

The Legacy of White Imperialist Forces in the Leadership of the DRCA FS

K.J. Pali

ORCID iD: <https://Orcid.org/0000-0001-5105-2650>.

Abstract

The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in the Free State (DRCA FS, for Black Africans) is a product of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC, for the Afrikaners) mission and one of the DRC family of churches established in South Africa for African Christians. The DRC racial mission policy stipulated that established churches by the DRC should be separated according to racial categories hence the DRC family of churches consisted of the Afrikaners (DRC), Mixed-race (DRMC), Blacks (DRCA) and Indians (RCA). For many years, the DRCA FS was under the dominant leadership of white missionaries and dependent on the financial support of the DRC in the Free State. The DRCA FS members, as part of the South African community, suffered not only from White imperialist forces such as slavery, colonialism and apartheid, but also from the DRC's racial mission policy during the apartheid era. At present, the leadership of the DRCA FS is struggling to respond appropriately to this legacy of dependency, division, violence and declining mission. However, the failure of the DRCA FS's leadership to recognize the historical context of the above problems makes it difficult to engage with them appropriately and prepare for a better future. This article analyses how the legacy of white imperialist forces influenced the leadership of the DRCA FS, using internalised oppression theory to highlight the impact of White imperialist forces on the leadership of the DRCA FS.

Keywords: White imperialist forces, Internal oppression, Leadership, Dependency, DRCA FS

Introduction

This article focuses on leadership in the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Free State (DRCA FS), where leadership includes ministers, elders and deacons. Most of the emphasis will be on the ministers. Currently, the DRCA FS is one of four regional synods of the DRCA, and has congregations mainly in the Free State, as well as in other provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, and North West. The membership of the DRCA FS is predominantly Black. The main languages are Sesotho and Afrikaans, as well as Tswana, Zulu and Xhosa. At present, there are 121 congregations, with 34 ministers, four of whom are part-time ministers in their congregations, two of whom are White, and the remaining 28 are full-time Black ministers (DRCA FS Synod 2019:46).

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) has strongly influenced and dominated the DRCA FS. White missionaries assumed the role of ministers, with the right to lead the church council meetings, the presbytery, the synod, and the commissions in various church structures. Furthermore, members of the DRCA (including the DRCA FS) were part of the Black South African community subjected to White imperialist forces manifested in slavery, colonialism, and apartheid. During the formal institution of these White imperialist forces, especially during apartheid, Black Africans were the lowest on the social hierarchy that classified races as Whites first, then mixed-race, Indians, and finally Black Africans (Omond 1986:23).

This article defines imperialism as economic, political, and cultural expansion, the subjugation of others, or dominance in whatever form (Smith 1999:21). White imperialism is a malicious system that invades all the societal structures, and adversely affects the whole human being; that is, psychologically, spiritually, and physically. Various types of professionals implemented the White imperialist ideology. According to Kane (1978:247), the first type was the political leaders of the imperial government, tasked with instituting White imperialism through legislations and domination. Second, the capitalist, representing the business interests of the imperial government, was tasked with exploiting human and material resources at the expense of the colonised. The capitalist employed the cheap labour of the vanquished people to achieve imperialist business interests. Third, the White missionary, influenced by White imperialist ideology, was tasked with manipulating the thinking, morality, and belief systems of the colonised.

The legacy of White imperialist forces still lingers on in contemporary

South African society. Their impact is felt more in the leadership problems in various sectors of society. Leadership features mostly as a malicious factor to be blamed for most of the social problems, whether political, economic or religious (Konneh 2002:1). Post-apartheid South Africa is described as violent, unequal, and racially divided (Woermann 2012:89). Churches in South Africa are meant to be transforming agents of a society guided by the ordinances of the gospel. This means church members need to live out values of the gospel like integrity, honesty, caring, and courage to confront injustices in their own context. However, most churches are oblivious to their gospel mandate. They tend to conform to the power of social pressure by compromising the values of the gospel. This we encounter by acts of violence, conflicts, and sexual misconduct that happen in the churches, to such an extent that churches are a mirror of their society, instead of the society being a mirror of the church as a Christian community (De Gruchy 2004:8, 9).

The DRCA FS has experienced a gradual decline in a social ministry characterised by conflicts, from mere personal disagreements to litigation and violence, and the relationship among those in leadership is one of mistrust and suspicion (Pali 2017:2, 6, 8). The leadership is blamed for the unhealthy situation in the DRCA FS congregations. Furthermore, the moderamen of the DRCA FS (i.e., the executive committee of the Synod of the DRCA FS) raised its concerns that, due to these conflicts, the church has lost its integrity to proclaim the gospel to society (DRCA FS 2015:32, 33). In light of the above, this article aims to critically analyse how the legacy of White imperialist forces has influenced the leadership of the DRCA FS. The reason for this research is that White imperialist forces have adversely affected Black Africans, and the consequences thereof are evident in the ministry of the DRCA FS.

The next section analyses the situation in the DRCA FS, as well as the ramifications and the nature of slavery, colonialism and apartheid, with reflection on the ministry of the DRCA FS. I then discuss the impact of the legacy of these White imperialist forces on the DRCA FS and its leadership, using internalised oppression theory to explicate the DRCA FS's muted response to apartheid governance, and its continuing dependence on the DRC.

Historical-situational Analysis of the DRCA FS

Prior to 1994, the DRC (for White Afrikaners), through its racial mission policy, established the following churches according to ethnic groups: the

Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC, for the Mixed-race), the DRCA (for Black Africans), and the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA, for Indians) (DRCA FS 2003:7, Article 2). Amongst the Black Africans the DRC established churches according to their different ethnic groups. According to Crafford (1982:149, 158, 173, 245, 564), prior to 1994, the DRCA had eight regional synods, namely the DRCA FS (initially for the South Sotho speaking, established on 9 March 1910 in Bloemfontein); the DRCA in Transvaal (established on 2 March 1932 in Johannesburg), which was later on 27 April 1964 divided into the DRCA in Northern Transvaal (for the Black African ethnic groups like Venda, Pedi, and others living in the Northern Transvaal) and the DRCA in Southern Transvaal (for the Black African ethnic groups living in the Southern Transvaal); the Dutch Reformed Bantu¹ Church in South Africa (initially for the Black Africans ethnic groups living in the Western Cape, established on 7 November 1951 in Molteno, Western Cape); the DRCA in Natal (initially for the Zulu speaking Black Africans, established on 30 October 1952 in Ladysmith); the DRCA *Phororo*² Synod (initially for the Tswana speaking Black Africans, established on 15 March 1966 in Mafikeng); the DRCA Eastern Cape (initially for the Xhosa speaking Black Africans, established in 1973), and the DRCA Transkei Synod (initially for the Xhosa speaking Black Africans, established on 29 August 1978 in Umtata).

This article will focus more on the DRCA FS, as the first Black African church of the DRC established 9 March 1910 in Bloemfontein. Initially, it was called the DRMC FS (for the South Sotho speaking Black Africans). Prior to 1910, some of the Black African congregations had already been established as a product of White missionary activities of the 19th century (Corrie 2013:43). The White imperialist forces influenced the social pressure of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This affected the relationships between the majority of the Black Africans and Whites in both the church and society.

According to Odendaal (1970:485-521), already in the 19th century, Black nationalism was becoming stronger and more opposed to the practices of slavery and colonialism, and this continued into the 20th century against

¹ Bantu was a name used in the Apartheid era to refer to the Black Africans in South Africa.

² *Phororo* is a Tswana name for the waterfall, and the synod of the DRCA *Phororo* is situated in what is now called North-West and Northern Cape provinces in South Africa.

apartheid. In society, this took the form of opposition to the following: White dominance, oppression of the Black Africans (who were denied political rights), invasion of land by the colonial government, and manipulation of Black Africans to be involved in both the Anglo-Boer War and the World Wars. These socially oppressive practices adversely affected the relationship between Black Africans and White missionaries in the congregations. Odendaal (485-521) notes that, in the DRMC (for the Black Africans) congregations, some of the White ministers were suspected of supporting the colonial government and its practices of racial discrimination. Some of the White ministers also undermined African culture and propagated the ideology of associating Christianity with Western civilisation. Some of the White missionaries were also reluctant to affirm Black leadership in the congregations.

The Ethiopian movement inspired opposition to these practices. The consequence of this increasing tension between White ministers and Black leadership in the congregations led to a schism in some Black African congregations (Odendaal 1970:517, 518). To avoid further damage to the congregations, Odendaal (1970:551) mentions that White ministers, together with the Mission Commission from the DRC, formally established separate churches for Black Africans, with the intention of allowing them to ultimately govern themselves. The DRMC in the Free State (for Black Africans) was the first to be established in 1910 for the South Sotho-speaking Black Africans. Other DRMC (for other Black African ethnic groups) regional synods were later established in other provinces of South Africa. However, even after the establishment of separate Black African churches, the missionaries were still reluctant to acknowledge the readiness of this mission church to govern itself (Elphick 2012:225). Some of their arguments were that the mission church was neither sufficiently ready, financially strong, fully developed, nor ecclesiastically organised to stand on its own (Odendaal 1970:551). As a result, the DRMC regional synods including DRMC FS were subjected to a period of guardianship. The synods, constitution, articles, and laws were subjected to the DRC approval, and the DRC officials had the right to attend the DRMC meetings (Crafford 1982:175).

The name of the newly established church for Black Africans was similar to an already existing DRMC for 'Mixed race' peoples. On 7 May 1963 and thereafter, all Black African DRMC churches held a general synod in Kroonstad and adopted the new name, the DRCA. Crafford (1982:564) argues that the prefix 'Dutch Reformed' was adopted to revere and remember the

mother church, the White DRC. The suffix 'in Africa' was to open the doors to other churches in the DRC family and elsewhere in Africa to join them with the intention to unite. By contrast, Lebone (2002:277, 278) states that the purpose of uniting the DRCA churches in 1963 was to bring together Blacks, avoid alienation of the synods in different regions, and start a process of integrating with other DRC mission churches from other African countries. Regrettably, this has not yet been achieved, as the DRCA and others from the DRC family of churches are still struggling to unite.

From its first General Synod in 1963, held during the prime days of apartheid, the DRCA became one of the first DRC family of churches to oppose the establishment of separate churches based on ethnicity (Crafford 1982:573-575). It must be noted that during the apartheid era, the mission within the DRC was driven by the ideology of apartheid that required the paternalistic approach and the segregation of churches based on race (Mohlamme & Qakisa 1992:231; Van der Watt 2010:2, 3). The racially influenced mission policy of the DRC had implications within and far beyond the ecclesiastical realms. It affected the process of unification within the DRC family of churches and promoted the Afrikaner Nationalist policy of separate development beyond the church.

During the apartheid era, the DRC was reluctant to engage in unity talks with its DRC family of churches. The DRCA nevertheless initiated unity talks with the DRMC, from which the RCA (for Indians) was excluded, due to its view that it would only engage in unity talks if all the DRC family members were willing to participate. This unity process started in the early 1970s and was achieved in 1994. Both the DRMC and the DRCA were disbanded and a new church was inaugurated in 1994 as the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA). However, after this formal unification, some ministers and their congregations from the DRCA FS and the DRCA Phororo withdrew from the URCSA to remain as the DRCA. The leadership of these two DRCA regional synods accused their previous moderamen of the general synod of the DRCA of deviating from the protocol of the church order to disband and unite churches and accept the Belhar³ Confession (DRCA FS 1995:16, 17; 1999:9; General synod of the DRCA 1999:9). The remaining DRCA regional synods described the Belhar Confession as political, and the confession of the URCSA. More importantly, on the Belhar Confession, the

³ Belhar Confession is a faith statement document from URCSA.

DRCA ministers felt excluded by the DRMC (for the Mixed-race) leadership when they decided, on their own, without inviting other DRC family churches, to participate in the writing of the Belhar Confession (Corrie 2013:44). The withdrawal from the URCSA caused a great deal of physical conflict and litigations between the URCSA and the then DRCA, especially in the Free State.

The DRCA FS and DRCA Phororo withdrew from the URCSA, also because of the influence of some of the conservative Black ministers who were opposed to the Belhar Confession and in favour of the unity of all the DRC family of churches. Moreover, the withdrawal from the URCSA was ascribed to the influence of some conservative White ministers in both the DRC and the DRCA who were not in favour of the Belhar Confession and formation of the URCSA. One of the White ministers in the DRCA (Phororo regional synod) mentioned that “[d]uring the 1980s, when the DRMC started the process of adopting the Belhar Confession, we [DRCA] still had not reached the point where we felt that it gave rise to a *status confessions*” (Corrie 2013:44). Concerning the unity process, it is strange and preposterous that the leadership of the DRCA, including the DRCA FS, after withdrawing from URCSA, applied for the disbandment of the remaining DRCA regional synods and membership of all its congregations and leadership at the DRC Synod (Corrie 2013:43; DRCA General Synod 2003:12). Does this mean that the DRCA General Synod was willing to allow the unity of the DRCA with the DRC rather than with other members of the DRC family of churches? Further research is required for a better understanding of the issue.

In relation to its external ministry, the DRCA made selective efforts to engage with apartheid critically and practically. For instance, the DRCA General Synod (1975:175 – 205) opposed the practice of apartheid in its document entitled *The Bible and the relationships between races and people*. In addition, Masuku (2014:160) argues that, during apartheid, some Black ministers in the DRCA joined the Black African Ministers’ Caucus or Confessing Circle in order to oppose apartheid and the racial policies that hampered the internal and external ministry of the church. However, their views often did not as such represent the views of the DRCA as a whole. Kritzinger (2013:2, 10) explains this, arguing that in the fight against apartheid, some of the leadership, including White ministers from both the DRCA and the DRC, were reluctant to radically engage in apartheid; they preferred to use cautious criticism against apartheid. Cautious criticism implies that the

brutality and racial policy of the apartheid government that harassed, impoverished, and oppressed black people were not openly and radically criticised. This was to maintain relationship between the DRC and the apartheid government and sustain as long as possible the existence of the relations between the DRC and the apartheid government. Therefore, these ministers intimidated those aligned with the Confessing Circle against apartheid. During the apartheid era, Black ministers from other denominations viewed the DRCA ministers with suspicion when they made statements against apartheid, because of their association with the DRC, (Masuku 2014:160). This suspicion was confirmed by the report of the Financial Administrator of the DRCA FS (2019:41), who agreed that the DRCA, especially the DRCA FS, was severely criticised during apartheid. Even now, other churches view the DRCA with suspicion because of its relationship with, and dependency on the DRC, and its relative silence vis-à-vis apartheid policies. As Corrie (2013:44), one of the White ministers in the DRCA (Phororo Regional Synod), stated in his view of the critical role of the DRCA General Synod of 1963 against apartheid,

At our commencement in 1963, we as a church did not have a problematic relationship with the apartheid government on any official level. Certain individuals did raise a lot of opposition against the [apartheid] government on the general synodical level, but that was not entertained by the majority of representatives.

Corrie's statement confirms that the DRCA was silent and uncritical in the context of many of the injustices of apartheid. The leadership of the DRCA General Synod was in general very cautious about their criticism of the apartheid government.

For a long time, including during the apartheid era, the DRCA, including the DRCA FS with Black ministers as leaders, was under the spell of the White ministers' influence. However, it must be noted that not all White or Black ministers in the DRCA, especially the DRCA FS, were supportive of and silent against the apartheid government. However, the DRCA FS was one of the regional synods of the DRCA that was initially mostly dominated by conservative White ministers. Even some of its Black African leadership were described as mainly conservative, supporting only cautious criticism of apartheid. According to Kritzinger (2011:118; 2013:2, 9, 10), the DRCA

inherited a silent and uncritical stance against apartheid from the DRC. Hence, the DRCA FS' (2011:153-156) approach to the injustices of apartheid was mostly silent, or at most addressed internally through its commission reports. Kritzinger further mentions that the DRCA inherited pietistic theology from the DRC and its White ministers. A pietistic theology is a theology that emphasised personal piety at the expense of radical and responsible societal engagement. A church or individual embedded in pietistic theology may pray to God and read the Bible every day and remain oblivious to social injustices. This weakened the critical social involvement of the DRCA. It is no wonder, at present, that the DRCA FS mission and *diaconia* are experiencing a serious decline.

The other issue that affected the contemporary situation of the DRCA FS is related to its lack of financial independence. Kritzinger mentions that the DRCA is financially and theologically dependent on the DRC and that this adversely affects the critical role of the DRCA in society. The consequence of this dependence was evident when some of the ministers who joined the Confessing Circle were marginalised and labelled as liberal. Today, when the DRCA FS experiences ministerial or financial crises, it begs the DRC for assistance. Again, there is a great deal of mistrust among those in the leadership, to such an extent that some of the ministers would like a return of the White missionaries or disbandment and integration of the DRCA into the DRC.

The Ramifications of Slavery, Colonisation, and Apartheid

These conflicts in the DRCA FS mirror the violent, divided and unequal society of which it is a part, and which results from the legacy of White imperialist forces. These forces and the violence they perpetuated include slavery, colonialism, and apartheid.

There are mixed feelings from former White imperialists when discussing slavery, colonialism, and apartheid. There are those who still see nothing wrong with White imperialist forces and regard them as necessary to facilitate civilisation, racial order and peace (Konneh 2002:12; Jansen 2011:38-42). By contrast there are those who regard White imperialist forces as terrible and wrong; these people are willing to confess the injustices they committed (Nimako & Willemsen 2011:157; Jansen 2011:38 - 42). From my perspective, it is appropriate to open a public debate on the injustices

perpetuated under White imperialist governments in order to help the victims and their descendants understand what happened and start the process of healing and reconciliation with the perpetrators. It is also imperative to note that the process of reconciliation and forgiveness starts with the victim (Schreiter 1998:14). The following section briefly discusses slavery, colonialism, and apartheid, and analyses their nature and effect.

Slavery is one of the inhumane White imperialist forces that subjugated Africans to foreign oppression by Europeans (Lovejoy 1981:11). Morton (1994:1) maintains that, on their arrival in South Africa in 1652, the Dutch settlers introduced slavery. This was later perpetuated by other White settlers such as the British and later the Afrikaners in the Western Cape. Nimako and Willemsen (2011:173-183) argue that, from the enslavers' perspective, slavery was an episode in human history and a stain on countries' characters that should be forgotten. But they also argue that academic discussions on slavery underrate its impact on the descendants of the enslaved who are still struggling with memory, commemoration, and the emancipation process (Nimako & Willemsen 2011:173-183). In my observation within the context of South Africa, there is a limited academic discussion on the practice of slavery and its consequences, while the families of the descendants of the perpetrators are oblivious to the impact of slavery on its victims. As a result, emancipation today is a continuing process, because issues of legacy and reparations must still be addressed.

Colonialism in South Africa is complex and lasted much longer than in other African countries. Loubser (1987:3) contends that the modern colonisation of South Africa by European powers started in 1652, when the first Dutch settlers occupied the former Cape Colony. This was followed by the British in 1800, and the Afrikaners from 1924 to 1994. It should be noted that the colonisation of Africa implies that Africa was conquered, subjected to European imperialism, and colonised against its will. Parrat (2004:3, 4) explains colonisation as a practice by a few European countries who dominated and controlled the destiny of the vast majority of the world populations, including not only Africa, but also most of Asia and the Americas. Parrat argues that colonisation was a total system that deprived the colonised of their political structures, and subjected their economies, cultural and social life to the needs of the Western countries of the world. It was maintained through violence and perpetuated by racism (Nimako & Willemsen 2011:152).

Besides slavery and colonialism, Black Africans also suffered because

of apartheid, which can be viewed as the twentieth-century climax of White imperialist governance in South Africa. Apartheid, as perpetuated by Whites, involves elements of segregation, racism, and imperialism. Apartheid is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon that is not easy to define. Loubser (1987:xiii, xiv) describes apartheid as an extreme form of racial segregation on all levels of society. To White Afrikaners, apartheid was a system used to create a pure Afrikaner nation; hence, the prevention of mixed marriages and the practice of racial discrimination and inequality were relevant to achieving this goal. Apartheid was also used to classify nations according to race and build the infrastructure according to the status of their race. In summary, Apartheid was a form of violent paternalism, designed to undermine African culture and control African population growth. The majority of the Afrikaners and their churches were ardent proponents of the apartheid ideology as a system of government in South Africa. Afrikaners of Dutch, German, and French origin (Loubser 1987:125) were associated with Afrikaans churches such as the Dutch Reformed Church, the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, the Gereformeerde Kerk, and the Hervormde Kerk.

The Nature of White Imperialist Forces

In order to analyse the nature and effect of these White imperialist forces on Africans, I will briefly use ideas of Konneh (2002:10-13). White imperialist forces denied Africans the right to participate in their future destiny; they used legislations and structures, and appointed their own officials to dominate Africans (Konneh 2002:12). Again, White imperialists used authoritarian bureaucracy to control resources and subjugate their subjects (Konneh 2002:11). Authoritarian bureaucracy refers to police, army, courts, tax collectors, labour law officials, and sometimes White missionaries. These representatives of authoritarian bureaucracy used legislation and punitive measures to implement the White imperialists' laws. Furthermore, the goal of White imperialism was not nation building, but fragmentation of people according to the boundaries of ethnicity, geography, or social status (Konneh 2002:10). Moreover, the White imperialist legislation enforced exclusion by favouring the White imperialist and undermining the rights of the indigenous people; hence, there was no equality before the law (Dooling 2007:16). Lastly, White imperialism used the strategy of divide and rule to ensure its political and economic hegemony (Konneh 2002:11). This was achieved by dividing

Africans according to their tribes, planting mistrust amongst the African tribes and appointing African tribal chiefs who will serve interests of the white imperialists.

The Influence of White Imperialist Forces on the Leadership of the DRCA FS

White imperialist forces had a devastating impact on societal structures and conceptions of humanity. They infiltrated African institutions such as the family, churches and the traditional leadership systems. White imperialist forces affected African leadership and, in particular, the DRCA FS leadership and its ministry. According to Thesnaar (2010:93), apartheid deeply affected both African and White communities as ‘victims’ and ‘offenders’. In this instance, ‘victims’ refers to mainly the African community, and ‘offenders’ to the perpetrators and bystanders who took part in the injustices of apartheid or who benefited from the system, the majority of them being Whites. Thesnaar (2010:94) maintains that the vast majority of South Africans affected by apartheid tend to remain in their comfort zone of ‘victim’ and ‘offender’. This is realised when most of the African communities depend on the state and turn it into a welfare state, whereas the White community keeps away from the African community and government out of shame or to avoid conflict (Woermann 2012:90). In the context of the DRC family of churches, the DRCA FS tends to play the role of victim of the White imperialist forces. This often happens when the DRCA FS experiences financial or ministerial challenges; it always begs the DRC for assistance.

Internalised oppression theory helps to illustrate how the ‘victim’/‘offender’ legacy of White imperialism is perpetuated in the DRCA FS. David and Derthick (2014:23) define internalised oppression as uncritical devaluation of one’s own group members and valuation of another. David and Derthick (2014:8) note that long exposure to oppression, violence or injustices tends to influence one to perpetuate that situation to which one has been exposed, although it may be in a different context and in varying degrees. For example, prior to coming to Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, most of the White settlers suffered violence and injustice from their European compatriots. Under British rule in South Africa, Afrikaners suffered acts of violence and injustices, especially during the Anglo-Boer War. Yet, these White settlers, including the Afrikaners, perpetuated what they had suffered by doing the same to Africans.

Some of the African leadership perpetuated injustices they had suffered by doing the same to other Africans.

Members of the DRCA FS have long been exposed to the DRC mission policy influenced by White imperialist ideology; moreover, as members of South African society, they were also subjected to its White imperialist forces. The present leadership of the DRCA FS reflects internalised oppression due to a long exposure to White imperialist forces. For example, in its early days, the DRCA FS was placed under the guardianship of the DRC, institutionalising an unequal relationship. For a long time the DRC provided financial and human resources to help sustain the DRCA FS. Now, in the post-apartheid South Africa, the DRCA FS is viewed as independent and capable to sustain itself. Therefore, the relationship between it and the DRC should now be of partners in ministry. Despite these new developments, the DRCA FS still acts like a victim of the previous White imperialist forces and shows low self-esteem and dependency upon the DRC. For example, in the DRCA FS, some ministers still believe that mission is from White to Black people and therefore that the DRC has the responsibility to fund DRCA FS mission projects (Pali & Verster 2013:227–253). Again, I often observe times when the DRCA FS has challenges to fund mission projects or deal with its internal conflicts, as it does not trust its own people to come with creative solutions, but is only too ready to run to the DRC to seek assistance.

Internalised oppression perpetuates unhealthy relationships (David & Derthick 2014:9). Leadership involves a quality relationship of influence with the other. Traditional African leadership values relationship with life, connection to nature, relationship with other human beings, and relationship with God (Mutabazi 2002:207). Unfortunately, with their strategy of divide and rule and of planting mistrust and suspicion among Africans, White imperialists contaminated the practice of maintaining quality relationships between the African leader and the follower. As discussed earlier, in the early years of the DRCA, Africans mistrusted the White missionaries because they suspected them of supporting White imperialist forces. During the apartheid era, other denominations viewed DRCA ministers with suspicion and mistrust because of their association with the DRC and their muted criticism of apartheid. In the DRCA FS, conflicts cause unhealthy relationships among those in leadership, thus reflecting envy, mistrust, and suspicion (DRCA General Synod 2019:28, 29; DRCA FS 2019:24, 29). In the present DRCA FS, in 2020, a faction of ministers decided to separate themselves from the DRCA

FS to form the DRCA Eastern Free State synod. In my research, I have observed that these factions do not talk to each other, rather they insult each other. Those ministers who belong to the opposing faction are often suspected of being informers.

Internalised oppression leads to domination and autocratic bureaucracy, which is discouraged in modern leadership studies. Domination and autocratic bureaucracy in leadership generate both resistance and passive followers, and can eventually lead to violence, including domestic violence and violent crime (David & Derthick 2014:21). In the context of the DRCA FS, Pali (2016:117) discovered that ministers who prefer a domineering kind of leadership tend to refuse to listen to the members of their congregations, and insist on controlling the administration and ministry of the church. They use church bureaucracy and tradition to resist change. According to Pali (2018:10), conflicts in the DRCA FS are shifting from mere personal disagreement to litigation and violence, due to a leadership that prefers domination and hides behind the bureaucracy of the church. Violence takes the form of physical threats and disruption of the DRCA FS assemblies and worship services as well as synodical and presbytery meetings (Pali 2018:5).

Long-term oppression leads to a distorted view of oneself and others (David & Derthick 2014:14). The manner in which a leader interacts with and views the followers impacts on the results of leadership. White imperialists viewed their victims as less human and lacking in creative thinking. Hence, they believed that their victims could not produce anything of value. It is not surprising that some of the Whites in South Africa still use derogatory words against Black Africans (Geldenhuys & Kelly-Louw 2020:2). As discussed earlier, in the early years of the DRCA OFS, some White missionaries were not ready to affirm African leadership in the newly established Black African church, due to doubts about their competence and readiness to lead the church towards a self-governing and propagating church. According to Pali (2016:48, 102), some ministers in the DRCA FS view their congregants as lazy, ignorant, rebellious, and lacking in vision. By contrast, some members in the congregations of the DRCA FS describe their ministers as arrogant, controlling, and unapproachable. Regrettably, such a negative view of others in the congregations of the DRCA FS has led to passive members and arrogant and unapproachable ministers.

Internalised oppression manifests itself in discrimination, hierarchy and control to sustain dominance (David & Derthick 2014:10). During the era

of White imperialist forces, the emphasis on master-servant relationship, the distinction between male and female, and the emphasis on superiority-inferiority were common and were used to highlight differences and increase inequality. One can say the DRCA FS discriminates against ministers from Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (URCSA), for the reason that it does not recognise ordination of its ministers because of the Belhar Confession. This is despite URCSA being a member of the DRC family of churches. In the DRCA FS Church Order (2003:8), even though the practice of leadership emphasises servanthood and collegiality, some ministers tend to emphasise hierarchy and control in order to assert their leadership. During my teenage years, one of the senior ministers told his congregation with pride and arrogance, “I found you poor and with nothing and I built all these buildings. If no one is ready to listen and obey my orders, the door is open for you to leave this congregation. I am the pastor here; I will not tolerate anyone to disobey my authority”. This kind of leadership is autocratic and not open to alternative views.

Internalised oppression leads to identity crises that contribute to individual and group moral failure and loss of identity (David & Derthick 2014:8). White imperialists contributed to the loss of identity of African leadership by undermining African languages and cultural practices. Leadership in the DRCA FS is Christian, Reformed and African. Unfortunately, the DRCA FS used its Reformed identity for exclusion and resistance to change, as noted in its reluctance to take part in the unity of the DRC family of churches, due to the adoption of the Belhar Confession. In terms of African identity, the vast majority of the DRCA FS ministers are Africans who, for a long time, resisted the introduction of African practices such as African musical instruments and liturgical dance in the church. Many of the members left the church, as they found the church and its ministry to be foreign and therefore irrelevant.

Internalised oppression not only affects external behaviour but also the inner person. For example, in his first article under *I Write what I Like* in the SASO Newsletter of August 1970, titled, ‘Black Souls in White Skins?’, Biko (1978:28, 29) argues that White imperialist forces left Africans with a tarnished personality and angry, with emotions of vengeance that are often vented against a fellow Black man and his property. Ramphela (2008:14) raised concerns about the quality of human capital inherited from apartheid. Parrat (2004:5) notes that, from colonialism, we inherited human beings suffering

from spiritual, psychological and physical poverty. This is an indication of the extreme effect of White imperialism on humanity, both as victim and offender. It proves that the inner being of an African is deeply hurt, traumatised and disoriented from the true values of *Ubuntu*, integrity and love for one another.

The scourge of conflicts has caused the DRCA FS to lose its integrity. It is experiencing an increase in sexual immorality, financial mismanagement, and internal violence (Pali 2018:5, 8, 10). Due to conflicts among themselves, some ministers are suffering from depression (DRCA FS 2007:8).

Internalised oppression promotes underdevelopment and lack of initiative. Leadership is tasked with human development, empowerment and enablement. White imperialists hindered human development by enacting laws to impose their own development on Africans, in order to shape their destiny as servile servants. To achieve this, White imperialist education inculcated the superiority of Whites, thus making Africans aspire to the fallible wisdom of the Europeans. It made African elites think in European terms and imitate European practices as far as planning the future of their own people was concerned (Van der Walt 2003:15). It led to Africans remaining in positions as cheap labourers, producing nothing creative. In the DRCA FS, holistic development and empowerment of the laity are also hindered by the shortage of ministers (Pali 2016:107). The majority of the ministers who do lay empowerment limit it to internal aspects of ministry with less emphasis on the external aspect of ministry. This kind of practice limits the church' impact to its own context.

Internalised oppression, in turn, instills fear and the lack of passion to engage social injustices. White imperialist forces disempowered Africans to engage effectively with their own context. This was done through use of fear and punitive measures to discourage initiatives to deal with social injustices. Fear refers to fear of God or fear of the violent nature of the White imperialist forces. By punitive measures I refer to the use of armed forces, imprisonment, or legislation to discourage Africans from protesting against injustices of the White imperialist government. For example, during the apartheid era, the mission of the DRCA FS in the industrial, mining, and farming areas was suspected of making Africans yield to tyrannical employers and ignore injustices in the workplace (Pali 2019:213). Furthermore, fear of losing a salary subsidised by the DRC and the violent nature of the White imperialist government discouraged some ministers of the DRCA FS from taking part in social activism against apartheid.

Conclusion

The practices of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid in South Africa have a common thread that binds them together. These White imperialist forces were implemented against the will of the victims. They exposed victims to perpetual violence, racism, inequality and exploitation, and influenced every aspect of social life to serve the interests of White imperialists. White imperialist forces were ruthlessly paternalistic, to such an extent that they left many Africans in a state of spiritual, psychological and physical poverty, whereby they cannot produce anything of value, but glorify the western models of doing science, ministry, and living (Parrat 2004:4). The situation of the DRCA FS indicates that it needs to be liberated from the legacy of the White imperialist forces, because it is still financially and theologically dependent on the DRC. Due to its long exposure to White imperialist forces, the DRCA FS suffers from internalised oppression. Signs of internalised oppression include physical acts of violence, disruption of DRCA FS assemblies, unhealthy relationships among those in leadership, poor social engagement with their context, dependency on the DRC, lack of initiative in ministry, and increasing immorality. The leadership of the DRCA FS needs to reflect on the legacy of White imperialist forces in its ministry and context. It needs to empower its membership to develop a strategy to deal with this legacy and in particular the internalised oppression that is perpetuated amongst its leadership and ministry in the congregations. If the situation is not addressed, the DRCA FS may experience a slow death or will gradually be absorbed into the DRC FS, as has consistently been proposed in the DRCA FS' assemblies since 1994. The DRCA FS is in dire need of a leadership that will facilitate healing and liberation from the legacy of White imperialist forces, so that the DRCA FS can begin a new narrative of its well-being in the ministry of the Kingdom of God.

Acknowledgement: This article is written with the support of a NRF - FRF sabbatical postdoctoral grant. Reference: NFSG170904261632, grant no.: 112203.

References

Belhar Confession 2016. Available at:

<http://urcsa.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Belhar-Confession.pdf>

(Accessed on 30 October 2020.)

- Biko, S. 1978. *I Write what I Like*. Heinemann: African Writers Series.
<https://doi.org/10.5070/F783017356>
- Corrie, S. 2013. *Dei enim minister est tibi* – God’s Servant for your Good. The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the Law. *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 54,4: 41 – 6.
<https://doi.org/10.5952/54-0-288>
- Crafford, D. 1982. *Aan God die Dank*. Pretoria: NG Kerk-Boekhandel.
- David, E.J.R. & A.O. Derthick 2014. What is Internalized Oppression, and so What? In David, E.J.R. (ed.): *Internalized Oppression: The Psychology of Marginalized Groups*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
<https://doi.org/10.1891/9780826199263.0001>
- Dooling, W. 2007. *Slavery, Emancipation and Colonial Rule in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- De Gruchy, J. & S. de Gruchy 2004. *The Church Struggle in South Africa*. 25th Anniversary Edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- DRCA General Synod 1975. *Agenda of the Synod*. Reitz: [s.n.].
- DRCA General Synod 1999. *Agenda of the Synod*. Barkley-Wes: [s.n.].
- DRCA General Synod 2003. *Agenda and Acts of the General Synod*. Kroonstad: [s.n.].
- DRCA General Synod 2019. *Agenda of the General Synod*. Klerksdorp: [s.n.].
- DRCA FS. 1995. *Agenda of the Synod*. Parys: [s.n.].
- DRCA FS 1999. *Agenda of the Synod*. Thaba Nchu: [s.n.].
- DRCA FS 2003. *Church Order*. Bloemfontein: [s.n.].
- DRCA FS. 2007. *Agenda of the Synod*. Tsheseng, Qwaqwa: [s.n.].
- DRCA FS. 2011. *Agenda of the Synod*. Kroonstad: [s.n.].
- DRCA FS 2015. *Agenda of the Synod*. Steynsrus: [s.n.].
- DRCA FS 2019. *Agenda of the Synod*. Klerksdorp: [s.n.].
- DRCA FS. 2020. *DRCA FS Secretary Letter to the Congregations*. Virginia: [s.n.].
- Elphick, R. 2012. *The Equality of Believers: Protestant Missionaries and the Racial Politics of South Africa*. London: University of Virginia Press.
- Geldenhuys, J. & M. Kelly-Louw 2020. Hate Speech and Racist Slurs in the South African Context: Where to Start? *PER/PELJ* 2020,23: 1 – 46.
Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/17273781/2020/v23i0a7043>
(Accessed on 23 June 2020.)
- Jansen, J.D. 2011. *Knowledge in the Blood: Confronting Race and the Apartheid Past*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Kane, J.H. 1978. *Understanding Christian Mission*. Revised Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Konneh, A. 2002. African Leadership and Colonialism. In Gordon, J.U. (ed.): *African Leadership in the Twentieth Century. An Enduring Experiment in Democracy*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Kritzinger, J.J. 2011. Die Einde van Sending: Fases in die Sending Bedryf. *Acta Theologica* 31,2: 111 – 134. <https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v31i2.6>
- Kritzinger, K. 2013. The Role of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in the Struggle for Justice in South Africa, 1986 - 1990. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 39,2: 197 – 221. Available at: http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992013000200012&lng=en&nrm=iso (Accessed on 01 October 2019.)
- Lebone, M. 2002. Die Totstandkoming van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika: Hoogtepunte en Laagtepunte van die Afgelope Vyftig Jaar. In Coertzen, P. (ed.): *350 Jaar: Gereformeerd 1652 - 2002*. Wellington: CLF.
- Loubser, J.A. 1987. *The Apartheid Bible: A Critical Review of Racial Theology in South Africa*. Pretoria: Maskew Miller Longman.
- Lovejoy, P.E. 1981. *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*. London: Sage Publications.
- Lynch, W. 1712. The Making of a Good Slave. Available at: https://www.saberesaffricanos.net/phocadownloadpap/libros/Lets_Make_A_Slave_The_Making_Of_A_Slave.pdf (Accessed on 21 September 2019.)
- Mohlamme, I. & B.E. Qakisa 1992. Elders in the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. In Vischer, L. (ed.): *The Ministry of Elders in the Reformed Church*. Geneva: Berne.
- Masuku, T.M. 2014. Prophetic Mission of Faith Communities in South Africa. *Missionalia* 42,3: 151 - 167. <https://doi.org/10.7832/42-3-66>
- Morton, F. 1994. Slavery and South Africa: Historiography. In Eldredge, E.A. & F. Morton (eds.): *Slavery in South Africa, Captive Labour in the Dutch Frontier*. Colorado: Westview Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429306105-1>
- Mutabazi, E. 2002. Preparing African Leaders. In Derr, C.B., S. Roussillon & J. Boumais (eds.): *Crosscultural Approaches to Leadership Development*. Westport, Cape Town: Quorum Books.

- Nimako, K. & G. Willemsen 2011. *The Dutch Atlantic Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*. London: Pluto Press.
- Odendaal, A.A. 1970. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sending in die Oranje-Vrystaat (1842 – 1910). Proefskrif ingelewer vir die Graad van Doktor in Teologie aan die Universiteit van Stellenbosch.
- Omond, R. 1986. *The Apartheid Handbook. A Guide to South Africa's Everyday Racial Policies*. New Edition. Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Pali, K.J. 2016. Leadership and Transformation in the African Church: A Practical Theological Study of one Denomination. Joint DPhil thesis, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein & Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.
- Pali, K.J. 2017. Theological Reflections on the Ministerial Challenges of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in the Orange Free State in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 73,2: 1 – 12. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i2.4666> (Accessed on 01 May 2019.)
- Pali, K.J. 2018. An Analysis of Conflict Situations within the Leadership and Various Structures of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Orange Free State. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 74,2: 1 – 11. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i2.4972> (Accessed on 01 May 2019.)
- Pali, K.J. 2019. The Role of Ministers in Community Development: The DRCA OFS as a Case Study. *Acta Theologica* 39,1: 200 – 221. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.v39i1.10> (Accessed on 02 May 2019.)
- Pali, K.J. & P. Verster 2013. The Church and Mission: Challenges and Perspectives from DRCA in the Free State. *Journal for Christian Scholarship* 49,3: 227 – 255.
- Parrat, J. 2004. *An Introduction to the Third World Theologies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511801587>
PMCID:PMC1574240
- Ramphela, M. 2008. *Laying Ghosts to Rest – Dilemmas of the Transformation in South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Schreiter, R.J. 1998. *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*. New York: Maryknoll.
- Smith, L.T. 1999. *Decolonising Methodologies. Research and Indigenous People*. New York: Zed Books Limited.

K.J. Pali.

- Thesnaar, C. 2010. Restorative Justice as a Key for Healing Communities in Post-Apartheid South Africa. In Swart, I., H. Rocher, S. Green & J. Erasmus (eds.): *Religion and Social Development in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Perspectives for Critical Engagement*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.
- Van der Walt, B.J. 2003. *Understanding and Rebuilding Africa. From Desperation Today Expectation for Tomorrow*. Potchefstroom: Institute of Contemporary Christianity in Africa.
- Van der Watt, G. 2010. Recent Developments and Challenges in Understanding the Dutch Reformed Family of Churches' Missional Identity and Calling. *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 51,3: 1 – 13. <https://doi.org/10.5952/51-3-90>
- Woermann, M. 2012. Renewal of the Second Annual Ethics South African Conference: An Investigation of the State of Ethics in South Africa. *African Journal of Business Ethics* 6,1: 88 – 92. <https://doi.org/10.4103/1817-7417.104706>

Dr. K.J. Pali
Practical and Missional Theology
Faculty of Theology and Religion
University of the Free State
palikj@ufs.ac.za