

**Missions are money and money is missions:
Methodist Ecclesiology in South Africa, 1872-2004**

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Abstract

This article examines the close relationship between the church and money, as manifested in the breakaway churches from the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) from the 19th to the 20th century. The Methodist Church has had more secessions than any other mainline denomination in South Africa.¹ One of the key factors leading to these secessions was the disagreement about money. This is because the leadership of the Methodist Church, most of whom were white and privileged, often did not practise equality and transparency when it came to money. The article also argues that the disagreements about money were a manifestation of racism and mistrust of black leadership by their white counterparts. The author uses five case studies of secession in the life of the MCSA to show how money became a bone of contention that led to breakaways. The case studies are (1) the formation of Unzondelelo in the 1874; (2) the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal in 1892; (3) the formation of the Ethiopian Church in 1892; (4) the formation of the Methodist Church in Africa in 1930; and (5) the formation of the United Methodist Church of South Africa in 1978.

*We read the gospel as if we had no money, and
we spend our money as if we know nothing of the
gospel – John Haughey²*

¹ Attwell (1992:261).

² John Haughey, quoted in Myers (2001:5).

Introduction

On 28 May 1933, on a Sunday morning, Sophiatown in Johannesburg woke up to a march by black members of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). Clad in their red, white and black uniforms, they were marching in the streets singing hymns and following an ass covered with a white sheet on which was written the words, “Our Lord was sold for 30 pieces of silver; we are being sold for 30 pence”.³ This picturesque event culminated in the formation of the Methodist Church in Africa, *Icawe yaseDonki* (donkey church). Although this was the most dramatic breakaway from the MCSA ever witnessed and recorded, it was not the first one and it was not going to be the last. It followed three others and was to be followed by two more. The common thread that runs through these breakaways is the disagreement about money, its *collection, control* and *use in the church*.

It is necessary to give due consideration to the historical relationship between the church and money in South African missions history. In so doing, we will discover that competing interests regarding monetary issues have become the reason for conspicuous, incoherent and ambiguous behaviour on the part of the church. This led to the emergence of a number of splinter groups that were disgruntled by the church’s struggle to maintain integrity when it came to money. One way of uncovering this history is through case studies. This article surveys and evaluates the attitude of the Methodist Church towards money, especially as it relates to the African people and their early leaders. The stories of four splinter churches and an African missionary movement are considered in this article. These are the *Unzondelelo Missionary Movement*, the *Ethiopian Church*, the *African Methodist Episcopal Church*, the *Methodist Church in Africa* and the *United Methodist Church*.⁴

How is it possible that people who believed in and taught the gospel of love and equality turned into ruthless controllers when it came to money matters?⁵ The answer to this question lies in John Haughey’s suggestion that there is a tendency not to relate the message of the gospel to the way we understand and use money. What are the implications of this failure to trust and to share money for the centuries-old missionary work of the church? Answers to these questions can be found in the changing functions of the church regarding money over the centuries, for example, as collectors of money, as donors and as benefactors. In an attempt to answer the above questions, this article will adopt the following typology: the Wesleyan

³ Taunyane (2001:24).

⁴ Dabula (1983:4).

⁵ Interview with the Rev Enoch Ndlaku by Simangaliso Kumalo on 17 June 2011, Pietermaritzburg.

teaching on money, the secessions, and lessons learnt from the case studies, followed by some conclusions.

Methodology

The methodology of this article is based on archival and oral-historical material retrieved through reading and interviews. A number of books written from different perspectives were consulted, including Christian, missionary, historical, and economic viewpoints. The author of the article also conducted interviews with four church leaders, namely, Rev Geveza, the president of Unzondelelo, Bishop Lunga Ka Siboto of the Umzi-wase-Topiya Church, Rev Michael Scott of the AME Church, and Rev Enoch Ndlaku, formerly of the United Methodist Church and now of the MCSA.⁶ They were interviewed because of their direct involvement in and leadership of the churches that had broken away from the MCSA because of conflict about money. The interviewees differed on the way they thought the MCSA should have handled the issues. Bishop Lunga kaSiboto argued that the MCSA should have allowed African leaders such as Dwane to raise and control monies for their work. Rev Michael Scott argued that the fact that there was no parity in the stipends in the Methodist Church was a sign of racism, something that Mangena Mokone detested. Drummond Geveza argued that money still determines the quality of ministry that a congregation can receive in the MCSA, where rich congregations receive superior ministry to poorer ones because of the former's access to resources. Rev Ndlaku argued that the founding leaders of the United Methodist Church protested against the system of taking money from the local people to support the connexional⁷ structures of the MCSA instead of investing the money in the development of the local community from where it had been raised in the first place. All four interviewees argued that money had been a determining factor in the secessions. In the following section, theoretical assumptions concerning the relationship between church and money in the MCSA are discussed through the lens of John Wesley's teaching on money.

⁶ Rev Geveza was interviewed in Port Shepstone on 28 October 2010. Bishop Siboto was interviewed telephonically and by e-mail in June 2011. Rev Michael Scott who is in Cape Town was interviewed telephonically on 25 July. Rev Enoch Ndlaku was interviewed in Pietermaritzburg on 17 June 2011. All the transcripts are kept in the Kumalo Files in Pietermaritzburg.

⁷ The term "connexional" refers to the interconnected Methodist churches forming one structure.

Methodist teaching on money and John Wesley's *Trilaterals*

Early Methodists' attitude towards money came from the teachings of their founder John Wesley, popularly known as Wesley's trilateral teachings on money, which are based on three principles: *Gain all you can*, *Save all you can*, and *Give all you can*. These principles were supposed to have been the blueprint that guided the early Methodist missionaries who came to South Africa.⁸ Had they followed these principles, they could have avoided some of the conflicts and ultimate secessions from the church.

Gain all you can

This principle teaches that there is nothing wrong with working to gain money or to create wealth. In fact, every citizen has a duty to participate in activities that create wealth so that they can provide for their own needs, for the needs of those who depend on them, and for their neighbours' needs.⁹ This includes providing food, education, and security, and giving to the church. However, there is a limit to this "gain" principle, which is that money must not be gained at the expense of one's wellbeing, for example, one's health, life, peace and justice. Linked to this, the quest to gain money must not be undertaken at the expense of our neighbours' wellbeing, or their health, life, peace and dignity. According to this principle, money or wealth is not simply dismissed as sinful. Rather, its importance and the need to create and possess it are recognised, but it should be done while following some guidelines on responsibility. The point is that money must not control a person's life and cause a person to value it more than anything else in life – money is for enhancing life.

Save all you can

Recognising that money is an important asset and necessary for life, Wesley went on to encourage his followers to use money with diligence and care. It should be used to get the basic and important necessities of life, without which life would be very difficult. It should not be abused to buy luxuries and unnecessary material things. Children must also be taught to learn the value of money and how to use it properly.

⁸ For this sermon, see Holway (1987:500).

⁹ See also Hall (2011).

Give all you can

The last principle is to give all you can.¹⁰ When you still have money left, you need to give it to others. Wesley believed that storing too much money than was necessary was not a good thing because it might end up controlling a person.¹¹ He said, “When I have money, I get rid of it quickly, lest it find a way into my heart.”¹² The principle of giving all you can to others was grounded in Wesley’s belief of the horizontal nature of the gospel, according to which he argued that the gospel of Christ “knows no (private) religion but social, no holiness but social holiness”.¹³ By that, he did not mean that you have to give away all your money. Rather, he meant that you needed to give all that you could afford to give to others, after having saved some for your needs in the future.

These are the basic principles that have guided Methodists with regard to money from the time of Wesley through to the time of the Methodist missionaries who came to South Africa. These principles should be guiding Methodists today. It is within this framework that the discussion in this article is undertaken.

Missions are money: conflicts and breakaways from the MCSA because of money

When one considers the reasons for the conflict about money in the history of the MCSA critically, one realises the importance of money for missions. Missions depended and still depend on the availability of money.

The Unzondelelo Movement

One of the early examples of the struggles around money in the MCSA is illustrated by the formation of *Unzondelelo* (endurance) by black evangelists or native missionary agents in Natal in 1875. These native evangelists felt that the Wesleyan Missionary Society (WMS) was only supporting the work of white missionaries. On 7 August 1875, a group of Methodist native missionary agents from Indaleni (Richmond), Verulam, Driefontein and Edendale met at Edendale Mission, the biggest *kholwa community* in Natal. They formed *Unzondelelo* (endurance), a movement within the MCSA whose aim was to raise funds to support native missionary work in the Natal province.¹⁴ *Unzondelelo* was thus set up as a missions fund for black people (mostly

¹⁰ Holway (1987:504).

¹¹ Balia (1991).

¹² See http://thinkexist.com/common/print.asp?id+when_i_have_money-i_g...

¹³ Marquardt (1992).

¹⁴ Nyembezi (1994:18).

Zulu) engaged in missionary work, who wanted to raise money from their own (Zulu) people to support their missionary initiatives.

This caused embarrassment to the Methodist church because it meant that missionary work and its funding were based on racial grounds. The first amount Unzondelelo collected was 100 pounds. The white missionaries were concerned that this effort was going to lead to a breakaway, so they felt that they needed to be present at the meeting, take charge of it and keep it under the control of the church. Therefore, the Rev J Cameron chaired the meeting and took the money “for safekeeping”.¹⁵ Although the meeting allowed him to keep the money, they made it clear that it was meant for native missionary work and for nothing else. They also had a vision of starting a school to train black pastors. They felt the Methodist church was neglecting such training because the white leadership did not see a need to ordain black people as pastors but rather wanted to maintain the dominant positions of the missionaries. Nathaniel Mathebula (a missionary agent) raised this point openly, when he made the following comments:

Why did you not ordain the old teachers as Ministers? The first missionaries passed away without a Native Ministry. You may pass away also, without doing it. The English Missionaries are not enough to occupy Natal, and my heart is painful because of the condition of this land. In Fiji, the missionaries ordained converts, and the work prospered greatly. When one hears that we desire to form another Church, this is not our aim. You do not wish the work here to be great! We have now been six years at Driefontein (black community), and have 100 members. Who did that work? It was the Natives themselves. The Missionary lived at Ladysmith (town).

This statement demonstrates the dissatisfaction that black people had about the lack of interest shown by white Methodist missionaries in promoting African agencies in the Methodist Church. The missionaries met this attack by Mathebula with more excuses, and retaliated by taking over the control of Unzondelelo, giving it a different name, namely, “All together” and writing regulations to govern it. The black members of Unzondelelo did not accept this new name; neither did they give up the leadership of Unzondelelo. They continued to hold their annual meetings at which they collected money for missionary work. This act of defiance prompted the Rev John Kilner to warn the white missionaries by saying:

¹⁵ Balia (1991:36).

The old order of things is passing away; some change is imperative. The development of our work, the state of feeling at home, and the pressure of financial considerations, all give token that things cannot remain as they have been much longer.

Even today, Unzondelelo is still active and collects money but it has been refused representation at the annual conference of the MCSA, although much younger organisations are represented at this level and are taken seriously. In spite of the changes in the country and improvements in the leadership of the MCSA, Unzondelelo has remained a separate and marginal group.

The Methodist Episcopal Church – Daniel Maake Mokone

The Rev Mangena Maake Mokone founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1892 and it was the first *Ethiopian* Church to be founded in South Africa. Mokone was born on 14 June 1851 at Bokgaga in the district of Sekhukhune Land. In 1870, at the age of 19, he left his community for Durban in Natal to look for a job at the sugar plantation. Mrs Annie Steele and her husband John employed him as a helper in their house. The Steeles were devout members of the Methodist Church at Aliwal Street in Durban. They encouraged him to attend church and become a Christian, as well as to attend night school.¹⁶ In 1875, he followed his class leader to Pietermaritzburg.¹⁷ In 1880, he offered his services for the ministry and was examined by the Rev Frederick Mason and Dr John Kilner at the Methodist conference in Pietermaritzburg.¹⁸ In November 1882, he was sent to Pretoria where he started the Wesleyan Church and a day school for black and coloured people in Pretoria East.¹⁹

In 1885, Mokone requested George Weavind to purchase a farm in Pretoria East for the building of a school.²⁰ Kilner, who was the then Secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS), donated 14 000 pounds for the purchase of the land and the construction of the school for natives. The school was named Kilnerton Institution in honour of Kilner's contribution. Mokone was ordained and stationed at Kilnerton as a teacher in 1888. In 1889, he was sent to Makapanstad, but was ordered back to teach at Kilnerton in 1890.²¹ His staff included the Revs Owen Watkins, George

¹⁶ Mokone (1935:6).

¹⁷ The term "class leader" is a Methodist term for a layperson with pastoral oversight to another.

¹⁸ The Rev John Kilner was sent by the British Methodist Society to encourage young Black Methodists to join the ministry and be ordained in the Methodist Church; however, the missionaries in the field in South Africa discouraged it.

¹⁹ Mokone (1935:8).

²⁰ Mokone (1935:8).

²¹ Mokone (1935:9).

Weavind, Henry Ntsiko and Mapogo Makgatho. It was during this appointment that Mokone experienced the racism and inequalities in terms of payment of stipends in the MCSA. He resigned from the Methodist Church on 24 October 1892. In his letter of resignation, he protested against racism in the church and explained that this was evident through the unequal remuneration packages and unequal power relations between white and black ministers.

Some of the reasons for his departure are found in his letter entitled the "Founder's Declaration of Independence".²² He protested that "native ministers only get from 24 to 60 per annum, while the white minister got 300 per annum".²³

Mokone left the Methodist Church to form the Ethiopian Church. He first used the term "Ethiopian" in South Africa, having been inspired by the verse in Psalm 60:3, namely, "*Ethiopia shall stretch its arms to the Lord*". This was to be a church for black people, financed by them and led by them, free of white domination and exploitation. Later, this church was to merge with the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) in the US, another church that was owned by black people. Thus, the lack of transparency and fairness in the way the Methodist Church handled its money led to the formation of a breakaway church.

The Umzi-wase-Topiya: James Mata Dwane

Umzi-wase-Topiya Church was founded by the Rev James Mata Dwane in 1892 after they have broken away from the Methodist Church in protest over money.²⁴ James Mata Dwane was born at Wukuwa in the Kamastone district in 1848.²⁵ Educated by the Wesleyan missionaries, he joined the ministry in 1876 and was ordained in 1881.²⁶ Being one of the few black bright clergy, he quickly rose through the ranks of the Methodist ministry.²⁷ He recognised the need for a school, the cost of which would be 600 pounds.²⁸ Chief William Shaw Kama donated land for this project.²⁹

After having made a presentation to the Wesleyan Synod in Queens-town in January 1892, Dwane was granted permission to build the school. He was given letters of introduction to fellow Methodists overseas to raise the

²² Mokone (1935:10).

²³ Mokone (1935:11).

²⁴ Mata was the name of his father; therefore, he was James ka Mata or the son of Mata Dwane.

²⁵ Dwane (1999:20).

²⁶ It must be noted that Wesleyan refers to the Methodist Church.

²⁷ For Dwane's biography, see Millard (1999:21).

²⁸ In the Methodist system, a circuit is a cluster of Methodist Churches in a geographical area under the leadership of a Superintendent Minister.

²⁹ See Kamphausen (1995:124).

funds and left for England in June 1892. However, he only managed to raise an amount of 333 shillings, which was far less than the amount for which he had hoped. When he returned, the church demanded that he handed over the money to the leadership so that it could be deposited into the Mission School's Fund.³⁰ He was disgusted by the church's treatment of mistrust and he decided to leave the Wesleyan Church in 1894. He then formed an Ethiopian Church that joined Mokone's Church. He and his followers later left Mokone's Church, which had become the AMEC, to form the Order of Ethiopia, by joining with the Anglican Church, so that it could give them validation in terms of episcopacy. Dwane's church was a second church and a third organisation formed because of the disagreement about money in the Methodist Church.³¹

The Methodist Church in Africa

A group of lay people in Johannesburg, who broke away from the Albert Street Methodist Church in protest over the increase of their quarterly contributions, formed the Methodist Church in Africa. On 18 September 1929, at a quarterly meeting of the black section of the circuit, the superintendent minister, the Rev E Carter, announced an increase in the giving from 2 shillings to 2/6.³² The members refused the increment, arguing that it was too much for them; that they were not able to afford paying it. This disagreement began a long and protracted struggle between the black members, the superintendent, and the MCSA, which went on for three years.

In one of the meetings, when the people continued to resist the increment, the superintendent minister gave them an ultimatum, saying, "This door is open; those who do not agree to the payment of the 2/6 are free to leave if they wish."³³ On 17 September 1931, the President of Conference, the Rev JW Allcock, attended the quarterly meeting to discuss this issue. He urged the members to agree to the increment.³⁴ The members protested by saying the following:

... Africans were taxed in many ways. In some cases, their property was confiscated, or they themselves were imprisoned if they failed to pay their dues. The government was very strict with poll tax, and defaulters were arrested. Many of the residents of W.N.T. and Kliptown were unable to pay rent, simply because their jobs had been given to white labourers.

³⁰ Kamphausen (1995:139).

³¹ Kamphausen (1995:92-93).

³² See Taunyane (2001:16).

³³ Taunyane (2001:16).

³⁴ The president of conference was the head of the Methodist denomination in those days.

To make things even more difficult, they also had to pay church subscriptions.³⁵

Unfortunately, when the meeting did not lead to any agreement, the superintendent decided to excommunicate the leaders of the dissenting group. Most of those who had been excommunicated were men. On 16 April 1933, the president of conference was leading a communion service at the Wesley Hall in Pritchard Street, popularly known as the Central Methodist Missions. When he got ready to administer the communion, the women refused to take communion from him unless he explained to them “why the church had decided to excommunicate our husbands”.³⁶ This was followed by pandemonium. The women overturned the communion table, the wine was spilt all over and the president, together with the ministers, quickly ran out of the service. That was the end of the service. The breakaway group formed a new church that they named the Bantu Methodist Church. On 28 May 1933, this group gathered for a formal march to sever the ties with the Methodist Church. Mr Leeuw remembered the day as follows:

The parade started at 10: am and rounded Sophiatown in a most picturesque manner, with the singing of hymns, short speeches at intervals, and prayers here and there. A beautiful, well-built grey ass, covered with a white sheet on which was written “Our Lord was sold for 30 pieces of silver; we are sold for 30 pence”, led the procession.³⁷

They invited the Rev Mdelwa Hlongwane, a Methodist minister in the same circuit, to leave the MCSA to become their leader.³⁸ There is evidence that Rev Hlongwane was sympathetic to the dissenters and that is why they chose him to be their leader after the secession. This started the formation of the Methodist Church in Africa. Again, the cause of disagreement was about money.

The United Methodist Church of Southern Africa: Don Dabula

Another case study I have decided to use in this article is the formation of the United Methodist Church of South Africa (UMSA). The reason I decided to use it is that money was also central to it breaking away from the MCSA in 1978, although it is not the only reason. Methodist ministers in the Transkei, who felt that they were not treated as equals to the whites, prompted this

³⁵ Taunyane (2001:17).

³⁶ Taunyane (2001:18).

³⁷ Taunyane (2001:24).

³⁸ Sundkler (1948:111).

breakaway. This was evident in their salaries and other, much lower benefits compared to those of their white counterparts. They were also concerned that the money collected from their congregations was not serving the local communities but was sent off to the headquarters of the Methodist Church to support the needs of the denomination. The decision to secede was taken at a secret meeting held on 2 June 1978 at Mthatha. Amongst the senior ministers in this meeting were the Revs Don Dabula, Weston Zweni, and T Bam. The unhappiness that led to the decision to secede was exacerbated by the Methodist Church's conference held in the Transkei in 1977. The delegates to the conference refused to send greetings to the President of the Transkei, Chief Kaiser Matanzima, because the Methodist Church did not recognise the homeland system of which Transkei was part. Chief Kaiser Matanzima, who himself was a committed Methodist and a member of conference, was offended by this act of defiance. In 1979, George Matanzima, who was the minister of justice in the Transkei government at that time, signed a decree that the MCSA be banned as a church from the Transkei. The Methodist Church was forced to forfeit all its properties, including church buildings, schools, missionary houses, etc. The UMSA took these over. This affected the MCSA because it meant that a number of its churches were lost, together with the monthly income that the church enjoyed, amounting to millions. The MCSA retaliated by holding back the pension of the ministers who joined the UMSA. The then Prime Minister (Kaiser Matanzima) offered an amount of R300 000 from the state coffers to support the ministers of UMSA who had forfeited their salaries and pensions from the MCSA. UMCSA has continued to survive on a much smaller scale, but is continually threatened by the MCSA as it claims its buildings and the congregation back.

It is apparent that a number of churches broke away from the MCSA because of conflict over money. In the following section, these case studies will be analysed.

Money is missions: Analysis of the reasons for the conflicts about money in the MCSA

As money became the determining factor for the missions of the church, the church had to understand that part of its responsibility was to raise funds. Without money, there are no missions and at the same time, the church cannot get money without becoming involved in missions. We will now discuss the role of the church in raising money for its work.

Resources for missions

From the beginning, either the sending agencies or the British government supported the Methodist missionaries. Although they did not have a lot of

money, most of them had a financial support base for the work they needed to do in the planting of their churches in South Africa. This already gave them power to make their own decisions about when, where and how to use the money. As the missionary work developed, more African agents joined in. They did not have access to financial resources, be it for missionary work or even for their own stipends. The access to financial resources empowered the missionaries over the missionary agents. This created tension and led to the formation of Unzondelelo, which aimed to raise funds for the African missionary agents in support of missionary work parallel to that of the white church. This caused embarrassment to the white church, which then claimed and controlled the newly formed movement. The fact that the missionaries had financial resources gave them an advantage and power over the native missionaries.

Racism

In his Founder's Declaration of Independence, Mangena Mokone expressed the hurt caused by black ministers not being respected by their white counterparts. He wrote the following:

Our meetings have been separated from the Europeans since 1886. And yet we were compelled to have a white chairman and secretary. (2) Our district meetings were held in a more or less barbaric manner. We are just like a lot of Kaffirs before the Landlord for passes. What the white man says is infallible, and no black man can prove or dare prove it wrong ... No native minister is honoured AMONG THE WHITE BRETHREN. The more the Native humbles himself, the more they make a fool of him.³⁹

The reason for this inequality is attributable to racism in the church. This racism translated into the unequal stipends that were paid to people based on colour.

Stipends

Most of the time, African missionary agents (as they were often referred to) experienced racism in the church, expressed through the lack of parity when it came to the payment of stipends.

In his declaration, Mokone observed as follows:

³⁹ Mokone (1935:11).

Native ministers only get from 24 pounds to 60 pounds per annum, while the white minister gets 300 pounds per annum.⁴⁰

Most of these indigenous pastors did the same work as their white missionary colleagues, but they received smaller stipends. DD Stormont highlighted this issue when he wrote the following:

The difference between them (native agents) and whites was noticeable also in other ways. They did more or less the same work as the European missionaries and accomplished in their opinion often more than the others. In spite of this their salaries were very small in comparison with the white missionary workers, for it was expected that they should not rise much above the position of the coloured people in their mode of living.⁴¹

In a response to Mokone's protest and resignation, the Methodist Church resolved: "With regard to the support in the ministry, the district meeting pointed out [in 1894] that, although Black ministers had no claim on the special funds, each case of genuine need would be considered on its own merit".⁴²

Taxation without representation

Another issue that haunted the Methodist church concerned giving in the church. The leadership, which were predominantly white and privileged, tended to decide on the amount that black people had to give, without them participating in the decision-making process. Therefore, blacks viewed this as "*taxation without representation*", which led to conflict.⁴³ Since black people were not part of the leadership of the church, they did not even understand why they were giving money to the church. That created tensions and it is still doing so up to this day.

Way forward for the MCSA and money

Unzondelelo is continuing to raise funds for missionary work in KwaZulu-Natal and for bursaries for ministerial students. The AME has no stipend

⁴⁰ Mokone (1935:11).

⁴¹ Stormont (1902:25).

⁴² Mokone (1935:10).

⁴³ The idea of "taxation without representation" was popular in the US amongst proponents of the Abolitionist movement, who were opposed to the taxation of African Americans not represented in the government.

parity at all, and ministers are paid according to the ability of their congregation. The Order of Ethiopia also has no stipend parity, and over the years, it has experienced breakaways because of this issue. The UMSA has divided into four different denominations because of the same issue, and its ministers are among the lowest paid. Therefore, these denominations have not done any better than the MCSA.

It must be noted that over the years, the MCSA has done more than the other denominations to deal with the issues concerning money. Many conferences have seen the issue being tabled and a call for parity in stipends being made. After a long and protracted debate, the conference of the MCSA of 2003 noted that the “stipend system causes injustice and does not favour missions and (b) many Ministers have been treated unfairly because of flaws in the present stipend system”. This conference resolved as follows:

- (a) Reject any system of giving stipends to ministers, which causes unfair disparities in stipends, and adopt the principle of parity in stipends.
- (b) Direct the general treasurers and MCO executive to conduct research and analyses in order to develop a stipend system that will enable the implementation of this decision.
- (c) Invite circuit quarterly meetings and district synods to give input on appropriate mechanisms for implementing this decision.
- (d) Mandate the connexional executive to take further decisions to implement this decision as soon as the mechanisms have been established.⁴⁴

In view of the above, it was agreed that there should be parity in basic stipends, travelling allowances and any additional stipends paid to ministers. Congregations can give more to their ministers according to resources available, but a rule stipulates that the basic scale must be applied equally to all Methodist ministers.⁴⁵ That is why the church pays its ministers according to their years of service. This has brought about a level of equality in the stipends paid to ministers. As a result, the MCSA is doing much better compared to the other churches that broke away from it.

What is debatable is whether the highly democratised and predominately elite-led Methodist Church and its comparatively highly organised, but very expensive-to-run institution has assisted or hindered its ability to resolve the financial issues that led to the breakaways. The response of the author of

⁴⁴ The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (2003).

⁴⁵ Minutes of Conference of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (1980:68).

the article to this question is that it has not. In fact, the Methodist Church has complicated the issue even further. Committed to the payment of equal stipends for ministers, the church has raised the stipends, allowances and other fringe benefits without necessarily considering that congregations are not equal in their financial strength. This means that poor congregations have had to battle to find the means to afford a minister, while it is relatively easy for wealthy congregations to afford a minister and even other personnel support. For example, in rural circuits, forty or more congregations, at a total distance of over 200 km apart, all depend on the ministry of one or two ministers who visit them only once a quarter to perform the sacraments and collect the offerings. In townships, there is one minister for every congregation or, at most, for three or four congregations, which have to share a minister.⁴⁶ In the suburbs, there is one minister per congregation and sometimes a second minister, a pastoral worker, and a secretary. There is no doubt that those who have the financial means have access to the best ministerial and pastoral resources.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the discussion in this article has drawn the attention to the fact that most of the secessions from the MCSA came about because of disagreements over money, its *collection*, *control* and *use*. Had there been transparency regarding monetary matters in the MCSA, fewer secessions would have taken place. At the heart of the conflict about money lie the racist attitudes of the white leadership of the church. This led to some of the prominent black leaders feeling disrespected and discriminated against in a church that taught equality and salvation for all people. The black leaders also realised that the church was applying the principle of taxing people without their representation in the leadership structures of the church. Despite the fact that the leadership of the Methodist Church is predominantly black, ministry has become more expensive for ordinary congregations. Moreover, the system of apportionment is still perpetuating the taxation model in which congregations have to collect money to support the top-heavy structure of the institution of the church, while the church does little to impact local levels using this money. Poor communities have to raise millions each year, which are then transferred from the community to the coffers of the denomination in the name of supporting the “missions” of the church. It costs money to run a highly institutionalised denomination like the MCSA. There is the need to pay the bishops, ministers and lay workers, to build and maintain their houses, to buy and maintain their cars, to pay insurance coverage and retirement schemes, and many more. As a result, some ministers of the MCSA are

⁴⁶ Balia, *Black Methodists and White Supremacy*, 35, 36, 41.

no different from some other denominations that preach the prosperity gospel. Their “mission” is to collect money to meet their set targets. When one considers this, the church has not solved the problem of money. This problem is here to stay and it will continue to threaten the unity and stability of the church in the future because there can be no missions without money. And there can be no money for the church without its missions to the people.

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