

# The narrative of the Baptist Association of South Africa and its significance for the Indian Baptist Church in KwaZulu-Natal

*Rodney Ragwan*<sup>1</sup>  
Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnewood, USA

## *Abstract*

This article is an attempt to reclaim the history of the Baptist Association of South Africa. It provides background information about a community of indentured labourers, discusses the socio-political context of this community, and examines the contributions of three Indian-born missionaries and women of the Baptist Association of South Africa. Finally, it discusses the limitations of South African Baptist Historiography.

## **Background**

In the late 1800s, natives from India arrived in South Africa to work as indentured labourers on the tea and sugar estates in what was then the Colony of Natal. Among this group of labourers were about 150 Telugu-speaking Baptists. They settled in the Natal North Coast, where they worked on Sir Leigh Hulett's Tea Estate in Kearsney, near Stanger. In 1903 the Telugu-speaking Baptists invited John Rangiah from India to serve as their missionary. The Telugu Home Missionary Society in India sent John Rangiah, his wife and two children, to Natal to work among the Baptist indentured labourers (NIBA 1953:12).

## **Reverend John Rangiah**

John spent much of his boyhood (in India) among American Baptist missionaries. He served as a Sunday school teacher, Sunday school superintendent, lay preacher, evangelist, treasurer and deacon. Rangiah also served as headmaster of the Nellore Boy's School from 1897-1900 and of the Nellore Girl's School from 1901-1903. On 20 April 1903, he was ordained as a minister of the Lone Star Baptist Church (NIBA News 1953:10).

When Rangiah came to South Africa as a missionary, he started the first Indian Baptist Church in South Africa; at the time, this church had only sixty-four members (Rangiah 1905:1-3). The churches he started in Verulam, Darnall, Durban and Stanger became self-supporting, self-propagating and, to a certain extent, self-governing (Rangiah 1905:4).

The church at Darnall was established on 22 May, 1904. The membership at Darnall was 32, and according to reports, on that day four people were baptised. According to Rangiah, this church faced many challenges, although he does not mention details. Rangiah wrote that Mr K Daniels worked hard in this church. The church in Stanger was established during June 1904. There were six baptisms, and the church had a membership of 30 (which included the six newly baptised). Despite the challenge of having their house church removed by non-Christians, wrote Rangiah, they were able to relocate their church to another area. Their members contributed financially and physically to the rebuilding of a house church. This building, which had a chapel, cost them £6, which is equivalent to about R350 today. The church in Durban was established on 25 December, 1904. There were no baptisms during that year, and membership stood at 15. Rangiah tells us that the school that was established in Durban flourished. However, he was primarily concerned that members would relocate to other areas and attend other churches.

According to Rangiah, on 12 August 1906 a revival broke out (Rangiah 1905:3). Rangiah composed hymns and choruses which he taught to the congregation and these songs gained popularity among the members of this church. Regular Sunday services, women's prayer groups and prayer meetings were held. Once a month thanksgiving services were held, and during these services new hymns and choruses were sung. These services were characterised by a real sense of community. Rangiah also held Bible studies during the summer vacation; in his absence, he was assisted by the Reverend D Benjamin.

Rangiah described how he raised support for the preachers he trained and appointed, by encouraging the churches thus: "And in return the churches are exhorted to take heed to bear the

---

<sup>1</sup> Rodney Ragwan is a doctoral student of Prof GA Duncan at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

burdens of our preachers, to their utmost possibility." He also wrote about the need to depend on God in this matter.

The termination of the indentured labour system by the British authorities in Natal meant that the flow of Indians to places such as Kearsney, the hub of the Baptist Association of South Africa, ceased. In addition to this, Rangiah had to find the resources required to support the leaders he appointed over the churches in the Natal North Coast region. He reported to David Downie about assistance received by local estate owners, Colonel Addison of Stanger and Mr WG Armstrong, both of whom agreed to support preachers who lived on their estates.

It was the first time in Rangiah's correspondence with the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society that he raised the issue of finance. This was because he had always believed and maintained that the Indian church in South Africa should be self-supporting. (Until then, the Indian indentured labourers contributed to the mission work from their meagre earnings.) The lack of funds did not impede the work among the Telugus; indeed, there were some who agreed to work without remuneration. The Reverend Rangiah and his wife worked closely with these preachers and provided spiritual service to the Telugu people.

The arrival of the Reverend Valpula C Jacob in 1910 to serve as the second missionary from India inaugurated a new era in the history of the Indian Baptists. Jacob, who had been a teacher for a number of years in the Ramapatnam Theological Seminary, felt the call to come to South Africa to work among the Telugus. The Jacob family was welcomed by Rangiah and others at the Durban docks and were received warmly by the Telugus in South Africa.

Both Jacob and Rangiah did good work amongst the Telugus in Natal, South Africa. On 21 April 1911 Jacob was invited to live in Durban and to provide spiritual care for the members of Somseu Road Baptist Church. Jacob worked with Rangiah and visited the various churches, preaching, counselling and encouraging the Telugu population. He spent three months in Kearsney at the home of the Rangiahs. On July 1912, Jacob left South Africa and returned to India due to ill health. He returned on 13 December 1915 to continue working as a missionary in South Africa; this he did until his death (in 1932). He was an outstanding leader who worked well amongst the Telugus in Natal (Jacob & Cornelius 1953:23).

*The Baptist Missionary Review*, a publication of the American Baptist Church USA, records (Marsh et al 1915:381) a schism between the two Indian groups in the church that John Rangiah established. Unfortunately it does not provide the reason for the schism, but states that Rangiah was not accepted by a significant number of Telugu Baptists in Natal. However, churches that were established by Rangiah (1953:15), such as the Verulam Church (1904), the Darnall Church (1904), the Durban Church (1904) and the Stanger Church (1904) remained under Rangiah's ministry, which suggests, in fact, that it was only a small percentage of the Telugus in Natal who did not accept Rangiah. The actual cause of this schism is still unknown.

The mission enterprise in South Africa in the 1800s included European missionaries such as Andrew Murray Jr., Johannes Van De Kemp, and John Philip and Robert Moffat of the London Missionary Society. However, the belief that mission was mainly carried out by powerful western countries is negated by the tireless work of Rangiah, who represented a country that was poor and, at the time, a mission field itself.

As a missionary in South Africa, Rangiah's mission efforts included the building of a school in Kearsney, and establishing churches in what was the Colony of Natal (1905:4). His approach to mission included the notions that the social, educational and spiritual needs of the Indian people were important. However, his work focused on the educational and spiritual needs of the indentured labourers he came to serve.

Although Rangiah did not advocate that the Telugus carry the Christian faith to other parts of the world, he trained lay persons to spread Christianity to many parts of KwaZulu-Natal. He travelled widely, preaching, teaching and training persons for ministry (NIBA News 1953:15-22). Rangiah adopted a very practical model for ministry amongst the Telugus in South Africa. In his report he stated that, after identifying groups of Christians, he gathered them into churches and appointed elders from among them. He challenged these elders to spread the gospel to the utmost parts of South Africa to the best of their ability.

Rangiah preached in the Telugu language and composed and taught Christian hymns to the Telugus. Rangiah and his wife organised activities such as Thanksgiving services, song festivals, and fellowship meetings, all of which were culturally orientated and spiritually relevant. Rangiah, as mentioned earlier, devoted much of his time to the spiritual and cultural needs of the Telugus. He organised and facilitated services that were culturally sensitive (an important point, given that Indian culture is rich, diverse and unique). The Indian manner and way of communicating with each other are important components of their culture. Indian culture is rich in art, poetry, drama and theatre, music, and dance.

Although Rangiah received his theological training in an American Baptist seminary in India, he developed the ability to contextualise the Christian faith among the Telugus. Rangiah and his wife, Kanakamma, always dressed like Indians (she wore a sari and he always wore a turban).

A striking feature of Rangiah's understanding of the Christian faith was reflected in his ecumenical outlook. The notion of relationship with other communions and bodies of believers was not only encouraged, but was actively practised by Rangiah himself. In 1910 Rangiah (NIBA News 1953:25) sailed to Edinburgh, where he attended the International Missionary Conference that saw all the leading denominations in attendance. Rangiah was one of five Asian delegates of the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. Stanley makes the point that Rangiah was not simply the first missionary sent by the Telugu Baptist Home missionary Society to the Telugu-speaking Christians of the sugar plantations in Natal, but was also the first overseas missionary sent out by any of the mission churches of the American Baptists. He makes a further point that Rangiah is an early example of what would be called a "south to south" mission (Stanley 2009:100).

Rangiah worked within a moderate to conservative evangelical paradigm. However, there are features within his evangelical theology that place him at the conservative end of the theological spectrum. For instance, except for the establishment of a school for the Telugu children in Kearsney, he concentrated largely on evangelism and very little on social issues; in contrast, Ron Sider (1993:121-135) asserts that Christians should concentrate on both evangelism and social engagement.

In preparing leaders and congregants, Rangiah believed that the Bible was critical in shaping their lives. He held Bible classes at Kearsney where he chose the lives of Biblical characters such as Joseph, Samson and Ruth as models for the male and female leaders and congregants (NIBA News 1953:18).

After serving the Indian Baptist Church in South Africa for almost 12 years, John Rangiah died on 23 December 1915.

### **Theophilus M Rangiah**

In 1921 the Reverend Theophilus Rangiah and his wife, Sungunamma, arrived in Kearsney to continue the work his mother and father had started among the Indians. His goal was re-organisation and church planting. Theophilus began his work by visiting all the churches that had been established by his parents. He acquainted himself with the people and the circumstances of every area where churches of the Baptist Association of South Africa were located. Furthermore, he made contact with the white landlords and managers of the indentured labourers and encouraged them to take an interest in the spiritual needs of their employees. He encouraged the indentured labourers to consecrate their lives and to maintain a Christian way of life. Theophilus believed that a close relationship with God was a prerequisite of evangelism, and he held consecration meetings for pastors, deacons, evangelists, and other office bearers of the Baptist Association of South Africa Church.

Under Theophilus Rangiah's leadership, a number of churches were established and grew. At Glendale, Theophilus began a ministry among the Indian labourers who worked at the Glendale Sugar Estate. The result was the establishment of the Glendale Baptist Church on 16 December 1923. His leadership contributed to the growth of the Darnall Baptist Church. The first Baptist church at Darnall was made of grass; this was replaced by a wood and iron building and, later, another building was constructed to accommodate the growing membership of this church. Theophilus was responsible for the establishment of the Umhlali Baptist Church on 14 October 1923. In Durban, a church was established in Cato Manor (this church later relocated to Hilliard). All these churches were visited by Theophilus personally; he also raised funds to purchase property in North Street, Durban, where a church was built to accommodate the congregation living in the Durban area.

Despite the schism in the Baptist Association of South Africa in 1914, the two Baptist organisations continued to cooperate with each other. Theophilus assisted the Baptist Mission with its need for a missionary to work among them. A request was made to the Telugu Home Mission Society in India to send a missionary to South Africa. The Reverend Jacob responded to this invitation and arrived in Durban on 28 July 1936, where he and his wife worked with the Baptist Mission churches in and around the area.

Theophilus Rangiah expanded the work of his parents, which began in 1903. He died in 1947 after serving as a missionary among the Baptist Association of South Africa for almost 26 years. After his death, European Baptists (Israel 1998:10) helped Indians in South Africa to continue the work of the Baptist Association of South Africa.

### **David Newton Nathaniel**

After the death of Theophilus Rangiah in 1947, the Indian Baptist Church was without a missionary until 1951, when the Reverend David Newton Nathaniel and his family arrived in Natal on the ship *Isipingo* to take up the position of superintendent missionary. Nathaniel was born on 24 October 1908 in the district of Ramayapatnam in South India (Timothy 1978:7). Prior to his arrival, he was ordained in Allur, India, after completing theological studies at the Ramapatnam Theological Seminary (an American Baptist seminary where he trained as a minister), and at the Bangalore Theological College in India, which was supported by the Baptist Mission of England. Nathaniel's early education was in a mission school in Kavali, India. Nathaniel was married to Jayamma.

On 9 June 1951, Mr and Mrs Nathaniel and their three children arrived in South Africa to work with the Telugus. Nathaniel and his family were received very warmly by the Natal Indian Baptist Association (NIBA), who honoured them with a welcome service:

You represent, Sir, a rare combination of two important factors which are so very necessary in the ministry of our churches in this country, since we have in you a harmonious blend of high academic qualifications and practical experience accumulated over a number of years (Timothy 1976:7).

It appears that, when Nathaniel indicated to the churches in India that he intended to go to South Africa as a missionary, there were those who were not supportive and who, in fact, ridiculed him. One church leader stated "This is of your own choice and a capricious thinking." Nathaniel appears to have faced this kind of reaction not only from a few leaders in India, but also during his time as a missionary in South Africa. There were some in the Baptist Association of South Africa who ridiculed and mentally abused him (Timothy 1976:10).

Despite this, Nathaniel served the Baptist Association of South Africa churches as a superintendent missionary for almost thirty-five years, working hard and faithfully amongst the Telugus in South Africa. In 1951, he became the superintendent missionary of NIBA. Nathaniel wrote many Telugu songs and translated some popular hymns into Telugu. The staff of the South African Baptist Missionary Society (SABMS), a body formed by the Baptist Union, visited the Indian churches regularly. The Reverend TD Pass of the Baptist Union worked closely him, and introduced him to the circuit system (which involved the minister pastoring several churches in a particular region (Israel 1988:4)).

All of the missionaries who came from India stressed the value of education. All of them received quality education from the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society's educational programme in India. This value is evident in the missionaries' attitude to theological education as well, and the Reverend Nathaniel was no exception. He gained his Masters in Divinity degree at the age of seventy years at the University of Durban Westville, in Durban (he had completed the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in India and arrived in Natal with a good theological education (Timothy 1978:7)). Dr PM Krishna, who was a warden at the Bethesda Bible College in Durban, sponsored Nathaniel's theological graduate studies and also promised to continue doing so until Nathaniel completed his doctorate in Divinity (Timothy 1976:16). Credit must be given to the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society for its investment in these Telugu missionaries. As a result, these missionaries brought a positive attitude to education when they came to work in the mission field in South Africa.

In the early years of Nathaniel's work as a missionary with the Baptist Association of South Africa, Nathaniel wrote about unification and the need to work closely with other Indian Baptists. In his thesis, he presents a strong theological basis for unity and cooperation amongst the Telugus in South Africa (Nathaniel 1979). He states: "To this end no stone should be left unturned, unity then must be advocated and encouraged by every member and by every church."

As I said above, Nathaniel was a minister with a good training in theology, and he encouraged Indian Baptists to think about ministry. He wrote several books and commentaries: *Helpful commentary on Philippians; For the preacher in the making; Simple talks on Christian doctrines; Three minute digest; Commentaries on Deuteronomy and the Pastoral Epistles* (Nathaniel 1969:1). He died at the age of 77 on 20 December 1985.

John Rangiah, his son TM Rangiah and David Nathaniel between them contributed greatly to the work of the Baptist Association of South Africa. Nor should we forget that the wives of John and Theophilus played important roles in this work: Kanakamma Rangiah served from 1903-1931, and Sungunamma Rangiah from 1921-1943. John's grand-daughter, Rajithamma Israel (1956-2006), also contributed to the work of BASA. Other women and their contributions also form part of the history of the Baptist Association of South Africa.

## **Women in Ministry with the BASA**

There is currently no literature available on the work of Baptist women in South Africa. If they are mentioned at all, it is only in the brochures of the Baptist Association of South Africa. There is little or no discussion of their work, and certainly no official assessment or evaluation.

Although Rangiah showed an openness to women entering the ministry, the BASA does not have an official position on their role in ministry. However, women were given opportunities to participate in ministry in various capacities.

### **Kanakamma Rangiah, 1903-1931**

Kanakamma served as a teacher in the school that Rangiah established in Kearsney, where she provided education to the children of indentured labourers. She also taught the Telugu language to young girls and taught hymns and conducted Bible studies with the women.

She also worked in an orphanage on Hulett's estate where she took care of the educational and spiritual needs of orphans (aged 12-15 years). She played an important role in teaching girls to sing, lead worship services and participate in plays. When the membership of the historic Kearsney Baptist church increased, a decision was made to construct a larger building. Kanakamma and the women in the congregation helped to raise financial support for this project. When her husband attended the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, Kanakamma cared for the family, provided leadership to the Kearsney Baptist Church, liaised with leaders of other new established churches and provided counsel and moral and spiritual support to them during her husband's five-month absence. A few years later, when a schism occurred in the work of the Indian Baptists, Kanakamma provided Rangiah with the emotional support he very much needed during this extremely challenging time.

After working as a missionary among the Baptist Association of South Africa for almost 28 years, Kanakamma Rangiah died on 13 April 1931. Her daughter-in-law, Sungunamma Rangiah, followed in her footsteps (Israel 2007, *Discussion on the role of women in the Baptist Association of South Africa work in South Africa*. Telephone Communication, 16 September 2007).

### **Sungunamma Rangiah, 1921-1943**

Sungunamma Rangiah arrived in South Africa from India with her husband Theophilus on 5 March 1921 on the *SS Umtata*. Initially, Sungunamma, a young 18-year-old girl who had just completed high school, found it difficult to adjust to conditions in Natal, and it was largely owing to the support of her mother-in-law that she was eventually able to acclimatise to life in South Africa.

One of the significant contributions she made with her husband was the establishment of the church in Glendale in the Natal North Coast. A woman called "mother Subbamma" was seriously ill and needed healing. It is reported that Sungunamma spent much time in prayer, which resulted in the healing of this sick woman. This, in turn, opened up more opportunities for healing, and resulted in the establishment of a church in this region of Natal.

It was Sungunamma who began social work among the churches of the Baptist Association of South Africa. She taught Telugu, English hymns and choruses and held cooking, dressing and hygiene classes. She was particularly interested in promoting the English language. Young people who passed standard six (grade 8) and who entered high school, were required to preach a sermon in English in the presence of Theophilus and Sungunamma Rangiah. On Tuesdays, services were held in English to promote the language.

She also played an important role in helping families to organise wedding ceremonies, and gave advice on the choice of jewellery, clothing, food and even the choice of hymns. After serving the Indian Baptist Church for 23 years, Sungunamma died on 22 May 1943. After Sungunamma's death another woman, Rajithamma Rangiah, John Rangiah's granddaughter, emerged as an important leader in the Baptist Association of South Africa Church in South Africa (Israel 2007, *Discussion on the role of women in the Baptist Association of South Africa work in South Africa*. Telephone Communication, 16 September 2007).

### **South African Baptist historiography**

I found that within the South African Baptist church historiography there are three trajectories. The first trajectory is one of the Baptist Union of South Africa, which is written and interpreted mainly by its own historians, Hudson-Reed (1983), HJ Batts (1920) and Jeffrey James, and is published and studied in Baptist Colleges. The second trajectory is the history of the black Baptists, which is

interpreted by Moroka Humphrey Mogashoa (2004) and Gideon Makhanya (Hoffmeister & Gurney 1990), and the third is the history of the minority Baptist organisations (of which the Baptist Association is one). This history was written mainly by Noah Moses Israel, M Rangiah and N Timothy, and is found in non-academic literature such as newsletters and brochures (and not in scholarly publications). All these trajectories, however, have limitations in terms of how Indian Baptist history is recorded.

To begin with, it records Baptist history from a colonial perspective. Needless to say, this interpretation paints a very glorified picture of the history of white Baptists (triumphalism) in South Africa, and is accompanied with hardly any critical examination of the socio-political conditions prevailing in South Africa at the time. It also minimises the significance of the history of Indian Baptists in South Africa. Baptist institutions in the apartheid period gave very little space in their curriculum to the contributions of people of colour in the missionary enterprise in South Africa. Kretzschmar (1990:25) argued that Hudson-Reed's book, entitled: *By taking heed: the history of Baptists in Southern Africa, 1820-1977* is very selective in its history. She contends that it devotes a few pages to the history of Baptists which, at the time, had a total membership of 51 305 and a similarly small number of pages to the work of the Black Baptist Convention churches which, during that same period, had a membership of 26 308. She questions the history of this half of the South African Baptists. In this article I, too, contend that Indian Baptist history has not been adequately researched.

For almost three centuries, there has been a bias in the recording and interpretation of South African Baptist history: the Baptist historians in the apartheid era used a colonial and apartheid historiographical framework. I have found that, in order to critically examine the history of a colonised group of people, it is important to apply a hermeneutic that examines important issues within that history. I found that a methodological discourse called postcolonial theory is illuminating in examining history and, more specifically, the history of the Baptist Association of South Africa. Postcolonial theory, or "postcolonialism", according to Dyrness and Karkkainen (2008:683), examines the impact of European colonisation on colonised societies. This theory addresses issues such as race, gender, identity, globalisation and power relations. Sugirtharajah (1998:ix) describes postcolonial theory, among other things, as being controversial. This is because it involves marginal, non-western historians confronting and critiquing colonial ideology and its underlying assumptions. Dyrness and Karkkainen (2008:683) state that Ireland calls this a form of resistance "discourse from the margins", and claim that it undermines those discourses that have supported colonising attitudes, and that it unmasks the western ideologies behind colonial theories and texts.

South African white and Indian historians have written history that reflects the traditional historiographical framework. They ignored the three periods – namely, the Dutch (1652-1795), the British (1795/1814/1948), and the Afrikaner (1924/1947-8) (Loubser 1987) – periods which brought with them colonialism and apartheid. The history of the Indian Baptist church in South Africa requires examination during these three phases and there is a need to critically engage and reflect on the colonial and apartheid forces and their influence on the history of the Indian Baptist church.

Hudson-Reed wrote mainly about the whites, and the whites' history of Christianity (Hudson-Reed). Others such as Batts and Chris Parnell, both from the Baptist Union of South Africa, have also paid substantive attention to white Baptist History. Indeed, Hudson-Reed and most Christian historians make only a passing reference to the history of Black, Coloured and Indian Baptists and their relationship with the white Baptist narrative. Indian Christian history also received exposure from Elphick and Davenport's book, *Christianity in South Africa: a political, social and cultural history*. In this book, Gerald Pillay and GC Oosthuizen (1997: 286-296) write mainly about Pentecostal and general Indian Christian history. Although Pillay makes reference to Indian Baptists, he fails to provide an analysis of their contribution to Christianity in South Africa and their impact on the social, cultural and political development of the country.

Members of the dominant members of BASA who wrote Baptist history also showed a degree of bias and lacked objectivity and critical analysis. In my research, I discovered, for example, that the important role played by women in this church was not adequately covered in this history.

## Summary

The history of the Baptist Association of South Africa is important, given the fact that this history began with mainly unskilled labours, survived, and is now almost 90 years old. Indian Baptists have made significant contributions to the cultural and spiritual developments in Natal; the original indentured labourers brought with them the rich culture of India to their new home in Natal.

Many of the churches in the Baptist Association of South Africa sing the hymns composed by John Rangiah, Theophilus Rangiah and David Newton Nathaniel. Also, many of its members have appeared on radio and television where they presented sermons and songs. Mimosthram Rangiah

presented the Easter and Christmas stories through music and song in the vernacular language on radio (Timothy 1978:11).

The spiritual growth of the Baptist Association of South Africa resulted from the emphasis on leadership training, training that directly led to the increase in the number of churches in Natal. Noah Moses Israel, Mimosthram Rangiah and Risecliff Timothy were involved in the writing of BASA history, which appears in the NIBA News, and the Diamond and Golden Jubilee brochures. They provide recordings of the events and contributions of the leaders of the BASA, and this is certainly valuable for posterity. However, to date, everything about the BASA has been written from the perspective of the dominant members and thus tends to confirm the ethnocentric nature of the BASA's work. Furthermore, these histories all lack historical and theological analysis.

Maintaining the ethnocentricity of the organisation definitely had an adverse effect on the BASA, because its leaders engaged in dialogue among themselves. No new voices from outside of the BASA were heard, and this prevented exposure to new perspectives on critical issues facing the BASA in its South African context. Perspectives from younger leaders were received with caution. It was only in 2001 that the BASA sought membership of the Baptist World Alliance, All Africa Baptist Fellowship, and the American Baptist Church, USA and its mission agency. A relationship with the Los Angeles Baptist Association and the Cabarrus Baptist Association was also established. Linking the BASA to all these international organisations helped to broaden its worldview. Leaders are now attending meetings and conferences overseas; the fruits of these partnerships are now being experienced. Although the BASA is being exposed to the international community, it has still not moved significantly beyond its ethnocentric orientation. Its membership remains largely Indian. It regards and maintains the importance of its culture and rarely integrates the culture of the other racial groups.

The BASA contributed significantly to the spiritual and cultural (as well as economic) development of Christianity among Indians, but this is where it appears to stop. Unfortunately, the three Indian-born missionaries discussed in this paper did not respond to the socio-political realities of their day. The ethnocentric approach to mission work in South Africa was shaped by a particular theology that the Indian-born missionaries brought with them from India. This theology rarely integrated the Christian faith with the social needs of the people. As such, little attention was given to analysing the social and political forces prevalent in South Africa at the time.

## Conclusion

The history of the Baptist Association of South Africa has received considerably less attention than the history of the first Baptist structure in South Africa, the Baptist Union of South Africa (BUSA). Nor has history been located within the socio-political context. I have critically examined the history of BASA as written by members of this organisation, and found that the writers from within and outside the BASA approached Baptist history by using the traditional historiographical framework, which excluded critical examinations of colonialism, apartheid and ethnicity and the influence of these forces on the Baptist Association of South Africa.

## Works consulted

- Batts, HJ 1921. *History of the Baptist Church in South Africa*. Cape Town: Juta.  
Dyrness, WA & Karkkainen, V-M 2008 *Global dictionary of theology*. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press.  
Elphick, R & Davenport, R 1997. *Christianity in South Africa: a political, social and cultural history*. Oxford: James Currey.  
Ferguson-Davie, CJ [nd] *The early history of Indians in Natal*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations.  
Hoffmeister, D & Gurney, B 1990. National Awareness Workshop. Johannesburg: Awareness Campaign of the BCSA.  
Hudson-Reed, S 1983. *By taking heed*. Roodepoort: Baptist Publishing House.  
Israel, NM 1988. *Indian Baptist history: BASA annual brochure*. Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal.  
Israel, NM 2004. John Rangiah and a century of Indian Baptist work in Africa (1903-2003). Speech delivered to the Baptist World Alliance Heritage and Identity Commission, Washington, VA.  
Israel, NM 2007. *Discussion on the role of women in the Baptist Association of South Africa Work in South Africa*. Telephone Communication, 16 September 2007.  
Jacob, VC & Cornelius, H 1953. *The Indian Baptist mission 1903-1953*. Durban: CP Press.

- Kretzchmar, L 1998. *Privatization of the Christian faith: mission, social ethics and the South African Baptists*. Ghana: Legon Theological Series.
- Loubser, JA 1987. *The apartheid bible: a critical review of racial theology in South Africa*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller-Longmans.
- Marsh, CR et al 1915. *Baptist Quarterly Magazine* XX1 (10) India: American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society.
- Mogashoa, MH 2004. South African Baptists and finance (1820-1948). PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Nathaniel, DN 1979. The origin of the Indian Baptist Church in South Africa 1900-1978. MDiv thesis, University of Durban Westville.
- Rangiah, J 1905. *The first and second annual reports of the Telugu Baptist mission, Natal, South Africa*. Madras: Madras: M.E. Press.
- Rangiah, J 1905. *The Telugu mission in South Africa*. Valley Forge: American Baptist Historical Society.
- Rangiah, J 2009. Tribute: the late Lady Hulett, the Indians' sympathy.
- Rangiah, M 1953. NIBA News. Stanger: Mercantile Printers.
- Sugirtharajah, RS 1998. *Asian biblical hermeneutics and post colonialism: contesting the interpretations*. New York: Orbis Books.
- Timothy, N Risecliff 1976. *Baptist Church, Silver Jubilee of Rev. DN Nathaniel's witness in South Africa, 1951-1976*, souvenir brochure.
- Timothy, N Risecliff 1978. *The Diamond Jubilee of the Indian Baptist work in South Africa 1903-1978*, souvenir brochure.