



THE AFRICANIZATION OF THE
METHODIST CHURCH: WITH SPECIAL
FOCUS ON THE REVS. ZACCHEUS R.
MAHABANE AND THE REV. SETH
MOKITIMI

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BY

HENRY MCHLAULI

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SETH M. MOKITIMI**

By

Henry Mchlauli

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To the memory of my father
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ABBREVIATIONS

AAC:	All-African Convention
AIC:	Independent African Church
AME:	African Methodist Episcopal Church
ANC:	African National Congress
APO:	African Political Organisation
BMC:	Black Methodist Consultation
CAD:	Coloured Affairs Department
CCD:	Christian Citizenship Department
CCSA:	Christian Council of South Africa
CI:	Christian Institute
CYL:	Congress Youth League
DRC:	Dutch Reformed Church
IDAMF:	Inter-Denominational African Ministers Federation
IDAMASA:	Inter-Denominational African Ministers Association of Southern Africa
IDAMWASA	Inter-Denominational Woman's Ministers Association
GMC:	General Missionary Council
JRC:	Justice and Reconciliation Committee
LMS:	London Missionary Society
MCSA:	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
NEUM:	Non-European Unity Movement
PAC:	Pan Africanist Congress
PCSA:	Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa
SABC:	South African Broadcasting Corporation

SADF:	South African Defense Force
SANC:	South African Native Congress
SANNC:	South African Native National Congress
UMCSA:	United Methodist Church of Southern Africa
VOC:	Dutch East Indian Company
WCC:	World Council of Churches
YMG:	Young Mens Guild

ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses two African church leaders, the Rev. Zaccheus R. Mahabane and the Rev. Seth Molefi Mokitimi, and the role they played in eliciting change in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. The thesis observes that social, political and economic factors influenced change in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). The role played by black leaders was important in moving the church out of its past to become a voice for the voiceless. Though Mahabane's and Mokitimi's social locations were different, the causes to which they gave their full measure of devotion were comparable. They both served the church in different ways and at times in similar committees where they strove for the realization of African tradition and customs within the church. They challenged the Church in their own way to consider the African cultures and tradition. The study of both theologians clearly demonstrates that they did in their own way contribute towards the Africanization of the church although they were deeply anchored in a church tradition. Each of them developed a theological ethic towards this end

This thesis further argues that both leaders attempted to challenge the church towards indigenization and Africanization, incorporating African values into the life of the church and addressing the question of how these can contribute new facets to the church. Issues such as polygamy, African rites, lobola and circumcision are now on the Methodist agenda. An investigating committee on the question of the impact of African customs on the Church has been instituted. Both Mahabane and Mokitimi played a pertinent role in the recognition of African customs and culture by the Methodist Church, which has happened only since 1960. The emergence of a highly articulate and purposeful contribution from black clergy,

the subsequent election of a black President of Conference, the appointment of a Commission on Africanization and the role of the Manyanos all tell of a Methodist Church that strives to be of Africa. The Commission on Africanization has been tasked with defining the concept of Africanization in relation to the function of the church in respect of liturgy and form of worship. Both Mahabane and Mokitimi ensured that the traditional beliefs would find their fullest expression in the church, and thus assured that the MCSA affirmed its African roots.

The Obedience Conference of 1981, the most representative assembly in 165 years of the history of the MCSA, was a clear commitment to Africa. The conference affirmed that the MCSA is a Church in Africa and it is vital that the riches of Africa be appropriated into the church worship, music and liturgies. The institution of the commission on Africanization suggests that the Methodist Church is committed to enforcing Africanization and indigenization in the church. The call for a *"Journey to a New Land"* is another aspect which demonstrates that the Methodist Church is willing and committed to shaping the mindset of its members.

This thesis further observes that the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) and Manyano's in the Methodist Church served as important Africanizing mechanisms in the church. They have never given in to western influences but have striven to maintain their own values. The contribution of the Manyano's in the times of the struggle was essential. The Manyano's were successful in empowering black people in the church, especially women. The role they played was that of shaking off the shackles of colonialism by changing the mindset of the people for the realization of an African identity. Their all-night revival meetings, African-

style singing, dancing and movement, exposition of the Word by human laity, healing and exorcism, etc are important African experiences that the Manyano's made use of.

The thesis further offers a critical analysis on the BMC and argues that it is no longer relevant given its exclusivity in nature. The author proposes an alternative structure or a restructuring of the BMC to become an inclusive structure that will speed up the move towards the Africanization of the church. The thesis further offers a comparative analysis between the leaders under investigation and notes that both leaders espoused an interpretive framework for analyzing the South African situation. They both discussed similar concepts such as reconciliation, the role of the church and social change, and were committed in their own way of the welfare of South Africa. However, they differed in their political agenda. Mahabane appeared more radical than Mokitimi. The thesis notes that Mokitimi's uncritical political praxis is a microcosm of the kind of theology perpetuated by the Methodist Church.

The process of indigenization and Africanization has become a common denominator for transformation in the church. This thesis notes that the level at which churches themselves have attempted to grapple with this remains to be answered. It appears that some churches are not concerned about the realization of this transformation. The debate and realization of it is only centered among theologians of the mainline churches, such as the English-speaking churches. The question is, is there any impetus to "ring the bells" for Pentecostal theologians and those of other charismatic churches or to what extent are the theological seminaries and Biblical Correspondence Colleges contributing to this? This thesis submits that even though the debate on indigenization and Africanization is dominated by Christian theologians, it should rather not be regarded as a Christian endeavour only. All theologians

irrespective of their religion should engage in this realization. To commit oneself to it is to search for a greater unity of the religions practised in Africa. This realization expressed in language, worship etc holds us all together, and to recognize it is to come to terms with Africa, shaking off European dominance

This thesis shows that the Methodist Church has committed itself to this debate but, even so, there are those members who remain skeptical of the process. The only remedy is for the Church to transform their attitude. There is a need to conscientise ministers around the process of the indigenization and Africanization of the Church, so that they will help in shaping the mindset of the people. For the realization of this, all Methodists must join in making it happen.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

My interest in researching this topic relates to the current black church historiographical problem. The vast body of literature on the contribution of Africans to mission Christianity has been documented almost entirely by white historians. For instance, literature available on the life of Tiyo Soga has been extensively documented by white historians; it was only recently that a black perspective was offered by Gideon Khabela¹ and Malinge Njeza.² A similar gap exists with regard to Nehemiah Tile, Indigenous African Churches and other African initiated Churches, to name but a few examples.

A conference on the Making of an Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa, which was held at the University of Natal from 25-27 October 1994, demonstrated the importance of understanding the African contribution to Christianity in the sub-continent. Researchers who presented at that conference noted that Africans themselves should write about their own experiences and about their own people.³ However, it appears that not even this conference was fully committed to the injunction to Africans to write about their own experience and their own people since, of the nineteen papers presented at that conference, only nine were presented by blacks. Nonetheless the conference was an attempt to close the historiographical gap by encouraging blacks to write about their own people.

At the conference Buti Tlhagale⁴ enquired about what exactly was the contribution of African agency and what had happened to the customs of engaging agents. The questions of scholarship, African agency in historical account, and the frustrations of African people are

evident in a range of the presentations. The fact that African authors are not mentioned at all in the eighteenth century and only rarely in the nineteenth century suggested that there is still a great need for African contribution to church historiography. That this has not been encouraged can only mean that church historiographers have committed themselves to write only about their own people.

This thesis is a contribution towards bridging the historiographic gap, as it documents the lives and works of two black leaders within the Methodist Church the Rev. Zaccheus R. Mahabane and the Rev. Seth Molefi Mokitimi. The study seeks to investigate the role played by these leaders towards the Africanization of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). The quest for Africanization of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa dates from the first conference of the Methodist Church in 1883. Black people sought to challenge the white ideological terrain. Black awareness expressed the need to be involved in leadership structures and decision making. No greater tribute could be paid to Zaccheus R. Mahabane, Seth Molefi Mokitimi and other black leaders in the struggle for a just and equal society than to state that their influence was largely responsible for the realisation of this ideal.

In Antonio Gramsci's book *Letters from Prison (1891-1937)*⁵ the term Organic Intellectuals refers to that category of people that is created by every society alongside itself. Such people have no independent social base. They are generated from within specific groups and are themselves a group of a certain epoch. Gramsci's definition of organic intellectuals could be applied to the leaders under investigation. They were of a group or class that appeared on

the stage of history, a group of a specific epoch. According to Gramsci a new generation will produce or inherit organic intellectuals

In Cornel West's study on Martin Luther King Jr. as an organic intellectual he writes: "...King was an organic intellectual of the first order-a highly educated and informed thinker with organic links to ordinary folk. Despite his petit bourgeois origins, his deep roots in the black church gave him direct access to the life-worlds of the majority of black southerners. In addition, his education at Morehouse College, Crozier Theological Seminary and Boston university provided him with opportunities to reflect upon various anti-colonial struggles around the world, especially those in India and Ghana. This also entitled him to respect and admiration in the eyes of the black people, including the 'old' black middle class (composed primarily of teachers and preachers). Last his Christian outlook and personal temperament ensured openness to potential allies."

What Cornel West is saying is that these intellectuals are rooted in their community. Secondly, they have knowledge of their own realities. Thirdly, their commitments to their community are a function of their religious and political commitment to the interest and aspirations of that community.

It was in this way that the Rev. Zaccheus R. Mahabane and the Rev. Seth Molefi Mokitimi were each deeply rooted in the struggle for liberation within and outside the church. It is impossible to separate these intellectuals' political involvement from their church involvement. They were both committed Christians who were opposed to the evils of injustice in society and in the church.

Zaccheus R. Mahabane symbolizes the struggle of the African masses against colonialism. His commitment to the African community embodied the memory of the gallant anti-colonial struggle of the era just preceding his birth. Mahabane represented a progressive institutional discourse to challenge the status quo. His opposition, struggle, and inspiration of the African masses galvanized him into conflict with the ruling powers. He was one of the first to express the importance of the African Renaissance. Having recognized the colonial onslaught, he was determined to mobilize the African masses against western culture, politics and economics and remind them of the importance of their customs and values.

Seth Molefi Mokitimi, a teacher and a preacher, refused to accept the values of western civilization and could not stand the pernicious doctrine of white supremacy on which the dispossession of Africans was founded publicly. He deplored the South African status quo on several occasions. It was while he was a teacher at Healdtown that he first lamented the dominant character of white supremacists. Seth Molefi Mokitimi's involvement in the structures for change was his concrete struggle for liberation. He was without doubt determined to oppose colonialism and racism. He effectively used the Christian text as a source for bringing his concerns across. However, issues of justice and democracy were important for him. His incumbency as first black President of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa challenged racism in and outside the church as a venomous phenomenon that needed to be eradicated.

1.2 Objectives of the study

There are various factors against which the Africanization of a church denomination can be measured. The contributions of the African Independent Churches have received adequate attention but not the contribution of Africans in mainline churches. To understand the contribution of black leaders in mainline churches is to understand the patterns of Africanization in these churches. As this study investigates the contribution of the Rev. Zaccheus R. Mahabane and the Rev. Seth Molefi Mokitimi within the Methodist Church, it assists readers to understand the patterns of Africanization within that Church. In describing the experiences of these leaders, this thesis notes the unique way in which they managed to maintain loyalty to their rituals and custom while remaining within the mainline church. It is the objective of this study to demonstrate that blacks within mainline churches have played an equally important role to those in the independent churches in promoting Africanisation in the church. The bodies (BMC and the Manyano's) that sprang up in the churches are an expression of African identity, and played an important role in the struggle for the Africanization of the Church.

1.3 Research hypothesis

The awareness of discrimination against blacks even in the church aroused some competent and capable black leaders, especially the Rev. Zaccheus R. Mahabane and the Rev. Seth Molefi Mokitimi to fight against it. These leaders were renowned figures, who played an active role in both church and society. The hypothesis on which the research presented in this thesis is based is thus: The roles played by the Rev. Zaccheus R. Mahabane and the Rev.

Seth Molefi Mokitimi in the struggle for recognition and empowerment of Africans within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and in society at large were instrumental in effecting transformation leading to the Africanization of the MCSA. In order to gain insight into the struggle of black Methodists under apartheid, it is necessary for scholars and general readers to know the contribution these leaders made towards the Africanization of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Their lives symbolize the Black Methodist struggle within the South African context. Since they were in contact with the oppressed community, they articulated the feelings and ideas of the oppressed.

1.4 Methodology

Research design

The research has been carried out using the qualitative design technique. Open-ended questionnaires were used allowing interviewees to freely divulge their impressions of the subjects. The questionnaires were differently structured for different respondents. This was simply to collect data for the specific areas of study. The Western Cape and Eastern Cape were the selected areas for collecting data. Only contemporaries of the leaders were interviewed (see Appendix A-F).

Interviews

Interviews were conducted and recordings of interviews already in my possession were transcribed. Only six people out of ten identified as possible respondents agreed to be interviewed. Interviewees were clergy and people who knew the leaders Mahabane and Mokitimi (see Appendix A-F).

Literature research

Libraries that were visited were Cory Library at Rhodes University, Mayibuye Centre at University of the Western Cape, Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town and South African Public Library, Cape Town. Documents, minutes, reports, letters, speeches and any secondary documents were analyzed. These data provided an understanding of the subjects under investigation. This approach helped me to understand the social and theological context of the subjects. It was important to study their sermons in order to understand who the leaders really were. I have also revisited my Honours report on the Black Methodist Leaders and Apartheid in considering their role in the liberation struggle outside the Church per se.

1.5. Concept clarity

Africanization here means a serious engagement with the inadequacy of history in recording the political, religio-socio-economic conditions of the time, due to the previous refusal of historians/missionaries to take African agency seriously. The current Africanization/Afrocentrism/African Renaissance discourse has as its main objective

reinterpreting the past in order to understand present reality. However, this is understood differently by different people.⁷ The critique that Africanization/Afrocentrism is captive in Eurocentric worldview and racist in its judgement and mistakenly tries to locate a cultural unity on the African continent⁸ is very problematic. We must understand that apartheid racial legislation has entrenched in our society a series of denial attitudes of African people for their African culture. The fact that racialism and European culture is still dominant in our society suggests a need for deeper engagement with this reality. It is important that this project of African Renaissance/Africanization eliminate the “blind spots” of those who refuse to accept the fact that we need to come to terms with African reality. Moreover, this Africanization is about changing the mindset of both Europeans and Africans (who have given in to European culture) to come to terms with the reality that many South Africans face. As the hardship of suffering, unemployment, poverty, homelessness and inequality continue to haunt us in this new democratic dispensation, it is important that we continue to inquire about the past to unravel the racialism that we still face today. It is only then that we can have a genuine Africanization. Even for the church, to continue to address the imbalance and ignorance on African culture and African agency we need to reveal, and strive to complement, where any effort has been made in this regard.

Africanization should not be regarded as a racialistic project, not even as a project aims to replace whites with blacks, or for blacks to take over white-dominated institutions. However, it needs to be seen as a project that brings “light” where there is “darkness” or any hidden issues which are a threat to society. Africanization is about making a claim to be included in the world history. It has to do with promoting an authentic view of the contributions of Africans to the world. By so doing, it challenges the Eurocentric claim of

superiority.⁹ Africanization is really about a mental emancipation in which black people will be liberated from inferiority complex and white from the superiority complex.

1.6 Justification of the Study

The study is important in that it contributes to the current understanding of the blending of Christianity with African culture. Its essential relevance and meaningfulness arise from the continued process of shaping Christianity in Africa. It also presents a challenge to the church as an institution to order its life accordingly. The choice of the two leaders as subjects for study is important because they genuinely represent parts of the process of Africanization in the Methodist Church. Both represent an important epoch in the history of South Africa in general and the Methodist Church in particular. The study uses these case studies as important windows through which the Africanization of the church can be seen. Mahabane's role demonstrates a unique understanding of Africanization in general as engaging with the authorities to force them to recognize the potential of Africans in the making of politics in South Africa. Mokitimi's leadership in the church and continued engagement with the African culture enable us to see the beginnings of the Methodist attempt to rethink their hostility towards African culture. Suffice it to say their reconsideration would not have come about without blacks themselves challenging the church to move in this direction-hence the importance of Mokitimi's and Mahabane's roles.

1.5 Outline of Thesis

The **Introduction** to the thesis describes the background of the study, the historiographical problem the objectives of the study and the methodology used. The concept of Africanization is elucidated and the justification for the study is presented in the light of what has been discussed in this chapter

Chapters one deals with the origins of the Methodist Church in South Africa. Here the writer discusses the early tradition of the Methodist Church and its reluctance to promote black upward mobility, even though the blacks were in the majority in its membership.

Chapters two and three place the leaders Zaccheus R. Mahabane and Seth Molefi Mokitimi in the context of the history of the church and demonstrate that each played a unique role and were pivotal in contributing to the Africanization of the Methodist Church. What is also featured is their particular way of blending African rituals and customs with Christianity.

Chapter four is concerned with the Africanization of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. The frustrations that led to resistance by African members in the form of breakaways and the formation of separate organization are seen as leading to the desire for Africanization in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. The chapter shows that the emergence of an African elite served as an important window for the realization of Africanization in mainline churches

Chapter five concludes by summarizing the main findings and making recommendations for future research.

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Chapter one

A Brief Overview of the Methodist Church History in Southern Africa

When missionaries evangelized indigenous communities, it was with an assertion that Africans were an irreligious community. This assertion assisted the missionaries to reconstruct the social and political structures of the indigenous community. What is obvious is that there was verbal engagement between missionaries and missioned. In other words, missionaries explained their evangelistic objective. At the point of engagement, missionaries could not have done this task alone without the help of indigenous persons. Since indigenous communities understood their own culture they were the ones who interpreted their culture to missionaries, who misconstrued it times as van der Kemp and others did. The giving to missionaries of African names such for example, the naming of van der Kemp as *Nyengane Tinkhanna* and *Jankanna* (which means the one who appeared sneakingly or as if by accident), demonstrates that both missioned and missionaries were affected by each culture. However, the missionaries tended to dominate and destroy African culture. This for me suggests the initial impetus for the move towards Africanization.

The myth that the history of South Africa began with the arrival of the Dutch East India company (VOC) in 1652 is not correct. Before the arrival of the Dutch settlers, indigenous people such as the Khoi-Khoi and the Bantu-speaking people were already settled.¹ These communities had their own belief systems: for instance, the Khoisan religion was related to practical daily needs in its emphasis on rain and healing, planting and farming which were important for the survival of these people. Their deity was the creator/*kaggen*, which

manifested itself in different animals, in ancestors and even in ordinary people. The Khoi-Khoi acknowledged *Tsui//Goab* as their supreme God, who was in constant struggle with *Guanab* the god of evil. The ancestors provided a link between the Khoi-Khoi and the *Tsui//Goab*. The Bantu-speaking people also believed in a Supreme Being. The name of the supreme creator God varied from one people to another. The Sotho *Tswana* spoke of *Modimo*, the Xhosa of *Qamatha*² or *Thixo* and the Zulu of *uMvelinqangi* or *uNkulunkulu*.

During the eighteenth century in the Cape, the frontier was dominated by different Xhosa tribes, known as the Mpondo, Mpondomise, Bomvana, Thembu and Xhosa. The Xhosa consisted of two royal lineages. East of the Kei River were those of the Gcaleka lineage, while the Rharhabe were on the west. The Rharhabe were further divided between the followers of Ngqika and Ndlambe. These nations were rich in cattle farming and were very religious, following African traditional beliefs.

While journeying in search of land, survivors from shipwrecks, travellers and visiting colonial authorities came across these different groups of people. In their journeying, they observed the value of the land together with the cattle that the Africans owned. The Dutch-speaking frontiersmen saw the land as the right place for grazing their stock and appropriated it. This invasion resulted in serious confrontation. Continued border conflict escalated into war from the 1770s onwards.³

The next contact the Xhosa people had with whites arose from the advent of Christian missionaries. When the London Missionary Society (LMS) sent van der Kemp on mission work in 1799, he started this work among the Xhosa people. van der Kemp approached

Ngqika's territory and explained his presence in the area and that his main objective was evangelistic. However his worldview did not coincide with that of the missioned: *"If by religion we understand reverence for God, or the external action by which that reverence is expressed, I never could perceive that they had any religion, nor any idea of the existence of a God"*.⁴ The language barrier could have been a reason for the serious misunderstanding between van der Kemp and the Xhosa people, which could suggest why he misunderstood the religion and customs of the African people. van der Kemp emphasized personal conversion and faith in the saving gospel of Christ. He believed that "the word", expressed in preaching and prayer, rather than sacraments administered by a priest, was the central channel of God's grace. His message became heavily appropriated into the Xhosa religious belief. van der Kemp's message was also incorporated into the "Great Hymn" of Ntsikana the Xhosa.⁵ Ntsikana's "Great Hymn", which was first published in the Wesleyan Book of Songs in Grahamstown in 1835, was an expression of the continued effort to Africanise the Christian gospel. Though he gave in to the Christian tradition Ntsikana never forsook his traditional roots.⁶

van der Kemp later turned to working among the Khoikhoi rather than the Xhosa people because he perceived a greater need, which was more socio-economic than evangelical. He was committed to strive for the political and economic rights of the oppressed. Some scholars⁷ regard him as the best missionary of his time, though in evaluating his work we cannot disregard the contribution he made towards undermining the Xhosa culture. His limited understanding of the Xhosa worldview, despite his early encounters with Ntsikana and Ngqika, was the main reason for his undermining the Xhosa culture and political stability.

When the British expelled the Xhosa from the Zuurveld in 1812 to make way for white settlement, the Xhosa were moved from their land, which was their only source of survival. There were therefore repeated reactions against the settlers. Nxele and Ntsikana emerged as Xhosa prophets, called to deliver them from the hands of the settlers. Each had a different strategy to oppose the colonial aggressors, Nxele believing in militant resistance whereas Ntsikana was more concerned for the transformation of the individual. In 1817, a feud broke out between Ngqika and Ndlambe for power over the Rharhabe Xhosa, west of the Kei River. John Cradock, who was governor at the time, commanded a military force under Lieutenant Colonel Jon Graham to assist Ndlambe.⁸ However, Ndlambe's relationship with John Cradock collapsed when the governor took advantage of the situation by allowing settlers to take Ndlambe's land and property.⁹ Ndlambe's defeat brought more confrontation and bloodshed. In May 1819 Nxele headed a large force against the British, determined to drive them back across the Zwartkop River. After much bloodshed Nxele was eventually forced to surrender.¹⁰ He was imprisoned on Robben Island where he died a year later while trying to escape. After defeating both Nxele and Ndlambe the British declared the area between the Fish and Keiskama River a neutral zone, which incorporated all Ngqika's territory.

Methodism was brought to the Cape by the British garrison in 1806. George Middlemiss and Sergeant Kendrick were the first to bring Methodism to South Africa. In 1814 John Mc Kenny was sent to South Africa to preach to the soldiers and to pay special attention to the slave population.¹¹ His successor, Barnabas Shaw, who arrived in 1816, preached without permission, like John Wesley.¹² Barnabas Shaw then left Cape Town in order to pioneer missionary work in the North. He was refused permission to preach but he ignored

the sanction of the governor and moved onwards. Eventually, after much confrontation, he accepted the invitation of the Rev. H. Schmelen of the London Missionary Society to begin mission work in Namaqualand, where he founded a mission station at Lilyfontain in the Kamiesberg district. In 1816 at Kamiesberg Shaw converted Jacob Links, who was employed as an interpreter and teacher. Jacob Links became the first 'native' agent in South Africa. His conversion was followed by those of Hendricks Smith and Gert Links. At times these three were left in charge of the mission station. Shaw also made use of the talents of a 41 year old local preacher, William Pike, who was a very dedicated man. John Ayliff is reported to have written "at 10 o'clock it was announced that divine service would be performed...Taking a stroll among the tents I saw a short thin man I thought...he must be preaching for he held a book in his hand, and seemed to be talking. As I got near I found this man's name was Pike...and that he was a Methodist".¹³

Methodism spread further when the 1820 settlers arrived in the Eastern Cape. Among them was Reverend William Shaw (no relative of Barnabas Shaw) who was brought by the Sephton family and established Wesleyan preaching centres for the settlers, led by class leaders and local preachers. Despite his initial failure to achieve spreading the gospel of Christ to the Africans, he was determined to do so. In 1822 he inaugurated the first Methodist Church and a Chapel in Salem. Shaw's aim was to establish a chain of mission stations from the colonial borders in the west to Delagoa Bay on the east coast. This strategy received momentum because of the intervention of John Philip, of the London Missionary Society, who persuaded Sir Rufane Shawe Donkin, acting governor while Lord Charles Somerset was on leave in Britain, to rescind the colonial policy which prevented missionaries from operating freely across colonial borders. As part of their missionary

journey, William Shaw and his wife Ann crossed the Fish River together with William Shepstone and his family in 1823. They met Ngqika before journeying to the Gqunukwebe tribe between the Keiskama and the Buffalo Rivers, where Chief Pato gave them permission to establish the Wesleyville mission.¹⁴ In 1827 William Shrewbury sought the aid of the landdrost of the Albany District to persuade the Gcaleka tribe under Chief Hintsa to allow the establishment of Butterworth, the third mission in the chain. This was followed by other mission stations. In 1829 William Shepstone established Morley at the kraal of the Bomvana chief. Clarkbury, the fifth mission in the series, was established in April 1830 among Vusani's Tembu by Richard Haddy, and the sixth, Buntingville, was pioneered one hundred and twenty kilometres north of the Umtata River among Faku's Mpondo by William Boyce. More Wesleyan stations emerged between the Fish and the Kei Rivers which included Newtondale, Durban, Peddie, Lesseyton and Healdtown. When Shaw received permission from Ndlambe to appoint a missionary in his territory he appointed Stephen Kay. This move led to the establishment of yet another mission station, Mount Coke.

In 1882, the British conference of the Methodist Church granted autonomy to the South African Methodist Church. In the following year the first Conference of the Methodist Church was held in Cape Town. During this period Methodism became particularly strong on the Witwatersrand, which was growing rapidly after the discovery of gold. The growth rate in the Methodist Church was even more remarkable among the African of this area population. This may have been partly due to the emphasis laid by the church on organization, with its system of classes, including the use of local preachers, and on mission-planting in rural areas, which matched the Scottish Presbyterians' enthusiasm for education in the mission field. However the remarkable growth rate among Africans arose mainly

from the efforts of Africans themselves. There are many examples that validate this; let me mention a few of these.

In 1882 in Thaba 'Nchu one famous convert, Molema, the brother of the Barolong chief Montshiwa, established a church with 279 members. In 1885 Jonas Malefo acted as an interpreter for Owen Watkins while he was preaching in Potchefstroom. Watkins was impressed by Malefo, whose interpretation of his sermons was so powerful that many people were converted on hearing it. Malefo at times repeated Watkins sermons by preaching them himself to other Africans in their own languages. John Klassen who was converted in 1866 while living in the Cape Colony, became a lay preacher there and was later stationed in Potchefstroom as a lay agent. His work at Potchefstroom was most effective. He remained there until 1888, when he was transferred to assist in Johannesburg. In the Waterberg district Klaas Oliphant worked together with Hans Aapie, Joseph Matunte, Philip Mushi and Daniel Mahlangu in 1886 towards establishing the Methodist religion among the Africans. Henry Ntsiko (1888), Maptle Magolo, Samuel Matulelong (1892) and John Klassen are also reported to have made valuable contributions to Methodist missionary work in the Potchefstroom district. John Masike also helped in the expansion of Methodism and at times assisted with the Holy Communion services. The work of Jeremia Mqwa (1853), John Motaping (1892), Stephen Gqosho (1896), John Bowen, Elish Leshome and William Moeletsi played a further part in the flourishing of Methodism in South Africa.¹⁵ These local preachers, lay-agents and evangelists, all played a very important role in the establishment of the Methodist Church. Though there were many adverse factors that they had to contend with; they were successful in ensuring the spread of Methodism.

Joan Millard in her thesis on the growth of Methodism in the Witwatersrand at the end of the 19th century, suggests that Africans needed guidance from other missionaries. I am not so sure what kind of guidance Millard is referring to, but if she refers to missionary work *per se*, than I contest this statement outright. Millard should not forget that Africans preached in the language of the receiver which was not necessarily the preachers native language. The fact that some succeeded in establishing Methodist Churches proved their ability and zeal for Methodist expansion among their own people, and therefore they did not need any guidance. The fact that these men took the Christian message to different native tribes served as an important contributing factor towards Africanization of the church. The frustrations that they all had to contend with when their cultures were constantly insulted caused them to group together, so that they held gatherings to discuss issues that faced them and sought means to incorporate their own culture into the church.¹⁶ They traveled on foot to remote areas in spreading the word, and without their help Methodism could not have flourished as it has done in South Africa.

The cultures and belief systems of Africans continued to be questioned by white missionaries, especially when Methodist or Wesleyan Missionaries encountered the Xhosa people. Missionaries report different names for the understanding of God, for example (*uHlanga*) source of all things, (*Qamata*) the Great Spirit, *uThixo*, *umDala* and *uMenzi*. In spreading the Christian gospel, they simply appropriated the Xhosa terminology for the divine to suit the Christian understanding of God.¹⁷ There was no attempt to relate African worldview with Christian content.

The mission station was the place where Africans came to worship and listen to the sermons of missionaries. Frequently themes of heaven, death and the afterlife were preached. These concepts were different from the beliefs of the Xhosa people. The idea that 'one's soul should be saved' to avoid punishment in a world to come was foreign to the Xhosa people. For the missionaries it was extremely important to win the soul of the pagan, and their mission was to make sure the African people understood the Christian faith. Missionaries failed to understand the concept of close community, and the belief regarding the role of ancestors in protecting the community, and of the diviner (Qqira) in uncovering any source of social disruption. This was simply because missionaries regarded the Xhosa belief system as pagan and contrary to the Christian faith. However, missionaries' attempts to enforce Christian concepts on the Xhosa people explain their refusal to concern themselves with ancestor worship. To ensure the cooperation of African people missionaries at times destroyed their social structure leaving them with no choice but to turn to mission stations. These patterns were very evident in the missionary activity of the nineteenth century.

Wesleyans or Methodists were also involved in the destabilization of the Xhosa society, the Fingos or Ama-Fengu (a name given to refugees that settled among the Pondo), the Tembu and the Gcaleka Xhosa under Hintsa. The Mfengu people were a marginalised group who were primarily attracted by John Ayliff, Shrewsbury and other Wesleyan or Methodist missionaries in the area.¹⁸ At first, there was a good relationship between Hintsa and the missionaries and he offered protection to both the Mfengu refugees and the missionaries. However, this relationship did not last. The missionaries were very skeptical of Hintsa's behaviour towards the refugees, arguing that Hintsa had reduced the Mfengu people to 'slaves'. This brought the relationship of the missionaries with Hintsa into serious jeopardy,

such that Hintsu accused Ayliff of being a colonial spy. John Ayliff then appealed to the British forces to rescue the Mfengu from captivity under Hintsu. When the resulting war broke out the Methodist missionaries pleaded with the British force for the safety of the Mfengu people but, in the midst of this havoc, Ayliff removed himself to Butterworth where he relocated himself at Clarkbury.

The continued ambivalence of missionary involvement in the wars of 1834, 1846 and 1850-1853 led to the final destruction of African tribal system. The Xhosas were driven off most of their land. Their customs and social structures were depleted, although their culture was not totally destroyed. However, missionary work continued to undermined the traditional belief systems of Africans.¹⁹ Education became an important tool used by missionaries to colonise²⁰ in such a way that they became colonisers of consciousness,²¹ separating Africans from their cultural roots. Though some missionaries valued African customs, the general attitude of most was to condemn African customs and replace them with western values.²² This attitude was adopted despite the fact that African settled first in South Africa, and the Khoi Khoi were resident in the southern part of the country from the beginning of the Common Era, before whites made their first appearance in South Africa²³

It was against this background that the struggle against colonialism and white domination in South Africa emerged. The complicity of missionaries in this regime did not go unnoticed as many blacks emerged as a strong force to challenge the status quo. Pressure mounted both within and outside the church. Individual leaders and organizations emerged within the church to challenge the church hierarchy and the social order of the day. The desire of African chiefs such as Cetshwayo and others to resist colonial domination was acute. The

conflict was exacerbated as more and more colonisers invaded the lands of the African tribes. The invasion of Zululand in 1870 was intended as a means to destabilise the African community and yet it was seen by the Anglican Bishop Henry Callaway as 'the God-sent power to effect change'.²⁴ This fact clearly reveals that missionaries formed part of the destruction of African rituals and customs. It is further reported that the Tswana tribe attacked the LMS missionary station in the Northern Cape in 1878. As has been indicated the colonizers were aware of the threat and were determined to fight back. During the final frontier wars in the Eastern Cape (1877-78) and the Zulu wars of 1879 and 1884, the British and colonial forces succeeded in destabilising the African community. This division helped in the planting of colonialism²⁵ and enforced proletarianization. As African converts were relocated by missionaries on mission stations, they were separated from their cultural roots and the social structures that had previously controlled their lives. Missionaries were determined that conversion to Christianity should lead to the adoption of the European culture, which they saw as part of their mandate from the Christian scriptures. African culture was rejected, because the goal of the mission was salvation, redeeming the "heathen". Education brought immense benefit in terms of conversion to Christianity. It paved the way for a true African elite that continued the struggle against colonial domination, though at times assisting in the planting of Christianity.

The expansion of Christianity among the African population has been attributed to missionary activity and the role of Africans in it has always been neglected, it is well documented that the African elite themselves paved the way. The fact that some Africans in the Methodist Church were ordained e.g. Tengo Jabavu and others assisted in the expansion of missionary work among Africans. Jabavu made a significant contribution to African

political life and helped in the expansion of Christianity.²⁶ The ordination Charles Pamla, William Shaw Kama, and James Lwana by Bishop Taylor²⁷ represents an important landmark in the expansion of Christianity among the African people. In 1890, Black evangelists and local preachers pioneered the Methodist expansion in Kimberley, the Orange Free State, the Witwatersrand and Natal.²⁸ The substantial African contribution to the expansion of Christianity demonstrates the important role Africans played in spreading mission Christianity.²⁹ The continued training and ordination provided a new body of African leaders that emerged to fight for the rights of Africans. Nevertheless, Black people sought every means to challenge the complicity of the church in the colonial regime and the failure of the church to consider black upward mobility. Many chose to break away from the colonial domination which subsequently led to the formation of an Independent African Church (AIC). The breakaways of Africans from the church were an expression that Africans sought political and religious liberation from colonial domination. Nevertheless, movements such as Ethiopianism (see chapter four) received continued opposition from mission churches and political authorities. However, their emergence served as a challenge to the church such that the church gradually began to move out of its past to address issues that concerned Africans.

Despite the examples of ordination of Africans that have been given, there was a growing tardiness on the part of the new generation of missionaries in the early years of the 20th century regarding the ordination of Africans to ministry. Missionary education reached high momentum during the period 1870-1900, producing many ordained and well-educated ministers as well as lay leaders. Noteworthy among these are James and Mesach Pelem at Zonnebloem, Sol Plaatje at the Berlin Missionary Society at Pniel in the Orange Free State,

Selby H. Msimang who was trained at the Methodist mission at Edendale near Pietermaritzburg in Natal and S.M. Makgatho. At the turn of the century Ethiopianism had already spread throughout the country and attracted thousands of followers. During the Anglo-Boer war the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) came under serious threat by the state who saw them as the cause of 'native unrest'. The continued ambivalence of missionaries reinforced the emergence of Africans who were determined to take control over their own affairs. In the same year of the treaty of Vereeniging (1902), the South African Native Congress (SANC) in the Eastern Cape as well as the African Political Organisation (APO), mainly coloured in membership, were formed. The SANC was largely led by ordained ministers many of whom were from the Ethiopian Church. The Rev Walter Rubusana was elected its first president. From the end of the Boer war until the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, black socio-political aspirations were sacrificed for the interest of white unity, with the support of the mainstream churches. This happened despite a strong plea by black Christian leaders to the British authorities for a significant say in the shaping of the new Constitution. Blacks opposed the formation of the union of South Africa as we shall see in Chapters 2 and 3. Though parliamentary legislative programmes were reinforced by legislators, the blacks continued to challenge the racial discriminatory legislation. Different protest movements emerged, the formation of the *Iliso le-sizwe esimnyama* (the eye of the black nation) by the Wesleyan converts in 1907 being an important move which led to the establishment of South African Native National Congress (SANNC) which was later inaugurated in Bloemfontein in January 1912. The Land Act of 1913 prepared the way for the Land Act of 1936 which decreed that only thirteen percent of land be located to black South Africans. This provided the legal basis for the enforced removal of

blacks from their land, which eventually culminated in Verwoerdian apartheid Bantustans in the 1960s.

The Wesleyans made repeated efforts to oppose the Land Act. At the annual conference in 1919 the Methodist Church provided a statement on black unrest on the Rand and called on the government to react to the situation. During the passing of the Native Affairs Act in 1920, many African leaders spoke against it. Zaccheus R Mahabane (as we shall see in chapter 2) challenged the Act strongly: "I am not urging the Bantu races to take up arms against the powers that be, but I am to urge them with the whole might of persuasion that I can command to launch a big Constitutional fight for the divine rights of the people, for it was God himself who gave man the right of self-determination, life for death."³⁰ Mahabane became one of the leading African Christian spokespersons on political issues. He condemned the colour bar which promoted differential treatment for whites at the expense of blacks. It was in this regard that Mahabane called for the Africanization of the Bantu race; when declaring: "The question that must agitate the mind of every Black man and woman is that of SALVATION, spiritual and political, of the Bantu race. I am convinced that upon the spiritual salvation of my race of people depends its political salvation".³¹ Mahabane strongly criticised the separate Bantu churches and called for the formation of one Bantu church which could be the National church of the Bantu population of South Africa, and one which might tend to act as a unifying force among them.³²

When the Rand Revolt broke out in January 1922, white miners fought for the recognition of their jobs which led to the implementation of the famous Job Colour bar. Demonstrating their anger, whites cowardly attacked the defenceless natives. The missionaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the Transvaal expressed their deep abhorrence of the

“murderous assaults made upon defenceless natives during the disturbance in Johannesburg”. The further pursuance of segregation policies began when J.B.M Hertzog became Prime Minister in 1924 until 1936, with a strong Christian support, not least the role played by the Methodist Church. When the Methodist Church became fully autonomous in 1927 by an Act of the South African Government, blacks strongly criticized the church for not addressing the social and political issues of the time.

The conference of 1927 challenged the Methodist Church in South Africa to such an extent that it attempted to contend with the body of racially oppressive legislation promulgated during the first decades of the 20th century. William H. Irving, reporting on the South African Conference of 1938 to the British conference of 1939, stated that the Methodist Church in South Africa faced complex racial problems that were very new to them. The Church, he said, had a real trusteeship for the African people and was committed to defend those elemental human rights which belonged to all man.³³ Irving’s address indicates that the Methodist Church was greatly concerned for the welfare of the African people and they deplored the racial legislation that restricted these people. The Methodist Church attempted to convince the South African government to review their “Native policy”. It appears that some claims of the African people were set forth in Parliament through the new Native Representatives. In response to the Methodist report, Edwin Finch encouraged the Methodist Church for their ministry of reconciliation among the different races. Support was pledged for their quest of bringing Christ’s people together.³⁴

Though Irving expressed the Methodist Church’s concern for addressing the aspirations of the African people, the church nevertheless failed to address the racial imbalance in its own

structure. A letter addressed to Reverend Kingon clearly unveils the racial situation at the time.³⁵ The letter confirms the visit of the President of Conference, Reverend William Meara (1937), and efforts of the Cape of Good Hope District Local Preachers' Association (which was an exclusively white Association) to attract the Native, Coloured and Indian local preachers to the gathering. It is ironical to note that the Good Hope Local Preachers Association attempted to bring the different races together only for the visit of the President of Conference, and not as an endeavour to stimulate contact between the different races. On the other hand we learn of addresses of the South African Methodist Conference to the British Conference regretting parliamentary legislation affecting the African people, and their determination to defend the rights of the African people but with no clear plan of action.³⁶ Also the Methodist Church was committed to appointing African people to committees, for example that consisting of Rev E.E Mahabane, A.P. Pisto, D.J. Pululu, Seth M. Mokitimi, R. Mohabi, D. Ntsuntana, B. Mlamleli, S. Molaleke and A. Mbelle was one of the few that was constituted of blacks exclusively. However, it must be assumed that this was because of the kind of project they were engaged in, which was the publication of a Sotho hymn book.³⁷ Nevertheless, this does not mean that Blacks were not appointed in committees with their white brothers. To name a few, Rev S. Mdala, S.J.P.D Nikiwe and Mokitimi were all appointed to serve on an advisory committee for Healdtown.³⁸

The Methodist Church awareness of church involvement in society became more apparent when they continued to address issues that affect people in society. In a report Thomas Stanton articulated the new shape that the Methodist Church had taken on by revising the constitution to ensure fellowship between members of the church body, to obliterate differences that might exist among them.³⁹ The Methodist Church called on Christian

churches to play a vital role in diffusing the racial tensions that plagued South Africa.⁴⁰ However, in a land of racial oppression Africans could not cheer about the move made by the church, because the church was not being firm when it came to fighting racial legislation. Though the Methodist Church expressed their regret about racial legislation at the time, they forgot that the church structure was a clear indication of those racial policies. Since 1883, when the Methodist Church of Southern Africa was declared independent from the British Church, the Church in South Africa had continued to be dominated by whites.⁴¹ It was only in the early 1960s that blacks began to be elected to high positions in the church; for example, when Seth Mokitimi was the first black person to be nominated President of Conference. Nevertheless, in the preceding year the Government had sharpened its racial policies. Because of this many members and leaders broke away from the English-speaking established churches to form their own churches. This was not protest against the church doctrine, but against racial policies at the time; because the church was not addressing the aspirations of the African people they broke away.

The Methodist conferences of 1938, 1939, 1940 and 1942 expressed their support toward the formation of union among different churches. A joint committee comprised of the Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches met to discover common goals toward union.⁴² Unity became a common expression among both English-speaking churches and African leaders. However, the quest for union among the Africans was aggravated by racist policies and more so by the racial composition of the churches they belonged to. A Black caucus was initiated which recommended a legitimate African church. Members of this caucus had a clear vision for an African church. They understood Christianity as the gospel of love that teaches one God, one people, and one church. Their

understanding of the Christian gospel laid the foundation for their quest for unity. The church, they said, should be grounded in the life of the African. When asked why the African leaders wanted to unite, they answered that churches should unite to emphasize the common African brotherhood and to enjoy a deeper and fuller Christian fellowship. Many different Black leaders, including those in the English-speaking churches, particularly the Methodist Church, -vehemently expressed their support for establishing an Independent African church.⁴³ It is possible that many members broke away to join the African Initiated Church after this caucus. In addition to this, the attendance of the Methodist Church leaders at the caucus was quite critical, because it signaled concern of some kind. This can only suggest the dissatisfaction of the black Methodist members within the church. It does inform us that the white Methodist leaders did nothing to make blacks feel part of the church. This is precisely what Seth Mokitimi took to task in an address to the Christian Council in 1942, when he stressed that Black South Africans felt inferior to whites because they were excluded from government and were subject to discrimination. Mokitimi said that the churches must help people accept the necessity of cooperation between the races, since God never intended one group to dominate or exploit the other.⁴⁴

When the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948 further intensification of racial legislation was ensured. Many churches did not welcome the continued racial exploitation. The Methodist President, Rev. Edward W. Grant, declared that “the barriers which divide men into opposing sections in the sphere of the nation, the world, or the church, are unreal and untrue”. He further noted that the churches must promote fellowship among people of all races, and seek to provide Christian guidance to the state on the matter of race relations.⁴⁵

The Methodist Conference of 1948 declared that “No person of any race should be deprived of constitutional rights or privileges merely on the grounds of race. Political and social rights, especially of the underprivileged groups, should not be reduced, but rather develop and be expanded into greater usefulness. Living conditions and opportunity for education and labour should steadily be improved in the clear recognition that the good of all should be reflected in the contentment and usefulness of all sections of society”.⁴⁶

However, the government did not react at the criticism lashed against it, not even to the statements released by the Rosettenville conference of 1949 of English-speaking churches. On the contrary, the government continued passing racial laws.

In attempting to draw the attention of the government, the Methodist Conference of 1949 was convinced that apartheid was there to divide and conquer the African people. It affirmed the need to continue to oppose a policy which ignored human rights and “blocked the pathway to liberty.”⁴⁷ The British Conference was delighted to learn of this declaration on racial policy made by the Methodist Church of South Africa and encouraged them to fight for the rights of those who were denied them.⁴⁸ However, by 1950 the government had introduced the Group Areas Act, Immorality Act, Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Population Registration Act and the Suppression of Communism Act. Amid the apartheid policies the Methodist Church mildly negated the segregation policies and called for cooperation between all races.⁴⁹ The subsequent promulgation of the Bantu Education Act brought the churches into a state of confusion. The Act granted the government total control over the schools in the country. The Methodist Church, though not the only church affected, declared: “The Methodist Church of South Africa emphatically declares its opposition to the policy underlying Bantu Education as expounded by the Minister of

Native Affairs in his policy statement in the Senate on June 7th, 1954. A policy which in effect aims at conditioning the African people to a pre-determined position of subordination in the state is incompatible with the Christian principles for which the church stands.”⁵⁰ Despite this opposition the Methodist Church relinquished control of all its black schools and training colleges and only retained control over its hostels. The “Church clause” of 1957 stated that no church established in a “white” area after 1937 could admit Africans to services unless permission was granted by the Minister of Native Affairs and the local city council. This law was later amended to emphasize that the Minister of Native Affairs could withhold the right of the same white churches to hold services for Africans if he was convinced that the Africans were causing a “nuisance”. In October 1957, the President of Conference, Rev. Clifford Storey, expressed his opposition to the “Church Clause” by declaring “We will be compelled to disobey the law, if it is evoked to take away the right of any of our people to worship in any of our churches”⁵¹ The Conference of 1957 expressed its regret about the “church clause”⁵²

The conference of 1956 appointed a committee to compile a booklet in which it declared that all men are equal in the eyes of God and should unite in Christian fellowship. The Christian Citizenship Department (CCD), established in 1956, made certain enquiries into the socio-political affairs of the country. Among the findings it published in 1988 were the effects of migrant labour on young black men, pointing to the predominance of low wages and poor living conditions.⁵³

During tense turmoil in South Africa, which led to the massacre at Sharpeville, where police opened fire on a crowd of blacks demonstrating against the pass laws, killing 69 people and

wounding 180 others, many church leaders grouped together at Cottesloe in December 1960. The Methodist Church was represented at Cottesloe by Seth Mokitimi and Rev. Leslie Hewson., (see chapter 3 later), during the 1970s, Alex Boraine developed an uncompromising stand against apartheid legislation which forced the Methodist Church to take active stands against apartheid. For example the church also strongly opposed the decision of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to supply money to organization engaged in violent opposition to apartheid, because “we believe that we have not yet exhausted all the peaceable possibilities for bringing about change in Southern Africa, and until all peaceful means have been found to fail, there can be no justification of or support for violent methods by Christians”⁵⁴. A delegation which included Seth Mokitimi, Alex Boraine and Abel Hendricks arranged to meet with the WCC to discuss issues that affected them. However the meeting did not take place, because the WCC delegation called off the meeting after learning about the conditions set by Prime Minister John Vorster. Nonetheless the Methodist Church continued its criticism against the WCC for funding the liberation organizations and the way the funding was used by the liberation movements.⁵⁵ In 1971 the conference came out strongly against the treatment of detainees.⁵⁶ The 1972 conference protested against excessive force used by police in breaking up peaceful demonstrations.⁵⁷ By 1973 several Methodist ministers had been detained for showing active opposition to the apartheid policy.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, when the Soweto uprising of 1976 caused great commotion in the entire country, the Methodist Church did not come out strongly enough against the government for its actions. The conference declared “In the light of the present Republic-wide unrest in our community, the Methodist Conference calls for an immediate end to police harassment of school children and community leaders. While being unable to approve some of the methods adopted, conference nevertheless declares its solidarity with

the hopes and aspirations of the Black people and presses upon the Government the urgency of bringing rapid and radical change in the living and educational conditions under which urban Black people are living".⁵⁹ Some concerned Methodists took the Church to task by condemning the church complacency in not opposing actively enough the government action in the 1976 Soweto uprising. They declared: "Unless the church in South Africa identifies itself with Black hopes and aspirations, there is every possibility that Blacks will totally reject the "white-Christian" church. Our continued political, ecclesiastical and societal intransigence indicate that we have no intention of heeding the lessons of history."⁶⁰ When Abel Hendricks was elected President in 1976 he responded to the unrest in the country and declared that the church needed to support justice and proclaim liberation of the oppressed in order to fulfil its mission.⁶¹

In 1977 the Methodist Church protested strongly against the banning of the Christian Institute (CI) and its director Beyers Naude. The next year the conference called for the granting of common citizenship to all South Africans. The conference called for the scrapping of the Group Areas Act, Immorality Act, pass laws, and the release of African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela. The Methodist Church of South Africa at the conference decided that the church should minister to members of the liberation movements as well as troops in the South African Defence Force (SADF). The conference resolved to refer to members of liberation groups as "freedom fighters", rather than "terrorists" or guerillas." The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) referred to the Methodist resolution on the use of the term "freedom fighter" rather than "terrorist" as inexcusable and dangerous and stated that to elevate the status of the terrorists to "freedom fighters" is not an invitation to peace and justice, but to chaos and disaster".⁶² The church

demanding an apology from the SABC, but this was refused. In his induction address Peter Storey made two important remarks. He called on the liberation movements to renounce violence. He then called on P.W Botha (who had just become Prime Minister) to pledge an end to military intervention in townships and, to remove the ban on liberation movements in order to begin a dialogue.⁶³

The Methodist relations with the government fluctuated between 1981 and 1984. In 1981 the Methodist Church President, Howard Kirkby, and CCD General Secretary' Austen Massey, met with the Minister of Police Louis Le Grange to discuss the tension. However the government did not react to this call, but instead continued to issue statements against the involvement of the churches. Subsequently the church took a stand against the government's military conscription policy.

Though the Methodist church conferences continued releasing statements that reflected their regret of the apartheid policies, they still did not alter the fundamental problems within their church. Although blacks made up the majority of the Methodist Church in South Africa they held comparatively few leadership positions. For blacks, the church was seriously caught up in racism.⁶⁴ This was firstly because the structures of the church did not reflect the actual population of the church. As a result of this Black Methodists felt excluded from the church hierarchy. Secondly, the problem of under-paid ministers made Blacks feel subordinate. There was a clear discrepancy between stipends⁶⁵ of white and black ministers and blacks felt that if the church proclaimed itself to be the "One and undivided" church there was no need for this disparity. For blacks it was clear that whites ruled the church. For this reason black ministers continued to query disparities in stipends.⁶⁶

Thirdly, racial appointments (Blacks were denied top positions)⁶⁷ were overtly common in all structures of the church, with whites continuing to dominate the church leadership. Fourthly, segregation in worship for many whites was based on unwillingness to worship with non-whites. "To change this attitude and make white believers willing to worship with non-white believers in a natural and Christian way will be a long and difficult process. Yet to be Christian the Church will have to free itself of this attitude, whether we ultimately have separate or mixed racial communities".⁶⁸ This was very true for the Methodist Church which was still caught up in the segregation of worship. For the church to come out of this situation it needed to condemn segregation by action. The Church needed to encourage the appointment of ministers across racial barriers.

Fifthly, many elders within the church held a different view of what the church should become. Some people within the Methodist Church wanted to see four different racial church groups within the Methodist Church a White Methodist Church, Coloured Methodist Church, an Indian Methodist Church and a Bantu Methodist Church.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the Church Council had a clear stand on the issue of whether the church should become divided or undivided. They were much in favour of the undivided church and made a declaration to this effect at the conference of 1958.

While Rev. S. K Masela was preaching to a white congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (1st February 1960) he heard three educated Africans who were attending the service say, *"If we could have a good number of such African preachers in our Black South Africa, we could undoubtedly do away with the white nationalistic ministers in our midst"*.⁷⁰ The observation here

indicates that race was still an engraved problem in South Africa. For several reasons and particularly this one many black Christians were forced to stay away from the church, and regarded African ministers as sell-outs. In addition to this they called upon the church to be a true African Church, which would allow the church to identify with Black people.⁷¹

The above observations show the posit of discontent by members of the Methodist Church. The discontent was not directed as the church per se but at the racial composition of the church and its unwillingness to address the ambitions of the black people within its congregations.

Though blacks played an important part in the establishment of Methodism in South African they remained with no responsibility other than being elected into committees. As a way of demonstrating their frustrations, many blacks sought means to challenge the church from both within and outside the church. The formation of the Unzondelelo under the leadership of Samuel Kumalo (in 1884) at Edendale was prompted by such frustrations of the Wesleyan or Methodist clergy.⁷² Black ordinates sought to challenge the white-dominated Methodist Church. However the existence of this movement was soon brought to an end by the white clergy, who succeeded in restructuring the Unzondelelo to become the fundraising arm of the church. The growing number of schisms in the Methodist Church, continued pressure from black members and the emerging Black Consciousness philosophy were clear signals of “black frustration”. Why blacks chose to remain in the white established churches is a question that was difficult to answer for many. Some scholars⁷³ speculated that it could be that strategies were downplayed to achieve good results. This seems much more true when we consider the role played by the Rev. Z.R Mahabane and Seth Mokitimi in the

Africanization of the Methodist Church (see chapters 2 and 3). Their contribution is unique since they offer us a symbolic window in understanding the Africanization of the Methodist Church. It was their challenge that moved the Methodist Church to declare itself "One and Undivided" at the conference of 1958.

Their contribution challenged the Methodist Church to elect for the first time in the history of Methodism (in 1963) a black president. During this time many blacks were appointed to high leadership positions, for example Dr. Willie Nkomo, E.E Mahabane and Z.R Mahabane. The role played by Mahabane and Mokitimi led to the formation of the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) in 1966, which served as an important catalyst to effect continued change in the Methodist Church. The legacy of Mahabane and Mokitimi continued to haunt the Methodist Church in such a way that the church's structure gradually became representative of all the race groups in South Africa. This is evident in the leadership position taken up in the church: Nine years after Mokitimi's reign as president Jotham C Mvusi was elected president. Abel E. Hendricks was elected president of conference in 1975 and in 1977, in 1979 Andrew M. Losaba, in 1981 Dr. Simon T Gqibule, and in 1982 Dr. Khoza E. M Mgojo. In the same year Mogoba was elected the first black secretary of conference and held this position until 1987. He also held a presiding Bishop's position in the Methodist Church from 1988. In 1983 the Methodist Church conference declared apartheid a heresy. Two years after this conference Ernest N. Baartman became the seventh black man to be elected presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. In 1987 Dr. Khoza E. M. Mgojo was again elected presiding Bishop, followed by Stanley Mogoba in 1988. He held the position until 1994, and was succeeded by Dr. Vume Dandala.

Thus the pioneering work of Rev. Seth M. Mokitimi and Rev. Zaccheus R. Mahabane led ultimately to the appointment of many black men to high office in the Methodist Church during the last three decades of the 20th century.

The following chapters illustrate the role played by the Black Methodist leaders The Rev. Z. R. Mahabane and Rev. Seth Mokitimi and the contribution they made towards the Africanization of the Methodist Church

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Chapter one

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Chapter two

THE LIFE AND WITNESS OF THE REVEREND ZACCHEUS R MAHABANE

(1881-1971)

Zaccheus R. Mahabane was the son of a prosperous Sotho farmer and both his parents were Christians. He was born on August 15 1881 in Thaba’Nchu reserve, in the Orange Free State.¹ He received his early education at the Moroka mission², which shaped his Christian foundation. He was trained as a teacher during the Anglo-Boer War and taught at Moroka after qualifying in 1901. He subsequently studied theology and was a top student at Lesseyton Theological School, entering the ministry in 1908. As a member of conference and secretary of the Board of Examiners, Mr. Mahabane represented his church internationally at assemblies of the International Missionary Council in Belgium. He served his whole ministry in the Kimberley and Bloemfontein district and took part in some of the synod proceedings.³ Mahabane was a man of directness and fearlessness, and also a man of action who always sought to fight for justice. His organizing strategies and fight for African rights were well-known, especially to those who saw him as a threat.

He was a court interpreter before pursuing his studies in theology at a theological school in Cape Town. He joined the Wesleyan ministry in 1908 and was formally ordained in 1914 in Port Elizabeth.

He is described as thoughtful and slow speaking, sparely built, a powerful preacher whose usually cheerful face could be intense with the depth of his feelings.⁴ He was always willing to work with others, both fellow Africans and whites.

In 1908, when he qualified for the ministry, the church sent him to Cape Town to prepare for his profession. During his time in Cape Town, there was great political awakening. The wages of white workers increased by 40%, but not those of black workers which were affected by the whole notion of wage colour bar. The job colour bar also reserved special privileges to white workers. Thus the whole conception of cheap labour sprang into being. This period marked the birth of economic and political dominance of the white establishment and the structuring of a racially segregated society. Mahabane became greatly concerned about the racial colour bar and devoted much of his life to the struggle against the colour bar.⁵

THE AFRICAN PATRIOT

Political leader

His experience abroad and political events in South Africa informed Mahabane of the dangers that South Africans have to experience. Mahabane regarded the Colour Bar as a product of the "Native Question" or "Native Problem". At the signing of the Vereeniging Treaty of 1902 Lord Kitchener had made it very clear that "As regards the extension of the franchise to Kafirs in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, it is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to give such franchise before representative government is granted to those colonies, and, if then given, it will be so limited as to secure the just predominance of

the white race.”⁶ The Treaty of 1902 undoubtedly decided to excluded the “Non-European” from political rights. Similarly, the 1909 National Convention, which led to the union of white South Africa, excluded blacks from the franchise. For General Hertzog it was important to disenfranchise Africans as failure to do this would have resulted in Native voters swamping the Europeans. “It was purported that great danger would erupt if the franchise were extended to natives General J.C Smuts made it clear by saying that “Blacks should not be allowed to sit in the white man’s Parliament”. Roderick Jones⁷ wrote “The Englishman and the Dutchman, sinking their differences, will have to unite in order to preserve the domination of the white man over the Black man”. Roderick Jones’ observation encouraged the English and Dutch to continue dominating blacks. Mahabane expressed his regret over the promulgation and perceptions of these Acts and the attitude behind them. He noted, *“If the Parliament of this, our common country, exists only for the white man for his sole benefit, then it ceases to be a democratic Parliament, a Parliament of the people for the people.”*⁸

The colour bar was an important divisive phenomenon to maintain white domination, for it was believed that its removal would instantly herald the inauguration of a period of social, industrial, economic and political mayhem. At a convention to establish white dominance in 1909, Lord Kitchener endorsed this statement by articulating, *“Predominance of the white race must be secured by with holding the franchise from Kaffirs”*.⁹

It was clear that Europeans introduced the Colour Bar in order to dominate Africans. It was important for them to keep Africans at a distance as far as possible. It was a fact that Africans were in the majority; to give them the franchise would emphatically mean ‘black man rule white man’ (sic). However, Mahabane was certain that both racial groups were

needed for building a better country, but if whites felt that to build a democratic South Africa would only require whites then black people could not accommodate this. The Colour Bar permeated the entire life of the population, the industrial, economic, educational, commercial, as well as the religious life of the people. The instant removal of the Colour Bar would bring great relief to the African people, so that their dark or coloured skin should not be a determinant factor giving the “new comers” a right to discriminate against and exploit them. Mahabane questioned the quasi-National Convention of 1909 that brought about the so-called union of South Africa and the final exclusion of all persons of non-European descent from government.

The African National Congress which had been founded in 1912, opposed in strong terms the racist legislation and later statements made by Hertzog and company. Working groups were set up to investigate the racial policies of the government. The segregation and exclusion policies delimited black power on all rungs of the economic ladder. These Acts enforced permanent hatred among the different race groups and the African National Congress opposed them on many occasions. These racial Acts affected people in all spheres of society including church adherents. The shooting and killing of the adherents of the church founded by Enoch and Charles Mgijima meant that Africans no longer had a place in South Africa. Since the ANC was mainly led by Christian leaders, they regarded such actions as unchristian. Reacting on such incidents, the acting President of the ANC (Chief S. Mini of Endale, Natal) called for a Day of Humiliation and Prayer. It was to call for the liberation of the Bantu races of South Africa from the thralldom and oppression of European domination. “The legislators have failed to conduct themselves as the common representative of all the heterogeneous sections constituting the population of the Union of

South Africa. On the contrary, they have openly and shamelessly acted in the exclusive interest of one section of the community.”¹⁰ The ANC is looking forward for the day when white oligarchy will be replaced with democracy.¹¹ Kenneth Maclaren, in his book, *“The Cost of the New World”*, took this situation to task by writing *“Men have got to see that there is only one primary conflict in the world...it is not white against Black, or Brown, or Yellow; not East against West, but right against wrong, Christ against anti-Christ.”*¹² As follow up to this book, A. H Curle according to Zaccheus R. Mahabane, wrote a book called *“Today and Tomorrow, The Testing Period of the White Race,”* in which he argued *“that there are a number of disintegrating realities which the white race is faced with from within and without, and if not mastered in the years ahead, are likely to pull us down...One is the coming struggle of labour against capital, and the poor against the rich ...and another is the fast growing hatred of the colored world for the white.”*¹³ Commenting on these books, Mahabane said that oppression and injustice produced hatred in such a way that Africans demanded rightful place in the political affairs. Black people demanded absolute equality with the white man, with the right representation in the legislature of the land, not by proxy, as proposed by General Hertzog, but by members of their own race. African people refused to accept the position that the right to sit in parliament can only be monopolised by the white man.¹⁴ “They refuse to ascribe to the notion that the Union parliament is a white man’s Parliament. Africans declare that the white man is utterly wrong in abrogating such position to themselves. Peace, happiness, and contentment, as well as cooperation among all the races is an important aspect that is needed for South Africans and the betterment of cooperation between white and black people”, said Mahabane.¹⁵

The job colour bar was extended even to the church to discriminate between racial groups. The Dutch Reformed Church became a leader in this regard. The situation faced by Black people was ethically wrong and ungodly and Mahabane was strongly opposed to it.

He was in Cape Town when the Union of South Africa came into being in 1910, with blacks completely excluded from parliament. The then Prime Minister, General Louis Botha, ensured Afrikaner unity. The year 1910 saw the dawn of racially repressive legislation which undermined the economic position of blacks. The Mine Work Act of 1911 laid the basis for a statutory colour bar in the work place. The Native Labour Regulations Act of 1911 helped to control Natives for purposes of labour in the mines. The Defence Act was later passed with the intention of deliberately excluding Black men from the right, privilege and duty of defending their country. Mahabane identified himself with the Western Province Native Congress, at regional branch of the South African Native Congress (later the ANC) founded in 1912 as the African response to the white-controlled government.¹⁶

Mr. J.W Sauer, Minister of Native Affairs, became the first one to place before the House of Assembly a legislative proposal in the direction of territorial separation which came on record the famous Native Land Act of 1913. The 1913 Land Act introduced restrictions on black access to land and led to squatting of blacks on white farms, which was an attempt to increase the supply of cheap labour.¹⁷ Mahabane was depressed about this situation and became greatly concerned about the disabilities of his people. He became aware of the plight of his people who had been forced off their land by the promulgation of the Land Act, that further built on to the concept of colour bar by enforcing territorial separation of the races, the Native from the non-Native. Mahabane was greatly concerned about how the colour bar was going to derail black and white relations. The colour bar was a way of promoting white

domination, discrimination and exploitation. Such an attitude made it clear to blacks that they had no say in the affairs of the country. The colour bar managed to penetrate all the civil, economic, industrial, educational and even religious institutions. Mahabane considered this as the greatest form of social injustice that produced “discontent, disaffection, moral stagnation, mental depression, intellectual degradation, spiritual despondency and the destruction of holy ambition”¹⁸ The system clearly undermined the loyalty of the Africans by dehumanizing them. The colour bar he said, ‘finally divided, separated the European and non-European sections of the population into camps of hostility and antagonism to each other’. It had proved to be the system that separated the population into “two streams”. Mahabane made it clear that he would raise his voice in protest against the penetration of this iniquitous bar into the political, economic and industrial machines of the land. He called upon South Africans to take this system to task: *“Let us agitate and agitate now and again and rest not until this stigma has been entirely blotted out and finally eliminated from the national life of the land.”*¹⁹ He submitted that the colour bar had the effect of depriving members of the non-European races of the right of citizenship, with privileges, advantages, duties and responsibilities. The bar effectively defeated the concept of union by creating division, disunion and disintegration among the people. It also engendered bitterness and dissatisfaction, aggravating race hatred among the people of South Africa. Parliament, he added, had lost its purpose of creating law and order and became a body for instituting disorder.

In 1916, Mahabane arrived in Cape Town amidst political awakening. Deeply concerned for his people, he challenged the imposition of the racist Land Act of 1913 and the exclusion of Africans from parliamentary affairs. The disenfranchisement of Africans from parliament was a major worry to him. His critical knowledge of the Land Act assisted Africans with the

right of tenure outside the reserved areas. Charlotte Maxeke, an eloquent person, made speeches which laid the basis for Mahabane to become a member of the ANC in 1917.²⁰ Seven years after the birth of the ANC Mahabane was elected president of the Cape Congress, which was the beginning of his political involvement. Due to his work in the organization, he gained great respect from African leaders. He refused to accept the status quo and was determined to challenge it.

The Administration Bill of 1917, which was aimed at segregating the Bantu tribes, was another challenge. In 1917 General Botha, the then Prime Minister, introduced the Native Affairs Administration Bill to Parliament. The Bill was aimed at carrying out the policy of separation of the Natives territorially as well as politically. Rt. Hon John X Merriman and Hon. Sir Thomas Smartt tried to oppose the Bill but were unsuccessful. When Gen. Jan C. Smuts became Prime Minister and Minister for Native Affairs he made it clear that he could not allow blacks to sit in the whites' Parliament. Commenting on this, Roderick Jones declared that this view was undoubtedly the general perception of whites.²¹ Mahabane remarked that "the black mans' patience has been exhausted in permitting the white man to continue to legislate racial policies."²² Even though Mahabane made this remark, whites remained determined to fight for the recognition and continued existence of the colour bar.²³ The Urban Area Act of 1918 followed immediately with further imposition of the principles of segregation, separation and exclusion.

The Native Affairs Act of 1920 resulted in further exclusion of the black man from participating in government affairs and denial of political rights. To follow a precise wording of the Act, 'it needed to consider any matter relating to the general conduct of Native Affairs

or legislation in so far as it may affect the native population and recommendations to the ministers of Native Affairs'. The Queenstown Congress regard the Act as a "final exclusion of the black man, the original inhabitant of the land from participation in the government of the affairs of this the country of his birth."²⁴ "Such exclusion and demeaning of the black race was of serious concern for Mahabane. "If this was the playing rules, he adds, "Perhaps one would have no objection to separation if due provision had been made for the partition of the land into "Hemispheres" of equal size and like quality for locating the respective races, each race being given the right to manage its own internal affairs, even though the assistance or advice of the more developed race might be necessary in connection with the affairs of the less developed race":²⁵ This according to Mahabane was the possible result of racial legislation against the black people. The so-called superior race group was responsible for handling Native Affairs, which was just not acceptable for Mahabane. He called upon the Government to make provision for Native people to serve on the commission of Native Affairs.

The colour bar thus had the effect of depriving members of the non-European races of the right of citizenship, with all privileges, advantages, duties and responsibilities attaching thereto, not only in the Union of South Africa, but also in the British Commonwealth of free nations. The South African Native Congress made all attempts to oppose the colour bar, various petitions and letters being issued to Parliament as a means of expressing dissatisfaction over the colour bar. In 1920 there was a protest of non-European labourers of Port Elizabeth against the colour bar, where they expressed their discontentment with it and because of the unlawful and unwarrantable arrest of their leader, Mr. S.M Masabalala.

Police stopped the action and in so doing murdered twenty-three native and coloured men. The employers turned a deaf ear to the claims of the workers.

Mahabane made a strong cry for justice, and for the need to recognise the importance of African people. White rulers, he said, must remove the colour bar from the Constitution and make provision for some modicum of direct representation of native interest, allowing natives to represent their views in the Native Affairs Commission. He was perturbed why white South Africans were so slow toward the implementation of the democratic ideal, which was already visible in other parts of the world where people elected leaders of their choice. Earl Buxton,²⁶ in his presidential address to the African Society, made it clear that black people were considered the “Child race,” people with no voice or thinking capacity. Mahabane rejected this statement out of hand. In his contention, he indicated that in Bantu culture a male who has not yet gone through the initiation school is still regarded as a youth or “*Inkwenkwe*”. For Earl Buxton to refer to the Black people as a child race was to suggest that they were “*Inkwenkwe*” which was an insult on the manhood and on the culture of the black people. Such a statement revealed his intolerance of black culture.

On 15 February 1922, on the Union ground in Johannesburg a strike broke out with a principle to fight for “*a white standard of living for the workers of South Africa.*” A similar situation was reported in the Rand Daily Mail when 5,000 strikers on the Market Square, Boksburg, on February 9th carrying inscriptions which read, “white mans country”, “we will fight and starve for a “white South Africa” for our children.” Responding to these demonstrations Rt. Hon. J.C Smuts Prime Minister of the Union, said that “*the Colour Bar is a legal statutory bar and needs to be respected.*” General J.B.M Hertog, leader of the National Party of South Africa

moved a resolution in the House of Assembly in protest against any attempt at modification or removal of the colour bar on the mines of the Rand. What Rt. Hon. J.C Smuts and General J.B Hertzog proposed, that the colour bar should remain untouchable, came under attack by Rt. Hon. John X. Merriman, who proposed the removal of the colour bar in the mining regulations. In his speech on the Rand mines strikes of 1922, he described the policy of retaining the colour bar as “irrational and immoral” and declared himself in favour of its removal. The chief magistrate, J.B Moffat, also called for the removal of the colour bar from the mining regulations. Conscientious objection was demonstrated by some Christian whites, who even formed a joint council of whites and blacks with the aim of consulting together and taking joint action in all matters affecting the wellbeing of the black.

The Native Urban Areas Act of 1923, with its subsequent amendments of 1930 and 1937, provides, *inter alia*, for the “regulation of the ingress of natives into residence in urban areas.” It lays down the principle that the black man possesses no inherent right of residence in such areas except only in so far as he supplies the labour requirements of such areas. Hence, the Native Law Amendment Act of 1937 provided for the taking of a biennial census of all natives domiciled in urban areas, the object being to sift out from such areas Africans who were considered redundant. The investigation by the ANC of the Native policy of the Union of South Africa made the following findings: “It presupposes the inferiority of the black man and the superiority of the white man over the black man,” “white men fear to be dominated by the black men.”²⁷ The repressive series of legislation enacted since 1911, the Mines and Works Amendment Act, known as the Colour Bar Act of 1926, the Native Administrative Act of 1937 which curtailed the right of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly together with the native legislation of 1936 and 1937, strategically represented white interest as opposed to black. White people expected that black people

should accept legislation motivated by self-protection interest. Africans have been committed to seek for a solution to these African questions. It was precisely the colour prejudice, with all the complications that have developed from race prejudice, race animosity and race antipathy, that sparked off the mineworkers strike in 1946. Mineworkers went on strike against persistent refusal of the Chamber of Mines to give favourable consideration to their representations for increase of their wages, About 50,00 mine workers were involved in the strike.

Mahabane was against the fact that the original, aboriginal and permanent inhabitants were denied their natural and inalienable right to a voice in the direction, management and administration of the affairs of his country. This was "pharaoh-like oppression, which is political oppression and slavery, and persecution of the worst type". The unlawful, unwarranted and unnatural exclusion of people from civil and political right in the country of their father's birth, their own birth, adoption and permanent abode constituted the gravest menace to the peace and order of the country. The colour bar, Mahabane goes on, was a diabolical policy of *"white versus black which has so affected and contaminated the moral life of this country of ours that it is sowing and broadcasting seeds of disaffection, discontentment, discord, discussion, disruption and disintegration in the populace, that is bringing the moral fiber of society to an end"*²⁸ Mahabane was convinced that the colour bar had an enormous ability to be used in such a way that it would separate white and black. *"Let all say "Away with the colour bar, the time has come when we must once more raise our voices in protest against the continuance and perpetration of this iniquitous Bar in the political, economic and industrial machinery of the land, as a political blinder of an intolerable nature, and as an offence to the sense of manhood and nationhood of the non-European communities of South Africa, said Mahabane"*²⁹.

International Experience

Mahabane's experience of wider horizons was an important milestone in his life. His journeys were critical for his philosophical development, providing him an opportunity to re-read his society from the other side of the world. His visit to London in 1926 after attending the International Missionary Conference in Belgium was a revelation. He was impressed with the cultural setting there. This was for him a different setting compared to segregated South Africa. When he was abroad, he saw the true meaning of Christianity, a religion that is opposed to racism, unlike in South Africa where Christianity blessed injustices, "where the poor black man is consequently reduced to a position of utter voicelessness and votelessness, hopelessness, powerlessness and helplessness, defenceless, homeless, landless, a condition of deepest humiliation and absolute dependency".³⁰ He said: "God forbid that we, as human beings, made in the image of and after likeness of himself, (sic), should permit other human beings, made in like manner to abrogate to themselves a position of superiority over others". When Mahabane came back, he called upon the European population of South Africa to make a "new start."³¹ His international experience gave him great concern for what was going on in the world. He kept up to date on current events in the world and used to share his opinion. For example, he commented that during the League of Nations first General Assembly in Geneva in 1920, where forty-two nations were represented under the covenant of peace, "Ireland was on fire struggling for liberty". He was also interested when Africans assembled in New York at the U.S.A Negro Congress with a theme "Back to Africa"; it was aimed at exploring contact with Africa.³²

Non-European Unity Movement

Mahabane's involvement in the Non-European Unity Movement (N.E.U.M) is important, as he was committed to fostering closer relations between the different race groups. The N.E.U.M was formed almost at the same time as the ANC Youth League. Its programme, however, was opposed to that of the Youth League which emphasised class leadership of the workers among the oppressed. It was given impetus by the militant Trade Union movement of the 1930's and 1940's and by the attempt of the government to create separate so-called Coloured Affairs Department (C.A.D).³³ In 1943, the government established a Coloured Council with an aim of developing closer contact with the coloured community. In the same year, the Anti-C.A.C committee met with the All-African Convention to found the Non-European Unity Movement on a programme of non-collaboration committed to a principled struggle for the realization of a ten-point programme of democratic rights. The movement was not anti-white, but its propaganda was directly bitterly against whites under the stereotype of "*herrenvolk*." At the same time as the Anti-C.A.C committee and the All-African Convention were founding the Unity Movement, the Youth League was Pan-Africanist, asserting the inalienable right of Africans to Africa. The Youth League was aimed at seeking to galvanize Africans throughout the continent into one homogenous nation, emphasizing the exclusive basis of African solidarity, as a race and nation. The Youth League described itself as opposed to any form of racism and discrimination. The formation of the Non-European Unity Movement was brought about by the policy of segregation of the white and black races. It stems from the fact that South Africa was declared a country of the white people, where blacks had no voice nor voting power, no seat in the governing,

administrative or legislative councils of the land. The Act constituting the Union of South Africa expressly stipulated that to be eligible for membership to the parliament of the country the candidate must be a British subject of European descent.³⁴ The Non-European Unity Movement emerged to ensure some of the following:

- Compulsory education for all.
- Houses for all.
- Freedom of speech, press, meetings and association.
- Freedom of movement and occupation.
- Full equality of rights for all citizens without distinction of race, colour, and sex.
- Revision of the land question.
- Revision of the civil and criminal code in accordance with the above.
- Revision of the system of taxation.
- Revision of the labour legislation and its application to the mines.³⁵

The Non-European Unity Movement was committed to the principle of justice, and self-determination of people, of fundamental freedom for all without distinction of race, language, creed or sex.³⁶ Blacks, they said, should have a rightful place in the political area in the country of their birth, equal franchise rights, rights in legislature councils and rightful place in all administrative bodies of the land and in the public service of the country. The Non-European Unity Movement declared that *“South Africa’s political system is wrong and unsound from every ethical point of view, unchristian in conception, undemocratic in principle, uncharitable in practice, indefensible in the eyes of the modern world, untenable as a political tenet.”* The Non-European Unity Movement was committed to unity, *“unity of the coloured, Indian and African peoples of*

*South Africa to join hands in the grim for freedom.*³⁷ Their aim was to found a free land, world peace with one heart, one soul, one mind, one goal.

Multi-racialism

Racial cooperation was at the heart of Mahabane; he longed for a day when all would work together in harmony. The concept of non-racialism was important for building a united democratic South. "South Africa will never attain her noble ideal peacefulness, happiness, prosperity, greatness and national unity, of which the Prime Minister and all lovers of African have been rightly dreaming, without the full and free co-operation of all the white and black races of the land and of all classes and condition of man. Industrially, agriculturally and commercially we have been working together for the development of our common country. Let this, policy of full co-operation be extended to our political system, let no race or class or creed be driven to such a condition of despair as it might be compelled to adopt the Gandhian policy of "non-co-operation"—taxation without representation leads to this. The evil of the colour bar is its wrongfulness, unlawfulness, unfairness and injustice which separate the people along colour line."³⁸

Mahabane saw the great and crying need of South Africa for a state which would "bodily and courageously declare for a policy of race cooperation, race collaboration in developing the wonderful material resources of this great land in building up its industries. cooperation in developing the agricultural and mineral resources of the land, cooperation in defending the territorial integrity of this land of our common adoption, as well as in defending its laws and institutions collaboration in the making of laws for the good, orderly and peaceful

government of the land.”³⁹ For the state of affairs to be solved, a round table conference between representatives of all colour groups was necessary. Mahabane proposed such a round table conference representatives of the contending parties to work out an agenda where they could table their differences. Issues that needed to be considered in such a negotiation settlement included the question of land, which was the most important issue. Secondly, the aim of such a conference would be to address the issues of unrest among members of the African community, and thirdly, reconciliation among different race groups, respecting the potentialities among them, so that whites would stop seeing themselves as the chosen folk. “They believe that they are the elected and natives have no place and should not be granted rights. Blacks claim proper recognition, a place in the political household of Southern Africa. Secondly, a voice in the management of the affairs of the land. Thirdly, a voice in the determination of the destiny of the land of our common birth. Fourthly, a voice in the making of the laws intended for the people and recognition of birthright to live a free and full life in this land.” This is the only way, he adds, that the country can find a peaceful solution to its problems.⁴⁰ The existence of a state of tension in race relations in the country, the clash of ideas in the quest for a formula for the betterment of this state of tension, the rising of unrest in the country can only be resolved at a round table conference”.

When the Hertzog Native Bills of 1936 came before Parliament, suggestions were made to the Prime Minister, Dr. D. F. Malan, to consider a round table conference with the leaders of the African people. In June 1950, the late senator, the Hon. J.D Rheinalt Jones, approached the Prime Minister to endorse the call for a round table conference, but this did not receive attention. The rapid deterioration of race relations in South Africa further fostered the call for a multi-racial conference, for the purpose of exploring a suitable formula

for the solution of the problem of race relations in the country. The Prime Minister, was asked to reconsider the convention or round table conference but he declined this request. The matter was taken up again on 3rd February, 1957 but received adverse reaction.⁴¹ "The only thing that will finally shed the shackles of apartheid is human relations in a multi-racial society".⁴² Mahabane believed that there was a need to convene a multi-racial convention where all races and political parties could come together to address issues of great concern to all.

Inter-Denominational African Ministers Federation of South Africa

The fact that South Africa is a religious society and that Christianity is the dominant religion of this society brought African Christians together and committed them to their religious responsibility as ambassadors of Jesus Christ in a world afflicted with pain. The social structure of South Africa was contrary to the Christian philosophy. Because whites had no respect for other racial groups, it was evident that South Africa had a long way to go. The concept of superiority of the white man and the continued oppression and discrimination of the black man was based upon selfish motives of the whites. The inequality between white and black in this country was clearly reflected in both church and state. Christianity as presented by whites did not offer blacks an opportunity to belong, to feel part of the human race. These attitudes made Mahabane very critical of Christianity. He was more impressed by the unity in Islam.

The Inter-Denominational African Ministers Federation was found as a Transkei institution in 1915. It went national in 1946. This association encouraged the emergence of a female ministers association that was only established in 1967 in Cape Town. It was known as the

Interdenominational Women's Ministers Association of South Africa (IDAMWASA). It was aimed at working closely together with pastor's wives, giving them leadership-training skills so that they in turn assist their communities. The Inter-Denominational African Ministers Federation (IDAMF) was founded on the basis of continued discrimination against the Africans. There was the unequal distribution of the land, which allocated 80% of the land to the white population which numbered 2, 500.00, while Africans with a population of 8,00,000 were allocated only 13% of the land. The unequal treatment with regard to wages, and the total denial of civil and political rights to the Non-European, as adumbrated in the Acts of 1936 and 1956 were further concerns. The Inter-Denominational African Ministers Federation was also concerned about the social evils in the country, such as the high divorce rate, the use of marijuana, juvenile delinquency, gangsterism, tsotism and battering of women. Taking Christianity to task in his address to the Federation, Mahabane delineated that Christianity preached today is "far from the Christianity expounded by the great Apostles, Peter, Paul, John, James and their successors of the Reformation Age. Africans who are adherents of the Christian faith groan that they find no better religious home in Christianity than they found in religious forms of their ancestors".⁴³ Christianity, according to Mahabane, is now the national religion of the African people, but Africans are stuck between two opinions, to remain with Christianity or return to African traditional religion. Mahabane deplored that the church was broken into different denominations. Addressing this situation he declared, "What has happened to the Pauline conception of the ones of the Christian church-"One Lord, one faith, one baptism"? What does the great Apostle to the Gentiles think when he sees his teaching of the unity of Christendom dashed to pieces on the rock of divisiveness? What would Paul say if he looks at this tremendous process of dismemberment of the body of Christ, this disfigurement, disintegration of the great united

church of Apostolic days as described in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles? What has become of the unity of heart, unity of mind, unity of purpose, that fellowship of the saints, that community of interest? We appeal to religious leaders to challenge the moral instability of the country, to work towards a genuine moral fiber".⁴⁴

This Federation was committed to addressing the evils of society. They condemned the series of tragic events which resulted in a great deal of bloodshed, such as rioting which took place at the Sobantu township, near Pietermaritzburg, in August, 1959, resulting in the destruction of three African schools. The killings of seventy men and women and children at Sharpeville, near Vereeniging, and Langa near Cape Town, on 21th March 1960 did not escape the attention of the Inter-Denominational African Ministers Federation. This association was concerned about the future of Christianity among the African populace. Africans saw Christianity as a white man's religion and continued effort to dominate black people. Reverend William Illsley, former president of the Methodist conference (Thaba Nchu, O.F.S), expressed the same sentiment though in a slight different way when he said, *"Christianity might suffer eclipse in South Africa if the whites continue to spend their time and their energies wrangling."*⁴⁵

Mahabane regarded religious leaders as an important part of society. They are the people who need to take the gospel of reconciliation further. As ambassadors of the kingdom of God here on earth they need to address issues of injustices and inequality. Religious leaders are watchmen: in the social, political and ideological revolution, the church has an part to play, "to give needed guidance, to give direction, to guide the trembling feet of the new

nations as they enter upon this uncharted sea of a new venture, as they leap into the dark, along safe paths".⁴⁶

At the conference held in Bloemfontein (1960) it was agreed that the IDAMF acronym be change to IDAMASA (Inter-Denominational African Ministers Association of Southern Africa). At the conference the situation of the country received greater attention. It was pointed out that "the moral instability of the country presents a challenge to the Christian Church and to the religious leader of this age to present God's word in the present situation".⁴⁶. "The country calls upon leaders to preach: Freedom from want, freedom of movement, freedom of worship, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly. It calls for prophets to proclaim the gospel of emancipation from the thralldom of sin, from the power of evil, emancipation of the whole humankind, spiritually, intellectually, physically, socially, economically, and politically. The situation the country faces calls for a Willaim Wilberforce, a Martin Luther, a John Wesley, a Nehemiah, who called for intercessory priesthood, who will not only denounce the sinful propensities of the race, but also pray for its deliverance from the sins of the nation".

The church

When the Act of Union placed supreme political power in the hands of the Europeans, blacks were continually discriminated against and exploited. The Act enforced whites to subordinate blacks, and to worship with them was a disgrace. The proponents of racist ideology used the Christian scriptures to justify their interests. Mahabane, on the other hand, used the very same scriptures to demonstrate God's anger. He articulated that

I will come to thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent" (Rev. II:2-5).

Mahabane warns that "it is only a revived church that can visualize a "Fallen humanity" and be conscious of its call". What is important is that Africa is passing through a process of transformation, experiencing a re-birth. The church must be a vanguard of this momentous upheaval. It is important, he adds, that political awakening march hand in hand with religion. The church, according to Mahabane, is "the chosen vessel for taking the word of God to all the people of the earth. At times of national crisis, the church must speak to families, to communities, to tribes, to nations, to leaders of the race. The church is planted among all peoples of the world, all colours, all cultures, as the conscience of the world of all races of humankind. The church in its diversity must strive to be one."⁵⁴ Mahabane regarded the church as an organ of supreme and vital importance in the organizational pattern of national existence." It plays a vital role in all aspects of national life, in the realm of its physical soundness, its mental and intellectual development, its cultural progress, its spiritual wellbeing and in its moral integrity. She is the official spokesperson in Gods' dealings with humanity, counsellor in spiritual matters, guide in the march of man towards manhood and towards a state of perfection. In an attempt to re-awaken moral consciousness and responsibility, the church as the conscience of the nation, should not keep silent in a situation of injustice, discrimination and exploitation, but must raise her voice. It must raise her voice in the best interest of the country and of the community, not only on moral issues but also on national issues, that threatens the peaceful existence of the nations. The church needs to warn leaders of national thought against situations that would tend to produce a state of disaffection, dissatisfaction, discontentment, despair, exasperation,

with consequential results. It is the task of the church to help to foster a spirit of unity among racial groups, so that they see the importance of living side by side, live together, plan together, and work together. Racial tensions and rise of unrest in the country had led to the clash of ideas in the quest for a formula for the release of the tension.⁵⁵

Christianity in Africa

The story of Christianity in Africa is generally believed to have its origin in colonialism. It was a major agency of modernisation, penetrating African culture, with diverse and conflicting results. The spread of Christianity in Africa meant the spread of European culture. However the predominance of Christianity in African territories suggests that Christianity is older in Africa than we think. Christianity is the religion of Africa. Christianity became an African religion long before colonialism, and the assimilation of Christianity throughout sub-Saharan Africa during the past century to a remarkable degree has assisted in overthrowing colonial hegemony and, paradoxically, affirming African culture.

Mahabane's visit to parts of Africa made him realize that Christianity is the religion of up to 60% of blacks in Africa. He called for further investigation on the importance of Christianity in Africa. Researchers have recently explored into this area. The work of J.W de Gruchy, Ade Jaji, B.A Ayandele, K. Bediako and others have demonstrated the importance of Christianity in Africa. In a recent article entitled *From Cairo to the Cape: The Significance of Coptic Orthodoxy for African Christianity*, de Gruchy⁵⁶ submits that the Coptic Orthodox Church dogma and liturgy remain that of fifth century Christianity in Africa. Kwame Bediako adds, "Further developments in African Christianity will test the depth of

the impact that the Bible has made upon Africa.” This statement informs us of the significant role the Bible has played in the formation of African Christianity.⁵⁷

Mahabane made a reference to Psalm 68:31 which revealed his attempt to demonstrate that Christianity in Africa is much older than we think. He noted that Ethiopia had its connection with Egypt and it was Ethiopia, (Abyssinia) that evoked a sense of African identity. Mahabane submitted that 70% of the people in Ethiopia were Christians belonging to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a branch of the Coptic Church. His reference suggests that the Coptic Orthodoxy is a living reminder of the ancient roots of Christianity in Africa. It was this suspicion that led him to call for an investigation of Christianity in Africa. He would have welcomed the recent findings on the investigation of Christianity in Africa, especially the submissions made by John de Gruchy, that Coptic Orthodoxy is a prototype of Christianity in Africa

Mahabane, a truly African leader, was committed to his belief and culture. He was aware of western influence and ignorance of African traditional religion. He knew of many of his colleagues who had left the church for the African Independent Church (AIC's), but he was very reluctant to leave simply because he understood his role in the historical white Methodist Church. The love of his culture forced him to combine the traditional rituals with Christianity. His experience is an apt example of many other Africans who went through the same experience. The discovery of how old Christianity is in Africa suggested the continued marrying of Christianity with African rituals and customs. Mahabane successfully appropriated the Christian faith into his Africaness-blending Christianity with his culture. His pride and defence of his culture is evident for example, when refusing to be called an

Notes
Chapter two

**THE LIFE AND WITNESS OF THE REVEREND ZACCHEUS .R MAHABANE
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Chapter three

THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE REVEREND SETH M. MOKITIMI

(1904-1971)

In the year 1904 Seth Molefi Mokitimi was born on 15 January in a village called Phahameng in the district of Quthing, Lesotho.¹ He was the fourth child out of ten, of John James Mokitimi. Mokitimi started his education at Quthing at the age of seven, in 1911. He latterly went to train as a teacher and completed his primary certificate at the end of 1926. In 1927 to 1929, he started teaching at Healdtown School where he displayed his most outstanding gifts and exercised a most wholesome influence on the lives of the young women and men at Healdtown. During this time, he attended Healdtown Methodist Church, where the Rev Z. B Mesatywa, who was a very dynamic and eloquent speaker, influenced him. Because of this Mokitimi decided to join the Methodist ministry. During this time, he met Grace Mamonaheng Sello, to whom he was married on the 24th July 1928. On the completion of his training, Seth Mokitimi was stationed first at Zastron. He was then appointed warden of Bensonvale (1932), chaplain to Healdtown (1935), governor of the Osborn mission (1951) and superintendent of the Bloemfontein African circuit (1965). During his forty-year ministry, he served his church as moderator to the Board of Examiners, secretary of the Missionary Department, and Deputy Chairman of the Kimberley Bloemfontein district. He also became the first black President of the Methodist Conference.

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Highlights of Mokitimi's Life and Work

Overseas Ambassador

During his time Mokitimi travelled extensively. The trips were significant for his philosophical development and gave him a chance to meet with white people of other countries. In 1939, he attended the World Conference of Christian Youth in Amsterdam. The conference in its multi-racial outlook brought together Christian youth from all parts of the country. He also attended an international Missionary Council meeting held at Whitby (Ontario), Canada in 1947. On 2nd June, 1953, Mokitimi received from the Queen of the United Kingdom a Gold Medal "*to be worn in commemoration of Her Majesty's Coronation.*" His experience of living in a nonracial environment was liberating, as was that of Mahabane. In 1958, both Mokitimi and Mahabane attended the All-African Conference of Churches in Ghana as part of the South African delegation. The theme of the conference was "*The Church in Changing Africa*". He was moved by the vigorous witness of Christianity in its attempt to grapple with issues and challenges. There is no doubt that he compared his experience there with that in South Africa. In August 1961, he formed part of the South African delegation to the tenth World Methodist Conference in Oslo, Norway.² He later travelled to Britain, Europe and the U.S.A.³ His journeys abroad helped him to see South African issues differently and holistically, especially with regard to race relations.

Status of African customs in the Methodist Church

The need for the indigenization of Christianity in Africa has long been recognized. It was strongly felt by the African people who found themselves practising a westernized form of Christianity and came to the stage where they wanted to give expression to their own thinking in this regard, by incorporating their traditional ideas and rituals into Christianity. For example the way black Methodists celebrate the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ demonstrates a unique African way of doing things. The celebrations, in the form of preaching, singing and dancing usually last the whole night.⁴ The process of indigenization in the Methodist Church began with the formation of the Young Mens Guild (YMG) in 1912⁵, women's Mayano's and the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC), and with the election of Mokitimi as the first black president of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. It was important for these organizations to maintain their African identity. They called upon the church to recognize their rituals and customs, and ministers to be tolerant to their culture especially when sending young boys to the school of initiation. The conference of 1960 was amazed by a considerable number of African people who still felt they must initiate their youth into adult life through the practice of circumcision. A commission was appointed to investigate this matter. Its member were the Revs. D.W Bandy, D.P Dugmore, R.E Flowerday, N.Mjafta, P.S Mbete, S.M Mokitimi, A.B Montjane, G.M Setiloane (convener) and E.Z Sikakane. The conference having received the report of the commission, declares, "No objection should be raised against a circumcision in a hygienic fashion at a hospital or by a Christian doctor. It must be stressed that circumcision is purely optional for a Christian."⁶ Mokitimi played an important role during the formation of the report and his

involvement in the commission shows his concern and efforts for recognizing that African customs and tradition should be used to transform the church into becoming African.

The man and the event: First Black President of Conference

In an interview with Dr Gqubule in 1997, he mentions a small group of black Methodists that met in his house (during the 1950s) at Alice to discuss matters that concerned them.⁷ This was the beginning of an informal Black Methodist Caucus. The aim of the caucus was to lay the foundation for the next conference, and to seek means of persuading the black Methodists to vote for Mokitimi. The BMC in my view originates from this caucus.

The Methodist Church declared itself to be “one undivided church” from the beginning. However, the different national groups were in reality divided along racial lines. Black Methodists have formed part of the decision making process of the church since 1883.⁸ They had the right to vote and effectively be part of the decision-making bodies of the church. However, to what extent they did is questionable because there was a problem of language. Whites had the advantage because English was the medium of communication in which all deliberation took place. This was another major obstacle for blacks, who were consequently less able to effectively address their ambitions. Because of this, they tended to be passive at the synods.⁹ Dr Stanley Mogoba and Dr Simon Gqubule both suggest that whites used to ensure that they were in the majority at the synod. They used to do a quick count to see whether Africans did not outnumber them¹⁰ Nevertheless, this gradually changed and blacks began to be elected to committees. At the level of taking up positions within the church, however, appointments were made on the grounds of apartheid ideology,

and thus blacks were never appointed to high positions until 1963. Nevertheless, blacks were appointed to various committees of the church, where they gradually began to be vocal. Men like the late Dr Willie Nkomo, A.B Nkomo (father of Willie Nkomo), E.E Mahabane, Zaccheus R. Mahabane and so on are examples of the early black leaders.

Mokitimi did not become president only because of his own efforts, but this was part of the endless struggle of black people. The contribution he made to the Methodist Church during his candidature, and his roles at Healdtown and in the church, were no exceptions to his dedication to the struggle in general.

Although he received only three votes for presidency in 1954¹¹ at the Queenstown Conference, in 1958 Mokitimi became the runner-up in the annual presidential election. Abel Hendricks reports that Lesley A Hudson in 1959 wrote a pastoral letter to all Methodists preparing them for the change that was to take place in the Church.¹² In 1962 Mokitimi lost the presidency by only one vote; he received 55 votes and the Rev Stanley G. Pitts received 56. This set the scene for the next Methodist Conference. There was great animosity between Black and White members of the Methodist Church over developments that had happened thus far in the church.¹³ The church seemed to be not yet ready to embrace a black president. White members threatened to leave the church.¹⁴ Not only was the church not yet ready for this¹⁵ but the law in South Africa did not permit blacks to own land or to hold top positions. Mokitimi's noticeable incumbency stirred up great commotion, and debates began to emerge in various circles of the church which, in my view, was the signal that the church was beginning to prepare itself for change and unravel the ideology of apartheid. However, this was not without opposition and resistance. For the justification of

white domination, the Methodist Church considered many options to convince black people that they were incapable of managing the Church: for example the law concerning property of the church was repeatedly quoted.¹⁶ This debate indicates that the church was not prepared to shake off the shackles of white domination. Since the beginning of Methodism in South Africa until the 1940s and 1950s blacks had not been considered a threat to the church. However, now that a black president was anticipated the question of property became pivotal.¹⁷ According to the constitution of the church, the law and disciplines, the chief trustee of the church is the president. Therefore, all property of the church is registered in the name of whoever becomes the president of conference. Whites were very skeptical about this but through discussions and consensus they began to accept it.

The announcement of Mokitimi's election in 1963 was received with acclamation and enthusiasm. The Rev. Abel Hendricks describes the event as the most historic occasion that he had ever witnessed.¹⁸ Reverend Douglas Hubery described Mokitimi as *"gentle, courteous and kind. There is shrewdness, humour, and vision in his preaching"* and his observations were received with acclamation and enthusiasm.¹⁹ Theo and Helen Kotze described him as a "shining Christian". *"His face shone of goodness, a very remarkable brilliant amazing man. Had he been white he would have been the youngest president of conference ever. He had such advanced ideas of the Church and should have come back to be president because he was an outstanding person."*²⁰ To overwhelming applause Rev. Mokitimi took the stand. Expressing a vote of thanks to the Church for demonstrating its faith in him he said, *"My new duties will give me the responsibility of leading the whole church and to give to all a vision of South Africa as it should be, a country of goodwill and future harmony. I want to emphasize as strongly as I can that my election has no political significance whatever. It is simply an expression by the church of its own faith"*.²¹ He paid tribute to Rev A Arthur

Wellington and Mrs Wellington who had inspired him through the years. Mokitimi also thanked Rev G. H Jacques and Edwin Bottril and his wife for assisting him. He warned the Church of the challenge that they were facing in the interpretation of Methodism as one undivided fellowship of faith. On Tuesday 1st November 1963, addressing an assembly where all the choirs of the church were performing, he made an important remark that still lives with us today, by saying, *"God reaches down and He reaches out, but the full cycle of His redeeming purpose is not complete until our experience of the Saviour and His mighty works reaches others"*.²² Mokitimi in his address shows a willingness to follow Jesus' example because Jesus went beyond the barriers of race and ethnicity. Jesus is the 'Incomparable Christ'.²³

The Reverend Seth Mokitimi served the Church with devotion and distinction and was held in great esteem by all sections of the Church. Beyers Naude had the opportunity to share a room with Seth Mokitimi at the Cottesloe consultation and met him again at the Mindolo consultation in June 1964. Beyers Naude was struck by his deep friendliness, humility, sincerity and fearless expression of his conviction, which made a deep impression on every participant at both of these conferences.²⁴ His year of service was distinguished by many things, and not least by the humility of his spirit as he moved around the connection providing brilliant leadership in thought and witness. He was invited to speak at a Cape Town conference that was to be held on the 12-14 June 1964.²⁵ What was most annoying was that he had to obtain a permit for entering the Cape.²⁶ Nevertheless Mokitimi was amazed by the non-racialism among the Cape circuits. This, he said, was a future challenge to the Methodist Church to restructure its circuits along non-racial lines.

Chief Fenyang to investigate the move towards church union.²⁹ Recognizing the report of the investigating committee, the conference proposed common fellowship of prayers and service among churches as a way of accelerating church union. In 1953, at the inter-racial church gathering held in Johannesburg important resolutions were passed. The conference appealed to the government to make a sum of ten million pounds available each year for the social, economic and industrial development of the non-European community. The conference also called upon Christian people to regard and treat every human being with the honour and respect to which we are committed as Christians and to use every available opportunity to come into real fellowship with one another. At this conference, Seth Mokitimi impressed the entire audience by his address.

In his report he indicates that "the conference was itself a venture of faith. It was planned in an atmosphere of misgiving, if not actual suspicion. The racial situation in our land and the violent reaction of the outside world did not prove helpful. This became evident on the first day. People did not know each other at the conference. The atmosphere was definitely depressing". Mokitimi quotes one delegate who declared "*we are going at low gear*". While the papers presented were characterized as excellent there was a disconcerting disinclination to discuss the issues raised, and a tendency to dwell irrelevantly on other issues. Delegates seemed determined either to proclaim or to defend a standpoint be it under fire or not. In short the conference purported to prove that there was no unity. Reviewing the challenge of the church today brought the delegates face to face with the stark reality, the dilemma, of the world and of our South Africa in particular. They retired feeling the absolute necessity for God's sufficiency. However, they resumed the next day in a new atmosphere. All of the delegates were seekers ready to face up to the meaning of our oneness in Him (if they were His), which was not an ideal, not a nebulous theory, but a demonstrable fact. This was

ruthlessly shaking; one felt the impact of it on the whole conference. This was so to the end. Despite the differences of opinion so manifest in the early stages, there was no bitterness, but a remarkable willingness to listen and learn, to allow for differences and yet draw closer to one another in brotherly love. The faith of those who planned the conference and those who prayed for its success was richly rewarded.³⁰ In 1957 Mokitimi was again appointed to represent the Methodist Church in the Church Union commission.³¹ It was clear to him that the churches were committed to establish friendly cooperation with each other.

Christian Council

Before the renaming of the General Missionary Council (GMC) to the Christian Council, the former was constituted by individual members. The Christian Council of South Africa (which also formed part of the World Council of Churches) was formally founded in 1936³² with a constitution that emphasized evangelism, study and service. Africans were more strongly represented in this council than in the GMC. Both Mahabane and Mokitimi were members of this council. Mahabane challenged the apathy of the council with its lack of political engagement. He urged the council to address political injustices such as the abolition of the Cape franchise.³³ Following the challenge of Mahabane, the Council took to task legislation and administrative measures affecting race relations and it spoke out clearly against measures it considered unjust, e.g. the Bantu Laws Amendment Act. The Council has been able, with the aid of the World Council of Churches, to render considerable assistance to the dependents of “political” prisoners and also to the victims of the famine conditions which developed in parts of South Africa due to continued drought.³⁴

During the 1960's the Protestant and non-conformist churches in the Christian Council emerged with a strong voice to challenge the government. Following the Sharpeville massacre on March 21 1960, when police killed 68 women and children who were protesting against the pass laws in Sharpeville near Johannesburg, the response of the government in banning both the ANC and PAC and arresting the leadership caused great concern. The churches that were representatives of the Christian Council met at the end of 1960 in what was known as the Cottesloe consultation. Mokitimi had the honour of representing the Methodist Church.³⁵ The conference rejected segregation in the church and the government prohibition of racially mixed marriage, it criticized the migrant labour system and job reservation, and it affirmed the right of all people to own land. The resolutions taken at this conference however, did not satisfy the black representative from the English-speaking churches.³⁶

The Christian Council also met under the deep shame of the crisis through which the country was passing. The Council released a statement on the crisis that faced the country; in which it called on the government to put an end to the state of emergency, and for the release of all political prisoners.³⁷ It was during the leadership of Rev. Mokitimi that the Christian Council changed its name to the South African Council of Churches. The Rev. Seth M. Mokitimi was appointed president for the period 1966-1968, with the Archbishop of Cape Town Robert Selby Taylor, and Bishop H. Fosseus of the Lutheran church as vice-presidents. During his leadership the Council, in cooperation with the Christian Institute published a message to the people of South Africa which essentially rejected apartheid on the basis of the good news that, in Christ, God had broken down the walls of division

between God and man, and therefore also between man and man.³⁸ Mokitimi's leadership continued to challenge the role of the Christian Council of South Africa. His experience in race relations offered a new role for the Christian Council of South Africa.

Evaluation of Mokitimi's speeches

His religious conviction formed the basis of his political consciousness

When analyzing Mokitimi's speeches, it is important to be aware of his context. Though Gqubule argues that his speeches do not have political content nor do they offer deep theological thought, my conjecture is that to understand his speeches we must read them in relation to the political condition at the time, because they reflect his consciousness of the situation that the country was experiencing. Though it is not clearly evident, I submit that if we try to read them in the light of the situation at the time we will discover his political consciousness in his speeches. To this end I will review them, with the aim of unveiling his political consciousness.

Some of Mokitimi's speeches derived out of a particular historical context. It was during the time when the Hertzog bills sought to curtail even the limited participation by blacks in government that still existed. During the 1930s Hertzog introduced bills that prohibited blacks from owning land outside the Native Reserves and removed Africans in the Cape from the voters' roll. The Native Law amended Act of 1937 sought to reinforce the system of urban segregation and influx control. These policies presupposed the inferiority of the blacks and the superiority of whites and made it clear that South Africa was a white country because of the paramountcy of white interest. The position of Africans was reduced to

nothingness. They had no voice nor vote, no seat in the government of the country.³⁹ Blacks continued to challenge the racist bills. On 16 December 1935 over 400 from all major political groups in the country gathered in Bloemfontein at the All-African Convention (AAC). Selby Msimang, the secretary of the convention, insisted that the time had come for black persuasions to challenge white supremacy. It was during this time that the Congress Youth League (CYL), which included Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Anton Lembede slowly gained control of the ANC. It was through their initiative that the National Liberation gained momentum.⁴⁰

According to Mokitimi Christians have failed to use the church as the means of representing God's word here on earth in combating racial discrimination. In his sermon titled "The vision is Heavenly" delivered at Healdtown on 23 February 1941, Mokitimi read from Acts 26: 1-20 focusing on Acts 26:19 which read *"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision"*. When deliberating on this text he declared, *"Even the Church is made by some the sole object of their faith, and when the Church fails, as God knows it has failed, because after all you and I are the Church, they have turned away and said Christianity has failed. The truth is that they have failed to use the Church as intended as the means of their breaking through to God."*⁴¹...He further adds, *"we should not wait for a time when the Church will act. The Church will only move like a mighty army when privates like you and me in that army are prepared to obey the commands of the capture of the Lords Host. When you and I are prepared to see race discrimination and social injustice ended as far as we individuals are concerned instead of looking at others and waiting for others to move when our vision too is or should be heavenly."*⁴²

The 1940s were years of rapid change. Wartime shipping shortage deprived South Africa of many imports and encouraged rapid industrial growth, which in turn increased labour demand. As industrialisation began to stress the value of semi-skilled Africans in manufacturing employment many Africans migrated to the urban areas, which culminated in a phenomenal growth of squatter camps. This became a continued concern for the Government that led to the promulgation of stringent control of blacks in white areas.⁴³ The lives of African people were seriously deteriorating, and it was within this context that Mokitimi's delivered a speech on the 23 September 1937 at Healdtown reading from Ezekiel 3:15 "And I sat where they said" where he stated: *"Never have men spent more money on hospitals, even Africans' hospitals, as they do today; ignorance, facilities to intemperance, unwholesome dwellings, problems of health and all other stones in the way of human progress, are being attacked as never before. Why, the mountain is indeed full of horses and chariots of fire round about us all. These are the things that we have to shout from the house-top. Mokitimi called upon Africans to raise their voices so that the Government would begin to take them seriously. He said, "Go forth holding the message of hope, of revival, of life that makes room for self-improvement, and awakens us to the truth, the eternal truth that is righteousness, and alone exalts a nation".*⁴⁴

Mokitimi believed that God sent his Son down to live with the destitute people. When He came down to live among His people, He was prepared to learn from them. 'It is important to work together with other human beings for the wellbeing of the country.' This, according to Mokitimi is very important to help overcome the racial tensions in the country. Mokitimi was determined that we must find means to let the different race groups work together, to discover means of overcoming their false behaviour. It only breeds suspicion, coldness, and fight against potential unity." *"The time is now"* says Mokitimi, *"that we begin to build from the*

bottom and not from the top, and interact with other race groups. It is important that we get closer to the people on the ground. This will allow us to understand their aspiration.” Mokitimi goes on “we must, fight sinking in our own prejudices so that we fight against the spirit of intolerance.”

While at Healdtown Mokitimi was committed to the wellbeing of the students. He encouraged students to take education seriously. On 20 November 1938, at Healdtown boys dining hall, reading from Ezekiel 47: 1-12 and Ephesians 6:13 Mokitimi made an important remark which became an everlasting theme for many students at Healdtown. He said, *“A good start is often said to be half the battle won”* He adds, *“Many have been handicapped throughout their lives just because they had not made a good start in life. He called for an increase in students’ organizations. This, he adds, “will be a leading force in taking matters up to the government; so that they may address the aspirations of the people.”⁴⁵*

On 23 September, 1937 at Healdtown Mokitimi read from Ezekiel 3:15 *“And I sat where they sat”* clearly calls on racial integration, a call for social engagement. *“Until we realize that there is always something of worth in the people we are out to lead, and until we are prepared to study their background, build upon what God has given, use what has stood them in good stead for all these generations, so long shall we fail to impress them, and so long shall we remain a problem to them and not tell them how angry God is with them? How long shall we assume this false and unnatural attitude? It only breeds suspicion and coldness, and fights against all bonds of sympathy which are indispensable to a growing people! Shall we not go back, sit where they sit and make them realise that we also are men of like passion as they are, with common interests and dangers in life but only preach that they should, turn away from vanity unto the living God? Why overstretch the injunction ‘Be ye separate’, and forget that like salt we must work within them? Ye sit where they sit. The time has come for us to learn the lessons of self-improvement and to*

know what it is to build from the top to the bottom."⁴⁶ In other words Christians must be concerned for the wellbeing of others', by so doing they will realize the importance of existing for others. "Christians should render themselves in genuine service of their people, bringing hope where despair reigns, life where death would hold sway".⁴⁷ In his address at Healdtown Mokitimi called for an end of racism. He called on all to become concerned for their surroundings. "In the mist of pessimism people need to be optimistic so that God's power can be at work". He further called upon his students to be alert because they are going into a world where people have successfully created a spirit of suspicion, fear and hatred. When the war broke out Mokitimi called for a day of prayer. It was the 8 of September 1940 when reading from Psalm 143:9 '*Rescue me from my enemies O Lord, for I hide myself in you,*' he declared, *"If this is a war to end man's greed, human oppression, man's inhumanity to his brother man, then right through our homes we, in our individual lives in our national life, in our councils of state, should be lining up to destroy these evils. If this war has come to remove injustice then we must, where we live, be part of the forces that are out to destroy injustices in the world"*. Mokitimi's insight on the text reveals the fears that were looming the air. He used the text to heal the brokenness of those who have lost their loved ones, and to praise those who had sacrificed their life's for the country.⁴⁸

Mokitimi's messages all hinge on peace and forgiveness. While preaching at Healdtown on 25 April 1941, reading from Psalm 103, he made it clear that peace and forgiveness is an act of love which dwells in the heart of God. It is something which is there all the time; no matter how deep the pain might be forgiveness is possible. He refers to the story of Christ in Gethsemane as a symbol of peace and forgiveness; when Christ needed to take away our sin just for the sake of love. On the cross, Christ cried out not for annihilation but for forgiveness. Forgiveness is an attribute of God which is inseparable from Him because it is

part of His nature. "It is not something to draw out of an unwilling and vindictive God, not something that flows in proportion to the tears we shed, but something which dwells in the heart of the giver. It is something which is there all the time. God is committed to these ideals of forgiveness and reconciliation. It is God's nature to love, to forgive and to reconcile the world to us".⁴⁹

Notes

Chapter three

THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE REVEREND SETH M. MOKITIMI (1904-1971)

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Chapter Four

The Africanization of the Methodist Church

The quest for the Africanization of the Methodist Church is as old as colonialism in Africa. The resistance of the Africans to western culture is an apt example of the quest for the Africanization of Christianity. The ignorance of the missionaries about African customs and traditions did not alter the continued struggle of Africans for the realization of their cultures and traditions in the Church. The successive breakaways of Africans to form their own churches was in itself a call for the realization of the Africanization of the Methodist Church

From the establishment of Methodism in South Africa in 1883, the denomination gained a large black membership. According to J.W de Gruchy the growth rate of blacks in the Methodist Church between 1892 and 1902 was a record of 98,1 percent.¹ This growth rate pattern is further dealt with by Ivan Peden.² However, despite their majority in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa blacks were not involved in leadership roles in the church at this stage. This tendency to exclude black people from power sharing in the church was not enshrined in the Methodist constitution. It was the influence of the social, political and economic condition at the time. Blacks fought against this but were discriminated against, socially, politically, and economically.

THE EMERGENCE OF AN INDIGENOUS CLERGY

In 1856 Tiyo Soga was the first African to be ordained after studying at Lovedale and at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. When he returned in 1857 he spent most of his time on the Mgwali mission station in the Eastern Cape.³ Africans were generally trained to be evangelistic and lay helpers rather than for ordination.⁴ This was probably because they were not regarded as capable of leadership. However, the training and ordination of African ministers was an important investment for the churches and for the emergence of a new African leadership, which included John Tengo Jabavu (who was educated at Healdtown), Sol Plaatje (educated at Berlin missionary society at Pniel) and Selby Msimang (trained at the Methodist mission at Edendale).

In 1866 the Rev. G. Blencowe of Potchefstroom worked with David Makgatha, who was a convert for years as a refugee at Thaba Nchu. Magatha also preached at the market place in Potchefstroom. The local Boers were not in favour of this; they flogged him severely and banished him. His conviction forced him to get a preaching licence. He later returned and ministered to his people without support from the church. Some black ministers reacted to white supremacy. John Ncapai, an evangelist at Grahamstown, was very opposed to the fact that he could not move around like white missionaries. His concern was taken to heart by Rev. William Shaw who explained to him the reasons. He was later removed to another station but was killed during a frontier war.⁵

Rev. Charles Pamla, was the first ordained indigenous minister in the Methodist Church. He worked as an unpaid Methodist evangelist in the Ann Shaw circuit, Middledrift, Cape. He was the interpreter for Rev. William Taylor of California during revival meetings held in

1866. Rev. William Taylor was convinced that indigenous persons were the right people to evangelize Africa, and said this to Pamla, William Shaw Kama, Boyce Marna and Joseph Tele.⁶ In 1871, the Wesleyan missionaries ordained William Shaw Kama, James Lwana and John Lwana, making use of them as indigenous evangelists and helpers.⁷

In 1885 Robert Mashaba, who was a convert while working at Port Elizabeth and a trained teacher of Lovedale who later returned to Maputo, set up nine mission stations along the banks of the Tembe River. He also established a number of schools, for which he trained teachers himself. He was only ordained in 1893.

When blacks fully realized the discrimination and exploitation they were experiencing they rallied for change or broke away. Such patterns was evident when Mangena Mokone (1892) a Methodist minister in the Transvaal and Swaziland district, was faced with a similar situation which propelled him to resign.⁸ This situation induced a full class-consciousness among black people, replacing their false consciousness. In 1895, Samuel Mathabatha, a convert of the Rev. James Allison in Natal, began work in the Northern Transvaal. He was faced with constant threats of death, and his church was twice burnt down. He founded the huge Good-Hope mission. A founder of the Methodist Church in Soutpansberg, he was on trial for five years as a probationer minister but never promoted.⁹ The Methodist Church was not the only denomination to defer the ordination of indigenous ministers. The Protestant denominations are all guilty of moving slowly towards the establishment of an ordained indigenous clergy.

A variety of reasons exists why indigenous local preachers were not ordained. Some were refused ordination because of not being able to speak Latin.¹⁰ Frustrated desires of Africans to become church leaders were due to colour bar prejudice practised by missionaries, disputes over church discipline rooted in different moral standards,¹¹ the precedent of schism and denominationalism in Western Christianity, personal conviction among Africans and their conviction of divine calling. The denial to black women of adequate means of self-expression in church and the availability of scripture as the basis for critique of mission Christianity were other factors. In 1892, the Methodist Church announced that only ministers who were graduates of a University would be allowed in the ministry. "Natives" who lacked the advantages of a higher education would not be trained for ministry.¹²

White supremacy in and outside the church caused great animosity among the Africans. Africans believed they were capable of running their own affairs. In this affirmation they made a direct call for the expression of African nationalism.¹³ Shepperson made the following remark on the breakaway. "Secession was mainly because of reactions against over-strict disciplining of African converts by European missionaries, the desire of some African separatist ministers to increase their personal power and status by administering church property and monies, the creation of tribal churches in which due respect was paid to African customs, and a rejection of the colour bar in many European controlled churches".¹⁴ The breakaway of Africans was regarded by many as an expression of African opposition to the colonial regime.¹⁵ This philosophy or religious independence, which manifested itself in the rise of African separatist churches that broke away from the paternalistic control of white missionaries, was another form of response by Africans towards the growing white domination in South Africa. This was commonly referred to as Ethiopianism. These

SECESSIONS FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH

The breakaway of the Thembu Church

The formation of the Thembu Church later precipitated the emergence of other African churches. When news spread about the movement various forms of Native Independent churches began to spring up: to mention a few, the Native Independent Congregational Church in British Bechuanaland in 1885 and the Lutheran Bapedi Church and the Africa Church in South Africa in 1889. Given these situations Mangena Mokone formed the Ethiopian Church after being excluded by his white Wesleyan colleagues. This church, founded in the Witwatersrand, was called Ethiopian in reference to the biblical texts Psalm 68:31, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" and Acts 8:27, which was interpreted as a promise of the evangelization of Africa. As the Native Independent Churches sprang up in various part of Southern Africa, their leaders came together to discuss closer links between the Independent churches. In 1896 the Ethiopian Church sought affiliation to the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). James Dwane on his return from America received a cordial welcome when the Thembu began to launch the AME Church.¹⁷

The breakaway of the Bantu Methodist Church

Let me now turn to another breakaway from the Methodist Church, the formation of the Bantu Methodist Church. In the year 1939 a new separatist church broke away from the Methodist Church and called it self the Bantu Methodist Church of South Africa. Why did the Bantu Methodist Church break away from the Methodist Church? Reporting on this matter Rev L M M Mxozwa (1989) explains: "The introduction of the 1913 Land Act and

the 1923 Urban Areas Act left unforgettable scourges on the black people. Some were even asking 'Siya Ngaphi Bawo' (where are we going to Father?) The job colour bars and the racist white policies (separate facilities) led to a Yes Sir, Ja, Baas phenomenon. Blacks could no longer accept being treated as non-human. The white Methodist ignorance of the black aspirations, shown by simply adopting the system of separate development along the colour line, led black members to be encouraged to stand up for their rights even though this resulted in their expulsion from the church".¹⁸ Rev S. J Phomodi was in constant contact with the government for the recognition of his Church. This was not the only problem that he was faced with. Churches that were not recognized by the government had to make application to the Native Minister for permission to purchase wine for sacramental purposes.¹⁹ The government was quite determined to convince non-recognized churches of their illegitimacy. This is evident from the following resolution: "Applications are referred by the Magistrate to the police and to the Local Authority for their recommendations, and it has been laid down by the Johannesburg Municipality that where the applicants have no church building but merely hold services in private dwellings then the applications are invariably refused, as it has been consistently ruled that such dwellings and the stands may not be used for public worship or for any purpose other than that for which they were rented to the holders". Applications were refused to Rev. James J Matsemela, Rev James G. Mtungwa, George S. Soni and Rev Cornelius Mathe.²⁰

These schisms in the church clearly reflect blacks' dissatisfaction with the church and a desire for change. It was discontent about the Methodist Church conformity to racism that made the Bantu Methodist Church and the Thembu Methodist Church break away from the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Another more recent breakaway was that of the

Methodist Church of Transkei from the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. There is no doubt that many were left undecided in the Methodist Church about these breakaways. Nevertheless, one of the important lessons blacks were taught was to stand up for their rights. These breakaways raised serious questions concerning the Methodist Church.

The breakaway of the United Methodist Church of Transkei

The secession of the Methodist Church of Transkei in 1978 caused a great commotion. On 12 January, the Prime Minister of Transkei, Chief Matanzima, announced to a press conference his intention to ban the Methodist Church of South Africa, and the proposed creation of a Methodist Church of Transkei. He reacted to a report released by the Methodist Church (conference of 1977) which stated that the President of South Africa would no longer receive messages of goodwill from the church. Chief Matanzima reacted to this, as it would also affect him.²¹ After a Methodist delegation had met with the Transkei Prime Minister on February 16, 1977,²² the Transkei Minister of Justice sent a telegram to Clarkebury district chairman, Rev. Ferrier Fikeni, banning any foreigners from attending a ministerial consultation which took place in Umtata on February 21. In his statement Mr. Hendricks said, *"It has to be honestly stated at this point that things have not gone as we hoped. The situation is unhappy and disturbing"*.²³ Mr. Hendricks urged Methodists throughout Southern Africa to remember the critical situation in their prayers. Members of the Methodist Church greatly appreciated the fact that some clergy of the Transkei Methodist Church did not break away, and the courage of the Rev. Abel Hendricks to deal with the matter accordingly.²⁴ The church district committee established to negotiate with Chief Kaizer Matanzima was disbanded; this occurred at a meeting on April 12. Further committees were set up, but,

fearing that the same thing might happen again, several leaders refused to accept nomination to the committees. They were Mr. Knowledge Guzana, Rev. Dr. Elliot Mgojo, Rev. H. Qambela, Rv. Otto Mbangula, Rev. H Dandala and Mr. Mbabane.²⁵

A report on a meeting that took place following the statement by the Prime Minister of Transkei that he intended to ban the Methodist Church of South Africa in Transkei raised serious questions. Two motions were tabled for debate. One was the acceptance of the Methodist Church of Transkei which was suggested by Mr. Canca. Another motion came from Mr. K. Guzana. During the debate delegates were restrained by the presence of security police. The meeting rejected the idea of the proposed formation of the Methodist Church of Transkei by Matanzima with a majority vote of 70 to 40, and the acceptance of a motion that re-affirmed that Methodists in the Transkei were still part of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.²⁶ Immediately after this debate, the Prime Minister of Transkei announced the banning of the Methodist Church on June 2. Reacting to this the president of the Methodist Church, Mr. Abel Hendricks, describes it as an "*ecclesiastical disaster*". On May 29, Mr. Hendricks warned that every minister who joined the new church would be deemed to have resigned from the ministry of the Methodist Church of South Africa. This statement received great criticism from ministers and laity in Transkei who decided to leave the church. The Rev. Ben Tunyiswa, deputy superintendent minister in Port Elizabeth, defected to the newly established church, subsequently called the United Methodist Church of Southern Africa. His reasons for leaving are startling. He accused the church of practising apartheid, in that he had been forced to hold church services for domestic workers in a kitchen. This was after his former white colleague told him that holding the services elsewhere in the suburb would disturb peace and tranquillity in the area. They were told not to sing aloud in

the small kitchen, as this would cause a disturbance. He goes on to say that the Methodist Church paid differential salaries to its black and white workers and ministers. Though the church was black led, the actual power base was still vested under white control. On the contrary, the United Methodist Church was considered much freer from white domination.²⁷

The call for the banning of Methodist members who were non-Transkeians suggested that the president and black ministers were affected by this. Mr. Abel Hendricks' main concern was that the ordinary Methodists in Transkei would be confused at the mind-boggling non-theological action of some of their lay leaders who had cut ties with Methodism in Southern Africa. He called upon the new church to consider its position in the interest of Christian unity, of theological and biblical truth, and in the interest of obeying God rather than man. After the Transkei upheaval, only seventeen ministers in Transkei remained loyal to the Methodist Church in South Africa by not breaking away. Rev. Paul Shone the secretary of Clarkebury district was among this few. His stand made him an illegal alien in the Transkei. The Transkei security police deported Paul Shone to the Umzimkulu border in the early morning of June 16. The president, Mr. Abel Hendricks, appointed a committee to look into the property of the church. Rev. Paul Shone (former Clarkebury district secretary) and Rev. Tom Mbabane (former secretary of the Methodist Church in Transkei) formed part of this committee.²⁸ The new Transkei church was finally formed under the presidency of Rev. F. de Waal Mahlasela, a retired minister in the Methodist Church of South Africa but a close friend of the Transkei Prime Minister. At a last meeting held in the Clarkebury district of which he was the chairman, Mr. Fikeni took the honour of reading the government proclamation in banning the Methodist Church. The situation had serious repercussions for the Methodist Church. The Methodist Church could lose several million rands in terms of

property and other assets which it had invested during the years since its formation. A special Government Gazette issued on June 2, signed by the Transkei Minister of Justice, Chief George Matanzima, ordered the church to hand over:

- All land and other immovable property situated in Transkei of which the Methodist Church of Southern Africa is the owner, irrespective of whether such property is registered in the name of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa or its governing body or any person on its behalf, and
- All movable property owned by the Methodist Church of South Africa which is situated on any land...or which is used in connection with the activities of the church in Transkei, and
- To transfer cede or deliver, within a period of six months, all such property to the Methodist Church of Transkei, subject to such conditions as the Methodist Church of South Africa and the Methodist Church of Transkei may agree upon.²⁹

The statistical secretary, Rev. F. Harris, announced that 20 000 full members were lost to the Transkei church because of the ban, as well as 62 000 adherents, and fifteen circuits out of thirty-seven were lost.³⁰ Though the Methodist Church had suffered so much the Rev. Wilfred Hartley called upon the church to remain calm. Rev. D.W Bandey also made a similar call, but he emphasized that Methodists should not be too quick in judgement because those ministers who chose to join the Transkei church did it for several reasons.³¹

The Transkei issue remained on the agenda of the Methodist Church. It called on its ministers and people in Transkei to reconsider their position and return to the fellowship, so that together they could work out their differences.³² At the conference, Rev. Gladstone

Baai pointed out that the breakaway of the newly formed church was precipitated by the nationalism that had been created. He warned that it was due to white nationalism and arrogance that a new Black Nationalism had emerged. When the conference was still proceeding, news was received that the Transkei church had changed its name to the United Methodist Church of Southern Africa. The conference expressed its dissatisfaction in the following resolutions:

- Refused recognition for the breakaway church.
- Doubted the integrity of the new body and ministers who had been disciplined by the courts of the church because of absconding with money and property belonging to the church.
- Deplored delaying tactics used by the officials of the breakaway church in not making it possible for representatives of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa to meet with them to negotiate the matter of assets and liabilities. These tactics could well cause the Methodist Church to lose its rights in the process, as the period allowed for negotiation by the banning order of the Transkei government was to elapse on December 2.
- Deplored the campaigning of ministers of the schismatic body far beyond the borders of Transkei, using dubious methods and threats to urge Methodists from Transkei to leave the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, thus creating further division.
- Deplored the intimidation of people wanting to remain within the fellowship of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.
- Deplored the decision of Transkei government to ban the church, based on the false premise that the 1977 conference intended to insult the Republic of Transkei by discontinuing the practice of sending official greetings to the heads of state of the countries represented in the conference.³³

The Transkei government threatened to remove the citizenship of Transkeians who refused to join the United Methodist Church of Transkei. Reacting to this statement, Rev. Dr. Donald Veysie indicated that this would be an insult to our forefathers, like Rev. Seth Molefi Mokitimi, Zaccheus R. Mahabane and many others, who believed in the one and undivided church.³⁴ The situation propelled the Methodist Church to take immediate action with the Transkei government. In a meeting held at Vosloorus, Boksburg which was attended by Rev. Stanley Mogoba, chairman of the Black Methodist Consultations (BMC), it was reported that Chief Kaiser Matanzima, President of Transkei gave permission (to preach) in a letter to the former chairman of the BMC Rev. Ernest Baartman. Conditions in the letter stipulated that ministers of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) would be granted permission to conduct funerals only when the service was opened by a Transkeian minister. The relaxation came after the banning of the BMC in Transkei. Talks followed after the breakthrough where the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), represented by Dr. Simon Gqubule, and United Methodist Church of Southern Africa (UMCSA), represented by Rev. W.C Zweni, met to explore means of closer cooperation between each other.³⁵ The two delegates agreed to arrange further meetings. A follow-up to this meeting was a meeting between the Secretary of the MCSA and president of the UMCSA, Chief Kaiser Matanzima. Dr. Stanley Mogoba was caught by surprise when Matanzima refused to see the delegation from MCSA unless R.W Cyril Wilkins was included and the past President, Rev. Stanley Pitts. It was ironic that Matanzima acted in this fashion since he was the one who called the meeting. What happened remains a mystery that needs to be investigated. Since he called the meeting, he could stipulate the expectations of the meeting; instead, he surprised the delegation.³⁶ It was only on 17 October 1988 that the rift

between the UMCSA and MCSA was laid to rest. The two bodies agreed to work together as one in harmony.³⁷

Dr. D.D Jabavu and Zaccheus R. Mahabane saw breakaway as the ambition of the Bantu for liberation from white supremacy.³⁸ However, I am not sure whether the breakaway of the Transkei Methodist Church was for the reasons stipulated. My suspicion is that it was a strategy used by the apartheid government to incite black on black dispute.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NON-RACIAL CIRCUITS

The Africanization of Methodism derives from a very different social basis. The primary basis lies in the quest for identifying with African customs within the Christian tradition. This helped to build national consciousness which formed the basis of a common identity, a shared historical experience, a belief in a divine mission, and opposition to a common rejection. The concept of nationalism fostered movements of national consciousness and organization among African people. The call for the Africanization of the Methodist Church was made by Rev. Austen Massey in 1979. However, the concept was already familiar to Africans. They had no power base to make such a national call, but Austen Massey used his powerbase to create the impression that he was the proponent of Africanization in the Methodist Church. However, Black Methodists in their struggle for change and upward mobility of Africans had already pointed to this quest. The call made by Austen Massey differs from the understanding held by black Methodists. I will now outline Austen Massey's understanding and the reaction made by the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC). My understanding of the Africanization coincides with that of the BMC.

Austen Massey said that the church should remain united, but it should take faster steps to "Africanise" itself. His understanding of Africanization is prompted by what he came across during his visit to the non-racial Empangeni circuit in the Natal coast district. He was so impressed as it was the first time he had come across a non-racial circuit. He goes on to say *"The meeting I addressed impressed me. For the first time in my life, I did not have to sit at a meeting of blacks and whites at grassroots level where the chairman had specifically to welcome either of the two race groups"*. What was remarkable for him was his identification of a "new" model of how the Methodist Church should really be. His experience was that the people were deeply concerned about working together in addressing the evils of the country. What was of utmost importance to his understanding of Africanization was the concept of non-racial circuits. Mr. Massey called on the conference to reconsider the date for non-racial circuits. He called on the church not to accept circuits based on division, but rather based on non-racialism. He called upon the conference to consider integrating black societies into white circuits, which suggested that black ministers would have to be appointed in the white circuits. He held that the Empangeni non-racial circuit was an appropriate model for the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Those who opposed the movement towards the non-racial circuit were in danger of falling prey to apartheid. He said, *"I truly believe that it is God's will for us to be united. Now is the time for us to seek to Africanise the church in a meaningful way not only in terms of our structures, but in the manner in which we seek to proclaim the Good News."*³⁹

Austen Massey's call for the Africanization of the Methodist Church in 1979 emphasized the move towards non-racial circuits. His use of the concept of Africanization of the Methodist Church does not make sense as emphasis was laid on non-racial circuits as opposed to what

the Black Methodist Consultation called for. The irony is that when he made his call in 1979, there were already different circuits that had moved towards non-racialism, which in his terms meant that the Africanization of the Methodist Church was evident.⁴⁰ He made this call as if the Empangeni circuit were the only circuit that had made this move. Perhaps it was the first time he had witnessed such integration or maybe the other models he had witnessed were not so successful as that of Empangeni. What he really did was to call on the Methodist Church to put emphasis on the move towards non-racial circuits. Austen Massey should have used the concept “multi-racial circuits” rather than Africanization in this context.

In fact, what Massey did was to familiarize white Methodists with the concept, rather than giving meaning to it. The call for the Africanization of the Methodist Church was an impetus spearheaded by black Methodists. When realizing the influences that western culture had on them, Africans refused to be assimilated into western culture. The fact that they were denied the African way of doing things led to different responses. Some left to form the Independent African Churches (AIC), whereas others chose to stay within the Church to oppose white domination and induce the expression of their own world view. The formation of Manyano’s served as an integral part of the expression of African culture and to help in the empowering of women. For readers to understand the Africanization of the Methodist Church one should ask why the Manyano’s, Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) and other bodies emerged. These organizations were spearheaded because of the search of a new identity within the white-established churches. These organizations challenged the economic and political order of the day in order to affirm their own identity, which helped to build the Africanization of the church.⁴¹

A HISTORIC CONFERENCE

The 1982 centenary conference signaled a new birth at leadership level. It was as if the church had freed itself from the history of leadership struggles. In the past the leadership of the Church had been almost totally influenced by the British mother Church and was all white. This had gradually changed at the conference, four out of the six seats on the conference platform being occupied by blacks. A black president (Rev. Dr. T.S.N Gqubule) handed over to another black president (Rev. Dr. Khoza Mgojo), with a black secretary of conference (Rev. Dr. Mmutlanyane Mogoba). This resulting Africanization signaled the beauty and openness which is encouraged for a new understanding of the Church. The quest for the expression of Africanization in the Church was further demonstrated at a thanksgiving service for the president at the end of the service in a typical rhythmic dancing style of the young men's Guild, when the assistant secretary Mvume Dandala thanked the ex-president of the British conference, Rev. Dr. John Newton, by singing his praises as an 'mbongi' (praise singer) in a dramatic and moving moment.⁴²

The Grahamstown conference of 1981, when a black president was elected and a commission on Africanization was instituted, signaled a concerted effort to transform the Church that for 165 years had been dominated by western culture.⁴³ The commission on Africanization was given the task of defining the concept in relation to the functions of the Church, experimenting with liturgy and form of worship, so as to bring recommendations to conference and share its work as widely as possible with the Church. At the Welkom conference of 1981, the Christian Citizenship Department's Justice and Reconciliation

Committee was tasked with the matter of Africanization. However, it was felt that a special task force should be established. The Obedience Conference of 1981 debated this issue and resolved that the ex-presidents ad hoc advisory committee be called to look into the possibility of establishing a task force. Some important recommendations were made by the Obedience Conference of 1981. These include a resolution that the Church inform its white sector of the changes that were about to take place. The resolution also requested that the Conference remove some of the suspicion and fears of the people concerning Africanization. During the proceedings African leaders made it clear that Africanization is a process of incorporating African values into the life of the Church. It has nothing to do with a "take-over" of the Church, but seeks to find means how African culture can contribute new life to the Church that is in Africa. This understanding was at the heart of the Conference, appealing to Methodists to appropriate the riches which are our inheritance in Africa, including worship, music and spontaneity. The conference further expressed its commitment to peace and justice.⁴⁴ The Conference declared: "God commands His Church to be a pattern of His way of love, proclaiming salvation, demonstrating unity, expressing acceptance of one another in and beyond our own cultural and racial group. This Church, from its local congregation level, is to be an undivided community practising reconciliation at its deepest and most costly. The whole Church is to proclaim and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ with clarity and conviction, to offer caring ministries which can recognize and heal the pain of His suffering people. The Church is to be God's living visible Good News in a fragmented society. Trust between ministers and confidence in the laity is to be the cement of its programme. Truth, not expediency, is to direct its course, love is to permeate its every structure. Essentially we are a Church of Africa and we must discover afresh the implications of our unique heritage."

THE JOURNEY TO A NEW LAND

In the same spirit of Africanization of the Church, transformation is currently high on the agenda in the name of the “Journey to a New Land”. The Journey to a New Land is aimed at uniting all the different races in the formation of circuits of the Church on a strictly geographic basis. The Methodist Church also aims at addressing the past imbalances of the people on the basis of skill sharing, by conducting programmes called “Kabelano”. The stationing of ministers and appointment of stewards across racial lines and the stipends of black ministers also receive high priority. The Journey to a New Land was established under the following objectives:

- Changing the mindset of the Church from maintenance of the status quo to a mission focused on personal and social transformation;
- The empowerment of lay persons for the ministry;
- The democratization of the Church;
- More effective ways of expressing unity; and
- Setting ministers free to exercise their vocation of preaching, teaching and spiritual guidance etc.⁴⁵

In relation to the Journey to a New Land, a joint Connexional Committee of the three women's organizations meet to discuss unity among them; thus the Women's Mayano, Association and Auxiliary meet to search for a way to work together. Issues that have been tabled include spirituality, language and culture etc. The issue of unity and the importance of indigenization are still high on their agenda.

The Africanization of the Methodist Church presupposes the move of the church from western culture and symbolism to African culture. Its emergence has offered a unique Methodist move towards indigenization, setting its own destiny, culturally, economically and politically. The Africanization of Methodism in reference to the struggle must be seen as a proof that blacks can rule themselves. The great leaders under investigation in this thesis offer us a symbolic window on the Africanization of the Methodist Church. The Africanization of the Methodist Church can be seen as represented by these leaders, and the role they played in these organizations, their past and their future creation of a new identity.

THE ROLE OF THE BLACK METHODIST CONSULTATION

The formation of the Black Methodist consultation (BMC) emerged at a critical time in the history of black struggle in South Africa. It was a significant choice because of the principle involved, that of the Methodist Church being a one and 'undivided church'. The emergence of the BMC served as a major test for the church body to prove whether they did in practice subscribe to the principle or only in theory. My hypothesis is that the BMC was in existence prior to Mokitimi's incumbency. It was precisely the support for his incumbency in terms of lobbying for votes for him that stirred up the formation of a black caucus. In an interview with Dr. Simon Gqubule he mentions that blacks usually met to discuss means of ensuring the incumbency of a black president. Though this was only the beginning of an informal structure, it laid the basis for the formation of the BMC.

The Black Methodist Consultation was formally founded by an ordained minister, Ernest Baartman, in 1976.⁴⁶ The BMC was intended to lessen the inferiority among black ministers and help them to gain greater voice in church decision making. A committed black consciousness member summoned a consultation of Black Methodist ministers to meet at St John's Methodist Church in Bloemfontein in May 1975.⁴⁷ They met to discuss the future role Black ministers could play in the leadership structures of the church.⁴⁸ This meeting in Bloemfontein gave rise to the formation of the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) with Ernest Baartman elected chairman and the Rev Khoza Mgojo secretary. The chairman told the meeting that the aim of the Consultation was not to devise a means of giving birth to a Black Methodist Church but that its main objective was to examine the Methodist Church as a whole in its present structure and to see if there is any important role played by a Black man in the church.⁴⁹ This organization found that the Methodist Church was made up of 80% African members, while whites continued to dominate the church in terms of leadership. The consultation recommended that the Church should consider that all ministers receive equal stipends. They also voiced their concern over the lack of black influence over the Methodist Church. In addition to this, the church should not divorce itself from political life. It was strongly felt that Black sermons had to germinate political consciousness so that people could become actively involved in the local situation.⁵⁰ It was emphatically noted that there was a need to educate blacks on black awareness issues. The BMC identified the district synod as the most important decision-making body in the church, one in which the black lacked an effective presence. The BMC also accused ministers for not paying enough attention to the Theology of Liberation in their sermons.⁵¹

In the aftermath of the 1976 uprising in Bloemfontein the BMC met to discuss the prevailing political situation of the time. The chairman Ernest Baartman made an important remark by noting that the church had been silent for a long time and it was the duty of the BMC to recommit the church to social justice.⁵² After making its presence known during the 1976 Conference, the BMC continued its attempts to exert influence on Methodist policies. In 1977, the Consultation unanimously supported the formation of multiracial circuits, an idea that was receiving more and more attention. Though the BMC supported this idea, it was aware that the integration of circuits did not necessarily mean worshipping together.⁵³ The support of integration was aimed at encouraging Blacks and Whites to see each other as equals.⁵⁴ Two years later the black ministers were less sure. Some feared that the move toward geographical circuits was merely a “ploy” to ease the conscience of white Methodist in the face of increasing black demands.⁵⁵ The theme of “Africanization” became closely tied with the Black Methodist Consultation in the early 1980s. It encompassed the idea that blacks in South Africa must Africanize Christianity and apply it to their own struggle for liberation. Africanization also involved the development of black leadership in the church to offset white domination.⁵⁶ As the 1980s began, the BMC organized a lobby campaign which culminated in the election of Stanley Mogoba as Secretary of Conference (in 1981) and Rev. Khoza as President of Conference in 1982. In an ongoing struggle to contest white domination, the BMC continued to support nominations of black ministers as President of conference. The BMC was founded because of the pseudo-perception of the Methodist Church as one undivided church. Its formation was a response to the exploitation and oppression of black people. Though the BMC is an exclusively black organization, it does uphold the principle of non-racialism.

The BMC was seen by its white counterparts as a threat to the stability of Methodism in Southern Africa. Some saw it as a racist organization though it is committed to the struggles for non-racialism, as from its formation it has advocated the sharing of equal power between Black and white clergy. In addressing these charges the BMC stated: "It is those who have enjoyed playing a Moses to the Black fellow Methodists who now feel threatened by this surge of Black pride in the faith of our fathers. We treat the utterances of such know-all white brothers with the contempt they truly deserve. Yet on the other hand we are concerned about our brothers who shrink back in fear when our white masters bark. We are not in the church at the whims of Whitem, fellow Black Methodists. We are in the church of our fathers, and in this church we must live and die like them".⁵⁷

The BMC continued be challenged by their white brothers. Rev. Ron Brauteseth, questioned the continued need for the BMC in view of the Obedience '81 Conference, where whites expressed repentance and a dedication to work for racial justice in the church. The Rev. H.M Dandala took Brauteseth's remark to task when he wrote that it was a "thinly veiled threat" designed to "intimidate" the BMC.⁵⁸ The BMC continued to deal with the many challenges that faced it. Among them was the enormous task of developing leaders for administrative work. The common trend in the Methodist Church was to elect whites as chairmen and blacks as vice-chairmen. In 1977 the BMC raised this concern and requested blacks not to accept nominations for vice-chairmen or to vote for them.⁵⁹ At the conference of 1988 the Reverend Otto Mbangula raised an important question regarding Black Presidents who never introduced change because of white domination and black subordination. It was difficult for a Black President to address the concerns of Black people because the majority of the office bearers were White. Otto Mbangula noted that Black

Presidents could not adequately address the concerns of Black people because the structures of the church were still the same.

The presence of the BMC served as a watchdog to the Methodist Church. As a result the church became greatly concerned about the political turmoil during this time. In the wake of political awakening in the unrest of 1976, the BMC made a request to the conference to adjust itself to the crisis situation of the time. Reverend Seane explained to the conference that Blacks did not wish to have a separate church, but they asked for the church to identify with the oppressed and exploited. The BMC also encouraged Blacks to send their children to Methodist schools to fight racism in the institution. In 1980 the Reverend Andrew Lusaba informed White Methodists that there was still a chance for them to change and avoid the formation of a black confessing church. There was a strong echo for a militant church. If the church was not prepared to deal with the day to day situation in the country, the BMC threatened a walkout from the conference of 1976. Reverend Wesley Mabuza, at a conference held in Johannesburg in 1981, shared his frustrations at being Black in a White church. The BMC also questioned the presence of the Methodist chaplains in the state army. The conference of 1982 resolved that apartheid was a negation of the dignity with which God has endowed man in creating him in his own image. Secondly it was contrary to the work of Jesus Christ through his coming into the world to live, die and rise for humankind, thus freeing it from bondage for the fullness of life. Thirdly the reconciliation effected by Christ was between man and God and man and man. The Methodist declared that apartheid was not only a socio-political reality, but sinful contradiction of the Gospel which could not be justified on biblical or theological grounds and was, therefore, an ideology which the Methodist Church should reject as heresy. The Methodist conference

appealed to the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, the Hervormed Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerk to reject apartheid ideology, which was there to cause lifelong suffering to the majority of South Africans.⁶⁰ Bringing the Church closer to home, the BMC meeting held in Cape Town 1982, requested the conference to hold one of its ordination services in Langa. If the conference refused to make this recommendation it was decided that the Langa church would resort to boycott.

The BMC has played an important role over 20 years in fighting racialism within the Methodist Church, it has in its own way contributed towards the Africanization of the Church. However, they were not critical enough in challenging the church to move faster towards Africanization. Even black leaders who made the presidency because of the initiative of the BMC, were not critical enough in bringing the church towards the full realization of the Africanization. However, the question remains how successful and committed was the BMC in the realization of the Africanization?. One can even go on to ask: Is the BMC the right forum for assisting in the realization of the Africanization of the church? Given its history and perceptions among whites that of being exclusive.

We must acknowledge the role of the BMC and note at the same time that it won't be able to take us to the realization of the Africanization of the Methodist Church. The BMC needs to restructure itself before it can gain acceptance in the entire Methodist Church. We must understand that the idea of the Africanization is a project that requires the help of all. In order to make the Africanization a success in the church we require the help of all race groups. It is thus important that the BMC restructure itself or cease to exist for the benefit of a genuine "ONE AND UNDIVIDED CHURCH".

Notes
Chapter four

The Africanization of the Methodist Church

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Chapter five

CONCLUSION

For Methodism to prove itself in Africa it needs to take seriously the discourse of African Renaissance. This is the least that Methodism can do to move the church towards genuine transformation. In the past Methodism did not take seriously the struggle of the oppressed people nor their culture. It is clear that the chain of Methodist missions established across the Eastern Cape culturally transformed a large section of the indigenous population. They undermined and at times destabilized the social structure of the indigenous communities. Early Methodist missionaries who came to the Southern African sub-continent within the first decades of the nineteenth century were influenced by the character of the Methodist movement in England, and imported this to their converts as an integral part of the gospel they preached. However, they were not entirely successful because black Methodists grouped together in their distinctive dress of the women's Manyano's and the red waist coats of the black Young Men's Guild, which spread among many blacks who used this as a vehicle of expressing their own identity. These organizations were important in changing the mindset of black Methodists and creating an African identity of the Methodist Church in South Africa. This is very clear in their forms of worship such as all night revivals which differed markedly from those of the European churches. These organizations, as have seen, were a cause of white Methodist hostility to the African culture.

As the socio-economic and political conditions in the country changed so did the Methodist church change. Black Methodist involvement in political organization helped to shape their awareness to begin to challenge the church from within rather than breaking away as others

had done. As Black Theology emerged in which black Methodists played a prominent role, the theological discourse of the Methodist Church drastically changed. The political scene coupled with the initiative of individual leaders helped to shape the church. However, the complacency of the church with the regime became very apparent in their political statements. As black political leaders and Christian organizations continued to challenge the Church it gradually emerged from its past to be a church that was concerned for the social welfare of society. The Methodist Church as we have seen, for long very willing to release statements but did nothing in actively addressing the racial situation in South Africa. Moreover, although Methodist did not really become concerned about the status of the blacks in the church until 1963 and later in 1973. During the leadership of Mokitimi, the issues of African culture were revisited and the Methodist Church formulated certain policies to recognize black culture.

What was the role of the BMC in the recognition of black culture? Were they instrumental? I am not sure whether the BMC did play a significant role rather than lobbying for black presidents of the Methodist conference. Is there any future for the BMC? I think that the role of the BMC was quite pertinent in apartheid society. In the light of present reality, however, the BMC just does not seem to have a clear vision today and simply confuses both white and black ministers who are now more acceptable of a "rainbow theology". The fact that the church needs to move towards Africanization is of utmost importance. This task does not require black people alone. We need all sons and daughters of Africa who classify themselves as Africans to become involved in transforming the church to become a church in Africa. The BMC needs to be changed: the name itself is no longer appropriate given its exclusivity in nature. If ever we need such a structure, I will suggest that should be

a structure that will help to shape the mindset of the ministers, both white and black, so that they come to terms with the realization of the Africanization of the church. Such a ministers' fraternity, which will be formed in all districts, should seek means to foster inter-racial worship and a clear vision for the future of the church. Such a structure will seek to address adequately all situations that face the church in the South Africa of today. We need to do this to come to terms with the Africanization of the Methodist Church and this I submit, is what the present BMC as such can compromise.

The objective of this thesis was to investigate the contributions of Zaccheus R. Mahabane and Seth Mokitimi towards the Africanization of the Methodist Church, in order to demonstrate that both these leaders played a significant role in this realization. The writer used a qualitative research technique by interviewing contemporaries of the subjects and by analyzing primary and secondary documents. It should be noted that the questions were open-ended allowing interviewees to freely divulge their impressions of the subjects. However, the questionnaires were differently structured for different respondents. This was because the researcher attempted to collect data of interest to the various specific areas of study.

Most of the respondents did not know Zaccheus R. Mahabane in person; only one of the six respondents claimed that Zaccheus R. Mahabane was a good friend who occasionally visited their home (Appendix -D-). Mahabane was reported to be a very eloquent and upright man who stood up for the course of justice. The thesis has demonstrated that Mahabane was deeply committed to the struggle for freedom. He repeatedly spoke against the colour bar. His dual role as priest and leader of the ANC was fascinating as he proved how a minister can handle both religious and political spheres. Zaccheus R. Mahabane's exposure in

African affairs showed his love for Africa and commitment to the wellbeing of its peoples. He was able to discern the early roots of Christianity in Egypt and called for further research in this area, an initiative which has only recently been followed up.

All respondents personally knew Mokitimi. According to them, he was a real leader and eloquent preacher. He knew how to get his message across when using the Biblical text. For many he was not a political figure or aligned to any political party. However, two respondents felt that his contact with Zaccheus R. Mahabane and other African National Congress members suggests that he had a deep political conviction.

Both leaders played a significant role in promoting the cultures of their people within the Christian faith. Though their social locations were different, the causes to which they gave their full measure of devotion were comparable. They both served the church in different ways and at times in similar committees where they strove for the realization of African tradition and customs within the church. They challenged the Church in their own way to consider the African cultures and tradition. The study of both theologians clearly demonstrates that they did in their own way contribute towards the Africanization of the church although they were deeply anchored in a church tradition. Each of them developed a program of theological ethic.

Mahabane and Mokitimi each represents a different epoch in the history of South Africa. Each of them has a different perspective of the Christian responsibility in South Africa. They both offer an interpretative framework for analyzing the South African situation. Both leaders discuss similar concepts such as reconciliation, the role of the church and social change. Both leaders were committed in their own way to the welfare of South Africa.

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Mahabane was more concerned with interpreting fundamental Christian belief, the gospel, salvation, and forgiveness within the context of South Africa. He tried to grapple with the idea of how Methodist were to reconcile their beliefs with the apartheid society of his time. Unlike Mahabane Mokitimi did not focus so much on interpreting these concepts in the light of the South African situation. He was much more concerned with the conversion of people to Christianity. He did not speak out clearly against racial discrimination in the church and society. Despite Mokitimi's involvement at Healdtown with the students and teachers, when he was elected president of conference he spent much of his time with white people. This shifted his focus from the black Methodist majority. Mahabane, on the other hand, was more concerned with the plight of the black majority, and was committed to the struggle for transformation within and outside the church. It was very important for Mahabane to locate his African experience within the Christian belief from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. His allegiance to the ANC served as an important basis on which his political consciousness and critical engagement were based.

INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

Mahabane, and Mokitimi to a lesser extent, endeavoured to interpret the South African situation by referring to the Christian gospel. Mahabane saw South Africans racial oppression as the dominating factor over all aspects of life, economic and religious as well as political. He described the whole oppressive system as idolatrous and therefore under the

judgement of God. For Mahabane, the only means for Christianity to become liberative was to respond to the reality of the country. Mokitimi, on the other hand, used the Christian scriptures as a healing gospel in trying to ease the pain of those who needed comfort. Christ was the centre in all the sermons he preached.

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The political agenda espoused by Mahabane was resistance whilst Mokitimi advocated reconciliation. The resistance espoused by Mahabane was the resistance generated and organized by the oppressed. The reconciliation preached by Mokitimi was that offered by the gospel, which is concerned with changing people's attitudes and encouraging them to support and work for structural change. Mahabane called on Africans to protest and resist all forms of racial legislation. He recognized the important role that protest organizations played in challenging the church to become concerned for the social welfare of the country. Mokitimi's theology could be described as pre-critical, suggesting that he did not give cognizance to the possibility of ideological influence. His uncritical theology provided the framework for an uncritical political praxis. His theology was a microcosm of the kind of theology perpetuated by the Methodist Church at the time. Though his incumbency as first black president of conference is an important hallmark in the history of the black struggle in South Africa, nevertheless it became a convenient strategy used by the Methodist Church to glorify their own theology that fell within the ambit of Mokitimi, since, he never spoke critically of the Methodist Church. Mokitimi thus became the right person to promote Wesleyan passive theology.

Mahabane, in contrast compared to Mokitimi, was very critical of the socio-economic and political forces that were at play. He vehemently criticized the racial legislation and continued to call for a round table negotiation. His critical theology made him realize the passivity of the church. According to Mahabane Africanization could only be realized when African people were involved in the making of the country. Whether this was in the church or outside it, for him the presence of African people was critical in the realization of Africanization. He was quite aware of the importance of Christianity in Africa. This for him was important since it does signals the potential of Christianity being a religion of Africa. Religious tolerance and freedom were important for Mahabane. He believed that a working relationship among religions or religionists was important for building a healthy society.

Mokitimi did not attempt to offer political guidelines as such. His lack of political engagement does assert the belief that the church should not engage in the political, which reflected the Methodist dilemma. This does not suggest that Mokitimi did not have a political agenda. However, he expressed little opinion on how he envisaged the future of the church. This is very clear when he focused on the gospel of salvation with no prophetic engagement.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

The theological method, interpretive framework, and political perspective all find expression in how the respective leaders espoused specific issues. The more fundamental differences that can be noted lie in their theological categories of reconciliation, healing and salvation. Mahabane, for example, dealt with Christian social responsibility as a category of salvation,

while Mokitimi dealt with it as a category of repentance according to the scripture. An essential issue of difference is seen in the power of their positions. Mokitimi, though president of conference, did not appear to be as powerful as presidents before him. One wonders whether it was because Mokitimi was not at all influential that black Methodists had to wait for another ten years before they could see another black president of conference. Some voices might say the reason why black Methodist needed to wait so long for another black president was of Mokitimi's critical engagement; given this whites feared another black president. If we come to such a conclusion on what grounds do we base it? It appears that his leadership was instrumental in further promoting white dominance in the Methodist Church. When saying this I am not suggesting that Mokitimi's leadership was useless; all I am saying is that he should have done more to promote black aspirations. Some critics might say it was not easy for him because of being the only black among white persons; such a statement does not hold water, as many people have stood that test. I acknowledge Mokitimi's leadership and the respect that others have for him; however my reading of him is that he has failed the black Methodist majority.

However, one can not ignore the fact that both leaders attempted to challenge the church towards indigenization and Africanization, incorporating African values into the life of the church and addressing the question of how these can contribute new facets to the church. One vital aspect of Africanization is to incorporate African cultural patterns into worship. Issues such as polygamy, African rites, lobola and circumcision are now on the Methodist agenda. An investigating committee on the question of the impact of African customs on the Church has been instituted. Both Mokitimi and Mahabane played a pertinent role in the recognition of African customs and culture by the Methodist Church, which has happened

only since 1960. The emergence of a highly articulate and purposeful contribution from black clergy, the subsequent election of a black President of Conference, the appointment of a Commission on Africanization and the role of the Manyano's all tell of a Methodist Church that strives to be of Africa. The Commission on Africanization has been tasked with defining the concept of Africanization in relation to the function of the church in respect of liturgy and form of worship.

Both Mokitimi and Mahabane ensured that the traditional beliefs would find their fullest expression in the church. It has thus assured that the MCSA affirmed its African roots.

The Obedience Conference of 1981, the most representative assembly in 165 years of the history of the MCSA, was a clear commitment to Africa. The conference affirmed that the MCSA is a Church in Africa and it is vital that the riches of Africa be appropriated into the church worship, music and liturgies. For the first time in the history of the Methodist Church a black president (Rev.Dr.T.S.N Gqubule) handed over to another black president (Rev Dr Khoza Mgojo), with a black Secretary of Conference (Rev Mmutlanyane Mogoba). On one occasion, when the Rev Vume Dandala (Assistant Secretary) had to thank the ex-president of the British conference, Rev. Dr. John Newton, for addressing the Conference he did so by singing his praises as a Mbongi (praise singer) in a dramatic and moving moment that spoke of a church that was of Africa. The institution of the commission on Africanization suggests that the Methodist Church is committed to enforcing Africanization and indigenization in the church. The call for a *"Journey to a New Land"* is another aspect which demonstrates that the Methodist Church is willing and committed to shaping the

mindset of its members. This account clearly demonstrates that the MCSA has moved on in terms of realization of Africanization and indigenization .

A problem that remains is the question of replacing the Western symbols in the church by African symbols. This appears to be a difficult task, which could mean “hurting the weak”. However, if church leaders take the lead in this (by changing the mindset of the people), it may not be so difficult. We must praise Wesley for his teachings, but nonetheless, we need to change the imported identity of the Methodist Church so that it fits within Africa. Whether it is choir robes, hymns, liturgies or whatever, we must be prepared to create an African identity that is acceptable to all. Furthermore, the fact that the church has taken an active part in female empowerment is a good sign for gender identity in Africanization. However, these patterns are not consistent over the broader sectors of the church in South Africa, especially in some black churches. This is another challenge to the progress of Africanization and indigenization. The gender barrier needs to be crossed so that it is no longer the male customs that dominate the church. The process of Africanization and indigenization seeks to replace such mindset by one more representative of all the people, irrespective of gender.

One can not ignore the difficulties in the process of indigenization and Africanization when pastors seek to translate all discoveries into practice. For example, by the use of drums and Marimbas in liturgical music, and replacing the Holy Communion wine with something more African like e.g. ‘umqomboti’, pastors may fear to upset members of the congregation. However, this could mean that they themselves have reservations as to the reality of Africanization. It is thus important to free their mindset first from believing that anything western is superior.

The Manyano's in the Methodist Church have been an important mechanism for the realization of the African identity. They have never given in to western influences but have striven to maintain their own values. The contribution of the Manyano's in the times of the struggle was essential. The Manyano's were successful in empowering black people in the church, especially women. The role they played was that of shaking off the shackles of colonialism by changing the mindset of the people for the realization of an African identity. Their all-night revival meetings, African-style singing, dancing and movement, exposition of the Word by human laity, healing and exorcism, etc are important African experiences that the Manyano's made use of. The Manyano, the BMC, and other Africanizing mechanisms in the Methodist Church served as important components of the Church. The fact that the church as a whole has taken upon itself the quest for the Africanization is an important commitment.

This thesis has contributed to the challenges of indigenization and the Africanization of Christianity. It has demonstrated how black Methodists struggled for an African Christian identity. We have seen the contribution of both Mahabane and Mokitimi to the realization of the Africanization of the Methodist Church. Transformation in the Methodist Church is now high on the agenda in the name of the *"Journey to a New Land."*

Africanization should be seen as a necessity for every African person and institution. *"The failure of an African Church to wrestle vigorously with Africanization is an offence to its African constituencies and a betrayal of its geographical location. Whether the church is committed to the realization of Africanization and indigenization is one question to ask. The gospel is about enabling people to realize*

*their full humanity. We need to recognize that the cultural location of people significantly determines how they attain this humanity”.*¹

Challenge Ahead

This thesis has been concerned mainly with the Africanization of the Methodist Church in South Africa. But what of the Christian Church as a whole? Among theologians, the process of indigenization and Africanization has become a common denominator for transformation in the Church. The level at which churches themselves have attempted to grapple with this remains to be answered. It appears that some churches are not concerned about the realization of this transformation. The debate and realization of it is only centered among theologians of the mainline churches, such as the English-speaking churches. The question is, is there any impetus to “ring the bells” for Pentecostal theologians and those of other charismatic churches or to what extent are the theological seminaries and Biblical Correspondence Colleges contributing to this? These questions need to be addressed in order to get all churches on board for the realization of Africanization. It is important that all Churches and members join in the process. It should be noted, however, that even though the debate on indigenization and Africanization is dominated by Christian theologians, it should rather not be regarded as a Christian endeavor only. All theologians irrespective of their religion should engage in this realization. To commit oneself to it is to search for a greater unity of the religions practised in Africa. This realization expressed in language, worship etc holds us all together, and to recognize it is to come to terms with Africa, shaking off the European influence.

The Methodist Church has committed itself to this debate but, even so, there are those members who remain skeptical of the process. The only remedy is for the Church to transform their attitude. There is a need to conscientise ministers around the process of the indigenization and Africanization of the Church, so that they will help in shaping the mindset of the people. For the realization of this, all Methodists must join in making it happen.

One vital aspect is that the church must commit itself to change within its own structures. The Methodist Church needs to foster change within itself. Stationing of ministers across racial lines is one important challenge that the church needs to embark on. The churches also need to try to become a truly African Church, and to come up with a mechanism that will ensure the integration of white and blacks churches. Unless the church in South Africa does something in this regard, black and whites will continue to live on under the legacy of apartheid.

Notes
Chapter five
CONCLUSION

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APPENDIX -A-

INTERVIEW WITH DR. STANLEY MOGOBA

30 SEPTEMBER 1997

P.A.C OFFICE, PARLIAMENT, CAPE TOWN

- 1. In what way did the black Methodists express their concerns before they were allowed to be part of the decision – making process?**

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Here let me say Black Methodists who were members of conference did express their views. However, I would say where you had Blacks and whites in one quarterly meeting at one synod or one conference there was a problem of language. Whites had the advantage because English was the medium of communication, and the procedures of both synod conferences allowed discussions in English. So when you had blacks in a conference they tended to be spectators rather than participants in the process of the decision making. Until fairly recently, blacks played a very minimal part at the highest decision making bodies because blacks were not allowed. Language served as a major problem; they could not actively take part or express themselves very vividly. However, there came a time when blacks were gradually beginning to be vocal, and I think of people like the late Dr Willie Nkomo (not A.B Nkomo who is the father of Willie Nkomo). He was amongst the lay people who began to be vocal at conference and then you had a few lay people coming on who also began to be vocal. Then you had ministers like Rev. Mahabane. In the time of Reverend Mokitimi blacks views' began to be expressed at conferences.

2. What propelled the Methodist policy makers to allow a black president? Was it because of the fact that Africans got the right to vote in the church or was it the influence of international developments, e.g. independence of African countries, Martin Luther King in USA etc?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

Blacks had been trying for a long time to get a black president of conference. This was very difficult indeed. Let me explain that first there was a very interesting law in the state. The church had to be either white or black by definition. If you had the majority at the conference, say blacks, the church could be called black so was it when you had a majority of whites. Now the Methodist Church for a long time wanted to be white; because being white meant it should enjoy the privileges of being white, and also protect property. We are one church; our properties in the Black townships coloured townships and White townships or anywhere are under the protection of the President. According to the constitution of the church, the law and disciplines, the chief trustee of the church was the president. Therefore, if you became the president of conference all property became your property-treasures in your name. Similarly, if you are a black president it means you virtually own the church and ministers houses and schools in white areas. This in those days could be a danger because blacks were not allowed to own properties. Therefore, it became necessary to keep the church white. There used to be times when they made sure that the majority of members of conference were white one could sometimes see them doing a quick count. The Methodist Church in this way conformed to apartheid policies to protect the property.

3. At which point in history did Methodists begin to be vocal against apartheid?

What role did you and Mokitimi play in this?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

The Methodist Church has never quite accepted apartheid but it conformed to apartheid and there is a difference. In theory, they did not, but in practice they slowly conformed to it. Let me give you just one example: When the missionaries first arrived, they had no knowledge of the language of the people. They studied the language of the people and used interpreters to communicate to them. This soon began to stop and you got to a point where you could no longer send a Black minister to a white church, it just could not happen that way. It was easier to send a white minister to a Black church; that happened for a while until they felt that they had enough Black ministers in the black areas, than apartheid became complete. Black ministers were to minister in black areas and white ministers had to minister in white areas. This was not a law but it just happened right up to my time. Therefore, I would say that opposition to apartheid came when apartheid was legalized. I became a member of the African National Congress Youth League in 1949. During 1949-1950 I continued that tradition for a very long time and when the Pan African Congress was formed in 1959 my sympathies were slowly going that way

4. In what way can you say Mokitimi's incumbency effected change in the Methodist Church?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Some white people who chose to leave the church opposed Mokitimi's historical incumbency but later came back. Being a president of the church he had to ordain, baptize and confirm people. These things never happened before. I think Mokitimi's incumbency was a challenge for the church because he spoke against racism of the church. Mokitimi proved to the world that blacks could also do it.

5. When did the black caucus in the Methodist Church start? What other form of resistance did black Methodists employ within the church besides the caucus?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

The black Methodist caucus started in 1979. It was a reaction to the Soweto rebellion of 1976. The church was silent during this period when a number of black people were dying. At the conference of 1976, blacks called on the conference to be relevant to situations of the time. I still remember major protest when we wanted the conference to stop its agenda and address the situation outside. This act created havoc at the conference because we literally stopped it. The black caucus wanted Charles Stephenson and his conference to address social political issues and a need for a black president because we only had a black president in 1963-1964 and nothing had happened for nearly 12 years. The black caucus also addressed the issue of salaries of ministers. Different Methodist Church salary scales

between White and African ministers raised a big issue. The question was why? However, the real problem was you could not get the conference do that. Because ministers did not receive the same stipends and you could not prevent this from happening, since stipends were paid by circuits. This suggests that there was a big difference in stipend between a minister who stays in a white area compared to those in a black area.

6. Did Mokitimi have any political affiliation?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

To my knowledge not in a party political sense. He might have been influenced by the ANC. He was trained at Fort Hare University and he could have been influenced by the political activities at the time. But he did not belong to any political party in the same way that you can refer to Rev. Zaccheus R. Mahabane.

7. The Methodist Church is known to have the largest African membership but Africans only obtained high positions in 1963. Why at this point in history?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

However, I think the year 1963 is also important in many ways because here you will remember 1960 was the Sharpeville massacres, a year of political consciousness. Many people died during this time, a signal that delineates white supremacy and state control. The church became a duplicate of society and maintained white supremacy which enforced

docility among Africans. This slowly began to change when you had men like Mokitimi and E.E Mahabane taking up leadership positions. Between the conferences of 1954 and 1962, Mokitimi had a gradual increment in his vote, this signals his reign.

8. What would you say was the major difference between the church structure you inherited compared to that of Mokitimi?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

Before I became President of the church, I was secretary of conference. That was a major shift in the history of Methodism to have a Black secretary for the first time. In 1983, the church for the first time had a Black secretary and president. That was a clear sign that the structures began to change. Let me say that in another very important area the structure did not change much, particularly in the financial administration of the church. When I became secretary of conference, I also became the ministerial general treasurer and general treasurer at the same time. When I took office the District president began to change. Therefore, you begin to have more black districts but only for a short time. It also changed from year to year; sometimes you find that you have four of them out of thirteen, sometimes five, sometimes six. The District president is an important part in the executive of the church because the executive is made out of the President of conference and the secretary of conference and the bishops and all the chairman of districts. Therefore, I would say that was a major change that prompted a black voice to be heard.

9. How would you assess Mokitimi's term of office? What were the successes and failures? Was he successful in furthering the black aspirations?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

I would say that he was successful only in terms of the symbolism of his voice. The fact that for the first time in the history of Methodism we managed to have a Black president who dealt with the fears of the people. Particularly those who thought that Blacks will run with the property of the church. People later on embraced him as their president. However, there was no way the head of the Methodist Church could further black aspirations in one year, in a church that was completely under white control. It did not happen during my time, let me put it that way. It takes a very, very long time to further black aspirations.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR SIMON GQUBULE

11 SEPTEMBER 1997

EAST LONDON, ZWELITSHA, MOUNT COKE-OLD MISSION STATION

1. At which point in the history did Methodists begin to be vocal against apartheid.

What role did Mokitimi play in this?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

What actually should concern us is that it took such a long time for this black voice to be heard. The first black vote for Mokitimi came up at the conference in 1954 in Queenstown when he got four votes for the Presidency. That was the first time the blacks made their things visible, to the church and to the conference. Therefore, when four people voted for Mokitimi to be President, you could say that was the beginning of a visible demonstration of the feeling of blacks. I said in my book when Dr Webb saw the four votes he said, "that things cuts their shadows before they happen". In other words this was the sign of what was going to happen in the future and once Mokitimi got those four votes the votes increased year by year until in 1963 he was elected.

2. Was Mokitimi the only possible candidate? How did others feel about him?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

There were other candidates like E.E Mahabane, Davis Ngubela and so on, but the major support was for Mokitimi because of his availability.

3. According to your book pg. 119, you say that a small group of black leadership met in your house in 1962 to discuss the question of having Seth Mokitimi as the first black president of the Methodist Church; would you say that this was the beginning of the black caucus in the Methodist Church?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

The meeting that was in my house was part of an ongoing process of consultation among blacks. There were many other meetings we had at other different places in the country-Natal, Johannesburg, Alice-where we were discussing matters concerning us as blacks. Now then you see the black caucus was never a structured thing. Dr Nkomo, for example, used to be regarded as the convenor of the black caucus, although there was no meeting at which he was voted for as convenor. (This refers to Dr Nkomo of Pretoria father to A.B. Nkomo).

SO WOULD YOU SAY THIS WAS THE FIRST BLACK CAUCUS?

I was saying this consultation among blacks existed from the very beginning and the difference is it has never been structuring as the B.M.C became structured in 1976. The B.M.C became structured for the first time in 1976 so the caucus that existed before that was never a structure thing. Blacks used to be called by Dr Nkomo or somebody else to look at, for example, who should be the candidate for the Presidency and it was generally the black vote that determined who became President. However, blacks continued to

vote for white candidates, until at some point black people felt to vote for their own candidates.

4. In what way can you say Mokitimi's incumbency effected change in the Methodist Church?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

It meant that for the first time members of the church realised that a black person can do it and the whites also realised for the first time that a black fellow can do it. Thirdly, the question of the property of the church had to be looked into to decide whether, the regulation that, say, the property of the church belongs to the President can still be maintained when you had a black President. Technically this does suggest that all property belongs to the president.

5. Can you please describe the day of Wednesday 16th October 1963 (81st conference of the Methodist Church)? Before this day did you make any contact with Mokitimi? If yes how would you describe his attitude on that day?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

What contributed to the high numbers of votes for Mokitimi? It was the accumulation of years when he did not get the vote. From the vote in Durban in 1962 when Mokitimi lost it by one vote. From Durban conference we were determined that we are going to collect. We started acting from Durban and determined that we are going to influence people for the next conference in 1963. By the time we met at the conference in Port

Elizabeth in 1963 we had done a lot of canvassed. So that this gave him a large number of votes and we canvas not only blacks because conferences always had a white majority when it came to voting. So we saw to it that we have to canvas whites as well which means that we had to have white people canvassing among one another that they should vote for Mokitimi. Hence he have this massive rate, so it was not just a black vote because on the black vote alone he couldn't have the Presidency. He got the Presidency because in addition to the black vote we had the whites supporting the cause. Even on that day I'm sure that there were blacks that did not vote for him so it was a vote of a mixed body of conference.

6. Was Mokitimi a member of any political party?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

No, the only thing that could be considered to be political was his membership or the Institute of Race Relations. He became a member of Moral Rearmament which is not really a political organisation, just as the Institute of Race Relations was not a political organisation but it dealt with political issues like race and so on.

7. What would you say were the major intellectual influences on Mokitimi's thought?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Mokitimi was a great reader, he read a lot of biographies mainly biographies of church leaders. He was an admirer of great preachers like Spurgeon and Chepneur and Forstick and so on. Intellectually he was natured on that kind of thing and Mokitimi was a great Methodist. He read a lot of Methodist history and Methodist biography. He read about John Wesley's preaching and activities.

8. What kind of church structure did Mokitimi inherit?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

It was the same as today. We had separate churches and it was worse because we had separate synods. That was the structure and it is that thing of separate synods which he fought against and insisted that we also fight against it as he suggested.

9. How would you assess Mokitimi's term of office? What were the successes?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

The successes were, as I have already said, the fact that people expected that if you have a black President many whites would leave the church. Yes, some did leave the church but at the end of the day even those who had left the church originally came back and there was not a noticeable loss of membership because of that instead the members of the church continue to grow. Blacks were concern many more especially the young were attracted towards the church because they noticed that even a black person can do it. As President he travelled all over the country and people who never heard a black person preaching experienced this.

APPENDIX –C–

QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEW WITH ABEL HENDRICKS

9 NOVEMBER 1998

**AT HOUSE IN KRAAIFONTEIN, SCOTVILLE, CAPE
TOWN**

1. Can you briefly reflect on Mokitimi's incumbency?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Reflecting on the first black president, the Reverend M. Seth Mokitimi. He presided over the conference that took part in 1964, held in Queenstown. It was the most historic occasion that I have witnessed. I was privileged to be at that conference, not as a representative, but merely as a minister of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. The little bit that I can recall about Mokitimi's background, I think he grew up as a boy herding cattle. He was like the great men in the Bible, like David as a King and Amos as a prophet and also people who were out in the veld and close to the ground and to cattle. I also vaguely recall that one of the white missionaries took Seth Mokitimi in. He studied at Healdtown, he was exceptionally brilliant in many ways.

Before his election Professor Lesley A Hudson wrote a pastoral letter to all Methodists almost preparing them for the change that was about to take place, that took place when Husson was president of the conference in 1959. By that time we already saw and heard and

experienced certain steering within the church. There was a group called the Methodist Renewal Group who advocated change in the structures of the church, the constitution of the church and many other things. At the conference itself the role-played by Mokitimi, as I recall was a similar one in many ways that President Nelson Mandela has played, dreaming about reconciliation. You will appreciate the tremendous shock for a church that since its inception in this country the first conference that was held in 1883, had been white ruled of a sudden on the platform of conference there appears a black person and he needed to be addressed as Mr. President by everybody. The times in which we are living today may be quite different, the intensity of that particular moment is indescribable you cannot put in words the feeling that gripped me as a person when he ascended that platform and gave his presidential address. Some of the same emotions, recalling now after many, many years, I think went through my own mind when with the first democratic elections in this country I could go to the polling-boot and make my cross.

YOU INDICATED THAT REV. HUDSON CIRCULATED AN IMPORTANT LETTER, MY QUESTION IS WHAT WAS SO OBVIOUS THAT MADE HIM REALISE THAT A BLACK PRESIDENT WAS ABOUT TO TAKE PRESIDENCY OF THE METHODIST CHURCH?

There were many factors that leading up to that. You had people that you have mentioned in the question we will come to later. Like E.E Mahabane, Zaccheus R. Mahabane, Jotham Mvusi and many others. Blacks became more articulate and less timid, saying what they really felt and experienced. They opposed the perception that black ministers are subservient and not controversial. I also think that the yoke of oppression of apartheid itself

intensified the urge for freedom in the minds of the majority of people in the Methodist Church, being black and also in the country.

2. What other forms of resistance did black Methodists embark on besides the BMC?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

Nothing visible as far as I can recall although we had in many of the districts small groups of black Methodists meeting as ministers' fraternal on our own, and we discussed the issues of for example the inequality of stipends, that was a major issue. (This fraternal afforded blacks an opportunity to experience their own spirituality. For others the fraternal was seen as an opportunity to create another apartheid church.) Another major issue was of having three Women's groups in one Methodist Church. The Women's Manyano, the Women's Auxiliary (a predominantly white group) and the so-called Coloured Women's Association. Today these three organizations do incorporate with one another though there is no united front. The same situation applies to the young people.

Music has played an important part in the life of African people. It was used to express their feelings and emotions. There is no doubt that hymns sung in the church were a form of resistance articulated by the black people. The choir festivals were a unique example of a site used by the Methodists to challenge apartheid. At the Pietermaritzburg conference (of 1976) which I attended as the ex-president of the conference and Rev. Charles Stephenson was president of conference, black ministers insisted that the agenda of the day be changed. We had resistance from certain white ministers who became later presidents of conference. I

was a strong supporter to it, the threat was so great that the black ministers consulted me then as the ex-president of conference, that they will stage a walk-out. This was the era of turmoil in Soweto when the country went up in flames the pain and trauma and the whole political disruption that took place, house arrest, tapping of telephones and so on.

3. What kinds of leader were Rev. Zaccheus R. Mahabane and the Rev. Seth Mokitimi?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Z. R. Mahabane was very close to becoming the president of the conference. For reasons totally unknown to me up to this day he could never get a majority. Zaccheus R. Mahabane, if I recall correctly, aligned himself openly to the ANC to the Charter of Kliptown in 1955. I had the honor and privilege to sit at the feet of both these leaders. They made in their own way a tremendous impact.. Both Mokitimi and Zaccheus R. Mahabane were very outspoken.

4. Was Mokitimi not elected because white people in the Methodist Church could easily relate with him because he was not so radical compared to Zaccheus R. Mahabane?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

No, sir, let me refresh your memory. The conferences were predominately white. I salute many of the white missionaries and white leaders of the Methodist Church. But we had a lot of people attending conferences, here I am referring to white people, that still thought along the lines of the apartheid policies when there was no difference whether they voted for the

United Party in those days or the National Party. I don't know. The thing that the voting result reflected indicated that it was not the ability or capabilities that they used as a criterion or the spirituality or leadership potential of the person or the quality of character but the important ingredients in becoming a leader and it is for this reason that Mokitimi was elected.

5. Why did Mokitimi keep himself at a distance from political persuasions?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

It's hard to say but I will say he impressed me greatly with qualities that may in many circles no longer be deemed as the type of ingredient that forms the person is character. I think his spirituality, people who work very close with him spoke of his spirituality. To me he came across as a gentle person. I can't recall that he raised any major political issues. But he gave wise counsel and leadership. He served as a person to bring about reconciliation. I think it was just, as history says, the time comes and the leader emerges.

6. It is clear from the Methodist minutes that Mokitimi was much more involved with white people in different working committees as compared to Zaccheus R. Mahabane who was much more involved with the people on the ground. Your comments?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

I think he came to power at a difficult time in the political history of South Africa. Some people may say he was timid or did not take a stand on certain situations; but we should not

forget that apartheid was at its cruellest and worst at that time. He emerges as a black leader who felt he wants to bring reconciliation and protect the integrity of the church.

- 7. Mokitimi was the first black president, elected in 1963; ten years after him (in 1973) Jotham C. Mvusi was elected with such a gap, could we really say that Mokitimi did bring about change in the Methodist Church?**

ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

I can not give you an answer why there was a ten year gap before the next black president emerged. This troubled many minds in the church. This question is beyond my comprehension.

- 8. When comparing Zaccheus R. Mahabane and the Rev. S. Mokitimi what differences and similarities can we learn from these leaders?**

ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

When we talk about these leaders, Zaccheus R. Mahabane was part of the struggle and was a very influential person and had some very clear ideas even as a young person, I can remember when he spoke we listened. We must not see the ten year gap as an issue that reflect Mokitimi's incompetence, no! During this period many blacks voted for white ministers, this in a way helped stimulate the white supremacy.

- 9. Why did the president of the former Transkei, Matanzima, banned the Methodist Church?**

ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

Matanzima banned the church because of the pressure that was put on him by the Black ministers in the Transkei. The Methodist Church in South Africa was not the only church in South Africa that opposed the Homelands, however it became the prime target of being banned.

APPENDIX -D-

QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEW WITH HELEN AND THEO KOTZE

24 NOVEMBER 1998

AT HOUSE IN ROSEBANK CAPE TOWN

1. What kind of leader was Rev. Seth Mokitimi?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

My first memory of Seth Mokitimi is when he was staying in our home in the South coast of Natal. He was what I call a shining Christian. His face shone with goodness, a very remarkable, brilliant man, amazing man. Had he been white he would have been the youngest president of conference ever. He had such advanced ideas of the church. He was the first black leader in any of the white churches in South Africa. He came to Cape Town on an official presidential visit. I think he should have come back to be president because he was an outstanding person. Some of the blacks that followed him were token blacks-they were appointed because they were black. Beyers Naude told us that he went to the Cottesloe conference in 1961. Beyers went to the conference as a Dutch Reformed representative. He found himself sharing a room with Seth Mokitimi, and learned a lot from him. It was really a shock for him sharing a room with a black man. Beyers Naude said that this was one of the watersheds in his life-sharing a room with Seth Mokitimi. For a black staying in the house of a white was something quite incredible then. Seth was committed to the issues of the time. He was not acceptable to all whites and was sidelined.

The Methodist Church in the '60s and '70 never took real action against the legislation of laws, all they did was to pass resolutions. The Church of England was far better than they were because they acted.

- 2. Mokitimi was the first president elected in 1963. Ten years after him (in 1973) Jotham C. Mvusi was elected with such a gap, could we really say that Mokitimi did bring about change in the Methodist Church?**

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

That also can point to how outstanding Seth Mokitimi was, that the Methodist Church was not ready for another black president until the seventies. He could not come back. Because of his way of using the biblical narrative to identify with the day to day issues he brought about change

- 3. Was Mokitimi elected because white people in the Methodist Church could easily relate with him because he was not so radical compared to Zaccheus R. Mahabane?**

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Whites were getting more and more into the old groove of preserving white privilege. The reality of the South African situation was that whites never wanted to be swamped by blacks. They were determined to fight this. It should also be noted that the majority of conference was white despite the fact that the church was 90% black. It was arranged that all the whites in top leadership positions needed to get into conference. The blacks in the church also

need to answer because they did not make their voice heard earlier. I do not think that Seth Mokitimi was not radical enough, he tried, and that is why they did not have him back again as president, he got pushed aside.

4. . When comparing Zaccheus R. Mahabane and the Rev. S. Mokitimi what differences and similarities can we learn from these leaders?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

The two leaders were very highly regarded. Both of them had a loyalty to the church. In the midst of schisms in the church they preferred to stay rather than break away.

Mokitimi never associated himself with political persuasions because of his loyalty to the church. He tried very hard to raise the church consciousness to the evil of the situation in the country. He was a loyal Methodist like Mahabane.

APPENDIX –E-

INTERVIEW WITH STANLEY MOGOBA

16 NOVEMBER 1998

P.A.C OFFICE, PARLIAMENT, CAPE TOWN

- 1. When comparing Zaccheus R. Mahabane and the Rev. S. Mokitimi what differences and similarities can we learn from these leaders?**

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

The difference between Zaccheus R. Mahabane and Mokitimi is that Zaccheus R. Mahabane was a very powerful leader and more related to the political events of the day whereas Mokitimi was more a spiritual leader. Mokitimi was not a political leader as far as current national politics is concerned. There is no doubt that he was a great leader and wanted to see blacks taking their place in leadership. The greatest attribute of Mokitimi was his powerful preaching and his spiritual qualities. Whereas, Mahabane was both a strong church leader and a political figure.

- 2. It is clear from the Methodist minutes that Mokitimi was much more involved with white people in different working committees as compared to Zaccheus R. Mahabane who was much more involved with the people on the ground. Can you briefly reflect on Mokitimi's incumbency?**

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

I do not think so, it was the time that determined everything. Most of them were not able to make it to the position. Mokitimi became gradually acceptable for all. When people went to conferences they were clear about the role-played by Mokitimi and Mahabane. They clearly wanted someone who is acceptable to them. Mokitimi was their choice because of being a powerful preacher and his spiritual insights he offered. I have no doubt that Zaccheus R. Mahabane equally wanted Mokitimi to be president of conference.

- 3. According to the Methodists minutes Mokitimi played a leading role towards the building of unity among the Protestant Churches. This I think has afforded him to work “hand in glove” with the white people particularly in the Methodist Church. Given this scenario is it true to state that his incumbency was a strategy used by whites for their own gains?**

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

It might have been but one can not rule out the fact that Mokitimi was not liked by the whites because whites did not want any blacks in that position. To substantiate this, when I became secretary of conference whites did not want to see me in the position.

- 4. What other forms of resistance did Black Methodists embark on before the formation of the BMC?**

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Every year when there was a conference blacks formed caucuses to find out how they are going to mobilize their vote together. They also caucussed when resolutions were passed. One major issue was the equality of stipends and the segregation of the church. The form of protest was a reflection of awareness of the unfairness treatment that the church was practicing.

5. What role did the Manyano's play in the struggle for change in the Church?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

The Manyano's were determined to maintain their identity. The Manyano's were not political. When we look at empowerment, we will discover that the Methodist use of lay people was a form of empowerment. A typical Manyano woman is a domestic worker whose status is considered very low but when she comes home her status is elevated because she is the chairperson of the Women's Manyano. The same thing goes for the young men's Manyano's.

The whole concept of Manyano began in the Methodist Church was which subsequently followed by other churches. There was a strong resistance to its formation. When the Manyano started the white fathers resisted it they did not like black spirituality the form of dancing and singing in the church, this for them was nothing but heathenism coming back to the church. There was really a big debate whether the Manyano's should be allowed or not.

6. What role did you play in the BMC?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

I was not the founder but when it was founded, I left for Cambridge. I came back and left again for eighteen months to Britain. It was quite strong when I came back. I later joined and then became chairperson of it for a year. The BMC wanted me to become secretary of conference. I was very unhappy about it, because I was enjoying the BMC work and my work at the Federal Theological Seminary. At the Seminary we went through radical times but just needed to adapt the situation. We were expelled from Fort Hare and needed to go to Pietermaritzburg, where we were not really accommodated. We then needed to erect a new building, I played a prominent role during the erection of the building.

There was always resistance to the BMC. They regarded it as anti-establishment and they suspected it of being nationalistic as well. The role the BMC played that of addressing the interest of black members always made it to be disregarded by the white Methodist. Most people who were in top leadership in the BMC were proponents of Black theology and Black consciousness. I think the most important question is that white people wanted no black persons to take the lead, that's why there was resistance towards Mokitimi's election. When he was elected some whites threatened to leave the church. There were some church people who knew Mokitimi and respected him as a church person. They also began to think that it was unfair that blacks of Mokitimi's calibre could not be elected.

7. Mokitimi was the first president elected in 1963, ten years after him (in 1973)

Jotham C. Mvusi was elected with such a gap, could we really say that Mokitimi did bring about change in the Methodist Church?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

I think the gap between 1963 and 1976 shows that Mokitimi rise above white dominance and his contemporaries. Whites, I think, were very shocked after Mokitimi's reign so that they were more careful to allow blacks in powerful positions. I know the stories that were told about the property of the church that will be lost because there was a black leader. Those arguments were revived after Mokitimi. They kept on saying that if you have a black president than he is a chief trustee of the property of all Methodist Churches in Southern Africa. It meant that all black and white churches, ministers manses and all property registered in the name of the church would be lost because blacks at the time did not have the right to own property. That element kept on coming back. That is why at many conferences the secretary and the secretariat were very alert as to the composition of the church. When they moved away from the leader determining the ownership of the church , they were convinced that the conference must have a majority of whites. There was a problem of having more blacks than whites in the conference, they always tried to change that.

I AM JUST WONDERING HOW TRUE THIS IS BECAUSE WHEN MOKITIMI WAS ELECTED I AM SURE THAT BLACK AND WHITES VOTED FOR HIM? IF REALLY ONE COULD SAY THAT HE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE

**OF CREATING BLACK AWARENESS AND SURELY, ONE COULD HAVE
HAD A BLACK EMERGENCE IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS.**

The truth of the matter is what can you do in one year being in leadership. The system itself was not for change. He came in as president of conference but half way through the year was already moving out, in October a president elect is already chosen. The church was really administered by the secretary of conference who was the most powerful person in the church. Suggesting that the president of conference was really not the president.

**THIS IS FASCINATING, WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU WERE ELECTED
SECRETARY OF CONFERENCE IN 1981, DID YOU HAVE SIMILAR STATUS
AS COMPARED TO PREVIOUS SECRETARIES OF CONFERENCE.**

The BMC lobbied me to get him in this position. They knew that it was very difficult to get someone in there because our background did not prepare for executive positions. Myself I was not fit for the position but I had to work hard to get myself in.

I was in a similar powerful position as previous secretaries and was a very influential in decision making. I controlled the church; I administered the conference. The life of the church was in the hands of the secretary and the general treasurer. The president did not know much what was happening in the church.

8. Was Mokitimi elected because white people in the Methodist Church could easily relate with him because he was not so radical compared to Zaccheus R. Mahabane?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

No, I suspect it was because Mahabane was a minister in Johannesburg which is a most political area than in other parts of the country. Port Elizabeth and Cape Town also fall in these categories. I am trying to say the place that you ministered determined your political involvement. That is why Mahabane's appointment was a very important one. He ended up being a superintendent of his area, a "little president himself". Whereas Mokitimi's area to minister differed compared to that of Zaccheus R. Mahabane

APPENDIX –F-

INTERVIEW WITH ENERST BAARTMAN

11 NOVEMBER 1998

AT ROSEBANK METHODIST CHURCH CAPE TOWN

1. What were the reasons behind the formation of the BMC?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

I think it had to do with the differentiation in stipends because blacks were underpaid. We felt what the church was talking about, being “one and undivided,” was not happening in a practical sense. It was clear that apartheid was still visible in the church. Even if parity in stipends is not possible there should at least be a minimal stipend set for ministers. We went on to look at other disparities in the church e.g. the children’s fund, the composition of the leadership of the church, that was very white then. After Seth Mokitimi it took years for another black leader to be elected. This made us realize to support black people and equip them to take up leadership positions.

2. What role did you play in this?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

I called together the first forty ministers in Bloemfontein and acted as convenor. The interesting part of this was that a white group sponsored the meeting. There was a lot of uneasiness about the group, some saw it as something that will hold the church together. The Transkei schism (in 1978) was a major problem to the church, but the BMC managed to

hold the church together. Ministers in the Methodist Church felt that there was no point in leaving the church, but rather to work within the structures of the church to effect change. We have seen many black groups breaking away from the churches but for us it was clear that we had a share in the property of the church and were thus not prepared to break away from the church. One thing was clear for us that was *'ILIFA LO BAWO'*, and we were convinced not to leave the church. The BMC played an important role to hold the church together, it could have easily split into a black and white church.

3. Would you say that the BMC made any achievements in what they struggled for?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

I do not think they have, what has happened was to get blacks in leadership positions in the church. What we haven't really done is to have the church to become African. We are only African in black areas and we have not affected the church. For instance, when you have to go to a white church in South Africa you could easily find yourself worshipping in England. To a large extent we still have a lot of work to do as far as I am concerned. Now that we are in this new democratic South Africa, congregations will become more integrated. We trust that those who will be integrated in white congregation will be black enough to transform those congregations to be African enough to help the congregations to worship in Africa. I do not think that geographical circuits are going to work. What they have done was to join two groups together based on culture and race which they called integrated circuits. These groups only meet at the quarterly meetings. This kind of legislation limits relationship between people. If society is clearly integrated you will have working relationships. I do not see why a person who worships at Rondebosch should go and

worship at Langa. This does happen simply of the poor level of acceptance but in the next generation people who live in a particular area will worship where they are located.

4. What important role did the Manyano's play in inculcating a culture of Africanness?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

The Manyano is one group which has been peculiarly African. They never gave in to pressures but kept on to their values. There is strong talk to merge the three different groups, the Women's Auxiliary (predominantly white group) and the Coloured Women Association. However, there is great resistance from the Manyano, this I think is because they want to maintain their identity.

5. The Manyano's served as a major instrument for black empowerment. Your comments?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

The Manyano's served a great purpose during the times of struggle. Many of them were domestic workers. During the week they were treated as servants, but come Thursdays they felt much more empowered because then they could take up responsibilities. Women played an important role to affect change. In their own way they supported the church. They supported change with their vote and helped in articulating change in the church.

6. What role did you play in the formation of the BMC?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

My idea was to try to help blacks to take their position in the church and to play a meaningful role in the church. During apartheid white Methodists held positions of being chairperson. I advocated that the Vice-chairpersons (which were the position hold by blacks) must also attend the meeting. My idea was to get blacks into leadership positions in the church and to equip them.

7. Did the BMC gain an overall black appreciation?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Some blacks were not happy of the BMC, they saw us a divisive and racist. They did not understand that the church was practising apartheid. For them the church was holy and no politics should be brought in the church. Blacks who opposed the BMC helped in sharpening their vision in the church. The Manyano's played an important part in maintaining their African identity, they refused to be absorbed by western culture.

8. What role did Mokitimi and Mahabane play in this?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

Mokitimi was a brilliant preacher, a great leader. His leadership in the YMG was outstanding. He also had a great influence on students who studied at Healdtown. His contribution in the church raised the standard of blacks in the church.

9. What kind of leader were Rev. Seth Mokitimi and the Rev. Zaccheus Mahabane?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

Many people saw Zaccheus R. Mahabane as a politician rather than as a cleric. Mokitimi had a way of catching the ear of the listeners, finding acceptable ways of getting his message across. The majority of the church conference and executive was white and there is no way that Mokitimi could have broken the white supremacy in the church, being the only black person in a white environment. Mokitimi was a man who spoke against the social evils of the day. Mokitimi once said to us at the Seminary, I am not afraid to what I said to you, but make sure that when you address them they will listen to you and will not come back and say you have broken the law. One could say that Mokitimi was put into leadership at the right time when the church needed a black person. It did not look that whites were prepared to put blacks in soon.

10. Why did the president of the former Transkei, Matanzima, banned the Methodist Church?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 10

Transkei presented an opportunity for blacks to run the church. The black leadership used Matanzima, to support them. This was exactly what the government wanted, which indirectly supported their grand apartheid policy that blacks take up leadership positions in the former homelands. We did not support the idea that the church should be for Transkei people only, we wanted South Africans to belong to the church. The schism was political because it played directly into the hands of Matanzima and it supported the government policy of separate development.

11. What are your impressions on the changes of the Church thus far?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 11

The stationing of ministers should be encouraged across racial lines. There are stations who have white ministers working in coloured areas. I am looking forward for the day when a black minister is placed in a white church serving them.

The Journey to the New Land is an attempt to grapple with the issues but has not done much. It even makes reference to ministers being appointed across colour lines but it is not happening yet.

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