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The Dubious Legacy of Charles Parham: Racism and Cultural Insensitivities among Pentecostals

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Introduction

Racism remains one of the most pernicious sins affecting the Church throughout our world and one with which my own life has been entwined, a cancer that erodes both the Christian freedom of individuals and the essential unity of the whole Church and its healthy functioning as the body of Christ. It is not enough to point to racism around us and say that the church is "not like that." I have lived in an overtly racist society for most of my life, seeking for the past thirty years to challenge the prejudice and subtle, often unconscious racism and segregated churches that exist, not least among Pentecostals and Charismatics. My passion to bring to light this hypocrisy stems from my own life experiences of overt racism and my deep conviction that wherever there is true freedom in the Spirit there cannot be racism at the same time. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. has reminded us that it is not helpful to "attempt to assess our predecessors by today's standards," nor to "assign them motives . . . without clear evidence from their own pens and mouths." He points out that racism is often invisible to the perpetrator.[2] This paper will attempt to provide some evidence that in spite of the glorious claims of racial and cultural inclusivity made in early Pentecostalism, racism and cultural insensitivity have been endemic to the movement throughout its life and throughout the world. But I must immediately add that there are many, many exceptions to this pattern, and that examples are offered here in the hope that we will see something of ourselves and repent.

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[1] An earlier version of this article was a paper presented for the Mission and Intercultural Studies interest group at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Marquette University, Milwaukee, MI, March 13, 2004. Thanks are given to the Donald Gee Research Centre, Mattersey, England for access to Pentecostal periodicals of the period 1908–25; to the Heritage Pentecostal Research Center, Springfield, Missouri for the digitally produced periodicals; to Gary McGee for copies of Parham's publications; and to Cecil Robeck for helpful email discussions on this subject.

[2] Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "Historical Roots of Racial Unity and Division in American Pentecostalism," paper given at conference "Pentecostal Partners: A Reconciliation Strategy for 21st Century Ministry," Memphis, Tennessee, October 18, 1994, 3, 6.

The Racist Doctrines of Parham

In early 1906, William Seymour was probably unaware of the latent racism that lurked in the heart of the "Projector" of the Apostolic Faith movement, Charles Fox Parham. Had he known it, he probably would never have attended (or rather, half-attended) Parham's short-term school in Houston, where he learned of the "initial evidence" doctrine; and the subsequent history of Pentecostalism might have been quite different. Still, the facts point to the Azusa Street mission as a role model, a predominantly black but interracial and intercultural church led by an African American. Although Parham's biographer, James R. Goff, states that his "more blatant racism" emerged long after his break with Seymour in September 1906 and replaced his "paternalistic racism,"[3] his books *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness* (first published as early as 1902) and *The Everlasting Gospel* (1911) indicate the contrary. In 1902, Parham's British (or Anglo-)Israelism, which proclaimed the spiritual and racial superiority of the white Anglo-Saxon race, is full blown, complete with an identification of the throne of David with the British royal family courtesy of the prophet Jeremiah (who is supposed to have taken King Zedekiah's daughter to Ireland), and an identification of Britain with "Ephraim" and the United States with "Manasseh" among the ten "lost tribes." Many commentators, including Parham's biographer Goff, have failed to see the intrinsically racist character of British Israelism. Parham got these ideas early on in his ministry in the 1890s.[4] In 1900 he spent six weeks at Frank Sandford's Shiloh community in Maine, where he imbibed most of Sandford's doctrines, including Anglo-Israelism and "missionary tongues," doctrines that Parham maintained for the rest of his life.[5] Parham also entertained notions about the "Antichrist" as "the reincarnation of Judas Iscariot," did not believe in the immortality of the soul, and held to the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked. He had strange ideas about what constituted the "Body" and "Bride" of Christ and the meaning of "redemption." In fact, Parham had an all-round "unorthodox" theology, certainly by evangelical standards! He also advocated Zionism, the creation of the state of Israel, and Jerusalem as the commercial center of the world. But there are even more sinister statements in his books. Parham

[3] James R. Goff, Jr., *Fields White unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 132.

[4] Personal communication with Leslie Callahan, March 12, 2004.

[5] Goff, *Fields White*, 57–60, 73–74.

believed that only those physically descended from Abraham (whom he identifies as the Aryan race) could belong to the Bride of Christ.[6] In a passage in which he declares his belief that Cain married a woman from a pre-Adamic creation, Parham goes on to declare:

> Thus began the woeful inter-marriage of races for which cause the flood was sent in punishment. . . . Were time to last and inter-marriage continue between the whites, the blacks, and the reds in America, consumption and other diseases would soon wipe the mixed bloods off the face of the earth.[7]

Parham does not spiritualize this passage, but he goes on to state, "God intended to destroy man whom He had created, with all the half-breeds resulting from inter-marriages." God chose Noah, he declared, "not only because he was a just man," but because he was "perfect in his generation: a pedigree without mixed blood in it, a lineal descendant of Adam."[8] Parham also divides humanity into three groups: the descendants of Abraham (the Aryans), the "Gentiles" (all other Europeans), and the "heathen" (all other people).[9] In this scheme African Americans were relegated to the "heathen," and Parham was soon to exclude people of African descent from being part of the bride of Christ.[10] Leslie Callahan points out Parham's fixation with the purity of the blood, and the assumed relationship between social and sexual purity.[11] Anglo-Israelism was also rooted in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophies of Rousseau and Kant, who constructed a racial hierarchy of "rationalities."[12]

Everlasting Gospel was written after Parham's break with Seymour and Azusa Street, and in it he expresses his strong reaction to what had happened to the Pentecostal Movement. In the first place, Parham continued to hold that speaking in tongues was always speaking a known language, *xenolalia*, and that without this there was no Spirit baptism. He

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[6] Chas. F. Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*, 2d ed. (Baxter Springs, KS: Apostolic Faith Bible College, 1910), 73, 86, 87, 92–93, 101–7, 122; Charles F. Parham, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 1st ed. (Baxter Springs, KS: Apostolic Faith Bible College, 1911), 35, 92, 101, 112–13.

[7] Parham, *Voice Crying*, 83; Parham, *Everlasting Gospel*, 3.

[8] Parham, *Voice Crying*, 84.

[9] Ibid., 106–7.

[10] Goff, *Fields White*, 220, n. 15.

[11] Leslie D. Callahan, "A Sanctified Body: Reassessing Sanctification in the thought of Charles Parham," paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Pentecostal Studies, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, March 12, 2004, 7–8.

[12] Quoted in Daniel Ramirez, "Beyond Racial Incommensurabilities in American Revivalism," paper presented at the 31st Annual Meeting of SPS, Southeastern College, Lakeland, FL, March 2002, Collected Papers, 585.

declared, "Two-thirds of this tongues stuff is not Pentecost. The counterfeits have no real languages, and fleshly controls of spiritualistic origin have destroyed their soul-saving power."[13] Later he turns up the heat against his erstwhile disciples:

> By the Baptism with the Holy Spirit I do not mean all the chattering and jabbering, wind-sucking, holy-dancing-rollerism, going on over the country, which is the result of hypnotic, spiritualistic and fleshly controls, but is a real sane reception of the Holy Spirit in baptismal power, filling you with glory unspeakable and causing you, without any effort, to speak freely in foreign languages.

In this passage, "Three-fourths of the so-called Pentecosts in the world are counterfeits, the devil's imitation to deceive the poor earnest souls."[14] His fulminations against Azusa Street continued:

> I have seen meetings where all crowded together around the altar, and laying across one another like hogs, blacks and whites mingling; this should be enough to bring a blush of shame to devils, let alone angels, and yet all this was charged to the Holy Spirit. . . .[15]

In one passage Parham is even more specific, contrasting his own "Apostolic" movement with the "Pentecostal" movement of Azusa Street and distancing himself from the latter:

> The Apostolic Faith Movement had its origin in Topeka, Kansas, January 1, 1901, and is a dignified work, full of power and precision. The Pentecostal Assemblies originated in a negro [*sic*] mission in Los Angeles, California, and is a cross between the old-fashioned negro worship of the South, and Holy-Rollerism. Three-fourths of their socalled [sic] speaking in tongues is only a chatter and jabber and they have no Pentecostal power at all . . .[16]

It is important to understand that the background to Parham's outbursts included his belief in British Israelism, a prominent part of Parham's understanding of the scriptures. It appears that these ideas had their roots in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, when a genealogy attempting to link Queen Victoria with the Israelite King David was created, and this genealogy was reproduced by Parham.[17] At least by 1912 Parham was openly using the term *nigger* (a word used by most Southern whites at the time)

[13] Parham, *Everlasting Gospel*, 31.
[14] Ibid., 55.
[15] Ibid., 72–73.
[16] Ibid., 118.
[17] Parham, *Voice Crying*, 94–99.

and he criticized "nigger-lovers" (an abusive term meaning "traitor to the white race") in his own *Apostolic Faith* periodical—clearly another expression of his reaction to his own rejection by Seymour.[18] We can only conclude that even though he may have been "softer" on race issues than some of his white Southern contemporaries (even this is debatable), yet like them, Parham was essentially a racial bigot and white supremacist from the beginning. It is also significant, if not surprising, that there was no stronger reaction to his extreme views from other Pentecostals at the time, that is, if they were aware of them. But some did later disassociate themselves from him, but probably for different reasons. E. N. Bell, former Baptist pastor associated with Parham and later first Chairman of the Assemblies of God, wrote a repudiation of Parham in his periodical *Word and Witness* in October 1912:

> Chas. F. Parham, who is claiming to be the head and leader of the Apostolic Faith Movement, has long since been repudiated. He has refused to "hear the church" and we are obeying the command of Christ, the Head of the church by letting him be unto us as a "heathen and a publican." We are sorry it is so, but until he repents and confesses his sins we cannot obey God and do otherwise. Let all Pentecostal and Apostolic Faith people of the churches of God take notice and be not misled by his claims.[19]

The "sins" for which Parham was indicted here are unlikely to include racism, however, but may have included his doctrinal errors and moral issues. This was the person credited with being the "Projector" and "father" of Pentecostalism and who was almost certainly the inventor of the "initial evidence" doctrine. His place in Pentecostal history must be evaluated in this light.

The Legacy of Parham

Were Parham's racist fulminations exceptional, and can we safely conclude that he was sufficiently isolated to have had no effect on Pentecostalism elsewhere? It is not surprising that Parham was guest speaker at Ku Klux Klan meetings; what is more astonishing is that socially active Aimee Semple McPherson was there too.[20] Much has been written about the

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[18] Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., during email correspondence in December 2003, pointed out the need to nuance these offensive terms, which in the early twentieth-century white South were acceptable.

[19] "Notice about Parham," *Word and Witness* (Malvern, Arkansas, October 20, 1912), 3.

[20] Goff, *Fields White*, 157; Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Simple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1993), 186–89, 194–95, 275–78.

genesis of the Assemblies of God, and whatever one may conclude about the primary motivations that lay behind its formation in 1914 (one of which was the desire to separate from Bishop Mason's Church of God in Christ),[21] the end result was that Trinitarian Pentecostalism was almost completely segregated in the USA. Although a few leaders like Garfield Haywood of Indianapolis retained fellowship with the AG, Haywood's joining the Oneness split in 1916 ended that and meant that there were no longer any African American leaders in this organization, and the racial inclusiveness in Oneness Pentecostalism also broke down soon afterwards, certainly by 1937.[22] There were notable exceptions in which some degree of integration remained, such as the Church of God of Prophecy and the Apostolic Faith Church of God.[23]

The Assemblies of God's official mouthpiece, *Weekly Evangel*, ran an article in 1915 by W. F. Carothers, Parham's erstwhile lieutenant and now member of the AG's Executive Presbytery, in which Carothers described the segregation in the AG as being part of God's plan to ensure "racial purity" and "to preserve the integrity of the races." Racial segregation was, he opined, the same as the separation of the sexes and reflected "common decency and . . . a wholesome regard for the decrees of the Almighty."[24] Were these sentiments echoes of Parham? Referring to this article, Robeck has astutely observed:

> For an executive presbyter from the South to write an article such as this in the official, national, weekly voice of the fellowship was for the leadership of the fellowship to take a fairly strong public stand in favor of the status quo. A trajectory had been set down which path the Assemblies of God would now proceed.[25]

Robeck has traced the history of race issues in the US Assemblies of God, noting that blacks were seldom in ministry there and that if they applied for ministerial recognition it was only granted within a particular District, and that they should be referred to the "colored organizations" for ordination. Only in 1962 was ordination granted to an African American, although ordination was apparently given to African Americans in particular urban districts like New York City. In 1945 the General

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[21] Robeck, "Historical Roots," 27.

[22] Robert M. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), 189–92.

[23] Robeck, "Historical Roots," 58–59.

[24] W. F. Carothers, "Attitude of Pentecostal Whites to the Colored Brethren in the South," *The Weekly Evangel* (August 14, 1915), 2.

[25] Robeck, "Historical Roots," 30–31.

Council approved a resolution to establish an "Assembly of God—Colored Branch," but this never materialized.[26] In 1957 the AG General Presbytery accepted a report on "Segregation versus Integration" that advised against integration "because of unresolved issues in the larger society."[27]

Britain might not have had the same racist problems because there was no significant black population there at the time of the beginnings of Pentecostalism, but ethnocentric attitudes and racist presuppositions were apparent. The first Pentecostal church built in Britain was the Apostolic Faith Church, founded in Bournemouth in 1908 by William Oliver Hutchinson, which embraced British Israelism after 1919 but had no connection with Parham's movement.[28] The United Apostolic Faith Church, with which I was associated for fifteen years (1968–1983), seceded from Hutchinson's church in 1926 and remained with British Israel teaching at its heart at least until the mid 1990s. It was strongest in South Africa, where it resulted in even more racist-driven splits. One former pastor declared that Africans were the biblical "beasts of the field" and therefore had no eternal souls, and another established a "new Jerusalem" in Cape Town in which he reigned as the "Son of David."[29] George Jeffreys, founder of Britain's largest classical Pentecostal church, the Elim Pentecostal Church, also became a British Israelite from about 1920. Although Jeffreys probably received Spirit baptism through Hutchinson's ministry, there is no evidence that Jeffreys' views were gleaned from Hutchinson (whom Jeffreys repudiated), but from the prominent British Pentecostal barrister John Leech.[30] Eventually, because of his British Israelism and other opinions, Jeffreys had to leave Elim in 1939 and set up a small Pentecostal denomination called the Bible Pattern Church, where Anglo-Israelism continued to be a tenet.

Pentecostal Missionary Insensitivity

It is not only in the more extreme forms of Pentecostalism that racism and cultural insensitivity are found. Throughout Pentecostalism's history, its attitudes toward race and culture have been ambiguous. Pentecostal

[26] Ibid., 32–33, 36.
[27] Ibid., 45–47.
[28] Malcolm R. Hathaway, "The Role of William Oliver Hutchinson and the Apostolic Faith Church in the Formation of British Pentecostal Churches," *EPTA Bulletin* 16 (1996), 42–43.
[29] Personal communication from former ministerial colleague.
[30] Hathaway, "Role of William Oliver Hutchinson," 52–54.

periodicals and other early writings and letters from Western missionaries abroad expose the hidden dangers lurking under the heady spontaneity that was the early Pentecostal missionary urge, and reveal how precedents were established and followed by Pentecostal missions. Many of the secessions that took place early in Western Pentecostal mission efforts were at least partly the result of cultural and racially motivated blunders on the part of missionaries.[31] Pentecostal missionaries often carried the same ethnocentrism and racial and cultural insensitivity of their more educated Protestant counterparts. These early Pentecostal missionaries were ill prepared for the rigors of intercultural and interreligious communication. Everything happened at great speed, for the missionaries believed that these were the last days before the imminent return of Christ, and there was no time for proper preparation through such things as language learning and cultural and religious studies. Sometimes Pentecostal workers projected their own personal difficulties and prejudices (and possible failures) in adapting to a radically different culture, living conditions, and religion in their newsletters home. They went out, like many other Christian missionaries before them, with a fundamental conviction that the North Atlantic was a "Christian" realm, that they were sent as "light" to "darkness" and that the ancient cultures and religions of the nations to which they were sent were "heathen," "pagan," and "demonic," to be "conquered" for Christ.[32] Western culture was "Christian" culture and all other cultures were dark problems to be solved by the light of the gospel, replacing the old "paganism" with the new "Christianity."[33] The countries to which they had gone were "wicked," "dark," and foreboding.[34]

The earliest Pentecostal mission society, the Pentecostal Missionary Union of Great Britain and Ireland (PMU), constituted in January 1909, is representative of this trend. Missionary reports were extensively published in English Pentecostal periodicals, especially Alexander Boddy's *Confidence* and Cecil Polhill's *Flames of Fire*, the PMU mouthpiece. The PMU was a small organization; by 1916 they reported a total of twenty-six missionaries, of which seventeen were in China, six in India, two in

[31] Allan Anderson, "Signs and Blunders: Pentecostal Mission Issues at 'Home and Abroad' in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Asian Mission* 2, no. 2 (September 2000): 193–210; id., "Christian Missionaries and 'Heathen Natives': The Cultural Ethics of Early Pentecostal Missionaries," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 22 (2002): 4–29.

[32] *Flames of Fire* 35 (London, England, February 1916), 4.

[33] Wilbert R. Shenk, "Recasting Theology of Mission: Impulses from the Non-Western World," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25, no. 3 (July 2001): 100.

[34] *Word and Witness* 9, no. 6 (June 20, 1913), 1.

Japan, and one in Africa.[35] The PMU provided only rudimentary training for missionary candidates,[36] as Polhill referred to the problems his organization was finding with new missionaries and said that "some training was an absolute necessity," because "previous experience" had shown "the mistake and undesirability of immature workers, however zealous and spiritual, going forth to a heathen land."[37]

There were signs that this basic training was woefully lacking in cultural ethics, although it reflected the larger colonialist mentality of the era. Early Pentecostal missionaries were slow to recognize national leadership and missionary paternalism was widely practiced. Young PMU worker Frank Trevitt (who died of a fever on the field in 1916) sent back this prosaic report from "dark China" in 1911, obviously identifying a treasured Chinese national symbol with the devil:

> This is heathendom truly, without light or love, not even as much as a dumb beast would have. Well, we have seen much of this spirit, which truly is the "Dragon's" spirit, which is as you know, China's ensign. . . . Oh, how one's heart longs and sighs for the coming of Christ's glorious Ensign, to be placed where the Dragon holds such sway.[38]

His colleague, Amos Williams, described Tibetan food and said, "Only those who know anything about Tibetan life will fully understand how unpleasant it really is."[39]

Of course, it was not only in the PMU that this insensitivity was found. One of the earliest U.S. Pentecostal missionaries, "Apostolic Light" missionary M. L. Ryan, remarked in 1908 about the "coarse, semi-barbarous natives of the Gulf Coast" in Japan.[40] The insensitivity was especially evident throughout sub-Saharan Africa, where white Pentecostal missionaries followed the example of other expatriate missionaries and kept control of the churches and their African founders, and especially of the finances raised in Western Europe and North America. Most wrote home as if they were mainly (if not solely) responsible for the progress of the Pentecostal work there. The truth was often that the churches grew in spite of (and not because of) these missionaries. The indefatigable William Burton began his mission in the Belgian Congo in 1915, but forty-five years later

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[35] *Confidence* 9, no. 1 (January 1916), 17.
[36] *Confidence* 2, no. 1 (January 1909), 14; 2, no. 6 (June 1909), 129.
[37] *Confidence* 2, no. 11 (November 1909), 253.
[38] *Confidence* 4, no. 8 (August 1911), 191.
[39] *Confidence* 5, no. 5 (May 1912), 167.
[40] *The Pentecost* 1, no. 4 (December 1908), 3.

his Congo Evangelistic Mission was still directed by an all-white Field Executive Council and had sixty-five European missionaries working in fourteen mission compounds. Two missionaries were killed in the Congolese war, and Burton and his missionaries were evacuated in 1960. The result of this seeming setback was that ten years later the churches left behind had more than doubled in number.[41] Many of these and similar struggles were evidence of cultural misunderstandings and insensitivity that could have been avoided.

Early missionaries were sometimes patronizing and impolite. One woman, writing from Mbabane, Swaziland in 1911, spoke of the work among "the native boys," quickly explaining that "all [African males] are called 'boys'—from infancy to grey hairs."[42] Pentecostal missionaries often created dependency, and sometimes were overtly racist.[43] In one shocking report, Fred Johnstone, a young missionary writing to *Confidence* from the Congo in 1915, speaks of the "practically nude natives" who were "very raw and superstitious." The missionaries had carriers, who not only bore their heavy luggage for many days on end, but also piggybacked the missionaries across streams and swamps. Some of the carriers became drunk and violent, and the missionaries' solution was to give them "a thrashing with a stick," after which there was "perfect peace." Arriving at their destination, Johnstone reports, "The natives came to meet their new 'mukelenge' [or white chief] for fully a mile from the mission station."[44] Fortunately, this missionary was still on a learning curve. Two years later, as he left his mission for furlough in England, he wrote: "It was very hard to say good-bye to the dear natives whom I had learned to love so much, especially the young teachers in training. . . ."[45]

Racism was frequently in missionary reports. The conference address "Leopard's Spots or God's masterpiece, which?", published in *Confidence* in 1915 by a missionary from Africa, Miss Doeking, reflected the Enlightenment ideology in referring to the African as "the savage":

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[41] Harold Womersley, *Wm F. P. Burton: Congo Pioneer* (Eastbourne, UK: Victory Press, 1973), 77, 113.

[42] *Confidence* 4, no. 1 (January 1911), 16, 18.

[43] Gary B. McGee, "Pentecostals and Their Various Strategies for Global Mission: A Historical Assessment," in M. W. Dempster, B. D. Klaus, and D. Petersen, eds., *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 211.

[44] *Confidence* 8, no. 5 (May 1915), 98–99.

[45] *Flames of Fire* 53 (September 1917), 72.

> The savage is God's opportunity, the masterpiece of our common creator, who delights in tackling impossibilities. . . . unless the superior races are ready to humble themselves, we may yet witness such an awakening of the despised races as will put to shame the pride of their superiors.[46]

The so-called "superior races" of Europe were at that very time engaged in such a horrible and dehumanizing war that the rest of the world could be forgiven for wondering who were actually the "savages."

The fact that so many inaccurate, confrontational, and tendentious comments were published in leading British Pentecostal periodicals not only displays the ignorance and prejudices of these missionaries, but also reflects the prevailing cultural and religious ethos of early Pentecostals.

South African Pentecostal Racism

Racism was more blatantly practiced in South African Pentecostalism than in most other countries in the world. Early in the formation of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM), founded by Thomas Hezmalhalch and John G. Lake in 1908, African pastors were given only nominal and local leadership opportunities, the races were almost immediately separated in baptisms and church gatherings, and segregation became the accepted practice of the church. The same pattern pertained in all white-led Pentecostal denominations until the 1990s. It cannot be wondered that the schisms that occurred within the AFM from 1910 onward resulted in hundreds of other denominations and the creation of the largest church in South Africa today, the Zion Christian Church.[47] The white AFM was either not aware of these secessions or did not recognize them, and would go on to be identified with the apartheid government. Both American missionaries J. O. Lehman and John G. Lake commented on this situation in their letters back to their supporting church in Indianapolis.[48] Lake presumed to give the following advice to aspiring American missionaries to South Africa:

> . . . We heartily welcome *real missionaries*, but they cannot come to Africa with the thought of a lot of "brand new American ideas" to teach the natives. One of the curses of the American missionaries is that they teach race

[46] *Confidence* 8, no. 8 (August 1915), 154.

[47] Allan Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost: The Faith and Spirituality of African Pentecostal and Zionist/Apostolic Churches in South Africa* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2000), chap. 3.

[48] *The Pentecost* 1, no. 7 (Kansas City, MO, June 1909), 1.

> equality. Now the African native is a very different man from the American Negro. The African man is a heathen. He does not wear anything but a blanket until he is taught and Christianized.[49]

Lake clearly accepted the white settler view on race relations and is even supposed to have suggested a segregated "native land policy" similar to the apartheid system adopted some years later.[50] In 1917 the following resolution was adopted by the AFM Executive Council:

> . . . we do not teach or encourage social equality between Whites and Natives . . . We wish it to be generally known that our white, Coloured and Native peoples have their separate places of worship, where the Sacraments are administered to them.[51]

In April 1944 the following resolutions revealed the white AFM support for the emerging apartheid structures of the National Party, to become government policy after 1948:

> 1) Race Relations: The mission stands for segregation. The fact that the Native, Indian and Coloured is saved does not render him European. . . .
> 3) Native education: The mission stands for a lower education [for Black people] but [*sic*] is definitely against a higher education.

White South African Pentecostals have not always recognized their non-racist beginnings. Former President of the AFM Francois Möller, Sr. wrote off the non-racialism of Azusa Street by saying that "Seymour was replaced by more able people and the different races ceased worship together."[52] The current President of the AFM, Isak Burger, wrote that the Pentecostal Movement developed a "natural and spontaneous segregation," and went on to attribute this "to the fact that some Afrikaners who understood the history, nature and the attitudes of race relationships in South Africa better than the Americans were elected on the Executive" of the AFM.[53] This "understanding" led to Africans being accorded no legal status in the AFM for over seventy-five years. They had no executive power, and all decision making was left to a separate all-white church, even though the black members were more numerous.

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[49] Ibid., 3.

[50] Kemp P. Burpeau, "A Historical Study of John Graham Lake and South African/United States Pentecostalism," Ph.D. diss., Rhodes University, 2002, 105, 167–77.

[51] Quoted in de Wet, "Apostolic Faith Mission," 165.

[52] Quoted in J. Nico Horn, "The Experience of the Spirit in *Apartheid* South Africa," in *Azusa* 1, no. 1 (1990), 29.

[53] Quoted in Horn, "Experience of the Spirit," 29.

There are encouraging signs that these features are changing in the new South Africa, but the historical facts show that white-controlled Pentecostal denominations were at least sympathetic to the government that guaranteed their continued dominance and privilege. The oppression of the majority of South Africans in this political system went unnoticed, and participation in politics (other than in the politics of the white government) was "sinful." The *swart gevaar* ("black danger") was thought to be everywhere present. African nationalism and black political aspirations were "Communist" inspired, evil invisible forces, and therefore part of the "Antichrist" system that would destroy "genuine" Christianity. The glaring structural sin of the apartheid system was unrecognized, and those Christians who dared speak against it were at best "liberals," but more often were dangerous, Communist-inspired proponents of "liberation theology," another anti-Christian ideology that amounted to the seduction of "biblical" Christianity by evil forces. Black Pentecostals were also affected by the anti-political attitude, although they developed their own strategies for survival as the oppressed in this abnormal and violent society.[54]

Conclusion

This paper has tried to show that, despite the extreme examples of Parham, British Israelism, and South Africa, racism and cultural imperialism are just below the surface of Western Pentecostalism and its missionary movement, at least in its early history. Robeck's observation in the U.S. context can be equally applied to other parts of the world, for racism is the sin of the powerful against the powerless:

> . . . Racism is the sin of white America against "the other." The extent to which predominantly white Pentecostal groups have benefited from maintaining the status quo within American society, the extent to which they have played an active role in keeping the races separated, the extent that they have remained silent when unjust racial policies have been enforced or just racial policies have been left un-enforced, they are guilty of racism.[55]

After the early but short-lived example of Azusa Street, Pentecostalism in the West has suffered from a painful myopia to the richness of cultural and racial diversity that has continued in recent times. That which has

[54] Allan Anderson, "Dangerous Memories for South African Pentecostals," in Allan Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger, eds., *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 89–107.

[55] Robeck, "Historical Roots," 53.

lurked under the surface of early Pentecostal spirituality has actually made hollow the famous dictum of Azusa Street Revival eyewitness Frank Bartleman that "the 'colorline' was washed away in the blood." Tragically, what should have been was not. The Pauline teaching in Galatians that there is no social, sexual, or racial discrimination in Christ has not been a strong feature of Pentecostal history, to put it mildly. Church segregation and racist practices have continued for most of the twentieth century, as did missionary "practical arrangements" that excluded "native workers" from meaningful leadership roles, and isolationism, exclusivism, and ethnocentrism have ensued. In the process Pentecostalism has lost something of the universality of the gospel and the unity of the Spirit in the Body of Christ.