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Research Article

Clergy Vestment: An Analysis of the Ecclesiological and Theological Journey of African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa

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Historically, African Classical Pentecostal Churches (the African sections of the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Full Gospel Church, the International Assemblies of God, and the Back to God-Assemblies of God) did not use clergy vestments. The use of clergy vestments emerged among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches when Gladstone Botwana, the founder and head of Zoé Bible Church in Soweto, was elevated to the office of bishop in 1996. Currently, the use of clergy vestments has become a norm among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa. This article uses a desktop research method to analyse the ecclesiological and theological journey of clergy vestments among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa between 1996 and 2022. It shows that association with African Pentecostals from the United States of America and the Commonwealth Dominican influenced this trend and provided them with a Christian leadership accountability platform accompanied by a new ecclesiastical and theological identity.

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Introduction

The use of clergy vestments emerged in the first century CE when it was taught that those who served God should wear presentable and dignified garments (Schuchmann, in Van Maaren 2005:2005:12). During the periods of the Church Fathers, and later, the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox churches, clergy vestments were common and accepted to differentiate and entrench hierarchy among the clergy, as archbishops, bishops, priests, and deacons wore different garments (Ramsey n.d.:5). Such categorisation reflected religious duties, with one for the altar, another for the pulpit, and another set for ordinary public occasions (Ramsey n.d.:5). The Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox churches also introduced a set of vestments for their Pope and Patriarch (Revulus 2023:23; Zielinski, 1958:2).

When Pentecostalism reached South Africa in the early 1900s, the Roman Catholic Church and some Protestant churches in South Africa were already using clergy vestments, and most African sections of these denominations used church uniforms. From its roots in the 1906 Azusa Street revival, the subsequent Pentecostalism Movement, accredited to William Seymour, did not embrace the use of clergy vestments.

The article focuses on four prominent African Pentecostal-Charismatic Church¹ leaders from Gauteng Province (Archbishop Gladstone Botwana, Archbishop Stephen Zondo, Archbishop Abraham Sibiyi, and Archbishop Mosa Sono), one national Pentecostal-Charismatic organisation (The South Africa National Council of Independent Churches—SAUCIC), and the Free State-based national network of Archbishop Emmanuel Ketsekile (Emmanuel Christian University and its associates). The four African Pentecostal-Charismatic Church leaders, members of SAUCIC, and members of Archbishop Emmanuel Ketsekile's theological institution form part of the study because they are the earliest African Pentecostal-Charismatic Church leaders to embrace and use clergy vestments in South Africa. This focus enables

an understanding of the new trend among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa between 1996 and 2022.

Except for Archbishop Mosa Sono, who took over the work that Rhema Bible Church established in Soweto, the other three leaders established township-based independent churches in the mid-1980s during the height of the struggle against apartheid, whilst most members of SAUCIC and those associated with Archbishop Ketsekile range from those who established churches in the same period and later. All these leaders were at some stage part of four of the Classical Pentecostal Churches² in South Africa (Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God, Back to God-Assemblies of God, and Full Gospel Church) that reject the use of clergy vestments. The rejection follows the 1960s developments in the United States of America among some Reformed churches to wear a shirt and tie instead of a black gown (Van Maaren 2005:12).

The black gown was initially used by the Reformers who opposed the Roman Catholic Church and its vestments. Deans (2014:54-57) mentions that after the Reformation, Christian leaders opted to use a plain black gown instead of the vestments associated with the Roman Catholic Church after Professor Andreas Karlstadt used his academic gown to celebrate mass on Christmas Day in 1521. Van Maaren's (2005:11) states that after the Reformation, churches that followed the teachings of the Anabaptists, Calvin, and Zwingli perceived clergy vestments as "symbols of the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and his detestable enormities".

The main question is: What developments influenced the trend of using clergy vestments among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa? Using the desktop research method (Booth *et al.* 2016:93), the article demonstrates that the influence of African Pentecostals from the Commonwealth Dominican and the United States of America contributed to the current trend of using clergy vestments among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Church leaders in South Africa between 1996 and 2022. This trend offered them a new ecclesiological hierarchy and an ecclesiastical and theological identity that promotes Pentecostal-Charismatic Church leadership accountability.

Desktop research involves the gathering of data from various forms of literature to address a specific theme or phenomenon (Booth *et al.*

2016:93). The literature used in the article includes academic journals, academic books, theses, websites, and some Facebook posts related to Archbishop Ketsekile and the South African Union Council of Independent Churches (SAUIC).

The article is structured into three main sections. The first section provides a concise overview of the historical use of vestments, tracing back from the first century to their adoption in Orthodox Churches. The second section comprises a three-part exploration of clergy vestments within various South African settings, specifically focusing on African Independent Churches, Classical Pentecostal Churches, and Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches spanning the period from 1996 to 2022. Finally, the third section offers a reflective analysis of the evolving trend of clergy vestment usage within African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa. While the initial division delves into the historical backdrop of clergy vestments, the subsequent sections shed light on their application within distinct religious contexts in South Africa.

Clergy vestments in the period of the first century, the Church Fathers, the Roman Catholic Church, and Eastern Orthodox Churches

During the third century, Christian leaders wore special clothes during services (Van Maaren 2005:8). Two views explain the emergence of clergy vestments. First, is that the use of special clothes during church services emerged during the era of the Church Fathers, who traced it to the Levitical uniform of the high priest serving in the Tabernacle and later the Temple (Exodus 28; Haas 2004:16). Second, is that pre-Christian religious influence and the Roman civil dress in the first century influenced the use of special clothes during church services (Borgioli 2018:171; Haas 2004:17-18). The first view is the dominant one within the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches to date.

As mentioned, Christian leaders wore special religious clothes during church services and not in public worship. However, after the Edict of Milan in 313 CE, this changed, and they wore special clothes in both private and public worship (Behrendt 2001:449; Van Maaren 2005:8; see Borgioli 2018:171-172) as well as for specific occasions mentioned in a will (Jackson 2016:145). Over the centuries, spanning from the fourth to the sixteenth century CE, clergy vestments evolved from being a simple outfit to being an opulent outfit. Clergy vestments evolved from using a white colour, representing purity as the angelic garment mentioned in the Scriptures (Luke 9:29), to a mixture of various colours. Escue (1994:1) explains that:

[c]olor is God's way of filling his world with beauty and giving pleasure to those who live in this colorful world. Christians, for centuries, have used color in divine worship to emphasize the redemptive action of God through his Son.

The rationale for introducing opulent clergy vestments within the Roman Catholic Church was to: continue with the religious responsibilities with dignity associated with the Levitical priesthood mentioned in Exodus 28 and 29, and to use it as oral and visual culture to educate the new converts about their Christian faith (Van Maaren 2005:9; see Borgioli 2018:177). Thus, clergy vestments included the wearing of a cossack (robe), the apron, the stole, and the mitre (Van Maaren 2005:8, 11). It is also observed that the rationale for opulent clergy vestments within Eastern Orthodox Churches is to preserve its particularity (Bilaniuk 2020:2980). In both church traditions, clergy vestments identify the order of the clergy as archbishop, bishop, presbyter, deacon, subdeacon, and other orders during the particular church rite (Ramsey n.d.:5; 4).

Consequently, for the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox churches, clergy vestments enable the person to wear a presentable and dignified outfit rich with symbolism (Eke 2010:391) when ministering. Thus, introducing the ecclesial order of bishops, priests, and deacons, as Reppeto (1974:6-7) says, clergy vestments:

encompass a variety of garments used to clothe the ministers or officiants at public worship. The garment identifies the wearer with his role in the liturgy, be it priest, deacon, acolyte, preacher, or choir member. It is essentially a garment intended to clothe the man [sic] with the identity of his office rather than the identity of his own personality.

Clergy vestments and church uniforms among African Independent Churches (AICs)

Makhubu (1988:6) explains that "AICs are churches founded by Africans with no missionary links; in essence, these are churches founded by Africans for Africans in Africa." Barret (1961:76) and Chidester (1996:91) posit that these churches emerged because of the struggle against colonialism and mission imperialism and are categorised into Spirit (Pentecostal) type and Ethiopian. The latter emerged out of association with the American Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), while the former is an offshoot of American Zionism and Pentecostalism and other mission churches. Madise (2005:73) explains that:

[t]hese churches originated out of the need of indigenous people to address their worldview. These churches were formed to address and serve Africans. In spite of this unifying factor, there are differences between the AICs, especially on issues relating to liturgy, customs, usages, and agendas, all of which have been created to suit the needs of the African people.

The use of clergy vestments and church uniforms among African Zionist-Pentecostal Churches, also known as *imaZiyoni*, began in the early 1900s when Daniel Nkonyane of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion (CCAHCZ) introduced the use of a white garment, sticks, and worshipping barefoot; this was after Michael Mngomezulu first saw a vision of white robes and associated it with the white robes mentioned in the letter of Revelation (Sundkler 1964:48-50). Daniel Nkonyane also linked the use of a white robe to Alexander Dowie's (founder of Zionism in the USA) use of a white robe (Lindsay 1980:170).

The use of clergy vestments and church uniforms also manifested among various AICs. Christinah Nku, the founder and leader of St. John Apostolic Church of South Africa, introduced clergy vestments and church uniforms following a series of dreams between 1932 and 1935 where she was told, in a vision, to use a white and blue uniform (Landman 2006:12). Vengeyi and Mwanda (2014:208) aver, by referring to (Larlham, 1982:31) and Sundkler (1961:13),

[u]sually, it is the leader or senior leader of an AIC who, through dreams and visions, determines the colour combination of garments... Thus, the Holy Spirit prescribes what colour to put on, on both the prophet-healer and the 'patient' who is in need of healing. A particular illness might require a particular uniform and a particular colour...

Other AIC leaders continued with this trend of associating clergy vestment and church uniform with vision and dreams (Larlham 1982:31). Engenas Lekganyane, the founder and leader of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), who first associated and worked with Elias Mahlangu, the first leader of the Zion Apostolic Church (ZAC) at Wakkerstroom, also introduced clergy vestment and church uniform. Similarly, Isaiah Shembe, the founder and leader of *ibandla*

IamaNazaretha, introduced clergy vestment and church uniform. Frederick Modise followed this trend when he seceded from the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) and established the Independent Pentecostal Holiness Christian Church of South Africa (IPCC). Accordingly, Pauw (1995: 16) posits that the leaders of these churches:

have attempted to make creative symbols of traditional and Christian beliefs, creatively formulating truly African Christianity which gives Africans an African identity: they represent radical indigenisation and Africanisation of Christianity.

By the middle of the 1970s, clergy vestment and church uniform were a norm among these churches, with colours and designs varying from one church to another. Consequently, clergy vestment was acceptable among the African section of the Roman Catholic Church, some Protestant churches, and African Indigenous Churches in South Africa. Additionally, women in these churches also began to use church uniform.

Over the years, clergy vestment and church uniform among African Indigenous Churches served to (a) mark sacredness, (b) identify priests and members of the church within the vast groups of African Indigenous Churches in South Africa, (c) communicate the teachings and beliefs of a church, and (d) fortify church members and leaders from evil/spiritual attacks. Larlham (1985:32-33) adds that clergy vestment and church uniform further linked them to African Traditional Religions (ATRs) and the new ideal of African Christianity.

Perspectives of clergy vestment among African Classical Pentecostals

General perspectives regarding the use of clergy vestment among African Pentecostals are to: (a) avoid its use or (b) embrace its use. The first perspective among African Pentecostals flows from Black liturgy in the United States of America, where “[t]raditional liturgical vestments were avoided since they were not only impractical in the rural environment, but their meaning was interpreted differently by those attending” (Vondey 2012:158). This view is noticeable in the 1906 Azusa Street revival event that William Seymour led and subsequent developments. Since the latter was trained in John Wesley’s Holiness movement and Charles Parham’s Bible School, which avoided the use of clergy vestments, he continued with the praxis. His follower, John G. Lake, and his associate, Thomas Hezmalhalch, who are former followers of Alexander Dowie’s Zionism teachings and doctrines, also continued with William Seymour’s praxis when they reached South Africa in 1908 and later established the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

Similarly, other missionaries associated with the Assemblies of God and the Full Gospel in the United States of America rejected the use of clergy vestment. Van Maaren (2005:12) links this rejection to the decision and practice of the Reformers in the United States of America to wear a tie and a shirt. Consequently, African Pentecostals in South Africa followed in the footsteps of William Seymour and other missionaries from the United States of America by avoiding the use of clergy vestments. Instead, they continued wearing a tie and jacket or a suit with a tie or a bow tie like Pentecostal missionaries. Past pictures of Elias Letwaba (Healing and revival n.d.), Nicholas Bhengu (Lephoko 2010), Richard Ngidi (Khathide 2010b), and Job Chiliza (Khathide 2010a) show them dressed in jackets with either a tie or a bow tie. Furthermore, Khathide (2009:68) provides a group photo of graduates of the Union Bible School Institute in Pietermaritzburg also dressed in jackets or lambs jackets and wearing ties.

Raboroko Snr (2014:54), one of the senior pastors of the International Assemblies of God in South Africa, provides a history of the denomination from 1964 to 2014. He provides various photos of the church pastors at conferences, in leadership roles, and in Bible School

training with African males and male missionaries, all dressed in jackets with ties or bow ties. He provides a December 1964 group photo of the First National Bible Conference with 66 African pastors and 8 missionaries; a group photo of the African Bible Training Institute (ABTI) faculty dressed the same way, with a female staff member with no head covering (Raboroko Snr 2014:61); a 1969 African Bible Training Institute (ABTI) class with males dressed in jackets and ties and women in skirts and head coverings, but the female teacher missionary has no head covering (ibid., 96). The influence of missionaries on the national included passing on a dress code they learned from the Reformers in the United States of America (Van Maaren 2005:12). The use of a head covering among females conveys African patriarchal tendencies that teach that women are not equal to men and IAG’s position that women should hold leadership positions in the church (Chetty 2002:173).

Subsequently, African Pentecostal pastors who seceded from the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), the Back to God-Assemblies of God (BTG-AOG), the International Assemblies of God (IAG), and the Full Gospel Church South Africa (FGCSA) in the 1980s to establish independent Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches continued using a tie, shirt, and jacket. Among them are Archbishop Mosa Sono of Grace Bible Church in Soweto, Archbishop Gladstone Botwana of Zoé Bible Church in Soweto, and Archbishop Stephen Zondo of Rivers of Living Waters in Evaton, now relocated to Vereeniging (Anderson 2005: 77-83; Mzondi 2019: 88-90).

Clergy vestment among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in post-1994 South Africa

The shift from using a tie, shirt, and jacket to using clergy vestment among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa that emerged in the mid-1990s reflects what Chidester (2018:177) calls “plasticity,” which is “a feature of religion that endures and reinvents its relevance.” Below, the article discusses three aspects related to this shift: the African American Pentecostal and Commonwealth Dominican ecclesiastical influence; promoting ecclesiastical hierarchy among African Pentecostal Churches; and the theological and ecclesiastical identity and African Pentecostal-Charismatic Church leadership accountability.

The African American Pentecostal and Commonwealth Dominican ecclesiastical influence

The association of African Pentecostal-Charismatic leaders with African American Pentecostals reflects a shift from a less hierarchical and free ecclesiology to a formalised ecclesiastical hierarchy of bishops, presbyters, and deacons (Episcopalism) traced to St. Ignatius of Antioch (Toon 2004:24-25). This phenomenon shows a shift from the common hybrid system of presbyterian and congregational, found among Classical Pentecostal churches (the Back to God-Assemblies of God (BTG-AOG), the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), the International Assemblies of God (IAG), Full Gospel Church of God (FGCG)) and the usual congregational system of the Charismatic Movement modelled in Rhema Bible Church and similar churches.

As pointed out above, historically, African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches assumed the position of Classical Pentecostal Churches that rejected the use of clergy vestment due to the inherited North American influence regarding the use of vestment (Van Maaren 2005:12). This view began to change in 1996 when a township Pentecostal Church leader, Gladstone Botwana of Zoé Bible Church, a Pentecostal denomination with its head office in Pimville, Soweto, embraced the use of clergy vestment. His SABC televised consecration into the Episcopacy³ sent shocking waves through the entire section of African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches, as they usually associate clergy

vestment with the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, and the Lutheran Church.

A local Zoé Bible Church website explains that the theological basis for embracing vestments is for “restoring protocol, order, ethics, and the grandeur of the house of God. 1 Samuel 10:4-10”⁴. This view flows from its association with a sister church that teaches and promotes the use of clergy vestments and church uniforms, Zoe Bible Church in the United States of America, led by Archbishop Elijah Jordaen⁵. The latter is associated with Archbishop Roy E. Brown, the founder and head of Pilgrim Assemblies International, Inc., and promoter of the use of clergy vestments among African American Pentecostals. As a result, Pilgrim Assemblies International,

desires to promote spiritual continuity through prayer, directions, and mutual accountability among leaders, as well as to raise up leaders with a similar vision to reach the lost and the poor with the Gospel of Jesus Christ⁶

Archbishop Roy E. Brown’s approach could be linked with later theological developments among African Pentecostals in the United States of America that differ from Vondey’s (2012:158) explanation that, initially, African Pentecostals in the United States of America rejected the use of vestments. At the time of writing this article, in 2022, the current developments within Zoe Bible Church in South Africa are that Bishop Gladstone Botwana was later elevated to the office of Archbishop in 2019⁷.

From 1996 to just before the early 2000s, Bishop Botwana remained the only leader among African township Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches to function in the office of a bishop until some new trend emerged among African township Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in the mid-2000s. Furthermore, another prominent leader, Stephen Zondo of Rivers of Life Ministries (RLW) in Evaton, now in Vereeniging, was elevated to be Archbishop by the African American-based Interdenominational Theological Centre (ITC) in 2013⁸ after his elevation to the office of Bishop some years earlier.

The above-mentioned trend is further noticed among those African Pentecostal-Charismatic leaders who associate with Archbishop Emmanuel Ketsekile. He is behind the promotion and proliferation of the use of clergy vestments and the use of ecclesiastical titles of Bishop and Archbishop among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches because of the theological influence of and association with academic institutions in the Commonwealth of Dominica that promote the use of vestments to display order and dignity in the church. Archbishop Modiri Shole, the current president of the South African Union Council of Independent Churches (SAUCIC), is one of the first leaders he ordained and robed as a bishop. Some years later, ordination and robing as a bishop for most senior leaders of this organisation ensued. The organisation continues the process of ordaining and robing those who wish to be bishops in the country.

Promoting ecclesiastical hierarchy among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches

The use of vestments among archbishops, bishops, and priests in the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox churches discussed above displays ecclesiastical hierarchy (see Ramsey n.d.:5). Again, archbishops, bishops, and priests in these Christian traditions undergo a thorough theological training process (cf Kärkkäinen (2002:101), Pazmiño [1997:20]). However, many of the pastors, prophets, apostles, bishops, and archbishops associated with the organisation, SAUCIC, have no basic theological training. Being offered the bishopric indirectly satisfies the Christian theological training vacuum.

Archbishop Emmanuel Ketsekile has positioned himself strategically to provide certificates for doctoral theological training for African Pentecostal-Charismatic pastors through Emmanuel Christian

University International (ECUI)⁹, associated with Ballsbridge University based in the Commonwealth of Dominica, in the Caribbean. He also ordains them to the offices of archbishop, bishop, apostle, and pastor¹⁰. These developments demonstrate a new shift in the use of clergy vestments among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches.

Whereas Archbishop Botwana of Zoé Bible Church embraced this shift based on some theological grounds influenced by his association with its sister church, Zoé Bible Church, in the United States of America, lately, some African township Pentecostal-Charismatic Church leaders have ascended into the offices of archbishop and bishop at a cost. Archbishop Emmanuel Ketsekile’s institution offers a course in ordination as a bishop, archbishop, or apostle for R4500.00; ordination as a pastor costs R3500.00 (Emmanuel University n.d.).

During these developments, two prominent African Pentecostal-Charismatic Church leaders were elevated into the office of bishop through different associations of bishops operating in the country, Africa, and elsewhere. The first to be elevated was Bishop Abraham Sibiya of Christ Centred Church, a Pentecostal church in Saulsville, Tshwane. He is associated with Archbishop Demetrius Brown, leader of the Body of Christ Sanctified Church (BOCSC) and Brown University Leadership Institute and International Seminary (BLIS) based in the United States of America (USA). Archbishop Brown claims that his office is from an unbroken apostleship and bishopric dating from St. Ignatius of Antioch (Martyr) and subscribes to the Apostle’s Creed (BOCSC)¹¹. Currently, Archbishop Abraham Sibiya is the presiding bishop of the African region of Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, is a member, and the 1st Co-ordinator of the International Anglican Orthodox Episcopal Communion (IAOEC)¹² (cf Tjiya 2020). Additionally, his wife was elevated to the office of bishop in 2023 (Chester 2023).

The second to be elevated was Bishop Mosa Sono of Grace Bible Church, a charismatic church with its head office in Pimville, Soweto. He is associated with the former International Federation of Charismatic Churches (IFCC) led by Pastor Ray McCauley, founder of Rhema Bible Church and Rhema Bible College. The decision of Pastor Ray McCauley to join the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the subsequent IFCC’s appearance in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the 1990s created a second rift in the IFCC (Anderson 2005: 71; Resane 2020:224). Initially, the “Toronto Blessing” phenomenon caused the first rift (Anderson 2005:85).

The article argues that the move to participate in the TRC and associate with the South African Council of Churches (SACC) prepared a suitable ground for Mosa Sono, as these enabled him to associate, learn, and be exposed to the broader Christian tradition within the SACC and the wider ecumenical movement in the country. He was also exposed to the use of clergy vestments with SACC member churches and some AIC churches that use indigenously designed clergy vestments. It is no surprise that, over time, he later shifted from a free ecclesiology and embraced Pentecostal hierarchy through his association with Bishop Dag Heward-Mills of the United Denominations Originating from the Lighthouse Group of Churches (UD-OLGC, formerly Lighthouse Chapel International) in Ghana¹³. Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams ordained the latter¹⁴.

Theological and ecclesiastical identity and African Pentecostal-Charismatic Church leadership accountability

The African Pentecostal-Charismatic Church leaders mentioned in this article present a development different from Christian leaders of African Indigenous Churches (AICs) who were resisting colonialism and missionary imperialism. They reflect a quest to acquire a new Christian theological and ecclesiastical identity in the post-1994 South African context. The new democratic dispensation opened new doors and horizons that birthed new ecclesiastical relations with other African Pentecostal Churches outside the country, in the African continent, the

United States of America, and the Diaspora. These ecclesiastical relationships provided a break away from the pre-1994 South African Pentecostal church relations to new relations that brought ecclesiastical and theological identity.

Whilst Ethiopian church leaders, Mokone Mangena, and others found ecclesiastical and theological identity through associating with independent African American Churches who embraced the struggle for the emancipation of Africans in the United States of America (Roy 2000:102), the above-mentioned leaders found theological and ecclesiastical identity by associating with African Pentecostal Churches in the United States of America. Just like the Ethiopian church leaders, these leaders embraced the use of clergy vestments, liturgy (with some minor variations), and the ecclesiology of their counterparts in the United States of America and the Diaspora.

As seen on Archbishop Gladstone Botwana's local church website cited above, his church embraced clergy vestments to restore order, ethics, and protocol. This view resonates with Eke's (2010:391) and Schuchmann's (cf Van Maaren 2005:12) emphasis that religious responsibilities are to be performed with dignity. He also subscribes to Archbishop Brown's desire to hold African Pentecostal leaders in the USA and elsewhere accountable. Such Christian leadership accountability is achieved by identifying and associating with either African American Pentecostal Churches and related institutions or Commonwealth Dominican institutions.

Other leaders found their identities through associating with a group of African Pentecostals in the United States of America and the Diaspora who also established African Initiated Pentecostal churches belonging to a network of such churches. Some of their associate leaders have also established institutions of higher learning that provide theological training.

Archbishop Gladstone Botwana is associated with Zoé Bible Church in America, led by Archbishop Elijah Jordaan. Archbishop Stephen Zondo¹⁵ is associated with the Interdenominational Theological Centre. Archbishops and Bishops associated with Archbishop Emmanuel Ketsekile are associated with Ballsbridge University based in the Commonwealth of Dominica. Archbishop Abraham Sibiya is associated with Archbishop Demetrius Brown, the leader of the Body of Christ Sanctified Church (BOCSC) and Brown University Leadership Institute and International Seminary (BLIIS). Archbishop Mosa Sono is associated with Archbishop Dag Heward-Mills of the United Denominations Originating from the Lighthouse Group of Churches (UD-OLGC), who also founded a theological institution.

Associating with African Pentecostal Churches in the United States of America and the Diaspora provides legitimacy to their bishopric that is anchored among fellow Africans elsewhere. It further demonstrates a disassociation from established Classical Pentecostalism associated with non-African American Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement that emerged in the United States of America in the country (cf Anderson 2005: 71-72, 85). These associations further elevate and provide clergy dignity for some of these archbishops and bishops as they appear on television, printed, and electronic media, robed in clergy vestments or sometimes with archbishop's or bishop's shirts and cross necklaces.

The most intriguing leader is Archbishop Abraham Sibiya, whose association head traces his ecclesiastical and theological clergy vestment identity to an unbroken line of apostleship and bishopric from St. Ignatius of Antioch (Martyr). This leader has also established an institution that includes theological training.

Reflection on the use of clergy vestments among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa

The emerging trend signifies a notable ecclesial transition within Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches spanning the years between 1996 and 2022. This shift has delineated two distinct factions within African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa during this period: those embracing clergy vestments and those opting against them, particularly evident in Classical Pentecostal churches and other Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches. Furthermore, this shift indicates that certain African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa have progressed from a semi-congregational system to an Episcopalian structure, all while retaining their Pentecostal essence yet adopting novel expressions in worship.

It is noteworthy that among proponents of clergy vestments, there exists a dichotomy: some endorse vestments for religious status, power, and acknowledgment, while others advocate for them to uphold Pentecostal theological identity and dignity, representing a continuum of African-Caribbean Pentecostal traditions. These advancements underscore the dynamic nature of African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa as they engage with other Pentecostal-Charismatic entities beyond the African continent.

Importantly, the use and rationale behind clergy vestments among certain African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa during the specified period diverge from those of African Independent Churches. Unlike the latter, which embraced vestments as a form of socio-religious-political resistance to Western Christianity and colonialism since the early 1900s, the motivations behind vestment usage in the former are distinct.

Given that the article primarily focuses on the perspectives of four leaders and an established organization who were among the earliest proponents of clergy vestments, alternative viewpoints and congregational perspectives on vestment usage are naturally omitted. Further investigation into these realms could potentially unveil additional insights into this evolving trend.

Summary

The objective of the article was to analyse the theological and ecclesiological trend of the use of clergy vestments among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa. The article traced the trend of using clergy vestments among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa by looking at four prominent African Pentecostal-Charismatic Church pastors and two Pentecostal-Charismatic organisations. It first began by tracing clergy vestments in the first century among Church Fathers, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Eastern Orthodox churches. It then looked at the perceptions and the use of clergy vestments among African Independent Churches and the African sections of Classical Pentecostal Churches. The last section discussed three aspects that aid in understanding the use of clergy vestments among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa. The section showed that the theological and ecclesiastical shift in the use of clergy vestments among African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches stems mainly from their association with African Pentecostals and related theological institutions in the United States of America and the Commonwealth of Dominica. This association provided them with a Pentecostal ecclesiological hierarchy, an ecclesiastical and theological identity that promotes Pentecostal Christian leadership accountability. The conclusion of the article centres on a contemplation of the utilization of clergy vestments within African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa spanning the years from 1996 to 2022.

Footnotes

- ¹ Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches refer to independent churches established in the 1980s. (Anderson 2005 and Kgatle 2020)
- ² Except for Nicolas Bhengu's Back to God-Assemblies of God, these are Pentecostal Churches that American Pentecostal missionaries established in South Africa after 1910 (Kgatle 2020:7-8)
- ³ <http://zoebiblechurch.co.za/about-us-2/>, accessed 21 March 2021.
- ⁴ <http://zoebiblechurch.co.za/about-us-2/>, accessed 21 March 2021.
- ⁵ <https://rollingout.com/2016/07/08/e-bernard-jordan-elevated-archbishop/>, accessed 21 March 2021.
- ⁶ <https://www.pilgrimagessemblies.org/history/>, accessed 21 March 2021.
- ⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u84Ax7xsXxs>, accessed 29 March 2021.
- ⁸ <https://rlw.org.za/archbishop-zondo/>, accessed 21 April 2021.
- ⁹ <https://ec-university.co.za/>, accessed 28 April 2021.
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- ¹² <https://www.thebocscinternational.com/board-of-bishops>, accessed 21 March 2021. <https://www.thebocscinternational.com/leadership-highlights>, accessed 21 March 2021.
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