

## Chapter 4

### Winterveld: a case study in church state relations in Bophuthatswana

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will focus on the government of Bophuthatswana and its relationship with the church, especially in view of the fact that the government of Bophuthatswana declared itself Christian, in spite its constitution allowing freedom of religious association. The manifestation of this declaration were the long prayers to God for the success of the 'independence' of Bophuthatswana. Another factor were the annual celebrations by the homeland government concerning 'independence' which was believed to be from God, so there was a need to give thanks on 6 December of every year. To many people there was nothing to give thanks for, however, as the homeland was an inheritance from the South African government and not God. The churches were divided on this issue of thanksgiving particularly along the lines of denominational affiliation. In some cases, individual ministers or leaders of the church found themselves divided, some due to their commitment to their calling while others were interested in how they were going to benefit in return. For some it was a matter of either 'you are with us or against us'. On affiliation the main problem was based on territorial advantage between BOMIFRA and SACC.

In some cases the church found itself being dictated to by the state as to what role it should play in the society. For example, President Lucas Mangope, together with his Cabinet would call the church leaders to a meeting to 'remind' them of their role in the state as the ministers of the church: in many instances this was to instruct them to keep politics and the church separate. There were other situations where churches, particularly those that were affiliated to the South African Council of Churches (SACC), stood up against the homeland government and entered into confrontation over a number of issues which affected the society. The confrontation revealed itself especially strongly in the case of Winterveld, in relation to issues such as the water supply, health and pensions in the Winterveld region.

These issues led to the South African Council of Churches making it clear to the homeland government that their engagement in debates with the government over those issues did not imply recognition of Bophuthatswana as they maintained that it was not legitimate. The final focus was on the ruling party which was founded on controversial grounds.

#### **4.2 The ruling party**

Before Bophuthatswana gained its 'independence' certain political organisations or parties were formed. One was known as the Seoposengwe Party (SP), which was under the leadership of Chief Tidimane Pilane and was founded on 29 July 1972. Shortly after it was formed, Chief Lucas Mangope formed the Bophuthatswana National Party (BNP) on 5 August 1972 (Benbo: 1978, 32). There was also the Tswana National Party (TNP), which represented the Batswana who lived in Soweto. Due to the differences amongst Batswana towards the 'independence' of Bophuthatswana, with some of the parties being opposed to it and a tiny minority for it, some people ended up leaving the then existing political parties within Bophuthatswana (Benbo: 1978, 32).

Before Bophuthatswana became 'Independent' in 1974 the then Bophuthatswana National Party under the leadership of Chief Lucas Mangope experienced some tension and this led to the formation of a new party which was established in November 1974 and was known as Bophuthatswana Democratic Party (BDP). The founder of this party was Chief Lucas Mangope who had been the founder of the former. The Bophuthatswana National Party was now under the leadership of Chief Herman Maseloane. However, the new party under Lucas Mangope managed to gain positions in the cabinet of Bophuthatswana, before 'independence', which coincidentally was achieved under his party and leadership despite the opposition of the rest of the Batswana political parties (Benbo: 1978, 32). As a result of this, the Bophuthatswana Democratic Party came to be the ruling party of Bophuthatswana for the sixteen years of its existence as an 'Independent' homeland state from 6 December, 1977.

The situation in Bophuthatswana was over a long period of time being exacerbated by the

deeply personalised as well as paternalistic rule of Mangope. For Mangope, the church was another means to nurture Batswana into ethno-nationalism; hence he kept on insisting that his political party (BDP) adhered to the Christian principles which he was determined to see Bophuthatswana maintaining its 'independence'. At the same time there was a specific interpretation of Batswana which was shaped around traditionalism and Christianity as a form of political control within Bophuthatswana and its institutions.

Over a period of twenty years, the Bophuthatswana Democratic Party changed its name to the Christian Democratic Party simply because it was believed that the homeland needed to be led by Christian principles. However, the winds of change and the experience of a failed coup on 10 February 1988 made the Christian Democratic Party uncertain of its future. Its dominance of the political ground in the homeland had consistently promoted and created the concept that Bophuthatswana was the 'place of the Batswana' (Jones 1999: Vol. 98, No. 390, 513). In spite of this concept that Bophuthatswana belonged only to Batswana the transitional period was now making things difficult for the ruling party, so much so that they ended up relaunching themselves under a new name: this time the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP), as an attempt to unite all Batswana to resist re-incorporation into the new South African government that was anticipated. This was clear with the repackaging of the old themes and discourse being promoted by the homeland regime for local residents. Former ministers of that regime were informing their audience that the Batswana had nowhere else to go, in preparation for the 1994 first ever democratic elections of South Africa (Jones 1999: 531). The level of achievement of the Bop government and the lack of access to resources in Bophuthatswana was lamented by many speakers. For the ruling party the successes that had been achieved by Bophuthatswana would never again exist. The constitution of the Bophuthatswana United Christian Democratic Party was largely influenced by the Churches which supported the homeland government and individual ministers who belonged to the Bophuthatswana Ministerial Fraternity (BOMIFRA). In this period the ruling party was now using the means of the uncertainty of the future of the Batswana in the anticipated new South Africa to garner support as well as Christian principles to drive home their message (Jones: 1999, 528).

The early 1990s was the time when South Africa was moving towards the negotiations for a new dispensation. At that time the government of Bophuthatswana was now beginning to feel the pressure from its 'citizens': government wanted to maintain stability as well as the 'good governance' of their 'state'. This could be seen in Bophuthatswana's obsession with security, which they had inherited from the South African regime at that time (Jones: 1999, 513). The obsession was made visible by the continued torture, arbitrary dismissals, harassment and deportation of the opponents of the Bophuthatswana regime. During the same period the homeland state's network of authoritarian control was a 'pervasive system of control and information' which came from the capital, Mmabatho, and was disseminated down to the village level, keeping people in subjection (Jones 1999: 514). At the 1991 talks of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), the Bophuthatswana Administration was the only 'independent' bantustan which claimed to be autonomous and wanted to maintain its status quo. To the government of Boputhatswana, no outsider was allowed to come in and undermine the sovereignty of the state. This referred primarily to the African National Congress, which Bophuthatswana referred to as political thugs (Jones 1999: 514). At the same time the pressure of re-incorporation was mounting and Bophuthatswana was giving an indication of defiant tactics.

#### **4.3 A Christian Government**

The relationship between the church and state in the context of Bophuthatswana has been a controversial issue. In chapter 2 of its constitution clause (4) (b) 9 is stated that 'All people shall be equal before the law, and no one may because of his sex, his descent, his language, his origin or his religious beliefs be favoured or prejudiced' (Constitution 1991: 3). In spite of this clause the government of Bophuthatswana favoured the Christian religion over and above the others. In one of the interviews I conducted, the former minister of transport Rev Simon Kgobokwe (a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church) indicated that every government department of Bophuthatswana was forced to start the day with a prayer and that there were chaplains appointed to ensure that this practice was upheld. He added that it was the norm in Bophuthatswana that they should pray to God as they were a Christian government (Interview with Rev S Kgobokwe, 7 November 2003). One of the

reasons why the government opted to be Christian was simply that at the time they negotiated for 'Independence' they first consulted with church leaders and asked them to pray God for their success. Only after they were convinced, as a result of their consultation with the church leaders, that their prayers had been accepted and that Bophuthatswana's 'independence' was to become a reality, did they decide to become a Christian government. At the same time Rev. Simon Kgobokwe argued that even the leadership of Bophuthatswana was Christian and pragmatic about it. Kgobokwe stated that there was nothing wrong with this as there were other religious countries like Mauritius, Turkey, Pakistan (mainly Islamic) and many more and this did not mean Bophuthatswana was wrong in choosing to become a Christian state.

The relationship between the church and state was also divided along denominational lines, which simply means that churches which were affiliated to the South African Council of Churches were not favoured while other denominations were. Many of the churches which were not affiliated to the Council of Churches were Charismatic and or Pentecostal, as well as the African Independent Churches and the Dutch Reformed Church. They were therefore seen to be apolitical vis-a-vis the mainline ones affiliated to the ecumenical body (Interview with Rev. Diamond Atong, 7 November, 2003). These churches were found to be in a comfort zone because they were given recognition which they did not obtain from the South African Council of Churches. According to Atong this simply indicated the inheritance from the bearer of Bophuthatswana which was the South African government, which at that time was strongly supporting the idea of Bantustans and 'Independence'.

In support of this opinion was the Rev Tselapedi, who belonged to one of the Evangelical church denominations, who at that time was actively involved in organising protest marches of ministers from different churches challenging Lucas Mangope and his cabinet ministers about the legitimacy of Bophuthatswana. Tselapedi argued that the church was older than the state and therefore had a duty to be prophetic and not to support the state, because this would lead to a situation where the church would find itself being blackmailed by the state on issues where it was supposed to be the voice of the voiceless. In other words the government should hold society together while the church should keep reminding the

government of its role. Though sometimes people might want an angelic government, this was not possible.

However, for the government of Bophuthatswana, a new meaning evolved in which Lucas Mangope used a quotation from one of his cabinet ministers, who was at the same time a minister of one of the mainline denominations (Rev Simon Seodi): 'Lona baruti ba gaetsho ba Bophuthatswana, lo letswalo la puso e, setshaba se, fa le tswa ga go na sepe le fa e le motho'<sup>1</sup>. Mangope invited all the ministers of the church in Bophuthatswana to Moretele where he met with them on 7 February 1986. In characteristic style Mangope, questioned these ministers whether they had a conscience. He was using another scriptural quotation about ministers being the salt of the earth. He referred to the old ways in which people used salt before the emergence of modern technology, to preserve food from decomposing. Mangope instructed them to always make sure that people were not drawn to revolt against the state but that they should recognise its existence and added that people should not worry about what was going on in South Africa, as Bophuthatswana was autonomous. He encouraged the ministers of the church to go along with the changes which the government was making and to respect the ten years of 'independence' (Morongwa: 1986, 2). Mangope was at the same time emphasising that in times of change it was important to consider the old ways of doing things; to him it did not matter whether the new would replace the old but that the old had always been the best, though the new tended to do away with the old. He emphasised that faith is very old and that new and scientific thoughts tend to criticise it because anything new is rushed into and seen as good. He pointed out that the new developments did not leave the church behind but that they had infiltrated it: the main issue was about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which should be taken as the old truth and should be understood that way even in contemporary life. Mangope indicated why he had summoned the ministers of religion to the meeting: it was a way to thank them for standing in support of the government of Bophuthatswana and being the conscience of the 'nation'. As the president of Bophuthatswana he went on to use an illustration he had taken from the Exodus, about the angel of death who was to identify

---

<sup>1</sup>. Translation: ministers of the church in Bophuthatswana are the conscience of the nation and without them there is nothing.

the Jewish households through the blood on the doors of their houses, so that only the first born of the Egyptians were to die. As a result a similar situation could be expected from Bophuthatswana (Morongwa: 1986, 2). In his speech the emphasis was about leading the people to faith through a faithful leader.

Mangope further reiterated that he valued the church that loved harmony and conscientised people about how to live peacefully. His call to the ministers of religion was simply that they should ensure that the government was protected from any form of anarchy and that through their leadership this could be achieved (Morongwa: 1986, 3). He repeated his earlier statement that the ministers were the salt of the earth and therefore, using their status in society, they could call back all those who had negative thoughts about government. This call was made by Mangope after a series of protest marches by people in the Mankwe, Odi and Moretele region (in short he was referring to Winterveld). Mangope was complaining to the church ministers that he had not heard anything from them about what was happening. Mangope also indicated that the children that were involved in the protest marches would grow and be constantly in conflict amongst themselves and that this would lead to them taking their conflict into the church as well, in which case the ministers would be affected. In his opinion it was the responsibility of the church to ensure that society did not rebel against the state. As he (Mangope) put it, the church was society's conscience, and he justified this assertion by using a Setswana proverb: 'Ngwana sejo o a tlhakanelwa,'<sup>2</sup> in other words the school, society, leaders and church share the children.

At the same time the scriptural text of Roman 13: 1-10 was said to indicate that the state was ordained by God and that people must recognise it. Resistance to the Bophuthatswana government was viewed as defying the God instituted state. Christian as Bophuthatswana may have been thought to be, many people did not acknowledge its existence, and as said by Diamond Atong, this became clear when the government came to accord power to the police to maintain what was then called 'Law and Order'. In other words the state of governance in Bophuthatswana was simply in the hands of the police,

---

<sup>2</sup>The literal translation means: a child is food that is shared.

as they were patrolling the streets of the townships and villages to see to it that there was no defiance towards the rulers of Bophuthatswana.

#### 4.3.1 Thanksgiving

On 6 December, 1979 the government of Bophuthatswana was celebrating its 'independence' in Mmabatho. Lucas Mangope addressed the Batswana about reflecting on where they came from and thanking God for the success of their 'independence' (Morongwa 1979, Vol. 1, No. 4, : 2). In his speech, Mangope pointed out that it would have been useless not to acknowledge God and without Him they (the Batswana) would be people of no value. He emphasised that the Batswana were instead made to feel like other people, as they could now determine their own destiny and the dignity which God had given them. Mangope also pleaded to the women of Bophuthatswana to teach their children to grow as 'responsible citizens' because all the things which were being done were for them to inherit and continue with. Once more, Mangope emphasised that he was thankful to God and that He had blessed them as well as the kings and chiefs of Bophuthatswana. Further thanks were given for the trust and faith which he (Mangope) had received from the people of Bophuthatswana for choosing him as their leader and for the new capital of Bophuthatswana, Mmabatho. He promised that the people of Bophuthatswana would be employed as the government was going to create industries for 'citizens' (Vol 1, No. 4, 1979, 2). With the help of God the dream of building those industries would be realised, because He had been with the Batswana all the time. Mangope further dedicated some of the buildings which had been built during the two years of 'independence' to God. He mentioned that he enjoyed being the leader of Bophuthatswana and that he was committed to leading Batswana with dedication, always putting God before everything else.

Over the years of its 'Independence' the government of Bophuthatswana celebrated its achievements and gave the churches a slot, the main purpose of which was to thank God for the success of the homeland state. In some cases the state would ask the church to remember its autonomy in their services.

#### 4.3.2 The Church and Politics

It came as no surprise when the government of Bophuthatswana called a meeting which was disguised as a choral festival on 5 June 1993 at the Civic Centre in Phokeng near Rustenburg (Mirror: 9 June, 1993, Vol. 4, No. 21,). The intention of this meeting was to inform the people and the ministers of the churches that were supporting the government that church and politics were separate. In this meeting the Board of Trustees for Gospel Music was involved, together with the choirs and ordinary people, as well as some cabinet ministers. The Minister of Population Development, Mr Thate Molatlhwa, said that the aim of the meeting was to call on all young people to be involved in music as well as to take advantage of the bursaries provided for them to further their studies (Vol. 4, No. 21, 9 June, 1993). However, Mr Molatlhwa pointed out that the most worrying factor in Bophuthatswana was the way people involved the issues of faith and the church in politics. He emphasised that politics and the church were separate and should therefore not be mixed as this was dividing people and causing conflict.

In contrast were the many meetings of the Bophuthatswana Women's League which were encouraging numerous women in that territory to be Christians, to be faithful to their God and to support the government in praying for it (Mirror: 11 August 1993, Vol. 4, No. 30, ). On the same note the leader of the Women's League, Mrs Tsholofelo Mangope, was encouraging the women to trust in God as the progress made in Bophuthatswana had been achieved with the help of God. She referred to the failed coup as an example to show just how God had been on the side of Boputhatswana. She went on to liken the ruling party (United Christian Democratic Party) to a car that has just been serviced with new oil that enables it to run smoothly without friction caused by unoiled parts (Vol.4, No. 30, 11 August 1993). At the same time she took the opportunity to ask women to encourage their daughters to join the women's league of Bophuthatswana. Not only did Mrs Mangope encourage young women to join the women's league as well as the ruling party but she also extended an invitation to the members of the 'Gospel musical groups' to join the United Christian United Democratic Party. This was not the only situation in which the government of Bophuthatswana used every opportunity at its disposal to try and discourage people

from standing for what they believed; in the Bophuthatswana Ministerial Fraternity was another such organisation which supported the government.

#### 4.3.3 Bophuthatswana Ministerial Fraternity (BOMIFRA)

This organisation was not formed by the churches as such but was joined mainly by individual ministers. It was not affiliated to any church; hence there was no church which owed it allegiance. On 26 July 1993 the ministerial fraternity held a gathering in Atamelang, outside Delareyville which was addressed by Rev Esau Joseph Teu. Rev Teu told the people at the gathering that they (BOMIFRA) had been sent by the government to travel around Bophuthatswana reviving the Christian Spirit. Teu said that it was only through Christian Spirituality that people's development could be achieved so as to ensure that they protected everything around them and did not destroy it (Mirror: 14 July 1993, Vol. 4, No. 26). Teu emphasised that it was the intention of the government and BOMIFRA to talk about everything that was Godly, especially about peace, harmony and unity. In discussing the church and faith he pointed out that under the leadership of Rev SS Seane, BOMIFRA had been formed the previous year (1992) as a way to improve the religious relations between the church and state in Bophuthatswana. He further said that BOMIFRA was looking at uniting the different church denominations as well as women's and youth movements. On the same note the secretary of BOMIFRA, Mrs Kerileng Molantoa, used the creation story of Genesis to say that the Batswana should not forget that they were created in the image of God; she went on to say that it was not a plea but an instruction that all people should use the Sabbath as the day of worship (Vol. 4, No 26, 14 July 1993). She went on to emphasise that the government of Bophuthatswana was anointed by God to be 'Independent'.

#### 4.3.4 The church is the light of the nation

In Mabeskraal BOMIFRA had gathered on 25 May 1993 for the opening of the church building of the United African Federated Apostolic Zion Church. The Rev M.A Tshagemeno, in welcoming the people to this ceremony, said that the aim of BOMIFRA in Bophuthatswana was to ensure that the people heard the gospel of God. In his sermon he

emphasised that churches must work with the local chiefs as they were anointed by God. He said that in times of turmoil there should be a way to solve those problems as people were all children of God. In response, to this Mrs D Ntuane, the wife of Chief SG Ntuane (she was speaking on behalf of him) said that the polity of the faithful church could only be carried out by a minister who was honest and loyal (Mirror: Vol.4, No.26, 1993). She added that many people changed once they reached certain status, and this included ministers too. Mrs Ntuane continued that the church is needed to guide people to respect the government and preach the gospel and not politics to them like other churches do (in this case the reference was to the denominations which were affiliated to the South African Council of Churches). Mrs Ntuane pleaded with the churches that they should always remember in prayer the chief and the cabinet ministers, as well as to pray for the nation of Bophuthatswana not to fall into the hands of its enemies, who were busy confusing the Batswana. Irrespective of all this, the situation in Bophuthatswana was not as the government had portrayed it. In the Winterveld area people were being constantly harassed by the police. In some cases there were no running water, no health facilities, no proper school buildings for their children as well as no provision of pensions for those who were not citizens of Bophuthatswana.

#### **4.4 The Winterveld case study**

##### **4.4.1 Education**

The South African Council of Churches was now deeply involved with what was taking place in Winterveld. Education was one major problem which the Winterveld residents were experiencing. Many school principals were concerned about the poor supply of facilities by the Department of Education, such as books, stationery, toilets and running water. The Winterveld Action Committee, which was functioning under the Pretoria Regional Council of churches identified the principal area of concern as education. There were 11 Primary Schools, 3 Middle Schools and 1 High School but for the school - going population of Winterveld these schools were not adequate. To solve this problem the Action Committee established 13 unregistered private schools (mainly primary) which were to help alleviate

the educational needs in the area. The committee came up with a plan to assist these private schools with several of their requirements. The Winterveld Action Committee managed to build 5 toilets (critical in the light of cholera) for the private schools. It also managed to supply the schools with paper, from which they made exercise books with a special stapler, and about 3 000 exercise books were distributed in private schools (Chairman's report: 4 March 1985). For the Council of Churches education was the most critical issue because textbooks and blackboards were supplied through some kind of assistance to the schools by a white church group (Report from Pretoria Regional Council of Churches: 1981). The school benches were manufactured by the members of the community at a low cost. There were at the same time funds from overseas church groups as a donation to the Winterveld community through the South African Council of Churches. At the same time there were two volunteers that were employed to help teach the children how to read, write and count and these two teachers were being paid by the government. There was also a Learn and Teach project, particularly to teach adults how to read and write and to help conscientise them through discussion. Many of these schools were built with mud and in some cases there were benches without desks. Some plot owners would invite the community to build these schools on their properties. There were in some instances funds to improve or construct a school but the fear of the community was that if they were to erect a proper school building this was going to invite the unwelcome attention of the homeland government which might commandeer the school. The school fees ranged from R1 to R5 per month and additional items were also charged (The Profile on The Winterveld: 6).

These schools were part of the informal sector of the economy, which provided the means of livelihood for some and of exploitation for others. In some instances a qualified teacher would leave an established school and set up a new one; in this manner one might find that some of these teachers had few qualifications or none. At the same time a system of inspection was non-existent since many parents had no formal education. The teacher - pupil ratio was 1:100 and there were no teaching aids apart from the few charts and blackboards. Annually children would be promoted to a higher class and there was also a high dropout rate. Few of these pupils managed to go to high school despite having

obtained the certificates from the lower educational level. At the same time the Pretoria Council of Churches was involved in certain ecumenical projects, some of which included the building of schools on a piece of land which had been allocated to the church. This project was to be done jointly with the Winterveld Action Committee. The suggestion regarding the building of the school came from Mr D MacRobert who stipulated that this was not to be done without the knowledge of the community. MacRobert had already mentioned this idea to Fr Mashikinya and Rev H Hlaethwa.

The cause for the lack of supply of facilities by the Bophuthatswana government was simply that Winterveld was occupied by people who were non-Batswana. A large proportion of the population were from the Nguni speaking language groups: mainly Ndebele, Zulu, Xhosa and Swazi. Many of the people around the Winterveld felt that they were placed under pressure by the requirements of education in a medium which was not of their own choice: the Setswana language, which was made compulsory. In a letter written by the ambassador of Bophuthatswana, Rev Simon S Seane, to the South African Council of Churches. He indicated that he was aware of the schools that were operating illegally in Winterveld and that they were teaching through the medium of Zulu (letter to the SACC from the Embassy of Bophuthatswana). However, education was not the only problem which was facing the Winterveld residents as there were also health issues which were critical, considering that they lived in the slums.

#### 4.4.2 The church and health

The fact that Winterveld was under the authority of Bophuthatswana and occupied mostly by non-Batswana meant that the homeland government decided not to establish health facilities there. Hence residents there had to travel long distances to the nearest hospital or clinic. The Pretoria Council of Churches through the Winterveld Action Committee, therefore had to make some provision in this respect. In this case the Winterveld residents found themselves having to help some of their sick and injured people without the expertise of paramedics as well as without insight into health issues (Archdiocese of Pretoria Justice and Peace Commission report: 7 August 1984). These

people could not help patients effectively. The Winterveld Action Committee, together with the Council of Churches, decided to send four lay people to attend courses on basic training in health matters at Baragwanath Hospital. This course was sponsored by Anglo-American. At the end of the course these people were provided with the first aid kits, and they were taught how to use remedies for common ailments like gastro-enteritis, high temperatures, scabies, burns and wounds. This was a means to help the patients before they were taken to the hospital or to doctors. The main aim of the course was to teach people about preventative medicine. These people who were trained at Baragwanath were going to offer their help to the Winterveld slum area and work hand in hand with the St Peter's mobile clinic, which belonged to the Catholic Church, and the Good Shepherd Clinic in Makaunyana. In spite of these two clinics there was a need for more health facilities in Winterveld as they could not treat the population of about 400 000 people. At the same time it was expected of the church to build more clinics and of the authorities to accept them as registered private clinics (Winterveld Action Committee, Chairman's report: 4 March 1984). A hospital had been built by the Seventh Day Adventist Church in the 1950s, with six wards, but it was never used and is a ruin today as the area was zoned for agricultural purposes. The prohibition of the use of this facility was carried out by the South African government even though it had increased the population of the area. The nearest hospital were in Ga-Rankuwa and Hammanskraal, which were in Bophuthatswana as well, and both were about 30km from Winterveld (A Profile on the Winterveld: 5). In some cases doctors who were struck off the South African Medical Association roll would run their own private practices until they were reinstated. Because of the few resources and facilities which were available, the traditional doctors exerted a strong influence.

In spite of the efforts by the Winterveld community to emancipate themselves through the church, the government of Bophuthatswana had other ideas related to the issue of health. The government's health department, which was under the leadership of Dr Patrick K Mokhobo, held a conference at the Mmabatho Civic Centre on 14 March 1981 in which the churches in Bophuthatswana were invited to take part (Morongwa: Vol. 3. No. 1, April, 1981). The main point of discussion in this conference stemmed from the government, which wanted the church to lead in the issues of health and development. One of the

delegates at this conference was Mr GSP Mabale, who pointed out that the outbreak of cholera was a major problem in the Southern African context and that the churches were expected to play a leading role in combatting this problem. His comment was that the church should help in informing the communities as well as in enlightening the people about health and their environment. Mr Mabale went on to suggest that churches should shoulder the responsibility of taking care of the communities through the leadership of their ministers (Morongwa: vol.3, No. 4, 1981, 6). In his comment Mr Mabale said that this should be done in collaboration with the government department of health, particularly regarding minor diseases which people tend to take for granted.

On the other hand the minister of health, Dr Patrick Mokhobo, spoke about loyalty and the commitment towards serving the government and helping it combat the diseases which were affecting the people of Bophuthatswana. He went on to say that the aims of the government were to maintain the total health of a human being, which was physical and emotional as well as spiritual. Dr Mokhobo pleaded with the church leaders to help in preventing the unnecessary spread of diseases. He also spoke about the problem of teenage pregnancy which he said was being encountered by the state and remarked that the church should play a leading role in teaching the community about it (Morongwa 1978: 6). Another problem was that of fatherless children. He said that the two problems had led to a situation where there was no proper care for the infants as they were born of inexperienced teenage and unprepared parents. On a final note the health minister asked for a joint effort from the churches on family planning, to be taken to schools and to educate the youth about the importance of family values (Morongwa: 1981, 6). According to him these were some of the matters which needed to be taken care of as many of them were caused by poverty, and if they were not attended to the society would be left wandering and looking for an instant solution which might not be forthcoming.

#### 4.4.3 Water supply

Before Bophuthatswana's 'independence', there were about fourteen boreholes which had been fitted with pumps by the South African government. These pumps were apparently

maintained until the government of Bophuthatswana took over, after which the pumps gradually malfunctioned. In 1981 the government of Bophuthatswana drilled six boreholes on school premises but these were for school use only. The Winterveld Action Committee took the initiative to drill at least four boreholes, with the aim of bringing water to the residents at a low cost, or even free. Through Inter-Church Aid a trained agricultural engineer from Zambia gave the residents some practical advice about how to use the water and land.

In a meeting between the South African Council of Churches and the government of Bophuthatswana in Mmabatho on 21 April 1982 the issue of water was raised with the government. The South African Council of Churches pointed out to the homeland government that people in Winterveld had not been receiving any water services, except those which had been taken either on donkey carts or because someone would offer to sell them the water at 2 cents a litre and 50 cents for a drum. To some extent certain people would draw their water either from the clinics or the hospitals, at some distance. The church maintained that this was an urgent matter which needed attention as there was a need for drastic steps to ensure healthier living conditions. Instead of the government of Bophuthatswana addressing this situation, Chief Lucas Mangope questioned whether it was the function of the Council of Churches to look into such matters. However, the government responded by indicating that it was a matter which should involve the people of Winterveld, and that there were allegations that the plot owners had not responded to invitations to be involved (Minutes of the meeting: 1982). According to the government these people were asked to agree to the upgrading of the facilities and they had replied to the authorities that the government should 'concentrate on other areas, not our plots' (Minutes of the meeting: 1982). Mangope continued that the government was as much concerned as the Council of Churches was about the situation of the water supply in the Winterveld area. Mangope went on to say that the South African Council of Churches must not divide people into groups and encourage them to criticise the government on founded or unfounded matters.

From the side of the South African Council of Churches it became clear that Mangope and

his ministers could not distinguish between the Winterveld Committee of the Pretoria Regional Council of Churches and the South African Council of Churches. The Plot Owners' Association had made the first approach to the South African Council of Churches and their problems were referred to the Pretoria Council of Churches Winterveld Committee, who were later advised to consult with the attorneys who were briefed to act on their behalf. The Winterveld Committee was advocating the causes of many thousands of tenants who were in a vulnerable position. Matters of water and health were crucial issues. The ministers from the different churches raised this issue with the Pretoria Regional Council of Churches: that each time they buried people (particularly children) in Winterveld, residents raised questions about issues of water and health. As a matter of urgency the South African Council of Churches could not ignore it but had to address it and take it up with the homeland government.

#### 4.4.4 Old age pensioners

The issue of pensions was another matter which needed the attention of both the church and the state. Due to the constant ebb and flow of people, and the lack of a stable community, there were and many old people in the Winterveld with no means of support. However, pensions were only paid to Batswana and only at the community hall. For some elderly people to gain pensions, many of those who were not Batswana were left with no option but to apply for the citizenship of Bophuthatswana, yet their applications were never even processed. One of the pension officials of the government of Bophuthatswana informed the Black Sash member monitoring the bi-monthly payout that there were too many applications to handle and that the old people had no hope of ever receiving their pension money. At the same time the Winterveld Action Committee, Black Sash, and the Justice and Peace Commission had tried to help the old people, many of whom had no income whatsoever (A Profile on The Winterveld: 6). A survey was conducted, which determined that there were over 700 cases of people who were not receiving their pensions, and the government of Bophuthatswana was approached with this information, which was given to both Chief Justice Hiemstra and Chief Lucas Mangope. The government was urged to honour its pre-independence agreement in which it accepted the

responsibility for the people of the area. In response, Bophuthatswana claimed that these people were not citizens of Bophuthatswana and that they were not coping even with the pensions of the Batswana. For Bophuthatswana the non Batswana residents of Winterveld were citizens of South Africa. While this was the situation in Bophuthatswana, the South African parliament was being questioned by Mrs Helen Suzman on the issue of pensions for the people in Winterveld. This matter was first seen to be a legal issue when it was being tackled by the Legal Resource Centre, only for them to discover that this was not a legal issue but a political one. It became apparent that the South African government had the ultimate responsibility since it had set up the Bophuthatswana state (A Profile on the Winterveld: 6). The South African Council of Churches addressed this matter with the government of Bophuthatswana in their meeting in Mmabatho on 21 April 1982. In that meeting the Council of Churches indicated that there was an agreement between Bophuthatswana and South Africa on the matter (pensions). The agreement was that the South African government was going to pay the pensions of all Batswana who were in South Africa and that Bophuthatswana would do the same for all the non-Batswana who were living within the borders of Bophuthatswana (Minutes of the Meeting: 1982). In that same meeting the Council of Churches mentioned that there were thousands of people who were not receiving their pensions in Bophuthatswana and were coerced into applying for citizenship. The Council of Churches maintained that by law residents and people should qualify on the basis of old age or disability to receive their pensions in agreement with the pre-independence negotiations of the two governments. The matter was therefore regarded as a matter of urgency and it was stated that the issue of pensions should not be delayed pending the determination of residential status.

In 1984 the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Pretoria Justice and Peace Commission made some applications on behalf of sixteen people: Sister Immaculata was In-Charge and took all these people to the Mabopane magistrate's court to apply for old-age pensions. At the court Sister Immaculata was told by the clerks that people who qualified for a pension had to be in possession of Bophuthatswana citizenship (Field worker's report: 7 August 1984). However, Sister Immaculata together with the sixteen applicants presented the case that applications for citizenship had been made previously and that there had

been no response from the Government. In addition they were made to understand that by virtue of old age and proof of residence (meaning that these people needed to have a stamp on their reference books) people who applied for a pension would automatically qualify, but this was not the case. On June 25, 1984, Sister Immaculata took three other old people to the court to apply for a pension. They were in possession of temporary residence permits but all of them were not permitted to apply for an old age pension. Clerks at the magistrate court explained that the temporary residence permit did not qualify a person to apply for a pension; only a permanent residence permit and citizenship qualified a person to do so. Sister Immaculata argued with the clerks that the conditions imposed on these applicants were different from those mentioned to them by the officials both in Mafikeng and Pretoria (Field workers report, 7 August 1984).

Another controversy arose when the senior clerk came to explain the issue of applying for pensions, even though his explanation was clearer than that of his colleagues. However, when he was questioned on the issue of applying for permanent residence he indicated that there was no direct way to apply. He said that there were people who applied for citizenship and their applications were sorted out by the officials of the Internal Affairs Department of Bophuthatswana. Among these applicants some would be turned down and not be given citizenship but rather permanent residence permits.

In this situation the Archdiocese of Pretoria received some money from donors who did not want their names to be known and requested that the money be distributed to three aged people who were very needy or to such families in the Winterveld. Sister Immaculata embarked on the exercise of finding very needy persons and went as far as asking the people of Winterveld to help her identify them. She managed to find some of them, of whom one was a 62 year old woman whose husband had died in 1970 and who had no source of income though she was taking care of her two mentally retarded daughters. The old lady was residing on a plot which belonged to the Apostolic Faith Mission Church and she and her daughters were members of the same denomination as well. Other elderly people who were identified had similar problems and in some instances had troublesome children who were either unemployed with drinking habits, or were involved in crime in the community.

These cases forced the church to go out and look for sponsors, which was difficult because not many sponsors were keen to help the church with funds to alleviate this problem, of pensioners being refused pensions by the governments of both Bophuthatswana and South Africa. Some of these women fell ill after the death of their husbands and were left with no income, while others were left in the care of their children who might either be married but lived far from mother's home or not married but unemployed with grandchildren, and depended on the small grant which was organised by the church to keep the family surviving (Field worker's report: 7 August, 1984).

On the other hand the pension issue was more than met the eye. The Black Sash had in a number of ways tried to intervene and help all the old-age people in the Winterveld area with their pensions. This was a joint effort by the Black Sash, the Winterveld Action Committee and the Pretoria Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. It appears that the Black pensioners' problem was alarmingly worsening in Bophuthatswana, as the statistics regarding pensioners at that time had reached approximately 90% of the Winterveld population of non-Batswana. In this case all the three committees (i.e. the Black Sash, Winterveld Action Committee and the Pretoria Catholic Justice and Peace Commission) were dealing with an 'international situation', and this also in case the Pension Act No. 18 of 1978 of Bophuthatswana which stated that:

subject to the provision of this Act, any person shall be entitled to the appropriate social pension if he satisfies the Secretary-

a) that he is an aged, blind or disabled person or a war veteran; and

b) that he is resident in Bophuthatswana at the time of his application for a social pension; and

c) (i) that he is a citizen of Bophuthatswana or

(ii) that he has lawfully resided in the Republic of Bophuthatswana for the period of five years immediately preceding the date of such application (Black Sash Conference Report: 1982).

What this meant was simply that the conditions were the same as those of citizenship. In spite of all this the two presidents of South Africa and Bophuthatswana respectively had

signed a pre-independence agreement on behalf of their governments, for people who live in Bophuthatswana, but were not citizens of Bophuthatswana, to qualify for their pensions to be paid in Bophuthatswana. In direct contradiction of this, the government of Bophuthatswana demanded proof of citizenship, instructed non Batswana to go to their homelands and receive their pensions there, and in some cases told people to go back to Lady Selbourne. It later emerged that the government of Bophuthatswana was seeking legal advice to have the pre-independence agreement declared invalid and to put the pension cases on ice. The three committees involved wrote a letter to the then Justice Minister of Bophuthatswana, Chief Justice Hiemstra, appealing to him by means of a document with the names of applicants who numbered over 300, as well as some others who applied through the different churches, who had similar problems, to be present at the time of the appeal. Letters were sent to the Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Dr KP Mokhobo with the same enclosure, and a covering letter was sent to each of President L Mangope, Chief Justice Hiemstra and Mr R. F Botha who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in South Africa. There was only an acknowledgement of this correspondence from the latter (Mr R.F Botha) and no follow up from there except from the three committees (Black Sash, Winterveld Action Committee and Pretoria Catholic Justice and Peace Commission). At this point the Action Committee was now running out of patience and the only thing they could think of was to go public with the events in the Winterveld area.

It was also coincidental that at the time of considering this step, the Action Committee gained possession of correspondence between the two governments which clearly showed that South Africa was aware of the plight of pensioners. This letter contained a list of the names of about two hundred and twenty three applicants, all of whom were qualifying for pensions. This document was taken to be presented in the South African Parliament with the intention of asking questions about the pension issue (Black Sash Conference report, on pensions, 1982).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, it was clear from the beginning that the homeland government of Bophuthatswana had inherited its style of governance from its creators the South African government. It proclaimed that it was a Christian state though it was not against other religions. The language the leaders of Bophuthatswana used was similar to the Christian discourse used by the South African government: that they had achieved 'independence' after praying to God and they had received the answer from God that it was the right thing to accept the offer of sovereignty from South Africa. A major tactic which the homeland state used was to make use of the Christian religion to win the hearts and minds of the Batswana; however, those who were won over by the homeland government were mainly people from poor backgrounds some of whom were given incentives like land (in most cases this land was in the form of a lease or a contract). As for the employees in the civil sector, the situation was such that for them the conditions meant that they were forced to abide by the rules and regulations which were governing Bophuthatswana's civil service (in other words they had to observe the morning devotions or prayer which were traditional in the government departments).

As a Christian state, it had been traditional for the government of Bophuthatswana to celebrate its 'Independence' since 1977. These celebrations were not only concerned 'independence' but they also included worship, which was in many instances organised by the ministers who were members of the Bophuthatswana Ministers Fraternity. Many ministers who were members of the fraternity in that homeland were also part of the government and they were very influential regarding mobilising support for the government of Bophuthatswana. At the same time the government of Bophuthatswana was warning its people not to mix religion with politics. One could interpret this as another way in which the homeland government was trying to keep the church away from conscientising people about their political, social, and economic conditions. This was the same type of method the South African government had been using to discourage people from joining the South African Council of Churches. At the same time the non recognition of the South African Council of Churches by Bophuthatswana was a clear indication that the voice of the church was not going to be accepted, and it was counteracted by the establishment of the Bophuthatswana Ministers Fraternity.

Bophuthatswana Ministers Fraternity was not formed because there was a need for it, but it came into being as an attempt to stop ministers, particularly those of the historical mission churches from continuing their participation in an ecumenical body as well as to stop them from opposing the policy of apartheid, which in turn was going to affect the 'Independence' of Bophuthatswana. Some ministers who became members of the ministers fraternity were individuals from some historic churches and many others came from the African Independent Churches in Bophuthatswana. Many of these church ministers were either in the cabinet of the homeland government or stood to benefit either as individuals or for their churches (particularly when it came to land allocation) from the government itself. A good example of this was the Assemblies of God Church of which Lucas Mangope was a member, and which received a huge piece of land in Thaba-Nchu as well as a donation from him as a statesman, in return for his name to be inscribed on the church's wall as one of the contributors. In other instances, Lucas Mangope would summon the ministers of the different church denominations and remind them that they were supposed to be the conscience of the state. In his own interpretation this meant that church ministers were supposed to conscientise the people against seeing the truth and to acknowledge the existence of Bophuthatswana as a state.

Bophuthatswana, as a surrogate of apartheid South Africa, continued the actions of apartheid when they would not accept the children of the people who were not Batswana into schools, especially in the Winterveld region. The same was the case with the non establishment of health facilities and a water supply. The involvement of the South African Council of Churches in this context did not go down well with the government of Bophuthatswana. The reason for this was that Bophuthatswana saw itself as a sovereign state and therefore argued that there could be no outside forces to interfere in its affairs, including not only matters of education, health and water supply but also the old age pensions of people who were not Batswana. For Bophuthatswana, the church was not even supposed to become involved as this was a state matter. Bophuthatswana saw the Winterveld context not as a matter which needed immediate attention but as an ethnic situation which their government needed to be rid of.

The situation was fuelled by the ruling party under the leadership of chief Lucas Mangope, which accepted the offer of 'independence' from South Africa and was not easily going to give it up. When the signs of change in South Africa became visible, there was a need to come up with a new approach which was to look at Christian principles and embrace Christianity as their base and mode of governance. The new approach came about with the change of name of the party but the state of affairs remained the same. The issue was to cling to power and maintain the status quo.