

The story of the church in South Africa

The story of the church in SA can be divided into four periods: the Dutch period, the British period, the Afrikaans period and the modern periods.

The Dutch period (1652 to c1800)

In the year 1652 about ninety employees of the Dutch East India Company landed at the Cape of Good Hope with the purpose of establishing a refreshment station where the Company's ships could be supplied with fresh food and water on their way to the East. From that time, and from those small beginnings, there has been an unbroken and continually expanding Christian presence in those regions which were to become South Africa.

In the next 150 years, the Dutch Reformed Church (the only church permitted in the Cape) increased from one congregation to seven. The faith spread from the Dutch speaking community to a few of the indigenous Khoikhoi people, some of the slaves who had been imported to the Cape, and to most of those of mixed parentage (who were to become the so-called Coloured community). Towards the latter part of this first period, the Moravian and Lutheran churches laid their first foundations.

George Schmidt and the Moravians George Schmidt was the first person to come to the Cape for the sole purpose of reaching out to the Khoikhoi with the gospel. His arrival was in response to an appeal by two members of the Reformed Church in Amsterdam to Zinzendorf at Herrnhut to send one of the brethren to the Cape.

When Schmidt proceeded to baptize five of his followers, the news was greeted with displeasure by the Reformed clergy in Cape Town, who felt that Schmidt was not a properly ordained minister and that the baptisms were therefore most irregular.

In 1774, a Lutheran businessman, Martin Melck, erected a remarkably church-like 'warehouse' in Cape Town. And in 1778 permission finally came from Amsterdam for the Lutherans to have their own church. They lost no time in calling a minister, Andreas Kolver, who arrived at the Cape in 1780

Helperus Ritzema van Lier can truly be described as the Jonathan Edwards of the early Cape colony. An invitation to the Cape brought Van Lier to southern Africa. In 1786 he was inducted as a minister of the Cape Town Dutch Reformed congregation, his first sermon being preached from the text 'For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified' (1 Cor.2:2).

The spiritual condition of the slaves and the Khoikhoi became a source of great concern to Van Lier. He laboured to arouse among the Christians a sense of responsibility to reach out to these people with the gospel. The work of Van Lier was deeply influential in awakening

among the Christians of the Cape Colony a new spirit of concern for the slaves and the Khoikhoi, thus preparing the way for the revival of the Moravian mission as well as the arrival of the other missionaries in the closing decade of the eighteenth century.

Michiel Christiaan Vos In 1794 Vos was returned to the Cape as minister of the church at Roodezand (now Tulbagh). In his inaugural sermon, which he preached from Mark 16:15 (Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation), he announced his intention to preach to the slaves and the Khoikhoi also and urged his hearers to cooperate by bringing their slaves and employees to special classes he would be holding for their instruction.

The re-establishment of the Moravian Mission After the departure of George Schmidt from the Cape in 1744, the Moravians in Herrnhut never forgot about the Khoikhoi in the Cape. From time to time they tried to revive the work there, but without any success until the time of Van Lier and the change of attitude towards missions brought about by his ministry. When a Moravian bishop, Johann Reichel, called at the Cape in 1787 on his way back to Europe from Tranquebar, he was warmly received by Van Lier and others of like spirit. Sensing the change of feeling in the Cape, Reichel counseled the Moravian Brethren to renew their application to re-establish their work in the Cape. This time they were successful, and in 1792 three Moravian missionaries landed in the Cape: Marsveld, Schwinn and Kühnel.

The Brethren in Herrnhut were not the only ones who had not forgotten. Among the Khoikhoi converts of Schmidt, there were also those who remembered his promise to send other brethren. Even greater was their joy at finding an eighty-year-old woman, Lena, who turned out to be one of Schmidt's original converts, baptized nearly fifty years earlier. Old Lena then produced a copy of the Dutch New Testament which Schmidt had given her. Her eyes were too weak to read it, and she gave it to a younger woman who read the story of the wise men from the East aloud with considerable fluency.

The British period (c1800-1910).

Significant immigration throughout this period resulted in the planting of virtually all the denominations existing in Britain at that time - Anglicans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists, together with some smaller bodies.

During the nineteenth century many missionary societies entered South Africa with the aim of gathering converts from the indigenous African peoples. These included the London Missionary Society, the Moravians, the Wesleyan Missionary Society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and various Lutheran and Reformed and Catholic missionary societies. Missionaries from Britain, America, Germany, France, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden and other parts of the world all converged on South Africa.

During this period the British colonial authorities fought major wars against the Xhosa peoples in the Eastern Cape, the Zulus in Natal, and the Boers in their northern republics.

The triumph of British arms in all these conflicts led to the incorporation of all the above named territories within the Union of South Africa in 1910, which marks the birth of the modern state of South Africa within its present borders.

As a result of considerable immigration and missionary work during the nineteenth century, the church saw significant growth, both in numbers and the complexity of its make up. In addition to the original Dutch Reformed Church (virtually the sole representative of Christianity for more than a century) there were now also Anglicans, Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, as well as smaller groups such as Quakers and the Salvation Army. Further divisions, resulting in two Anglican churches, three Dutch Reformed churches, several Lutheran churches etc. complicated the ecclesiastical scene even more. But that was not all. Conflict and tensions between the indigenous African people and the politically and economically dominant white people inevitably affected church relations. The closing decades of the nineteenth century saw groups of African Christians separating from mission established and controlled churches to form African initiated churches wholly controlled by Africans. This small trickle was to become a mighty flood in the twentieth century.

The London Missionary Society One of the earliest missionary societies was the London Missionary Society (LMS), formed in 1795. Casting its eyes around the world for suitable fields of labour, southern Africa (among other places) was chosen, and so there arrived in the Cape in 1799 four LMS missionaries, Kicherer, Edward, Edmonds and Van der Kemp. These were the first of a large number who came to southern Africa under the auspices of the LMS, including some of the most illustrious names in mission history (e.g. Robert Moffat, David Livingstone). The LMS began life as an interdenominational society, pledged 'not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order and Government... but the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the Heathen.'

Ntsikana - the morning star of the Xhosa church During Van der Kemp's first abortive attempt to bring the gospel to the Xhosa in 1800, Ntsikana had heard the preaching of the missionary while a teen-age herd boy. Whatever further he might have heard about the gospel is uncertain, but round about the year 1815 he had a dramatic experience that was to change the course of his life. The main theme of Ntsikana's message seems to have been the greatness of God and the coming of Jesus to bring forgiveness of sins through his blood.

Anglicans. Robert Gray The first Anglican bishop, of high church sympathies. His clash with clergy of more low church and evangelical sympathies led to the formation of two Anglican bodies in SA.

Methodists

The first Methodist meetings in the Cape were held by some of the British soldiers stationed there. One of these, a Sergeant Kendrick, became well known for his spiritual zeal and

efforts to promote the gospel among his fellow soldiers. An earthquake in 1809 provoked a seriousness about religious matters, and Kendrick noted in his journal concerning the 83rd Regiment at Saldanha Bay: "The spark of grace soon began to catch from soul to soul. Prayer meetings now commenced among them and such a cry for mercy followed as is most wonderful. The room frequently has been so crowded that many have been unable to reach the door."

1816, **Barnabas Shaw** was the first Methodist minister to the Cape.

William Shaw William Shaw came with the British settlers of 1820. He dreamed of establishing a chain of mission stations along the coast from the Eastern Province to Natal, and the following list of stations with the date they were founded will show how far his dream was realized:

Wesleyville (1823) Mount Coke (1825) Butterworth (1827) Morley (1829) Clarkebury (1830) Buntingville (1830)

Presbyterians A group of Scottish soldiers stationed in the Cape formed a Calvinist Society in 1806, in which they met for Bible study and prayer. In 1812 they persuaded George Thom, an LMS missionary, to stay in the Cape and minister to them. It was he who formed the first Presbyterian church in southern Africa.

Lovedale Founded as a mission of the Glasgow Missionary Society (GMS) in 1824, the first decade of Lovedale's existence was stormy and precarious. Destroyed during the frontier war of 1834-5, it was later rebuilt. In 1841 a theological seminary was established at Lovedale with Dr. William Govan as its first principal. He continued to serve in that capacity for twenty-nine years.

Tiyo Soga In the days when Ntsikana was preaching, Ngqika, the Xhosa chief, sent one of his foremost counselors and warriors, Soga, to listen to him. Soga was impressed, and though never baptized, he became deeply sympathetic to the gospel, and most of his children were converted to Christianity. Tiyo was the seventh child of his chief wife, Nosuthu, a devout believer, who encourage her children to study. Tiyo went to Scotland, where he was baptized in 1848. He returned to South Africa towards the end of the same year. For a while Tiyo Soga worked as an interpreter and an evangelist teacher. But the outbreak of the 1850 border war again disrupted the work of the mission. In Port Elizabeth Tiyo was offered a job as a court interpreter with a good salary. An opportunity also arose for him to return to Scotland to study theology in preparation for the ministry.

The Cattle Killing Tragedy In 1856 a young girl, Nongquase, claimed to hear voices declaring apocalyptic events which would bring about the utter defeat of the whites and the restoration of the Xhosa people. To bring this about the people must slaughter all their livestock and destroy their grain in an act of faith. Her uncle, Mhlakaza, a renowned seer, supported and promoted her prophecies. Nongquase and her uncle Mhlakaza designated

18 February 1857 as the day of deliverance and restoration. Tragedy followed the slaughter of all livestock, starvation and and mass impoverishment.

Baptists The first Baptists to reach southern Africa arrived among the 1820 Settlers. They were few in number and without a minister. William Miller took the lead in holding the first Baptist services on South African soil under a tree in the Albany district.

In 1857 about 2 400 German soldiers who had fought for the British in the Crimean War were permitted to settle in the Eastern Cape. These were followed shortly afterwards by a larger group of north German immigrants. Among these German settlers were some Baptists who made application to Oncken in Germany for a minister. Johan Oncken, who can be considered the founder and apostle of Baptist work in Germany and eastern Europe, sent out to them in 1867 Hugo Gutsche, who became one of the most significant pioneers of Baptist work in South Africa.

Hugo Gutsche So effective was the work of Gutsche that at the time of the formation of the Baptist Union of South Africa in 1877 there were more German-speaking than English-speaking members

The first Afrikaans Baptist church was established in 1886 by J. D. Odendaal. At Frankfort he met Hugo Gutsche, who had arrived in the country only fourteen days previously, and was baptized by him

The Telegu Baptist Home Missionary Society sent **John Rangiah** to minister to Telegu Bapists in Natal.

Roman Catholics. Franz Pfanner and Mariannahill Born in the scenic Austrian Tyrol, Wendolin Pfanner studied philosophy at the Universities of Innsbruck and Padua. Becoming convinced of a vocation to the priesthood, he began theological studies in the seminary of Brixen in Austria. From the beginning, his heart was inclined to missionary work. 'As often as I recited the verse in the Miserere (prescribed in our rule for daily recitation), "I will teach the unjust Thy ways, and the wicked shall be converted to Thee," the yearning and desire to work in the badly neglected missions tormented me and gave me no rest,' he wrote in his memoirs. By 1898, with a community of 285 monks, Mariannahill had become the largest abbey in the world and the centre of a number of other extensions to other areas.

Robert Moffat A powerful spiritual breakthrough finally took place in 1829, shortly after the people began to give greater attention to the preaching of the gospel. Du Plessis describes the events as follows: "Without any apparent antecedent agency a wave of strong emotion broke over the inhabitants. They crowded the place of worship long before the service was timed to begin. Men, women and children were bathed in tears. Some would listen with intense earnestness to the tones of the preacher's voice, and then suddenly fall down in hysterics, or suffer themselves to be borne away in a state of extreme prostration. At all hours of the day the missionaries would be beset in their homes by numbers of anxious seekers after salvation. Those who had found peace would gather for prayer and praise, and

at early morn and late even the voice of rejoicing and salvation was heard in the tabernacles of the righteous.”

Moffat developed a friendship with Mzilikazi that was to last over thirty years.

By the 1850s Moffat had translated the entire Bible into Tswana and spent some time in England to see it through the press. It was during this time that David Livingstone heard him speak and felt inspired to come to Africa.

David Livingstone In many ways Livingstone was a failure. His preaching produced few converts. He lamented his neglect of his family and clashed with fellow missionaries. The Zambezi expedition he led and the Universities Mission he inspired were failures. Yet something of his indomitable spirit and his vision for an Africa truly liberated by the Gospel inspired thousands. He also influenced the British Government to take stronger measures to suppress the slave trade. The Sultan of Zanzibar was threatened with a naval blockade if he did not close his slave market forever. He complied, thirty-five days after Livingstone breathed his last while on his knees beside his bed in the heart of Africa.

The Great Trek Between 1835 and 1840 approximately 15 000 Afrikaners left the eastern frontier area of the Cape Colony and established their own states in the interior.

Daniel Lindley The son of a Presbyterian minister, Daniel Lindley was born in 1801 in Pennsylvania. His own ordination at the age of thirty was followed by two fruitful years of ministry in a Presbyterian church in North Carolina. Feeling a call to missionary service, Lindley and his wife were sent out to South Africa by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (often referred to as the American Board, or ABM) and arrived at Cape Town in 1835. At a time when relations between Boers, British and Zulu were marked by conflict, bloodshed and animosity, Lindley succeeded in gaining the respect and love of all three. To the Boers he became a Boer and to the Zulus a Zulu, understanding their peculiar customs and traditions with sympathy and insight. The little town of Lindley in the Free State was named after him.

The formation of two new Afrikaans Reformed churches By the year 1870, then, there were three separate bodies of Afrikaans Reformed churches in the Transvaal. The Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk, NHK) formed in 1853 as the established church of the Transvaal republic; The Reformed Church (Gereformeerde Kerk, GK) which split off from the Hervormde Church in 1859 as a more strictly confessional Reformed body, popularly known as the ‘Doppers’; The Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, NGK) which subsequently linked up with the Cape synod.

Andrew Murray The impact of Andrew Murray’s ministry on the church in South Africa is probably unparalleled by any other single figure in its history. Today his name is honoured in Reformed, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal and Charismatic circles. From his pen issued forth some 240 books and pamphlets, published in Dutch, English and Afrikaans. A few were published in up to fifteen languages and quite a number are still in print.

In 1848 both Andrew and John Murray were ordained at the Hague and returned to South Africa. Andrew was appointed to the Dutch Reformed congregation in Bloemfontein. At the age of twenty-one he found himself responsible for a parish covering an area of 50 000 square miles.

In 1860 Murray accepted a call to the church in Worcester which he served for four years. While Murray was there, a number of congregations in the Cape, chiefly Dutch Reformed and Methodist, experienced a remarkable religious revival.

Revival One Sunday evening at nearby Worcester, sixty young people were gathered in a hall in a prayer meeting led by J. C. de Vries, an assistant of Andrew Murray. Several had risen to announce the singing of a hymn and to offer prayer when a Fingo girl (a branch of the Xhosa people) asked if she might do the same. Permission granted after hesitation, the girl poured out a moving prayer. De Vries reported that while she was praying, a sound like that of approaching thunder was heard, coming closer and closer until it enveloped the hall, shaking the place. The company burst into prayer, a majority audibly, a minority in murmuring tones. Andrew Murray had just finished his evening services and, hearing of something unusual, hurried over to the hall to investigate. Finding everyone engaged in simultaneous prayer, he tried without success to quiet them. Disturbed by the apparent confusion he departed, exclaiming 'God is a God of order, and here everything is in confusion.' It was some time before Murray was convinced of the divine nature of the visitation. But in the following week Murray himself was leading a prayer meeting in the school when the same mysterious roll of approaching thunder was heard followed by an outburst of simultaneous prayer.

Charles Pamla The first black South African to be ordained to the Methodist ministry, Charles Pamla, fully shared in the zeal and spiritual fervour of the other early Methodist pioneers. Born in Butterworth in the Eastern Cape in 1834 to parents who had only recently been baptized into Christ, Charles Pamla received a Christian education and seems to have been religious from youth. While watching over his father's sheep, he studied his Bible and practised preaching to the trees. When he retired in 1913 it was claimed that 25 000 people had been converted as a result of his preaching. In 1916 he wrote: "Time would fail me to tell the wonders of God's grace which he has permitted me to see since the days when he called me to be a fellow worker with the reverend saint of God, Bishop Taylor. My own heart is full of wonder and thankfulness at the remembrance of all that my eyes have seen and my ears have heard. I am now a very old man, and in the quietness and in the peace of God, I am waiting for the coming of the chariots of my King, and I shall be caught up into heaven and see the face of His servant."

Doctrinal conflict in the Dutch Reformed Church Andrew Murray served as moderator of the DRC during this struggle and also personally undertook the defence of the church in the various court cases to which it was summoned.

Bishop Colenso In 1861 Colenso caused an even greater stir when he printed at Ekukanyeni a commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans in which he attacked the teaching of penal substitution, denying not only that Christ had died to placate an angry Father, but also that God has any righteous anger against sin at all. He also held that all men are justified in Christ from their very birth hour; baptism is merely a recognition and proclamation of this fact. Colenso proceeded to publish in 1862 the first part of a critical work on the Old Testament - *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined*. Convinced on the grounds of its bad arithmetic that the Old Testament could not be verbally inerrant, Colenso concluded that it was no more inspired than the words of 'Cicero, Lactantius, and the Sikh Gooroos.'

Ethiopianism The first church to have the word Ethiopian in its name was the *Ibandla laseTiyopiya* (Ethiopian Church) established by Mangena Mokone in 1892.

Lutherans The first Lutheran missionaries were sent by the **Rhenish Missionary Society** (RMS) and arrived in the Cape in 1829. The **Berlin Missionary Society** (BMS), founded in 1824, sent the largest number of Lutheran missionaries to South Africa. Another German Lutheran society that sent missionaries to South Africa was the **Hermannsburg Mission Society** (HMS), founded in 1849 by Ludwig Harms. The **Norwegian Mission Society** (NMS) was founded in 1842, drawing its inspiration in part from the work of Hans Nielsen Hauge, a farmer's son whose preaching had made a profound impact on Norway.

The Afrikaans period (1910-1994)

This period has seen the most extraordinary growth and diversification of the church in all its history. Four significant factors can be singled out as having had a profound impact on the development of modern South African Christianity:

- 1) The Pentecostal movement and the ongoing Charismatic movements following it
- 2) The rapid growth of the African instituted churches
- 3) The ecumenical movement, touching most of the mainline churches
- 4) The growing struggle for equal social and political rights for all people

Of the present 50 million inhabitants of South Africa, more than 70 per cent profess adherence to the Christian faith and would claim some sort of connection, however tenuous, to particular churches which would be numbered among one of the most complex arrays of churches to be found anywhere in the world. In addition to the traditional mainline churches, which still represent a very significant proportion of South African Christianity, there is a whole new generation of churches, movements, fellowships, and groupings that had no existence prior to the twentieth century. These would include:

- 1) The classical Pentecostal churches (e.g. Apostolic Faith Mission, Full Gospel Church, Assemblies of God, Pentecostal Protestant Church) which grew out of the Pentecostal movement at the beginning of the century.

2) Thousands of African instituted churches, each separately organized but bearing certain family characteristics and often with impressive sounding names (e.g. The Zion Christian Church, The Christian Catholic Apostolic African Church in Zion of South Africa, The Ethiopian African Church of Zion in South Africa).

3) New Charismatic groupings (e.g. International Fellowship of Christian Churches, Vineyard, His People, New Covenant Fellowship, Christian Ministries Network) which have emerged out of charismatic renewal movements in more recent decades.

The Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) This war proved to be the longest, costliest, bloodiest (at least 22 000 British, 34 000 Boer and 15 000 black lives) and most humiliating for Britain between 1815 and 1915. But the cost to South Africa was more than lives and property. It left a legacy of bitterness that was to stoke the fires of Afrikaner nationalism and sow the seeds of further racial strife. Its long shadow was to reach to the end of the twentieth century.

Prisoner-of-war camp revivals The British transported large numbers of prisoners-of-war to camps scattered throughout the British Empire, including Bermuda, St. Helena, India and Ceylon. Together with these prisoners went ministers of the Dutch Reformed Churches, sharing their imprisonment and ministering with the goodwill of the British military authorities. Remarkable religious awakenings occurred in these camps that deeply influenced the lives of many individual prisoners and had an impact on the subsequent religious and social history of South Africa.

Zion and Pentecostal beginnings John Alexander Dowie, one of the more eccentric products of the Holiness movement, was destined to have an unusual influence on South Africa. He became convinced of the practical message of divine healing and in 1874 started a publication, *Leaves of healing*. Leaving the Congregational Church in 1878, Dowie launched an independent ministry and in 1888 migrated to the USA where he eventually established Zion City just north of Chicago. This model community, in which pork, alcohol, tobacco and drugs were strictly prohibited, became the headquarters of Dowie's Christian Catholic Church in Zion (CCCZ), over which he ruled as 'Elijah III, the Restorer'.

In South Africa Dowie's *Leaves of healing* was eagerly read by those interested in the message of divine healing. These included Pieter L. le Roux, a Dutch Reformed missionary and disciple of Andrew Murray, Johannes Büchler, a Congregationalist pastor, and Edgar Mahon, a Salvation Army officer. In 1895 Büchler left the Congregationalists to found his own congregation which he called the Zion Church, and in 1897 he sought affiliation with the Christian Catholic Church in Zion. Edgar Mahon was healed after prayer by Büchler, who also developed a close friendship with Le Roux. In 1901 the DRC missionary commission found Le Roux guilty of rejecting doctors and medicines, pork, tobacco, and infant baptism. He and his wife resigned from the DRC in 1903 and continued as missionaries of the Zion Church in Wakkerstroom.

In 1904 Dowie sent Daniel Bryant to South Africa, having commissioned him as overseer of the CCCZ congregations there. Le Roux met him in Durban. Shortly thereafter, Le Roux, his wife, and about 140 black Zionists were baptized by three-fold immersion in a river outside Wakkerstroom. From the Wakkerstroom congregation came many future leaders of Zionist churches in South Africa, so that Wakkerstroom can be called the 'Jerusalem' of the *AmaZioni* of South Africa. Bryant ordained Le Roux as overseer of the CCCZ in Pretoria.

In 1908 two American Pentecostal missionaries, Thomas Hezmalhalch and John G. Lake, arrived in South Africa. Lake was formerly an elder in Dowie's Zion City and was acquainted with Seymour.

The Apostolic Faith Mission Founded by Lake and Hezmalhalch. An early member of the AFM, David du Plessis, achieved international renown as 'Mr. Pentecost,

The Full Gospel Church of God Archibald Cooper visited the Cape as a sailor in 1901 and decided to stay. Converted at a Gypsy Smith meeting, he joined a Presbyterian church for a while. He had been receiving the *Apostolic Papers* from Azusa Street, and a Pentecostal experience in 1907 led him to join Lake and the AFM in 1908. But after about a year, tensions with the other AFM leaders resulted in Cooper leaving that body.

In 1909 George Bowie, a Scottish immigrant to the USA, was sent by the Bethel Pentecostal Assembly of Newark, New Jersey, to South Africa, where he founded the 'Pentecostal Mission'. In 1910 Bowie and his colleague Eleazer Jenkins invited Cooper to join the Pentecostal Mission which eventually became the Full Gospel Church (FGC).

The FGC has the distinction of being the largest Christian denomination among the Indian population of South Africa

John Francis Rowlands. In October 1931 Rowlands moved to Durban, where he established the Bethesda Temple in Carlisle Street. This became the headquarters for the Indian work in South Africa with all branches being daughter churches of 'mother Bethesda' in order to encourage a family atmosphere.

When J.F. Rowlands was finally laid to rest in 1980, he left behind him a Christian community of more than 23 000 souls, the largest single Christian denomination among the Indian population of South Africa.

Assemblies of God. Nicholas Bhengu was attracted to Marxism as a youth and became an active worker in the Communist Part in Kimberley. In 1929 he attended a Full Gospel evangelistic crusade in Kimberley held by two American evangelists. There he surrendered his life to Christ.

From 1945 Bhengu began holding meetings in Port Elizabeth which were marked by 'changed lives, outstanding miracles of healing and the overflowing joy of the people.' Out of these meetings a local church began to grow,

In the same year he launched the 'Back to God Crusade' in East London. The results 'far exceeded what had happened in Port Elizabeth. Thousands attended the services which

were characterized by extraordinary power both in preaching and in healing. The whole of East London was moved.'

The impact of Bhengu's preaching was astonishing. In some areas where he ministered, the crime rate dropped by as much as one-third, and it was not unusual for people to respond to his messages by leaving their weapons and stolen goods in piles at his feet.

Further Pentecostal Movements and Churches Maria Fraser began to express criticisms of the AFM. Sin, she felt, was creeping increasingly into the movement. In 1927 she prophesied a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit within the AFM

'Latter Rain Assemblies' in Benoni has become a remarkable instance of Christian communal living, similar in many ways to that of the nineteenth-century Shakers in the USA.

J.H. Snyman protested that the fire of God was no longer burning brightly in the AFM and organized a conference in Benoni summoning the Pentecostal people to fan into flame again the fire from Heaven. Out of this protest was formed in 1958 the **Pentecostal Protestant Church**.

The African Instituted (or Independent) Churches

1917 Elias Mahlangu founded the Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa. Sometime between 1912 and 1920 Daniel Nkonyane, the most impressive among the early Zion leaders in the opinion of Sundkler, founded the Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion.

Edward Motaung and the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission Motaung (Sotho for 'lion person'), also known as Edward Lion and Edward of Basutoland, was one of Edgar Mahon's first converts. How he became a Pentecostal is not clear, but it appears that he met up with the AFM (and possibly with John G. Lake) in 1910. Motaung joined the AFM in 1912 and was given oversight of its work in Lesotho. Sundkler described him as 'the most spectacular of the Sotho Zionists of an earlier generation' and referred to his baptism of 130 converts in the Caledon River as 'the first mass baptism in that Sotho Jordan.'

Job Chiliza and the African Gospel Church

Engenas Lekganyane and the Zion Christian Church Lekganyane suffered from a serious eye disease for many years and related that he had a vision in which a voice told him that if he went to Johannesburg he should join the church that baptises by threefold immersion, and thus find healing. After arriving in that city in 1912, he joined the Zion Apostolic Church of Elias Mahlangu, who baptised him, resulting in healing for his eyes. At this early stage there was no difference between the ZAC and the AFM, as Mahlangu did not break with the white Pentecostals until about 1917. Even before his baptism by Mahlangu, Lekganyane might have met P.L. le Roux and later came to know him closely and received his preaching credentials from him.

1930 Lekganyane moved the centre of his operations to a farm he purchased about fifty kilometres east of Pietersburg. This became 'Moriah', the headquarters and spiritual centre

of the ZCC, the place where the faithful come together to celebrate and bring their gifts and offerings to the church every Easter.

Ma Nku and the Saint John Apostolic Faith Mission Christina Nku, known to her followers as Ma (Mother) Nku. Born in 1894, she grew up as a member of the Dutch Reformed Church. As a young girl she experienced various visions and dreams. While ill at the age of thirty, Christina became unconscious and had a vision of a large church with twelve doors (inspired, perhaps, by the vision of St. John in Rev. 21) and was told to follow the baptism of John and Jesus. She felt called by God to build the church of her vision. In that same year Christina and her husband were baptised in the Apostolic Faith Mission and became acquainted with P. L. le Roux. Le Roux objected to some of her more elaborate displays of prophetic rapture, however, and soon Ma Nku left the AFM to establish the St. John AFM.

Isaiah Shembe and the *ama-Nazaretha* When he was baptised in 1906 by W. M. Leshaga of the African Native Baptist Church (an offshoot of an African American Baptist mission to Natal begun in 1899), he was already famous as a healer. Immediately following his baptism Shembe was ordained a minister, and soon thereafter he led his followers to be baptised in the sea near Durban. In 1911 he broke with his Baptist Church over the Sabbath issue and started his own church, the *ama-Nazaretha* (Nazarites).

In keeping with the Old Testament ethos of the church, Shembe introduced circumcision, Sabbath-keeping and the prohibition of eating pork. Polygamy is sanctioned by the example of the Old Testament saints, and Shembe even declared that European monogamy was only the apostle Paul's invention. 'It was Paul's legislation, but not God's. Had not God said: *Zalani nande* (Be fruitful and multiply...)'

The Ecumenical Movement The strongly evangelistic and missionary emphasis of the ecumenical movement in its early days became increasingly replaced by concerns for social and political justice. This change of emphasis alienated a number of conservative evangelicals and has led to a new polarization in the Christian world, between 'evangelicals' and 'ecumenicals'. This tension has been felt in an acute way in South Africa.

The rise of apartheid How could the principles of democracy and Afrikaner self-rule both be maintained? The answer was clear - a radical separation of the people of South Africa into particular 'nations', each to govern itself in its own territory (like the peoples of Europe, it was argued, divided into autonomous national states.)

The development of the Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA) and the growing rift between Afrikaans and English churches

The Federal Mission Council (FMC) of the DRC and its efforts to devise a just racial policy

On 6 April 1952 the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress jointly launched the Defiance Campaign. They rejected segregation and the pass system and called on the authorities to stop introducing apartheid legislation. One of the leaders of the

Defiance Campaign, Albert Luthuli, was dismissed by the government as chief of his tribe. The guiding influence of Luthuli's personal Christian faith is displayed in his response: 'I try ... in a spirit of trust and surrender to God's will as I see it, to say: "God will provide." It is inevitable that in working for freedom some individuals and some families must take the lead and suffer. The Road to Freedom is via the Cross.'ⁱ

Even in Afrikaans-speaking and Dutch Reformed circles there were voices that questioned the FMC policy of segregation and the social separation of the races. In 1952 Ben Marais, professor of church history at the University of Pretoria, published *Die Kleurkrisis in die Weste (Colour: the Unsolved Problem of the West)* in which he rejected the arguments based on Scripture as support for the policy of segregation.

Sharpeville and Cottesloe 21 March 1960 a crowd estimated at between 3 000 and 5 000 gathered to protest outside the police station at Sharpeville, a black township near Vereeniging, south of Johannesburg. When a portion of the fence surrounding the police station was broken and some stones were thrown, the police panicked and opened fire. Sixty-nine people, mainly women, were killed and about 180 wounded. The incident provoked outrage throughout the country and the world. The Government declared a state of emergency. The ANC and the PAC were banned. Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela and Robert Sobukwe along with thousands of their supporters were arrested.

A consultation took place in Cottesloe, a suburb of Johannesburg, from December 7 to 14, 1960. The Cottesloe Declaration alarmed Verwoerd, who perceived it as an attempt to undermine the support of the DRC for the National Party government. 'Any form of political multi-racialism or so-called partnership,' declared Verwoerd, 'would ultimately deprive the white man of his rightful heritage.'ⁱⁱ Conservatives within the DRC played upon the fears and prejudices of its white members. As a result Cottesloe and its conclusions were rejected by the various DRC synods which, together with the Hervormde Church, withdrew from the WCC. The decades following Sharpeville and Cottesloe were to see growing conflict, violence, repression and hostility. Outstanding Christian leaders such as Albert Luthuli, Beyers Naudé and Z. K. Matthews found themselves in the wilderness.

Albert Luthuli Luthuli became president of the Natal branch of the ANC, and in 1952 the Native Affairs Department demanded that he resign either from the ANC or from the Groutville chieftainship. When he refused to do either, the government deprived him of the latter office. In December 1952 the National Conference of the ANC elected him its President-General by a huge majority. Despite his policy of moderation and non-violence, Luthuli was restricted in 1952 to the Lower Tugela district for two years; this banning order was extended for a further two years in 1954. In 1956 he was arrested with 155 others and charged with high treason.

Luthuli's policies of non-violence and collaboration with people of all races brought him into disfavour with the more radical Africanist faction of the ANC which eventually broke away under the leadership of Robert Sobukwe to form the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC).

Z. K. Matthews In 1930 he became the first African to obtain a Bachelor of Laws from the University of South Africa. Matthews subsequently travelled to the United States of America and in 1934 was awarded a Master of Arts at Yale University.

Beyers Naudé A few *bittereinders* after the Boer War vowed never to surrender their arms, including Jozua Naudé, the DRC minister who later became the father of Beyers Naudé. General Jan Smuts himself pleaded in vain with the influential pastor to accept the peace. Jozua was always to regard Jan Smuts a traitor to the Afrikaner cause. It was in this environment of intense Afrikaner nationalism that Beyers Naudé spent his formative years. But Beyers Naudé was beginning to entertain serious doubts about the apartheid policy of his government and his church. In 1952 Ben Marais was senior minister to Naudé in a Pretoria congregation when Marais's book *Die Kleur Krisis en die Weste (Colour, the Unsolved Problem of the West)* appeared.

When the Cottesloe conference was called to help the churches deal with the crisis that followed the Sharpeville shootings in 1960, Beyers Naudé was one of the representatives of the Transvaal Synod of the DRC. He was excited by the depth of fellowship and unity experienced by the delegates at Cottesloe, and it was the memorandum brought by his church that made an influential contribution to the final document produced by Cottesloe.

In 1963 the Christian Institute (CI) was launched with the aim of pursuing the ecumenical dialogue which had been started by Cottesloe. When Naudé was forced to choose between the post of director of the CI and retaining his ministerial status in the church, he chose the former.

After the Soweto riots of 1976 the political situation deteriorated even further, and in 1977 the government banned the CI, *Pro Veritate* and Beyers Naudé, along with other persons, organs and institutions.

William Duma From his earliest years, Duma evinced a deep seriousness concerning the things of God. He was troubled with continual ill health, and at the age of twenty he decided to fast and pray for seven days. During these days his dominant desire to be healed was replaced by a greater longing - that God himself should be the utmost fullness of his desire. At midnight on the seventh day of the fast, unhealed, he arose to pray. Some time later he felt a touch on his head and knew it as the finger of God. Prayer and fasting became hallmarks of Duma's personal spiritual life.

1939 Duma was inducted to the pastorate of the Umgeni Road Baptist Church.

Duma's ministry was characterized by powerful encounters with sin, sickness and Satan in the realm of the supernatural.

The struggle intensifies The SACC came into the limelight with the publication of its *Message to the People of South Africa*. Influential in preparing the text of the *Message* were Bill Burnett and Beyers Naudé who had attended the 1966 WCC Conference on Church and Society.

The *Message* declared apartheid to be incompatible with the gospel of the Jesus Christ. It affirmed that 'in Christ God has broken down the walls of division between God and man,

and therefore also between man and man.' *The Message* claimed that 'excluding barriers of ancestry, race, nationality, language and culture have no rightful place in the inclusive brotherhood of Christian disciples.'

Tensions were heightened even further when the WCC began to support financially liberation movements engaged in armed struggle against the South African government.

The SACC, during its 1974 annual national conference at Hammanskraal, north of Pretoria, raised the issue of Conscientious Objection.

In 1978 Desmond Tutu became the first black person to be elected general secretary of the SACC, a position he held for seven years. With so many opponents of the government either banned or in prison, Tutu and the SACC felt that they had the moral obligation to speak out for those who had no voice or who had been silenced. So during this critical period the SACC became a leading vehicle of opposition to apartheid, and Tutu, along with Nelson Mandela who was in prison, the most famous symbols of resistance to it.

In September 1985 *The Kairos Document* was released by the Ecumenical Institute of Contextual Theology and signed by many Christians and church leaders. In a searing indictment it condemned the state and all who supported it and demanded that Christians take sides on behalf of the oppressed and those seeking to liberate them. It rejected as blasphemous the following reference to God in the preamble to P.W. Botha's new constitution: 'In humble submission to Almighty God, who controls the destinies of nations and the history of peoples, who gathered our forebears together from many lands and gave them this their own.' 'This god', claimed *The Kairos Document*, 'is an idol':

A more conciliatory note was taken by the **National Initiative for Reconciliation**, launched in September 1985 under the auspices of **Africa Enterprise (AE)**, one of the few South African organisations able to combine the social concern of the ecumenical movement and the evangelistic zeal of Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Michael Cassidy, who founded AE in 1962, grew up in Lesotho and attended a private school in Natal. While at the University of Cambridge in 1955, a question posed by a friend concerning his relationship to Jesus Christ brought Cassidy to an experience of conversion and new birth in Christ.

By the middle of the 1980s a growing chorus of voices were calling on the government for radical change. These emanated not only from the SACC and the international community, but also from an increasing number of DRC ministers and other conservative churches not normally given to making political statements. The Baptist Union, for example, at its annual assembly in 1985 agreed to send a letter to the State President in which, after assuring him that they were praying for him and for all those 'who share with you the responsibility under God of directing the affairs of our land,' requested that 'the whole structure of apartheid be dismantled as a matter of extreme urgency.'

The newer charismatic churches

Edmund Roebert became the pastor of the small Hatfield Baptist Church in Pretoria.

Another independent charismatic congregation that was to grow even larger than the Hatfield Christian Church was the Rhema Bible Church, founded by Ray McCauley.

In 1985 Ed Roebert called a meeting of church leaders in Durban to consider possible ways of cooperation. It was decided to form the *International Fellowship of Christian Churches* (IFCC).

By November 1988, the IFCC claimed a membership of 493 congregations and ministries, representing a community of about 270 000 members

The IFCC is certainly not the only fellowship of independent charismatic churches in South Africa. Other, smaller, cooperative groups of churches with a charismatic ethos have emerged: Christian Fellowships International, founded by Fred Roberts; Foundation Ministries, established by Derek Crumpton; and New Covenant Ministries, led by Dudley Daniels. A student Christian movement in Cape Town, His People, expanded to become a rapidly growing cluster of churches with extensions overseas. Still other associations have their origin outside South Africa, such as the Association of Vineyard Churches, originally established by John Wimber in the USA, and New Frontiers, a fellowship of churches with British links.

The collapse of apartheid Johan Heyns, who signed the 1980 'Reformation Day Witness', was elected moderator of the general synod of the DRC in Cape Town in 1986. During this synod the church adopted the *Church and Society* document in which DRC finally and officially withdrew its support of apartheid. "concerning the policy, which has become known as apartheid, the conviction has gradually grown that a forced separation and division of peoples cannot be considered a biblical imperative. The attempt to justify such an injunction as derived from the Bible, must be recognised as an error and be rejected."

In February 1990, De Klerk stunned the country and the world when he announced the unbanning of the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress and the Communist Party. Nelson Mandela and many other leading political prisoners were released, and De Klerk pledged to work together with them towards a new constitution and a democratically elected government.

To what extent national political leaders were influenced by appeals coming from the 230 church leaders from eighty denominations and forty para-church organizations who met at Rustenburg is difficult to tell. But the conference was at least an important link in the extraordinary chain of events leading to the establishment of a new South Africa.

The modern period (1994-present)
