

**CHURCH PLANTING IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN
INDIAN COMMUNITY, WITH REFERENCE TO THE
REFORMED CHURCH IN AFRICA**

by

Petrus Johannes Perold de Beer

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree

Doctor Philosophiae (Ph.D)

In the Department of Missiology
Faculty of Theology
University of Pretoria

Promoter: Prof Dr P G J Meiring

Submitted: April 2010



“You are not your own,
you were bought at a price.”
(1 Cor 6:19-20)

To Marietha

The “romance” of a missionary is often made up of monotony and drudgery; there often is no glamour in it; it doesn’t stir a man’s spirit or blood. So don’t come out to be a missionary as an experiment, it is useless and dangerous. Only come if you feel you would rather die than not come. Lord Wolsey was right: “A missionary ought to be a fanatic or he encumbers the ground”. Come if you feel there is no greater honour, after living for Christ, than to die for Him.

C T Studd

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Upon the completion of this dissertation the overpowering emotion is one of deep thankfulness. The goodness of God and his gracious undertaking with his church in a world of many religions has left one with speechless admiration: How great is God!

I regard it a great privilege that I could write a first history of the life and mission of one of the youngest churches of the Dutch Reformed Family of Churches.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the following:

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My wife, Marietha and family for their inspiration and sacrifice.

Above all I am forever indebted to God, my Saviour Christ Jesus, for grace undeserving.

PREFACE

In 1956 the DRC invited the renowned Dr Oswald J Smith from the People's Church in Toronto, Canada, to conduct evangelistic services in South Africa. I was seated in the top gallery of the Bosman Street Dutch Reformed church in Pretoria when I heard this anointed servant of God speak on the incident when Jesus took the meagre meal of bread and fish from the little boy, prayed and then had it passed on to all present. 'What would have happened,' asked Dr Smith 'if Jesus only served the first three rows and then began again and again with the first row?' 'Surely' he said 'the people in the back rows would have shouted, 'and what about us?' It was then that I realized what God was saying to me: 'Go share the Gospel to the neglected Hindu and Muslim people in South Africa. You give them something to eat. That unforgettable Sunday evening my whole life changed and I never looked back again. Dr Smith's watchword rings in my ears to this day: 'Why should anybody hear the Gospel twice before everybody heard it at least once?'

I made my first acquaintance with the Hindu and Muslim community in South Africa when the local minister, Rev J P W de Vries of the DRC Hartbeespruit, Pretoria shared with our youth group his heart-felt concern for the Indian folk of Marabastad.

When I saw the physical and spiritual plight of the community, my heart broke. That was 10 June 1956.

Prof A van Selms who taught Semitic Languages at the Pretoria University lived just down the road from where I stayed with my parents. He offered to teach us the religion of Islam at my parent's home. Once a week we sat glued to our seats as he passed on his unsurpassed knowledge of Islam.

My first congregation was the DRC of Adelaide in the Eastern Cape. Though I simultaneously received a call to pioneer missions among Indian people in Northern Transvaal, I decided to decline the call. Two years later I was called again and this was the opportune time to accept the call. I was inducted in a tent

erected on the Church site in Laudium, Pretoria.

At that time the work in Laudium was part of the Transvaal congregation, with preaching stations in Benoni and Lenasia. My colleagues were Dr C du P le Roux in Benoni and Prof C J A Greyling in Lenasia. The work in Laudium prospered and a beautiful church building was erected at 261 Jewel Street. Funds were obtained through the selling of Christmas cards by the young people of the 'KJA Indiërsending'. Through the tremendous efforts of Mrs Katie du Toit (Prof H D A du Toit's wife) funds were generated for the church building.

On the 29th of October 1972 the foundation stone was laid and the Charisma congregation established.

I was privileged to serve the following congregations:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | NGK Adelaide (Eastern Cape) | 1964 – 1965 |
| 2. | IRC Transvaal (Pretoria) | 1966 – 1971 |
| 3. | RCA Charisma (Pretoria) | 1972 – 1979 |
| 4. | RCA Emmanuel (Durban) | 1979 – 1981 |
| 5. | RCA Jeshurun (Durban) | 1981 – 1991 |
| 6. | RCA Charisma (Pretoria) | 1991 – 2004 |

OVERVIEW

The spice route around the Cape of Good Hope established links between the refreshment station in the Cape and India. This foreshadowed the official involvement between South Africa and India. By 1700 up to 50% of the slaves in the Cape were of Indian descent.

As early as the 17th century, the DRC had been involved in outreach work to the Muslim community in the Cape. It took a considerable length of time after the Indians had settled in Natal in 1860, however, before the DRC became involved in this new field. It was only in 1946 that the church officially began mission work among the Indian people and more specifically the Hindus. A number of factors however hampered the outreach work, such as political antipathy, the English language, fear of economic competition, the foreign culture, and their religion.

The Mission Boards of the DRC, in time, acquired not only the necessary funds, but also the manpower for the task. In the sixties they commenced to work in Natal, as well as in the Cape and Transvaal. A number of important issues landed on the desk of the Mission Board, such as membership of ministers, the form of baptism, the period of catechism for older believers, aspects of organizational questions regarding the formation of a new church, the training of evangelists and ministers, and a church order for the newly established church.

The first missionaries, being pioneers in the work among the Indian people, were all white ministers either from the DRC, the DRC Missions Church (NGSK) or the DRC Church in Africa (NGKA). These early missionaries were determined to ensure that the Gospel was brought to this neglected community in a clear and forceful way. The challenges involved were obviously enormous.

The first evangelists were all Indians and by and large workers belonging to other churches. The appointment of evangelists proved to be a great asset. As co-workers of the missionaries, they opened doors to Hindu homes that would have been closed to the foreign missionaries.

By 1962 four congregations had been established and in 1968 the Indian Reformed Church was formed. Two years later the use of evangelists in the IRC was discontinued. Six years later the name of the church was changed to 'Reformed Church in Africa', establishing the church as an open community. Strong resolutions were taken against any form of racism. The church was now established as an open church where all races would be welcome. In the seventies it was the RCA that took the initiative to call upon the NG Kerk, the NG Kerk in Afrika and the NG Sendingkerk to consider possible unification. The RCA remained strongly focussed on reaching Muslims and Hindus.

The resolution of the WARC in 1982 to suspend the NGK and the denouncement of apartheid as heresy by certain members of the RCA led to a serious confrontation with the NGK and a schism in the RCA.

The reconstruction of the RCA began in 1986 and in 1990 the RCA adopted the Laudium Declaration, affirming that the church was Reformed, and an Evangelical Reformed Church. A period of remarkable rebuilding and growth ensued. The Laudium Declaration became the hallmark of the RCA. The specific reformed, evangelical and mission orientated qualities had to be met. Evangelists were again trained and sent out.

The RCA offers important insights to all believers in a pluralistic community. In spite of a flood of liberal theological thinking, the RCA holds zealously to her Reformed Evangelical position as expressed in the Laudium Declaration.

ABBREVIATIONS

AFM	-	Apostolic Faith Movement
ASSK	-	Algemene Sinodale Sendingkommissie
CMS	-	Church Missionary Society
CCLI	-	Christian Copyright Licensing International
DRC	-	Dutch Reformed Church
DRCA	-	Dutch Reformed Church in Africa
DRMC	-	Dutch Reformed Mission Church
DRIC	-	Dutch Reformed Indian Church
EEIC	-	English East Indian Company
GSMC	-	General Synodical Missions Committee
IRC	-	Indian Reformed Church
IMC	-	Indian Mission Committee
KJV	-	Kerkjeugvereniging
KJA	-	Kerkjeugaksie (Church Youth Movement)
LD	-	Laudium Declaration
LMS	-	London Missionary Society
MYM	-	Muslim Youth Movement
NGK	-	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (DRC)
NGKA	-	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (DRCA)
NGSK	-	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk (DRMC)
N-Tvl	-	Northern Transvaal
RCA	-	Reformed Church in Africa
RES	-	Reformed Ecumenical Synod
REC	-	Reformed Ecumenical Council
SSK	-	Sinodale Sending Kommissie
SACC	-	South African Council of Churches
SC	-	Synodical Committee
S-Tvl	-	Southern Transvaal
SSBD	-	Sentrale Sendingbestuur van Durban
SAGM	-	South African General Mission
SANSSA	-	South African National Sunday School Association
UTM	-	Universal Truth Movement
URC	-	Uniting Reformed Church

- UDW - University Durban Westville
- URCSA - Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa
- WARC - World Alliance of Reformed Churches
- YMMA - Young Men's Muslim Association



RCA Church, Laudium

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