

Chapter 3

The Beginnings and Development of Indian Baptist Work in South Africa

The previous chapter traced the origins and development of Baptist missions globally. It provided a brief overview of Christian mission and examined the role of important persons and organizations in the Baptist global missionary enterprise. It highlighted important individuals and the various mission organizations. Finally, it provided a historical overview of five South African Baptist organizations, namely, The Baptist Association of South Africa, The Baptist Mission of South Africa, the Baptist Convention of South Africa, the Afrikanse Baptiste Kerk and the Baptist Union of South Africa. Chapter 3 has three sections. Section A will discuss more specifically the history of the Baptist Association of South Africa, including its beginnings. John Rangiah, the son of a Hindu priest named T. Rangiah who converted to Christianity, became the pioneer missionary of the Indian Baptist work in South Africa. It will also take into account the historical events in the United States of America and how these events influenced the formation of the Baptist Association of South Africa. In section B I will provide a description of Rangiah's understanding of the Bible and Bible themes; provide the basic elements which influenced this church in South Africa; and will also provide insight with regards to socio-political questions. Additionally, the study will analyze the impact of the Bible and Biblical themes on his theology and on the Indian Baptist Church in South Africa. Section C will study the contributions of women and other Indian Baptists. In this chapter the study will attempt to answer two key research questions: What was the significance of the work of the three Indian born missionaries to the Baptist Association of South Africa and what were the roles women play in this organization?

Section A

The history of the Baptist Association of South Africa, as stated earlier in this study, was not fully chronicled due to the dominance of the history by white Baptists, which overshadowed the history of people of colour. Additionally, the little space that was accorded to Indian Baptists in significant academic narratives was largely written and interpreted by non-Indians. This chapter specifically will provide an “inside” recording and interpretation of this narrative. This chapter will answer the key research question, Why is the history of the BASA important to the history of Christian missions in South Africa? It will show that this narrative stands on its own and is not viewed from the perspective of the Baptist Union of South Africa. Moroka Humphrey Mogashoa, in his doctoral dissertation, *Baptist Finance Matters*, also contends that most Baptist historians rely heavily on Hudson Reed’s recording of Baptist history in South Africa. This research, however, begins with the early days of the Baptist Association of South Africa, which contain significant and expanded data omitted from Hudson-Reed’s works.

The formation of the Baptist Association of South Africa Church was preceded by a very crucial board meeting of the Missionary Union in New York in 1853. At this meeting the mission work among the Telugus was discussed. A brief account of this is included in this chapter. Chapter 3 will also provide a description of Rangiah’s understanding of the Bible and Bible themes that shaped and informed his ministry in South Africa. The significance of this focus will reveal the basic elements that influenced this church in South Africa and will also provide insight with regard to cultural and socio-political questions. On this level, the study will analyze the impact

of the Bible and Biblical themes on Rangiah's work and on the Baptist Association of South Africa in South Africa. The contributions of other members of the Baptist Association of South Africa, including women, will be studied as well. The meeting of the Missionary Union in New York provides a context for the early beginnings of the Baptist Association of South Africa Church in South Africa.

3.1 Missionary Union, 1853

Little did anyone realize the significance that the historical development of the mission work in India would have on mission in South Africa. The year 1853 was a critical period in the history of the Telugu mission in India. After seventeen years of American Baptist mission work among the Telugus in India, its viability came under review at a Missionary Union meeting in Albany, New York. The reports from missionaries in India were not very positive. However, the Missionary Union learned that the mission field had much potential, the missionaries had acquired the language, and there were a few converts as a result of the witness of these missionaries. On the other hand, the progress made was very small and this work could be handed over to other mission agencies (Downie 1928:46).

This possible closure of the Telugu mission in India was referred to a board; a proposition was made that a letter be written to Dr. Jewett, the American Baptist missionary in India, requesting that he close the mission and relocate to another mission in Burma. There was reluctance from the secretary to write this letter to Dr. Jewett, and eventually he refused to do so. Later that day, when the Telugu Mission was discussed by the board, one of the speakers, in the course of his address,

turned to the mission map which hung on the wall, pointing to Nellore, the location where the Telugu Mission was established. The speaker called it the “Lone Star,” as this was just one lonely mission in India.

The Rev. S.F. Smith, author of the *National Hymn*, was present at this meeting, and before going to bed that night he wrote, as recorded by David Downie (1928:47), the following lines:

The Lone Star

Shine on, “Lone Star!” Thy radiance bright
Shall spread o’er all the eastern sky;
More breaks apace from gloom and night;
Shine on, and bless the pilgrim’s eye.

Shine on, “Lone Star!” I would not dim
The light that gleams with dubious ray;
The lonely star of Bethlehem
Led on a bright and glorious day.

Shine on, “Lone Star!” in grief and tears,
And sad reverse oft baptized;
Shine on amid thy sister spheres;
Lone stars in heaven are not despised.

Shine on, “Lone Star!” Who lifts his hands
To dash to earth so bright a gem,
A new “lost plead” from the band
That sparkles in night’s diadem?

Shine on, “Lone Star!” The day draws near
When none shall shine more fair than thou;
Thou, born and nursed in doubt and fear
Wilt glitter on Immanuel’s brow.

Shine on, “Lone Star!” till earth redeemed,
In dust shall bid its idols fall;
And thousands, where thy radiance beamed
Shall “crown the Saviour, Lord of all.”

The following day this poem was read at the board meeting. Many wept and sobbed

during the reading, and whatever doubt the board had about the viability of the Telugu mission in India vanished. The board unanimously voted to reinforce the mission. Little did the board realize that this mission among the Telugus would someday have global implications for mission. The Baptist Association of South Africa churches in South Africa are indebted to the Dr. S. F. Smith for his contribution to the history of the Telugu Mission in India. The poem cited above is an important part of the history of the Baptist Association of South Africa (Downie 1928:47).

The work among the Telugus by the American Baptist missionaries grew. One of the most significant developments of their work was the initiative of the Telugus in establishing their own missionary organization called the Telugu Home Missionary Society. In 1897 this indigenous mission agency was established, 44 years after the Telugu mission was almost closed by the American Mission Union (Rangiah 1905:1). Their vision included the sending of their own indigenous missionary to another country. Rangiah (1905:1) described the economic status of these Telugu-speaking Christians as being extremely poor. Many of them earning only a few pence a day decided in faith to participate in a global mission enterprise by sending one of their own to the then Natal province as a missionary. The NIBA News (1953:9) reported, *“The Lone Star Church at Nellore was the happiest of them all, it was sending one of its cherished sons as the first Indian Baptist Missionary to a distant field.”* It was this same church that the American Missionary Union board almost closed in 1853. Almost 49 years later the significance of the decision to allow the church in Nellore, India bore fruit. Another continent was impacted as a result of that decision.

It is against this background that the Telugu Home Missionary Society sent a

missionary family to Natal, South Africa to provide spiritual services to the indentured Baptist labourers. During the year 1900, hundreds of Indian indentured labourers came to South Africa; among them were about 150 Baptist Christians from Madras, India. These labourers came in response to the British authorities in Natal for Indians from India to enter into contract to provide labour to the sugar and tea estate industries. According to the *Natal Mercury*, dated 22 November 1860, among this group were mechanics, household servants, domestics, gardeners and trades people. There were also bankers, carpenters and accountants amongst them. Many of the labourers were dispatched to the tea estates of Kearsney on the North Coast of Natal. Kearsney became a significant place where Telugus established themselves under the leadership of John Rangiah.

The history of the Telugu Baptist Church in South Africa, with its founder John Rangiah, includes its early beginnings and its relationship with the American Baptist Church Foreign Mission Society in India. John Rangiah corresponded with the Society, providing it with progress of the work in South Africa among the Telugus, sharing the needs of its ministry as well as expressing thanks for the prayer support given by the Society to this mission.

3.2 Telugu Baptists request assistance for a Baptist minister from India

The owners of the tea estates, the Huletts, sought the assistance of the Wesleyan missionaries for the spiritual needs of their indentured labourers. These labourers spoke very little English. Soon, language and denominational problems emerged and the Telugus found it challenging relating to these Wesleyan missionaries. The

Baptist Indians expressed the desire to have a Telugu Baptist Minister. In the meantime, the Telugu Church in South India planned on sending out missionaries of its own. One of the countries on their list was South Africa.

Here, it is worth reflecting on the great stride the indigenous Indians made in sending a missionary to South Africa. Both the sending Mission Society as well as the respondent to the missionary call must be commended. Given the economic status of these indigenous Christians and the uncertainty of life in Africa at that time, the Telugu people committed themselves to world mission. In 1903, Rev. John Rangiah and his family accepted the invitation to go to South Africa to work among the Telugu Indians (The NIBA News 1953: 10).

3.2.1 Rev. John Rangiah

Finette Jewett (1898:49) wrote about John Rangiah's father's eagerness to receive education. John's father, T. Rangiah, would consistently arrive at the American Baptist School in Nellore requesting the opportunity to learn. The Lymans, who were American Baptist missionaries in India, granted this request and recognized that T. Rangiah was a very diligent student. Consequently he was employed as a student tutor to others at the school. During his association with the American Baptist missionaries in Nellore, T. Rangiah converted to Christianity and later became the pastor of the Madras Baptist Church. T. Rangiah had four sons, one of whom was John Rangiah, and all of them were ministers.

There are no records of who was responsible for John Rangiah's conversion. American Baptists were probably instrumental in his conversion. However, Rangiah (1905:1) states that in the then Madras Presidency the Christians owed their conversion to the work of the American and Canadian missions. It seems that John spent much of his boyhood around American Baptist missionaries. As a young man he took an active part in Christian ministry. He served as a Sunday School teacher, Sunday School superintendent, Lay preacher, evangelist, treasurer and deacon. Rangiah also served as headmaster of the Nellore Boy's School from 1897-1900 and of the Nellore Girl's School from 1901-1903. On 20th April 1903, he was ordained as a minister of the Lone Star Baptist Church (NIBA 1953:10).

Mrs. Lyman Jewett (1913: 1-6)) wrote an article in a journal entitled *John Rangiah, The First Telugu Foreign Missionary* in which she records the life of Rangiah while in India and his work in South Africa. She provides a background of Rangiah's parents and their conversion to Christianity. Lyman describes Rangiah's commitment to the Christian faith and more specifically to his personal life. She wrote (1913: 4) about Rangiah's prayer request which he shared at his ordination service. He requested that the audience pray that he would not be proud, as he was the first foreign missionary and so many kind words were spoken of him. Layman further refers to the positive comments of two important leaders about Rangiah's work in South Africa. One is of David Downie and the other is a response from Dr. McLaurin, a professor at the Ramapatam Seminary in India. Dr. McLaurin shared the good work of Rangiah's ministry in South Africa, stating that it "*has given a mighty impetus to the revival spirit in the seminary at Ramapatnam, and we shall extend it, if possible, into every church.*"

When the request for a missionary was received from South Africa, Rev. John Rangiah, after much prayer, accepted this invitation to be the first missionary of the Telugu Baptist Home Mission Society.

The NIBA News (1953:9) describes Rangiah's vision that confirmed his missionary call to Natal, South Africa. On 24 January 1903, he had a vision where he saw two angels who comforted him with the words, "*We have been praying to the Lord for the past few years ... that He may send a Telugu preacher and today He has provided one for us.*" The angels then handed him Bibles. Rangiah describes this experience as "glorious." He was greatly encouraged by this experience.

In examining Rangiah's vision, the questions are, "What was the significance of this vision?" and "Are they vehicles through which God may reveal His will?" Diane S. Dew (1997) writing on *Visions and Dreams* provides insights into dreams and visions. She states that it must be recognized that God has spoken and revealed Himself to humans through dreams and visions. She refers to Numbers 12:6 and Jeremiah 23:28. These two texts support her view of God's revelation to man through dreams and visions. Additionally, she contends that the authenticity and source of a dream or vision may be determined when one recognizes who it is that receives the glory for it. Here, too, she supports her view with scriptural texts in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and Daniel 2:19-23. She clearly refers to Daniel giving praise to God. Finally, she states that there are specific purposes for visions. According to her, visions are also for assurance, encouragement, and comfort. She cites Genesis 15:1; 28:12-17; 46:2 and Acts 18:9-11. Dew also states that visions give direction, instruction, and guidance. According to Dew the following Biblical texts are referred

to with regards to the purposes of a vision: Genesis 46:2, Job 33:15-18, Matthew 1:20, 24; 2:12, 13, 19 and Acts 9:10-12. There are other reasons for visions, which she discusses but for the purpose of this study, they are not relevant (Dew 1997:1).

Rangiah's vision does reflect Dew's understanding of this phenomenon. After the vision he praised God. The NIBA News (1953:9) recorded his response, "Praise be to the Lord." He also felt encouraged and was assured of the direction he needed to take with regards to his ministry. This clear direction that was communicated to him in a vision gave him the encouragement to undertake this mission to South Africa. Rangiah, his wife, Kanakamma and two children, Manoharam and Premaleelah, left India for South Africa.

Rev. Rangiah described this journey by ship to South Africa.

"I, with my wife and two children, left Nellore on the 9th May 1903, and on 11th took passage by the steamer 'Safari'. After just a month, i.e. on the 11 of June, we arrived at Port Natal and found shelter at the mission house of the South African General Mission" (Rangiah 1905:1).

Rev. Rangiah (1905:1) continued by relating one of his earliest experiences upon arrival in South Africa. He was requested to visit a prisoner at a prison in Durban where the prisoner was waiting to be hanged. Rev. Rangiah spent an entire month visiting this condemned man. Rangiah presented the Christian faith to him. It is recorded (Rangiah 1905:1) that moments before his hanging the prisoner remarked: "I go to the refuge at the feet of the Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Rev. Tomlinson, a white minister of the South African General Mission (SAGM) took Rangiah to Phoenix, Durban, Duffs Road, and Verulam, where he ministered to Indians. The SAGM attempted to persuade Rangiah to work with this mission

organization. However, Rangiah felt that his obligation was to the Telugus from Kearsney. He discussed with Mr. Walton of the SAGM his decision to go to Kearsney as well as his vision of starting the Telugu Baptist Mission. A short while later, Rangiah felt the need to go to the people of Kearsney, firstly because it was at their request that he was sent to South Africa, and secondly to advance his vision of the Telugu Baptist Mission. The SAGM suggested to Rangiah that the Telugu Baptist Mission be brought under the control of the SAGM. The SAGM promised to supplement his salary. After prayerful consideration Rangiah wrote to the SAGM and informed them that he could not join the SAGM. He cited two reasons. First, the Telugu Baptist Home Mission Society of India had sent him to Natal and had not given permission to join with the SAGM; neither was it in their interest to hand over the work to this organization. Second, for the little extra financial assistance and other material benefits, Rangiah would not like to be instrumental in dampening the enthusiasm and interest so far shown by the Home Mission Society in the Natal work. Rangiah was committed to the Telugu work in Natal and set out to Kearsney to begin his mission.

At Kearsney, the Huletts, owners of the Kearsney Tea Estate, received the Rangiahs warmly. Sir Liege Hulett was greatly touched by the humility of the Rangiahs and their devotion to God. He gave them a large house on his property. The generosity of the Huletts moved Rangiah, who expressed great thanks to God, saying, "He raiseth up the poor of the dust and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill" (Psalm 113:7). Mr. D. Benjamin, a Telugu Christian leader, met the Rangiahs as they made their transition from Phoenix, Durban to Kearsney on the Natal North Coast. Benjamin, too, extended hospitality to the Rangiahs and helped them acclimatize to

the new and different conditions in Kearsney.

The first Indian Telugu Baptist Church was formed on 27th December 1903 at Kearsney. Rangiah wrote to the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society about this historical development: “December 27th was a memorable day in South Africa, for on that Sunday we formed the first Telugu Baptist Church in this land. Sixty four Telugu Baptist Christians, including myself and my wife, formed the church” (1905:1-3).

Rangiah submitted reports to the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society about his work in South Africa. He wrote about the approach he employed in his work among the Telugus. He also wrote about the missionary tours he undertook as he set about his mission work. These tours were typical of those made by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Rev. Samuel Day as well as Rev. Jewett, American Baptist Missionaries in India, made similar tours of the villages where they accessed the needs and opportunities for evangelism.

3.2.1.1 Reports and Correspondence of John Rangiah

John Rangiah submitted annual reports of his work among the Telugus in South Africa to the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. Three reports sent by him to the ABFMS reflected the extent of his work in South Africa. His communication to an American missionary and a letter to an internal mission magazine also provide insight into his work and understanding of mission.

3.2.1.2 Report of indigenous mission work

Rev. Rangiah in his first and second annual reports on the Telugu Baptist Mission in Natal, South Africa, described his visits to Phoenix, which is an Indian township near Durban (1905:4). He had gone in search of Baptist Christians. He further reported on his visits to areas like Stanger on the Natal North Coast and then to Kearsney. Kearsney became the headquarters of the Indian Telugu work in South Africa. According to Rangiah, he settled in Kearsney on the 9th October 1903. Rangiah praised the landlords, Sir Liege and Lady Hulett, for their hospitality in providing them with a large house. He reported: "This liberal minded and benevolent gentleman takes a genuine and enthusiastic interest in enterprises pertaining to the Kingdom of Christ." Rangiah received rations as well as medicine for himself and his family.

As previously mentioned, the highlight of his reporting was the establishment of the first Baptist Telugu Church in South Africa. According to Rangiah, 64 members were part of this church that was established in Kearsney, South Africa. Rangiah provides further details of developments in his ministry at Kearsney. The first harvest they reaped was 6 new believers, who were baptized in the Umvoti River on the 14th of February, 1904. Rangiah gave a new name to this river. It was referred to as the Gundlacumma of Natal, with earnest hopes and prayers for the further progress of the Kingdom (The Gundlacumma is a river in South India, where 2, 222 people, mainly Telugus, were baptized in one day).

Rangiah, a fellow Telugu who was familiar with the culture of the indentured labourers, began an Indian church with Indian leadership. There are two main Protestant strategies proposed for the creation of indigenous churches as understood as churches suited to local culture and led by local Christians. The first is indigenization where foreign missionaries create well-organized churches and then hand them over to local converts. The foreign mission is generally seen as a scaffolding which must be removed once the fellowship of believers is functioning properly. Missionaries provide teaching, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finance and authority, and train local converts to take over these responsibilities. Thus the church becomes indigenous. It becomes self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. The second is indigeneity where foreign missionaries do not create churches, but simply help local converts develop their own spiritual gifts and leadership abilities and gradually develop their own churches. Missionaries provide teaching and pastoral care alone. The church is thus indigenous from the start. It has always been self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. Rangiah certainly created an indigenous church based on the indigenization strategy and set out to use local leadership for the churches he started. They also became self-supporting, self-propagating, and to a certain extent self-governing.

3.2.1.3 Report of Growth and Expansion

John Rangiah reported to the Foreign Missionary Society on his work on the mission field in South Africa. He began by revealing that the year under review, 1906, was successful but not without troubles, struggles and hardships, both within and outside of the church. These challenges included travelling to the various areas by

horseback and raising funds for the support of Christian leaders. However, due to his strong faith in God and with a resolute spirit, he remarked that the gracious spirit of the Lord followed him closely, and he overcame every challenge.

Rangiah (1905:3) wrote about his deep longing for revival amongst the Telugus. This desire is reflected in this report. It was no wonder that he recognized the obstacles to these revivals and confronted them through the preaching of the Bible. He reported (1905:3) that inside the church there were “secret sins being fondled.” According to him, the leading members of the church were involved in sinful activities. There was also the issue of self-support for the other Christian workers. This impeded the spread of the gospel, wrote Rangiah, as members were being disillusioned. To add to these challenges, there were Zulu uprisings, which caused alarm and slowed their movements for months. In view of all that was happening with the work amongst the Telugus, Rangiah was convinced that what was required of them was a full surrender to the Lord and His will.

As a result of their strong emphasis on prayer, revival broke out. Rangiah reported that 12 August 1906 was a day of inexpressible blessing. A sermon was preached from Galatians 6:6-8. Prayer meetings followed at the home of one of the members, where people began weeping. Many cried aloud and confessions of sins followed. According to Rangiah these prayer meetings carried on for more than four months. The churches that were established by Rangiah all began to experience similar revivals. A hill in Kearsney, the headquarters of the Telugu Baptist Mission, became a place of prayer as well. Many wanted to identify with Jesus when he went away from the crowd to be alone in prayer.

Rangiah reported on the five churches he established in Natal, South Africa. They were Kearsney, Verulam, Darnall, Durban and Stanger. He provided important information on each of these churches:

Kearsney – The first Sunday service was held on 11th October 1903. Rev. Rangiah preached from Zachariah 8:13. Mrs. Rangiah worked together with her husband. She provided leadership to the women of Kearsney, visited them regularly and prayed for them. She also provided care for the many who were sick. Mrs. Rangiah held special services where she taught women new songs. She was head of the Sunday School ministry at Kearsney.

Rangiah described a very significant meeting during which members discussed the ministry at Kearsney. Rev. D. Benjamin, Mr. Preyanadham and Rev. and Mrs. Rangiah met to pray about the possibility of starting a church in Kearsney. The church at Kearsney was organized on 27th December 1903; it was the first church of the Baptist Association of South Africa. Mr. D. Benjamin and K. Isaac were elected as deacons of this historic church. Later Rangiah baptized 12 and ended up with a membership of 75. He composed hymns and choruses which he taught to the congregation. These songs gained popularity among the members of this church. Regular Sunday services, women's prayer and prayer meetings were held. Once a month thanksgiving services were held, and during these services new hymns and choruses were sung. A great sense of community characterized these services. Rev. Rangiah also held Bible studies during the summer vacation. Rev. D. Benjamin rendered great assistance to this church, especially in the absence of John Rangiah.

The church at Darnall was organized on 22nd May, 1904. The membership at Darnall was 32, and it was reported that 4 people were baptized. According to Rangiah this church was experiencing many challenges, details of which he does not mention. However, Rangiah wrote that Mr. K. Daniels worked hard at this church.

The church in Stanger was organized in June, 1904. There were 6 baptisms with a membership of 30 which included those who were baptized. Despite the challenge of having their house church removed by non-Christians, wrote Rangiah, this church was able to relocate their church to another area. Their members contributed financially and physically to the rebuilding of a house church. This building, which had a chapel, cost them 6 pounds which would be equivalent to about R350 today.

The church in Durban was organized on 25 December, 1904. There were no baptisms during that year. Their membership stood at 15. Rangiah reported that the school that was established in Durban flourished. However, he was concerned about members relocating to other areas and attending other churches. Here too, Rangiah expressed the need for revival in this church. He was not only concerned about the work in South Africa but globally as well. Evidence of this is found in his letter to an international Baptist magazine.

3.2.1.4 Rangiah's letter to the editor of the *American Baptist International Magazine*

Rangiah evidenced a concern for Indian mission in other parts of the world such as the United States of America. He wrote to the editor of the *American Baptist*

International Magazine (American Baptist Convention: 1911) about the need for missionaries to work with the Indian immigrants in San Francisco. He challenged Americans to consider learning the language of the Hindu immigrants so as to serve their spiritual needs.

In concluding his report, Rangiah reflected on the work completed and the work still to be done. It might cause one to pause and reflect personally on this man's love and passion for the work amongst the Telugus. He recognized that the work he started was sustained by God and keenly supported by his wife. He mentioned that both of them walked many miles visiting the Telugus in spreading the Gospel. In his report Rangiah showed a deep concern for the spiritual needs of the people and expressed the need for revival. Yet in the accomplishments achieved by him in such a short space of time, he merely pointed to the future and the task that was before him. He wrote that his most important work was to take care of the Christians and churches already formed. Secondly it was to preach the Christian Gospel to those who had not yet received it.

Rangiah's letter to the editor provides insight into his knowledge of developments in global Baptist mission work. He certainly was keeping abreast of these developments by reading. Paul Borthwick (1987:67) contends that an important building block for world mission is reading.

3.2.1.5 Rangiah's personal letter to David Downie

During Rangiah's work in South Africa, he made several invitations to the American

Foreign Mission Society's Rev. David Downie and his wife to visit the Telugu Mission in South Africa. In the archives of the American Baptist Historical Society, a handwritten letter of John Rangiah to Rev. David Downie was located. Downie, an American Baptist missionary, played an important role in Rangiah's life while in Nellore, India. Rangiah wrote to him about his work in Natal. This letter contained some important aspects of the context of his work in which he wrote about the human and financial resources as well as ministry needs.

Rangiah wrote about the status of the indentured labourers. He wrote that at the end of their contract, the majority of them "re-indentured" themselves while a few returned to India. He described the returning indentured labourers as common, uneducated and shy. Rangiah advised Downie, who was in India during this period, to make contact with the returning immigrants and inquire of them of the mission work in Natal. According to Rangiah the uneducated and shy former labourers would provide a more accurate report of the work in South Africa than the educated indentured labourers. The reason for Rangiah's assumption is not known. It may seem that Rangiah enjoyed more support from the uneducated labourers than the educated ones. Later in his ministry, he did experience opposition by a section of the indentured labourer community; which led to a split in the Indian Baptist work in South Africa.

The letter also contained an update of the human and financial resources of the mission among the Telugus. Rangiah mentioned Palli Yellamanda and his wife, who served the Darnall Baptist Church, and Rev. D. Benjamin and his wife, who served in the Durban area. Rangiah stressed the point that since Durban was the chief port of

the colony with a large Indian population, it required a church with a preacher. Rangiah wrote about his own position at Kearsney, the headquarters of the Baptist Association of South Africa, and the need for him to be based there. He also wrote about the many tours he took visiting other mission stations.

Rangiah makes reference to the question, “How will the preachers for the work in Natal be paid?” He presents the cost for the support of a married preacher with a stipend of £1.10 per month and a single preacher with £1 per month, both with rations. Additionally, he states that a preacher in Durban will require £1 per month for rent.

Rangiah described as well how he raised support for those preachers. According to him he stopped receiving support from the churches he planted. Instead he saved funds from these churches to support preachers. Rangiah reports that by 11 June 1905, he was able to save £20 with which he started a fund to support the preachers who were inducted and appointed by himself to the various mission stations in Natal. He mentioned that this amount would provide remuneration for the preachers for 5 months. Rangiah was careful to indicate to the preachers that the fund would not provide support for them on a regular basis, as he felt that the church using their services was to meet that obligation. He encouraged the churches: *“And in return the churches are exhorted to take heed to bear the burdens of our preachers, to their utmost possibility.”* He also wrote about the need to depend on God in this matter.

A note of gratitude is reflected in the letter. Rangiah expresses his appreciation for helpers who came to support him in his ministry. He records that he was in prayer for

three preachers but he received five. He compared them to the five talents referred to in the Bible. According to him, two of the preachers received remuneration from the estate owners, Colonel Addison of Stanger and W.G. Armstrong of Verulam.

Rangiah considered the Downies as his spiritual parents and longed for a visit from them. After some time, Downie and his wife visited Rangiah in South Africa. He wrote (1928:53) that the Board thought it a good plan that the Downies go to South Africa to visit and encourage and advise Rangiah. On 17 October, 1909, Downie and his wife landed in Durban, South Africa. They had an opportunity to assess the mission work that Rangiah was doing among the Telugu indentured workers. Downie had much praise for Rangiah's work. He wrote:

I knew something of the high opinion that Sir Liege Hulett (Rangiah's landlord) had of John and his work, but it was a surprise and a pleasure to hear from his own lips the very high regard he had for John and his work. Nor was Sir Liege the only one who spoke of it in similar terms. During our stay in Natal we heard nothing but the highest praise of his untiring work and Christ-like spirit. The work John has done is much more extensive than we had been led to believe from what he had written us. (Downie 1909: 3).

David Downie (1928:53) wrote about his visit to South Africa at the invitation of John Rangiah: *"It was a great delight to us to see the fine work John was doing. ... Sir Liege spoke in the highest of terms of John and his work."* The visit of Downie to South Africa helped in assessing the mission and the effectiveness of John Rangiah's work amongst the Telugus. It is very evident from the comments he made about Rangiah and his work that he was extremely pleased with both of them.

It appears that Downie had influenced Rangiah back in India. Rangiah wrote a personal letter to Downie and expressed his thanks to him for the role he played in

his life in India and then went on to report on his work in South Africa. In this handwritten letter on the 31 July 1905, Rangiah addressed him as “My dearest Missionary father.” It is an indication of the bond that existed between the two. He wrote about the status of the indentured labourers who came from India to work on the sugar and tea estates in South Africa. He also reported on the indentured labour system and its termination by the British government. This meant that there were not going to be further Indians coming to Natal, South Africa to work in the tea and sugar estates.

The termination of the indentured labour system by the British authorities in Natal meant that the flow of Indians to places like Kearsney, the hub of the Baptist Association of South Africa work, was stopped. To add to this Rangiah had to find resources to support the leaders he appointed over the churches in the Natal North Coast region. He reported to David Downie about assistance received by local estate owners, Colonel Addison of Stanger and Mr. W.G. Armstrong, who agreed to support preachers who were on their respective estates. He shared this blessing and expressed thanks to God for this development.

It was the first time in Rangiah’s correspondence to the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society that he raised the issue of finance. He did not raise this issue earlier because he believed and maintained that the Indian church in South Africa should be self-supportive. So far, the Indian indentured labourers out of their meagre earnings contributed to the work of the mission. Rangiah listed the number of preachers who were currently in service with the Telugu Mission in Natal, South

Africa. There were five of them, two who were supported by estate owners and three who were in need of support.

The lack of funds did not impede the work among the Telugus. There were some who agreed to work without any remuneration. Rev. Rangiah, together with his wife, worked closely with these preachers and provided spiritual service to Telugu people.

From the middle of 1904, Rev. Rangiah made frequent visits to the South Coast, Isipingo, the Railway and Magazine barracks, and the Umgeni areas in Durban. He preached at evangelistic meetings to the many indentured labourers in these places and provided prayer and encouragement to them. He also sought permission from the Protector of Indian Immigrants to visit Indian passengers on the ships and in the immigration depot. In 1904, through the vision and encouragement of John Rangiah, a church was organized in Durban in the house of Mr. D. Benjamin. In 1909 this house church moved into a new building, which was dedicated and a foundation stone laid by Dr. David Downie, Rangiah's mentor and friend of the American Baptist Missionary Society. The work carried out by Rangiah received affirmation from another missionary to the Indians in the Natal province, Mr. N. E. Tomlinson. Mr. Tomlinson of the South African General Mission (SAGM) wrote about Rangiah's work. Rangiah recorded Tomlinson's comments:

Tomlinson's comments about the Telugu Baptist work in South Africa are noteworthy given the general attitude of the dominant Baptist Union towards this indigenous mission work. Additionally, it was important for Rangiah that commendation from a person like Tomlinson be reported to the wider Christian community as it provided a degree of objectivity.

The strain of providing leadership to such a vast area from Durban to Kearsney in the Natal North Coast was taking its toll on the Rangiahs. At the suggestion of Dr. Downie, additional personnel were brought from India to assist with the Telugu work.

3.3 Reinforcement of the Telugu Baptist Mission: Rev. V.C. Jacob

The arrival of Rev. Valpula C. Jacob in 1910 to serve as the second missionary from India inaugurated a new era in the history of the Indian Baptists. A teacher for a number of years in the Ramapatnam Theological Seminary, he felt the call to come to South Africa to work among the Telugus. The Jacobs were welcomed by Rev. Rangiah and others at the Durban docks and were received warmly by the Telugus in South Africa.

Both Jacob and Rangiah worked well amongst the Telugus in Natal, South Africa. On 21 April 1911 Jacob was invited to reside in Durban and to provide spiritual care for the members of Somseu Road Baptist Church. Jacob worked with Rev. Rangiah and visited the various churches, preaching, counselling and encouraging the Telugu population. He spent three months in Kearsney at the home of the Rangiahs. On July 1912 Rev. Jacob left South Africa and returned to India due to ill health. He was described as having been held in very high regard by his peers in India as well as by the Missionaries of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. He handed all the records of the mission to John Rangiah. However, he returned on 13 December 1915 to continue with the work as a missionary in South Africa. Jacob served as missionary until his death in 1932. He was an outstanding leader who worked well amongst the Telugus in Natal (Jacob and Cornelius 1953:23).

The Baptist Association of South Africa church that was pioneered by Rangiah was not without challenges. Tensions arose between Rangiah and certain members of the Kearsney Baptist Church. This led to a schism.

3.4 Schism in the Indian Baptist church

Rangiah (1978:2) wrote, “The year 1913 was an unpleasant one for the Mission, for differences arose between the Missionary, Rev. John Rangiah, and a certain section of his congregation.” Rangiah preached a sermon on the subject of sin and its results. A certain section of the congregation viewed his preaching on this subject as very controversial and interpreted it as their excommunication from the congregation. These aggrieved members took this matter up with the Telugu Baptist Home Missionary Society (TBHMS) in India. They sent a letter without the knowledge of Rangiah to the TBHMS about their grievance. Rangiah was disappointed that he was not informed about the letter that was sent to the TBHMS. The TBHMS responded by sending a representative to South Africa to attend to this conflict between Rangiah and the aggrieved congregation.

Rev. W. B. Boggs represented the TBHMS. On 31st May 1914, a council of sixty-six members met at Kearsney and deliberated over the conflict for twenty-four hours. Despite the intervention of Rev. Boggs, the talks failed. Rev. Rangiah resigned (Rangiah 1964:10).

The Baptist Missionary review, a publication of the American Baptist Church USA, records (1915:381) this schism between the two groups in the Natal province. Unfortunately it does not provide the reason for the schism but states that Rev.

Rangiah was not acceptable to a considerable section of the Telugu Baptists in Natal. However, churches that were established by Rangiah (1953:15), such as the Verulam Church (1904), The Darnall Church (1904), The Durban Church (1904) and the Stanger Church (1904), remained under the ministry of Rangiah thus it does seem that only a small section of the Telugus in Natal did not accept Rangiah. To date, there has been no information about the actual cause of this schism.

According to the Golden Jubilee Brochure, a publication of the aggrieved group, the two parties, headed by Rev. John Rangiah on one side and Mr. Y. A. Lazarus on the other side, were unwilling to compromise. On the 27 December 1914, Rangiah formed the Natal Baptist Association of South Africa, now called the Baptist Association of South Africa. The other group called itself the Indian Baptist Mission and is now the Baptist Mission of South Africa. Despite this setback in the Baptist Association of South Africa's work in South Africa, Rangiah went on to build the organization into a viable Baptist organization centred mainly in the Kwa Zulu Natal province. John Rangiah, after many years of faithful service, died on 23 December 1915. He was deeply missed because of the significant leadership he gave to the Telugus, especially those on the North Coast of Durban.

In reflecting on his work in South Africa it is important to discuss Rangiah's theology. His work among the Indians was informed by a distinct theology that was influenced by American Baptist missionaries in India. He also demonstrated the ability to contextualize the Christian faith among the Indian Christians in South Africa. The research will describe Rangiah's model of mission.

3.5 Rangiah's model of mission and ministry

The mission enterprise in South Africa in the 1800s saw European missionaries such as Andrew Murray, Jr., Johannes Van De Kemp, John Philip and Robert Moffat of the London Missionary Society develop their own models for mission in South Africa. John Rangiah too developed a mission model which had its own unique characteristics.

3.5.1 Mission - an inclusive task

In 1897, when the Christians in South India established the Telugu Home Missionary Society, they focused both on local and global mission, of which Rangiah was very much a part. Rangiah, like his American counterparts, recognized that mission must be to the furthest parts of the world and he believed that Indians, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, country of origin, language and social status, can participate in the missionary enterprise. Stan Nussbaum, in his attempt at clarifying and simplifying David Bosch's ideas and thoughts on mission (2005:27), writes almost a century later about Luke's gospel with regards to mission and its universal appeal. Nussbaum states that the hearers in Luke's gospel, who appear to be Gentiles, were both the product of mission and the bearers of mission. Rangiah maintained that mission is universal in scope and is inseparably related to God's cosmic purposes.

The notion that mission was mainly carried out by the powerful western countries is negated by Rangiah, who represented a country that was poor and at that time a mission field. Additionally his understanding of mission compares favourably with

Bosch's understanding of mission with the exception of ethnicity, an issue that will be discussed later. Bosch (1991: 84-122) states that mission should transcend class and ethnicity. Rangiah believed this and expressed this in his mission to South Africa.

Another significant insight into Rangiah's ministry was his view that women should be active participants in the ministry of the church. Rangiah's sterling report of the Women's Ministry also reflected an understanding of ministry that encouraged the participation of women. He stated that his wife, Mrs. K. Rangiah, helped with the preaching of the gospel to the women. Her frequent visits to women made them very receptive to the gospel, and she enjoyed much success in her efforts when she shared the gospel. Mrs. Rangiah also taught at the school for children at Kearsney. As a result of this ministry 31 new believers were added to the churches by baptism since 1904, reported Rangiah (Rangiah 1953:16).

3.5.2 Ministry – spiritual and social dimensions

In Rangiah's mission report (1905:1) he states that the American Baptist Missionaries began their mission in India. They established many churches, primary and high schools, as well as a college and two theological seminaries. As a missionary in South Africa, Rangiah's mission efforts included the building of a school in Kearsney, as well as establishing churches in the then Natal province (1905:4). His approach to mission embraced the notions that the social, educational and spiritual needs of the Indian people are important. However, his work evidenced

an emphasis on the educational and spiritual needs of the indentured labourers. His approach to other race groups will be discussed in chapter 5 of this study.

3.5.3 Leadership Training

In Rangiah's work in South Africa he evidenced a strong emphasis on training of local leaders for ministry. Although he did not advocate that the Telugus carry the Christian faith to other parts of the world, he trained lay persons to spread Christianity to many parts of Kwa Zulu Natal. He travelled the length and breadth of this province, preaching, teaching and training persons for ministry. Lay leaders who received training for Christian ministry were A. Reuben, D. Benjamin, V. Samson and Z. Robert (NIBA News 1953:15-22).

3.5.4 Church Planting

Rangiah adopted a very practical model for ministry amongst the Telugus in South Africa. In his report he stated that in his missionary tours in South Africa, wherever he found groups of Christians, he gathered them into churches and appointed elders from among them. He challenged the elders to spread the gospel to the utmost parts to the best of their ability. In his report, he listed the number of churches that were established as a result of this model. They were: the Verulam Church established on 22 May 1904, the Darnall Church on 12th June 1904, the Durban Church on 30th October 1904 and the Stanger Church on 25 December 1904.

3.5.5 Culture

Having been trained theologically in India, Rangiah was careful not to approach the South African mission from a purely western perspective, which can sometimes be insensitive to the culture and customs of the local people. He communicated the gospel in understandable terms appropriate to his audience. This was necessary as the Telugus were not very educated and had their own traditions and culture. As an evangelical, he took into account the cultural factors. Nicholls (2003:9) in his book *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture*, laments that evangelical communicators have often underestimated the importance of cultural factors in communication. Rangiah preached in the Telugu language and composed and taught Christian hymns to the Telugus. Rangiah and his wife organized activities such as Thanksgiving services, song festivals, and fellowship meetings, all of which were culturally orientated and spiritually relevant. They further assisted with planning weddings.

Rangiah, as mentioned earlier, devoted much of his time to the spiritual and cultural aspects of the Telugus. He organized and facilitated services that were culturally sensitive. Indian culture is rich, diverse and unique. The Indian manner and way of communicating with one another are important components of their culture. Indian culture is rich in art, poetry, drama and theatre, music, and dance. Rangiah and his wife composed hymns, poetry, and produced plays during their work among the Indians in South Africa.

Although Rangiah received his theological training in an American Baptist seminary

in India, he developed the ability to contextualize the Christian faith among the Telugus, unlike many Western missionaries who were sometimes culturally insensitive by teaching the local Christians to sing English hymns and only play the organ at church services. Rangiah and his wife, Kanakamma, did not cease to dress like Indians. She wore her sari and he used his turban. Although Rangiah expressed the Christian faith without disregarding the cultural practices amongst the Indian Baptists, his strategy, did not take into account the social and political realities in Kwa Zulu Natal. Chapter 6 discusses critically his strategy.

3.5.6 Ecumenical outlook

A striking feature of Rangiah's understanding of the Christian faith was reflected in his ecumenical outlook. The notion of relationship with other communions and bodies of believers was not only encouraged but was practiced by Rangiah himself. In 1910 Rangiah (NIBA News 1953:25) sailed to Edinburgh, where he attended the International Missionary Conference that saw all the leading denominations in attendance. The purpose of this international gathering of mission agencies was to promote unity in the missionary enterprise. According to the NIBA News (1953:25), Rangiah was afforded an opportunity to speak at this conference. But there is no record of any public contribution by Rangiah to the conference. Rangiah was one of five Asian delegates of the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. Stanley makes the point that Rangiah was not simply the first missionary sent by the Telugu Baptist Home missionary Society to the Telugu-speaking Christians of the sugar plantations in Natal, but was also the first overseas missionary sent out by any of the mission churches of the American Baptists. He makes a further point that Rangiah is

an early example of what would be called a ‘south to south’ mission (Stanley 2009: 100). Writing about his impressions of the conference, Rangiah makes general comments about how global the gathering was. He was also impressed with the cleanliness of Edinburgh, surprised at the absence of idols and grateful for the benevolence of his hosts. He wrote that he was motivated by his experience in Edinburgh and eager to return to South Africa with a greater determination to engage in ministry (Rangiah 1910:662-663).

3.5.7 Rangiah’s response to the socio-political conditions in South Africa

Racial tension began very early in the history of South Africa. De Gruchy (1979:53) argued that this racism, which in 1948 became known as apartheid, began as early as 1910. As a result of this Baptists were segregated along racial lines. The Telugu Baptists functioned as an ethnic church, and even if they had a desire to embrace other racial groups, the conditions in South Africa would not have allowed it. Additionally, the missionaries-- Methodists, German and Norwegian Lutherans, the French Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Anglicans, Scottish Presbyterians, and members of the American Board of Missions -- began their work in a highly segregated context and not much integration took place. When integration did take place, the Africans were generally ostracized by their people and discriminated against by the white community. Isichei (1995:100) records what an African Methodist said in 1863: “To the natives we are despised--to the English we are no more than Kaffirs.” Indians suffered the same fate as Blacks albeit not as severely. The study now turns to Rangiah’s response to the socio-political challenges.

Firstly, Rangiah lived in British-controlled India until he left in 1902 for South Africa. Since the 17th century India was influenced by British politics and social life; Rangiah was accustomed to British rule in Natal. His relationship with the English in Natal, including with his landlord Sir Liege Hullett and others, demonstrated his ability to approach them with regards to his work among the Indians. However he had no need to confront them on issues of discrimination and injustices that Indians experienced during that period in the history of Natal, as the records in BASA history do not show any discrimination and injustices by the Hulleys against the indentured Indians.

Secondly Rangiah's theological orientation did not allow him to address such social and political issues. Theologically he was schooled in India by American Baptist missionaries. American Baptist theology at that time did not challenge socio-political injustices in India. Also the advocates of this theology were mainly white males who did not strongly address social issues. Instead the American missionaries addressed them through socially oriented ministries such as the building of schools, hospitals, and colleges for the low caste Telugus in India.

In India, Rangiah appreciated the positive contributions of American Baptist missionaries towards the spiritual and social lives of the Telugus when they built a seminary, schools, colleges and hospitals. This approach to ministry influenced his work in South Africa. Also, the American missionaries in India did not confront the British authorities' unfair treatment of the Telugus. It seemed that Rangiah, as a result of his years in British-controlled India, was accustomed to such a political system and therefore did not find it difficult to adapt to such a system in Natal. It

appeared that he did not believe that he had the right as a foreigner to confront the British in Natal over any injustice or discrimination. In this regard it would be unfair to criticize the American Baptist missionaries in India for not doing the same. Having stated this, nowhere in the preaching of these missionaries does one find any preaching about the gospel's response to social and political injustices. In chapter 5 of this study there is a detailed analysis of Rangiah's as well as the strategies of other BASA leaders in the socio-political context of South Africa. The study now turns attention to Rangiah's son, Theophilus Rangiah, who came as a missionary from India to South Africa.

Section B

3.6 The impact of the Bible and Bible themes on Rangiah's ministry

3.6.1 The Bible

The formation of one's theology does not occur in a vacuum. It is influenced by a number of factors. Context, culture and education are some of the factors that contribute to this formation. John Rangiah, lived most of his adult life in India, received his education there and followed the Indian culture. The Indian culture was therefore deeply rooted his psyche which but at the same time, it also conflicted with the Christian faith as expressed by the American Baptist missionaries during Rangiah's stay in India. It is against this background that one must attempt to analyze Rangiah's theology. Here, we will discuss broadly the Bible themes as well as characteristics of his theology.

As mentioned earlier, Rangiah's early years were spent with American Baptists in his country of birth, India. These American Baptist missionaries were part of a strong denomination that had its evangelical roots in England. Rangiah was schooled in evangelical theology in India at a school started by American Baptist missionaries. However, he largely employed this theology in his work in South Africa. His understanding and interpretation of the Bible must be seen against his early association with and schooling in an American Baptist theological institution.

American Baptists have a distinct denominational identity. They are a biblically based people whose life and witness are grounded in the Scriptures which revolve around an evangelical centre. Broadly, the American Baptist missionaries' theology centred on God's sovereignty in which the theology of the Kingdom and the church feature strongly. Furthermore, according to this theology, Baptists are biblically based, inclusive, redeemed, interdependent, missional and worshipping in character (*American Baptist Churches in the USA* 1988). This theological orientation became very evident in Rangiah's work in South Africa. Rangiah can be best described as a moderate evangelical sometimes leaning more towards a conservative orientation.

Roger Olson (1998) mentions the core characteristics of authentic evangelical theology. They are (1) the Bible is the supreme norm of truth for Christian belief and practices and that the Biblical message is enshrined in its interpretation of those narratives; (2) a supernatural worldview that is centred in a transcendent personal God who interacts with, and intervenes in creation; (3) the forgiving and transforming grace of God through Jesus Christ in the experience called conversion. This experience is the centre of authentic Christian experience; (4) the primary task of

Christian theology is to serve the Christian Church's mission of bringing God's grace to the whole world through proclamation and service.

Rangiah worked out of this evangelical paradigm. However, there are features within his evangelical theology which places him more on the conservative side theologically. For instance, except for the establishment of a school for the Telugu children in Kearsney, he concentrated largely on evangelism and very little on social issues. Ron Sider (1993:121-135) asserts that Christians should concentrate in evangelism and social engagement. He (1993:136) further quotes Alan Walker, "There is no greater menace than a born-again Christian without a social conscience."

In preparing leaders and congregants, Rangiah believed that the Bible was critical in shaping their lives. He held Bible classes at Kearsney where he chose the lives of Biblical characters such as Joseph, Samson and Ruth as models for the male and female leaders and congregants (NIBA News 1953:18).

Rangiah's dependence on God evidenced a belief in the supernatural. When he decided to come to South Africa as a missionary, he realized that no human effort would convince his wife Kanakamma to agree to accompany him on such a mission. He engaged in prayer and this yielded the desired result. He commented, "God worked wonders" (NIBA News 10). He also believed that when he first arrived in Kearsney and was in need of accommodation, it was God's intervention which resulted in Sir James Hulett's providing accommodation for him. His prayer was, "He

raiseth up the poor out of the dust and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill” (NIBA News 1953:13).

When the poor Telugus on their own accord, decided to send Rangiah as their first foreign missionary, they showed their willingness to participate in God’s mission worldwide. Rangiah took that invitation to participate in that mission seriously when he and his family left India to work among the indentured Baptist labourers in Natal (NIBA News 1953:11). Not only did Rangiah evidence a commitment to Christian service and mission in Natal, in 1910 he also supported by his attendance one of eight goals of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, that is “Carrying the Gospel to all the World” (Stanley 2009: 49 and 100).

Rangiah championed the Bible as the bedrock of his Christian life and practice. Archival research revealed Rangiah’s letterhead dated 1905. On the letterhead is the name of the mission, Telugu Baptist, followed by his name, Rev. John Rangiah, and the address in Kearsney, South Africa. His letterhead has a drawing of a dove carrying a branch with the biblical text Isaiah 61:1 written below the dove:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”

This text provides an insight into Rangiah’s faith. In attempting to understand the relevance of this text to his faith and mission, it does seem to convey the idea that

God has found favour in him and has put the Holy Spirit upon him as a seal of approval for the task of mission. He understood his task to be that of a missionary who engaged in extensive preaching. In 1903 when Rangiah arrived in South Africa he began almost immediately with his preaching ministry. The NIBA News (1953:12) reported that Rev. Rangiah made frequent visits to Durban and preached the Gospel in many of its suburbs. Rangiah took his ministry to the broken-hearted very seriously. His very first experience was of a Telugu man who was found guilty of murdering a fellow Indian. This criminal was awaiting execution when Rangiah was informed about his fate. Rangiah provided spiritual support for him and even pleaded with the Governor of Natal to spare the man's life, but he was unsuccessful (The NIBA News 1953:12).

After the condemned man responded favourably to Rangiah's counsel and indicated that he was ready to accept the Christian faith, Rangiah read a text from 2 Corinthians 4:7: *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."* It appeared that Rangiah was encouraging the condemned man that his body was a fragile container that held his soul and that through God's power the gospel is now in him (that earthen vessel). It was indeed an appropriate encouragement to the brokenhearted man. Before the execution, the man gave a speech in which he repented of his crime and described how the Christian faith had transformed his life (NIBA News 1953: 12).

Another line in the text found on Rangiah's letterhead also provides an insight to his passion for his fellow Telugus. It reads, *"...to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the*

opening of the prison to them that are bound.” He believed that many of these Telugus were in need of spiritual freedom.

Right from the beginning of his arrival in South Africa Rangiah was an avid reader of the Bible. It is recorded that when the ship he was travelling from India to Durban, the *Safari*, docked at 6 pm at the Durban harbour, the passengers had to remain on board overnight until the next morning before disembarking. During this time Rangiah spent time reading the Bible, in particular the Acts of the Apostles (NIBA News 1953:11). Also at the conclusion of Rangiah’s report of the Telugu Baptist Mission to the Telugu Baptist Home Missionary Society, he quotes (1905:5) a very significant biblical text from Malachi 3:10-12, *“All nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of Hosts.”*

It is not very easy to clearly define Rangiah’s theological orientation based on his ministry in South Africa because the Indian Baptist church did not label people into different theological persuasions. Furthermore, the vast majority of the indentured labourers were illiterate (NIBA News 1953:16). However, since American Baptists influenced Rangiah’s theological education background, he worked mainly out of their paradigm which emphasized the sovereignty of God, the kingdom of God and the church. There is much debate in Christendom about the sovereignty of God regarding salvation. There is the Calvinistic and the Armenian views. Both of these views take into account the sovereignty of God but there is a divergent view with regard to the definition of the sovereignty of God pertaining to salvation. For Calvinists, the sovereignty of God is a cardinal aspect in their understanding of salvation. According to this understanding (Birch 2008:1), God has the right to elect

one person to be saved and reprobate another. The Arminian view maintains that humanity has a free will with regard to their salvation. Both views are compelling. Rangiah's approach to salvation reflects an Arminian orientation. His very first ministry assignment was to a prisoner called Subbadoo. Rangiah feared that Subbadoo would harden his heart towards God but was later pleased Subbadoo made a decision to accept the Christian faith (NIBA News 1953:12). In the twelve years that Rangiah worked in Natal, his hymns (Rangiah 1905:1) featured the theme of salvation. He travelled widely holding evangelistic services at Kearsney, Durban, Darnall, Amatikulu, Tinley Manor, Stanger, Verulam, Pietermaritzburg, Dundee and Glendale where he reported persons making decisions to receive salvation (NIBA News 1953:17-27).

The adventurous spirit and trusting faith of men like Paul the apostle became very evident in the life and ministry of Rangiah. Like Paul the apostle, Rangiah travelled on missionary assignments planting churches, training and mentoring leaders for ministry. In examining Rangiah's work among the Telugus in Natal, the following Bible themes are reflected in his ministry:

3.6.2 Prayer

Rangiah believed and maintained that prayer was an important spiritual discipline and practice. Prayer featured prominently in his reports as well. In 1902, when Rangiah was initially challenged about responding to a request to go to South Africa to work among the Telugu Christians, he went down on his knees and prayed for God's will to be done (NIBA News 1953: 8). This was a simple act of submission to

God; prayer and submission to God became the hallmarks of his work as a missionary.

Throughout Rangiah's writings one notices his emphasis on prayer as well as self sufficiency. In preparation for his ministry in South Africa, Rangiah spent three months in prayer (NIBA News 1953: 8). Even when his wife, Kanakamma resisted the idea of them coming to Natal to take up the mission work, Rangiah spent time in fasting and prayer. His prayer was:

O Lord grant if it is thy will that we should labour in Natal for Thee, open Thou the way. Grant Kanakamma courage, O lord, that she may be able to leave her beloved parents and friends and undertake the journey with me. Do tell us, O Lord, whether to leave behind these my two children or to take them with me. If it is Thy will that we leave them behind, grant Kanakamma and me that courage to endure the pangs of separation. Help us on our voyage and use us for Thy glory and service (NIBA News 1953: 9).

This prayer reflected a person's deep concern for his family and ministry. Rangiah recognized the spiritual resource that is available within the Christian faith particularly in a text in Proverbs 3:6 which states, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." It does indicate an understanding of the supremacy of God in matters of family and ministry and that God must direct these matters. Rangiah's prayer was answered within six weeks. His wife informed him that she was ready to come to Natal and that there should be no delay (NIBA News 1953:10).

In 1903, when Rangiah arrived at Port Natal, he was so overwhelmed by the task that was before him that he prayed for God's strength and grace (NIBA News 1953:11). When Rangiah arrived in Kearsney, he organized a prayer meeting with

the expressed purpose to establish a church there. The result of this prayer was the establishment of the first Telugu Baptist Church in Africa (NIBA News 1953:14). In Natal, prayer continued to feature strongly in Rangiah's ministry. In 1906, Rangiah prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (NIBA News 1953:17). He maintained that prayer was necessary for personal cleansing. At a prayer meeting which took place in 1906, congregants wept and cried aloud. They prayed for mercy and forgiveness. It was reported that this prayer meeting were held over a period of four months. In Nonoti, a hill (which was named Prayer Hill) was a place where Rangiah and others used for prayer (NIBA News 1953:17). Rangiah also initiated home prayer meetings (NIBA News 1953:21).

He also wrote that he and his wife were in earnest prayers for buildings for places of worship, and he gave thanks to God for providing them with buildings that he and his wife prayed for in places like Stanger and Verulam. In his second and third reports he lists the number of pastors that he appointed to the churches and the churches' financial support of those pastors despite the economic status they were in. He wrote, "We are trying hard to help ourselves, and when we do our part, we know the Lord will care for the rest." Rangiah recognized the impact of prayer with regards to education for the poor Telugus. He established a school in Kearsney. Here the influence of the American Baptists in India influenced his theology on education. American Baptists, according to R. H Elliot et al (1988:42), held to the view that, "The whole context of our humanity, therefore, is involved in our mission." In their work in India, American Baptist missionaries shared the Christian faith with the Telugus and contributed to the educational advancement and social uplifting of these people by building schools and hospitals. The NIBA News (1953:16) recorded that as a

missionary, Rangiah was responsible not only for the spiritual needs of the Indians in Natal, but also for the educational requirements of the many Indian children who were growing up illiterate. He once again presented this need to God in prayer. It is recorded that he went on his knees and asked for God's guidance and help in that matter. In answer to his prayer, his landlords, the Huletts, provided an old laundry building for this purpose. On Monday, October 10th, 1904 the first Indian school in Kearsney, South Africa was opened. Four pupils were in attendance. By the end of that year, the enrolment increased to 12 (NIBA News 1953:16).

3.6.3 Salvation

It seems from Rangiah's letterhead that his call to South Africa was based on the Isaiah 61:1 text. Although it is difficult to base one's theology on this text, such a text, without any exegesis is insufficient for anyone to do any meaningful analysis, it, nevertheless, conveys the idea that Rangiah was driven by this call to preach salvation.

Furthermore, Rangiah's hymn entitled *New Birth* (Rangiah 1890) reflects this theme of salvation. The English translation (Ramanjulu 2010) is:

New Birth

Chorus

The great teacher Jesus Christ confirmed that man should be born again in order to enter into heaven

Nicodemus the leader of the Jews who knew the law was thinking of Jesus
He went at night to the Lord, stood before him and talks to him in peace.

Rabbi, you are teaching about the word of the Lord of heaven and we understand it.

And the signs (works) of God that you do, cannot be done by ungodly men

As the Pharisees said these things Jesus replied to him with grace and mercy

Jesus told him the truth that none can be lifted up to the Kingdom of heaven without the new birth.

The Pharisees asked how an old man can enter his mother's womb to be born again.

Then Jesus said unless you are born of the spirit you cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

Rangiah's hymn is based on John 3:1-21. In Christianity salvation is understood to be grounded in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The result of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is redemption (McGrath 2001:407). It is at this point that a person experiences a new life. There are many instances in Rangiah's ministry which reflected aspects of salvation. His very first ministry opportunity was a visit to a prisoner which resulted in the prisoner's salvation (Rangiah 1905:1).

It does appear that Rangiah believed in the universal saving will of God and that salvation is possible only in and through Christ. His ministry to the prisoner in Durban evidenced this. Rangiah invited the prisoner to make a choice to either accept or reject salvation. The condemned chose salvation (Rangiah 1905:1).

3.6.4 Eschatological Hope

Rangiah, in a hymn entitled *The Door to Heaven* (Rangiah 1890) wrote about the hope. The English translation (Ramanjulu 2010) of this hymn is as follows:

Christ is the Door of Heaven

Chorus

Jesus is the beautiful door-the beautiful door-on the way to heaven.

He is the beautiful door through which you enter into the land of
Canaan where the milk and honey flow
He is the beautiful door through which people enter into the Holy
place of the temple in Jerusalem.
He is the beautiful door through which we enter into heaven as the
priest of the holy of the holiest
He is the beautiful door which is the right door even though it is
narrow, it leads us to happiness in spite of troubles

This hymn reflects a Johannine imagery, eschatology, which is, at the very least a very standard evangelical theology (Keener (2010) [*Discussion on Interpreting Hymns*] (Interview 28 February 2010)). Eschatology in the Christian tradition comes from the Greek term *ta eschata*, “the last things” and relates to such matters as the Christian expectations of Christ’s resurrection and judgement (McGrath 2001:553). It appears that Rangiah, through this hymn, was presenting hope to the indentured labourers in the midst of suffering. It must be stated that it is precarious to extrapolate from Rangiah’s hymn any meaning without an understanding of his social context (Keener (2010) [*Discussion on Interpreting Hymns*] (Interview 28 February 2010)). We do know through the writings of Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2008), indentured labourers suffered. On the other hand, there is no record of Rangiah addressing these sufferings; he does, however, through the medium of this hymn, although written in 1890, provide hope to the indentured labourers in the midst of their suffering.

It must be stressed that Rangiah was not a theologian but a missionary. Given this fact, it will not be plausible to attempt to locate his theology based on the hymns he composed and the work he did as a missionary. Generally, Western scholars tend to examine doctrine as it relates to whether one is an Arminian or a Calvinist. While this is important in theological inquiry, in Rangiah’s case, he was in Africa and the contextual realities required new questions pertaining to racism, apartheid, ethnicity

and colonialism. Applying the historical western form and thought, that was shaped and developed in the Western socio-cultural ethos, to Rangiah's theology, will not be entirely helpful. As he was educated in Western theology by American Baptists it becomes necessary to examine his work as it relates to the unique South African context.

Section C

3.7 Rev. Theophilus M. Rangiah

Rev. Theophilus M. Rangiah, the eldest son of John and Kanakamma Rangiah, arrived in South Africa from India in 1903 with his parents when he was six years old. At the age of 10, he returned to India for further schooling. He received his early education at the school that was established by his parents in Kearsney. He attended the Coles-Ackerman Memorial Boys' High School in Nellore, India. In India, Theophilus was brought up in the strictest and most orthodox environment under the care of his maternal grandmother. After completing high school, he studied at the Madras Christian College of the University of Madras in preparation for becoming a lawyer. During his second year as an Arts degree student, Theophilus was invited to Natal, South Africa to work among the Telugus. Before arriving in South Africa, he married Sugunamma Narsiah (Israel 1998:4).

In 1921 Rev. Theophilus Rangiah and his wife Sugunamma arrived in Kearsney. He continued in the work his mother and father had started among the Indians. His goal was re-organization and church planting. Theophilus began his work by visiting all the churches that had been established by his parents. He acquainted himself with

the people and the state of every area where Baptist Association of South Africa churches were located. Furthermore, he made contact with the white landlords and managers of the indentured labourers and encouraged them to take an interest in the spiritual needs of their employees. He encouraged the indentured labourers to consecrate their lives and to maintain holy living. He held the view that a close relationship with God was a pre-requisite for evangelism. In order to accomplish this, he held Consecration Meetings for pastors, deacons, evangelists, and other office bearers of the Baptist Association of South Africa Church. He further stressed that these men and women would not attain true leadership by virtue of their knowledge, prestige and influence but rather by their Christ-like lives.

Under his leadership, a number of churches were established and grew. At Glendale, Theophilus began ministry among the Indian labourers who worked at the Glendale Sugar Estate. The result was the establishment of the Glendale Baptist Church on 16 December 1923. His leadership contributed to the growth of the Darnall Baptist Church. The first building of this church was made of grass, then a wood and iron building replaced the grass building, and then another building was constructed to accommodate the numerical growth of this church. Theophilus was responsible for the establishment of the Umhlali Baptist Church on 14 October 1923. In Durban, a church was established in Cato Manor. This church later relocated to Hillary. All these churches were visited by Theophilus. He also raised funds to purchase property in North Street, Durban, where a church was built to accommodate the congregation living in the Durban area.

Despite the schism in the Baptist Association of South Africa in 1914, the two Baptist

organizations co-operated with each other. Theophilus assisted the Baptist Mission with their need for a missionary to work among them. A request was made to the Telugu Home Mission Society in India to send a missionary to South Africa. Rev. V.C. Jacob responded to this invitation and arrived in Durban on 28 July 1936 where he and his wife worked with the Baptist Mission churches.

Theophilus Rangiah expanded the work of his parents, which began in 1903. He died in 1947 after serving as a missionary among the Baptist Association of South Africa for almost 26 years. After his death, European Baptists (Israel 1998:10) assisted the Indians to continue with the Baptist Association of South Africa work.

The work of the Rangiahs which started off as a Telugu church became an inclusive church which Tamil-speaking as well as Hindi-speaking people became a part of. However, Timothy Paul in his thesis makes certain claims about the Rangiahs' attitude towards the Tamilians. Paul, a Tamilian (1990:144), asserts that Tamil Baptists were sidelined by Telugu Baptists with regards to leadership positions. It seems there was a manifestation of the caste system among the Baptist Indians in Natal. The indentured Baptist Indians who were mainly from the south of India spoke Telugu, while a few spoke Tamil. All worshiped in a predominantly Telugu speaking Church in Natal (NIBA News 1953: 8).

It is important to examine Paul's assertions on the relationship between the Tamil and Telugu Baptists as well as comments of individuals on the reasons for the split between John Rangiah's group and the aggrieved group led by Y.A Lazarus. In this split, it is alleged by individuals that Tamil speaking congregants were discriminated

against by the Telugu speaking leaders. This social categorization requires some additional background because of its implications for the Indian Baptist Church in Natal.

Within the Indian Baptist community, there were members of the Mala and the Madiga people. John Rangiah, a Telugu, belonged to the Mala (sometimes spelt Malla) group. The Tamil speaking Baptists belonged to the Madigas. These two formed part of a social group called the dalits or Dalits. The dalits came mainly from Andra Pradesh and they were marginalized in every respect by those higher up in the caste system. The dalits fell outside of the caste system which meant that they were outcastes and they lived away from the higher castes. Their lives were shaped by a system of sanctified apartheid (Carla Power 2009:1). The hierarchal caste system comprised the Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra (The Caste System and the stages of Life in Hinduism 1996).

Within the untouchable social groups, the Malas, Madigas and Dakkals were divided by hereditary (Intercaste rivalry: Madigas and Malas 2008:1). Language also divided the dalits. The untouchable applied the same social rules of endogamy of the caste system. Members of these social systems married exclusively within the caste or sub-caste system (Barbara Joshi 1986:4).

In 1911 when the Indian Baptist church split, there were some who held to the view that this was as a result of tension between the Malas and the Madigas. Paul (1990:211) asserts that in his interview with a member of the Baptist Association of South Africa, Noah Israel, the caste system within the Indian Baptists characterized

the split between Rangiah's group and Lazarus's group. Paul (1990: 212) further refers to Chembiah's comments that John Rangiah spoke against sin only to a section of the congregation which was the lower class, while the friends of the missionary who were also equally guilty of living immoral lives was overlooked and condoned. He goes on to state that the Madiga's were treated as the "pariahs" a term which is used for an outcast (The American Heritage 2009) and were forced to be subservient to the Malas.

While it was true that the lives of these indentured Baptists were shaped by the caste system in India, their arrival into a new country forced them to adapt to a new reality. It was more the traders or passengers than the non-indentured labourers who maintained the caste system. Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2000:13) quotes an indentured labourer as saying "I have taken my caste and left it with the Port Officer." The passengers on the ships that arrived in South Africa comprised indentured labourer, free Indians and passenger. She (2000:13) further asserts that the voyage itself meant breaking the rules of caste. However, the passenger Indians, the vast majority of whom were Gujerati-speaking, had greater links with their country of birth and they retained their cast restrictions (2000:14). Both Israel's and Chembiah's comments about the reasons for the split between Rangiah's group and Lazarus's group is not convincing. Israel does state that the caste system characterized the split with no specific detail about how this played out and so it is difficult to assume that either party was using their social status to either demean or feel demeaned.

The records of the Baptist Association of South Africa and the Baptist Mission of South Africa do not share this view that Tamils were discriminated against by the

Telugus. The writing of the ex-president of the Baptist Mission of South Africa, Rev. Brian Naidoo (2003: 27-100) and PhD research undertaken by Charles Dayadharum does not share Paul's view that the Tamils were prejudiced by the Telugus.

In analyzing Paul's assertion, it must be noted that in 1978 Paul (a Tamil) himself was elected by the executive council of the Natal Indian Baptist Association to the position of vice-president (Timothy 1978:11). His son, Harold T. Paul, is currently the president of this organization.

Dayadharum refutes (1999: 128-132) Paul's hypothesis arguing that separate churches for Tamils and Baptists did not materialize and that as the Telugu Baptist Church developed, it became inclusive of other sub-cultures, namely the Tamils and the Hindustani. Although Theophilus Rangiah had to deal with the challenge of the caste system, the early pioneers, according to Dayadharum (1999:128), did well in their efforts to reach out to the different sub-cultures among South African Indians.

Another argument posited by Dayadharum was the fact that among Rangiah's first converts were the Pillay family, who were Tamils. The Pillay children were also among the first pupils in the school which Rangiah established. Three of the Pillay sons married John Rangiah's daughters. Rangiah it seemed did not apply the same social rules of endogamy of the caste system.

On one hand, Paul has made the assertion that Tamils were sidelined by the Telugus and on the other hand the title of his PhD thesis *From Telugu Baptist Church to Open Church: A Study of the Indian Baptist Missionary Enterprise in South*

Africa (1903-1989) suggests an opening of the membership of the Telugu Baptist churches to non-Telugus.

In an article written by John Rangiah, which was a tribute to Lady Hulett, the wife of his landlord, he makes reference to the caste system. He wrote:

Regardless of the distinction of caste on one side and colour on the other, orphans she guarded and brought them until they became parents of children, by supplying them with food and clothing and medicine while sick; the sick she nursed, the poor she helped, and to the servants she was kind and beneficent (Rangiah nd).

This reflects Rangiah's awareness of the caste system, and his comments suggest that he was affirming Lady Hulett's non-discriminatory attitude towards the different castes. It would therefore seem unlikely that Rangiah would have encouraged the caste system.

Finally, there is no empirical evidence to support Paul's claim. This, as well as Dayadharum's discussion on this issue, the silence in the records of the Baptist Mission of South Africa (including a significant work of Rev. Brian Naidoo ex-president and current general secretary of the BMSA), the fact that Rangiah's three daughters married Tamil speaking men and Rangiah's speech on the death of Lady Hullet, weakens Paul's claim that that Tamils were prejudiced against by the Telugus. David Newton Nathaniel, arrived in South Africa to continue with Rangiah's work with the Baptist Association of South Africa.

3.8 Rev. D. N. Nathaniel

After the death of Theophilus Rangiah in 1947, the Indian Baptist Church was without a missionary until 1951 when Rev. David Newton Nathaniel and his family arrived in Natal on the ship *Isipingo* to take up the position of superintendent missionary. Nathaniel was born on 24 October 1908 in the district of Ramayapatnam in South India (Timothy 1978: 7). Prior to his arrival, he was ordained in Allur, India after completing theological studies at the Ramapatnum Theological Seminary, an American Baptist seminary where he trained as a minister, as well as at the Bangalore Theological College in India, which was supported by the Baptist Mission of England. Nathaniel's early education was in a mission school in Kavali, India. Nathaniel was married to Jayamma.

To commemorate Nathaniel N. Timothy, a former general secretary of the BASA, wrote a biography of Nathaniel wherein he records the tributes paid by the churches in India to Nathaniel just before he left for South Africa. These included tributes by the field association, which comprised eleven churches, the Southern Baptist Association, the Lone Star Baptist Church (the church that John Rangiah was a member of), and other churches. The Telugu Baptist Church in Allur wrote "*Your meritorious services to the Church as deacon, secretary, treasurer and Sunday School Superintendent have always been helpful to the growth of the church.*" (Timothy 1976: 4) There were also warnings by some in India about his going to South Africa. In 1950, in a letter dated 30 September 1950, Nathaniel's call to South Africa was questioned, as there was a delay of almost a year before Nathaniel finally left India for South Africa. The letter stated "*If you go to South Africa you and your*

whole family will be beheaded the moment you step out of the boat. If you want to go, go yourself, but leave your family here.” Nathaniel replied “We must serve the Lord not only when all things go well but even under adverse circumstances” (Timothy 1976: 5-6).

On 9 June 1951 Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel with their three children arrived in South Africa to work with the Telugus. Nathaniel and his family were received very warmly by the Natal Indian Baptist Association. At a reception held in 1951 in Durban, the missionary and his family were treated to a welcome service.

You, represent Sir, a rare combination of two important factors which are so very necessary in the ministry of our churches in this country, since we have in you a harmonious blend of high academic qualifications and practical experience accumulated over a number of years (Timothy 1976: 7).

It seemed when Nathaniel indicated to the churches in India his intention to go to South Africa as a missionary, there were those who were not supportive and ridiculed him at times. One church leader stated *“this is of your own choice and a capricious thinking.”* It seemed that Nathaniel not only faced this kind of reaction from a few leaders in India but also during his work as a missionary in South Africa. There were some in the Baptist Association of South Africa who ridiculed and mentally abused him (Timothy 1976:10).

Despite this, Nathaniel served the Baptist Association of South Africa churches as a superintendent missionary for almost thirty-five years, Nathaniel working hard and faithfully amongst the Telugus in South Africa. He became the superintendent missionary of NIBA in 1951. Nathaniel wrote many Telugu songs and translated some popular hymns into Telugu. The staff of the South African Baptist Missionary

Society (SABMS), a body formed by the Baptist Union, visited the Indian churches regularly. Rev. T.D. Pass of the Baptist Union worked closely with Rev. Nathaniel. Rev. Pass introduced Nathaniel to the circuit system, in which a minister pastored several churches in a particular region (Israel 1998:4).

All of the missionaries who came from India stressed the value of education. All of them received quality education from the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society's educational program in India. This value is evident in the missionaries' attitude to theological education as well, and Rev. David Newton Nathaniel is no exception. He gained his Masters in Divinity degree at the age of seventy years at the University of Durban Westville, in Durban. He had completed the degree of Bachelor of Divinity and arrived in Natal with a good theological education (Timothy 1978:7). Dr. P.M. Krishna, who was a warden at the Bethesda Bible College in Durban, sponsored Nathaniel's theological graduate studies and also promised to do so till he completes the Doctor of Divinity (Timothy 1976: 16). Credit must be given to the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society for its investment in these Telugu missionaries. As a result, these missionaries brought the same attitude to the mission field and their work in South Africa.

In the early years of Nathaniel's work as a missionary with the Baptist Association of South Africa, Nathaniel wrote about unification and the need to work closely with the other Indian Baptists. In his thesis, he presents a strong theological basis for unity and co-operation amongst the Telugus in South Africa (Nathaniel, D.N., 1979. *The Origin and Development of the Baptist Association of South Africa Church in South Africa, 1900-1978*. MDiv. University of Durban-Westville.) He states that, "To this end

no stone should be left unturned, unity then must be advocated and encouraged by every member and by every church.”

Rev. Nathaniel was a theologically trained minister. He stimulated the thinking of the Indians with regard to ministry. He wrote several books and commentaries. They were: *Helpful Commentary on Philippians, For the Preacher in the Making, Simple talks on Christian Doctrines, Three minute Digest, Commentaries on Deuteronomy and Pastoral Epistle* (Nathaniel 1969:1). He died at the age of 77 on 20 December 1985.

John Rangiah, his son T.M Rangiah and David Nathaniel contributed greatly to the Baptist Association of South Africa. Their respective wives also played important roles in this work in South Africa. They are Kanakamma Rangiah, who served from 1903-1931, Sungunamma Rangiah, 1921-1943, as well as Rangiah’s grand-daughter. Included with these wives is Rajithamma Israel who is more recent (1956-2006). Other women and their contributions also feature in the history of the Baptist Association of South Africa and this study will now focus on their contributions.

This research has discussed the three India-born missionary families who came to South Africa to work among the Telugu indentured labourers. Their contribution to Baptist work in South Africa is noteworthy given that world missions during that period involved mostly white western missionaries.

3.9 Women in Ministry with BASA

There is currently no literature on Baptist women in South Africa. They only appear in brochures of the Baptist Association of South Africa. There is little discussion in which their work is assessed and evaluated. Here, the research will examine important contributors to the mission of the Baptist Association of South Africa.

Although Rangiah showed an openness to women in ministry, the BASA does not have an official position on their role in ministry. Women were given opportunities to participate in ministry in various capacities. This lack of an official position on women in ministry was largely shaped by apartheid theology which this study will examine. What follows next are the contributions of women to the spiritual, social, and cultural development of the Baptist Association of South Africa. At a later stage, the researcher will critically discuss the dominant view held by most Baptists, including BASA, on the status of women. It will show how apartheid influenced this view. We now turn to the contributions of women. They include: Kanakamma Rangiah (1903-1931), Sungunamma Rangiah (1921-1943), Rajithamma Rangiah (1956 -2006), Martha Isaac (1970-1988), Rebecca Rhandram (1970- 2006), Esther Benjamin (1970-2006), Valerie Dayanandham (1989-2006), Marge Nathaniel (1998-2003), and Evelyn Maistry (1990-2006).

When John Rangiah arrived in Kearsney to establish the first Indian Baptist Church in South Africa, Kanakamma was part of the leadership team, which was compromised of John, D. Benjamin, herself and others. She taught the Telugu language to the young girls and taught hymns and conducted Bible studies with the

women. Kanakamma served as a teacher in the school that Rangiah established in Kearsney, where she provided education to the children of indentured labourers.

An orphanage was started by Mrs. Hullett, the landlady at the tea estate, and Kanakamma was invited to take care of the educational and spiritual needs of these orphans, aged 12-15 years. She played an important role in teaching girls to sing, leading worship services and participating in plays. When the membership of the historic Kearsney Baptist church increased, a decision was made to construct a larger building. Kanakamma and the women in the congregation assisted in raising financial support for this project. When her husband attended the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, Kanakamma cared for the family, provided leadership to the Kearsney Baptist Church, liaised with leaders of other new established churches and provided counsel and moral and spiritual support to them during her husband's 5-month absence. A few years later when a schism in Indian Baptist work took place, Kanakamma provided Rangiah with the emotional support he needed so much during that extremely challenging period in their work in South Africa.

In 1916, when John Rangiah died, Kanakamma had to make some serious decisions about her future ministry with the Baptist Association of South Africa Church as well as her children's education. She was tempted to return to India but instead stayed to continue the work she and her husband had started. Kanakamma, however, decided to send her 10-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter to India so that they could receive a good education. After her son Theophilus completed his education in India, he returned to South Africa, and was received by his mother to continue the

work his parents started in 1903. Theophilus, who had lived in Nellore, an urban centre in India, and who was trained in law and theology, preached highly academic sermons. Kanakamma guided him and encouraged him to preach simple sermons so that the congregation, who were mostly indentured labourers, could understand his preaching. It is recorded that she once told him after a sermon, “Manoharam, nobody understood you today. Come down to their level” (NIBA News 1953: 36).

Kanakamma Rangiah, after working as a missionary among the Baptist Association of South Africa for almost 28 years, died on 13 April 1931. Her daughter-in-law, Sungunamma Rangiah followed in her footsteps, (Israel (2007) [*Discussion on the Role of Women in the Baptist Association of South Africa Work in South Africa*] Telephone (Communication, 16 September 2007).

Sungunamma Rangiah arrived in South Africa from India with her husband Theophilus on 5 March 1921 on board the *SS Umtata*. Initially, Sungunamma, a young 18-year-old girl who had just completed high school, found it difficult to adjust to the conditions in Natal. Through the support of her mother-in-law, she eventually acclimatized to the South African conditions.

One of the significant contributions she made along with her husband was the establishment of the Baptist Association of South Africa Church in Glendale in the Natal North Coast. A woman called “mother Subbamma” was seriously ill and needed healing. It is reported that Sugunamma spent much time in prayer, which resulted in the healing of this sick woman. This opened more opportunities for healing. The result was the establishment of a church in this region of Natal.

Sungunamma initiated socio-religious work among the Baptist Association of South Africa churches. She taught Telugu, English hymns and choruses and held cooking, dressing and hygiene classes. She was particularly interested in promoting the English language. Young people who passed standard six (grade 8) and who were entering high school were required to preach a sermon in English in the presence of Theophilus and Sungunamma Rangiah. On Tuesdays, services were held to promote the English language.

Sungunamma opened her house to strangers, young girls and boys who needed rehabilitation. Her hospitality was very evident in her ministry to the community at Kearsney, where she and her family lived and served. She played an important role in assisting families in organizing wedding ceremonies, advising on the choice of jewellery, clothing and food as well as providing guidance in choosing hymns for the church service. After serving the Indian Baptist Church for 23 years, Sungunamma died on 22 May 1943. After Sungunamma's death another woman, Rajithamma Rangiah, John Rangiah's granddaughter, emerged as an important leader in The Baptist Association of South Africa Church in South Africa (Israel (2007) [*Discussion on the Role of Women in the Baptist Association of South Africa Work in South Africa*] (Telephone Communication, 16 September 2007)).

Rajithamma was born at "Gospel Hill" Kearsney in 1932. She was trained as a school teacher. Wherever she lived, she organized Sunday schools for Indian and Black children. Hindu and Muslim children also attended these Sunday schools. Rajithamma annually prepared these children to write the National Baptist Union Scripture Examinations.

Rajithamma held the position of Assistant Secretary of the Baptist Association of South Africa for 8 years. She also served as president of the BASA Women's Department for 25 years. Under her leadership, the Women's Department assisted Bible college students financially, provided financial assistance to churches with building projects, contributed to HIV/AIDS projects and organized annual women's rallies, special Ascension Day services and spiritual camps for women.

A very significant seminar was initiated by Rajithamma on the "Status of Women in the Church and Community." Another important seminar arranged during her leadership was on HIV/AIDS. She also recognized the need to provide emotional and spiritual support to widows. Rajithamma organized a widow's fellowship, and this became an annual event in the BASA Women's Department.

Rajithamma travelled widely and attended many conferences. In 1975 she attended the Baptist World Alliance Congress in Sweden, where she presented a paper, "Today's Women in South Africa." She also participated in women's conferences in Malawi (2001), Ghana and Brazil (2003), participated in a mission conference in North Carolina, USA (2003), and attended the Baptist World Alliance Congress in Birmingham, England (2005).

Rajithamma taught young girls the Indian traditional stick dance, which they performed at the 2003 Indian Baptist centenary celebrations at the Durban City Hall. To mark the significance of this centenary celebration, she organized an art competition among the Baptist Association of South Africa churches where artists were encouraged to depict the historical scenes of the Baptist Association of South

Africa in South Africa. She herself was an art teacher. She also played the role of Kanakamma Rangiah in a radio play entitled, “Behold the Baptist Association of South Africa,” which was produced by Dr. Gabriel Naidoo. This play depicted the life of Rev. John Rangiah and was broadcast in three countries -- India, Pakistan and South Africa.

Rajithamma continues to this day to render service to Tongaat Baptist Church where she is a member. She continues to sing and promote the singing of Christian hymns in the Telugu language. She also cooperates with other denominations and organizations such as the Tongaat Minister’s Fraternal, and raised funds for the building of a neighbouring church in Tongaat. Her work with the Baptist Association of South Africa spans some 50 years. (Israel (2007) [*Discussion on the Role of Women in The Baptist Association of South Africa Work in South Africa*] (Telephone Communication, 23 September 2007).

The role of women, particularly from the Rangiah family in the narrative of the Baptist Association of South Africa church and in the narrative of the Baptist Association of South Africa church, is noteworthy, given the challenges of missions in South Africa. These challenges included raising financial support for their work and the promotion of culture and tradition in an African and English context as well as in a male-dominated Baptist history which reflects mainly the contributions of white male missionaries in South Africa. Other women who were not related to the Rangiahs also played important roles in the Baptist Association of South Africa.

Martha was a locally trained missionary who worked among the women and youth of the Baptist Association of South Africa. She studied at the Durban Bible College and

earned a diploma in theology. Martha rendered spiritual services to the women, youth and children of the Indian Baptist church. Martha was also employed as a missionary of the South African Baptist Missionary Society (Ragwan, D., *Women in Ministry: The Role of Martha Isaac in BASA*). [Letter] (Personal communication, 9 September 2008).

Rebecca Rhandram, born Rebecca Peter, is the only daughter of the five children of Mrs. Elsie and Evangelist V. Arumugam Peter. Evangelist Peter, along with Rev. N.E.Tomlinson founded the South African general mission, now known as the Evangelical Church of South Africa. Rebecca's four brothers followed in their father's footsteps and entered the ministry. Rebecca also took that route. She studied as a full-time student at the Durban Bible College and earned a diploma in theology. In 1968 Rebecca joined the staff of the South African Baptist Missionary Society (now known as the Baptist Missions department of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa) and worked among the Indian churches in Kwa Zulu Natal together with Rev. T.D Pass, Baptist Union missionary; Miss Judith Morck; Miss Julia Forgus; and Miss Martha Isaac. While with the South African Missionary Society, Rebecca was engaged in the following activities: speaking at ladies' services, daily vacation bible schools in different churches during church holidays, speaking at church youth groups and young women's church groups, teaching in church and wayside Sunday schools, and visiting church members and counselling those who wanted to put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Rebecca resigned from the South African Baptist Missionary Society in December 1971 when she married The Rev. T. Rhandram, who is currently a Baptist minister (Rhandram, T., *Women in Ministry: The Role of Rebecca Rhandram in BASA*). [Letter] (Personal communication, 9 September 2008).

Esther, unlike Martha and Rebecca, did not receive any formal training in mission work but worked with the Baptist Association of South Africa as its missionary. She contributed to the women's ministry of the BASA where she served as vice president of this organization. Mrs. Benjamin travelled widely and went on many short-term missions to Malawi, Swaziland and Mozambique. (Ragwan, D., *Women in Ministry: The Role of Esher Benjamin in BASA*). [Letter] (Personal communication, 9 September 2008)

Valerie was the great-granddaughter of David Rajanna, who came as an indentured labourer from India. He was the pastor of the Tinley Manor Baptist Church. Valerie was a graduate of Durban Bible College. She served as president of the Baptist Women's Department of the Baptist Association of South Africa. Valerie's work included working with women, speaking at youth and women's retreats, preaching, and leading worship. She also served as a missionary with the Baptist Association of South Africa. Valerie participated in short-term missions to Swaziland, Malawi and Mozambique. (Ragwan, D., *Women in Ministry: Women in Ministry: The Role of Valerie Dayananand in BASA*). [Letter] (Personal communication, 9 September 2008).

Marge Nathaniel is the daughter-in-law of the late Rev. D.N. Nathaniel. She is from a Catholic background but married the youngest son of Rev. and Mrs Nathaniel. Marge trained as a school teacher and in 1998 was elected as the first female general secretary of the BASA. Marge played an important role in the administrative affairs of the organization. She also addressed the organization at significant events. She possessed the gift of communication and articulated the vision of the organization

very ably. Marge was responsible for initiating important workshops and conferences notably on Leadership (Swamy: 1999: 10-11).

Although BASA did not formally recognize women ministers, a local church of BASA called Living Stones Baptist Church inducted the first woman minister. Then-president of BASA Anthony Poliah inducted Evelyn Maistry into ministry. Mrs Maistry served in various capacities in BASA, notably as vice president of the Baptist Women's Department and director of the Christian Education department. In 2003, she also travelled to the USA and participated in ministry and workshops that were planned by BASA. (Ragwan, D., Women in Ministry: Women in Ministry: The Role of Esher Benjamin in BASA). Letter] (Personal communication, 9 September 2008)

Although Rebecca Rhandram, Martha Isaac, Esther Benjamin, Valerie Dayanandham and Evelyn Maistry were not related to the pioneers of the Telugu missionaries, they nevertheless contributed and continue to contribute to the spiritual, cultural and educational development of the Indian Baptist work in Kwa Zulu Natal.

3.10 Evaluation of the early ministry of the Baptist Association of South Africa work

When the American Baptist missionaries began their work among the Telugus, little did they realize that in a short period of time their converts would rise to the occasion to form their own mission society and then send an indigenous missionary family to the Indians of South Africa. The notion of being self-sufficient, taking responsibility,

working hard and being creative was very evident among the Telugus in India and was reflected in Rev. and Mrs. Rangiah's work in South Africa. Although Rangiah received his theological training at an American Baptist seminary in India, and this was evident in his theology in South Africa, he nevertheless demonstrated the need to contextualize the Christian faith to the Telugus to whom he ministered.

When the Rangiahs left India to come to South Africa, they did so with the understanding that the church in South Africa would provide most of their remuneration. Since they were people who were deeply committed to prayer, they further believed that God would take care of their needs while in South Africa. The Hullets, at Kearsney, were touched by their humility and love for God and of their own will they provided a stipend of £20 per annum for the Rangiahs. The Rangiahs' belief in prayer was reinforced by the Huletts' action. When finance became an issue during the tension between Rangiah and a certain section of the congregation who accused him of living a sumptuous lifestyle, he requested that the contribution by the church in India be stopped. He also believed that the church in South Africa should take responsibility in providing for their physical needs. Here is further evidence of his life of faith and integrity.

What is of great significance as one considers missions in developing countries is the tendency of the nationals to be dependent on overseas financial support. While this is needed for a period of time, there must come a time when the nationals need to become less dependent on Western support and become more self-sufficient. Rangiah shows this very clearly in his mission among the Telugus in South Africa. He goes one step further and states that the sending mission agency in India, which

is the Telugu Home Mission Society, must not bear the responsibility of sustaining the work among the Telugus in South Africa, but it must be carried out and supported by the Indians in South Africa (Rangiah 1905:1-5).

The training of Telugu lay leaders for ministry was a hallmark of Rangiah's work. Having received education himself in India, he recognized the importance of this and set out to educate his parishioners. He built a school in Kearsney, trained men and women to lead congregations and appointed regional representatives to take care of the spiritual needs of the congregations. Given the lack of educational opportunities for Indians in the early 1900s in South Africa, Rangiah stands out as an important pioneer in the education of the Telugus in South Africa. For out of this school emerged leading men and women who have contributed to the advancement of the Indian population in South Africa.

Rangiah's arrival as an indigenous missionary to South Africa must be hailed as a great milestone, since at that time mostly western missionaries went to developing countries. Furthermore, he negated the idea that only western missionaries were capable of undertaking such an enterprise. Peruvian-born missiologist Samuel Escobar (2003:12) stated in his book *The New Global Missions: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone*, that the great commission is not only directed to Western Christians but to everyone. Rangiah showed that as a developing Christian, he was capable of participating in global missions. He did not allow his ethnicity, economic status and country of origin to impede his call to South Africa, and this he did over 100 years ago.

Although Rangiah demonstrated that as a developing missionary he could participate in global missions, he did not intentionally stress the need for South African Indians to consider foreign mission work. Somehow the missionary spirit of Rangiah did not influence Baptist Indians in South Africa, to the extent where it would be a sending agent. It was only later that foreign missions were stressed and encouraged. Rangiah did encourage local missions but that was confined to Indians in South Africa. It seems that the failure of Rangiah to engender a missionary spirit and zeal among the Indians in South Africa was due to the fact that the Telugu population was in need of much training and much work was needed to strengthen them. After all, these people were indentured labourers and their only medium of language was Telugu. Since India was the only country that had a Telugu-speaking population, the door for foreign missions for Telugus in the 1900s was very limited.

Another observation in Rangiah's work is that nowhere in the records of the history of the Baptist Association of South Africa work is there reference to any kind of relationship with Black Christian leaders or congregations. It may be because of the 1906 African uprising. This uprising took place because of a poll tax that the white authorities were enforcing on Zulu males in Natal. This uprising caused Rangiah to be fearful of being attacked. According to The NIBA News, Rangiah wrote (1953:17) that this uprising caused great alarm and confusion. The indentured labourers were stricken with fear and they took shelter in the tea factory during the night in fear for their lives. Rangiah and his family spent many nights hiding in the bushes at Gospel Hill at Kearsney. Another factor could have been the language barrier. While Rangiah was very proficient in English, he could not really use this language to minister to the Zulus.

Perhaps the greatest historical significance of the arrival of the Rangiahs in South Africa was their establishment of the Baptist Association of South Africa work in South Africa. The Baptist Association of South Africa work was not a product of colonial missions work as in the case of White, Coloured and Black Baptist work in South Africa. Baptist organizations from these racial populations fell under the jurisdiction of the Baptist Union of South Africa, a largely English denomination. The Baptist Association of South Africa work stands out as the most unique mission in South Africa because it was started by an Indian-born missionary and was and is an autonomous organization with its own constitution and structure.

The sugar and tea industries in South Africa greatly benefited from the contributions of the indentured labourers. Not only did these two industries gain from their labour but these labourers added richly to the culture and economy of Natal. Today one of the greatest concentrations of Indians outside of India is in Phoenix and Chatsworth, South Africa. These two Townships were mission fields of the Baptist Association of South Africa. The result of hard work by the pioneers of the Baptist Association of South Africa are very evident in Phoenix and Chatsworth.

An important aspect of the narrative of the Baptist Association of South Africa church is the contribution of women. The study highlights the roles of the wives of John and Theophilus Rangiah. The granddaughter of John Rangiah also features in this narrative. The contributions of Rebecca Rhandram, Martha Isaac, Esther Benjamin, Valerie Dayanandham and Evelyn Maistry were also noted. Although BASA has allowed women to engage in ministry, it has not formally put into place a policy with

regard to women in ministry. It still largely reflects a hierarchical model in its ministries, which no doubt was influenced by apartheid theology.

The contribution of women to the Indian Baptist work in South Africa is noteworthy given the view held by many of the churches during this period. However, this view still fell short of the biblical view of women. Although, BASA allowed women to engage in ministry, it reflected a view that women were not equal to men. This view was a result of the hermeneutics church leaders both in BASA and in the other South African Baptist organizations used to interpret scripture. In the South African context, the question of how to interpret the creation of human persons became an issue which influenced how Baptists viewed women in ministry. Compounded with this question of interpretation, White Christians, and more specifically the Afrikaner Christians, claimed that they were the ones who could interpret the Biblical text. They also believed that they were responsible for passing their interpretation of scripture on to people of colour. The people of colour had no participation in the formulation and construction of theology and, furthermore, were not allowed to criticize the theology that was passed on to them. South Africans of all races were influenced by apartheid theology. Apartheid theology, in addition to its restrictive framework, also applied racial and gender stereotypes to human persons. According to apartheid theology, white persons are superior to Blacks, Indians and so called Coloureds, and man is considered superior to woman. This theology has been oppressive and dehumanizing. What then is the alternative view of women from a biblical perspective?

In order to understand the nature of human persons, Manfred Brauch, a Biblical scholar, argues that scripture, and in particular the account of the creation of human persons, must be read in a particular way. He sheds light on the way the creation narrative in Genesis 1 and 2 should be read by pointing to the genres of the Genesis creation narrative. An incorrect genre judgment according to him will lead one astray in biblical interpretation. There are two creation narratives and they each have different genres. The genre of Genesis 1 is poetic in form and the genre of Genesis 2 is in a story form. These two narratives with two distinct genres as indicated before are “theological” in nature. Mosaic tradition places these two chapters side by side. Now, there are two ways of reading the creation account: theological and historical. A historical narrative reading focuses on the chronological sequence of events, such as the creation of the earth, waters, plants and human persons. A theological approach presents a multifaceted theological tradition about creation within the text. This approach requires that the researcher look beyond the mere sequence of events and read the creation account within the larger context of scripture, which includes the covenant of God with His people, Israel, as well as the revelation of God in Jesus. Which approach one uses affects one’s understanding of human persons, which in turn will affect one’s understanding of marriage and family and in particular women. The researcher opts for a theological reading/understanding of the narrative. (Brauch states that although chapters 1 and 2 are stylistically different, they do not conflict with each other. Furthermore, he says that while the creation narrative reports a historical event, it must not be read in a historical manner).

One can understand Brauch’s argument against this type of reading of the creation account of human persons with its emphasis on the order aspect of the creation

narrative and the claim that this reflects the nature of God because this type of reading looks at the texts historically rather than theologically. The conclusion is made that since God is a God of order, the creation of man first and woman second must be interpreted to mean that man should be the head of the woman. Brauch goes to the extent of saying that the reading of Genesis 1 historically violates the meaning of the narrative of the creation story. Should one agree with Brauch that we must read this theologically? The researcher is inclined in this direction. It is an important question, because how one answers it makes a huge difference in what one sees. Apartheid theologians read this narrative “historically” and argued that since man was created first followed by woman, man is superior to woman. According to this theology if one were to elevate the status of woman, one would alter God’s design. Here in the Genesis narrative we see how apartheid scholars, as well as a large number of Biblical scholars, are influenced by the larger Semitic culture where importance was attached to that which is first. In the study of the faith of Israel, one finds the frequent divine rejection of cultural norms. Throughout the Biblical narrative, the cultural pattern of assigning superiority to “first” is set aside in the accomplishment of God’s purpose. Thus Isaac was chosen over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, and David over Saul as the “ideal messianic king.” The same note is heard in Jesus’ statement, “The first shall be last and the last first.” This is an example of looking at the creation account within the larger context of scripture.

In examining the phrase, “male and female are created in the image of God,” Brauch states that the creation narrative in chapter 1 is rhythmic and poetic and that it focuses on various relationships between different realities. He refers to three realities in Genesis chapter 2, *adamah* (earth: feminine), *adam* (man: masculine) and *havah* (eve: feminine) and states that man is out of earth (feminine), woman is out of

man (masculine), and man and woman are out of woman. Looking at this way, this text clearly reflects the mutual interdependence of man and woman. The reading of this text theologically (meaning that this text must not be interpreted in isolation from the whole of scripture on this subject) rather than historically provides a very different basis for our understanding of human persons as essentially relational, equal, and mutually responsible. Genesis 2:18, 20 respects this core relational nature: “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helper for him.” Such a theological interpretation receives significant exegetical support. In Genesis 2:18, 20 the word “helper” (from the Hebrew *ezer*) appears two times. This same word is used an additional sixteen times in the entire Old Testament and always in reference to God as Redeemer, as one who acts to rescue from danger or calamity (e.g. Psalms 33:20; 121:2; 115:9; Deuteronomy 33:7). Similarly, the verb *nagid* means “to save from extremity” and “to deliver from death.” In a literal sense, the word means “what is front of him, in front, facing (toward), face to face” and the metaphorical meaning is “corresponding to and complementary.”

Having established the meaning of the verb in the Hebrew, the researcher draws attention to the use of the noun, *nagid*, in Genesis 2:18-20. In the Hebrew it means “one who rules, one who leads, a ruler or prince.” This noun represents the woman as the one who is the leader.

Such a reading of the two terms together implies that the creation of the woman leads the man out of his aloneness and that her presence is redemptive and life giving. She is depicted not as a subordinate creature, but as one who is an equal partner, corresponding to him and complementing him. Further evidence of the equality of the man and woman in the creation account is found in chapter 2:23-24.

This text confirms and affirms the equality and correspondence between male and female. Verse 23 states, “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.”

In the creation of human persons in Genesis 1:26-27, God is referred to in the plural. Here is the first Biblical hint of the Trinity through whom all things are created and sustained. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (1990:40) points to a very interesting insight, which is that “God is not an abstract ‘first cause’ or a solitary ‘world governor’ devoid of emotion.” She contends that “God is intrinsically social: Creator, Redeemer and Holy Spirit working in cooperative interdependence throughout the whole of the Biblical drama.” She further asserts that “feminist theologians and psychologists have pointed out that one of the chief features of a feminine perspective on life is a concern for relationships.” Male theologians over the years as well as Baptists pastors have generally “tended to think of God in terms of hierarchy, rulership and top-down authority whereas female theologians have suggested that these images of dominion need to be balanced by an understanding of God in a more emotional and relational” manner Van Leeuwen cites (1990:40) Numbers 11:12 and Matthew 23:37 in advocating for the feminine trait of God to be considered.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has chronicled the ministry of the Baptist Association of South Africa Church in Natal, South Africa. It provided a brief context of this ministry, which was founded in India. The focus of the early part of this chapter included the historical arrival of the first Indian missionary, John Rangiah, to South Africa. Rangiah’s early ministry, which included training of leaders, establishing churches and appointing

leaders to lead churches, formed part of the focus of Rangiah's contribution to the Baptist Association of South Africa.

The chapter then described Rangiah's understanding of the Bible and Bible themes. The research also showed how the influence of American Baptist theology as well as Rangiah's experience under British rule in India influenced his work in South Africa. It further provided insight with regards to the socio-political issues/questions. In this regard, the study critically discusses Rangiah's role within this period of South Africa's history. The study then analyzed the impact of the Biblical themes on Rangiah's theology and on the Baptist Association of South Africa Church in South Africa. At the death of John Rangiah, his son, Theophilus Rangiah, continued the Baptist Association of South Africa work. His contribution to the establishment and re-organizing of churches in Natal were discussed. The study answered the key research question, Why is the history of the Baptist association of South Africa important to South African Christian history? It discussed in detail the ministries of the three Indian-born missionaries, which illustrated the self-supporting, self sustaining work of the Baptist Association of South Africa.

This chapter also discussed the contribution of women to the ministry of the Baptist Association of South Africa with a critique of BASA's view of women. It also provided a hermeneutic which challenged the traditional view and offered a new way of understanding the status of women. Here, it responded to the other key research question, What role women played in the BASA?

Chapter Four

The Baptist Association of South Africa in Unity Talks

The historic emergence of an indigenous Indian Baptist mission in South Africa occurred in an era of European expansion, colonialism, and apartheid. During this long period South Africa's population groups such as the Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites were racially divided. Throughout this period there was no significant movement amongst Baptists towards racial reconciliation. There were, however, conversations between the predominantly White Baptist Union of South Africa and the Black Baptist Convention of South Africa as well as between the two ethnic Indian Baptists, the Baptist Association of South Africa and the Baptist Mission of South Africa. However these conversations were not inclusive. The conversations between the White and Black Baptists had to be terminated as they excluded the Indian and Afrikaans Baptists.

The political climate in South Africa in the 1990s provided the conditions for all races to engage one another and work towards reconciliation. In 1994 a new era dawned in South Africa. The release of Nelson Mandela from prison further created an opportunity for all South Africans to embrace reconciliation. In 1999 the leaders from the five Baptist organizations recognized this defining moment and began a process of dialogue with one another. It was a new beginning for South African Baptists. Baptists from the five racially divided groups, the Baptist Convention of South Africa, the Baptist Union of South Africa, the Baptist Association of South Africa and Baptist Mission of South Africa, and the Afrikanse Baptiste Kerk, an Afrikaans speaking organization, began a process of engagement on reconciliation and unity. The

researcher (Ragwan, 2004) examined this unity process in a Master of Arts thesis, *An Inquiry into the Unity Process among Baptists in South Africa*. This chapter will critically discuss the participation and contribution of BASA in this process. However, it is, important to locate BASA within the larger social and political framework and show how it was impacted in that framework. As such, this chapter will discuss the history of apartheid with special emphasis on three periods namely, the Dutch, British, and Afrikaner period. Additionally, it will show the effects of apartheid in South African societies, particularly the influence of apartheid on racism and ethnicity. This chapter will examine these phenomena within the larger historical framework. The history of the church in South Africa must be seen in three phases. They are the Dutch Period (1652-1795), the British Period (1795/1814/1948) and the Afrikaner Period (1924/1948-7).

4.1 The Dutch Period

Jan van Riebeeck was dispatched by the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) to build a fort and establish a garden at the Cape. In 1652 he established a refreshment station (Dvorin 1952: 10). This served as a halfway station for ships between Holland and the East. The purpose of this was to increase the profit of the DEIC's trade and small-scale farming. According to Regehr (1979: 105), Jan Van Riebeeck had no interest in conquest and subjugation.

During the Dutch occupation of the Cape, slave labour was introduced. In 1658 West Africans were first used as slaves and later the DEIC added to its African slave numbers slaves from territories such as India (particularly from Bengal and the

Coromandel and Malabar Coasts) and from the Indonesian islands. Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2000: 10) writes about a young boy in the seventeenth century called Ari. He was playing on a beach on the west coast of Bengal when he was captured and taken as a slave to the Cape where he became a possession of the Dutch. Many other Indians like Ari were brought as slaves to the Cape married other slaves from the East or from Africa, or the indigenous Khoisan inhabitants. The early Dutch Settlers depended upon the Khoisan inhabitants for their cattle. The Khoisan, who were the indigenous inhabitants, were a nomadic people who followed their herds of cattle and sheep to grazing areas. They later became known as the Hottentots (Regehr 1979:105).

Whilst both these communities lived side by side, the Dutch settlers initiated the first sign of apartheid when they erected a hedge that separated the Khoisan from the Dutch settlement. Further conflict between the two communities arose when problems over grazing rights and land occurred. This eventually led to two wars, which forced the Khoisan to accept the Dutch occupation. The Dutch hired the Khoisan as farm labourers and domestic servants. As a result of miscegenation between the San, Khoisan, slaves and whites, the coloured population (people of mixed blood) emerged (Stack and Morton 1976:11). Dhupelia-Mesthrie's (2000: 10) finding that Indian slaves who were brought to the Cape by the Dutch resulted in the miscegenation between the Indians and the San and Khoisan, which brought about the Coloured, people is worthy of further research.

Despite this mixing of races during this period, the whites, according to Loubser (1987:5), viewed themselves a distinct group from the others. Loubser further stated

that in 1788, a number of Stellenbosch people protested against a corporal who was "of dark and of heathen descent". At the end of the eighteenth century, race prejudice was firmly established everywhere, and shortly after this the Afrikaans language became a symbol of white identity (Davenport 1977:5).

The Bible played a part in the lives of the settlers as it guided and informed their lives in the colony. During the Dutch period, the public expression of Christianity was largely monopolized by the Dutch Reformed Church, closely overseen by the ruling Dutch East India Company. Elphick and Davenport (1997:2) argue that most social historians do not fully recognize that Reformed piety and doctrine were influential in the shaping of White society as well as White-Black relations

4.2 The British Era

Generally many have been critical of the Afrikaner because the Afrikaner is synonymous with apartheid. One must apportion blame to a certain extent as well to the British for the divisions in South Africa. The researcher recalls as a student attending a special lecture in 1986 by a leading evangelical scholar, John Stott, with the entire student body of the Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa in Parktown, Johannesburg. The subject was apartheid in South Africa and the Christian's response to it. John Stott shared the lecture with a few local English speakers. During the question and answer sessions, the Afrikaners were blamed for apartheid in South Africa. A fellow Black student confronted the speakers about the role the English had played in the divisions in South Africa. Confessions were made and apologies followed because of a one-sided viewpoint, especially by the South

African speakers. On the other hand it can be argued that some British promoted racial harmony and cannot be blamed for apartheid. Advocates of this may cite British sympathy for Blacks. They took issue with the Boers as far as their treatment of the Blacks was concerned. They were also concerned at the provocation of the Blacks by the Boers. The imperialistic attitudes of some of the British towards the Boers were evident.

According to Loubser (1987:10), within a decade the Cape suffered a change of government three times (1795, 1803, and 1806) and each time the church had to adapt itself to new situations. In 1806 when the British took control of South Africa, little changed for the welfare of the Blacks. They passed restrictive laws and suppressed most Blacks, took away most of their land and made them dependent on Europeans in order to make them subservient to White Rule (Ngcokovane 1984: 2). Regehr (1979: 121) on the other hand, argued that during this period more freedom was experienced by Blacks, who could now enter the colony freely under a pass system to sell labour and trade. He cites Dr. John Philip's work among the Blacks. Dr. Philip championed the cause of the Blacks and was not well received by the Boers because of his influence on the government regarding the issue of Ordinance 50, which was in favour of Blacks enjoying the same legal rights White colonists enjoyed (Regehr 1979:121). Although he advanced the course of the Khoisan, Philip felt that Blacks should live separate from Whites until such time as they could compete with Whites in White culture on an equal footing. Regehr (1979:121) also stated that John Philip wanted African chiefs to safeguard their land against the incursion of White farmers. Although Philip was committed to the well-being of the indigenous people, more than many of his fellow missionaries, he found himself

trapped in the ideology of imperialism. He argued that the missionaries extended British influence and the British Empire (Villa-Vicencio 1988: 44).

There were further attempts by the English to advance their imperialistic supremacy. They attempted to anglicize the Dutch, but this failed. However Regehr stated (1979:116) that the Afrikaans language became dominant amongst the "coloured" people.

The discovery of diamonds at Kimberly in 1870 and of Gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 put South Africa on the path to industrialization (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 242). This development did not have a direct impact on the Indian population as mostly Blacks worked in the mines.

4.3 The Afrikaner Period

During this period in the history of South Africa, apartheid was introduced by the National Party when it came into power in 1948 (Stack and Morton 1976:16). It was during this period when apartheid became legally sanctioned in South Africa. Below will follow a definition of apartheid and racism and its effects on the population.

4.3.1 Apartheid's Influence on the Baptist Church

The single most disuniting force amongst Baptists has been apartheid. Apartheid manifested itself in many forms in the church, such as inferior theological education for blacks, insensitivity of white Baptists towards black Baptists, and structures of the

white Baptist Union of South Africa that were considered to be racist. Reading the various papers presented at the BCSA's Awareness Workshop held in Barkly West in 1990, one will discover that these papers reflect the claim of the Baptist Convention of South Africa that the Baptist Union of South Africa still practiced racism and apartheid within their structures and ministries. One would have thought that the church would be free from the influence of this ideology as the democratic forces in the country were challenging the apartheid ideology. Unfortunately, apartheid brought about much conflict between black and white Baptists; it also allowed other Baptists, such as the Afrikaanse Baptiste Kerk, the Baptist Mission of South Africa and the Baptist Association of South Africa to maintain their separateness. Before proceeding with the factors of disunity amongst the five groups, apartheid and racism will be defined and a description of the apartheid ideology will follow.

4.3.2 Apartheid and racism

Apartheid literally translated means "apart-ness" or "separation." It is pronounced "apar-hate" and was first used in a leading Afrikaans newspaper in 1943 (Stack and Morton 1976:17). Dr. Malan, the first Nationalist prime minister, used the term frequently to describe South Africa's goals of government. Central to this system was the notion that the different races and cultures of South Africa could never be an integrated whole, sharing a common citizenship. The whites (English and Afrikaans-speaking) perpetuated apartheid and Blacks, Indians and Coloureds who were on the receiving end of this ideology. Stack and Morton (1976:17) describe apartheid and its effects on the black population of South Africa. This gives one a sense of the

conditions of apartheid under which both black and white Christians and Baptists had to live out their faith. Black people were deprived of their land and were forcibly removed and given arid tribal "homelands." They were stripped of their right to vote for the all-white government, which controlled their destinies. They were reduced to offering their labour at poverty wages to gain the right to re-enter the "white" land (white people owned eighty-seven percent of the land) where they worked separated from their families eleven months out of the year as migrant labourers (1976:17-18). The fruits of the apartheid state accrued mainly to the Whites, which swallowed up almost seventy percent of the total national income. Apartheid was all about a life of privilege, power and plenty for the Whites, based on the exploitation of cheap "non-White" labour. Martin M. Marger, in his book *Race and Ethnic Relations*, states that the cruel irony of apartheid was that it was financed primarily by its victims. All non-Whites – Africans, Coloureds and Indians - were discriminated against, yet they had to underwrite the oppressive system by accepting artificially low wages and seriously deprived working and living arrangements (Marger 2003:440).

In reality the entire population were daily victims in one sense or another. Blacks suffered daily disasters, from homicide to humiliation. The researcher himself was thrown out of a first-class coach while travelling from Johannesburg to Germiston because of the colour of his skin since the first-class coach was reserved for Whites only (Ragwan 2003:19). From expropriation to grinding poverty, from brutal torture and imprisonment to relentless persecution, family life was shattered, careers wrecked, education withheld, and life was a round-the-clock survival. According to Stack and Morton (1977:18), even the supporters of apartheid paid a price, living in constant fear that they had created a monster and were losing basic human

sensitivity. Perhaps the best way to describe apartheid is to read the words by two Prime ministers, namely Mr. Strijdom and Mr. Verwoerd:

"Our policy is that the Europeans must stand their ground and must remain baas (boss) in South Africa. If we reject the Herrenvolk idea and the idea that the White man cannot remain baas, if the franchise is to be extended to the non-Europeans, and if the non-Europeans are developed on the same basis as the Europeans, how can the European remain baas? Our view is that in every sphere we must retain the right to rule the country and keep it a White man's country." (Stack and Morton 1976:18)

T.R.H. Davenport, in his book *South Africa – Modern History*, confirms this by stating (1977:331) that the mystique of apartheid as elaborated by its exponents after 1948 came to mean separation in all possible fields - political, territorial, residential, cultural and economic. Upon analysis of a statement of this nature it becomes clear that the principles of apartheid are clearly reflected as strongly advocating the separation of races.

Stack and Morton recorded (1976:17) Mr. Verwoerd's speech in the House of Assembly on 25 January 1963 in which he stated, "Reduced to its simplest form the problem is nothing else than this: We want to keep South Africa White. Keeping it White can only mean one thing, namely White domination, not leadership, not guidance, but control, supremacy." Here, too, the strong insistence was that South Africa be a country where the separateness of the races be maintained with Whites enjoying supremacy over Blacks, Coloureds and Indians. The church was adversely affected by this phenomenon.

4.3.2.1 Apartheid

It could be said that the idea of racial separation started in the late 1800s, though many would be tempted to suggest that it started in 1948 when the National Party came to power with its racist policies. De Gruchy (1979:9) states that the settler church and in particular the Dutch Reformed Church's missionary program through its custom and culture provided an ecclesiological blueprint for the nationalistic policy of separate development. The British, too, joined in by perpetuating this ideology as will be seen in this chapter. It is within such a milieu that Baptists began their work.

It also must be stated that Baptists were among the settlers who came to South Africa. Hudson-Reed (183:15) confirms this by stating, "Among the intrepid British Settlers of 1820 was a small group of Baptist laymen." Due to historical reasons, Baptists too were influenced by the colonial missionary model and were divided along racial and ethnic lines. It may seem unfair to single out two of the organizations, the BUSA and the ABK that historically enjoyed full citizenship and were protected by the law of the land; the reality was that they benefitted from such a system.

History records that the five Baptist organizations started their organizations at different periods in history. BUSA was formed in 1877 (Reed 1983:361), ABK in 1944 (Hudson-Reed 1983:218), BCSA in 1927 (Hoffmeister and Gurney 1990:33), BASA in 1914 (Rangiah 1964:10) and BMSA in 1903 (Indian Baptist Mission Golden Jubilee 1953:3).

Having described briefly the apartheid system, it should be made known that this system occurred in a country that was populated by a majority of Blacks (Stack and Morton 1976:10). The population groups of South Africa were separated from each other politically, socially, culturally and territorially along racial lines. Racism played a major role in this process. Apartheid meant the separation of Blacks in every field.

4.4 Racism

Having looked at an ideological system that caused so much division, we now examine another phenomenon, which is racism, that also adversely affected the population of South Africa.

The term “race” is defined by A.S. Park in his book, *Racial Conflict and Healing*, as “group of human beings possessing in common certain physical characteristics which are determined by heredity.” He further states that racism is the “dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to congenital inferiority and another group to congenital superiority” (Parks 1996:24). Denton Lotz, the former General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (1993:22), defined racism as being rooted in the belief that a group or groups of people are by heredity and nature intrinsically superior to the rest of mankind. Racism demands, supports and legitimizes the use of power in order to define, devalue, dominate and discriminate against those considered inferior.

Lotz (1993:9) answers an important question of why racism has become a worldwide problem. He states that from the beginning of human history there has been racism

that it has manifested itself in very different forms. According to Lotz (1993:10) this is shown in “rudimentary drawings on the walls of prehistoric caves and paintings in Egyptians tombs.” Lauren, in his book *Power and Prejudice*, maintains that discrimination is ancient in its origins. He goes on to say that from the earliest periods of human existence, groups developed prejudices towards others and then discriminated against those whom they regarded as different or inferior (Lauren 1988:5).

Lotz (1993:9) stated that the real problem of the twentieth century would be the problem of the colour line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races. He highlights information from the Human Rights Watch World Report of 1993 where racial and ethnic conflicts around the world have taken place. They were: Somalia: the violent Destruction caused by fighting among the clans and sub-clans; Sri Lanka: the Sinhalese against the Tamil minority, resulting in 1.5 million displaced persons; Sudan: the Arab North against the Black animist/Christian South; Turkey: the Turkish majority against the minority Kurds; Iraq: Iraqis against the Kurds; Palestine: the Arab - Israeli conflict; Kenya: tribal tensions; Nigeria: ethnic conflicts; Germany: conflict with foreign workers; Myanmar: conflict with the Muslim minority, and tribal aspirations; Mauritania: Arab-Berber government used fraud and violence to disenfranchise a large number of Blacks (Human Rights Watch World Report 1993).

The European people, after setting foot on African soil, were involved in a racial conflict and a struggle for survival. Loubser wrote (1987:3) that because of their European background they were totally unprepared for the life in a new country. To add to their frustrations, the Afrikaners did not favour racial integration of the

churches, and this caused divisions between the Dutch Reformed Church and the English-speaking churches. Loubser's analysis of the unpreparedness of the Europeans is correct. Europeans faced the challenge of racial diversity and the search for new identities. Despite these, they survived but not without imposing their language, religion, culture, political institutions and laws

De Gruchy (1979:18) elaborates further on the struggles of the Afrikaner against British imperialism. This frustration and unhappiness of the Afrikaner with British imperialism led them to trek northwards with a hope of building their own permanent nation (Regehr 1979:103). This outrage and frustration is reflected in the words of a Voortreker woman called Anna Steenkamp.

It is not so much their freeing which drove us to such lengths, as their being placed on equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God, and the natural distinction of race and colour so that it was intolerable for any decent Christian to bow down beneath such a yoke, wherefore we rather withdrew in order to preserve our doctrines of purity (De Gruchy 1979:19).

The real reason for the Afrikaners trekking away from British control seems to be a theological one. This can be disputed. In fact, Hexham argues that the origins and underlying causes of the nationalist movement were matters of academic dispute. He goes on to say that some sought to analyze the movement's class dynamics, while others sought less comprehensive solutions or invoked ideal types to explain its historical significance. But according to Hexman most agree that the ideological roots of Afrikaner Nationalism are to be found in the Calvinist religion of the early White settlers who arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in the mid-seventeenth century (Hexham 1981:1).

Hexham further claims that another factor that played a continuing role in holding the Afrikaner people together and shaped their philosophy is the Calvinism preached and practiced by the three largest Afrikaner reformed churches, of which ninety percent of Afrikaners were adherents. The Old Testament was also like a mirror of their own lives. In it they found the deserts and fountains, the droughts and plagues, the captivity and the exodus. Above all they found a chosen people guided by a stern but partial deity through the midst of the heathen to a promised land. Hexham says that the Old Testament and the doctrines of Calvin moulded the Boer into the Afrikaner of today. This exclusive and sectarian view of themselves did very little to improve race relations, which for decades had become an impediment to a free and just South Africa. This divisive system of apartheid had an adverse effect on the Baptist church in South Africa as well. By this time all five Baptist organizations were in existence and all five of them were affected by colonialism and apartheid, some more adversely than others.

Hoffmeister and Gurney record Louise Kretzschmar's paper, *A Theology of Dominance – an Alternative History of the Baptist Union of South Africa*, which she presented at the BWAU. Here she recalls (1990:27) a settler type ideology in a pamphlet of the BUSA. In this pamphlet it is said that the Baptist settlers "ventured the stormy seas of the Cape where the scattered settlers were too few to keep the kaffirs to their agreed upon eastern side of the Great Fish River. They treated their pledges as scraps of paper, and when it pleased them they crossed the river to plunder cattle."

The Baptist settlers seemed to regard their possession of the land as being justified

on the spurious grounds that the Xhosas were treaty breakers, cattle thieves and invaders, thus their actions were understandable (though not excusable). The repetition of such views in the recent years, says Kretzschmar (1990:27), is completely unjustifiable. C. M. Wilson, in his book *Co-operation and Conflict: The Eastern Frontier* agrees with Kretzschmar by referring to the findings of a historical analysis. He stated (1969:233) that the extent of these treaties were greatly misunderstood by both the settlers and colonial authorities, that the Xhosa were not the only cattle thieves and that the series of border conflicts were, at least in part, desperate attempts by the Xhosa to defend what remained of their land. In the recording of the histories of the five Baptist organizations by their respective historians all but the Baptist Convention of South Africa write about the social, political and economic injustices that apartheid created. Instead they highlight their achievements, victories and strides they have made as Baptists in South Africa. Hudson-Reed's recording of the BUSA is one such example. In his view (1983:7) the Baptist history, particularly BUSA history, is an outstanding one. Whilst from a BUSA perspective it has been an outstanding one, the reality is that the history of Baptists in this country has been one of division that for many years existed along racial lines. The existence of five different Baptist organizations is proof of that.

How did the Christian church respond to the problem of apartheid, which contributed to the disunity of the church as well as disunity among the peoples of this country? Although there were racial divisions in South Africa prior to 1948 little was being done by the church to address this problem. De Gruchy (1979:39) stated that generally the church in South Africa prior to 1948 was preoccupied with the desire for peace. The Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA), which was formed in 1936 to foster co-operation among the churches, had called a conference at the University

of Fort Hare in 1940 to discuss the task of the churches in "Christian Reconstruction" after the war (De Gruchy 1979:39). It seemed that after the war with Hitler the world would be at peace. Seven years later the Christian Council convened another conference, this time at Rosettenville in Johannesburg. The theme at this conference was "The Church in a Multi-Racial Society." De Gruchy recorded that the optimism of Fort Hare had gone. The mood was one of apprehension. Apartheid had arrived (De Gruchy 1979:53).

How did Baptists in South Africa respond to this apartheid that had arrived? The conference convened by the Christian Council in 1949 invited leaders from various denominations, including the Baptists, to deal with the church's response to apartheid. BASA was not invited to this conference; BUSA represented the Baptist denomination. Given its position on matters such as politics as well as the all-white government, BUSA would not have been a fully representative voice, and therefore most likely would not offer a strong opposition to apartheid. Furthermore the Baptist Union of South Africa, according to De Gruchy (1979:61), generally was more cautious on political matters. Since 1949 up to 1990, the BUSA continued to be cautious.

In 1990 the mainly Black Baptist Convention of South Africa convened a workshop to deal with the issue of apartheid and to come up with a way forward. Most of the Black Baptists' response was expressed at a workshop that was held in 1990 in Barkly West called the Barkly West Awareness Workshop (BWAWS). This workshop brought together leaders who applied their minds to working out an "empowered future." In doing so they made an attempt to come to terms with, in the words of the

editors Rev. Desmond Hoffmeister and Brian Gurney (1990:5), the "official history of Baptist witness in South Africa." It was also stated that apartheid had wound itself into the structures of the Baptist witness in Southern Africa (Hoffmeister and Gurney 1990:5). This workshop dealt mainly with the BCSA's response to the history of the BUSA, which in their opinion was racist. The response and reactions of the other groups will be dealt with later in this chapter.

At this BWAU conference the Baptist Convention of South Africa listed the effects of apartheid on the Baptist Convention. It lists firstly the training of their pastors. BCSA pastors were first trained at Millard Bible School in Orlando, Soweto. The school was later relocated to Ciskei. This relocation was motivated by apartheid as the government wanted to remove Blacks from the urban areas (BWAU 1990:54). Stack and Morton (1976:26), in their book *Torment to Triumph*, explain the Influx Control Act, which stipulates that no African may be permitted to remain in an urban area for longer than 72 hours without a permit, unless he or she was born there and has been continuously resident. Exceptions were made for persons who worked in one area continuously for ten years for one employer or for fifteen years for more than one employer.

Black pastors of the BCSA received inferior theological education. Hoffmeister (1990:54) bemoaned the criteria applied by the then-White Baptist Union, which stated, "It is desirable that a candidate should have passed at least the equivalent education of junior (standard eight)." With regards to the training of the BCSA pastors, he says, "Theological training of Convention pastors was subjected to the standards imposed by the Baptist Union. Our potential was limited. The curriculum

was foreign in all respects. It became an insult to our dignity and humanness" (BWAU 1990:54). Kretzschmar (1990:30) calls the education taught at these institutions both Euro-centered and privatized. By this she meant that the questions, subject matter, books and lecturers were predominantly based on European and North American theology. Further criticism of the theological education received by the BCSA pastors according to her was that students were not exposed to the significance of the rise of African and Black theologies. She adds that social ethics, especially issues directly related to the South African context, received little or no emphasis. It is quite obvious that the pastors trained at a Black theological school were not being adequately prepared to minister within a context of political oppression and economic deprivation. Nor were they given the tools to evaluate the BCSA's own perception of the Christian gospel (BWAU 1990:30).

When one reads De Gruchy's recording (1979:54) of the Baptist Union's statement to the apartheid government when the government wanted to deprive Africans of their limited Parliamentary representation, one is tempted to come to the defence of the Baptist Union of South Africa. Hoffmeister, however, (1990:28) argued that no practical steps were taken by BCSA to challenge the state. Nevertheless BCSA, together with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, the Methodists and the Congregational Assembly, stated its opposition to the government's proposed legislation aimed at depriving Africans of their limited Parliamentary representation. According to De Gruchy (1979:54) the Assembly of the Baptist Union condemned this proposed legislation by stating that,

any tampering with the accepted constitutional understanding that the franchise rights of non-Europeans will continue to be entrenched as provided in the South Africa Act. Furthermore it was gravely concerned at the rising tide of bitterness and resentment,

non co-operation and hatred, which is evident among those people concerned, by any suggestion of the limitation of their existing rights and legitimate aspirations, and the Assembly resolutely dissociates itself from any policy which would restrict or reduce the present rights of representation in Parliament or Senate of any section of the community (De Gruchy 1979:54-55).

The above statement sent to the government was not the only one where BUSA expressed concern about apartheid laws. Over the years there have been individuals within the BUSA who have supported statements made at its Annual Assembly that were critical of the government, or they addressed letters to the State President and other officials. As mentioned earlier one is tempted to come to BUSA's defence as one reads of their criticism of apartheid laws, but Louise Kretzschmar (1990:24-31) in a paper presented at the BCSA's Awareness Workshop entitled "A Theology of Dominance - An Alternative History of the South African Baptist Union", helps us understand the level of commitment the BUSA had in truly opposing apartheid. Kretzschmar (1990:28) states, "But to agree to a statement of protest at Assembly is one thing, to devise practical steps to implement such protest is quite another." This indicated a lack of commitment by the BUSA to address and help remove the injustices of apartheid.

It could be said in the words of Villa-Vicencio (1988:1) in regards to the protests of most English speaking churches, "Their protest was neither harsh nor rigorous." Kretzschmar (1990:29) further cited another discriminatory practice employed by the BUSA. A close examination of the BUSA's mission policies indicated discrimination and White domination. It was, according to her, revealed in their mission policies. Rather than pursuing a policy of partnership in mission or practicing a form of mission that included concern for the material needs of communities, mission was

conceived of as evangelism by Whites to Blacks. The South African Missionary Society (SABMS), which was a division of the BUSA, undertook the mission work of the BUSA, and the Black churches that were started by BUSA fell under the control of the SABMS. Increasingly the pattern of separate churches for different races became entrenched. Kretzschmar continued in her criticism of the BUSA by stating that these churches under the SABMS had very little representation on the BUSA executive committee and were subject to the policy decisions of these bodies as well as to the White missionary superintendents (BWA 1990:28-29).

The listing of the Baptist ministers in the BUSA's handbook along racial lines illustrates apartheid practiced by the BUSA. Kretzschmar's further contention is that the BUSA stated in its 1976 Assembly: "Assembly reaffirmed that the Baptist Union of South Africa is open to all churches which desire to join it and which qualify in terms of the constitution, regardless of race or colour." It affirmed that such churches would be welcomed into the Union and charged the executive committee to make this known to all churches within the Baptist Union Associations. Yet the BUSA had the names of Black ministers listed separately.

Racial discrimination was reflected in the BUSA 1989 Assembly, which was held in Kimberley. Racially separate accommodation was provided for all delegates. The venue of this Kimberley Assembly, which was held in a military barracks, was hurtful to the Black members of the BUSA who attended this Assembly. The Baptist Union was accused of being insensitive to Blacks as the venue was a symbol of White oppression and violence. This resulted in the walkout of Blacks in protest against the BUSA for their choice of venue. The military in South Africa was an instrument of the

apartheid state that crushed anti-apartheid activists.

4.5 Ethnicity

Cornell and Hartman (1988), in their book *Ethnicity and Race*, assert that the word “ethnic” has a long history and that it is a derivative of the Greek word *ethnos*, meaning “nation.” This term “ethnic” was previously thought of as race or nation. In English the word “ethnic” referred to someone who was neither Christian nor Jewish, in other words a pagan or heathen (Cornell and Hartman 1998:16). These terms, according to Marger (2003:10), are clearly different in meaning.

4.5.1 Unique cultural traits

Marger (2003:11) draws our attention to the fact that ethnic groups are groups within a larger society that display a unique set of cultural traits. Marger draws on the comments of Melvin Tumin, a sociologist who provides a definition of an ethnic group as a “social group, which, within a larger cultural and social system, claims or is accorded special status in terms of a complex of traits (ethnic traits), which exhibits or is believed to exhibit.” It can be said that ethnic groups are subcultures that maintain certain behavioural characteristics that in some degree set them apart from society’s mainstream culture.

Three of the five Baptist organizations, BASA, BMSA and ABK, would fall into this category of ethnic group. The ABK, which represented Afrikaans-speaking people, held dearly to their language and culture. According to Reed (1983:218), the ABK is

a language-union of the BUSA, meaning that its members spoke Afrikaans.

4.5.2 Sense of community

Marger's second assertion (2003:11) is that in addition to a common sharing of cultural traits, ethnic groups display a sense of community among members. He says that there is a consciousness of kind or awareness of close association. Gordon Milton, in his book *Assimilation in American Life*, suggests that the ethnic group serves, above all, as a social-psychological referent in creating a "sense of people hood." He further states that this sense of community, or oneness, derives from an understanding of a shared ancestry or heritage and that ethnic groups view themselves as having common roots (Milton 1964:84).

John Rangiah, the grandson of the founder of the Indian Baptist Church in South Africa, Manhoran Rangiah, in his editorial comments in the *Natal Indian Baptist Golden Jubilee Brochure*, supports Merger's suggestion that in ethnic groups there is a sense of community, which is derived from an understanding of a shared ancestry or heritage. M. Rangiah stated:

NIBA is our sacred heritage handed to us by those who have gone before us. By the grace of God, we have, with all our limitations and inadequacies, guarded the interests of the Association jealously, upheld its traditions sacredly, its principles resolutely and kept aflame the spirit our forbears put into the Association. May we be privileged to hand over this cherished heritage to our children when we depart from them" (NIBA News 1964:2).

In analyzing Rangiah's comments against Merger's definition (2003:11), it is very clear that he was reflecting ethnic characteristics. BASA has remained largely an ethnic Baptist organization since 1914. Whilst BASA is a member of the South

African Baptist Alliance, any suggestion to form a united Baptist organisation will not be easily accepted by this organization (SABA Minutes 1999:6). As far as the BMSA is concerned, it has indicated that it is ready and willing to form one united Baptist body. Although BMSA is also a largely ethnic organization, it remains to be seen what influence ethnicity will play when Baptists finally agree to form that one united Baptist organisation in South Africa. It would be naïve to think that ethnicity has not influenced the unification process in South Africa. As was stated, the three ethnic Baptist organizations held strongly to their traditions, heritage and, in one case language. The true test will come when structural unity becomes a reality amongst Baptists in South Africa.

SABA has allowed for the five Baptist organizations to engage each other in the area of unity and co-operation. However, there is a past that was painful and challenging. The relationship of the ABK, BASA, BSCA and BMSA with the BUSA had its challenges and at times caused pain. Each of these four organizations relationships with BUSA will be examined.

4.6 The ABK and the BUSA

The Afrikanse Baptiste Kerk (ABK) was an ethnic and language union of the BUSA. Although strong representations were made by the ABK to the BUSA to discuss having its own legal entity, these attempts were unsuccessful. It was accepted that the ABK, because of language and cultural differences, should make provision for the expansion of its own membership (Hudson-Reed 1983:218).

Hudson-Reed, in his book *By Taking Heed*, records the relationship between the BUSA and the ABK. He states that the stunted growth of the Baptist community among the Afrikaans-speaking people is attributable in large measure to the sometimes negative and unsympathetic attitude of the BUSA. Despite this, a good relationship between the two organizations followed. Tensions arose when the BUSA formulated a strongly worded resolution to the National Party that came into power in 1948, which dealt with race relations in particular. Reed records the disappointment of the ABK regarding these resolutions. The ABK regarded these actions as unwarranted and felt that the BUSA was meddling in politics. Furthermore, these resolutions, according to Hudson-Reed, proved to be a real obstacle to reaching Afrikaners with the Gospel (Hudson-Reed 1983: 229).

Relationships with the BUSA deteriorated, and in 1960 a BUSA delegation visited the ABK to discuss its relationship with the Union. The purpose of this meeting was also to find ways of overcoming misunderstandings and to establish better relationships. The Committee of the BUSA recommended to the ABK that it consider the formation of a separate Baptist Union. The motivation for such a recommendation is recorded by Hudson-Reed as follows:

- the ABK's attitude in respect of race relations;
- the frustration experienced in some congregations on account of the limited representation on the Baptist Union's Executive Committee;
- the importance of the development of Baptists among Afrikaans-speaking people;
- the foundation of the Seminarium as an official training centre of the ABK;
- the fact that the ABK already functions as an independent Union.

The BUSA executive committee did not accept this resolution. A recommendation was made to the BUSA to strengthen the bonds of unity. In assessing this relationship the BUSA still had some control over certain matters, such as that ministers of the ABK would be interviewed by the BUSA, all applications for marriage licenses would be made by the General Secretary of BUSA, and that the minutes of the ABK would be sent to BUSA. It must be stressed here that although the ABK remained an integral part of the BUSA it functioned as a separate association. Furthermore the BUSA did not make any provision for representation of ethnic and language groups within the BUSA. The BUSA promised the ethnic groups that they would be consulted from time to time. Hudson-Reed states (1983:230) that the ABK members of the BUSA executive committee regarded with suspicion the long drawn-out uncertainty in connection with the policy.

The BUSA allowed associations to be in membership with it. These associations had representatives at the BUSA executive committee of which the ABK, BASA and BMSA, as associations, were members. The ABK felt comfortable with this, as they would not have to join the territorial associations of the BUSA. The territorial associations, as the name suggests, required that churches in a particular province would be affiliated with that territorial association which had representation on the BUSA executive board. As an ethnic and language association the ABK desired to have their representations on the executive board of the BUSA and not through the territorial association. The ABK feared that joining the territorial association would be a threat to its existence, as the territorial associations would be wholly multi-racial. Hudson-Reed (1983:230) records that attempts were made to keep the status quo

with respect to ABK representation on the Executive Committee of the BUSA, and these were eventually accepted by the BUSA Assembly. Although it was accommodated on the executive committee, the ABK, as did the other associations, still maintained its respective identity. At an interview with Dr C.W.R. Lehmkuhl, the General Secretary of the ABK, on the 18 October 2003, it was learnt that in 1996 the BUSA terminated the membership of associations within the BUSA. The BUSA had hoped that all ethnic and language associations would disband and their churches affiliate directly with the BUSA. The BUSA's rationale was that the BUSA was a union of Churches and not a union of associations.

The relationship of the ABK and the BUSA did have its high as well as low points. There were times when they differed, for example, when the BUSA applied for membership to the South African Council of Churches. The ABK, according to Hudson-Reed, considered this unacceptable. Only a limited number of ABK members attend the BUSA assembly meetings. Hudson-Reed hoped that both sides would take advantage of the current changing political climate to work for a greater degree of unity (Hudson-Reed 1983: 231).

In reading through the history of the Afrikaners in South Africa as recorded by Stack and Morton (1976: 26), Loubser (1987:5), Davenport (1977:331), de Gruchy (1979:54), and Regehr (1979:103), one sees the pattern amongst Afrikaners in general as well as in the ABK at that time. The issue of race relations became an issue in the ABK. The BUSA raised this with them in a protracted meeting held in 1960 and as mentioned earlier the BUSA recommended to the ABK that it should form a separate Union (Hudson-Reed 1983:229). Was that British imperialism or

Afrikaner leaning towards apartheid? The response of BUSA to the government on several occasions where they opposed certain laws concerning the rights of Blacks suggests that the BUSA was serious about the issue of race relations, at least in words.

4.7 The BCSA and the BUSA

William Mashologu is recorded as being the person who started the Baptist Convention of South Africa, formerly known as the Bantu Baptist Church. During his missionary activity in the Transkei, now called Eastern Cape, Mashologu recognized how fragmented Baptists in South Africa were (Hoffmeister and Gurney 1990:33).

In a document, “Proposal Concerning Promoting Reconciliation Between the Baptist Convention and the Baptist Union of South Africa,” it was stated that one of the basic reasons for the present divisions between the BUSA and BCSA appears to be different perceptions of the past. This document goes on to qualify this statement. The BUSA has repeatedly claimed that it did not support apartheid. Indeed, it spoke out against apartheid. However, its perception of the BCSA’s own structures as well as its failure to actively resist apartheid was questionable. Kretzschmar strongly supported this claim about the lack of practical commitment by the BUSA to oppose apartheid as stated earlier in this chapter.

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA), under the leadership of its General Secretary Dr. Denton Lotz, captured other reasons for the disunity that existed between the BUSA and the BCSA. He did this by gathering his leadership in the BWA to listen to the

voices of both these organizations, which took place on the 18 November 1995 at the Rosebank Union Church in Johannesburg. Lotz called this a “Listening Tour.” On Thursday 16 November 1995 he, together with his leadership, met separately with the BCSA and the following day with the BUSA. Each of the delegates of the BWA was required to summarize what he/she heard.

Their summaries reflected the same underlying misunderstanding of the past by the two groups. Emmet Dunn, the youth director of the Baptist World Alliance, observed that the same story of the past was told but from different perspectives. He also stated that he was not sure if the younger generation understood the issues of the past. He warned that this division might produce two generations of fighting. This was echoed by Paul Montacute of the BWA who went on to say that historical perceptions differ between the two organizations. Eleazar Zihembere (BWA) admitted that the more he listened to the two sides, the less he understood the problem. He challenged the two organizations to work together.

Lotz, who acted as the facilitator at these talks, summarized their observations. The following themes surfaced during this “Listening Tour.”

4.7.1 Merger: Revision versus New Vision

The BUSA and the BCSA did not succeed in an earlier attempt to reconcile. In 1987 the merger talks between these two organizations did not yield any results.

The failure of the merger talks of 1987 revolves around the understanding of unity and the Constitution. Merger failed because one wanted a revision of the constitution and the other wanted a new vision

exemplified in a completely new constitution, not a re-write of the old one (Rosebank Union Minutes 1995:3).

4.7.2 History: Mission versus Submission

Whereas the Union viewed their history as a glorious story of mission to the unevangelised and non-Christian natives, the Convention viewed this history as one of submission. The natives suffered the indignities of being treated as children and inferiors, ruled by the White leaders with no power sharing (Rosebank Union Minutes 1995:3).

The Baptist Union's history as recorded by Hudson-Reed (1983:15) does reflect a one-sided narrative in which the efforts of their pioneers and achievements of the BUSA's ministry are highlighted. This history is critically viewed by Kretzschmar (1990:30), and Hoffmeister (1990:52-55). They pointed out the suppression of knowledge of the plight of Black Baptists.

4.7.3 Theology: Evangelism versus Diakonia

In South Africa at that time, with its social, economic and political inequalities, it seemed that only the BCSA was serious about this state of affairs which affected the every day lives of Black Baptists. According to the observation made by Lotz's leadership, the difference in the theologies of the two organizations and how they contributed to the misunderstanding:

There are two theologies at play between the two organizations which, according to him, is the main driving force that has caused much misunderstanding. The BUSA constantly speaks of church growth, evangelism and personal conversion. The BCSA peaks constantly of diakonia, service and justice (Rosebank Union Minutes 1995:3).

4.7.4 Theological Education: Indoctrination versus Contextualization

Theological education is an important area that has been identified by Lotz and his leadership team.

Training of pastors is a key to the future ministry of the church. Indoctrination versus contextualization may be a caricature of how the union and the convention do theological education, but it does highlight two different streams of structures of education. Whereas the BUSA has an elaborate system of theological colleges and Bible Schools, the BCSA is financially prevented from this. The BCSA theological courses are too Western and White and do not understand the contextual problems of the Blacks (Rosebank Union Minutes 1995:3).

The researcher himself is a graduate of the Baptist Union Theological College and had noticed the two different streams of theological education. Although some Blacks were allowed to study at their Colleges, they were largely designed for Whites, and the colleges adopted a very restrictive theological framework. One's social and political context was generally ignored.

4.7.5 Leadership and the Unity Process: Evolution versus Revolution

The impatience of the BCSA was evident, and it seemed that the political developments in the country gave them the motivation and encouragement to pursue unity with the BUSA.

The Union leaders seem to be saying that it is inevitable that ten or fifteen union leaders will be Black, they will be the majority and they will rule. In a sense it will be a growing process, an evolutionary process. The BCSA leadership, on the other hand, is not prepared to wait. The secular government of Nelson Mandela assumed power in a peaceful revolution. What are Baptists waiting for? (Rosebank Union Minutes 1995:1-3).

4.7.6 Repentance: Gospel versus Law

Since repentance is such a critical issue in the Bible, a biblical understanding of this is necessary. It seemed that there was a difference of understanding with this issue.

The BUSA feels that their resolution of repentance sent by the letter to the BCSA is enough of a sign of repentance and should be received with forgiveness by the BCSA. This is the Gospel way. The BCSA feels that the content of the repentance is not enough. There can be no cheap repentance. It needs to be the cross and suffering. It needs to mention specific acts of evil perpetuated by the BUSA, e.g., sending chaplains to minister to the other side of the border. What about specific instances where the intelligence forces used Baptists to report on activities of Black Baptists causing harm? What is the solution and what is the content of repentance? Is it 'an eye for an eye' or is 'it love your enemies' (Rosebank Union Minutes 1995:1-3).

The BUSA's first step of sending the BCSA the aforementioned letter was a necessary one but does not measure up to genuine repentance. The BCSA's call for being specific is the next step so that the perpetrator and victim can find each other.

Lotz, being an outsider, demonstrated a high degree of objectivity, and his observations of the tensions, perceptions and interpretations of issues by the BUSA and the BCSA were summarized very well. Whilst the Awareness Workshop of the BCSA held in 1990 dealt with many of the issues summarized by Lotz, such as inferior theological education for Blacks, mission work by the BUSA to the Black churches, the structures of the BUSA and its understanding of repentance, Lotz is very specific in the areas that contrasted the polarized views, which had often been portrayed or misunderstood by one side about the other. His thematic analysis of the differing views reflected by the two organizations were well presented (Rosebank Union Minutes 1995:1-8).

4.8 The BASA and the BUSA

As mentioned earlier in this research there is not much available literature that reflects the history of BASA that highlights the relationship between these two organizations. According to Hudson-Reed (nd 86:), formal contact with the BUSA is first referred to as having occurred in 1923. He also records the acceptance of Rev. T.M. Rangiah as a ministerial member of the Union. The BASA was accepted as a special association of BUSA and had representation on the executive committee of the BUSA. BASA had a good relationship with the SABMS, a missionary society of the BUSA through which BUSA sent a number of missionaries to work among the Indians in BASA and BMSA. When the BUSA changed its constitution to encourage special associations to affiliate with its territorial association and the churches within those special associations were requested to join the BUSA directly, two organizations opposed this. They were the ABK and the BASA. Then-General Secretary of BASA, V.P. Nathaniel, sent a letter to the BUSA outlining its objection to such a decision. In summary BASA objected for the following reasons.

4.8.1 Fellowship/Interaction

Through apartheid generally and the Group Areas Act of 1950 in particular, Indians have lived in Indian areas and developed Baptist work in their own areas. This Act provided for the setting aside of separate areas for business and residence for Indians, coloureds, blacks and whites (Palmer 1957:142). Nathaniel's (1993:2) rationale was that it was not practical for fellowship and interaction. He also cited the absence of white churches between Durban North and Empangeni, where most of

the BASA churches are located to further substantiate his rationale.

4.8.2 Cost

Nathaniel (1993:2) stated that the cost of travelling to the executive meetings was another factor and that the building of their churches was a priority. The executive meetings rotated among the various provinces of South Africa.

4.8.3 Disputes

In the event of disputes in churches, the arbitrators could be BASA, NBA or the BUSA, perhaps all three. Nathaniel (1993:2) expressed his fear that in the event of a split the aggrieved party has a ready haven in the BUSA. Such a pattern had developed.

4.8.4 Identity

Nathaniel (1993:2) stressed BASA's intentions to maintain its identity. Affiliation with the BUSA would lead to dual allegiance. He belaboured the point that BASA was of the opinion that dual allegiance would militate against the organizational norms, practices and control so carefully nurtured since 1903.

4.9 BUSA- BASA Relations

Nathaniel (1993:3) described an incident that caused BASA disappointment. The

BUSA president and his wife were in Natal during 1992. Mr. N.M. Israel of BASA met them by coincidence and hastily arranged a tour of BASA churches for the following day. A car was provided to take them to Kearsney and the Bible College on the Natal North Coast. They covered seven churches and four hundred kilometres in five hours. The next day, at the BASA Easter assembly, the President brought greetings and mentioned with appreciation the trip and history of each church related by Mr. N.M. Israel. Two months later, at the BUSA Annual Assembly, a BASA representative gave the president an album of photographs of the trip. In the BUSA's presidential report to the executive he reported on his visit to the Western Province churches but there was not a single word about the Indian experience.

Nathaniel registered a further concern and disappointment in that the women's president of the Baptist Women's Department of BUSA, who was invited to a rally by the Women's Department of BASA, reported to her executive committee very little about the BASA women's rally at which she was a guest speaker. In addition, the BASA youth department was sending its newsletter "Youth Update" to the Youth Department of BUSA but no communication regarding their youth work was shared with BASA youth.

Nathaniel (1993:3) drew the BUSA's attention to the recording of minutes of BASA's representative to the BUSA executive. N.M. Israel, at the March executive meeting of BUSA held in Claremont, shared the history of Indian Baptist work in South Africa as well as the split that occurred, resulting in the formation of BASA and the BMSA. The minutes read, "Mr. N.M. Israel addressed the executive committee on some historical details of the split between two Indian groups in Natal" (Nathaniel 1993:3).

Fortunately at that meeting no representative from the BMSA was present; otherwise those minutes would have caused problems if they were read by non-executive members.

It is apparent that BASA has been aggrieved by the attitude and actions of the BUSA. The reasons given by Nathaniel (1993:4) are no way seen as obstacles to unity; instead they are obstacles to closer co-operation and more so obstacles to affiliation with the Natal Baptist Association, which, as mentioned earlier, is the territorial association of BUSA. Presently BASA has no representation on the BUSA executive committee or on its territorial association, but has a cordial relationship with BUSA.

4.10 The BMSA and the BUSA

The Baptist Mission of South Africa (BMSA) is the smallest of the five Baptist organizations in South Africa. It has 13 churches with a combined membership of approximately 1500 (Baptist World Alliance Member Bodies and Statistics 2007). On 29 July 1951, the BMSA executive committee decided to join the BUSA. By the decision of 1951, the general assembly of the BUSA accepted the BMSA as a member church. This implied that the BMSA enjoyed the privilege of having the liberty to carry on with its own work. Hudson-Reed (1983:276) writes that later, in 1974, the BMSA applied for association status with the BUSA but this was unsuccessful. Some of the BMSA churches, such as Arena Park Baptist Church, Asherville Baptist Church and Bethel Baptist Church in Stanger, affiliated directly with the BUSA. Although the BMSA was not accepted as an association within the

structures of BUSA, it was represented on the executive committee of the BUSA (Hudson-Reed 1983:276).

4.11 BASA's response to racism and apartheid

Although, BASA experienced racism in its relationship with the BUSA, BASA's response to the idea of a united Baptist organization in South Africa must be seen against its response to apartheid and racism. In 1964, the South African government established the National Indian Council, which enforced the Indian identity along the lines of separate development (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000:24). And then in the mid-1980s the National Party continued with its racial policies by introducing a system of government that included Indians by allowing them limited political power. This system of government which allowed Indians and Coloureds limited political power was called the tri-cameral parliament. It consisted of three houses of chamber: the House of Assembly for Whites, House of Representatives for Coloureds and the House of Delegates for Indians. By 1993 most of the House of Delegates members supported the National Party (2000:24). When an election was held to elect members to the House of Delegates, only 20.3% of the Indian community went to the polls (2000:25). Although this was a low turn-out for this election, a pattern developed among Indian voting in the 1994 and 1999 democratic elections. In both these elections 60% of Indians voted for the National Party (2000:27). It seemed that despite the oppressive ideology of the National Party the majority of Indians did not make a break from its ethnic orientation. The National Party provided a system through its separate development policy that promoted the Indian propensity towards ethnicity. None of the BASA leaders or members publicly supported the liberation

movements such as the Natal Indian Congress, African National Congress, United Democratic Front, Azanian Peoples Organization, and the Pan African Congress. Some of the significant members of the Indian community such as Strini Moodley, Jay Naidoo, Saths Cooper, Mac Maharaj, Pravin Gordan, and Frene Ginwala did not support the House of Delegates. These leaders warned the Indian community against participating in the tri-cameral elections. The NIBA News, which was written by M. Rangiah, great grandson of John Rangiah, does not make reference to racism and apartheid in its survey of missionary enterprise of the Natal Indian Baptist Association from 1903-1953 (NIBA News 1953: 1-57).

Although, Timothy (1989:7) wrote about the Group Areas Act and its effect on the Indian community which resulted in the Indians being removed from Cato Manor, North Street in Durban and were resettled in Chatsworth and Phoenix, BASA has been largely silent on the issue of racism and apartheid.

This research has examined the obstacles to unification, namely apartheid, racism and ethnicity. The historical periods in which these obstacles surfaced or came about were also examined. The research also covered the relationship of each of the Baptist organizations with the BUSA followed by a brief discussion on BASA's response to racism and apartheid.

4.12 Division in the Indian Baptist work in South Africa

Indian Baptists in South Africa once belonged to the Telugu Indian Baptist Mission Church. Rev. John Rangiah, an Indian born missionary, is the founder of the Telugu

Indian Baptist Church. However, 1911-1914 saw the Indian Baptist work go through difficult times. Division amongst Indian Baptists surfaced. Rangiah, editor of the *Natal Indian Baptist Association Brochure* describes this division,

“Rev. Rangiah preached a sermon on sin and its results and this was interpreted as excommunication by the dissentient group. The group then persuaded a few others to join it and wrote without Rev. Rangiah’s knowledge, to the Home Missionary Society (HMS) in India. Rangiah was disappointed that he was not informed of this decision to write to the HMS in India and that the proper channels were not followed. After meeting with Rev. W.B. Boggs who was sent by the HMS in India to settle the dispute, Rev. Rangiah resigned from the HMS. Rev. Boggs returned to India without success in settling the dispute” (M. Rangiah 1964:10).

The BMSA’s brochure, *The Indian Baptist Mission 1903-1953* (1953:12), also recorded the schism in the Indian work in South Africa in the following words: “The year 1913 was an unpleasant one for the Mission, for differences arose between the Missionary, Rev. John Rangiah, and a certain section of his congregation.” This schism is also recorded in both the records of the BASA and BMSA. A council of sixty-six members met at Kearsney on 30 and 31 May 1914 to settle the differences; the meeting lasted twenty-four and a half hours. Despite the intervention of an arbitrator, Rev. Wheeler Boggs, the talks failed. Rev. Rangiah resigned from the Telugu Baptist Home Missionary Society in India and formed the Natal Indian Baptist Association on 27 December 1914 (The Indian Baptist History 1953:12). The brochure of the BMSA (1953:12) states that the two parties, headed by Rev. John Rangiah on one side and Mr. Y. A. Lazarus on the other, were not willing to come to a compromise. The BASA (1964:10) records this same schism as follows: “The missionary found that some of his members in Kearsney, Tinley Manor and Darnall were living sinful lives. Persuasive talk and pleading from the missionary did not help. Special prayers hardly moved them.”

T. Paul in his research on Pentecostalism amongst the Indian churches in the Stanger area, records this schism between the two organizations. (Paul 1987:4-5) According to him (1987:4-5) the reasons cited in his research are similar to the one in the NIBA Golden Jubilee of 1964 except Paul gave the following information that was not contained in the above publication. He stated that a group of aggrieved members sent a petition to the TBHMS accusing the missionary of living a sumptuous life at the expense of the labourers and that he was making efforts to sever his connection with the HMS in India. These accusations, however, do not appear in any of the minutes of the BASA and the BMSA.

The difficulty is that neither of these records is specific as far as the differences were concerned. Rev. T.D. Pass, a BUSA missionary to the Indian Baptists, is quoted in the *Diamond Jubilee Brochure* (1978:2) as saying, “Explaining the causes of the rift between Rev. Rangiah and the group now called the Indian Baptist Mission is difficult since only BASA has offered any explanation and not with enough detail to permit evaluation and judgment.” He continued by saying, “It may be that the real roots lie below the surface and their germination in relationship between various parties before they left India.” To date neither the BASA nor the BMSA are able to specifically state the reasons for the schism. It may seem by Rangiah’s version that the differences were either ones of morality or of theology. A deeper analysis would lead one to probe the nature of the “sinful lives” as stated by Rev. Rangiah, as well as the theological credentials of the two, Mr. Y.A. Lazarus and Rev. John Rangiah.

Firstly, Rev. Rangiah’s vocal and forthright utterances about the “sins” as recorded in the *Diamond Jubilee Brochure* of 1978 were misconstrued as “excommunication” by

the dissident group. If this was the dispute then could the two have not talked about this with their minister and have the minister speak to those concerned privately about these alleged sins? In researching Rev. Rangiah's life it has to be said that he was a very organized, methodical person who maintained accurate records. Every two years he issued a report of his work. In a report submitted by the Telugu Home Mission Society to the American Baptist Missionary Society, the Secretary wrote that most of those of Africa were as sheep having no shepherd. The Telugu Home Mission Society decided to send them a man as soon as a suitable one was found. He continued by stating that one of their best men, John Rangiah, who had been engaged in educational work in the Mission for a number of years, volunteered for the Foreign Mission Service (NIBA Diamond Jubilee Brochure 1978:2).

It may be correct to claim that Rev. Rangiah was a theologically trained minister, as he is referred to by the title Reverend and that when a request was made by the Baptists from South Africa for a minister, a three-man committee was appointed by the TBHMS in India to find a suitable candidate (Golden Jubilee 1964:6). It seemed that a thorough screening process of Rev. Rangiah was undertaken, which made him the right candidate for this religious work in South Africa.

On the other hand there is very little information on Mr. Y.A. Lazarus, leader of the aggrieved group, in the records of the BMSA. The only information about him was that he later became the president of the BMSA. The date of his presidency is not recorded in the *Golden and Diamond Jubilee Brochures* of the BMSA. These brochures placed him in the period 1914-1934. This, however, cannot be used to dispute his presidency. What is strange is that he is not recognized as a leading

force in the BMSA. Other leaders of the BMSA, such as Reverends V.C. Jacob and V.J. Jacob, are accorded much honour by BMSA. Mr. K.D. Moses, editor of the *Indian Baptist Mission Diamond Jubilee Brochure*, praised leaders that have made great contributions to the Indian Baptist Work in South Africa. He wrote, “We cannot bypass this rare opportunity of recording names of such spiritual giants as Rev. John Rangiah, Rev. T.M. Rangiah, Rev. V.C. Jacob, and Rev. V. J. Jacob, who in the obedience call laid themselves on the missionary altar.” Whilst he goes on to acknowledge the contribution of laymen, of which it is assumed Y.A. Lazarus was one, he does not mention names, understandably so because of the large numbers that were involved in the work of the BMSA.

If Mr. Y.A. Lazarus was a layman, would that have played a part in his lack of understanding and interpretation of Rev. Rangiah’s sermon, which dealt with sins in the church? If Mr. Y.A. Lazarus was a layman, then he could have been there before Rev. Rangiah. The *Diamond Jubilee Brochure* (1978:3) of BASA stated that before the arrival of the pioneer missionary in 1903, faithful laymen administered the work and tendered the scattered flock. One could speculate that these two leaders could not work together since Rev. Rangiah came after Mr. Y.A. Lazarus or that the new minister did not recognize the presence of laypersons in his congregation. With reference to the latter, the people who were said to have been living sinful lives were in different churches. Some of the members at Kearsney, Darnall and Tinley Manor were living sinful lives. (*The Diamond Jubilee* 1978:4). If Rangiah’s sermon was of a confrontational nature, why did the others from these churches not respond in the same manner that Mr. Y.A. Lazarus did?

The other reason for the differences between these two leaders is one of speculation as well. The subject of the caste system surfaces. Whilst there is no visible evidence of this, it must be borne in mind that these two leaders came from India where the caste system was practiced. Furthermore it was recorded in the *Natal Indian Baptist Association Golden Jubilee* brochure that Rev. John Rangiah was a son of an orthodox Hindu priest in India (*Natal Indian Baptist Association Golden Jubilee Brochure* 1964:6). Could the fact that Rev. Rangiah came from this caste, which was considered high caste, have contributed to tension between Rev. Rangiah and Mr. Lazarus? The suggestion by T.D. Pass (*Diamond Jubilee Brochure* 1978:2) about the caste system and that the real roots lie below the surface and that their germination in relationship took place between the various parties before they left India must be noted.

J.H. Hutton, in his book *Caste in India*, describes India as a country composed of all sorts of different elements of great diversity, of different creeds, different customs and even different colours (Hutton 1946:1). One sociologist would define caste as:

hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed among other things by the concepts of pollution and purity, and generally, maximum commensality occurs within the caste (Srinivas 1962:3).

In the above definition, it is assumed that a caste group is always easily identifiable and that it does not change its social boundaries. Srinivas disagrees with this. He goes on to say that a caste is usually segmented into several sub-castes and each sub-caste is endogamous. There are thought to be some three thousand castes in India; the scope of this research does not allow an exhaustive account of individual castes but salient aspects as far as its definition is concerned will be mentioned.

According to Hutton the caste system is an exclusively Indian phenomenon and no comparable institution to be seen elsewhere has anything like the complexity, elaboration and rigidity of caste in India. Hutton's definition of the caste system is very helpful. He defines it as "a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same heredity calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community" (Hutton 1946:47,48).

Whatever the reasons for this schism that took place between 1911 –1914 in which the BASA and BMSA parted ways were, there have been attempts to amalgamate but without success. In assessing these attempts, not many leaders, especially in BASA, have examined the theological basis for unity except for the late Rev. D.N. Nathaniel, an Indian born minister who arrived in South Africa in 1951 and served the BASA until his death in the late 1980s. In his research he provides a theological basis for unity by making references to biblical texts and providing an important interpretation of them as well. Of significance he quotes John 17:21, the prayer of Jesus for unity. He goes on to state: "As we strive to achieve Church union under an appropriate title it would be right and proper if we eliminate selfish and divergent views." Nathaniel strongly advocated unity. His statement that no stone should be left unturned substantiates this (Nathaniel 1979:109-111).

The political change in South Africa provided BASA with an opportunity to engage other Baptists with regards to unity. The research will now turn to the various consultations and meetings of the five Baptist organizations which evidenced a

desire to move towards unity.

4.13 Movement towards Unity

The new political dispensation in South Africa in 1994 and the meeting of the Baptist World Alliance in Durban, South Africa in July of 1998 saw a very significant development as far as Baptist unity was concerned. Leading figures such as Rev. Desmond Hoffmeister of the BCSA initiated discussions with BASA and BMSA, which took place at the Springfield College of Education in Durban in 1997. Another significant consultation between the BCSA and the BUSA took place at Colesberg in 1998. All of these bilateral consultations between and among the various groups were a positive sign. The researcher will examine these important consultations as well as the very first Baptist forum that initially included the BASA, BCSA, BMSA and the BUSA; later the ABK also became part of the process of reconciliation. The breakthrough came when the Baptist World Alliance held its General Council meetings in Durban in 1998. The researcher, in his book *In His Service*, wrote, "...this was the first time the Baptist World Alliance would be meeting in South Africa. They had not made a previous visit due to apartheid in our country, which they strongly opposed" (Ragwan 2003:40).

The BUSA and the BCSA invited the BWA to hold its General Council in Durban in July 1998. Rev. Desmond Hoffmeister, General Secretary of the BCSA requested that the BWA to include other Baptists in South Africa to form part of the Local Arrangements Committee for the BWA. During this General Council meeting, Terry Rae, the General Secretary of the BUSA, said: "We need to sit down and talk to

each other.” It was decided at that General Council meeting by the leaders of the South African Baptist organizations, Reverends Desmond Hoffmeister (BCSA), Terry Rae (BUSA), Mr. Dan Philip (BMSA), President of the BASA Anthony Poliah, and Vice-President of BASA and chair of the Local Arrangements Committee (LAC) Rev. Rodney Ragwan, to meet and begin a process of dialogue.

At a meeting in Durban in 1997 a Local Arrangements Committee (LAC) had been elected with the researcher as chairman. For the first time in the history of Baptists, a multi-racial Baptist committee was established to work together in organizing the logistics for the arrival of the General Council delegates of the BWA. Despite certain challenges, one of which was the resignation of the secretary (a member of the BUSA) of the LAC at the first formal meeting of this committee, the General Council Meeting was a huge success (Ragwan 2003:63).

The working of the South African Baptists particularly in the LAC paved the way for Baptists to move closer towards cooperation. The formation of the South African Baptist Alliance was a result of the cooperative efforts of the five Baptists organizations in South Africa.