

A STUDY OF THE PERCEIVED CAUSES OF SCHISM IN SOME ETHIOPIAN-TYPE
CHURCHES IN THE CAPE AND TRANSVAAL, 1884-1925

by

JOAN ANNE MILLARD

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I declare that A study of the perceived causes of some Ethiopian-type churches in the Cape and Transvaal 1884-1925 is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Joan A Millard

Joan A Millard

SUMMARY

During the period 1884-1925 Ethiopian-type schisms from mission churches occurred for a number of reasons. Generalisations of these reasons have been made by numerous authors. By generalising the causes of schism the particular reasons why each independent church leader left the mission church are ignored. The thesis shows how each schism was due to unique circumstances in the mission church as well as to factors, for example, the personal feelings of the independent church leader. In each case there was a point of no return when the founder of the independent church no longer felt he could accept the status quo.

There were two government commissions that investigated the independent or "separatist" churches during these years - the South African Native Affairs Commission of 1903-1905 and the 1925 South African Native Affairs Commission which investigated the "Separatist Churches". The testimony of the white government officials and missionaries and the black church leaders has been compared with the findings in the reports.

Four case studies are investigated to show how general causes of schism may occur for a number of years until a reason, peculiar to the particular independent church, manifests itself and leads to the formation of an independent church. The case studies are the Ethiopian Church and related independent groups, the independent churches which joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1896 with the Ethiopian Church but later left to form their own churches, for example the Order of Ethiopia, schisms from the Presbyterian Church during the 1890's and the Independent Methodist Church.

KEY WORDS

Ethiopian movement, government commissions, African Methodist Episcopal Church, schism, testimony, African Independent Church, report, witnesses, synod.

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- *Queenstown Museum
- *School of Oriental and African Studies, London

- *State Archives - Pietermaritzburg
- *State Archives - Pretoria
- *State Library, Cape Town
- *South African Missionary Museum, King William's Town
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ABBREVIATIONS

AFM	-	Apostolic Faith Mission
AIC	-	African Independent (or Indigenous) Church
AMEC	-	African Methodist Episcopal Church (also AME)
ANC	-	African National Council
ANMC	-	African Native Mission Church
BMC	-	Bantu Methodist Church
CACinZ		Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion
C of E		Church of England
GZEC	-	Gazaland Zimbabwe Ethiopian Church
IMC	-	Independent Methodist Church
O of E		Order of Ethiopia
SANNC	-	South African Native National Council
ZAFM	-	Zion Apostolic Faith Mission
ZCC	-	Zion Congregational Church
ZCongC-		Zulu Congregational Church

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INTRODUCTION

Individual African Independent/Indigenous Churches (AIC's) are often considered only as part of a wider "independent movement", as if all the churches in the movement were established for the same reasons. Generalisation of the causes of schism often diminishes the understanding of the contexts of why particular groups of African Christians left the mission or main-line churches to establish their own churches. The AIC's are seen as parts of the larger movement instead of "mini-denominations", which, in fact, are what they are. The individuality of each independent church is therefore lost in the attempt to categorise the whole (movement).

The categorisation of independent churches as a movement started with the first break-aways from mission churches. The Ethiopian Church became the foundation for the "Ethiopian movement", which because of its connection with the American-based African Methodist Episcopal Church was considered "anti-white" and was viewed with fear and suspicion by government officials and white leaders of churches. At the beginning of the twentieth century all independent churches were viewed in this light and were seen as part of the Ethiopian movement. The testimonies presented to the commissioners of the 1903 to 1905 Native Affairs Commission amply illustrate this tendency.

Independent churches then became known as "separatist churches", a term considered derogatory by independent church members today. The 1925 government commission investigated the "separatist churches" and, in 1926, Lea wrote his book "The Native Separatist Churches". He investigated the founding of Ethiopian-type independent churches. Although he mentions a number of the churches by name, the reasons for schism are presented in a general list as if applying to all churches belonging to the "Ethiopian movement".

The study will concentrate on the so-called "Ethiopian-type"

churches which form the earliest break-aways from mission churches. African leaders used this name based on Psalm 68 verse 31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God" and Acts chapter 8 verse 27 (the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian or dark-skinned person from Africa). It confirmed their biblical and prophetic vocation. Investigation will show that each move towards independence had its own motivation and its own set of circumstances that led to the final parting from the mission church.

Ethiopian-type churches, as opposed to the Zionist-type churches, are those which broke away from the mission churches of the main-line denominations. The Ethiopian churches have to a large extent retained the organisational structure and doctrine of the churches from which they seceded. After a time the secessionist church often modified both structure and teaching to provide an African emphasis. The Ethiopian mythology expresses the African's desire for a Christian African nation under a strong African leader. The leaders of the Ethiopian churches gave a strong African leadership.

Reasons for schism generally accepted by writers on the Ethiopian churches, for example lack of responsibility for black leaders, resentment of white-enforced discipline, etc, may be present in a black mission church for a long time before the moment arrives when the potential independent church leader or the church community decides that it is no longer possible to accept the status quo. The exact moment when the decision for independence was made may be difficult to detect at the time of schism, or even later by historians. The immediate reasons for the break-away are often not among the generally accepted causes of potential schism, but are dependent on the individual context of the leader or group of people who establish the new independent church. As will be seen in the case-studies presented, there was a point in the life of each of the Ethiopian church leaders when they chose to become independent. Doctrinal differences were seldom among the reasons for schism. However, organisational and

church political differences were sometimes mistaken for doctrinal differences and where this occurred these differences may be construed as causes of schism.

The generally accepted reasons for schism are:

1. Desire to be independent of the mission authority and to be responsible for running their own church affairs.
2. Racial prejudice, with positions of authority being kept in the hands of the white missionaries.
3. Resentment of church discipline.
4. Lack of pastoral care and insensitivity on the part of the missionaries.
5. Desire for status.
6. Wish for a tribal church which retained African cultural practices.¹

There were also other more general factors that led to schism. These include reaction to colonialism with the resultant breakdown of tribal structures and authority and missionary involvement in the colonial government. Traditional black leaders who lost status in this way sometimes found leadership opportunities again within the hierarchy of an independent church with its black leadership and caring ministry.

With increasing urbanisation came the need to adapt to living away from the tribal and family support structures available in rural surroundings. Where there was lack of love and/or supportive personal interest on the part of the mission churches, people found a home in the newly formed independent churches. Frustrations with the mission church were compounded by the problems of urbanisation. Mokone, for example, broke away from the Methodist Church and founded an independent church because

¹ See Lea, A 1926 The native separatist churches and numerous other authors such as Sundkler, B 1948 Bantu prophets in South Africa London:Oxford University Press

of long-time frustrations with the mission church structure and the (Methodist) Church's apparent lack of care for Africans in an urban situation.

People who testified or wrote about the independent churches had different perceptions of the reasons for schism. The view of government agencies did not always concur with what was believed by either the white missionaries or the black independent leaders. The study investigates the views expressed to the government commissions by "white" witnesses and missionaries and "black" witnesses and church leaders. In particular, the testimonies of the Ethiopian church leaders presented in the case studies will be examined. The investigation will concentrate on the causes of schism and the case studies of Ethiopian-type churches which broke away from mission churches during the period 1892 to 1925.

Chapter 1 consists of a overview of the field of study into the causes of Ethiopian-type schism. The following chapter provides an in-depth study into the causes of schism as articulated to government commissions between 1903 and 1925. Chapter 3 begins with the history of the Ethiopian movement and examines the causes that led to the founding of Nehemiah Tile's Tembu National Church, Mokone's Ethiopian Church and the reasons for the link with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Further Ethiopian churches are investigated in chapter 4. These were formed after leaving the African Methodist Episcopal Church and show how little difference there was between the white-led mission churches and the century-old black-led AME Church, which for the purposes of this investigation is considered in the same light as the mission churches. The churches that left the AMEC included Dwane's Order of Ethiopia. Chapter 5 looks at the Presbyterian schism of Pambani Mzimba in the eastern Cape. The Independent Methodist Church, the history of which is examined in chapter 6, had its roots in the Methodist Church in Swaziland which was under the authority of the Chairman of the Transvaal and Swaziland District of the Methodist Church. The conclusion

(chapter 7) is a summary of the causes of schism reported to the government commissions and evaluated against those discovered in the examination of the case studies. In this critical assessment of the causes of schism the aim is to seek out, as far as it is possible, the immediate cause which led each of the Ethiopian leaders choosing that particular time to leave the mission church.

CHAPTER 1

ETHIOPIAN-TYPE INDEPENDENT CHURCHES - THE FIELD OF STUDY

Barrett in his book on Schism and renewal in Africa¹ lists thirty-four nations in Africa in which schism from mission churches has occurred. These include Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Dahomey, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and South Africa. For the purpose of this study only independent churches originating in South Africa will be considered.

Much has been written about the separatist church movements in South Africa. Gerdener wrote: "The interesting if pathetic phenomenon of separatism has set many pens and tongues in motion".² Most of what has been written has, however, been about the Zionist churches. This study concentrates on what has been written about the Ethiopian churches which formed the earliest schismatic groups.

The so-called "Ethiopian" movement was not the first of the separatist or schismatic³ church groups in South Africa. In 1872 about 150 members temporarily separated from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society at Mount Hermon in Lesotho. In 1884 the Rev Nehemiah Tile, a Methodist minister in the Transkei formed the Tembu National Church.⁴ Tile came into

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- ¹ Barrett, D 1989 Schism and renewal in Africa , 18f
- ² Gerdener, GBA 1958 Recent developments in the South African mission field Cape Town:NG Kerkuitgewers, 189
- ³ "Separatist" and "schismatic" were the words used to describe the early break-away groups at the time that they left the mission churches. Terms more acceptable to the independent churches themselves which are used today are "African Independent Churches", "African Self-Initiated Churches" or "African Indigenous Churches".
- ⁴ Falk, P 1979 The growth of the Church in Africa Grand Rapids, Michigan:Zondervan, 179 See also Pretorius, H 1988 "Nehemiah Tile - a 19th century pioneer of the development of Christian theology" in Christian faith

conflict with his district superintendent, the Rev Theophilus Chubb of Clarkebury Mission, because of his Tembu nationalist tendencies (he spoke out against the magistrates in Tembuland and donated an ox to the circumcision celebrations of Dalindyebo, the son of the Chief). The conflict led to Tile ending his membership of the Methodist Church and forming his own church. Tile made a lasting impression on what was to become the Ethiopian movement through his acquaintance with James Dwane and through members of the Tembu Church who travelled to the Transvaal to work on the mines and joined Mokone's Ethiopian church. Tile may thus be considered a fore-runner of the Ethiopian movement.⁵

One of the earliest, if not the earliest, writer to discuss the Ethiopian movement was the Rev DD Stormont. He was a teacher at Lovedale from 1891 to 1902 and at the same time editor of the Christian Express, a "Journal of missionary news and Christian work".⁶ Cochrane, writing nearly a century later, said that: "Perhaps the only place where the Ethiopian movement was reasonably responded to was in the pages of the Christian

and African culture ed L Kretzchmar, Umtata:University of the Transkei; Saayman, WA 1989 "Tiyo Soga and Nehemiah Tile : The black pioneers in mission and church" Missionalia 17 no 2 August, 95-102 and Saunders, CC 1970 "Tile and the Thembu church: politics and independency on the Cape eastern frontier in the late nineteenth century" Journal of African History 11 no 4, 553-570. C/f also Balia, D 1991 Black Methodists and White supremacy in South Africa Durban:Madiba Publications, 54-61 and Roux, E (1st ed 1948) 1964 Time longer than rope. A history of the black man's struggle for freedom in South Africa Madison:the University of Wisconsin Press, 78 and 79.

⁵ See chapter 3 for details of the formation of the Tembu National Church.

⁶ Shepherd, RHW 1942 Lovedale South Africa The story of a century 1841-1941 Lovedale, Alice:Lovedale Press, 520. Stormont became Principal of Blythswood (a Presbyterian mission near Butterworth, Transkei) from 1902 - 1931. He died on 29 November, 1931.

Express"⁷ In a 1896 editorial entitled "Native development" Stormont drew attention to the fact that many of the African people were "traders who had set up shops of their own".⁸ While this type of independence was seen as commendable, Stormont condemned the setting up of independent churches. He wrote that:

A still further feature of the development of the natives at the present time, is the fact of there having come into existence within the last few years an entirely separate and independent body known as the Ethiopian Church.⁹

This was said to be a "split from a well-known mission". Stormont saw that there was "a good element in it if the idea leads the Natives to entirely support their own preachers". However, he warned that the new church could become "a cave of Abdullam for all the discontented or dissatisfied and for those fleeing from the discipline from other churches".¹⁰ The phrase "Cave of Abdullam" caused offence to the members of the Ethiopian Church and the Rev Xaba wrote to Stormont to complain that: "When our church is called a cave of Abdullam it is insulted".¹¹

In April 1897 Stormont again wrote an editorial about the Ethiopian movement. This time he entitled his story "A new church and possible trouble". Stormont was acutely aware of the implications of Ethiopianism for traditional missionary work in South Africa. He perceived clearly the link between religion and

⁷ Cochrane, J 1987 Servants of power The role of the English-speaking Churches 1903-1930 Johannesburg:Ravan Press, 92

⁸ The Christian Express vol xxvi no 314 1 August, 1896

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ MS 10, 697 (Cory Library, Grahamstown)

politics in the minds of modern Christian Africans of the time.¹² He gave a brief history of the inception of the movement and warned that:

Its plan seems to be to lengthen its cords and strengthen its stakes by planting branch churches within the fields of labour long occupied by those Societies which have done the real missionary work of this country. ¹³

Stormont saw that the Ethiopian movement was creating a "new danger" and said that by asking the African Methodist Episcopal Church to incorporate their movement the Ethiopians were "importing another denomination into South Africa". ¹⁴

In an undated "Zeitschrift" entitled the "Ethiopian movement among the Native churches in South Africa" ¹⁵ Stormont gave an overview of the establishment of the independent churches until the time of writing. Stormont saw the Ethiopians as "national fanatics" who "preached hatred towards all white men".

Stormont had personally experienced schism in the church. While he was at Lovedale the Rev P J Mzimba ¹⁶ broke away from the

¹² Cuthbertson, G 1991 "Cave of Abdullam: missionary reaction to Ethiopianism at Lovedale, 1898-1902" in Missionalia Vol 19 No 1, 58.

¹³ The Christian Express A journal of missionary news and Christian work vol xxvii no 322 1 April 1897

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ MS 10, 697 (Cory Library, Grahamstown). This was possibly written in 1904 while Stormont was at Blythwood Institution as he mentions "the General Missionary Conference which is to meet in July". However, he expects the Conference to meet in King William's Town while the GMC met in Johannesburg. It was written after 1901 as he quotes the Constitution of the Order of Ethiopia which was published in 1901.

¹⁶ The Rev Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba was ordained minister of the Lovedale Native congregation, the first ordained black Free Church of Scotland minister

Free Church of Scotland at Lovedale to form the Presbyterian Church of Africa. Stormont said that he felt that "the native in Africa here must stand for himself in religious matters as in other countries" .¹⁷ Mzimba was a respected preacher in the tradition of Tiyo Soga (1829-1871), the first ordained black Presbyterian minister. However, Soga never left the Presbyterian Church and was proud to be a "Black" Christian. Throughout his missionary career Tiyo Soga fought for the preservation of Black dignity. ¹⁸ Soga often used the great hymn of Ntsikana (the first Xhosa convert) in services. Williams suggests that his frequent use of this hymn may have "conceivably contributed to the origins of separatist (nativist) churches".¹⁹

The experience that Stormont had with the Mzimba schism in which, "since he (Mzimba) was a Fingo most of the Fingoes of the Scottish congregation followed his example", ²⁰ coloured Stormont's view of the Independents. However, he tried to look

trained in South Africa. In 1898 Mzimba broke away from the Presbyterian Church. See chapter 5 for details of the formation of the Presbyterian Church of Africa.

¹⁷ Williams, D 1970 "African nationalism in South Africa: origins and problems" in Journal of African history vol xi no 3, 381

¹⁸ Williams, D 1978 Umfundisi A biography of Tiyo Soga 1829-1871 Alice:Lovedale Press, 122

¹⁹ Williams, D (ed) 1983 The journal and selected writings of the Reverend Tiyo Soga Cape Town:AA Balkema, 6. Hodgson, J 1984 "Ntsikana - a precursor of independency?" in Missionalia vol 12 no 1 April 1984, 21 "Ntsikana is revered by the Xhosa as a prophet sent by God ... This concept of prophecy is another synthesis of Xhosa and Christian traditions ... His response was not to reject his own culture nor to simply protect it, but to enrich and enlarge it".

²⁰ MS 10,697 (Cory Library, Grahamstown) See also Wells, J 1909 Stewart of Lovedale The life of James Stewart London:Hodder & Stoughton, 295, 296 who says that: "This secession brought peculiar sorrow to Stewart, for in the early days Mzimba had been to him as his own son in the faith".

at the movement objectively and said that although:

they were not in a position to create a ministry which could step into the place of the foreign missionaries, notwithstanding they preached the greatness of their own race, which was ready, they thought, to free itself from their guardians ... ²¹

Stormont, however, felt that it was "the duty of the old established missions to fight with the Ethiopian movement".²² He was unable to understand fully the causes that led to the formation of independent churches.

The Christian Express continued to carry articles about independent churches when they were considered newsworthy and in December 1909 an article on the Order of Ethiopia of the Church of the Province of South Africa appeared.²³ The article sketched the history of the Order and Dwane's association with it.

The establishment of the Ethiopian movement caused consternation in other missionary circles too. On 13 to 20 July 1904 the First General Missionary Conference was held in Johannesburg. The Report of the Proceedings revealed the feelings of the missionaries who took part in the Conference. The Rev Morris of the Methodist Church read a paper entitled "The Ethiopian movement" in which he said that "of all the evils which have befallen missionary work, I do not think that there is any so serious as this". He said also that "the taproot of this movement is opposition to whites". ²⁴

²¹ Stormont, nd Zeitschrift, 13

²² Ibid, 23

²³ The Christian Express 1 December, 1909, 195

²⁴ Report of the Proceedings of the First General Missionary Conference held at Johannesburg on 13-20 July 1904 Johannesburg:Argus printing & publishing Co. 1905, 40

Another speaker at the Conference, the Rev F Bridgman of Durban, acknowledged that fear of the unknown was one of the reasons why the missionaries condemned the Ethiopian Church.

Suspicious of an ulterior motive the colonist and his government have not been wanting in their denunciation of Ethiopianism. ... Of the inner working of independent churches I believe very little is known. ... ²⁵

Bridgman gave a overview of the formation of independent churches up to 1904. ²⁶ As a Congregationalist he lamented the fact that in the Zulu Christian Church the causes of schism were the "question of property and discipline, (and) the inability of our best native Christians to comprehend the aims and motives of the missionaries". ²⁷

Bridgman made various charges against the Ethiopians. He accused them of forming new churches among the people who lived in "the very fields long occupied by the missionaries" rather than going to the "unevangelised". Bridgman also accused the independent churches of having "low morals" and concluded that:

Ethiopianism with its divisive, anti-missionary spirit, and its prevailingly low moral and spiritual tone, can be

²⁵ Report 1904 , 163

²⁶ Report 1904, 162-177 Bridgman mentioned the Ethiopian Church of Mangena Mokone, Dwane's schism and his Order of Ethiopia, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a so-called " Baptist faction", Mzimba's break-away from the Free Church of Scotland, Joseph Booth's "African Christian Union" and the Zulu Congregational Church. He also mentioned the "Umlanga Mission" (from the Free Church of Scotland), splits from the Golden Memorial Mission and the Wesleyans in Natal, the "Cushites" in southern Natal and a group calling themselves "Ethiopians" in Durban. In one decade Ethiopianism had grown and by 1904 was established in many parts of South Africa in spite of the restraints of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

²⁷ Ibid, 170

viewed only with grave foreboding.²⁸

A final resolution was passed at the Conference that Ethiopianism was a misdirected use of the civilisation that came with the Gospel and that the independent churches "required not so much repression as careful guidance".²⁹

At the Second General Missionary Conference held on 5 to 11 July 1906 statistics were given of the number of independent churches in South Africa. There were 20 in the Cape colony, 23 in Natal, 3 in the Orange River Colony, 8 in the Transvaal, 4 in Basutoland, 2 in Bechuanaland, 6 in Rhodesia and 3 on the "East coast" - 69 in total.³⁰ The Rev F Suter read a paper on the "Ethiopian movement" in which he tried to formulate the reasons for schism among independent churches. He said that the origin of the churches:

seems to be traceable to a spirit of pride and jealousy which gave birth to the desire to free themselves from the oversight of the European missionary.³¹

He also felt mission methods could have encouraged "such a spirit" of independence.³² Suter suggested, too, that missionaries may have "suddenly laid hands on men who were either not called of God or were prematurely thrust by us into the ministry".³³ He said more effort should have been spent making the black mission churches self-supporting and independent.

²⁸ Report 1904, 172,173

²⁹ Ibid, 182

³⁰ Report of the proceedings of the Second General Missionary Conference for South Africa held at Johannesburg on 5 -11 July 1906 Basutoland:Morija Printing Office 1907, 107

³¹ Report 1906, 108

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

By the time of the 1921 General Missionary Conference held in Durban there were two black delegates serving on Conference committees. They were Mr JK Bokwe (Presbyterian) and Mr DDT Jabavu (Methodist).³⁴ Although problems like the injustice of the 1913 Land Act and hymns in the vernacular were considered more important issues for discussion, the Ethiopian movement was also addressed.

In his address AJ Lennard, the Retiring President, referred to the Ethiopian movement which had "grieved the older mission churches in South Africa during the past 25 or 30 years". He dismissed "the thought that the multiplicity of Christian denominations appeared to be a scandal in the eyes of the heathen" and said that "the secession of Native Christians" was on "all sorts of grounds".³⁵

The Bulhoek tragedy³⁶ took place in May 1921 and the Conference

³⁴ The Rev John Knox Bokwe was born in 1855 at Ntshlamanzi, Lovedale. He attended Lovedale Institution from 1866 to 1872. From 1875 he started to compose hymns and later joined the ministry of the Presbyterian church, while still continuing to compose hymns and songs. Mr Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu was a lecturer in Bantu Studies at the South African Native College, Fort Hare. He was born in 1885, the son of JT Jabavu, editor of "Imvo Zabantu". He was a member of the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Government Native Conference, Pretoria, the S A Federation of Native teachers, the Ciskei Native Convention of the Cape of Good Hope and the Cape Native Voters' Association. He gave evidence before numerous government commissions. Skota, TDM 1933 The African yearly register Being an illustrated national biographical dictionary (Who's who) of black folks in Africa Johannesburg:RBL Esson & Co, 7 and 159.

³⁵ Report of the proceedings of the fifth General Missionary Conference of South Africa held at Durban on 18 to 22 July 1921 Durban:The Commercial Printing Co. 1922, 33

³⁶ On 24 May 1921 a large contingent of military and police attacked a group of independent church members called Israelites who refused to move from Crown Land at the Oukraal Location, Bulhoek, near Queenstown. The leader of the Israelites was Enoch Mgijima who grew up

delegates saw this as the result of "fanaticism" in a separatist church. They deplored the fact that "many of the separatist movements have become very different from what they were in their earlier stages" and the change was "for the worse".³⁷ "The beginning of the separatist movement may have been in a new race consciousness and a desire to be independent" but if these "disruptions" were to increase they would bring "greater evils than in the past".³⁸

It is interesting to note that in 1911 Professor J du Plessis wrote A history of missions in South Africa in which the rise of the separatist or independent church movement was not addressed except in a note (y) in Appendix 11. He wrote:

Had the so-called "Ethiopian movement" in South Africa put forth any fresh and independent effort to reach the unevangelised tribes in the sub-continent, it would have deserved a chapter of this "History" to itself. ... The chief claim of the Ethiopian movement to notice in these pages is the unenviable one of having effected serious schisms in almost every church and society at work in the

in the Methodist Church and after experiencing visions joined an independent group, the Church of God and Saints of Christ. This group, which had originated in America, was also disturbed by his visions and excommunicated him. He then formed his own church, the Israelites. It was this group that was encamped at Bulhoek. Report of the Native Churches Commission 1925 (UG 39-25) Cape Town: Cape Times, 7f. A number of the Israelites were killed and injured as they were poorly armed and believed that the white men's bullets would turn to water. The Report noted that: "The result was inevitable. The unfortunate deluded men were shot down". Ibid, 14. See also Lea, Separatist churches, 15, 16.

³⁷ Ibid, 33

³⁸ Report 1921, 34

mission fields of South Africa. ³⁹

Du Plessis mentions "sporadic attempts" on the part of the "North Transvaal Basuto" in which "a spirit of isolation and independence manifested itself" which caused "no little trouble and anxiety to the brethren of the Berlin Society". He then mentions "Nehemiah's (Tile) Church of the Tembus" which was a secession "of no great importance". ⁴⁰

This unsympathetic tone is used in his descriptions of the Ethiopian Church, the Order of Ethiopia and the African Methodist Episcopal Church which Dwane had "called in to absorb and organise the Ethiopian movement". ⁴¹ After enumerating the churches ("without detailing the history of each") Du Plessis concluded his note on the Ethiopian movement with a paragraph on the South African Native Affairs Commission of 1903-1905 in which he observed:

That the Commission is not disposed to condemn the aspiration of religious independence, unassociated with political propaganda (and) That the Commission cannot but regard with concern the fact that many who have been prominently connected with the movement ... are men lacking in the breadth of view and wisdom to lead others in a church movement. ⁴²

His uncertainties regarding the Ethiopian movement mirror the attitudes held by missionaries at the time.

A Methodist writer who gave scant attention to the independent

³⁹ Du Plessis, J 1965 A history of Christian missions in South Africa Cape Town:Struik, 453. Appendix 11, Note y.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 454

⁴¹ Ibid, 456

⁴² Du Plessis Christian missions, 459

or separatist church movement was Dr LA Hewson. In his book on Methodist church history in South Africa written in 1952 he included a chapter on "African dis-unity and Christian co-operation".⁴³ While citing the books of Lea and Sundkler he also gave his own opinion of what separatism meant to the Methodist Church. He noted:

Certain important facts must now be stressed with regard to Methodism and the separatist movement. Secessions from Methodism are not to be explained simply as revolts against white oppression. ... Under Mokone the movement did become anti-white, and it is therefore of greater significance that under Dwane the same group was eventually reconciled to another branch of the Christian Church. (A later) ... secession from the Methodist Church, the "Donkey Church",⁴⁴ (which took place in 1932) has not been reconciled to the parent Church, but its subsequent history of further secession and litigation proved that revolt from discipline rather than from white Methodist "domination" was the underlying cause. Methodism has had a prominent association with the movement not because its genius was essentially disruptive, but because the Methodist mission work in South Africa was of such dimensions and stretches to so very many tribes that factors operating in all missions and among all tribes have produced proportionately more numerous secessions.

⁴³ Hewson, LA 1952 An introduction to South African Methodists Cape Town:Standard Press, 91f

⁴⁴ This secession from the Methodist Church falls outside the ambit of this thesis. The split occurred at the time of the Great Depression which started in 1929. The Methodist Church wanted to increase the church dues (class money) from two shillings to two shillings and sixpence. Some of the leaders of the Albert Street congregation in Johannesburg felt that their poverty stricken members could not afford the increase. Insensitivity in handling the situation and intransigence on the part of the white church leaders in Johannesburg led to the split.

This apologetic approach reflected the view of the Methodist Church during the 1950's. However, although separatism was a "matter for profound concern" it was nevertheless a challenge because it showed the "necessity for a vigorous revival of Methodist churchmanship". To quote a Methodist minister, the Rev ZR Mahabane: "The division of the native church into well over 130 different sects has made her hopelessly incapable of saving the Bantu race".⁴⁵

Books exclusively about the separatist churches - pre-1961

In 1926, shortly after the publication of the "Native Churches Commission" of 1925, the Rev Allen Lea⁴⁶ of the Methodist Church published The native separatist church movement in South Africa.⁴⁷ In this book the author described "the rationale of the movement" and said that "religion is often mixed up with both the claims (by the Ethiopian leaders of the faults in the mission church) and the methods (of obtaining independence), and religion is thus brought into disrepute".⁴⁸ Lea says that the principles underlying the movement are embodied in the statement of the Witwatersrand General Church Council of 1906: "Ethiopianism stands for disloyalty to the State". He also quoted Dr J Stewart who said that: "it (the Ethiopian movement) is anti-white".⁴⁹ The "generalised term 'Ethiopianism' was often applied to the phenomenon of all the independent churches" although Sundkler later used it to contrast schisms from the mission churches with the Zionist churches.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Hewson Introduction, 95

⁴⁶ At the time the Rev Allen Lea was the General Missionary Secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist church of South Africa.

⁴⁷ Lea, A 1926 The native separatist church movement in South Africa Cape Town/Johannesburg:Juta & Co

⁴⁸ Ibid, 15

⁴⁹ Ibid, 20

⁵⁰ Cochrane, Servants, 88 Sundkler's views will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

Lea was the first author to acknowledge that "there are separatist churches that are not Ethiopian". Many of the separatist "sects" were seen as "more Ethiopian than the AME Church which was the first Ethiopian body". Ethiopianism "in its extreme form stands for Africa for the Africans".⁵¹

After describing the rise of a number of the independent churches⁵² Lea gave the "Reasons for separation". These were:

1. Desire for independence in church matters.
2. "Colour bar" among white missionaries.
3. Discipline of members.
4. Example of Europeans.
5. Personal ambition.
6. Desire for a tribal church, conforming to native (African) custom.
7. Desire to administer church property and money.⁵³

Lea continued that some secessions had worthy causes (here he cited the case of Joel Msimang and said that the secessions did not reflect on his moral character). Others were caused through irritation, especially where a senior black minister had to serve under a young white minister who although junior was given authority over the work. Further, "some, without doubt have their occasion in racialism".⁵⁴ Lea pointed out that not everyone who had reason to secede did so and that:

in all the missionary churches are many fine native ministers, good and in many ways able men ... who are

⁵¹ Lea Separatist churches, 18, 19

⁵² Ibid, 23-47. His facts are not always accurate. For example, he gives the date 1900 instead of 1906 for the founding of the Independent Methodist Church by Joel Msimang. (43)

⁵³ Lea, Separatist churches, 48

⁵⁴ Ibid, 55 and 56

proving that native men can be loyal to God and the church. These do not secede because they - like many of us - have not all that they think is their right; but who seek by constitutional means to secure redress of grievances and further opportunities for self-expression. ⁵⁵

While Lea's sentiments were couched in paternalistic terms, they expressed the truth that although many of the indigenous clergy had to put up with frustrations more black ministers remained within the mission church structure than left to form their own groups. Lea considered that the separatist movement did two things: "It wounded the very people who have done most to help them - the missionaries" and it "intensified racial bitterness".
56

Lea also drew attention to the fact that the secessionist churches often split again to form other groups and said: "internal discord may yet be the ruin of Ethiopianism". ⁵⁷ All in all Lea felt that:

The attitude towards the separatist churches should be touched with Christian grace. In the main they should be recognised as Christian. ... If they wish to return the door should always be open. ⁵⁸

In 1926 The International Review of Missions published a "special double Africa number". ⁵⁹ Writing about the independent churches Loram reported that "when independent Native churches have sprung up the Government has placed no obstacles in their way in spite

⁵⁵ Ibid, 57.

⁵⁶ Lea Separatist churches, 21

⁵⁷ Ibid, 48

⁵⁸ Ibid, 67

⁵⁹ The International Review of Missions (eds) JH Oldham and GA Gollock. Special double Africa number - Loram CT "The separatist church movement", 476-482

of allegations that these separatist churches ... are anti-white".⁶⁰ Loram enumerates, in general terms, the reasons for schism as he perceived them:

1. the colour bar - this included the feeling that the missionary was more interested in the white church than in mission work.
2. Desire for independence in church matters - "Natives point out that they are restricted by Europeans in all directions except church matters. There they are free to walk by themselves".⁶¹ They were not, however, given real responsibility and the top management of the main-line churches was always kept in the hands of the white ministers. Men like Mokone soon realised that the apparent independence in church matters was actually a sham.
3. Church discipline - if a minister fell foul of the mission church authorities he often set up a church of his own. Another reason for setting up a church was the privileges afforded ministers of religion, such as exemption from the Pass Laws and cheap passenger rates on the railway.
4. Need for "a tribal church and one more in conformity with Native customs" because "earlier missionaries demanded on the part of their converts a complete break from much of Native custom which cannot be regarded as in any way anti-Christian".⁶²

He concludes his article with the observation that "there is rarely any question of a difference of doctrine" and "it seems clear ... that the separatist movement will grow".⁶³

⁶⁰ Ibid, 476

⁶¹ Loram, Separatist churches, 479

⁶² Loram, Separatist churches, 480

⁶³ Ibid, 480 and 481

In 1948 Bengt Sundkler published his book Bantu prophets in South Africa.⁶⁴ This was the first in-depth study of the independent church movement. He starts with a survey of the religious and social background to the separatist movement before investigating the rise of independent churches. In 1961 Sundkler revised the book after spending time in South Africa. He felt that although as a white observer he remained an "outsider", he wanted to investigate how far the Protestant missionary strategy of forming an "independent", self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating" church had led to the formation of African independent churches. Sundkler wanted to "see what the African Christian when left to himself, regarded as important and relevant in the Christian faith".⁶⁵

Sundkler rejects the name "native separatist" because Africans disliked the word "native" and the name "separatist" or "secessionist" was used only for black churches. Sundkler instead uses the term "Bantu Independent Churches".⁶⁶

The Ethiopian Church, the Order of Ethiopia and the Independent Methodist Church are mentioned in his book, although very little detail is provided.⁶⁷ Sundkler's book also deals with the relationship of the independent churches to the mission churches from which they evolved and the similar doctrine and organisation which was retained when they left. He draws attention to the fact that white church leaders did not usually understand the reasons for the split.

Sundkler was the first person to categorise the independent

⁶⁴ Sundkler, BGM 1961 (1st edition 1948) Bantu prophets in South Africa London:Oxford University Press

⁶⁵ Sundkler, Bantu prophets, 17

⁶⁶ Ibid, 18

⁶⁷ Ibid, 39 for Ethiopian Church, 47 for the Bantu Methodist Church and 139 for the Independent Methodist Church.

churches. He identifies the following types of churches:

1. Ethiopian - which have seceded from mission churches on racial grounds and which follow closely the rituals and church polity of the group from which they had seceded. In this group Sundkler also includes churches that have seceded from Black mission churches.
2. Zionist - churches which have evolved spontaneously under a "prophet". They usually have the words "Zion" or "Apostolic" or "Pentecostal" or sometimes "Faith" in their names and consider their roots to be in Zion City, Illinois in the United States of America. The "Apostle" to which they refer is John A Dowie of Zion City. Sundkler says that some of the Zionist churches were nativistic and could become the bridge over which Africans were brought back to their "old heathenism from whence they once came".⁶⁸
3. Sundkler also refers to the Messianic type of Zionist movement which has as its leader a charismatic prophet. The AmaNazarethe of Isaiah Shembe in Natal is an example of this type of church.⁶⁹

Sundkler considers that the "church organisation and Bible interpretation of the Ethiopians were largely copied from the Protestant churches from which they seceded".⁷⁰ He stresses the socio-political causes of the formation of independent churches. Sundkler says that "Ethiopianism or separatism is the African Christian's reaction to racial discrimination in Church and State, a hundred years after it was formulated in the Grondwet of the Transvaal".⁷¹ The Native Land Act of 1913 was another

⁶⁸ Sundkler, Bantu prophets, 54 and 55

⁶⁹ Ibid, 100f See also Sundkler, B 1961 "Concept of Christianity in the African Independent Churches" in African Studies vol 20, 203 and 204 and Sundkler, B 1976 Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists London:Oxford University Press, 308.

⁷⁰ Sundkler, 1961 Concept of Christianity, 203

⁷¹ Sundkler, 1961 Concepts of Christianity, 204 and 205.

crisis that led to the formation of independent churches. Sundkler quotes the example of Enoch Mgijima and the Israelites of Bulhoek as an independent church group in need of land on which to build a tabernacle.⁷²

Sundkler deals mainly, however, not with the history of the independent churches, but with their rituals and the doctrines they teach. He looks at their manner of worship, their special belief in healing and their baptismal and eucharistic rites. He also investigates the relationship of the independent churches to the government and the communities in which they live. In his 1961 edition of his book Bantu prophets Sundkler brought the reader up to date with the political changes that had taken place in South Africa since 1948 and their effect on the independent churches.⁷³ In 1976 Sundkler published another book on the independent churches which covered the areas not treated in his earlier work - Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists.⁷⁴ This book dealt mainly with Zionist churches in Natal.

Sundkler's books have been used by many writers on the independent churches and are still the most widely used reference books on the subject.⁷⁵

Roux's Time longer than rope, published in 1948, included a chapter on the Ethiopian movement. The book deals with the "struggle of the black man for freedom in South Africa" in the political sphere, although Roux includes a study on the struggle

⁷² Ibid, 205

⁷³ In 1948 the Nationalist Party won the election and the policy of Apartheid was introduced and legitimised.

⁷⁴ Sundkler, B 1976 Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists London:Oxford University Press. This book mentions the Bantu Methodist Church on p 216 and the Independent Methodist Church on p 239.

⁷⁵ Among the people who quote from Sundkler's work are Kamphausen, Pretorius, Moeti and Ekpo.

for religious independence. ⁷⁶ Roux notes that the inclination towards forming independent churches "began in the eastern Cape, that part of Africa where the Bantu had been longest in contact with western civilisation". This made them "thoroughly acquainted with theological dogmas and creeds" and they felt that they were "just as capable of having their own views on these matters as the Europeans ". ⁷⁷ Added to this was "a growing feeling of national consciousness and revolt against the whites". ⁷⁸ Industrialisation and the meeting for the first time of people from different tribes also played a role in the formation of independent church groups.

Roux ends his comment by saying: "(W)ere all these little churches united in a single body, no government could afford to ignore them". ⁷⁹ Roux's work is important not only for the light it sheds on Ethiopianism, but also because a number of authors used his work for reference. ⁸⁰ He does, however, use generalisations in describing the reasons for schism. The differences peculiar to each independent church or denomination may well be the reason for the lack of success in uniting all the "little churches" into "a single body".

In 1958 K Scholsser, wrote a book on the independent church movement entitled Eingeborenenkirchen in Sud- und

⁷⁶ Roux, E 1964 (1st ed 1948) Time longer than rope A history of the black man's struggle for freedom in South Africa Madison:University of Wisconsin Press, 77f

⁷⁷ Roux, Time longer than rope, 78

⁷⁸ Ibid, 78

⁷⁹ Roux, Time longer than rope, 86

⁸⁰ See Verryyn, T 1972 A history of the Order of Ethiopia Cleveland, Transvaal:Central Mission Press, 64 and Balia, Black Methodists, 82.

Sudwestafrika.⁸¹ Schlosser wrote mainly about the Zionist churches and included chapters on Isaiah Shembe of the Amanazarethe, Nicholas Bhengu of the Assemblies of God and Enoch Mgijima of the Israelites. She emphasises the importance of ethnicity and socio-political factors in the formation of independent churches.

The 1960's brought a number of writers on the independent churches. One of the most important works was GC Oosthuizen's paper on "Causes of religious independentism in Africa".⁸² Oosthuizen sketches the rise of the independent movements and the social ethos out of which they arose. He says that "the leader himself is often compensating for loss of indigenous leadership in a paternalistic society".⁸³ Oosthuizen looked at the role of traditional religion and worship and at rituals like running in a circle, hand-clapping and dancing and showed how these are incorporated into independent church worship.

Oosthuizen lists the factors that he considers to be the causes of separatism:

1. Political factors such as colonialism and imperialism. "During the last century Ethiopianism was seen

⁸¹ Schlosser, K 1958 Eingeborenenkirchen in Sud-und Sudwestafrika Ergebnisse einer volkerkundlichen Studienreise 1953 Kiel:Kommissionverlag WC Muhlau Schlosser's earlier book written in 1948 was called Propheten in Afrika and dealt with independent movements throughout Africa. (Schlosser, K 1948 Propheten in Afrika Braunschweig:Albert Limbach Verlag.

⁸² Oosthuizen, GC 1968 Causes of religious independentism in Africa Reprint from Fort Hare Papers June 1968 Fort Hare University Press Professor Oosthuizen was, until he retired recently, the Director of NERMIC (New Religious Movements and Independent Churches), a research institute attached to the University of Zululand which studies the independent church movement.

⁸³ Ibid, 8

as a nationalistic-inspired movement against

missions".⁸⁴ Race relations also played a negative role.

2. Economic factors - these movements promised "heavenly bliss" and the "underdogs" believed the promises.

3. Sociological factors such as cultural disturbance, concern for social justice and social unadaptability in the Western-orientated society in the mission churches.

4. Historical factors like missionary paternalism, white society's failure to live up to its Christian ideals, occupation of the best land by settlers and missions and the struggle for political independence.

5. Denominational factors like the multiplication of mission denominations and the competition for converts between them. The Zionist Churches chose attractive names that induced people to join them.

6. Religious factors - Independentism gave religious autonomy. Traditional African religion is holistic and the independent movement introduced a religion that combined all aspects of African life. Women and children from polygamous marriages who the missionaries refused to baptise found a home in the independent churches.

7. Ethnic factors - When Mzimba seceded from the Free Church of Scotland at Lovedale (1898) he took all the Fingo members of the congregation with him. Conflict was not the only reason for secession. Smaller groups were established for better control. A person's need to express worship in a way relevant to African culture also led to schism. This included an African perception of the super-natural with visions and dreams as well as the rituals of dancing and clapping. Oosthuizen also includes the lack of the use of indigenous languages as a cause of independentism, as many missionaries needed interpreters and saw no reason to speak the languages of the African people.

8. Ecclesiastical factors - Oosthuizen includes here the lack of pastoral care by missionaries, big congregations

⁸⁴ Ibid, 9

which had no sense of belonging and lack of training for pastors. Church discipline led to a number of secessions. There was also a reluctance to transfer authority to the indigenous ministers. Money played a role both when there was abuse of finances and when black ministers who collected money when travelling abroad were not given any say in how the money was to be spent. Those who formed independent churches often drew up constitutions which were far more legalistic than those of the mission churches. Independent church constitutions often accepted polygamy and ancestor worship.

9. Non-religious factors - The symbolic and colourful uniforms attracted people. "Holy sticks" and wooden croziers which guaranteed health and ritual purity as well as the festivals and rituals influenced many, especially the illiterate, to join independent groups. Among more literate people the emphasis on the "Spirit" rather than ancestor spirits had appeal.

Among these factors Oosthuizen includes the ambition of the men who became leaders of independent churches.

10. Communication as a factor - Here Oosthuizen emphasises lack of understanding of Biblical doctrine where "the Gospel message does not penetrate the substratum of the heart and mind of the African".⁸⁵

11. New understanding of the Bible as a cause - Oosthuizen shows that when the Bible was translated into the vernacular it was often the first book in that language. This led to people wanting their own independent church as they were then also able to detect discrepancies between the missionaries teaching and their actions. Often what was read in the Bible did not appear to have any bearing on the dull formalism apparent in the mission church. In the Bible women had status and in the independent churches women play a role and have a status not accorded to them in the traditional mission churches. However, in some of the

⁸⁵

Oosthuizen, Causes, 14

independent churches the Bible was present at the service but never opened.

12. Theological causes - Oosthuizen says that the African understanding of the Highest Being was of One who had to be approached through mediators. One such mediator would be the messianic prophet leader who usurped the place of Jesus Christ in the church, together with an understanding of the Holy Spirit who was somehow linked with the ancestral spirits and able to communicate in dreams. This African theological perception was a factor leading to schism. Oosthuizen notes discrepancies in the understanding of the concept of sin and the sacraments between those of the independent and the mission churches. Holy places and times become important while the importance of eschatology gives way to the need for a realised eschatology - a better life in the here and now.

While this is Oosthuizen's main work on the causes of separatism, he has also worked on other aspects of the independent church movement. Most of his work on the independent churches has been about the Zionists rather than the Ethiopian movement.⁸⁶

Oosthuizen's work on Ethiopianism showed that he viewed the movement not as political or nationalistic but as purely religious. He writes:

Although the deepest motive of many independent movements has been religious, one of their essential points is the transferring to the spiritual and ecclesiastical plane the opposition to white authority, which could be made effective only by reconstructing the African communities

⁸⁶

See for example Oosthuizen, GC 1987 The birth of Christian Zionism in South Africa KwaDlangezwa:University of Zululand and Oosthuizen, GC 1967 The theology of a South African messiah; an analysis of the hymnal of the "Church of the Nazarites" Leiden:Brill

under African leadership.⁸⁷

Oosthuizen points out that in the early stages Ethiopianism was "mainly a movement of ministers who were in the closest contact with the needs of their own people" who wanted to "produce a truly African type of Christianity suited to the genius and needs of the race and not only a black copy of any European church".⁸⁸ He argues that the proliferation of separatist churches may be explained partly by the race issue and by the failure of the church, but most important is the reaction of indigenous cultures in the face of the onslaught of Western civilisation, technology and industrialisation. Thus Zionist (and Ethiopian) churches are psychological safety valves in the urbanisation process.⁸⁹ Other movements that influenced the growth of Ethiopianism in South Africa were the African National Congress (after 1912) and the American Independent Movement.⁹⁰

Writers from wider Africa

Among writers from other parts of Africa whose work is relevant to the separatist or independent movement in South Africa are D Barrett and J Mbiti. In 1968 Barrett published his book Schism and renewal in Africa: an analysis of six thousand contemporary religious movements⁹¹ Barrett defines independency as:

formation and existence within a tribe or tribal unit,

⁸⁷ Oosthuizen, GC 1968 Post Christianity in Africa A theological and anthropological study London:C Hurst & Co, 7

⁸⁸ Ibid, 33

⁸⁹ Kruss, G 1986 "A critical review of the study of independent churches in South Africa" in Oosthuizen, G Religion alive Studies in the new movements and indigenous churches in Southern Africa Johannesburg:Hodder & Stoughton, 21

⁹⁰ Oosthuizen, Post Christianity, 34

⁹¹ Barrett, D 1968 Schism and renewal in Africa: an analysis of six thousand religious movements Nairobi:Oxford University Press

temporarily or permanently, of any organised religious movement with a distinct name and membership, even as small as a single organised congregation, which claims the title Christian in that it acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord, and which has either separated by secession from a mission church or an existing African independent church, or has been formed outside the mission churches as a new kind of religious entity under African initiative and leadership.

⁹²

Barrett emphasises the importance of African culture in African Independent Churches and also of "the vernacular language itself in which was enshrined the tribe's soul".⁹³ He saw independency as a reaction to mission saying that "independency is a societal reaction to mission arising out of a tribal 'Zeitgeist' or climate of opinion in which Christian missions were believed to be illegitimately mounting an attack against African traditional society ...".⁹⁴

Mbiti did not write specifically about the independent churches but, while addressing the subject of African religion, he stresses the importance of "acculturation" in the search for religious identity. He believes that the African Independent Churches "bend Christianity ... to fit into the cultural setting of African peoples".⁹⁵

In 1958 Shepperson and Price wrote a book on Independent Africans in Malawi.⁹⁶ They point out that the first militant wave of

⁹² Ibid, 50

⁹³ Ibid, 267

⁹⁴ Barrett, Schism and renewal, 116

⁹⁵ Mbiti, JS 1967 African religions and philosophy London:Heinemann, 264 and 265.

⁹⁶ Shepperson, G & Price, T 1958 Independent African John Chilembwe and the origins, setting and significance of the Nyasaland uprising of 1915 Edinburgh:The

Ethiopianism in Malawi, the Kamwana movement, was the direct result of contact with Ethiopianism in the labour centres of South Africa. ⁹⁷ Shepperson quotes a Nyasaland missionary who said that:

Ethiopianism is caused by forces that are operating all over the world. ... (It is) caused by the desire of nations to have separate existence untrammelled by foreign supervision ... The first step is the formation of a church that is peculiarly their own. ⁹⁸

Daneel is a writer on the independent churches in Zimbabwe. In his book on the independent churches among the Shona people of Zimbabwe ⁹⁹ the writer of the Foreword notes that Zionists in Zimbabwe have made a cleaner break with Shona traditions than the Ethiopians, unlike the South African situation where the reverse is true. The terminology "schism" is seen as inappropriate in Zimbabwe as, in contrast to South Africa, many of the members of these churches have never belonged to a church before. ¹⁰⁰ Migrant labourers from Zimbabwe worked on the mines in the Transvaal where they encountered the Ethiopian movement. Some joined Mokone's Ethiopian Church while others formed their own independent churches usually with the word "Gaza" in the name.

In both his book on the Shona church and his later book Quest for

University Press, 158

⁹⁷ Ibid, 158

⁹⁸ Shepperson, Independent African, 185. The missionary quoted was the Rev A M Caverhill.

⁹⁹ Daneel, ML 1974 Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches volume 2 - Church growth - causative factors and recruitment techniques. The Hague:Mouton.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, vii The writer of the Foreword is H Turner.

belonging ¹⁰¹ Daneel discusses the factors leading to the formation of independent churches. He emphasises the socio-political situation out of which they arose - the colour bar in the church, land-hunger due to repressive legislation and colonial paternalism. He notes that "the churches are characterized primarily as movements of political protest against the background of colonial paternalism and the rise of African nationalism". ¹⁰²

Ethnic factors play an important role in determining the process of independent church formation. Loneliness occurs when people have to leave the shelter of the mission station and find work in urban areas away from tribal and family structures. Daneel quotes Sundkler who said that there was "a morphological correspondence between the 'pattern' of a tribal culture and the type, or types, of Christianised prophetic movement which it tends to produce". ¹⁰³

These movements are basically religious even when they are anti-white or have come about in opposition to white authority or due to lack of sensitivity on the part of missionaries.

Daneel enumerates nine "crucial factors". ¹⁰⁴ They are:

1. Poor communication - included here was lack of understanding of African culture and religious experience.
2. A superficial, impoverished gospel preached by the missionaries who were unable to proclaim the salvation of the whole person rather than just the soul.

¹⁰¹ Daneel, Inus (ML) 1987 Quest for belonging Gweru: Mambo Press, 58f. See also Daneel, Old and new, 7f.

¹⁰² Daneel, Old and new, 8 Note the generalisation - the AIC's are treated as a group rather than as individual churches.

¹⁰³ Sundkler, Bantu prophets, 300 in Daneel, Old and new, 8

¹⁰⁴ Daneel, 1987 Quest, 75f

3. Rapid social change, industrialisation, urbanisation and secularism had a radical effect on the illiterate and semi-illiterate. Urbanisation led to housing in small impersonal units. The longing for "a place to feel at home" led to the formation of independent, especially Zionist, groups.¹⁰⁵

4. The relationship between blacks and whites where the whites maintained their position of authority gained in the colonial process.

5. Disillusionment with western life or the fact that the promised social upliftment did not take place. The independent church leaders wanted a realised eschatology, a better life in the present rather than the promise of blessings in the life hereafter.

6. Western denominationalism showed lack of unity among the many Protestant denominations in South Africa and led to the perception that "schism was nothing extraordinary".

¹⁰⁶

7. The translation of the Bible into the vernacular showed that what was preached was not always what appeared in the Bible. The realisation that the Bible spoke of "social justice" as well as salvation led to a growing self-awareness of African nationhood and human dignity.

8. The traditional structures of a people encouraged the formation of independent (or tribal) churches.

9. Daneel quotes Turner's "precipitating factors", a particular situation or climate which led to the formation of an independent group. Turner mentioned dreams as a factor in the founding of the Maria Legio church in Kenya and the gift of healing which led to the formation of the Kimbanguist Church in Zaire.¹⁰⁷ Some of the churches Turner described had a "crisis" or turning-point which led to the formation of the independent church and seemed to

¹⁰⁵ Daneel, 1987 Quest, 80

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 84

¹⁰⁷ Daneel, 1987 Quest, 82

force the decision to leave the mission church or previous schismatic church.

HW Turner has written extensively about the independent churches in Africa, rather than South Africa. However, he emphasises general factors that apply to the field of study in South Africa. He notes that when a classical tradition ceases to serve the people a new movement provides a thrust towards renewal or revitalisation.¹⁰⁸ Turner shows that all over Africa the Ethiopian-type of church was the earliest form but says that the more recent types of independent church are not so easy to categorise.

In 1976 Kamphausen produced one of the most comprehensive overviews of Ethiopianism in Africa that had, until that time, been published.¹⁰⁹ His survey includes, among others, the Ethiopian movement, Tile's Tembu National Church, Winter's Pedi Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church.¹¹⁰ Kamphausen deals with the early period in the history of Ethiopianism and its participation in the struggle for political freedom by African nationalism. He sees the Unzondelelo (meaning - to desire earnestly) movement of the Methodist Church in Natal as a precursor of the Ethiopian movement.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Turner, HW 1979 Religious innovation in Africa Collected essays on new religious movements Boston, Mass:GK Hall & Co, 24

¹⁰⁹ Kamphausen, E 1976 Anfänge der kirchlichen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung in Südafrika Geschichte und Theologie der Äthiopischen Bewegung, 1872-1912 Frankfurt:Peter Lang

¹¹⁰ A thesis that explores the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa is: Campbell, J 1989 Our fathers, our children: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa Unpublished Ph D thesis, Stanford University

¹¹¹ Kamphausen, Kirchlichen, 78 In end-note 42, 503 Kamphausen quoted Du Plessis, History, 302 "For some time the movement (Unzondelelo) was viewed with suspicion by the European missionaries, as savouring

In a section on how the attitude of the missionaries helped to cause the rise of the Ethiopian movement, Kamphausen notes the cooperation between the missionaries and colonialism, the colour bar as a betrayal of the Gospel, missionary paternalism and the missionaries Eurocentric teaching and methods as predisposing causes of schism.¹¹²

Vittorio Lanternari is another modern writer on the "indigenist" churches. His work covers the independent churches in Sub-Saharan Africa. Lanternari writes that "opposition to white domination was the first requirement for a chief of the church" and that after 1913 "the main leaders of the South African indigenist churches began to be regarded as Moses".¹¹³

Later South African writers on the independent churches

Marks writing in 1970 about the Bambata rebellion in Natal (1906-1908) provided information on how Ethiopian church members were mistakenly blamed for the trouble. She describes how members of both the Ethiopian Church and "European-type" political organisations at this time were articulating African opinion for the first time. Marks says that:

Although the leaders of both these movements were indiscriminately lumped together by most whites as "seditious Ethiopians", "busy-bodies ... in existence more for the harm of the natives than otherwise", the movements were two distinct "reactions to conquest".¹¹⁴

too much of what was subsequently known as Ethiopianism".

¹¹² Ibid, 429-436

¹¹³ Lanternari, V 1985 "Revolution and/or integration in African socio-religious movements" in Lincoln, B (ed) Religion, rebellion, revolution, London:Macmillan, 140 and 141

¹¹⁴ Marks, S 1970 Reluctant rebellion The 1906-1908 disturbances in Natal Oxford:Clarendon Press, 59,60. Here Marks is quoting "Evidence by GAR Labistour, Attorney-General, Natal S A N A C, vol 111, 98".

She notes that both these movements were primarily the result of missionary teaching. Furthermore, these "new movements were noted especially among the members of the American Zulu Mission and of the Wesleyan Methodist Missions and to a lesser extent of the United Free Church of Scotland".¹¹⁵ All these missions had emphasised education and had encouraged land tenure and provided opportunities for the evangelical zeal of their converts. Both the Wesleyan Methodists and the American Zulu Mission had schisms at the time of the 1906 rebellion. The educational advantages and pastoral opportunity were not enough to hold dissatisfied ministers in the mission churches when faced with crises. For example, when the Transvaal Synod of the Methodist Church wished to transfer Msimang to Mozambique against his will he left the Methodists and formed the Independent Methodist Church in 1906.

In 1972 Verryn published A history of the Order of Ethiopia based on his doctoral thesis written in 1957. He describes how when he "first considered the Independent Churches, (he) concluded that they were a retrograde step in the history of Christianity in South Africa".¹¹⁶ Personal contact with black Christians and further study made him change his mind but his words express the view of most white Christians in the 1950's. Verryn describes Ethiopianism as the "offspring of the nuptials of Christianity and African culture".¹¹⁷ He says that a "prodigious number of offspring had resulted" and after describing some of these churches he enumerated his perception of the causes of schism.¹¹⁸ He lists:

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 60

¹¹⁶ Verryn, T 1972 A history of the Order of Ethiopia Cleveland, Transvaal: The Central Mission Press, ii.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 5

¹¹⁸ Verryn, Order of Ethiopia, 5 and 17f. The churches that he described are the Hermon schism from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, Nehemiah Tile's Tembu National Church, Winter's Bapedi schism from the Lutheran Church and P J Mzimba's African Presbyterian Church.

1. A desire for expression of leadership. He also notes that "even when the whites have gone, if their black replacements have been thoroughly schooled in white norms and procedures, other blacks who know only their traditional methods will not feel at home ...".
2. Colour prejudice. Here he mentions the "overt, crude and insulting manifestations of prejudice" instead of the "brotherhood and love" which Christianity should proclaim and which led to "bitterness and degradation".
3. Discipline. An example of this is the norms regarding money. While both white and black norms demand a sense of responsibility, "the ultimate and absolute moral obligation in black culture is the obligation to help members of the extended family who might be in need".¹¹⁹
4. Western denominationalism. Verryn cites Barrett who said that where only one evangelising agency was known by the people schisms were less frequent.¹²⁰
5. Personal factors. Under this heading Verryn lists personal ambition and desire for leadership as well as factors like dreams that reveal a leadership role.
6. The role of women. In the mission churches women played a very small role in the leadership structures but the independent churches allow women a more prominent role and they act as prophetesses and healers.
7. Syncretism. This applied more to Zionist churches where African cultural practices played a greater role than in the Ethiopian churches.

Verryn refers to the works of two other Anglican writers - Lewis and Edwards' Historical records of the Church of the Province of South Africa (1934) and Hinchliff's The Church in South Africa (1968). Both these books have chapters on the Ethiopian movement

¹¹⁹ Verryn Order of Ethiopia, 21

¹²⁰ Ibid, 24

but concentrate mainly on the Order of Ethiopia. ¹²¹

Another writer of this era was the Methodist historian, DC Veysie. In his thesis entitled The Wesleyan Methodist Church in the Transvaal 1823-1902 ¹²² Veysie included a chapter on the Ethiopian movement. He dealt shortly with Mokone and Dwane and their break-away from the Methodist Church.

In 1975 West ¹²³ drew attention to the fact that many of the independent churches were to be found in the cities, thus indicating that the loneliness caused by urbanisation and the break-down of traditional family structures provided a climate for the caring ministries of independent groups. In his study of the independent churches to be found in Soweto, West mentioned various independent churches including the Independent Methodist Church of Africa. West used the Bantu Methodist Church (the Donkey Church of 1932) as an example of how schismatic churches are often themselves prone to schism. He described how the Bantu Methodist Church broke away from the Methodist Church of South Africa. The Free Bantu Methodist Church then broke from the Bantu Methodist Church and in turn the Free United Methodist Church broke from the Free Bantu Methodists. Finally, the Holy United Methodist Church was formed from the Free United Methodist Church. ¹²⁴

West wrote from a sociological point of view. Ethiopian Churches

¹²¹ Lewis, G & Edwards, C 1934 Historical records of the Church of the Province of South Africa London:SPCK and Hinchliff, P 1968 The church in South Africa Church history outlines London:SPCK Chapter 14 "Ethiopianism:Christianity and politics"

¹²² Veysie, DC 1969 The Wesleyan Methodist Church in the Transvaal 1823-1902 Unpublished Ph D thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown

¹²³ West, M 1975 Bishops and prophets in a black city. African Independent Churches in Soweto, Johannesburg Cape Town:David Philip

¹²⁴ Ibid, 37

are those "who have remained close to the Protestant mission churches in structure, doctrine and dress".¹²⁵ Here he alludes to another factor in the formation of independent churches - most of these churches had their origin in a Protestant church. There were very few schisms from the Roman Catholic Church according to West, perhaps because in the Catholic ritual people found a parallel to their traditional form of worship.

Kruss in her thesis on Religion, class and culture - indigenous churches in South Africa, with special reference to the Zionist-Apostolics referred to African cultural needs which were met by the formation of Ethiopian-type churches. Her work emphasises the Zionist-Apostolic churches, however, as indicated in the title of her thesis.¹²⁶

H Pretorius has written extensively on the Zionist churches in the Transkei. He has also written about the Ethiopian leader Nehemiah Tile as a pioneer African theologian.¹²⁷

Black writers on the Independent Churches

These writers are considered in a separate section only because of the particular understanding and insights they bring to the study. One of the earliest of the black writers to read a paper on Ethiopianism was the Rev BS Diepu. He addressed the Sixth General Missionary Conference in 1925 on the subject of Native separate church movements and their relation to the problem of

¹²⁵ West, Bishops and prophets, 17

¹²⁶ Kruss, G 1985 Religion, class and culture - indigenous churches in South Africa, with special reference to Zionist-Apostolics Unpublished MA thesis University of Cape Town

¹²⁷ Pretorius, H 1990 "Nehemiah Tile A 19th century pioneer of the development of African Christian theology" in Journal for the study of religion volume 3 no 1

evangelism. ¹²⁸ He stated that:

It is only by means of a Native agency that Christianity can become the possession of the Native mind. ... The complete Christianising of the native mind can only be brought about by the Native himself imbued with African ideas and feelings and realising the Christian life in truly African fashion. ¹²⁹

The most prolific African writer of the 1920's and 1930's, DDT Jabavu,¹³⁰ did not write specifically about the independent churches but mentioned them in his discussion of political factors which affected African life. For example, in his paper on "The segregation fallacy" in 1928 he writes "the war (1899-1902) awakened an otherwise dormant race-consciousness in the Bantu as witnesses ... the spread of religious separatist movements". Jabavu noted that in 1928 there were 106 independent churches registered with the Union Government. ¹³¹

In 1979 Kuzwayo wrote a thesis on Ethiopianism entitled A history of Ethiopianism in South Africa with particular reference to the American Zulu Mission. ¹³² In his chapter on Ethiopianism

¹²⁸ Diepu, BS 1925 "Native separate church movements and their relation to the problem of evangelism" in The evangelisation of South Africa being the Report of the Sixth General Missionary Conference of South Africa held at Johannesburg on June 30 to July 3, 1925 Cape Town:Die Nasionale Pers, 111

¹²⁹ Ibid, 111

¹³⁰ DDT Jabavu was the son of Tengo Jabavu, the editor of the Xhosa newspaper "Imvo" published in King William's Town. Jabavu snr, a staunch Methodist, had little sympathy with separatist aspirations.

¹³¹ Jabavu, DDT 1928 The segregation fallacy and other papers (A Native view of some South African inter-racial problems) Alice:Lovedale Institution Press, 81

¹³² Kuzwayo, AWZ 1979 A history of Ethiopianism in South Africa with particular reference to the American Zulu mission Unpublished MA thesis UNISA, Pretoria

(chapter 1) he explores the use of the name "Ethiopian". Initially it was used to refer to dark-skinned people and often referred to people living anywhere in Africa. The use of the expression "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God" (Psalm 68 verse 31) did not originate with Mokone. The Rev Francis Owen wrote in his Journal in 1838, when forced to abandon his mission in Natal, that the "time is not yet come for the Ethiopian to stretch his hands unto God".¹³³

Kuzwayo also writes about "Africa's hope for equality with nations of the world (which lies) with Christianity taking root in the land with the help of a native pastorate".¹³⁴ He remarks that "the missionaries felt the greatest impact of Ethiopianism, for the important Ethiopian leaders came from among their converts".¹³⁵

Kuzwayo shows that "Ethiopianism transcended tribal affiliations and acknowledged that it represented early stirrings of African nationalism".¹³⁶ The existence of common grievances against the whites who discriminated against them tended to strengthen ties of race and colour. One explanation for how tribal differences were transcended was provided by Chirenje.¹³⁷ He says that "the mission school also fostered pan-regionalism of a sort through its accepting students from all over Southern Africa". Students from different tribal backgrounds met in the boarding schools and friendships were formed. "This pan-regionalism, which in due course flowered into modern African nationalism, enabled church secessionists to spread their brand of Christianity across

¹³³ Kuzwayo, Ethiopianism, 4

¹³⁴ Ibid, 9

¹³⁵ Kuzwayo, Ethiopianism, 16

¹³⁶ Ibid, 18

¹³⁷ Chirenje, JM 1987 Ethiopians and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa, 1883-1916 Baton Rouge:Louisiana State University Press, 25

national boundaries".¹³⁸

In 1981 Moeti wrote a thesis entitled Ethiopianism: separatist roots of African nationalism in South Africa.¹³⁹ This was written from an anthropological point of view and emphasised the part played by emerging African nationalism and the politics of racial segregation in the growth of the independent churches.

Moeti criticises Sundkler's typology of separatist groups saying that many of the early so-called Zionist groups strove for political independence. He also rejects the typology of Martin West who looked at isolated features of ritual to decide whether a church could be categorised as Ethiopian or Zionist.¹⁴⁰ Moeti, like Kamphausen, regards African nationalist and anti-racial feelings as specific characteristics of Ethiopianism.¹⁴¹

Another thesis on the subject of Ethiopianism was written by Ekpo and entitled Modern African religious movements: Problems of research and classification.¹⁴² Inevitably, in a thesis on research, Ekpo discusses the positions taken by other writers. He does note, however, that "the tightening squeeze on the Africans through land legislation is seen as a direct cause of the increase in the membership of independent churches".¹⁴³ Ekpo's study on the research on the separatist groups relies on the work of Sundkler, Oosthuizen, Turner and other writers. His

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Moeti, MT 1981 Ethiopianism: separatist roots of African nationalism in South Africa Unpublished Ph D thesis, Syracuse University

¹⁴⁰ West, M 1975 Bishops and prophets. Moeti, Ethiopianism, 14

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 13

¹⁴² Ekpo, MU 1980 Modern African religious movements: problems of research and classification Unpublished Ph D thesis University of Florida

¹⁴³ Ibid, 15

original research was done on the Aldura Church of the Lord in West Africa.

An important study was done in 1986 by Makhubu, a member of an independent church. It is called Who are the Independent Churches?¹⁴⁴ Makhubu enlarges Sundkler's typology to include Apostolic-type churches, Evangelical-Pentecostal-type churches and Ethiopian-cum-Zionist-type churches. In the last group he included the Zion Christian Church of Lekganyane.¹⁴⁵

Makhubu states that "the independent churches were born out of bitter experience and the cry for freedom. In the independent churches people feel like human beings ...".¹⁴⁶ Among the causes for leaving the main-line churches he included:

1. African nationalism - both clergy and politicians were gripped by the prevailing spirit.
2. The uneducated ordinary black man at the turn of the century could not understand why the white man was treating him like a virtual slave in his fatherland and the land of his ancestors.¹⁴⁷
3. Makhubu said that another reason was "supposedly hygienic". Blacks and whites were socially separate.¹⁴⁸ As there was no social mixing between black and white people, whites saw only the poverty of some of the blacks and considered them "dirty". Makhubu found this concept hurtful and insensitive.

In his discussion of the generally accepted causes of schism from

¹⁴⁴ Makhubu, P 1986 Who are the Independent Churches? Johannesburg:Skotaville Publishers

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 14

¹⁴⁶ Makhubu, Who?, 19

¹⁴⁷ Makhubu, Who?, 18

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 18

mission churches as published in the Tomlinson commission of 1955 ¹⁴⁹ Makhubu adds to the explanation by giving the "other" side of the story. Accepting that anti-white feelings and attitude played a role in the formation of separatist churches, he says that the master-servant relationship in South African society "did not remain outside the church" but was "carried from the farm, factory and work place into the church". ¹⁵⁰ Accusations of "anti-white agitation and the furthering of communism" came about because of lack of understanding of the "sharing and caring" in the independent churches. ¹⁵¹

Resentment of the strict demand for the rejection of African culture by the original mission churches was a cause of schism. This was due to lack of understanding on the part of the missionaries of why various African cultural activities took place. Linked to these causes was the fact that in the Old Testament the people read about the very practices (like polygamy and circumcision) that the missionaries were condemning. Often, too, the emotional needs of the African worshipper were not catered for in Western-style worship. Makhubu elaborates on a number of different causes related to the question of culture differences and the lack of missionary understanding, often compounded by lack of knowledge of the vernacular.

Fears about "political unrest" were groundless as Makhubu insisted that "experience has taught that differences in church administration matters can easily be misunderstood as politics".

¹⁵²

Setiloane, a Methodist minister and academic, delivered a paper

¹⁴⁹ The Tomlinson Commission of 1955 was a government investigation into all aspects of African life. This included a history of the independent churches.

¹⁵⁰ Makhubu, Who?, 20

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 22

¹⁵² Ibid, 23

at a NERMIC ¹⁵³ symposium in 1985 on "The contribution of the Methodist Church to the African Indigenous Church movement". ¹⁵⁴ He examines the causes for schism from the mission church, in this instance, the Methodist church. He deplores the missionary reluctance to ordain Africans and said that the "reluctance of the missionary to harness African talent and inspiration" caused frustration among their converts. ¹⁵⁵

Setiloane maintains that the Methodist system of training lay people to take services and lead class meetings developed leadership qualities. This, complemented by the Methodist stress on personal salvation, had the side effect of enhancing the individual's self-respect and feeling of worth. ¹⁵⁶ In Methodist Church circles people who in everyday life performed menial tasks were often leaders of importance in the church. The failure of the white ministers, who were themselves often poorly educated and from a working class background, to recognise the importance of this role reversal and new-found status led to frustration and tension in the church.

Finally, Setiloane maintains that the Methodist doctrine of the universality of salvation (all men can be saved - the potentiality of salvation for every human) had parallels in African traditional religion with its philosophy of "ubuntu". ¹⁵⁷ He feels that the teaching concerning Christian regeneration and the related experience ¹⁵⁸ "even more obviously confirmed

¹⁵³ NERMIC - The Institute for the study of New Religious Movements and Independent Churches based at the University of Zululand.

¹⁵⁴ Setiloane, GM 1986 "The contribution of the Methodist Church to the African Indigenous Church Movement" In Oosthuizen, Religion alive, 186-196

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 186

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 187

¹⁵⁷ Setiloane, Contribution of the Methodist Church, 191

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 191

African traditional views and insights". The appropriation of Christian teaching into African understanding had, from the very beginning, involved interpretation into symbols which are African. Setiloane concludes that:

(Because) there had been imparted in these people during their tutelage in the conventional Methodist manner, qualities of self-respect and a new sense of worth, so that they could now see themselves through Methodist spectacles ... Thus "assured" (they found) how easy it is to move out into the wilderness away from the intransigent cultural and spiritual colonialism of their "fathers in the faith" to become yet another one of the "Bantu prophets in South Africa". ¹⁵⁹

This note of freedom was sounded again by Ngubane in his Theological roots of the African Independent Churches and their challenge to Black theology. He saw:

African church independentism as a movement taking different forms ... ranging from a separatist imitation of a mission church to an original, creative attempt at synthesis of traditional and Christian beliefs, an attempt to establish new African Christian identity ... ¹⁶⁰

Ngubane shows that doctrinal differences seldom led to schism because "the Ethiopian type of churches, in the main, retained the basic organisation, liturgy, hymnbook and catechism of the church they had left behind" ¹⁶¹, although sometimes adaptations

¹⁵⁹ Setiloane, The contribution of the Methodist church, 195

¹⁶⁰ Ngubane, JB 1986 "Theological roots of the African Independent Churches and their challenge to Black theology" in Mosala, IJ and Tlhagale, B (eds) The unquestionable right to be free Essays in Black theology Johannesburg:Skotaville Publishers, 74

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 77

were made to suit the African ethos.

Balia is one of the more recent of the black writers on Ethiopianism. He, too, is Methodist minister. His thesis, A study of the factors that influenced the rise and development of Ethiopianism within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, was written in 1985. In it he dealt with the William Taylor mission of 1866 in which Taylor drew attention to the need for African ministers to be trained.¹⁶² He, like Kamphausen, sees the Unzondelelo movement as a precursor of the Ethiopian movement. Balia writes about the Ethiopian leaders Tile and Mokone. He looked at the present policies of the Methodist Church and felt that "it was necessary to retain the reactionary nature of Ethiopianism as a vital element in the quest for African religious independence".¹⁶³

Balia again mentioned the Ethiopians in his study on Black Methodists and white supremacy in South Africa. However, the study is mainly about the Black Methodist Consultation, a movement within the Methodist Church which seeks renewal within the Church rather than separation from it.¹⁶⁴

Institutional studies on the African Independent Churches

In 1965 Mapumulo Lutheran Theological College presented a series of lectures entitled Our approach to the Independent Church Movement in South Africa.¹⁶⁵ While most of the lectures dealt

¹⁶² Balia, DM 1985 A study of the factors that influenced the rise and development of Ethiopianism within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa Unpublished M Th thesis Durban:University of Durban-Westville, 44

¹⁶³ Ibid, 108

¹⁶⁴ Balia, DM 1991 Black Methodists and white supremacy in South Africa Durban:Madiba Publications

¹⁶⁵ Our approach to the Independent Church Movement in South Africa Lectures of the First Missiological Course of the Missiological Institute at the Lutheran Theological College Mapumulo 30 September to 6 October 1965.

with the Zionist Churches, Makhitini spoke on "our relationship to the separatist churches of the Ethiopian type". He felt that the missionaries "must work themselves out of offices and not dig in". ¹⁶⁶ Responsibility should be given to black ministers and missionaries must encourage Africans to take over leadership. Lack of responsibility and promotion was one of the causes of the formation of independent churches. "Devotion and a deep rich Christian life" should be encouraged ¹⁶⁷ and Makhitini saw cooperation and the acceptance of differences as the way to understanding between members of main-line and independent churches.

In 1967 the Christian Institute published a report of their work with the independent churches. Van Zyl (the compiler) wrote that:

The early secessions took place mainly on racial grounds, while later splintering among the Ethiopian churches themselves took place mainly because of disagreement on financial matters, struggles for leadership and power and furthering personal ambition. ¹⁶⁸

Van Zyl said that through the "long separation between mother church and secessionist church" both structures and teaching have been modified to give an African emphasis. ¹⁶⁹ Van Zyl notes that "the independent churches are important in that they act as a corrective to a tendency in South Africa to see Christianity as part of the white man's culture". ¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 2 Each chapter has its own numbering starting with 1.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 3

¹⁶⁸ Van Zyl, D 1967 God's earthenware pots Report on the work of the Christian Institute of Southern Africa among the African Independent Churches for the period December 1964 to September 1967, 1.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 2

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 5

Analysis and application of the perceived causes of Ethiopian schism

There is remarkable agreement about the causes of schism from the mission churches even though the manner of addressing the problem changed with the years. The understanding of the main-line church writers of the underlying causes for independent churches changed little with the passing of time until the appearance of Sundkler's Bantu prophets in South Africa. Approaches and attitudes changed from puzzlement and an effort to determine why schism occurred, to considering the independent churches a subject for research. Fear of political motives being behind the formation of the Ethiopian-type churches appeared to blind people to the particular reasons for each of the groups leaving the so-called "mother church". It will be seen that the Wesleyan Methodist Church was one of the mission churches from which the greatest number of secessions took place. Within the parameters of the research examined above a reason for this will be sought. It must be emphasised that while the same predisposing factors prevailed in many sections of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, there were always far more African clergymen who remained within the structures of the mission church than left to form their own independent groups. It was only when the prevailing conditions became untenable or a crisis arose that individuals left to form independent churches.

Missionary attitudes

Attitudes played a big role in the formation of the Ethiopian-type schismatic churches. Insensitivity, paternalism and lack of understanding of African culture as well as the need for accepting differences and finding similarities led to schism more often than equating Christianity with western Eurocentric culture.

In 1880 the Rev John Kilner, secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society conducted an on-site inspection of the Methodist mission churches in South Africa. He had previously been a missionary in India and was familiar with conditions in

a missionary environment. However, when he presented his report to the Missionary Committee in February 1881 he made several valid criticisms about the mission field in South Africa.¹⁷¹ He made the distinction between the white (colonial or English) and the African (mission) churches. Here, even before Tile's split took place or separate District Meetings became a bone of contention for Mangena Mokone, was evidence of polarity in worship between the different race groups.¹⁷²

Kilner reported at length on the indigenous ministry. He commented on the "absence of recognised native ministers in the Minutes of Conference and the abundance of evangelists" and said that he had hoped that these men only needed training to achieve ministerial status. He found that some of the men had been "kept back by a timid, if not at times a jealous hand",¹⁷³ but that on the whole there were men well able to become ministers. It was after this visit that a number of men were accepted into the ministry in Natal, among them Daniel Msimang and Mangena Mokone.

Kilner reported that:

1. Native men had for years been doing the greater part of the vernacular work on their respective stations, preaching, teaching, visiting, etc.
2. They were soundly converted men of singular force of character ... some connected with the ruling chiefs.
3. The Lord had blessed their labour abundantly .. Hundreds of heathen had been converted through their instrumentality.
4. They have the spirit and bearing of gentlemen.

¹⁷¹ Kilner, J 1881 A summary report Deputation to the South African mission field Presented to the Missionary Committee February 11, 1881 and on subsequent dates. London:Adams Brothers (Unisa Library)

¹⁷² Ibid, 7

¹⁷³ Ibid, 15

5. They are a generation in advance of their own people generally ... They are as much superior to those among whom they will labour, as any batch of English candidates that ever offered themselves to Conference ...
6. The native churches desire, I may say demand, them as their pastors.
7. They have passed unanimously through the Quarterly Meetings (ie they have been examined as regards doctrine, etc before the lay leaders of the church)
8. They have all passed searching examination by their district meetings ... (they have been examined by their fellow clergy)
9. They will work under the direct supervision of an European missionary and will not be entrusted with the sole superintendency of a Native Circuit until they have satisfied the district meeting of their unquestionable competence for such office. (This was one recommendation that led to frustration and bitterness as African clergy became more senior because some white missionaries never considered the African clergy competent to take over the running of a circuit. Trouble also arose when a young white missionary was made Circuit Superintendent, not because he had experience but because he had been trained in England.)
10. Their term of probation is to be extended until the district meeting is convinced that they are fit to be received into "full connexion" as Native ministers. This also led to frustration as due to language difficulties - some evangelists found it difficult to learn the English language and many of the missionaries saw no reason to learn the vernacular - some of the Africans were given less credit for the knowledge they had than was due to them. Some of the district meetings were very slow to admit African clergy into "full connexion". ¹⁷⁴

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An example of this was the Methodist, Samuel Ndlovu (Oliphant). He was "the fruit of our work in Potchefstroom". He became a local preacher and attended night school. "He gave himself fully to the work ... and his work bears testimony to his

11. Although several of them were somewhat advanced in years ... (they all) gave promise of full ten to fifteen years hard and valuable service.

12. They will all be fully supported by the Native churches. ...

13. They have agreed to give up secular work and devote themselves wholly to the work of saving souls.

14. They have agreed to go wherever Conference may appoint them. (This may have been agreed to in 1880, but in 1903 Joel Msimang was unwilling to be bound by the decision of Synod and the Independent Methodist Church was born in 1906).

15. They all maintained Christian homes and had the support of their families.

16. All costs for the indigenous ministry would be borne by money collected in South Africa.

17. Kilner foresaw (in the Report) that in this way the missionaries would be able to devote their time to training and teaching an indigenous clergy.

Kilner's plan, however, did not work out as he had intended. Within a year of his presenting the report Tile left the Methodist Church in the Clarkebury District of the Transkei, one of the oldest Methodist missions in South Africa, and formed his own Tembu National Church. If this plan, coming as it did at the beginning of the era of Ethiopianism, had been implemented much of the frustration and bitterness of the schisms could have been avoided.

fidelity".(Minutes of the District Meeting of the Transvaal and Swaziland District, 1888) He then became an "assistant minister on trial " at Bloemhof, under the white minister at Vryburg. In 1890 he was sent to Kilnerton in Pretoria to be trained for the ministry but it was decided that "this student seems incapable of further progress" (Examination of students at Kilnerton, 1893) because he could not do his oral examination in English. He went back to Bloemhof and continued as an evangelist in the Methodist Church until his death in 1897.

Charlotte Maxeke, a founder member of Mokone's Ethiopian Church in 1892, told the General Missionary Conference in 1925 that:

The early missionaries in this country knew what they were doing. They studied us; they lived with us; they moved among us. Even the wives of our missionaries were with us. ... But today what happens to us? ... How many times when we go to visit our missionary somebody tells us: "go round to the kitchen". ... That very thing is responsible for the more than 140 native churches in this country. That is what brought about this great split in the churches. ¹⁷⁵

Maxeke was referring here to the attitude of social and racial superiority and lack of humility of many of the missionaries. Their failure to acknowledge that the people who had been trained from the beginning of mission work in South Africa could now be ready to take leadership positions led to frustration among the indigenous clergy. An example of this may be seen in the history of the Msimang family and the Methodist Church in Swaziland. Daniel Msimang was given authority in the Swazi church by the Rev Owen Watkins - one of the pioneer missionaries in the Transvaal. When Msimang senior died in 1903 ¹⁷⁶ his son Joel, who expected to take over the work in Swaziland, was no longer under the Chairmanship of the Rev Watkins. In 1906 when the Independent Methodist Church was founded, the Superintendent of the Methodist Church in the Transvaal and Swaziland District was the Rev Amos Burnett, who was not as sympathetic to the Msimangs.

Jabavu, a Methodist lay preacher, described an experience that illustrates the attitude of the missionaries to people of colour. When he returned to South Africa after ten years at an overseas university he was invited to lecture at a "Native Training School". The missionary did not invite Jabavu into his own house

¹⁷⁵ Sixth General Missionary Conference, 1925 Maxeke, Mrs "The native Christian mother", 130

¹⁷⁶ See chapter 3 for full details of the history of the Msimang family and the Independent Methodist Church.

but accommodated him in the boys' hostel. Jabavu notes that "many a missionary of today has no handshake for his black brother, and he feels distinctly embarrassed when he is among other whites and he meets him (the black minister) in town". ¹⁷⁷

The fact that the Transvaal and Swaziland District Synod, unlike the rest of South Africa, was directly under the British Conference led to closer ties with Britain than elsewhere as the ministers had to report to an overseas authority. Reliance on British missionary authority was one of the factors which caused Methodist Christianity in the Transvaal to be perceived as a white man's religion. This perception of Christianity was one of the reasons why Mokone and Dwane decided to approach the African Methodist Episcopal Church in America in order to be amalgamated with a church which was controlled by blacks.

Other problems were caused by paternalism, lack of pastoral care and the impression that the white church members were more important to the missionary than the converts or black church members (white churches were called colonial or English churches while black churches were referred to as the "Native church"). Lack of understanding on the part of the missionary was one of the main causes for schism from mission churches. At ordination a Methodist minister is called to:

be minister in the Church of God, and to see that to each of its members the ministration of the Spirit is given to profit withal. Will you do all that in you lies to build up the Body of Christ, to persuade and encourage every member to exercise the gift of grace that is in him ...? ¹⁷⁸

Many of those who left to form schismatic churches felt that in

¹⁷⁷ Jabavu, DDT 1920 Native unrest Its cause and cures A paper read at the Natal Missionary Conference Durban, July 1920, 6

¹⁷⁸ The book of offices 1936 London:Methodist Publishing House, 145

their mother church they had not been encouraged to exercise or develop their "gifts of grace".

Church discipline may be added under missionary attitudes as it was often a different understanding of African culture that led to the discipline in the first place. Tile's experience with the Rev Theophilus Chubb is an example of this. Lack of sensitivity by the white members of Synod to the family problems experienced Msimang led to his being disciplined and the eventual formation of the Independent Methodist Church. Mzimba left the Presbyterians when he was disciplined over a disagreement over money. The action of disciplining a black minister was often the last sign of a deep underlying resentment felt by the recipient, which had come to the surface. This crisis led to the formation of an independent church.

African nationalism

The era in which the Ethiopian church movement arose also saw the growth of the African nationalist movements. African ministers were often leaders in these movements. Anti-white feeling due to the colour bar, especially after the 1913 Land Act, led to secession from "white" churches. Writers who were members of the Methodist Church like Jabavu spoke out vigorously against discrimination and were supporters of African nationalism. The bitterness felt by some of the schismatic church leaders towards the church that they felt had let them down, found an outlet in the anti-white feeling of African nationalism. Ethiopianism's alliance with the African Methodist Episcopal Church was perceived by white South Africans to be anti-white rather than pro-black. The link with emerging African nationalism and anti-white feeling was emphasised by writers from the earliest like Stormont to modern writers like Balia and Kuzwayo.

Mokone's Ethiopian Church was an example of a church which transcended tribal barriers. Mokone's personal experience had prepared him for this wider African view. Born a Sotho, he lived among the Zulus in Natal for many years and then taught at

Kilnerton in the Transvaal, where people from various backgrounds studied together.

Methodist doctrine as a predisposing factor

Setiloane emphasised how Methodist teaching gave an assurance of self-worth which if not appreciated by the missionary could lead to a break-away from the church. The doctrines of Christian perfection and regeneration brought "Christianity much closer to the indigenous experience of the Divinity and its activity".¹⁷⁹

Wesley preached about a person's life being changed. When a person is "born of God , born of the Spirit, how is the manner of his existence changed!"¹⁸⁰ Sometimes this change appeared to be more a change into an African Englishman. However, Wesley continued: "The eyes of his understanding are now open ... He sees what is the exceeding greatness of His (God's) power ... His ears are now open ... he hears and obeys the heavenly calling".¹⁸¹ These words were all acceptable within the context of the African understanding of God. The doctrines taught by Wesley were easily assimilated into the teachings of the Ethiopian-type independent churches.

The acceptability of the doctrines taught by the Methodist Church applied in other denominations as well. Mzimba did not disagree with the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church. After the break-away Mzimba, like Mokone and other Ethiopian leaders, continued to teach and practice what he had learnt in the mission church.

The overview of the perceived causes of schism provides insights into why the churches in the following case studies left the

¹⁷⁹ Setiloane, Contribution of the Methodist Church, 191

¹⁸⁰ Wesley, J 1967 Forty-four sermons Sermons on several occasions London:The Epworth Press, 177

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 177 The sermon is entitled "The great privilege of those that are born of God". based on 1 John 3:9

mission churches and joined the Ethiopian movement. Some of the factors discussed were present in the formation of all of the churches. However, there were specific factors that were unique to each circumstance and which provided a deciding factor leading directly to the schism.

All the writers whose works have been examined used generalisations when writing about the African Independent Churches. Unless the history of a specific church group is being discussed, for example Kuswayo's work on the Zulu Congregational Church, all the independent churches are discussed as if their individual characteristics are subordinate to the general characteristics of the AIC's. This diminishes the role of the causes peculiar to each group and the individual identity of each "mini-denomination" is lost in the contemplation of the whole body of the AIC's.

In the case-studies an attempt will be made to show that many of the general causes of schism may be present for a long time before a particular event leads to the break-away from the mission church. The categorisation of the AIC's which suppresses the individuality of groups leads to the misunderstanding of the causes of schism. What is relevant to one group, for example Tile's wish for a united tribal church or Mokone's rejection of inequality between black and white ministers belonging to the white Methodist Synod in the Transvaal, does not necessarily apply to all AIC's. Dwane, for example, for the Methodist Church because of a disagreement over money which he wanted to use for building a college. Even when the cause of schism appears more or less the same, each church should be viewed individually in order to appreciate their particular emphases. Generalisations may lead to all AIC's being considered as part of one movement instead of churches in their own right.

CHAPTER 2

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND INVESTIGATIONS INTO INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

This survey will deal with government policy and investigations into the "separatist" churches during the years 1892 to 1925. The causes of schism, as revealed in the interviews and reports of the various commissions, will be examined.

Sundkler in his book on the African Independent Churches in South Africa ¹ categorised government involvement with the Independent Churches into three periods: pre-union up to 1910, 1910 to 1925 and after 1925. Attitudes to the independent churches in each period depended on how much people knew about the movement. Interest in the secessions was widespread as people tried to find reasons why black church leaders and members should desire independence. For example, in 1903 the executive of the South African Native Congress ² sent a statement to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London in which they blamed the secessions on "the conduct of untrained men taking upon themselves responsibilities for which many of them are eminently unfitted by character and culture ...". ³ The statement continued, trying to allay anti-white fears:

These church secessions are responsible for much bitterness, but as they have been interpreted as aiming at the eventual overthrow of the established authority of the government and the white clergy, it would perhaps be well for us to emphasise the fact ... that these movements are purely a matter concerning those churches affected and have

¹ Sundkler, Bantu prophets, 65f

² The South African Native Congress was started by JT Jabavu in 1902 in order to coordinate African activities in the eastern Cape Colony, especially with regard to electoral politics. (Karis & Carter, 1978 From protest to challenge, volume 1 1882-1934 Stanford:Hoover Institution Press, 9)

³ Ibid, 18

no anti-racial significance.⁴

The years between 1892 and 1910 may be seen as the time of the establishment of the Ethiopian-type independent churches, ie those resulting from a split with a mission church. In the years immediately following the Anglo-Boer War attitudes in the Cape and Transvaal were more tolerant towards the Independent Churches than in the other two provinces. One of the reasons why there was less tolerance in Natal was that the "Bambata" rebellion took place in 1906 and Ethiopians were suspected of being agitators and influencing the revolt. This coloured the attitude of the whites towards the independents.⁵ The movement was denied legal status in the Orange Free State and Ethiopians like Xaba were persecuted.⁶

The South African Native Affairs Commission took place during the years 1903-1905. This government commission examined every aspect of life in South Africa in order to formulate a comprehensive policy for Africans. The commission travelled extensively and listened to evidence from both black and white witnesses.

Between 1910⁷ and 1925 many new independent churches were founded, especially of the Zionist-type. The Ethiopian churches suffered secessions and formed second and third generation groups. In 1921 the Bulhoek incident in the eastern Cape led to

⁴ Ibid

⁵ When the colonial administration in Natal imposed a new poll tax for Africans on 1 January 1906 several Zulu groups refused to pay. The ensuing disturbances ultimately led to armed clashes between Africans and white troops. Bambata was the name of a minor Zulu chief who led the revolt. (Packenham, T 1991 The Scramble for Africa Johannesburg:Jonathan Ball, 648)

⁶ Xaba seceded from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Heilbron and joined the Ethiopian Church. Typescript PR 3949, 7 (Cory Library, Grahamstown)

⁷ 1910 more or less marked the founding of many of the Zionist-type churches.

the formation of a Separatist Churches Commission to formulate rules for recognising independent churches. After 1925, which marked the publication of the report of the Separatist Churches Commission, the government issued regulations with a view of controlling the activities of independent churches. Recognition, with attendant privileges such as granting of church sites and licences for marriage officers, became difficult to obtain. The problem of acquiring recognition for the clergy of independent churches would continue to frustrate their ministers, adversely affecting their activities, for years to come. ⁸

The context in which the 1903-1905 Native Affairs Commission was constituted.

In the years preceding, and at the time of, the 1903 to 1905 Native Affairs Commission enquiry the Ethiopian movement was often equated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church and its predecessor, the Ethiopian Church. In 1893 the Ethiopian Church was recognised in the Transvaal, ⁹ but this was not the case in Natal or the Orange Free State.

Sundkler notes that in the Cape Colony "the African Methodist Episcopal Church first brought the Cape Government into contact with the Separatist Church problem". ¹⁰ During the 1890,s their ministers had applied for and been supplied with official Marriage Registration forms (under the Marriage order in Council of 1838). AMEC ministers were treated in the same way as white ministers in this respect. When Bishop Turner arrived in 1898 and

⁸ Claasen, J 1993 The struggle of Independent Churches in South Africa to obtain government recognition Unpublished paper read at the NERMIC conference held at Witwatersrand University in July 1993.

⁹ The constitution of the Ethiopian Church of South Africa 1908 Johannesburg, 2 (State Archives, Pietermaritzburg) See also Claasen, J 1993 The struggle of independent churches in South Africa to obtain government recognition Unpublished paper read at the NERMIC conference held at Witwatersrand University on 30 June to 2 July 1993

¹⁰ Ibid, 65

ordained sixty-five African ministers the Prime Minister, W P Schreiner, ordered that no more marriage licences be issued to any AMEC ministers because of the low educational standard of the newly ordained men. In 1901, however, the AMEC was recognised as a "Church within the meaning of the Marriage Order in Council of 1838" and was allowed to have twelve marriage officers among their clergy.¹¹

Newspaper reports and official correspondence told the story of the suspicion with which the Independent or Separatist Churches were viewed, especially with regard to their association with the AMEC. In June 1904 the Times of Natal reported on the proceedings of the Maritzburg Missionary Association.¹² After commenting on the harm done by the Colenso controversy because it gave "the enemies of the Church opportunity to blaspheme" the report continued:

This was particularly the case with the Ethiopian movement with which he (the speaker) was glad to say, his government were not at all in sympathy.¹³

A letter to the Natal Mercury at the same time (1904) deplored the fact that the Ethiopians were recognised in the Transvaal.

It is well known that Rhodesia promptly excluded the Ethiopians, and doubtless on sufficient grounds. Sufficient

¹¹ Sundkler, Bantu prophets, 66

¹² Cutting from the Times of Natal entitled "Natal mission work" and dated 7 June 1904. (PM 1046/1904 SNA 891/1904 State Archives, Pietermaritzburg)

¹³ Ibid The speaker, Sir Henry McCallum, was referring to the dispute between Bishop R Gray of Cape Town, (the Metropolitan) and Bishop J W Colenso of Natal, which led to Colenso being accused of heresy (on nine theological charges) in 1863. This led to a split in the Anglican Church in Natal and later in the rest of South Africa too. They two branches became known as the Church of the Province of South Africa and the Church of England in South Africa.

has been written in the Press to show the sect to be a danger to be reckoned with; yet, the home government directed Lord Milner to admit them to the Transvaal ... and as a consequence half our native working population are to be subjected, without let or hinderance, to the pernicious teaching of this sect. ¹⁴

Great consternation was caused when Bishop Coppin of the AMEC wanted to visit the Transvaal congregations belonging to his church. Official correspondence showed that, although Coppin was given a permit "beyond that, no permits have been issued to any known members of the denomination, and no recognition is given to the denomination in this territory". ¹⁵ This endorsed a letter written two days earlier in which the Secretary for Native Affairs claimed that "no Native Churches which do not belong to any recognised European Christian denomination are recognised by the Transvaal Government". ¹⁶ This was further emphasised when the Administrator of Natal wrote to the High Commissioner for South Africa in Johannesburg about AMEC clergy being allowed into the Transvaal saying:

As this sect is known to be closely associated with the Ethiopian movement, my ministers perceive in the admission of its clergy to the Transvaal Colony an initiatory step towards the rapid spread of Ethiopianism throughout the whole of the Transvaal Colony and the remaining South African Colonies. ... I am satisfied that this movement is

¹⁴ Cutting from the Natal Mercury dated 6 June 1904. No name of writer provided. (SNA 891/1904 State Archives, Pietermaritzburg)

¹⁵ Letter from the Transvaal Department of Native Affairs dated 10 June 1904 (NA 901/2605/04 State Archives, Pietermaritzburg)

¹⁶ Letter from the Transvaal Department of Native Affairs dated 8 June 1904 from Johannesburg. (NA 901/04 no 2553/04 State Archives, Pietermaritzburg) This raises the question of why the Ethiopian Church was recognised in 1893, unless, as a recognised Methodist minister, Mokone was still considered a Wesleyan.

already affecting prejudicially the natives of this Colony
... ¹⁷

Thus it is evident that at the time that the Native Affairs Commission (1903 - 1905) was conducting interviews the Ethiopian movement and the African Methodist Episcopal Church were seen in one and the same light.

The Commission interviewed people from all walks of life. This chapter surveys the causes of schism as they were articulated before the commissioners. First the evidence of the AMEC will be examined because of the importance of that Church to the Ethiopian movement. Church leaders from mission churches were often drawn to the AMEC because it was controlled by Blacks and this posed a threat to the established mainline churches.

Most members of mission churches remained loyal to the church to which they belonged and did not leave to form or join separatist churches. The Commission report indicates also how loyal black mission church members understood the reasons why people left to join the independent churches.

The 1903-1905 South African Native Affairs Commission

This Commission was not primarily an investigation into the Separatist Church movement. It was established to investigate all areas of African culture in order to formulate a policy for dealing with the African population. Questions were asked about the Ethiopian movement in the course of discussion about land, labour and wages, marriage customs (especially "lobola" and polygamy), education and mission work. For this reason, although the Minutes of Evidence of the Commission record much about the Ethiopian movement and the Separatist Churches up to that time, the Commission cannot be seen as an investigation aimed primarily at schismatic churches.

¹⁷

Confidential letter from the Administrator of Natal to the High commissioner for South Africa dated 15 June 1904. (SNA 891/04, State Archives, Pietermaritzburg)

The Commission's interviews in the Cape began on 1 October 1903 under the Chairmanship of Sir Godfrey Lagden. The nine-man commission comprised Sir Godfrey Lagden, Mr Samuelson, Hon Mr Campbell, Captain Dickson, Mr De la Harpe, Mr Krogh, Sir Thomas Scanlen, Mr Sloley and Mr Thompson. The first meetings were held in Cape Town from 1 October to 23 October 1903 and continued in the Cape Colony until March 1904.¹⁸ Thereafter the other areas of South Africa were visited as well as the territories under British control such as Swaziland, Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Rhodesia. Among the people interviewed in Cape Town were Bishop L J Coppin and the Rev A H Attaway of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Desire to belong to the black-controlled African Methodist Episcopal Church as a possible cause of schism

EE Dower testifying before the Native Affairs Commission said that "there is only one body commonly connected with the Ethiopian movement, which is at present recognised, or whose ministers are recognised, and that body is the African Methodist Episcopal Church".¹⁹ Various independent church groups and in particular the Ethiopian Church, allied themselves with the AMEC.

Bishop Levi Jenkins Coppin of the AMEC was interviewed on 14

¹⁸ Interviews were conducted in Cape Town from 1 - 23 October 1903, in King William's Town from 2 November - 19 November 1903, in East London on 26 November 1903, in Lady Frere on 1 - 2 December 1903, Butterworth on 15 - 16 March 1904, Umtata on 21 - 22 March 1904 and Kokstad on 28 - 31 March 1904.

¹⁹ Minutes of Evidence, volume 11, 41, question 428. Interview on 2 October 1903. EE Dower was the Chief Clerk in the Department of Native Affairs. He later became the Secretary for Native Affairs. When asked if he knew of any other Ethiopian churches Dower answered: The other recognised branch is that which has associated itself with the Church of England". (Ibid, 41 question 431)

October 1903. He established his credentials ²⁰ as a bishop of the AMEC and said that the African Methodist Episcopal Church originated in America in 1767, took organic form in 1816 and was established in South Africa by Bishop H M Turner in 1898. ²¹ Coppin succeeded Turner in 1901.

Coppin was then asked:

Will you tell me what the Ethiopian Church was that induced Bishop Turner to come here and to receive it? What is the difference between that church and your church? ²²

Coppin answered: "All the difference in the world. It had no possible connection. I supposed when it established itself it did not know that our church existed". ²³ Coppin said that the Ethiopian Church had sent a delegation to the AMEC general conference in 1896 and asked to be united to their church. This resulted in Turner's arrival two years later. Coppin told the Commission that the Ethiopian Church had been started by two South Africans, Mokone and Dwane and insisted that there was not, nor ever had been, a branch of the Ethiopian Church in America. ²⁴

²⁰ Coppin told the Commission that he was an American educated in the State of Ohio at the Protestant Episcopal Divinity School. Minutes of evidence

²¹ Minutes of Evidence volume ii, of the South African Native Affairs Commission 1903-1905. Minutes taken in the Cape Colony. 1904 Cape Town: Cape Times, 215 questions 2581-2597

²² Ibid, 215 , question 2599

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Minutes of Evidence volume ii, 215 and 216, questions 2598 and 2600 to 2606

On the 15 October the Rev A H Attaway was interviewed. ²⁵ He was asked why the AMEC had considered establishing a church in South Africa. He answered:

So far as I am able to say, people who lived here communicated and came to America, seeking affiliation with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. They came to us simply to unite. I do not know of any reason than the fact that they wanted to affiliate with our Church. ²⁶

Dwane was the first to visit America. Mokone, Gabashani and Santsi (sic) went later. Attaway had met Gabashani in America before he came to South Africa.

Testimony of loyal mission church members

The testimony of loyal mission church members showed why they preferred to stay with the main-line mission church as well as providing their insights into why people joined independent churches. The main witnesses from the mission church were the Headman from Ndabeni Location, Cape Town and the Headman from Driefontein, the Methodist settlement in Natal.

The Headman of the Ndabeni Location, near Cape Town, was the Rev Elijah Mdolomba, a minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. ²⁷ Mdolomba was interviewed on 23 October 1903 and asked about his experience of the Ethiopian movement: ²⁸

What do you think, Mr Mdolomba, of this independent movement amongst the native races towards the management

²⁵ Attaway was an American who had been in South Africa for two years. His special interest was in education and he was principal of the Bethel Institute, the AMEC training institution.

²⁶ Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 252, questions 3100 and 3101

²⁷ Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 277, question 3446

²⁸ Ibid, 411, question 5392

and control of their own religious affairs, in what we call the Ethiopian movement?

Mdolomba replied that he could not agree with their doctrine or teachings. "The gist of their teaching is to oppose the white man and with that I cannot agree. ... They have the thought in their minds and that is what they say".²⁹ When asked whether the Ethiopians "work right in the midst of the old-established congregations and try to upset their work?", he answered: "Yes".³⁰ Old church members were being separated from their children who accused their parents of "being on the white man's side and no good".³¹ Mdolomba said some of the people who had left the main-line churches were returning to their old church affiliation again. Mdolomba included the African Methodist Episcopal Church in what he said about the Ethiopian movement as "they (the Ethiopians) had joined themselves to the American Church".³² This was his experience in Ndabeni Location, Cape Town.

Mdolomba differentiated between Mokone's Ethiopians and what he called the "real Ethiopians" - the followers of Dwane and Ngcayiya who he had met in Tembuland. He had also met the Amatile when Goduka was their head. They were working by themselves and had nothing to do with the American Methodist Episcopal Church.³³ Mdolomba does not appear to categorise all the independents as "Ethiopians" but only those connected with Mokone's movement and the AMEC.

²⁹ Ibid, questions 5394 and 5395

³⁰ Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 411, questions 5396 and 5397

³¹ Ibid, 5397

³² Ibid, 412, question 5401

³³ Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 412 and 413, questions 5405 to 5419 Many of the witnesses used the term American Methodist Episcopal Church for the American ministers who served in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. It was often used to differentiate between the African and American members of the AMEC.

Mdolomba considered that the indiscriminate selection of ministers by the African Methodist Episcopal Church and their lack of training made "sensible natives" oppose the Ethiopian movement. All racial "hatred" in the Ethiopian movement he blamed on the AMEC because he felt they drew people away from the mission churches which were under white control.³⁴ His attitude was that of an older minister who had status both within the Methodist Church and the community and who remained loyal to the mission church which had educated and employed him.

In May 1904 Chief Joseph Kumalo of Driefontien was interviewed. He was one of the people who had first formed the Methodist mission in Swaziland with the missionary, Allison. He described how the land at Driefontein had been bought with money collected by the community at Edendale. The land was then apportioned to the people. He was quite happy to live under tribal law and had never applied to change his land rights to the land tenure of the Europeans. However, his grandson, also Joseph, had been granted exemption from tribal law. New ideas accepted eagerly by young people often did not find favour with the older generation. The educated and trained younger generation were more open to independent thinking.³⁵

Kumalo was also asked whether he had any contact with Ethiopians wanting to preach at Driefontein but he answered that although he had heard of the Ethiopians he had never met anyone belonging to the movement. At Driefontein the minister was someone from their own community, the Rev Mtembu. As landowners, and with one of their own men as their minister, the people at Driefontein

³⁴ Ibid, question 5425

³⁵ Minutes of Evidence, volume iii, 485 to 489, questions 25,387, 25,393 and 25,470 Interview on 5 May 1904. In his answer to question 25,450 Kumalo said that he had been converted through the preaching of Mr Edwards and became a Christian through the preaching of Mr Allison. He came to Natal with Allison "soon after ... the British had taken the Colony of Natal".

considered that they lived in a "fortunate state".³⁶ The people at Driefontein already possessed most of the responsibility for their own affairs that many of the Ethiopians were aspiring to achieve.

Older black ministers who were loyal to the mission churches said that the Ethiopian movement attracted younger people. They felt this could harm family relationships because of divided loyalties. When Jabavu wrote that "the natives are naturally imperialistic in their sympathies, having come through the experiences of early colonial history"³⁷ he was referring to the attitudes of people like Mdolomba who deplored what he perceived as anti-white feeling in the Ethiopian movement. The evidence of Kumalo showed that there was no need for schism where religious responsibility was vested in the people.

The testimony of newspaper editors sought in an effort to establish the causes of Ethiopianism

Mr F Z Peregrino, who was born in Accra on the Gold Coast (now Ghana), was the Editor of the South African Spectator. He was asked whether he had written anything about the American Methodist Episcopal Church in his newspaper. He discussed what he knew of the AMEC in other areas and said:

My impression is that they were rather more reckless or foolish than otherwise, that in their desire to proselytise and get members from other churches - which in itself is not at all criminal - they incited a large number of the natives to believe that the presence of white men in the churches is not altogether a proper thing.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid, 491

³⁷ Karis & Carter, 1978 From protest to challenge, 21
Statement by the Executive of the South African Congress in 1903.

³⁸ Ibid, 318, question 3933 Interview on 19 October 1903

In spite of this statement he did not believe that the AMEC or the Ethiopian movement were seeking political power but his statements added to the perception of many people that the Ethiopian movement was "anti-white". Peregrino, himself, seemed unsure of what caused the establishment of the Ethiopian movement.

Fear that the Ethiopian movement would seek political power was wide-spread and in an effort to assess the danger to the colonial powers a number of different people were questioned.

The Editor of the Christian Express, Dr DA Hunter, was examined on 11 November 1903 on articles about the Ethiopian movement that had appeared in his newspaper. The Christian Express had for a long time been "combating in some degree the propoganda of the African Methodist Episcopal Church".³⁹ Hunter's statement seemed to endorse the fact that Whites feared the possibility of Black political power. He said that the Voice of missions, the official paper of the AMEC, reported that:

(T)he opinion has been expressed that bye and bye the Native people of this country, that is to say the coloured people, will drive out the British from South Africa, and make this an African republic, or something of that sort. Another opinion expressed is that mission work carried on by the European missions in Africa is a failure, and that the European missions ought to hand over their money and their missions to the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

40

Hunter reported that since he had become editor of the Christian Express in 1901 there had been articles on the Ethiopian movement

³⁹ Minutes of Evidence volume ii, 674 question 9250

⁴⁰ Ibid, 675, question 9251 While Hunter promised: "I can give you the exact quotations if you wish" he does not provide any clue as to which editions carried these words.

(especially in the October and November 1903 editions). Both Mzimba's and Dwane's (the Order of Ethiopia) churches had been discussed. Mzimba's church was discussed as part of the independent movement.

Perceptions of the causes of schism articulated by whites

Mr R J Dick, a magistrate from King William's Town was asked what he knew of the Ethiopian movement (or "independent Native movement").⁴¹ Dick knew both Mzimba (he was adamant that Mzimba was not an Ethiopian) and Dwane who he named as the head of the Ethiopian movement. Dick did not see the Ethiopian movement as a national movement nor did he feel the people were "reorganising themselves under new leaders" in a search for political power.⁴² Dick considered that the reason for secession was the desire for religious independence.

Dr Alexander William Roberts, Acting Superintendent of the Lovedale Mission Institution.⁴³ was asked to give his views on the independent church movement and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Unlike most of the whites questioned he did "not take exception to the desire of the Natives to have independence in church matters". However, he could not give his wholehearted support to the Ethiopian movement⁴⁴ because he felt that there might be other motivations for independence besides church motives. Roberts considered that the independent movement was:

First a race movement; second ... political; third ... church, and because of the sequence, I think, it is harmful

⁴¹ Minutes of Evidence volume ii, 478 questions 6209 to 6220. Interview on 3 November 1903

⁴² Ibid, 478 question 6220

⁴³ Ibid, 797 The interview took place on Thursday, 19 November 1903 at King William's Town.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 809, question 11,103

at the present day.⁴⁵

The possibility of danger was repeated in the evidence of W Brownlee, the Resident Magistrate at Butterworth. He said that "the members of the Ethiopian body are such crafty men that they come with credentials ..." and use the excuse of visiting people to preach about their church.⁴⁶ The suspicion with which members of the Ethiopian movement were viewed extended even to family visits or social calls. Brownlee's evidence points to one of the complaints that the mission churches had about the Ethiopians - that they found their members among the members of mission congregations.

In November 1904 the Rev Dr James Stewart of Lovedale was questioned about the Ethiopian Church. At this time he was an old man and died not long after he had given evidence.⁴⁷ He had experienced the Ethiopian movement first hand through the schism from the Free Church of Scotland by the Rev Pambani Mzimba. He felt that the movement should be discouraged because of its divisive effect on the church. Stewart discussed the reasons for schism and said that "the Ethiopian question, or movement rather, is a revolt on the part of a certain number of native ministers of various missions or denominations against white control ecclesiastically".⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 809, question 11,106

⁴⁶ Ibid, 984, question 13, 465. Interview held on 16 March 1904 at Butterworth.

⁴⁷ Du Plessis wrote: "Stewart died in 1905 without having seen his ideal of bringing the native population into line with the European occupants of the land". Christian missions, 364

⁴⁸ Minutes of Evidence volume iv, 905, question 4,949. Stewart said that the movement: "began with the Rev Mr Dwane in the Cape Colony; and at the same time, or even earlier, with one or two men in the North of the Transvaal, namely, Mokone and Gabashane. It has arisen solely from a desire to have control of their own ecclesiastical affairs".

Stewart used an example when he spoke of the sorrow of missionaries whose work had been affected by Ethiopian schisms. The Rev Coillard (of the Paris Evangelical Mission) had written that "one of the greatest griefs of his latter years was to find that even in Barotseland his work was being destroyed by a native agent of his own training". Stewart continued: "The effect of this movement generally called Ethiopianism is to break up all the work that has been done for the last 50 years ... I find it very difficult to say anything on behalf of Ethiopianism".⁴⁹

Stewart said, however, that the "creed of anti-white was unlikely to be taught publicly" in spite of the fact that "they do not want the white man to have anything do with them".⁵⁰ On the positive side, he spoke of the educational work being done by the Ethiopian Church and said that they had founded a New South African College.⁵¹ Stewart did not foresee the movement lasting and predicted that "internal discord may yet be the ruin of Ethiopianism. ... The fact that already it is split up into two or three sections may indicate that there will be more of this sub-division. Finance also may bye-and-bye be a serious difficulty".⁵² While Stewart's prediction of schisms from the break-away churches was proved true, the independent church movement did not fade away, it continued and flourished.

Independent Church leaders provide their reasons for schism

The first of the Independent Church leaders to be examined was the Rev James Dwane, named in the Commission's report as an Anglican missionary. He reported that he had left the Methodist Church in 1895 and had then "connected myself with what is known

⁴⁹ Minutes of Evidence volume iv, 906, question 44,949

⁵⁰ Ibid, 906, question 44,951 and 908, question 44,962 A few anti-white booklets had been distributed by the Ethiopian movement.

⁵¹ Ibid, 910, question 44,976

⁵² Minutes of Evidence volume iv, 911 question 44,979

as the Ethiopian movement".⁴³

Dwane was asked how he came to join the Ethiopian movement. He replied:

(A)t the end of the year 1895 a deputation of native men who belonged to the movement came down from the Transvaal to meet me at Queenstown, where they asked me to join them and help them. We had a long discussion about the matter at Queenstown ... and they told me that their intention was to unite with the American Negro organisation, of which I knew nothing at that time. ... I said: "If you unite yourselves with a purely Native organisation the people in this country will take you as anti-English".⁴⁴

Dwane then related the circumstances of his relationship with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. "I found in America (that) which did not please me, the feeling between the whites and the blacks was very bitter". Lighter American Negroes looked down on those that were darker. Dwane remarked that "in Africa it is just the other way. We are satisfied and contented with our colour".

⁴⁵

This dissatisfaction with the AMEC led him "to write to the Archbishop of Cape Town in August, 1900 ...asking him and the other Bishops of the Province of South Africa to give us an

⁴³ Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 708, questions 9693 and 9894. Interview on 12 November 1903 in King William's Town.

⁴⁴ Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 708 and 709, question 9695.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Dwane is expressing a sentiment of African nationalism. He was articulating African attitudes to Africans of other clans or tribes and not between black and white people in South Africa. Dwane did not want the Order of Ethiopia to be considered "anti-white" or to be accused of advocating colour prejudice. He was also expressing his rejection of colour as a divisive factor among Africans.

organisation of our own ... within the Church".⁴⁶ This organisation became the Order of Ethiopia with Dwane, as he told the Commission, "Provincial of the Order".

Dwane was then asked what he felt about the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He answered:

I am afraid that the teaching and everything is calculated to bring about an undesirable state of things in the country. ... (I)n the practical teaching and training the tendency is to set the black race against the white race.

⁴⁷

Dwane was asked a number of questions about the African Methodist Episcopal Church and he said that he doubted the ability of some of the AMEC ministers to run a church successfully. However, when asked whether "the natives had risen to such a state that they could manage a church without the supervision of white people" he answered:

I would not say it could be done all over the country; but it is time a beginning be made in that direction. Christianity has been long enough in the country, and if no start is made it shows there is some defect in the systems.

⁴⁸

Dwane was also asked why the Ethiopians in the Transvaal had seceded from the mission churches. He answered, showing that he considered all the early independent leaders "Ethiopians":

They were dissatisfied, I believe, or they would never have

⁴⁶ Ibid. Dwane was at this time a deacon in the Anglican Church.

⁴⁷ Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 710, questions 9698 and 9699

⁴⁸ Ibid, 711, question 9714

left them. One Nehemiah Tile was the first to move, and then several joined him, including Jonas Goduka, J Gqamana and others, and then it was started in the Transvaal by M Mokone.⁴⁹

Dwane said that the people of the Order of Ethiopia considered him "their missionary, as the Europeans look upon their missionary". He assured the commission that "as far as politics are concerned I take no part in them".⁵⁰

Another independent church leader interviewed was the Rev Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba. He was recorded as being a Presbyterian minister.⁵¹ In fact, Mzimba officially left the Presbyterian Church in 1898 and by 1903 belonged to (and became Moderator of) the Presbyterian Church in Africa, an independent church. He was asked whether he had any connection with the African Methodist Episcopal Church and replied: "No".⁵² He was then asked why he had "severed his connection" with the Presbyterian Church. He answered:

My intention was simply to work independently, thinking that it might work better in that way. ... Ours is purely a religious matter and arose out of religious difficulties.

⁵³

Mzimba said that his Church had no connection with the Ethiopian movement and had no political aspirations. After questioning him about the number of people who belonged to his church and whether they followed Presbyterian church polity, the Commission members

⁴⁹ Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 714, question 9747

⁵⁰ Ibid, 715, questions 9765 and 9766

⁵¹ Although Mzimba was at the time a member of an independent church he was still an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church.

⁵² Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 790, question 10,843

⁵³ Ibid, 793, questions 10,893 and 10,901

reverted to asking him about secular matters such as education and marriage customs.

During 1904 the Commission conducted interviews in the Transvaal. Here independent church leaders were questioned in groups. On 5 October 1904 the Revs MM Makone (sic), JZ Tantsi and SJ Mabote, ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, were examined. Mokone was the presiding elder of the AMEC Church in Pretoria and Mabote worked with him. Tantsi worked in Johannesburg. Unlike most of the other witnesses, Mokone and his fellow church leaders had requested permission to give evidence before the Commission. ⁵⁴

Mokone was first asked to tell the Commission about the church organisation of the AMEC in the Transvaal. The leaders were then asked what they wished to discuss with the Commission. Tantsi answered:

We are very grateful we have been allowed to appear here, in order that we may explain certain points which have special reference to our Church. Our object is a simple and clear one: to preach to our people the gospel, to advance education for their good, and encourage them in habits of industry. It is not right that our Church should be credited with feelings of hostility towards the Europeans. That is absolutely not true. ... There are men of all colours in our Church. A white man may enter our Church. ... What led us to establish our church was our idea of securing rightful orders, and we recognise equality in the church. We make no distinction of colour in the church. We do not interfere in politics. ... No instance can be brought of a charge of sedition against a minister in this Church ... This Church was established in the Transvaal in 1893, and all our teaching has been in the direction of

⁵⁴

Minutes of Evidence volume iv, 474, question 40,283.
Q You asked to be allowed to give evidence? - Yes.

obedience to the Government. ⁵⁵

Other independent church leaders who were asked to give evidence were the Revs Samuel Brander, Joshua Mphothleng Mphela and Stephen Nguato of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion. They had recently resigned from the AMEC and had before that been members of the Church of England. ⁵⁶ Brander gave his reasons for leaving the Church of England saying: "We came together in a meeting that we called, and said, 'Let us go and teach our own people by ourselves'. That was all". ⁵⁷

Brander's reasons for leaving the AMEC were explained in greater detail as he expressed his dissatisfaction with the American church leaders:

We left on account of the promises they gave us when we joined them not being kept. They promised that they would give us a school from America at their own expense, with teachers and all, and this they did not do. It is now six years since we united with them, and all those promises they failed to keep. ⁵⁸

Not only did the AMEC fail to keep its promises but money collected in the church in South Africa had to be forwarded to America. When Brander's church was in debt he three times applied to America for help but the American AMEC refused to help him. Therefore he said: "it was no good for us, they would not help us from America, and it would be better for me to stay in Africa

⁵⁵ Ibid, 474, question 40,287

⁵⁶ Minutes of Evidence vol iv, 519 question 40,782 - 40,788. The interview took place in Pretoria on 4 October 1904, the day after the Commission had interviewed Mokone and Tantsi. Brander founded the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion in April 1904.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 521 question 40,805

⁵⁸ Minutes of Evidence vol iv, 521 question 40,814

and help my people".⁵⁹

The Transvaal leaders, from the reasons they offered for schism from the mission churches, attempted to allay the perceived fears of the whites-only Commission that their actions were politically inspired. They also revealed the wish to have the religious part of their lives unfettered by the organisation of colonial officials whether from government or mission.

Interviews conducted in Natal provide evidence of "hidden" causes and the attitude of Whites.

In 1904 the Colony of Natal also fell under the scrutiny of the Commission. Once again information about the Ethiopian movement was gathered at the same time as other facts about African culture and life. The answers to the questions posed to white missionaries and other witnesses by the commission show evidence of attitudes such as paternalism and imperialism. Fear, intolerance, racial superiority and ignorance were all expressed by the witnesses. Such attitudes led to dissatisfaction with the mission churches.

Marks, in her book Reluctant rebellion, remarks that "there was a tendency in Natal to see every educated African as a dangerous Ethiopian ready to drive the white man into the sea".⁶⁰ In the answers to some of the questions about everyday life there are glimpses of the attitudes that led to the formation of the Ethiopian movement. For example, a farmer, A K Murray agreed with the Commission members that it was the duty of the white man to civilise the black race and to "teach them the dignity of labour".⁶¹

As had happened in the Cape, missionaries were called upon the

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Marks, Reluctant rebellion, 76

⁶¹ Minutes of Evidence, volume iii, 344, question 22,916 and 22,918. The interview took place on 28 April 1904.

give evidence. The Rev J Scott, a Presbyterian missionary, was asked whether he had any "experience of the African Methodist Episcopal Church". He answered:

I have had no direct experience of it. Perhaps you are referring to the Separatist movement among the Natives, which is now called by the name of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. ⁶²

Scott said he believed that "it would ultimately be a political" but that at present it was "a movement for Natives wishing to be their own masters". ⁶³ The AMEC ministers from America had only come to "make our Natives imagine grievances when there are no grievances". ⁶⁴ Scott saw the American ministers as undesirable immigrants who would only harm South Africa. In his view the ministry of the AMEC was a cause of schism from mission churches.

Miss Harriette Colenso, the daughter of Bishop John William Colenso of Natal, was also interviewed. She had continued her father's activities on behalf of the African people after his death in 1883. The Commission did not question her about the Ethiopian movement as such but her answers to questions about missionary attitudes provided an insight into reasons for schism. Colenso was asked whether all missionaries agreed on a certain standard of morals. She answered that "they say you are going to be my child; you must not follow the evil ways of your father and mother". ⁶⁵ She saw this paternalism as a contradiction. Colenso said that many of the missionaries had meant well but had made mistakes.

⁶² Ibid, 375, question 23,411

⁶³ Ibid, 375, question 23,414 Scott said that one member of his congregation had left to join the Native Congregational Society of South Africa.

⁶⁴ Ibid, question 23,415

⁶⁵ Minutes of Evidence, volume iii, 407 question 23,888. The interview took place at Pietermaritzburg of 2 May 1904.

Confusion about the names of the Ethiopian Church, the Order of Ethiopia and the African Methodist Church is clear in the interview conducted with the Rev William Allerton Goodwin, an Anglican missionary. He was asked about the Ethiopian movement attached to the Anglican Church and called it the Ethiopian Guild. He was asked why the members of the Order could not belong to the Church of England as ordinary members. Goodwin saw the "Ethiopian Guild" as a split from the Ethiopian movement in favour of white rule, a split for the ideal of Africa for the Africans. He did not see any political danger in the Ethiopian movement. ⁶⁶

People tended to judge the Ethiopian movement according to their own experience of the movement. W J Clarke, Chief Inspector of the CID (police) when asked what he knew about Ethiopianism replied that their motto was "Africa for the black man" and he knew of a group at Umzumbe who had formed a Congregational Church that belonged to the Ethiopian movement. ⁶⁷ His ignorance of the Ethiopian movement was no different to that of other whites at the time, many of whom had an incorrect idea of the reasons for independentism.

For example, a magistrate, Mr J Stuart, read notes to the Commission that he had made of "the substance of a conversation with a Native in Natal in May 1899". ⁶⁸ His garbled version of the historical facts of the founding of the Ethiopian Church reveal lack of exact knowledge of the background of the movement. He said:

I heard that a Mr Watkinson (sic), a hump-backed Wesleyan preacher, went to Pretoria a number of years ago, with one Dwane, a Native Wesleyan minister, who as a boy had worked

⁶⁶ Ibid, 634, questions 28,074 and 28,078

⁶⁷ Minutes of Evidence, volume iii, 624, questions 27,919 and 27,921 Interview held on 12 may 1904

⁶⁸ Ibid, 956 question 33,802

for Mr Watkinson in the kitchen. Dwane separated in Pretoria from his following and started a church of his own. The church was largely patronised. He threw in his lot with a Basuto called Mangena.⁶⁹

After this inaccurate historical account Stuart gave his own opinion of the Ethiopian movement:

I do not know how far the Governments of South Africa have gone in this matter, but I think that if a history of the movement were taken in hand and written, it might serve a good purpose ... I do not see why the Ethiopian Church should have such a free hand in this country.⁷⁰

The 1925 Separatist Churches Commission would try to establish the facts of the history of the Separatist churches when it instigated a comprehensive investigation into the Ethiopian movement.

Further interviews by the Commission in British colonies

Volume iv of the Minutes of Evidence dealt with interviews conducted in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Basutoland (Lesotho), Bechuanaland (Botswana), Swaziland and the Transvaal between the 30 August and 12 September 1904. It is unclear why the surrounding British Colonies were included in an investigation into Separatist churches in South Africa, unless it was because the investigation by the Colonial Government was into all the British colonies south of the Zambezi. In these areas very few questions were asked about Separatist Churches while the witnesses were questioned extensively about African customs (including lobola and polygamy) and the land question.

In many cases where Ethiopian churches were established beyond

⁶⁹ Minutes of Evidence, volume iii, 956, question 33,802
Very few of the white clergy knew the history of the Ethiopian movement in South Africa.

⁷⁰ Ibid

South Africa's borders, they were found to be in existence because of mission work conducted by South African independents.

Dr G A Wilder, an American Board missionary in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) showed more understanding for the Ethiopian movement than most of the missionaries interviewed. He reported on a:

pastor of my Church, a man who I had selected out of the young men of the district as a most promising young fellow and he went to the Zulu Congregational Church, against the wishes of the Church where I was, and carried on the work, apparently sympathising with the Ethiopian movement. ⁷¹

After three years this man returned to the mission church. This, too, was not uncommon as people sometimes only joined the Ethiopian movement for a time. The financial stability and availability of resources brought them back into the mission church. Wilder continued with a description of the man as a pastor:

He was ... very intelligent and very energetic. He worked all the time ... The Church he had charge of developed from 246 ... to over 600 individual communicants. That man was influenced by the Ethiopian movement, and I followed it very closely because of this individual. ... I ascertained that they felt that the missionaries were keeping back from them the privilege of running their own churches. They had not the least idea of any interference with the government; there was not the least political thought, so far as our people were concerned. ⁷²

Wilder saw independence as a positive step in the development of the African church, a culmination of the aim of mission education. He said:

⁷¹ Minutes of Evidence vol iv, 13 question 34,056

⁷² Ibid

There was in the mind of the Native a desire to become independent, as he was educated by the missionary - for all this was born out of mission effort. This desire to manage their own affairs was indicated along the line of their development.⁷³

Wilder said that due to the lack of quality in mission education ("they were not developed industrially, they were developed very little intellectually")⁷⁴ when the spirit of nationalism grew it took the form of independent churches. Because of the growth of nationalism which was manifested in the independent churches, Wilder saw the Ethiopian movement as a danger even if it was ignored or suppressed because it could lead to aggressive anti-white sentiments.⁷⁵

The Rev J M Springer of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America was a missionary who was interviewed in Salisbury (Harare). There was some confusion in the minds of the Commission as to whether this was a branch of the AMEC (and therefore to be feared) or a different group from America. Springer assured the Commission that there was no connection.⁷⁶ The AMEC was known but not recognised, in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and recruited members of mission churches.⁷⁷

One of the members of a mission church who joined the AMEC was the Rev Michael Makgatho of the Dutch Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. He was born in Sekukhuniland and became a Dutch

⁷³ Minutes of Evidence vol iv, 13 no 34,057

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Minutes of Evidence vol iv, 14 question 34,061

⁷⁶ Minutes of Evidence vol iv, 117 question 35,498

⁷⁷ Ibid, volume iv, 449 question 39,989 Evidence by Mr Sloley.

Reformed Church evangelist under the Rev Stephanus Hofmeyr.⁷⁸ Makgatho described how he had become a DRC preacher in Mashonaland although as an unordained minister he was not allowed to perform marriages.⁷⁹

It was only when the Rev AA Louw took over the mission that Makgatho experienced any trouble. Prior to this he had been in charge of the mission. The problems experienced by Makgatho were common to a number of the early African pioneers who saw the churches that they had started being taken over by white missionaries who thought that the way had been prepared for their arrival. Missionaries arrived to take over an established work with little regard for the African pioneer preachers who had pioneered the establishment of the church and opened up the area for mission work. Makgatho explained his problems saying:

I was a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church; I was sent from the Transvaal with the Rev Mr Hofmeyr to Mashonaland, and I was the first Dutch Reformed minister in Mashonaland, even before Mr Louw was sent there. Mr Louw followed me and the Rev Mr Helm ... After the Rev Mr Helm's return to the Transvaal, the Rev Mr Louw was not good to me; he was always against me, and tried to find something against me. A few years later he almost beat me on account of the school. Owing to personal differences between me and Mr

⁷⁸ The Rev Stephanus Hofmeyr (1839 - 1905) worked as a pioneer missionary in the Soutpansberg area at the Goedgedacht Mission from 1865. He sent a delegation of evangelists to Zimbabwe to initiate mission work there. Makgatho was one of the evangelists chosen. Minutes of Evidence volume iv, 199 question 36,594 and also Maree, W 1962 Lig in Soutpansberg Die sendingwerk van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord-Transvaal 1863-1963 Pretoria:N G Kerkboekhandel, 126. Maree stated that Makgatho was the leader of the 1887 expedition.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 200, questions 36,624 and 36,625

Louw I changed my church.⁸⁰

Maree describing Makgatho's career merely states that he left the Dutch Reformed Church because of a matter of discipline.⁸¹ Makgatho became a member of the AMEC where he was ordained. Now he could take responsibility for all the tasks of a minister including those which had been denied him in the mission church - for example, conducting marriage ceremonies.

A M Miller, a resident of Swaziland, was questioned on 6 October 1904 and was asked whether there were any AMEC or Ethiopian Church missionaries working in Swaziland. He answered that he had heard of them but knew little of their work.⁸² He had nothing to say about the troubles at Mahamba Methodist Mission and the newly formed IMC.⁸³ This was not unusual - Whites often knew little of what was happening in the black community.

Assessment of the perceptions of the causes of schism

The following are the causes of schism gleaned from the evidence of those who were interviewed by the Commission. The Commission had set out to discover certain factors about the Ethiopian

⁸⁰ Minutes of Evidence volume iv, 199 question 36,600

⁸¹ Maree, Lig in Soutpansberg, 163 "Vir die eerste keer het daar nou bedreiging van die kant van separatistegroepe, en by name van die Etiopiese sekte, gekom. Miga Magatho (sic), een van die Banyai-evangeliste, het by die sekte aangesluit nadat hy deur ds Louw en dr Helm om een of ander rede gestraf is". Louw also mentioned Micha (sic). He described his enthusiasm: "Micha, een onzer evangelisten, nooit zonder raad of moed"... However, early in Louw's account a note of censure may be observed when Louw blamed Micha for not warning him how easy it was to get lost; "Had Micha mij maar gewaarschuwd, gelijk bij eene vorige gelegenheid". (Louw, AA 1917 Dageraad in Banyailand, Cape Town:De publicatie commissie der Zuid Afrik. Bijbel Vereeniging, 13 and 15)

⁸² Minutes of Evidence volume iv, 599 question 41,636

⁸³ The Independent Methodist Church was formed at this time. In 1903 Msimang left the Wesleyan Methodist Church and in 1906 the IMC was founded.

movement. These were:

1. What the nature of the movement was and what had initiated it.
2. Whether there was a link between the Ethiopian movement and the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
3. What the extent of the movement was and
4. Whether there was any political danger (a possible link to the rising black nationalism) and to what extent the movement could be considered anti-white.

They found the answers in the perceptions of the causes of schism leading to independentism, as articulated by witnesses from all walks of life. The causes may be summarised as follows:

1. The movement was seen to be anti-white (Mdolomba and others). Dwane saw the so-called "colour bar" as a cause of schism but pointed to racial discord among members of the AMEC too. Stewart, however, said that in his experience there was no overt anti-white teaching although some anti-white booklets had been produced and the movement would have nothing to do with the white church. Tantsi, on the other hand, said that Whites would be welcome in the Ethiopian Church. The missionary Goodwin saw no danger in the Ethiopian movement.⁸⁴ This "anti-white" perception of the movement, based on the fact that it was wholly administered by and the Whites were ignorant of the real causes of schism, led to white fear and speculation as to the real reason for independence.
2. Linked to the first point was the fear that the movement was seeking political power. Hunter described the wish for political power as the desire to drive out the British (from South Africa). Dower testified that "the Ethiopian

⁸⁴ Mdolomba. vol ii, 318, Stewart, vol iv, 906, Dwane, vol ii, 710, Tantsi, vol iv, 474 and Goodwin vol iii, 634 The Commission saw the AMEC as an agent for the spread of anti-white propaganda.

movement was as much political as religious"and whites feared that the religious independence was a cloak for political aspiration. ⁸⁵ Dwane, however, said that he was not interested in political power. Many of the witnesses, for example Dower, agreed that the main culprit was the African Methodist Episcopal Church who, under their American clergy, were interested in political power and were encouraging members of other churches to join their own denomination.

3. The failure of the missionaries was seen to be a factor. Harriette Colenso described the paternalism of many of the missionaries. Makagtho described how the criticism of the Rev AA Louw had forced him to leave the Dutch Reformed Church and join the AMEC. ⁸⁶ Lack of sensitivity and acceptance of an "African" way of doing things led to misunderstanding between white missionaries and African evangelists.
4. Dwane said that Africans felt that they had the ability to manage their own church affairs. The missionary Scott said that the Ethiopian Churches wanted to be independent to run their own church affairs. ⁸⁷ Often missionaries took over congregations which had been started by pioneer black preachers on behalf of the mission church. Whites who testified before the commission were unanimous in their belief that Africans were not ready to control church affairs, except in local congregations under white oversight. This reluctance to "let go" and allow Africans more say in the administration of their own church affairs led to frustration which paved the way for independence.
5. Mzimba referred to so-called "religious difficulties". These varied from group to group depending on the circumstances of the schism and included financial matters

⁸⁵ Minutes of Evidence, volume ii, 42, question 435

⁸⁶ Minutes of Evidence volume iii, 407 and volume iv, 199

⁸⁷ Ibid, volume ii, 375

and enforced discipline by the mission church. Mzimba did not elaborate nor did any of the witnesses admit to such difficulties before the commission. Makagtho, however, described how he had been disciplined (he felt unfairly) by the missionary. This led to his joining the AMEC.⁸⁸

6. The wish to worship in an African church away from the confines of having to follow European patterns of worship, was described by Brander of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion. This desire was articulated in other testimonies as well, for example Wilder's description of the evangelist who joined the Zulu Congregational Church only to return to the mission church after a few years.⁸⁹

It will be seen that most of the negative views of the Ethiopian movement were held by Whites and fuelled by fear. The Blacks, on the other hand, took a more positive and realistic view of the causes of schism leading to the formation of the Separatist churches.

The Report of the Commission

Before presenting their perception of the reasons for schism from mission churches, the Commission first looked at the various definitions of the word "native". In the definition accepted in the Cape the various tribes were named (Fingo, Zulu, Msuto etc) but did not include "any native while serving in any of His Majesty's ships and while in uniform".⁹⁰ The other provinces were more or less in accordance with the Transvaal position of "any person of any kind belonging to or being a descendant of any of the native races of South Africa whatever". Thus the commission took "natives" to be the "aboriginal inhabitants of

⁸⁸ Minutes of Evidence volume ii, 793 and volume iv, 199

⁸⁹ Ibid volume iii, 521 and 624

⁹⁰ Report of the South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905, 1905 London:Darling & Son, 9

Africa".⁹¹

The commission members admitted that they had "little sympathy" with the "church separatist or Ethiopian movement" when they⁹² started their "special enquiries" into the independent church movement. At the end of the investigation they reported as follows:

1. The clergy of the independent churches were "recruited from every denomination ... in South Africa, and there is in each case little or no divergence from the tenets of the parent church" ... although "the commission fears that relaxed strictness in the moral standard frequently follows".⁹³
2. Almost without exception secessions have been led by church officers who have been unable to co-operate smoothly with their "European" superintendents.⁹⁴
3. The leaders have not yet arrived at a stage where they could manage church administration on their own or manage without the "ennobling examples of self-sacrifice and piety" of the missionaries.⁹⁵
4. The commission advised against persecution of the independents but suggested that ways be found to bring them under mission control once again.
5. The Commission concluded that the Ethiopian movement, now represented by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Ethiopian Order in the Church of England, and numerous semi-organised schismatic fragments detached from every denomination operating in this country, was the outcome of a desire on the part of the Natives for ecclesiastical

⁹¹ Ibid, 9 and 10

⁹² Report 1903-1905, 46

⁹³ Ibid, 45

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Ibid

self-support and self-control, first taking tangible form in the secession of discontented and restless spirits from religious bodies under the supervision of European missionaries. The missionaries did nothing to incite these moves. The Report continued "that upon the affiliation of certain of these seceders and their followings to the Africa Methodist Episcopal Church lamentable want of discrimination was displayed by the first emissaries to South Africa in the ordination to the ministry of unsuitable men".⁹⁶

6. The Commission was "not disposed to condemn the aspiration after religious independence, unassociated with mischievous political propaganda",⁹⁷ but said that "a subject race" should not seek independence especially under the "leadership of ignorant and misguided men". This could lead to racial tension "fraught with the seeds of racial mistrust and discontent".⁹⁸
7. The members of the Commission were concerned about the calibre of the independent church leadership. They felt that "the fact that many who had been prominently connected with the movement in its various phases were men lacking in the breadth of view, wisdom and forethought necessary properly to foster and direct the fledgling ideals of a people just emerging from ignorance and barbarism into a state of semi-enlightenment".⁹⁹
8. The Commission report did not advise "any measure of legislative repression, unless unforeseen developments render it necessary". ... "Effort should rather be directed towards securing efficient constitutional control and organisation, in order that the influences at work may be wisely directed, and any individual cases in which pastors

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Ibid, 47

⁹⁹ Ibid

abuse the trust reposed in them, may be amenable to authoritative discipline".¹⁰⁰ The members of the Commission recommended that secessionist churches should not receive recognition from the state and that no minister of religion should solemnise a marriage without being licensed as a marriage officer.¹⁰¹

In the report the commissioners agreed with the testimony of the witnesses as noted in the summary above, but sounded a censoring note not found in the Minutes of Evidence. It referred to "a people just emerging from ignorance" who are a "subject race ... misdirected ... by the leadership of ignorant and misguided men". This shows the lack perception and understanding on the part of the government in regard to the independent churches.

Events in the years between the Commissions

In 1906 a rebellion broke out in Natal. The Ethiopian movement was accused of being an instigator of the revolt. Stuart wrote that:

At goldmining centres, especially Johannesburg, youths of Natal ... became acquainted with that insidious American Negro propaganda called Ethiopianism ... In such an environment it is not surprising that the already growing spirit of independence was developed.¹⁰²

Two members of the African Congregational Church (a breakaway from the American Board Zulu Mission), Makanda and Mjongo were blamed for the initial resistance to the poll-tax at Trewirgie.

¹⁰⁰ Report 1903-1905, 47

¹⁰¹ Report 1903-1905, 47 See also Du Plessis, J (1st ed 1911) 1965 A history of Christian missions in South Africa Cape Town:Struik, 459 Being granted permission to officiate at marriages implied some recognition by the government.

¹⁰² Stuart, J 1913 A history of the Zulu rebellion 1906 and of Dinizulu's arrest, trial and expatriation London:Macmillan, 97 and 98

The Ethiopians were seen to be "wholly free from European control" and were therefore suspect.¹⁰³ Events in Natal led to even greater mistrust of the Ethiopian movement than had existed before.

During the years between the two commissions John X Merriman, Prime minister of the Cape Colony from 1908-1910, and EE Dower, who became Secretary of Native Affairs for the Cape and later the Union of South Africa, tried to solve the problem of the separatist churches. PJ Mzimba was appointed a marriage officer in 1907, thus gaining a measure of recognition for his church. The Order of Ethiopia was also recognised due to its association with the Anglican Church. Writing to Dower in 1909 Merriman stated:

I am sure that it is not sound policy to repress these religious ebullitions, however inconvenient and absurd they may seem to us. Repression will be like "the blood of the martyrs - the seed of the church". When we come to granting church sites, it is a different question. Each must be dealt with on its merits. As a matter of policy I should approve of one or two being granted to Mzimba to make it clear that we do not boycott him on account of colour.¹⁰⁴

Merriman's words show his scorn for the separatist churches (religious ebullitions) and irritation at the inconvenience caused by them. His liberal inclination is seen in his reference to allowing Mzimba one or two church sites and his wish not to be considered motivated by colour. In accordance with these views Merriman and Dower laid down the following policy in 1909:

¹⁰³ Ibid, 128 and 129 Mjongo was captured in February 1906, his kraal burnt and his crops destroyed. (Bosman, W 1907 The Natal rebellion of 1906 London:Longmans, 3 and 11)

¹⁰⁴ Sundkler, Bantu prophets, 68 and 342. Merriman's note on draft letter dated 25 April 1909 by EE Dower, Native Affairs Department, Pretoria.

Applications by Native Separatist Churches for church or school sites should be dealt with on their merits, due consideration being given inter alia -

- a. to the stability of the applicant organisation
- b. to the danger of discord arising from the introduction of a divisive element into close proximity to established spheres of mission work
- c. to the wishes of the people generally
- d. to the availability of land ¹⁰⁵

In practice it was very difficult for "separatist" churches to obtain recognition of any kind including permission to build churches and schools. There are numerous unsuccessful petitions for permission to build churches and schools ¹⁰⁶ from different independent churches in the various archives that bear witness to this.

In 1926 Lea wrote his book Native Separatist Churches. In the book he mentioned both the 1903-1905 Native Affairs Commission and the 1925 Native Churches Commission. He was the first to draw attention to the need for a correct definition of the word "Ethiopian". Lea criticised the fact that in the 1903-1905 Commission's Minutes of Evidence the terms "Separatist Church" and "Ethiopian movement" were synonymous. Lea pointed out that "there are Separatist Churches that are not Ethiopian" so the two are not synonymous. ¹⁰⁷ Separatist Churches were those " who leave another church for reasons other than racial and political". ¹⁰⁸ These churches may become Ethiopian. The term Ethiopian, he said had come to stand for "a quasi-religious and

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ For example, KAB 3/STB 4/1/156 i7/85 (State Achives, Pretoria) Rural churches, schools and missions. Bantu Methodist Church of South Africa (Mceula Location)

¹⁰⁷ Lea, Separatist Churches, 18

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

quasi-political body. In its extreme form it stood for "Africa for the Africans".¹⁰⁹

The 1923 Native Affairs Commission

This Commission,¹¹⁰ working concurrently with the 1925 investigation into the "separatist churches", interviewed members of the main-line churches and missionary societies, for example, the Natal Missionary Society, the English Church Conference and the Dutch Reformed Conference. The latter saw "segregation as a fundamental plank in Native policy".¹¹¹

The Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa (the African branch of the United Free church of Scotland) was the only so-called "African" church to have a voice in the report of the Commission. The existence of this church was explained by :

the Mother Church has approved of the missions and missionaries under her control forming them selves into a "Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa" affiliated to but not under the jurisdiction of, the Assembly of the parent church.¹¹²

A separate conference was held by the Commission for Black leaders where social rather than church matters were discussed. None of the problems facing the church in South Africa were discussed as if the church as an institution could do nothing to alleviate socio-economic questions. The independent churches

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 19

¹¹⁰ Report of the Native Affairs Commission for the year 1923 The appointed members were JC Smuts (Chairman), AW Roberts, LAS Lemmer and CT Loram. The presentation to the Governor-General stated: "In terms of the regulations published under government Notice no 2004 of 1920 the Native Affairs Commission begs leave to submit a report of its work for the calender year 1923", 1 (State Library document 323.168)

¹¹¹ Report 1923, 8

¹¹² Report 1923, 9

received no mention at all. The commission showed that in church matters, the South African government considered the voice of the white missionaries more important than the voice of the indigenous church.

THE 1925 NATIVE AFFAIRS COMMISSION

In 1921 a commission was set up to investigate and report on "separatist churches" in South Africa.

By Government Notice No 1339 of the 23 August 1921, we, the undersigned, in conjunction with Mr JS Marwick, Esq M.L.A, were appointed by your predecessor as Commissioners to inquire and report upon :-

1. The origin, nature and extent of any disturbing influences at work among the Natives of the Union, and more particularly the origin and nature of the "Israelite" movement; and
2. The origin, nature and extent of the various organisations within the Union which are solely under native control.

Your Commissioners held their first meeting on the 20 October 1921, at Durban and decided that as a first step a full questionnaire should be issued to officials, missionaries and persons interested in native matters asking for information ... ¹¹³

The commissioners who conducted the investigation were A Roberts (Chairman), LAS Lemmer, CT Loram and P van der Merwe.

In addition to the questionnaires the Commission made use of interviews with various interested persons and official

¹¹³ Report of the Native Churches Commission 1925 U G 39/25 Cape Town:Cape Times, 3 The report was dated 16 March 1925.

correspondence.¹¹⁴ Representatives from mission churches were asked to comment on the character of various men who had left their churches to start separatist churches.¹¹⁵ The questionnaires were distributed during 1921 and 1922. Besides the name of the church the questionnaire requested information on:

1. Name and address of witness.
2. Founder of the church
3. Date when founded
4. Present head of the church
5. Places of worship
6. Person in charge of each and membership of each congregation
7. Total numbers of members in the church
8. Previous church membership
9. Reasons for change of membership and/or reasons for foundation of the church
10. What doctrines were taught by the church
11. Whether or not a pass holder and if so, the number of the pass
12. The constitution of the church (if one existed) was also required.

Leaders of independent churches were also asked to provide the following information:

1. Name and address
2. Tribe to which they belonged
3. Where born
4. Date of birth or approximate age

¹¹⁴ UG 39/25 Report of the Native Churches Commission 1925 Cape Town: Cape Times, 3

¹¹⁵ Mission church leaders from whom information was solicited were the Revs Baker (SA Compounds Mission), Bosman (Apostolic Faith Mission), Bridgman (American Zulu Mission - Congregational), Hill (Church of England), Joyce (Baptist), Botterill (Methodist), Le Roux (AFM) and Irving (SA Bible Society).

5. Church in which baptised
6. Reason for leaving the church in which they were baptised
7. Whether they had belonged to other churches before founding their own
8. The names of the other churches in successive order and reasons for leaving each church separately
9. Particulars of any government pass ¹¹⁶

Schisms from all the main-line churches were found to exist and members were questioned, as well as members from Zionist churches which had broken away from the Apostolic Faith Mission. Sometimes more than one member of the church was interviewed. There were also found to be schisms from the independent churches. By the time the report was published in 1925 the number of separatist churches was estimated by Loram (one of the commission members) to be between 120 and 140. ¹¹⁷ However, in 1922 the questionnaires were sent out to members from only 65 churches.

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At the General Missionary Conference held in July 1921 the retiring President, the Rev AJ Lennard of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, said:

Nothing has grieved the older mission churches in South Africa during the past 20 or 30 years so much as what has been known as the Ethiopian movements, the secession of native Christians on all sorts of grounds from the missionary churches which brought them the knowledge of

¹¹⁶ MS 14 787 These particulars are taken from the form sent to the Rev Joel Msimang.

¹¹⁷ Loram, CT 1925 "The separatist church movement" in The international review of missions Special double Africa number July 1925, 477

¹¹⁸ See Appendix 1 for a list of the names of the churches questioned.

Christ ... ¹¹⁹

The Conference resolved to "request the government to investigate, through the Native Affairs Commission, the deplorable conditions" that had arisen because of the 1913 Land Act. ¹²⁰

The Commissions did their work with the face of rising African nationalism on the one hand and the white fear of greater political and economic power for the Africans on the other. The rise of the African Independent Churches was seen as part of the whole scenario.

The Bulhoek tragedy

The event that really brought matters to a head was the massacre of the Israelites on 24 May 1921 at Bulhoek, part of the Oxkraal Location, near Queenstown. This was discussed in Section 2 of the 1925 Report under the title "The Israelite movement". Enoch Mqijima, the leader of the Israelites, was born at Ntebelanga, near Queenstown in 1858. ¹²¹ Ntabelanga was near Bulhoek where the drama was to take place more than sixty years later. Mqijima came from a Methodist family and later became a local preacher in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. His family all received a good education at Lovedale but Enoch was unable to continue at school because of headaches. ¹²² Lack of education meant that he could not train to become a minister.

¹¹⁹ Report of the proceedings of the fifth general Missionary Conference of South Africa held at Durban 18 -22 July 1921, 1922 Durban: The Commercial Printing Co., 33

¹²⁰ Report 1921, 24 This was: "with a view to affording early relief from the injustice suffered by Natives in certain sections of the Union".

¹²¹ Edgar, R 1977 The fifth seal: Enoch Mqijima, the Israelites and the Bulhoek massacre 1921 Unpublished PhD thesis University of California, 17

¹²² Ibid, 24

When he began to have visions, especially after seeing Haley's comet in 1910, he left the Wesleyan Methodist Church and joined the Church of God and Saints of Christ which church was founded by a black American, William Crowdy. Mgijima's visions continued and began to have racial overtones. He predicted a war between blacks and whites in South Africa. When excommunicated by the Church of God and Saints of Christ because of his millennial visions, he resolved to start his own church ¹²³ with Old Testament teaching and a millenarian emphasis. Millenarian movements such as the Israelites "usually emerged from crises in the traditional way of life and structures ... especially among the most poor, disorientated and therefore powerless". ¹²⁴

Mgijima's followers, who included people from many other areas, usually gathered to celebrate the Passover together. In 1921 they resolved to remain at Ntabelanga until they had celebrated the Passover. However, the celebration kept being postponed. Negotiations were begun by the authorities to try to disperse the new settlers who were waiting for the Passover, as the area was already overcrowded. Assurances were given that the strangers would return home but instead the numbers at Bulhoek increased. More houses were erected on Crown Land in defiance of the authorities when no other land was available. ¹²⁵

A large armed contingent of police and soldiers were sent to disperse the Israelites who were poorly armed. When it became apparent that neither side would give in, both sides prepared for battle. When given a chance to withdraw Mgijima replied: "We will fight and Jehovah will fight with us". ¹²⁶ In the ensuing battle 163 people were killed, 129 wounded and 95 were taken

¹²³ Native Churches Commission, 1925, 7

¹²⁴ Cochrane, 1987 Servants of power, 229

¹²⁵ The Bulhoek tragedy The full story of the Israelite settlement at Ntabelanga 1921 East London:Daily Dispatch, 6

¹²⁶ Bulhoek, 23

prisoner. ¹²⁷

The "Times" of London reported:

The government (of South Africa) is perfectly prepared to appoint a commission if the facts disclosed at the forthcoming inquest indicate that such a course is desirable. ¹²⁸

The tragedy elicited various reactions. John Dube of the Zulu Congregational Church saw that "the tragedy suggests a sad mishandling of a serious situation". ¹²⁹ In Parliament John X Merriman said that "it was a very dangerous thing" ¹³⁰ while Lea, the Methodist minister and acknowledged expert on the separatist or independent churches, called the tragedy "a disturbance". ¹³¹ The event also made the Government concerned enough to consider forming a commission to investigate the "separatist" churches. Loram wrote:

The matter was brought up in Parliament, and while the action of the government in the "Israelite" affair was approved, it was decided to appoint a commission to enquire into the matter and also into the origin, nature and extent of the various religious organisations within the Union which are under native control. ... It made an exhaustive enquiry into the question of the separatist churches. ¹³²

At the General Missionary Conference held in 1922 Hill reported

¹²⁷ Ibid, 29

¹²⁸ The Times, 30 May 1921

¹²⁹ Edgar, R 1988 Because they chose the plan of God Johannesburg:Ravan Press, 36

¹³⁰ Edgar 1977 Fifth seal, 2

¹³¹ Lea 1925 Separatist churches, 13

¹³² Loram, Separatist churches, 477

that:

An inquiry was held in 1922 as to the number, character and origin of separatist churches in existence and later after the Bulhoek affair a commission sat on the subject under the aegis of the Native Affairs Commission. ... In 1922 there were discovered 65 such bodies most of them purporting to have their headquarters on the Rand ...

Some of these 65 bodies have seceded from missionary churches in comparatively recent times and many of them are the result of subsequent secessions from those secessions. By far the largest and most important of them is the African Methodist Episcopal Church ... ¹³³

Sixty-five separatist churches were sent questionnaires by the Commission. Their answers record their reasons for leaving the mission churches. In many cases the notes from missionaries also show what caused the schisms.

Information on the causes of schism found in the answers to the questionnaires ¹³⁴

These questionnaires did not encompass the full extent of the evidence placed before the Commission but reflected the opinions of independent church leaders and interested persons. The following churches are among those from which secessions took place. Zionist-type secessions took place from the Apostolic Faith Mission. In spite of the influence of Daniel Bryant, the American Pentecostal missionary from Zion City near Chicago, most of people questioned who belonged to this category, considered themselves ex-Dutch Reformed Church because PL le

¹³³ The evangelisation of South Africa being the report of the sixth General Missionary Conference of South Africa held at Johannesburg 30 June to 3 July 1925, 112

¹³⁴ The answers to the questionnaires are to be found in MS 14, 787 (f), Cory Library, Grahamstown.

Roux, who had been their original missionary, had first belonged to the DRC.

The questionnaires provided information on why people left denominational churches to join independent churches. The main schisms and the causes of schism are listed below.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church

The AMEC, founded in America in April 1816 by Richard Allen, an African-American, was invited to come to South Africa by Mokone and other members of the Ethiopian Church in 1896.¹³⁵ By 1925 the AMEC had come to be seen by many of the independents in the same light as the mission churches due to their overseas control and American leadership.

People left the AME Church for various reasons. The earliest defections were those in the Ethiopian Church who initially refused to join the AMEC with Mokone and Dwane. Dwane himself defected to form the Order of Ethiopia. Disillusionment with American leadership was one of the main reasons why people left the AMEC. With Americans in charge there was little opportunity for local leaders to fill the top positions. Other reasons given were the wish to belong to the original "Ethiopian" movement (for example, the ECCin Z) and a desire for an Anglican form of worship. Churches founded by people who left the AMEC were:

Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion (the word "Catholic" was added to distinguish it from the Ethiopian Church which joined the AMEC)

African Cathedral Episcopal Church

Brethren Mission Church

National Church of Ethiopia (rejected American control)

African United Ethiopian Church (ex Ethiopian Church)

¹³⁵ The following were the successive Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church: Turner, Coppin, Smith, Johnson, Beckett and Vernon. Evidence by SJ Mabote.

African Gaza Church (for Shangaans from Zimbabwe)
Rhodesian Seventh Church Mission

Churches which seceded from the American Board Mission ¹³⁶

The (Congregational) church started by this missionary society was known as the American Zulu Mission. According to Marks ¹³⁷ "although the Wesleyan Methodist and the United Free Church of Scotland converts had contributed to the general political and religious awakening among the Africans", because they had a large white membership they escaped the "odium which attached to the American Zulu Mission" with its all-Black membership. ¹³⁸ The American Zulu Mission (previously the American Board Mission) felt the effect of a number of Ethiopian schisms. Marks writes that "their congregational structure may well have predisposed ... to schism" ¹³⁹ as there was more apparent control by the people than in a hierarchical church structure. Black church leaders felt more confident of controlling their own affairs and when this authority was denied them they formed their own independent churches.

African Congregational Church (1917)

¹³⁶ The American Board of Missions was formed in 1810 at the request of a group of college students who petitioned the General Association of Congregational Churches to form a missionary society. In 1812 missionaries were sent to India. Work in South Africa began in 1835 with the arrival of six missionaries and their wives - Daniel Lindley, Henry Venables and Alexander Wilson who first worked in the northern Cape, and Newton Adams, Aldin Grout and George Champion who established the work in Natal. In 1837 Lindley, Venables and Wilson joined their colleagues in Natal. (Kotze, DJ 1950 Letters of the American missionaries 1835-1838 Cape Town:Van Riebeeck Society, 14 and 15) By 1925 the work of the American Board was centred in Natal, mainly on "mission reserves" like Groutville.

¹³⁷ Marks, Reluctant rebellion, 81 and 62

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Marks, Reluctant rebellion, 62

The founder of the church was Gardiner Bartiman Mvuyana who lived in Johannesburg. The church was founded in September 1917 with Mvuyana as head and the Basuto section under the leadership of Stephen Motsamai. Mvuyana said that he left the American Zulu Mission because white missionaries held the rights to the property of the African churches in Durban which were registered in the name of the Congregational Church of the American Board. The ABM missionary Bridgman's evidence differed - he said that at first Mvuyana and his followers refused to admit that they had a grievance. Then he discovered that "the reason underlying his action (was that)...he was afraid that charges of immoral conduct would be brought against him" ¹⁴⁰

Zulu Congregational Church (1898)

This church was formed in February 1898 because of "the independent Ethiopian feeling which ran very strong amongst all mission societies during the period 1892 to 1902". ¹⁴¹ There was a disagreement between the white missionaries at Table Mountain (Natal) and those in Johannesburg over ownership of property belonging to the African church. The Africans wanted their church property registered in the name of their own church, according to Congregational practice.

The original leaders of the Zulu Congregational Church were Fokoti Makanya and Simungu Shibe. In the unsigned statement a leader of the American Zulu Mission said that although Shibe "stood firm for the standards of morality in which he was trained under the American mission", he had difficulty in controlling his followers. He remarked that "this sect suffers from a chronic state of quarrelling and dissension. There are usually several who claim to be head". ¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ MS 14,787 Statement by the Rev FB Bridgman dated 7 December 1921.

¹⁴¹ Zulu Congregational Church - notes on statements submitted by leaders of the same. Ibid

¹⁴² MS 14,787 (Cory Library) Unsigned statement on the Zulu Congregational Church.

A further problem, common to many of the Independent churches was brought to the notice of the Commissioners:

It is significant as a commentary on standards for the ministry that while the American Board Mission after 85 years labour in this land has only 15 ordained native ministers, the Zulu Congregational Church claims to have 32 according to this evidence. I am positive that Thomas Sibisi's (the leader of the ZCC) statement that there are about 6 000 members in their church is very, very much exaggerated ... ¹⁴³

This statement, while not intending to, reflects the reluctance of the white missionaries to ordain African preachers. Lack of status and responsibility were causes of frustration among many of the men who broke away from mission churches. The statement also reflected the hope for government recognition (by quoting inflated church membership numbers) of the independent leaders because with recognition came privileges like the granting of marriage licenses, church sites and free rail passes.

Some schisms from the Zulu Congregational Church (therefore also from the ABM)

African Mission Home Church (1907)

This Johannesburg church was established as the founder, PS Ngwenya's, appointment as a preacher was not approved by Shibe of the ZCC.¹⁴⁴ The cause of Ngwenya's secession was his lack of responsibility in Shibe's church. Mistakes that led to secession in mission churches were often repeated in independent churches.

¹⁴³ Ibid

¹⁴⁴ MS 14,787 (Cory Library) In a paper read at the NERMIC conference held at Witwatersrand University in July 1994 entitled "The Zimbabwe Ethiopian Church", RS Roberts of the University of Zimbabwe said that the East African Gaza Church of ES Mashinga was a breakaway from the Zululand Congregational Church. However, in evidence to the 1925 Commission J Ntuyana (ex SA Compounds Mission) said that he founded the East African Gaza Church in 1907.

In this case Shibe did not want to delegate the responsibility he had gained by leaving the mission church.

Congregational Church of South Africa (1914)

The Congregational Church of South Africa was founded as the result of a breakaway from the Zulu Congregational Church by Abraham Zungu who accused his ZCC minister of misappropriating funds.

Some schisms from the Apostolic Faith Mission

The Rev PL le Roux (born 1864) was the Dutch Reformed missionary at Wakkerstroom. His belief in faith healing led to disagreement with the DRC authorities. Le Roux and some of his African congregation were baptised by Bryant, the missionary from Zion City in America, and became "Zionists". When the Apostolic Faith Mission was established in Johannesburg in 1909 le Roux joined the new church and in 1915 became leader of the AFM. The "Zionists" were not allowed to join the white church so le Roux left the Wakkerstroom work in the hands of his African helpers.¹⁴⁵ Le Roux hoped to form his Wakkerstroom congregation into a black branch of the AFM. Many of the Zionists formed their own churches because of this "colour bar". Some of these Zionists gave their previous church affiliation as Dutch Reformed, so may be considered "Ethiopian-type" Zionists.

Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion (1904)

The name of the group that le Roux left behind at Wakkerstroom became the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion. They remained under the control of the white AFM.¹⁴⁶ The testimony of Ndhlovu, a member of the group, shows the lack of pastoral care which led to secession:

¹⁴⁵ See the evidence of EN Mahlangu of the Zion Apostolic Church who claimed to have been left in charge at Wakkerstroom.

¹⁴⁶ MS 14,787 Statement by the Rev John Philips: "I am a minister of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion which is under the control of white people". Philips himself was not white.

We originally belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church which we left to join the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion. We simply followed the Rev le Roux. ... We left the CCAC in Z because the European minister who succeeded le Roux was dismissed from the church by the American authorities. He advised us to start a church of our own under native supervision. We did so. ¹⁴⁷

Christian Apostolic Church in Zion (1920) The members of this church were also previously members of le Roux's Wakkerstroom congregation. ¹⁴⁸ They, too, were advised to start their own church when le Roux's successor, Powell, was sent back to America.

It was this confusion that led Daniel Nkonyane, who had also been a member of le Roux's "Zion" church, to say that they had struck out on a new road and were not to copy the worship of the Whites. ¹⁴⁹ Nkonyane became the founder of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion.

African Christian Baptist Church (1907)

The founder, TM Zungu, was originally a member of the Wakkerstroom Dutch Reformed Church under le Roux. He was baptised by Bryant and left because of the "colour bar". ¹⁵⁰ According to Zungu the new church (the AFM) was a "combined system of both

¹⁴⁷ Ibid Statement by Jacob Ndhlovu Mr HM Powell was the General Overseer in South Africa but in 1920 the Rev Dr Voliva of Zion City, USA, Overseer for the world's work in Zion, dispensed with his services so that Powell resigned the CCAC in Z. The vacancy was not filled. WG Voliva was Dowie's second-in-command. Dowie called him: "that scoundrel Voliva, miserable little cur, traitor and thief". (Sundkler, Bantu prophets, 48)

¹⁴⁸ MS 14,787 Statement by J Ndhlovu, the founder of the church. "Mr le Roux seceded three years before us".

¹⁴⁹ Sundkler, Zulu Zion, 50

¹⁵⁰ "Colour bar" meant not being able to join the white AFM with their missionary, le Roux.

Dutch Reformed Church and Zion".¹⁵¹ Another church in this category was the Christian Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa (1920) started by PM Mabiletsa.

Bethesda Zion Apostolic Church of Africa (1919)

Some of the causes of schism appear trivial but show lack of white understanding of black religious preferences. For example, the members of this church left the Christian Catholic Church in Zion because "the Overseer, the Rev John G Philip, wilfully wore boots during the administration of the Holy Eucharist and refused totally to wash his feet".¹⁵² The secessionists considered this "against Scripture" .

Zion Apostolic Faith Mission (1912)

The founder, ET Lion, was baptised in the Zion Catholic Church but said that he was "appointed by God" to have his own church. A "divine call" was frequently found in independent churches especially those with Zionist leanings.

Zion Apostolic Church

EN Mahlangu, the head of this church, cited PL Le Roux as the founder of the church. He was elected to that position when le Roux joined the Apostolic Faith Mission which was an "European church".¹⁵³ However, the ZAC became an independent church and not part of the AFM.

Some schisms from the Baptist Church¹⁵⁴

African Ndebele Church (1919)

J Mongoni founded an independent church because some of the

¹⁵¹ MS 14,787 Report of the African Christian Baptist Church (of South Africa)

¹⁵² MS 14,787 Constitution of the Bethesda Zion Apostolic Church of Africa

¹⁵³ MS 14,787 (Cory Library) Statement by EN Mahlangu

¹⁵⁴ The first Baptists to settle in South Africa were 1820 British settlers. The Baptist Union was formed in 1877.

members of the congregation in the Baptist Church at Boksburg preferred to belong to a church controlled by their own race. This cause of schism was given by leaders of many of the churches.

National Baptist Church of South Africa

JD Mtselu, the founder of this church, left the Baptist Church because "his" (the one he supported) minister died. He felt loyalty to a person rather than a denomination.

Some schisms from the Church of England ¹⁵⁵

Although there were schisms from the Church of England, the Order of Ethiopia became part of their organisation when they decided to rejoin a mission church. The following are schisms from the Church of England:

The African United Church (1912) - the founder left the C of E when he was transferred to another district. He felt that he should have been allowed a "free hand in the district". He also felt that the Bishop treated him "unsympathetically". ¹⁵⁶

African Cathedral Episcopal Church (1906)

The founder, S Temba, left the C of E because he wanted to belong to a church "controlled by one of our own race and colour" and not because he had "any grievance against the Church of England". ¹⁵⁷ Stirrings of African nationalism were often a cause of schism.

¹⁵⁵ Although there were Anglicans at the Cape before the arrival of Bishop Robert Gray in 1848, that is the date generally accepted for the establishment of the Anglican Church in South Africa.

¹⁵⁶ MS 14,787 Statement by Joel David. A statement by Father Hill said that David was a Deacon who later returned to the C of E.

¹⁵⁷ MS 14,787 Statement by S Mndaweni. Temba first joined the AME before starting his own church. It is unclear whether the real reason was "colour bar" or growing African nationalism. He left the AME because he missed the "doctrines" of the C of E.

National Catholic Episcopal Church (1912)

NC Moloatsi left the C of E because "the Bishop would not ordain any fresh Native ministers and he would not make any provision for those who had grown old in the work of the church".¹⁵⁸ Complaints against mission churches included lack of promotion in church ranks and unwillingness to ordain indigenous clergy as well as lack of pastoral care.

African Free Catholic Church (1914)

The founder, Seboa, was a preacher in the C of E from 1897. He left because the ministers that the congregation knew were "continually leaving and being replaced by others from England". The new ministers had no knowledge of the language or customs of the people.¹⁵⁹ He resented, too, the fact that young white ministers were put in charge of elderly black ministers.

Some schisms from the Methodist Church¹⁶⁰

One of the earliest Ethiopian schisms was Nehemiah Tile's Tembu National Church in 1884. The next schism of note was the breakaway by Mangena Mokone in 1892 to form the Ethiopian Church which amalgamated with the AMEC in 1896.¹⁶¹ From that time onwards there were a number of churches formed by men who broke away from the Methodist church. These included:

African Native Mission Church (1884) - who claimed Nehemiah Tile as their founder as well as the African Native Church established in 1892 by Jonas Goduka, Tile's successor.

¹⁵⁸ MS 14,787 Statement by NC Moloatsi. A letter to the Commissioner of Native Affairs asked what the church was doing for "our blind, old and invalided preachers".

¹⁵⁹ MS 14,787 Statement by PR Seboa

¹⁶⁰ The first leader of the Methodist Church in South Africa was Sergeant J Kendrick, a soldier during the second British occupation of the Cape. The first full-time minister was the Rev Barnabas Shaw who arrived in 1816.

¹⁶¹ See chapter 3

Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa (1884)

Another church which claimed to be part of the church founded by Nehemiah Tile. They claimed to be "the original Ethiopian Church" and added "Catholic" to the name to distinguish their church from the one that joined the AMEC. ¹⁶²

Christian Brethren Meeting (1912)

Caluza, the founder of this church, belonged to the Methodist Church but worked for a member of the Plymouth Brethren, Mr Irving of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Caluza felt that the teachings of the Brethren were "more in accordance with the Bible". ¹⁶³

Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion (1904)

Samuel Brander was one of the first members of the Ethiopian Church. He was baptised in the Methodist Church, later joined the Church of England and was, with Mokone, a founder of the Ethiopian Church which amalgamated with the AMEC. He left the AMEC to start his own church because he was "generally dissatisfied". ¹⁶⁴

Ethiopian Church of South Africa (1909)

HR Ngcayiya, the founder, belonged in turn to the Methodist Church, the Church of England, the Ethiopian Church and the AMEC. The reason he gave for leaving the AMEC was the it was controlled from America.

The African Ethiopian Church (1918) was started by JM Luhlengwane, a Methodist, who "felt it his duty" to join the

¹⁶² MS 14,787 Statement by K Rasimeni

¹⁶³ MS 14,787 Statement by MM Caluza. Caluza had previously been a member of the Rev James Allison's church at Edendale and left with him when he joined the Presbyterian Church. Although Caluza rejoined the Methodist Church he had already felt the impact of might have led to schism. (See chapter 4)

¹⁶⁴ MS 14,787 Statement by S Brander

Ethiopian Church of South Africa. He was not happy in that church so formed his own.¹⁶⁵

Gazaland Zimbabwe Ethiopian Church (1914)

Mhlauli, the founder, felt a call to preach to his own people from Zimbabwe. He a vision in which he was told him to start his own church. He had previously belonged to the Methodist and Ethiopian Churches.

The Holy Missionary Evangelist Church (1915) was also established as the result of a Methodist (AD Solomon) receiving a vision which led to him founding a church.

Independent Methodist Church of Africa (1906)

The founder, J Msimang, did not want to be transferred to another part of the country so seceded from the Methodist Church.¹⁶⁶

The founders of a number of independent churches claim to have belonged to the New Jerusalem Church (Swedenborgian) after leaving a mission church.¹⁶⁷ Although there had been white members of the Swedenborgian Church living in South Africa as early as 1838, the church only gained favour with Africans after an African, David William Mooki, read a copy of Swedenborg's "True Christian religion" in 1909 and resolved to follow his teachings.¹⁶⁸ Mooki founded the New Church in Africa in 1911.

¹⁶⁵ MS 14,787 Together with the statement from Luhlongwane is a letter from the Rev Botterill of the Methodist Church saying that Luhlongwana was expelled for immorality.

¹⁶⁶ See chapter 4

¹⁶⁷ Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) lived in Sweden where he taught that a new church was being formed to replace the church of his life time. It would be called "The Church of the New Jerusalem". He taught that the old church had come to an end because the priests and ministers had ceased to preach the truth. Kingslake, B 1981 Swedenborg explores the spiritual dimension London:Seminar Books, 12

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 170

Those who had belonged to his church before founding their own churches called it "The New Jerusalem Church". The reasons for joining the Swedenborgian church included the influence of the charismatic leader, Mooki and the mistake of equating "Jerusalem" with "Zion". The independent leaders who testified before the commission thought that they were joining a church belonging to the Ethiopian movement and left when they found they were mistaken.¹⁶⁹

Mzimba, (not the Presbyterian PJ Mzimba) founder of the Native Christs Church of Africa in 1919, left the New Jerusalem Church because Mooki had told the new members that the church was under black control but it was actually controlled by Whites. The New Church of Christ was founded J Xasa when the secessionists could not agree with a white Swedenborgian minister, Father Bennet. These people also accused Mooki of ill-treating them. Luhlongwane founded the Universal Church of Christ in 1919 because "it was the wish of a number of the members of the New Jerusalem Church that I should found a new church".¹⁷⁰ None of the new independent churches continued to follow the doctrines of the Swedenborgian Church but returned to those of either the Church of England or Methodists.

Doctrine and schism¹⁷¹

Ethiopian-type schisms often kept the doctrines of the mission churches from which they had broken away. These were the doctrines that they had been taught by the missionaries. The church polity of the original mission church was also often adhered to as it was seen to have been successful as far as administration was concerned. With time and further secessions

¹⁶⁹ The independent also discovered that Mooki's church was controlled from America. However, Mooki retained close ties with the Ethiopians.

¹⁷⁰ MS 19,787

¹⁷¹ For a list of independent churches which follow the doctrines of the various mission churches see Appendix 2.

the doctrines of the original mission church were adapted to the needs of African culture and the individual separatist church. Some of the church members perceived the doctrines of their church differently to the founder, for example, the founder of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion, Samuel Brander, stated to the commission that the doctrines of his church were similar to the Church of England while two of the church members stated that they were similar to the Methodists. ¹⁷²

It did not necessarily follow that the name of the independent church included the name of the church from which the founder had seceded. A number of churches included "Ethiopian" in their names, especially those which had a connection with the original Ethiopian Church. It is interesting to note that two of the churches which claimed Nehemiah Tile as their founder, the Ethiopian Catholic Church and the Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa, use the word "Ethiopian" but make no mention of the Tembu National Church which he originally founded.

Churches using the word "Apostolic" in their name usually had some connection with le Roux's church at Wakkerstroom, for example, the Apostolic Faith Assembly and the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission.

REASONS FOR SECESSION CITED BY WITNESSES BEFORE THE COMMISSION

The following reasons for schism have been collected from the testimony of the independent church members who provided information for the commission. They included both church founders and ordinary members. Some of those interviewed gave more than one reason for leaving their previous church. Others had belonged to more than one previous church and gave different reasons for leaving each one. Still others had only been members of the independent church to which they now belonged. One man said that before joining his present church he had been a "heathen". The reasons for each schism provided by the witnesses

¹⁷²

For further information on the doctrines followed by the independent churches questioned see Appendix 2.

have been recorded.

The following are the factors that led to schism: ¹⁷³

Wish to be controlled by their own race or colour:	31
Refused transfer to a church in another area:	4
Disapproved of way of baptising people:	9
Tribal conflict - Zulu/Sotho in the CCAC in Z:	1
Wish for a Saturday Sabbath:	1
Founded church for Mozambicans on the mines:	1
Left the mission when minister died or left:	7
Saw need for preachers in the Independent Church:	2
Left because of discipline:	3
Visions led to starting own church:	2
No direct descent from apostles in mission church:	1
Accusations of immorality (either own or ministers):	8
Disagreement with white ministers:	13
Indifference of white ministers:	9
Disapproval of or friction between black ministers:	13
Disputes about finance in the church:	7
No wages:	15
Joined founder of church because friends or family:	1
Only ever belonged to an Independent Church:	8
Previous indifference to religion:	2
Transferred because of doctrinal preferences:	1
Followed the minister when he left the mission church:	3
Resented overseas control (AME):	4
Wished to start own church:	3

The largest number of witnesses said that they wished to belong to a church controlled by one of their own race or colour. This reason was often accompanied by another cause for discontent such as lack of wages. The latter reason (no wages) fell into two categories. Firstly, there were lay preachers in churches like the Methodist church who felt that they should be paid for

preaching, although the policy of the church was to pay only ordained ministers and evangelists in the full-time employ of the church. The other category came from churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission who expected the congregation to support the minister and also to provide money for the funds of the central church. Albert W Monareng of the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission complained that when he had asked the Apostolic Faith Mission for wages he was told to "trust in God", so he joined the ZAFM.

Complaints about disagreements with or indifference from ministers took a number of forms. One witness complained that the white minister wore his boots while serving the Eucharist. Another testified to lack of pastoral care saying that when his child was ill the black minister had refused to visit him. Accusations were also made that black and white ministers were treated differently by an Anglican bishop.

Accusations of immorality led to disciplining and expulsion from both mission churches and schismatic churches. For example, Mvuyana of the African Congregational Church was accused of immorality by both the mission church and by members of the independent church he founded.

Visions, such as those experienced by Enoch Mgijima of the Israelites (the massacre of the Israelites was a deciding factor in forming the 1925 Commission), were seen by other independent leaders too. Such "shamaan" experiences were seen as a "call" to found a new church. For example, PM Mhlauli testified that he "founded the Gazaland Zimbabwe Ethiopian Church because I had two visions which revealed to me the name of my church and called to me to found the GZE Church".¹⁷⁴

Three witnesses admitted that the reason that they established Independent Churches was because they themselves wanted to be

¹⁷⁴ MS 14,787 Statement by Petros Mayengani Mhlauli.

head of a church. One such was BJ Mavundla who stated:

I originally belonged to the AME Church which I left to found the African Gaza Church because I wished to start a church of my own. ¹⁷⁵

Secessions from one independent church to form another occurred for various reasons. For example, S Thejane of the African Province Mission stated:

We originally belonged to the African Mission which we left to start the African Province Mission as there was a dispute about the finance of the African Mission. ¹⁷⁶

Notes made on statements submitted by leaders of the Zulu Congregational Church by a member of the American Zulu Mission concluded with: "This sect suffers from a chronic state of quarrelling and dissension". ¹⁷⁷ This statement applied to other churches too. For example, Moshanyana of the Apostles Brethren Church of South Africa left the Brethren Mission Church because of conflict with his uncle, the founder of the latter church.

The mines on the Witwatersrand employed workers from neighbouring countries. The South African Compounds Mission worked among the miners but foreign miners often left the Mission to form their own churches because of discrimination by local miners or the wish to preserve their own identity, for example the East Coast Gaza Church (Mozambican), the African Gaza Church (the founder first belonged to the AMEC but they "treated us Shangaans badly").

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Statement by Benjamin John Mavundla. His church was founded on 5 May 1907.

¹⁷⁶ MS 14,787 Testimony by Simon Thejane.

¹⁷⁷ MS 14,787 (Cory Library)

Ntuyana, one of the witnesses, said that he left the S A Compounds Mission because "all the denominations objected to us East Coast natives forming a burial society as they stated we would be collecting monies for our society which should rightly be paid into the church".¹⁷⁸ Burial societies were important in African culture and provided necessary support for people far from home.

As seen from the above analysis the causes of schism were many and varied. The Report of the Commission summarised these causes.

THE REPORT OF THE NATIVE CHURCHES COMMISSION - 1925

The Report of the Commission endeavoured to give a fair and unbiased account of the evidence that had been placed before them. To a large extent they were successful in doing this. The great majority of the witnesses, both White and Black, had recommended that the government attitude towards the movement should be one of toleration.¹⁷⁹ This toleration is reflected in the Report when dealing with the Independent Churches, although the wording is somewhat less tolerant when reporting on the Bulhoek affair.

The report began with a discussion on "Native political and industrial societies". Among these societies were those: "whose activities may be regarded as disturbing by the section of the European population which has known only the humble respectful

¹⁷⁸ MS 14,787 At the NERMIC conference held at Witwatersrand University in July 1994, in a paper entitled 'Mutual aid in the African Independent/Indigenous Churches', S Maboea said: "The Burial Society is an organisation established in many AIC's. ... Although the initial introduction of a burial society was simply to help with funeral expenses, it has increasingly become essential that all members assist within the home of the deceased soon after the death of a member has been reported... Monthly contributions are to be paid to the treasurers on a stipulated Sunday".

¹⁷⁹ UG 39/25, 36

Native of the servant type".¹⁸⁰

The societies included in the report were:

***The African National Congress** - "While the flamboyant extravagant utterances of this body are often disappointing ... its actions have hitherto been constitutional".¹⁸¹

***The Bantu Union** - "a political organisation in the eastern Cape ... that has always cooperated loyally with the government".¹⁸²

***The Industrial and Commercial Union** - "it aims at uniting the Native workers into some trade union combination. ... it suffers from the fact that several of its leaders are foreign-born Natives".¹⁸³

***The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union** - "a rival organisation".¹⁸⁴

***Negro Mutual Improvement Society and African Communities League** - This was the creation of Marcus Garvey an American. Africans lost money when Garvey was imprisoned for fraud in America. There were four branches of this society in Cape Town.¹⁸⁵ (This was where the AME Church with its American connections was strongest.)

***Criminal societies** - on the mines and in the larger industrial towns. These were dealt with by the law.

The next section explored the history of the Israelite movement and sought reasons for tragedy. Criticism was levelled at both the police and the Israelites. The "local authorities appeared

¹⁸⁰ UG 39/25, 5

¹⁸¹ Ibid

¹⁸² Ibid

¹⁸³ UG 39/25, 6

¹⁸⁴ Ibid

¹⁸⁵ Ibid

to have acted weakly'" ¹⁸⁶,the action of the police was regretted and the criticism of the Israelites showed lack of understanding of the causes of separatism. For example, Enoch (Mgijima) was regarded as a man of "inordinate vanity ... with great influence over ignorant followers". ¹⁸⁷ Mgijima and his brother Charles taught "the crazy notion that the day was coming when the black man was to have his freedom".¹⁸⁸

The commissioners then began to discuss the independent churches from a general point of view. They felt that "occasionally really dangerous men will secure the control of these groups as did the Mgijimas in the case of the Israelites and trouble will follow" However, the members of the commission felt that "religious, social and political organisations will continue to exist" because of the "African's fondness for social gatherings". Another reason was "their traditional group system of government, partly to an imitation of the methods of the Europeans and partly to a desire to express their dissatisfaction with the government". ¹⁸⁹

The fact that "religious organisations " were included in the above demonstrated that the Commission felt that these criteria also applied to the separatist churches.

The origin and extent of the independent churches was examined to try and assess the reasons why they had been established. The report stated that: "The spread of the separatist movement among native churches and the results springing therefrom are matters of the greatest concern to the government ..."¹⁹⁰ The commissioners had received the impression that there was a growth

¹⁸⁶ UG 39/25, 15

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁹ UG 39/25, 17

¹⁹⁰ UG 39/25, 18

of race consciousness with the secessions from mission churches as one of its expressions. The commissioners had been "disappointed at the trivial reasons advanced in explanation of or reasons for the various secessions"¹⁹¹, not allowing for the fact that the trivial reason that finally led to the schism may have been the final step in a long process.

The testimony of the witnesses showed that it had not been difficult for Africans to accept Christianity because their own traditional religion had already taught them about "Unkulunkulu or Morimo, the creator, the father of the nation".¹⁹²

The report emphasised the value of the work done by the earliest missionaries who "learned their language" and "associated with them on terms of greater equality, his house was open to them ... and he became more intimate with them than is the case today".¹⁹³ The commissioners had received numerous complaints regarding the attitudes of present day missionaries. These included:

*The conviction that the "colour bar" feeling had entered religion.

*Modern missionaries compared badly with the early missionaries as regards patience, energy and brotherliness.

*The modern missionary had "become the superintendent of a group of native evangelists rather than the evangelist himself".¹⁹⁴

*While African clergy had been used from the beginning, the "requirement of a long period of preparation, unmistakable proof of fitness for their office and the growth of maturity was demanded".¹⁹⁵ This "maturity" was not always

¹⁹¹ Ibid

¹⁹² Ibid, 19

¹⁹³ UG 39/25, 20 and 21

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 21

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

seen in the behaviour of white missionaries. The sometimes unattainable standard expected of the indigenous ministers led to their ordination being postponed with resultant frustration.

There was a perception of a weakening of the influence of the "European" among the Africans interviewed. The urban African had become disillusioned with white authority. The disillusionment began with the influx of African labour into the towns and the discovery that Whites were not all as kind as the missionaries in the rural areas had been. Town habits such as the use of alcohol were acquired and if the missionary tried to impose discipline the miscreant often either left to join a separatist church or founded his own.¹⁹⁶ Many of the independent churches arose out of "extreme social distress like detribalisation, urbanisation, culture clashes, natural disasters and socio-racial conflicts".¹⁹⁷

It was pointed out that the churches in South Africa had neither history or tradition to hold the converts if they wanted to leave. While Africans found it difficult to reject tribal customs or laws, to leave a mission church counted "but little" because church history in South Africa could "only go back three generations in time".¹⁹⁸

Education was seen as another "inevitable cause for dissatisfaction with Christian missions"¹⁹⁹ because "education and self-judgment in religious matters" led to "loss of faith in

¹⁹⁶ UG 39/25, 22

¹⁹⁷ Pillay, GJ 1988 "The use of functional-type theories in the study of Independent Christian Movements: a critique" in Neue Zeitschrift fur Missionswissenschaft 44 1988/2, 128. Pillay refers to this as "the social disorganisation theory".

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

the orthodox European missionary".²⁰⁰

The early schisms from missions churches - Nehemiah Tile's Tembu National Church, PJ Mzimba's African Presbyterian Church, Mokone and the Ethiopian Church and Dwane and the involvement of the African Methodist Episcopal Church were then discussed. The first "secession from a secessionist body" took place from the AMEC - the Ethiopian Catholic Church which did not wish to belong to the American church.

The principle reasons for the establishment of "native separatist" churches, as perceived by the commissioners, were then discussed. It was difficult to "get the truth" as the independent church leaders did not "readily give the real reasons for their actions".²⁰¹ Many of the people interviewed were not even sure why they had separated from the mission church. The following are the reasons for schism gleaned from the interviews:

*Desire for independence on church matters - seen as the chief cause for schism and connected with a growing African nationalism.

*"Colour bar" amongst White missionaries - this included lack of sympathy, insensitivity and lack of fellowship.

*Secession of members placed under discipline - with discipline from the mission church was coupled personal ambition for status.

*The example of "Europeans" - denominationalism was cited by many witnesses as an example for secession.

Further reasons for schism included:

*Personal ambition and an easy way of earning a living.

*Tile's Tembu Church was used as an example of a church which supported tribal identity.

²⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁰¹ UG 39/25, 24

*A church in conformity with native custom - this was a reaction to the missionary habit of suppressing African customs as belonging to the old life. ²⁰²

*Desire to control properties and funds - Whites had the perception that it is difficult for Blacks to manage their own church money. Most of the problems arose where ownership of land was vested in a mission society and not in the local church.

The attitudes of the parent church, non-seceding and heathen natives towards secessionists were examined. ²⁰³ It was noted that after a secession there was sometimes a considerable amount of bitterness, both on the side of the mission and of the secessionists. This made reconciliation virtually impossible. This did not usually apply to the local church members who remained on good terms with those who had seceded.

The separatist churches were accused by the commissioners of having little interest in converting the "heathen" but of recruiting their members from mission congregations.

Ceremonies and rites of the separatist churches, anti-white feeling and the religious and social work of the separatist churches were all of interest to the commissioners and found their place in the report. While most of the independent churches kept to the practices of the parent mission church, in some of the churches new ceremonies were introduced. In separatist churches all social life became centred around the church.

In answer to the accusations of the commissioners the separatist churches denied having any anti-white feeling and yet by the very act of secession anti-white feeling was engendered. The commission felt there was a difference in the personal morality of the mission clergy and those from the separatist churches.

²⁰² Ibid, 28

²⁰³ Ibid, 29

Church organisation was felt to be more lax in the separatist churches. This generalisation applied to a few of the independent leaders but many more were men of integrity.

The members of the commission saw that the future of the "separatist" movement depended on the power of the independent bodies to agree among themselves, on the attitude of the mission churches towards their black churches and the recognition afforded the independents by the government. Union between the independent churches could only be obtained through "a strong, properly articulated organisation, higher entrance standards and a proper course of training for the ministry".²⁰⁴ At the time of the commission one of the witnesses spoke of a meeting of independent leaders being initiated by the AMEC in an effort to achieve unity. However, in spite of many efforts the independent churches have never united.

The mission churches were urged to find ways of giving their black churches more responsibility while the government was warned to be tolerant. Conditions for the recognition of African churches were to be reconsidered. The criteria were:

*Age - recognition only after 10 years of continuous existence and then only if the church had a constitution, schools, buildings and other signs of growth.

*Size - there should be at least six congregations with their own meeting places.

*Training and qualification of ministers to be examined.

205

204 UG 39/25, 35

205 UG 39/25, 38 Many of the early Ethiopian leaders had attended church training institutions, for example Joel Msimang of the Independent Methodist Church attended the college at Edendale while Nehemiah Tile and James Dwane attended Healdtown Methodist Institution. Lack of education was an accusation levelled at the ministers ordained by Bishop Turner of the AME. Many of the independent churches found these educational requirements very difficult to fulfil.

*Ethical standing of minister and members - the ministers had to show that they were morally capable of handling the "civil functions of their office".²⁰⁶

Comparison of the Report with the questionnaires

While the Report attempted to give an accurate picture of the causes of schism reflected in the questionnaires, it dealt far more with attitudes towards the churches. The Commission considered that "trivial reasons" were given for leaving mission churches although it acknowledged that often the real reason was hidden.²⁰⁷

The responses to many of the questionnaires pointed to the wish for baptism to be public and by immersion (for example, as in the Baptist Church). This was only mentioned in regard to the Israelites where "public baptism ... must have been a great attraction".²⁰⁸ Other responses that pointed to "Africanness" in worship were not mentioned, for example "trivial" reasons like that of the minister who refused to remove his shoes while serving the Eucharist, in accordance with African understanding of respect for the sacrament, were not considered important.

Causes of schism that the commission considered important were the increasing African nationalism and longing for the responsibility to control their own religious affairs. In the questionnaires "control by one of my own colour" was by far the most general reason given for secession.

The commissioners condemned attitudes in the mission churches which showed lack of interest in the well-being of their African ministerial staff. The new "denomination" served to compensate for the lack of support experienced previously by independent

²⁰⁶ Ibid

²⁰⁷ UG 38/25, 18

²⁰⁸ Ibid

church leaders.²⁰⁹ The commission warned that the mission churches needed to reassess their attitudes to their African branches by allowing them greater independence and responsibility.

After 1925

In 1926 Jabavu reminded people of the government attitude to the so-called "native races", the climate in which the commission had undertaken its investigation. He said: "In South Africa the Blacks, out numbering the Whites by four to one have no franchise, except in the Cape Province". He quoted General Hertzog speaking to the Government Native Conference at Pretoria on 3 December 1925:

We are afraid and it may be that our policy is dictated by fear; be it so, but our fear is wisdom, for what we fear it is a bad future. We are anxious for a good future, a future of goodwill.²¹⁰

At the International Missionary Conference held in Belgium in 1926 Smith explained that:

Europeans in South Africa are under the influence of a terrible fear.... It is the prevailing belief, backed not so much by figures as by the Report of the 1921 census, that the Blacks are increasing so much more rapidly than Whites so as to threaten to swamp white civilisation by mere numbers.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Pillay, Functional-type theories, 130

²¹⁰ Jabavu, DTT 1926 "The South Africa problem" in International review of missions Special double Africa number July 1925 New York:Committee of reference and counsel, 378, 379

²¹¹ Smith, EW 1926 The Christian mission in Africa A study based on the work of the International Conference at Le Zoute, Belgium, 14-21 September 1926, 155

Jabavu pointed out that "white supremacy depended entirely upon the repression of the black man" and warned Africans that General Hertzog was intending to introduce a policy of segregation. This "colour bar" policy was totally unacceptable.²¹² In the Report of the Commission (1925) "Native political and industrial societies" like the African National Congress and the Industrial and Commercial Union were discussed under the heading "disturbing influences among natives".²¹³

One of the results of the enquiry was that many more of the independent churches applied for recognition. However, after 1925 only two churches were recognised - the African Congregational Church (1937) and the African Orthodox Church (1941). As recognition was still difficult to obtain most of the churches applied a number of times. The Bantu Methodist Church, founded in 1933, was one of the churches whose repeated requests for recognition were refused.²¹⁴

African nationalism entered a new era with publication of the 1936 Land Bill. The number of Independent Churches proliferated with the growing nationalism. Economic factors, linked to the Great Depression which began in 1929, the effect of which was felt during the 1930's, led to the founding of a number of independent churches. Most of these were of the Zionist-type, but some, like the Bantu Methodist Church, were Ethiopian-type schisms from mission churches.

During the years between 1925 and 1955 a number of attempts at cooperation were made to consolidate the AICs. The earliest took

²¹² Ibid, 379 and 383

²¹³ Native Churches Commission, 1925, 5 and 6

²¹⁴ 921/214 (State Archives, Pretoria) eventual recognition was granted in 1951 after a request in October 1950. The first application for recognition was made on their behalf by a lawyer, Mr Max Cohn, in 1934 when their Constitution was sent to the Department of Natives Affairs "for recording purposes". 344/214 (State Archives, Pretoria)

place in 1919 when the Rev E Mkhize of the Anglican Church in Pretoria, convened a conference to establish a "United National Church of Africa". This was short-lived and in 1937 "The Bantu Independent Churches Union of South Africa" was formed by Zulu ministers of churches of Congregational origin. This lasted until 1944. In 1948 the "African Ethiopian Church Council" was formed. This was followed by the "Federation of Bantu Churches in South Africa". Finally, in 1963 - 1964, "The Interdenominational African Ministers Association" united ministers from both the Independent and the main-line churches in one organisation. ²¹⁵

LATER COMMISSIONS THAT PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO CAUSES OF SCHISM

The Tomlinson Report - 1955

Attitudes of main-line church leaders to the AICs in 1955 showed little change from the testimony given to earlier Commissions. The Bishop of Natal considered that "most of the sects are very definitely anti-white. ... Bantu intellectuals may sneer at their ignorance but ... seek to use their influence". ²¹⁶ The Bishop of Zululand said that the AIC's were "undermining the work which the various churches had painstakingly built up ...". ²¹⁷

The AIC's were considered "strange religions" and the Moravian mission representative said the "untrained or self-made ministers are a menace to the people ..." while "a good and well-trained African minister had great influence on the people ...". ²¹⁸ The Report recommended the freezing of government recognitions as there were already 78 recognised AICs and the "Bantu" did not need any more. However, it was pointed out that all 11 of the separatist churches examined by the commission were self-supporting, self-governing and self-expanding in comparison with

²¹⁵ Sundkler, Bantu prophets, 50 -53

²¹⁶ Kerklike aspekte van die verslag van die Kommissie vir sosio-ekonomiese ontwikkeling van die Bantoegebiede binne die Unie van Suid-Afrika, hoofstuk 40, 79

²¹⁷ Ibid

²¹⁸ Ibid, 80

only 10 out of 33 mission churches.

The commission of enquiry into certain organisations - The Christian Institute - 1975

The Christian Institute was founded in 1963 to continue the ecumenical dialogue commenced at the Cottesloe Consultation in 1960 by bringing together Christians of all races.²¹⁹ They initiated a programme of training for independent church leaders.

In 1975 when a Commission of Inquiry was established to investigate the Christian Institute, the Rev Danie van Zyl was questioned about the work being done for the independent churches by the Institute, because he had written an article entitled "The political future of the African Independent Churches".²²⁰ His evidence coincided with the perceptions of earlier writers and may be summarised in a series of generalisations as follows:

- * Members of Ethiopian Churches tend to be better educated than members of Zionist and Messianic groups.
- * All the AICs shared a reaction to the white man's culture which came with the Christian faith.
- * People left mission churches for different reasons (financial administration, discipline, leadership disputes) but underlying these was often a culture clash.
- * The AICs model themselves on mission churches but do not want to be like them. They want acceptance from the government, granting of marriage licences, sites for church buildings, etc so retain the historical church model.
- * There are often power struggles within the independent churches leading to further schism, hence it is unlikely that there will be a united African church.
- * Few political opinions are expressed and the AICs are concerned with religious work.

²¹⁹ Hofmeyr, JW & Pillay, GJ (eds) 1994 A history of Christianity in South Africa volume 1 Pretoria:HAUM Tertiary, 275

²²⁰ Commission of Inquiry, 50

* The African Independent Churches Association (of the Christian Institute) brought the AICs into prominence and made black leaders more aware of the numerical strength of these churches.

* The commission was investigating the feasibility of introducing a policy of separate development or "homelands". Van Zyl saw the AIC's as likely to support the "homelands" governments should they be established, because of the measure of independence they would afford. ²²¹

The Christian Institute was declared a banned organisation in 1977. Since the publication of the report of the Commission of Inquiry there have been no further investigations into the African Independent Churches.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDY 1: THE GENESIS OF THE ETHIOPIAN MOVEMENT IN THE
CAPE AND TRANSVAAL

"A desire to have an African church independent of the white man and expressing African cultural genius, dignity and self-reliance is as old as the period of conversion of the first Africans to Christianity".¹ This statement was especially true of the church started by Nehemiah Tile, the fore-runner of the Ethiopian movement.

Ten years before the establishment of Mangena Mokone's Ethiopian Church in 1892² Nehemiah Tile (d 1891) founded the Tembu National Church. He left the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1882 and in 1884 founded his own independent church. As the fore-runner of the Ethiopian movement he established the precedent for the formation of further independent churches. Tile was also the first minister to break-away from the Methodist Church and start an independent church.³ An interim report on the "separatist churches" written for the Native Affairs Commission declared that the numbers in Tile's church were small and "their secession would be unimportant had it not suggested the idea of a wider

¹ Lamola, JM 1988 "Towards a black church: A historical investigation of the African Independent Churches as a model" in Journal of Black Theology in South Africa volume 12 number 1, 5

² MS 10 697 (Cory Library, Grahamstown) In his typescript paper entitled "The Ethiopian movement" Stormont wrote: "The beginning of the Ethiopian movement ... goes back to the year 1882. In this year an evangelist named Tile in Tembuland seceded from his mother church, the Wesleyan".

³ In the early years of the Ethiopian movement the African Independent Churches were called "separatist churches". Thus Lea's book written in 1926 was entitled "The native separatist churches in South Africa". Tile's Tembu National Church is among those listed by Lea.

movement known as the Ethiopian movement".⁴

The founding of the Tembu National Church is significant because it was the first South African independent church. By calling his church a "national church" Tile was demonstrating the fact that it was a truly African church. To the African of the 1880's the tribe represented the nation and the idea of "Africa" was equated with the tribe. Tile also did pioneering work in assimilating African cultural practices, at that time rejected by the missionaries, into Christian worship and doctrine.⁵

When Tile founded the first purely African church in South Africa it was led by Africans, its membership was African and its missionary work was by Africans to Africans. Until that time all indigenous churches had been mission churches under white leadership.⁶

Nehemiah Tile was born in Tembuland and educated at Boloto. Little is known of him before the 1870's when he worked in Queenstown where he became a member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church⁷ and later a local preacher and evangelist. He was sent to Pondoland in 1870 where he became the personal friend of Paramount Chief Mhlontlo and Chief Lehane of the Basutos.⁸

⁴ SNA 3/2/4 dated 20 March 1922. Typescript of report on Native separatist churches (State Archives, Pretoria)

⁵ Lamola, Black church, 8

⁶ This statement does not take into consideration indigenous churches founded in the Transvaal by African pioneers which were later absorbed into the mission churches.

⁷ Skota, TDM (ed) 1933 The African yearly register being an illustrated national biographical dictionary (Who's who) of black folks in South Africa, Johannesburg: Easson & Co, 95 Tile was baptised by the Rev HH Dugmore, a pioneer Wesleyan Methodist missionary in the eastern Cape.

⁸ Ibid

In 1871 Tile was transferred to Shawbury with the Rev E Gedye.⁹ Shawbury was a mission station with a school but Tile did not remain there for long. In accordance with the Methodist custom of an itinerant ministry, in 1872 Tile was moved to the Clarkebury circuit under the superintendency of the Rev Peter Hargreaves.¹⁰ Here Tile enjoyed a successful ministry at Cwecini, near Clarkebury,¹¹ where the society "increased and revived".¹² He was given permission by Chief Ngangeliswe to build a church in 1873 and was also partly responsible for the

⁹ Gedye worked at Shawbury from 1864-1872. Shawbury was not one of the chain of mission stations planned by the Rev William Shaw but grew out of the work at Buntingville, the last link in Shaw's chain. (Mears, WG 1973 Mission to Clarkebury Cape Town: Citadel Press, 38 and 36) Shawbury was established in 1843.

¹⁰ The Rev Peter Hargreaves was stationed at Clarkebury from 1856 and remained in charge for twenty-four years during which time he "exerted a remarkable influence over the Tembus". (Ibid, 21 and 23 See also MS 15 207 An outline of the missionary background of the work of the Methodist Church in the district of Engcobo, 3 Cory Library, Grahamstown) Hargreaves followed the Rev Chubb as Chairman of the Clarkebury District in 1885 (remaining Chairman until 1905) In 1895 the Tembu Chief returned to the Methodist Church. As Hargreaves was a popular Chairman of District and a well-known pastor while Chubb's insensitivity had been the cause of Tile's split with the Methodist Church, the change in Chairmanship may be considered a reason for the Tembu chief's return to the Methodist fold.

¹¹ Clarkebury mission was started in 1830 when the Rev William Shaw introduced the Rev Richard Haddy to Chief Vossani and Haddy was allowed to establish a mission station. (Clarkebury Mission, Tembuland Centenary souvenir 1830-1930 The Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa, 8) On 1 January 1963 the Rev FdeW Mahlesala assumed duty as the warden of Clarkebury Institution thus ending a 132 year period during which white ministers were stationed at Clarkebury. (MS 14, 683, Cory Library, Grahamstown. Letter from Mr Coggin to the Department of Bantu Education, Umtata dated 5 May 1963)

¹² Minutes of the Queenstown District Meeting, 1873 (Cory Library, Grahamstown See also Balia, Ethiopian movements, 74)

establishment of the Umgwali school.¹³ During these years he had no real responsibility as the Cweceni church was under the authority of the superintendent of the Clarkebury circuit.¹⁴

On the recommendation of the (white) ministers in the Synod Tile was sent to Healdtown Institution, the Methodist training institution near Fort Beaufort in the eastern Cape. After spending three years in theological study¹⁵ Tile was accepted as a probationer minister in 1879. He left the Methodist Church before he could be ordained into its ministry.

In 1883, after he had left the Methodist Church, Tile's name was mentioned in the Methodist Minutes of Conference as having worked at Xora in the Clarkebury district.¹⁶ It was here that he came into conflict with the authorities, both clerical and colonial. Political causes played a greater part in Tile's secession than in the establishment of any of the other Ethiopian-type churches.

Tile left the Methodist Church in 1882 after a disagreement with the Rev Theophilus Chubb, his District Superintendent (Clarkebury District).¹⁷ The immediate cause of the schism was that Chubb

¹³ Skota, 1933 yearly register, 95

¹⁴ The South African Methodist 26 May 1892, 128 (Cweceni and Engcobo are under the superintendent of the Clarkebury circuit)

¹⁵ James Dwane, member of the Ethiopian Church and then leader of the Order of Ethiopia, was also trained at Healdtown.

¹⁶ The first South African Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church was held in Cape Town in April 1883. Prior to this the South African Methodist church had been under the jurisdiction of the British Conference. The Transvaal District remained under British control because of the financial burden of funding missionary work in Zimbabwe.

¹⁷ Theophilus Chubb was born in 1841 near London, England. He was ordained a minister of the Methodist Church in 1867 and a year later came to South Africa. He worked first at Cradock before moving to Healdtown as Vice-President of the Training Institution. From

was angry and disciplined Tile for donating an ox to the circumcision feast of Dalindyebo, the son of the Paramount, Ngangelizwe.¹⁸ There were also other more complex underlying factors.

Tile's break with the Methodist Church occurred because of the adverse attention his political activity drew from the colonial authorities. Tile had become the close advisor of the Tembu Paramount which met with resistance from his District Superintendent, the Rev Chubb. For example, it was Tile's defense of the paramountcy that first brought him to the attention of the Cape Native Affairs Department who complained to his superiors. The allegations against Tile included hostility to the magistrates in Tembuland, addressing public meetings on the Sabbath, as well as donating an ox to the circumcision of Dalindyebo, the son of the Paramount.¹⁹ Tile did not see anything wrong in the latter action which was a natural part of tribal ritual, but Chubb had little understanding of or patience with African culture.

Ngangeliswe, the Chief, wanted less control from the government at the Cape and "informal links with the British Crown".²⁰ Tile was accused of acting against the Cape government by telling the Tembu people to stop paying taxes. From 1884, when he established

1873 to 1884 Chubb worked at King William's Town, Lesseyton, Osborn and Clarkebury Training Institution. It was while he was at Clarkebury that he clashed with Nehemiah Tile. Chubb died in 1916 in England.

¹⁸ Ngangelizwe had close ties with the Methodist Church at Clarkebury. His father died when he was still a child and he had become Paramount of the Tembus. From 1858 Ngangelizwe became a student at the Clarkebury Institution living in the home of the minister, the Rev Hargreaves. (Clarkebury Mission Tembuland Centenary souvenir 1830-1930 The Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa, 13

¹⁹ Saunders, Tile and the Tembu Church, 555 and 556 See also Skota, 1933 Yearly register, 96

²⁰ Ibid, 557

his own church, Tile made further demands for less government control over the Tembu people ²¹ and supported the chief in his desire for independence and the unity of the Tembu people.

It appears that the Wesleyan Methodists' decision to discipline Tile followed on a request from the Cape Department for Native Affairs, evidence of the close cooperation between the Methodist Church and the colonial authorities in that area. ²² Tile was called to appear before a minor Synod to account for his actions. When he refused to be transferred from Tembuland he was asked to resign from the ministry of the Methodist Church. ²³

Two years after he left the Methodist Church Tile founded (in 1884) the Tembu National Church, at Qokolweni, near Umtata in the Transkei. Tile had great respect for the authority of the British Crown and this was reflected when he made the chief the head of the Tembu National Church, a copy of the church in England where

²¹ Ibid, 559 In June 1884 Tile wrote to the Cape Argus and set out his demands. "Here in Tembuland there are only two men - Gangelizwe, the lord of all, and Matanzima, the hand, speaker and eye for his brother Gangelizwe. ... To make justice and civilization we want help from the government and from missionaries to fill our country with education and we want missionaries to preach the gospel to us. We think these two can make justice and civilisation in our land, not the ill-treatment." He also wrote "we want to rule our own country as the above. We want the unity of the Tembu people. We want to be under the Government of Queen Victoria, ruled by one magistrate ... We do not want our lands to be in farms. We want our country to be filled up with education and Christianity". Tile wanted "the unpleasantness in Tembuland' to be "rooted out". He wanted one magistrate and one Paramount Chief. (Cape Argus 23 June 1884 in Balia, Ethiopian movements, 81 and 82)

²² Campbell, J 1987 Conceiving of the Ethiopian movement Unpublished African Studies Seminar paper. University of the Witwatersrand 7 April 1987, 15

²³ Lea, Separatist churches, 26

the Sovereign was head of the Church.²⁴ He decided that the Tembu National Church would follow Anglican doctrine. Tile applied to register as a theological student at the Anglican St John's College in Umtata in order to learn the doctrines of the Church of England.²⁵ In leaving the Methodist Church Tile was not reacting against the Christian church but against the insensitive way in which the policies of the Methodist Church were implemented.

For a time Tile met with "extraordinary success" as members from other mission churches flocked to join his church.²⁶ Tile later added the words "South Africa" to the name of his church. The Tembu National Church of South Africa served the Tembu people who wanted to belong to the church of their chief, and by adding "South Africa" Tile also included non-Tembu people. The original name fell away when the influence of Tile's church spread to the Transvaal and the church ceased to serve only the people for whom it had been formed. The members of the church became known as "Tilites".

In 1884 when Chief Ngangeliswe died his son, Dalindyebo, succeeded him. For a number of years Dalindyebo supported Tile's church and even gave permission for the erection of a church

²⁴ Lamola, Black church, 8 writes: "As if to ridicule the English history of the Wesleyan Church, Tile ordained Chief Ngangeliswe as the head of the tembu National Church, just as the Queen of England was the head of the Church of England". Other writers, such as Saunders, disagree with this interpretation.

²⁵ Minutes of evidence, volume iii, 634 Evidence of the Rev William Goodwin, Anglican missionary. Goodwin had known Tile personally and said that "the ideal of a national church had been borrowed from the Church of England, and Dalindyebo was to be the secular head and Nehemiah Tile was to be the high priest". Actually it was Dalindyebo's father who became head.

²⁶ Ibid, 27 Lea wrote "churches and outstations of the older church were his hunting grounds; all were more or less harassed, some were even decimated". See also Skota, 1933 Yearly register, 96

building near his Great Place. The foundation stone was laid in 1890, a year before Tile's death. However in 1895, due to the persuasion of African Methodists like JT Jabavu, Dalindyebo rejoined the Methodist Church²⁷ and Tilites were no longer welcome at the Tembu Great Place.²⁸ Another result of the return of the Chief to the Methodist fold was that he (the chief) no longer held the position of head of the Tembu National Church. Dalindyebo, with the approval of the chief magistrate, Major Elliot, asked the Wesleyan Methodist Church to accept the site and building of the Tembu National Church at Mqekezweni. He said that he and the tribe had withdrawn their support from the Tembu National Church which had joined the Ethiopian movement.²⁹ Saunders considered that in the relationship between the Tembu National Church and the Ethiopian movement, the "other independent churches drew inspiration from Tile's church".³⁰

When Tile died in 1891³¹ he was succeeded by Jonas Goduka although on his death-bed Tile had given three ministers who he had ordained, Gqamani, Kula and Mkize, the task of continuing the work of the Tembu National Church. These men were illiterate and their ordination was not by a mission church so Goduka, an ordained Methodist minister, who was already disenchanted with

²⁷ Pretorius, HL 1993 Ethiopia stretches out her hands unto God Aspects of Transkeian indigenous churches Pretoria:ISWEN, 17

²⁸ Clarkebury mission, 6 Chief Regent of Tembuland, Chief Dalindyebo said: "If we trace the royal line of Tembu chiefs ... we will find that they have all been members of the Methodist Church".

²⁹ Lea, Separatist churches, 28

³⁰ Ibid, 566

³¹ Saunders, Tile and the Tembu Church, 563. See also Pretorius, H 1990 "Nehemiah Tile A 19th century pioneer of the development of African theology" in Journal for the study of religion volume 3 no 1, 10 Tile: "was buried at Gengqe near Mqanduli where, years later, a tombstone was erected with the inscription: 'Rev Nehemiah X Tile Founder of the Ethiopian Church of Africa in 1884 Died 21 November 1891' ".

the Methodist Church, was asked by the members to lead the Tembu National Church. Later there was a split in the remaining membership of the Tembu National Church. Goduka changed the name of part of the church he led to the African Native Mission Church. Gqamani became the leader of the Ethiopian Catholic Church whose membership comprised eastern Cape "Tilites".

Jonas Goduka (1846-1914), born near King William's Town in the eastern Cape, was not a Tembu but of Ngqika origin. During 1874 and 1875 he studied general teaching subjects at Healdtown,³² after which he taught in Somerset East. In 1884 he became a candidate for the Methodist ministry, was ordained in 1885 and was appointed to Blikana, an African village in the Queenstown district.³³

In 1895, when Goduka was in charge of the Tembu National Church of South Africa, Chief Dalindyebo, who had remained loyal to that church during Tile's life-time, was reconciled with the Methodist Church. Membership of a mission church carried privileges not granted to independent groups, for example the approval of the colonial powers and mission education.³⁴ The church founded by Tile ceased to be the official church of the Tembu tribe. Therefore, in 1898, Goduka formed the non-tribal African Native Church with its headquarters at Herschel in the eastern Cape.

³² Goduka and Tile probably were acquainted with each other, not only from attending Methodist Synods but from their time at Healdtown. James Dwane also attended Healdtown at more or less the same time as Tile and Goduka.

³³ Minutes of Conference 1890 Cape Town:WA Richards, 15 and 2 The names and addresses of "ministers" and "native ministers" are listed separately. Goduka is listed as having candidated in 1881 and his address in 1890 was Blikana, Bensonvale, Herschel, Aliwal North.

³⁴ Clarkebury mission, 6 Chief Regent of Tembuland, Chief David Dalindyebo: "If we trace the royal line of Tembu chiefs from Chief Ngubencuka to Chief Jongilizwe we will find that they have all been members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church". The split with the formation of the Tembu National Church occurred later.

Goduka belonged to Mokone's Ethiopian Church for a short while but returned to his own church when the Ethiopian Church joined the AMEC. The church was later renamed the African Native Mission Church. Goduka died in May 1914.³⁵

Three other groups also claimed Nehemiah Tile as founder. The first of these was the Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa. The word "Catholic" was added to the name to "distinguish us from those of the original Ethiopian Church who went over to the AME Church".³⁶ The Rev Rasimeni who said he was the head of the church in 1922, told the commissioners that when Tile died Bishop Gqamana became head of the Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa. He held the post until 1917 when he was "relieved of his position" because he "encouraged polygamy, ordained ministers from other denominations and interfered with the ministers in the diocese of another bishop". He also handed out licences to preach without conferring with the other ministers.³⁷ Rasimeni, himself, was reputedly excommunicated at a conference held at Queenstown in 1921 so should not have had the task of testifying for the commissioners, although he still considered himself in charge. The fact that he was contacted is evidence of the lack of communication between government officials and the independent churches. This was often due to the frequent change in leadership but also because the independent churches were under African control and were not answerable to the government for their religious organisation.

The Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa had a number of leadership disputes. In 1917 when Gqamana was forced to leave the

³⁵ MS 14,787 Testimony by Enoch Bolotana Goduka.

³⁶ Ibid, Testimony by K Rasimeni.

³⁷ MS 14,787 Testimony by K Rasimeni, the head in 1922 of the Ethiopian Church of South Africa. Rasimeni had been introduced to the Ethiopian movement by Mangena Mokone but refused to join the AMEC in 1896 so joined the Tilites. He did not provide a reason for his decision.

Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa he and another member, the Rev Orpen Reuben Potwana formed the Ethiopian Catholic Church.³⁸ They divided the church into dioceses and Potwana called himself "Archbishop".³⁹ This was reminiscent of Tile's adherence to Anglican doctrines.

Both these churches claimed to be the original church founded by Tile. Skota⁴⁰ in 1933 provided particulars of yet another church which claimed Tile as founder. This was the Tembu Catholic Church, the Tembu remnant of Tile's original church.

Tile's church did not have direct links with the Ethiopian Church of Mangena Mokone until after his (Tile's) death. Mokone would have heard about the Tembu National Church from Methodist circles and from Tembu workers who arrived in the Transvaal during the 1890's to work on the mines. Mokone met Goduka in 1894 and they reached "a favourable understanding."⁴¹ Saunders said that "in founding his church Mokone was directly inspired by Tile's example".⁴² However, whereas Tile's church was tribalistic Mokone's Ethiopian Church was to be consciously non-tribalistic.

Factors leading to the formation of the Ethiopian Church

The first members of the Ethiopian Church broke away from the Methodist Church in Pretoria in 1892. For this reason a short overview of the establishment of the Methodist Church in the area is included to show the involvement of the early Ethiopian leaders in the mission work of the Methodist Church.

³⁸ The words "of South Africa" were dropped to differentiate between the two branches.

³⁹ Ibid, Testimony by O Potwana.

⁴⁰ Skota, TDM (ed) 1933 The Yearly register Being an illustrated national biographical dictionary (Who's who) of black folks in Africa Johannesburg:RL Esson, 351

⁴¹ Skota, 1933 Yearly register, 209

⁴² Saunders, Tile and the Tembu Church, 566

The Methodist Church in the Transvaal was first established in Potchefstroom. Here David Magatta,⁴³ the first known pioneer African evangelist, started a church before the arrival of missionaries. He had been converted at the Methodist mission at Thaba 'Nchu and arrived in Potchefstroom in about 1866 where he started to preach the Gospel in the name of the Methodist Church. Magatta's work was discovered in 1871 by the Rev George Blencowe from Natal who was on an exploratory expedition.⁴⁴

By 1872 there were a number of white Methodists who lived in Pretoria⁴⁵ as well as African Methodists who lived in or near the town. These African pioneer preachers like Klaas Ndlovu (the Methodists called him Oliphant) who worked at Aapies River⁴⁶ and Hans Aapie⁴⁷ who worked further north at Makapan's Kraal had been converted while working in the Cape Colony and had

⁴³ In 1908 the Rev Amos Burnet wrote: "The founder of our church in the Transvaal was not a fully equipped and formally appointed missionary, but a simple and uneducated native, named David Magatta". (Burnet, A 1908 A mission to the Transvaal London:Richard Hulley, 30. David Magatta was originally from the Rustenburg area. He was born in about 1814 and when Mzilikazi and his troops swept across the Transvaal in the 1830's Magatta was taken prisoner. At Mosega, Mzilikazi's stronghold, he met the American Board missionaries Daniel Lindley, Henry Venables and John Wilson. In 1838 Magatta escaped and went to Thaba 'Nchu where he was converted and also educated. He was given "a note to preach", Methodist terminology for permission to serve as a lay-preacher, by the Rev William Shaw, Superintendent of the Albany District. Magatta returned home but by 1866 was in Potchefstroom preaching as an evangelist of the Methodist Church. Magatta died in 1874.

⁴⁴ Notices of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society 1878, 62

⁴⁵ Notices, 1897, 132 Report by the Rev JS Morris.

⁴⁶ Notices, 1891, 84 Biographical sketches

⁴⁷ Minutes of the Transvaal District Meeting held at Potchefstroom in 1885. Candidates for the ministry 1886

returned home in about 1870 and started Methodist societies ⁴⁸. The Methodist Church took over the churches the pioneers had founded and although they did not always agree with Methodist practice, neither Ndlovu or Aapie considered leaving the Methodists to join an independent group. ⁴⁹

In 1880 Pretoria became the centre for the "Trial Mission" which was started in the Transvaal, administered from Natal. The Natal District offered one "European" missionary and two "native agents" for the work. They pledged themselves to raise one hundred pounds per annum towards the cost of the "native agents" and two hundred pounds per annum for five years for the "European" missionary.⁵⁰ The Rev Owen Watkins was appointed as the "European" missionary and the two "native agents" were the Revs Daniel Msimang who went to Swaziland, and Mangena Mokone who worked in Pretoria as a preacher and teacher in the school he established.

In 1884 a school was started at Potchefstroom. The Rev JG Benson was the first warden and Mr Henry Ntsiko, ⁵¹ a school teacher from Pretoria, assisted him. The majority of the first seven

⁴⁸ "Society" is the Methodist name for a local congregation. A number of societies form a "Circuit" and a number of circuits form a "District." The Districts are represented at Conference, the highest gathering for organising church affairs. The exact date that the pioneer preachers returned to found their churches is not recorded.

⁴⁹ The name H Aapie appears among the records of the first members of the Ethiopian Church but there is no mention in Methodist records of the pioneer preacher Aapie having left the Methodist Church.

⁵⁰ Supplementary resolutions of the Natal Synod, 1879 "This meeting rejoices to learn that the Missionary Committee has resolved to begin a new mission to the Transvaal". Watkins "offered himself" for the work in the Transvaal.

⁵¹ Henry Ntsiko was accepted as a candidate for the ministry in 1888 and served as one of the first Methodist ministers in Johannesburg. Notices 1891 Biographical sketches.

students were selected from Mangena Mokone's school in Pretoria.⁵² However, by March 1886 Pretoria was seen to be a more central position for the training institution. The new institution was named Kilnerton after the Rev John Kilner, the secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.⁵³ It was here that Mokone first thought of founding the Ethiopian Church.

Mangena Maake Mokone⁵⁴ (1851-1934) was a member of Sekhukhuni's tribe from Bogaga in the Eastern Transvaal.⁵⁵ He was the second son of a subordinate chief⁵⁶ who was killed in the Swazi war of

⁵² Mphahlele, MCJ 1972 The Methodist venture in education at Kilnerton (1886-1962) (An historical-critical survey) Unpublished M Ed thesis University of the North, Pietersburg, 58

⁵³ The farm Koedoespoort was offered to the Rev Owen Watkins by the Standard Bank for R3 000 instead of the market price of between R7 000 and R8 000. At the same time a number of African members of the church had complained to him that they had nowhere to live as they were not allowed to own land in the Transvaal. Watkins wrote to the Committee in England asking for permission to buy the farm. (Ibid) He was told to go ahead and Weavind concluded the deal. (Notices September 1885, 16) See also Notices, March 1897, 134 "In 1886 Kilnerton Farm became the permanent home of this (the educational) work".

⁵⁴ This is how Mokone himself spelt his name. SNA 1/1/440 1909/2647 (State Archives, Pietermaritzburg) Letter from Mangena Maake Mokone requesting the gold medal of exemption. Other spellings of the name exist - "Mokoni" and even "Molsoni" in the biographical sketches in the May 1891 Notices. The name "Moses" is also used eg by Saunders in Tile and the Tembu Church, 566

⁵⁵ Notices 1891 Biographical sketches, 113

⁵⁶ Verryn, TD 1972 A history of the Order of Ethiopia Cleveland, Transvaal: Central Mission Press (1st ed 1957), 61. See also MS 15,432 Transvaal missionary papers Report of Mokone's visit to his home village on 14 December 1886. See also Karis, T & Carter, G 1977 From protest to challenge A documentary history of African politics in South Africa volume 4 Political profiles 1882-1964 Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 93 and Balia, D 1985 A study of the factors that

1863.⁵⁷ The Rev George Weavind reported in 1890 that Mokone had told him that:

While he (Mokone) was still a very little boy the Swazis attacked the tribe and his father and nearly the whole of the people were killed. Mangena fled and with another little fugitive found his way to Durban, Natal. Here he became a kitchen boy to a Wesleyan lady (Mrs J Steele), who took great interest in him, taught him to read, and induced him to attend our Sunday and night schools.⁵⁸

Mokone arrived in Pietermaritzburg in 1870 hoping to find work. He worked on the sugar plantations of Mr Acutt and after six months he had earned six pounds. He took his money and went to

influenced the rise and development of Ethiopianism within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa 1874-1910 Unpublished M Th thesis University of Durban-Westville, 87

⁵⁷ Skota, Yearly register 208. Mokone was the son of Maake, the son of Kgate, the son of Moniqiweta, the son of Mokone. His mother was the daughter of Sephate. The detailed biographical details indicate how important Mokone considered his ancestry in placing him within the tribal hierarchy. As Mokone died in 1935 these details come from his own testimony. Mokoni was the name of an early chief of the Bantwane tribe who lived in the Pretoria district. (Short history of the Native tribes of the Transvaal 1905 Pretoria:Government Printing Works, 46 and 40)

⁵⁸ Notices May 1891 Biographical sketches, 113. Verryn, Order of Ethiopia, 61 wrote: "Mokoni (sic) ... left home at the age of nineteen to work in the sugar cane fields of Natal" Roux, E 1964 Time longer than rope A history of the black man's struggle for freedom in South Africa Madison:University of Wisconsin Press, 79 wrote: "In 1870 he went to Natal and worked there for 10s a month on the sugar plantations in order to buy a rifle. After some months he went to Durban where he worked as a domestic servant and attended night school". These details are to be found in Skota, Yearly register, 208.

Durban.⁵⁹

In 1885 Mokone described how in the morning when he swept the bedroom he would see the book (the Bible) that Mrs Steel, his employer, read each day and he wished he could read.⁶⁰ Mokone attended the Aliwal Street Chapel and night school where he proved an excellent pupil.

One Sunday Mokone heard a local preacher, Mr T File,⁶¹ preach about how pits were dug to trap animals and how the devil uses the same strategy to trap people. Mokone was converted and became first a teacher, then a preacher and then a native minister in Pretoria.⁶²

In 1874 Mokone was baptised by the Rev Damon Hlongwana and in 1875 he returned to Pietermaritzburg to attend classes in elementary theology. The college in Pietermaritzburg was founded by the Rev J Allison at Edendale. The Rev Joel Msimang of the Independent Methodist Church later also became a student at the college.

Mokone became a local preacher, working as a carpenter by day and preaching at revival meetings at night. On one occasion his congregation, stirred by his preaching, are reported to have been moved to tears. A white neighbour complained and said: "Vuka boy" - (get up boy) to the congregation. The Rev Rowe, the Circuit Superintendent, was sent for and was requested to replace Mokone

⁵⁹ The South African Methodist 16 December 1885
"Missionary items". Interview with Mangena Mokoni
(sic), 574

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ PR 3949 (Cory Library, Grahamstown), 14

⁶² S A Methodist, 1885, 574

with a more moderate preacher. ⁶³ Mokone, however, continued to preach in the black Methodist Church in Durban in spite of this request.

In 1880 when the Annual Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church met at Pietermaritzburg Mokone was among those accepted into the ministry. Daniel Msimang was also among those accepted as "native assistant missionaries". In 1881 Daniel Msimang and Mokone were "on trial" ⁶⁴ which meant that they were not fully accepted into the ministry but were serving their probation. They would be expected to undergo training for the ministry before being ordained. At the District Meeting in 1881, the first to be held in the Transvaal, the need for African ministers was expressed. In the Minutes it was noted that "we are persuaded that the only way by which we can reach the millions of Africa is by the multiplication of native ministers". ⁶⁵

In 1881 Msimang was sent to Swaziland and Mokone should have joined him there, but was prevented from doing so by the first Anglo-Boer War. So Mokone worked at Newstead in Natal until 1882 before being appointed to Pretoria where he proved a great success. ⁶⁶ At the meeting of "Native ministers and agents held in Pretoria on 19 November 1883" the Rev Watkins noted that:

Mangena Mokone began work in Pretoria with 6 in the congregation and three children in the school. ... The

⁶³ Skota, Yearly register, 208 The first sermon that Mokone preached was on the text "And if thy right hand offend thee cut it off, and cast it from thee ..." (Matthew 5:30) This is in effect what Mokone did to the Methodist Church when they "offended him".

⁶⁴ Both local preachers and probationer ministers serve a term "on trial" to ensure that they are really called to the task of preaching and the lay or ordained ministry.

⁶⁵ General summary of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Meeting, 1881, 21

⁶⁶ Skota, Yearly register, 209

congregations have grown rapidly and the school also. The church is crowded and he has 45 children in the school. ⁶⁷

When Mokone began working in Pretoria (1882) he had been a successful teacher for six years and a diligent local preacher for four. ⁶⁸

Known as a man of considerable intellect and piety, assisted by Jeremiah Tabane, ⁶⁹ who had been a student at Kilnerton and was a fellow African minister, Mokone translated the Catechism into Sepedi. None of his achievements, however, helped him to gain recognition as a minister of equal status with the white ministers in the Methodist Church. This lack of recognition was one of the main frustrations Mokone encountered in his work in Pretoria and one of the determining reasons for his leaving the Methodist Church.

After serving their probation, in 1887 ⁷⁰ Mokone and Daniel Msimang were ordained into the ministry of the Methodist Church. Weavind wrote for the notices of the WMMS and said:

⁶⁷ Notes of the meeting of native ministers and agents held in Pretoria on the 19 November 1883 and following days.

⁶⁸ Minutes of a special meeting of the Natal Synod 1880. Report by the Rev Owen Watkins

⁶⁹ Notices, 1891, 114 "Jeremiah Tabane was brought as a little boy, by his father, a Christian man, from one of our missions in Soutpansberg, to Mr Watkins to be trained for the work of the church. On the formation of the Native Training Institution Jeremiah was admitted as one of the first students. ... He was appointed on leaving the Institution, to the Kilnerton station, where he has conducted a very successful school and become an efficient pastor".

⁷⁰ Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Meeting held at Potchefstroom on 5 November 1885 Mokone and Msimang were received "into full connexion" - they were no longer "on trial". General summary of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Meeting 1887, 169. Mokone and Msimang ordained.

I cannot refrain from referring specially to the service at which Mangena and Daniel were ordained. It was a memorable service, distinguished by the special unction that attended it all through. ⁷¹

In 1888 Mokone was appointed to the Waterberg mission in the Blue mountains north of Pretoria. While he was there leprosy struck the tribe. ⁷² At this time his wife of five years died from tuberculosis, leaving him with two small daughters.

1890 and 1891 were spent in Johannesburg in the new Witwatersrand Gold Fields Mission to those who had come to work on the mines. During these two years he made acquaintances who would later become supporters of his Ethiopian Church.

During the years that Mokone worked in the Transvaal racially separate district meetings became the accepted form of church government for the Methodist Church in the Transvaal. This was another major factor for Mokone finally leaving the Methodist Church. In 1882 the District Committee held a conference with the "native agents". The purpose for holding the meeting was recorded: "We received reports of the work in the various circuits. The Chairman took the opportunity to instruct these native teachers in several important points of Methodism". ⁷³ Later, one of the reasons which would be given for holding racially separate district meetings was the need to instruct African probationer ministers. In 1883 it was noted that: "We on several occasions gladly welcomed into our midst the native

⁷¹ Notices, 1888, 191 Note the usage of the first names. Even though they were being accepted into the ordained ministry their first names were used in accordance with the custom of the time. This would not have been the case if the newly ordained ministers had been white.

⁷² Minutes of the "Native" District Meeting held at Pretoria on 4 November 1888.

⁷³ Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Meeting 10 November 1882, 39

evangelists who had come from all parts of this extensive district".⁷⁴ From these words it does not appear that the indigenous clergy were full members of the Synod, even before separate meetings were made official.

In 1887 the "Native District Meeting" (a racially separate district meeting) was held at Kilnerton.⁷⁵ At the meeting Mokone and Jeremiah Tabane's work on the translation of the catechism was commended.⁷⁶ On the 4 November 1888 another separate "Native District Meeting" was held. Mokone's attended as a "native minister" - all the other African clergy were called "native assistant missionaries".⁷⁷ There were only two ordained African ministers in the Transvaal and Swaziland district - Mokone and Daniel Msimang.

During the 1890 "Native section of the District Synod" an enquiry was made into the character and work of all the paid native agents.⁷⁸ Klaas Ndlovu (Oliphant), the pioneer church planter at Aapies River was "charged by his Superintendent with insubordination and neglect of his work".⁷⁹ He had worked as a transport rider to earn more money, a practice which was not allowed by the Methodist Church which expected its ministers to be preachers and teachers and not take other employment. This

⁷⁴ Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Meeting held 16 to 20 November 1883, 59

⁷⁵ Ibid, 1887, 172

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Minutes of the Native District Meeting held on 4 November 1888 at Pretoria. At this meeting Tabane was received "on trial". In spite of his close association with Mokone, Tabane did not leave the Methodist Church. Daniel Msimang did not attend the meeting but in later minutes his name is also recorded as a "native minister".

⁷⁸ Minutes of the Native section of the District Synod held at Pretoria on 13 October 1890, 241 to 244

⁷⁹ Ibid

could have heralded the formation of an independent church because Ndlovu had moved a section of his church to another area and was holding his own services. However, Ndlovu was not willing to leave the Methodist Church. He was suspended by the meeting until he was willing to obey his superintendent minister, the Rev Weavind. In 1892 Mokone used the example of Ndlovu as one of the ministers who had been treated unfairly by the Methodist Church and Weavind was the person to whom Mokone addressed his complaint.

Another evangelist that Mokone felt had been wronged was Samuel Mathabathe of Soutpansberg. He, too, was not ordained but continued to work as a native assistant missionary under the supervision of a white missionary. In 1895, after Mokone had left the Methodist Church, Synod decided:

The meeting recognising the great and faithful services that Bro. Samuel Mathabathe has done for the Lord and Methodism for many years past, and seeing that through lack of educational advantages in his youth he is unable to do the examination work we all feel is highly necessary - we recommend that Bro. Mathabathe - he also having expressed his consent - continue as an evangelist. ⁸⁰

This statement, while expressing appreciation of his work, did not take into consideration ordination as a reward for a long and successful career, nor is there any thought that the standard of education required might be unnecessary for someone working in a rural congregation. In 1895 Mathabathe had been "on trial" for 10 years after pioneering the establishment of the Methodist Church in the Soutpansberg area long before the arrival of the missionaries. Mokone cited the lack of promotion for these preachers as one of the reasons for his leaving the mission

⁸⁰ Minutes of the Synod of the Transvaal and Swaziland District held at Johannesburg on 15 to 17 January 1895.

church.⁸¹

In 1892 the "Native section" of the District Meeting was again held at Kilnerton and Mokone was among those present. By this time there were thirty-one "native agents" listed but still only two ordained African ministers. In that year Mokone was transferred back to Pretoria from Johannesburg to teach at Kilnerton. It was while he was at Kilnerton that he left the Methodist Church to form his own church. He had actually meant to resign at the beginning of 1892 but he did not want to upset Watkins who was ill so he waited until Watkins retired before tendering his resignation.⁸²

On 24 October 1892 when Mokone was planning to resign from the Methodist Church he wrote:

I hereby give you notice that at the end of this month I will leave the Wesleyan Church ministry and serve God in my own way. It is no use to stop me for I won't change. If you like, I can pack up all I've got and leave tomorrow morning before breakfast.

Your grumbling servant

Mangena Maake Mokone⁸³

⁸¹ Minutes of the 1892 District Meeting of the Transvaal and Swaziland district of the Methodist Church

⁸² Veysie, Methodist Church, 136 Watkins had contracted malaria while on a journey to Mashonaland. For a profile of Watkins see chapter 5. Watkins made friends of his evangelists and also knew their families. See Watkins' letter to his wife dated 1 August 1885: "Got halfway to Aapies River to the place where David, Mangena's father-in-law lives". (Journal of Meth hist. volume 3 no 2 October 1958, 43) Watkins also learnt to speak Sesutu: "Been trying today to learn a little Sesutu from Michael (Boweni)". (Ibid, volume 3 no 3 February 1960, 94)

⁸³ Veysie, DC 1978 Wesleyan Methodist Church in the Transvaal 1823-1902 Unpublished Ph D thesis Rhodes University, 136

On 1 November 1892 Mokone left Kilnerton and moved to Marabastad (Pretoria). By the end of 1892 Watkins had retired and Weavind was Chairman of the District. Mokone wrote to Weavind asking for a certificate stating that he was a duly ordained minister of the Methodist Church and was leaving of his own accord and not for any reason of censure.⁸⁴

Mokone's reasons for leaving the Methodist Church

The Separate District Meetings for black and white ministers, one of the reasons why Mokone was dissatisfied and left the Methodist Church, were held from 1886. Another bone of contention was that the "Native" meeting had white minister as Chairman and secretary. From the Methodist point of view this was to free ministers from spending longer than was necessary away from their congregations. Language was another problem as most of the white ministers did not understand the vernacular languages. The meetings for the black candidates included teaching and examining sessions, usually conducted with the help of an interpreter.

Mokone wrote a letter to Weavind submitting his reasons for resigning. The letter was to be read to the District Meeting (Synod). The reasons were:

- * In articulating his resentment of separate District Meetings ("which had been separated from the English since 1886 without cause or reason") Mokone referred to the fact that all the African ministers were "on trial" or

⁸⁴ Moeti, Ethiopianism, 163 The Methodist Church had a special certificate for the "Transfer of members to or from the AME Church and Ethiopian movement". It read: "Conference advises that in the event of any of our members desiring to relinquish their membership in our Church, with a view to obtaining membership in any of the so-called Ethiopian movements, a certificate of membership shall, on request be given to such persons. That in the event of any members of such movements desiring to obtain or to renew their membership in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, such persons shall invariably be placed on trial for such a period as may be considered necessary". (MS 15,655 "Private circular", Cory Library, Grahamstown)

probationers and that there was only one "full minister" (himself). The minister had to act as interpreter. (Actually there were two full ministers, Mokone and Msimang, but Msimang was stationed in Swaziland and suffered from bad health so was often unable to attend).

* Mokone accused the white ministers of lack of understanding and not listening to the problems of black ministers like Hans Aapie and Samuel Mathabathe. The ministers were treated like "boys in the office" and had to do what the white ministers told them to do - "all what white minister said is infallible and all natives found guilty".

* African ministers received no family allowances. Mokone suspected that the separate meetings might have something to do with the Missionary Society not paying allowances for wives and children. He also said that there were different rules for black and white ministers, for example white ministers were not allowed to marry before they were ordained, while this did not apply to African ministers

* Even when an African minister was ordained the English probationers were given superior status. Mokone said that "there is no reason for that only colour".⁸⁵

* Poor wages (sixty pounds whether for a town or country station) and refusal to allow African ministers to use mission property for their personal convenience. Mokone cited the cases of black ministers who were not allowed to borrow mission waggons to transport their families. This did not apply to white ministers.

* Poor housing for black ministers. In Waterberg Mokone had to build his own house of reeds and skins.

* Overwork for black ministers and lack of care by white ministers for black church members. Black ministers were expected to preach three times on Sunday and to teach in school on the other days. They were also expected to run

⁸⁵ Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Meeting 1892 Mokone's reasons for resigning from the Wesleyan ministry.

class meetings, prayer meetings and visit the sick.

* Lack of friendship between black and white ministers. "There is no one can say I ever visit a native brother or no native ever an English brother ..." ⁸⁶ The white ministers were not available to guide black ministers with spiritual problems and their attitude was "let black preach to black for he has given himself for them".

* African ministers did not receive the British "Minutes of Conference" or the "Annual Report" and "Missionary Notices". Mokone had been in the ministry for 12 years and had never received these "privileges of a Methodist". ⁸⁷

* No recognition for work well done. As a teacher Mokone had only heard second-hand from others that his work was good. ⁸⁸ He asked: "What is good of me being a teacher?"

Mokone was willing to answer any questions that the Synod wanted to ask. He was sure that other black ministers felt as he did. However, he was not called upon to address the Synod.

In his letter to the Rev George Weavind as Chairman of the District Meeting, Mokone warned that if notice was not taken of these problems other ministers would also leave the church. He hoped that Weavind would "amend your rules and treat them poor fellows better (so) they will remain". ⁸⁹ On 1 November 1892 Mokone resigned from the Methodist Church. The following Sunday he organised the Ethiopian Church with 20 members. He had with him three local preachers - Reuben Dhlamini, Joshua Mphila and Jantje Thomson. ⁹⁰

An examination of the reasons shows that racially separate

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Skota, Yearly register, 209

district meetings were not the main reason for his leaving the Methodist Church, although racial discrimination was at the bottom of many of his allegations. Lack of understanding by those in authority was another important reason. Many of the reasons were personal. He felt the lack of status afforded him as an ordained minister. His house at Kilnerton was badly built and he could not "light a candle when the wind blew".⁹¹ Mokone's wife had earlier died of tuberculosis, a disease caused by poor living conditions.

Mokone saw himself as a supporter of the poor and oppressed - in that way he may be seen as an early liberation theologian. He took up cudgels on behalf of African ministers like Hans Aapie, Klaas Ndlovu (Oliphant), May Lotti and Samuel Mathabathe, all of whom had not been ordained although they were pioneer church-planters.⁹² He complained about the salaries earned by African ministers and about the housing provided for them, as well as about the lack of family support. If a black minister was humble he was made to feel stupid. Mokone experienced this himself at the College where he "was called one of the teachers but treated as one who does not belong in the school".⁹³

Mokone also stressed that if the white minister was in charge he ought also to visit the sick and dying, and not leave the everyday work to the black minister. He listed a number of people who "died without having a pray (sic) from his minister but black

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Minutes of the meeting of the District Committee of the Transvaal and Swaziland District held at Johannesburg on 11 November 1889. Among the names mentioned as "remaining on trial" were Samuel Mathabathe and Klaas Ndlovu (Oliphant).

⁹³ Coan's list of complaints called the "Founders declaration of independence" in Balia, Methodist origin, 91 to 93 differs slightly from the handwritten list in the Synod Minute Book of the Transvaal and Swaziland District.

one. Shame!".⁹⁴

Mokone did not see "any justice, brotherly love, sympathy or union" so he felt that "I must go and publish what I have received of the Lord Jesus. God is in heaven who will judge the wicked and the righteous". He continued: "Your doctrines are correct and I sincerely believe them and I will in future preach the same as usual".⁹⁵

At the 1892 District Meeting the letter was read to the other African preachers and ministers who assured Weavind that they were not dissatisfied with their treatment by the Methodist Church. They "disclaimed any responsibility for or sympathy with ... the action taken by Mangena".⁹⁶ Weavind recalled that when Mokone's wife died the Church had helped with the care of his two little girls, while Mokone himself had received financial assistance.⁹⁷ The white ministers could not understand why Mokone felt he could no longer remain in the Methodist Church.

Weavind in his reply to Mokone stressed the following points:

- * The District Synod was held in two sections for the training of "native" ministers.
- * All cases of discipline were heard in the "native" section and freedom of speech was allowed.
- * The Synod tried to give the "native brethren" sufficient for their needs.
- * Colour did not influence decisions.
- * Houses were suitable and equal. The Mission House at Kilnerton had been enlarged for Mokone at a cost of sixty-six pounds.

⁹⁴ Minutes, 1892

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Minutes of the Transvaal District Synod, 1892

⁹⁷ Ibid

* It was essential that the African ministers did the bulk of the pastoral work. Weavind denied that the white ministers had neglected visiting the sick.

* There had appeared to be a good spirit at the last Synod

* Mangena (Mokone) would be consulted about matters to do with the Institution. ⁹⁸

The reply came too late as Mokone had by this time left the Institution. Mokone's complaints concerned racial discrimination, lack of understanding, lack of pastoral care by white ministers and lack of responsibility. Weavind denied the existence of racial discrimination. His reply showed a lack of understanding of what had caused Mokone's dissatisfaction with the Methodist Church. The other African ministers, whether from conviction or expediency, refuted the charges of lack of pastoral care and the promise of more responsibility came too late to affect Mokone's ministry at Kilnerton.

Whiteside articulated (in 1906) the perceptions of the Ethiopian movement held by many white people. He said:

Book learning alone tends to the formation of exaggerated ideas of progress. Many natives cherish the belief that it is possible for them to climb in one generation up to the level which Europeans have taken many generations to reach ... Out of this immoderate estimate of themselves has arisen the Ethiopian movement, which is largely a revolt against the English missionary. ... Makoni (sic) ... aimed to form a religious community composed of, managed and maintained by natives only. ⁹⁹

It is not clear what the final cause was for the split. A number of factors not mentioned in the letter also played a part in

⁹⁸ Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Synod 1892. Reply to Mokone's letter by the Rev G Weavind.

⁹⁹ Whiteside, History, 281

bringing about Mokone's final step of leaving the Methodist Church - the death of his wife, the retirement of Watkins and the lack of support and fellowship at Kilnerton as well as his unfulfilled expectations of being accepted as an equal because he was a member of the teaching staff.

The Methodist Church authorities refused to be worried about the threat of Ethiopianism. The General Summary of the 1896 Synod noted that "some malcontents have been drawn away by the Ethiopian Church but the majority of our people remain loyal".¹⁰⁰ When the challenge of Ethiopianism was felt in 1897 the Synod noted that "the unique caring ministry of the black ministers, evangelists and local preachers ensured that few were enticed away".¹⁰¹

The Ethiopian Church

The name "Ethiopian" came from the verse Psalm 68:31 - "Ethiopia (or Cush) shall stretch out her hands to God". This was not a new concept. In Acts 8 the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch through the ministry of Philip led to the Gospel reaching Africa, making African Christianity earlier than its Western counterpart. The African Methodist Episcopal Church in America had used the same slogan from the late 1700's. Together with the slogan "Pity poor Africa"¹⁰² it was used to rally missionary support for Africa.¹⁰³ Shaw used the term in 1828 to describe

¹⁰⁰ General Summary of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Synod, 1896

¹⁰¹ General Summary of Synod 1897

¹⁰² Shaw, B 1970 (1st ed 1828) Memorials of South Africa Cape Town:Struik & Co, 50 Shaw thought that he heard the words "Pity poor Africa" in the "mournful dirge" of the slaves at Rio de Janerio. Also 158: Shaw said: "Pity poor Africa has long been my motto".

¹⁰³ Shaw, Memorials, 204 "By your pity for poor Africa; by your zeal for the Lord of hosts; you are intreated to put your shoulders to the wheel. Contribute the necessary supplies; offer incessant prayer to God for his blessing on the labours of his servants; and most assuredly that promise shall be fulfilled - 'Ethiopia

the mission-field in South Africa. Bishop Taylor of California who conducted revival meetings for the Methodist Church in South Africa during 1866, wrote: "I would hail it a privilege to lead a band of black native evangelists through the African continent till Ethiopia would not only stretch out her hands, but embrace Christ".¹⁰⁴

Preachers from other denominations besides the Methodists used the expression - the Presbyterian Tiyo Soga used the words in 1869 to argue against the possible extinction of the black races.¹⁰⁵ Mokone was using a tried and tested formula to advertise his new church when he named it the Ethiopian Church.

On the 20 November 1892 Mokone and twenty others held the founding service of the Ethiopian Church at Marabastad, Pretoria. Among those who attended were Reuben Dlamini, Jantjie Thompson, Joshua Mphela, Job Malembe, Gama Hlatwayo, Ginger Mahlali, Abram Mokone, James Henry Mazibuko and Samuel James Brander. Brander brought with him 157 members from the Anglican Church.¹⁰⁶

Another of the founder members was Jacobus George Xaba, an evangelist in the Methodist Church at Heilbron, Orange Free State. At the 1892 Synod of the Methodist Church in the OFS funds were set aside for the widows and orphans of ministers. Xaba wanted to know what was being done for the widows and orphans of

shall soon stretch out her hands to God' ".

¹⁰⁴ Taylor, W 1895 Story of my life An account of what I have thought and done in my ministry of more than fifty-three years in Christian lands and among the heathen. Written by myself. New York:Eaton & Mains, 382

¹⁰⁵ Williams, D 1978 Umfundisi A biography of Tiyo Soga 1829-1871 Alice:Lovedale Press, 100 Soga pointed out that such an unlikely event did not tally with: "the glorious prediction - the sheet anchor of the Church of Christ, and of the expectations of the toil-worn African missionary, - 'Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God' ".

¹⁰⁶ PR 3949, 17

EARLY ETHIOPIAN - TYPE CHURCH LEADERS



Rev. MM Mokone



Mrs. CM Maxeke



Rev. JM Dwane



Rev. PJ Mzimba



Rev. E Tsewu

African ministers. This led to a quarrel with his superintendent minister, the Rev CS Franklin. Xaba left the Methodist Church and founded a branch of the Ethiopian Church in Heilbron.¹⁰⁷

Mokone was later also joined by JZ Tantsi, Samson Mtintso, Marcus Gabashane, PS Kuze and Abram Mngqibisa.¹⁰⁸ James M Dwane joined Mokone's Ethiopian Church in 1896. Jonas Goduka was also among the people from Marabastad who joined the AMEC.¹⁰⁹

At first the Ethiopians met in the home of William Makanda, a Methodist with Ethiopian sympathies. In November 1893 the first church was opened in Marabastad. The Rev Weavind, Superintendent of the Methodist Church, was invited to dedicate the first Ethiopian Church but he was unable to attend so the service was taken by the Rev G Underwood. His text was Genesis 28:19 "And he called the name of that place Bethel ..." - the same text as was used by Bishop Francis Astbury when he opened the first AME church, Bethel Church in Philadelphia, in 1794.¹¹⁰ This was an unconscious foreshadowing of future events when the Ethiopian Church would amalgamate with the AMEC from America.

In 1893 Mokone visited Johannesburg where he interviewed local

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Marcus Gabashane was a minister of the Methodist Church in the Orange Free State and is credited with starting the AME Church in Lesotho. Jantjie Zachariah Tantsi was a teacher in the Wesleyan Methodist Church "before being attracted to the Ethiopian movement. In 1904 he compiled the first AME Church hymn book to which he personally contributed many hymns". He also translated the AME "Book of discipline" into Xhosa. Peter Samuel Kuze was a teacher who was also a catechist in the Anglican Church. (Coppin, L 1905 Observations of people and things in South Africa 1900-1904 np, 24,25)

¹⁰⁹ Gordon, EM 1952 A short historical survey of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Cape Province and its development Payne Theological Seminary, Wilberforce University, 2

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 18 and Skota, Yearly register, 209

preachers of the Methodist Church among them JL Tantsi ¹¹¹ and A Mngqibisa.¹¹² Mokone also travelled, in 1894, to Macibini near Queenstown, to meet James Goduka from Tile's church. Together Mokone and Goduka issued an appeal to young men to join their ministry. The first to respond to the appeal was Henry Reed Ngcayiya, interpreter at the Magistrates Court at Aliwal North.¹¹³ Mokone was later joined in Pretoria by P Kuze, one of the ministers ordained by Tile. Later Tantsi, Magqibisa, Mpumlwana and J Xaba all joined as candidates for the ministry. In 1895 Mokone was appointed Supervisor by the Conference of the Ethiopian Church. ¹¹⁴

During 1895 Charlotte Makhomo Maneye (later Maxeke) was studying at Wilberforce University in America. She often wrote to her sister, Kate, who lived in Johannesburg. Kate and Charlotte Maneye were Mokone's nieces. ¹¹⁵ Kate told Mokone about the African Methodist Episcopal Church to which her sister belonged in America. On 31 May 1895 Mokone wrote to Bishop Turner in America, as well as to Charlotte Maneye. Mokone shared the contents of his correspondence with the other ministers of the Ethiopian Church and at the 1896 Conference of the Ethiopian Church it was resolved to unite with the AMEC. ¹¹⁶

Charlotte Makhomo Maneye (b 1874) was born near Fort Beaufort

¹¹¹ JZ Tantsi was a Tembu by birth. His son JY Tantsi attended Clarkebury Institution at the time that Tile was forming his Tembu National Church. Tantsi was a Methodist local preacher who became a minister in Mokone's Ethiopian Church and later joined the AMEC. (Skota, Yearly register, 105)

¹¹² Skota, Yearly register, 209

¹¹³ PR 3949, 19

¹¹⁴ Skota, Yearly register, 209

¹¹⁵ Coppin Observations, 26 He provides no proof of the statement so they may have been members of Mokone's extended family.

¹¹⁶ Skota, Yearly register, 209

in the Eastern Cape ¹¹⁷ and attended school in Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth before the family moved to Kimberley. She toured Europe, Canada and America with the Orpheus McAdoo choir.¹¹⁸ While in America she was helped by Bishop Derrick of the AMEC to enter Wilberforce University, Ohio where she obtained a B Sc degree, the first African woman in South Africa to do so. Other choir members who became members of the AMEC in South Africa were James Tantsi, Charles Dube, Henry Msikinya, Marshall Maxeke, and Edward Tolityi Magaya. These people all received degrees from Wilberforce University, forming an educated nucleus for the new church. ¹¹⁹

In 1903 Maneye married the Rev MM Maxeke, ¹²⁰ a fellow - graduate from Wilberforce, and together they did missionary work for the AMEC in South Africa. At first they worked in Pietersburg. Later Enoch Mamba, a headman at Idutywa, invited Maxeke and her husband to establish a school in his "location" after a dispute with the Cape Administration. The Maxekes became

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 195

¹¹⁸ Campbell, J 1989 Our fathers, our children: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa Unpublished Ph D thesis University of Stanford, 129 HR Ngcayiya joined the choir in 1897 when a member of the AME. Ibid, 128

¹¹⁹ Skota, 1965 The African who's who An illustrated classified register and national biographical dictionary of the Africans in the Transvaal Johannesburg: Central News Agency, 159

¹²⁰ The Rev Marshall Maxeke was born in 1874 in Middledrift, Cape. He attended Lovedale Training College. The family later moved to Johannesburg where Maxeke became friendly with ZJ Tantsi. Maxeke and Tantsi accompanied Bishop Turner of the AME when he returned to America after his visit to South Africa. Maxeke and Tantsi studied at Wilberforce University where Maxeke won the Rush Prize and gained his BA degree with honours in classics and mathematics. He also passed his theological examination and was ordained an elder in the AME. He compiled the first Xhosa AME hymn-book. (Skota, Yearly register, 70)

part of the growing presence of the AMEC in the eastern Cape.
¹²¹ The Rev Maxeke became pastor and principal of the Lota High School.

The Maxekes were the founders of the Wilberforce Institute which eventually was established in 1908 at Evaton, Transvaal. Maxeke, the founder and President of the Bantu Women's League, was appointed a Probation Officer. She more than anyone else was responsible for persuading the Ethiopian Church to invite the AMEC to come to South Africa.¹²² Her membership of the AMEC had nothing to do with her previous church affiliation but rather with the educational opportunities afforded her by the AMEC in America. Her efforts to get others to join the AMEC were fuelled by the hope that they would benefit in the same way as she had from their association with the AMEC.

On 17 March 1896 at the Conference at which it was decided to unite with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, James M Dwane and Marcus Gabashane, previously ministers in the Methodist Church joined the Ethiopian Church.¹²³

James Mata Dwane (1848-1916), a member of the Amatinde tribe,
¹²⁴ was born at Debe Nek, near King William's Town in the

¹²¹ Campbell, J 1987 Conceiving of the Ethiopian movement Unpublished paper read at the African Studies Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, 7 April 1987, 26

¹²² Gordon, A short historical survey, 2

¹²³ Skota, Who's who, 176

¹²⁴ Minutes of evidence, 1903, 708 question 9681. Dwane's father was Dwane Mcebuka, a member of the Amatinde royal family. (Burns-Ncamashe, SM 1952 An investigation into the provision of education by the Order of Ethiopia to Africans in the Cape Province between 1900 and 1952 Unpublished B Ed thesis University of Cape Town, 15. His mother was Nosali, his father's "great wife". In about 1850 the family settled in the Middledrift district, part of Chief Kama's territory. (Ibid, 16) Kama was a Methodist local preacher who had planned to enter the Methodist ministry but was prevented from doing so because of

eastern Cape. He was educated and trained as a teacher at Healdtown Missionary Institution, Fort Beaufort.¹²⁵ After completing his studies he worked at Healdtown as a teacher. He became a local preacher in the Methodist Church and in 1872 returned to Healdtown for theological study. In 1875 he began his ministry and was ordained in 1881 in Port Elizabeth. He then served in East London, Grahamstown, Kimberley, Mount Coke and Glen Grey, where he was superintendent of the Seplan Circuit. It was while he was serving in this capacity that he resigned from the Methodist Church and joined the Ethiopian Church.¹²⁶

Dwane did not need to seek status in a separatist church as he already held office in the Methodist Church. In 1888 he was appointed by Conference to serve on the Committee to enlarge the Xhosa hymnbook as well as the Committee to oversee "native translations". He was also one of 25 ministers responsible for the studies and examinations of probationer ministers and in 1890 he was one of only two black ministers appointed to examine black probationers.¹²⁷ Therefore, Dwane did not cite lack of status and responsibility as a reason for leaving the Methodist Church.

In 1892 Dwane was sent to England on a deputation tour for the South African church. He was expected to collect financial support for the work of the church. Dwane sent regular reports of his progress in the letters that he wrote to the Rev Robert Lamplough who had been his tutor at Healdtown. Dwane soon let the

his tribal responsibilities. Chapter 2 of Burns-Ncamashe's thesis gives a detailed account of Dwane's early years.

¹²⁵ Ibid, Dwane said: " I went there as a heathen boy. I was brought up by Mr Lamplough, one of the leading Wesleyans". question 9689

¹²⁶ Dwane, S 1989 Issues in the South African theological debate Essays and addresses in honour of the late James Mata Dwane Johannesburg:Skotaville Publishers, 1 His address in the 1893 Minutes of Conference was "Seplan, Askealon, Lady Frere, Queenstown".

¹²⁷ Minutes of Conference (South African Conference) 1890

people in England know why he was raising funds. He wanted the Methodist Church to build a technical school in the Seplan area. The SA Methodist reported:

Mr Dwane is in this country in order to raise money for an industrial school in the Seplan Circuit of Queenstown District for the education of his fellow Kaffirs. The schools for the extension of which Mr Dwane has come to plead, do not receive help from any missionary society and are supported mainly by grants from the Cape government ... It is most desirable that there should be added to what is already taught in those schools some training in such useful trades as that of (the) carpenter, mason, blacksmith and shoemaker.... It is sufficient guarantee of the genuineness of Mr Dwane's appeal that the Revs J Walton and J Smith-Spencer are acting as his Treasurers. ¹²⁸

Dwane's tour was a great success. In September 1892 he preached at Armagh Methodist Church where "he gave a most touching and beautiful account of mission work among the Kaffirs, in which he has been engaged for over twenty years". ¹²⁹ Once again he pleaded for funds for "the fifteen day schools with twenty-five teachers and over 1,000 scholars". ¹³⁰ Dwane had come "with the authority of the South African Conference to solicit British aid in this noble enterprise". ¹³¹ However, when Dwane returned to South Africa the Methodist authorities insisted that the money be paid into the general fund. Burns-Ncamashe quoted an un-named Methodist minister who considered that Dwane had "become

¹²⁸ SA Methodist, 10 September 1892, 130 See also "Records of St Bede's College, Umtata" in Burns-Ncamashe Investigation, 32 "Altogether he (Dwane) collected the sum of three hundred pounds which was sent to the Rev R Lamplough in South Africa by the Revs J Walton and JS Spencer".

¹²⁹ SA Methodist, 1 October 1892, 165

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ Ibid

ambitious and discontented like Mzimba and although money matters were properly adjusted, Dwane went out".¹³² The dispute over money was the immediate cause of Dwane's defection to the Ethiopian Church.

In December 1895 a deputation of members of the Ethiopian movement in the Transvaal visited Dwane in Queenstown. They discussed possible union with the AMEC. At first Dwane was doubtful of their motives and said that people would consider an all-African movement anti-white. The Ethiopians persuaded him otherwise and Dwane consented to attend the conference in Johannesburg. At the conference Dwane and Xaba were appointed to go to America to confer with the AMEC. Xaba could not raise the money for the trip so Dwane went alone.¹³³

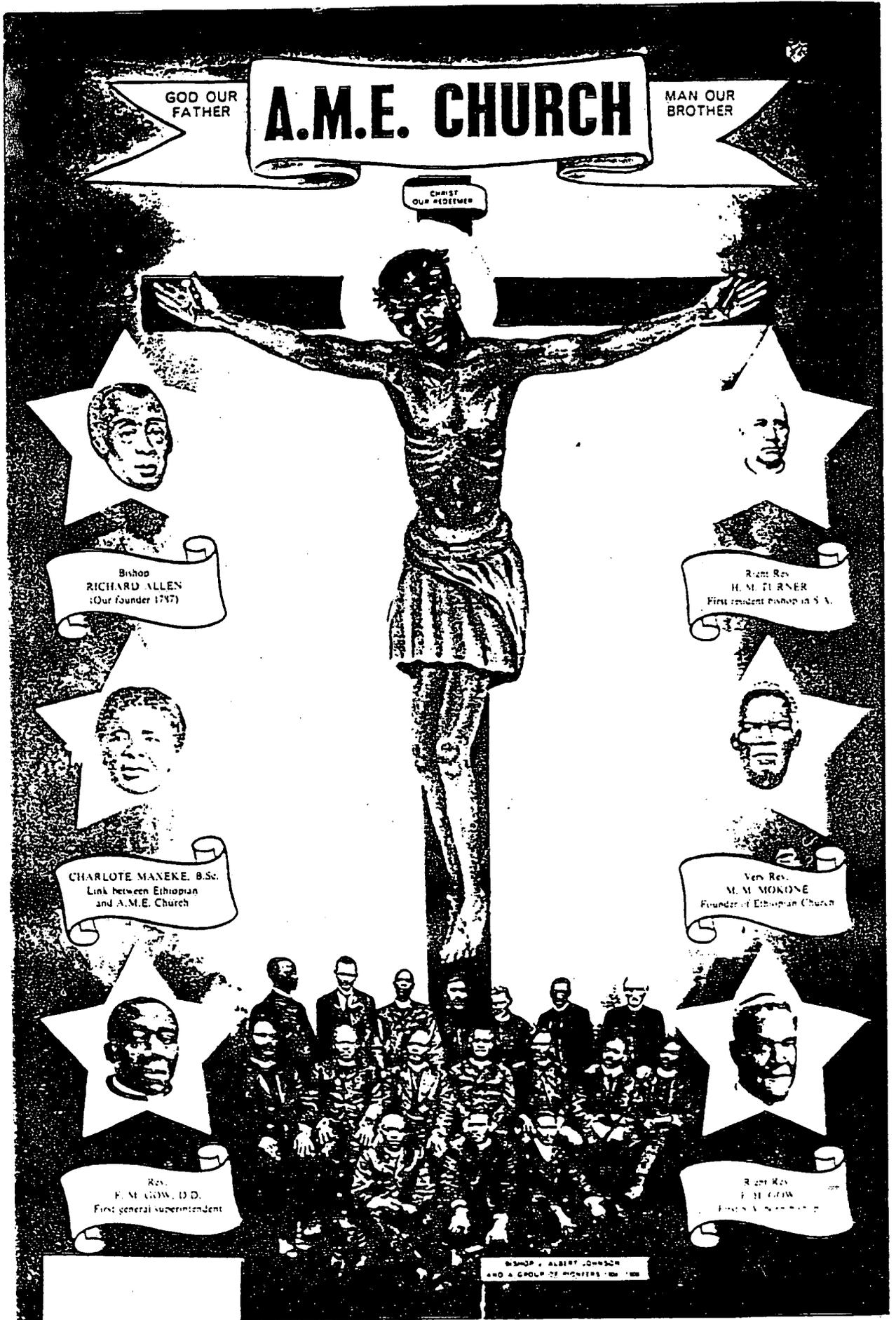
On April 1896 Dwane left for America. He arrived just after the end of the American General Conference. He met with Bishop H Turner and other officials. The House of Bishops and the Missionary Board of the AME Church agreed to the amalgamation of the Ethiopian Church with the AMEC and in September 1896 Dwane returned to South Africa as General Superintendent of the South African AME Church. He himself had been "reobligated" (or ordained) and he was told to reobligate the ministers of the Ethiopian Church.¹³⁴

Meanwhile, in August 1896 the Transvaal Government recognised the Ethiopian Church. Mokone received the certificate of recognition

¹³² Burns-Ncamashe Investigation, 32

¹³³ "The Ethiopian Conference selected Reverend James Dwane and Reverend Jacobus Xaba to go to America to negotiate the affiliation. But the Ethiopian Church raised only enough money for one fare. Dwane alone left Cape Town on April 16". (Moeti Ethiopianism, 55 and 56) The money for Dwane to go to America was raised by three brothers who belonged to the Methodist Church - Hans, David and Daniel Matsolo of Bengu near Lady Frere (Burns-Ncamashe Education by the Order of Ethiopia, 49

¹³⁴ Coppin Observations, 12



A BLACK FIGURE OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS SURROUNDED BY PORTRAITS OF EARLY AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH LEADERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

from General Joubert who congratulated him on the work he was doing but warned him that the white missionaries would "accuse him of having stolen their sheep".¹³⁵

Dwane's return in September 1896 as General Superintendent caused great dissatisfaction in South Africa. The members of the Ethiopian Church were displeased that he had not waited until Xaba was able to accompany him. They felt that as the founder of the Ethiopian Church Mokone should have been elected leader and Dwane was seen as a newcomer to the Ethiopian movement. However, at the first Conference of the AME Church in South Africa held at Lesseyton, near Queenstown, on 7 April 1897 Dwane "reobligated" all the Ethiopian preachers.¹³⁶

In March 1898 Bishop Turner from America visited South Africa. At a second General Conference of the AMEC Dwane was made Vicar-Bishop. Turner returned to America in April 1898 leaving Dwane in charge. The AME Church in America did not agree with the appointment and Dwane was called to America in September 1898. It was agreed that Dwane be given the chance to lead the AMEC in South Africa after observing how the Church worked in America. Dwane returned to South Africa from his second visit to America in March 1899.

At a Conference held at Queenstown in September 1899 Dwane told

¹³⁵ PR 3949, Typescript, 24

¹³⁶ Ibid The ministers who were ordained at this and the following Conference were: PP Botha, SJ Mabote, (previously a Methodist minister at Viljoensdrift, Orange Free State) TT Seromu, JR Phala, B Kumalo, NJ Boya, JM Lebala, J Masaka, J Moroane, J Diale, P Bolibe, J Mathoka, C Noko, B Tsibele, K Mojalisa, IG Sishuba, HR Ngcayiya, WB Mashalaba and P Ngqabe. (PR 3949, typescript on the history of the Ethiopian Church, 25 Cory Library). The following were ordained elders: AS Gabashane, SH Senamela, PJ Mavavana, SJ Brander, J Thabane, JR Thabe, SR Modipa, HT Appie, PO Ramutlwa, S Moletsi, MM Mokone, D Masiza and HR Ngcayiya. (Ibid, 26) The elders had greater authority than the ministers. Lesseyton was the home of JZ Tantsi.

members that the AME Church in America had promised 2 000 pounds to build a South African College. The American Church now refused to honour the promise. There were thirty ministers at the Conference and all except four (Kuze, Mngobisa, Masholaba and Tantsi) seceded from the AMEC.¹³⁷ The remaining AMEC ministers who had not been at the meeting, including Mokone, Sishuba and Ngcayiya, met together to try "to prevent the trouble spreading" and wrote to Bishop Turner in America. In 1900 the General Conference sent delegates to the Conference in America. They were the Revs MM Mokone, JZ Tantsi, AS Gabashane and a lay representative F Gow.¹³⁸

Mokone continued to serve the AME Church, first as the Presiding Elder for the Transvaal and later as a "Father" in the church. The AMEC was led by ministers from America - the Rev JN Fitzpatrick in 1900 and soon after the Revs JA Gregg and Attaway. Another arrival in 1900 was Bishop Levi Coppin. The same year Mokone attended the American General Conference as one of the South African delegates.

Mokone's role in the AMEC may be assessed from the part he played in the Conference proceedings. In 1901 his name was second on the roll of those present, after that of Bishop Coppin. He was asked to "comment on the addresses made". (One of the addresses was made by Miss C Maneye). On the third day Mokone opened in prayer and later at "the Bishop's request sang a hymn". He also served on the committee to assess prospective candidate ministers. An important moment at the Conference was when Coppin ordained

¹³⁷ Dwane set in motion the process that would lead to the formation of the Order of Ethiopia by writing to the Archbishop of the Anglican Church about possible amalgamation.

¹³⁸ Coppin Observations, 13 and 14 In 1956 Gow became the first South African to be elected to the bench of Bishops. Tantsi, NB A history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa, Type script in the AME Archives, University of the Western Cape.

Mokone and others as elders by the laying on of hands. ¹³⁹

At the Conference in 1903 Mokone assisted the Bishop to serve Communion and, a sign of his role becoming more passive, it was suggested that a "Mokone Day" be held in honour of what he had achieved. Mokone requested that there be "no recognition of Mokone Day until ... he had gone to his rest". ¹⁴⁰ Mokone thus achieved the recognition and status that he had lacked in the Methodist Church, as well as the appreciation of his work that he had complained was missing among the Methodists.

In 1904 Bishop Smith was appointed to South Africa. Tantsi called these years "a difficult period" ¹⁴¹ as the work of the AMEC was hampered by losses to the Order of Ethiopia, the Anglo-Boer War and the difficulty of gaining recognition. ¹⁴² Mokone is listed

¹³⁹ Minutes of the Cape Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 20-23 December 1901 (AME Archives, University of the Western Cape, Bellville)

¹⁴⁰ Minutes of the Conference held on 27 January 1903. (AME Archives, University of the Western Cape, Bellville)

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 8

¹⁴² See letter from Lord Selbourne, High Commissioner to Sir Matthew Nathan, Governor of Natal dated 14 April 1907: "I have the honour to inform you that no official recognition is accorded to the African Episcopal Methodist Church in the Transvaal". SNA 1/1/388 1907/3801 No 12/54 (State Archives, Pietermaritzburg) This was in answer to a request which assured the Governor that "the four cardinal points which are taught by us in the home school and church are moral excellence, business integrity, obedience to government and religious intelligence". (Letter from Bishop MB Derrick of the AME Church to Sir Matthew Nathan. Ibid, G 922/1907) Coppin had been granted recognition in the Cape, however, in March 1901 - "Mr Schreiner wishes you to understand that the Government does not oppose the extension to the Cape Colony of the legitimate work of the (AME) denomination". Gordon, EM 1952 A short historical survey of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Cape Province and its development, 4. Unpublished thesis, Wilberforce University. (AME Archives, University of the Western Cape)

among those who figured prominently in the struggle. ¹⁴³

In 1906 Smith was replaced by Bishop WB Derrick. Mokone was once again a delegate to the General Conference in America. However, Mokone's leadership role was becoming less important. He continued to fulfil a role of a "father" in the church until his death in 1935, allowing others to take the lead.

Reasons why the Ethiopian leaders joined the AMEC and why some did not remain

The reasons why members of the Ethiopian Church initially chose to join the AME were as follows:

- * the AME had black leadership. The American experience was similar to the South African path to independentism and the local leaders felt that they could learn from the Americans. They also thought that ability and status would be recognised.
- * The Ethiopian leaders thought that being linked with an international body would ensure government recognition in South Africa.
- * The AMEC had a Methodist background and their doctrines were the same as those of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The Methodist doctrines and form of organisation were familiar to the men like Mokone, Xaba and Tantsi who had broken away from the Methodist Church. They had seen that Methodist organisational methods worked in the mission church and wished to continue with the methods that they knew best.
- * The Ethiopians were led to believe that the Americans would assist with education for blacks in South Africa. Maxeke's enthusiastic letters while studying at Wilberforce University had been one of the main reasons that the

¹⁴³ Tantsi, History, 8 The others were JZ Tantsi, Gabashane, Gow Lebala, Mabote, I Andries, AW Phigeland, DP Gordon, I Dlepu, JY Tantsi, W Mtinka, MJ Ndlebe, and MM Carelse.

Ethiopian Church had decided to join the AMEC. When Dwane visited America he tried to procure promises of financial help for the college that he still hoped to build near Queenstown.

The reasons for which the Ethiopian Church became affiliated to the AMEC gave rise to the causes for schism from that body. The African leaders began to realise that they were African and an American church did not necessarily have the answers to their problems.

* Some of the South African members began to resent government from America. Promotion and status was afforded to Dwane (Vicar-Bishop) but others like Mokone only became Presiding Elders. In part the wish for greater authority by the Ethiopians was realised, as government from America could only be partial, yet the independence they had sought had not been fully achieved. Mokone was afforded near canonization and yet was never considered as a possible bishop. Dwane left AME Church when his consecration as a bishop was questioned by the Anglicans. By the time that Coppin consecrated Mokone and others by the laying on of hands, Dwane had already left the AMEC.

* The Ethiopians had sought an "African" church where African culture and rising African nationalism could be accommodated. They received instead an American church with its roots firmly embedded in American culture. Even though the AMEC Missionary Board in America had seen the new missionary enterprise as a return to their African roots, the AMEC clergy from America came out of an American context. Dwane complained to the 1903 Commission about the racial discrimination that he had discerned among African-Americans. He said: "I told the coloured people of America that I did not think it would be a good thing for them to come out here (because of the discrimination between the light and the dark people in America). ... In Africa it is

just the other way ... (Africans accept each other)" ¹⁴⁴
 When the AMEC clergy came to South Africa they came to fill top positions, unlike the early white missionaries who had been content to live with the people. The new American clergy took over positions that had been held by white missionaries in the mission churches and once again African hopes for promotion were frustrated.

* While the Methodist emphasis of the AMEC suited those leaders who had come from a Methodist background it did not suit people who had previously belonged to the other churches, for example the Anglican Church. Brander, the one-time Anglican broke with the AMEC to start his own church based on the Anglican form of worship. Brander, and others like him, had no option but to start their own church because their ordination in the AMEC and their lack of formal training made them unacceptable to the Anglican Church - the Church of the Province of South Africa. ¹⁴⁵

* Promising students from South Africa were sent to America to study - Dwane told the 1903-1905 Commission that he knew of twelve men who had gone to America to be educated. ¹⁴⁶ Dwane, who had hoped that the AMEC would build the school that he had long planned near Queenstown was disillusioned when the money was not forthcoming and so he left the AMEC. His school, the Ethiopian College was eventually built by the Anglicans. Although the Anglicans never made Dwane a bishop, the fulfilment of his dream of a South African College made him satisfied to remain in the Order of Ethiopia, under the umbrella organisation of the Anglican Church. Charlotte Maxeke eventually, in 1908, opened the Wilberforce Institution (now the RR Wright School) for the AMEC near Evander in the Transvaal.

¹⁴⁴ 1903-1905 Commission, volume 2, 709

¹⁴⁵ 1903-1905 Commission, 712

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 716 "The American people promised so much in regard to teaching them and making them wise that their parents agreed to send them there and get what they could not get in Africa".

It must be remembered that, as was the case with the mission churches, more members of the AMEC remained loyal to the church, including those who had belonged to the Ethiopian Church, than left to form their own churches. The next case study deals with the most important early break-aways from the AMEC in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4
CASE STUDY 2: ETHIOPIA REACHES OUT AGAIN

Three important schisms occurred in the early years of the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa. The schisms were led by men who held leadership positions in the AMEC - James Dwane, SJ Brander and Henry Reed Ncgaiyiya. However, it was the defections of Dwane and Ncgaiyiya that caused the greatest consternation in AMEC circles and both are described in early South African AMEC historical accounts. The schism that led to the Order of Ethiopia was called "Dwane's revolt" and that of Ncgaiyiya the "secession of Ncgaiyiya and Sishuba".¹

These were not the only dissatisfied members of the AMEC. The Rev J Kanyane (Napo) was one of the members who became dissatisfied with the AMEC when he found that he was not given the status that he had hoped to achieve.

For example, at a conference held at Aliwal North in December 1903 Attaway² asked the Rev J Kanyane whether he had "come to identify himself with the AME Church". Previously, Kanyane had been a member of the Anglican Church. He then formed his own church, later joined the Ethiopian Church and then the AMEC. In 1901 Kanyane was stationed in Pretoria and had eight churches, nine ministers and twenty-three local preachers and teachers under him.³

¹ African Methodist Episcopal Church - Typescript in the AME Archives, University of the Western Cape

² Minutes 1903 Attaway, who was from America, was the Secretary of the Conference.

³ Minutes of the Conference held on 18 December 1901. Spencer Smith identifies Kanyane with the Rev Joseph Mutunye Kanyane Napo who founded the African Church in 1888 after leaving the Anglican Church. (Spenser Smith, C 1922 A history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church being a volume supplemental to a history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church by Daniel Alexander Payne DD LLD late one of its bishops.

However, by 1903 Kanyane was keen to be independent again and considered himself "independent of our (AME) church control". He had even "set apart some men by consecration and laying of hands for the office of ministry".⁴ Kanyane wanted to be bishop of his own district. He felt that he had been treated badly by the Ethiopian Church⁵ and ignored by the AMEC and had no wish to join Dwane. He elected to remain where he was after airing his grievances. There was potential for schism in the situation but it was averted.

The Order of Ethiopia or Dwane's revolt

Dwane's secession from the AMEC was the earliest of the break-aways and also the most important. Dwane made a number of moves before settling down in the Order of Ethiopia. He left a mission church (Methodist) to join an independent group (the Ethiopian Church), then joined the AMEC with the Ethiopians.

The AMEC had started as a secession from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in America, but by the time that the first AMEC missionaries arrived in South Africa it had been established for almost one hundred years (in America) and differed little from the mission churches already in South Africa, except that the AMEC leaders were black. Dwane left the AMEC to join the Anglican Church, one of the white controlled mission churches. The reasons for his leaving the AMEC as well as for joining the Anglicans will be examined. Important, too, are his reasons for remaining with the Anglicans even though many of the grievances which led to his leaving the other churches had not been addressed.

Philadelphia:Book concern of the AME Church, 182) Xaba and Tantsi were ordained by Mokone "assisted by Rev JM Kanyane of an independent church known as the African Church".

⁴ Minutes of the Conference held at Aliwal North on 6 December 1903 (AME Archives, University of the Western Cape).

⁵ Minutes of the Conference held on 6 December 1903. "The Ethiopians had treated him undeservedly".

On 7 October 1899 Dwane called a special session of the South African Conference of the AMEC at Queenstown. As Vicar-Bishop of the AMEC this was his prerogative. About thirty ministers attended the Conference. AMEC sources reported that "Dwane openly advocated and led a revolt against the African Methodist Episcopal Church".⁶ Dwane and the other leaders who left the AMEC felt that they had "lost all confidence in the promised sympathy and support of the Afro-American people and must seek help else where".⁷ All but four of the ministers joined Dwane in his secession "but the four ministers who refused to follow him frustrated his many plans to break the AME Church completely".⁸ Mokone at first supported Dwane but on 6 November 1899 he wrote to Dwane and said that since the Conference he had "never got rest ". He could not support Dwane's move because some of the AMEC members did not like the Episcopalian system and preferred the AME church. Mokone continued that "it pains me a lot to leave you", but he had decided to remain with the AMEC.⁹

The ministers who remained loyal to the AMEC called a meeting in Cape Town in November 1899 to formulate plans to combat the secession. The meeting was presided over by the Rev I Sishuba. Among those present was Henry Ncgaiya.¹⁰ These two men would lead the next secession of note, but in 1899 they were still loyal to the AMEC. They decided that Dwane was motivated by self-interest and said that one of the reasons for his revolt was the

⁶ The African Methodist Episcopal Church - Typescript (AME Archives)

⁷ The Christian Express, 1 February 1900, 23

⁸ Ibid Initially Mokone supported Dwane but soon wrote a contrite letter to Bishop Turner asking for forgiveness and begging the AME "to forgive and forget and treat me as before". Voice of missions Jan/Feb 1900 in Campbell, J 1989 Our fathers, our children: the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa Unpublished Ph D thesis Stanford University, 148

⁹ Typescript PR 3949 (Cory Library, Grahamstown)

¹⁰ Ibid

failure of the American church to send money for a college. The opinion of Dr E Gordon of the AMEC was that if "this secession would have been disastrous to the (AME) church if Gow had not stepped in to save the day". ¹¹

Another reason for Dwane's defection was the AMEC's failure to make him a bishop. However, "the discipline of the AME Church did not allow for that". ¹² Dwane's "revolt" and defection led to more American ministers being sent to South Africa - first the Rev IN Fitzpatrick and in 1900 Bishop L Coppin. It also affirmed American doubts about the ability of Africans to be leaders. Bishops would continue to be sent from America until 1956 when Bishop Francis Herman Gow was elected the first South African-born Bishop.

The Anglicans explained the secession in different terms. "Mr Dwane was intelligent enough to realise that if their rapidly-growing Order was to be permanent it must have a settled rule of faith and discipline". ¹³ The writer was actually speaking about Dwane and the Ethiopian Church but his remark applied equally to the Order of Ethiopia. Dwane wanted the Anglican rule and discipline for his Order as he believed this to be the true "Catholic" faith. He testified to the 1903-1905 Commission that he had left the AMEC "on doctrinal points". ¹⁴ However, independent leaders seldom seceded on "doctrinal points" and Dwane could have been expressing his preference for a liturgical style of worship.

The AMEC had made Dwane the General Superintendent of the South

¹¹ Gordon, A short historical survey, 4

¹² Typescript, AME Archives

¹³ Lewis, C and Edwards, GE 1934 Historical records of the Church of the Province of South Africa London:SPCK, 217

¹⁴ Minutes of evidence 1903-1905 Commission volume 2, 715.

African mission during his visit to America in 1896. Then Bishop Turner appointed him Vicar-Bishop in 1898. Dwane, however, became suspicious of the validity of the orders into which he had been inducted. Bishop Turner believed that the roots of Dwane's secession were to be found in his visit to America in 1898 when he had queried the fitness of Afro-Americans to evangelise Africa.¹⁵ Dwane had the conviction that the Anglicans had the true Apostolic (Catholic) succession and that the AMEC orders counted for nothing. This conviction was fostered by the Anglicans when Dwane spoke to the Rev Julius Gordon of Queenstown.¹⁶ Gordon introduced Dwane to Bishop Cornish of the Anglican Church in Grahamstown. Cornish prepared the way for the acceptance of the Order of Ethiopia by the Anglicans. In 1899 Dwane wrote to Archbishop W West-Jones of Cape Town to negotiate the admission of the break-away group of Ethiopians into the Catholic church as represented by the Church of the Province of South Africa.¹⁷ The Bishop of Grahamstown also wrote to the Archbishop saying: "The movement would seem to be of God; the problem is how to direct and control it".¹⁸ Dwane was once again returning to the white supervision of a mission church whether or not he was aware of the fact.

In 1899 the United Board of Missions of the Provinces of Canterbury and York considered the question of "native" churches.¹⁹ While they did not want to infer that there was a difference between Christians, they wanted "native" churches to become self-governing. Once again the way was paved for the acceptance of the Order of Ethiopia into the Anglican fold.

The ministers (O of E) who wanted to make the change had to be

¹⁵ Stormont, Ethiopianism, 18

¹⁶ Ibid, 219. See also Skota, 1965 Yearly register, 178

¹⁷ Hinchliff, Anglican Church, 202

¹⁸ Skota, 1965 Yearly register, 179

¹⁹ Lewis & Edwards Historical records, 218

taught Anglican doctrine and prepared for the step of entering the Anglican Church.²⁰ A number of white Anglican priests, in particular Father Puller of St Cuthbert's Mission and Father Albert Kettle of the Community of St Cuthbert's,²¹ were given the task of teaching the "Anglican" Ethiopians.

On 26 August 1900 a service was held in Grahamstown Cathedral at which Dwane was formally accepted into the fellowship of the Anglican Church. After making the necessary vows he was admitted as Provincial of the new Order of Ethiopia. He was ordained a deacon on 23 December 1900. The same year a Compact was made between the Order of Ethiopia and the Church of the Province. The Diocesan Bishop was instructed to visit all the "Ethiopian" congregations to instruct them in preparation for joining the Anglican Church.²²

Burns-Ncamashe said that it could not be denied that the "Ethiopians were getting what they had asked for and had promised them in the Compact".²³ Others were not so confident that the Compact held the answer to all the problems involved with the incorporation of the Ethiopians into the Anglican Church. Verryn wrote that some of the Ethiopians argued that "the Compact had no legal power" and that the Compact was "impossible to carry

²⁰ Ibid, 219 It must be remembered that ministers like Dwane who had been ministers in a mission church (in Dwane's case the Methodist Church), who had then joined the Ethiopian Church as ministers and had been "reobligated" in the AME (reobligated was the word used for the consecration of ministers from other denominations into a Methodist Church, in this case the AME) had to undergo yet another course of training for ordination when they joined the Anglican Church.

²¹ Lewis & Edwards Historical records, 220

²² The Order of Ethiopia Compact of 1900, constitution and form of admission, 2 (AB 867, Aa 1.2, CPSA Archives, University of the Witwatersrand). The Constitution was finally accepted by the Synod of Bishops in 1907.

²³ Burns-Ncamashe, Education of the Order of Ethiopia, 65

out".²⁴

The Compact created an order of clergy and laity within the Anglican Church, governed by a Provincial and Chapter and subject to the general control of the bishops of the Province. However, the Compact left many things undecided. It did not explain that "valid orders" did not include giving the Order their own bishops. The members of the Order had expected Dwane to be consecrated, but this was not done. This led to a lasting sense of grievance. The Compact also did not define the relationship of the Order to the existing Anglican mission churches.²⁵

Other reasons for Dwane's leaving the AMEC and joining the Anglican Church have also been suggested. Tuckey cited as a further reason for Dwane's leaving the AMEC T Logie's (Acting Inspector of schools) remark that Dwane was like a chameleon and worked with whoever it was expedient to work with.²⁶ Stormont, of the Presbyterian Church, felt that Dwane was aware of the fact that the AME churches had been set back by the Anglo-Boer War and was forced "toward the Anglican Church and European supervision ... to save his own skin".²⁷ AMEC sources said that Dwane's "about face ... brought confusion into the church, while the outbreak of the South African Boer War added to the chaos in the

²⁴ Verryn, T Order of Ethiopia, 102 and 103

²⁵ Compact, 1 "Neither must members of the Order endeavour to draw into it those who are already church members outside it". See also Hinchliff, P 1963 The Anglican Church in South Africa An account of the history and development of the Church of the Province of South Africa London:Darton, Longman & Todd, 200f

²⁶ Tuckey, CE 1977 The Order of Ethiopia A study in African independency 1900-1916 Unpublished BA Hons essay University of the Witwatersrand, 21

²⁷ Stormont, DD 1899 "Report on the Lovedale native congregation, 1899 - 1899" in "Lovedale Annual Report 1899".

church".²⁸ This was especially true of the AME Church in the Transvaal.

Burns-Ncamashe, a writer who belonged to the Order of Ethiopia, said that "Dwane's impatience and impulsiveness on the one hand, and the dilatory fashion in which his superiors in America implemented their promises of monetary aid on the other hand"²⁹ induced him to realise that there was no future for his ambitions in the AMEC. His prompting motive was not so much a desire for financial assistance as for guidance of himself and the Ethiopians in self-help by sympathetic, local Europeans.³⁰ Burns-Ncamashe continued: "The factors that had contributed towards his past failures in realising his goal had by now taught Dwane to have faith in the policy of self-help under resourceful supervision".³¹ Dwane was therefore satisfied with the conditions laid down in the Compact for a separate African Order of Ethiopia under the supervision of the Anglican Church.

The Order of Ethiopia was not accepted into the Anglican Church without a certain amount of resentment on the part of both the white missionaries and the black Anglican mission church leaders. "The (Anglican) Church ... in accepting the Ethiopians probably trusted that time would obliterate the distinctions between these and the other native members of the Church".³² The distinction between the Ethiopians, received into the Church as an Order, and the ordinary African members, who frequently resided in the same districts and villages was artificial and perplexing. The

²⁸ The origin of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa Lecture 2 Typescript of lectures for the Wilberforce Institute, 6 (AME Archives)

²⁹ Burns-Ncamashe, Education by the Order of Ethiopia, 81

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid, 82

³² The Christian Express, 1 December 1909 "The Order of Ethiopia", 196

Ethiopians expected that one or more of their number would speedily be ordained to the office of priest, even to that of bishop was unfulfilled. ³³

White missionary priests who saw money being given to the Order while the needs their own work in the Anglican mission church were not addressed, often felt resentful. The Rev W Stead was one of these resentful ministers. He wrote to the "African monitor":

The cause of the Ethiopian movement was due to disobedient, disloyal and ungrateful men leaving the Wesleyans, and starting a denomination of their own. It had nothing to do with individual missionaries and certainly not with those in the Church. ... What then was Mr Dwane's position when he negotiated with our Church through the Rector of Queenstown? It was just this: he had been turned out of the Wesleyan body for reasons given above, he had given trouble to the native Ethiopian schism ... Dwane only wanted the church as a cloak under which to develop a native policy to be independent of the white man. The missionaries have almost unanimously disapproved of the Order. ³⁴

Stead further suggested that the spirit of independentism was due to "a wave of dissatisfaction and unrest passing over the coloured races of the world". ³⁵ He considered urbanisation another cause of "dissatisfaction" with the established church due to the break-down of community structures. Moreover, Stead commented that he was sure that Dwane's illiterate church members were unaware of the fact that they were being baptised into the

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Stead, WY 1908 "The Order of Ethiopia and its relation to the Church" Grahamstown:African Book Co Ltd, reprint from African monitor, 3 and 4

³⁵ Ibid, 4

Anglican Church rather than the Ethiopian Church. ³⁶

The Order of Ethiopia after 1900

When the Compact was signed in 1900 Dwane was made Provincial of the "Order of Ethiopia ... an order within the Catholic Church (Dwane believed that the Anglican Church was the Catholic Church) with the special object of teaching and training in the Catholic faith and discipline people of the Bantu race ... by members of their own race". ³⁷ From 1900 to 1902 "nothing more was done towards the formation of the Chapter". ³⁸ In 1902 Dwane presented the names of six men for ordination. The Archbishop also had candidates that he favoured but until 1905 only two appointments were made.

In 1902 fifty-three candidates from Queenstown and Lesseyton were confirmed. Father Puller was "struck by their reverence and intelligence".³⁹ However, these confirmees were not priests for the Order of Ethiopia and the confirmation was only a step in the process towards possible ordination.

Another step in the process towards the ordination of a specific Order of Ethiopia priesthood was the granting of a catechist's licence to twelve men who were "not yet ready for ordination".⁴⁰ It appears, however, that the Anglicans were no more willing to ordain the Ethiopians than were other mission churches to ordain

³⁶ Ibid, 6

³⁷ Proposed constitution of the Church Order of Ethiopia, typescript dated 12 January 1906 (AB 867 Aa 1.2 CPSA Archives, University of the Witwatersrand)

³⁸ Memorial from the Chapter of the Order of Ethiopia. Handwritten document signed by WM Cameron, Acting Provincial of the Order of Ethiopia. (AB 867 Aa 1.5 CPSA Archives)

³⁹ Ibid, 221

⁴⁰ Lewis & Edwards, Historical records, 220

to African ministers. ⁴¹ No further preachers of the Order were granted licences until 1908. ⁴² After Father Puller was recalled to England he was replaced by the Rev WM Cameron who was later to play a leading role as acting Provincial of the Order. ⁴³

In 1902 Cameron settled in Iquibica on the land that had been granted to Dwane for building a college. He planned to provide theological training in the same way as Puller had at Queenstown. On 24 November he wrote to the Bishop that he was "now able to send your Lordship the report on my first month's work here with the Ethiopian theological students". When Cameron was away on other church duties Dwane acted as instructor. ⁴⁴

By 1903 Dwane and the Order began to experience difficulties due to the loss of revenue because of the drought. Dwane, as Provincial, carried the burden of administration as well as recording all financial matters. The Ethiopians began to complain that they needed help which was not forthcoming and that their own people were not being ordained. A Commission of Inquiry was formed to investigate the problems. The Commission expressed sympathy with Dwane over the burden that he was carrying. ⁴⁵

In 1905 the Archbishop appointed a committee to deal with affairs

⁴¹ Mokone had given tardiness in ordaining African ministers as one of the reasons for the establishment of the Ethiopian Church.

⁴² Lewis & Edwards, Historical records, 220

⁴³ Cameron came from St John's diocese in the Transkei. (Lewis & Edwards Historical records, 221 See also Grant, A Cardross September to November 1905 The 10th Journal, 11 "Bishop Cameron, the Acting Provincial of the Order of Ethiopia".

⁴⁴ Verryn, Order of Ethiopia, 112

⁴⁵ Verryn, Order of Ethiopia, 114 Dwane at this time was still a Deacon and acted as interpreter at confirmation services taken by the Bishop (Lewis & Edwards, Historical records, 222)

of the Order. Six of those appointed were Whites, priests from the surrounding parishes and included the Rev Cardross Grant who was the chaplain to the Order of Ethiopia.⁴⁶ Dwane and the other members of the Order protested because they said that the Whites were not members of the Order.⁴⁷ The problems increased at the Second Conference of the Order of Ethiopia held in 1905. Dwane did not approve of the catechists of the Order having to work under a diocesan priest. He also complained that the Rev WY Stead was put in charge of an Ethiopian congregation (St Philip's, Grahamstown) without any reference to Dwane as Provincial.⁴⁸

Dwane wrote a letter of complaint to the Archbishop asking him to meet with the members of the Order. He wrote that "from the day we placed ourselves and our movement under the supervision and guidance of the bishops of the Church of South Africa we have never wavered in our loyalty to them nor have we ever doubted the wisdom of the course we took". Dwane felt that now things had "taken a sharp turn" and an "unfair construction" was being put

⁴⁶ "Mr Grant holds the license of the Bishop of Grahamstown the SPG supplying his stipend, for intinerating work among Church Christians of the Order of Ethiopia". Journal of the Reverend A Cardross Grant 19 April 1905-30 June 1905 (AB 1967 CPSA Archives) The measure of Grant's popularity with the Order may be gauged from the fact that at the Annual Conference of the Order of Ethiopia held at Grahamstown in 1927 "the Rev A Cardross Grant, formerly Chaplain to the Order, was welcomed as a new member of the Chapter". (PR 3181 Cory Library, Grahamstown)

⁴⁷ Ibid This would be a consistent complaint. As late as 1959 in a Supplementary Report "The O of E contended that the CPSA clergy were inadequate to deal with the O of E members as certain methods of pastoral work and certain services are not common to both". "One member of the O of E accused the Bishops of acting contrary to the spirit of the Compact, in particular regarding the non-appointment of the Bishop ..."(AB 867 Aa 1.6 CPSA Archives)

⁴⁸ Lewis & Edwards, Historical records, 223 Stead was not sympathetic to the Ethiopians - vide his objections to the Order of Ethiopia earlier in the chapter.

on the Compact.⁴⁹ In order to express his displeasure he refused to act as interpreter for the Easter services.

Dwane then called his own conference at Lesseyton and issued licences to catechists and dismissed seven catechists considered disloyal to the Ethiopian cause. Bishop Cornish reacted by withdrawing Dwane's licence as a Deacon of the Order. Dwane had experienced this sort of treatment before when he left the AMEC but this time the members of the Order did not appear willing to move again. In 1905 when the Bishop addressed the Conference of the Order of Ethiopia he reminded the delegates that they were "first members of the Church of the Province of South Africa ... and secondly members of the Order of Ethiopia".⁵⁰

In 1906, when the Bishops met with the Archbishop at Queenstown in order to discuss the proposed constitution they decided to replace Dwane as Provincial. Cameron was appointed Acting-Provincial.⁵¹ The Rev H Edwards (secretary of the European members of the Chapter) wrote on 14 June 1906 that the complaints made by the Ethiopians included that as "nominees of the Provincial only they were not representative of the general body of Deacons, Catechists and people of the Order".⁵² The Ethiopians complained that the white priests were not members of the Order as so were not representative of the Order.⁵³ The white priests complained about Dwane's actions as Provincial, and especially his sacking of the catechists. In 1909 the Rev H Woodrooffe wrote to the Archbishop and described this troubled

⁴⁹ Letter from JM Dwane to the Archbishop of Cape Town dated 29 November 1905. (AB 867 Aa 1.3 CPSA Archives, University of the Witwatersrand)

⁵⁰ Grant, A Cardross 10th Journal, 17

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Typed report to the Archbishop of Cape Town dated 14 June 1906 and signed by HLG Edwards, Hon Secretary. (AB 867 Aa 1.2 CPSA Archives, University of the Witwatersrand)

⁵³ Ibid

time saying that "the Bishops placed the Church before the Order; the Ethiopians placed the Order before the Church".⁵⁴ He also felt that if Dwane had been made a Bishop "the result to be anticipated would have been the formation of another separatist sect".⁵⁵ Dwane felt, however, that the only acceptable appointment as a bishop was within the clergy of the "Catholic" church as embodied by the Church of the Province of South Africa.

The question must be asked: "Why did Dwane remain within the confines of the Anglican Church when so many of the conditions that had caused him to leave the Methodist Church and then the AMEC still existed?" These included:

* The status afforded him as Provincial was taken away from him in 1906 and a white Acting-Provincial put in his place. In 1909 he was even expected to "express at the Provincial Missionary Conference at Bloemfontein the thanks of this Conference for sending the Rt Rev Bishop Cameron as Acting-Provincial".⁵⁶

* In spite of the expectations of the Ethiopians Dwane was never made a Bishop. He had joined the Anglicans in the hope of becoming a bishop according to the laying on of hands in apostolic succession, but this privilege was never afforded him. The first African Bishop of the Order of Ethiopia was Dwane's grandson, Bishop S Dwane who was consecrated Bishop in 1982. Dwane's hope of being made a bishop must be considered one of the reasons why he stayed within the Anglican Church. Others who left the AMEC and formed their own separatist churches did not have to accept

⁵⁴ Letter from the Rev HR Woodrooffe dated 14 January 1909 (AB 867 Aa 1.5 CPSA Archives, University of the Witwatersrand)

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Resolutions of the Annual Conference of the Order of Ethiopia held at Queenstown on 1-6 February 1909. (Ab 867 Aa 1.5 CPSA Archives, University of the Witwatersrand)

white authority and promoted themselves to the rank of Bishop or Archbishop (Brander) at will. Dwane, however, wanted to be a Bishop in the Catholic tradition of the Christian church.

* Dwane had confidence that the decision made by the Ethiopians was the correct one for the Order. This was in spite of the fact that the Anglicans considered that "Mr Dwane does not like the discipline and order of church life".⁵⁷ Dwane often resented his loss of individual status and the fact that he had to answer to the white mission authority for his actions.

* Most of the Ethiopians were quite happy to remain in the Order under the jurisdiction of the Anglican Church. A memorandum from the Bishop of Grahamstown dated 18 December 1905 stated that "his people regard Dwane as perfectly hopeless in all matters of finance" and had "expressed a wish that an European might be appointed as Provincial".⁵⁸

* With the founding of the Ethiopian College at Queenstown Dwane saw the fulfilment of his dream of a South African college for Africans.

* Dwane stayed with the Order of Ethiopia as part of the Anglican Church because what he gained from the association outweighed the disadvantages that he had to experience.

The Ethiopian Catholic Church In Zion

The Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion was started by Samuel James Brander⁵⁹ on 3 April 1904. Brander belonged to both the

⁵⁷ Memorandum from the Bishop of Grahamstown dated 18 December 1905 (AB 867 Aa 1.3 CPSA Archives University of the Witwatersrand)

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Brander's address in 1925 was 26, Municipal Location. Box 773, Pretoria. (MS 19,787 Cory Library)

Methodist ⁶⁰ and the Anglican churches before starting his own Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion.

Samuel James Brander (b 1851) was a Mokgatla Msutu ⁶¹ born at Colesberg, Cape and baptised in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. ⁶² His mother, Lydia Brander, was an Afro-American. ⁶³ Thus Brander's connection with the AMEC was not his first contact with Afro-Americans. Brander was educated at Lovedale. His father, Jacobus, was a Methodist local preacher who had a disagreement with the white minister of his church. The family left the Methodists and became Anglicans. Brander's family background did not show loyalty to any particular denomination.

In 1873 Brander became a transport contractor and later worked on the diamond diggings in Kimberley. In 1876, while in Kimberley, Brander joined the Anglican Church even though he had been a "class leader" in the Methodist Church. ⁶⁴ In 1884, when the family moved to Potchefstroom Brander served as a catechist. Brander was later to remark that during his years in the AMEC he missed the liturgical worship of the Anglicans.

⁶⁰ Brander was baptised by the Rev Richard Giddy of the Methodist Church. PR 3949 (Cory Library)

⁶¹ The original Mokgatla belong to the Bakgatla from the Pretoria district. (History of the Native tribes, 30) Brander entered these details on the questionnaire for the 1925 Separatist Churches Commission. (MS 19,787 Cory Library) They are also to be found in The constitutions and canons of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion 1919. (South African Library, Cape Town)

⁶² He was baptised by the Rev Richard Giddy who in 1844 was one of the pioneer missionaries to visit Swaziland. Constitutions and canons, 3

⁶³ This was according to his own testimony in the Constitution and canons, 3 Until the arrival of the AMEC missionaries there were very few Afro-Americans in South Africa.

⁶⁴ Constitutions and canons, 4

After fifteen years of membership, in 1890, Brander left the Anglican Church, while holding the office of a Deacon. At the time he was working as a catechist in the Waterberg area. He had a disagreement with Bishop Bousfield over money that he, Brander, had spent on building a school and which he wanted refunded.⁶⁵ Brander and a number of his fellow Anglicans, joined the Ethiopian Church and became members of the AMEC when the Ethiopians and AMEC amalgamated. He was ordained by Bishop Turner in 1898.⁶⁶

Brander was not happy in the AMEC⁶⁷ and does not figure in the early minutes of the AMEC conferences as one of the ministers who held an important office. He was, therefore, more easily disillusioned than those ministers who were satisfied with the AMEC. Late in 1902 Carleton Tanner, an AMEC minister from America, was sent to South Africa. He attended the joint session of the Transvaal and Cape conferences at Aliwal North in December 1903. On the first day of the conference an article by Tanner was published by the Christian Recorder. Tanner, a stern disciplinarian, advocated stricter American control of the AMEC in South Africa. After the conference a letter of protest was sent to the General Conference in America by Tantsi, Ncgayiya, Brander and Kumalo.⁶⁸ The letter complained that "much has been said of Africa by strangers" but the time had come for Africans to speak for themselves. They accused Tanner of placing

⁶⁵ MS 19,787 (Cory Library) Testimony of Brander for the 1925 Commission. In the Constitutions and canons, 5 it is stated that Brander was working for the Anglican Church in Waterberg at this time for a salary of twelve pounds a year. Bousfield told him to have land surveyed (at his own expense) for a church building. Bousfield then refused to refund the money and also told him that they could not afford his salary.

⁶⁶ One of the Anglicans who joined Brander in the Ethiopian Church and then the AME was David Phala.

⁶⁷ Ibid. "I was also generally dissatisfied with the AME Church".

⁶⁸ Campbell, Our fathers, 170

them:

under the same condition which forced us to leave the white churches, to be placed under the superintendency of men who are ignorant of the people, their customs, traditions, and life in general; these men will have to require interpreters where ever they go, and they do not always seem to have sympathy with the people, having been disappointed with the state in which they found them. ⁶⁹

The letter concluded by saying that the writers were tired of taking second place. A year later Brander left the AMEC and soon of the four writers of the protest letter only Tantsi remained in the AMEC. Brander summarised his feelings when he said that "we thought as they were our own colour, they would help us up, but we found they helped us down ...". ⁷⁰

The official reason that Brander gave for leaving the AMEC was "that all the monies collected by the Church (AME) in South Africa were retained in America and that the schools promised for our children were not being built". ⁷¹ In the six years that Brander had belonged to the AMEC nothing had been done to provide the promised schools. Brander complained: "We had to support our schools and everything here ourselves". ⁷² In addition, all the best positions in the church were given to men

⁶⁹ Ibid, 171

⁷⁰ Minutes of evidence, 1903-1905 commission, volume 4, 522

⁷¹ MS 19,787 Testimony by Brander. Turner, during his time in South Africa, made several rash promises of financial aid for education. While in Cape Town he promised Mokone \$1 000 to build a new church. He also promised \$10 000 to build the "South African College" on a site donated to Dwane by Chief Kama. (Campbell, Our fathers, 139)

⁷² Minutes of evidence 1903-1905 commission, 521

from America. ⁷³

In 1904 Brander, together with Joshua Mphothleng Mphela and Stephen Nguato, ministers of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion, were interviewed by the Native Affairs Commission. Brander told the commissioners that he had left the AMEC because he realised that he "could not get ahead". Brander considered himself a cofounder with Mokone of the Ethiopian Church. ⁷⁴ While Mokone was recognised as the founder of the Ethiopian Church, no such recognition had been afforded Brander.

When Brander was still a member of the AMEC his church fell into debt. He applied to the AMEC for assistance as Easter day and other collections were forwarded to America. The AMEC refused to provide aid so Brander realised that it would be better for him to "stay in Africa and help my people" rather than go to America to seek financial aid. ⁷⁵ Brander decided to form an independent church with a "Catholic" form of church government. His schools could be under "European" control but he was the leader of a new African church and any minister who joined would work under him. The Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion was a church wholly controlled by Africans. It was formed in reaction to the black AMEC rather than the white mission churches. ⁷⁶

The first service of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion took place in Marabastad on 3 April 1904. There were 45 members present. The first church building was opened on 8 May 1904. ⁷⁷

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Minutes of evidence 1903-1905 commission, volume 4, 520. "Makone (sic) and myself came together to raise the Church of Ethiopia".

⁷⁵ Ibid. During the years that Brander had belonged to the AME his church and schools had received no financial help from the Americans.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 523

⁷⁷ Constitutions and canons), 6 and 7

Brander's reasons for leaving the AMEC may be summarised as follows:

- * lack of expected status in spite of being a founder member of the Ethiopian Church.
- * promises made by the AMEC as regards supply of schools and other financial aid not fulfilled.
- * the AMEC erected a school called Bethel College, but this was for the benefit of the Americans themselves.⁷⁸
- * American control - especially financial control and the fact that money collected in South Africa was sent to America. This was exacerbated by Tanner's advocating stricter American control of the South African AMEC.
- * lack of support when the (Brander's local) church was in debt.
- * Brander's history of moving from denomination to denomination and the fact that he had a following within the AMEC who were willing to leave with him, predisposed to his leaving the AMEC and forming his own church.
- * in the AMEC Brander missed the liturgical worship and hierarchical church government of the Anglicans.

By 1919 when the "Constitutions and canons of the Ethiopian Catholic Church" were written Brander, who to begin with had called himself "Overseer",⁷⁹ called himself "Archbishop". The ECC in Z was governed by diocesan canon law which was similar to the canon law of the Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican Church).⁸⁰ A liturgical form of worship, which Brander had missed in the AMEC, was followed. Schools were built in different areas of the Transvaal. Most of Brander's reasons

⁷⁸ Ibid, 6

⁷⁹ The title "Overseer" was used in Zionist circles in churches emanating from Bryant's Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion.

⁸⁰ The ecclesiastical structure was the same as that of the clergy of the Anglican Church - from Archbishop to parish priest.

for leaving the AMEC had been addressed and he was the head of his own independent church.

The Ethiopian Church of South Africa (the secession of Seshuba and Ncgayiya)

The Ethiopian Church of South Africa which was founded in March 1909 by Henry Reed Ncgayiya ⁸¹ and Isaiah Goda Sishuba, returned to the original name used by Mokone before the Ethiopians joined the AMEC.

Ncgayiya at first belonged to the AMEC and played an important role in their early history in South Africa. It was only later that he decided to leave that church and join the Ethiopian Church being established by Sishuba.

Henry Reed Ncgayiya (1860-1928) was born near Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape. He was educated at Healdtown where he obtained a teachers certificate. After teaching for some years he became interpreter at the Aliwal North Magistrate's Office. When a call was made for men to join the ministry of the Ethiopian Church, (Mokone and Goduka's united churches) Ncgayiya volunteered.

Ncgayiya was ordained by Bishop Turner of the AMEC in 1898. ⁸² He became a loyal member of the AMEC and served on a number of committees. He was on the Conference Committee in 1901, together with Mokone, Attaway, Tantsi and Gow, as well as on the missions and finance committees. ⁸³ He was also among those delegated to "collect facts dating from the conception of the Ethiopian movement". ⁸⁴

⁸¹ Ncgayiya's address in 1925 was Stand 806, Nancefield, Johannesburg. MS 14,787 (Cory Library)

⁸² Skota, Yearly register, 78

⁸³ Minutes of the Conference held on 18 December 1901. (AME Archives, University of the Western Cape) Ncgayiya's name appeared 4th on the attendance list.

⁸⁴ Ibid

In November 1899, after Dwane's defection to the Anglicans, Sishuba held a meeting at the Friendly Hall in Cape Town in order to uphold the unity of the AMEC. Ncgayiya was not among those present. "The meeting decided to send a committee out to visit circuits to counter the spread of Dwane's rebellion".⁸⁵ All the people at the meeting, "seeing the deception of Dwane decided to stand by the African Methodist Episcopal Church". They considered that "Dwane, like many African leaders, was a self-centred man and his ambition was to be the sole head of the church".⁸⁶

In 1900 Bishop Coppin was assigned as the first Bishop of the South African AME church. The South African leadership began to centre around four men - MM Mokone, JZ Tantsi, MS Gabashane and F Gow.⁸⁷ Others like Ncgayiya who had been leaders in the Ethiopian Church began to realise that there was no more chance of gaining further promotion in the AMEC than there had been in the mission churches.

In 1908 a constitution for a new independent church was drawn up and signed by Sishuba, Ncgayiya, Spawn, Sonjica and Phakane.⁸⁸ They declared that they had "seen, and still see with deepest Christian anxiety, the deplorable spiritual and mental condition of our people".⁸⁹ Membership was based on "an intelligent profession of faith in Christ" and they held to "the Methodist or Presbyterian form of church government".⁹⁰

Although the Constitution of the Ethiopian Church of South Africa

⁸⁵ Typescript in AME Archives.

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Typescript (AME Archives) These four men were elected as delegates to the 1904 General Conference in America.

⁸⁸ Constitution of the Ethiopian Church of the United South Africa, 3 (State Archives, Pietermaritzburg)

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Ibid

is dated 7 December 1908 it was only at the 1912 Conference that Sishuba and Ncgayiya finally took their leave of the AMEC. They decided to resuscitate the Ethiopian Church in the areas in which they worked, that is Natal and Queenstown, so they held a conference of their own. At the 1912 Conference Sishuba, Ncgayiya and 17 ministers who supported them, were suspended by Bishop Johnson of the AMEC. They then established their own church, a continuation of Mokone's Ethiopian Church, which they called the Ethiopian Church of the United South Africa.

In 1925 Ncgayiya summarised his reasons for leaving his previous churches in two sentences:

We left the Church of England because we preferred to belong to a church controlled by one of our own race and colour. The reason why we did not become members of the AMEC was because it was controlled from America.⁹¹

When Sishuba died Ncgayiya became leader of the Ethiopian Church, a post he held for more than sixteen years until his death in 1928. Ncgayiya was also a member of the African National Congress working for the recognition African people. This he did through both his political and his church work.

In reestablishing the Ethiopian Church of South Africa Ncgayiya was fulfilling his desire for a truly African church. The name he chose, the " Ethiopian Church of the United South Africa" showed that the new church was for all the African races of South Africa.⁹²

⁹¹ MS 14,787 Testimony of Henry Reed Ncgayiya. (Cory Library) These words were endorsed by the testimony of Michael Calusa: "We left the AME Church because it was controlled from America whereas we desired that it should be controlled by a South African native". Ncgayiya left the AMEC in 1909.

⁹² Constitution, 4 The constitution states that in the Ethiopian Church there is "no distinction of race or colour".

Reasons for leaving the AME Church

The reasons given by the leaders of the three churches that seceded from the AMEC show both similarities and differences. The differences, however, provide the answer to why the people who broke away from the AMEC could not all be accommodated in one church.

* promises to provide schools with American money were not kept. This cause for separating from the AMEC was the same for all three of the churches but for Dwane it was a deciding factor. Ncgayiya wanted to be in control of his own schools as well as his church while the other two leaders were willing to allow some white assistance.

* both Dwane and Brander wanted the Anglican form of worship. While Dwane was unable to reach the status of Bishop in the white-controlled mission church, he was for a while the Provincial of the Order of Ethiopia. Brander, on the other hand, in an independent church of his own, had no difficulty in reaching the position of Archbishop.

* all the church leaders wanted South African leadership for their churches. The American control of the AMEC was resented by all three of the church leaders, but for Ncgayiya it was particularly difficult to accept. In the constitution of his Ethiopian Church the basis of their statement of faith was Psalm 68:31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God", ⁹³. The Ethiopian Church was to be a church for a united African nation. "Africanness" was important in all three churches.

* the three churches differed in the amount of contact with and control by whites that was allowed. Dwane's Order of Ethiopia was under the umbrella of the white-controlled Anglican Church. Control was firmly in the hands of the whites and even though Dwane was often unhappy about his lack of effective status he did not leave the Anglicans. Brander was willing to allow whites some say in the running

of schools, but church leadership had to be black. Ncgayiya, with his greater emphasis on African nationalism, wanted black control for all the activities of his church.

The case study shows, therefore, that while the same factors, such as the wish to be in a church controlled by black leadership, brought the leaders of the three churches into the AMEC these factors could neither hold them there or bind them into one church when they left the AMEC. All three sought responsibility, status and the freedom to worship in their own way. Each found that freedom in different ways in the churches they founded.

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY 3: PRESBYTERIAN INDEPENDENCE

The split in the Presbyterian Church (Free church of Scotland) at Lovedale in 1898 had nothing to do with the Ethiopian movement in the Transvaal or with Dwane's Order of Ethiopia. It was an entirely separate movement initiated by Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba¹ of the African congregation belonging to the Presbyterian Church at Lovedale in the eastern Cape. Although the schism had nothing to do with the Ethiopian movement, Mokone and Dwane especially, may well have influenced the formation of the Presbyterian Church in Africa (Mzimba's church) because at the time of its inception the Christian Express, the journal published by the Lovedale Press, ran a number of articles on the Ethiopians. Although most of the articles were critical, Mzimba was able to read how people in other areas were finding religious independence through the Ethiopian movement. For example, in April 1897 he would have read that:

For a few years there has been growing up in South Africa a separate and independent native church. ... It is known as the Ethiopian Church. This is an excellent name which does great credit to its inventor, and is almost a stroke of genius if it was intended to express a movement of a purely indigenous kind.²

If these words were taken at face value the critical nature of the statement would have been lost and the words would have seemed to express a measure of approval. The editorial provided a brief outline of the history of the Ethiopian movement to date and noted: "A Bishop Turner is expected shortly to organise this new church".³ However, the reader was left in no doubt as to the

¹ The name may also be spelt Mazimba.

² The Christian Express volume xxvii no 322 Editorial entitled "A new church and possible trouble".

³ Ibid

attitude of the missionaries to the new movement. "We cannot think that either individual missionaries or the committees of different societies will look with much satisfaction or approval on this latest development of Native African Christianity".⁴

The establishment of Lovedale as a training institution

Lovedale was established as the result of the work of the missionaries of the Glasgow Missionary Society. The first missionaries, the Rev William Richie Thomson and the layman John Bennie, were sent to South Africa in 1821. They established a mission station on the Chumie River and in January 1824 the first Presbytery was formed with Bennie as ruling elder.⁵ This was later called Mgwali, the mission station where the Rev Tiyo Soga did much of his work.⁶

Thomson and Bennie started a school at Chumie, the first Scottish educational venture in the eastern Cape and a forerunner of Lovedale. In 1824 a second Scottish mission was established at Incehara by Ross and Bennie. In July of that year they "erected a ... humble meeting place to serve the purposes of church and school".⁷ The station was renamed Lovedale in 1826 in honour of Dr Love, the general secretary of the Glasgow Missionary Society, who had died the previous year.⁸

The first baptisms took place at Chumie in 1823 and the increasing number of converts from the mission stations provided

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Holt, B 1976 Greatheart of the Border A life of John Brownlee Pioneer missionary in South Africa King William's Town: The South African Missionary Museum, 51 The other members of the Presbytery were the Revs WR Thompson and J Ross.

⁶ Williams, Umfundisi, 3

⁷ Ibid, 53

⁸ Hofmeyr, J & Pillay, G (eds) 1994 A history of Christianity in South Africa volume 1 Pretoria: HAUM Tertiary, 72

the need for a training institution for evangelists and teachers. In 1841 the Glasgow Missionary Society sent Dr William Govan to South Africa as the first principal of Lovedale Institution.⁹ The Institution was officially opened on 21 July 1841.¹⁰ Govan remained principal for twenty-nine years and helped to establish Lovedale as a leading educational institution in South Africa. Lovedale became an interdenominational training centre and teachers from other missions were trained there too. It was a multi-racial institution, accepting both black and white students as boarders in its hostels. The same syllabus was taught to all the students. Mzimba, as a student at Lovedale, had both black and white classmates.

In 1867 Dr James Stewart joined the staff at Lovedale Institution. He introduced technical training into the syllabus. At first this caused dissension between Stewart and Govan who believed that only academic subjects should be taught. Govan retired in 1870 and technical subjects continued to be taught to prepare students for various careers, for example, gardening. This was the Lovedale that Pambani Mzimba knew as a scholar.

Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba (1850-1911) was born at Ngqakayi in the eastern Cape. He was the son of Ntibane Mzimba¹¹, an old student of Lovedale Institution.¹² Ntibane and his wife were

⁹ In 1833 divisions over the issue of voluntarism (state support for the church) led to two camps in the Scottish South African mission. Lovedale, Burnshill and Pirie (two other mission stations) remained with the Glasgow Missionary Society while Chumie and Qhiubiri were allied with the newly formed Glasgow South African Missionary Society. The question of voluntarism in the South African churches was only settled in 1875.

¹⁰ Shepherd, RHW 1940 Lovedale, South Africa 1841-1941 Lovedale:Lovedale Press, 95

¹¹ Skota, 1933 Who'who, 75

¹² Stewart, Lovedale past and present, 253 Pambani's brothers were also students at Lovedale - Joseph Mzimba, (b 1867) the teacher at Seshegu (where Pambani

baptised by the Rev James Laing, a Free Church of Scotland minister, in 1852 and Ntibane later became a deacon in the Free Church Mission Congregation at Lovedale, the church that Pambani, his son would later serve.

Mzimba entered Lovedale in 1860 and remained a student there until 1875 when he emerged the first of two Africa-trained black Presbyterian ministers in South Africa. The other was the Rev E Makiwane whose training and experience was similar to Mzimba's, but who remained within the mission church.

In 1876 Mzimba married a member of the Soga family, Martha Kwatsha.¹³ In this way he allied himself with the family that had produced the first black Presbyterian minister in South Africa.¹⁴

Elijah Makiwane (1850-1928) was born at Sheshegu¹⁵ in the eastern Cape, his parents becoming Christian after his birth. He entered Lovedale in 1865, five years after Mzimba because he first attended the Wesleyan Methodist schools at Ncera and Healdtown. Makiwane was a successful and diligent student and was appointed assistant teacher to the junior classes in 1867.

received his earliest training from his father who also taught there), (Skota, 1933 Who's who, 75) David Mzimba (b 1863) in 1886 still a student at Lovedale, Samuel Mzimba (b 1854) the Magistrate's Clerk in Alice and Pambani's cousin, Cekiso (d 1886) Mzimba. The Mzimba family had a long tradition of attendance at Lovedale.

¹³ Typescript notes from the South African Missionary Museum, King William's Town. Ref. Mzimba, Rev Mr. Kwatsha came from Burnshill and attended Lovedale. In 1875 she went to Scotland with Mrs Thompson, returning in 1876 when she married Mzimba.

¹⁴ Burchell, DE 1979 A history of the Lovedale Missionary Institution 1890-1930 Unpublished MA thesis University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg), 118

¹⁵ Mzimba, too, lived at Sheshegu as a boy and his father was the school-teacher there for a while.

At the end of 1871 both Mzimba and Makiwane were granted special certificates of honourable mention. ¹⁶ Their careers continued to run a parallel course as both men then worked for the Telegraph Office in Alice, Makiwane in charge of the office and Mzimba as a telegraph operator .

The course for ministerial students at Lovedale differed little from the theological courses offered in Scotland. Students studied literature, philosophy, classical languages and divinity. Both Mzimba and Makiwane completed the course and were ordained in 1875. Mzimba became minister to the Lovedale "native" congregation while Makiwane was sent to MacFarlan mission in 1877. Between 1875 and 1877, after he was ordained, Mzimba was employed at Lovedale as a theological teacher . ¹⁷

In 1876, shortly after their ordination, both Mzimba and Makiwane were among the ministers being considered as pioneers for the newly-formed Livingstonia mission in Malawi (then called Nyasaland). Stewart, himself, would lead the party. Neither Mzimba nor Makiwane was chosen to go. ¹⁸

1891 was the year of Lovedale's Jubilee celebration. Mzimba was chosen to deliver one of the sermons. In the Jubilee Report of that year he was recognised as a modest and capable minister, a satisfactory pastor and a successful evangelist. ¹⁹

In 1893 he was sent to Scotland as "native representative" of the Free Church of Scotland at the anniversary of their stand at the

¹⁶ Stewart, Lovedale past and present, 252

¹⁷ Stewart, Lovedale past and present, 264 and 252

¹⁸ Shepherd, Lovedale,

¹⁹ Lovedale Missionary Institution Reports 1891 Jubilee Report, Lovedale Press, 6 and 7 (South African Missionary Museum Archives)

"Disruption"²⁰ which fifty years previously had led to the formation of the Free Church. In much the same way as Methodism may be seen as a schism from the Church of England, so the members of the Free Church of Scotland had had the experience of leaving the established or state church. Mzimba collected donations to build a new church for the Lovedale African congregation. Money collected during this trip later caused the dissension which led to the formation of the Presbyterian Church of Africa.

In 1896 Lovedale began theological classes with nine students and a syllabus "formed to meet the requirements of several churches".

²¹ The lecturers and students in the theological classes were multi-racial. Both Mzimba and Makiwane became tutors in biblical studies. Mzimba taught the books of the New Testament and Makiwane the books of the Old Testament in "Kaffir", that is in the Xhosa language. ²² The lecturer in charge of the theological school was Dr DD Stormont, the author of the articles in the Christian Express condemning the Ethiopian movement.

consequencing?

In September and October 1896 Stewart and Mzimba together acted as mediators in the Tsewu case in Johannesburg. Here Mzimba was to see the first break-away from the Free Church of Scotland in South Africa.

A first independent Presbyterian church

The first independent (African) Presbyterian church in South Africa was of short duration and was formed when the Rev Edward Tsewu (b 1856 in Grahamstown) refused to be transferred by the

²⁰ The "Disruption" was the name given to the deed by which on 18 May 1843 four hundred and seventy ministers along with many elders, members and adherents of the Church of Scotland severed their connection with the State Church and formed the Free Church of Scotland.

²¹ Lovedale Annual Report, 1897, 6

²² The Christian Express, 1 January 1898

Presbyterian Church after he was disciplined by the white Presbyterian clergy. Tsewu's history was in many ways similar to Mzimba's. His father was a deacon in the Lovedale African congregation, as Mzimba's father had been. Tsewu entered Lovedale in 1871²³ and remained there until 1875 when he obtained a teacher's certificate. He returned to Lovedale in 1878 and passed his theological examinations in 1883. He was licensed by the Kaffrarian Presbytery of the Free Church of Scotland and from 1884 worked at Toleni and Idutywa in the Transkei. Later Tsewu was transferred to Johannesburg where, although his work appeared successful, he was accused of irregularities.

In November 1895 the Presbytery of Kaffraria listened to a report of the work in Johannesburg and decided that the minister there, the Rev Edward Tsewu, should change places with the Rev Makiwane of the MacFarlan mission. Tsewu refused to be transferred and in 1896 presented a letter to the Kirk Session purporting to come from the Johannesburg congregation, expressing their satisfaction with his ministry. However, "the decision of the Presbytery was that the serious charges made against Mr Tsewu were proved beyond reasonable doubt".²⁴

The charges against Tsewu were:

1. Falsifying reports of his church and school
2. The statement in his favour contained false information and forged signatures
3. He married couples without calling proper banns and without the knowledge of their parents
4. He charged "exorbitant fees" for performing marriage ceremonies
5. He withheld certificates of membership in order to force people to pay church dues
6. His appointment of elders was "in flagrant disregard of

²³ Skota, 1965 Who's who, 79

²⁴ The Christian Express, 2 August 1897

the rules of the Presbyterian Church".²⁵

Tsewu maintained that Stewart had "caused a split in his church" because he refused "to have the witnesses of the accused (himself) heard fairly".²⁶ However, the split in the church had existed long before Stewart and Mzimba arrived in Johannesburg to examine the charges against Tsewu. He presented many excuses for not attending the Presbytery meetings, for example, his child and his brother-in-law had died. His witnesses were finally heard and proved to be the ringleaders in a move for independence that was destroying the congregation.²⁷

The Presbytery gave Tsewu an opportunity to answer the accusations but he "abused ... the Presbytery and commission (Stewart and Mzimba)"²⁸ and had the matter reported in the newspapers. He was requested three times to appear before the Presbytery and refused. Finally, Tsewu resigned from the Free Church of Scotland. According to the rules of the Free Church of Scotland a person who has publicly accused the church cannot resign because "we publicly made him a minister of our church". Because he had "proved himself unworthy," we had to "undo our work and deprive him of his ministry as publicly as we had invested him with it".²⁹ Tsewu left the Presbyterian Church after he was dismissed and established his own church with the "witnesses" who had been seeking independence as members.³⁰

Tsewu later joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He remained in Johannesburg and in 1905, with other members of the

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ The Christian Express 2 August 1897

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid Statement by the Rev WJB Moir, Moderator of the Kaffrarian Presbytery.

³⁰ Skota, 1965 Who's who, 79

AMEC - Maxwell Maxeke, John Mtshula and James Tantsi, formally challenged the Registrar of Deeds' refusal to register land in an African's name.³¹ Tsewu ignored the proper channels and went to the men at the top of the Pretoria administration.³² He was successful in his struggle for African land rights and soon after Africans were granted the right to buy land in the rural areas and certain urban areas.³³ His desire for religious freedom had been channelled into a fight for political rights for Africans. However, although his individualistic approach which ignored the proper channels was successful in politics, it was one of the reasons why he had to leave the Presbyterian Church.

The first national Presbyterian Assembly

The first united (national) Presbyterian Assembly was held in Durban in 1897. Mzimba was one of the delegates from the Kaffrarian Presbytery. Union of the Presbyterian Churches in South Africa was not accepted wholeheartedly by the churches in the eastern Cape. The Christian Express reported in July 1897 that "the native churches at Lovedale, MacFarlan, Burnshill, Pirie and Idutywa have sent to their respective Presbyteries returns against the proposed union of the Churches in South Africa".³⁴ The list of churches included those served by Mzimba and Makiwane. The editor of the Christian Express felt that "the five native congregations have doubtless been led to their decisions"³⁵ because of their experience with the "discipline and jurisdiction of the Home Church" ie the church in Scotland.

36

31 The Star, Johannesburg 5 April 1905 See also Campbell Our fathers our children, 210

32 Campbell Our fathers our children, 209

33 Skota, 1965 Who's who, 80

34 The Christian Express, 1 July 1897 "Union of the Presbyterian Churches".

35 Ibid

36 Ibid

Other objections voiced by members of the Kaffrarian Presbytery were that the General Assembly would not have full control of South African affairs as the final authority to make decisions would still lie with the church in Scotland. They feared that funds for the missions of the "colonial church" would no longer be sent from Britain. They also felt that white colonial ministers would not submit to the authority of a General Assembly where African ministers had a vote and could force a majority decision.³⁷ In spite of these objections plans for the united General Assembly went ahead. Opinions remained divided on the subject of one assembly for all race groups with the Rev J Don of King William's Town saying that he would "deem it a calamity and a disgrace to divide the church of Christ on lines of colour". The Rev J Thompson of Idutywa insisted that "if the native churches must be restricted, the native churches should not be incorporated at all".³⁸ The racial attitudes prevailing at the time of the First General Assembly were influential in the establishment of a separate Bantu Presbyterian Church under the umbrella of the General Assembly and to a lesser extent in the formation of the Presbyterian Church of Africa, a wholly independent church for Africans established by Pambani Mzimba.

The First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in South Africa met from the 19 September 1897 under the Moderature of the Rev John Smith. In the Basis of Union it was stated that the united church would be named the "Presbyterian Church in South Africa" and would adhere to the Westminster Confession and other Reformed confessions of faith. The membership would be based on "an intelligent profession of faith in Christ, a life consistent therewith; and an active interest in the Church's well-being".³⁹ It would be formed from three Synods, those of the North,

³⁷ The Christian Express, 1 July 1897

³⁸ The Christian Express 1 November 1897

³⁹ Ac 1971 Ah 1.1 (Presbyterian Archives, University of the Witwatersrand) "Proposed organisation for the Presbyterian Church in South Africa".

Kaffraria and the South.⁴⁰ The question of race was not mentioned. The delegates from Kaffraria, however, felt that they could not be part of the act of union because of the "want of acquiescence (refusal to agree to the union) on the part of several of the native congregations".⁴¹

The Assembly tried to make modifications to "the arrangements ... in order to remove these obstacles".⁴² They tried to please both the white colonial church and the black mission church so that neither might fear a majority vote by the other. It was ultimately agreed that each Presbytery would send one half of their ministers with a corresponding number of the laity.⁴³ It is interesting to note that although there were black representatives at the Assembly and although the delegates were at pains to placate the members of the Kaffrarian Presbytery, the basis of union is signed by only white ministers.⁴⁴

The date of the next General Assembly was set for the second week in September 1898, to be held in Cape Town.⁴⁵ Mzimba did not attend that Assembly as he was no longer a member of the Presbyterian Church in South Africa.

Reasons for the establishment of the Presbyterian Church of Africa

After twenty-two years in the ministry of the Free Church of

40 Ibid

41 Minutes of the First General Assembly, 20 September 1897 (Presbyterian Archives, University of the Witwatersrand) The reference is to the deliberations at a meeting of the Synod of Kaffraria held on 19 July 1897.

42 Ibid

43 Ibid. Sixth session of the Assembly held on 22 September 1897

44 Minutes of the First General Assembly, September 1897

45 Ibid

Scotland Mzimba felt that he could no longer remain a member of the Presbyterian Church and formed his own independent church. The effect of this move was felt differently by those with whom he had worked at Lovedale. Wells wrote that "Stewart and his friends had bestowed upon him (Mzimba) exceptional kindness. But, in 1898, without warning, he resigned his position".⁴⁶ The bad influence of Dwane was suspected and Stewart felt "peculiar sorrow" because Mzimba had been like a son in the faith to him. Stewart's legal advisor noted that "the matter aged Dr Stewart perceptibly".⁴⁷

Stormont felt that "the native in Africa must stand for himself in religious matters" but his view of the Ethiopian movement became less tolerant when Mzimba broke away from the Presbyterian Church and "most of the Fingoes ... followed his example".⁴⁸

It is puzzling to know what exactly caused the final break with the church at Lovedale. The money which is supposed to have been the cause of the schism was collected five years earlier, although it took four years to arrive in South Africa. Mzimba may have waited for the church he planned to be built, the fact that it had not yet been built was not enough to precipitate sudden action. There must also have been other underlying factors to have initiated the break and ignited the fire of discontent that had been simmering ever since Mzimba's visit to Scotland.

One of the factors was that Stewart (and other white missionaries) felt that the church planned by Mzimba was "too fine a church for natives".⁴⁹ Shepherd was convinced that

⁴⁶ Wells, J 1906 The life of James Stewart London:Hodder & Stoughton, 295

⁴⁷ Ibid, 296

⁴⁸ MS 10 697 Zeitschrift (Cory Library, Grahamstown) and Williams, African nationalism, 381

⁴⁹ Minutes of the Presbytery of Kaffraria. Mzimba's letter of resignation in Burchell, Lovedale, 124

Mzimba's dissatisfaction with affairs at Lovedale stemmed from his visit to Scotland.⁵⁰ where he had been feted and treated as an equal by the Scottish people.

Mzimba was on good terms with Stewart until at least 1896, the year in which they together investigated the Tsewu trouble in Johannesburg. Tsewu's new church formed a precedent for an independent Presbyterian church and showed Mzimba that it was possible to disagree publicly with the Presbyterian church authorities. The racial conflict that surrounded the act of union at the First General Assembly a year later was another factor with which Mzimba had to contend and which led him to realise the need for an African church run by Africans.

At first it was Makiwane who was "preparing for separate action".⁵¹ Burchell is of the opinion that Makiwane did not in fact consider leaving the Presbyterian Church but that he was disturbed by the racial tension surrounding the First General Assembly. Although he was unwilling to make a break with the Presbyterian Church he continued to take a keen interest in the advancement of the African people.⁵² Makiwane was one of the ministers who questioned Mzimba in the Presbytery when he resigned from the Presbyterian Church.

Early in April 1898 Mzimba tendered his resignation as pastor of the Lovedale Church to the Kaffrarian Presbytery. For a week the members of the Presbytery examined the reasons that Mzimba gave

⁵⁰ Shepherd, Lovedale, 246

⁵¹ Letter from Moir to Stewart dated 15 April 1898 in Burchell, Lovedale, 122

⁵² In 1910 Makiwane wrote an article for the Christian Express entitled "Black and white in South Africa". he wrote: "The condition of the native under Union may be good or bad. It may, as some fear, be no better than that of the children of Israel in Egypt; but if oppression brings us together and reveals to us that we are a people and not merely tribes, it will have accomplished for us what is of greater importance than even the franchise". 1 February 1910, 28

for leaving the Presbyterian Church but "failed to find sufficient cause for resignation".⁵³ Mzimba explained that "the missionaries and myself shall always hinder one another; we generally see things different ways which introduces bad feeling and distrust".⁵⁴

Mzimba recalled that when Tsewu had to be replaced in Johannesburg a white minister was sent in accordance with the recommendation of the white members of the Presbytery, although the church was African.⁵⁵ After it was explained the "peculiar circumstances of Johannesburg where natives are at a disadvantage", Mzimba withdrew his accusation.⁵⁶

Mzimba told the Presbytery that the immediate cause of his resignation was the dispute over the new church for the Lovedale district. He quarrelled with Stewart and Lennox over the site of the church. The Rev LM Mzimba, Pambani Mzimba's son, spoke of the domineering and tyrannical position his father had felt placed under.⁵⁷ At the end of the commission of enquiry the ministers remained unconvinced that there were underlying factors which had

⁵³ The Christian Express 1 October 1903

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Kaffrarian Presbytery. Mzimba's letter of resignation presented to the Presbytery on 6 April 1898 in Burchell, Lovedale, 122

⁵⁵ After a schism in the mission church the authorities tended to replace the break-away black minister with a white minister in the hope that the flow of church members to the independent church would be stopped. The Rev Joel Msimang (chapter 6) was also replaced by a white minister.

⁵⁶ Ibid The members of the Presbytery were referring to the difficulties African ministers experienced in the Transvaal where there was abject poverty as well as other social problems but little sympathy for Africans from most of the officials. See chapter 3 for a discussion on the problems of urbanisation in the Transvaal.

⁵⁷ LN Mzimba 1933 "The African Church" in Taylor, JD (ed) Christianity and the natives of South Africa Lovedale:Lovedale Institution Press, 88

not been resolved. For example, Stewart remained sure that Mzimba had been influenced by Dwane as both had split with the mission church over the question of money collected in Britain.⁵⁸ However, tradition passed down in Mzimba's church and recorded as evidence for the commission in 1922 showed that Mzimba left the Presbyterian Church "on account of a difference he had with the ministers ... (over) the site for the erection of a church for natives only".⁵⁹

In 1898 Lennox, the chaplain at Lovedale, tried to pinpoint the reasons for Mzimba's resignation. He cited the growing desire for independence among the African people, the influence of the Ethiopian church which made Mzimba desire a church of his own, Mzimba's growing "touchiness" and the fact that the money from Scotland had not been sent directly to him.⁶⁰

In spite of Stewart's belief that Dwane had influenced Mzimba and Lennox's view that Mzimba was influenced by the desire for independence and emerging African nationalism, Mzimba told the Commission in 1903 that his church was not part of the Ethiopian movement.

At the Second General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Africa in 1898 a word of caution was voiced: "There is a movement among the native people of a kind which compels those in missionary work to move with caution".⁶¹ The secession of Mzimba was linked by the Assembly to the wider Ethiopian movement and missionaries were warned about possible repercussions from the secession. Mzimba's church would in future be included in articles on Ethiopianism in the Christian Express. For example, in 1903 there appeared a mention of "a third movement, having

⁵⁸ Wells, Stewart, 295

⁵⁹ MS 14 787 (Cory Library) Evidence by BS Diepu

⁶⁰ Burchell, Lovedale, 125

⁶¹ The Christian Express 1 October 1898 "General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in South Africa".

headquarters in the Cape Colony, ... led by the Rev PJ Mzimba".⁶² The other two movements mentioned were the AMEC and Dwane's Order of Ethiopia.

Shepherd, on the other hand, writing years later, saw little danger to the Presbyterian Church as a whole and felt that the new church was of "little but local interest" and that its influence even after forty years was confined to a small area and ...its only real significance has been as part of a phase of Bantu church life".⁶³

The Presbyterian Church of Africa

Mzimba's resignation from the church at Lovedale led to feelings of bitterness on the part of the missionaries, especially as it heralded a lengthy battle over property ownership. When Mzimba resigned he "persisted in retaining properties with whose custody he had been entrusted. These included buildings, title deeds to land, the sum of one thousand three hundred and sixty-one pounds, together with the records and documents of the church".⁶⁴ Eventually, legal action had to be taken for the property to be restored to the Presbyterian Church. The finding of the court was a severe blow to Mzimba and his followers.⁶⁵ Most of the money, however, amounting to nine hundred and seventy-three pounds was never recovered.

Lennox believed that Mzimba would return to the Presbyterian Church if left to himself. Stewart, on the other hand, lost his confidence in the ability of the African to manage church affairs.⁶⁶ Henderson, also of Lovedale Institution, saw Mzimba's secession as "the awakening desire for racial self-

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Shepherd, Lovedale, 245

⁶⁴ The Christian Express 1 October 1903

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Minutes of evidence volume ii, 912

realisation" that was part of a world-wide movement and as such should be viewed with tolerance. ⁶⁷ Unfortunately, events that took place after the secession led to recriminations from all the parties involved.

Mzimba was a Fingo and when he left the Lovedale Church two-thirds of the congregation followed him, this being the Fingo component of the members. By 1903, according to Mzimba's estimation, the membership of the independent church had grown to 6 500 communicants and 20 000 adherents. ⁶⁸ Mzimba issued circulars inviting people to join his church and many of the congregations in the area around Lovedale were affected by divisions. ⁶⁹ The writer in the Christian Express lamented that the members of the new church were not "gathered out of heathenism but gained by seductive methods from the pioneer missionary church". ⁷⁰ Mzimba's influence proved disruptive as he and his followers attempted to proselytise the Presbyterians in the area.

Further disruption was felt at Makiwane's MacFarlan mission station. Chief Mbovane of MacFarlan mission decided that the time was appropriate to claim back from the mission the title deeds for mission property which, he claimed, had been built on land given to the tribe by God and which the mission had acted falsely in using. Makiwane claimed that the demand was made to mask the desire for independence and that the chief wanted to join Mzimba's church. For a time during 1899 both Mzimba and Makiwane conducted services for the chief's people. ⁷¹

Makiwane, like LN Mzimba, saw the secession as part of a wider

⁶⁷ Lea, Separatist churches, Foreword

⁶⁸ Du Plessis, Christian missions, 458

⁶⁹ The Christian Express 1 October 1903

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Burchell, Lovedale, 137

social problem because of the inequality in salaries between black and white people in the church and the civil service as well as the lack of promotion.⁷² Mzimba's son explained that in the independent African church things would be different. No longer would black ministers receive a "lower salary and status than the white missionary". The new church would offer a "highway to increased influence".⁷³

Mzimba's evidence before the 1903-1905 Commission provides insight into why he left the Presbyterian Church. He said that there was a desire "to work independently"⁷⁴ and having their own church "stimulates us in making self-sacrifice in our work".⁷⁵ Mzimba believed that he was creating an African church in which the African could stand on his own feet.⁷⁶ Mzimba's son referred to this type of church as "a truly African type of Christianity suited to the genius and needs of the race, not a black copy of an European church".⁷⁷

The picture that Mzimba painted for the 1903-1905 Commission was of a growing, vibrant church. They had already held five Synods, there were four ordained ministers and Mzimba was looking forward to the time when "while we control our own affairs separately there will be incorporation or federation with the colonial Presbyterian body".⁷⁸ Mzimba still sought recognition from the Free Church of Scotland and the South African Assembly and appeared unaware of the hurt and displeasure of the "colonial" ministers. He applied for recognition to the Free Church of

⁷² Ibid, 138

⁷³ Taylor, Christianity, 86 and 87

⁷⁴ Minutes of evidence volume ii, 793

⁷⁵ Ibid, 794

⁷⁶ Williams, African nationalism, 381 See also Mzimba, LN The African Church, 88

⁷⁷ Ibid, 89

⁷⁸ Minutes of evidence, volume ii, 793

Scotland, basing his application on his church's conformity to the common practice of the Presbyterian Church - the use of the prayer book and the twenty-four articles of the Presbyterian Church in Britian. ⁷⁹ The Kaffrarian Presbytery refused to consider the possibility of union with Mzimba's church saying that if the application was accepted "it would be a severe shock to the mission work amongst a people just emerging from heathenism". ⁸⁰ They were also afraid that such a union would lower the standard of the African ministry of the Presbyterian Church and engender bitter feelings throughout the mission. Mzimba was no longer considered a minister of the Presbyterian Church in South Africa.

Later history of the Presbyterian Church of Africa

In 1907 Mzimba was appointed a marriage officer, thereby receiving a measure of recognition for his church. This was followed in 1908 and 1909 by four other ministers being granted marriage licences. ⁸¹ Mzimba's church was one of only three for which recognition was recommended. ⁸² The other two churches were the AMEC and the Order of Ethiopia.

By the time that Mzimba died in 1911 Mzimba's church had grown to 33 congregations with over 13 000 members all over South Africa. ⁸³ He was succeeded by his son Livingston, who had been educated in America and who became Moderator. In 1933 Skota noted

⁷⁹ Burchell, Lovedale, 138

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ SNA 3/2/4 20/03/22 (State Archives, Pretoria), 19 In 1922 the names of the Presbyterian Church of Africa's ministers who held marriage licences were: JS Mazwi, R Damana, WW Stofile and EG Mpinda.

⁸² Ibid, 23

⁸³ Skota, 1965 Who's who, 74 According to the Annual Report of 1912 submitted to the government the Presbyterian Church of Africa had 46 484 adherents, 18 751 communicants, 41 134 church members, 362 preaching stations and 44 churches. (SNA 3/2/4 20/03/22 State Archives, Pretoria)

that:

The trouble with the Rev Mzimba's organisation, like all native religious organisations, was that he had no institution to train some of his followers for Holy Orders and consequently he had to ordain untrained men or send them to the institutions of other denominations. The result was that ... his work did not get on as smoothly as did that of churches under European supervision. ⁸⁴

Analysis of the causes of the Presbyterian schism

Unlike Tile, Mzimba did not set out to form a tribal church although most of his followers belonged to the Fingo tribe. He was a charismatic leader and most of his congregation, especially those who belonged to the same tribe, decided to follow the minister they knew and admired. This gave the impression of being a tribal church although Mzimba was happy to accept people from any of the tribes and clans in the area. To start with the church was limited to the area in the eastern Cape near Lovedale, but later spread to other parts of South Africa.

LN Mzimba declared that "the African church is not a political organisation. Neither was it planned as a national church". ⁸⁵However, socio-political problems played a part as Mzimba was reacting to unequal opportunities for black and white ministers. LN Mzimba, when he was leader of the Presbyterian Church of Africa wrote that African ministers:

(H)ad a lower salary than the white missionary. They felt much more isolated both from the "blacks" and the "whites". Being somewhat educated they wished to better their position, and the more ambitious wished to make a rapid

⁸⁴ Skota, 1933 Yearly register, 75

⁸⁵ Shepherd, 1937 "The separatist churches of South Africa" in The international review of mission volume 26, 455

ascent of the social ladder".⁸⁶

He then added that "the Bantu is determined to have his share not only of the task of living for Christ, but also the blessings and the reward".⁸⁷

Lennox, in 1909, offered the following criticism of the accepted missionary policy of the main-line Protestant mission churches:

(W)e offer the native church the finest product of our thinking and experience, while at the same time we remove from them the discipline of thinking out these great questions in relation to their own traditional life. ... We could do no greater disservice than to do all their thinking for them. They must take their responsibilities on their own shoulders. ... They must cast themselves on the future in faith and must garner and use the lessons of their own experience. ... They are not ... to be reckoned failures.⁸⁸

Lennox came to this conclusion through much soul-searching after Mzimba's secession. The formation of the Presbyterian Church of Africa made him realise the inadequacies of the colonial mission policy.

The immediate cause of the secession, the refusal to allow Mzimba any say in how the money he had collected overseas was spent, was a direct result of the attitude of the missionaries that Lennox was deploring. For example, Shepherd wrote that "in Scotland Mr Mzimba was given considerable sums of money, which on returning to South Africa and contrary to the views of his presbytery, he

⁸⁶ Shepherd, 1937 "The separatist churches of South Africa" in International Review, 455

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid, 463

claimed to allocate to such objects as he pleased".⁸⁹

Of all the influences that have been discussed it was perhaps the emerging spirit of independentism and self-reliance among Africans that most influenced the formation of the Presbyterian Church of Africa. Mzimba wanted an African church in which there were prospects for promotion for African ministers and which was under the control of Africans.

The question still remains why of two men whose careers ran on parallel lines, Mzimba and Makiwane, one should leave the Presbyterian Church to form an independent church while the other remained loyal all his life. Unknown underlying factors, for example, personality and personal expectations, played a part in causing the one to leave the mission church while ensuring that the other remained serving the church in which he had been ordained. Skota, referring to Mzimba, writes that "only a man with an attractive personality, with more than average organising ability and with singleness of purpose could have drawn so many people after him" and left an established independent church like the Presbyterian Church of Africa.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Shepherd, "African Separatist churches" in International review, 455

⁹⁰ Skota, 1965 Who's who, 74

CHAPTER 6

CASE STUDY 4: A FURTHER INDEPENDENT METHODIST INITIATIVE

The members of the Independent Methodist Church, unlike those from other independent churches who say that their history starts with the breakaway from the mission church, consider the history of the church from which they originated the history of their own church.

In 1903 the Synod of the Transvaal and Swaziland District of the Wesleyan Methodist Church decided to move one of their ministers, Joel Msimang, from his church in Swaziland to Mozambique.¹ However, Msimang was not willing to leave his Swazi congregation. When the Methodist Church refused to reconsider their decision Msimang felt he could no longer remain a minister of the Methodist Church. He left the mission church at Mahamba (the main mission station of the Methodist Church in Swaziland where his father, Daniel, had worked) and Emakosini (the mission station which Joel started in 1892). His erstwhile parishioners persuaded him to start an independent church/congregation in

¹ On 22 December 1921 the Rev E Botterill of the Methodist Church in Johannesburg wrote to the Commission investigating Native Separatist Churches that:

The Independent Methodist Church was started in 1906 by Joel Msimang who up to that time was resident Methodist minister at Mahamba, Swaziland. In the ordinary course after a long term in Swaziland Msimang was transferred to Johannesburg by his Synod. He declined and set up his own organisation. (Ms 14 7876 Cory Library, Grahamstown.)

This is the only reference to a possible transfer to Johannesburg. All other references are to a transfer to Mozambique. Botterill continued that he had:

"personally known not only Joel but two other expelled ministers of the Wesleyan Church who have found a temporary refuge with him". Ibid

Swaziland and the surrounding areas where he had ministered so in 1906 he founded the Independent Methodist Church of Africa. The leaders of the Independent Methodist Church, look upon the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Swaziland prior to 1903 as the history of their own Independent Methodist Church because the roots of both are the same.

Mswati 11, the Swazi king at the time of the first Methodist venture into Swaziland, is a legendary hero of the Swazis. There is a tradition that he acted on the dream of his father, Somhlolo (Sobhuza) ² about the coming of the white man from overseas, and was responsible for bringing the Bible (Umculu) to Swaziland. The coming of the Umculu had been prophesied by King Somhlolo who told the people that if they would take it (the Bible) instead of coins (money) they would live as one nation. ³ This legend

² The name Somhlolo is derived from the vision that the king had in 1836. Various interpretations of the meaning of the dream have been suggested. Kasenene (of the University of Swaziland) and Matsebula believe that the dream means that the white man must be tolerated. Mswati 11 put his father's dream into action when he invited the missionaries. However, this also opened the way for the entrance of other groups like traders and hunters. Kaserene believes that the dream forms the basis of Swazi civil religion and discerns four basic elements :

1. radical changes were about to take place in Swaziland.
2. The people should not resist the changes.
3. The Swazis should be selective in adapting to the ways of the white man.
4. The Swazis must preserve the Swazi nation.

Bishop Mandla Zwane, the first Swazi Roman Catholic bishop of Manzini (1976-1980) believed that the dream was the preparation of Swaziland for the Gospel. (Magrath, O 1987 "Somhloloism: An African preparation for the Gospel in Swazi tradition" in Grace and Truth 1987/2, 58-61)

³ Interview with Mrs Nata Mpungose conducted by the Rev Musa M Shongwe of the Independent Methodist Church in 1984. She was the grand-daughter of Joel and Julia Msimang, the daughter of their daughter, Nata. The interview was to record the history of the Msimang family and the origin of the Independent Methodist Church. I have a photocopy of the typewritten original

provides a sense of continuity between the Swazi past and the development of Swazi Christianity.

Swazi independent churches originated and developed differently from those in South Africa as Swaziland has always (even in colonial times) enjoyed a semi-independent political status. In Swaziland the King was looked upon as both sacral and political leader of the nation so leaders of Ethiopian-type churches like the Independent Methodist Church did not need to fulfil the same function of formulating political protestation against a foreign ruler, as did leaders of Ethiopian-type churches in South Africa.⁴ This innate independence may be seen as a cause of the confidence that Msimang had that the Independent Methodist Church could function apart from the Methodist Church in the Transvaal.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in Swaziland was first established by the Rev James Allison (1802-1875). He came to South Africa with the 1820 British settlers when he was 18 years old. In 1831 Allison was converted and went to help the Rev Barnabas Shaw⁵

which is in the possession of the Rev Shongwe. Shongwe said that others who supplied information at the interview were Mr Silulo, in 1984 an inspector of schools in Swaziland and Mr Nguku, also a teacher, now very old and living in Mbabane.

⁴ Magrath 1987 Somhloloism, 58, quotes Bishop Zwane: "The whole country is one - one country, one culture, one language, one diocese and many denominations. The only element in Swaziland that divides the people is the Christian religion".(ie because of the many denominations)

⁵ The Rev Barnabas Shaw was the first ordained Methodist minister to work at the Cape. Previously the Rev McKinney had stopped briefly at the Cape but left when he encountered opposition. However, when Shaw and his wife Jane arrived at the Cape in 1816 they resolved to stand firm and do the work for which they had come, in spite of opposition from Lord Charles Somerset, the Governor. In his Memorials, the journal that Shaw wrote about his missionary work, he noted: "In order to comply with the requests of the chiefs whom I visited and commence a mission beyond the boundary of the Colony, it was requisite to apply to the colonial government. Mr Archbell and myself consequently waited

at Lilyfountain mission station in Namaqualand where he taught the people to make hats.⁶ Here he discovered how important it was, if people were to be truly independent, for them to be trained in a trade as well as learning to read and write. This approach Allison employed at the training schools at Indaleni and Edendale in Natal which he established.

In 1832 Allison and his wife,⁷ were sent to work with the Rev John Edwards⁸ who wrote in his "Reminiscences" that when passing through Grahamstown in 1832 to take up his appointment at Buchaap, north of the Vaal, "Mr James Allison was engaged to go with us as a catechist on the station. He and his excellent

on Sir Rufane Donkin, the deputy governor, who spoke as a Christian upon the subject. 'Gentlemen', said he, 'your work is far more important than that of any colonial governor, and though my predecessor, in some measure, opposed missionaries going to those distant tribes, yet I will not'." Shaw settled at Lilyfountain in Namaqualand. In 1824 this work received the approval of the Governor. Shaw wrote: "In the year 1824, his excellency, Lord Charles Somerset expressed his desire to render any assistance to the station ...". (Shaw, B 1974 Memorials of South Africa Cape Town: C Struik, [1st ed 1828] 182, 129 and 130).

⁶ Ibid, 92

⁷ Eveleigh, W 1920 Settlers and Methodism Cape Town: Methodist Book Room, 117 Allison's wife's name was Dorothy Thackwray.

⁸ The Rev John Edwards (1804-1887) came to South Africa in 1832. He was sent to work at Buchaap in Bechuanaland. He travelled to the Eastern Orange Free State with the Barolong tribes in 1833 and established the mission at Lishuani. In 1836 he moved to Umpukane. He died on 11 November 1887 in Grahamstown. (Minutes of the South African Conference 1888, 7 and the Minutes of the British Conference for 1888, 51 - Cory Library) In 1886 Edwards wrote an account of his missionary career in South Africa entitled Reminiscences of the early life and missionary labours of the Rev John Edwards. Fifty years a Wesleyan missionary in South Africa. London:Woolmer, Paternoster Row.

wife accompanied us" ⁹ by wagon to the mission station at Buchaap.

In 1833, after a year of poor harvests, Chief Moroka's Barolong people among whom they began working, decided to move eastward to near the Caledon River where there was good grazing ground. A settlement was negotiated with the chiefs who owned the land - Sikonyela of the Mantatees ¹⁰ and Moshesh of the Basuto. A new mission station was established at Imparani. ¹¹

Whether or not the legend of Somhlolo's (Sobhuza) dream is true, in 1838 Mswati, the chief of the Baraputsi (the Swazis), ¹² sent two envoys, Majumba Mndzebele and Mnkonkoni Kunene, and asked the

⁹ Edwards 1886 Reminiscences, 60

¹⁰ The Mantatees were of Sotho origin and the name Mantatee came from the name of Queen Mantatee. Edwards Reminiscences, 86 wrote: "Steps were then taken to induce Sekonyela, chief of the Mantatees, and Moshesh, chief of the Basutos, with their councillors, to meet us at a given place. They came. Sekonyela (sic) had a mean and sneaking look; Moshesh a bold, manly appearance, with an open and firm countenance. ... Having all met together, the object of our visit was explained. It was to obtain sites for mission stations, ..."

¹¹ In 1839 Allison and his wife were visited at Imparani by James Backhouse, the Quaker traveller. Backhouse wrote that he had parted from Allison "in a feeling of much love" and that "having been brought up in the Colony, he had some advantages over many others, in his knowledge of the habits of the people, and his skill in managing wagons and oxen. These qualifications, combined with an industrious disposition and adroitness in building, carpentry, gardening, etc., contributed to the advancement of the civilisation of the restless and barbarian people amongst whom he took up residence" (Eveleigh 1920 Settlers, 118).

¹² The name Baraputsi came from ba ra putsa, the Sotho rendering of the name Sobhuza (Raputsa).

missionaries of the Methodist Church at Thaba 'Nchu,¹³ through Chief Sikonyela of the "Mantatees" who had contact with the missionaries, to send a teacher (missionary) to work among his people.¹⁴

In 1838 the Rev James Archbell,¹⁵ the missionary at Thaba 'Nchu, left the mission station and was replaced by the Rev Richard Giddy.¹⁶ In January 1839 Giddy wrote "We expect Mr W

¹³ The two men, Majumba Mndzebele and MnknoKnoi Kunene, were sent to "look for a minister who could come to Swaziland with the Umculu" (interview with Mrs Mpungose, grand-daughter of Joel Msimang in 1984). Kunene was the family name of the person who had acted as Regent before Mswati came of age and began to rule.

¹⁴ Mears, W G 1955 Methodism in Swaziland Cape Town:Methodist Missionary Department, 4

¹⁵ The Rev James Archbell (1798-1866) arrived in South Africa in 1819 and worked in the Northern Cape. He reestablished Maquassi (the first Methodist mission north of the Vaal River established by the Revs Samuel Broadbent and Thomas Hodgson in 1823 and abandoned due to the Dificane war and ill-health) with Hodgson in 1825, established Platburg in 1826 and Thaba 'Nchu in 1833. After much dissension with his colleagues he left for England in 1838. Later Archbell returned and settled in Natal, left the ministry and became a leading public figure. (Schoeman 1991 Missions, 129) In his "Reminiscences" the Rev John Edwards wrote : "The Rev Mr Archbell went to England on a visit, and although he returned to the colony he did not resume his labours in the Basuto country, but went to the Natal District." (1886, Reminiscences, 111,112) He became a Supernumerary (retired and with no regular pastoral charge) minister in 1846. In 1848, at the District Meeting of the Natal Section of the Albany and Kaffraria District, Allison (and two other ministers) charged that Archbell was devoted to temporal things and Archbell retired completely from the work of the Methodist Church. (A 534 Minutes of the District Meeting of the Natal Section of the Albany and Kaffraria District held at Pietermaritzburg on 20 June 1848 - State Archives, Pietermaritzburg)

¹⁶ The Rev Richard Giddy (1806-1881) arrived in South Africa in about 1835 and settled at Thaba 'Nchu in 1837. He moved to Platburg in 1845 and then to Colesburg in 1857. He was responsible for the printing press of the Bechuana mission. In 1852, when Allison

Shaw to visit us in about six weeks".¹⁷ When Shaw visited the Rev James Allison at Mparani (Imparani) in 1839 he heard of this request and resolved to comply.

In 1841 Giddy wrote:

The Baraputsa (Swazis) have repeatedly sent to us for a missionary. Hitherto they have no teacher, no religion, no light. They have heard of our missions and of the God of the white people, and they are anxious that someone should be sent to them to preach the Gospel. But as yet we have to lament that their request has been preferred in vain.¹⁸

In 1844 the Revs Richard Giddy and James Allison, now an ordained minister, visited Swaziland to accept the invitation to open a mission station which had first been suggested by King Sobhuza 1. The old king was now dead and they visited his son Mswati 11, who had succeeded him. On this first exploratory visit they were accompanied by Giddy's son and two local evangelists, Job and Barnabas, who had been trained at Imperani. These two men, Job and Barnabas,¹⁹ the Sotho converts from Allison's school about

left the service of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Giddy wrote a letter from the mission station at Platberg criticising Allison and saying: "Allison's conduct is beyond every thing outrageous. But his course is not to be wondered at when he had been quarrelling for the last 20 years with his brethren." (A 534 8/1 Letter dated 23 January 1852 from the Rev R Giddy to the Rev H Pearse - State Archives, Pietermaritzburg)

¹⁷ Schoeman, 1991 Missions, 43

¹⁸ Schoeman 1991 Missions, 66

¹⁹ There is no record of the surnames of these two men. Job and Barnabas were probably their baptismal names as Biblical names were chosen by the missionaries for new converts. Swazi writer Kasenene, P in 1993 Religion in Swaziland Johannesburg:Skotaville, 45 refers to them only as "Barnabas and Job". Matebula, Swaziland refers to the men as "the Basotho evangelists Barnabas and Job". The use of their "Christian" names is in accordance with the

whom virtually nothing is known, started the first school on Swazi soil. The name of this first mission station established by the two evangelists was Hovunga.²⁰ The mission was later moved to Mahamba, beyond the Mkhondvo River.

In 1845 Allison, accompanied by a number of people from Imparani, established a mission station at Mahamba in Swaziland. The optimism of the missionaries about the new mission was shown at the Bechuana District Meeting in 1846. The Minutes reported that "we hope soon to hear that great things are being accomplished in the name and by the power of the Lord".²¹ One of the people who had accompanied Allison to Swaziland was a young boy named Daniel Msimang who was to play a leading part in Methodist mission work in Swaziland. He was the father of Joel Msimang of the Independent Methodist Church.

When Allison and his party arrived Job and Barnabas, who had been left behind to start mission work in Swaziland, came to meet the missionary party. They reported that classes for both boys and girls had been started. King Mswati also sent messengers to greet them.

Because of the disturbed state of the country due to the civil war, Allison was unable to see the king again. Job and Barnabas had already involved the mission in the war by protesting when

paternalistic attitude of the time when indigenous people were called by their first names as a matter of course. When Watkins spoke of the Rev Daniel Msimang he just said "Daniel" as in "Daniel's reply was full of simple child-like faith ..." (Holden, W 1887 A brief history of Methodism and of Methodist missions in South Africa. London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 624). When Holden described the work of the Rev Mangena Mokone he wrote: "Mangena is working very faithfully and well ..." (Holden 1887 Brief history, 596)

²⁰ Journal of the Methodist Historical Society of South Africa April 1957 Vol 2 No 7, 165.

²¹ Minutes of the Bechuanaland District of the Wesleyan Methodist Church for 1846.

Mswati destroyed twenty-two villages in an attempt to regain power.²² Allison condemned the behaviour of Mswati during the war but did not openly support the rebels although some of Mswati's enemies found refuge at the mission station. In 1895, the Rev WJ Underwood who had worked at Mahamba with Daniel Msimang for a year (1885), told a missionary meeting held in Wesley's Chapel, London the story of the events that led to the abandoning of the mission at Mahamba. In his one-sided account of the event he told how:

One Sunday afternoon, (in September, 1844) while the bell was ringing for church, the people saw coming down the hill a Swazi impi, and these savage warriors attacked the community. Fifty persons were killed before the missionary's eyes. Blood ran like water in that valley, and not only for purposes of safety but for sanitary reasons (this was not explained) the missionary had to move the station.²³

A message had been sent to Allison to say that Mswati was cleansing the country of his enemies. Although Allison appears to have understood that this was Swazi custom and that the new king was ridding himself of people who were a possible threat, he still felt that as a missionary he could influence events. Before Allison could negotiate with the Swazi regiments four

²² Bredell, 1978 Methodists, 58. Job and Barnabas sent a stick notched in twenty-two places with a knife to the ruling party and asked by what authority the people had been killed thus breaking the laws of Jehovah. Mears, 1967 Methodism, 8, said that this action caused a sensation and the teachers were sent a cow as a gift demonstrating the high esteem with which teachers were regarded.

²³ Notices of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for July 1895. This account, biased as it was in the missionary's favour, does not recognise the Swazi traditions that led to the waging of the war.

mounted Boers ²⁴ urged the Swazi army to attack the mission. ²⁵ There was a counter-attack from the mission and twenty-five people were killed.²⁶ On 17 September 1846 Allison and about one thousand followers abandoned the mission and journeyed to Natal.

The Methodist Church at Indaleni, Edendale and Driefontein

Indaleni was the first mission station to be established in 1846. Others were started later at Edendale and Driefontein in Natal. Daniel Msimang became the leader of the society at Driefontein.

Besides starting the mission at Indaleni Allison and the party from Swaziland also initiated work at Driefontein and Edendale, in the Pietermaritzburg area. Evangelists and teachers were

²⁴ Matsebula (1988 Swaziland, 42) states that the names of the Boers are unknown, although their leader was known as Hans.

²⁵ Matsebula (1988 Swaziland, 42) notes:

The attack ... took place on a Sunday morning on 14 September 1844, just before the church service began. The converts (men, women and children ran to the mission house. Allison sent two horsemen to talk to the approaching army. The two soon returned with the word that Mswati's forces were clearing the country of his enemies. In 30 minutes the regiments approached and stopped within reasonable distance. Allison hoped to negotiate with the leader of the army, but in a moment four Boers (their names unknown to this day) appeared under the leadership of one known as Hans, who gave the order to the regiments to attack. The converts rushed inside the church. There were so many converts that some died of suffocation. About 60 local men (not converts) fought desperately, killing about 15 of Mswati's regiments, while 25 of the defenders were assegaied to death. The fighting continued until dusk fell. Next morning the regiments ndvunas politely negotiated with Allison asking him to hand over certain converts. Allison did not accede to the request.

²⁶ In Spencer, 1982 S British settlers in Natal 1824-1857 A biographical register. Vol 1 Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 38, the number differs - "50 of Allison's people were killed." No source is cited.

trained and the Methodist Church in Natal grew rapidly in the rural areas. In 1848 Allison described how he taught those who had been chosen for special tuition:

I have 23 native youths residing in my family to whom I devote my special attention, giving them daily instruction in religion, the arts, and agriculture. Mrs Allison conducts a girls' school of industry consisting of 32 native girls. ²⁷

In 1846 Allison translated the Methodist Catechism into the Swazi language. This document presented the Gospel truths in a way that the people could understand, as Allison contextualised the terms.

28

Allison wanted the Methodist Church to sponsor a land-sharing scheme at Edendale. He purchased the farm Welverdiend, which had six thousand acres, for one thousand three hundred pounds. It had previously been the property of the Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius. Allison divided the farm into plots which he sold to the African people of the mission and developed the village called Edendale. The Msimang family became land-owners in the new village.

Allison's planned land-ownership scheme impressed Bishop John Colenso, the Anglican Bishop of Natal, but the Methodists wanted nothing to do with it so, on 20 August 1851, ²⁹ Allison severed

²⁷ Letter from the Rev J Allison dated 29 May 1848 to the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the claims of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to the land at Indaleni. CO 179/46 Public Record Office, London in S A Archival records Natal No 5 Records of the Natal Executive council 1856-1859. 1964 Cape Town:Office of the Director of Archives, 122. (Unisa library)

²⁸ Spencer, S British settlers, 38

²⁹ Minutes of the Special District Meeting 1851 Allison's letter read: "I wish my engagements with the Wesleyan Society to terminate on the 20 August, 1851,

all connection with them. By doing this Allison (in Methodist terminology) "voluntarily resigned" when he left the ministry. Whiteside described what had happened when he wrote:

Not long after Mr Allison's arrival in Natal circumstances arose which led to his withdrawal from the Mission. It is unnecessary to go into details. He was a man of strong will, impulsive, full of energy, impatient of restraint Certain circumstances led him to think that he was an ill-used man. Possibly there was on the other side a lack of perfect patience and tact. ³⁰

This appears to be the Methodist view of Allison's resignation. Whiteside writes "Mr Allison was never again united with the church of his early choice, but a friendly feeling gradually arose on both sides". ³¹

Although Allison no longer belonged to the Methodist Church, in 1861 he sold them his share in the Welverdiend project. ³² The

at which period I shall be prepared to deliver the Indaleni Station into your hands as Chairman of the District." (State Archives, Pietermaritzburg)

³⁰ Whiteside, J 1906 History, 363

³¹ Ibid, 363

³² Perkins, 1974 Swaziland, 108. After leaving the Methodist Church, Allison moved from Edendale into Pietermaritzburg in 1861. He joined the Free Church of Scotland in 1867 (Mears 1967 Allison, 15). He started a mission among the neglected African population of the town and built the Ebenezer Chapel. In 1869 he started the Impolweni Mission outside Pietermaritzburg where he followed the same lines that he had as Methodist minister - building a manse, a chapel and a school. His last entry in the church registers there is for 19 January 1875. He died on 1 April 1875 and is buried in the plot of ground in the Pietermaritzburg cemetery that is set aside for Methodist ministers (Mears 1967 Allison, 15). Meintjes, S 1990 "Family and gender in colonial Edendale" in Walker, C (ed) Women and gender in Southern Africa to 1945 Cape Town:David Philip, 129 infers that Allison was virtually hounded out of

situation at Edendale had the potential to lead to the formation of an independent church as some of the people remained loyal to Allison. However, the majority (among them Daniel and Joel Msimang) remained within the Methodist Church and the crisis was averted.

In 1868 there was again a crisis at Edendale and the formation of an independent church was averted when:

tribal differences and jealousies led to a temporary rupture between residents. The dissidents erected a separate place of worship, and established a day and Sunday school. But for the tact of the Rev H S Barton, a permanent schism must have resulted. ³³

Joel Msimang was, therefore, familiar with the threat of schism long before he himself became the leader of an independent church.

In 1881 the Rev John Kilner, the Secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in London visited Driefontein and reported that:

This is a marvellous outgrowth from Edendale. The company of Christian men, their legal holding, the extent of their holding, and the terms of occupancy, are

Edendale village in 1861 due to his paternalistic attitude which led to a quarrel over individual title-deeds. She also says that the village elders asked the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to take over the pastoral affairs of the village.

³³ Whiteside, History, 379 At this time Daniel Msimang was involved with the work at Driefontein. The leader of the "dissentients (sic) left the station, the race apathies cooled down and reunion took place". Walker, C 1990 Women, 128 notes that "the language of community life reflected the people's origins: Zulu, Sotho, Seswati and even Dutch". However, the languages used in church and in the schools were English, Dutch and Zulu.

remarkable. On meeting at the entrance of their estate, the increasing company of the cavalcade, the house, a Boer's dwelling - now, a chapel! The trooping worshippers on the side of the hills - men, women and children, the early service, the baptism of fire, every heart touched! ... These men have no want: they enter the work of Christ to win souls. ³⁴

One of the most remarkable accomplishments of this mission was the initiation of the Nzondelelo movement (meaning "to desire earnestly"). ³⁵

The Nzondelelo Movement

The Nzondelelo movement was a missionary outreach by the people of Edendale and Driefontein to other areas of Zululand. The Independent Methodist Church still call their collection of missionary money "Nzondelelo" because of their awareness of the effectiveness of the movement. ³⁶ The movement had its roots in the expansion from Edendale that started in 1865. Whiteside wrote: ³⁷

About the year 1865 a migration commenced from Edendale which led to a wonderful extension of Christianity amongst

³⁴ A summary report by the Rev John Kilner, deputation to the South African mission field. Presented to the Missionary Committee February 11, 1881 and on subsequent dates. London:WMMS "The object of the deputation was to gain as accurate an acquaintance with the men and their work as a brief personal visit to each station could supply". (32) (Unisa library)

³⁵ Holden, 1887 Brief history, 418. "The name just chosen for the gathering is Unzondelelo; and the natives assure me that it contains within itself all that is expressed by Paul in, 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God, ...' (Rom 10:1).

³⁶ This was emphasised by a number of women at the Conference of the Independent Methodist Church held at Manzini, Swaziland in 1990.

³⁷ Whiteside, 1903 History, 369



DANIEL MSIMANG.

Notices of the Wesleyan Methodist
Missionary Society - 1891



JOEL MSIMANG.

the natives in the north of Natal.

The farm "Driefontein" was purchased and later another farm, "Dornhoek". These farms belonged to the people themselves in much the same way as Allison had procured the title deeds of Edendale for the members of the Methodist Church. Among the leaders of the movement were Nathaniel Matebule, Daniel Msimang and Luke Msimang.³⁸

In 1877 Daniel Msimang explained what was being done:

In 1874 the Edendale people (including Driefontein) were moved in our hearts on account of the work of the Lord. We heard the cries of those who want to be saved ... In 1875 we met at Edendale ... From every side came testimony as to the sad state of the natives all over the land ... We felt we ought to send people to them ... The meeting raised one hundred pounds for this work.³⁹

This report was given in August 1877 at a special meeting held at Indaleni, which was called by the Synod of the Natal District of the Methodist Church to discuss the Nzondelelo movement.⁴⁰ When the Rev F Mason (who had arrived in Natal in 1856) was elected Chairman of the District at this time, he discovered that:

a new movement was going on among our Native Christians. ... Collections were made on all our stations without the authority of the District Meeting, which collections were

³⁸ Whiteside, History, 371

³⁹ Minutes of the Natal District Meeting, August 1877 - 1878 MS 15,378 State Archives, Pietermaritzburg. c/f also Hewson, L 1950 Introduction to South African Methodists Cape Town:Standard Press, 77.

⁴⁰ Ms 15,378 Report attached to the Minutes of the Natal District Meetings 1877-1878. (State Archives, Pietermaritzburg).

paid in at a great annual meeting. The District Meeting knew little or nothing about this movement ... The late Chairman's books simply stated the bare fact that one hundred pounds was deposited in the Natal Bank in the name of the Chairman in his official capacity, on the a/c of the Unzondelelo. ⁴¹

At the next Synod of the Natal ministers held in 1878, rules and regulations for the guidance of the new movement were agreed upon. It was constituted a "Wesleyan Native Home Mission" ⁴²

Daniel Msimang was one of the leaders of the Nzondelelo movement, which Ezra Msimang helped to organise after Daniel returned to Swaziland in 1882. The concept of the Nzondelelo movement as a method for raising money impressed Joel Msimang and is still used in the Independent Methodist Church for financing mission outreach.

At the Natal Synod of 1877 the Rev Mason ⁴³ and three other

⁴¹ Ms 15, 378 Report attached to the Minutes of the Natal District Meeting 1877. The report consisted of the minutes of a special meeting held in August, 1877. (State Archives, Pietermaritzburg.)

⁴² A 534, 1/1/2 (State Archives, Pietermaritzburg) Resolutions of the District Meeting of 1878, upon the Native Unzondelelo.
That the Unzondelelo be authorised to continue ... and that the designation of it in English shall be "The Natal Native Mission".

⁴³ Frederick Mason (1834-1911) was born in Shropshire, England. "He was brought up in a distinctly Methodist atmosphere, and was led to Christ when he was twelve years old, by his elder brother, Joshua, who was for many years a Wesleyan Methodist minister." In 1855 he was appointed by the British Conference to work in Pietermaritzburg and arrived in Natal in 1856. In his first year of service in Natal there was a revival in Pietermaritzburg. He was President of the South African Conference in 1886. In 1890 he retired and lived first in Pietermaritzburg, then in Durban until his death in 1911. His obituary records that:

He was animated by the true missionary spirit,

ministers were elected to attend the annual meeting of the Nzondelelo movement at Indaleni in August 1877. Representatives from "all our stations except Pondoland, ..in fact from every part of the Natal District" attended. ⁴⁴

The ministers were impressed by what they heard at the two day meeting at Indaleni. In the Minutes of the 1878 District Meeting it was stated that at the meeting attention was called to the "non-formation of a Native ministry by the early missionaries". This was declared a grave defect - and they expressed their profound conviction that the great work of bringing the native people to Christ must for the most part be done by native agents. ⁴⁵

and had an intimate knowledge of native affairs, evincing the deepest interest to all that pertained to the material, moral, and spiritual welfare of the aboriginal peoples of South Africa. (Minutes of the thirtieth annual Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa held at Queenstown on 17 April 1912, 6)

⁴⁴ The ministers belonging to the Natal Synod who were elected to attend were - the Revs F Mason, O Watkins, D Eva and SH Stott. They were to enquire into the history, objects and modes of working of the Nzondelelo movement and to report to the District Meeting. They also had to devise some scheme which might utilize the movement and harmonise it with "our Methodist modes of working". It was noted in the Minutes of the January 1877 District Meeting that "most of the ministers in the District Meeting regarded it (ie Nzondelelo) with fear, some with distrust". It appears that where work was not initiated through the usual channels (their own) the ministers viewed it with suspicion.

⁴⁵ "It was further said by the ministers: 'We are as anxious as you can be for the spread of the Gospel amongst the heathen. ... Unzondelelo has sprung from the right motive - love for souls - but there are dangers connected with it. To talk is an easy thing, but it is hard to find the right kind of workers. They must be trained as preachers, and they should be under the rules of the Methodist Church'" (Minutes of the Special Meeting 1877. State Archives, Pietermaritzburg. See also Whiteside 1906 Wesleyan Methodist, 403)

The communities at Driefontein and Edendale sent Daniel Msimang and his family to Swaziland to re-open the Methodist Church at Mahamba. Mpungose says that Daniel Msimang was accompanied by his wife Ruth and 15 men.⁴⁶ The Church at Edendale, through the Nzondelelo movement, gave five hundred pounds out of gratitude to God, for the work to recommence in Swaziland. Joel Msimang later assisted his father as he established the pioneer work of the Methodist Church in Swaziland. They took with them the knowledge that an essentially African mission like the Nzondelelo movement had been successful and they used the same methods in Swaziland. Joel Msimang saw for himself the success of an African mission initiative.

The reopening of the Methodist Church in Swaziland

Although Joel Msimang was the founder of the Independent Methodist Church, it was built on the foundation of the work in Swaziland initiated by his father, Daniel, the pioneer of the Swazi Methodist Church. This close association with the people and history of the mission church form which the schism occurred is unusual in Ethiopian-type churches. Unique, too, is the influence on an independent church of an African movement like Nzondelelo.

Daniel Nhlanhla Msimang was born, probably in Lesotho, in about 1813, the eldest of five children.⁴⁷ While herding his father's

⁴⁶ Interview by Shongwe with Mpungose 1984, 4. Leaders of the IMC like the Rev Mhlangu, the present President (Interviews at the Conference in 1991) also consider Daniel Msimang the pioneer of their Church.

⁴⁷ The names of the children were Daniel, Henry, Eliam, Esther and Charlotte. Daniel Msimang's cousin related that Msimang's father, Nhlanhla, had three wives and that Daniel's mother was the great wife. When Msimang was about three years old the family fled to the Orange Free State to escape Mzilikazi. In about August 1834, at the time when the Methodist missionaries were moving from Platberg to the Thaba 'Nchu area, Msimang moved to Imparani. (Private papers of the Rev CD Choates, an early minister in the Transvaal at the beginning of the 20th century. During the 1950's Choates published articles in the South African

cattle ⁴⁸ Msimang had a vision. He described it as coming in the appearance of a "mirror in which he saw a body of brown men making an attack on his Mantatee tribe with fire, and carrying off many cattle". ⁴⁹

Until this time Sikonyela, in whose territory Imparani was situated, had been very successful in defeating his enemies and he believed that the boy was bewitched. A few months later the Koranas attacked the Mantatees with guns and riding on horses and the Chief decided that the boy was a true seer and brought him into his royal village. Shortly after this Msimang had another vision and saw "white men coming among the people who were men of peace and who would do them good and make their cattle prosperous".⁵⁰ About eight months later Allison arrived at Marabeng and when he explained his mission the people all declared "this is the man of the vision". When Allison established himself near Sikonyela's village Msimang went to live

Methodist based on interviews held with early black pioneers. The papers are in the possession of his family)

⁴⁸ Edwards, 1886 Reminiscences, 102,103 says that Daniel (Msimang) was "a refugee lad among the Mantatees, having fled through war from far in the interior to save his life". The name Daniel was given to him by Edwards when he was baptised. Edwards described him as "a young man of small stature, who, after being kept in the Class for some time for instruction, was considered fit to be admitted as a member of the Church".

⁴⁹ Perkins 1974 Swaziland, 58. Perkins is quoting Walker from Backhouse, Life and labours of GW Walker, 427 In the 19th century dreams providing a "call" were a common in the independent churches and even today are considered a sign of a special vocation.

⁵⁰ Edwards, 1886 Reminiscences, 104,105. Edwards described how the chief or "headman" related to him how Msimang had three visions, all of which came true. The first predicted the conquering of the Mantatee tribe by Mzilikazi. The second foretold an attack by the Koranna people and the third predicted the coming of the white men. They would "not come into the country to make war, but would live in peace". See also Backhouse in Perkins 1974 Swaziland, 59.

with him, but he explained to the chief that as the visions were not of his own control and they were undoubtedly from the true God. His dreams of the Holy Spirit and people turning to God took on a new significance for Daniel. Because of his dreams it did not seem strange to Msimang that some time later the first of the deputations from Swaziland asking for a missionary arrived.

Msimang (Daniel was his baptismal name) was converted in about 1835 near a mountain called "Mohebieskop" which he pointed out to Rev Owen Watkins when they, together with Msimang's son Obed, visited Swaziland in 1881. "It was very touching to see how he recalled the circumstances ... and note his abounding gratitude to God".⁵¹ His conversion had taken place during a revival at Umpukani when the Rev John Edwards was the missionary there.

In Natal Daniel Msimang became a lay leader of the congregation first at Indaleni and Driefontein and then at Edendale. In 1854 Colenso described meeting Daniel, the manager of the watermill at Edendale. "Daniel was a cheerful, intelligent -looking fellow, of (perhaps) twenty-five years of age, who had been with Mr Allison twelve years, and whose first attempts at book-keeping I inspected, commencing on Feb. 1, 1854."⁵² Msimang was

⁵¹ Journal of O Watkins, Sunday 31 July 1881 - entitled "Methodism re-enters the Transvaal" - (Cory Library). Watkins does not explain the circumstances of Msimang's conversion but quotes the date 1845. It was in fact in about 1835 soon after Edwards arrived at Umpukani. A revival took place and Msimang was converted. Edwards, 1886 Reminiscences, 101,102 wrote: "After some time employed in teaching and preaching to the people the things pertaining to their salvation, a gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place. I allude to a revival ..."

⁵² Colenso, Ten weeks, :52. The account continues: "Daniel was dressed like any decent Englishman, in trousers, jacket, and a good black hat, and, as Mr Allison assured me, he 'had the feelings of an Englishman, and during the twelve years had never been known to commit an immoral action'." Both Allison and Colenso appeared to equate being like a "decent Englishman" with being a Christian, thus echoing the colonial attitudes of their time. This attitude is to

accepted as a candidate minister in 1881 at the same time as Mangena Mokone who later founded the Ethiopian Church.⁵³ After being accepted into the ministry in 1881 he returned to Swaziland in 1882, where he re-opened the Methodist missionary work at Mahamba. Here he and his wife, Ruth, worked for twenty years. All the family were active in the Methodist Church. Joel's brothers Luke and Albert were also Methodist ministers, his brothers Enoch and Obed were local preachers and his sisters were class leaders and leaders in the Women's Prayer Union.

be seen again in the words of Mrs Warner of Glen Grey, near Queenstown, writing to the Ladies Committee of the WMMS in 1863:

I have known "Kaffirs", on embracing Christianity and becoming anxious to clothe themselves and their families decently, purchase materials to the value of several head of cattle. ...You may see a man walking about nicely clothed; his missionary will introduce him as a local preacher and class leader, and you may think him perfectly civilised. But go into his hut and you are completely disappointed. (Findlay, G and Holdsworth, W 1921-1924 The history of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society London: Epworth Press, 29) Colenso's mention that in 1854 Msimang had been with Allison 12 years meant that in actual fact he had become part of Allison's group in 1842.

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The Minutes of the District Committee for the Natal District Meeting for 1881 (State Archives, Pietermaritzburg) held in Durban read: "Who do we recommend as candidates for our ministry?" There followed nineteen names of African ministers who were examined. "The case of each candidate was carefully reviewed, and a separate vote was taken upon each name". The following were among those accepted: Harry (Henry) Msimang, Mangena Mokone, Daniel Msimang, Eliam Msimang and Luke Msimang. These men were called Native Assistant Missionaries. It was only much later that Daniel Msimang was allowed the status of a minister. Joel Msimang, being younger, was considered a Native Assistant Missionary until he left the Methodist Church, as this was the normal status for African clergy. Mokone's name listed here with those of the Msimang's reflects the fact that they were known to each other.

By the time Daniel Msimang returned to Swaziland in 1882 he was very rich and had several wagons and many head of cattle. He divided his belongings among his children, reserving one wagon and a span of oxen, that he might, as he said, "be better able to do the Lord's work".⁵⁴

The old mission which Allison had established in 1845 at Mahamba had been claimed by the government of the Transvaal Republic⁵⁵ who had granted the land on which Mahamba was built to the Dutch Reformed Church at Wakkerstroom. They had sold the land to the Vermaak family. With the help of the British Government agent land for a new mission was eventually obtained within the Swaziland border not far from where the old station had been situated. The land was granted them by the King himself,⁵⁶ although the Swazi people still, to some extent, distrusted missionaries and at times Msimang feared for his life. This site, chosen with the help of Mr Roberts the British agent, became the new Mahamba mission. Mahamba was on the border of Swaziland with the Transvaal and Watkins recorded that "Daniel is praying that our way may be opened into Swaziland proper".⁵⁷ In 1883 the Summary of Reports at the District Meeting of the Transvaal and

⁵⁴ Biographical sketches written by the Rev George Weavind in the Notices of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for May 1891. (Cory Library) Weavind was the District Superintendent of the Transvaal and Swaziland District.

⁵⁵ In 1855 "Lydenberg ... secured from the Swazi a wedge of land thrust between Zululand and Swaziland ..." Walker, E A 1957 (1st ed 1928) A history of Southern Africa London:Spottiswoode, Ballantyne & Co, 264. The Transvaal had previously claimed land from Swaziland in 1846 with the Swazi cession. Ibid, 363.

⁵⁶ Notes of the Meeting of Native Agents 1883. (Central Church Archives, Johannesburg) Daniel said "our plan was to purchase a piece of ground from the Swazi king and build schools and a church on it." ... "they found the people very degraded ... The people were afraid to come to services because they thought the king would punish them for attending the white man's church."

⁵⁷ Notes of meeting of Native Agents 1883.

Swaziland District noted that:

our devoted minister Daniel Msimang has gained the confidence of all with whom he comes in contact and has gathered a congregation of over seventy persons.

In 1885 Watkins wrote to England from Mahamba saying "Daniel Msimang is a grand man ... and he occupies a position of great and increasing responsibility".⁵⁸

Remembering how Allison had offended King Mswati, from 1881 Daniel Msimang made regular visits to the King's village as well as to the homestead of the Queen Mother, Nobamba. When the Queen became ill she asked Msimang to pray for her. She died in November 1885.

The wide extent of the influence of the mission at Mahamba and the need for extra helpers, can be assessed from a letter written by the Rev Daniel Msimang in 1887:

There are five places which want to be taught situated between a day's journey from here and they have between 500-800 people. There are seven places nearer here that want the Gospel preached to them but I have no local preachers and I can't leave my church alone for it is crowded every Sunday".⁵⁹

In 1891 there was a request from Robert Mashaba at Delagoa Bay (Mozambique) for the work that he had started there to be taken over by the Methodist Church. The Rev Daniel Msimang was one of the ministers who, together with the Chairman of the District, the Rev George Weavind, were sent to investigate. They had to

⁵⁸ Letter written from Mahamba by the Rev Watkins to the Rev Kilner on 30 March 1885. (Methodist Archives, SOAS, London).

⁵⁹ Letter dated 25 March 1887 written from Mahamba by the Rev Daniel Msimang to the Rev George Weavind.

wait until 1892 for a smallpox epidemic to abate before they felt safe to travel to Mozambique. In this way Joel Msimang learned that the climate in Mozambique was unhealthy because of the strange diseases found there. The ministers, Weavind and Msimang, recommended that Mozambique be incorporated into the Transvaal and Swaziland District.

Daniel Msimang experienced the effects of the growing Ethiopian movement. In 1881 the Rev Mangena Mokone was among the men accepted as candidate ministers with Daniel Msimang and was chosen to serve at Mahamba⁶⁰ for a short time as co-worker with Msimang. Instead, because of the war in the Transvaal, Mokone remained in Natal until he was transferred to Pretoria. In 1892 Mokone broke away from the Methodist Church in Pretoria because, among other things, he considered the separate district meetings a sign of racial discrimination.

Both Daniel and Joel Msimang were at the 1892 Synod meeting when Mokone resigned. Soon after the 1892 Synod had been held the Chairman of the District, the Rev George Weavind, visited Mahamba. He related that a "difficulty had arisen between some of the leaders and Daniel which had grown acute through long standing. They were able to talk together and the disagreement was soon disposed of".⁶¹

Mokone exploited the difficulties that Daniel Msimang had been experiencing with some of his leaders when Msimang preached against cultural practices which he did not consider Christian. In spite of Mokone's efforts to turn the people away from Msimang, the Swazi church remained within the Methodist Church. Joel Msimang thus had first-hand experience of the Ethiopian movement and knew of Mokone's reasons for leaving the Methodist

⁶⁰ Reports to the WMMS for 1882, 199 - "Swaziland Mission ... Two of the best native ministers also volunteered for this mission and were accepted ...". These were Msimang and Mokone.

⁶¹ Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland Synod 1892

Church.

The work at Mahamba and Emakosini grew apace. In 1896 the Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Meeting show that a grant was recommended (no amount mentioned) to enlarge the church at Mahamba. Three pounds a month was voted to enable Joel Msimang to employ another evangelist as well as thirty pounds to enable him to build three more churches. Two young men from Mahamba (names not provided) were to be sent to be educated at Kilnerton Institution, the Methodist training school near Pretoria.⁶² The Minutes of the 1897 District Meeting show that Joel Msimang now worked with five evangelists. The work that he was doing was growing and he was becoming more and more involved in the church in Swaziland. At this time Joel Msimang had no reason for wanting to leave the Methodist Church.

The Rev Joel Ngadala Msimang - founder of the IMC

The Rev Joel Msimang was born at Edendale, Natal on 4 September 1854.⁶³ He was the third son of the Rev Daniel and Mrs Ruth Msimang⁶⁴ and spent much of his youth at the Methodist mission at Edendale in Natal where many of his family lived. He later paid his own expenses when he attended the training school at Edendale.⁶⁵ He was taught the Christian faith both at home and

⁶² Minutes of the District Meeting of the Transvaal and Swaziland District held at Pretoria from 21 to 30 January 1896 (Central Church Archives, Johannesburg)

⁶³ Skota, 1933 Yearly register, 73 In the form completed by Msimang for the 1921 Separatist Churches Commission, he stated that he was 54 years old. This would make Skota's date incorrect as the date of birth would then be 1867. (MS 14 787 Cory Library, Grahamstown) In answer to the question: "Date of birth or approximate age", Msimang answered: "54 years".

⁶⁴ Msimang told the Commission in 1921 that he was born at Edendale. (MS 14,787 Cory Library)

⁶⁵ Notices of the WMMS 1892 Biographical sketches by the Rev G Weavind.

at school and became a convinced Christian.

In 1880 ⁶⁶ Joel Msimang married Julia Radebe and they had five children. In 1888 when he was called to the ministry through the challenge of the Rev Watkins, he was already the father of three children. He was troubled because he felt he was not sufficiently educated to preach, so Msimang studied for two years at the Edendale Training Institute, ⁶⁷ paying his own expenses.⁶⁸ In 1888 he was sent to work with his father in Swaziland as a candidate minister.⁶⁹ In 1889 Joel Msimang is described in the Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Meeting as being a preacher on trial with one year's experience. He served as a probationer at Mahamba under his father's guidance and was ordained as a minister in 1892.

In 1898 Ruth Msimang died. She had always been supportive of the work of the mission and took a lead in the women's work. In 1885 Watkins wrote that at a convocation at Mahamba "thanks to Mrs Daniel, who is the Dorcas of the land, all the Christian women, boys and girls were clothed" were recorded.⁷⁰ The home in

⁶⁶ Skota, 1933 Yearly register, 73

⁶⁷ Notices of the WMMS 1891 - Brief biographical sketches. "Joel Msimang ... felt the desire to become a preacher and went for some years, at his own expense, to the Training School at Edendale ... He ... last year commenced work at Emakosini, our first station in Swaziland proper, where he is still, amidst much difficulty, bravely testifying for the Master".

⁶⁸ Biographical sketches in Notices of the WMMS May 1891, 112 and 113. These notes were written for the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society by the Rev George Weavind to introduce the "Native" ministers of the Transvaal and Swaziland District to the supporters of the Mission in England.

⁶⁹ Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Meeting held at Pretoria on 19 November 1888, 182. Central Methodist Archives, Johannesburg.

⁷⁰ Letter from the Rev Owen Watkins to the Rev John Kilner written at Potchefstroom on 5 January 1885. Letter in the Methodist Archives, SOAS, London.



Synod of Transvaal and Swaziland District, 14th to 21st May, 1902.

George Lule (Acting Chairman), E. J. Briscoe (Secretary), Thomas H. Wamman, R. F. Applebe, M. Ferdinand Cruickson, Charles W. Mowson, Walter B. Milward, Henry W. Goodwin, Ebenezer H. Morgan, Edwin Battill, Walter T. Goodson, James Chamberlain, John Henry Nield, Robert L. Rogers, George Rolland, Edward Dunston, J. G. Davies, Sydney J. Baker, William Kocott, Knuch Carter, William Frost, William Moore and P. J. Williams, Rev. Marshall Hartley as representing the Missionary Committee, and the British Conference accompanied by Rev. James Chapman, Rev. E. P. Lavery, Senior Wesleyan Chaplain British Forces, S.A. and James Green, C. F. and Rev. John White from Mashonaland, and the following laymen for the Financial and Statistical business: T. A. Nwob, S. Sugden, John Sitoy (Johannesburg Central), H. H. Anon, W. H. John, A. E. Hewson, C. J. Fourhead (West Rand).

In this photograph several of the attitudes leading to the dissatisfaction of the black clergy may be noted.

1. except for one man in front all the black clergymen are at the back where some of them are obscured,
2. only the names of the white clergymen are provided
3. there are no black ministers listed among the list of office-holders

From: The 75th anniversary of the commencement of Methodism in Johannesburg and the 42nd of Central Hall 1961 (Box 5, Cory Library, Grahamstown)

which Joel Msimang grew up was described as "a beautiful example of the transforming and refining influence of the Christian religion, which exercised a great influence for good."⁷¹

In 1901 the Rev George Eva was stationed at Mahamba in charge of the three "Assistant African Ministers" - Daniel and Joel Msimang and Benjamin Hlatywako, who worked at Bremersdorp.⁷² The circuit of which Eva had charge was very large and Joel Msimang took over much of the pastoral work of the church at Mahamba. In spite of the fact that a white superintendent was in charge of the Circuit Joel Msimang had responsibility for most of the work of the Swazi Methodist Church.

The Synod of 1902 was the last that the father and son attended together as Daniel Msimang died the following year. During 1902 Daniel Msimang visited Natal and on his return to Swaziland he suffered a stroke leading to paralysis. He lingered for a year and died in October 1903.⁷³ He was described as having served the Wesleyan Methodist Church faithfully for twenty years and having had the joy of leading many of his fellow-countrymen into the life of light. Towards the end of his life he was unable to oversee the work of the Methodist Church in Swaziland, of which he was the senior minister. When Daniel Msimang died in 1903 he was buried at Mahamba. His son Joel, who expected to take over the work was called instead to Mozambique, a post which he felt he could not accept.

After the Rev Joel Msimang left the Methodist Church in 1903 Methodist mission work at Mahamba stopped for a while. Msimang remained in the mission house at Mahamba much to the annoyance

⁷¹ Daniel Msimang's obituary is to be found in the Minutes of the British Conference for 1904. This book lists the obituaries of all ministers who have died during the preceding year. (Cory Library)

⁷² Minutes of the British Conference for 1901, 269

⁷³ Obituary of Daniel Msimang - Minutes of Conference 1904.

of the Rev Amos Burnet, the District Superintendent who wrote in 1906 that:

In Swaziland we are still in the thick of a great fight. The trouble arises from the fact that in earlier days we built native churches there without any shadow of title to the land on which they stand. Joel Msimang's house is in the same plight and we have no power to eject him. Still, I think we are winning our way bit by bit, though it is annoying and a slow process. ⁷⁴

Those members of the Church at Mahamba who did not wish to have a full-time white missionary later joined the Independent Methodist Church. In 1911 the Rev Amos Burnet wrote saying that a white missionary had already been placed on the new concession of land which had been bought for a mission. ⁷⁵ The Daniel Msimang Memorial Church was opened at Mahamba on 3 April 1913 ⁷⁶ by the Rev George Weavind, Chairman of the Transvaal and Swaziland District. The church is a lasting memorial to Msimang but it was also a reminder to the Independent Methodist Church that the work of the Wesleyan Methodist Church at Mahamba still continued even though many of the congregation had left in 1906 and now followed Joel Msimang.

⁷⁴ F 165886 (Unisa Library) Letter from the Rev A Burnet to the Rev Hartley of the WMMS in London dated 9 November 1906.

⁷⁵ Letter from the Rev Amos Burnet, Superintendent of the Transvaal and Swaziland District, dated 3 November 1911, to the Commissioner for Swaziland. "Some years ago we had great trouble in connection with our work in south Swaziland. ... Last year we managed to buy a concession. For this we paid five hundred pounds ..." (Central Methodist Church Archives, Johannesburg).

⁷⁶ Financial Statement by the Rev Walter Wilks on Wesleyan Methodist Church letterhead. The church cost eight hundred and thirty-one pounds. (Central Methodist Archives)

THE INDEPENDENT METHODIST CHURCH

The Independent Methodist Church was formed by Joel Msimang at the request of a number of his parishioners when he left the ministry of the Methodist Church. There are few records of the church's activities available as, although records were kept in Msimang's time,⁷⁷ these have been lost.

Most of the information comes from oral tradition, the few IMC records available and Methodist Church official records.⁷⁸ The secession of the Independent Methodist Church is not only the earliest schism from a mission church in Swaziland, but it is the only "mass" secession to have taken place in that country. Nearly all the Methodist congregations in the south of the country followed Msimang.⁷⁹

In 1890 when Joel Msimang was a probationer in the Wesleyan Methodist Church he opened a new mission station at Emakosini. This was the centre where the Independent Methodist Church started. Kasenene calls the centre Nyaname, near Mahamba.⁸⁰

In 1903, when Daniel Msimang died, Joel Msimang expected to take charge of the work in Swaziland. He refused to accept the Synod decision to transfer him to Mozambique to take over the work

⁷⁷ MS 14,787 (Cory Library) states that the minute books submitted by Joel Msimang were returned to the magistrate at Standerton. They have not been seen since.

⁷⁸ On 4 October 1991 I attended the Annual Conference of the Independent Methodist Church which was held at Manzini, Swaziland. A group of the members of the Church met together with me to discuss the history of the IMC. Until the present President came into office no minutes kept of meetings for many years and there were few records of the history of the IMC.

⁷⁹ Cazziol nd Swazi Zionists, 55.

⁸⁰ Kasenene, Religion, 50

begun by Robert Mashaba.⁸¹ His appeals to the Synod to be left in Swaziland were refused.

Then in 1904 Msimang asked to be transferred to the South African Conference which was in charge of the other provinces in South Africa (all the Districts apart from the Transvaal and Swaziland District which was under the jurisdiction of the British Conference). No reason was given for this request, although in South Africa his family would not have been subjected to the same threat of disease as in Mozambique. The Chairman of the Transvaal District was authorised to give Msimang and the President of the South African Conference credentials for his transfer and Synod sanctioned his application for admittance to that Conference. However, this also fell through as Msimang did not want to leave the congregation in Swaziland.⁸²

In the Minutes of the British Conference of 1906⁸³ it is noted that Joel Msimang had voluntarily ceased to be a Methodist minister. This indicated that he was no longer regarded a minister of the Methodist Church. Lea noted that Msimang was "a minister who was loved and much respected" and that in the

⁸¹ The Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Synod held from 24-30 January 1896 record that Robert Mashaba was unable to attend because he had been arrested by the Portuguese authorities. In 1897 the work at Mahamba was placed under the supervision of the Chairman of the District, the Rev George Weavind. An "European" minister was requested for Mahamba. Minutes of the Synod of the Transvaal and Swaziland District held on 21 January, 1897. Msimang may have been considered too junior to take responsibility for the work in Swaziland.

⁸² Annual Synod Journal of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Synod for 1904. (Central Methodist Church records)

⁸³ Minutes of the British Conference for 1906, 156 Question XXX Who have ceased to be recognised as ministers among us? In the section "In our foreign field" the name Joel Msimang appears.

secession "there was nothing to reflect on his moral character".

84

Msimang was a charismatic leader and when he left the Methodist Church a large number of the congregation left with him. A further factor which made him popular was that Msimang was a Swazi minister in a Swazi congregation and not an outsider.

Joel Msimang remained in the old church built by his father. When the Methodists built a new Church (the Daniel Msimang Memorial Church) in 1913 there were two churches at Mahamba, the old in which the members of the Independent Methodist Church worshipped and the new in which the Wesleyan Methodists met.

Those congregations that supported Joel Msimang came together and asked him to be their minister. The story is told that when he did not know what decision to make he visited the Queen Mother who advised him to carry out the wishes of the people.⁸⁵ When applying for recognition from the Natal government in 1925, the date given for the founding of the Independent Methodist Church was 1 March 1906. Msimang opened churches for the newly formed IMC at Nyamane, Nsongweni, Madulini, Mhlanga, Thunzini, Mabande, Mawombeni, Hluthi, Dudusini, Dwlila and Mantambe.⁸⁶ In 1991 there were still IMC churches at these centres. There were IMC congregations in the Transvaal as well as in Swaziland and Joel Msimang, himself, lived at Standerton (in the Transvaal).

A number of traditions have grown up in the Independent Methodist Church around the story of Joel Msimang. The truth of these hagiographic accounts cannot be established. For example, when Msimang first became leader of the Independent Methodist Church

84 Lea, Separatist churches, 44 and 55

85 Oral tradition at the 1991 Conference by Mr Similane, General Trustee.

86 Mpungose Interview 1984 See also the list of churches listed in the Constitution of the IMC.

he was challenged for the leadership. The contenders decided to pray until an answer was received. Eventually, Msimang's challenger fell over dead. When a woman belonging to the IMC once wanted to become a preacher some of the men objected. A challenge was issued and candles were lit to see whose would burn the longest. In the morning only the woman's candle was still burning. This was accepted as a sign of her calling. At the Conference in 1991 Mrs Gabede, a member of the church at Emakosini, said that the candles used in the test still exist in the Emakosini church.

Another story tells that after the split in the church at Mahamba (which led to the formation of the independent church) Msimang promised never to leave the IMC and Swaziland. IMC members believe that towards the end of his life Msimang wanted to return to Natal, but as he was travelling the cart in which he was seated overturned and he was killed. Skota, however, says that Msimang was visiting his parishioners when the accident happened.

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Skota's biographical sketch of Joel Msimang states that Msimang:

was fairly well off, but during the rinderpest⁸⁸ he lost 700 head of cattle. He owned three farms, one in Edendale, one in Driefontein and another in Waschbank, Natal. He was a powerful preacher. His eldest son is a solicitor and is practising in Johannesburg, his second son is a clerk to a firm of lawyers, the youngest is a caretaker. Rev Joel Msimang was well advanced in age when he was run over after

⁸⁷ Skota 1933 Yearly register, 73.

⁸⁸ 1896 was known as the year of the rinderpest. The farmers were also plagued by swarms of locusts and drought. In the Notices of the WMMS the Rev C Mowson reported on conditions in the Transvaal saying that in Potchefstroom "all have been prevented from gathering together at the various 'Nachtmaal' centres for the quarterly visitation". The rinderpest, locusts and drought affected the whole of Southern Africa.

accidentally falling off a wagon when on a visit to his congregation. He died on the 21 May, 1929.⁸⁹

The new church after its establishment in 1906

From 1906 the Rev Joel Msimang established the new Independent Methodist Church at Emakosini. At first the congregation called themselves the "Intsandzane yaWesley" but this name led to conflict with the Methodists. Richard Msimang suggested that they call themselves the INDEPENDENT METHODIST CHURCH OF AFRICA. The proposal was welcomed by the congregation and the name was adopted. Several attempts were made to register the church at Lobomba as an African Swazi church. Mpungose⁹⁰ described how:

when the party came to Ludzidzini during the reign of Labotsebeni Mdluli, the Queen Regent welcomed the delegation from KaDlovunga. After the discussion the Queen Mother sent them to the High Commissioner at Mbabane for registration. They were accompanied by Prince Malunge on behalf of the Queen Regent. The Queen Mother was very happy as she said it was an African church.

On 17 March 1913 the Rev Joel Msimang convened a meeting of the leaders of the church at Makwabe, near Wakkerstroom in the Transvaal, to draw up a Constitution. In 1914 the Independent

⁸⁹ Skota, 1933 Yearly register, 73 gives the date of Msimang's death as 1929. The date agreed upon for the death of Msimang by various members of the IMC was 1930. They said that he was buried at Imbali, but although some of the members had seen the grave they could not give precise details. Sundkler, 1976 Zulu Zion, 239, gives the date of Msimang's death as 1935. Sundkler claims that his information is from an interview with Selby Msimang, Joel's second son. Sundkler also gives 1904 as the date on which the Independent Methodist Church was formed. However, Msimang left the Methodist Church in 1904 but only formed the IMC in 1906. This is the date on the official form asking for recognition from the South African government in 1925. (Department of Welfare and Housing, Pretoria)

⁹⁰ Mpungose 1984 Interview

Methodist Church was registered in Natal and eleven years later the Rev CM Ntlabathi, the General Secretary, applied for registration of the IMC by the government in Pretoria.⁹¹

The Rev Joel Msimang was joined by other Methodist ministers - the Rev J Congwa from Queenstown, the Rev Zephaniah and Stephen Mavimbela (1806-1948), a former policeman who wanted to become an evangelist. In 1902 Mavimbela had a vision in which he was told; "Go to Mahamba and there you will be told what to do".⁹² Msimang sent him to Mozambique as a preacher.

Joel Msimang travelled widely during these years and many important Swazis joined the church. Both Queen Mother Lomawa Nxumalo and her successor (and sister) Queen Nukwase were members during the post-1920 period.⁹³

⁹¹ In 1921 a commission was appointed to examine the question of the recognition of independent church groups. The commission decided that they could be recognised if they complied with certain conditions. These were:

- * The church must have functioned as an independent church for 10 years or more and the church must have a constitution, schools and church buildings.
- * Each church must have at least six congregations each with its own meeting place.
- * Preachers must have at least a Std 6 education with 2-3 years theological training of some sort; and
- * The church must comply with ethical standards and preachers must be capable of performing their duties. Despite the fact that the Government decided that the decisions of the 1921 commission were only guide-lines and that each case must be decided on merit, only two churches had received recognition by 1945 (The AIC - Their church names and listing of church names - Paper read by EF Retief at the NERMIC Conference on 4 July 1991). The application for registration by the IMC is among the records of the Department of Welfare and Housing in Pretoria.

⁹² Sundkler, 1975 Zulu Zion, 215

⁹³ Cazziol, RJ nd The Swazi Zionists An indigenous religious movement in Southern Africa Social studies monograph no 7 University of Swaziland, 47

The objects and principles of religion, precepts and discipline of the Independent Methodist Church demonstrate their emphasis on a personal faith and their concern not to be accused of exclusivism. Their beliefs are based on conservative evangelical doctrine. They may be summarised as follows:

- * The object of the Church is to advance the propagation of the Gospel among the aboriginal races ...

The principles of religion are:

- * We believe in the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testaments ...
- * We believe in the existence of One God ... the Creator and Governor of all beings and all things
- * We believe that God is revealed in the Scriptures as the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, each with the same divine attributes.
- * We believe that in matters of religion testimony of personal faith in God rests with the individual ...
- * We believe in the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

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The precepts and discipline of the Church demanded that every member "should be a true believer in the Living and Almighty God" and should "follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ".

In many ways the organisation of the Independent Methodist Church follows the guide-lines laid down in the "Laws and disciplines" of the Methodist Church from which its founder had broken away.⁹⁵ This was understandable as the methods used by the Methodist Church were the ones that they knew best and the ones that they

⁹⁴ Constitution 1914, 5

⁹⁵ MS 14,787 (Cory Library) In answer to the question "Are the doctrines of your church similar to those of any of the European churches? If so what church?", Msimang answered "Yes. The Wesleyan Church."

had seen were successful. The Methodist hymn-book is still used and many of the Methodist liturgies and forms of service such the Communion service are the basis for the IMC forms of worship. Conformity with the generalisation that Ethiopian-type churches keep the doctrines of the mission church is one of the few ways in which the IMC adheres to the general perceptions of the causes of schism.

According to West the IMC are not led by prophets, they do not use drums or dancing in their services, nor do they baptise in rivers. Healing is taught and practised.⁹⁶ Cazziol wrote that:

The "Ethiopian" churches in Swaziland have always insisted on differentiating themselves from the numerous Zionists. In doctrine and ritual, the "Ethiopian" churches in Swaziland have never been much different from the mission churches from which they seceded or from which their leadership originated. Their worship is orderly and it is usually programmed (order of service) although it is more lively than that of the mission churches (eg use of tambourines, hand clapping, shouting of hallelujah). Speaking in tongues and spirit possession is not approved
...⁹⁷

In Swaziland the IMC is a member of the League of Churches, an organisation to which a number of the Zionist churches also belong.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ West, M 1975 Bishops and prophets in a black city African Independent Churches in Soweto, Johannesburg Cape Town:David Philip, 41. These facts are included in a comparative table of Ethiopian-type churches in Soweto and refer to the "Independent Methodist Church in South Africa", a break-away branch of the IMC.

⁹⁷ Cazziol, nd Swazi Zionists, 54

⁹⁸ Magrath, 1987 Somhloloism, 68. "The League of Churches groups the Independents around the monarchy, to which all their important affairs are ultimately referred. ... Yet, ... the monarchy maintains a certain distance from them and an openness to all churches". There are

Expansion of the Independent Methodist Church

In 1926 Lea wrote that:

It is questionable whether it (the IMC) will live after the "passing" of Mr Msimang. He is its life and soul and "it is his wealth that keeps it going". He is a minister who is much loved and respected. ⁹⁹

This, however, did not happen. Under the Rev Joel Msimang the IMC expanded rapidly. In 1912 a body of about 1,000 people, from Ndabakazi, in the District of Ngamakwe, Transkei, invited Msimang to be their minister and asked to be accepted into the Independent Methodist Church. Msimang accepted their invitation and a branch of the IMC was established in the Transkei. ¹⁰⁰ He sent Kilborne Qwana and Noah Mhlongo to minister to the new congregation.

At the 1912 Synod of the Clarkebury District of the Methodist Church in the Transkei, Simon Msimang left the Methodist Church to join the IMC. The Synod wanted Marki, where Simon Msimang worked, to become a sub-station of Butterworth mission which meant that Msimang would have to work under the supervision of the white minister at Butterworth. Simon Msimang could not accept this and left the Methodist Church. He was given charge of the IMC in the Eastern Cape. After his death in 1929 the Revs Noah Mhlongo and Kilborne Qwana took charge. ¹⁰¹

two other ecumenical bodies - the Swaziland Conference of Churches for the evangelical groups and the Council of Swaziland Churches, founded in 1976, which groups the Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans and some smaller groups.

⁹⁹ Lea, 1926 The native separatist churches, 44

¹⁰⁰ Constitution and Deed of trust of the Independent Methodist Church of Africa, 1

¹⁰¹ Information supplied by leaders of the IMC at their Conference in 1991.

In 1921 Joel Msimang reported to the Government Commission ¹⁰² that the IMC had 2587 full members, 1089 on trial and 589 junior members. He listed seven preaching places with ministers in the Transvaal, two churches and ministers in Swaziland and three each in Natal and the Cape Province. ¹⁰³

Critical assessment of the reasons for schism

Whiteside ¹⁰⁴ recorded that "the years 1903 and 1904 were remarkable in the history of the Transvaal for marvellous activity and rapid extension". These words were echoed in the report entitled Transvaal and Swaziland District 1903 in the Notices of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society:

As we review the work of another year, our hearts are filled with gratitude to God for the manifold tokens of his presence and blessing throughout the District. ¹⁰⁵

These words did not take cognisance of the fact that in one section of the district, that is in Swaziland, the church at Mahamba was in the process of being torn in two. The Methodist leadership (all white) probably thought that the matter would be resolved and that Joel Msimang would proceed to Mozambique as directed. The Ethiopian schism by Mangena Mokone in Pretoria had

¹⁰² Msimang gave his address as P O New Denmark, via Standerton.

¹⁰³ The list reads as follows: Mahamba, Swaziland (Rev Z Kunene), Tyaneni, Swaziland (Rev E Ngcobo), New Denmark, Transvaal (Rev J Msimang), Ermelo (Rev IIN Marwa), Johannesburg, (Rev RM Silgee), Pretoria (Rev JM Ramutloa), Rustenburg (Rev MR Ruoele), Buffelsdraai (Rev JP Motsuane), Leeukraal (Rev S Khalo) - all these in the Transvaal - Newcastle, Natal (Rev M Sitole), Victoria Hill (Rev JN Mhlongo), Verdriet (Rev PJ Ngwenya) - all in Natal and in the Cape, Mpukane (Revs P Pupuma and W Mtanshana), Umvuzi (Rev KWS Qwana) and Mpamba (Rev E Matshingana) MS 14 787 (Cory Library)

¹⁰⁴ Whiteside, 1906 History, 458.

¹⁰⁵ Notices 1904, 107.

been viewed as an isolated incident and although the danger of Ethiopianism was discussed among the clergy, the Synod appears to have ruled out any possibility of such a split in Swaziland. It is probable that the authorities were unaware of how deeply Msimang felt about the prospective move and the effects it would have on his family. Whiteside and the un-named writer of the report were writing for a British readership who supported the mission financially and even if these reporters feared a split they appear to have been unwilling to include reports of disruptions that could influence their financial support.

The causes of the schism will be discussed under two categories. Firstly, conditions that prevailed in the Methodist Church of the Transvaal and Swaziland District. Secondly, Msimang's family commitments and his own personal preferences which played a part in the formation of the IMC.

1. CONDITIONS IN THE METHODIST CHURCH

* Historical predisposition to autonomy

From the time of King Sobusa's dream that led to the invitation to the missionaries to Swaziland, the church was considered beneficial to the Swazi people. For many years after Allison's short-lived attempt at mission, missionaries were distrusted by the Swazi kings. When Daniel Msimang re-opened the Methodist Church in Swaziland he was careful to show respect to the King and the Queen Mother. This enhanced the position of the Christian minister at Mahamba.

Swaziland was not one of the provinces ¹⁰⁶ of South Africa. It was a semi-independent country under the protection of the British Government and was ruled by a King. Bishop Zwane wrote in 1987 that:

The whole country is one - one country, one culture, one language, one diocese and many denominations. The only

¹⁰⁶ The four Provinces were only formally incorporated into the Union of South Africa in 1910.

element that divides the people is the Christian religion.

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This unity of culture and language was one of the factors that made Swazi ministers like Msimang more acceptable to the Swazi church members than a minister from other areas. It also gave Msimang confidence that an independent Swazi church like the IMC (even though there were branches in the Transvaal and other areas of South Africa) would be acceptable to the Swazi people.

* Allison's training in leadership

Allison taught his church leaders how to be independent, especially those who were trained in his schools and who lived in his house. For example, in 1844 he left Job and Barnabas in sole charge of the new work in Swaziland until he should return.

His experiment in land-ownership at Edendale, where the members of the mission community could own their own land and make their own decisions, was an unusual missionary policy for the mid-1800's when most missionaries adopted an authoritarian approach. Allison's encouragement of indigenous leadership, for example Daniel Msimang, until 1852 opened the way for the formation of the Nzondelelo movement in the 1870's, a movement for the African people supported by African people. When this movement was incorporated into the work of the Natal District of the Methodist Church the white missionaries revealed their attitude to black leadership. They believed that the venture could not be successful unless under the control of a committee of white ministers to ensure that the Church controlled the finances and checked that the correct doctrines were taught. ¹⁰⁸

From the re-opening of the Mahamba Mission Daniel Msimang, who had been trained by Allison, was left to a great extent, in sole

¹⁰⁷ Magrath, 1987 Somhloloism, 58 Bishop Zwane is a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

¹⁰⁸ MS 15,378 Minutes of the District Meeting of the Natal District, 1877 (State Archives, Pietermaritzburg)

charge of the work in Swaziland. The Circuit Superintendent based at Ermelo in the Transvaal, visited Mahamba infrequently. Other ministers such as Underwood spent short periods of time at Mahamba, but it was Msimang who provided the continuity of leadership for the church in Swaziland. Joel Msimang, therefore, was used to the Methodist church in Swaziland having a measure of independence and expected this state of affairs to continue. His father had been kept at one mission station for the whole of his ministry. Joel Msimang, after the death of his father, was suddenly expected to adhere to the Methodist tradition of an itinerant ministry.¹⁰⁹

Other leaders of the church at Emakosini also demonstrated their ability to initiate mission work successfully. In 1886 Watkins and Daniel Msimang travelled to Zululand "in order to find the Zulu king and obtain his consent to open a Wesleyan mission station".¹¹⁰ Watkins became ill and it was decided that conditions were not suitable or safe to start a mission at that time. However, Thomas Khumalo, a member of Joel Msimang's congregation at Emakosini, felt that God was calling him to leave Swaziland and start a mission among the Mandhlakazi in Zululand. He established his mission at Nongoma in Zululand.

When his son was born Khumalo and his wife travelled back to Swaziland for the child to be baptised at Emakosini. When he returned to Zululand he persuaded other Swazi preachers, Stoffel Nkwanazi, Isaac Mlangeni and their class-leader from Emakosini,

¹⁰⁹ Jackson, T 1839 The centenary of Wesleyan Methodism A brief sketch of the rise, progress, and present state of the Wesleyan Methodist Societies throughout the world, 104 "Every preacher was required to be a travelling preacher. ... Preachers were required to visit the several towns, villages and hamlets committed to their care. ... From these stations preachers were liable to be removed every year".

¹¹⁰ The South African Methodist - 8 September 1886. Methodism in Zululand. (Cory Library, Grahamstown)

Samuel Mabengu, to accompany him.¹¹¹ This outreach was not initiated by white missionaries but nevertheless laid the foundation for Methodist mission work in Zululand.

* Failure to ordain Black ministers timeously

At the Special Meeting in 1877 held at Indaleni to discuss the Nzondelelo movement, one of its local preachers, Nathaniel Matebula,¹¹² (accepted as a candidate minister in the Methodist Church in 1880) asked the white missionaries:

Why did you not ordain the old teachers as ministers? The first missionaries passed away without making a native ministry. ... I weep because I fear that the work may not go on. The white missionaries live in the towns and do not know the needs of the country.¹¹³

Matebula feared that the white ministers would leave the country churches when the work in the towns required their presence and that young men from the local community were not being trained and ordained to take their places. Matebula's statement challenged the missionaries to up-grade the indigenous ministry. This decision to upgrade the local ministry would affect both Daniel and Joel Msimang. Matebula was speaking on behalf of the

¹¹¹ Mears, Torchbearers, 23

¹¹² Nathaniel Matebula was born in 1827 at Umhlongavulle on the western border of Swaziland. When Allison commenced mission work in Swaziland in 1844 he had five preaching stations as well as the main mission at Mahamba. The evangelist at Umhlongavulle was Johannes Kumalo. In 1845, after listening to the preaching of Kumalo he became a Christian. According to Holden Matebula was the first Swazi convert of the mission. In spite of family opposition Matebula accompanied Allison to Natal. He settled at Indaleni and became a builder. He later became one of the land-owners at Edendale. When he became a preacher on trial in 1880 he was appointed as minister at Driefontein, a Methodist settlement which was one of the places where the Nzondelelo movement started. Holden, 1887 Brief history, 630f.

¹¹³ Whiteside, 1906 Wesleyan Methodist, 402,403.

whole community at Driefontein and Edendale when he expressed his sorrow for the lack of responsibility and training given to black ministers. Joel Msimang felt in 1903 that the absent white minister "could not know the needs of the country" and he wanted to remain with his congregation.

* Isolation of the mission community

The mission stations in the south of Swaziland, Mahamba, Emakosini and their out-stations, were very isolated and far from the rest of the Transvaal District. It was not easy for the missionaries to visit the missions very often. This made the people on the mission stations self-sufficient and able to act independently.

In 1881 Watkins described his first visit to Swaziland with Daniel Msimang ¹¹⁴ "crossed the Pivan River, and thence crossed a high mountain called Mokebieskop and then through a very rugged country - part the way had to lead our horses."

In 1890 Watkins again described a journey to Mahamba. ¹¹⁵

On leaving Wakkerstroom, we at once entered the Drakensberg range of mountains. We were four days and nights amongst the mountains, suffering many difficulties and some danger. Travelling in a two-wheeled cart, we found it often almost impossible to get down the mountains. My good driver, Solomon, carried me on his back over two rivers, because he feared he would not be able to get his cart through without an upset. ... The cold was intense at nights ...

While this isolation allowed for independence it also led to loneliness. When Msimang and Watkins went to Mozambique in 1891 they found that they could not rely on the company of other

¹¹⁴ Watkins 1881 Methodism re-enters the Transvaal Saturday, 6 August

¹¹⁵ Notices of the WMMS February 1890, 279,280. The report is entitled "Through the Drakensberg to Swaziland".

people because:

In eleven days of travel (they) had passed by Cape cart from Heidelberg to Mahamba over the rugged Drakensberg road. From thence they had gone through Bremersdorp, and designed to reach the Tembe River from there and thence to the Bay.¹¹⁶

During this time they had travelled alone without other travelling companions.

* Paternalism and the attitude of the white ministers

Watkins had a rare relationship with his African colleagues which unfortunately was not shared by many of the other ministers. While his actions and words show the almost unconscious paternalistic attitude which characterised mission work at that time, he nevertheless showed an appreciation for the work of his African ministers and was popular with them. Watkins wrote in his journal on 28 March 1885 that when he visited Mahamba "the news soon spread that the great white father had arrived". It should be recognised that black evangelists of the time would not have been aware that this attitude was paternalistic.

Unfortunately, it was not Watkins with whom Joel Msimang had to deal when the question of his move to Mozambique arose. Other white ministers did not have the same understanding of the African predicament and there appears to have been an unwillingness to understand the circumstances that gave rise to Joel Msimang's request. This lack of concern may be counted among the causes of the schism.

Mpungose said ¹¹⁷, referring to the relationship between black and white ministers in Swaziland, that:

¹¹⁶ The South African Methodist vol 3 no 45 20 May, 1949
Article by Botterill, E "Delagoa Bay is in the news:
more fascinating historical research".

¹¹⁷ Mpungose, 1984 Interview

Those times were different times for African ministers. The spirit of discrimination and suspicion was haunting even the white minister and the church authorities. ... Africans had no freedom of worship, preaching and speech because all they could do (sic), they had to consult the white authorities first for consent and approval. The church authorities were in England. To get the answer meant a period of over three months or more waiting. ¹¹⁸ ...

The spirit of discrimination and oppression prevailed even when African ministers have been ordained. Instead of working together with the European ministers they were made to work under them. This proved no fellowship between black and white ministers. ¹¹⁹

* The imposition of the "English" model of worship

Missionaries from England tried to impose the church organisation that belonged to the mother church in England for these were the structures they were familiar with.

For example, when Underwood was at Mahamba he wanted to fashion the mission station after the pattern of an English Circuit. In 1895 he wrote:

This evening we have had the first meeting of a class which I have formed for converted men and boys. I hope to grow local preachers out of it. My intention is to make a circuit as near as possible on the English model and put on the plan large kraals in the neighbourhood and send these young men out in couples to preach the Gospel. There were 16 present and they were very willing but very ignorant,

¹¹⁸ Once again Mpungose in expressing her own and the family's perceptions of the events leading to the formation of the IMC is not completely correct. The decision to send Msimang to Mozambique was made by the Synod of the Transvaal and Swaziland District, not by the authorities in England.

¹¹⁹ Another generally accepted cause of separatism was lack of love shown by the white ministers.

not one half of the 16 being able to read in their own language. So in this class we shall try to teach them both the letter and the Spirit of the Word of God. We shall also have prayer and experience and anything else able to keep the divine fire burning in our souls. ¹²⁰

Underwood was trying to introduce the English model into the African church as this was the generally accepted Methodist missionary policy of the time. Some of the ideas of English Methodism fitted into the context of the African church. For example, the use of local preachers in a culture where few people had sufficient education to become ordained ministers, proved especially efficient. Local preachers received basic training in Scripture knowledge and preaching and were used in their own community. But other attitudes prevalent at the time, such as the seniority of white ministers over the African, no matter the age, often led to friction. Other Methodist practises that proved acceptable in the African context were retained by the Independent Methodist Church. Among these were the use of class meetings for studying the Bible and fellowship and the division of the different geographical areas in which the IMC worked into Districts and Circuits.

* Disagreement over money

It was the practice in the Methodist Church for "class leaders" to collect "class money" as church dues. Msimang had a disagreement with the Methodist authorities over the amount of class money the congregation should pay. This led to further misunderstanding. ¹²¹

¹²⁰ Notices 1896

¹²¹ Lea, A 1926 The native separatist churches, 44 Other independent churches also named a disagreement over money as one of the reasons for the schism. For example, James Dwane wanted to build a college for Africans with the money he collected in England (see chapter 2). When the Methodist church refused to allow this he left them to join the Ethiopian Church. The Rev Pambani J Mzimba of the African Presbyterian Church left the Free Church of Scotland (Presbyterian)

IMC tradition about the ¹²² disagreement regarding money was that the money collected in Swaziland was needed to build houses there, but the Methodist Church wanted to use the money for general funds. The IMC agreed that Msimang said that the amount being asked for church fees was too great.

* The Ethiopian movement

In 1892 the Rev Mangena Mokone left the Methodist Church in Pretoria and formed the Ethiopian Church. Joel Msimang was a member of the Synod that discussed Mokone's schism. There were other schisms at this time too. In 1896 the Rev James Dwane, a minister from the eastern Cape, left the Methodist Church to join Mokone's Ethiopian church. Not only the Methodists were affected. In 1898 the Rev P J Mzimba left the Presbyterian Church at Lovedale, Alice and started his own independent church.

These separations contributed to a general mood of independentism hitherto not considered proper or possible. Next, these early schisms having highlighted the possibility, many others became feasible, among them that of the IMC.

In 1911 the Rev Amos Burnet, Chairman of the Transvaal and Swaziland District, wrote indicating that in the eyes of the Methodist Church Msimang's break-away was due to the influence of the Ethiopian movement:

Some years ago we had great trouble in connection with our work in south Swaziland owing to certain Ethiopian agitation and defection. ¹²³

While all these must be construed as contributing causes of the

at Lovedale, near Alice in 1898 to form his own Church. The disputes over money and property that followed lasted many years.

¹²² Mpungose, 1984 Interview

¹²³ Letter from the Rev A Burnet dated 3 November 1911. (Central Methodist Archives)

schism it should also be remembered that far more black ministers remained with the mission churches than left to form their own. Burnet's letter has a tone of irritation and annoyance arising from Msimang's action which he saw as causing unnecessary problems for the Methodist Church.

* Conditions in Mozambique

In Mozambique, during the late 1890's the Methodist Church had undergone difficulties and Joel Msimang knew about their struggles. Started in 1885 by a Mozambican, Robert Mashaba, who had been converted in Port Elizabeth in the eastern Cape where he was working. He returned to his own people and had to endure persecution. He was finally falsely accused of treason and arrested by the Portuguese authorities.¹²⁴ This took place in 1896.¹²⁵

Mozambique was not a safe country in which to live. When Watkins planned to visit Mashaba in Mozambique in 1890 he wrote:

News arrived that smallpox had been brought into Delagoa Bay by a steamer, and that both town and port were closed. The smallpox itself did not alarm me, for I have had this foul disease, but what did deter me was the prospect of

¹²⁴ Robert Ndevu Mashaba, a member of the Ronga clan, was born near Delagoa Bay in about 1850. He worked first in Durban where he attended a night school. On hearing that he could earn more money in Port Elizabeth, he moved there. A vision from the Book of Daniel led to his conversion and he felt called to return home and preach to his own people. He was baptised by the Rev Robert Lamplough, earned enough money to study at Lovedale Institution in the eastern Cape, and in 1885 returned to Mozambique and started a Methodist Society. (Private papers of the Rev CD Choates)

¹²⁵ Minutes of the Transvaal and Swaziland District Meeting, January 1896. "The Chairman reports on the case of Robert Mashaba - arrested for complicity in the native rebellion in Port territory and that he was unable to secure Mashaba's release. Sympathy was expressed for his unmerited trouble and Synod will try to secure his release".

being shut up at Delagoa Bay for an indefinite time ... I have arranged for Daniel Msimang to visit the place when it is safe. ¹²⁶

By 1902 the Methodist Church in Mozambique was going through a difficult time due to lack of leadership due to Mashaba's having been arrested on a false charge of treason against the Portuguese authorities. In 1896 the Methodist authorities sent John Bowen, an evangelist, to replace Mashaba. He worked there until 1897 when he was shot by a disgruntled member of his church leaders' meeting.¹²⁷ In 1902 the Rev G Weavind, who had replaced Watkins as Chairman of the Transvaal and Swaziland District, visited Bowen and brought him back to Johannesburg for treatment. ¹²⁸

The next person to be sent was James Makapela, an evangelist who worked at Massala in the south of Mozambique. He fell victim to a "fever". Then the Rev Elias Khumalo of the Witwatersrand Mission was sent to Mozambique after the Anglo-Boer War. He filled the place that Msimang had refused. Khumalo, according to Burnet, was the "most intelligent and tactful native minister in the District". ¹²⁹

2. PERSONAL AND FAMILY REASONS FOR THE FORMATION OF THE IMC

When Joel Msimang was transferred to Mozambique in 1903 two of the reasons why he did not wish to go to Delagoa Bay were the isolation and the possibility of his family contracting diseases. When Joel received a call to this church, he remembered

¹²⁶ Notices, 1891

¹²⁷ The South African Methodist Vol 3 no 45 20 May 1949. Botterill, "Delagoa Bay".

¹²⁸ Ibid. Travelling was difficult because of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Botterill had first hand knowledge of the events as he was a member of the Synod of the Transvaal and Swaziland District at the time.

¹²⁹ F 165885 (Unisa Library) Letter from the Rev A Burnet to the Rev Hartley dated 3 March 1903.

the circumstances his father had described after his visit to Mozambique and felt he could not accept a transfer that would endanger the lives of his family. In 1924/1925 when the Rev Ntlabahti applied for government recognition the reason given for the session was that Joel Msimang "was transferred to another place. In that place there was children's diseases".¹³⁰ Msimang's refusal to comply with this transfer led to the formation of the Independent Methodist Church.

* Joel Msimang's family

Msimang did not want to take his family to an area which endangered their health. His family was used to the milder climate of Swaziland and not the heat of Mozambique.

Possible family illness was not the only problem that Msimang had to face. The education and future professions, especially of their sons, caused the Msimangs' concern. In 1904 his son, Richard, was due to start his studies at Taunton College in England.¹³¹ Swaziland was under British jurisdiction while Mozambique was Portuguese territory. Mozambique was isolated and Richard would no longer have been resident in a British Colony. Remaining in South Africa (Msimang lived at Standerton, near the Swaziland border) meant that the family could receive the best education available to Africans.

Two of the sons of Joel and Julia Msimang went on to become famous. The eldest son, Richard W Msimang, (1884-1933) was one of the first students to attend John L Dube's Ohlange Institute in Natal¹³² and later attended Healdtown, the Methodist college

¹³⁰ Records at the Department of Welfare and Housing, Pretoria.

¹³¹ Skota, 1933 Who's Who, 73

¹³² The Ohlange Native Industrial Institution was founded by John Dube of the Congregational Mission in Natal, who also did much of the teaching. In 1909 he wrote that the Ohlange School was a Zulu school neither owned nor worked by White missionaries (1909:21).

in the Eastern Cape. In spite of the split with the Methodist Church Msimang continued to make use of their educational facilities for his children. Richard Msimang then went overseas to study. He spent nine years in Britain where he trained as an attorney at Queen's College, Taunton, Somerset. When he returned to South Africa after doing his articles and qualifying in England he established a law practice in Johannesburg¹³³ and was among the founders of the African National Congress in 1912.¹³⁴ His father's ambition for his son's further training in England was realised in the young Msimang's achievements.

Henry Selby Msimang (b 1886) is better known than his brother. He spent his early youth at Emakosini (1892-1903 Emakosini Primary School, Nhlangoeni) and in 1903-1904 he studied at Kilnerton Training Institution, Pretoria. In 1905 he attended Edendale Training Institution and from 1906-1907 he studied at Healdtown where he qualified as a teacher.¹³⁵ All Selby Msimang's education was received at Methodist mission institutions.

Selby Msimang was employed in various capacities but is best known for his work as a journalist and his association with the African National Congress and the Liberal Party.¹³⁶ His spiritual approach to life learnt from his father and grandfather was expressed in his words; "If your life is spiritually centred, you'll cast the matter onto God, and accept his guidance. To change people, it's useless to tell them they're

¹³³ Skota, 1965 Yearly register, 29

¹³⁴ Karis, T & Carter, G (eds) 1977 From protest to challenge A documentary history of African politics in South Africa 1882-1964. Volume 4 Political profiles 1882-1964 Stanford:Hoover Institution Press, 106

¹³⁵ Deane, D 1978 Black South Africans: A who's who: 57 profiles of Natal's leading Blacks Cape Town:Oxford University Press, 117

¹³⁶ Karis & Carter 1977 Political profiles, 104

wrong. But overlooking their shortcomings may move them to change".¹³⁷ Msimang's words echo his attitude to the mission church which would not listen when he felt his transfer to Mozambique was wrong.

* Reluctance to leave Swaziland

Msimang was reluctant to leave the congregation that he had helped his father to build up and the church which he had helped establish. On the part of the Methodist authorities there was a lack of understanding for Msimang's problems and undue stress on the letter of the law which said that a Methodist minister had to be willing to go wherever he was sent.¹³⁸ When Msimang realised that as far as the Methodist Church was concerned it was inevitable that he would have to go to Mozambique, he resigned and formed the Independent Methodist Church of Africa.

Members of the IMC who left to join the Zionist movement

Zionism is traditionally considered to have been introduced into Swaziland by Johanna Asiyena Nxumalo (died 1930) in 1913.¹³⁹ Nxumalo came from an influential Swazi family and was the sister of two successive Queen-mothers Lomawa and Nukwase, both of whom were supporters of the Independent Methodist Church. The Nxumalo family had been members of Allison's church at Mahamba and fled to Natal with him and remained prominent members of the church at Edendale. Like her sisters, Johanna Nxumalo first belonged to the IMC but after meeting Daniel Nkonyane and her baptism into the Zionist Church in 1913, she introduced Zionism into Swaziland.

¹³⁷ Deane, 1978 Black South Africans, 116

¹³⁸ Mpungose Notes the: "As an African or black minister, his European authorities regarded him as a 'Kaffir'. As a result, such regards made Rev Msimang to have a good study and understanding of the white man" (Interview 1984). Given the prevailing paternalistic attitude of colonialism at the time, race may well have played a part in the refusal of the authorities to listen to Msimang's pleas.

¹³⁹ Sundkler 1975 Zulu Zion, 206

When members of the IMC had so-called "spiritist" experiences they often left to join Zionist churches. Another IMC member who became a Zionist was Stephen Mavimbela (1860-1948), the man who Msimang had sent to Mozambique. He was a minister of the Independent Methodist Church until 1920 when he joined the Zionists and became a leader in the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion.¹⁴⁰ Dlamini reported that at first Mavimbela was not accepted as a leader in the CCACZ as he was "from the place of the Black Coat" ie the Methodist Church.¹⁴¹ The CCACZ did not appear to differentiate between the Wesleyan Methodists and their independent off-spring, the IMC. The IMC was considered to be more organised and respectable than the Zionist churches.

The reasons for the break-away from the Methodist Church that led to the formation of the IMC do not fit into the general perceptions of the causes of schism. Some of the reasons were personal, such as Msimang's fear for the health and safety of his family. However, the schism was also influenced by the historical background of the Swazi church with its distinct flavour of Swazi independence as well as the difficulties brought about by the politics of the time, for example the isolation and danger in Mozambique and the difficulties experienced by the traveller due to the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa.

Schisms from the IMC were because of "Zionist" visions and because those who experience visions needed to worship where these experiences were accepted. Others appear to have thought that discipline in the IMC would be less stringent than in the mission church.

¹⁴⁰ Dlamini, TLL 1976 The Christian Catholic Holy Spirit Church in Zion as it exists in Swaziland: its development, life and worship. Vol 1 Development, church organisation, prayers. Unpublished MA thesis, 7,8. Dlamini's facts come from interviews with people such as Joseph Selby Mavimbela, from whom this information is derived.

¹⁴¹ Dlamini, 1976 Christian Catholic, 8. J S Mavimbela said that the name "Black Coat" referred to the black gowns worn by the Methodists when preaching.

It will be seen, however, that the schism was the result of a particular set of circumstances, peculiar to the group/church at the time of the schism. The various causes led to a set of circumstances that was no longer acceptable to Msimang so he left the Methodist Church and founded his own Independent Methodist Church of Africa.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

But to me it is clear
that even the black man in Africa must stand
on his own feet in matters of worship like
people in other countries, and not
always expect to be carried by the
white man on his back. He has long
learnt to walk by leaning on the
white man, but today he must stand
without leaning on anybody except
his God so that the work of the
Gospel should flourish ... The child
itself feels it must walk, it
stumbles and falls, takes one step
at a time, but the end result is
that it walks.¹

In this poem the Rev Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba, founder of the Presbyterian Church of Africa, articulates much of the longing expressed by the founders of independent churches in South Africa for acceptance as mature and responsible Christian leaders. Mzimba's poem acknowledges the role played by the missionaries in bringing the Gospel to South Africa but also expresses the frustration of black leaders who were not given the opportunity to stand on their own feet and accept responsibility for the work that they were doing. Black mission church leaders often experienced a lack of recognition of their skills, of advancement up the hierarchial ladder and inequality in salaries and educational opportunities.

It is important to emphasise that these factors which influenced schisms did not exist in every mission station neither did the

¹ Mzimba, P J. "It walks" in Chapman, M & Dangor, A 1982 Voices from within Black poetry from Southern Africa Johannesburg:A D Donker, 31

attitudes of all the missionaries lead to the type of frustration that caused black church leaders to leave the mission church. For example, the Rev Owen Watkins of the Methodist Church in the Transvaal was held in great esteem by black colleagues because of his insistence that they were equally responsible for the leadership of the mission. Mokone, after deciding to leave the Methodist Church, was willing to remain at Kilnerton a further year until Watkins retired rather than upset the missionary.

In 1925 Mrs Charlotte Maxeke, a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, drew the attention of the General Missionary Conference to the difference in attitudes to mission work of the pioneer missionaries and those that came later. She said that:

...(T)he early missionaries in this country knew what they were doing. They studied us; they lived with us; they moved among us. Even the wives of our missionaries were with us. They taught us in the Sunday Schools; ... They led us, and we knew that we had to follow in their steps because they were living the right lives. ... ²

Neill writes that it was after "the year 1890 (that) a radical change took place in the attitude of the missionaries to the Africans - they, ... became imbued with imperialistic ideas and with a sense of the superiority of all white men to all black men". ³ The period in mission history that saw the establishment of the first independent churches coincided with these years when, according to Neill, racial superiority became a feature among white missionaries. The Ethiopian Church was established in 1892 and from then until at least 1925 the Ethiopian-type churches proliferated. Numerous schisms occurred both from mission churches and from first generation Ethiopian-type

² Report of the General Missionary Conference 1925, 129 Mrs Maxeke, "The native Christian mother".

³ Neill, S 1966 Colonialism and Christian missions London:Lutterworth Press, 314

churches. After 1925 there were few new Ethiopian-type churches.

4

A critical analysis of the findings of the official commissions shows that the evidence of the witnesses led to generalisations about AIC's. For example, the generalisation about the causes of schisms which specifically interests us here, led to distortions in the understanding of key individual groups of churches. Individual churches lost their identity and became absorbed into what was called the "Ethiopian movement". The lessons which could have been learnt by the mission churches and so prevent further schisms were lost as the "particulars" became lost in the "general". Fuelled by political prejudice against the movement individual churches became categorised as just another of the AIC's.

Writers in the field also tended to generalise about the causes of schism as can be seen in the work of for example, Stormont and Lea. The following analysis compares the generalisations in the reports of the 1903-1905 and the 1925 Native Affairs Commissions with the testimony of the witnesses and the facts as revealed in the case-studies.

ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF SCHISM IN ETHIOPIAN-TYPE CHURCHES

The 1903-1905 Native Affairs Commission

The 1903-1905 Native Affairs Commission met to formulate a "Native policy" after the Ethiopian movement had been in existence for more than ten years. From the time that the Ethiopian Church (established in 1892) joined with the African Methodist Episcopal Church from America (1896) the two organisations were seen as one. The AMEC had black leaders mostly from America. Although there was an outcry when Bishop Turner ordained men of little education,⁵ it must be remembered that

⁴ A notable exception was the Methodist Church in Africa (Donkey Church) an Ethiopian-type schism from the Methodist Church in the Transvaal which took place in 1932.

⁵ Report 1903-1905, 47

the majority of those ordained had been leaders of mission church congregations. The Americans themselves were educated men. The fact that they were as educated as most white South Africans led to fear and suspicion of the motives of black Americans in coming to South Africa. Would they stir up local black revolt against white leaders in churches that would spill over into political unrest?

Whites generally considered lack of white control a sign of anti-white sentiments. White people knew little about the Ethiopian movement and almost nothing about individual independent churches. All churches not under white control were included under the umbrella of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Dower's testimony to the commission reflects a fear of the influence of the AMEC:

The Ethiopian movement is as much political as religious. ... (T)here is very little of the political aspect as it is carried on the African Methodist Episcopal Church with Bishop Coppin at its head ... but a number of men associated with his church are engaged in work of a political nature. ⁶

The 1903-1905 Report ⁷

The report found as follows:

1. That the independent churches were "recruited from every denomination" and that there was little or no divergence from the tenets of the parent church". ⁸ This will be seen to be true in some of the case-studies examined. Mokone continued to preach the doctrines of the Methodist Church

⁶ Minutes of evidence 2 October 1903, evidence of E Dower, Chief Clerk, Native Affairs Department, 42

⁷ Report of the South African Native Affairs Commission 1903-1905 CD 2399

⁸ Report 1903-1905, 45

doctrines which he said were correct and he sincerely believed in them.⁹ When Mokone's Ethiopian Church joined the AMEC in 1898 they continued to worship in the Methodist manner, so there was no change from the "tenets of the parent church". Mzimba called his church the Presbyterian Church of Africa and continued to consider himself a Presbyterian minister. The Commission also called him a Presbyterian minister. Joel Msimang continued to preach Methodist doctrine and use the Methodist Book of Offices in the Independent Methodist Church that he established.

For other churches this generalisation was not true. There was no place in the analysis of the evidence by the commission for the exception to the rule. When Nehemiah Tile left the Methodist Church and formed the Tembu National Church he rejected the Methodist form of worship and introduced the Anglican liturgy. He even went so far as to attend St John's Anglican College in Umtata to ensure that he preached correct Anglican doctrine. Dwane left the Methodist Church to join the Ethiopian Church and then the AMEC. When he decided to leave the AMEC he formed the Order of Ethiopia which later became part of the Anglican Church. The commissioners in 1905 were aware of these exceptions but made no mention of them in their report.

The assumption that Ethiopian-type churches not only broke away from mission churches and retained the doctrines of the parent church laid the foundation for later classifications of the AIC's. For example, Sundkler writes that he classified as Ethiopian "such independent Bantu churches as have seceded from the white mission churches" and whose "church organisation and Bible interpretation are largely copied from the patterns of the Protestant mission

⁹ Minutes of the 1892 Synod of the Transvaal and Swaziland District of the Methodist Church.

churches from which they have seceded".¹⁰ Makhubu writes that there "is usually nothing eye-catching that makes them (the Ethiopian churches) too different from the main-line churches".¹¹

2. "Relaxed strictness in the moral standard frequently follows" schisms. The Report contains a whole section on "Christianity and morals". This statement is a generalisation which when applied only to the AIC's infers that the lack of a moral standard was caused by the split with the mission churches. The commissioners felt that "civilisation, particularly in the larger towns, brings the Native under the influence of a social system of which he too often sees and assimilates the worst side only".¹² As the "restraints of the law" were ineffective in dealing with the situation it was left to the churches to provide "hope for the elevation of the native races" which depended "on their acceptance of Christian faith and morals".¹³ While it cannot be denied that the accusation applied to a number of independent church members, the early Ethiopian leaders like Joel Msimang upheld a high standard of Christian morality and expected their followers to do the same.¹⁴
3. The "Ethiopian movement" originated in the "desire on the part of a section of the Christianised natives to be freed from control of the European churches".¹⁵ Numerous writers

¹⁰ Sundkler, Bantu prophets, 53 and 54

¹¹ Makhubu, Independent churches, 5

¹² Report 1903-1905, 40

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Lea, in Separatist churches, 55 noted that in the secession "of the Rev Joel Msimang there was nothing to reflect on his moral character".

¹⁵ Report 1903-1905, 46

on the AIC's agree with this assessment. The Editor of the Christian Express wrote in 1903 that there was "a disposition to say to the white brother 'Hands off, let us plan and do for ourselves'" which resulted in "the formation of native churches independent of missionary control".¹⁶ Lea wrote that the "church separatist movement" symbolised "the general ambition of the Bantu for liberation".¹⁷ Sundkler saw the rise of Ethiopian-type churches as the result of "the white mission's conquest of the African peoples"¹⁸ Makhubu wrote that "the earliest breakaways from mission churches were mainly on nationalistic grounds"¹⁹ while an Independent Church bishop, Ngada, wrote ninety years after the Commission that "from the beginning we were regarded as a hotbed of African nationalism".²⁰

The rise of African nationalism was not the only reason for independent church leaders seeking control of their own affairs. For example, control of finances became a cause of schism when white control of finances became authoritarian, especially regarding money collected by the Africans themselves. This is seen in several of the case-studies. Dwane and Mzimba both collected money while on fund-raising tours overseas. Neither was allowed any say in how the money was to be spent and both broke away from their mission churches for this reason. Msimang's disagreement over money was different. Lea cites a quarrel over "class money" - ie the money collected week by week for the up-

¹⁶ The Christian Express, 1 October 1903

¹⁷ Lea, Separatist churches, 11

¹⁸ Sundkler, Bantu prophets, 54

¹⁹ Makhubu, Independent churches, 5

²⁰ Ngada, NH 1992 "Politics and healing in the African Indigenous Churches" in Challenge February 1992, 3

keep of the church, as a cause of the schism.²¹ Msimang wanted the money to be used locally instead of being placed in the general church funds. In these cases the break did not only come because of the desire to control their own finances but because of frustration experienced when the project for which the money was collected was rejected by the white missionaries. This was especially true in the cases of Dwane and Mzimba.

4. Without the "increased wisdom in church administration" provided by the white missionaries and the "ennobling examples of personal self-sacrifice and piety" shown by the missionaries, the African church would not be able to grow. Many independent churches had neither formal administrative structures nor the example of the white missionaries so the commissioners decided to "accord recognition to (only) such native churches as were possessed of sufficiently stable organisation to control their pastors and enforce discipline where necessary".²² This effectively excluded most of the AIC's and the commissioners hoped that what was "worthless and unstable in the movement would dwindle ... (and what was) in harmony with the true principles of religion ... would grow in the fullness of time to be a power for good".²³

The Commission did not allow for the fact that many of the break-away churches wanted to have an African Church for the African people. The Presbyterians believed that they had answered this need when they formed the Bantu Presbyterian Church under both black and white control. While this answered some of the problems it was not an African church for Africans controlled by Africans. Only the independent churches filled this need.

²¹ Lea, Separatist churches, 54

²² Report 1903-1905, 46

²³ Ibid

The Commission arrived at the following conclusions:

1. That the Ethiopian movement "represented by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Ethiopian Order in the Church of England and numerous semi-organised schismatic fragments from numerous denominations ... first took tangible form in the secession of discontented and restless spirits from religious bodies under the supervision of European missionaries".²⁴ The phrases "schismatic fragments" and "secession of discontented and restless spirits" indicate the lack of sympathy of the commissioners with those who chose to leave the established churches. The Order of Ethiopia was recognised because of its incorporation into the Anglican Church while the AMEC, although viewed with suspicion, was recognised because of its American link. All the other independent churches were seen in the same light regardless of their individual reasons for leaving the mission church. At the time that the interviews were held members from the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion (Samuel Brander, JM Mphela and Stephen Nguato) and the Presbyterian Church in Africa (PJ Mzimba) both testified about why they had left the mission churches. While Mzimba insisted that his church had no connection with the Ethiopian movement,²⁵ Dwane considered that all the early independent church leaders were "Ethiopian".²⁶ This generalisation by Dwane possibly influenced the perceptions of the commissioners as Dwane was a "recognised" leader. However, the names of many other independent leaders were mentioned in evidence (for example, Dwane mentioned Nehemiah Tile, Jonas Goduka and J Ggamana²⁷) and the commissioners should have recognised

²⁴ Report 1903-1905, 47

²⁵ Minutes of evidence, volume ii, 793

²⁶ Minutes of evidence, volume ii, 714

²⁷ Ibid

the fact that the independent church movement was more wide-spread than they allowed for and that the churches they studied displayed many differences.

2. The "Commission was not disposed to condemn the aspiration after religious independence" ²⁸ as long as it had nothing to do with political aspirations but the commissioners deplored the "leadership of ignorant and misguided men" especially those who sowed the seeds of "racial mistrust and discontent". ²⁹ This conclusion demonstrates a misconception. Firstly, most independent leaders who supported the African nationalist movement were not "ignorant" men although the commissioners may well have considered them "misguided" for wanting to leave the mission churches. The independent church leaders were mission-educated men who found that there was little acknowledgment for the leadership qualities of Africans. Henry Ngcayiya worked as a clerk for the civil service in Aliwal North before becoming an independent church leader. Richard Msimang, the son of Joel Msimang of the Independent Methodist Church, who formulated the first constitution of the South African Native Congress in 1919, was a lawyer trained in Britain. Tile, the fore-runner of the Ethiopian movement, who wanted a united Tembu church and may be considered as having political motivation, was trained at Healdtown by Methodist missionaries. The early African nationalists were seeking responsibility for Africans rather than "sowing seeds of racial mistrust" and in this regard their motives were the same as those of the independent church leaders.

The commissioners view about the independent church leaders as "ignorant" men can be refuted in the case of men trained in missionary training institutions. Lovedale, for example,

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

provided the same education for both its black and its white students. Mzimba was a tutor at Lovedale teaching both black and white students. Mokone was a successful school teacher and at the time of his secession was a teacher at Kilnerton, the Methodist training institution in Pretoria. Dwane trained as a teacher before becoming a minister, as did many of the other independent leaders.

Nevertheless, education was a bone of contention in the training of African ministers, especially for those ministers who received "in-service training" and had to study on their own while working in a congregation. Education was part and parcel of missionary endeavour in South Africa. Eveleigh, a Methodist historian, wrote that "almost from the beginning of our missionary work in this land education has been a necessary arm".³⁰ This was especially true when it came to the training of candidates for the ministry. Lack of promotion to the ranks of the ordained ministers was often due to the unduly high educational requirements expected by the mission churches before indigenous ministers could be ordained. For example, black probationer ministers were sent to institutions such as Healdtown, Kilnerton or Lovedale where they were taught the same subjects as their white colleagues had learnt at colleges in England. One of the reasons for the discrepancy observed in the standard of education received in South Africa and that of the British-trained white ministers was due to the fact that in Britain much of the teaching was done by academics, while in South Africa ordinary missionaries taught in the colleges. There were many excellent teachers like Stewart and Shepherd of Lovedale, but there were also others for whom teaching was only part of their missionary task. Hinchliff wrote that most of the missionaries in South Africa usually came from a working

³⁰ Eveleigh, W 1923 The story of a century, Cape town:methodist Publishing House, 62

class background and not from the ranks of academics.³¹ While this, too, is a generalisation it nevertheless means that many of the teachers in the training institutions were educated as ministers, not teachers.

Furthermore, probationer ministers had to cope with their studies while serving in a congregation. The latter had no contact with other students and were expected to master theological subjects in a second language. When unable to do so they remained on probation or were employed as evangelists.³² For example, the Methodist probationer minister, Samuel Oliphant, who remained loyal to the Methodist Church in spite of lack of promotion, became a student at Kilnerton in 1890, just prior to Mokone's appointment there. He had previously served as an evangelist at Potchefstroom and Bloemhof where he had "been most faithful and his work bore testimony of his fidelity".³³ In 1893 he was found incapable of writing his examination in English and he returned to Bloemhof to work as an evangelist again. Very few of the white ministers could have passed an examination in Oliphant's home language, Sotho. Knowledge of an indigenous language was not a requirement for a missionary, although it was recommended. Oliphant returned to Bloemhof at the time that Mokone's Ethiopian Church was gaining ground in Pretoria. In spite of not being ordained Oliphant did not join the "Ethiopians".

In 1892 a letter from an "African minister" to The South

³¹ Hinchliff, PB 1986 "Voluntary absolutism: British missionaries in the 19th century" in Sheils, WJ & Wood, D (eds) Studies in church history volume 23,

³² In 1893 Oliphant was found "incapable of further progress" and reappointed as an evangelist. (Examination of students at Kilnerton - 1893)

³³ Minutes of the District Meeting of the Transvaal and Swaziland District held at Pretoria on 19 January 1888

African Methodist, called for equal educational opportunities and pleaded that all black Methodist ministers be allowed to attend college because "all the other Christian churches which have native ministers are making efforts to give them (a) good education".³⁴ As a member of Kilnerton Institution, Mokone reacted to the fact that white staff members did not accept his educational qualifications as equal to their own. He wanted to be able to have the same qualifications as they did. He also protested the lack of promotion for black pioneer preachers whose years of experience should have been weighed against the fact that they had not attained the required standard of theological education. Independent leaders with little education like Enoch Mgijima of the Israelites were successful preachers who had hoped to achieve a position of importance in the mission church but could not be accepted for the ministry because of their lack of formal education. Such preachers could accept a lowly status in the main-line or mission church or join an independent church or start a church of their own.³⁵

3. The commissioners regarded the independent leaders generally as men who lacked "breadth of view, wisdom and forethought" and thus would be incapable of "directing" the fledgling ideals of a people just emerging from ignorance and barbarism into a state of semi-enlightenment".³⁶ Harriette Colenso described this paternalistic attitude to the Commission when she said that the missionaries told the African people: "You are going to be my child; you must not

³⁴ The South African Methodist 19 November 1892, 250

³⁵ Enoch Mgijima reached Standard 3 at the local Oxkraal school. Each time his father sent him to Lovedale with the rest of the family he was forced by head-aches to return home. He was, however, a popular and successful lay preacher in the Methodist Church.

³⁶ Report 1903-1905, 47

follow the evil ways of your father and mother".³⁷ This attitude was possibly motivated by misunderstanding or ignorance of African culture and methods of worship. The majority of white people equated Christianity with western civilisation and thus with western ways of worship. An African Christianity controlled by Africans would have appeared suspect to the commissioners.

"Breadth of view, wisdom and fore-thought" come with experience and responsibility. For example, Joel Msimang was able to display these qualities (Lea recorded that the secession of the IMC had "its occasion in real conviction of the correctness of conduct"³⁸) because he gained experience of administration in the church in Swaziland. However, he was not able to persuade the authorities to change their minds when they wanted to move him to Mozambique.

Missionaries were slow to recognise and trust the abilities of black Christians to act as pastors and administrators. Even when ordained to the ministry, black ministers were regarded as no more than assistants to the missionaries.³⁹ The Methodist Church reflected this attitude by calling their black probationers "native assistant missionaries" while white probationers were known as probationer ministers. Black probationers were often kept on probation for many years so they remained junior in the eyes of the missionaries, although their congregations accepted them as ministers. There was a failure to grasp what Neill noted in 1966 - that "a church cannot become genuinely independent unless it has local leaders capable of replacing the

³⁷ Minutes of evidence, volume iii, 407

³⁸ Lea, Separatist churches, 55

³⁹ Neill, S 1964 History, 515

missionary on every level of thought and activity".⁴⁰

The ministers of the English-speaking Protestant churches in South Africa in the years prior to 1925 were still bound to the missionary societies in Britain. There appeared to be little inclination to delegate authority to black ministers as the missionaries themselves had come to South Africa to serve as bearers of the Gospel, not as teachers of people who would replace them. Even the Bantu Presbyterian Church (the African branch of the Free Church of Scotland) remained under the guidance of the white church. Independence could, therefore, only be obtained by establishing an independent church.

4. The "Commission would not advise any measure of legislative repression ... (E)ffort should rather be directed towards ensuring efficient constitutional control".⁴¹ Individual cases "in which pastors abuse the trust reposed in them" would be disciplined by the government.⁴² However, the "secessionary fragments"⁴³ would not be recognised by the government. This decision caused many difficulties in the organisation of the emerging independent churches when they could not obtain licences as marriage officers or sites to erect church buildings without official recognition. The report concluded that "no minister of religion should solemnise a marriage without being licensed as a marriage officer".⁴⁴

While the AMEC and the Order of Ethiopia were given official recognition, other churches in the case-studies

⁴⁰ Neill, history, 517

⁴¹ Report 1903-1905, 47

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

were affected by the decision not to recognise independent churches. The refusal of their repeated requests for recognition led to bitterness on the part of the enquirers. Although Government sources said they examined each case on its merits, very few churches gained recognition. In the main, churches like those in the case-studies, the Ethiopian Church of South Africa, the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion and the Independent Methodist Church, were classed in a general category as independent churches and did not receive recognition.

The 1925 Native Churches Commission ⁴⁵

From 1922 letters eliciting information were sent to independent church leaders. By now there were many more independent churches than there had been during the time when the 1903 to 1905 Commission was conducting its interviews. This time members of 66 independent churches were asked for information. The report was tabled twenty years after the previous one and dealt more comprehensively with the "Native separatist churches". The term "separatist" had become freely used when discussing the independent churches, for example in the title of Lea's book, printed in 1926 - "The Native separatist churches". The term "Ethiopian" was still used but "separatist" included both Ethiopian-type and Zionist churches.

It is only from section 3 of the report that the independent churches are discussed. Section 1 deals with political organisations and the independent churches are not mentioned. Section 2 deals with the Bulhoek tragedy and Enoch Mgijima's Israelites. Although the Israelites were an independent church body the investigation was more political than religious. Section 3 follows on with an investigation into the independent church movement because "the Commission feels that religious, social and political organisations will continue to exist". ⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Report of the Native Churches Commission UG 39/25

⁴⁶ Report 1925, 17

The commissioners found that:

1. The existence of the independent churches was "partly due to the African's fondness for social gatherings, partly to their traditional group system of government, partly to an imitation of the methods of the Europeans and partly to their desire to express their dissatisfaction with the government".⁴⁷ Urbanisation during the 1890's and later led to a need for a caring ministry to replace traditional cultural structures that had been left behind in the rural communities. When the established mission churches failed to fulfil this need independent churches were formed. They replaced tribal families with church families. Where the mission church met the need of the people independent churches were seldom established.

The impact of urbanisation, especially in the Transvaal, was a major factor leading to the formation of Ethiopian churches. The 1925 Report noted that "the disillusionment of the natives in religious matters probably began with the influx of native labour to the towns".⁴⁸ Pretoria and Johannesburg were the two main towns affected by the migration of workers, as well as by the establishment of the Ethiopian movement. The sense of community (ubuntu)⁴⁹ which has always been important to African religion, was lost as people moved away from the influence of family and home to an unfamiliar life in town. This led to insecurity and loneliness which the churches, both main-line and independent, tried to address. Gray writes that the "Ethiopians stood squarely within a great tradition of Christian missionary concern" and their "challenge to racial discrimination (especially applicable in the urban

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Report 1925, 22

⁴⁹ Ubuntu is true a sense of being a person before other people.

situation) was shared by many Africans within the missionary-connected churches".⁵⁰ Racial discrimination was especially prevalent in towns like Johannesburg where black workers did much of the manual work on the mines.

Pretoria, where Mokone established the Ethiopian Church in 1892, was the capital city of the Transvaal. African workers lived in Marabastad, a rock-strewn slum on the western edge of Pretoria, which had been founded in the 1880's. Here Mokone held his first service of the Ethiopian Church. The earliest inhabitants of Marabastad were Pedi migrants but there were also people from further afield. Many of the people who settled at Marabastad were Christians seeking to use the skills they had learned at mission schools in other areas.⁵¹ Almost all the inhabitants of Marabastad had left behind some part of their traditional community and needed to establish roots in their new environment.

Among those who joined Mokone's church were members of the earliest independent church in Marabastad. This church, the African Church, had been formed in 1888 by J Kanyane Napo, an Anglican. Mokone soon gathered other church members, not only sympathetic Methodists and Anglicans, but also people who had no church affiliation. Even though members of one independent church supported other independent churches this did not mean that they lost their own identity and should be considered only as part of the wider Ethiopian movement.

Mokone knew the needs of the people of Johannesburg, the gold-mining centre, because he worked there as a Methodist minister in 1890 and 1891. It was a dusty, dreary place that attracted migrant workers (both black and white) from

⁵⁰ Gray Black Christians, 100

⁵¹ Campbell, Our fathers, 192, 193

all over South Africa and further afield. Some workers arrived in groups but many came as individuals, in search of employment, hoping to become rich. However, for most of those who streamed to Johannesburg there was little hope of saving money as the cost of food and essential items was high. There were signs of poverty everywhere, especially among the migrant workers.⁵²

The Methodist historian Whiteside described Johannesburg as it was experienced by Africans during the 1890's:

Tens of thousands of natives were employed on the mines, and they were drawn from almost every nation and tribe in South Africa. By some strange inconsistency, whilst the battery stamps were kept at work the whole of Sunday, no underground work was to be done: the result was that having nothing to do, the natives fell easy victim to the fascinations of hundreds of canteens. Faction fights, riotous quarrels, often ending fatally, were numerous.⁵³

As well as gaining experience in the problems facing urban dwellers, Mokone made useful contacts during his time in Johannesburg - the Maneye family, JL Tantsi and A Mngqibisa. These people all formed part of the African mission-educated community on the Reef. They later joined the Ethiopian Church and after 1896 moved to the AMEC.

In 1903 Bishop Jenkins, the Bishop of the AMEC in South Africa, showed his awareness of the poverty of most of the

⁵² Cook, T 1893 My mission tour in South Africa London:Charles Kelly, 45. Also Kennedy, EE 1985 Waiting for the boom Cape Town:South African Library Reprint series, 39 Kennedy wrote in 1890 that "we paid eighteen pence for a loaf of bread not much larger than a bar of soap ... and five shillings for a cabbage". He considered these prices "phenomenal".

⁵³ Whiteside, History, 443

black people in South Africa. He told the Native Affairs Commission that the AMEC "preached the gospel ... and taught religion and morality " to the people, but it was also the policy of the AMEC to teach industrial skills because of the poverty of their members "who do not own lands and money" but were "labouring classes".⁵⁴ Mokone, Tantsi, Mngqibisa and other leaders of the AMEC in the Transvaal and other areas of South Africa implemented the same policy of teaching both religion and life skills when they established new AMEC congregations.

Urbanisation, with its breakdown of traditional community structures, was also a factor in establishing independent churches such as the "Gaza" churches, formed to unite foreign miners from Mozambique and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) into communities.⁵⁵ These churches provided the support system needed by people who were far from home.

African revival movements both within the historic churches and the African Independent Churches reaffirmed the need to develop a more African Christianity.⁵⁶ The independent churches provided a church community with a supporting, caring function and brought new life to insecure and rootless urban dwellers.

Many of the independent churches had rural roots, however, and emerged within the tribal structure. For example,

⁵⁴ Minutes of evidence, volume ii, 216

⁵⁵ MS 14 787 (Cory Library) Evidence by J Ngonyamah who founded the East Coast Gaza Church because "all the other denominations objected to us East Coast natives forming a burial society". Also evidence by S Koza who founded the African Gaza Church because the AME treated "us Shangaans badly so we decided to start our own church". No details of the "bad treatment" are provided.

⁵⁶ Barrett, "African Christianity", 63 quoted in Ikenga-Metuh "Revival" in Mission studies, 166

Tile's church was essentially for the Tembu people and was formed in rural Tembuland. Mzimba's church had a majority of Fingoes (Mfengu) and was established in rural Ciskei. Msimang's Independent Methodist Church was formed in rural Swaziland. All these churches eventually established branches in the towns and cities to cater for their members who came to the towns seeking employment - according to the 1925 Report the missionary in the rural areas "had stood for the white race as a whole and (that black people thought) that all white people were actuated by the same altruistic motives as the missionary".⁵⁷ This is a generalisation as often as in the cases of Nehemiah Tile, Joel Msimang and James Dwane, it was rural ministers who caused their dissatisfaction.

Sundkler notes that Africans have a "propensity for ritualising religious worship (which) affects their concept of Christianity in the various African Independent Churches".⁵⁸ He feels that the "western individualistic concept of Christianity is replaced by a communalistic and collectivistic concept of church and Christianity".⁵⁹ An example of the truth of the statement is seen in the refusal of the members of the Order of Ethiopia to be absorbed completely into the Anglican Church and their insistence on keeping a measure of independence. This action revealed their wish to maintain the "Africanness" of their worship in spite of the Anglican structures which had absorbed their administration.

Members of other churches like the Ethiopian Church of South Africa considered their church the true Ethiopian

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Sundkler, BGM 1961 "The concept of Christianity in the African Independent churches" in Africa studies volume 20 Johannesburg:Witwatersrand University Press, 207

⁵⁹ Ibid

church with an African emphasis. The longing for a truly African emphasis is echoed in the use of "African" in the names of many of the independent churches, for example the African Native Church.

2. If there was a "good native policy and proper native administration" the "natives would have an opportunity of expressing themselves and bringing their grievances to the authorities" there would be no need for independent churches. ⁶⁰ The commissioners appear to feel that a "good native policy" would do away with the reasons that led to the formation of AIC's.

In chapter 3 of the Report the origin and extent of "native separatist churches" were examined. The introduction which deals with the work of missionaries lists the commissioners understanding of the causes of schism. These are:

1. The remoteness of the later missionaries who lived in the towns and did not have close contact with the people as had the early missionaries. Watkins was an early Methodist missionary who befriended his evangelists and Mokone was willing to wait a year before forming his own church, so as not to upset the seriously-ill Watkins. However, the statement that all the early missionaries were close to the people and all the later missionaries were remote is a generalisation. Father Puller of the Anglican Church was a much-loved later missionary who was sympathetic to Dwane and the Order of Ethiopia.
2. That disciplined church members who left the fold of the mission church often returned and "the discipline was accepted and the child came back to the fold". ⁶¹ Although some of the people who left mission churches returned the

⁶⁰ Report 1925, 17 and 18

⁶¹ Report 1925, 22

vast majority remained in the independent church they had formed or joined or left to form another independent church of their own. This finding of the commission is misleading in that it infers that people who left the mission churches were dissatisfied with the independent churches. The vast proliferation of independent churches during the 20th century has proved this finding incorrect.

Section 5 of the report traced the reasons for the establishment of the "separatist movement". The commissioners said that they found it difficult to assess the "real" reasons for schism but considered the following to be the most important:

1. Desire for independence in church matters. The commissioners noted that: "After nearly a century of mission work among the natives of South Africa the native feels that it is time that he should do his bit in propagating the Gospel".⁶² This statement appears correct but does not allow for the fact that black Christians had been "propagating the Gospel" for years within the mission church structure. The pioneer preachers that Mokone wanted to have ordained because of their long experience in the church, had been preaching the Gospel to the indigenous people in the Transvaal long before the arrival of the missionaries. The wish to preach the Gospel was not one of the reasons for schism as all the early independent church leaders were already doing so. However, the wish to have an African church with an African form of worship was a reason for schism for example, in Tile's Tembu church.
2. "Colour bar" among "European" missionaries. Among the manifestations of the accusation were lack of fellowship, lack of care and lack of responsibility. Racial discrimination was one generalisation that was true to all the churches in the case-studies as well as the churches

⁶² Report 1925, 25

interviewed by the commission. Mokone complained about the racially segregated district meetings Msimang felt a lack of concern for his personal problems and the independent leaders all felt that the white mission controlled church did not have their interests at heart. The report quoted an anonymous witness who said: "Racial prejudice is so strong that secession is the best course for European and native alike".⁶³

3. Secession of members put under discipline. This generalisation does not allow for the fact that black ministers were disciplined for a variety of reasons like not rejecting African traditional customs (Tile) to not wanting to be transferred (Msimang). However, equally important were those who had not been disciplined but who still left the mission church. Mokone, Dwane, Xaba, Ngcayiya and many did not secede because of discipline but for other reasons.

4. The example of Europeans - meaning the numerous denominations among the white Protestant churches. While this may well have been a reason for schism among a few of the independent churches it was never one of the main causes cited by independent church leaders. Independent churches did, however, tend to have break-away groups when members did not find what they were seeking in the independent church they joined. For example, Brander, Dwane and Ncayiya all left the AMEC to form their own churches because they did not agree with the form of worship (Brander) nor did they find the status they were seeking (Ncayiya). Dwane left the AMEC because he said they did not keep their promises. The example of denominationalism may have appeared to be the reason for leaving the AMEC but there was another underlying cause for schism in the churches studied.

5. Personal ambition - The report of the commission considers vanity on the part of the independent leaders a cause of schism, for example the desire to be called "Bishop" or "Right Reverend". The report does not allow for the fact that for many of the independent leaders seniority in age did not mean seniority in ministerial status. Often the only way of obtaining a position of authority was to form an independent church.

6. Other reasons included the desire for a tribal church, as in the case of Tile and Mzimba, the desire for an "African" church sympathetic to African customs and the desire to control money. In making generalisations the commissioners gave equal importance to all the possible causes of schism. In the formation of all the independent churches there were many reasons for dissatisfaction, but only a few that were serious enough to actually cause a split from the mission church.

In 1925 the commissioners considered that "there was no doubt that the separatist movement was spreading".⁶⁴ "The growth of race consciousness in South Africa ... will result in an increase in separation".⁶⁵ The government was urged to be tolerant and the churches urged to find ways of satisfying the need for black independence within the main-line structure. The individuality of churches was ignored yet the general causes for schism voiced in the report of the 1925 commission formed the basis of much of the future work done on the independent churches.

Comparison of the causes of schism noted in the case studies

In spite of the generalisations used by both the commissioners of the government commissions and the various authors who have written about the independent churches, especially of the Ethiopian type, an examination of the case studies reveals both

⁶⁴ Report 1925, 34

⁶⁵ Ibid

similarities and differences in the causes of the schisms. The churches examined all broke away from two Protestant denominations. The Ethiopian Church and the Independent Methodist Church were formed by men who seceded from the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The AMEC, which became like a "mission" church in the eyes of some of the Ethiopians who left it, also belonged to the Methodist family. Mzimba's church broke away from the Free Church of Scotland, a Presbyterian Church.

It is interesting to note that tenuous links with the "mother" church often remained. Mokone's first Ethiopian service was held in the home of a Methodist and among those who attended his services were men who remained in the Methodist ministry but also retained Mokone's friendship.

Many of the Ethiopian leaders were of more or less the same age. Mzimba was born in 1850, Mokone in 1851, Dwane in 1848 and Msimang in 1854. All these independent leaders lived during the years of the establishment of the mission churches which led on to the consolidation of mission structures, ie the grass-roots mission church was replaced by a church organisation ruled by Synods, Superintendents and Bishops. The decisions that they made to form independent churches were the studied decisions of mature adults.

Many of the early Ethiopians knew each other as colleagues or friends. Mokone was ordained in 1881 with Daniel Msimang, the father of the founder of the Independent Methodist Church. Living, as he did among the Methodist community in Natal, Mokone knew the people of Edendale and Driefontien. He attended the same Synod meetings as the Msimangs because as ministers they were all were under the Transvaal and Swaziland District Synod. It is impossible to assess, however, how much the formation of Mokone's Ethiopian Church influenced the formation of the IMC.

Many of the early independent leaders when they were young, spent time in the homes of missionaries, or were influenced by people

who had done so. While Tile, himself, had no such contact except for his time at Healdtown, Ngangelwesi, the Tembu chief, spent part of his school years boarding in the home of the Rev Peter Hargreaves. Mokone, although working as an employee, learnt about "European" ways in the homes of the people he worked for in Pietermaritzburg and Durban. In Durban his employer, Mrs Steele, ensured that he attended night-school. This close association provided an education in ministerial ways and helped the future independent leaders acquire a better grasp of English.

Another leader who had this type of education was Dwane who lived in the home of the Rev Robert Lamplough⁶⁶ when he was at Healdtown. Although Joel Msimang, the founder of the IMC, did not have a similar opportunity his father, Daniel, lived with and was taught by the missionary, Allison, who took promising young men into his home to be educated. This type of education, however, was the exception rather than the rule. The fact that so many of the early Ethiopian church leaders had the experience may have led to even greater resentment of the racial discrimination they later experienced.

All these men gained experience of "European" culture from within and gained self-confidence at the same time. Their self-confidence was expressed in a desire for greater independence. Ngangelwezi wanted unity for the Tembu people and joined Tile's united Tembu National Church when political unity proved impossible to achieve. Msimang, confident in the training he had received from his father, was sure that the IMC would succeed.

Wells says that Dwane and Mzimba were friends. Both had received money from benefactors in Britain which they wanted to administer in their own way. Wells voiced the feelings of white people of his time (1909) when he noted that "money without the usual

⁶⁶ Robert Lamplough (1833-1905) started the institution at Healdtown in 1867 and was called "Vulindlela", the way-opener, which expressed the African "estimate of his service and his whole missionary career". Obituary British Minutes of Conference 1906, 150

business control (of a Synod committee, not as an individual) has proved a great snare to many".⁶⁷ White church leaders were convinced that black ministers had not yet advanced to a point where they were able to administer church finances, even with the controls provided by a Synod. The self-governing, self-supporting Ethiopian churches proved how incorrect this view was.

Another minor link between the independent leaders discussed was the role played by the Rev Theophilus Chubb. Chubb worked at Healdtown in 1872 and then moved in 1875 to Lesseyton, near Queenstown. He became superintendent of the Queenstown Circuit while Dwane was an evangelist. During 1882 to 1884, the years during which Tile was severing his links with the Methodist Church, Chubb was the Superintendent of the Clarkebury Circuit. He spent the three years 1886 to 1888 at the Edendale Institution, "the pride of our Natal African people".⁶⁸ At this time Joel Msimang was a student. It is unclear exactly what role he played, but it is significant that he was acquainted with at least three Methodist ministers who left to form independent churches. This fact is especially relevant as Chubb's disagreement with Tile finally caused Tile to leave the Methodist Church. The thread linking the schisms is tenuous but many of the independent leaders knew each other and were aware of what had led to the formation of the various Ethiopian churches.

It is interesting to note that having achieved most of what they had set out to do leaders like Mokone and Dwane were willing to compromise and accept a position which was better than before although not exactly what they had intended. Thus Mokone who achieved leadership in the AMEC did not persevere and try to become Bishop, but was satisfied to work under an American bishop. Dwane, having joined the Anglicans, tried hard to persuade them to give him the status of Bishop. His followers also tried to persuade the Anglican authorities to consecrate

⁶⁷ Wells, James Stewart, 295 and 296

⁶⁸ Garrett, Theophilus Chubb, 11 and 12

Dwane as their own bishop. When Dwane realised that he would never become an Anglican bishop he accepted his role as Provincial of the Order and did not try to form another independent church. The college that he had dreamed about became a reality under the Anglicans and he was willing to compromise his wishes for the benefits that his followers had obtained.

The same cannot be said for those church leaders who found their status seemingly unchanged when the Ethiopian Church joined the AMEC. Among these were Brander and Ngcayiya who, using excuses other than disillusionment, left to form independent churches of their own.

Besides their Protestant origin there are other similarities among the churches in the case studies. All the churches had a charismatic leader who was able to attract followers. In the case of Tile and Mzimba there was the added attraction of a "tribal" church. Tile formed a Tembu National Church while Mzimba drew the Fingo members of the Presbyterian congregation at Alice.

Mokone was a charismatic preacher. Even in his days as a local preacher he had been able "to stir the emotions" of the congregation. In the AMEC his dynamic leadership and the loyalty of his followers was acknowledged even though he was never given the status of bishop. The suggestion of proclaiming a "Mokone day" is evidence of this. Another dynamic Ethiopian preacher in the AMEC was Ngcayiya whose mission work led to the formation of new churches in the eastern Cape. His qualities of leadership were not recognised so he left the AMEC.

Mzimba was a teacher at Lovedale where his leadership abilities were acknowledged and his preaching acclaimed. In spite of his ability he could not reach any position of real authority in the Presbyterian Church. When the question of how to use the money Mzimba had collected in Britain arose and his wishes were ignored, he was ready for schism.

Conclusion

The study has shown how the churches in the case studies fit into generally accepted perceptions of the causes of schism and still have their own peculiar reasons for leaving the mission churches. Such generalisations can mislead the researcher into a superficial grouping of churches such as "the AIC'S". Generalisations such as, all Ethiopian churches seceded because of an anti-white attitude, can also lead to a loss of individuality and give false impressions of the real reasons for schism. Generalisations such as, all missionaries were paternalistic, insensitive and unwilling to give any consideration to their black clergy, led to other false impressions. The missionaries who took young men into their own homes to train them prove this perception wrong. The particularities of each independent group safeguards against the biases that have in the past influenced governmental policies and scholarship. Biases still exist and as biases they may feed the political correctness of the day. Scholarship is not above this danger which a sound understanding of the individuality of the AIC's can help prevent.

To summarise the case-studies:

Tile wanted the Methodist Church to acknowledge that aspects of African culture could be acceptable within the Christian teaching of the church. His search for an African Christianity led to his forming the Tembu National Church.

Mokone wanted more understanding for black church members by the white ministers. Racially separate district meetings seemed the epitome of racial superiority on the part of the white church authorities. But he was able to defer his plans for seceding until Watkins, who was a sensitive, caring minister, retired from the ministry. His plea to Weavind, the minister who succeeded Watkins, was for a more caring attitude towards the black ministers who remained loyal to the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Dwane had a dream of an African college. He tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Methodist Church to build the college with the funds that he had collected in Britain. After meeting the Ethiopians Dwane joined their church and when the Ethiopian Church joined the AMEC he was given a leadership role. However, in spite of promises, no money was received for an African college. Dwane then approached the Anglicans to form a separate Order within their church communion. The Anglicans helped him to build the college and realise his dream.

Brander wanted to be head of his own church. He also wanted to belong to a church which followed Anglican rituals and doctrine. He realised his ambition by forming an independent church which followed an Anglican form of service.

Mzimba had long held minor leadership roles in the Presbyterian Church. He had even been a delegate to the first South African Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. However, when it came to deciding how to use the money he had collected in Britain he discovered how little authority he actually had. His desire for real authority was one of the main reasons for the formation of the Presbyterian Church of Africa.

Msimang, discovered that when it came to decision making he had little influence. The decisions of the white ministers in the Synod prevailed over his objections. In spite of his pleas not to be sent to Mozambique because of family reasons he was required to obey orders and go there. When he felt he could not be fair to his family and obey the Methodist authorities at the same time, he put family considerations first. He then was forced to "voluntarily resign" from the Wesleyan Methodist Church. His followers later persuaded him to form the Independent Methodist Church.

The study shows that while generalisations may be true in a number of cases where Ethiopian-type churches have been formed after a break with a mission church, there are always exceptions

to the rule. It is the cause particular to each case which was the reason for the final break with the mission church. In each of the independent churches examined there came a point when what had previously been experienced as irritations and frustrations, became a reason for schism. To the people concerned a point of no return had been reached. Leaving the mission church became the only way forward.

Mzimba wrote: "The child itself feels it must walk, it stumbles and falls, takes one step at a time, but the end result is that it walks".⁶⁹ The Ethiopian-type independent churches took the first faltering steps towards the adulthood of the African church in South Africa. Their efforts opened the way, not only for greater responsibility for black Christians in main-line churches like the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches, but also for the Zionist expression of African Christianity.

⁶⁹ Mzimba, It walks, 31

APPENDIX 1

"SEPARATIST" CHURCHES KNOWN TO THE 1925 COMMISSION

1. African Church
2. African Christian Apostolic Church in Zion
3. African Christian Baptist Church of South Africa
4. African Catholic Church
5. African Congregational Church
6. African Cathedral Episcopal Church
7. African Ethiopian church
8. African Free Catholic Church
9. African Gaza Church
10. African Methodist Episcopal Church
11. African Mission Home Church
12. African Native Church
13. African Native Baptist Church
14. African Native Baptist Church of South Africa
15. African Native Mission Church
16. African Ndebele Church
17. African Pentecostal Mission
18. African Province Mission
19. African United Church
20. African United Ethiopian Church
21. African United Gaza Church
22. Apostles Brethren Church of South Africa
23. Apostolic faith Assembly of South Africa
24. Bethesda Zion Apostolic church of Africa
25. Brethren Mission Church of South Africa
26. Central African Church
27. Christian Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa
28. Christian Brethren Meeting
29. Christian Congregational Baptist Mission
30. Christian Evangelist Mission Church
31. Church of God and Saints of Christ
32. Congregational Church of South Africa
33. East African Gaza Church

34. Ethiopian Catholic Church
35. Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion
36. Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa
37. Ethiopian Church of South Africa
38. Gaza First Found Church
39. Gazaland Zimbabwe Ethiopian Church
40. Holy Catholic Episcopal Church
41. Holy Missionary Evangelist Church
42. Independent Ethiopian Congress Mission
43. Independent Methodist Church of Africa
44. Lutheran Bapedi Church
45. Melchizedek King of Salem Church of Africa
46. National African Church of Salem
47. National Baptist Church of South Africa
48. National Catholic Episcopal Church
49. National Church of Ethiopia in South Africa
50. Native Christ Church of Africa
51. Native Independent Congregational Church
52. Native Methodist Church
53. New Church of Christ
54. Order of Ethiopia
55. Presbyterian Church of Africa
56. Seventh Church of God
57. South African Native Baptist Association
58. Rhodesian Seventh Church Mission
59. Transvaal Basuto Church
60. United African Apostolic Church
61. United Ethiopian Catholic Church
62. Universal Church of Christ
63. Zion Apostolic Church
64. Zion Apostolic Faith Mission
65. Zulu Congregational Church

APPENDIX 2

DOCTRINES OF THE VARIOUS INDEPENDENT CHURCHES AS SHOWN IN
EVIDENCE TO THE 1925 COMMISSION

The two churches whose doctrines were most widely represented were the hierarchical-type Anglican and Methodist Churches. This is in spite of the widely held view by scholars such as Marks that hierarchically structured churches like the Anglican (Church of England) and the Roman Catholic churches were less prone to schism than congregational churches which encouraged greater independence.¹ Although Ethiopian-type churches are generally considered to keep to the doctrines of the mission church from which they seceded, the following analysis shows that that is not always the case .

The church membership of the founders of the churches is indentified with the doctrines they followed.

Churches with doctrines similar to the Church of England²

African Province Church (until 1914 African Mission Society, ex C of E)

African United Church (ex C of E and Congregational)

African Catholic Church (ex C of E via the African Church)

African Cathedral Episcopal Church (ex C of E, ex AMEC)

African Church (previously African Mission Church)

African Free Catholic Church (ex C of E and African Mission Church)

Brethren Mission Church of South Africa (ex DRC and AMEC)

National Catholic Episcopal Church (ex C of E)

¹ Marks, Reluctant rebellion, 62

² Hill, F 1925 "Native separatist movements and their relation to the problem of evangelisation" in The evangelisation of South Africa, 113 wrote: "In one case the constitution of the Church of the Province has been printed almost word for word; in another case the 39 Articles of religion formed the constitution. I have not heard of one of them which claims to have separated from its parent body for doctrinal reasons".

African Free Catholic Church (ex C of E and African Mission)

Holy Catholic Episcopal Church (ex Gereformeerde Kerk via National Catholic)

Ethiopian Catholic Church (ex Methodist)

Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa (ex C of E, ex Ethiopian Church)

Ethiopian Church of South Africa (ex C of E and AMEC)

United Ethiopian Catholic Church (ex Ethiopian Church)

New Church of Christ (ex C of E and New Church of Jersualem)

Order of Ethiopia - became an autonomous part of the Church of England in 1900 under the Anglican Synod.

Churches with doctrines similar to the Methodists

African Methodist Episcopal Church (American origin)

African Native Church (ex Methodist ex Lutheran)

African United Ethiopian Church (ex Ethiopian Church)

Central African Church (ex Methodist ex Independent Methodist)

National Church of Ethiopia in South Africa (ex Methodist, AME and Ethiopian Church)

African United Ethiopian Church (ex Ethiopian Church)

East Africa Gaza Church (South African Compounds Mission)

African Gaza Church (ex AMEC)

Gaza First Found Church (ex Ethiopian Church and East African Gaza Church)

Independent Ethiopian Congress Mission (ex Congregational)

Independent Methodist Church (ex Methodist)

Melchizedek King of Salem Church of Africa (ex Methodist ex Independent Methodist)

Native Christ's Church of Africa (ex AFM and New Jerusalem)

Churches with a mixture of doctrines from the Church of England and Methodist Churches

Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion (ex C of E)

Gazaland Zimbabwe Ethiopian Church (ex Methodist and

Ethiopian Church)

Universal Church of Christ (ex Methodist Church and New Jerusalem)

Churches with doctrines similar to the Baptist Church

African Native Baptist Church (ex Methodist)

Christian Congregational Baptist Church (ex Baptist)

South African Native Baptist Association (this church was viewed by members interviewed as an independent church. It received government recognition due to its affiliation to the SA Baptist Missionary Society)

National Baptist Church of South Africa (ex Moravian ex Baptist)

African Ndebele Church (ex Baptist)

Churches with a mixture of Methodist and Baptist doctrine

These churches adhered to the Methodist teaching in all but their method of baptism.

African Native Mission Church (ex Baptist)

Apostolic Faith Assembly (ex AMEC ex Apostolic Faith Mission)

Christian Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa (ex DRC ex AFM)

Churches adhering to the doctrines of the Apostolic Faith Mission

Zion Apostolic Church (ex DRC)

Zion Apostolic Faith Mission (ex DRC)

Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion (ex DRC)

Churches adhering to the doctrines of the Congregational Church

African Congregational Church (ex ABM)

Zulu Congregational Church (ex ABM)

African Mission Home Church (ex ZCongC)

Congregational Church of South Africa (ex London Missionary Society)

Native Independent Congregational Church (ex Congregational Union)

Churches adhering to the doctrines of the Plymouth Brethren

Christian Brethren Meeting (ex Methodist)

Churches adhering to the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian Church of Africa (ex Free Church of Scotland)

Churches adhering to the doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Church

Apostles Brethren Church of South Africa (ex DRC ex Brethren Mission)

Native Methodist Church (this was a break-away from the Church of England and was not connected with the Methodists)

Churches adhering to the doctrines of the Seventh Day Adventist Church

Church of God and Saints of Christ (the founder of this church was an African-American named William Crowdy)

Churches adhering to the doctrines of the Lutheran Church

Christian Evangelist Mission Church (ex Lutheran)

Lutheran Bapedi Church (founded by J Winter in 1888 ex Berlin Mission)

Transvaal Basutho Church (ex Lutheran)

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