executive Council, but the black section had not been allowed to form one (Burger & Nel 2008:233).

In 1960, the Native Workers' Conference discussed a motion that future workers of the black section of the AFM would be known and certified either as a 'minister', with powers as appear on a certificate, or as an 'evangelist', with the same powers as a minister, but having no congregation and only ministering the Lord's Supper when requested by the minister in charge of church.⁷ This was accepted in 1961 and the titles of these workers, Ministers or Pastors and Evangelists, Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses, were established.⁸

In 1973, a revised constitution allowing for an Executive Council for the black section was accepted.⁹ The name of the Executive Committee was changed to 'Executive Council' on 06 November 1973. In 1977, the designation of 'Missionary Overseer' was changed to 'District Superintendent'.¹⁰ For the years from 1958 until 1979, the office bearers in the black section were white people. Only when Pastor C. Nielsen, the vice moderator, retired in 1980, was it resolved that there should be one white and one black vice chairperson elected (Burger & Nel 2008:225).

By 1986, the AFM acknowledged that a new policy for the 'Missions Department' was necessary due to radical changes in the way churches were starting to think about outreaches to indigenous people. In 1998, the policy was extended, and it was resolved that, in order to retain the initiative for mission endeavours, all fields should be analysed with future-projected goals (Burger & Nel 2008:225). In 1993, the Missions and Evangelisation departments were amalgamated to form a new department. The directors of the new department were white leaders, Pastor Edgar Gschwend and Hannes Steyn.¹¹

There was often contact between white congregations and those of the other sections. However, contacts with black people tended to be very 'top down', and many white members would preach regularly in black townships or mine hostels. Contact between white people and Indian people and white people and mixed race people was an easier option because of many cultural similarities (Clark 2005:145).

Of all the sections (black, mixed race, Indian and white) in the AFM, the white section was the domineering section and

7.Minutes of the Annual General Native Workers' Conference, 19 March 1960, p. 83.

8.Minutes of the Missionaries in Conference, held at Central Tabernacle, 27 March 1961, p. 90.

9.Minutes of the Annual General Native Workers' Conference, 23 March 1973.

10.Minutes of the black Executive Council, 22-23 March 1977, p. 115.

11.Minutes of the Missionaries in Council, 10 April 1993, p. 207.

the black section was the marginalised section. Although the mixed race section and the Indian section were also oppressed by the supreme white section, the black section was the most oppressed. Therefore, the black section can be classified as the marginalised section of the AFM.

AFM was inconsistent in their dealings with white and black pastors. For example, white pastor, Wessels, was actively involved in party politics and even served for many years as a National Party senator, while he remained in active ministry (De Wet 1989:208). In 1981, the black pastor, Frank Chikane, was accused of being involved in politics and suspended from ministry even though he never had been directly involved in any political organisations between 1974 and 1983.

The roots of the oppression and marginalisation of black people and other minorities in the country were based on a theology of a privileged Western civilisation to the exclusion of all other groups. Concomitant with this privilege was the thin line that divided Western theology and Christian theology. For the black majority to be liberated, liberation theology was needed. The more the black section inclined towards a Western theology, the more they were oppressed (Welty 2005:71).

This marginalisation was seen in the leadership positions of the AFM. Racism was more blatantly practiced in South African Pentecostalism than in most other countries in the world. African pastors were given only nominal and local leadership opportunities and the practice became the accepted practice of the AFM. Other prominent leadership positions were reserved for the white pastors who could also lead in black churches and communities. The same pattern pertained in all other white-led Pentecostal denominations until the 1990s (Anderson 2005:53).

The God-given dignity and worth of black people as human beings was disregarded in the AFM as well as in society. They were robbed of their rights and freedom by their white oppressors in the country (Lapoorta 1996:91). In South African society, discriminatory acts in the republic were passed, although often without the means of effective enforcement. Africans were forbidden to carry guns, and they were subject to vagrancy and pass laws. Black people were permitted to register land ownership. Although many controlled land held nominally by missionaries and other white people, in some cases the land was purchased by African chiefs in the years after the South African War (Worden 2012:79).

In the AFM, black leaders were not given an opportunity to take part in the high echelons of the church. It means that decisions were taken on their behalf without their consent because they were not members of such decision-making bodies of the church. The black people were regarded as adherents and not members of the church as only white people could become full members of the church. This marginalisation became a source of humility and submission

for the majority of black pastors. To some, it was a source of inspiration to seek a solution through zeal and knowledge, whereas others reacted by starting their own organisation.

Unity in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

Unity in the composite division

The composite division existed as a result of delaying tactics and reluctance for unity by the white section of the AFM. The black, mixed race and Indian sections of the AFM decided to unite to form what is called the composite division. While the white section remained independent, it was declared a white division. As a result of the composite division, AFM moved from four sections to two divisions: the composite division (black, mixed race and Indian) and the white division.

In September 1990, the three sections (black, mixed race and Indian) gave expression to the declaration by merging. The leadership consisting of the office bearers of each section was responsible for the joint administration of the composite division. In April 1991, the Workers' Council of the white section accepted a new constitution, allowing corporate administration of the legal personality by the white single division and composite division. It also reaffirmed its intention to create a single structure for the whole church (Horn 1991:11). In the AFM during the years of struggle, the three sections of the church moved from three ethnic sections to one division, and the sections reached an amicable constitutional arrangement in which the constitutional control of the white division over the powerless sections had been curbed. The three sections united while negotiations were still continuing to finally unite with the 'white' division (Lapoorta 1996:115).

An important meeting was held in Port Shepstone in May 1988, when six delegates from each of the three sections Workers' Council came together. It was agreed that the committee for unity should continue to negotiate with the white division, but that the three sections should themselves unite and become a legal entity within the AFM. Legal opinion was sought, as it was clear that the white people were not moving towards real unity. They were advised that the interim arrangement should be to agree to two divisions in the AFM constituted by two statutes, each of which was subsidiary to *Private Act 24/1961* under which the AFM had legal standing (Anderson 2000:99). When the three sections of the AFM finally united to form the composite division, it was after various attempts were made to unite the white, black, Indian and mixed race churches, but the white section had some reservations and asked for more time. As a result, the black, mixed race and Indian sections unified in 1992 and formed the AFM composite division (Matika 2004:70).

In other words, the three sections of the church became impatient with the delay for the unity of the whole church. Paul (2006:80) points out that 5 years between 1981 and 1986 of unity talks and discussions followed, which varied

between hope, despair and frustration on both sides. No discernible positive results towards unity were achieved. A crisis point was reached in 1991, which led the three sections (black, mixed race and Indian) to unite without the white section. The union of the mission churches revitalised negotiations between the white and black churches.

The foundation of the composite division in the AFM was as a result of the white section of the church's delay in the unity process. This led to the formation of the two divisions in the AFM from January 1993. It is obvious that the other three sections of the church were more pro-unity than the white section. It is a sign that these three sections were uncomfortable with the current system of racial segregation in the church, while the white section continued to benefit from the system.

Although a move in the right direction, the composite division, however, did not solve the two major problems of the AFM: Racial segregation and white supremacy. The church was still divided under two divisions, the composite and white division. In conclusion, Richardson (2013:30) indicates that although the black, mixed race and Indian sections united to form the composite division under one leadership and largely governed their own affairs, they did so in the context of the white division decision-making on church-wide policies. The AFM still had to unite under one constitution and name to defeat a system of racial segregation and white supremacy.

Unity between the composite and white division

As indicated in the above section, there were few factors that hindered unity between the composite division and the white division. One of the factors is that the white division insisted on geographically linguistically demarcated districts in order to maintain their predominantly Afrikaans speaking districts intact (Lapoorta 1996:108).

These obstacles did not stop the strong drive in the AFM towards unity. The two presidents of the AFM, one (Frank Chikane) elected by the composite division of the church and the other (Isak Burger) elected by the white division moved towards unification. They moved towards the AFM under one legal entity tied together by a common constitution and at an executive level by liaison committees with equal representation, dealing with property and finance, liaison and doctrine, ethics and liturgy (Anderson 2000:100). It took both Frank Chikane from the composite division and Isak Burger from the white division to unite the two divisions of the AFM. The two leaders saw a possibility of a united AFM. They respectively made sacrifices in order to accommodate the other division.

Although the white division was initially sceptical, Matika (2004:70) states that the white division finally united with the composite division in 1995, 1 year after South Africa's first democratic elections. Throughout its history, this Afrikaner-dominated division supported apartheid until the early

1990s when the government indicated willingness to negotiate a democratic settlement.

In June 1992, white people and black people agreed on a new constitution. The constitution took into consideration the existence of the two divisions. For the first time in the history of this church, the constitution set the two divisions on an equal footing. Intensive and painful negotiations continued between the two divisions followed by an agreement on structural unity of the church. The composite division adopted the new constitution in July 1994, and the white division adopted it in April 1995 (Paul 2006:80). The fact that the composite division adopted the unity constitution earlier than the white division is further proof that the composite division was a willing negotiator in the process of unification in the AFM. However after 1994, the white division moved dramatically fast towards unification with the composite division, but not before they had devolved power to the local churches to control church property (Horn 2006:236).

At the beginning of 1995, the composite division requested that the process of unity be accelerated. A joint meeting of both Executive Councils was held on 22 February 1995 to discuss the request (Burger & Nel 2008:429). At this stage, the composite division was on the point of giving up negotiations with the white division. Frank Chikane as the president convinced the composite division to pursue unity. He argued that history will 1 day honour the composite division for their determination. At that stage, on the other hand, Burger shared his dream of a unified church with a number of the Regional Councils of the single division. He convinced them that unification was God's will for the AFM.

The white section experienced a lot of tension and fears about the future of the unified church. At one stage, the possibility of a schism was a looming reality. Many conservative white people believed that unification with the composite division would inevitably lead to domination by the majority. The Executive Council requested Burger to visit all white Regional Councils before the crucial Workers' Council of 1996 to inform pastors and other leaders about the process of unification. He successfully convinced the white division to complete the road to unification (Nel 2012:139). The two divisions finally united against all the odds of unity in the AFM. Even with the fears of the white division, these fears were not strong enough to oppose the unity in the church. According to Chandomba (2007:40), in 1996, the composite division of the church officially unified structurally with the white division of the AFM to form one single unit.

The united Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

Finally, the whole church was united under one name, AFM, in 1996. This meant that the church was no longer divided according to sections but became one single body. It meant that the church had one constitution, one legal persona, one Workers' Council, one Executive Council and open membership.

The structural racial unity process took 22 years from the time of the first move in the direction of unity, until the point was reached where structural unity became a reality in 1996 (Erasmus 1996:128). The white division was in full control of the whole church up to the mid-eighties and gradually lost control up to the point where the church united to form a non-racial structure. The structural unification took place, but it might take a long time before there will be racial equality.

The unification of the AFM took a long time and came as a surprise after the years of Pentecostal support for racial segregation, but it brought some fruits and benefits. Mathole (2005:252) explains that in 1996, unification was ushered in to bring about the integration of previously segregated churches within the AFM churches. Unification destroyed the bonds of the historical legacy of an apartheid society. This resulted in the integration of their separate denominational structures, which had been organised according to various racial categories, into one national structure – a change that enriched the church as a whole.

During the dramatic unification service in which Isak Burger embraced Frank Chikane, the AFM gained the respect of both political and religious leaders in South Africa. Since 1996, the church has moved on to become a respected church and member of the South African Council of Churches (Horn 2006:236). On 03 April 1996, the AFM became the first church in South Africa to unite all races together and to constitute the united church on the basis of a mutually agreed upon constitution (Paul 2006:81). The church sets the precedence and points to a way of transforming South African society from a racially and ethnically divided society to a society which is based on the values of the Christian faith.

This unity in the AFM came with some changes in the leadership structures to suit the united church. The Executive Council was renamed the National Leadership Forum, and the Regional Councils were renamed the Regional Leadership Forums. The senior local pastor of each assembly is now termed the assembly leader, whereas previously all accredited ministers and part-time ministers were simply referred to as workers. The annual largest representative body, called the Workers' Council, became known as the General Business Meeting and convenes only tri-annually. Furthermore, the General Business Meeting consists of few representatives compared to the former Workers' Council. Most of its powers have been removed and given to the National Leadership Forum. The day-to-day running of the church as a denomination is the task of the four National Office Bearers (President, Vice-president, General Secretary and General Treasurer) who enjoy significant executive authority of their own (see Clark 2007:42).

Another highlight of the unity of AFM after 1996 according to Chandomba (2007:41) is that English is now the official language. This was a key change in the Afrikaner culture for many. Since less than 4% of the pastorate or congregants have

English as their home language, it is felt to be a middle ground for almost everyone.

The issue of language and culture was important for the formation of identity, while for others they were regarded as more functional, as a prerequisite for communication. Some regarded unity as total integration, while others argued that integration would lead to loss of identity defined in terms of language and culture and that worship should be defined in terms of language and culture. The National Leadership Forum emphasised that the church should exert itself at all levels to educate its members in prejudice reduction, cultural interaction, cultural sensitivity and appreciation of cultural diversity. Caring for one another should be encouraged through involvement in sharing resources with one another in the form of financial assistance to struggling assemblies. Assemblies in poor areas should be adopted by economically strong assemblies. Involvement in community development projects should also be encouraged among strong assemblies (Nel 2012:39).

In summary, after 1996, the various sections of the church were reconstituted into one homogenous unit and the AFM became one church in its structure. The leadership structure was changed to make sure that it now represents all different races in the church. Though there is no racial requirement or quota written into the AFM's constitution, it has been the practice of the organisation to ensure that the four office roles that are a part of the National Leadership Forum – the AFM's senior leadership body – are each occupied by a different racial group: black, mixed race, Indian and white (Richardson 2013:31).

Conclusion

The AFM was divided into four sections as a result of the influence of the South African social politics on the ecclesiastical politics. The sections are the white section, the mixed race section, Indian section, and the black section. These sections came as a result of racial segregation and discrimination. The four sections in the AFM were not equal in power and responsibilities. The white section of the church was the major and domineering section in the AFM. Although other sections like mixed race and Indian were also inferior to the white section, the black section was the most inferior section. The four sections in the AFM were able to move into structural unity in 1996. Since 1996, the church has seen tremendous growth spiritually and numerically.

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