

**AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY AND METHODISM:
A SURVEY OF BLACK MEMBERS OF THE
THABA-NCHU METHODIST CHURCH**

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, the people of the Thaba-Nchu area and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA).

ABSTRACT

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) has been plagued by a number of problems. One of these problems has been the breakaway of some of its members. Some of these members have joined other churches (Mainstream and African Indigenous Churches) and others have founded their own churches. One of the major reasons for the breakaways is what I have framed as lack of "African Spirituality" in the MCSA. By "African Spirituality" I imply that the African way of life does not distinguish between sacred and secular. African spirituality includes the following component elements: Belief in one God, belief in Divinities, Believe in spirits, veneration of ancestors and practice of medicine.

My research in the Thaba-Nchu area confirmed the existence of this problem in the Thaba - Nchu Methodist church. There were three categories of respondents in this research: those who left the church are: those who live between two worlds (belonging to the MCSA and attending services in the African Indigenous Churches at the same time); and those who have single membership. The first two categories, unanimously agreed that the lack of African spirituality and that is why they left the church or have dual membership.

Ways of addressing this problem, i.e., to remedy the situation, have been suggested by the respondents, some scholars and leaders of the MCSA. These suggestions include the following:

- (i) singing: use of drums, clapping of hands, etc.
- (ii) special Sundays for prayers of healing: the church is to use people who are gifted in this, eg. diviners, *sangomas* and *barapelli*.
- (iii) symbolic things like water to be used.

It is hoped that if these suggestions were implemented, the problem would be addressed and the breakaways would stop or slow down and those who have dual membership would be satisfied to stick to the Thaba-Nchu Methodist Church alone. To implement these suggestions, the "top-down" communication strategy adopted by the MCSA's leadership on this and other problems has to be revised, the language used must be understandable to the ordinary people (the grassroots or the marginalised) and the material must be easily accessible to them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people who have contributed to the successful conclusion of this dissertation. Though it is difficult to mention each and everyone by name, I would like to express my wholehearted thanks to all of them. However, it would be unfair on my part not to mention the following people:

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My sincere gratitude also to the respondents from Thaba-Nchu area who were patient enough to avail themselves during the interview, not forgetting other respondents like Rev. I.T. Moeketsi, Prof. C.L.S. Nyembezi, Rev. Dr. M.S. Mogoba.

I would, however, like to point out unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the script, I am responsible for the final presentation of this work. The whole dissertation is my original work.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIC:	AFRICAN INDIGENOUS CHURCHES
AIC:	AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES
ATR:	AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION
BMC:	BLACK METHODIST CONSULTATION
CEYD:	CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND YOUTH DEPARTMENT
L&D:	LAW AND DISCIPLINE
LMS:	LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY
MCSA:	METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
PAC:	PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS
SACC:	SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
TBVC:	TRANSKEI, BOPHUTHATSWANA, VENDA AND CISKEI
YMG:	YOUNG MEN'S GUILD
ZCC:	ZIONIST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Although extensive studies have been done on African Spirituality,¹ the need to revisit this area of study was stimulated by a number of factors. Firstly, I became interested in this topic through the course work programme I undertook on Leadership and Development. One of the modules of this course was on alternative pneumatologies.² In reading the subject further, it became clear that pneumatology has become a central focus of African Indigenous Churches (AICs). They understand the work of the Holy Spirit as involving assuring, instructing, healing, and guiding people daily.³ The work of the Holy Spirit is thus not limited to Sunday services, but is experienced in everyday life. It is this emphasis on the Spirit that is often felt to be missing by African people in traditionally White mainline churches. This perception is highlighted in the following quotation from the African Independent Churches :

What makes us feel uncomfortable in the White churches, more than anything else, is the apparent lack of the Spirit in these churches ... This is what was disappointing to our leaders in the past who left the White churches to be founders of new churches. The African people were suffering from spiritual hunger - lack of Spirituality in services, exorcism, *isiwasho*, purification healing and discouraged in believing in the world of spirits. ⁴

As is evident from this quotation, the failure of mainstream Christianity to address the question of African spiritual needs was one of the reasons why some Africans in Thaba-Nchu broke away from Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA).

¹ By "African Spirituality" I imply that the African way of life does not distinguish between sacred and secular. The belief in the world of the "spirits" is very important and particularly the Holy Spirit.

² Alternative pneumatologies deal with the work of the Holy Spirit.

³ African Independent Churches. *Speaking for ourselves*. Braamfontein. ICT. 1985. P.28.

⁴ Ibid. Pp. 27-28.

Secondly, I was stimulated by the informal and formal interviews that I conducted in Thaba-Nchu among black members of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. While working in Thaba-Nchu, I noticed that some black Methodist members were leaving or had left the church. In a pilot study I learnt a number of things from this trend. The respondents gave worship rituals as one of the reasons why they were dissatisfied with the Thaba-Nchu Methodist Church. They indicated that the worship rituals do not reflect African Spirituality. By this they meant for example:

- (a) the absence of healing in services
- (b) the order of service does not give room for ancestral veneration, communal life, and traditional rituals
- (c) a lack of freedom of worship e.g. clapping of hands and beating of drums.

One respondent stated: “the beating of padded cushions are closer to the African way of singing but so often discouraged by those leading the service. They will always say it is not Methodical.”⁵

Thirdly, the work done by the Africanization Committee as reflected in the MCSA was also an added factor.⁶ The liturgy that has been produced by this committee has considered the following aspects of African Spirituality: the African family, home, children; humanity (*ubuntu-botho*); neighbourliness. It has also produced working documents on the rite of passage to adulthood (circumcision), rites of birth (*imbeleko-thari-ritiki*), rites of repentance and purification, mourning rites, ancestral ceremonies of thanksgiving, rites of response to divine call (*ukuthwasa*), etc.⁷

A fourth motivation was an address of the then Presiding Bishop of the MCSA, Rev. M.S. Mogoba on *An Authentic African Church* which raised issues confronting the

⁵ Refer to appendix no 6, interview no 7.

⁶ The committee on Africanization emerged in the early nineties. The reasons for its inception was the concern for the church to relate the Christian gospel in terms of concepts, symbols, practices and ethos of the African people. The committee has completed the liturgy which accommodates African practices. The liturgy is still in experiment. The committee to report about the outcome to the Methodist conference in 1997.

⁷ The Minutes of the Methodist Conference. Cape Town. Methodist Publishing House. Refer also the

Methodist Church such as the question of ancestral veneration. In response the Queenstown District Synod wrote a resolution to the Methodist Conference on questions relating to ancestral veneration.⁸ The other issue that emerged, related to “Indigenisation of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa”. A resolution from the synod of the Northern Transvaal and Botswana District called on the conference of the MCSA to institute mechanisms by which its members could be educated in this regard. The resolution also affirms the process of authenticating African Spirituality.⁹ M.S. Mogoba has also contributed towards this process of introducing African spirituality into the Methodist church through his publications such as *Convicted by Hope, Black Methodist Consultation Seminar on Africanization, The relevancy of Evangelism in the 20th Century - Christianity in the Southern African Context*, the sermon on “Who is Jesus to you as an African”¹⁰ and his Masters thesis on *The Christian Faith of Urban Africans in South Africa. An Anthro-po-socio-theological Analysis* (1975, Bristol University).

Fifthly, the Black Movements within the MCSA and the continuous increase of the Indigenous churches, some of whose members are also still members of congregations such as the Thaba-Nchu Methodist Church, have also a role to play in my decision to embark on this topic.¹¹ Though some of the black movements within the MCSA have been studied by Balia,¹² their existence even today persuades one to consider the question: to what extent was their quest for independence within the MCSA the result of African Spirituality?

Last, the interest was also motivated by my general reading on Christianity and African traditional religion. The books, articles and journals I read raised issues that

appendix no. 1.

⁸ Refer to Appendix no. 2.1 Par. 27.6.2.

⁹ Refer to Appendix no. 2.2 Section C under General.

¹⁰ Refer to Appendix No. 3 -3.1.

¹¹ See appendix no 6, the reflection also includes unattributed interviews (due to reasons of anonymity).

¹² Balia, D.M. *Black Methodist and White Supremacy in South Africa*. Durban, Universal Printing, 1991, pp 35-45 & 87-91.

stimulated me to consider, for example,¹³ the danger of “romantizing” African traditional values, a view that has strongly been discouraged by Oduyoye. About Christianity and African women’s rituals like mourning rites and purification rites, she states, such rites are health hazards and heart rendering for women.¹⁴ Mbiti also raises interesting issues in connection with African Spirituality.¹⁵ All these factors prompted me to investigate the role of African Spirituality in the Methodist church with particular reference to the Thaba-Nchu area.

Jim Kiernan says of the coming of Christianity in Africa, “The bulk of the African population accepted Christianity, without abandoning the deep-seated religious orientation of distinctive way of life”.¹⁶ The majority of people in Africa-the “bulk”, as says Kiernan - are Christians, they continue to live between the two worlds; the Christian world and the African world. This view has been highlighted by Rev. Ukpong, who shares similar sentiments. He states:

Even those Africans who became Christians, their conversion to Christianity did not bring about any change in their African basic world-view. Thus it is that those Africans who broke away from the mainline churches to found their own churches integrated in various ways, political, economic and typically African religion’s concerns into their Christian religion’s practices. These people had accepted faith in Christ but did not understand how Christ could be indifferent to the political oppression that was going on in Africa at that time.¹⁷

It is essential to indicate that there are others who have researched in this area of study within the Methodist Church. A great deal of the research put forward happened to be

¹³ Oduyoye, M.A. *The will to arise*. Maryknoll. Orbis Books. 1979 P. 31.

¹⁴ Ibid. P. 3.

¹⁵ Mbiti, J.S. *Introduction to African Religion*. Heinemann. Orbis Books. 1975. P.190.

¹⁶ Prozesky, M. & de Gruchy. *The living faiths in South Africa*. New York. 1995. P.116

¹⁷ *Journal of Inculturation Theology* 1994. P. 13. Vol. 1 No. 1. And Interviews B Appendix No.6.

“top-down” rather than “bottom-up”.¹⁸ By way of illustration; the liturgy produced by the committee on Africanization to meet the quest for African Spirituality amongst Black members of the Methodist Church is not known by the majority of Black members. Only those who have access to the material and are able to read and write may be exposed to it. This became clear during the research conducted in Thaba-Nchu.

In the light of the written sources and interviews the study tried to tackle the research from the “bottom-up” rather than the “top-down” approach. Many issues on African traditional values addressed by the Africanization committee,¹⁹ were also issues for those I interviewed. Thus both groups agree on the issues but are not in communication.²⁰

Furthermore, as much as there has been a quest for African traditional values to be upheld in the Methodist Church, there can be also a danger of romantizing the African world view. According to the minutes of the Methodist conference, there are rites that are to be addressed and recognised by the Church.²¹ These include those such as mourning and purification rites which are dehumanising to women and thus should be challenged. These rites should not be taken at face value.²² Though the Methodist Conference (the decision-making body) had recognised that the bereaved should not be excluded from public worship service, especially the widows, they still occupy the back seats in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church, even if the church is not full. The

¹⁸ For more information see M.S. Mogoba & O.S. Mbangula. *Africanization an exploration*. Greyville. Durban, 1982.

¹⁹ The Minutes of the Methodist Conference. Cape Town. Methodist Publishing House. 1993. Pp 246-250. Refer also to appendix no 1. P. 246-250.

²⁰ The material referred to is reflected in appendix no 1: The liturgy development.

²¹ Ibid. P. 249. 28.3.7.2.5

²² Purification: An African woman undergoes purification ritual after her husband's death or after child's birth. Mourning rites: the African woman goes through an extremely intense period after the death of her husband. For some cultures (Barolong culture) this involves women dressing in black for a period of a year without talking in public nor mixing with other people. The rites are dehumanising because they do regard women as fully human. For example purification after birth-giving does not make sense because African

study hoped to evaluate the rites which affect women who are the majority in the Methodist Church.

The researcher has experienced the limitation of language in this study. There are concepts that one could not translate from the African languages of Sesotho and Setswana to English. These concepts are found mostly in the interviews that form part of the Appendix.

culture understands birth in the first instance as wholeness for the woman. For details see Oduyoye, M. A. & Kanyoro, M. R. A. (1979) *The Will to Arise: Women tradition and the church in Africa*. Pp 9-24

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 The area of the present study: Thaba-Nchu

In the book *Black Mountain*, Colin Murray reflects on questions of land, class and power in the Eastern Free State between the period of 1880s-1980s with particular reference to the old Thaba-Nchu.²³ The area has a distinguishing and peculiar history. Thaba-Nchu was the only district in the Free State in which Africans held freehold title to land.²⁴ The place also contained two of the three small African reserves in the Free State. The people spoke Serolong which is classified by comparative linguists as a dialect of the Setswana language. The 1970 census documented three different ethnic groups united in one place. There were, according to Murray, 24 300 Batswana, 12 000 Basotho and 3 600 Xhosa in a total population of 42 000, all politically subordinated to the Barolong Tribal (Regional) Authority.²⁵

In the same year (1970) Thaba-Nchu was incorporated into the apartheid homeland state of Bophuthatswana. Hence it became a region of the Batswana (Barolong), where the language of power was Afrikaans while the first language of most citizens was Sesotho. In the mid 1970s, Murray indicates that, “tens of thousands of people - mainly Basotho - left white farms and small towns all over Free State. The remaining people drifted into the Thaba-Nchu locations for example - Morolong, Mokoena, Moroka, Ratlou, Motlatla, to the Bultfonteins; to the trust villages and to some of the remaining privately owned farms”.²⁶ These moves resulted in a large concentration of mostly Basotho “illegal squatters” in an area which became known as Komdraai. Most

²³ The book title *Black Mountain* means Thaba-Ntsho, the original name of the area of research.

²⁴ Entitlement to free hold title land in the Free State by Africans ended in the early 1970s. Murray, C. *Black Mountain*. Witwatersrand. International African Institute. 1992. p203

²⁵ *Ibid.* Pp 218-220.

²⁶ Trust villages while close to urban centres are not typical of urban townships, they are characteristically more rural.

Basotho were staying in this place (Komdraai). As a result, in 1977 and 1978 negotiations took place between Bophuthatswana, Qwaqwa and the South African government over the provision of land for relocation of Basotho from Thaba-Nchu. Those Basotho who drifted to Thaba-Nchu area were forcefully removed by the Bophuthatswana Police, who became known by the YB number plates of their vehicles, to Onverwacht (today known as Botshabelo, “the place of refuge”).²⁷ In late May 1979 Dr. M Griffiths the then medical superintendent of the Moroka Hospital in Thaba-Nchu described the removal thus:

“We saw lorries go past the hospital daily, loaded up with people with everything on they could salvage from their homes, together with pigs and fowls and things in little wire cages ... Loaded lorries would go past all day for months and months”.²⁸

Due to these changes, even those who were regarded as inhabitants in Thaba-Nchu were uprooted from their homes and forced to move to planned villages. New structures of authority were created in Thaba-Nchu which was re-incorporated into South Africa by the end of 1990.²⁹ There existed two different hierarchical classes in the new Thaba-Nchu. According to Murray, there were “Bantustan bureaucrats” at the top of the hierarchy with comfortable salaries and occupants of the trust villages at the bottom of the hierarchy. Many of the occupants of the trust villages experienced the problem of unemployment. As a result, people were forced to travel daily to work from Thaba-Nchu to Bloemfontein. This resulted in family breakdowns.³⁰ There is also an imbalance in terms of development between those people staying in suburb areas (which were predominantly white), township areas (Seloshesha) and those staying in trust villages (undeveloped areas). A gap emerged between the rich and the poor. However since the 1994 elections people have been looking for change as promised by

²⁷The Bophuthatswana police became known as “MAYB” after Thaba-Nchu was incorporated into Bophuthatswana.

²⁸ Murray, C. *Ibid.* P. 221.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

the Government of National Unity through the reconstruction and development programme (RDP).

1.2 Research Methodology

Although there has already been much research on Christianity and the African world view,³¹ there has not been much emphasis on the views of “grassroots” members of congregations on this matter. I have therefore opted to focus my study on a specific congregation, the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church, using interviews to understand the views of “grassroots” members. The findings from these interviews will help the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church to discover why firstly, some black members are content to belong to the Methodist Church despite the lack of African spirituality in this church; secondly, why other black members have dual membership (that is, they belong to the Methodist church but at the same time they take part in the African traditional rituals or secretly they attend African Independent Churches); and thirdly, why others leave the Methodist church in a quest for African spirituality.

Although Christianity was planted in Africa centuries ago, one would have expected all people in Southern Africa to be Christians, this has not been the case. Nokuzola Mndende observes that, among those people who go to church, most of them perform African rituals, for example, they sacrifice to their ancestors. Father S. Mulago, as quoted by Mndende, highlighted this by saying that:

“Good Christians are often seen as “backsliding” when they are in a crisis, re-establishing contact with ancestors”.³²

The situation in the Methodist Church in Thaba-Nchu is no different. The majority of black Christians here live between two worlds, the Christian world and the African

³¹ Refer to some of the following works in the bibliography; Bediako, K (1995), Mbiti J, S (1970 & 1975), Mogoba M. S. (1982 & 1994)

³² Mndende N. *Living in a false paradise: Religious oppression in the New South Africa*. Johannesburg. Sunday Times. 1995. P. 13.

world (referred to as religious concubinage).³³ Others, however, have opted to join indigenous churches.

The subjects of the study are ordinary church members whose opinions are not known and whose voices are not heard. The study will reveal the views of the subjects in relation to their need to see the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church being Africanized.

Given the lack of an African spirituality in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church, the aim of the research was to understand why members opted for their choice of either maintaining single membership, secret dual membership, or leaving the congregation.

The research process adopts the survey sampling method and sites survey interviews approach which includes open-ended questions and closed ended questions. The methodology used has the following advantages and limitations over the other methods.

(1) According to K. D. Bailey, the research has to be conducted at a single point in time, so that the views of all subjects are comparable.³⁴ However, its disadvantage is that if the survey is continued the data may be suspected, as the respondents may sabotage the study by falsifying the answers.

(2) The method encourages the researcher to conduct fewer but more careful interviews. This is unlike the total population survey, which would be difficult to conduct in a short period of time. However, disadvantage of interviewing a large number of interviews is that the views polled during the beginning of the study may not be comparable with opinions gathered later.³⁵

³³ Mogoba, M.S. *Convicted by hope*. Belgravia. Department of Public Relations and Communication. 1994. P.5.

³⁴ Bailey, K.D. *Methods of Social Research*. London. Free Press. 1982. P. 83-86.

³⁵ Ibid.

- (3) Survey sampling has also an advantage over the full population survey because a researcher may achieve a greater response rate and greater co-operation from the subjects and thus make the study accurate.
- (4) Lastly, by using a sample, the researcher can keep a low profile. With a sample, it is not easy for one to offend as many people as it would be with using the entire population. The respondents in this case do not know other respondents who have been asked the same questions. So this enables the individual respondent to be free and open. One needs to be very careful in that as Bailey puts it: “to say a sample can yield information that is just as accurate as, or conceivably even more accurate than information received from a survey of the entire population ... effective design of a sample can involve a tremendous amount of work and expense.”³⁶

There are two ways of survey sampling: Probability and non-probability samples. Since the study didn't involve the entire population of subjects in Thaba-Nchu, I didn't use the probability approach.³⁷ I used instead the non-probability approach of survey samples.³⁸ Its advantage is that a sample may prove perfectly adequate if the researcher has no desire to generalise his or her findings beyond the sample. I have adopted this approach because in the words of Bailey,

It is much less complicated, much less expensive, and may be done on a spur-of-the-moment basis to take advantage of available (and perhaps unanticipated) respondents without the statistical complexity of a probability sample ...

If the investigator plans to repeat the study at a later date, he or she may initially be more interested in perfecting the

³⁶ Bailey, K. D. *Ibid.* p 84.

³⁷ There are four types of probability samples: random, systematic, stratified random, and cluster sampling. For more information of these types, see Bailey, *Methods of social research*, pp. 91-95.

³⁸ There are five ways of carrying out non-probability sampling: convenience, quota, dimensional, purposive, and snowball. For further information on these five ways, see, Bailey. *Methods of social research*, pp. 97-100.

questionnaire than in the sample and may find a non-probability sample adequate.³⁹

What Bailey is saying in relation to this methodology was true to me as researcher. For example, using this approach I was able to research in that area even though I was no longer working there. This method was also better because it is less expensive as I did not have funds to carry out the research. So, working from Pietermaritzburg to Thaba-Nchu became easier mainly because I took advantage of the availability of respondents and I could work at my own pace. Because of these factors, it means that I was using convenience sampling in the non-probability method.⁴⁰ In convenience sampling, the researcher chooses the closest persons as respondents. This saves time and is less expensive.⁴¹ However, this method cannot be without limitations. In Bailey's view: "The obvious disadvantage of non-probability sampling is that, since the probability that a person will be chosen is not known, the investigator generally cannot claim that his or her sample is a representative of a larger population.. This greatly limits the investigator's ability to generalise his or her findings beyond the specific sample studied."⁴²

The above tallies with the following point on adopting the snowball method. For instance, although I was working in this area, I couldn't just pick up anyone for investigation, but I used my own judgement about the respondents to be interviewed. Because of this judgement, it means that I was also using purposive sampling.⁴³ Another sampling method that was implicitly used is the snowball method.⁴⁴ For example, since I was away from Thaba-Nchu for three years, I was unaware of other subjects who had left the Methodist church entirely. These were some of those who

³⁹ Bailey. *Methods of social research*. P. 97.

⁴⁰ Convenience sampling is one of the fine ways of doing non-probability sampling.

⁴¹ Bailey. *Methods of social research*. P. 97.

⁴² *Ibid*. P. 92.

⁴³ According to Bailey, "The advantage of purposive sampling is that the researcher can use his or her research skill and prior knowledge to choose respondents."

⁴⁴ See Bailey, *Methods of social research*, p. 100.

had dual membership: practising both African traditional values and Christianity at the time I was in the area. The names of these people who had left came when I asked whether “R” is he still preaching and singing as he used to do? Then the response would be “R” has left the church, he is now a Zionist or “P” is now a member of the Universal church. As a result of this other persons were identified to be interviewed, hence the number of respondents grew. The use of snowball method like in any other research has the limitations and danger of generalising the findings, and this could be case with my research on the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church.

In this study I have opted to included only seven interviews from the three different categories due to the fact that there were points of similarities among informants as per category.

1.2.1 Sites survey interview approach

This approach according to Ericson, required that both closed and open ended questions be asked during interviews.⁴⁵ Open ended questions call for descriptive answers from the informants while a closed ended question is one that can be answered in one or two words. The following are examples of the questions asked during the research at Thaba-Nchu:⁴⁶

Closed ended questions

(a) Respondents of dual membership

- when did you begin this dual membership?
- how old were you?
- until when will you maintain this dual membership?

⁴⁵ Ericson, S. *A field notebook of oral history*. Idaho Oral History Centre. 1951. P 4.1.

⁴⁶ For further examples, see Appendix no 6.

Respondents of single membership

- when did you become a member in this church?
- which organisation do you belong?
- what keeps you in this church?⁴⁷

(c) Respondents who have left the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church

- why did you leave the church?
- which year did you leave ?
- do you have any intentions of coming back?

Open ended questions

(a) Respondents of dual membership

- what makes you to stay in this church regardless of its inadequacy to African spirituality?
- what makes you go to the other church, which you feel is not found in this church?
- can you suggest ways which can help in overcoming this dualism?

(b) Respondents of single membership

- what makes you feel content in belonging to this church?
- what is it that the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church does not fulfil in terms of African spirituality?
- can you suggest ways that can help in overcoming this inadequacy?

(c) Respondents who left the Methodist church

- what caused you to leave the Methodist church?
- what can the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church do to prevent people leaving due to a lack of African spirituality?

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

In documenting these interviews, I tape recorded the interviews and made hand written notes. The limitations experienced were that some respondents refused to be tape recorded or have notes made of the interview. They eventually agreed to be documented only on condition that their names remain anonymous.

1.3 Definitions

1.3.1 African Spirituality

For some African scholars like Prof. Nyembezi the term African Spirituality is undefinable. African Spirituality is inclusive in all forms of life. There is no distinction between religion and the secular. Nyembezi stated that the African world view does not define words, words are understood from people's context or rather through story telling. He indicated that only the Western world view is concerned with definitions.⁴⁸ The view that the African world-view does not distinguish between the secular and profane, has been supported by Mtetwa in the article "African Spirituality in the Context of Modernity". Mtetwa states that African Spirituality cannot be dichotomised in terms of the sacred and the secular, the physical and the spiritual, the individual and the corporate.⁴⁹ Bediako concurs with the above, saying that African Spirituality implies African personality, a sense of harmony with nature, and religiousness and openness to the spiritual dimension of existence.⁵⁰ His view shows that one cannot separate religion from one's daily life experience. This is because African Religion is found in all aspects of life, not only in the Sunday service. In each African society, religion is embedded in the local language. Thus to understand the religious life of the people one needs to know the language.⁵¹ For example, if parents took a long time before conceiving a child, that child's name would be Thapelo meaning prayer (indicating that they have been waiting for the child).⁵² I agree with

⁴⁸ Nyembezi, C.L.S. *The concept of Ubuntu*. Unpublished paper. June. 1996.

⁴⁹ Mtetwa, S. *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa & Africa*. Vol. 3. No. 2 June 1996. P. 21.

⁵⁰ Bediako, K. *Christianity in Africa*. The Renewal of a non-western Religion. Orbis. Edinburgh Press. 1995. P. 12.

⁵¹ Mbiti, J. S. *Introduction to African religion*. Heinemann. 1975. P.27.

⁵² Refer to appendix no 6, interview no 4 p 125.

Idowu that, African spirituality includes the following component elements:

- (a) Belief in one God -- For instance, amongst the Basotho and Batswana, the name Modimo refers to the Supreme Being. In the past and today, people do request their ancestors to communicate on their behalf to Modimo because it is belief that all those who died had a special place next to God. Biko shares the same sentiments. He states that religious practices were the occasion of worship of one God. He indicates thus, “we did not believe that religion could be featured as a separate part of our existence on earth. It was manifested in our daily lives, we thanked God through our ancestors before we drank beer, married, worked, etc. We would obviously find it artificial to create special occasions for worship. Neither did we see it logical to have a particular building in which all worship would be conducted. We believed that God was always in communication with us and therefore merited attention everywhere and anywhere”.⁵³
- (b) Belief in Diviners -- Diviners are both male and female. They normally work also as medicine men and women. They use divination. This is a method of finding out the unknown, by means of pebbles, number, water, animal entrails, reading the palms, throwing dice and so on.⁵⁴
- (c) Belief in spirits--There is a belief that when people die (men, women and children) they do exist in the invisible world. These can be those who are no longer remembered. People do not have clear ideas about these spirits. It is thought that some of them have become nature spirits.⁵⁵

⁵³Stubbs, A.C.R. *Steve Biko I write what I like*. London. Geoffrey Chapman. 1986. P.45.

⁵⁴ See Appendix no.6. Interview no. 7.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

- (d) Veneration of ancestors -- There is a strong belief in the mediating role of the ancestors. The meaning behind veneration is that, they are honoured/respected not worshipped, because only God is worshipped.⁵⁶
- (e) Practice of medicine -- Practice of medicine can be done either by men or women. These carry out the work of healing the sick and putting things right when they go wrong. Practice of medicine for healing is holistic. It encompasses spiritual and emotional aspects of a patient, attending to facts which cause to psychological and social problems around a patient.

1.3.2 Spirituality

According to Shorter, spirituality is a dynamic and outgoing concept. The very word is derived from *spiritus*, the life giving force that stems from God. It is also the encounter with the ultimate reality in real life and action. It is the mode of living, the essential disposition of the believer and it imports a new dimension to the believer's faith.⁵⁷

In Uka's view, Spirituality involves interaction and participation between the divine and the human. It provides one with an expression for the search for and the experience of a deeper meaning to life and existence. Spirituality as Uka states, is

Attained through periodic festivals, acts of worship (including prayers, sacrifices) and oath taking ... during these festivals, the society truly celebrates herself, her institution her solidarity and belief systems. Since the festivals include dances, musical performance, prayer ... sacrifices, they are performed as evidence of the desire of the people to associate with the persons of their Gods' the spirit of the ancestors and with the

⁵⁶ See Appendix no. 6. Interviews 1-8.

⁵⁷ Shorter, A. *African Christian Spirituality*. London Geoffrey Chapman. 1988. P. 4.

life of the community ... In so doing, the spiritual and moral tone of the people are uplifted.⁵⁸

Spirituality, in that sense, enables one to communicate with the spirits of the ancestors. This can happen through special celebrations that are performed among the family clan and the whole society. Douglas defines spiritism as a system of beliefs and techniques whose purpose is to establish communication with the “spirits of the dead”.⁵⁹ These sentiments are shared most informants in Thaba-Nchu.

The study on African Spirituality, as it has been reflected above, includes ancestral veneration, intermediaries, human mediators like traditional healers and diviners, *izangoma*, healing, the power of symbols in African world-view, and the African sense of community, present and future.

1.4 Ancestors

Those who have “died well” (i.e. the respected and those who played leadership roles in the community while alive)⁶⁰ are regarded as ancestors. They are perceived as playing a mediation role between the ultimate reality and the living community. According to Buti Tlhagale, ancestors are mediators in a symbolic sense in so far as they are near God.⁶¹ In other words, ancestors as mediators are seen as replacing the role of Jesus as the Mediator. Most informants affirm this contact between the living and the living dead. Mrs Boysen states; “I was told what to do if I want to be healed. They (ancestors) showed me where and whose is supposed to heal me. Due to ignorance I became quiet ... because of the quietness I was disturbed by the spirit and was strangled by the spirit.”⁶² The ancestors act as mediators in the hierarchical

⁵⁸ Uka, G.M. *Reading in African Traditional Religion*. New York. Wien 1991. P. 171, 179.

⁵⁹ Douglas, J.D. *The concise dictionary of the Christian Tradition*. Michigan. Marshall: 1989. P. 413.

⁶⁰ To “die well” also means to die natural death, full of years and to have a decent funeral and burial.

⁶¹ Tlhagale, B. *The Truth Commission and the unknown dead victim*. (unpublished paper) Johannesburg, 1996, p 10.

⁶² Refer to appendix no 6, interview no 7.

African universe between the Supreme Being, the world of spirits and the world of the human beings. This hierarchy can also be seen in African families; the father (head), mother (the go between) and the children.

The beliefs of indigenous people in life after death go hand in hand with the belief in the continued existence of the ancestors. Their role is restricted to the lives of their descendants. However, it is God who is ultimately in charge. God is the Ultimate source of reality.⁶³

1.4.1 Africanization

This is a discipline of study concerned with the perception and understanding of the Christian gospel, in terms of concepts, symbols, practices and ethos of African Indigenous people.

According to Mgojo, the term Africanization, includes terms like, localization, contextualization, indigenisation and inculturation. Theologically, Africanization, to use Mgojo's words, "tries to adapt through translation, messages to local context and situation".⁶⁴ The task of Africanization is to free and liberate African Christians from the culture of the West so that the Christian message can freely acculturate itself in new situations.

1.4.2 Worship

From an indigenous point of view, worship should imply recognition of the idiom, culture, societal and traditional religious beliefs and practices in the formation of liturgical forms in response to God.⁶⁵ According to Mbiti, the word worship means one's act or acts of turning to God. These acts in worship may be formal or informal, regular, communal or individual, ritual or unceremonial, through word or deed.⁶⁶

⁶³ Tlhagale, B. *Ibid.* P. 8-10.

⁶⁴ Mogoba, M.S. & Mbangula O.S. *Africanization on exploration.* Durban. CEYD 1982. P. 2-3.

⁶⁵ The Minutes of Methodist Conference. Cape Town. Methodist House. 1993. P. 247.

⁶⁶ Mbiti, J.S. *Concepts of God in Africa.* London. SPCK. 1970. P. 178.

The above definition of worship is not generally the one applied in the Methodist Church. However, some members, through their organizations (Black organizations) do reflect the above understanding of worship .

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the specific methodology and defined terms to be used in this study. First, I outlined the *convenience sampling* method simply because I knew some respondents who left the Methodist church during my work in Thaba-Nchu. I even know those who belonged both to the Methodist church and Indigenous churches. By stating that I used convenience sampling, it does not imply that other ways of doing non-probability sampling were not used.

Terms such as African Spirituality, indigenisation, the world of the spirits, African world-view and Christian will dominate in this study as they have been described in this chapter.

When discussing spirituality, it is important that one does not refer to the understanding of academics only, but also to that of marginalized people. The study would show that there is much that the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church can learn from the ordinary members about issues relating to African Spirituality.

2. THE GENESIS OF METHODISM AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The Genesis of Methodism

John and Charles Wesley were the founders of Methodism. Both were Anglican priests and both were educated at Oxford University. It was at Oxford where John Wesley implemented what he learned from his religious parents. His life style was characterised by a strict religious and spiritual discipline. The Holy Club emerged in 1729, although it was not originally a religious meeting. It ended up being a devotional group which John took over as leader.⁶⁷ The two brothers together with a small group of fellow students began to meet regularly to study the Bible, pray, assist the poor and visit the prisoners.⁶⁸ They also produced hymns and contemporary prayers. According to William,⁶⁹ they insisted on justification by faith and the vital importance of the sacraments of communion and baptism.

Methodism in Meeks' view, emerged out of a specific context. He states thus:

“Methodism was born at a time when the individualism was emerging as significant in political-social and economic life... This inevitably affected the ways in which conversion and faith were understood. In Wesley, there are undeniable individual and personal emphases. Genuine salvation for him involves participation in the love of God for the individual ... but this love experienced personally has its goal nothing less than the

⁶⁷ Rack, H. D. *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*. Epworth. London. 1989. Pp 85-94. See also the work of Davies, R.E. *Methodism*. Epworth. Westminster. 1985.

⁶⁸ Prozesky, M. & De Gruchy, J.P. *Living faiths in South Africa*. New York. 1995. P. 35.

⁶⁹ William, K.F. *Nurturing perceptive faith. An approach to educating for Christianity from a Wesleyan perspective*. Unpublished MTh thesis. University of Natal. 1992.

creation of just human communities and reconciliation and renewal of all creation”⁷⁰.

Wesley’s view of communities has been influenced by the religious societies in which his father was involved and these, along with the manner in which Susanna (his mother) conducted evening studies, certainly had introduced Wesley to different aspects of life.⁷¹ According to Jackson T, John Wesley learned extempore prayer from Susanna. It was at home that he was exposed to the religious societies which were later to have such an impact on his personal and ecclesiastical life.⁷²

When Methodism started, Wesley had not intended to create a new church and to separate from the Church of England.⁷³ Wesley claimed his Anglican heritage until his death, and yet recognised no parish boundaries and ordained his own clergy in the face of an established church’s refusal to acknowledge the movement he established as an Anglican renewal movement.

Methodism has always been mainly missionary in character both in England and abroad. For this reason it continued in the different stages i.e.

(a) It continued to develop throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries. In Davies’ view the development of Methodism emerged while Wesley was still in the church of England. Its development was influenced by Evangelical Revival of the 19th century.⁷⁴

Among these middle aged respondents, there were also women. Even though the aim was to interview equal number of both sexes, it was difficult to achieve that because

⁷⁰ William, K.F. *Nurturing perceptive faith. An approach to educating for Christianity from a Wesleyan perspective*. Unpublished MTh thesis. University of Natal. 1992. P.39.

⁷¹ Meeks, D.M. *The future of the Methodist theological traditions*. Abingdon, Nashville. 1985. P.88.

⁷² Jackson, J. *The works of John Wesley* (3rd edition). Hendrickson: Massachusetts. 1981. P. 387.

⁷³ Prozesky, M. & De Gruchy, J.R. *Living faiths in South Africa*. New York. 1995. P. 35.

⁷⁴ Davies, R. E. *Methodism*. Epworth: Westminster. 1985. Pp 114-132.

women are in majority in the church. Most of these women, e.g., those who left the church, play major roles in leadership positions as diviners unlike in the MCSA.

- (a) It developed through influencing other English non-conformist churches by introducing Christianity to Africa and other parts of the world. Different denominations that exist here in Africa and Southern Africa in particular resulted from the missionary work.
- (b) It developed through self-determining conferences held around the world that were linked together in the World Methodist Council.⁷⁵

2.2 The Methodist Church in South Africa

Methodist Missionaries, like Congregationalists and Presbyterians, were amongst the missionaries who came in the first decade of the 19th Century.⁷⁶ As part of its missionary activities the yearly conference of Great Britain (generally known as the British Conference), commenced work in South Africa in the year 1814 when its first missionary landed in South Africa. In the course of time the work grew and it became increasingly inconvenient and difficult for the missions to be controlled and directed from England.⁷⁷ By 1881 Methodism was strongly established in South Africa to the extent that a separate conference was set up (as opposed to the past when they had one conference with the British people).⁷⁸ However the work in South Africa did not grow without problems. Missionaries were not familiar with the world of the indigenous people (as we shall see a late stage)⁷⁹ and they did encounter problems. This one could argue created a vacuum in the area of African Spirituality.

⁷⁵ Attwell, A.F. I *The Methodist Church*. Cape Town, Methodist Publishing House. 1995. P.1-2.

⁷⁶ For further information on the history of Methodism in South African refer to the followings works:
a) Hewson, L.A., *Methodism in South Africa*. London, 1950. b) Southey, R. *The life of John Wesley and the rise and progress of Methodism*. Longman, Roberts & Green. 1864. c) *The journal of the Methodist Historical Society of South Africa*. Nov. volume 3 in 1 Grahamstown, 1952 -1961.

⁷⁷ *The MCSA Laws and Discipline*. Pietermaritzburg, The Natal Witness. 1991. P.10

⁷⁸ Davies, R. E. *Ibid*. p. 145.

⁷⁹ See Chapter 3 - African spirituality

There were three branches of South African Methodism in 1882. These were:

- (i) The Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa.
- (ii) The Transvaal and Swaziland District of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Great Britain, and
- (iii) The Primitive Methodist Missions in the Union of South Africa.⁸⁰

As from the 1st of January 1931, the three branches of Methodism in South Africa were united and became known as the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA).⁸¹ Despite this amalgamation, the Methodist Church in South Africa remained divided along racial lines - members worship according to racial categories i.e. Whites, Indians, Coloureds, and Blacks. This division, as we shall see later in this study contributed to the break-away of black members to new churches. Though the MCSA tried latter to call for “one and undivided Church”, the steps towards amalgamating members have also contributed to the break-away in that styles of worship were different.⁸²

2.3 The style of worship

This sub-topic, “the style of worship” is an important one for this study. Most interviewees, recommended a need for flexibility in worship services in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist Church.⁸³ Some of them indicated that it was as a result of the Methodist Order of Service that they decided to quit the church.⁸⁴ In many of the interviews that I conducted in Thaba-Nchu, the style of worship was seen to be an issue. In relation to worship, Packer states that from the beginning the Christian church recognised herself as a worshipping community. Christians in the early church,

⁸⁰ Hewson, L.A. *Introduction to South African Methodism*. Cape Town, Methodist Publishing House. 1950. P.88.

⁸¹ The Methodist Presidents. P.1. 1183-1961 (Booklet on Methodism) the administrative legislation of this church is contained in a handbook entitled - “Laws and Disciplines.

⁸² See chapter 3

⁸³ Appendix No. 6 -- Interviews No. 4,5 & 8.

⁸⁴ Appendix No. 6 -- Interview No. 6 & 7.

worshipped in homes (Acts 2:46; 12:12), public halls (Acts 19:9) and at the Temple (Acts 13:14ff: 17:1-2). Music and singing were an important part of the worship.⁸⁵

The Thaba-Nchu Methodist church does not worship in homes or public halls, but uses church buildings for its worship services (cf: temple and synagogue worship in the early church). It is of interest to realise that the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church has moved away from the Wesleyan traditional form of worship. According to Rack, in John Wesley's eyes "Methodist meetings for preaching were not services of worship complete in themselves ... the growth of purpose-built preaching houses ... was underlined by Wesley's favourite octagon design ... Though its formal objectives was the pursuit of holiness, it also gave much scope for spontaneous expression of community, personal and group identity. Apart from field preaching the main preaching services were held early in the morning and in the evening on Sundays and weekdays."⁸⁶ In the light of this quotation, it is revealing that the worship in Wesleyan tradition was flexible, open and communal. The informants share the same sentiments in their recommendation of spontaneity in worship. They reflected that the worship services in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church are rigid and need more flexibility. In other words the worship services need to be a reflection of the 19th century Methodism.

There are set forms of worship or orders of service, morning prayer, the annual covenant service, marriage, burial, the ordination of candidates for the ministry, which are rigid. These orders of services have been translated into different African languages and into Afrikaans.⁸⁷ Most of these forms of service were originally adapted by Wesley from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and have much in common with those of the other mainline churches in Christendom.⁸⁸ This order of

⁸⁵ Packer, J.I. *New dictionary of theology*. England. Leicester. 1988. P. 730.

⁸⁶ Rack, H. D. *Ibid.*. pp. 409-410.

⁸⁷ Attwell, A.F.I. *The Methodist Church*. Cape Town. Methodist Publishing House. 1995. P. 79.

⁸⁸ The Book of Offices. *Order of Service*. London Methodist Publishing House. 1936. P.1-226.

service does not allow flexibility hence all informants in one way or another, suggested ways of accommodative and spontaneous worship services.

There are different styles of worship between the different racial groupings within the Methodist church. One may argue that the different styles of worship have come about because traditionally the Methodist church since its inception has been divided into racially defined “circuits” (groups of local churches). There is also the “*Te deum Laudamus*”, the praising Lord song which is sung only within the Black “circuits’ and not among the White “circuits”. It is of interest that all Black circuits were able to Africanize the song that has a western origin.⁸⁹ One may agree with Ndiokwere when he said:

“The whole world knows that Africans love music, that they love rhythm, and that they are particularly endowed with a very rich cultural heritage; with indigenous lyrics, idioms and proverbs ... The western system of worship was introduced ... unrelated to the African way of worship ... boring and monotonous with order of worship in most of the older churches.”⁹⁰

I concur with Ndiokwere that in the African situation the place of worship is not conceived as a cold, boring and monotonous. Worship in the African setting is not a place where people sit in silent meditation with arms folded, while the “dramatists”, “piano” and “organ” perform alone on the stage (as is the case in some white churches in the MCSA). Worship in African context is a place of free movement and total participation by everyone including children in acts of worship. This view is also shared by respondents with dual membership. They indicated that they attend Indigenous churches (most respondents) and Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) or The

⁸⁹ See chapter 4 -reasons for members with dual membership and single membership - Singing in worship services is one of the reasons for staying in the MCSA.

⁹⁰ Ndiokwere, N.I. *Prophecy and Revolution*. London. SPCK. 1981. P.277.

Universal Church (two respondents) for spiritual satisfaction. Movement and full participation in worship services is recommended by the informants interviewed.⁹¹

According to Attwell worship in the Methodist church exists in two forms - “a liturgical movement and a tradition of extemporary worship. Thus we may draw upon the rich treasures of the past and yet remain free to follow the contemporary leading of the Holy Spirit”.⁹² One would argue against Attwell who seems to generalise about the worship services in the MCSA, that there is only one order of service in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church. Extemporaneous worship in this church does not exist, and only exists in services organised by women’s and men’s respective organisations.⁹³

Furthermore, by referring to an order of service in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church I refer to one rigid order of service. For example, all people who wanted to be preachers in this church have to go through the order of service⁹⁴ During services where they are examined, the examiners check whether they are following that particular order of service, i.e. formal not extempore, this is shared by the informants in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church.⁹⁵ One may conclude that it is this formal service that has contributed to members leaving or holding dual membership.

2.4 The role of the missionaries in Southern Africa

The function of the missionaries in Southern Africa was to plant Christianity amongst the “heathens”.⁹⁶ This role was not different to the other role they performed in other African states. They were to bring light to the dark continent of Africa. They were also expected to set up missions for indigenous people to convert them. The conversion stressed individualism rather than the African norm of communalism.

⁹¹ Refer to Appendix no 6.

⁹² Attwell, A.F.I. *The Methodist Church*. Cape Town. Methodist Publishing House. 1995. P.19.

⁹³ Refer to 3.1.3: Black movements within the MCSA. Pp 43-52.

⁹⁴ Here I refer to Black churches because I am more familiar with them.

⁹⁵ Refer to appendix no 6. Interview no 6. P134

⁹⁶ Balia, D. M. *Black Methodist and White Supremacy in South Africa*. Durban. Madiba. 1991. Pp 14-15.

The ambiguous aims of mission are well outlined by Bosch. He outlines the aims of mission in the light of the following motives: The impure motives

- (a) The imperialist motive (turning “natives” into docile subject of colonial authorities);
- (b) The cultural motive (mission as a transfer of the missionary’s “superior” culture);
- (c) The romantic motive (the desire to go far-away and exotic countries and peoples);
- (d) The motive of ecclesiastical colonialism (the urge to export one’s confession and church order to other territories)

The theological motives:

- (a) The motive of conversion which emphasised the value of personal decision and commitment ... individualism to the sum total of saved souls;
- (b) The eschatological motive, which fixes people eyes on the reign of God as a future reality...;
- (c) The motive of *plantatio ecclesiae* (church planting) which stresses the need for the gathering a community of the committed but is inclined to identify the church with the kingdom of God and
- (d) The philanthropic motive, through which the church is challenged to seek justice in the world.⁹⁷

The above quotation shows that the planting of Christianity occurred simultaneously with Colonisation and the Western world-view. This clearly implies that Christianity came to the continent with the assistance of the settlers and traders. Hence there was a thin line between the intentions of the missionaries and those of the colonisers. Further, the quotation reflects that the missionaries viewed their culture as “superior” over against the indigenous culture. This imply that rituals like the veneration of

⁹⁷ Bosch, D. J. *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. Maryknoll, New York. 1991. P. 5.

ancestors as part of indigenous culture was undermined.⁹⁸ Introducing individualism was the way of monopolising African norm of communalism.⁹⁹

The views that missionaries were extending “British influence” and “British interests” over the Africans, suggest the superiority of the Western world-view over the indigenous world-view and promoting at the same time the socio-political condition of the so called inferior-superior syndrome. One may argue that it was this type of approach, “winning hearts and minds”, that created a vacuum for African Spirituality. Instead of introducing indigenous people to a western world-view, missionaries were to learn the indigenous world first. Failing to understand the African world-view, contributed to members belonging to both Christianity and African Traditional Religion. This leads me to consider the missionaries’ approach towards the indigenous traditional values at that point in time.

2.6 The missionaries approach towards indigenous traditional values

Conversion of indigenous people to Christianity meant for many missionaries a complete rejection of African world view and a denial of traditional values.¹⁰⁰ According to Muzorewa, the missionaries’ expectation was that of converting the “natives” not only spiritually but also culturally. He states:

Unless the African pagans adopted much of Western culture and civilisation, it was difficult to measure the success of the missionary task.¹⁰¹

The Missionaries’ cultural world-view became a key to the indigenous people to enter the door of the Christian world. Hence the indigenous cultural world-view ceased to be

⁹⁸ See appendix no 6.

⁹⁹ Mndende, N. *Living in false paradise. Religious oppressions in the new South Africa.* (Unpublished paper). 1995. Pp 10-12.

¹⁰⁰ Prozesky, M. & De Gruchy J. *Living faiths in South Africa.* New York. 1995. P.36. Refer also to Bosch, D. J. *Ibid.*, p 5.

¹⁰¹ Muzorewa, G.H. *The origins and development of African Theology.* New York. Orbis Books. 1985.

important. Its context was not taken into consideration. It has been accepted by some commentators that there can be no culturally naked Christianity. Indeed, as Freund points out, the real Christianization would take place only if the holding of traditional African system could be broken,¹⁰² which as we shall see later has been impossible.

The approach of the missionaries towards the indigenous traditional values was that of condemning and even discouraging converts from continuing some of their traditional customs. As Mogoba emphasised, Christianity in Africa was wrapped in Western culture.¹⁰³ The following indigenous customs were condemned: circumcision, ancestor veneration, polygamy, African marriage system (*lobola*) and African dance. Missionaries were inclined to think that most of African practices and customs were unChristian and consequently wrong and thus condemned them.¹⁰⁴ This suggested that indigenous converts had to adjust to the new way of life and distance themselves from their own religion, which was a problem because African Religion is a way of life. The African world-view covers all spheres of life from before birth to long after death.¹⁰⁵ By disapproving of African traditional customs the missionaries failed to understand the indigenous world view. For example, by rejecting the function of the ancestors as mediators between God and human beings they failed to draw the parallel between these and Christ, the greatest mediator. On the other hand they misunderstood the whole issue of the extended family and the sense of continuity of family relation between the living and the dead.

It is because of this rejection that the missionaries did not succeed completely in winning the hearts and minds of indigenous people. As it shall be observed,¹⁰⁶ those

P. 29.

¹⁰² Freund, B. *The making of contemporary Africa*. Bloomington. University of Indiana. 1984. P.156.

¹⁰³ Mogoba, *The relevancy of Evangelism in South Africa today*. Unpublished paper. Harmmanskraal. 1986. P.23.

¹⁰⁴ Muzorewa, G.H. 1985. P.32.

¹⁰⁵ Mbiti, J.S. *Introduction to African religion*. Heineman. 1975. P.13.

¹⁰⁶ See the research findings Chapter 4 - Those who left the MCSA and those with dual membership.

who called themselves Christians continued to stick to some of their African religious ideas and practices. In the words of Shorter as have been quoted by Mogoba:

More and more people have come to accept that “in the past hundred years African Traditional Religion has been visibly sinking beneath the surface of modern social life in Africa, but what remains above the surface is in fact the tip of the iceberg”. Many professing Christians are “Crypto African Traditional Religionists” operating two thought systems at once and both of them closed to each other.¹⁰⁷

Could the Wesleyan missionaries’ approach towards the indigenous traditional values in general be different from those of other missionaries? Of course not, because Wesleyan missionaries like others came to Southern Africa with the same intentions. For the sake of this study with its focus on a Methodist congregation, the paper will briefly outline the role of the Wesleyan missionaries’ approach towards indigenous traditional practices in South Africa and towards the conclusion, the study will consider their approach with a particular reference to Thaba-Nchu. In the light of the above, it becomes clear that the indigenous traditional values were inadequate in the missionaries’ approach, hence the situation created a vacuum for the African spiritual dimension.

2.7 The Wesleyan missionaries in Southern Africa

The Wesleyan missionaries arrived in Southern Africa in the nineteenth century like other missionaries of the mainstream churches. They had a chain of stations throughout the African continent.¹⁰⁸ As has been indicated earlier. The Wesleyan missionaries’ role in Southern Africa was not different from that of other missionaries. Muzorewa and Bosch affirms that the Wesleyan missionaries’ motive was similar to

¹⁰⁷ Mogoba, M.S. *The relevency of Evangelism in South Africa today*. Johannesburg. 1980. P.23.

¹⁰⁸ Fiona, W. *Coming of Age: A Study of the early development of Methodism in Natal with Special reference to Pietermaritzburg 1847-1883*. Unpublished Mth Thesis. University of Natal. 1988. P.31.

that of the London Missionary Society (LMS), namely, to convert the sinner and bring the message of salvation to the African people. Their common goal was the evangelising of the heathens.

Though their first mission station was in Great Namaqualand, their most intensive operation were among the “Bantu tribes”, both in the East and in the North. It was under the leadership of Rev W. Shaw that the following stations amongst indigenous people emerged. Rev Shaw first established a mission station at Mount Coke beside Chief Ndlambe, then Butterworth and the whole of Eastern Cape. Still further North, Shaw gained a footing among Batswana tribes and soon followed the French missionaries into the land of the Basotho. Shaw’s missionary reports had created a circle of interests beyond the boundaries of British Methodism.¹⁰⁹

One of the important things they did was to learn the language of the people. That made their work easier because they could communicate. As a result they managed to translate some materials into the language of the people. Mears points out that:

Short hymns were written, translations of catechism, the Lord’s prayer, the Ten Commandments, portions of the liturgy and occasional services,¹¹⁰ and were all translated in African language.

The Wesleyan missionaries’ approach to African custom and practices was negative. For instance, it has been stated that the African customs need to be discouraged “Church members, if parties to the heathen rite of circumcision must be disciplined”.¹¹¹ And that “all ministers in charge of Native work shall give special attention to the uprooting of those heathen practices which are against God among the converts”.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ *Journal of the Methodist Historical Society of South Africa*. Grahamstown vol 11 (no 6) 1956. Pp 139-140.

¹¹⁰ *Methodist Missionaries* No.2. Rondebosch. Methodist publishing House. 1958. P.36.

¹¹¹ Minutes of the Methodist Conference. Cape Town. Methodist Publishing House. 1929. P.278.

¹¹² *Ibid.* 1933. P. 154.

The view in relation to Wesleyan missionaries approach to African custom is well noted by R. Ross and H. Bredekamp in the book: *Missions and Christianity in South African History*. In it J.C. Warner states the following about the indigenous people "... it is the spirits of their departed friends and ancestors, ... in whom they trust and whom they endeavour to propitiate. This is the foundation of that system of superstition ... there will be a danger of building Christianity on the rotten foundations of their pagan superstition, as the Roman Catholic missionaries have done in some parts of the world."¹¹³

It is clear from the above that missionaries including Wesleyan missionaries in particular, had an interest in converting people not only spiritually but in all spheres of life to their Western world view. Indigenous traditional customs and beliefs were regarded as *Heathen, systems of superstition* and not part of the indigenous way of life. However, there were some positive steps that they took, for example, that of learning the language of the people in order to communicate with them, and their commitment i.e. teaching people how to read and write.¹¹⁴

2.8 The missionary work with particular reference to Thaba-Nchu

The increased number of missionaries made it possible for Rev Shaw to send two missionaries to Bechuanaland. It was in 1821 that Methodism was established among the Barolong in Thaba-Nchu. According to Mears, the Wesleyan missionaries arrived in Trans-Oranjia at the beginning of migratory wars among the African tribes.¹¹⁵ The year 1821 was the socio-political upheaval of the nineteenth century (*Difaqane*).¹¹⁶ About the instability, wars, annexations and territorial disputes between the Southern Batswana (Barolong) and Basotho of Moshoeshoe, Prozesky highlights that:

¹¹³ Ross, R & Bredekamp, H. *Missions and Christianity in South African History*. South Africa. Witwatersrand University. 1995. P158.

¹¹⁴ See appendix no 6.

¹¹⁵ Mears, W. G. A. *Wesleyan Barolong Mission in Trans-Oranjia 1821-1884*. Cape Town. 1958. P 1.

¹¹⁶ Prozesky, M. *The Church in African Christianity*. Kenya. Initiative. 1990. P.15

The missionaries jumped to the conclusion that this state of instability and social dislocation was the permanent condition of the Tswana and their customary way of life, and it simply confirmed their pride bias position to depict the indigenous people as benighted and backward, miserable, superstitious and inhabiting a moral wasteland. Their sense of mission was thus assured; to turn the Tswana into healthy Protestant individuals ... and ultimately to transform them into a free and self-reliant peasantry.¹¹⁷

The missionaries i.e. Thomas Hodgson and Samuel Broadnoot intervened between the Basotho of Moshoeshe and Batswana. They were later succeeded by James Archbell, who was able to persuade Moshoeshe to agree to allow the Barolong to settle at Thaba Nchu, which would become a centre for missionary work in the area. The agreement to purchase land from Moshoeshe for a mission station is dated 7th December 1833. As a result of instability, the mission station became a place of refuge and did aid for the weak, helpless and the marginalised (women, young people and disabled).¹¹⁸ Some converts were from among disadvantaged, junior royals excluded from succession, poor men and women in general.

The missionary work in Thaba-Nchu was successful. The Wesleyans continue to spread the gospel and to foster education. I concur with Mears that even today the Moroka institutions in Thaba-Nchu have a well equipped technical schools, high schools, teachers training colleges and hospital. Here, a large church with accommodation for 800 people was erected, schools were established and a printing press was set up. One of the reasons for this success was that Chief Moroka of the Barolong was in favour of the missionaries. Secondly, his sons became converted to Christianity, one a Wesleyan convert, the other one an Anglican convert. And thirdly,

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ *Restoration of the Archbell House*. Thaba-Nchu. Bloemfontein. 1990. P.2. (brochure).

their mediation convinced the indigenous people that missionaries were “useful allies both as robust rifleman and as political middleman”.¹¹⁹

Though the Wesleyan missionaries were positively welcomed in Thaba-Nchu, this does not mean they succeeded without problems. For instance, first, the attempts at spiritual conversion were notably successful. Prozesky points out that by seeking a meeting ground in the identification of God with *Modimo*, they met with the usual incomprehension (Where is God?, How big is He?, Does He have hair?).¹²⁰ This indicates that the missionaries did not understand the African indigenous world view. As it has been indicated above, the missionaries came with preconceived ideas, that, the instability was the permanent condition of the Batswana and their customary way of life. Setiloane highlights this view. He states that, in their arrival, missionaries found that the indigenous people had a concept of God which was different from theirs. All Africans had a word for God. For example, the Xhosas had the word *Thixo* and the more profound one *Qamata*. The Zulus spoke about *Umvelinqangi* which means “the one who is coming is enigma... about which no body knows”. And the Basothos and the Batswanas had the word *Modimo*. The Batswana referred to *Modimo* as *Ke selo se si boitshegang*, meaning a ‘huge, monstrous, indescribable thing’.¹²¹ Here the word *Boitshegang* should be translated ‘holy’, that is ‘taboo, not to be approached, weird’.¹²² In other words, it would have made things easier, if the missionaries like Broadbent were to understand the meaning of ‘Modimo’. Setiloane emphasised this view when he quoted Broadbent’s discussion with Bobokwe: “I pointed out to one of them who was worshipping with us in our homes” and I said to him Bobokwe, “Who is this father in heaven?” No, I have no father in heaven. He answered. Then continues Broadbent, “Tell me what it is that makes the grass to grow, and rain to fall, your wives to conceive your children, your cattle to increase? Who was the first?” All said

¹¹⁹ Du Plessis, J. *A History of Christian Mission in South Africa*. Cape Town. Struik. 1965. P. 300.

¹²⁰ Prozesky M. *The church in African Christianity*, Kenya. Initiative. 1990. P. 50.

¹²¹ Setiloane G. *The Black leader*. Johannesburg. 1995. P. 21.

¹²² Ibid. P. 22.

in a chorus *Modimo*. Lack of knowledge of the indigenous idiom by the missionaries led to gross misunderstanding.

Secondly, the missionaries failure to 'win' people from the traditional world-view contributed by their mission "turning Batswana into healthy Protestant individuals".¹²³ Individualism has never been the accepted concept in the African setting. People enfolder communalism, thus, the sense of the family and the community. Community in African context is a unit to which people can belong and in which the individuals' freedom and responsibility are carefully adjusted. There has been a very strong continuity between the living and the living-dead.¹²⁴ Thirdly, the approach of Wesleyan in Thaba Nchu towards African traditional values has been negative like other places in Southern Africa in particular. For instance, it has been stated in the manual that other missionaries amongst the Barolong tribe encountered certain 'native custom practices'. Some practices were those done for ancestors and sacrifices performed for them.¹²⁵ These were condemned without the clear understanding of the indigenous people from the missionaries.

2.8 Conclusion

The above condemnation of the indigenous traditional values by the missionaries resulted in an African spiritual vacuum. Thus, most interviewees expressed the need for African spirituality. The missionaries' negative approach towards the African spirituality led to the development of a new leadership and development within the Methodist church. This I shall discuss later.

¹²³ Prozesky, M. *The Church in African Christianity*, Kenya. Initiatives. 1990. P. 7.

¹²⁴ Mogoba, M.S. *Convicted by Hope*. Belgravia. Department of Public Relations and Communications. 1994. P. 6-7.

¹²⁵ *Methodist Missionary No. 1* (Manual). Rondebosch. Methodist Publishing House. 1954. P. 47.

3. AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY: CAUSE OF BREAK AWAYS FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (MCSA)

3.1 Introduction

History shows that the inadequacy of African Spirituality led to the break away of black Christians from the mainstream churches. In this chapter, I will look at a number of issues, e.g.:

- (a) the inadequacy of African Spirituality as a cause of the break away.
- (b) examples of leaders who broke away from the MCSA.
- (c) black movements within the MCSA and their contribution towards African Spirituality.
- (d) new leadership and development within the MCSA as the result of the break away.

3.1.1 African Spirituality

As indicated earlier,¹²⁶ African Spirituality entails practices that are not part of the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church, but are part of the indigenous churches. For example, the veneration of ancestors and other traditional practices (circumcision and polygamy) had been highly criticised by missionaries.¹²⁷ Mugambi presents four main types of churches in African Christianity.¹²⁸ Of the four, I will focus on two types: the dominant and the indigenous.

According to J.N.K. Mugambi and L. Majesa the mainstream churches (Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans are examples) are classified as

¹²⁶ Refer to chapter 1, "Definition on African Spirituality".

¹²⁷ Refer to chapter 2, "The Missionary approach to indigenous traditional values."

¹²⁸ Mugambi, J.N.K. & Majesa L. *The Church in African Christianity*. Nairobi initiatives. 1990.

the dominant types. They further argue that these churches have strong links with their metropolitan origins.¹²⁹ One respondent in Thaba-Nchu stated that they are characterised by “centralism, formalism and a commitment to be involved in the secular affairs of the state”. Worship services in these churches are formal and they follow a written liturgy.¹³⁰

The Thaba-Nchu Methodist church is not an exception of this formalism. This is also affirmed by the informants in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church who in my opinion seem to share the same sentiments with Mugambi and Majesa.¹³¹

According to Mugambi, African indigenous churches can also be called independent churches.¹³² These are the churches which broke away from the dominant types (the historical missionary churches). Mugambi asserts that these separations can be associated with the African spirit of cultural assertion and a rejection of foreign attack or domination of the African people and their culture. There is great emphasis on healing, dreams, prophecy and communalism within the believing community.¹³³

Burgess, C (1979: 1962) states in Anderson’s book: *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African context*, that “African theology in indigenous churches comes to life in music and song, prayers and sacramental acts of healing and exorcism, ... church structures and community life”.¹³⁴ Mogoba states that these churches emphasize the importance of family and the extended family. One discovers one’s full potential only if one is in group relationships. This sense of community plays an important role in these

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Appendix No.6 Interview No. 6.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* Interview no 4

¹³² Mugambi, *The Church in African Christianity*. Kenya initiatives. 1990. p. 37.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Anderson, A. *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African context*. Unisa. Pretoria. 1991. P 33. Refer also to appendix no 6.

churches.¹³⁵ Mogoba also states that there is a continuity of the present family to the future - communication with the living dead.¹³⁶

In light of the above, I would like to present briefly present three dominant characteristics of the indigenous churches which are inadequately dealt with in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church. These are: (i) healing; (ii) veneration of ancestors; and (iii) prayer.

3.1.1.1 Healing

Healing is part of a religious ritual and an act of worship in the indigenous churches. Illness in the indigenous churches, as in the African Traditional Religion, is understood holistically¹³⁷ - not just a mental or a physical condition but a religious matter.¹³⁸ There are often objects associated with healing. For example, water can be sprinkled on the painful parts of the body. One may also be asked to drink some of the water. Other people use oil for healing.

3.1.1.2 Ancestors

The living-dead constitute the largest group of intermediaries in the African context.¹³⁹ The departed may also be expected by the living to meet their expectations. About the function of ancestors and the living, Mbiti indicates:

When, among the Basotho, someone wants to approach God, he does not do so directly. He first starts a chain reaction, by asking his brothers (whether alive or dead) to relay his request to his father. The father in turn approaches his own father, who is supposed to approach his own father, and so. This continues

¹³⁵Mogoba, S.M. *The Christian faith of urban Africans in South Africa: An anthropo-socio-theological analysis*. Unpublished MTh Thesis. Bristol University. 1978. P. 10.

¹³⁶ Appendix No.6. Interview No. 8.

¹³⁷ Appendix No.6. Interviews No. 5 & 8.

¹³⁸Mbiti, J.S., *Introduction to African Traditional Religion*. London. Heineman. 1975, p. 134.

¹³⁹Mbiti, J.S. *Concepts of God in Africa*. London. SPCK 1970, p. 230.

on until the message reaches someone among the departed, who is sufficiently worthy to approach God.¹⁴⁰

The above communication with the living dead was also highlighted by most respondents, as part of their African world view.¹⁴¹ However, the chain of communication can be criticised in that only men seem to be involved in the communication. They are the only ones who pass on the message from, e.g., the youngest brother to the great grand father. In this chain, there is therefore no space for women to act as intermediaries. This aspect of the chain needs to be researched further in order to find out how women feel about this chain of communication.

3.1.1.3 Prayer

According to Uka, prayer is a true symbol of African Spirituality because it is through prayer that one approaches, feels closer to God and makes requests.¹⁴² For example, one may ask for good health, healing, protection from danger, prosperity for children, and so on. One may also express joy, happiness, and thanksgiving. In the African world view, these may be done through special ceremonial rituals.

The fact that the mainstream churches have failed from their genesis to lay emphasis upon these factors of African Spirituality (the Methodist church in Thaba-Nchu), resulted in its members belonging to different categories: (a) those belonging to the Methodist church and the indigenous churches: dual membership.¹⁴³ (b) those who broke away from the Methodist church and joining other churches e.g. indigenous churches, Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) and The Universal Church,¹⁴⁴ (c) those belonging only to the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church: single membership.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* P.231.

¹⁴¹ Appendix No. 6. Interviews No. 5,6,7 & 8.

¹⁴² Uka, E.M. *Ready in African Traditional Religion*. New York. Wien. 1991, p. 173.

¹⁴³ Appendix No. 6. Interview No 5.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid* No. 6.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid* no.3.

If the MCSA can focus on the above characteristics of the indigenous churches (healing, veneration of ancestors, prayer) it may reduce or slow down the trend of breaking away. In fact, there would be no need for members to belong to two world views if the African Spirituality is taken care of.

3.1.2 Break- aways from the Methodist church

I will give a few examples of some prominent black leaders who broke away because of the lack of African Spirituality.

3.1.2.1 Nehemiah Tile

Tile was one of the prominent African leaders within the Wesleyan Mission Church (Methodist Church). He broke away from the Wesleyan Mission because of his strong Tembu nationalistic feelings. He became involved in Tembu politics and this made him unpopular among his Wesleyan superiors. For example, he proposed the abolition of the magistrates and the restoration of the official power of the chiefs.¹⁴⁶ Tile also addressed a public meeting on the sabbath and contributed an ox at the circumcision of Dalinyebo, then the heir to the Tembu chieftaincy.¹⁴⁷

Though Tile became unpopular among the Wesleyan missionaries for the love he had for Tembu people, he had no choice. The Tembu nation was Tile's origin. It was difficult for him to divorce himself from his African world view. Communal ceremonies like circumcision, were part of his heritage. African world view does not separate between the secular and the sacred. Religion is part of ones day to day experiences. So circumcision being one of African traditional rites of passage, could be celebrated any day because each day is a Sabbath. Unlike the Christian world view where one worships God on Sunday, in the African world view, one communicates

¹⁴⁶ Balia, D.M., *Black Methodist and white supremacy in South Africa*. Brairdene. Universal Printing. 1991. pp. 55-56.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

with the ultimate reality everyday. It was important for Tile as an African and a leader not to divorce himself from his African spiritual world view.

After Tile left the Wesleyan mission, he established the Tembu church of South Africa. This was the first indigenous church in South Africa. This was different from Tile's original church because he enthroned the Tembu chief Ngangelizwe as its visible head. The church, unlike the Wesleyan mission which was western, accommodated African traditional practices. Some of these practices like circumcision were regarded as heathen and therefore unchristian by missionaries.¹⁴⁸

According to Balia, the Tembu church should be seen in the context of the long history of African reaction to white missionaries. The increased white pressure had led Africans on the eastern frontier and the Tembu church in particular to appeal to ancestral spirits.¹⁴⁹ In the African world view, ancestors are the ultimate source of power. Africans appeal to (not worship) ancestors when they are confronted by suffering and mystery of evil. So, by appealing to ancestors, Tile was actually recognising the existence of African spiritual world view.

3.1.2.2 Mangena M. Mokone

Mokone founded the original Ethiopian church in Pretoria,¹⁵⁰ after he broke away from the white controlled Methodist church. Most of his members were not converts, but they were from the mainstream churches.¹⁵¹ The reasons for Mokone's resignation were his attitude towards racial segregation within the Methodist church,¹⁵² and his biblical interpretation of Ps 68:31 - "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God". Sundkler maintains that Mokone understood the text to mean "the self-government of

¹⁴⁸See chapter 2, "The Missionary approach towards African Traditional values."

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁵¹ See Appendix No. 6. Interview 1,2,4 and 6.

¹⁵² Sundkler, B. *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*. International African Institute. University Press. 1961, p. 92.

the African church under African leaders.”¹⁵³ It is evidently clear that Mokone left the Methodist church due to racial segregation practices. But this reason does not rule out the possibility that his break off from the Methodist church was due to the quest for an authentic African spirituality which was obviously lacking in the then Euro-centric missionary “Methodist” church. The break away resulted with Mokone founding Tembu church, though not intentionally on tribal lines.

3.1.2.3 James M. Dwane

Dwane was an ordained minister before he left the Methodist church and joined the Ethiopian church. Dwane had an advantage since he had been sent overseas by the Methodist church. It was in these trips that his mind was enlightened. He believed that higher education was essential for African development.¹⁵⁴

Erhard Kamphausen highlighted the fact that it was Dwane’s experience in Britain and Ireland that resulted in his break away. It was through these visits that he became conscious of the “racial discrimination blacks had to suffer in South Africa and of the paternalism of the white missionaries”.¹⁵⁵

Evangelization, he believed, would have more impact if it were done by Africans to their own people because they understand their world view.¹⁵⁶ Such a belief in evangelization by Africans to Africans, if materialized, would have slowed down the break away process from then Euro-centric “Methodist” missionary church to the African indigenous churches. As a result, the African- world view would not have been a problem for Thaba-Nchu Methodist church today. In Hewson’s view, this church’s distinguishing feature was its emphasis on Africanism - they were controlled by Africans and led by Africans.¹⁵⁷ First, the entire separatist sect was all African.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Balia, O.M., *Black Methodist and supremacy* (1991), p. 75.

¹⁵⁵ Denis, P., *The Making of Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa*. (1995), p. 92.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Hewson, L.A., *An introduction to South African Methodism*. Cape Town. Methodist Publishing House.

Secondly, their desire for independence was because of racial practices and discriminatory policies of the missionary churches.

There is one common factor in most indigenous churches: they are mainly constituted by black people. The leaders developed their African world view in their worship services. The above break aways and the quest for independence within the MCSA have also been highlighted by black movements within the MCSA. These black movements, however, survived within the MCSA while living between two worlds - African traditional world-view and the Christian world- view.

3.1.3 Black movements within the Methodist church of Southern Africa (MCSA)

In this subsection, I will outline each of the movements according to their genesis and show how they contributed to the process of African spiritualization in the MCSA.

The movements are as follows:

- (i) women's *manyano* (Black women's organization)
- (ii) young men's guild (Black men's organization)
- (iii) the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC).¹⁵⁸

3.1.3.1 Women's Manyano (Women's organization within the MCSA)

As stated in the laws and discipline of the Methodist church, *uManyano (kopano)* is the Methodist women's prayer and service union. It stands for holiness of life, purity of speech and conduct, temperance, and service to the glory of God and for the extension of His kingdom.¹⁵⁹ This organisation has been one of the most important tools for the development of African spirituality within the life and work of the MCSA. The organisation is virtually exclusively black in its membership. Its constitution was adopted by the Methodist conference on Wednesday, May 3, 1933.¹⁶⁰

1950. P. 65.

¹⁵⁸ Originally, the organization was called the Black Ministers Consultation, but later it became the Black Methodist Consultation. The change was to accommodate the laity as well.

¹⁵⁹ The MCSA Laws and Discipline. 1991, p. 163. 17.1.

¹⁶⁰ The minutes of the Methodist Conference of the MCSA, 26 April 1933, p.258.

Its aims are to build and strengthen the spiritual life, reading, studying the Bible, to encourage the missionary spirit among people and to raise funds for missionary work. Throughout Southern Africa members are seen with their distinctive uniform of red blouses, black skirts, white collar and white hat. The black colour signifies the blackness of sin, the red colour the blood of Christ, and the white colour stands for the purity of life.

It is in their monthly or quarterly revival services that the African way of worship as opposed to the normal (western) Sunday services of the Methodist church is expressed. The act of worship in their revival services is seen by free movement and total participation. Contrary to the normal (western) service, in their services everybody participates in singing. It is this kind of service whereby one preaches, sings, and prays to the Almighty wholeheartedly and holistically. Members share freely their lives, joys and difficulties through preaching and prayer.

It has been in this organisation that some members managed to belong to two world views, i.e., being Methodist members and at the same time belonging to the indigenous churches. Some members indicated during the interview that the break away from the MCSA to indigenous churches and other churches - ZCC and the Universal Church - occurred when the Methodist church failed to offer some help in relation to spiritual matters. For instance, as some respondents expressed, when there is a need for healing, they know that their church cannot help them, so they always go to places where they can get help or be healed.¹⁶¹

3.1.3.2 Young Men's Guild (YMG)

The YMG as stated in the MCSA laws and discipline is a society of Methodist men (Blacks) meeting regularly for evangelical devotions, social and development purposes. Its aim is to encourage YMG members to improve themselves so as to better

¹⁶¹ See Appendix No.6. Interview 5 & 7.

serve the kingdom of God. Their uniform is a white shirt, a black tie and a red waistcoat. White symbolises purity, black stands for sin and red symbolises the blood of Christ.¹⁶² Similar to *Umanyano*, this organisation has been one of the most important weapons in convincing Blacks to join the Methodist church. It has been through their evangelical zeal that many were converted. Their monthly and quarterly revival services early in the morning in villages and townships have made an impact in terms of the growth of membership in the Methodist church. Their way of singing has not only revived worship in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church but it has influenced even other mainstream churches like the Presbyterian and the Anglican churches in Thaba-Nchu. This group called *Amadodana aseWeseli* (YMG) is a group which has organised itself to change the Methodist hymns (which are sung in a western way) to suit African context. The music is in tapes, CD's, and records.

One may hear this music in taxis, buses, and trains. Their music has not only revived the mainstream churches but also those who are not members of the Christian religion - like Traditional African Religion. Their services become a place of free movement and total participation by everyone in the worship. It has been in these services that the black Methodist members beat their Bibles and hymn books during the church services.

Mogoba, highlighting the spontaneous worship in indigenous churches in his address (An authentic African church), stated that the African church enjoys colourful worship and a lot of movement and rhythm. The African drum had been hastily removed from the church by the early White missionaries. The beating of Bibles, hymn books, and padded cushions during the services of worship is a cry for the return of the drum.¹⁶³

¹⁶² The MCSA Laws and Discipline. 1991, p. 173. 19.1-19.4.

¹⁶³ Mogoba, M.S. *Converted by Hope*. 1994, p. 9.

One discovers, however, that there are local churches in which ministers or leaders are against the way the YMG sings in church services especially during holy communion services. This becomes a problem to members where the previous minister or leader was African in his/her way of leading the service. It has been in these situations that people would opt to change to other Methodist branches (societies as they are called) to join churches that are reviving spiritually even to the extent of belonging to two churches - Methodist by day for a baptismal certificate, a decent burial service and marriage, and Zionist by night for spiritual satisfaction. For example, in 1989 when I was a minister in Thaba-Nchu in the Talle trust at the church called Broadbent (named after a White missionary who once worked there), there was an African man who was a Society Steward (one of the people who are in leadership position in the MCSA structures) who was westernised. He went to the extent of regularly stopping the hymn in the middle simply because, as he used to put it, "*that way of singing is not methodical, it is the Zionist way of singing*". It was only when the minister came to give quarterly holy communion and the society steward did not have the authority to intervene. The people would comment - "Awe felt at home today, we really enjoyed the service". Simply because he was a leader, people would not challenge him, instead the church would be empty.

Speaking about the impact of *uManyano* and YMG in Africanizing the liturgy of the Methodist church, Mvume Dandala (The current Presiding Bishop of the Methodist church) in his address to the BMC states:

There are two approaches to liturgy that have always been adopted by African Methodist in Southern Africa. One is contained in the worship of both the Young Men's Guild and the *uManyano*, and the other is evident in the Eleven o'clock Sunday service. The YMG and *uManyano* approaches are largely exuberant and display a lot of activity, whilst the eleven o'clock service approach is very solemn in its approach. There is a sense in which we talk of Africanisation within the

Methodist Church, we have made an impromptu reference to the YMG and *uManyano* styles as being more authentic African approaches than the eleven o'clock service which in most cases is heavily influenced by western musical patterns and uses.¹⁶⁴

Furthermore, one of the informants concurred with Dandala's view that; "...what keep me going in the Methodist church is music, especially of the YMG. I am telling you, it is African. The small cushions that they beat represent at least for me drums which are indigenous."¹⁶⁵ The Thaba-Nchu Methodist Church would be truly African and members would be revived spiritually from their African perspective if all ministers, preachers, evangelists, and leaders could promote and advocate the *uManyano* and YMG styles of worship.

Though both YMG and *Umanyano* have revived the worship service in the Methodist Church, some members of these organisations have left stating black colour which is part of the uniform as a problem. Arguing that black colour is identified with evil therefore its unacceptable to them. Some young women who belongs to *Umanyano* are complaining about the rules pertaining the uniform - those rule are irrelevant for today's context.¹⁶⁶

3.1.3.3 Black Methodist Consultation (BMC)

This is a group of black Methodists within the MCSA. Rev. Baartmann, the first chairperson of the BMC, outlined the historical background of the BMC during the 21st celebration of the BMC in Cape Town. Baartmann states that the history of the BMC began in 1975 when a group of black ministers came together in Bloemfontein to deal with issues that were affecting the black members or ministers for the

¹⁶⁴ Dandala, H.M. *Whither Methodism*. Edited by M.S. Moggoba and O.S Mbangula, *Africanization on exploration*. Durban CEYD. 1982 P. 4-5.

¹⁶⁵ Appendix no 6. Interview no 3.

¹⁶⁶ Appendix no 6. Interview no 7.

Methodist church.¹⁶⁷ He states that: “Twelve Black ministers from all over the country met in Bloemfontein. People like Sikhakhane, Lubisi, Lesaba, Fikeni, Moeketsi and others were there. The agenda was (a) oppression and apartheid within the church. (b) conference resolution calling for the establishment of the augmentation fund. (c) black leadership in the Methodist church.”

The aims of the BMC as has been summarised by Mogothu are: 1) to empower each other in order to best empower the black grassroots, 2) to better inform the Methodist church to relate the Gospel effectively to the black people and their situation in South Africa.¹⁶⁸ The movement which began as the Black Ministers’ Consultation had in due course to be opened up to involve the laity (black) of the Methodist church. According to Dandala, this was brought about by the realisation that the church of God belongs to the people and “the battle has to be waged on all fronts” Opening the membership of the BMC to all Methodist people was a way of trying to reach the grassroots, the people in the pews who form the backbone of the church so that such exposure can enable them to know more about their church, its history, beliefs, and practices as well as its administration.¹⁶⁹ The name changed from Black Ministers Consultation (BMC) to Black Methodist Consultation (BMC). About the BMC, Baartmann, during the 21st celebration of the BMC, reminded the ministers to take seriously their roots as Africans in that one can only know oneself if oneself know s one’s background. The title of his speech was ANo growth without roots. He states that:

You and I are the Methodist Church but the Methodist Church is not ours. It is our root. It is not you who sustain the root, the root sustains you (Romans 11:18). “You do not support the roots, but the roots support you....” We must never forget that we all have roots. None of us was born yesterday. Yet the gospel certainly does not say that if you have no roots then

¹⁶⁷ Baartman, E. *The History of the BMC - 21ST Celebration*. (Unpublished paper) Cape Town 1996. P 1.

¹⁶⁸ Mogothu, S., *AOpen Membership: A Kairos for the BMC*. Venda. March 1993. Unpublished paper.

¹⁶⁹ Dandala, M.V. *The need to organize the BMC*. (Paper delivered at the BMC meeting held at Moletlane, Zebediel, 17 July 1993). Pp. 2-3.

forget it. That would very much like those who stood on the fact that they were the children of Abraham - and the rest nowhere. Jesus' reply to that was, "God can make stones out of these stones" and stones have no roots. In his book "Roots" Haley seeks to establish the roots of slaves whose roots had been deliberately severed and their names changed so as to cut their links with the past. We need to refuse to disown or disparage our roots. Paul's writing to the Gentiles who had been strangers to the community of Israel, outside God's covenant and the promise that goes with them. They do not have to become Jews in order to be Christians. In Christ the blessing, the inheritance of Abraham is theirs. They have been engrafted in Christ by sheer grace. In Christ is neither Jew nor Gentile. To those who feel rootless they feel what Christ went through. Jesus Christ was without the father to give him name and he was known as the son of Mary. This was shameful in a patriarchal culture.¹⁷⁰

What Baartman is saying here is that though most indigenous people have turned to Christianity, this does not mean that they have forgotten their roots. Their roots - the African traditional worldview I - their daily life experience. I concur with him because the nation which does not have the past (roots) perish. One exist because one belongs, not only to those around him or her but to the whole community.¹⁷¹

Balia stated that the BMC believed the integration of churches regardless of race in the MCSA (circuits) did not necessarily mean that people would worship together. The spirituality of the black church was furthermore a unique contribution which blacks should not abandon or be ashamed of. "Integration of service should not just be a

¹⁷⁰ Baartmann, E. *The History of the BMC*. 21st celebration. Cape Town. (Unpublished paper) 1996. P. 3.

¹⁷¹ There have been lots of workshops, schools, seminars within the BMC, which is one way or another a reflection of the African traditional world view (the roots). Since its beginning up until today, these

coming together on Sunday service to observe the consciences of the whites and it should not be furthering the Westernisation of the church.”¹⁷²

The BMC recognised seriously the world-view of the African people. The BMC, in furthering the issue of worship in the Methodist church, elected a committee to look at worship. The committee reported that “worship is the freedom to do what the spirit says one should do.” The liturgy, according to the committee, has to be different from day to day. There is a need to have as many participants in the service as possible.¹⁷³

Though the BMC has played a major role towards conscientizing people and reminding them about their roots - the African World view, - the BMC cannot be “romanticized”. Like other movements, the BMC is not perfect - not without blame. One of the BMC’s aims, is to empower each other in order to best empower the black grassroots and to relate the gospel to their context. As Dandala puts it, “Opening the membership to all Methodist people was a way of trying to reach the grassroots, people on the pew who form the backbone of the church so that such exposure can enable them to know more about their church...”

If the above was taken seriously by the MCSA within the black churches in particular the percentage of membership would be high. The failure to apply the above to local churches is that: (a) Ministers who are to “relate the Gospel to black people”, their ministerial training does not offer those skills. For instance, the courses that I did in the seminary were not contextual to the African situation. African theology was one of them but most courses were western-orientated. In other words, while I was working in one of the local churches (in Thaba Nchu) it was difficult even for me to contextualize the Gospel in the African Context because I was not taught.

workshops have been conscientising BMC members in different ways, for example, empowering members and their communities to re-read the bible in an African context

¹⁷² Balia, *Black Methodists and White Supremacy in South Africa*. 1991. p.89.

¹⁷³ BMC minutes for meeting held at Kagiso in Krugersdorp circuit on 20-22 September 1991. P. 3.

(b) In relation to empowerment, I do argue that this is one area that the BMC is good at. The problem is that those who are empowered fail to empower the local people. For instance, Those giving report back from the BMC 's National Conference to the local people, they do so in a foreign language. The disadvantaged in terms of education do not understand. Further, even empowerment from the national level is done in English. The assumption is that all people understand the language, while this is not the case. The BMC has become an elite movement where only those who can understand English and argue can feel comfortable. I think it is high time to realise that not all people are of the same standard.

Moreover, the BMC emerged out of a specific context. Blacks were not in majority in leadership positions. There were no whites in black churches as well as blacks in white churches. But now things have changed. Even political parties like the Pan African Congress (PAC) have people of different colours. For me like other few members of the BMC I believe it is a high time that the movement considers that there are ministers who serve in Black churches and are not black. I concur with Mogothu when he says: " I therefore move and call on the BMC to open its membership to those Whites who are stationed in black churches. These are people who would have opted to being born again with the marginalized beings who national oppression and economic exploitation did not allow to be. These are people who would have voluntarily renounced myth of superiority of their purity of soul, of their virtues, their wealth, their wisdom and that they can save the Blacks ."

3.1.3.4 Conclusion

As has been reflected above (about black movements within the MCSA), it is clear that the movements have served as a well where black members go to drink when they are thirsty for spirituality. However, there are members (black Methodists in Thaba-Nchu) who still belong to both the MCSA and indigenous churches because of the quest for African spirituality. These black movements, though they do not discourage

members from practising African traditional rituals, are unable to practise their rituals openly because the movements are not independent. They are within the MCSA's laws and disciplines. Further, there are things which are performed within the indigenous churches which are not done within these movements. For example, though one of the Manyano's aims is to pray for those who are sick and to visit them, healing is not done for those who are sick as is the case in the indigenous churches Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) and The Universal Church.¹⁷⁴ The Manyano women for instance, may pray for a sick person without doing the following: laying hands on the sick person, praying for water for the sick, and to fast for healing of the person.¹⁷⁵

3.1. 4 New leadership and development in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA)

In this sub-section, I am going to discuss how the new black leadership in the MCSA has tried to address the inadequacy or lack of African spirituality. This attempt will entail examining how the development of the new leadership has contributed to the slow down of break - aways by black Christians. Of interest here will be the contributions of three black leaders or presidents of the conference towards African spirituality in the MCSA.

The first black president of the Methodist church was Rev S.M. Mokitimi. He was elected in 1964. Since his presidency, a number of black (males) have held that position, for example Rev Jotham C. Mvusi (1973), Rev Andrew Losaba (1979), Rev Dr Simon Gqubule (1981), Rev Dr Khosa Mgojo (1982, 1987), Rev Ernest Baartman (1985), and Rev Dr Stanley Mogoba (1988-1996). My interest is, however, on the contribution of three of these leaders to African spirituality (Africanization). These leaders are: Rev S.M. Mokitimi (the first black president), Rev Dr K. Mgojo, and Rev Dr S.M. Mogoba. Of particular interest are Mogoba and Mgojo because of their enormous contribution towards African spirituality. These were elected to the chair

¹⁷⁴ See Appendix No.6. Interview No.5.

more than once. These leaders have written, preached , and conducted seminars on Africanization. These have also been strong members of the BMC.

3.1.4.1 The Rev S.M. Mokitimi - 1964

Rev Mokitimi became the first black president of the Methodist church. For this reason, his election became symbolic and essential in the Methodist history. It took almost a decade before a black person held the highest office again .¹⁷⁶

In his address to the conference of all the members of the Methodist church in 1964, Sudbury, Rev Mokitimi's secretary, said: "This year, for the first time, there was reported an overall decrease in membership: 4537 in our African churches and 1061 in our coloured churches. The conference was disturbed by the decrease and calls upon all Methodist ministers to join in an honest examination of the effectiveness of preaching God's word in each church."¹⁷⁷ Though the reasons for the decrease of membership amongst African churches are not stated, one may argue that lack of the African spirituality was one of the causes. For example, African cultural practices were discouraged and condemned by missionaries.¹⁷⁸ From Rev Mokitimi's address (cf. "The decrease of membership in our African churches "), one would have thought that, as the first black president, he would have been interested in the African world view. Instead, however, according to Gqubule, Mokitimi believed in and preached a "kingdom without barriers (Luke 1.33)."¹⁷⁹ Mokitimi's emphasis was on restoring harmony between different languages¹⁸⁰ and reconciling tribal, racial and ecclesiastical differences. Being a reconciler, Mokitimi is marked by: (i) his knowledge of different languages, (ii) his commitment as a member of the theological education and a chairperson of the provisional council of the Federal Theological Seminary, which

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ *Minutes of the Methodist conference*. 1979. p. 321 and (1985) p. 455. For an account of his life and work see, T.S.T. Gqubule, *Meet the Brown Bomber*. Alice. Lovedale Press 1996.

¹⁷⁷ The minutes of the Methodist conference (1964) pp. 242-43.

¹⁷⁸ See chapter 2, 2.5 & 2.6 for illustration.

¹⁷⁹ Gqubule, *Meet the Brown Bomber*, p. 28.

was ecumenical (iii) a commitment as a person involved in theological education and the chairperson of the Institute of Race Relations.

It is also noted that his sermons and addresses did not focus specifically on the African world view, but were generally focused on the Christian world view (spiritual). His concern was to call and remind people about the incomparable Jesus and God's kingdom.

In short, Rev Mokitimi, though the first black leader in the MCSA, did not focus on Africanization.¹⁸¹ The issues pertaining Africanisation were not yet issues of concern in the MCSA during that era.¹⁸² He neither addressed the inadequacy or lack of African spirituality nor corrected his white colleagues who were condemning African traditional values as "heathen" customs. However the burning issue during that time were to do with racial discrimination in both the country and the church. This issue was contextual. Some of the issues taking place then are highlighted in the minutes of the Methodist conference.¹⁸³ For example, the following statement reflects burning issues of the time:

We share with you problems associated with church life...class distinction and colour prejudice the latter more acutely felt in our country, where, through the implementation of the Group Areas Act, our people are still constantly moving to newly appointed 'separated' areas, involving the disruption of community, church and family life.

These situational problems were also noted by the "then presiding bishop" of the MCSA, Rev M.S. Mogoba.¹⁸⁴ In terms of the inadequacy of African spirituality,

¹⁸⁰ He completely mastered six different languages.

¹⁸¹ The concept - Africanization was only defined by the committee on Africanization in 1992 (see the minutes of the Methodist conference 1992 p.242ff)

¹⁸² His sermons and addresses testify to this fact.

¹⁸³ *Minutes of the Methodist conference* (1964) pp. 239-41.

¹⁸⁴ See Appendix No.6

highest positions in the MCSA. To others, it meant the expression of the dynamic interaction of the gospel, church, and cultural recognition of African customs.¹⁸⁶

3.1.3.2 The Rev Dr K.E. Mgojo - 1982 & 1987

Dr Mgojo was elected as Methodist president in 1982. He was the fourth black president in the history of the church and the first to be re-elected in 1987.¹⁸⁷ Apart from his leadership in the church, Dr Mgojo was also the chairperson of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) for a number of years.

Dr Mgojo's contribution towards addressing the lack of African spirituality in the MCSA is reflected in his addresses and sermons during his presidency, and in the seminars he conducted. My interest here is on two things: his address in 1982 to the conference members of the church¹⁸⁸ and the papers he presented during a seminar organised by BMC members in 1980.¹⁸⁹

One of the issues that emerged during Mgojo's presidency was with African worship. This was to be reflected in the way ministers were trained, i.e., this was to be both practical and theoretical for the ministers. It was hoped that, in light of the new model of ministers' training, members within the church could begin to experience the joy of African worship in their local churches. In the 1980s, Mgojo was already one of the lecturing staff in the ecumenical seminary¹⁹⁰ where black clergy were trained for ministry. From this presentation it appears that the issue of training black clergy for the African context was important for Mgojo even as the president of the MCSA.

Book (1981), p. 118.

¹⁸⁶ For most informants in the Thaba - Nchu Methodist church, Africanization means, spontaneous worship, use of African drums, veneration of ancestors etc. (see appendix no 6. Interviews no 1, 3-7).

¹⁸⁷ Mgojo was the first black president to have a black secretary of the Methodist conference by the name of M.S. Mogoba. Mogoba being a secretary in the then White dominated leaders' structures, it was important because his role was to organise the business of the Methodist conference.

¹⁸⁸ *The minutes of the Methodist Conference*. 1982, p. 378 ff.

¹⁸⁹ M.S. Mogoba & O.S. Mbangula. *Africanization an exploration*. 1982. Cf. *The Gospel and the Book* (1981), p. 118.

¹⁹⁰ *Minutes of the MCSA conference*. 1982, p. 378.

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In a seminar organised by the Black Methodist Consultation (a movement within the MCSA)in 1980, on Africanization Mgojo was one of the leading presenters on this subject.¹⁹¹ At this seminar, he presented two papers: "The Gospel and the early missionaries and *Africanization*." In the paper on "The Gospel and the early missionary" Mgojo raised the following issues in relation to the failure of early missionaries to understand the indigenous world view:

- (i) the function of the ancestors as mediators between God and humanity. The missionaries failed to draw the parallel between ancestors and Christ the greatest mediator. Instead, the missionaries assumed that the indigenous people were praying and worshipping the ancestors. By so doing they failed to understand the channel of communication among the indigenous people. For example, a child in the African world view does not communicate directly with the father. He/she has to go through the mother.¹⁹²
- (ii) the notion of the God of the third world people;¹⁹³
- (iii) the concept of the future life;

¹⁹⁰ *Minutes of the MCSA conference*. 1982, p. 378.

¹⁹¹ One may argue that the aim behind this seminar was to address the inadequacy in African spirituality in the church. Hence, the point was to conscientize other black leaders who attended the seminar and were about to break away from the MCSA that the problem was being addressed.

¹⁹² See, Appendix no.6. Interview No.8.

¹⁹³ Mogoba & Mbangula, *Africanization*, pp. 1-2; Setiloane *The Black leader*. 1995, p. 21.

- (iv) the nature of sacrifice; and traditional ways of healing by African *inyanga* (doctors). Instead of approving the indigenous way of healing which is holistic (healing the whole person), the missionaries opted for their western style of healing. This method of healing is individualistic and not communal like the latter. The latter, according to Mgojo, is also closer to Jesus' way of healing.

The above quotation, point (i) & (iv) are also shared by the respondents of dual membership and of those who left the Methodist Church in Thaba - Nchu.¹⁹⁴

In addition to the above factors, Mgojo suggested the following as ways of meeting the inadequacy of African spirituality in the MCSA. According to him, a dynamic church should: (a) employ indigenous forms to meet the quest for African spirituality, (b) music take indigenous forms, possess them for Christ, adapt and employ them to serve Christian ends; (c) convey to its members true Christian meaning; (d) apply in worship ritual ways that are appropriate to the cultural context of the indigenous people; and (e) accept converts as they are, e.g., such a church will have polygamous congregants.

In the paper on "Africanization," Mgojo states that by Africanization he refers to the expression of the dynamic interaction between the gospel church and culture.¹⁹⁵ The task of Africanization is to free black Africans from the cultural accretions of the west. According to him, Africanization would be the answer to the spiritual hunger which characterizes most of the European churches in Africa today. The inadequacy of African spirituality in those churches has been one of the main causes of the emergence of indigenous African Christian churches. Mgojo suggests that Africanization would be a solution in making the church in Africa truly the church for the majority of Africans.

¹⁹⁴ See appendix no 6.

¹⁹⁵ Mogoba & Mbangula, *Africanization on exploration*. 1982. P.4.

Mgojo continues to state that Africanization, through spokespersons like the members of the BMC, is geared towards the full participation of the majority in the life of the church. Africanization also seeks to catch the spirit of that African Christian spiritual tradition which was manifested by the song of Tengo Jabawu as he lay dying on his death bed. Tiyo Soga's great hymn:

Lizalis' idinga lakho

Tixo nkosi yenganiso

Zonke intlanga zalomhlaba

Mazizuze usindiso

Translated as:

Fulfil thy promises

O Lord, Lord of truth

Let every tribe of this land

Obtain salvation.

By failing to understand the African world view : the role of *inyanga* in healing process, the function of ancestors, the concept of *Modimo* (God), and the nature of sacrifice, etc. the missionaries created the situation that forced some black members to live between two worlds, i.e., practising Christianity and African traditional ritual.¹⁹⁶

Dr Mgojo's papers were relevant for the area of this study because, they raised issues which tried to address the inadequacy of African spirituality in the Thaba - Nchu Methodist church. The sentiments expressed in the papers are also issues of concern for the respondents in Thaba - Nchu.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Refer to Appendix No.6. Interviews No. 4,5, & 8.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*,

3.1.3.3 The Rev Dr M.S. Mogoba - 1988-1996

Rev Dr M.S. Mogoba was first elected as the presiding bishop of the MCSA in 1987, for a three year term. He was voted by a clear majority on the first ballot.¹⁹⁸ In a remarkable move, Mogoba was re-elected for a second three year term when his first term of office ended. He has been the first in the history of the MCSA to have such a strong impact on socio-economic, political, tribal, religious and cultural issues. In addition to being the first black leader of that calibre, Mogoba was also the first black person to be elected the secretary of the Methodist conference in 1982. M.S. Mogoba has now joined the politics after a long service in the MCSA.¹⁹⁹

Mogoba has done a lot in the field of the African world view. In his research on the Bapedi religious world,²⁰⁰ he states that the belief in ancestors among the Bapedi has been partially presented. He notes that ancestors are believed in as intermediaries between humans and *Modimo* (God). By saying this, Mogoba was clarifying a controversy which has continued for a long time, i.e. , whether ancestors are venerated or worshipped. This research motivated Mogoba to challenge the MCSA with its western background to take African traditional practices seriously.

Mogoba challenged the church at different levels. First, as a strong member of the BMC, he and other black ministers conducted a seminar on Africanization in 1980.²⁰¹ The aim of the seminar was to address the relevance of Africanization in the church which has been westernized. It also aimed at addressing the inadequacy of African spirituality which has been one of the causes for the decrease of membership in the church. In his paper, *The Gospel and African Culture*, he raised the following issues that are important for African spirituality: (i) ancestors/transcendence - immanence;

¹⁹⁸ Minutes of the Methodist Conference (1987), p. 456.

¹⁹⁹ His involvement as a member of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) before he joined the ministry, one may argue it influence his understanding and the interpretation of the Gospel in African world-view. Integration of the two involvement (BCM & the MCSA minister) further enable him to be the president of the Pan African Movement (PAC) by the end of 1996.

²⁰⁰ Kuckertz, H. *Ancestor Religion in Southern Africa*. Cacadu. Lumko Missiological Institute. 1981. Pp 52-64.

(ii) life - death; (iii) *dingaka* (diviners).

According to Mogoba, ancestors represent God in the transcendental and immanent dimensions. For someone who does not understand the African world view, this would raise the complex question of the role of ancestors as intermediaries. In order for one to understand this, one has to understand the hierarchical structure which governs relations in the African world view. Mogoba gave an example of the relations between a king and subjects. Subjects cannot just talk to the king, one would have to communicate one's message to someone who would pass on the message accordingly until the message reached the king. So ancestors stand in this hierarchical relationship between God and humanity. Of interest here is the fact that ancestors are thought to be very close to the living so that the actual spatial distance between humans and God cannot be great. Prayer, in this case, can be by word of mouth, but the greatest communication is a sacrifice of beer (African beer) or food.

Death, in Mogoba's view, is not the end of life, it is a bridge to the life hereafter. The belief in life after death goes hand in hand with the belief in the continued existence of the ancestors. Ancestors are the ultimate source of power. They are the mysterious power that gives life or that destroys life. As Mogoba puts it, "when ancestors are pleased or contented, when relationships with other people or with the ancestors are right, blessings flow and there is profusion of life"²⁰² When the relationship between the living and the dead is upset, the living may experience suffering. To stabilize harmony, one would perform a ritual - offering sacrifice to ancestors.²⁰³ This ritual, like other African rituals, was condemned by missionaries. As a result, some Christians attend indigenous churches²⁰⁴ to fulfil the spiritual needs that are lacking in the Methodist church.

²⁰¹ Mogoba & Mbangula, *Africanization on exploration*. 1982. P.4.

²⁰² *Ibid.* 1982. Pp. 5.

²⁰³ See Appendix No.6. Interview No.5.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 4 & 6.

The dingaka play a major role in the African world view. Their role, according to Mogoba, can be seen in African Christian families, both in rural villages and in urban areas. He states that:

The first task of a man who wants to live in a house with his family is, in traditional belief, to secure the service of a *ngaka* (diviner) so that he may use his charms “to strengthen the foundations of the new home (*go thea motse*)”. This ensures that the evil spells of witches or sorcerers cannot penetrate into the house. The history of this practice goes back to a time when no charms were used but the ancestors were invoked and informed about the new home.²⁰⁵

The work of the *Dingaka* is not only for securing new homes. For example, parents call the *Ngaka* to secure a child who would be going to write exams so that others do not make him/her weak.

It is reported that some African Christians invite both a minister (*moruti*) and a *ngaka* to bless the new home. This happens at different times. This belief has also gone beyond homes to churches. During the opening of new church building, people would ask a minister to bless the building. The members of that church can begin to worship freely in that building after that ceremony.²⁰⁶

The western practice of laying foundation has acquired a unique African character in the urban areas. One reasons why people will ask the *ngaka* and the *moruti* to bless the new home is because people believe in the power of both. The work performed by *ngaka* form part of African spirituality in that ancestors are invited. They come at different times because the church does not approve the work of the *dingaka*. The two also work differently: the *ngaka* upholds African traditional rituals whereas the *moruti* upholds Christians practices as are reflected in the prayer book. About the role of the *dingaka* Mrs Boysen and Mrs Kgati, stated that people whom they used to worship

²⁰⁵ Mogoba & Mbangula, *Africanization on exploration*. 1982. p. 9.

together in the Thaba - Nchu Methodist church, are now far from them because of their divine calling. Continue that, it is also difficult for them to attend the women's *manyano* (Women's organisation) due to them being the *dingaka*.²⁰⁷

In his 1994 address to the representative session of the Methodist conference in Umtata, Mogoba raised challenging issues about African spirituality which is lacking in the Methodist church. A large percentage of African Christians were happy with his address while a few were against it.²⁰⁸ The people who were for and against the address were both Blacks and Whites.²⁰⁹ Individual Methodist district synods reacted differently to the address in 1995.²¹⁰

Dr Mogoba suggested different ways in which aspects of African culture and religious views can enrich Christianity. He presented five factors:²¹¹

- (a) life after death. He indicated that, in pre-Christian times, Africans believed that the community of the living and of the living-dead were one continuous community. Ancestors are part and parcel of the lineage. By condemning the belief in ancestors, missionaries were disapproving African spirituality.²¹²
- (b) community and relationship. There is a strong belief in an African world view that the family and the extended family fosters human growth and happiness. The community becomes a society where all belong and where an individual finds freedom. The relationship in family and community at large exists between persons; humans and heavenly beings (spiritual beings); the living and the living-dead and so on. This includes the

²⁰⁶ As to how the opening is performed, see Appendix No.6 Interview No.8.

²⁰⁷ See Appendix No. 6. Interview No. 1 & 7.

²⁰⁸ See Appendix No.5 "Restore Message of the Revivalists."

²⁰⁹ See Appendix No.6 Interview No.8.

²¹⁰ See Appendix No.2 --2.1 Resolutions 1995.

²¹¹ For more information on these factors, see Mogoba, *Convicted by Hope*, pp. 1-11.

²¹² *Ibid*, pp. 5-7. And also refer to Appendix No.6. Interviews No. 1,3,4,5,6 &7.

relationship between humans and the environment, hence all the healing medication emerges from the environment.²¹³

- (c) symbolism: symbolism is another factor that is part of an African world view. Shorter, as quoted by Mogoba, highlights the relevance of symbolism in the African perspective. He states that the churches in Africa are overwhelmed by western symbols, as a result, there has been a resistance towards African symbols.²¹⁴ The denial or refusal of this factor, like the above factors, is a rejection of African world view. The acceptance of African symbols can and would enrich Christianity and satisfy the majority of its members who are indigenous.
- (d) worship as celebration. This factor has been highlighted and recommended by most respondents. Inadequacy of this factor in Christianity and in the MCSA in particular has resulted in (i) members leaving the church to join churches which satisfy them spiritually, (ii) members living double life - Methodist and indigenous churches. Mogoba stated that the fear of the church to Africanise the worship has deprived both the church and its members of very interesting liturgical forms.²¹⁵
- (e) healing: Mogoba pointed to the need for healing in the church. He noted that African independent churches are not the only ones that can pray and heal the sick.²¹⁶

This factor, like the previous one, seems to be a priority especially to those who have left the church totally to join indigenous churches.²¹⁷ African Christians leave their churches to attend healing sessions in the indigenous churches or to consult the

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 7. *Ibid.* All Interviews including the views of an unattributed interviews.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* See also Appendix No.6. Interviews 1-8.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* Interview No.6.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9. See also Appendix No.6. Interviews 2, 4 & 6.

izangoma. This is an important area for the traditional healers. In performing the healing ritual, traditional healers or *sangomas* use dancing and singing. In the African world view, healing shows a re-establishment of peaceful relationships between the living and ancestors and the whole family.

3.1.5 The work of the Africanization committee

The Africanization committee has been one of the developments in the MCSA charged with the responsibility of addressing the inadequacy of African spirituality in the church.²¹⁸ The church established this committee with the aim of defining the term in relation to the functions of the church. The committee was to define the term with particular reference to worship, teaching, preaching, and evangelization.²¹⁹ It was only in 1992 that the definition²²⁰ and the liturgy that reflect African practices,²²¹ was introduced by the convener (Rev Moeketsi) to the Xhosa and Sesotho speaking churches. African traditional values and rituals which were condemned by missionaries²²² like circumcision/rites of passage to adulthood, ancestral ceremonies of thanksgiving were recognised by the committee. One can argue that these African traditional practices could not have been recognised if the head of the church was not someone who was committed to the African world view and also a member of Africanisation committee, which is committed too to the African traditional belief system.

In highlighting the important role of the Africanisation committee in the Methodist church, the BMC²²³ stated that the syllabus of theological training centres and universities that train Methodist ministers must have a significant component of Africanisation. This syllabus has to include the debate between traditional African values and Christianity.

²¹⁸ Rev Dr Mogoba is an ex-officio member of the committee.

²¹⁹ *Minutes of the Methodist conference* (1979), p. 186.

²²⁰ *Minutes of the Methodist conference* (1992), p. 245 ff.

²²¹ See Appendix No.1.

²²² See chapter 3.

²²³ Baartmann, E. *The History of the BMC* - unpublished paper, 6-9th July 1996, p. 2.

3.1.6 Conclusion

With the input of black organizations, leaders like Mgojo and Mogoba, seminars on Africanization, the development of African spirituality in Africanizing the church, the face of the MCSA has changed. These different contributions have brought awareness to some leaders in the church that the African traditional belief system is not outside the scope of Christianity. In fact, it is part of the African Christianity and therefore needs to be upheld. The reactions from the different sources also helped to promote dialogue within the church especially between people with a western bent and those with the local touch.²²⁴ In the language of Rev Schooling:

Our church needs to make the Gospel relevant in a culture where the living and the dead are seen as one.... The church has for too long ignored the hearts of people and so has closed the door of the Gospel to millions.²²⁵

Though more people felt challenged and left the MCSA, most from the black perspective were happy because for too long they had been deprived, as Schooling noted. One may argue that African spirituality has been highlighted in the MCSA simply because the presiding bishops have taken a keen interest in the subject. This has made the work of independent movements in the church easier as regards addressing the lack of African spirituality in the church.

Although things seem to be promising, as evidenced by the presentation above, the break away trend has not been completely halted. Members in the Thaba - Nchu Methodist church continue to break away and join the indigenous churches. One thing needs to be noted here. It would appear that most of, if not all, the seminars, conferences, and decisions are done by the hierarchy. So the grassroots people in Thaba - Nchu, those who can not read nor write, are not involved in the process of Africanization. There is need for joint effort between the leadership and the ordinary

²²⁴ Cf. Mogoba, *Convicted by Hope*, pp. 1-11.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

Christians if Africanization is to succeed in the MCSA. In short, there is a need to make literature on the issue accessible to the ordinary members and also that literature should be in a language familiar to the members. This will ensure that everyone in the church is kept up to date on the developments taking place in the church.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse data collected from my field study on blacks who have left the Methodist church due to this lack of African spirituality. Before I do this, I would like to look briefly at two issues: the limitations and constraints and the process of the field work.

4.1.1 Limitations and constraints

There are some respondents who have dual membership, i.e., belonging to the Methodist church and at the same time taking part in the African traditional rituals or secretly attending indigenous churches. Most of these were reluctant to be interviewed and they even did not want to be identified or be known. This was so because they were afraid of being excommunicated. Once assured of their anonymity, some of these respondents were free to respond to questions.

Those who have left the Methodist church in quest for an African spirituality were more open. However, their ministers were sceptical because they thought my aim was to win back these people to the Methodist church. Before I interviewed them, I had to explain the process to their ministers, but even then some were not convinced. As a result of this, I was unable to interview some of them.

Some respondents were not comfortable with being tape recorded. For example, some asked whether I was going to give the cassette to their ministers. These people wanted to protect their confidentiality and safeguard their security. Others also felt threatened when they saw me taking notes. I decided to write notes after the interviews.

The target of these interviews was the marginalized groups, and some leaders who are for Africanization in the church. Unfortunately, some leaders were not cooperative. They kept postponing interviews till I gave up on them. However, those who knew me, were open and they even gave me permission to include their names and locations in the report.

As noted already, I had also the problem of funding. This research had no funds. It depended entirely on the generosity, co-operation, and willingness of the respondents.²²⁶

4.1.2 Process of research

As I have indicated earlier, the focus of this study was on a specific community and denomination.²²⁷ My aim was threefold, i.e., to find out:

- (i) why members leave the MCSA in search of African spirituality
- (ii) why others have dual membership, i.e., belonging to the MCSA but at the same time taking part in African traditional practices and indigenous churches
- (iii) why others, regardless of the above, are content to belong to MCSA.

I used the survey sampling²²⁸ method to get answers to these questions. The field work was carried out in 1995 in the Thaba-Nchu area.²²⁹

4.2 Sample

The number 100, as reflected in the pie chart in this section represent the subjects interviewed in Thaba - Nchu. I felt that the number was representative and it will enrich the information of the present study because the is not a biographical one.

The number was also partially dictated by the methodology used. As I indicated

²²⁶ For more details of the research used, refer to chapter 1.1.2. The advantages of the methodology and its disadvantages are well outline.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *ibid.* the examples of the questions used are outlined.

earlier, the fact that I did not have research funds and used time that was available to me meant that I could not use the probability sampling which could have involved the entire population. For this reason, I chose to use the non-probability sampling which is less expensive and problematic. However as reflected in chapter 1, this methodology has its own limitations like any other method.

In terms of the representation of the respondents, both male (35) and female (65) of middle age group (48-65) were interviewed. I chose this particular group because these were the people I was living with when I was working in the Thaba-Nchu area. Secondly, these middle aged people are those who still remember or perform African traditional rituals. Thirdly, these people have been in this area even before the place was in-co-operated into the Bophuthatswana. The respondents were also of different locations.²³⁰ Fourthly, the respondents did not know whom I had interviewed.²³¹ Fifth, most of them are the ones I personally know and worked with, few being leaders (e.g. women's *manyano* chairperson, men's organization's chairperson, local preachers, society steward etc.) and most ordinary members.

In terms of young people, I found it difficult to focus the study on them because of the following reasons:

- (i) most young people are unfamiliar with African traditional rituals because these rituals are no more performed in the families. Where these rituals are performed, most of the young are not interested.
- (ii) some young people today are attending school with people of different cultural backgrounds. In the process of this interaction, their culture ceases to be important. In this setting a new culture emerges which is different from the parents'.
- (iii) I believe that if this research was done among the young people, the outcome could have been different. However this area can be an area of interest for the

²³⁰ For more information and the outcome of the pilot survey, see chapter 1.

²³¹ The snowball method used introduced me to other people I did not know.

future study. It will be interesting to find out the views of young people in relation to African spirituality within the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church.

In terms of educational background of the respondents, the focus of the study was on the marginalized groups. These are people who are voiceless. Their voices are normally not heard. The respondents were in fact from the working class group. The reason why I did not interview educated people is that most of the educated people regard African world view as “uncivilized” and others are not open when it comes to their beliefs in traditional practices.

Nonetheless, if the same study can be conducted in the same community (Thaba-Nchu), I am convinced that there is a high probability that the researcher concerned will find almost similar findings. But it will be worth considering the following contributing factors:

- (i) the methodology might not be the same
- (ii) respondents might not be open if the researcher is not known
- (iii) it is fairly possible that the respondents might be different.
- (iv) the preaching of the ministers might be different (recognising a need for African spirituality), and will also depend on the time the research will be conducted.

Illustrated on the next page is a pie chart that shows the general response of the respondents (Thaba-Nchu area)

A Pie Chart that represent the interviewees (Thaba-Nchu)



1 = 18% => Single membership

2 = 26% => Break away to join other churches

3 = 56% => Dual membership

According to the pie chart above, some of the respondents twenty six percent (26%) left to join for example African Indigenous churches (AIC), Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) and Universal Church. Some of the respondents are bishops and also in high positions in these churches for example AIC. What is interesting is that those in leadership positions also occupied positions of authority in the Methodist church. For example, one of the respondents was a preacher and a chairperson of a men's organization in the MCSA.

Only two percent (2%) out of twenty six percent (26%) of the respondents above left the MCSA to join ZCC and Universal church. Names of such people came when questions like "Does X still sing and preach powerfully" The reply would be "No, X has left the church and is now a member of ZCC."

The chart also shows that fifty six percent (56%) of the respondents have dual membership, i.e., belonging to the Methodist church but at the same time taking part in the African traditional rituals and attending indigenous churches. Rev Dr Mogoba calls these people "religious concubinages."²³² These are the respondents who have shown concern over their customs and cultures, who find it difficult to break away

²³² Mogoba, *Convicted by Hope*. 1994. p. 5.

from their African world view, by raising concern over veneration of ancestors and rites of passage.

The remaining eighteen percent (18%) of the respondents have single membership i.e. those fully committed to the MCSA.

4.3 Analysis

(a) Those who left MCSA in quest for African spirituality

Mr. Ranthethe one of the respondents states that he left the Thaba - Nchu Methodist church because as he puts it “ our church is too procedural. One has to wait for the day allocated to him/her to preach, according to the preacher’s plan/programme. In the Apostolic church, the worship services are spontaneous and everyone participates. Further, I allow the spirit to work as I feel. When I feel like praying for someone, I do so”.²³³ The sentiments expressed here are also highlighted by Mugambi. Mugambi states that

the mainstream churches are distinguished by formalism....
Worship services in these churches are formal and follow a
written liturgy. Spontaneous and participatory forms of worship
are lacking.²³⁴

Those who left the MCSA to join the Universal Church stated that this church have special days during the week to pray for their needs. They indicated that this is lacking in the Thaba - Nchu Methodist church. For instance, Mrs. Kganare said of the Universal church: “ ... on different days ... on Monday, we are praying for financial problems and people who are not working... I prayed on Monday,I got the job.. ”²³⁵ Furthermore, another reason given was that the mainstream churches do not emphasize important factors that form their African world view. For instance, they

²³³ Appendix No. 6. Interview No. 6.

²³⁴ J.N.K. Mugambi & L. Magesa, *The Church in African Christianity*. 1990. P. 10.

stated that veneration of ancestors, healing (as *sangoma* or diviners do), singing (using African drums and clapping of hands rather than playing pianos), and communication within the believing community, is part of their African heritage. Mrs. Boysen shares this views about the African heritage:” ... spirits is something that disturbs a person inside ... I believe that if our the Methodist church can allow African drums to be used, people like us who are spiritually (*ba nang le moya*), will feel at home....”²³⁶

Mrs Kgati highlighted the same views on African heritage and spontaneous worship that “... if the church could allow us to dress as instructed by ancestors, I tell you, you would experience a miracle. All who have left the church will come back home... and if the church can all allow a thanks giving ceremony for our ancestors ...we will feel at home...”²³⁷

35% of this group stated that the organizational attire (women’s *manyano*) is one of the reasons why some left the church. For example, black colour that is part of the uniform - black tie for men and black skirt for women - is depressing (*dia ba imela*). They also identify “black” with evil, hence they say the spirit does not allow that. Though some of these issues are being addressed in the MCSA,²³⁸ the problem is that this is done from “top” downwards. So the people from “below” will keep on searching for African spirituality because information is not forthcoming to them from the top. Furthermore, the information and decision making on these matters are written in a foreign language, English. Most people (grassroots) cannot read or speak English. To show that they are unaware of the development taking place towards the Africanizing the MCSA, these people made the following recommendations to the MCSA for it to be successful. The issues which were stressed, in point form, are:

- (i) singing: use of drums, clapping of hands, etc. This was voiced by 69% of this group

²³⁵ See Mrs Kganare in Appendix No.6.Interview No.2 p.117

²³⁶ *Ibid.* Interview No.7 pp.144-145.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, Interview No. 4 pp.125-127.

²³⁸ See appendix No.1. The proposed liturgy by Africanization Committee” Chapter 3.

- (ii) special Sundays for prayers of healing: the church is to use people who are gifted in this, e.g., diviners, *sangomas*, *barapelli* (gifted in prayer). Most of the respondents in this group agreed on this point.
- (iii) symbolic things like water to be used. This point was also advocated by all the people in this group.
- (iv) those gifted to be allowed to wear special attire and carry stuff. 92% in this group stated this. They indicated that instructions for special attire come from the living-dead. The remaining 8% stated that God calls people as they are.
- (v) white candles to be made available. This was advocated by the respondents in this group.
- (vi) ministers (black) to attend “spirit services “ so that they can understand who exactly the ”spirit people” are.²³⁹ Only 15% of respondents in this group supported this idea. The rest felt that the gift of the spirit depends upon individual calling. So there is no need for ministers to attend “spirit services”.
- (vii) These respondents who joined the ZCC stated that the MCSA should encourage people to stay healthy e.g. no smoking and no alcohol. Their reason have been one of the emphasis that John Wesley stood for. This shows that such respondents do not know their church history.

For the Methodist church in Africa to be an authentic African church, it should definitely take the above recommendations seriously. It has been a long time since the African world view had been ignored. Hence people will always be Methodists by day and fulfil their spiritual needs by night (secret churches). Taking more time to listen to the grassroots will help the MCSA to grow, not only in numbers but holistically.

However, in talking to some respondents, healing seemed to be one of the major reasons why some of them left the MCSA. For example, one of those who joined the Universal church states:

²³⁹ Appendix No.6. Interview No. 4, 6 & 7.

From the MCSA I went to *Sangomas* and the Zion churches, but they did not heal my asthma. Someone told me about the Universal church. I went there and my asthma was healed.²⁴⁰

The one who joined the ZCC said:

I became sick for a long time. I went to many medical doctors and traditional healers, but I was not getting better. When I joined the ZCC, I was given stuff to eat and I was told to stop smoking and drinking. I was healed.²⁴¹

The respondents in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist Church stated they left the church in search for healing. 26% of the respondents left the church in quest for healing. However, 2% from that group do not attribute healing to anyone or anything, but to God.²⁴²

The above reasons are an eye opener to the MCSA. I believe that our church can heal people. The presiding bishop S.M. Mogoba highlights this when he says:

Healing is another area which has suffered. Whether we believe in this area or not, the fact is that our members believe in it. We have to change that the image that AICs are the only ones that can heal.²⁴³

So it is clear that prayers and services for healing should be encouraged in the MCSA. This should be known by all people including the marginalized communities.

(b) Members with dual membership

According to the above chart, 56% of the respondents had dual membership. The respondents gave different responses in relation to the inadequacy of African spirituality in the Methodist church. 71% of the respondents in this group belonged to

²⁴⁰ Appendix No.6. Interview No.2.

²⁴¹ Unattributable interview (for reasons of anonymity)

²⁴² See Appendix No. 6.

²⁴³ Mogoba, *Convicted by Hope*. 1994. p. 4. Cf. Appendix No.6. Interview No.8.

the women's organization (women's *manyano*) and to the YMG.²⁴⁴ They stated that it is in their monthly meeting worship, when there is no interference from the minister, that they feel at home. About women, Ukpong highlights this when he says: "Christian women gathering is a place where they sang local tunes clapped their hands and dance freely. This was perhaps the only way they could express their African sentiments of worship in a Christian context."²⁴⁵ This is the place where they preach, pray, and share freely their lives' joys and difficulties as women in these gatherings. The problem emerges when they are in church services. This is where they are not free. They worship as though they are in England while they are in South Africa. Hence, these women respondents indicated that it is after the Sunday service that they attend indigenous church services (at night) for spiritual satisfaction.

18% of the women respondents in this category stated that though they love the *manyano* uniform²⁴⁶ the problem comes out when the *moya* (spirit) tells them not to wear black things.²⁴⁷ This is because black is always associated with evil. These respondents indicated that their ancestors describe to them what to wear. Hence they would opt to attend indigenous churches in order to wear the attire that had been prescribed for them. The same respondents stated that they joined the *manyano* because they were told (by ancestors) to do so. However, the problem of accommodating such people becomes real in that all those who belong to the organization are supposed to put on the same colours. As a result, some of these people end up denouncing their membership in the organization.

30% of this group stated that they enjoy attending services held by YMG and women's *manyano*. Members said that although they do not belong to this organization, their services were uplifting to their spirit. Because these services are not sufficient, this results in their dual membership.

²⁴⁴ For more information, see chapter 3, -- *Awomen's Manyano*.

²⁴⁵ *Journal of Enculturation Theology*, vol. 1, No. 1 (1994), p. 15.

²⁴⁶ For more information on the *manyano* colours, see chapter 3.

²⁴⁷ Appendix No.6. Interview 6.

About the freedom of worship that members of organizations (YMG and *uManyano*) experience in their gatherings, Dandala agrees with the respondents that the YMG and *uManyano*'s approaches are largely exuberant and display a lot of activity.²⁴⁸ So worship is very important for people because it is part of their daily experience. In short, all the 56% in this category gave worship as one of the reasons for dual membership. According to the respondents, worship is a place where they want to feel at home. Since the 11 o'clock services in the Methodist black churches (9 or 10 o'clock) are formal and follow a written liturgy, this results in members having dual membership in quest for spiritual satisfaction. This view is highlighted by Ndiokwere. He stated that, in such services formalism prevails, movement and spontaneity are restricted. Ndiokwere continues to say, "worship is a place of free movement and total participation by everyone in the acts of worship."²⁴⁹ Mogoba also adds that "African church enjoys colourful worship and a lot of movement and rhythm...the beating of Bibles during services of worship is a cry for the return to the African drum."²⁵⁰ The spontaneity in worship services is also highlighted by Mbiti.²⁵¹ It is interesting however that MCSA's 11 o'clock services are formal amongst black churches. Members have managed to sing *Te Deum Laudamus* (*siyakudumisa Thixo*). This means "We praise thee O God!" They are able to sing this song in an African tune and beat. In this way even Western hymns can touch African hearts.

Healing and prayer are some areas that have been identified by respondents as reasons of dual membership. 90% of the respondents in this category pointed to a need for a church to take seriously the traditional healers and *sangomas*. They also indicated that their healing (*sangomas*) is holistic - not only an individual is healed but the whole family as well. The concern is that most of these people (*sangomas*) have left the church because they could not be accepted. Most of them are women. So because women are in majority in the church, healing performed by such people will be

²⁴⁸ For information, see chapter 3 -- "Young Men's Guild."

²⁴⁹ Ndiokwere, N.J., *Prophecy and Revolution* (1981), p. 277.

²⁵⁰ For more information, see chapter 3. New leadership and development within the MCSA.

²⁵¹ See chapter 1: definition of Worship.

effective and meaningful. Instead of people leaving the church for healing,²⁵² the accommodation of traditional healers, as they are with their attire, will slow down the dual membership. For example, Mogoba indicated that healing done by African traditional healers is holistic, they operate through faith and beliefs.²⁵³ According to Mogoba, people need not reject or look down on traditional healers' work. There is a need for objectivity. These respondents believe in both healing: by traditional healers and by pastors through laying on of hands.

13% of this group indicated healing and prayer as one of the important areas. However, for these people healing and prayer need special Sundays or days during the week.²⁵⁴ They gave the example of the Universal Church where there are special days and time for special needs. For example:

Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
10 am	Prayer	Anointing	Meeting of	Chain of	Prayer to	Strong	Meeting of
3 pm	for the	with oil	the	Prayer for	destroy	Prayer for	the Holy
5pm	Un- employed	for the sick	Children of God	the Family	Witchcraft	Financial Blessing	Spirit

The respondents noted the possibility of attending such services because there is nothing happening in the Methodist church during the week. This includes even 5 o'clock on Sunday. They use this time to satisfy their spiritual needs. As far as healing is concerned, all the respondents in this group are in favour of healing in the Methodist church. The difference between the two groups in this category is that there are those who believe in both traditional healers and pastors' healing through laying on of hands. The others are not for traditional healers, i.e., they only support healing done in a Christian way.

²⁵² Appendix No. 6. Interviews No.1 & 6.

²⁵³ For more information, see chapter 3, and appendix No. 6. Interview No. 8.

²⁵⁴ Unattributed interview (for reasons of anonymity).

Apart from worship, healing and prayer, veneration of ancestors²⁵⁵ is one area that is still not accommodated fully by the church. Although I have stated²⁵⁶ that the suggested liturgy has been Africanized - for example veneration of ancestors, institutions like circumcision, rites of passage and so on are included. The problem is that the majority of the people - marginalised - do not have access to those written materials and the language is foreign to them. However, in this area of ancestral veneration, 90% of the respondents believe strongly in the continuity of life after death. They also believe and have weakness in communicating with the living dead. As I have indicated in chapter 2, missionaries in Thaba-Nchu condemned African traditional values. Amongst the Barolong tribe, missionaries encountered hostility from the people simply because they regarded their customs as "pagan." Some of those practices were done for ancestors and sacrifices were performed. Hence, even today, it is not surprising that people in Thaba-Nchu, the majority of the respondents, still have dual membership. They are still scared that they might be excommunicated if they perform sacrifices for their ancestors. Most respondents, when asked why they were venerating ancestors secretly, stated that the act is not approved by the church. When they perform such ceremonies, they simply say it is a "thanksgiving service" for what God has done for them and their family.²⁵⁷ They indicated that the real ceremony starts early in the morning, then other people from the community and church members with their minister (if possible) can join at the last stage.

9% of the respondents did not respond to the question of ancestral veneration. 1% of the respondents stated that ancestral veneration is part of their African heritage. In response to the question: "How do you communicate with the living-dead?" they indicated that it was a private matter. In this case I realised that some of them were not open to me. This 9% consisted of respondents who were not worshipping in Thaba-

²⁵⁵ For more information, see chapter 3 – New leadership and development within the MCSA.

²⁵⁶ See chapter 3 – "Africanization Committee."

²⁵⁷ Appendix No. 6. Interview No. 4.

Nchu when I was a minister there. I think they did not trust me - thinking I might tell their ministers about their feelings.

Nonetheless, 91% did recommend that the church in its liturgy should give chance to its members to thank their living-dead as they wish. There is what we call a *Rona* month in the Methodist church. This is a month for thanksgiving. When I asked the respondents whether that was not enough, they indicated that the *Rona* is general, for example, one may thank God for ones life and achievement, while what they are proposing is specifically for their ancestors. It is clear that most respondents were in favour of ancestral veneration.

As has been pointed out earlier,²⁵⁸ the failure by the missionaries to understand African world view- the role of African healers, the function of ancestors to the living, the understanding of God , the fact that Africans have special names to refer to the Ultimate reality, the nature of sacrifice and their communal way of life . This resulted in respondents having dual membership because they could not denounce what was part of their daily life experience. The thought expressed here is also highlighted by different people²⁵⁹ for example, Mgojo states, “By failing to understand African world view, this includes the role of *inyanga* in healing process, the concept of *Modimo/Umvelinqangi* (God) etc., the missionaries created the situation which forced some black members to live between two worlds, i.e., practising Christianity and African traditional ritual.” It is interesting to see that even after the missionaries like Broadbent and others left Thaba-Nchu, people continued to live between the two worlds. What could be the reasons? One may argue that this resulted from the type of training of black ministers. Their training had nothing to do with the African context because they were taught by people who were not familiar with their context - (western theologians). African theology was not taught during those days. Concepts like Africanisation, contextualisation, inculturation, and many others which form the

²⁵⁸ See chapter 2.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Views of Prozesky, Setiloane, Mgojo and Mogoba (see chapter 3).

African world view, were not burning issues at the time. It is now that theologians and the people have started to realise that though they are in Africa, their churches have been westernised. Mogoba shared the same sentiments.²⁶⁰

When asked why they did not leave the MCSA, all the respondents gave different reasons for their dualism. For example, they gave some of the following reasons:

- (i) 56% of the respondents in this category stated that the MCSA is the church of their parents including their ancestors. Therefore, it is difficult to break from it. They also indicated that they were baptised by and married in the same church.²⁶¹
- (ii) 98% stated that testimonials is one of their reasons. For them the testimonials that are written in the MCSA are recognised by the government. This also helps their children to be employed and accepted to new schools. This view is also highlighted by Mndende when he says that many jobs or educational institutions require a testimonial from a Christian minister, which makes it compulsory for one to belong to a Christian church.²⁶²
- (iii) it was interesting to hear from the 50% that pledge (money paid monthly to the church) is one of the important areas. As one of the respondents put it, “though we pay a lot of money, it does help because when one dies, one will get a respectable funeral.”²⁶³ This interested me because this one of the reasons which makes some members to leave the church.²⁶⁴
- (iv) lastly, 56% of the respondents in this category stated that they enjoy the revival services. These are monthly services led by both women and men’s organisations.²⁶⁵ They indicated that their beating of the Bibles and hymns is African. Such services allow full participation and movement.

²⁶⁰ Appendix No.6, Interview No. 8.

²⁶¹ Ibid. See interview No. 1, 4 & 6.

²⁶² Mndende, N., *Living a false paradise: Religious oppression in the New South Africa* (1995), p. 11.

²⁶³ Appendix no.6, interview 1, 4 & 6.

²⁶⁴ This area needs further research.

²⁶⁵ Appendix no.6, interview 1, 4 & 6.

(c) Members who still belong to MCSA (single membership)

The pie chart above shows that 18% of the respondents have single membership, i.e., they are fully committed to their church (MCSA). As compared to the other groups, this group also stated reasons for its stay, for example:

- (i) like the dual membership group, they also stated that the Methodist church has been the church of their parents, including their ancestors and they do not intend to break away.
- (ii) the majority of this group (83%) stated that organisations like BMC, YMG, Women's *Manyano* are uplifting their spirit and their Africanness.²⁶⁶ Most people are also members of the above mentioned organisations. For example, one of the respondents indicated that

What keeps me going is the YMG music. I am telling you, it is African. The small cushions that they beat represent at least for me drums which are indigenous. The way this is played together with horns, *manaka*, and other instruments which make some clock sounds are African. I may say in a way it is healing.²⁶⁷

This view is also supported by Mogoba. Mogoba states that “the beating of Bible and padded cushions during services of worship is the cry for the return of the drum.”²⁶⁸ 17% of this group are not members of the above mentioned organisations but as choir members, they also indicated that music keeps them going to church, even though their music is different from the YMG.

- (iii) all the respondents in this category indicated the importance of Easter services within the MCSA. The following were given as reasons for their answer:
 - (a) that they are able to identify their lives as blacks with the experience that Jesus went through during Good Friday.
 - (b) the other special day is Easter Sunday. Here, they stated that the

²⁶⁶ For more information, see chapter 3: “Black Movements.”

²⁶⁷ Appendix no.6, interview 3.

²⁶⁸ Appendix No. 6, interview no. 8.

resurrection of Jesus affirms that their grandparents are not dead. Their communication with the living-dead is not a sin because Jesus, after he died, communicated with his disciples. This view is supported by Mogoba when he says “ There is strong belief amongst Africans about the future life - life after death. That is why the resurrection of Christ is less a problem to them. The Black Christian... celebrate Good Friday and Easter Sunday without a problem. The White Christians, I mean white Methodists worship in a very apologetic way, as if they feel guilty of being superstitious. If you listen to a preacher in a white congregation on a Easter Sunday, they have problems.... What we do celebrate, we live the crucifixion of Christ in the seven words. Why is it that so? Because it is a religion and culture which is close to that of the people.”²⁶⁹

- (iv) all the respondents indicated that they like the idea of rotating ministers. They said that it is a good idea to have ministers less than five years because he/she would go while he/she is still in good relationship with the community.
- (v) Lastly, a decent funeral services and testimonials are the ones that make them to stay in the MCSA

4.5 Conclusion

It can be concluded that, as mentioned above from the different groups of respondents, 26% left the MCSA due to lack of African spirituality; 56% had dual membership; and 18% remain committed to the MCSA. From the above analysis, it is clear that the MCSA needs to provide a “space” for the Africans where they can feel at home and get involved actively and meaningfully in the act of worship. It is, however, interesting to note that the majority of the respondents (93%) emphasised the importance of continued communication with the living-dead.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

5. EVALUATION

5.1 The Role of African Women in Religion

In African traditional religion, women have played major religious leadership roles, e.g. as healers, counsellors, diviners, rainmakers and mediums. It is no secret that in the African world-view, women have constituted the majority of healers or diviners. In an African context *sangomas* are believed to be vehicles of ancestral spirits. They communicate the wishes of the ancestors. As *sangomas*, they are also traditional healers who receive their call through illness. They are possessed by the ancestral spirits (*Bayathwasa*), and this sets them apart from others when it comes to performing their duties. This means that, in the sphere of charismatic leadership in religion and spirituality both women and men have enjoyed equal status. Despite this, it is a known fact that African women have been discriminated in African culture. African world view was and is still patriarchal in nature and as such regard women as inferior. In African Indigenous Churches (AIC) women play a secondary role (e.g. mediums and in cultic dances) as compared to those who serve as high priest at shrines or as healers. The same is the case in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist where there are more males than females in the leadership positions. This denial of women to perform their spiritual gifts (from a leadership point of view) has contributed to the inadequacy of African spirituality in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church.

Of interest here is the case of those who have dual membership (Methodists by day and AIC by night). Most of these informants stated that they were healed by women healers (*Barapelli*).²⁷⁰ In the light of this, it is a pity that, though women are in majority in the MCSA and have this leading potential, they are being marginalized.

²⁷⁰ Unattributed interview (for reasons of anonymity).

Although women have been accepted in the MCSA for ordination, there are no ordained women in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist Church. It is interesting to note that, there are already women local preachers and the Bible women but ordination of women is still a problem. Some respondents indicated that the church refused them when they offered for ministry.²⁷¹

At this point, it is important to present what some women in the Thaba-Nchu Methodist church considered to be the reasons why they have not been accepted by their local churches and ministers in particular. One of the reasons presented is menstruation. This has been a stumbling block for women to enter the ministry. During menstruation stage, they are considered unclean, including even those who have been ordained. It is also culturally noted that women cannot lead in men's presence "*Mosadi a ka se ke a etella Banna.*" Secondly, pregnancy is another fact that works in women's disfavour when it comes to ordination. It is claimed that it is difficult for women to lead and administer sacrament when they are pregnant. Thirdly, when it comes to funerals, women in our African culture are told that they cannot go to the graveyard, only men are allowed. It has also been pointed out that since the genesis of the MCSA, women have not been on leadership positions as heads of the church. Therefore, those who argue for the defence of the status quo, strongly propagate that women cannot assume leadership positions.²⁷²

I agree with Oduyoye's sentiments that there is a danger of romanticising African traditional values.²⁷³ For instance, though African women's rituals like puberty, childbirth, marriage and widowhood form part of African world-view, they should not be "romanticized". These rituals affect African women's self esteem in their daily life experiences. However, it would be of great interest, especially for the marginalized women, if rituals like widowhood and childbirth could be critically analysed and

²⁷¹ An attributed Interviews for reasons of anonymity.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ For more information refer to Introduction.

scrutinised. It is true, as Oduyoyo indicates, that these rituals are health hazards and heart rendering for women²⁷⁴ simply because when one is mourning, one's work stops until the period of mourning is over. This also applies even if one performs spiritual duties (as a women minister). If one's husband dies, one has to go through a long period of mourning wearing the same type of dress with the same colour without changing dresses. In most African cultures women usually wear black dresses to indicate to the outside world that they are mourning for their husbands. With all the restriction associated with any women who is mourning, this means that, it is not only the person concerned who suffers but also even those whom she helps. This issue of women's rituals needs further research.

5.2 Conclusion

As has been indicated earlier²⁷⁵ the aim of this study was to find out from the ordinary members of the Thaba-Nchu Methodist, why they opted to belong to either of the following groups: single membership, dual membership and breaking away from the church. In the light of the research findings, I discovered that African spirituality is the contributing factor to the above mentioned group. It is stated in this study that, failure by the White missionaries to understand African world-view: the role of African Diviners, Seers, Healers, and the function of Ancestors to the living, resulted in membership of the Thaba-Nchu Methodist being unstable among other reasons, due to the lack of African spirituality.

This study has also revealed the important issues that make members of the Thaba - Nchu Methodist church to belong to either of the three groups (i.e. those of single, dual membership and those who left the church). Those of either single or dual membership stated the other reason to remain in the church, is that they want a respectable funeral. For this reason they continue to pay their monthly pledges

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Refer to Chapter 2.

(money), so that the local ministers and the preachers of this church may conduct a respectable funeral. Another fact noted was concerning the monthly revived services that are lead by both the YMG and Women's Manyano. The vigour and freedom enshrined in these services appear to be other reasons for the respondents to remain in the church. Testimonials for employment and acceptance in new schools issued by the church are also stated as reasons for the above mentioned groups. These reasons are unique and important for the church. These issue might be trivial to observants but to the respondents they are valid reasons for belonging to the MCSA.

This study has also revealed that although the MCSA has developed means of Africanizing the church, this has only been on paper as a "top - down" approach. This was evident when the respondents in Thaba-Nchu suggested that the church should allow the following worship services: African drums in the church, allow them to venerate their ancestors without fear of being ex-communicated and healing.²⁷⁶ These suggestions appear in some papers written by the top leaders of the MCSA but they are known to the Thaba - Nchu ordinary members. In other words, It would have been redundant for them to repeat what was officially communicated to them.

5.3 Recommendations

In light of my findings in this study, I therefore make the following recommendations as a contribution toward the move to slow down the break-away from the Thaba-Nchu Methodist Church and the MCSA in general.

- (i) The MCSA has to take the ministry of women in relation to African spirituality seriously. This is important for the growth of the church.
- (ii) There is a need for workshops in all churches that are part of the MCSA (in all races, Whites, Blacks, Coloureds and Indians) so that people should know and understand more about African spirituality i.e. healing, veneration of ancestors

²⁷⁶ For more information of the suggested issues, see the research findings.

and rites of passage. This will help to a considerable degree to stop other break as a result different world-view.

- (iii) Seminaries and Universities programs have to be revised. Black ministers who are trained from these institutions need to know more about traditional customs so as to limit “cultural” problems when they work with the people. African Traditional Religion has to be considered as one of the subjects to be taught in these institutions.
- (iv) The MCSA should have special Sundays for healing services (praying for water and ash), spontaneous worship services (for spirit type people - clapping of hands and the using of African drums)
- (v) The MCSA should create time to listen to the grassroots level people. This will help the church to grow, not in numbers but holistically. It will also help the church and its members to have a clear understanding of their needs.
- (vi) As most respondents has indicated above that the MCSA need to take seriously the work of the traditional healers and *sangomas* who view healing holistically.
- (vii) Lastly, there is also a need for sermons that are preached by both Methodist preachers and ministers in the Thaba - Nchu Methodist church to be contextual to the African context.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁷ For more information refer to appendix no. 3 - 3.1 and 3.2.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

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No 2. Resolutions for the Methodist Conference

- 2.1 B - Ancestral Veneration (par. 27.6.2)
- 2.2 C - Indigenization of the MCSA.

No 3. Sermons

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No 4. The map of Thaba-Nchu

No 5. Responses to Rev. Dr. M.S. Mogoba's address - "*An authentic Africa Church*"

No 6. Interviewees

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- 1. K. Kganare
- 2. T. Sehularo
- 3. M. Kgati
- 4. D. Monare
- 5. M. Ranthethe
- 6. M. Booysen
- 7. Rev. Dr. M.S. Mogoba

NDI

to a people this people's 'who' and 'how' is to be fully understood.

4. Avoid legalistic application of Christian values and standards as they tend to address only peripheral symptoms and do not reach the depths of the total reality.
5. It is proposed that the following liturgical forms and topical briefs be developed and prepared in order to strengthen the above guidelines and analysis of the contrasts between traditional values in the Church and traditional African values. Further, that these be published for the use of Methodist people.

VALUES to be addressed are:

African family; Home; Children; Land; Material Possessions; Humanity-Ubuntu-Botho; Neighbourliness; Parenthood, etc.

INSTITUTIONS to be addressed are:

Circumcision/Rites of passage to Adulthood; Rites of Birth-Imbeleko-Thariki; Rites of Repentance/Confession and Purification; Mourning Rites; Burial Rites; Ancestral Ceremonies of Thanksgiving; Rites of Response to Divine Call-Ukuthwasa; Courtship, Lobola, Marriage, etc.

28.3.3.3

Liturgy Development

Conference authorises the Standing Committee to experiment with Liturgy and form, so as to bring recommendations to Conference based on experience and implementation.

The Xhosa and Tswana experimental liturgies for Worship and the Sacrament of

Holy Communion are authorised for use. Copies are obtainable from the Department.

The following Liturgies are being prepared:

Liturgy of the Lord's Day.
Thanksgiving for Birth-Pitiki-Imbeleko-Go Ntsha Motsetse.
Blessing and Dedication of a Home.
Healing Service.
Pastoral Care of such as are Facing Terminal Illness, Death, Bereavement.
Disposal of Ashes at Cremation and a Topical Brief on Cremation.
Christian Marriage in Africa.
General Thanksgiving - for use on such occasions as: Thanksgiving Ceremonies for Benefits received or achieved, Graduations, Workplace Promotions and Achievements, Ancestry Ceremonies - Mpha Badimo, Thanksgiving for Healing, Birthday Celebrations, Commemorations, Memorial or Remembrance Ceremonies, etc.

28.3.3.4

Customs and Traditions relating to Death and Bereavement

28.3.3.4.1

Funerals

Conference reaffirms its disapproval of the practice of Sunday funerals;

Discourages unnecessary expenses such as feasting and numerous wreaths;

Recognises that bereavement should never exclude mourners, especially widows, from public worship services;

Awaits the findings of the Standing Committee on the services and costs of funeral undertakers in consultation with the Zikhuliseni Community Programmes.

RESOLUTIONS

Received from Synods

DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

- A. The Synod of the South Western Transvaal District requests Conference to give attention to the subject of how our members may regard other religions whilst remaining true to the Christian Faith and that the results be made widely known in our Church and in particular to our Ministers in training.

B. ANCESTRAL VENERATION (Para 27.6.2) *11/12/13*

The Queenstown District Synod asks Conference to give a response to the Church on questions relative to ancestral veneration.

1. Is there Biblical and Christological basis for ancestral veneration?
2. Is there not a difference between ancestral veneration on the one hand and that of being thankful for those who have left us on the other hand?
3. Is there also not a need to differentiate between those who died in the Lord and those who did not die in the Lord in our devotions?
4. How different is ancestral veneration for the practice of spiritualism, in which an attempted contact is made with the dead as a way of calling them up (eg Samuel and the witch of Endor) which is condemned in Deuteronomy 18, and which the Church has condemned down the years.
5. If there is to be ministry from those who have died in the Lord, should the ministry not be solely that of being in Christ and through Him, as the sole way of devotion to the Father? Hebrews 12 is a Scriptural basis for this kind of ministry.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR THE MINISTRY

- A. The Northern Free State & Lesotho District Synod recommends to Conference that those involved in determining where and when Regional Ordination Services take place consult the Districts where there are Ordinands to determine the location and timing of such Ordination Services.
- B. The Synod of the Natal Coastal District views with great concern the continued reduction of Ministerial Staff in many of our Circuits. This has resulted in Ministers not being appointed and employment being sought by some of our Ministers in para-Church organisations. The Synod requests Conference for the time-being to at least reconsider acceptance of Candidates for our Ministry as well as the transfer into our Connexion of Ministers from other denominations. In considering this resolution the following were some of our concerns:
- (a) Is it morally right to encourage Candidates to offer for the Ministry, being aware that appointments are scarce?
 - (b) Is it economically viable to continue to train prospective Ministers at enormous cost and not station them?
 - (c) Is it ethical to receive Ministers on transfer when our own are without appointments?

CONNEXIONAL OFFICE

A. DAY / WEEKENDS OFF

The Synod of the Northern Transvaal and Botswana District recommends to Conference that:

1. Circuit Stewards ensure that the Ministers in their Circuit take ONE FULL DAY OFF per week;
2. Circuit Stewards ensure that each Minister in their Circuit takes ONE WEEKEND OFF per quarter;
3. This regulation be reverently and forcefully instated in each Circuit.

investigate all relevant factors. The Committee shall make a recommendation to the Presiding Bishop who shall decide whether or not to grant the Leave.

- 4.109 Ministers on Leave of Absence shall attend the Synod of the District in which they reside and answer the Discipline Questions. A Minister on Leave of Absence who resides outside the Connexional shall answer the Discipline Questions in writing to the Presiding Bishop before the 15th May. A Minister on Leave of Absence who fails to answer the Discipline Questions as required is guilty of not having observed our discipline.

ECUMENICAL AFFAIRS

A. CHURCH UNITY COMMISSION

The Synod of the South Western Transvaal District requests that the Church Unity Commission establish as soon as possible lines of communication with the African Indigenous and other non-member Churches.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION

- A. Whilst recommending the work of the SABC in opening its doors to all the people of World faiths, the Synod of the South Western Transvaal District requests Conference to urge that the SABC ensure that the message of various religions is not diluted in this quest for fairness to all faiths.
- B. The Synod of the South Western Transvaal District wishes to express its disappointment that so few Methodist Ministers are given time on TV and radio religious services.
- C. THE KING
From the Natal Coastal District Synod:
1. The Synod expresses its support of the pro-active work undertaken by our Presiding Bishop in releasing logjams in relationships between the King and political structures in this province;
 2. We are grateful for the pastoral and prayer support of the Methodist Church given to the King and we encourage our Bishop and those involved with him to continue the exercise.

GENERAL

- A. The Natal Coastal District Manyano Convention noted:
1. The importance of communication;
 2. The need of information dissemination and therefore requests the Conference to again re-instate the names and addresses of District Presidents and Secretaries in the Minutes of Conference.
- B. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CONFERENCE AND CIRCUITS
The Grahamstown District Synod noting Conference's poor record of communication with Circuits and Ministers, resolves and recommends to Conference that:
1. Any matters of a sensitive nature and/or involving appointments of whatever nature, that are not referred to Conference by Synod resolutions, first be cleared with the relevant Circuit Stewards prior to Conference making a binding decision;
 2. Presiding Bishop/Bishops and Superintendent Ministers not be empowered to act unilaterally and without adequate consultation of the relevant Lay Circuit Officials and/or Circuit Quarterly Meeting.

AD

C. INDIGENISATION OF METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Synod of the Northern Transvaal & Botswana District notes with concern the fact that many of our people regard the indigenisation of the Church as abhorrent and are unaware of what the Leadership

of the Church and the Presiding Bishop are trying to achieve in this regard. It therefore requests Conference to take more effort in educating our people in this regard. It also affirms the process of authenticating African spirituality that is genuinely Christian.

- D.** The Synod of the South Western Transvaal District appoints the Rev Mandla Gamede as Trustee representing the Church on the Christian Development Trust.

Rev Dr. M.S. Mogoba

WHO IS JESUS FOR US?

Revelations 19: 1-6

Matthew 16: 13-20

vs. 13b: **"But who do you say that the Son of Man is?"**

1. THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

"Africa is the fastest growing Christian continent in the world today. Sometime in the 1980's, its members surpassed those of Christians in North America, making it the third most populous Christian continent in the world after Latin America and Europe. It is estimated that Africa will have nearly 325 million Christians by the year 2000. (R J Schreiter, 1991.)

Bolaji Idowu, on the other hand, remarks pointedly that "Africa is shaped like a question mark and carries a question mark in her heart. This is the question within herself and a question about the rest of the world. Questions! Questions! Questions!

In Robert Schreiter's book, Douglas Waruta tells a story of a prominent sign with a bright neon light on the way to Nairobi. The sign read "CHRIST IS THE ANSWER". Some young student theologians were amused at this sign. They said:

"But, what is the question?"

One day, Jesus put his disciples to the test.

2. In Caesarea Philippi

In an isolated place with many things to remind them about different religions with their own deities, Jesus asked the disciples the question:

"Who do people say that I am?"

The disciples were quick to give answers. It is always easy to say what other people are saying - a kind of village gossip or even national gossip.

People say you are Moses or John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. The disciples, however, were less happy when Jesus changed the question:

"BUT, Who do you say that I am?"

The disciples were tongue-tied, in fact - embarrassed. This apparently simple question revealed that the disciples were not sure.

This was, by and large, our experience at this Consultation. We thought we knew the answer. We thought we knew who Jesus was. We, however, discovered that perhaps we may be just repeating, reciting or mimicking the answers of our Mother Church or of Churches of other lands - Geneva, Berlin, Scotland, Canterbury, Westminster, Bristol.

It was at this point that Peter saved the disciples. In a flash of inspiration Peter exclaimed:

"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God".

This was the "Eureka" of Faith.

You remember Archimedes - running out of the bath! OR Revs Boyce and Appleyard who were ploughing in the field and then suddenly, in a flash of inspiration discovered the secret of a Xhosa sentence - the concordial agreement.

Little wonder Jesus was visibly overjoyed with Peter's answer:

"Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona (Son of Jona) For flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter (the Rock), and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

c
and

3. At this Consultation we were more like the other disciples, than Peter. We have asked ourselves and each other many questions. The truth of the matter is that we were hearing Jesus question: "But who do you say that I am?" and we struggled with the answer to this basic question of faith. Only when we are able to answer this question for ourselves does Christ become real for us; become real power in our lives.

Listen to some of our answers:

- ❑ Jesus is the Messiah - a Deliverer from all manner of oppression
- ❑ Jesus is the Prophet - who come from God with a word of warning
- ❑ Jesus is the Priest - who stands between God and us
- Jesus is the Mediator,
- Jesus is the Ancestor
- ❑ Jesus is the Healer - Psycho Therapist or a Sangoma
- ❑ Jesus is a Purifier of Cultures
- ❑ Jesus is the Peacemaker/Reconciler
- ❑ Jesus is the One who cleanses the blood stained, sinful and guilty nation.
- ❑ Jesus is ~~therefore~~ a Nation builder
- ❑ Jesus, Son of God, is the Author, Finisher and Perfectioner of Ubuntu
- ❑ Jesus is the Source and Giver of True Life

4. CATHOLICITY/AUTHENTICITY

In reformulating these tentative questions ^{for} scholars of African theology, the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be chiselled and hit out on two anvils: care should be taken

Catholicity and Authenticity

There are in Christianity certain features, elements which are invariable and are of the 'essence' the very being, or nature, of Christianity.

anvil

The other important ~~tag~~ is AUTHENTICITY || This, now almost classic description was made by the Pope.

In short, What is there in our traditional beliefs and culture that make us better Christians. What is there in our ATR which hinders our faith and gives us a squinted view or understanding of Christ.

5. SO - GOODBYE

So we leave for our homes. We go away with an experience of a liberation which we must bring to our Churches - a freedom to ask questions, and more questions even if we do not yet have the answers.

ASKING questions, like Thomas, is the beginning of a journey of Faith.

* We go away prepared to go and not only talk, but act, and do something.
A new spirit of CREATIVITY

- Liturgical creativity
- Architectural creativity
- We go away determined to return and meet again. Like the Jews meeting at the Passover greeted each other with the words, "Next year, in Jerusalem.

We must also say, "Next year, at Telkom"

Let us go out to enrich the kingdom of God and so be able to sing praises to God, sing with the writer of Revelation,

Hallelujah, For the Lord our God,
The Almighty reigns.

AMEN
BISHOP M S MOGOBA

Prof. Nyembezi

Bantu bakwaMachibise ngizocela ukuba ningilalelisise ngoba engizokwenza namhlanje kuzophonsa inselelo kwaMachibise nakumuzi onsundu wonkana ngoba kusobala ukuthi kukhona lapho siduke khona. Kukhona futhi lapho silahleke khona.

Okokuqala, ngifisa nje ukuthi sibheke ukuthi izikhonkwane zomuzi wethu bekuyini. Engakafiki umlungi bekuyini. Besingabantu abanemindeni eqinile futhi esimeme. Imindeni enabantwana abakhuliseke kahle ngokomthetho futhi elandela umthetho. Besingabantu abahloniphayo emakhaya nasemphakathini. Besingabantu abakwazisayo ukwethembeka. Ake ngilinganise nje kalula, uma ngikhuluma ngokwethembeka. Bekulotsholelwana ezikhathini eziphambili. Kwakungekho muntu, kwakungabhalwa lutho, kwakukhulunywa nje kuphela. Umuntu wayesho agagule imibala yezinkomo ukuthi umbala owukuthi nokuthi. Sekuyincwadi le ibhaliwe, ibhaliwe. Akuzokuthi ngelinye ilanga bese kubuzwa ukuthi kwabhalwaphi? Kwasayinwa kuphi? Ngikhuluma ngesikhathi engakafiki umlungu. Ubuphuma ushiye kungekho nokhiye laba abaninginingi okukhiywa ngabo manje. Uma uphuma ushiye ubuyise isicabha sakho watshela omakhelwane ukuthi ngisahambile usukhiyile. Akunjalo manje. Akusenjalo manje. Kwenzenjani ngizam'u... ngiya ngale engakafiki umlungu. Ngizama ukudweba umfanekiso wethu njengesizwe esinsundu engakafiki umlungu. Umuntu ohluphekile besimsiza. Kuqhamuka lapho phela ukuthi kuze kube nesiko lokusiselana. Ukuthi uma ubona kukhona umuntu ohluphekile ukwazi ukuba umsize. Thathe inkomo uthi hamba uyosenga nabantabakho, hamba uyosenga nabantabakho. Sizwelana, sihawukelana sibambisana nxa umuntu evelelwa ubuhlungu. Ake nibheke nanamuhla uma kuvele isifo. Uma kuvele isifo abantu baphuma bengena emzini lowo la kuhlushekwe khona. Ngeke ukuthole lokho kubelungu. Kubelungu amazibonele. Zibonele wena, zibonele wena. Kodwa kobantu, kobantu, uma umuntu evelelwe ubuhlungu evelelwe usizi. Lolusizi kuaythwaliswana lona. Ubheke emakhaya ngesikhathi sasekwindla nasehlobo, uma sekuhlakulwa. Kuphuma amalima. Ilima ngelokusizana, ukuba abantu bakwazi ukuthi basizane kuleso sikhathi esinjalo.

Namhlanje sekukhona into entsha esingayazi esikhule singayazi thina ukuthi umuntu omdala uthi uma esekhulile abe esethathwa eseyofakwa ekhaya labadala, okuthiwa i-Old Age Home. Besingamazi ukuthi u-Old Age Home ukhona. Besazi thina ukuthi umuntu omdala yisithunzi sasekhaya. Uhlala ekhaya kuze kufike leso sikhathi lapho umdali wakhe esefinyelele ukuba amthathe. Bengakafiki abelungu. Namuhla sekudunyiswe ukuthi umuntu omdala akayofakwa kwi-Old Age Home. Wazi bani e-Old Age Home? Ziyakwazi ukuxoxa izitulo zase Old Age Home? Uyoze a ... Lomuntu okhulise abantwana, othole abantwana wabakhulisa wabenza konke, wazidela, walala engadlile. Uma sekufuneka ukuba abantwana bambheke sekufuneka aye e Old Age Home. Ayengekho ama Old Age Home bengakafiki abelungu. Namhlanje anibheke, kuthiwa kukhona ama Street children. Yini lokho? Yini u street children? Ngoba akukho ngane ebingenamnikazi. Imindeni ibilondoloza izingane. Uma kukhona ... ingani thina sikhule kukhona izihlali emakhaya, umuntu okhula nje ahlale ekhaya engazani nani. Isihlali sasekhaya, kodwa ngoba lomuntu uhluphekile uyaludinga usizo, uyaludinga ukhuselo akhulele lapha ekhaya. Bengakafiki abelungu.

Ngithi ngifuna ukuwugqamisa lomqondo: Bengakafiki abelungu. Kuthe uma ngiyicabanga lento, ibanzi lento bakithi - ngikha nje phezulu ngoba isikhathi asingivumeli. Kwake kwathi esikhathini sika 1955, kambe kwakuwu 1977 noma 1978, bangicela lapha esikoleni sabefundisi eFedSem ukuthi ngizokhuluma. Kwakuyilanga lokuthweswa kweminyezane labo

abaphumelele ezifundweni zabo. Engakusho lapho ngathi, thina sizwe esinsundu okukhulu kakhulu okuphunyikile kithina ubuntu. Kuphume ubuntu, buphunyukile. Ngazama ukuchaza ukuthi ubuntu bubaluleke kangakanani. Uma sithatha leligama lobuntu silisondeza ebhayibhelini elifike nabelungu, lithi ibhayibheli uNkulunkulu wenza umuntu ngothuli lomhlabathi. Uthe uma esemakhile wabe esephefumulela kuye umoya wakhe, umuntu waba ngumphefumulo ophilayo. Ngithanda niyicabangisise lentio ukuthi isho ukuthini. Unkulunkulu wayesephefumulela kuyena, uNkulunkulu wayesefaka ubuyena kulento aseiyibumbile. Yabe syiphenduka lenti seyiba noNkulunkulu kuyona. Uma sikhuluma ngobuntu sikhuluma ngobuNkulunkulu obukumuntu. Nibona kwenzeka zonke lezizinto nje yingoba uNkulunkulu okumuntu ulahlekile. Nakhu-ke lapha indaba ikhona. Kepha-ke engifuna ukunilandisa khona ngoba sesithe ngokubona zonke lezizinto ezenzekayo sabe sesithi ubuKhrestu yinto yabelungu, ubuKhrestu abulahlwe. Abantu abasha abekho lapha emasontweni. Ngoba bathi inkonzongeyabelungu. Osekufuneka sikwazi kusukela namuhla ukuthi uNkulunkulu wazembula kithina sizwe esinsundu bengakafiki abelunu. Bengakafiki abelungu.

Abelungu bafike sesimazi uNkulunkulu - uMvelinqangi. Abelungu bafike sesikwazi ukuthi kukhona ukuphila emva kokufa ngale kwethuna. Ngabe phela bekungenziwa ukuthi nxa umuntu eyongcwatshwa kukhwezwe nezinkozo zommbila. Kuthiwe uyo... Kuthiwe uyosibona kwlamathongo. Uyosibonela kobana uma bengasekho. Abantu babemazi futhi babekwazi ukuthi ukuphila kuyaqhubeka emva kokuba umphefumulo sewuhlukene nomzimba. Babekwazi lokhu, yingakho nasezimpini babethi uma belwa babethi uyadela wena osulapho. Ethu noma ngabe ngiyafa ngiye kobabamkhulu. Angizojula esithubeni. Manje-ke ngifunde izindawo ezimbili ebhayibhelini, ngifunde u Eksodusi 20 ngafunda noMathewu. Ngicela ukuthi uma nifika emakhaya nizifunde lezizindima ezimbili bese nizinqumela nina ukuthi okuyiyona kulezi ... ngoba phela lokhu engikufundile yizona zisekelo zenkolo. Yizo lezizisekelo imithetho eyishumi, nalemithetho emibili uJesu ayiphawula. Zitholele wena-ke ukuthi yikuphi okuphambene nendlela esasiphila ngayo bengakafiki abelungu. Yikuphi okuphambene nendlela esasiphila ngayo bengakafiki abelungu. Thina asizange sithathe udonga lolu silubumbe silwenze isithixo bese silikhonza. Asizange sithathe ukhuni siluqophe silwenze isilwanekazi bese siyalukhonza. Asizange sithenge i... sithathe insimbi siyincibilikise bese siyayikhonza. Konke okukulemithetho eyishumi, ngisho nalokhu okuthi hlonipha usuku lweSabatha, ngani na? Sasingahloniphi usuku lweSabatha lodwa ngoba zonke izinsuku kwakufuneka zihlonishwe. Hhayi usuku lweSabatha lodwa kepha zonke izinsuku. Akukho nokukodwa okuphikisanayo.

Ngizama ukuthi bandla lakwaMachibise , engakusho laphaya kulaba bafundisi, kukhona lapho siduke khona. Abafundisi laba abafika bevela phesheya, bafika nomqondo wokuthi simnyama nezingqondo zethu kazazi lutho. Konke esikwenzayo kumnyama. Base bethi thathani konke lokhu okwenu nikubuyisele eceleni. Baze bathi namagama ethu lawo obaba asiwalahle. Sonke lapha sithwele amagama asindayo esingazi ukuthi asho ukuthini, esaphehlelelwa ngawo. Uke uzibuze ukuthi igama lakho lisho ukuthini. Kungani kwathiwa leli ngelakho, leli olaziyo lesiZulu, okuyilona elisho utho kuwena kwathiwa elesihedeni. Akugcinwanga lapho kwathiwa manje uma uzokhonza kufuneka ugqoke ungavezi umzimba. Bahamaba-ke abantu befuna izijalimane zabo bazithunga-ke lezozinto. Kodwa-ke namhlanje obani abahamba bhushu lapha emgwaqweni? Ngabelungu. Angithi yibona? Sekwenzenjani-ke namhlanje? Lokhu ababekushilo mhla bengakafiki la kithina sekushonephi namhlanje? Engikubongayo nje bandla ukuthi ingathi sesiqalile ukuvuleka amehlo. Lesisizukulwane esincane asisabaqambi abantwana amagama angaziwa. Ngenxa yokuthi

abantu babefuna amagama esilungu kwake kwathi ubaba ewumfundisi eNewcastle kuzobhabhadiswa kwafika abazali bengane . Wabuza-ke ubaba, “igama lalomntwana ngubani?” “u-never-die mfundisi” (lahleka ibandla). “Ngubani?” “u-Neyer die”. Uma ubaba ekhombisa ukumangala bathi, “cha, mfundisi, siyabona ukuthi awu ... Lomntwana ugule kabi, saze sakudela ukuthi usayophinde aphile, kodwa namhlanje uzomthethelela. Ngu Never-die”

Bakithi, bandla elihle lakwaMachibise, nakhu engikucelayo. Lenkolo ithe uma ifika yasidalela izinkinga eziningi. Yasidalela ukuthi sibandlululane. Yasidalela ukuthi uma ngingakhonzi nawe ebandleni leli okulona usuyisitha kangangoba kukhona abanye uma ngabe ungakhonzi nabo abangauni ngisho nokuthandaza nawe. Ake sizibeke zonke lezizinto ukuthi zisho ukuthini kithina njengesizwe. Zisho ukuthini ngoba okwakufanele kwenzeke ukuthi uma befika-ke abefundisi bafike bakhe esabo isisekelo phezu kwalesisekelo. Ukuthi uma ngabe kukhona izinto ezingamathunzi kweyethu inkolo zifune ukuchazwa kakhudlwana zichazelwe phezu kwesisekelo kungathiwa “buyiselani eceleni”. Nakhona la inkinga iba khona.

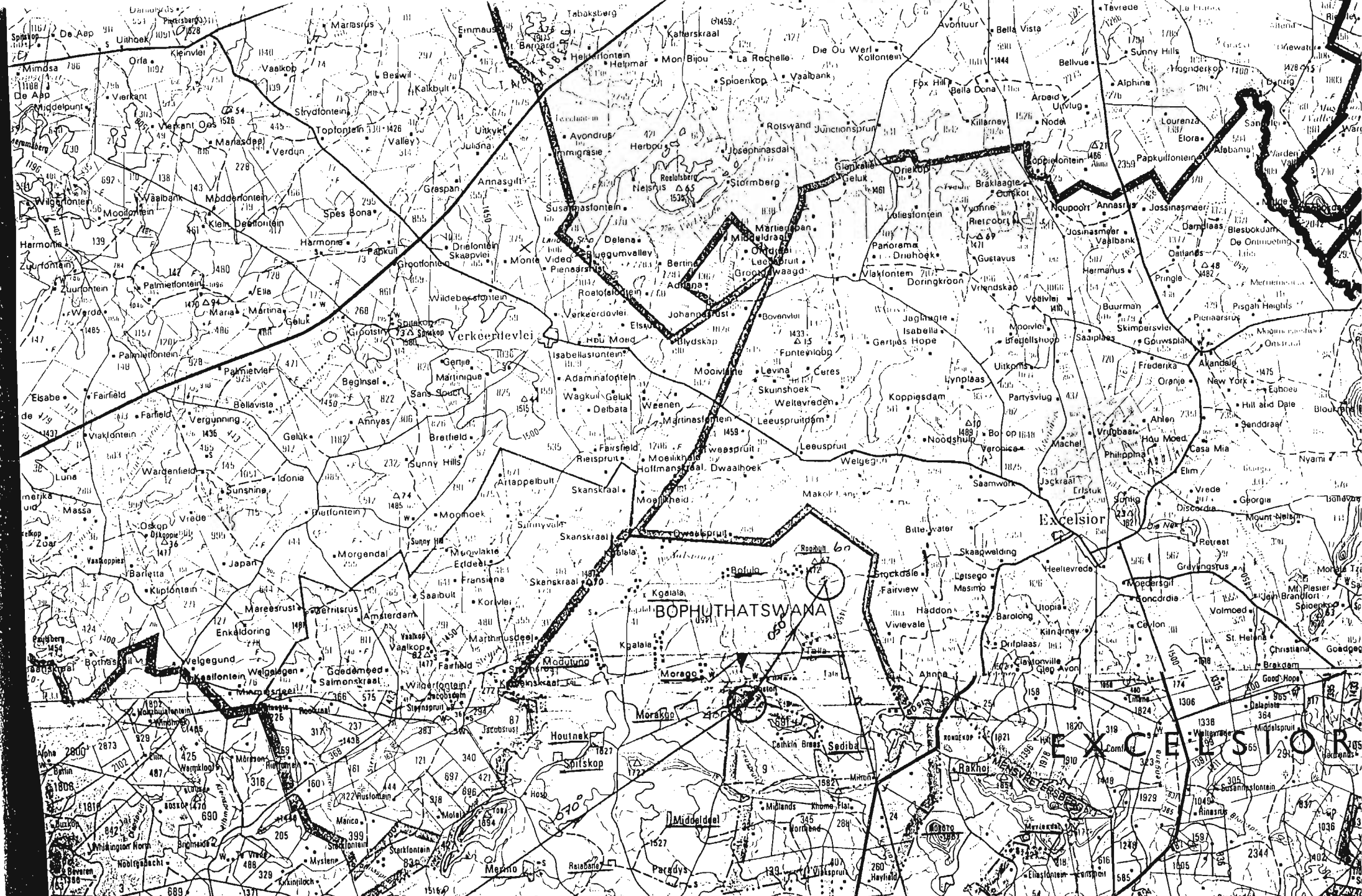
Ake ngithathe enye into enizoyibona masinyane ukuthi ngithini. Bangaki nje lapha endlini abangazifaki iziphandla lezi? Bangaki abangazifaki? Angithi nje bangaki abazifakayo? Zibize ukuthi sisho ukuthini isiphandla. Isiphandla inkinga edalwe ukwenza, ukuthi abantu balandele into abangayizwisisi kahle. Abone umuntu ukuthi uJesu ngiyamethemba ukuthi uzongisiza kodwa ake ngimsize nami. Ake ngimsize nami ngoba ngifake lesisiphandla. Ngake ngaba sekilasini ngifundisa eNewcastle eminyakeni yawo 1939, ikilasi elaliphethwe ngubaba. Ngathi uma ngiphuma esikoleni ngiya ekilasini kunguLwesibili ntambama, kulelikilasi lethu kwakukhona nomnumzane wakwaMhlongo. WayenguFalaza. Wathi ubaba, “Thandaza, Mhlongo”. Nanku umthandazo kaMhlongo, awuzange uphume engqondweni yami. Wathi, “nkosi, nakhu lapho ngikhona ekilasini. Kodwa-ke mina bengingezi ekilasini namhlanje, bengizinyukela ngendlela, wabe esengibona umfundisi wathi “weMhlongo, buya bo! Woza ekilasini”. “Ngibe sengibuya-ke ngeza ekilasini. Ngihamba nje ngithukuthele ngivela enkantolo. Ngivela enkantolo kuthiwa ngishaye abafana. Angazi ukuthi bebengifunani bona”. Qhathanisa owakho umthandazo nokaMhlongo. Umhlongo ukhuluma nomuntu amaziyo, anenkolo engelinganiswe neyamuntu. “Nkosi bengishaya abafana abangidelelile”. Abe esephetha ngokuthi, “Nkosi, Nkosi, nomkami-ke uNokusho obekade ehlathshwe yisikhuni naye usengcono Nkosi”.

Ngizothi bandla elihle lakwaMachibise, kukhona lapho silahleke khona. Kukhona okwethu obekungamagugu ethu okufanele sikufune, kubuye sikubuyise. Uma kungabuya lokho nesithunzi sethu sobuzwe sizobuya ngoba lokhu esikuzwayo kukhulunywa ngakho abanengi bakhuluma ngakho kodwa abazi ukuthi kusho ukuthini. Ukuthi lobubuntu konke lokhu enikubonayo lokhu kudliwa kwezimali ohulumeni kwenzenjani - kwenzenjani. One thing. Ubuntu abukho. Asithandazele lokho-ke. Ngiyabonga ukuthi, eh ..., sengathi laba abaphethe ebandleni lakithi bebengezwa sonke lesisikhathi. Ake ngidlule lapho ekutheni mhla ngikhuluma laphaya eFedSem ngalento yobuntu, bayithatha leyo nkulumo yami base beyoyikhipha ephepheni lebandla okuthiwa yi-Dimension. Yabhalwa yonke lapho. Wangihlasela umfundisi womlungu engitshela ukuthi yonke lento engiyishoyo angazi ukuthi ngikhuluma ukuthini. Kwasha kwacima anginake lomsebenzi wami wokubhala izincwadi wona engiwaziyo ngihlukane nalo wenkolo ngoba abezwanga ukuthi ngithini. Futhi mina ngangakhulumi nomlungu. Ngangikhuluma nabantu bakithi. Ngithi kukhona okuphambukile, kukhona okusilahlekele. Asikufune, sikubuyise ukuze sibuyelwe yisithunzi sethu.

Manje-ke lokho asikwenze khona lapha enkonzweni ngoba akufuneki kube sengathi lezizinto ziyashayisana, azishayisani. Azishayisani lezizinto. Kodwa nje kusuke kwavezwa ngendlela yokuthi kube sengathi ziyashayisana. Sengiyayeka. Le eNingizimu Meleka kwake kwaphuma abafundisi beyoshumayeza abantu bethi bayabaphendula. Kwakungabafundisi basemaRomini. Bafika kulomnumzane bamshumayeza bamshumayeza waphenduka. Base bethi-ke cha sesizokunika igama elisha-ke manje igama lakho elisha kuzoba wuFrancesco. Leli elakho elidala selilahlekile ngoba nathi sawalahla phela amadala. Igama lakho elisha manje sekuwu Francesco. Manje-ke Francesco, nakhu esifuna ukukutshela khona. NgoLwesihlanu, ungayidli inyama ngaphandle kwenhlanzi. NgoLwesihlanu inyama ayidliwa. Bahambe-ke. Ngelinye ilanga babuya-ke abafundisi bezobona phela ukuthi imvu yabo uFrancesco usuhamba kahle yini endleleni yenkosi. Bambuzu, “Hawe Francesco unjani? “Ngiyaphila”. “Kepha manje Francesco ungathi usuyikhohliwe into esakutshela yona. Inyama ungaboyidla ngo ...” Athi, “hhayi, cha, angiphekile inyama befundisi”. Manje yini le?” “Cha, ngipheke inhlanzi”. “Cha befundisi kukanje, njengoba nangishintsha igama nanginika elisha nami ngilibulelel igama lalenyama sekuyinhlanzi”.

Angigcine-ke ngokuthi bandla ayingaphelelli-ke lapha lento, nginxusa bonke abahamba ikwata abakhokheli nabashumayeli abahamba ekwateni ukuthi loludaba alusukunyelwe phezulu. Ibandla lakithi alibhekisise ukuthi akukho yini lapho saphambuka khona njengebandla, sabakhipha endleleni abantu. Bathi abefundisi uma beletha lelivangeli, bafica abantu benezithembu zabo. Kwathiwa uma usuphenduka ongena abandleni akalahle onke amanye amakhosikazi akhe agcine eyodwa kuphela. Manje uzomketha kanjani ozomlahla? Umlahla nje futhi unabantwana. Kwasho ukuthi khona lapho kusuka nje sekukhona okushaya amanzi. Ziningi kabi izinto okufanele zilungiswe ebandleni. Kodwa ngeke zilungiswe uma sithule, ngakho-ke ngithe angize kwaMachibise ngizophonsa lenselelo. Angiqali-ke bandla, angikusho nje ukuthi ngike ngakhuluma nabefundisi abakhulu. Abafundisi bayesaba. Basaba ukuthi uma bekhuluma njengoba ngenza bazonqunywa ebandleni. Kuzothiwa bayahlubuka, kanti akukho ukuhlubuka. Ukulungisa ukuhlubuka? Ngakho kufuneka ukuba kwenziwe konke lokhu engethemba ukuthi uNkulunkulu uzosisiza ukuthi lamagama engiwakhulumile bese ... ngize neselelo njengoba ngishilo nje. Asihambeni bandla sixoxe ngayo lento nxa sifika emakhaya, sixoxe nanezingane zethu intsha. Izingane zethu singathi nje ... asixoxe nabo. Abantwana bayafuna ukwazi ukuthi yini kwenzenjani? Why? Bano why? Omkhulu kabi. Aismphendule lo why? Ngokuba sibatshele ukuthi wozani esontweni. Isonto akulona elabelungu. Isonto elethu. Unkulunkulu akabusise lokhu kuze kube phakade. Amen.

100.4



BOPHUTHATSWANA

EXCELSIOR

Nos: Response to Rev Dr M.S. Mogoeba
Address - "AN AUTHENTIC AFRICAN
CHURCH"

Ignored debate closed millions of hearts

From: Rev David Schooling
In response to the article, "Call for dialogue with African religion" (*Dimension*, October 1994), what we need in our Church is to make the gospel meaningful in Africa.

Christ becomes incarnate in the culture and traditions of the people where the gospel is preached.

An example of this is the experience of the woman at the well where Jesus used everything about her to bring her to salvation: the traditions of her people, her physical needs, her daily chores and the sin in her life.

Our Church needs to make the gospel relevant in a culture where the living and the dead are seen to be one, where there is such an importance placed on community and where symbolism is so important.

Furthermore, our Church needs to examine the practices and traditions of Africa so as to determine that which is good and that which is sinful or evil. For instance, witchcraft, which is very much part of African religion, needs to be identified so that Christians are protected from involvement in it.

I believe that this debate is long overdue. The Church has for too long ignored the hearts of people and so has closed the door of the gospel to millions.

May our Church take this matter seriously so that Africa can believe and be saved.

- Howick

Restore message of the revivalists

From: SS Sebitloane
Dr Mogoba is reported as having called for a dialogue between African religion and western Christianity "in which the best and most helpful aspects from the respective systems can be blended."

I agree with him when he says that "the use of marimbas and other African musical instruments should be added to the organ and the piano to improve the quality of our worship".

However, I do not find any biblical justification for mixing Christianity with any religion of the world.

South Africans, regardless of colour or culture, have a right to choose the ancestor religion. But the poor

ones must remember that the animal of sacrifice is not cheap. The ancestors do not have the power to bless or save, because they were sinners just like us. Some were atheists who said God does not exist.

My prayer is that Methodism may go back to the messages of the great revivalists who started the movement.

- Bloemfontein

APPENDIX NUMBER 6

Interview No. 1

The Interviewer: M. Sibeko (MS)
The Interviewee: Mrs M Sefothelo (M)
Date: 18 December 1995
Place: Thaba-Nchu - Motlatla
Time: 13h00 - 14h00
Language: Setswana

MS: *Dumela Mme Sefothelo. Ke boitumelo hoba le wena kajeno.* You remember that you were not sure that you will be here today or not? Thanks for sending the message of your today's availability.

M: Thank you for coming, since you left no other minister came in this house. I am very happy to see you. What can I do for you *Moruti*?

MS: This is a continuation of what we discussed earlier, when I made this appointment. So can you tell me Mme, when did you leave the church? And how did you manage to practice the African traditional rituals and on the other hand Christianity?

M: I left in 1991 after you have left. I did manage because there were things that my church could not do in terms of African spirituality. So I did handle both because I wanted to be healed and further it does not mean that in performing African traditional rituals I have denounced God. God was worshipped and the elder people knew *Modimo* (God) long time before Whites came to this country. But you must know *Moruti* that *Modimo o thusa ba ithusang* (God help those who help themselves) for instance, I have been sick for long time. I had a dream of which my grandmother who died long time ago coming to me telling me what to do and I will be healed. She showed lot of things and even the colour of a dress to wear and cords to ties round the waist and across the shoulder. And showed me a diviner (women)

who will help me. So I have done all those things because I wanted to be healed. When I met that diviner, she told me I have to stay there with her for three months to go through different things. After that I was healed, I am now a diviner myself but which still belong to the Methodist church.

MS: What did you do there for three months?

M: I can't tell you *Moruti*. It is a secret. The only thing I did and which I can tell you was to call all my relatives after that to do a thanksgiving ceremony to both *Modimo* and *Badimo* (ancestors).

MS: Can one say you worship ancestors (*Badimo*)?

M: I do not worship them, I honour them. There is this commandment in the Bible which says honour your mother and father that is simply what I am doing.

MS: How are other church members react to you as a diviner? Are they still accept you? What about your minister, after being away from the church for three months?

M: I would say most of them, those close to me are now far from me, they have withdrawn. They don't want to associate with me. Maybe because of my attire. And, I can now tell a person about his/her diseases even about his/her family problems. Briefly I would say they seem to be scared of being with me. About the minister, You know *Moruti* that the church law says that - Aif one cannot receive Holy communion within three months one has already excommunicated oneself. Further, the same law applies to us who are members of Women's *manyano*. So I had to explain to my minister about my illness. He told me I have to attend the church for another three months before I can receive the sacrament and that *tekete yaka ya dikabelo e maroa e lokelwa ho duwelwa..*

MS: What is it that keeps you in the Methodist Church why don't you just belong to other indigenous churches?

M: First, I love my children very much. I love my church uniform together with the laws that goes with it. The baptism certificates are accepted by the government. Even the marriage certificate is not a problem. My children do get testimonials when they look for the job or new schools. Above all, the *Madodana's* way of singing is not far from the way we sing in indigenous churches

MS: What can you suggest the church to do to stop this "concubinage" of members - practice African traditional customs while there are still Christians? If you could be given an opportunity to draw an order of service in the MCSA how would you go about?

M: My experience of being a diviner has isolated me from my sisters and brothers in the Methodist church. I will suggest that the church should put aside one Sunday morning, afternoon or evening for us (Diviners) to pray for the sick, by so doing members will accept us and will recognise our gifts. So the church should focus on healing. As you know healing in our culture does not mean physical but it incorporates the whole person. And this includes the family that one comes from.

If I could be given a chance, I can include the following:

- Time for an open public confession
- To pray all of us at the same time
- To sing choruses
- Taking weapons - sticks for those who are spiritually called to do so
- Dancing in a circle around the person with the weapon
- To give testimonials after the sermon
- Time to offer money for ancestors
- Two readings from both testament followed by YMG songs and drums.
- Praying for the sick -- this to be done by laying on of hand, touches, rubs and press the whole body especially where it is painful - then to give proper Holy water which has been prayed for by a minister
- Then benediction

MS: Are you saying the above can stop people to attend indigenous churches?

M: Yes *Moruti*, but *kereke ya rona ka ya molao. E ka se dirahale taba e.*

MS: Do you still want to go back to church and why?

M: If they can accept me as I am I will be very much willing. Above all the MCSA is the church of my grand parents. Both my husband and I were baptised in that church. We also got our marriage certificates in it. I will go when I am properly healed. Further more the church helped because it gives our children testimonials for other schools or when they look for the jobs. I also enjoy and like the way YMG and *Manyano* sings and handle their monthly revival services.

MS: Thank you mama, I will see you when I visit Thaba-Nchu again.

Interview No. 2

The Interviewer: M. Sibeko (MS)
The Interviewee: Mrs K. Kganare (KK)
Date: 29 December 1995
Place: Thaba-Nchu - Ratlou
Time: 15h00 - 17h00
Language: Setswana

MS: Greetings. Thank you for allowing me to have this time with you. When did you leave the church and why?

KK: It was in 1989. But the main reason for leaving the church was that I felt sick and the church could not help me. My family took me to different places for help. I even went to Ciskei but still there was no change. So, one day I attended the universal church just to see what was happening there. Only to find that it is a church then I joined them.

MS: Have you recovered now?

KK: I have not recovered but it is not like before because I haven't used asma spray since I began to attend this church. Before I had lot of problems, you know that too. I had problems which were so difficult to solve. I couldn't speak about them to anybody. The only solution I can think of was to commit suicide. I did not know what to do with those problems. The problems are still there but they are not heavy like before. What I got from Universal Church I could get from the Methodist Church. Not only Methodists even from the Secret Church (Sephiri) I could find any help. Now I still have problems but I could carry them. They are not heavy as before. You know I used to be short tempered. Life was a misery for me, I was always crying and always hurt. I know how to forget my problems and forgive. I now told myself that I must look back I must forgive and forget. I am no more a moody person who is always angry. I know that God is my saviour. I don't mean in the Methodist

Church, they have destroyed me or they've chased me out , they've done nothing bad to me.

MS: How is the worship service in this church?

KK: The Universal Church is having the same system or order. The service starts. The pastor will pray for all the problems. He will call Jesus Christ as usual and from there each one of us will pray from him/herself. But there are times where different things are prayed for on different days. For an example on Monday, we'll be praying for financial matters and people who are not working. The work that I am doing now, I got it through the universal church. I was not employed for six months and I joined the universal church on a Saturday and I prayed on Monday I got the job. They pray for the sick and they use things like oil, water and you get all these things from them. For people who are looking for employment they bring their Identity. Documents so that the pastors could pray for them. All these things are brought forward and we al pray. Thursdays are for families.

MS: Do you take every member with you?

KK: No, you can take member or their photos and they will pray for them. They even pray for salt and when you get home you sprinkle it all over the yard/home then everything will go smooth at home.

MS: What do they say about the salt or what is their understanding of the salt when reading from the Bible?

KK: We understand salt as being a medicine, but this doesn't mean I cannot consult a doctor when I am sick.

MS: Let me hear from you, how did they heal you?

KK: It is up to you. If you want them to touch you, they can. Actually this whole thing

depend on your faith. Sometimes there are people who believe in preaching and praying like me. For instance, I felt sick last week but if I can go for assistance I know that I will be cured.

MS: *Mma* can you tell me the origin of this church?

KK: From Gauteng and Germany.

MS: What advice can you give to the Methodist ministers concerning healing. What can they do to heal the sick people in the church?

KK: We are treated equally and our secrets are kept safe. In the Methodist Church you become scared when you want to tell your minister about your secrets/problems because you feel that everybody will know your secrets. In the Methodist church there is special treatment for others. Unlike in the Universal church that is the reason why we leave the Methodist church. This destroys the church.

MS: Do you pay the pledge or offerings in your church?

KK: Yes, We pay tithes. Now I understand that when I earn R300 I should give R30 like in Malachi 3. We even offer Sunday collection like the Methodist church. We understand the paying of the tithes very well. We don't follow the Bible, like this day is just like that. I wish this system of the Universal church could be practised in the Methodist. You feel the holy spirit in you and from there you feel free and forgiven. You forget the past. I now know how to forgive a person. I hated young boys who pointed a gun at me. No I've forgiven them. I hated Mr Dioka.

MS: What do they say about the ancestors?

KK: Those are old things. We don't believe in those things. We are not believing in them like old people do.

MS: Are they not in the Bible?

KK: Our life is different. Now we conduct funerals differently. It is better not to follow our rituals because they are meaningless. There is jealousy in the family or relatives. In Psalms 25 they have their own way of doing things. We do things and we follow the Bible e.g. Lord's prayer -- we follow it.

MS: We wanted to know the reason you left the Methodist church, is it money or what?

KK: I enjoy being in the Universal Church because there are no gossips. Their sing the Methodist songs differently. I have recovered from asthma, that is the reason why I like it.

MS: Kea leboha - Mme.

Interview No. 3

The Interviewer: Malika Sibeko (MS)

The Interviewee : Thabo Sehularo (ST)

Date : 02 August 1995

Place : Sediba

Time : 14.00 - 15.00

Language : Sesotho and English

MS: This is a follow-up of what we talked about earlier in relation to the inadequacy of the African Spirituality in the MCSA. Tell me, despite the lack of this factor, what makes you to stay in the MCSA?

ST: To start with what keeps me going is music especially the YMG. I am telling you it is African. The small cushions that they beat represent at least for me drums which are indigenous. The way these are played together with horns and other instruments that make some clock sound. I must say in a way it is healing. In most cases when a preacher has not touched his audiences inner being you will often hear remarks like *a re tetebetsa* but if the opposite has been done you will hear remarks like *a re tlhapholla* or *re fa hloho*. Therefore for me this is what keeps me within the Methodist Church, furthermore once in a year there is a service called A where we remember all our families who have joined the church triumphant, at least one is able to say *A Ke hopola re mogolo, mma* etc. And this makes me feel good although it is done Christian way. I need also to say it is healing to some extent. Above all the MCSA is the church of my parents, I was baptised there and marriage certificate there. So I am not willing to go. Instead I'm willing to see to it that others who have left come back home. Furthermore, I like the way our church hold Easter services. They are African. For example, the journey that Jesus took to Calvary is not different from the daily life experiences of a Black person in South Africa. The suffering and pain that He experience gives us hope that our sufferings are not bad. The resurrection Sunday reminds us that of communication with the living - dead. So I will remain a Methodist forever,

Furthermore, you may be well aware of the damage that has been caused by the advent of missionaries in Africa particularly in South Africa. We are today experiencing inadequacy of African Spirituality as a result of missionaries. For instance, when a child is born in a home that child is a gift from *Badimo* (ancestors) and therefore s/he must be connected, with them and the only way to do that, is to slaughter and ho *morwesa sefaha/ kgwetsa*. This *sefaha* or *kgwetsa* is not just there, but it also give that particular child an identity and connect him/her with *Badimo*. This practice is no longer done for our own people held up to the missionary view that their own things are pagan. Again this practice today is now substituted by baptism which is western. I must point out that the danger if not taking our culture seriously is causing our children problems as they grow up. The church if it is the church, let it be born in Africa then we will be able to accept it maybe differently. The second thing is the mourning rites. When a person is dead that person takes another form, he no longer belongs to us but to the other world, and s/he is dead alive. The problem is that we no longer respect the dead person because we feel it is a waste of time. Yes, we do slaughter but unfortunately our dead people are now the source of business. There is also a saying that goes *Lefu la hae leya mphedisa* The church has make us white people who do not mourn as we does. I do not suggest that there is a standard way of mourning, instead I am saying that because of the church (bible) we have lost track. The missionaries were not aware that our relation with those who have departed in this planet earth, is very important. Now the fact that we no longer have respect for our departed, that make us not to have good relation with them and therefore jeopardise our African Spirituality. The church says we must focus on Jesus and he will make all things fine for us and this is spirituality and romantising our mourning rites. Jesus has nothing to do anyway with our mourning rites and I want to argue that He was born in Africa,. I am convince the He wouldn't have said a thing about our rites. For instance, he said nothing about the Jewish rites of mourning, and s/he was circumcised and so what? The church must therefore stop to underestimate our rites.

MS: What is your understanding of a divine call in African world-view?

ST: You have touched on holy ground when you speak about a response to divine call. I like your careful choice of words A divine call A. This has been regarded as being the highest degree if be the church (missionaries). People who were called to this office were not just people but they were those whose lives were right with *Mong* or *Modimo (Tlutlamatjholo)* and other people. This call would come through dreams and vision as well as some sicknesses, specially on the knee, ankles, hand joints etc. the particular person who is being called will be shown in a dream where they need to go to find help. Unfortunately the church excommunicated these purpose on the grounds that they are practising what God does not like. And the church never had a dialogue with such people. It is only now that some churches were trying to dialogue with these people. This should have been long done although it is never too late to mend but the perception is that this is unacceptable within the mainline churches. This is also why there is such a great exodus to the African Indigenous Churches and they are growing tremendously. In order words, in order to be a Jew not African and this is tantamount is to say a Jew must eat a pork. Furthermore the church has underestimated the African Spirituality not taking into consideration the fact that African Spirituality is too unique. To take this point further I must indicate that African religion and culture are inextricably intervened, there is no dichotomy. The call to divine office is part of the African Spirituality, which the church need to view seriously, for it is for an African person.

MS: What about ancestral veneration and ceremonies? Can you venerate your ancestors fully and openly, as a member of MCSA?

ST: Not in my knowledge *Mma*. When one does such a ceremony one does not specify what is all about, only the close family knows. The dead are living, that is why we call them the living dead. It is because we believe death is not the end of life but the beginning of new life. We therefore get in touch with our ancestors through dreams and vision. That is why you will always hear people say *Ke bone/lorile ntate bosiu* or whoever in the family who has departed from this world. We communicate with them by slaughtering a goat or a sheep, a cow, even a chicken. What is important is blood and bile (gal). I must warn you that our ancestor are not equal to God and

they are no gods either as they are perceived. The church used to excommunicate people. Our people if found to be slaughtering for ancestors it was not accepted - regarded a pagan. Therefore the church did not take us seriously. Anyway, it was a missionary perception that we were atheist we had no religion and an Ultimate Being. We always believed that there is an Ultimate Being in Tswana we call *Him Mong* or *Modiri*. The Ultimate being was addressed through ancestors, the church was not aware of this. It is only today that the church is saying What is happening here. Lastly it was our ancestors who accepted the Christian faith and also witnessed so how can we forget such important people in our lives.

MS: Is there nay important area that we left, that is part of African Spirituality?

ST: It is healing ministry that is holistically. The missionaries had their own methods and ways of healing. However, we need to commend them for building missionary hospital and clinics. These only worked with western medicine and were only concerned with healing the itching part of the body. In Africa water, herbs, roots, tree barks, grass, etc. are important as far as healing is concerned. The reason is that Africa nature is sacred for instance, some trees are sacred, e.g. rivers, oceans, seas, grass, etc. Because of their sacredness they are saint to be having divine powers to heal any sickness. Also what we need to recognise is the fact that in Africa when a person, say in a family is sick, it is not only s/he who is sick but the entire family is sick. Hence the entire family need to be healed. The problem is that these roots, herbs, water etc. I spoke of above are not acceptable by the church and yet they make us humans and well being as Africans. There is one minister of this church but his late now (Rev Ramantsi) he was stationed in Welkom in the Free State. His church was always packed and people left in numbers from their churches even from local Methodist churches to his. The reason was only one, he started healing ministry which was a convocation that the Supreme Being gave him. He therefore had problems with other Methodist ministers. This is what he did, he laid hands on the sick, prayed for water, gave people the water and what we call Sewasho (mixture of salt, ash and water) and people get healed. He also prayed for the roots, herbs etc. that people brought to him. In him people saw a real African

minister. People did not have to go to AIC at night or to so called *kereke ea siphiri* because they had what was African within them.

I have already pointed out that what Rev. Ramantsi was doing was very much unacceptable to his Methodist colleagues, despite that he carried on and people got healed. Anyway he was the only one and he has since joined the church triumphant. Ho *qhoqha* (an altar where call-people come in front and prayed for) has been some way of healing in the Methodist church but it was spiritual only it did not touch so much the unique African soul. As a church we need to recognise A *Dingaka tsa methokgo* and not despise them for their duty is to heal using the African natural resources. This will also minimise the exodus to AIC for interest sake you ask some of the AIC's Bishop as where they come from they will tell A I once was a Methodist preacher so what happened? A I left because there is no healing in that church. This is very important, you see you can do all your tricks but if you do not heal the African soul it will not rest until it finds rest and authenticity.

MS: *Ke ya leboha Ntate ho utlwa maikutlo a hao.*

ST: *Ke nna ya lebohileng haele mona o mphile sebaka sa hontsha se eleng kgale se nkokoroisa maikutlo maelana le ka moo dikereke di tsamaiswang ka teng. Ke leboha ho menahana, I even feel healed.*

Interview No. 4

The Interviewer: Malika Sibeko (MS)
The Interviewee: Mrs. M Kgati (MK)
Date: 17 July 1995
Place: Selosesha
Time: 13h00 - 14h00
Language: Sesotho and Setswana

MS: Greetings, I hinted to you when we met at Motlatla village about my research. You indicated that you had left the Methodist Church for spiritual reasons. Seeing that I am here as per our appointment, could you please explain to me how it came about that you leave the church.

MK: I was in a Methodist Class when I became restless. The leader noticed. He asked about it but I could not explain since he would not have understand. Even in Church after the Reverend's preaching, he used to ask people with problems to come affront for prayer; I would go even if I had no problem - I was driven by something within, It is advisable for ministers to attend spirit - services so they can understand who exactly the spirit - people are.

I remember well, it was as we were awaiting this child (pointed at the child). I had been to several doctors all of whom told me I wasn't pregnant. Then I was *shown* (in a vision) a certain prayer - women. When I came to her, she gave me water that had been prayed for, and she prayed for me. Then she told me I was pregnant. Since then I kept going to her until I gave birth to this child whom we named Thapelo (prayer). This is how the spirit works.

When these things gets in to you, you never know what to do.

MS: How do you notice it, what happen?

MK: Your head will be heavy, and revolving. If I may tell you, I stayed that way, afraid of leaving the church.

MS: What were you afraid of?

MK: I told you I don't want to go to the Apostolic church. But the way the spirit worked, I had to go to the society Steward (of the Methodist Church) and tell him I was not well and had to go for my healing.

MS: Why did you not go to your Reverend?

MK: I did not believe that he would understand. Somehow I also believed that I would return to the Methodist church, seeing I used to love it.

MS: What things Why did you not go to your Reverend

MK: I did not believe that he would understand. Somehow I also believed that I would return to the Methodist church, seeing I used to love it.

MS: What things are lacking in our church to an extent that people have to go looking for healing? How many we attain those things?

MK: It is tough dear, because for example when a person falls during a church service due to the spirit, instead of the congregation intensifying the singing, they take the person outside, others even laugh at such a person. The sad thing is that one cannot control oneself when in that state. The church can't reach us efficiently in spiritual matters.

It is like a service for ancestors. People are not free to explain what kind of function they are having at home, because the church does not welcome such. As I said that when this things takes hold of you, you lose your mind and only have to follow some animal sacrifice. Just imagine what people would say if one were to come to

church wearing necessary attire and carrying the staff (Iere). If the church could allow us to dress as instructed by ancestors, I tell you, you would experience a miracle, all who left the church would come back home. Again if the Sunday order of service could include:

(i) white candles to show divine glory

(ii) Methodists have at month end a "Y" (where people are allowed to preach especially those belonging to organisations such as the women's prayer league to lead the service). If people could be allowed to worship God by all means and with anything - even those of us who left would come back. The scripture speaks of the sound of trumpets, this would be appreciated by all, especially those with spiritual gifts.

(iii) Another possibly profitable change could be, I think, if water could be prayed for. People be told to come with their containers that Sunday.

General questions after the interview:

MS: thanks, Mrs Kgati. But before we part, are there other people you know who left the church for reasons related to what we discussed?

MK: There is a quite a number. Some who come with us to Apostolic church, I can't name since hold leadership positions in the Methodist Church.

MS: what do some of them say the problems are?

MK: some say they do not feel spiritually catered for in the church. If they are sick and possessed by the spirit, the church can't minister to them. Also, those who no longer come to church are shown no love at all - no visits.

Interview no. 5

The interviewer: M Sibeko (MS)
The interviewee: Mrs D Monare (DM)
Place: Thaba-Nchu - Sediba
Date: 19 July 1995
Time: 14h00 - 15h00
Language: Setswana and Sesotho

MS: *Dumela Mme MaMonare, Le phetse jwang tsatsing lena la kajeno?*

DM: *Dumela hle Moruti, Re phetse re thabetse ho utlwa lona.*

MS: Mme MaMonare, I am very glad to see you after a long time. *Ha e sale ke o qetela selemong sela, ke hore 1991* when I visited this area during December vacation.

DM: *Oa hle Moruti, lenna ke itumetse ho o bona, le ha o ntse o tla re hlwela.*

MS: As we talked the other day when I was arranging this appointment, you raised question in reaction to inadequacy of African spirituality within the MCSA. Knowing you that you are a staunch member of the church, being in leadership position and a member of women's organisation - what made you to stay in this church regardless of its inadequacy to spiritual matters?

DM: *Oa bona Moruti*, This thing *ya moya*(spirit) started me in my early age at school. I used to be brilliant. But the problem was when I have to write exams. I just become sick in such a way that I was unable to write exams, I used to repeat classes in order to pass. I remember one day I was doing standard six, I came back home from school weeping. I told my mother that the Principal said I did not do well in my examinations. I was also sad because I suspected that I have been bewitched by someone or my enemies. My father was a vice president of the men's organisation and he was against traditional rituals, because he used to say his parents were

Christians. My mother tried hard to convince him that they should try *Boreatsebe* traditional healers), hoping they might help. It is were they were told that as they did not perform the birth ritual for me, our ancestors are angry with them. *Ka ha le bebele e e ke tla ota bana ka lebaka la bokgopo ba batswadi ba bona*. So they have to perform the ritual and I was healed.

MS: How was the ritual performed?

DM: They brew *jwala* (beer), they bought a sheep for sacrifice which was slaughtered. The food was cooked overnight and we were not suppose to eat them before sunset. My family was told to go to a sacred place for our tribe early in the morning. We all face east. My parents and I thank the ancestors about everything and asked them to protect me from illness. We all pray at the same time, because thanksgiving goes hand in hand with prayer. From the sacred place, we went back and the rest of the community invited enjoy the feast with us. After that my school problems stopped. But the spirit is still controlling me, directing and telling what to do.

MS: Do you invite your minister?

DM: I don't. But some Christians do invite the minister saying AI will have such a ceremony for the late mother of this house or for my child who died even though they will announce, that the ceremony will start on such and such a time, they will do their family thing separate before others and the minister comes. My experience has been that of seeing some members of my church to attend ancestral veneration.

MS: What can you do to make people free? What can make you free in the Methodist church.?

DM: If we can be allowed to beat the drums, clap the hands, and lay hands to the sick one Sunday, people will be happy and the church can be packed. The holy spirit will work and we can pray for people who need prayers.

MS: Can you heal the sick and how?

DM: We are laying hands and we can see any problem.

MS: Now, by doing that do you think things will be good in the Methodist church.

DM: Yes, people won't leave the Methodist church.

MS: Can you heal the people in the Methodist church and how?

DM: It is difficult to do that because we are not allowed and we can't pray for ash or water that heal people. If we were allowed we would heal the people and we would beat the drums but we can't.

MS: What can we do according to you to help our church, so that our people can feel free?

DM: It's when we change our system of worship. On Sunday should be for praying for water and ash and the clapping of hands and one Sunday a normal Methodist service.

MS: When you accept or welcome a member, what do you do in the MCSA as a leader.

DM: In the Methodist you need to attend the confirmation class where you read and understand the catechism then when you have answered all the questions you're become a full member but if you cannot read you won't be a full member. In Zion we don't do that, you're just welcomed. Another problem in the Methodist church is that when a child cries, people don't care, so for me I will know that that child have inhaled some medicine from other people in the church but I cannot help the child because I am not free. Our church can give the child some water, *peita ngwana* the child and he/she'll be better. For older people we do give them water, bath and ash then they'll be cured from any sickness.

MS: How can we introduce this in our Methodist church?

DM: The minister should take this matter to the synod and tell them that we should alternate. One Sunday for Zion and other Sunday for normal Methodist service..

MS: Until when will you be in both churches?

DM: I had a vision when I was at home and they took me to the healer and I was given a bath from there. I knew everything that is happening and that will happen. I was shown coffins of people who died long ago and I was brought at home. I was dressed in a cloth which was shown and they slaughtered a sheep I was shown. Four colours, green, red, yellow and white. White, red, and cream means that you're to be trained as *isangoma*. Yellow and red means the heaviness of your spirit and green means freedom.

MS: Until when will you be in both churches?

DM: Until I am healed totally and holistically. For instance, I had a vision when I was at home and they took me to the healer and I was given a bath from there. It was as if I knew everything that was happening and going to happen. I was shown coffins of people who died long time ago, then I was brought home dressed in a cloth, and they slaughter a sheep. I was also shown four colours: green, red, yellow and white. White, red and green means that you are to be trained as *isangoma*. Yellow and red means the heaviness of your spirit and freedom. Because of this vision I will still belong to both churches, until my ancestors reveal to me what to do. Further more the Methodist is the church of my parents, I was baptised, married in that church. It will be difficult for me to leave my children without a church. As it is easy for them to get testimonials *jwalo jwalo*. But if I am sick I will always go to Apostolic and the return to Methodist again.

MS: What keeps you from not breaking away from this church if it does not satisfied your spiritual needs?

DM: As I said earlier on *Moruti*, this is the church of my ancestors. My parents were committed to this church and they were great members. Except that, I think I still believe that all the fortunes I have in my life is because I still belong to this church. Even though we pay a lot of money, in return, at least one get a descent and respectful burial service. Briefly *Moruti*, I am not going anywhere. I like the revival services done by the YMG and *Manyano*. The beating of cushions and bibles reminds me of the African Indigenous Churches (AIC), the only thing missing is the beating of drums.

MS: Thank you mama, I wished to hear exactly that which you know and I hope it will help many who will implement the problems we discussed today. *Sala hantle mme, re se re tla kopana hape ka Desembere.*

Interview No. 6

Interviewer: M. Sibeko (MS)
Interviewee: Mr. Moeti Ranthethe (MR)
Place: Rooifontein
Language: Sesotho
Church: Apostolic (Zionist) Church
Time: 2hours

MS: Greetings, Mr Ranthebe, I am very glad to be in your home once again, especially seeing that you are still well. I last saw you in 1991 when I was preparing to leave for school (university).

MR: *Ke ya leboha Moruti.*

MS: I came to you the other time to arrange an appointment since we have worked together in the past. You were a leader and a preacher (evangelist) in the Methodist Church. I am surprised to hear that you are no longer in the church. Nevertheless I came knowing you to be *motho wa dintho tsa hao* as we used to discuss. I even remember that blue gown you asked us to bless before you could wear it. Could you then please explain to me those things you used to do or still do, traditional and spiritual, to which the church was or is opposed.

MR: It all began with the arrival of Rev. Bubu. He told me that I belong to too many churches. That I am all over. The main discord being because I used to wear my Apostolic Church robe (*Seaparo*). I told him that I was born into *ntho ya moya* and thus had to obey what I was instructed concerning my dress. My whole family has always been church people, belonging to *Fora*. But the majority of us, especially from my mother's side, were "spiritual" people (*ba se moya*). But now it is sheer luck that I am inclined to the Apostolic Church because I am actually a diviner (*motho wa difaha*).

In the Methodist Church - ill intended- I have always been welcomed by the superintendent, yourself and your successors; they all knew and loved me. The difficulty arose when as a spirit-led person I would see visions and feel the urge to preach. I could not because our church is too procedural - one has to wait for the day allocated to him/her according to the preacher's program.

Whilst in the Apostolic Church, having been a "*Mokhethwa*" (chosen one) since I joined three years ago, I allow the spirit to work as I feel. After their services, I see a beautiful land, people - things I am seeing for the first time. Sometimes I see lands unknown to me even as I am seated down. In the Methodist Church I was a preacher for fifty years and had no problems. It is only with Rev. Bubu that I have differences. He is the one who excommunicated me. I received a note informing me that I have been erased from the church books.

MS: Do you still have the letter? Did you question the Reverend about it?

MR: No, I disposed of it. In any case I was consoled by the fact that the Methodist Church cannot claim monopoly or exclusive privilege to worship. My mistake was that I had a good faith stance. Even my Society Steward was opposed to my gifting.

Where he did not know that I joined the Methodist Church because of my wife who was a prayer-woman, whilst I was just a mine-worker.

(voice change) Moreover I had realized that my spirit (gift) was imprisoned and not utilised, since I had to always wait for the Preachers' plan. But when you were a pastor there, you had given me the job of praying - which I could do even if you were not around.

So, to tell the truth, I left the Methodist Church because of spiritual matters. Rev. Bubu is just one of the factors, but the main thing is that I was instructed by the spirit.

MS: *Ntate* Moeti, you referred somewhere to your coming from a family of "spirit-people". Could you explain further.

MR: My parents had spiritual gifts. They could divine sickness (*sesila*), and could

prescribe treatment; for example, sacrifice of a white goat to the ancestors and go about it thus. Even my mother's family was like that. Now the thing has passed on to me and has even my family. It is only my sister and I who took it from our mother - the other four siblings are just "normal" or "ordinary" people. My mom even died because of the spirit. She got it from her uncle - a traditional healer - who himself initiated her. My mother's feet, face and abdomen swelled about five years. She died when I was already staying here in Thaba-Nchu . She died holding my daughter Matshediso (consolation) in her arms - she was my mother's consolation.

MS: *Ke ya untlwisisa* (I understand).

MR: That is how it is. I am even reminded of Rev. Mahlatsi, he used to say, "spirit-people must be permitted to follow their instructions in the church - and not to be hindered.

MS: You said earlier that our church is too ordered or procedural (*ya molao*) and thus restrictive. What exactly did you mean?

MR: Thanks. The first thing is that the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Fora, Ethiopian, Anglican and Methodist are all legalist churches. Whereas Apostolic is said to be of volunteers, I grew up with this as the status quo. Do you know, Rev, that I am not educated. I left school in standard two. But there is nothing new I could be told about the Bible, I am naturally gifted with the ability to interpret/unfold Scripture. The Apostolic church has always despisable to Boers. I do not mean to be rude, but it was not liked by churches such as Methodist. I won't mention names, but even today there are still ministers who are antagonistic to it. What is surprising is that even in the Apostolic Church people talk about Christ. The same Bible is read, the preaching and prayers are also the same. Just recently one pensioned reverend said he does not want anything to do with the Apostolic Churches. I was offended when he said that at a funeral, because I was in Apostolic uniform, but I told myself that he does not know what he is talking about, he does not have what I have. My overseer once said in a covenant service that "there are people who walk about

at night in white *dituku*. These people are seeking for God as in the dark (*ba a mo phopholetsa*). They are like Moses who after seeing a "burning bush" went out by calling to the nation to deliver God's message". The overseer was specific that these people are looking for God and they have direction. I understood what he mean. Apparently other people also were touched and happy about the message.

I remember one Roman Catholic Church minister in 1956. In on Sunday you would ask him for a lift, he would ask which church you were going to. If you said Catholic he would concede, if *Fora*/Presbyterian he would have his hand saying "that's not a church!", but if you said Apostolic he would say "out of my way, you moron". What is surprising is extents to which Apostolic churches are growing, despite all such divisions and their lack of church buildings. At Matlatsane, it grew so much that there were some whites in the church.

MS: Yes, pa, but how different is you current occupation from that which you had in the Methodist church.

MR: I am responsible for opening and closing the service in prayer. I am also an elder and the oldest of 870 congregants. I even consecrate babies - I am like the Biblical Simeon. Some other important difference is that I now pay ancestors their dues, which is thing I could not do in the Methodist church because of fear of excommunication - even as even now I am excommunicated. I was once down and needing to offer a huge service to the ancestors. I kept asking them to show me the type of service it was supposed to be and how I were to conduct it. It was to be a thanksgiving service because in thanking God I also gave thanks to my ancestors for being with me over these seventy-four years, my wife and ten children - all of them alive today; and my cattle as well.

MS: Ntate Moeti, did you say seventy-four years of age? But you don't look the old!

MR: That's correct Rev. It is indeed grace for one to get this old. I would love to have you attend this thanks-giving service which is likely to be in April 1996.

MS: I hear you talk about a thanksgiving as well as a service for ancestors, are they different services?

MR: I thank both God and my ancestors for keeping me safe since childhood. As a black person you should also be aware that a thanksgiving service is both for God and ancestors. In mainline churches they do not use "*Mpha-badimo*" (offering for ancestors), but "thanksgiving" because using the former could lead to excommunication. They also say "we did not offer to our parents whilst they were still alive, yet we all of a sudden want to offer service to them when dead". Thus the mainline believers do not use "ancestors" but "service to ancestors".

MS: Could you please clarify how the church could acquire the gifts of the spirit-people and they may be used?

MR: *Moruti*, in my opinion, spirit-people like this child of mine, are supposed to be given at least the responsibility of praying in church. There must be permitted to sing as the spirit urges. There could possibly be a Sunday per month when the service would be conducted by them. Also a healing-only Sunday. then those with gifts of praying for others as well as of seeing visions would know that there are days when they can become active. Even the singing style has to change -- there must be more usage of hands (i.e. clapping) as well as of African indigenous drums. If you observe quite clearly, the Methodist Church is also Apostolic. The *Amadodana* style of singing is plainly Apostolic. This needs to be encouraged. by reverends.

Interview No. 7

Interviewer: Ms M. Sibeko (MS)

Interviewee: Mrs M. Booysen (MB)

Date: July 20, 1995

Place: Thaba-Nchu - Ratau

Time: 1900-2100

Language: Setswana

MS: Greetings.

MB: Let us pray before we start talking *mma*.

MS: God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God of our parents, we beseech the to give us strength when as we talk about your word in this house of your daughter. Amen.

MS: I am very happy to see you *mma* even though the sun has set. I believe that you are tired.

MB: *Mma*, when we are at home, we are relaxed.

MS: When we meet with the help of Mrs Modisakeng, I knew that you are the person who could help me with the kind of questions I want to know from you.

When was the last time you went to the Methodist church?

MB: 1986.

MS: In which organisation were you before you left the church?

MB: I was the secretary of the Women's *Manyano* (guild) in the circuit. I was also the secretary of women's guild on Sundays in our church at St Pauls. Our women's guild was meeting every Sunday.

MS: Coming to my research now, what things (gifts, spiritual) made you leave the church?

MB: I left the church because I was sick. That was the time when we were in Modutung (Interruption). I have forgotten the reason why we were in Modutung.

MS: Did you not go there for the quarterly meeting?

MB: Yes, that was the time when I noticed that people were against me because I was the secretary and I was given the report of the people on their behalf. This was the time when I realised that there was a problem.

MS: Which problem are you talking about? Could you elaborate on that?

MB: I refer to people who are spiritually gifted. Their problem is that they are closed out from the rest of the people. What I am saying here is that these people find themselves not wanting to be among other people. They cannot wear even anything which is black like the Angolas. This is because the colour black seems to be difficult or hard to withstand.

When they were asked why they were not mixing with the others, no one responded.

I do not know whether my explanation is clear.

MS: Yes, *mma*. Your explanation is quite clear.

MB: It is true that they cannot be in contact with anything that is black in colour. Even after my term of office as secretary came to an end, I tried to persuade them but they said that a spiritual person cannot go to church, instead she should stay at home.

MS: Where was the minister's wife at that time?

MB: Rev Mmamane said that if a person is spiritual, that person should stay out of the church or leave the church. (Interruption).

It appears as if the spiritual people bring problems and conflicts in the church. As from me, I was not excommunicated from the church. It is just that I felt sick.

I have realised that the time has not come for me to go back to my church. I went to my ancestors.

MS: Yes *mma*, I am still listening. Before we come to talk about ancestors, could you please explain why you left the church or why you stopped attending church.

MB: I explained to my minister that I still liked to attend my church even though I was sick. My minister asked me why I did not tell or say that I have a problem.

According to my minister's understanding, things were running smoothly in the church. The minister asked me if it was possible for him to offer me help or pray for me. I told him that there was no help that he could offer me because the way *mosho yo o ntseneng a leng mosito ka teng, ke morapetse go tloga 1981-86 six years gore a ntlogele*.

I had a time and a place where I could go and pray for what was in me to leave me alone totally. In order to rest, the language changed even the facial expression and the voice changed that I was speaking louder.

I could see that I was no longer praying and I could not wear my women's guild uniform. I told my minister that I wanted my books to be in order because I was sick. I didn't want to leave without notice. Even though I was not allowed to leave without notice, I was forced to leave without telling them. I am saying this because I want you to know that I am no longer in the church.

Then my minister gave me permission to leave on condition that I wrote a letter to the women's guild informing them that I was no longer going to attend *manyano*

because of my illness. The minister went on to say that he was not giving permission to leave so that I could go and practice *boloi*, but I was sick and that I should come back when I felt better. The minister continued to say that as long as he was still alive, he would explain to them why I left and if they agreed with the reason, they would reinstate me in my position of secretary as before and they would give me my uniform.

When I was in Durban, I wrote to explain everything. I explained to them again after I came back. This was in 1989. I confessed to my minister, but I cannot remember very well the minister's name. I explained to this minister my position in the church before I left. I even showed him all my pledge cards and my building fund card so that he could see how powerful I was in the church. I used to pay R10-20 every month instead of R3 as the others did. When it comes to pledge money, I was paying for my father, mother, and myself.

MS: Are your parents still attending the church or are they still alive?

MB: No, I used to have my own way of doing thing. When we started working as teachers, our father used to pay for us, all the children. In the end, I inherited this. When I was paying, I remembered to pay for my parents as well. (Voice goes higher and higher, body language changes).

I told this pastor that I came to him to get advice as I wanted to go the hospital. I was not feeling well, I had problems, and I was being disturbed by spirits. This minister advised me to write and he would give it to the leaders' meeting.

MS: What happened after that because you say that the minister was supposed to report your matter to the leaders' meeting?

MB: Yes, minister. Because of this minister's delay, I decided not to wear my uniform but go to church anyway. I decided to go to church because I thought I had recovered. But do you know what happened in that service?

MS: No, *mma*. I am interested to know what happened.

MB: You know that when you are in church, the first song before the order of service puts you in a situation where you feel spiritually uplifted. But this was not the case with me on that day. It was in that service that I realised that I have not yet recovered from the spiritual calling. I failed even to hear the sermon on that day. I felt weak and my head was heavy. I then decided to go home.

MS: Did you go back to your minister to explain your situation?

MB: I became angry and I told my minister that I was caught by the spirit. I wanted to go back to the women's guild, but I wanted to respect them. My minister reminded me of one of the doctrines of the Methodist church that if one does not attend the women's guild for three successive months, then that one has excommunicated herself. It was then that my minister advised me to go to church for the coming six months.

MS: How do you think your minister would have responded if you had told him that you had left the church because of spirits and ancestors?

MB: Superintendent Gill had no problem with me. The person who had problems was the presiding minister, i.e., the society minister. I think this minister was afraid to accept me without the consent of the women's guild, i.e., the women's guild committee.

The other reason is that there were many of us who left the church. Others went to the Apostolic church and they came back because of that reason. There was going to be talk about me. Just now, there is a person who comes to me because this person has spirit problems. This person doesn't know whether the church will accept her.

MS: How do these spirits work? Some say spirits fight one another.

MB: They are not telling the truth (repeated twice). (She indicated this by hands. According to her, the five fingers represent the spirits). I am talking to you as a minister. I think you will understand how spirits work. You know that when you start preaching, you begin very well but as you continue, the voice will change and even the way you look, your appearance will change. Your humanness changes also. It is the spirit that makes you that way. The spirit of God does that to you. For example, there is a spirit for prophecy, one for healing, one to be a traditional healer and so on. Let me explain how come I decided to leave the Methodist church.

I was told what to do if I was to be healed and what to wear. They showed me where and who was supposed to dress me. Due to ignorance, I was quiet when I reached the place. Because of this I was disturbed by the spirit and I was strangled by it.

MS: What did they say to you?

MB: My Uncle's daughter came to me and showed me the dress which I was supposed to wear at Nazareth. Before I continue with this, I should explain to you about my life.

I grew up not wanting traditional medicine *ditlhare tsa setswana*. Even my father knew that. I used to tell my father that I was against superstition. I did not see the reason why they should make incisions in the body. I personally did not want that and I don't see any reason for doing that. I grew up like that. The time I went to college, I refused to be cut. When we were at weddings as bridesmaids, I could run away in order not to be cut because I did not want anything on my body. The other thing is that we are all Christians at home. My uncle was the steward of the circuit and my aunt was in women's guild. My mother was the chairperson of women's guild in our society. All of them were full members wholeheartedly. My younger brother was the steward of our church. As you know *Moruti*, he died while being a steward and he is the one I don't understand very well. As I told you before, I was the chairperson of the guild before I had the spirit. But the younger brother who has passed away, there is no one like him. This why I am saying I didn't understand him

very well. He was a straightforward person when it came to God and working for God. I believe that when he went to heaven, he was running. My mother had a spirit but we could not notice that. She was always sick and in the end, she died. But even today, my mother, uncle, and aunt are strangling me with the spirit.

In my dream, I saw my mother. She gave me a white chain. She put it on top of my head. I used to hate chains in my life but I had no choice. Later, when I woke up, I found myself sleeping on the floor.

So you see how the spirit works. My mother was supposed to put on this chain but she happened to pass it to me. It happens that this spiritual gift is passed on to children. The people I lived with, didn't know that I had this spiritual gift. This was my secret. These people could ask about my health, why I was growing thinner. In my response, I would say to them that there was nothing wrong with me, I was fine.

A prophet came to me and told me that my mother wanted to take my soul because I didn't want the chain. I didn't reply to what the prophet said because this was my secret. *E, Moruti*, a person can die because of the chain and die altogether. That is why you see me like this. I ended up taking the chain.

MS: I understand what you are saying, but I just want us to go back and talk about the person whom you were directed to see. What did that person say when you arrived at that place?

MB: Yes, *mma*, I can remember when we woke up in the morning, this person told me that he knows they came to me and he knows what they told me.

MS: Why were you quiet and not tell this person?

MB: *Jwalo ka ga oitse Moruti*, because of the situation I was a teacher in the church we attended, a person is often afraid to tell stories like those in the church. Even if you are told everything, you are just afraid to say something because of money.

Yes, reverend, at the healing place this woman was emphasising on spiritual matters (said twice). He also emphasised on prophesy. She said that in prophetism, a person is supposed to fast for some days. During summer, a person should fast once a day. You are not even supposed to drink water. You drink water at 11 p.m. Again in prophetism, if a sick person comes to you, you should give this person water.

MS: What is the importance of fasting to you?

MB: It means that you are strengthening your faith in God and your ancestors. This means that I have a belief that all my requests will be accepted. For example, if a person comes to me, this person will be healed if I fast, but if I don't fast, this person will take time to recover.

She said much about prayer and that people like me who are spiritual are supposed to pray for lost spirits which happen to move around the sky, for example those who have completely, those who are being killed but their families don't know, and those who have died because of lightning and those who have died because of car accidents. We used to go out wearing white clothes which were made specially for praying. We were not supposed to touch trees (*dithhare*). We were not supposed to wear traditional doctors (*sangoma*) clothes. (She was pointing at her attire at that time). Even food, we were eating appropriate food, i.e. spiritual food. When we were going home, we were carrying animal skins full of silver coins. We were throwing the silver into the mountains and in the forests to feed those spirits which were all over the forest.

I don't know whether I am making sense to you, *mma*.

MS: Yes, you are explaining very well. Is there any suggestion you can give as to how all these people who are spiritually gifted could be allowed to make use of their gifts in the church?

MB: (Silence). I don't know whether the Methodist church would allow that. You that it has its own doctrines.

MS: Can you elaborate further on what you are saying?

MB: Spirit is something that disturbs a person inside. For example, there used to be a time when young men guild came into the church singing using a beat thrice. I could jump, jump higher and at that moment, I felt like they could play something that could make stamp on foot. Spirit is like a chicken hurt by its eggs. I believe that if our church could allow a drum to be played inside, people like us, who are spiritual, will find ourselves at home.

MS: Do you mean something like a real drum *mma*?

MB: Yes! It will be! It will be! (She was laughing very loudly with excitement). It will be a disaster. Playing a drum is what is needed but the Methodist church would not allow it.

MS: Why do you say that?

MB: I told you a moment ago that the Methodist church has its own way of doing things because of its doctrines. If they could allow drums, there would be no need to be wild when playing them. Even those people who have left the church, they could come back. In that situation, there should be no one who could prevent you from jumping. Sometimes, you will discover that what is needed is a song, hands, and a drum. They will wake up and they should be allowed to run inside the church if possible..

MS: *Mma*, I hear you.

MB: If they can be allowed, they can shake and take step. This spirit hurts. It is like when it reaches you, you feel like you are being administered to an electric shock. It makes you feel hurt and makes you feel like singing and so what is needed at that

time is a song. If there is not much songs, you will feel it in your head ticking. You just want a song to be sung to you loudly. I think I am still giving the right answers.

MS: I am still listening. Is there anything the church could do for those people who are spiritually gifted so that they could be helped and find themselves accepted in the church?

MB: The church is not supposed to ignore who put on chains because it might not be according to their wish. Even myself, I did not want them. I want to give you an example about the minister who once came to me.

It was at the time when I brewed beer and there were bones inside the house. This minister found a basket full of beer inside the house. I said to him, AWhere are you going to pass in this mess He told me not to worry because I was working. At that time he started to burp, but I decided to keep quiet. Later on he burped again. It was then when I took him to the circle to examine him and he continued burping like a bull until we finished. He asked me what he would do as a minister. I told him that it was a problem for even myself didn't know. I told him that we needed to do something immediately. I had to make him stamp for some time so that the spirit could calmed and give him things which he could make use of. He told me that he could not make use of those things because he was afraid of the steward for he used to come often to the manse.

MS: How was he supposed to use them when the steward would be in a position to see them?

MB: He was supposed to wake up early in the morning at 4 am and go to a spot or a place to pray and ask God and ancestors saying, ANow that I am in this situation, I ask you to help me so that the spirit can be calm (decrease). He was supposed to say that because this spirit cannot be chased away. You just make it to be calm. There is medicine called *phepa*. *Phepa ke letlape la lekgala la setswana a* (traditional medicine). He was supposed to lighten it so that he should be able to talk with

ancestors. When you have finished, if you are a person who prays, you pray in the name of God.

He was unable to use it because of the situation and the condition he was in. As I am talking to you now, this minister has already passed away.

MS: Is that so *mma*?

MB: I am telling the truth.

MS: Was there no way for him to go home?

MB: I made a suggestion. I mean that kind of suggestion because his home was in Transkei. I asked him how well it would be for him to go home so that something could be done in the way of calming down the spirit. He told me that even at home, that could be a problem. Honestly, I don't know how the Methodist church can help people like him because people talk negatively of traditional medicine. But the very same people go to traditional doctors in the evenings.

I have a group which comes to me. It is exactly like the one I am referring to here. The thing is that they don't want other people to see them when they come to see me during the day. I think the Methodist church should allow people who are spiritually gifted to pray for others in the church. For example, let us take a situation where when I look at your sister (she was pointing at Lolly my sister), I notice something, say an illness she has, at that time I might feel like praying for her and there must not be people talking about that because one can be killed because of that spirit. When you pray for a person like that, you are also praying for yourself.

MS: I think and believe that you have answered me *mma*. What else do you think we have left behind?

MB: I don't think that the Methodist church will be the same as it is now if can allow all what I have just said to you.

MS: Why do say that *mma*?

MB: Since I have been in this condition, no one is afraid of me and no one is not asking for help. It is because I put on chains and I have a gift of making people who are sick to feel better.

People used to come to me, visiting, enjoying ourselves, but when I started to get sick, they stopped coming to see me. They have forgotten that I used to go to them even to those who were sick. I could take my car and go to the location, looking for those who were no more coming to the guild. I was a person who was in front looking for people who were sick. We were praying for those people. Others, we found drinking beer and when we arrived, we used to talk to them nicely. All of them can tell you *mma*. In Thaba-Nchu, that Methodist church nearly broke my heart because I worked for it. I was like I was paid for what I was doing. For example, in the morning if you came to my house at 7 am, you would meet me going to church at St Paul's church. I used to take a small pot with me with breakfast inside because I used to eat at the church. On Saturdays I used to go to my minister to give him money and receipts and after that I would go back to work. But now, it is like I have done nothing in the church because there is no single person who cares for me. All is because of this chain I have with me.

What I am trying to say finally is that people should go to church with what they have. When I go back to church the way I am right now (she was pointing to the *sangoma* attire that she was wearing) I will not take out this chain. What I have discovered is that the only church that will accept me is *Selossha* society. It will accept me as I am because there are people who understand this spiritual gift.

MS: *Ke ya leboha Mma, ke tshepa ntho di tla fetoha nakong e tlang.*

MB: *Se retla boka ha di oroha Moruti.*

Interview No. 8

The Interviewer: M. Sibeko (MS)
The Interviewee: S.M. Mogoba (SM) (Presiding Bishop of the MCSA)
Date: 11 July 1995
Place: Musgrave in Durban
Time: 12h30 - 14h00
Language: English and Sesotho

MS: Greetings. As we have already discussed briefly with you papa through the phone about my research project, I would briefly indicate/remind you about the reasons I wish to interview you on this research. One of the reason, is your address to the representative session on an "Authentic Church for Africa". I would like to know, what motivated you or what was the reason for your choice of this subject. Further, did you encounter any opposition in terms of race and class? The other motivation for this research is to know more about the Africanization committee that you happen to be the chairperson of. However, I would like to hear your response or an overall feeling in general, pertaining to the Methodist members who leave the church or who attend according to ELA (my faith as an African) "mass in the morning", being "diviner at night" or as you have put it "Religious concubinage" (an Authentic church for Africa: 1994) due to their spiritual and cultural aspects?

SM: Malika, I think it is fair to give you a little bid of a background of myself as a teacher in Fort Hare and FedSem. I went to United Kingdom to study about African Christianity, what an opportunity! One of the ironic thing was to leave South Africa to go to the United Kingdom to study about Africa.

Secondly, it was an eye opener to find how much has been studied in this field particularly in Africa. We here in South Africa because of our political problems we happened to focus on Black and Liberation Theologies because we had no choice. Our minds were occupied with oppression and the struggle for Liberation.

I discovered that most of North Africa is ahead of us, in terms of African Theology. We, down here were alone, as far as Liberation Theology and Black Theology was concerned. To find that here in South Africa we are behind, surprised me. So, I spent all those years trying to find out what these people are trying to find out and what they trying to do. Coming back to South Africa in FedSem in particular, I immediately began with workshops on African Christianity. It was interesting, but of course there was also confusion. I had been feeling that the time has come as I had said in my address that unless the fast growing Christian churches in Africa become authentic African church, we'll not be able to have a quality church and at the same time our churches won't be full. But that doesn't touch the life of the people. There are problems of conflicts that had not been reconciled. (somebody interrupted).

MS: You were talking about conflicts papa.

SM: Now let me give you a story which will respond to these. Before that conference in Umtata, I had an opportunity to address the ministers retreat, in the Transkei. I have been longed waiting to challenge our church there, because I thought they are not emitted, there is a need for them to be authentic hence they are predominantly black. So I raised cultural questions - the questions of ancestors. When I raised those, I could see their eyes getting bigger and bigger. I could see that they were shocked, that I the head of the church, I'm talking about such things - or put it abruptly, such heathen practices. I believe that, it is a Black or an African minister who would understand and know such things. By the second day, they were beginning to be liberated so much so that I was listening to them. The things that they could have expressed two days ago, they did not mention (He coughed the voice not clear). The real problem that we are facing everyday is the problem of beliefs. There are two systems of belief operating at the same time. One below the other or one against the other. This is happening because of the way in which Christianity was introduced in Africa.

Everything in Africa, the culture of indigenous people was destroyed. They were made to accept foreign values and ways. People were told that *o thwanetse gore o tlogele dilo tse tsa badimo, o be dilo tsothe mo go Kreste, o be* a new person. These meant, changing of our names e.g *Ha o sale Malika o se ole Jane*, and changing of a attire. We know that missionaries did not do their work thoroughly, for instance, in the villages or various places like Lesotho, Transkei, as early before missionaries came, people believed in Modimo. Their believe in Modimo went hand in hand with their belief in ancestors. So, it is important for Christianity to meet African culture somewhere. The whole question of what do you do when the child is born? What happens hao bolotsa mohlankana? What happens when you marry? The whole issue of marriage - what do you do when you are in a wedding, I tell you, it's really exciting. We all know that we are all from different backgrounds and languages. I am a Zulu, my grandmother is a Mosotho, but we all enjoy the ceremony.

My view is that, we fear syncretism that a Christian faith must be kept pure, and therefore when there is a danger that when we have to mix faiths we run a great risk. When the two or more faiths are placed in close contact there is great danger that syncretism will take place because ideas pass imperceptibly from one to another. This is more likely to happen when there is a crisis in life or in the family for example when there is serious illness or misfortune like death people trying to consult this doctors or that diviners or that representative of a religion.

The healthiest thing is for a dialogue to happen. In a dialogue one consider the way things are done, practised and examine the reasons. For instance from the Christian faith one will say no, I have a different way, this is the way we do it and I have reasons for it. We have in the past people experiencing different faiths with different forms, co-existing without a debate or an argument. Now, that is not helpful, what we need is the debate to happen.

There are certain things that are absolute in African Traditional Religion. Somebody needs to tell the system of things which have worked in the past that it used to work in the past but it can't work now. Equally there are certain things in our culture

which are still relevant today. For instance, there are certain aspects of ancestor worships which are harmless and they won't destroy Christianity. Instead, they would actually strengthen the Christian faith.

But the Christian faith has been so stereotypical in this field that it is uncritical of it. There is a great fear of ancestors and it is difficult even to talk about it.

MS: How would ancestor veneration strengthen the Christian faith?

SM: It would strengthen the Christian faith in such a way that it would be strong because of that. Actually I have addressed a paper in this field. I am referring here Malika to the fact that the whole structure of ancestors, is family structure and therefore you cannot destroy this structure because you will destroy the family completely. When I say "*ke na Mogoba, ke ngwana Mogoba*" I am thinking of generations and generations of those who have left and say "who I am". Now if you say you are not interested about those Mogobas, you are interested on this one, then you have missed a point. If I agree, yes I can agree but actually most of the time if you are talking to me alone you are not talking to the Mogobas because in me exist that cloud 2x of witnesses, call it that way, or beings as it sometimes so described. When we are alone in a family, we talk about these without reference to anything. You will here one saying to the other, "have you told *badimo hore ngwana wa nyalwa/nyala*". This is profound in that for me if you don't tell them it seems something has not been done.

Ntho engoe hape ke ena - in our African society we have intermediaries. Let me give you an example of a wedding. In wedding transactions families do not negotiate directly. They use intermediaries on both sides who negotiate for the families. It is also worth noting that when a mediator acts on behalf of his principal, assumes the full authority of that principal. He is even addressed as the "father" of the bride or bridegroom. If there are no intermediaries, *o tla utlwa bare "Bo rakhadi wa hae bakae, bo maloma bakae and all that"*. This way of communication is very harmless.

MS: Can you say more about the whole issue of mediation (bearing in mind the issue of ancestors) in relation to ancestors. There is this confusion or misunderstanding that ancestors amongst Blacks play a role of mediating between humans and God instead of Jesus.

SM: Yes, that is the whole area of syncretism. What happen is that there is no dialogue. Ancestors can never be mediators like Jesus in our faith as Christians, because we have come to accept that Jesus Christ is the son of God. We don't see him as someone who has to replace the ancestors. The whole question of intercession is a cultural thing. I used to give this example, when we were in Roben Island some of our Roman Catholic colleagues gave us "rosaries". Bo Mandela, bo Sisulu and other didn't know why they were using them. For some these things were useless. But when they taught us how to use the "rosary" for mediation it made sense. It was a way of talking about Christ which was very Catholic, very foreign to us, but it worked. Likewise, ancestors can be used in that way correctly speaking, they can never take the place of Christ. But if you don't correct that, many people talk about ancestors as if they are talking about something beyond.

However, there is a strong belief amongst Africans about the future life -- life after death. That is why the resurrection of Christ is less a problem to them. The Black Christians Malika, celebrate Good Friday and Easter Sunday without a problem. The White Christians, I mean White Methodists worship in a very apologetic way. As if they feel guilty that they are superstitious. If you listen to a preacher preaching in a white congregation on Easter Sunday, they have problems. You feel that the preacher him/herself is not sure what he is preaching about. But you go to our Black churches on Easter Sunday, there is nobody who argues about that. No problem. What we do celebrate, we live the crucifixion of Christ in the seven words. This enrich even those who don't normally go to church. Why is it that so, it's because there is a religion and culture which is close to that of the people. *Batho ba rona ba bangata, ha bana mathata le taba ya Badimo. Le ha kereke ene e le khahlanong, Bane ba ntse ba tsoella ka "ona"*. In fact what is needed, is for our ministers and theologians to have clarity about the difference between Ancestral generation,

ancestral worship, so that they don't say things which they cannot be accountable of. This can help even those who do not understand like our white colleagues.

Africans (Christians) had a big problem of talking about the dead simply because the Christian church said is heathenism. This was until the whites reacts, the cult of tomb stone that blacks started. Earlier, *ba batlare "moruti re na le mosebetsi ka hae"*. You will never know what type of mosebetsi that was. But when the cult of tombstone started people began to do freely. The church actually wanted to burn it.

It was difficult for the church to accept this until the Africanization committee. This was not left to individual ministers. There was a special committee which was chosen/elected to look at the issue of tombstone cult. (Interruption...)

MS: You were talking about the cult of tombstone.

SM: The committee on tombstones was not really African. It had people like J. Forrie and others. But it enable the cult to be accepted by the church and it was approved, people were free.

MS: How was that communicated to people on the ground?

SM: Just through record books. The problem is that many people do not know about these. I believe that is not a good way of communicating to people -- something still has to be done. However, the booklet has been translated in different languages. I hope I have responded to you. Is there anything that I failed disclose?

MS: Eya Papa. Can you suggest ways which can help in overcoming cultural dissatisfaction in the MCSA or spiritual dissatisfaction?

SM: Healing ke erea enngwe. Whether we believe in this area or not, the fact is that our members believe in it. We have to change the image that AIC are the only ones that can heal. For instance, *ha rebula dikereke (opening of new church buildings) batho*

ba lebeletse hore dibulwe both ka metsi le ka thapelo. Ke hopula ke bula kereke e ngoe, ke e potoloha, ke etsela ka metsi kentse ke rapela. Le ha hone ho bonahala batho ba maketse, bane ba itumetse. Their comments afterwards indicated that they were happy. Such symbols like water can truly enrich the Christian church and our liturgy in particular.

Another question or area is that of *African diviners - "Dingaka"*

If you know one which is suffering, it is this area. We Christians have often stigmatize African Traditional Healers. There is no meeting place. Then you have difficulties when you have people in you congregation, suddenly feeling *bana le moyo* (they are high in spirits). The whole sangoma cult need to be taken into consideration. I remember in Pretoria -- Atteridgeville, there was a lady teacher who was a committed member of our church. The husband was a society steward (leader in the MCSA structure) and working for SABC. She suddenly experienced being high in spirit (effervescence). She said to her leader (in the church), *ke na le moyo*, I can't explain but is a very heavy spirit. As it normally happens with izangoma, she had to leave teaching. They (herself & the husband) did not even want people and member of the church to know about this. They even decided to leave the church. There was nobody to help this poor lady. Even the minister could not help.

The truth is that the whole area of healing is complex. The western had divided the body and soul, while Africans view this differently. Many say you're mentally disturbed, we immediately send you to a psychiatrist. You will be treated as a western person. That is why most of Africans believe that one in that state can only be helped by traditional healers because their healing is wholistic. They operate through fear and beliefs.

The problem with *bongaka ba rona* (traditional healers) is that they work individually. *Ke mpho eaka le badimo baka* (my own gift from my ancestors). Therefore it becomes difficult to know fully what is happening. However, even if

we don't have a fully understanding of it, we need not to reject or look down on their work. We need to be objective because our members are part of this.

MS: Papa what should we do with such people *ba nang le moya wa bokoma* (those who have ubungoma)?

SM: Malika, I would suggest that we listen to them and try to be with them. If for an example, one says, "*moruti kena le moya ke kopa ho yangakeng ke tla bowa*" (Reverend, I feel I have this spirit, can you give me a permission to go away for healing, I would come back). I don't see the reason why we can't understand that especially if we don't have power or gifts of helping them. Further, imagine being a minister, how would you do if your spouse *Ao na le moya* as it was the case with that woman from Pretoria, would you just pretend or ignore without taking action as an African? It is high time that we start to be objective. Our main problem is ignorance.

Anyway, there is another question before we depart that I didn't respond to concerning the opposition that I received after the address I presented at a conference in Umtata. Most of the opposition was from the white colleagues, *ke e thotse ho makgowa*. Some felt that, the best way will be to leave the church. They were saying that because they have been protected by our church structures for a long time. But now we are beginning to talk about one Methodist church, the one and undivided church. I believe people need to listen and understand.

I was surprised also to get the resolution from Northern Transvaal and Botswana District Synods which were attacking me directly. *Hei, ba twana* saying things like *rona re be re tshepile hore* presiding bishop *ke thlogo ya kereke ya rona -- Anthe ke mohetene!* However their resolution to the conference last year indicated that there is a need for people to learn more. Refer to the appendix (.. under general - Point C -- Indigenization of Methodist Church of Southern Africa). Furthermore, it is interesting to see that people, our members are beginning to see a need to learn more about Ancestral veneration. I would like you to check the minutes of the

conference 1995: p.62 11-15. There is a resolution from the South Western Transvaal District about the Ancestral veneration.

Due to time constraints, I would like to stop here. *Ha o na le nako* feel free to come so that we can discuss more.

MS: Knowing that you are a busy person, I would like to thank you so much papa for the time you've spent with me for all that we've discussed. I will contact you if I need more information.