

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is on the lasting legacy of Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu, one of Africa's greatest pioneers.

In 1950 Bhengu established the Back to God Crusade which he used to launch evangelistic campaigns in Port Elizabeth and East London, and elsewhere in Southern Africa including Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia, Mozambique and Botswana. Bhengu also preached in numerous other countries in Africa. His ministry extended beyond the borders of Africa into overseas countries such as Sweden, Norway, the United States of America, Germany, Canada, Scotland and Japan.

During his lifetime he planted more than 2000 churches in South Africa and neighbouring countries. Bhengu taught his churches to be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating, at a time when the majority of black churches depended on support from sending countries overseas. He also established a women's movement that still raises millions of rand for the Back to God Crusade which, driven by Bhengu's vision to go from Cape to Cairo, preaches the gospel in Southern Africa. Bhengu's influence went beyond his own church, the Assemblies of God; he was a catalyst in keeping the fires of evangelism and mission burning during some of the most tumultuous years in the history of South Africa: socially, economically and politically.

Bhengu's ministry spans a period of five decades, beginning in Nelspruit, Swaziland and Benoni in the Transvaal. It was however during his stay in Port Elizabeth in 1945 and in East London in 1950 that Bhengu's ministry became internationally known and recognised. He moved to East London in 1950, where God used him mightily to reach out to thousands of people with the gospel. His preaching was attended by many conversions and with criminals turning themselves

and their weapons in to the police as they began to experience the new life in Christ. There were also numerous healings and miracles that took place among the people.

1.2. RESEARCH GOAL

The goal of the study is to capture the vision, mission, strategies and lasting legacy of one of Africa's greatest pioneers, and the impact of his Back to God Crusade campaigns that introduced hundreds of thousands of people to Christ and helped them become witnesses for God.

The research will show how as a prophet, Bhengu responded to both the macro and the micro socio-political pressures of his time; and how he resisted demands to get involved in the political arena and denounce the evil system of apartheid.

1.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher uses the qualitative approach. All the necessary directives in conducting a primarily historical research are honoured.

Firstly, existing literature on Bhengu's life and work was gathered and evaluated (Quantitative method). Neither Bhengu nor his first associates in the ministry ever wrote books or articles about themselves. This includes Hubert Phillips, the man Bhengu joined in 1937. I approached John, Phillips's son, for material that his father might have left behind when he died. John responded that his father had destroyed everything about himself and his work because he did not want to steal the glory from his Lord Jesus. Phillips's wife Jean did the same before her death. Alfred, one of the earliest associates, also did not write anything about the work. It seems that these matters were not discussed at dinner table.

These efforts were followed by a series of interviews (Qualitative method) with church leaders as well as others who knew Bhengu, and worked with him during his lifetime. An attempt was made to investigate the impact of his work abroad, in the UK, the USA, Sweden, Norway, Canada and Scotland. However the main focus of the study will be on his work in South Africa and surrounding countries - Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana.

1.4. PARTICIPANT OBSERVER

I am undertaking the research from the vantage point of being a participant observer. The participant observer - according to Spradley - comes to a social situation with two purposes: (1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and (2) to observe the activities, people and physical aspects of the situation. The ordinary participant comes to that same situation with only one purpose: to engage in the appropriate activities. In the process of carrying out these actions, this person does not normally want to watch and record everything else that occurs, describe all the actors present, or make notes of the physical setting. (Spradley 1980:56)

I was born and raised in the Assemblies of God and I am also a retired pastor of the Assemblies of God. I was privileged to have worked with Bhengu and had numerous discussions with him relating to ministry and was involved in some of his ministry activities. I have served as a member of the General Executive of the Assemblies of God and an Executive member of the Back to God/Assemblies of God Movement.

I participated in many ecumenical conferences at some of which Bhengu spoke, including the 1973 Durban Congress on Mission and Evangelism (at which Billy Graham was the key speaker). In 1977 and 1980, at the request of Bhengu, together with Derek Crumpton I helped organise the first and the second Charismatic Renewal Conferences in Johannesburg that brought together thousands of people from Southern Africa, the rest of Africa and overseas. Speakers included Nicholas Bhengu, Lorren Cunningham of Youth with a Mission, Cecil Kerr, and the Archbishop of Cape Town, Bill Burnett who served as Conference Chairperson. I was also involved in organising the SACLA (1979) university student conference and addressed the Youth Group of that conference on Rebuilding the Broken Walls. In 1983 when I was the National Director of Life Ministry, (Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ International, I asked Bhengu to serve on our Board. In 1985 I invited him to speak at Explo 1985, a worldwide televise outreach organised by Campus Crusade for Christ International, held at the Pretoria show grounds. Bhengu agreed; however due to ill health he was unable to honour his commitment and he delegated his right-hand man, Abel Matroshe to speak in his place.

In 1966 Bhengu wrote a preface to my book *Ingane Yakho Neyami* (Your Child and My Child). I also had the privilege of being with him in private meetings, alone or sometimes with others, where he shared his vision and mission for Africa. His vision was to preach the gospel from Cape

to Cairo driven by the slogan 'Back to God – Africa for Jesus – Jesus for Africa'. I personally knew some of Bhengu's early associates: Alfred Gumede, HC Phillips (with whom I closely worked as an elder in his church, in Nelspruit in 1957), Fred Mullan, James Mullan, Austin Chauwner, Fred Burke, Mrs Larsen, LS Mjaji and many others. I used to be one of the official interpreters at General Conferences of the Assemblies of God as early as 1957. My involvement with Bhengu and some of the founders of the Assemblies of God is borne out by a inscription by John Bond, former General Chairman of the Assemblies of God for 27 years, in a complimentary copy of his book: *For the Record – Reflections On the Assemblies of God* [2000].

To Dan Lepoko (sic)

My very good friend, you are one of the few people who knew most of the characters mentioned in these memoirs. You were part of the unfolding developments I have tried to describe. I trust you will find my account accurate, fair and enjoyable to read.

With warm greetings

John Bond, September 2003

In 1966 Bhengu promised to invite me to a meeting at which he would re-organise the Youth Ministry. This invitation never materialised. I therefore responded to his request in a letter, saying that I found it strange that he would want to entrust me with the responsibility of editing a magazine and writing on youth issues when he had not invited me to the restructuring meeting. For his reply (see Appendix 3).

Bhengu died on 7 October in the Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town after a protracted illness. His first wife, Mylet, died on May 26, 1971, and his second wife in 2005. Bhengu and Mylet were buried in Pietermaritzburg, and Nokwethemba in Durban.

1.5. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are used in the study:

1.5.1. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

I refer to three statements by eminent theologians on the topic.

‘The baptism with the Holy Spirit is an operation of the Holy Spirit distinct from and subsequent and additional to His regeneration work’ (Torrey 1957: 271).

‘... baptism of the Spirit is identical with the gift of the Spirit, that it is one of the distinctive blessings of the new covenant, and because it is an initial blessing, is also universal blessing for members of the covenant’ (Stott 1964:43).

‘With them it was no mere intellectual assent to some article in a creed defining an orthodox doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit. Neither were they satisfied to acquiesce to a vague idea that in some indefinite manner the Holy Spirit had been imparted to them upon conversion. They gladly and thankfully recognized His gracious operations in their regeneration and sanctification, but their own personal reception of the Holy Spirit was an intensely vivid experience. They knew when He came, where He came, and how He came. Nothing reveals this more than Paul’s searching question to certain disciples whom he immediately sensed to be spiritually lacking in a vital part of their Christian inheritance “Have ye received the Holy Ghost?” Acts19:2. The challenge was to experience, not the doctrine. How significant! An Ephesians “Pentecost” speedily rectified their short-coming and it was an experience as vivid as all the rest had received. “They spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Gee 1928:4).

1.5.2. Contextualisation

I use Bradshaw’s definition: ‘Contextualisation is an effort to understand the frames of reference and worldviews that people have developed to make sense out of their environment’ (Bradshaw 1993:49).

1.5.3. Culture

Neely’s definition is used in my thesis: ‘Culture is not just an open-ended way of life. Rather, it is a plan, map or blueprint for living that is always in the process of formation and adjustment. It is a code for action, for survival and for success in life’ (Neely 1995:4).

1.5.4. Diakonia

The diakonia dimension of our mission approach refers to the many forms of ministry and service in which the Christian community, in imitation of Jesus of Nazareth (who was among us as one who serves), puts itself at the service of the whole world (cf Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:37).

1.5.5. Ethics

According to De Vos, 'Ethics is a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or group, are subsequently widely accepted, and offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students' (De Vos (ed) 2002:63).

1.5.6. Evangelism

Archbishop Temple's famous words, are used in my thesis to define evangelism: 'To evangelise is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men come to put their faith in God through him, to accept him as their personal Saviour and to serve him as their King in the fellowship of his church' - Archbishop William Temple [Green: 1992:14]

1.5.7. Key Leadership Factor

A key leadership factor is the ability to inspire your followers to accept your vision of the future. Some of the followers of the ruling National Party were not prepared to take the risks involved in a radical change of course – even though they could see the breakers smashing on the reefs ahead. It was the task of the party's leadership to assure them that there were other courses that could effectively protect their core interests, while at the same time affording full political rights to all South Africans. We explored the possibilities of power sharing; of constitutional guarantees; of the devolution of power (De Klerk 2002: 611).

1.5.8. King and Church

It is not only the priests and witch-doctors who have an important role to play in the religious and social structure of the tribe. He is one who sums up in his own person the legal and sacral traditions of the tribe; he it is who guarantees the strength of the tribe, and his authority depends on the tribesmen's need to participate in the source of strength. The problem of the relationship between king and Church has been a source of much concern in the encounter of the Church with African tribal culture (Sundkler 1963:197).

1.5.9. Kerygma

With the kerygmatic dimension I refer to all the forms of ministry of the word in mission: preaching, witnessing, providing literature, theological education etc. The content of this ministry is the good news that God, Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who is the Lord of history, Saviour and Liberator' (cf Bosch 1991:412)

1.5.10. Koinonia

The missionary church, the church-with-others must truly incarnate the essential communion of the body of Christ. This has important consequences for our practice of mission. It makes very clear that Christian missionaries can never proclaim or witness as if from some safe haven, as people who have 'arrived' whose journey, apart from intermittent forays into 'the world', is over. It calls into question much of the history of missionary church planting, as much of the effort was concentrated on domesticating the church (in a nation, people, group or culture) rather than on equipping the church for its open-ended existence in fellowship with other pilgrims on our journey through the world' (Bosch 1991:368-389; Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:38).

1.5.11. Mission

Evangelism is not the same as mission. According to Michael Geen mission is a much broader term than evangelism. "It speaks of the total impact of the church on society, while evangelism is more restricted, the passing on of the good news' [Green 1992:14].

1.5.12. Pentecostal Mission

Pentecostal missionaries, said McGee, set out to their “mission fields” to accomplish one task and one task only: ‘the evangelisation of the world (understood as personal salvation) in preparation for the imminent return of Christ. One must add to this the fact that there were not many ecclesiological traditions the missionaries could take with them. So, for example, the American AOG only came into being as a denomination in 1914, by which time it already had more than twenty missionaries in various parts of the world’ (McGee 1987:113-115).

1.5.13. Spiritual Leadership

According to Sanders, spiritual leadership transcends the power of personality and all other natural gifts: ‘The personality of the spiritual leaders influences others because it is irradiated, penetrated and empowered by the Holy Spirit. As the leader gives control of his life to the Spirit, the Spirit’s power flows through him to others’ (Sanders 1994:28).

1.5.14. Theology

I found David Bosch’s definition very helpful: ‘Theology is concerned with the basic presuppositions and underlying principles which give direction to our ecclesiastical activities. Such presuppositions and considerations are always present, in any ecclesiastical activity, even if they are not always expressed or formulated systematically. This implies that behind every missionary enterprise in the various periods of missionary revival there was indeed theological reflection, albeit not always formally articulated. Theology was, therefore decidedly not absent. No mission is possible without theology’ (Bosch 1980:24).

1.5.15. The Church

The Church is the body of Christ on earth, the communion of all believers. In defining the Church it is necessary to bear in mind the distinction between the visible and the invisible Church. (1) The former may be defined as the company of the elect who are called by the Spirit of God, or briefer still, as the communion of believers. (2) The latter is a broader concept and may be defined as the community of those who profess the true religion together with their children. It is important to bear in mind that these two are not entirely parallel. Some who are members of the

invisible Church may never become members of the visible organization or may be shut out from it; and some who belong to the visible Church may be unbelievers and hypocrites and as such form no part of the body of Christ. (Berkof 1933:282-289)

1.6. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The study consists of eight chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces Bhengu, the relevance of study, the hypothesis research goals, the methodology, as well as the sources used in the research. A list of definitions is added. The chapter ends with an overview of chapters to follow.

Chapter 2: South Africa, 1948-1985. The Context of Bhengu's life and work

In this chapter I deal with the socio-political setting within which Bhengu ministered. This saw the Nationalist Party coming to power in 1948. With its obsession with race the Nationalist government introduced a regime that relegated the black the lowest status in South Africa. The government placed laws on the statute books: job reservation, pass laws, creation of homelands some of which accepted independence from South Africa. I survey Bhengu's involvement in the churches' struggle with apartheid.

Chapter 3: The man Bhengu

In this chapter I focus on Bhengu's early life: family, youth, education, conversion, call to ministry, and training for ministry. I will also show that Bhengu was deeply influenced by Mr Suter, his teacher and Principal at Kwa Dumisa Theological College, whom according to Bond, Bhengu loved better than his own father. Bhengu's quest for deeper theological training saw him go to Taylor University in the USA. It was however at KwaDumisa where his foundation in theology was laid, KwaDumisa Bible College later moved to Sweetwaters in Pietermaritzburg and changed its name to Union Bible Institute. Bhengu sent most of his pastors to Union Bible Institute - although he was unhappy with its non-pentecostal stance, especially concerning the speaking in tongues.

Chapter 4: Bhengu's Message: his preaching and the theology behind his preaching

It is argued that Bhengu was not a practicing theologian however his Bible training at KwaDumisa Bible College gave him a sound theological background which later saw him take up a visiting professorship position at Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham in the United Kingdom. In addition to his training at Kwa Dumisa he had been exposed to a Pentecostal experience whilst working with Chiliza in the Full Gospel Church of God and later in the Assemblies of God. It was this Pentecostal experience that empowered him to perform the miracles, healings, and the anointing that accompanied his preaching. Although Bhengu did not practise speaking in tongues during his campaigns, he did speak in tongues in private and saw tongues as a vital part of Pentecostal experience, a phenomenon he encouraged his followers to seek. He however taught that one should in rather seek the Giver than the gift.

Chapter 5: Bhengu: Missionary, Evangelist and Church Planter

This chapter deals with Bhengu the visionary leader, missionary, evangelist, church planter and strategist On Wednesday October 10, 1955 at the Assemblies of God conference in Witbank in a thesis titled The National Church; he outlined his vision and strategy to win back Africa to God. In it he called for the unity of the church in Africa under African leadership. He called upon missionaries to support his vision by providing training to black workers. I postulate that it was this stance taken by Bhengu that saw American missionaries leave the Assemblies of God in 1964, followed by Elim Churches of England missionaries in 1977 and Canadian missionaries in 1981.

Chapter 6: Bhengu's prophetic role: his socio-political activities and message.

The period 1945-1985 was the most significant period in Bhengu's ministry. It was a time of political and socio-economical upheaval in black townships, the independent homelands, and the self governing homelands. This period saw the banning of the ANC, PAC and the uprising by Soweto students in 1976 against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools. The focus is on how Bhengu responded to the socio-political situation prevailing at the time, and the prophetic messages he preached to try and address the needs of the moment. In some quarters Bhengu was criticized for taking a stronger public stance against apartheid.

Chapter 7: Bhengu as an ecumenical figure: relationship with other church denominations

The focus is on Bhengu's involvement with church leaders of major denominations, on his contribution to ecumenical movements as well as his efforts to steer the Assemblies of God toward accommodation of other church groups. I seek to show that he made several attempts to persuade the Assemblies of God to join the South African Council of Churches, without success. Although he was involved in ecumenical movements, he nonetheless remained very critical of liberal and black theologies. He saw Black theology as portraying Christ as a black man. He believed Jesus was neither black nor white but the Son of God and saviour of mankind. To Bhengu liberal theology weakened the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 8: Conclusion - Bhengu's Lasting Legacy

In the final chapter Bhengu's lasting legacy is discussed. The role of Bhengu - preacher, evangelist, church planter, strategist, prophet, ecumenist, leader, visionary, servant-leader – is evaluated. In the end, the conclusion is: Nicholas Bhengu was indeed a remarkable man, the 'Billy Graham of South Africa'. He was a human being, with human frailties and weaknesses, but above all he was a man who answered the call of his Lord, who with his many talents has left a remarkable imprint on the churches in South Africa, as well as in Africa, and in the world beyond.

SOUTH AFRICA 1948 – 1985: THE CONTEXT OF BHENGU'S LIFE AND WORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION: TURBULENT TIMES FOR SOUTH AFRICA

The circumstances in which Bhengu was born, raised, educated and called to ministry, were created by the political, social and economic events of his time. It was indeed a turbulent era, a time that saw discrimination unparalleled anywhere in the world, perpetrated by two consecutive white regimes: The United Party (before 1948) pursued a policy that relegated black people to the bottom of the political, social and economic order in South Africa. It was however the Nationalist government (after 1948) that perfected the system by introducing legislative measures that governed the lives of black people from birth to the grave. The coming to power of the National Party was both dramatic and traumatic for South Africa. It altered the whole South African scene for decades to come.

To understand Bhengu's life and work, to evaluate his contribution, it is necessary to briefly sketch the South African context during the second half of the 19th century: South Africa during the time of apartheid. It is equally necessary to gain some understanding of the different ways in which the Christian churches reacted to the challenges of apartheid.

2.2. THE BIRTH OF TWO POLITICAL FORCES: THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND THE NATIONAL PARTY

2.2.1. The Founding of the African National Congress (1912)

The African National Congress (then the South African Native National Congress) was founded in Bloemfontein on 8 January 1912. The formation of the African National Congress was attended by diverse groups of prominent African people: professional men, chieftains, ministers, teachers, clerks, interpreters, landholders, businessmen, journalists, estate agents, building contractors and labour (Lodge 1983:1)

The coming together of the people followed the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 which had excluded African people from participating in the political affairs of the land of their birth.

Between 1903 and 1909 two prominent Africa leaders, Rev John L Dube and Tengo Jabavu, sought to persuade the British government to address African grievances – but to no avail. British interest was geared more toward appeasing white South Africans who were not opposed to the integration of whites and Africans. On the other hand, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, Governor of Natal, was opposed to any form of power-sharing with blacks (De Gruchy 2004/2005:26).

Africans were stripped of all the rights that they had before the Union. The right to non-racial franchise, to the parliamentary seats for blacks that existed in the Cape, was removed. In 1911 the Native's Land Bill was passed, preventing Africans from owning land in the rural areas and occupying land outside "the reserve", which comprised only eight percent of the total area of South Africa. The Bill dispossessed black land owners. The Native Labour Regulation Act criminalised blacks for breaking contract on farms and mines and excluded blacks from skilled industrial jobs (Lodge 1983:2).

In 1955 the ANC committed itself to the ideals of the Freedom Charter as set out below:

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know

... that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;

... that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

... that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

... that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

... And therefore, we the people of South Africa, black and white together, equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this Freedom Charter;

... And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

Included are the key phrases:

- The People Shall Govern!
- All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!
- The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!
- The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!
- All Shall be Equal Before the Law!
- All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!
- There Shall be Work and Security!
- The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!
- There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!
- There Shall be Peace and Friendship!

These freedoms we will fight for, side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty.

In a large measure these ideals are still a guiding light for the ANC. No attempt is made to analyse the Charter. Its ideals are in many respects self explanatory.

2.2.2. The Founding of the National Party (1914)

In 1902 the Afrikaner was defeated in the Anglo Boer War. In the years that followed there was a growing desire among both the English and the Afrikaners to bring together the English colonies, the Cape and Natal, and the two Boer Republics, the Transvaal and the Free State to found a Union of South Africa. In 1910 the Union of South Africa was formed in order to unite all white people in the country. (De Gruchy 2005:28)

However there were among the Afrikaans speakers some who were interested in building unity among the *volk* (people). This philosophy of Afrikaner unity was promoted by General Barry

Hetzog and later by Dr D F Malan. Generals Jan Smuts and Louis Botha on the other hand were seeking to forge unity among all whites – English, Afrikaans and others. In 1914 the National Party was founded in Bloemfontein to “foster Afrikaner identity, distinct language, traditions and religious institutions” (De Gruchy 2005:28) It is not clear whether the founding of both the ANC and the NP in Bloemfontein was by accident or by design.

Decades later, the African National Congress and the National Party became the parties that would direct the political, socio-economic, religious and racial configuration of South Africa.

2.3. THE NATIONAL PARTY ASSUMES POWER (1948)

Under the leadership of D F Malan the National Party wrenched power from General Jan Smuts's United Party, in May 1948, with a majority of five seats. General Smuts also lost his own seat (Suzman 1993:15).

The 1948 election was spearheaded by the Afrikaner Broederbond, headed by Dr D F Malan in the Cape. Key Afrikaner Broederbond members included J G Strijdom in the Transvaal, C R Swart, E. Jansen Eben Dönges and Ben Schoeman (Wilkins and Strydom 1978: 117-118). As soon as the Nationalists took power, they set out to bring about legislation that would bestow power to the Afrikaner and build Afrikaner nationalism. The National Party was not the architect of racial discrimination and segregation in South Africa. Racial discrimination and segregation had been practiced as part of colonisation in many parts of Africa. Under Nationalist rule, however, racial discrimination dominated every aspect of South African life: political, economic, educational and social (Suzman 1993:15)

As a student in Germany, Nico Diederichs, an Afrikaner nationalist, had been greatly influenced by Third Reich propaganda. After returning home in 1935, he wrote:

God willed that ... At the human level, there should be multiplicity, diversity of nations, languages and cultures ... and just as it would be a violation of God's law to try to reduce all colours to one colour and all sounds to one sound, everything in nature to one dull monotony, so it is just as much of a desecration of his laws to want the multiplicity of nations in the world for the sake of a monochromatic, monotonous and monolithic humanity (*Guardian Newspapers* 1994:53 – 54).

Both the African National Congress and the National Party established themselves to promote the concerns of their constituencies. The African National Congress focused on doing away with discriminatory laws that excluded blacks from freely participating in the political, social and economic life of the country on non-racial grounds. The National Party, by contrast, was committed to protecting the political, social, economic and religious rights of the Afrikaner and the Afrikaner culture to the exclusion of blacks and, in some instances, other whites - especially in the areas of culture and religion.

The two polarised ideologies later led to conflict of such magnitude that South Africa was engulfed in protracted violence, violence sponsored by the state and counter violence by liberation movements, in the main by the ANC. To the international community the country became a pariah state. It was isolated by international bodies from sport; economic sanctions were introduced and cultural events were boycotted.

After coming to power in 1948 the National Party immediately proceeded to enact laws that would bolster and exacerbate racial divisions for almost five decades in South Africa, the effects of which the country is still struggling to shake off.

The following are some of the most repressive laws put on the statute books in South Africa by the Nationalists to bring about a nation divided by race, language, religion and ethnicity from birth to the grave. As fostered by Dr Verwoerd, this was indeed grand apartheid:

- **The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949.** This act banned marriages between white and other races, and nullified mixed marriages entered into by South Africans abroad.
- **The Immorality Amendment Act of 1950.** The act extended the 1927 Immorality Act, to make all sexual relations between white and other races illegal.
- **The Population Registration Act of 1950.** The entire population was entered on a central register and classified as White, Native or Coloured. Coloured people were subdivided into ethnic groups including Indian, Griqua, Cape Malay and Chinese.
- **The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950.** Practically any person or organisation hostile to government policy could be defined as Communist and banned by the government. There was no right of appeal.

- **The Group Areas Act of 1950.** This act gave the government powers to segregate the entire country by allocating separate areas to the different population groups. To implement this policy, the Act provided for forced removal and resettlement.
- **The Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act of 1952.**

All black people over the age of 16 were required to carry a passbook and present it to police on demand. Apart from personal details, the book contained information on employment, poll tax and influx control. The Pass Laws of 1952 were among the most notorious laws that specifically affected black people in the most inhumane ways. The Pass laws were the most hated of all the laws introduced by the Nationalist Government. In 1952 the government passed the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act. Previous to the enactment of this law black people carried what was known as a special pass issued by the Department of Native Affairs. The special pass allowed black people to travel from one area to another in search of work or visit friends or relatives with relative ease. The holder of this document could also transfer it to a friend who in the eyes of the authority did not qualify to be issued with the pass. The 1952 law made it difficult for blacks to travel, seek employment or reside in a white area not designated for blacks. The law made it mandatory for all black people over the age of 16 years to carry a reference book (popularly know as Dom stupid Pass among blacks). The Reference Book incorporated all laws affecting the lives of black people including the law on Influx Control. They were required to carry their pass books on them at all times; failure to produce one on demand landed them in prison.

Under the Influx Control legislation blacks were only allowed to live in the so-called white areas if (1) they were born in the town or city or (2) if they had worked for one employer for ten years or more. Should they break the service, they would either have to start all over again to earn the ten years or be ordered out of the urban area. Rural blacks or people from another urban area were allowed in an urban area for not more than 72 hours, or face arrest. The police would wake people up in the middle of the night, looking for persons that were in the urban area without permits. Millions of black people were arrested and large numbers of families destabilised. A black household had a roster with the names of all members of that household and which would have to be produced for verification whenever the police arrived to check the legitimacy of the people in the house.
- **The Separate Amenities Act of 1953.** The act provided for separate amenities for white and non-white races in all public places and vehicles. It also stipulated that separate amenities need not be of equal quality.

- **The Bantu Education Act of 1953.** This Act set down rules governing the curriculum for black education – a limited curriculum for black students. The Minister for Native Affairs could close black schools not adhering to this curriculum. Bantu education consigned the black child to an inferior type of education. It prepared him for a perpetual position of serving the white man. In short, the black man became the hewer of wood and drawer of water. In introducing the Bantu Education Act, Dr H.F. Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs said:

Racial relations cannot improve if the wrong type of education is given to Natives. They cannot improve if the result of Native Education is the creation of frustrated people who as a result of the education they receive have expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa do not allow to be fulfilled immediately, when it creates people who are trained for professions not open to them, when there are people who have received a form of cultural training which strengthens their desire for the white-collar occupations to such an extent that there are more such people than openings available. Therefore, good racial relations are spoiled when the correct education is not given.

Bantu Education henceforth came under state control. Verwoerd went on to say:

What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? What is the use of subjecting a Native child to a curriculum which in the first instance is traditionally European? I just want to remind Honourable Members that if the Native inside South Africa today in any kind of school in existence is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake. (Suzman 1993:34-35)

The Bantu Education designed by Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, then Minister of Native Affairs, was indeed one of the corner stones of apartheid. . Education was removed from church schools. The government was unhappy with Church schools because some missionaries did not always support the government policy of apartheid and separate development. Black education was designed to provide blacks with an education that would keep them subservient to whites. It was discriminatory in its application, budget and curricula. It was based on ethnicity: Zulu, Swati, Pedi, Xhosa, Ciskei and Transkei. Although both Ciskei and Transkei spoke Xhosa, schools were built for different ethnic groups in designated & ethnic locations. As a result of this policy South Africa eventually had 14 education departments: four white – the Transvaal, Cape Province, Natal and Orange Free State provincial education departments – and a National Department of

Education for each of seven Black languages - IsiZulu, IsiSwati, Xitsonga, SeSotho, IsiXhosa, SeTswana, IsiNdebele - as well as departments for Coloureds and Indians.

- **Bantu Education and teacher training, 1954.** Addressing the Senate in 1954 Dr Verwoerd stated as follows on the training of black teachers
It is obvious that the state must obtain full control of the training of teachers. For many decades the churches have used the training of teachers for the furtherance of their own particular interests. In addition the desire of teachers to show off their knowledge of English culture and, possibly also, their inability to distinguish concepts from terminology, contributed to an irresistible desire to convey knowledge to their pupils in the same words in which they had received them (Hartshorne 1992: 235).
- **The Extension of University Education Act of 1959.** This act excluded all other races from white universities and established “ethnic” universities. However, black universities such as the University of the North (now University of Limpopo) became institutions that produced student leaders such as Tiro who mobilised and agitated for the liberation of black people. Tiro was killed by a letter bomb sponsored by the state whilst in exile in Botswana
- **The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959.** This act was designed to transform the black reserves into self-governing homelands.
- **The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970.** All black South Africans were to become citizens of their tribal homelands, irrespective of whether they had ever lived there. They would then be regarded as aliens in South Africa

2.4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES: POVERTY AND DISRUPTION OF FAMILY LIFE

Apartheid not only divided people racially, it also legislated job reservation and unequal work opportunities. Black people were to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. Bantu education consigned blacks to inferior education so that they would not be able to compete with whites in the labour market. Men were recruited from the homelands to provide cheap labour on the mines and farms. These men were housed in single-room hostels where there was no privacy. Black townships such as Soweto, Umlazi, Mamelodi and others were established many kilometres away from workplaces. Black townships were ghettos with few or no entertainment facilities; these areas became breeding grounds for crime and substance abuse. Family life in the homelands and townships was destroyed. Economic migrants were strangers to their families

whom they visited only on holidays or end-of-year leave. They lived in concrete men's single hostels in inhumane conditions. Because of job restrictions and lack of proper education, township and homelands were poor and crime became rampant.

2.5. REACTION AGAINST APARTHEID

2.5.1. Growing opposition

Opposition against apartheid gained momentum over decades of Nationalist rule, following a litany of laws and policies designed by the government to keep control over the lives of Blacks, Coloureds and Indians. The struggle against apartheid was fought on multiple fronts: churches, trade unions, political formations, students both at primary and high school and university campuses as well as civil society all took part. There were boycotts of white businesses, attacks on government collaborators such as councillors, and sports boycotts by international bodies. A number of multi-national businesses withdrew from doing business in South Africa and arms embargoes were imposed against the country.

2.5.2. Sharpeville

In 1959 Dr Verwoerd, the architect of grand apartheid, became Prime Minister. He was determined to implement apartheid to the fullest. There was growing resistance to the pass laws. Both the ANC and the PAC had been planning pass boycotts.

Then the ANC held a conference at Curries Fountain Sports ground attended by about 8000 people. A decision was taken that 31 March 1960 was to be an anti-pass day. On that day there were going to be mass marches to the Bantu Commissioners' office, though Robert Sobukwe wrote to station commissioners informing them that proceedings would be peaceful. Sobukwe also told his followers not provoke the police. They were to leave their passes at home and present themselves for arrest. In Sharpeville the police opened fire on peaceful and unarmed PAC demonstrators, killing 69 people.

The whole world was shocked at the action of the police. The government nevertheless took stringent action to restore law and order; it banned the ANC and the PAC; and it arrested the key leaders of the two organisations; Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela and Robert Sobukwe (Meer 1988: 123-126).

Sharpeville was a watershed in South African politics. In 1961 the ANC and the PAC abandoned their non-violence strategy. In an effort to achieve liberation for their people they now embarked on armed struggle, the ANC forming UMKHONTO WESIZWE (“Spear of the Nation”) and the PAC forming POQO.

On 16 December 1961 a spokesperson for Umkhonto explained their decision to adopt armed struggle:

The time comes in the life of any nation when there remains only two choices: submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means in our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom... We of Umkhonto have always sought to achieve liberation without bloodshed and civil clash (Meer 1986:146)

2.5.3. Rivonia Treason Trial:

Insurgency and counter insurgency by the government and liberation organisations continued until the unbanning of liberation movements and the release of political prisoners by then State President F W de Klerk in February 1990.

A number of the accused in the Rivonia case had been arrested at Lilliesleaf in Rivonia on Thursday night 11 July 1963. The police arrived in two vans - one a dry cleaner’s van and the other a bakery van. Those arrested at Lilliesleaf estate included: Walter Sisulu – ANC Secretary-General, Govan Mbeki (former President Thabo Mbeki’s father) Lionel Bernstein, Bennies Goldberg, BA Hepple, Arthur Goldreich, Hazel Goldreich (Arthur’s wife) and Dr Hillard Festenstein. Nelson Mandela was already serving a five year sentence – three years for inciting people to stay away from work from 29 to 31 May 1961; and two years for leaving the country without a passport. This was when he left South Africa on the instruction of the ANC to attend the Pan-African Freedom Movement for Central, East and Southern Africa in Addis Ababa early in 1962. (Meer 1988:146)

2.5.3.1. The State's Case

The case was the 'State versus The National High Command and others' in the Supreme Court of South Africa (Transvaal Provincial Division) - now the Gauteng North High Court. Dr Percy Yutar who led the state prosecution team introduced the case against the accused, as follows:

... the accused deliberately and maliciously plotted and engineered the commission of acts of violence and destruction throughout directed against the offices and homes of state and municipal officials, as well as against all lines and manner of communications. The planned purpose thereof was to bring in the Republic of South Africa chaos, disorder and turmoil, which would be aggravated, according to their plan, by the operation of thousands of trained guerrilla warfare units deployed throughout the country at various areas by local inhabitants, as well as specially selected men posted to such areas. Their combined operations were planned to spread confusion, violent insurrection and rebellions, followed at the appropriate juncture by an armed invasion of the country by military units of foreign powers. (Meer 1988:165-166)

2.5.3.2. Mandela's Defence

Nelson Mandela, who was accused number one, elected to make his defence statement from the dock without going into the witness box in which he would have had to take an oath and open himself to cross examination which could have had serious consequences for himself and his fellow accused. This strategy was a huge gamble; yet it turned out to save him from a death penalty when he was found guilty of sabotage. He said:

... We want to be part of the general population, and not confined to living in our ghettos. African men want to have their wives and children to live with them where they work, and not to be forced into an unnatural existence in men's hostels. Our women want to be left with their men folk, and not to be left permanently widowed in the Reserves. We want to be allowed out after 11 o'clock at night and not to be confined to our rooms like little children. We want to be allowed to travel in our own country, and seek work where we want to, and Not where the Labour Bureau tells us to. We want a just share in the whole of South Africa; we want security and a stake in society.

This then is what the ANC is fighting. Our struggle is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by our own experience. It is a struggle for the right to live.

During my lifetime I have dedicated my life to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for, and to see realized. But my lord, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.... (Mandela 1994:354)

2.5.4. Soweto 1976: Student Riots

The government had instituted a policy of teaching 50% of school subjects in English and 50% in Afrikaans. Soweto students were, however, opposed to being forced to be taught in Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor.

On June 16 1976 students took to the streets to protest against this policy. It was a peaceful march. However they were met with the full might of the state. Police were brought in to quash the protest and restore peace and order. Instead of keeping peace, the police fired at the marchers with live ammunition, killing some of the students including Hector Petersen, who became the first martyr of the 1976 student revolt and has since been honoured with a memorial in Soweto – the Hector Peterson Memorial.

The student protest was a turning point in the struggle against apartheid. Many young people left the country to join the ANC or PAC, took up training and came back as freedom fighters. Many others were imprisoned, yet others were killed by the state, others simply disappeared.

The riots soon spread to other areas of the country. I had been training student ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in evangelism at Mphumulo Theological Seminary under Campus Crusade for Christ SA when the riots erupted in Soweto on Wednesday 16 June 1976.

The next day, 17 June 1976, a colleague, Charles Maphosa, and I went to the University of Zululand to minister to students. After the evening service we were informed that the SRC had called an urgent meeting to discuss the students' response to the Soweto riots. We had wanted to attend the meeting but were advised not to because if trouble erupted, administration would

accuse us of having incited it, since we were not part of the University. On the other hand, we knew the students might suspect us of being police spies. The following morning, 18th June 1976, students attacked the administration building as well as the newly built DRC Church on campus with petrol bombs. They shouted “Away with the DRC!” as they bombed the church. On our return to Soweto on Friday evening 18th June 1976 all we could see was the destruction of buildings.

2.6. MARXISM AND COMMUNISM

Karl Marx challenged the status quo, in particular capitalism, which he identified as evil. The capitalist state, according to Marx, was responsible for human suffering and was against human emancipation. Capitalism - the economic system - was to be blamed for the alienation of the working class. Liberation would come when the workers organised a revolution. Power for change, according to Marx, lay with the people themselves. However, the proletariat had to be organised to throw off the capitalist yoke of injustice. In this way man would be free to be himself, he argued. Capitalist technology would be appropriated to benefit all. Each person would contribute according to his own abilities and to meet his own needs.

It was Lenin who engineered and promoted Communism. The proletariat was to be the engine that drove the philosophy of Communism. Lenin’s ambition was to harness all social energies to achieve common goals. He sought to destroy the barrier between the state and civil society, and eliminate the distinction between ‘public’ and ‘private’. His methods, however, were despotic, totalitarian – his will enforced by the police.

Marx declared:

As an orchestra conductor sees to it that all the instruments sound harmonious and in proportion, so in social and political life does the party direct the efforts of all people towards the achievement of a single goal. Each person must, like a bee in the hive, make his own contribution to increase the material and spiritual wealth of society (Femia 1993:168)

With regards to communism Marx said:

The narrow horizon of bourgeois law, which compels one to calculate with the heartlessness of a Shylock whether one has not worked half an hour more than somebody

else, whether one is not getting less pay than somebody else, this narrow horizon will then be left (Femia 1993: 171)

Communism was to eliminate class distinction and the oppression of the poor by the rich capitalists. Communism promised liberation and equality among all people. However the brand of Communism which was propagated and practiced in Communist countries in Eastern Europe, the USSR, China and Cuba did not promote freedom among their people. Although the ANC was not Communist, it did enter into an alliance with the South African Communist Party.

The South African government proclaimed Communism as the arch enemy of the state for various reasons: Communism preached equality of all people whereas the state preached separation; it promoted fair wages whilst the state practised and created labour reserves in the homelands to provide cheap migratory labour for the mines and farming communities.

Communism appealed to the masses of oppressed blacks and came to be seen as a saviour and a liberating force. Some African countries accepted funding and training from Communist countries such as Russia, China and Cuba. The Cubans were fighting alongside the MPLA in Angola; Mozambique adopted the Marxist economic and political ideology.

Under the Suppression of Communism Act, 1950, any person or organisation that opposed government policy could be banned with no right of appeal. The Black liberation struggle was labelled the 'Rooi Gevaar' (Red Danger - Communism). It was said that "the government saw a Communist under every bed."

Generally speaking the churches, especially the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, did not welcome Communism - for at least two main reasons: In the first place, they found its atheistic stance untenable. Communism did not accept the existence of a Supreme Being; religion to them was a means of keeping people from saving themselves. Secondly, the churches objected to the employment of violence to serve the proletariat, and the arming of liberation movements. Although most Evangelical and Pentecostal churches were opposed to apartheid, they believed that liberation should be attained through negotiation and non-violent means. (Moller (s.a.): 16-22)

2.7. THE STATE BECOMES MORE REPRESSIVE

In the wake of the student riots the government was determined to deal with the situation in a strong-handed manner. The State banned publications such as *The World* and *Pro Veritatis*, news magazines opposed to apartheid. It also banned key figures like Qoboza, editor of *The World*, Dr Beyers Naude, founder of the Christian Institute, as well as many other leaders. These measures by the government impelled the people to continue fighting. The government also declared a state of emergency and indemnified itself against legal action retrospective to 16 June 1976.

The 1977 Defence White Paper set out a comprehensive strategy to deal with the so-called Total Onslaught. In 1978 P W Botha described it as follows:

The ultimate aim of the Soviet Union and its allies is to overthrow the present body politic in the Republic of South Africa and to replace it with a Marxist-oriented form of government to further the objectives of the USSR. Therefore all possible methods and means are used to attain this objective. This includes instigating social and labour unrest, civilian resistance, terrorist attacks against the infrastructure of South Africa, and the intimidation of black leaders and members of the security forces. This onslaught is supported by a world-wide propaganda campaign and the involvement of various front organizations, such as the trade unions and even certain church organizations and leaders.

In October 1984 seven thousand troops were deployed on a "seal and search" operation (Operation Palmiel) in the Sebokeng township. By the end of 1985 more than thirty-five thousand troops were on duty in the townships. (Challenging the State - Churches as political Actors in South Africa [http: search. ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?))

2.8. POLITICAL RE-ENGINEERING

In 1983, in addition to the National Parliament, the government decided to establish parliaments for Indians and Coloureds - the Tricameral Parliaments. However this backfired on the government. The constitutional amendments by PW Botha's government were met with even stiffer resistance. A wide range of organisations - churches, labour unions, political organisations

- came together to form the United Democratic Front (UDF). Dr Alan Boesak, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr Frank Chikane and other prominent leaders gave leadership to the movement.

The UDF mobilised communities around the country to fight the apartheid system. A number of councillors who collaborated with the government, were killed by stoning and their houses petrol bombed. White businesses and the payment of rent were boycotted. Learners chose to forego education as the slogan "Freedom before education!" took hold. The government realized that it was becoming more and more difficult to control the volatile situation. The country was becoming ungovernable.

2.9. THE CHURCHES AND APARTHEID

2.9.1. A challenge to the Christians: the role of the churches in times of violence.

The mission of the church in South Africa had been to win the heathen nations of Africa for Christ. The expansion of the white community during the 18th and 19th centuries into the interior brought with it its own dynamics, as well as conflict with Xhosa-speaking and other indigenous people. Farmers began to discriminate against their own workers, who often were their fellow church members. Some farmers refused to have their domestic servants baptised and worship with them. It was however, especially during the 20th century, in the apartheid era that the church had to deal with a host of problems including apartheid laws, segregation in the church, conservative and liberal theologies, black theology and liberation theology. The church became divided on how to deal with a repressive situation and violence perpetrated by the government in the black community.

Helder Camara (in Oosthuisen, Coetzee De Gruchy, Hofmry and Lategan 1985:88-89) mentions three types of violence:

- The violence of injustice (violence as unjust oppression - violence no.1)
- The violence of the oppressed (violence as rebellion against this injustice - violence no.2)
- The violence of repression (violence as repression of such rebellion – violence no. 3).

Violence thus attracts violence and gives rise to what Camera calls a "spiral of violence".

Villa-Vicencio (1980, 5-6) sums up Camera's argument as follows:

It begins...as the egoism of some privileged groups drives other human beings into sub-human conditions, where they suffer restrictions, humiliations and injustices without prospects for a better deal and without hope. Within this condition violence is manifest in various forms: both in the institutionalised restrictions and humiliations imposed upon people and in the violence which so often emerges among some members of the oppressed who have few other ways at their disposal, through which to express their energy and frustration. Established violence, as either the oppressed as a group or certain individuals within it come in revolt and fight for a more just and humane world. These sporadic revolts and at times sustained revolutions are inspired by various ideologies, cadres, "subversive elements" and "agitators" at different times of history in different parts of the world. They all however, have one ingredient in common: whatever the motivation of the instigators the people are receptive to such instigations and respond for a similar reason – the desire to overcome their oppressive state and to institute a more just society.

This violence no.2 is followed by violence no.3, the violence of repression in which violence no.2 is countered by police or military action, in order, firstly, to resist the change proposed by those perpetrating violence no.2 and, secondly, to maintain the status quo. The three kinds of violence were all experienced in South Africa.

2.9.2. The attitude on race, of the early settlers

It was the Dutch who built a halfway station in the Cape between Europe and India. It was preceded by the shipwreck in 1648 of the Dutch East India company ship, Haarlem, that broke up along the coast of the Cape of Hope. The crew survived the ordeal, went onshore and established a temporary shelter where they stayed until they were picked up by a returning ship. They came into contact with natives who treated them in a friendly manner. Among the crew of the ill-fated ship were Leendert Janssen and Nicolas Proot. Upon their return they prepared a report which they presented to the United Chartered East India Company, indicating the financial gain that would accrue to the company if they established a victualling station at the Cape of Good Hope.

Jan Van Riebeeck was duly commissioned to settle in the Cape of Good Hope. He arrived on 6 April 1652, bringing with him a charter issued by the Chamber of Seventeen that forbade any act that was designed to offend the inhabitants of the land, the Hottentots and the Khoikhoi.

Included in the charter was the following:

... Accordingly, whoever ill-uses, beats or pushes any of the natives, be he in the right or in the wrong, shall in their presence be punished with 50 lashes that they thus may see that such is against our will and that we are disposed to correspond with them in all kindness and friendship, in accordance with the orders and objects of our employers (Du Plessis 1910: 19 – 22).

It may be safely asserted that Van Riebeeck was the first 'missionary' to introduce the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape of Good Hope with the backing of the East India Company which committed the State to the propagation of the Reformed religion among the natives.

When Van Riebeeck settled in the Cape the Dutch Reformed Church became the official church of the new colony. This is understandable as the settlers represented the Dutch East India Company. Other churches such as the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist and Congregational Churches were recognised much later, and permitted to do mission work.

Martin Melk and Jan Mored were well disposed towards both slaves and Hottentots. Melk had a deep interest in the moral and spiritual welfare of the slaves, and prompted by his concern, he baptised the slaves and allowed them to be admitted as members of the church (Du Plessis 1910:5).

Another person who had great influence in reaching out to Hottentots was Van Lier. Van Lier was invited to the Cape at a young age. At 22 he was inducted to minister to the slaves and Hottentots. In a sermon he preached to his European congregation on 17 May 1789 on the necessity of preaching the Gospel to every creature, he said (Du Plessis 1910:63):

Of set purpose does Jesus use the expression to all creatures – in order to teach us that the Gospel must be brought to everyone who can bear the name of man – to the most

ungodly heathen and the most barbaric nations, to the simplest and the most ignorant. No exception may be made. Jesus has anticipated all excuses. His Gospel must be proclaimed to every human being, however savage, ignorant, degraded or too sinful he be. No one is so virtuous as not to need the Gospel. No man, whatever profession of virtue or innocence he may make, can do without the Gospel: to no man, however guilty and depraved he be, may the Gospel be refused. (Du Plessis 1910:63)

From the above it can be inferred that the early settlers were not obsessed with race although they saw the Hottentots, Bushmen and slaves as heathens and barbarians who needed to be evangelised.

The Dutch East India Company recognised four categories of people: (1) company servants, (2) freemen, (3) slaves, and (4) aliens (Khoikhoi and Bushmen). Freed slaves (blacks) were seen as the equals of those whites who were servants of the company or as freemen (Adam and Giliomee 1979:86).

2.9.3. The Churches' response to apartheid

2.9.3.1. Churches divided on apartheid

Churches responded in different ways to apartheid. Some churches, especially English-speaking churches, were more outspoken against the system whilst Afrikaans-speaking churches supported and abetted apartheid.

According to 1980 census: Religious composition of the total population (percentages and numbers in thousands)

Religion	Cape	Natal	OFS	Trans-vaal	Ciskei	Gazan Kulu	Ka Ngwane	Kwa-Ndebele	Kwa-Zulu	Lebo-wa	Qwa-qwa	Trans-Kei	Bophu-that-swana	Venda	Total	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	Thousands	%
Dutch Ref.	26.1	4.7	30.6	14.8	3.8	1.6	1.9	5.8	1.0	4.0	24.1	1.8	9.2	2.6	3 676	12.5
Ref.	0.3	0.9	0.7	1.1								0.2	0.5	1.4	146	0.5
Herv.	0.2	0.4	0.6	2.6								0.1	0.1		249	0.8
Angl.	11.0	7.1	5.2	6.2	5.3	0.4	0.6	1.9	5.0	1.5	5.7	12.3	6.8	0.6	2 040	6.9
Meth.	10.3	8.1	13.9	7.7	26.8	0.4	2.5	1.3	6.8	1.5	8.9	25.8	12.4	0.3	2 978	10.1
Presb.	2.0	2.3	2.5	1.6	6.2	2.5			1.8	1.0	4.4	5.4	0.8	0.3	646	2.2
Congr.	4.1	0.3	0.3	0.6	4.3		0.6	1.	1.5	0.2		1.0	3.9	0.9	467	1.6
Luth.	2.0	2.6	1.1	3.6	1.0	0.6	0.6	1.9	4.9	7.1		1.4	12.4	7.2	1 045	3.6
R.-Cath.	7.5	12.0	10.4	9.0	4.7	3.3	3.7	5.1	14.4	7.4	9.5	7.7	8.9	2.3	2 701	9.2
A.F.Miss	1.1	0.2	1.6	0.7	0.6	0.6		1.3	0.3	0.2		0.4	0.3	0.3	191	0.7
Other Apost.	0.4	0.3	0.6	1.0								0.1	0.2		132	0.4
Independent Black	9.7	14.7	17.1	22.2	23.3	20.2	55.3	31.9;	31.9	24.7	16.4	11.4	28.6	15.4	5 857	19.9
Other	12.1	7.6	4.9	9.6	7.5	10.7	9.9	4.4	4.4	4.6	9.5	7.3	10.7	6.4	2 475	8.4
N Total	4419	1 635	1728	6 744	567	207	121	132	2 467	913	139	1968	1432	130	22603	
%	86.8	61.1	89.4	80.8	83.6	40.3	75.2	84.6	72.1	52.3	88.0	88.0	94.8	37.7		77.0
Jewish	0.7	0.3	1.0	0.9											119	0.4
Hindu	0.1	17.5		0.4					0.1						512	1.7
Islam	3.1	3.4		0.8									0.1		319	1.1
Other	0.8	1.2	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.6			0.6	0.8	0.6	11.2	1.9	8.4	522	1.8
Unknown (including Black Traditional)	8.5	16.7	10.2	16.5	16.5	59.1	23.6	15.4	27.2	46.8	9.5	13.8	3.2	53.6	5 285	18.0
N Total Non-Christian	672	1041	204	1 607	111	307	40	24	955	834	19	655	79	215	6 762	
%	13.2	38.9	10.6	19.2	16.4	59.7	24.8	15.4	27.9	47.7	12.0	25.0	5.2	62.3		23.0
N TOTAL	5091	2676	1932	8 351	678	514	161	156	3 422	1 747	158	2 623	1 511	345	29365	
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0		100.0

Source: Kritzing, 1984:9

2.9.3.2. The Afrikaans Churches

The Dutch Reformed Church is the largest of the three Afrikaans churches, with 37.4% of the members of all Afrikaans churches in South Africa belonging to it. 2.8% belong to the Reformed Church, and 5.4% to the Hervormde Church (Oosthuizen, Coetzee, de Gruchy, Hofmeyer and Lategan 1985:22). The DRC exerted greater influence in the political arena than the other two although they also played a significant role in the maintenance of the apartheid ideology. Arthur Koestler wrote "The history of the Afrikaner nation cannot be written without the history of the Afrikaans churches" (Wilkins and Strydom 1978:291).

The Afrikaans churches were opposed to "integration and blood mixing between white and non- white" (cf Wilkins & Strydom 1978: 291). A commission instituted in 1950 by the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (The Dutch Reformed Church) came to the conclusion that "every nation and race will be able to perform the greatest service to God and the world if it keeps its own national attributes, received from God's own hand, pure, with honour and gratitude ..." God had it to be so, He also perpetuates it. It called whites "those who are culturally and spiritually advanced" and added that the "Natives must be led and formed towards independence so that eventually they will be equal to the Europeans, but each in his own fatherland" (Wilkins & Strydom 1978: 292)

The Dutch Reformed Church soon earned the label of "Nationalist government in prayer" It exerted great influence on the Nationalist government. One has only to take cognisance of the fact that Dr D.F Malan, the man who won the elections in 1948, was a dominee (minister) of the Dutch Reformed Church. Many members of parliament and cabinet ministers in the successive Nationalist governments were also members of the Dutch Reformed Church.

The Dutch Reformed Church supported separate development despite the fact that it had brought untold suffering among disadvantaged communities. People were uprooted from the land of their birth and taken in truckloads to areas such as Dimbaza etc, with little or no facilities and basic amenities. Coloureds were removed from District Six in Cape Town to the Cape Flats; in Johannesburg blacks were removed from Sophiatown to Meadowlands etc.

2.9.3.3. The DRC defends apartheid on theological grounds

Citing theological and biblical grounds, the Dutch Reformed Church defended the apartheid system. Although the church rejected racial injustice and discrimination in principle, it nonetheless accepted it as desirable for harmonious living among races.

The Dutch Reformed Church was only too well aware of the serious problems in respect of personal and inter-racial relationships in South Africa. It sought to achieve the ideals of social justice, human rights and self-determination for people and individuals, based on God's Word, as did other Christian Churches. It was also convinced that it was imperative for the church to fulfil its prophetic calling, to be sympathetic, to give guidance according to scripture and to intercede on behalf of all men. If the Dutch Reformed Church did differ from other churches, the conflict was not due to a different view of the situation in South Africa and the teaching of God's Word in this regard. There was no difference in ideals and objectives, but merely disagreement on the best methods of achieving these ideals.

An unidentified minister of the Dutch Reformed Church explained it as follows at a joint Conference of the church and its daughter churches at St. George's Cathedral: "We are privileged people because of having the gospel and our lifestyles. We want to help all people." That help wasn't "paternalism," he argued, but "guardianship." He claimed that these "privileged people" had "made provisions for the needs of people so they will be happy where they are, and not put them all in one bunch." (Wallis and Hollyday 1989:5-6).

In response Dr Alan Boesak made a passionate plea to his white brethren:

The time has come to call apartheid by its true name - a sin - and to dismantle apartheid. The Dutch Reformed Church must do it with the same energy as they used to establish apartheid, and we must help them. We understand the pain of the Dutch Reformed Church in hearing these things. We don't enjoy this. Is the Dutch Reformed Church willing to look its history in the face?

Professor Heyns said today, "We are blood brothers". I want to believe that with all my heart. But you don't treat blood brothers the way you have treated us, the way

you have treated the people of South Africa. We keep coming back to you again and again. We say this in love and charity, and we will stay with you as long as we can." (Wallis and Hollyday 1989:6)

2.9.3.4. The English Mainline Churches

In November 1948, the Episcopal Synod of the Church of the Province issued a lengthy statement on the race issue. The bishops identified themselves fully with the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference earlier that year which declared "that discrimination between men on the grounds of race alone is inconsistent with the principles of the Christian religion". The South African bishops then stated that human rights are not extraneous to Christianity but rooted in Christian anthropology. They condemned the newly proposed apartheid legislation and stated:

The only hope in our judgement for the future of the men, the women and the children of Southern Africa lies in the creation of harmonious relationships between our various racial groups. And harmony can only be achieved if the Europeans But if, on the other hand, Europeans seek to preserve for themselves the exclusive benefits of Western Civilization, and to allow the non-Europeans merely its burdens, South Africans will inexorably draw apart into mutually antagonistic racial groups.

The 1949 Rosettenville Conference which was the first conference to take a stand against apartheid communicated the following truths:

1. God has created all men in his image. Consequently, beyond differences remains the essential unity.
2. Individuals who have progressed from a primitive social structure to one more advanced should share in the responsibilities and rights of their new status.
3. The real need of South Africa is not 'apartheid' but 'eendrag' (i.e. unity through team work).
4. Citizenship involves participation in responsible government. The franchise should be accorded to all capable of exercising it.
5. Every child should have the opportunity of receiving the best education that the

community can give, and for which the child has the capacity.

6. Every man has the right to work in that sphere in which he can make the best use of his abilities for the common good (De Gruchy 2005: 53-54).

2.9.3.5. Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches

The Pentecostal and Charismatic churches generally speaking are apolitical in their theology with regard to political and social issues. They believe that structural change, whether political, social or economic can only come when men and women come to know Christ and their lives are transformed by the power of the gospel.

The Mission Church and the assemblies of God did not vocally oppose apartheid. Both the Full Gospel Church and the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) are Afrikaans denominations with established daughter churches amongst Blacks, Coloureds and Indians.

The white Apostolic Faith Mission churches supported or abetted the apartheid system. A number of black Christians suffered persecution at the hands of some AFM members who served in the Special Branch. Dr Frank Chikane for instance, was suspended from the ministry by the church for being political although he had not joined a political party.

Chikane relates the impact of discrimination that he, his father and other church members had to endure within the AFM:

The structure of our church has not changed much. We have a white church with its own executive committee and its president who is elected solely by them. This white church appoints a missions director who takes responsibility for what are called 'daughter' churches of the mission church. These are the so called 'African', 'Coloured' and 'Indian' churches. In fact the missions director chairs the national executive councils of these daughter churches. Technically, according to the constitutions of these churches, they are merely an extension of the 'mother' church, the 'real' church, and we are just a mission-field of this church.

The first time I encountered a serious problem with this structure was when I said to my father, who was then an elder in charge of our congregation that I would like

to join Pastor Gschwend as a missionary to preach the gospel to the world. It was then that I discovered that, structurally, this was not possible. According to this classical, traditional concept of mission, Europeans or Americans, and for us, 'whites', were the only people who could be called missionaries, or work as missionaries. Those who were the objects of missions, blacks in South Africa, could only be assistants in this mission to their people. So, when Pastor Gschwed approached me to work with Pastor Bonnke, it seemed to be a bridge to get beyond the obstruction of the apartheid structure of the church.

My meeting with Pastor Gschwend was dramatic. He made an appointment with me to meet him in Pietersburg, where he was going to attend a meeting, and gave me the address of a white pastor of the white church in Pietersburg. When I arrived at the house, I knocked at the front door. A black woman appeared at the door, asked for my name and what I wanted, and she said to me: "No, there is no such person in this house." I insisted that Pastor Gschwend had said I could meet him at the house. She then said: "Let me call the 'missies'", closing the door behind her. The 'missies', who happened to be the local pastor's wife, opened the door after some minutes and asked: "What do you want?" I explained my story again. She told me Pastor Gschwend and the local pastors were still at a meeting at the church. I asked whether I could wait for them, and she said that she did not know how long they were going to be at the church. After saying that I was quite happy to wait, she told me I could wait outside not in the house. Feeling hurt, I drifted towards the church where I found them closing the meeting, and together we went back to the same house.

This event reminded me of a visit with my father to our district missionary chairperson. My father was in charge of a congregation in Soweto, but when we arrived at the house in Krugersdorp we were told to use the back door. At the back door we were shown a garage where we were to meet the pastor. Not in his house. Not for blacks. I could not understand why Christians behaved like this. Now I understand.

In an interview with Wallis, Chikane relates how a white deacon from the white AFM had tortured him whilst in detention.

Wallis: How often have you been detained and under what circumstances?

Chikane: I've been detained five times since 1977. The first one was January 1977, for seven days. Within an hour after the first detention, I could not walk. They used brutal, third-degree methods of torture. And then I was detained again from June 1977 until 1978, and I went through six weeks of torture. It was during that detention that the deacon of my church in the white congregation supervised the fifty-hour period where I was interrogated around the clock. During the forty- eighth hour, when I realized the torture was affecting my mental state, I told him, "I'm not going to answer any more questions. You can do what you want." And they tried for two more hours and then got me out of the chains and dropped me in solitary confinement, where they ignored me for six months.

But that deacon simply believed that he was doing his work. He knows I'm the pastor of a church. But he believes he's stopping the Communists and the terrorists of this country. Whites in this country are worried about a Marxist takeover; we are worried about a Christian government which oppresses other Christians. (Wallis and Hollyday 1989:73–74)

The Assemblies of God differed from the Full Gospel Church of God and the Apostolic Faith Mission, which established black daughter churches.

The Assemblies of God was established as a black church from its inception by expatriate missionaries working among black people as far back as 1908. Right from the beginning, the Assemblies of God never practised segregation in its work. The Assemblies of God always had multi-racial and multi-cultural General Conferences and a General Executive consisting of Whites, Blacks, Coloureds and Indians.

However, like all churches, the Assemblies of God was affected by the apartheid system. At conferences the majority of Blacks, Indians and Coloureds had segregated dining halls

from whites although ministers were free to join other groups. The Assemblies of God did not encourage its members to participate in political activities; neither did it prevent them from doing so if and when they so wished.

Bhengu did not allow his ministers to be involved in party political activities for fear that they could be swallowed up by political systems operating at the time. Political activities by pastors would cause division among pastors and congregants and would blunt their message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

2.9.4. Church initiatives to address apartheid

The church as a collective embarked on a number of initiatives to address the evils of apartheid. One of their concerns was that black and white members were fighting and killing each other on our borders - whites defending the regime and blacks fighting for democracy.

2.9.4.1. The Cottesloe Consultation, 1961

Sharpsville was followed by the banning of the ANC and the PAC, and their leaders, including Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela and Robert Sobukwe being arrested. Many blacks left the country to join the anti-apartheid movement overseas.

The Archbishop of Cape Town, De Blank, wrote to the WCC: "The future of Christianity in this country demands our complete disassociation from the Dutch Reformed attitude ... Either they must be expelled or we shall be compelled to withdraw" (de Gruchy 1986:61-62). The WCC responded by calling for a consultation conference of member churches in South Africa to be held in Johannesburg. It sent a delegation of five representatives led by its General Secretary Dr Visser't Hooft.

The conference issued the following statement:

We recognise that all racial groups who permanently inhabit our country are a part of our total population, and we regard them as indigenous. Members all these groups have an equal right to make their contribution towards the enrichment of the life of their country and to share in the ensuing responsibilities, rewards and privileges. No one who believes in Jesus Christ may be excluded from any on the grounds of his colour or race. The spiritual unity among all men who are in Christ must find visible expression in acts of common worship and witness, and in fellowship and consultation on matters of common concern (de Gruchy 1986:64)

Prime Minister HF Verwoerd was upset at the support the DRC delegation had given to the decision of the conference. He said that only their synods could make such a decision. The upshot of this conference was the withdrawal of the DRC from the World Council of Churches, which widened the gap between the English and Afrikaans churches even further.

Afrikaner author W. A. de Klerk commented, "The ghost of Cottesloe would return to haunt the Afrikaner's wayward theologizing. There was evidence that, in spite of the silencing, recantation, bowing of heads and deep cognation, something remained. The Church could never quite be the same again"

2.9.4.2. The Durban Congress on Mission and Evangelism, 1973

The congress was held in Durban in 1973. It was the brain child of Michael Cassidy, founder of African Enterprise in Pietermaritzburg. It brought together a whole range of denominations - the Dutch Reformed Church, the Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Pentecostals and Evangelicals.

At the conference church leaders were provided with the opportunity to face one another over the evils of apartheid. The congress ended with rallies at Kingsmead Stadium in Durban and Wanderers Cricket Stadium in Johannesburg, both were addressed by Billy

Graham. Graham had refused to come to South Africa unless audiences were desegregated. I was privileged to be at the congress and to attend both closing rallies.

I attended both the Kingsmead and Wanderers Rallies. At Wanderers Billy Graham preached from John 3: 16. I can clearly still hear his thunderous voice proclaiming, "God loves the black world, the white world, the yellow world and the Red world (read Communist World). Which was a brave thing to say in a country where Communists had been banned and their name used to scare the whites? At rallies both black and white people flocked to give their lives to God as a sign of repentance.

2.9.4.3. The South African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA), 1979

SACLA was another attempt to compel the church to address the challenges of apartheid. Once again, it was spearheaded by Michael Cassidy and other church leaders. It was held in Pretoria in 1985. Speakers for the plenary included Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Bishop Mvume Dandala, Michael Cassidy, David Bosch and others. I led a breakaway discussion group. A dominee who claimed to be State President PW Botha's pastor was in my discussion group. I met with him at the Burgers Park Hotel in Pretoria after the conference for further discussion.

Regional groups and home cells were established all over the country to continue with the work of the National Initiative for Reconciliation I was a member of the Pretoria Regional group with a number of prominent leaders from different denominations, including Bishop Robin Briggs, Dominee Eddie Bruwer and Prof. Johan Heyns all three are deceased.

Individual churches opened their doors to political activists to conduct political gatherings. Pastors were involved in supporting families affected by arrests. They buried victims killed by the police in the townships. These were the times and context of Bhengu's ministry. It called for cool heads and decisive action to try and make sense of a volatile situation.

2.9.4.4. The National Initiative for Reconciliation, 1985

One of the initiatives taken by the broader Christian community in the fight against apartheid was the National Initiative for Reconciliation held in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal in September 1985. The conference was held in the midst of political violence unleashed by the State in the townships through its security forces. The focus of the conference was on reconciliation between blacks and whites. It also sought to define the meaning of reconciliation as defined by both black and white as in the country. For the whites reconciliation “helped to consolidate their control over restive Black population. Blacks on the other hand perceived White efforts in the direction of reconciliation as a conscious or unconscious attempt to weaken the resolve of the Black majority to throw off their shackles”(Nurnberger in Nurnberger and Tooke 1988: 5).

Key speakers at the conference included Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Michael Cassidy of Africa Enterprise, Frank Chikane, Klaus Nurnberger, the late Professor David Bosch and numerous others.

Bosch was a towering theologian locally and internationally. He was a missionary in the former Transkei and later the Dean of Missiology at UNISA, a man of outstanding ability and a bridge builder between black and white, and between his church and English-speaking churches in South Africa.

He was involved with PACLA (the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly), SACLA, the National Initiative for Reconciliation and numerous other attempts to bring sanity among the people of South Africa during the most turbulent times in the country.

As an Afrikaner he was better qualified than anyone else to speak on the process of reconciliation and demands of obedience at the NIR conference.

Bosch in Nurnberger and Tooke (1988: 100-112) presented twelve theses in which he dealt with the fact that the Afrikaner was held responsible by the world for the evils of apartheid. He asked the question – Who are the Afrikaners? According to Bosch “the majority of Afrikaners are convinced that they have been engaged in a battle for survival and that this battle is today being fought more fiercely than ever before.”

He postulated that reconciliation does not come cheap, it demands repentance and conversion, pointing of fingers at the Afrikaner especially by White English speaking South Africans is hypocritical because their history of oppression and exploitation of others speaks for itself.

He concludes by reminding his audience that reconciliation is not a human possibility but a divine gift.

2.9.4.5. The Kairos Document, 1985

The Kairos Document was a response to the challenges of apartheid facing the country. A group of theologians from different churches and individuals came together to challenge the government, churches and individuals to address what they called "KAIROS", the moment of truth.

The preface to the statements reads:

The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. (Kairos 1985: iv)

- **State Theology.** The document is a critique of the State Theology and Church Theology and replaces these theologies with what it calls a Prophetic Theology and a challenge to the church to participate in the struggle on the side of the oppressed. It critically analyses Rom 13:1-7 which deals with obedience to the governing authority and payment of taxes since there is no authority apart from that which is appointed by God, "The State is there to serve God for our benefit" (Ro 13:4). The crux of the critique is that an oppressive state is cannot be said to be a servant of and benefit to the people. Just as the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks and Romans were oppressive and did not serve God and the best interests of their citizens, so was the South African government.

Turning to Law and Order, the document accuses the State of institutionalising disorder and oppression. The declaration of the State of Emergency, for example, placed many Christians in a situation where they had to say like Peter, “We must obey God rather than man.” (Ac 5:29)

It accuses government of labelling anything that seemed to challenge the status quo as “Communism”, without understanding what Communism means or seeking to understand why people would turn to Communism. The document also accuses the state of blasphemy by invoking God’s name in the preamble to the constitution of the Republic, as follows: “In humble submission to Almighty God, who controls the destinies of nations and their history; who gathered our forbears together from many lands and has guided them from generation to generation; who has wondrously delivered them from dangers that beset them...” In claiming that God gave them the land which was taken from the people who lived on it, they were in effect saying that God was on their side, which implied that God was against the poor (Kairos 1986: 3-8).

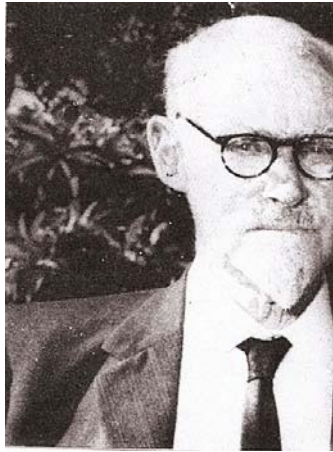
- **Church theology.** The Kairos document recognises the fact that English churches criticised the apartheid system, albeit “in a limited, guarded and cautious way ...”

The reconciliation they preached failed to recognise the fact that different situations called for different methods to bring about reconciliation. This reconciliation is tantamount to reconciling good and evil, God and the devil (Kairos 1985:10)

- **Prophetic Theology.** The document continues to suggest a solution to the problem facing the country and the church by proposing a “prophetic theology”. This theology includes social analysis, reading the signs like Jesus did (Mt 16:3); Lk 12:56). The church is implored to study oppression in the Bible and Christian tradition in dealing with tyranny – tyranny being the enemy of the common good (Kairos 1985:17).

2.10. NICHOLAS BHENGU'S EFFORTS TO STEER THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AWAY FROM APARTHEID

It is almost impossible to talk about the Assemblies of God without also talking about Bhengu. Bhengu came into the Assemblies of God with his friends, Alfred Gumede and Gideon Buthelezi. In 1937 Bhengu saw an advertisement for a teacher in UBAQA, a Christian magazine in Pietermaritzburg. It had been placed by Rev Hubert Phillips, an English missionary from the Elim Churches of England, a Pentecostal denomination. Rev Phillips had established the Emmanuel Mission in Nelspruit in 1925.



Missionary HC Phillip



Mrs Jean Phillip

The story of how Bhengu came into the Emmanuel Mission and later into the Assemblies of God is narrated in a document written by Mrs Jean Phillips, wife of Hubert C Phillips:

HCP was the superintendent of the African schools for many years. As he was having a lot of trouble with the teachers, he decided to advertise in the Zulu paper "Ubaqa" for two teachers of impeccable character. Mr Bhengu who was court interpreter saw this advertisement and wrote to HCP explaining that he was not a teacher, but was interested and would like to see the Emmanuel mission constitution. HCP sent this to him, "I believe like you do. I would like you to come and work with the Emmanuel Mission." Not as a teacher but as an evangelist. Having been through the Dumisa Bible School under Rev Suter, HCP knew he was well versed in the word of God.

As N Bhengu was about to be married, arrangements were made for him to come to Nelspruit in the new year with his new bride, which he did. From the moment he began his ministry the Lord put his seal upon him and his work, and blessed him in a very wonderful way. When the Emmanuel Mission amalgamated with the Assemblies of God. Mr Bhengu who was then a member of the Emmanuel Mission joined with us. This was the beginning of his fruitful ministry in the Assemblies of God.

In an undated memo titled *How did I come into the assemblies*, Bhengu explains how he joined the Assemblies of God.

I joined the Emmanuel Mission in 1936; and in 1938 I left the government service to do evangelistic work in Eastern Transvaal. I soon found out from Pastor Phillips of the Emmanuel Mission (Elim in England) that they were not recognised by the Government in South Africa as the latter was not recognising any new church. He informed me they were negotiating with the Assemblies of God which accepted churches into the federal structure and so I agreed to join the Assemblies of God on Federal lines.

Bhengu exerted a huge influence on the Assemblies of God. This was not easy as La Foy, General Secretary of the Assemblies of God explains:

I think first of all he made a tremendous impact, a tremendous mark of respect across the board. The respect for Nicholas Bhengu as the minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ transcended the Assemblies of God far, far beyond that, within the Assemblies of God cross-culturally. He was held in tremendous high esteem and I think he was instrumental to break down a lot of the black-white taboos, because people began to see a black man of God, speaking the truth of God's Word under the unction and the power of the Holy Spirit. And the very old mindset of racism was challenged, not because he challenged it, racism was simply challenged by the demonstration of God in his life. That for me was one of the powerful things that had people sit back and re-think the black-white issue by the simple demonstration of the giftedness of God which was in him. The Assemblies of God to me, when it comes to cross-cultural relationships was far ahead of every other major

Pentecostal church in South Africa. It was the only Pentecostal church that did not inscribe racism into the constitution. It was the only Pentecostal church that had one conference, one General Executive elected on one floor. That did not happen because we have different white people in our church. On the contrary we have people who were saved, converted from the same sick society. They came into the church, they were delivered from alcohol immediately but they were never delivered from racism. What made the Assemblies of God so different? I believe it was the stature of Nicholas Bhengu that created respect for people of colour and prevented the application of apartheid to a degree that is applied to any other church. I speak as a minority group as a so-called coloured. And I want to say that if it was not for the stature of Nicholas Bhengu, the Assemblies of God could very well, probably have gone the same way, because we have the same sick people in our church, but they could not do it against the man of that stature. For me that makes the Assemblies of God different. Not the people but Nicholas Bhengu made the difference. (La Foy Interview 2003.10.01, in Lephoko 2006: 84-85)

From the foregoing it is clear that Bhengu was able to steer the Assemblies of God away from the agony of apartheid suffered by other Pentecostal churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission and The Full Gospel Church of God who had to deal with racial conflicts within their own ranks. Although the Assemblies of God was not constituted on a racial basis and had never practiced racial discrimination from its inception it is probable that without Bhengu, Gumede, Buthelezi and other key black leaders it too could have easily followed the way of the Apostolic Faith Mission and Full Gospel Church of God.