

CHAPTER 5

BHENGU: MISSIONARY, EVANGELIST AND CHURCH PLANTER

5.1. INTRODUCTION: BHENGU'S UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION AND EVANGELISM

According to John Stott (1975:35) 'the word "mission"... is properly a comprehensive word, embracing everything which God sends his people into the world to do. It therefore includes evangelism and social responsibility, since both are authentic expressions of the love which longs to serve man in his need.'

According to this definition the church has an obligation to involve itself in the broad aspects of God's general mission work: world affairs including poverty alleviation, unemployment, disease and the liberation of people who are denied civil liberties. Nonetheless, Stott maintains that Paul's cry for his people to be saved, is God's key mission (Ro 10:1).

5.1.1. *Missio Dei and Missio ecclesiae*

Just as the Father had sent Jesus, so He sent his disciples. 'As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world' (Joh 17:18). In Mark the Lord said "Go into the entire world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mk 16:15).

Bosch asserts that Karl Barth was the first to give a clear theological explanation of *Missio Dei* (Bosch 1998:389f). Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the *Missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another "movement", the *mission ecclesiae*: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into

the world. This was how Bhengu, too, sent out his people as God's ambassadors to evangelize those who had not been converted to Christ.

5.1.2. Biblical Missionary task

Peters (1972: 159 – 163) enumerates four tasks of mission:

- (1) A spiritual task – the Holy Spirit being the agent of salvation originating from the eternal counsel of God.
- (2) A Biblical task - a biblical theology is a missionary theology. He postulates that a Bible teacher will be also be a mission teacher and any attempt to bring revival for mission has to be biblical based.
- (3) A Task of faith - God has ordained that Christianity be a religion of faith. From an objective point of view Christianity is a religion of supernatural revelation. From a subjective point of view it is religion of faith. Faith is the spiritual eye that beholds God, that perceives in Christ the Saviour and Lord, that understands the Bible to be the Word of God, that accepts the missionary task as the purpose and will of God, that discovers missions as the natural result of the work of Christ and that missions is an inherent element of the call unto salvation and the obedient compliance to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Without faith it is impossible to please God; faith is fundamental to al Christian life and endeavour. There is no truly spiritual work which is not also faith work.
- (4) A human task - 'God has chosen human instruments to accomplish His task in human hearts within a human society surrounded by human environment.' Peters decries the fact that many a missionary has not fully identified with the environment of the people he has been sent to minister to, the evangelical missionary has not been willing to make the social integration, psychological and spiritual identification. He never "sat where they sat" which has created cultural problems. These missionaries have failed to incarnate themselves in the manner that Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul did (Phil 2:5 – 11; I Cor 9: 16 -23; Joh 1:14, Mk 10:45). Peters makes the significant

observation that many missionaries were unwilling to integrate socially with the people they were ministering to. Their lack of interaction with the fabric of society they were called to serve was one of the reasons that there was a call for missionaries to go home.

5.1.3. Bhengu, the Missionary

It is clear that Bhengu was acutely aware of the awesome responsibility to spread the message of salvation throughout the whole world to all the people, calling them to go back to God. In a handbill for Bhengu's Mission to Salisbury (1976.09.18) his missionary career was highlighted:

Nicholas Bhengu has preached to thousands of people throughout Scandanavia, the U.S.A, Britain, Canada and South Africa. In the late 1940's he baptized 1300 converts after his Back to God Crusade in East London, South Africa. One of the biggest churches in South Africa, seating 5 000 people was built in East London as a result of that Crusade. At Christmas time each year some 10 000 people gather there for a huge convention. When Nicholas Bhengu visited Salisbury in 1959 the Time magazine gave a full page report of his work. Outstanding miracles of healing and remarkable conversions have taken place under his ministry and thousands of lives have been changed by God.

Africa Enterprise pays tribute to Bhengu (Africa Enterprise update December 1985):

We pay tribute to evangelist, prophet and teacher Rev Nicholas Bhengu who died recently. Rev Bhengu was a member of the Africa Enterprise Board of Reference and so will be sorely missed by our team and those of us who knew him personally.

Converted through missionaries in Natal he felt called into the ministry and studied at Dumisa Bible School and in the United States of America. As a minister of the Assemblies of God he launched the "Back to God" crusade in Duncan Village, East London in the 1950's. It was to prove to be one of the most effective ministries to reach people in South Africa for Jesus Christ. Rev Bhengu died in October at the age of 76 having established one of the largest churches on the African continent

and having been awarded the title of “The World’s Greatest Black Soul-Winner” by an American church group.

In an annual report to donors dated Sunday 23 November 1969, delivered at Assembly Hall, Belgravia Crescent, East London, Bhengu exhibits a full understanding of the *Missio Dei*.

He based his message on John 20:21: ‘Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: As my father hath sent me, even so send I you.’ He said,

1. It is striking to realize that we have a mission not less than the one which the first missionary who travelled the longest distance came to this earth. It frightens us to know the immensity of the task before us.
2. It behoves us to intensify our efforts. He was sent by God to do the greatest Mission on earth. We, in turn, have been sent by Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth whom we have accepted as our Saviour, King and Master.
3. We are made aware of our position first in Him as members of His body, and His bride, as His church and as bones of His bones. We belong wholly to Him but there is a task set before us. If we have been accepted into sonship with Him we have also been commissioned by Him to this ministry on earth – to fulfill that which was begun and left incomplete by Him.
4. The work of salvation was his Mission to this world and this was accomplished – “It is finished” - when he bore our sins on the tree and died the death of a malefactor “having done nothing amiss”. His mission was accomplished. “I must work the works of Him that sent me (John 9:4).
5. The Mission of gathering the lost souls, building His body and extending His kingdom by proclaiming to the world the glad tidings of what has been accomplished in their behalf is left with (sic) us and for us. We are fully aware now of our task and mission from the risen Saviour – ‘even so send I you!’
6. We all want to fit into His programme and play our role respectively as grateful and obedient children of the Great King. We are constrained by His love to do His will.
7. The indwelling Christ compels us to love as He loved, sacrifice as He did and suffer with him in all things. What is His will?

8. His will is that no one should perish but they should all come to the knowledge of the truth and repent, believe and be saved (2 Pet.3: 9). How shall they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:14). How shall they preach except they be sent? (Romans 10:15).

“The first missionary who travelled the longest distance to earth” is none but the one who is mentioned in John: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning (Jn 1:1-2).’ And ‘The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth’ (Jn 1:14).

Bhengu felt compelled to obey God and intensify his efforts to accomplish the mission that was started and left incomplete by his Master, the Son of the living God.

Jesus finished the work of salvation which He had been sent to do by the Father by bearing our sins on the tree. He shouted ‘It is finished!’ Jesus’ mission to earth was to die and redeem mankind from sin and impending judgment.

Bhengu was keenly aware of the task that he had to fulfil by preaching the good news, and building up the church, the Body of Christ. The words ‘Even so send I you’, seem to have consumed Bhengu His desire was to fit into his Master’s programme and play a role as a grateful and obedient child of the Great King. He was impelled by God’s love to do his will. Like Paul, he could say:

Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s

law) so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessing. (1 Cor 9:16-23)

Bhengu concluded with Paul's great missionary verses:

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Ro 10:13-15).

This was a passionate plea to his audience, many of whom were not able to go but could send Bhengu and his team of evangelists as their ambassadors.

After his extraordinary calling, Bhengu believed that God sent the Son, and that God the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit. The sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son meant that the Church was in the world to do Mission work. He also understood that 'Mission is no longer thought of as the Church's activity overseas, run on cultural lines' (Kirk 2000:24). He knew that the mission frontier was not primarily a geographical one, but one of belief, conviction, of a commitment. From the beginning of his ministry Bhengu sought to reach out to people of all cultures: Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Pedi, Swazi, Venda, Whites, Indian, Coloured and Shonas in Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa.

Bhengu believed that just as the Father had sent the Son, the Son through the Holy Spirit had now sent him to take the Gospel from Cape to Cairo. His vision was to reach all of Africa with the good news. In an endeavour to reach all the people he learned to speak most of South Africa's black languages, including English and Afrikaans. He also became a student of their cultures. He never interfered with the Xhosa culture of circumcision. A remark by Bhengu at the 1957 Convention confirms this:

The Xhosa people have a saying that a boy is a boy. With them every uncircumcised person [which would include Bhengu, a Zulu] is a 'boy' and therefore a dog. They say that neither a boy nor a dog can lead men, that is circumcised

people. They say a dog cannot be a leader of its own master. But there are dogs which after they have made a kill of a wild beast come to their masters, wagging their tails, jumping about, panting and growling uneasily. The master notices something unusual about his dog, he stands up and notices the kill. The dog has led its master! What have they to say today? I as a 'boy' [i.e., an uncircumcised Zulu] have led the 'men' [circumcised Xhosa who predominate in the Cape Province] to such a stage without complaint. (Cries of 'Glory to God! Amen!')

An extract from an address by Mhlambiso, Chief of the Amahlubi tribe in the Amatola basin at the 1957 Convention, illustrates the way people held Bhengu in high regard:

Rev. Bhengu, White ministers and Black ones, together with all the officials, I am grateful for this honour. I thank the Convention ... for giving you this church site. I am very pleased to have this pleasure of seeing with my own eyes what this is like. When a finger of God points at someone to be a leader of anything nobody can ever turn or bend it. God pointed at Rev. Bhengu for his gift of being capable of leading the people convincingly. I am given people to lead and rule. They are very stubborn. They do not listen to me as people listen to Rev. Bhengu. [Applause from the congregation, and cries of 'Hallelujah! Amen! Glory to Jesus!'] I think he possesses what I lack. He has a gift I do not have. He has God in him – I do not. (Dubb 1976:79-80)

Most of Bhengu's work was among his African people, he did however not restrict himself to this group. He also preached to whites in this country and overseas in countries such as Canada, the USA, Norway, the UK, Sweden, Japan, etcetera.

5.2. BHENGU THE EVANGELIST

Bhengu began his evangelistic work as an itinerant evangelist. He preached to several denominations including the Church of the Nazarene and the Pentecostal Holiness Church. He also preached on the mines on the East Rand before he started planting churches.

Green [1992: 14 – 15] says that in his evangelistic work Bhengu tried to reach out to sinners and build a new society. Through his work many lives were transformed:

Evangelism is not an optional extra for those who like that kind of thing. It is not an acceptable pastime for the person who likes making a fool of himself on a soap box in the open air, or titillating his ego by addressing a large gathering in a public hall. Evangelism is sharing the good news of what God has done for us all. It is the sacred duty of every Christian.

Evangelism is not shallow. It is, of course, often regarded as shallow by those who don't do it, and by some who do. Indeed, a lot that passes by the name of evangelism is shallow. But that is not how it is meant to be. It is intended to be the good news of how God takes sinners and builds them into a new society which constitutes the first instalment of God's kingly rule in a rebel world. There is nothing shallow in that message and its implications. It affects the intellect, the outlook, the relationships – everything.

5.2.1. Bhengu preaches for the Church of the Nazarene in Swaziland

The Church of the Nazarene in Swaziland was founded in 1908 by Dr Hynd Senior at eNdzingeni near Piggs Peak. Hynd Senior also founded a hospital and a Teachers Training College in Manzini. According to Dr Hynd Jnr (interview 203.10.18), son of the founder missionary of the Church of the Nazarene, Bhengu was quite remarkable:

Bhengu had a way of ministering to people (like African to African). He had a very powerful evangelistic ministry. His messages were so simple. He preached God's word with authority – which gave him a degree of honour and respectability. He, as a black man (not a white missionary) preached the Word of God in a very powerful way. His messages were convincing. Bhengu was authoritarian in terms of God's Word and people responded to him. He was a wonderful man. He was like a president of South Africa in the spiritual sense. If he were a politician, he would have been a very strong politician.

His message was plain gospel and he never pushed people to speak in tongues. He was a wise man who had a way of engaging his audience. Nazarenes were not open to tongues and were never imposed upon or pushed to speak in tongues. Bhengu never pushed people to give him anything.

Bhengu's influence grew and 'others were inviting him.' The King also invited him to speak at special occasions. When the King brought churches for prayers together as the result Bhengu became closer to the King.

Hynd also met Bhengu in Scotland when he was on preaching tours in the U.K. or to attend conferences as one of the leaders. In Scotland, he used to fetch Bhengu and take him to meetings; 'so Scottish people knew him as a hero; they said he was a lot accepted there.'

5.2.2. Bhengu preaches for the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Phoekeng Rustenburg

According to Phinda and Ramoroa (interview 2009.02.16):

Bhengu also preached for the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Phoekeng. The church was founded by a Rev Kenneth Spooner, an African American Missionary. Spooner was the first person to bring the gospel to the area. Spooner and Bhengu preached on surrounding farms. It was whilst he was preaching in the area that Bhengu and Mylet's first child Nomvuselelo became ill and died along the road near a farm.

Bhengu asked the farmer for permission to bury his daughter. The farmer offered to give Bhengu some planks for a coffin; instead Bhengu emptied his trunk tin and buried Nomvuselelo in it in a rockery pointed out to him by the farmer in front of the farm house.

5.2.3. Bhengu preaches on the Mines – East Rand

After joining HC Phillips in 1937 in Nelspruit and after preaching in Nelspruit and surroundings, he moved to Benoni on the East Rand where he ministered on the mines and established his first church in South Africa in 'Twatwa' in 14th Avenue (now Actonville township) for Indians after the National government removed black people to Wattville and Daveyton. According to Phinda and Ramoroa the church started in Rabothatha's house in Brakpan. The church grew and moved to Rabothatha's garage, the garage also became too small and a new church was planted in Benoni. Bhengu asked Alfred Gumede to come to Benoni to look after the Church whilst he went to Port Elizabeth. (Interview Phinda and Ramoroa 2009-02-16)

5.2.4. Bhengu goes to Port Elizabeth

Bhengu was invited by James Mullan to join him in Port Elizabeth. Mullan was an Irish missionary working for Emanuel Mission in Tzaneen under H C Phillips. He had felt a call to go to Port Elizabeth to start work among white people. He also had a burden to reach black people but needed someone to minister to blacks. He invited Bhengu to join him and work among black people. In a memo [s.a]. Bhengu explains how he went to Port Elizabeth:

Forty years ago after meeting me at the Annual conference at Nelspruit, he [Mullan] invited me for a series of meetings at his mission station near Tzaneen. He held Bible classes every morning with the workers and I attended those classes. To my astonishment I found this man different from all others. He taught exactly what had been revealed to me but I was afraid to use it. We became tight friends and that was why I went to Port Elizabeth a year or two after he had already started a small White Assembly there.

As the church in Port Elizabeth got established Bhengu organised classes where men were taught leadership skills in the church: how to live in harmony with their wives and raise children. Women likewise, were taught how to take care of their husbands and children.

They were also taught basic hygiene and how to work with their hands to support their families.

In Port Elizabeth Bhengu was assisted by a Durban choir from the Full Gospel Church of God with which he had been associated from the time of his conversion. He called his meetings a garage where souls were restored to God and bodies were healed. He told people he was not starting a church. On Sunday mornings he told people to go back to their churches and come back in the afternoon for his meetings. Those who were not churched demanded a Sunday morning service because they had nowhere to go. After establishing his first church in Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape, he brought in Alfred Gumede and Mr J.J Dlamini to teach in the Pilgrim Bible School, which he had established in the church: Bible School classes were held in the evenings for those who wanted to enter the ministry and those who just wanted to enrich their spiritual lives by getting into the word of God for themselves. He also brought Pastor Nebe from Benoni, Transvaal (now Gauteng). (Watt's interview: Thembani and Makinana 1986.09.13)

5.2.4.1. Bhengu expands his crusade to Korsten

Two weeks later Bhengu went to Korsten where he preached in a community hall. The same modus operandi was followed. People were healed from diseases and many were saved and had their lives transformed by the gospel Bhengu preached to them. Many who came to Christ were from different cultural groups, Zulus, Xhosas, Coloureds etcetera. There was, however, opposition from mainline churches who were concerned with some of their people leaving the church to go to Bhengu's meetings although he encouraged them to go back to their churches. His preaching was not about the church or people joining a church but about having a born-again experience and a relationship with Christ:

Dressed in a blue overall that was shorter than he was, he rode around the township on a bicycle with some pamphlets, which he distributed in the street, especially among children. Vena was one of the children he gave handbills to to assist with the distribution. He pasted them on walls; he took others into shops.

Bhengu encouraged those who had been saved and cripples that could now walk to give their testimonies in the streets on Sunday afternoons and display their crutches to demonstrate the power of God (Interview: Vena 2005.03.05).

Makinana was one of Bhengu's first workers. According to an interview with him and Thembani, campaign meetings started on 22 January 1945. Thembani went to the meetings, and the next evening, on 23 January 1945, he was saved. He was also healed from a stomach ailment he had had for many years. Many miracles happened during the campaigns: the blind could see, the deaf could hear and the crippled walked. Many other miracles took place. (Watt's interview Thembani and Makinana 1986.09.13)

5.2.5. A Macedonian call for Bhengu to go to East London

The move by Bhengu to go to East London could be compared with that of Paul to go to Macedonia. When Paul and his companions came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to, so they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'. After Paul had seen the vision, they got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel to them. (Ac 16:7-10).

In an interview (2005-09-18) Gcwabe explains how it happened:

In 1945 Mr Camangca saw a vision of a man dressed in a black suit wearing a bow tie. Camangca did not know the man. God told him to go to Port Elizabeth and ask the man he had seen in a vision to bring revival to East London. He later went to Port Elizabeth (German Hall) to try and find the man he had seen in the vision. He met Bhengu at the entrance of the City White Hall (German Hall) where Bhengu had his meetings. Camangca shouted, 'Here is the man I saw in a vision.' Bhengu shouted back, 'Here is the man I saw in a vision.' Bhengu had also seen a vision of a man of Camangca's description. Camangca told Bhengu that God sent him to come and ask him to bring revival to East London - a Macedonian call (Ac 16:9-10). Bhengu went to East London but had no place to stay. He stayed in Mr Camangca's home. Mr Camangca lived in a two-roomed house with his wife and children. He offered his bed to Bhengu but Bhengu chose to sleep on the floor not wanting to cause discomfort to the family.

Bhengu conducted his campaigns at a Tipini (Dumping Ground). There was no other place for his meetings. Many people came from all over the Eastern Cape to hear Bhengu. His meetings were highly successful. The mayor of East London and the police published in newspapers the effects of the meeting.

It was in East London that he launched his most powerful evangelistic campaign that effectively catapulted him on to national and international scenes as one of the greatest evangelists of the likes of Billy Graham. He was known as the Billy Graham of Africa.

5.3. BHENGU, THE CHURCH PLANTER: HOW BHENGU ESTABLISHED THE BACK TO GOD CRUSADE

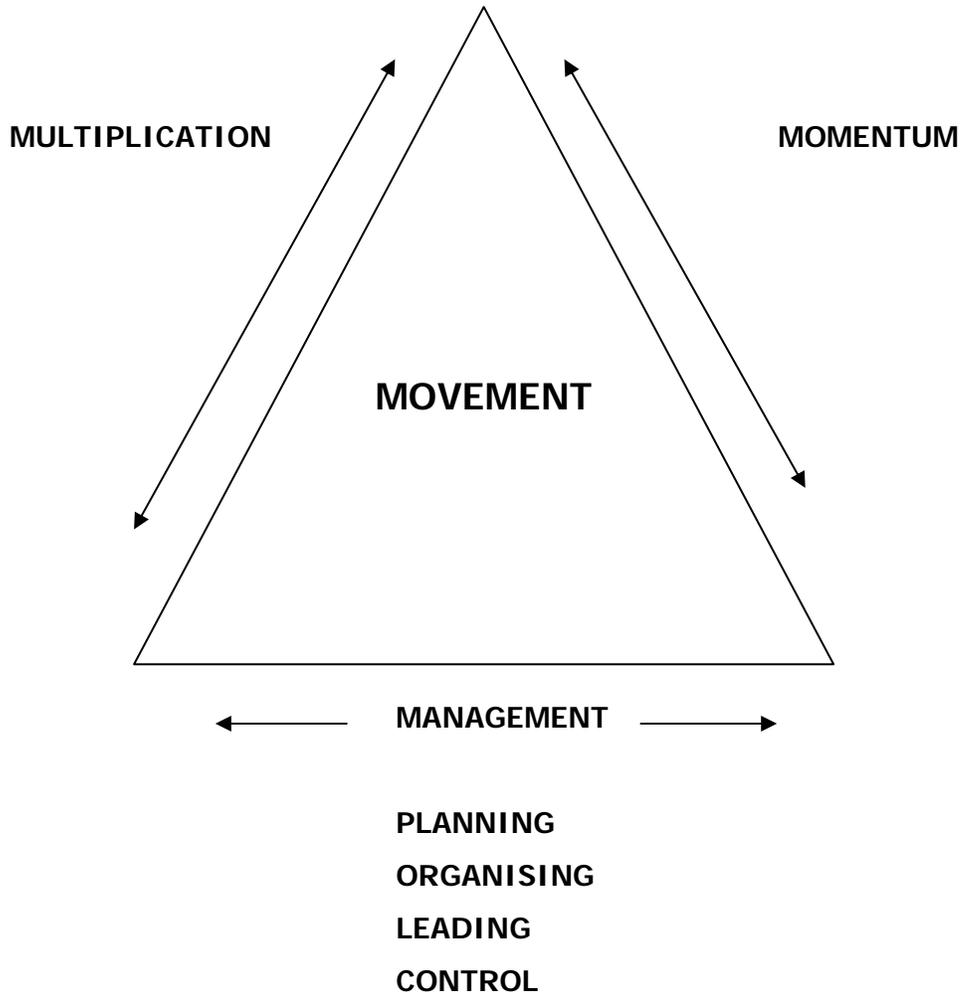
In the minds of many, one of the greatest achievements of Nicholas Bhengu was the establishment of the Back to God Crusade. By doing this, he joined the ranks of church planters in Africa.

Bhengu had been calling people back to God long before establishing the Back to God Crusade, but in 1949 an important event took place:

The Back to God Crusade came into being because of a vision Rev N B H Bhengu saw in 1949 at (sic) Port Elizabeth shortly after his return from the United States of America where he had gone to study, but had to cut short his stay because of the illness of his entire family. On the day of the death of General J C Smuts that night Bro Bhengu saw the vision and a choir heavenly was also singing in the sky. The message from above was loud and clear that he should preach the gospel from Cape to Cairo and bring people 'back to God'. He got up and paced the room, uttering 'Back to God, Back to God' and 'Back to God'. That was the beginning of the Back To God Crusade (Mothers' Convention Reports Accounts: 1982-1983).

Bhengu was determined to build a movement that would be a vehicle to reach out to the continent of Africa by building momentum multiplication processes through his churches and managing the results.

INGREDIENTS OF A MOVEMENT



Bhengu's crusades built momentum; he moved into areas with a big bang, with trucks marked 'Back to God - Africa for Jesus – Jesus for Africa', a choir and a team of evangelists. This drew crowds who came to see and hear the message he preached.

Multiplication was achieved when churches were planted. These churches became the source of support for future mission and evangelistic outreach. He conserved the results of his crusades.

The Back to God Crusade became known among the people as *Nozala* - the one who gave

birth to hundreds of churches in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique (Interview: Shabalala 2003.10.12). Crusades were mainly held in tents although community halls were also used, especially at the beginning of his outreach.

5.3.1. Bhengu organizes and sets objectives for the Back to God Crusade

At the July 1971 Workers Conference, Bhengu presented the objectives of his Back to God Crusade. He wanted results. In the minutes dated 12th July 1971, the following information was noted:

1. Name of the Crusade: Back To God Crusade.
2. Sphere of Operation: The whole of South Africa
3. Programme: Outreach by way of the crusades and implementation of the programme. Soliciting funds, from interested persons and people of all races embracing all goodwill people.
4. Affiliation: affiliated with the Assemblies of God Church in South Africa – not a platform for criticism.
5. A committee of THREE men for Back to God Crusade will be appointed to look after the funds of the B.T.G.C.
6. Back to God Crusade is not an end to (sic) itself but is for the establishment of Assemblies.

5.3.2. Constitution of the Back to God Crusade

A Back to God Crusade Constitution with its name, objectives and principles was drawn up for the registration of the organisation. The registration of Back to God Crusade as a Section 21 Company on 21 July 1976 helped facilitate the raising of funds for Bhengu's evangelistic crusades:

1. Name: The Name of the Institution shall be the 'Back to God Crusade', hereafter referred to as an Institution.
2. Head Office: Johannesburg (R.S.A.)
3. Objects and principles
 - a) To spread the gospel throughout the country.
 - b) To provide premises and equipment such as tents, motor vehicles etc.

- c) To maintain such premises and equipment and to engage such officers and staff as may be necessary for the establishment, maintenance and promotion of the Crusade.
- d) To purchase, take on lease or acquire any other interest in any land, buildings and property, real and personal which may be acquired for the purpose of or capable of being used in connection with the objects of the Institution.
- e) To borrow and raise money in such a manner and subject to such conditions as the Crusade may deem fit, for the purpose to bind the whole or any part of the properties, assets and revenue of the Crusade both present and future.
- f) To do all such things and carry out all such undertakings as may be necessary or desirable for an incidental to the objects of the Institution.

Personal particulars of founding Subscribers to Back to God Crusade

- 1. Full names : Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu
Occupation : Preacher
Residential address: Jabavu, Standerton
- 2. Full names : Pritchard Johannes Maboia
Occupation : Preacher
Residential address: Jabavu, Standerton
- 3. Full names : Fred Shabalala
Occupation : Preacher
Residential address: Jabavu, Standerton
- 4. Full names : Josiah Donda
Occupation : Preacher
Residential address: Jabavu Standerton
- 5. Full names : Abel Matroshe
Occupation : Preacher
Residential address: Jabavu, Standerton
- 6. Full names : Harrison Magiya
Occupation : Preacher
Residential address: Jabavu, Standerton

7. Full names : Siphso Bhengu
Occupation : Preacher
Residential address: Jabavu, Standerton

5.3.3. Regional teams and team leaders

For strategy, effectiveness, efficiency and best results regional teams were established for the crusades. In a circular titled *For best results in the crusade work* [s.a], Bhengu stated:

The division of the Crusade into eight regions is far better and profitable than a big solid team moving from area to area. This has a tendency to HIT & RUN, leaving rural areas and small places untouched while racing for the big cities. The campaign stops, the tents are rolled and carried away to the next town. The tide of revival subsides and many relapse into their old life. But when a team is continually, constantly and permanently in the area the results will be permanent in most cases. We can thus see crime reduced and children's activities established to curb the rising irresponsibility and idleness. This is our task.

Each team will be semi-permanent in an area with daily crusade meetings, follow-up work and prayer meetings. In this way I feel I can do more by directing, planning and initiating these campaigns for the teams, the first few nights as a DRAW-CARD perhaps. I can do more by prayer, writing, arousing interest, making reports, praying for the sick and visiting these regions by rotation.

AREA	LEADERS
1. Transkei (Now Eastern Cape)	Hartley Qina, assisted by 3 workers
2. East Pondoland (now Eastern Cape)	Gideon Colombile, assisted by three workers
3. Ciskei (now Eastern Cape)	Atwell Ngcangisa, assisted by three workers
4. Cape Peninsula (now Western Cape)	Don F Siko, assisted by two workers
5. Witwatersrand Southern (now Gauteng)	Led by a team of five evangelist yet to be appointed
6. Natal and Zululand (now KwaZulu-Natal)	Dan Masondo, assisted by two workers

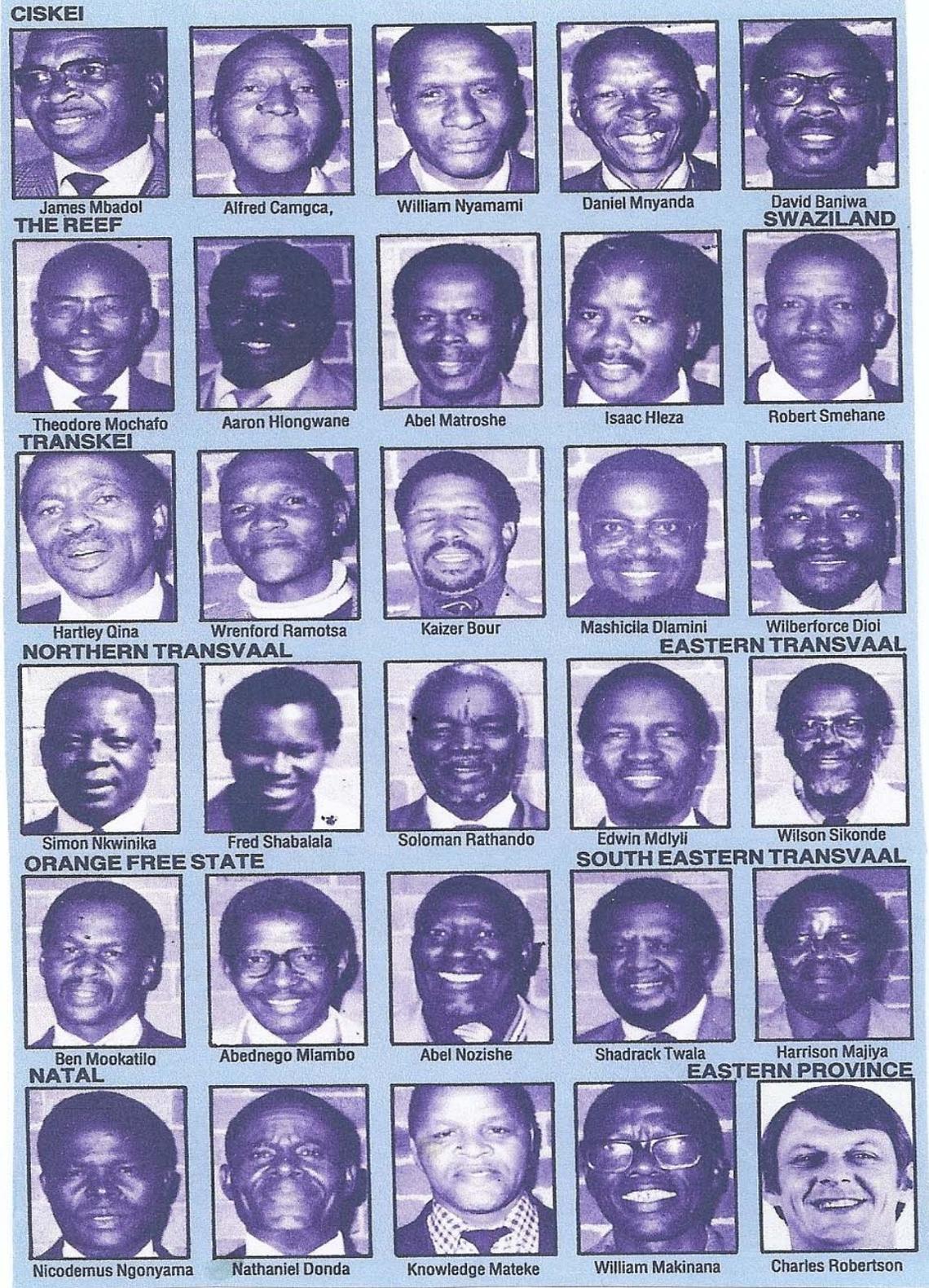
7. Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga Lowveld)	Leader to be appointed.
8. Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo)	Leader and assistants to be appointed

Leaders and workers were required to be 'experienced, matured (sic) and tested workers who will create no problem or anxiety in the crusade ... select men and women with a vision and a call from God (and not hirelings)' (Circular 1967-11-01).

For Results in the Crusade Work lays down his strategic focus and the need to conserve campaign results by establishing churches. He did not conduct crusades for crusades' sake but to build up the work.

His focus was not only on towns and cities but on rural areas as well. He was interested in effectiveness and efficiency in the work. He wanted to see fruit: '... that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples' (Jn 15:8) 'fruit that will last' (Jn15: 16). The way to achieve and conserve results was by having a 'semi-permanent' team in the area with daily crusade meetings. He himself was to play the role of director – directing the operations through planning, prayer, writing and stimulating interest, generating reports, praying for the people and visiting the regions.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF SOME OF BHENGU'S EVANGILISTS AS PER REGIONS



Bhengu's regional evangelists. Almost half of these men have gone home to be with their Master. This strategy worked very well. With several tents in different places, his major

task was to initiate the campaign, withdraw, and leave the tent with a team leader. He would then move to another area where this would be repeated. Once a church had been planted, a pastor was sent to look after the new converts. Some of these churches were founded by women but only men were appointed to pastor.

5.3.4. Bhengu sets qualifications for Evangelists

Bhengu set high standards for his evangelists. These included understanding the role and calling of the evangelist.

The evangelist had to be clear about his message that salvation could only be had through Jesus Christ. Regarding his personal life, the evangelist had to be mature and lead a pure life, be a member of a local assembly and not a loose cannon. The anointing of the Holy Spirit on the evangelist's life was indispensable. The evangelist had to practise a spirit of forgiveness. An evangelist was the one who announced Good News (Isa. 52:7).

The qualifications were set out in an undated circular:

A. As an Ambassador he is expected to do the following:

1. Sound warnings
2. Make judgements clear
3. Call sinners to repentance
4. Point to the cross and God Man on the Cross
5. Point to the empty tomb
6. Shout the good news on housetops
7. Point the way of peace.

B. Message of Evangelist must be clear to be effective (I Cor 14:8)

Salvation through Jesus only (Acts 4:12)

Paul's summary of the Gospel (I Cor. 15:3,4)

C. Clear motive

1. Paul's motive (2 Cor. 5:14)

2. The approaching judgement (2 Cor. 5:11; Acts 17, 30, 31)
3. To fulfil the command of our captain. Ambassadors under authority.

D. Personal Life

1. Be matured (sic)
2. Distinguished by life of Holiness (I Pet. 1:16)
Highly Exposed - Idolized
3. That is why he should say with Paul:
"Imitate me for I imitate Christ" (I Cor.11:1)
 - i. We serve a Holy God Rev. 4:8, 2 Cor 5:9
 - ii. We preach a Holy Gospel 2 Pet 2:21; Jude vs 20
 - iii. We are called to be Holy 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:14 – 16
 - a) Holiness is to conform to the character of God
 - b) Holiness should touch every area of our life:
 - Childish immaturity
 - Lovelessness
 - Competitiveness
 - Holiness in vessel 2 Tim 2:20,21
 - Body Holiness Prov. 4:23

E. Local Assembly

Good standing

- i. Accountable to it
- ii. Faithful, true, fruitful, active, servant in local body, subject to local leadership
- iii. Prov 11:14 "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety".

F. Holy Spirit in life of an Evangelist

Luke 4:18,19 Anointed – indispensable

- i. Prayer Life
- ii. Man of Faith

G. Are we Evangelists acceptable to God?

Are you sure you are in the right Ministry? (cf. Jer 20:9; Acts 4:20, 1 Cor 9:16)

1. Are our lives acceptable to God?
2. Our relationships with other workers –
Is it acceptable to God?
Love one another
Serve Mark 10:43
Patience 2 Tim 2:24
Courteous 1 Pet 3:8

Example:

Forgiving (Eph. 4:32; Matth 6:15)

About judging others (Rom 14:4; 1 Pret 4: 8)

Subject to one another (Rom 12:10)

“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad tidings of Good things” (Rom 10:15)

5.4. WOMEN FUND THE BACK TO GOD CRUSADE

Women were the backbone and engine of the Back to God Crusade. They raised literally millions of rands for the campaigns. As early as 1950 Bhengu realized that in order to fulfill his mandate to preach the gospel from Cape to Cairo, he would need money. He often went to the USA to seek financial assistance for the crusades. He either came back with insufficient funds, however, or with no money at all.

The story of how Bhengu started organising women is told by the women themselves:

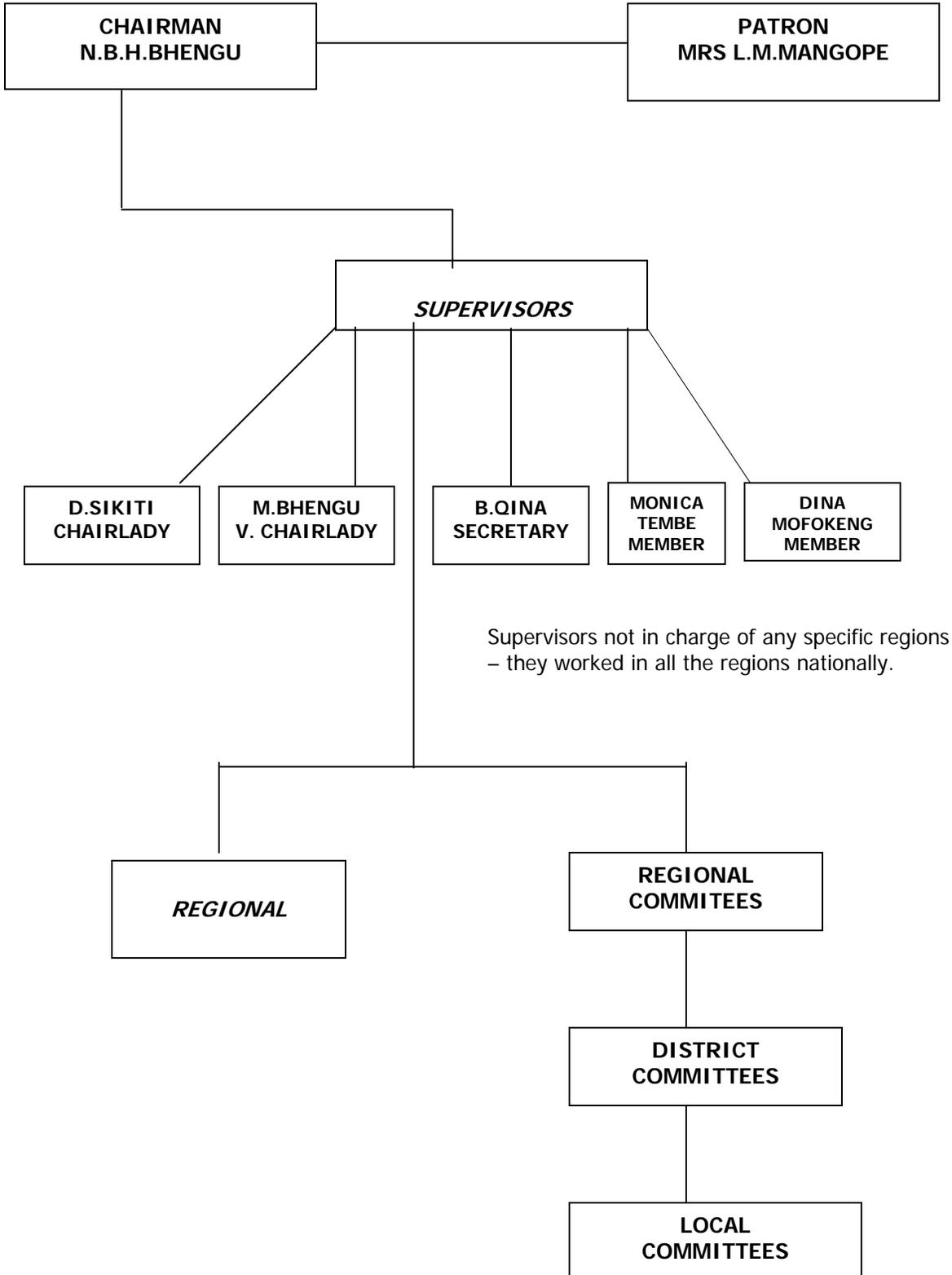
It was during one of his fund-raising episodes in Brooklyn, New York, USA that whilst he was praying to God, God spoke to him and told him to go back to South Africa to raise money for the work there. That night in a vision he saw an African woman wearing a typical ‘doek’ (headgear). He then heard the voice of God asking, ‘Do you see this African woman? Go back to your country; you will get the money that you need to do my work from people like this woman.’ After his striking vision in Brooklyn, New York, USA Bhengu returned to South Africa. After much prayer he called together a group of women: Mrs Mylet Bhengu (his first wife), Mrs Doreen

Sikiti, Mrs Virginia Buthelezi (wife of Gideon Buthelezi, one of his early associates) and Mrs Mngoma. Mylet became chairlady. Doreen Sikit became Secretary. He trained the women and commissioned them to train others. In 1961 he enlarged the team to include Mrs Ruth Moduka and Mrs Beatrice Qina.

The first Mothers' Convention was held in Bloemfontein in 1969, at which a total of R2000 was collected, a substantial sum in those days. He never asked his African audiences to make financial contributions to his campaigns until they were formed into a church. (Back to God Mothers' Organisation report, no date).

Structure for the Mothers' Ministry

It was developed after the death of the chairperson, Mylet Bhengu.



Neither the supervisors nor the organisers had power or authority over the women in the Assemblies. According to Mofokeng, Local Committees were under the leadership of the local church.

Bhengu disapproved of the election of Convention Committee members by secret ballot, he feared that people who did not share his vision and commitment to the Great Commission might end up in leadership positions. After the death of Mylet, Doreen Sikiti became Chairlady and Beatrice Qina the Secretary. Ruth Moduka, Dina Mofokeng, and Monica Tembe became additional members.

Local and Regional Committees received strict instructions on how to collect money, bank and withdraw it. Money was to be banked in the name of the Local Mothers work at both regional and national levels, with supervisors acting as co-signatories for the regions.

5.4.1. The Back to God Crusade Annual Financial Audit presented at the Mothers' Easter Conventions

Women were organised at Local, District, Regional and National levels as a strategy to raise crusade funds. Regions brought their bags (monies) raised during the year to national conventions in ThabaNchu. There were also displays of handiwork (sewing, knitting, etc) from regions and countries such as Swaziland and Lesotho and Namibia. A spirit of competition was engendered during the convention among regions vying to beat others with their donations and their handicrafts. Before the presentations of bags, financial audits were presented to the Convention attended by between 20 000 – 30 000 people annually. Winning regions were presented with trophies to encourage groups to perform even better the following year.

5.4.2. White Assemblies partner with Bhengu in spreading the gospel through financial giving

Under the leadership of James Mullan and later John Bond, white Assemblies became involved in supporting the Back to God Crusade financially. Pastor Noel Scheepers in East London coordinated all contributions from Assemblies countrywide. Regional Offices were set up in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho with responsible leaders:

1. Transvaal (now Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo), Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and Overseas: J.S.W. Bond.
2. Orange Free State, Kimberley, Lesotho: Ted Rawlings.
3. Natal and Zululand (now Kwa-Zulu Natal): John Howe.
4. Eastern Cape: Hustler
5. Western Province (now Western Cape): N Cromhout.

Funds were channelled into the Back to God Crusade account through Noel Scheepers' Office in East London. A large number of workers were supported by this fund. Scheepers organised fundraising meetings for Bhengu in East London. There was also financial support from overseas, notably the USA.

Bhengu was very sensitive to interference in his work by white donors or friends. They were welcome to give but he detested it when they sought to exercise control over his workers. The letter below expresses his anger at whites meddling in his work.

Selly Oak Colleges,
B29 6 LE
Birmingham. England.
7th .May, 1975

Dear Brother Bond,

Greetings in His Precious Name!

Thank you for your letter dated April 17th received here on our arrival from South Africa. I quit or appreciate your position but I want to give you a little light:-

1. Almost all the African workers came to the Lord through my ministry. We spend time and money in holding special sessions for (sic) discussions questioning, counselling and conclusions on all matters concerning procedure and manner of

working. It has been known that we have unique unity in our work for a long time and therein lies our strength.

2. After the workers, during my absence overseas, unilaterally decided to accept vehicles and gifts from the white brethren without indicating to me that they wished to depart from our way of administration, I knew they were challenging my authority, which up to this hour I have never been used to. When Bro. Scheepers apologised they have not done so up to this hour.
3. In order to prevent workers from getting a share from the central fund made out of Assemblies tithes and at the same time accepting monies and gifts individually from the white brethren, I decided to revert to the old system that each and every assembly keeps its funds and supports its pastor direct. This is more scriptural and constitutional. I had told them that this centralisation does not seem to have any New Testament backing but seeing that we are faced with the problem of smaller assemblies and starving pastors we should try the Old Testament pattern (the Levites). I had also said that if it does not work we will revert to the New Testament and constitutional pattern. So in November and December last year I went to all central fellowships e.g. the Reef, Durban, the Transkei and the Ciskei. In each area I discussed with the committees first, then the workers in the general meeting. I answered all questions and gave all reasons for doing this in my life. After this I took it up with the people at the convention. At first I had thought I would have to leave the ministers to administer the Assemblies (the Fellowship for every area) and I withdraw completely to concentrate on evangelism fully. This possibly pleased some of them, but I found out that the majority of loyal workers were greatly displeased and the assemblies were all, to the man, opposed to my doing so. I prayed and read and searched the Bible more. A father cannot throw away his children just like that without a reason. I would be betraying the trust.

I then freed the workers to accept cars, money or gifts from the White brethren and fellowship with them on ministerial level as much as they wish to. They will still pastor assemblies as before and be supported by the assemblies but there are

certain things they cannot do:- 1.The Assemblies remain in my charge as their founder and apostle until each assembly wishes to be free from me.

2. These workers will not be under me but independent, they will remain members of the A.O.G. Conference and fellowships, I also remain there with them - not over them but with them. The Assemblies which I have founded are Assemblies of God and remain tightly in the Fellowship. But according to the A.O.G Constitution and our manner of working, their administration falls into my hands and I will administer them as a group since we are the Back to God Group and those workers who remain loyal to this manner of working will pastor and also be selected to serve on committees until things return to normal.

Those who felt their time to rule assemblies had come took exception of this and Brother Dan Masondo actually carried on a strong propaganda in the Durban area and this was spreading all over. There was a serious division among workers although fortunately it had not affected the Assemblies. The members of the African Executive were also affected without knowing the harm already perpetrated in Durban area. We went to Bloemfontein, the Executive did not meet me and so the matter was not touched in spite of the fact that many people came there for the explanation of this matter according to my circular letter. I then requested all workers to go to Durban on April 5th. There, full evidence of his invidious propaganda was revealed. He did not apologise in spite of admonition from all workers and Executive members. He made a statement that he does not agree with my way of working as it is bad and is subject to changes. This was a public statement. I thought perhaps the two assemblies in which he is pastor are also affected and may stand with him (1) uMlazi (2) KwaMashu. I found a great amount of dissatisfaction in both assemblies. I asked them to make a choice either to retain him and be free from me or retain me and free themselves from him. They unanimously decided to stay with me and I therefore relieved him from his duties as pastor of KwaMashu. This is the whole position....

Bond replied to Bhengu's letter, as follows:

26 May 1975

Dear Bro. Bhengu

Thank you for your letter of 7 May with the confidential information it contains. In reply let me state as follows:

1. I unequivocally accept your judgements in these matters because I recognise without questioning your authority and ministry and because I have always found that in such matters you act with reason and insight which I cannot question.
2. I have found Masondo amiable and was so quite unaware of the sentiments and activities which you describe. I accepted him without question as a member of the executive and as one of your trusted lieutenants. I had no idea that there were tensions within your work or that he was responsible for any difficulties whatsoever. Had I known this I would have been very much more alert in my relationships with him. I feel now as though I have been exposed to a grave situation in which I could very easily have become involved. As it happens I have not have not become involved in any way whatsoever, but I realise that this is more by good fortune than good management. Nevertheless I am relieved since the last thing that I want to do is become involved in the internal workings of the African work.
3. To a certain extent it seems that Bro. Attlee has become involved, in that it was through his work in Natal when certain vehicles and or monies (I do not know precisely what) were handed over. Bro. Attlee has taken immediate steps to recover him from any invidious position he might have been betrayed into. I can assure you most emphatically that Bro. Attlee takes the same attitude as I do in recognising unequivocally your authority and leadership in the African work.

4. Whatever happens Bro. Bhengu, please believe me that none of us wants to become involved in any wrong way in the African work. I note your comment in the final paragraph of your letter about the white brethren not accommodating certain recalcitrant elements in your work. Might I say my dear Brother that I feel you owe it to me and the other white brethren to please tell us specifically if there is any way in which you think this might be happening. I get alarmed when I hear things like this about Masondo and realise how easily I could be led into an invidious situation simply by having an open heart towards an African brother without realising the inner workings and tensions in any particular situation. I thank you for your complete honesty and frankness in making the situation clear to me....

5.4.3. Bhengu reports to donors

Bhengu gave regular reports of his crusades to overseas and local donors. It is not possible to refer to all of them, only three are tabled.



THE CHALLENGE OF AFRICA



for 1968

to the Europeans of East London

under the Chairmanship of

Noel A.M. Scheepers, B.Sc.

in the City Hall, East London

on Saturday, 25th November, at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: NICHOLAS B.H. Bhengu

That Might African Man of God, with a Spirit-filled message for Africa

together with

70 Voice All African Choir

Every European of Every Church needs to hear the needs of Africa

Sponsors: Back to God Crusade

There were a number of overseas donors who gave money to the Back to God Crusade. In one of his reports to Faith Partners, Bhengu singles out two donors, Rev J Meares of The Evangel Temple of Washington D.C who supported three evangelists with three thousand dollars a month (Bhengu Report: 1966). In the same report he mentions a pledge from Len Jones of Christian and Mission Enterprise in Australia, which he calls "WONDERFUL NEWS IS TO HAND".

5.4.3.1. Bhengu reports from Port Elizabeth 1948

With the exception of financial support he received from his friend Gideon Buthelezi and the Carmichaels when he went to Port Elizabeth in 1945, the report of February 1948 is very likely the first report Bhengu sent to supporters.

P.O BOX 33
NEW BRIGHTON VILLAGE
PORT ELIZABETH

Feb. 10th 1948

Dear Brother/Sister,

Greetings in the name so Sweet –JESUS,

The year 1947 has gone past and now we are all faced or facing another momentous year in which we hope the Lord is going to come. We were, however, not disappointed last year when we saw its closing without the advent of our expected King of Kings; He has graciously given another period to us to proclaim the Gospel and a chance to sinners to be saved.

The past year was not full of interesting happenings in the field but was, nevertheless, full of activities and blessing from the Lord. We closed the year jubilantly with a baptismal service at Zwartkops where 28 stood up to testify of their salvation before going into the waters. Quite a number have been saved after that so that before winter-fall we hope to baptise more than the last number including those who have been saved already. (We bury the dead).

We were very busy last year; I had to do more going out to visit the believers in the whole of the Cape, Transvaal, Natal and Swaziland. Our dear Brother Gumede took charge of the work here, teaching different classes and building up the work. Unfortunately, he fell ill and had to undergo an operation for appendicitis. The Lord

helped him through and he got over it. He worked very hard during the latter part of the year and we were afraid his wound might be disturbed. Running and standing in queues for buses every day and coming home late at night were his portion. Early this year he decided to go to Durban to get a bit more of a SECULAR EDUCATION, which we all need very much. He is taking up a teaching post to maintain himself and his family and will attend lectures at Sastri College in the afternoons. His space is greatly felt by all here and the gap shall remain for a long time as there are no workers at all. We do trust he will come back after graduating.

Brother Jafta Dlamini has gone to the Transkei to consolidate the work which the Lord is starting at different centres through the believers returning to their respective homes. God bless and prosper him. Brother Ngcobo is still at Queenstown with his family and we hope to help him soon to get to Piet Retief, God willing. May God bless them.

Sister Violet Hillary has been to Stegi to help the brethren there and came back to P.E. The people missed her much. She is a great help in the whole work. She does office work as well. I do not know if we could accomplish much without her. She is a blessing in the work. May the Lord bless and keep her. Sister Marie Daniels is devoted and zealous to work for her Lord but her health is failing. Let us pray for her healing.

Brother Burman (Coloured Brother) from Obed-Edom, Pietermaritzburg, Natal, will be arriving here in March this year to see possibilities of a solid coloured work in the Coloured Township. Please pray for this man for there is a great need among this section of the people.

It seems as if all the trips shall be retarded this year because they will be done by train instead of by CAR. The car is absolutely out of question this year. Two very important parts which must be replaced cannot be obtained anywhere in the Union; therefore, it appears as though the car shall have to be sold cheap otherwise it is wasting money for nothing. But many will say 'This is better.' We have (1) New-Brighton, (2) Korsten, (3) Walmer, (4) Uitenhage, (5) Jeffreysbay, (6)

Grahamstown, (7) Lovedale, (8) Peddie, (9) Middledrift, (10) East-London (11) Queenstown (12) Engcobo (13) Idutywa (14) Willowvale (15) Umtata (16) Mt Frere (17) many places in Natal and Zululand (18) Many places in the Transvaal including Piet Retief and (19) Stegi, Swaziland. There are many other small places for our attention plus hundreds of invitations from different Churches and Missions which have been waiting for us over the years. Although we do establish assemblies where it is absolutely necessary, we, however, work interdenominationally where there is co-operation.

GOD BLESS YOU. PRAY FOR US. PRAY FOR WORKERS. PRAY FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

In the report, he expresses his appreciation for his colleagues: Gumede, Dlamini, Ngcobo, Violet Hillary, as well as Burman who was to start a new work among coloured people. This is in the spirit of Paul who when writing to churches he mentioned his co-workers by name (Ro 16).

5.4.3.2. The Eshowe report 23 November 1969

The Eshowe Crusade was probably the most important crusade for Bhengu. It was held in his home town. Although he could not pitch his tent on the Mission Station at Entumeni, residents from the Mission were based to the meeting as indicated in the report. Bhengu reports:

Here we pitched our large tent in winter in spite of very cold nights at Empapala 18 miles West of Eshowe and 14 miles from my home Entumeni where I was born and my people are. Every night we had to use all the available transport conveying Mission station people to and from the meetings. Entumeni is a Lutheran Mission Station, all the inhabitants of the entire reserve are members of the heathen (sic) Mission and no one is allowed to preach the Gospel there unless he is a Lutheran despite the fact that the lives of the people there is (sic) not different from the lives of the Lutheran and sometimes is worse. This, in essence, is a curse of blind bigotry of denominationalism. This was very expensive but we managed to get the

message to the inhabitants that way. Many were saved and healed from the Mission as well as those in area where the tent was.

5.4.3.3. The Msinga report August 1970

Bhengu also reported on a campaign that was held in Msinga in Kwa Zulu-Natal upon the invitation of the chief of the Bomvu (Ngubane clan) tribe. The Msinga area was riddled with faction wars between the Bomvu and Mchunu tribes. I was privileged to have attended the opening day of the campaign up on the hills of Msinga valley and witnessed hundreds of people surrender their lives to Christ. In August 1970, he reported:

It is not easy to render a clear report of what has taken place, as we were overwhelmed by the Tugela (Umsinga) success.

As I reported last year, we received an urgent call from one of the very important Zulu chiefs of the Bomvu Tribe on the Umsinga Hills between Dundee and Greytown. This chief, Muntu Ngubane, is a primitive Zulu, as is his tribe, which is one of the largest in the country. For over ten years there had been faction fights and tribal skirmishes resulting in deaths and bloodshed. These people use guns and sometimes manufactures (sic) their own arms and ammunition. The government has established a special station as a firearm squad, but the guns are still there and people are still shot in spite of these efforts.

We pitched our tent in February, with fear and trepidation, but faith rose up as we saw crowds filling our largest tent to capacity on the very first day. Chief Muntu – never been to school or church before – was the first to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his own personal Saviour. The joy of the Lord and the power of God filled the whole tent, and everybody clapped hands as if they said “Hurrah”.

Now you may guess what followed: We felt that for the first time the gospel message had penetrated this backward tribe. Chief Muntu was baptized on April 5th, together with the wife of the late Paramount Chief of Zululand. Hundreds will be baptized after winter. Eight people were shot dead a month ago, less than a mile

from the tent; but our people 's morale was not shaken. This is a very notorious area, but we have a feeling that VICTORY IS ON THE WAY.

The Crusade has been very costly. There is starvation in the land, and feeding the workers and others from the shops and markets which are fifty miles away, drained a lot of money. We could not look on the sick and hungry people from long distances; we have to give them something to eat.

5.4.3.4. The Lesotho report

Reporting on a crusade in the neighbouring country Lesotho, Bhengu wrote:

Something unusual, the Crusade was launched on January 8th 1983 at the Pitso ground in the centre of Maseru the capital of Lesotho. The Lesotho crusade has seen hundreds accepting the Lord as their personal saviour, and there are many significant cases of healings from deafness, blindness, paralyses. Crutches and wheelchairs decorate the tent as we draw close to the end of our campaigns because winter is catching up with us and yet we have invitations from all over Lesotho to bring the tent. Our brother Elliot Mashicila Dlamini has been used of God more than ever before. We praise God for His wonderful presence and witness in troubled Lesotho.

Prayers: We pray and ask you to pray for the Crusade, our next target is Swaziland where the King died with a plea for a Crusade. Pray with us.

Our Faith: (1) We believe God will do greater things for us in Africa.

(2) We believe God for a big truck for conveying tents and equipment.

Our old Ford truck has had its days, we need a new and larger truck about 7 to 10.

Please pray with us (In his Chairman's Review: 198/1983 LESOTHO REPORT).

5.4.3.5. Mylet reports to donors

On 6 February 1967 Mylet reported in her own capacity on a visit to the 1966 Annual Convention by Meares and his wife, Rev and Mrs Forseth and Petrucelli:

Brother Meares brought sister Meares with him this time. We also had Rev. and Mrs Marvin Forseth from Vancouver Canada. We had heard that brother Petrucelli was unable to come this time, so his arrival was a pleasant surprise. We really appreciate what our brethren at the Evangel Temple have done by sending their Pastors, and paying all the expenses involved, to say nothing about missing their inspired messages during Christmas.

Brother Petrucelli was our first speaker on Christmas day. He spoke about the victory of the little boy David over the giant Goliath. He stressed that David had confidence in the power of God, he remembered what the Lord had done for him in the past and said, ' The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out the hand of this Philistine' I Sam. 17:37. The blessing of the Lord was upon the whole convention, and everything felt that if we can have that faith the Lord will use us.

It was the first time that brother and sister Forseth came to our beautiful country. We will never forget the love they extended to my husband and me while we were in Canada in 1964, together with his congregation they made our stay in Westminster a memorable one. It was a great pleasure to welcome him and Mrs Forseth in South Africa.

From Mylet's report it is clear that she valued the sponsorship these people brought to their work.

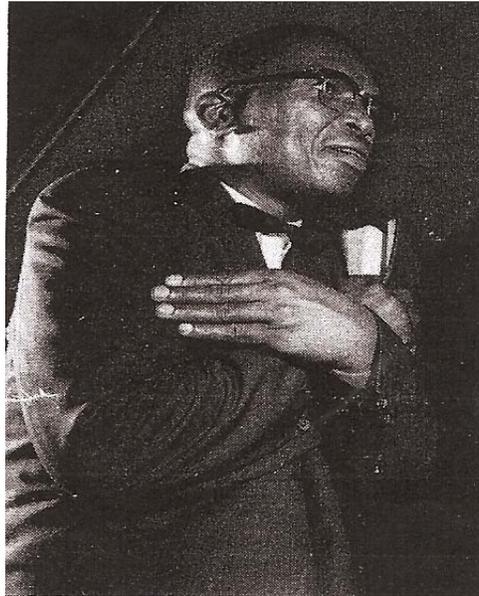
5.5. PASSION AND COMPASSION IN BHENGU'S MESSAGE

Bhengu's preaching – his *kerygma* - was marked by passion and compassion. He made heartfelt appeals to the people to turn to God and forsake sinful living. He preached hope

instead of condemnation, without judging the people who were in a hopeless situation of social, economic and political deprivation (Stark 2007:101).

Bond in his book *For the Record - Reflecting on the Assemblies of God* (57-60) writes on Bhengu's preaching:

Bhengu was making an altar call. The dust had powdered his face as though it were a mask. I saw two black stripes on his cheeks as his tears made a rivulet there. He was pleading with souls to accept Jesus as Saviour. 'My girl, my boy, come as you are. Jesus loves you. He died for you. Come as you are. Jesus loves you.' As he pleaded and wept over them, my heart and eyes were weeping too. Such tenderness!



Bhengu pleading with his audience

Bond also tells of Bhengu preaching to about 1000 people in Lamontville, Durban. Bond's heart was stirred up as he heard Bhengu shout fiercely over the loudspeakers, 'Forget about Bhengu! Forget you! The Assemblies of God can't save you! Only Jesus can save you!' Jim Mullan looked at me in the car afterwards and said, 'Old Bhengu was really giving it stick today.' He truly was and often did.

In Zambia there were no chairs, so he squatted on his heels whilst he preached to the people who squatted around him, telling them a story of a caterpillar crawling out of fire on a twig placed by George to illustrate salvation. In Malawi he stood in the shade of a thorn tree while he preached to the people.

5.6. THE IMPACT OF BHENGU'S MESSAGE

Bhengu preached for results, and did bring change to the lives of thousands of people and communities. Wherever he went with his tent, crowds came to hear him. They gave their lives to Christ, went back to God.

5.6.1. Changed lives

It did not matter where he preached, whether in cities or rural areas, crime came down; people turned stolen goods and their tools of trade in to Bhengu. Stolen goods and weapons were then taken to the police in truck loads. The Johannesburg *Star's* staff reporter (in *Mission News* October, 1958), reporting under the title *A Black Billy Graham* wrote:

The fire died out of the tall, bespectacled Zulu's eyes and voice and he began moving slowly around the congregation, intoning: "Ubugebengu abukhokheli lutho. Nikelani izikhali zenu nani kuNkulunkulu." ("Crime does not pay. Surrender your arms and yourselves to God.")

There was a slight stir and then knives, pangas, hatchets, coshes, knuckledusters and other dangerous weapons were silently passed from hand to hand to the Rev. Nicholas Bhengu, South Africa's "Black Billy Graham"

Since he began his religious campaigns around South Africa in 1945, this preacher has been responsible for thousands of pounds worth of stolen property, guns and other arms being handed over to the police, as well as the wholesale conversion of native gangsters. He is now campaigning in Orlando where his fireproof tent is packed each night with up to 4000 people. So phenomenal is his power over his own people that tributes have been paid to him by Dr. Verwoerd, the minister of Native Affairs, and by police chiefs throughout the country. His power, as I witnessed, is almost hypnotic. In the style of the old-time crusading evangelists, he

gives his congregations a verbal lashing for their sins. He tells them: 'Not one of you is clean. The thing you know how to do best is to hate.' He somehow gets across to even the worst elements. A native from Randfontein handed over a small, razor-sharp, needle-pointed knife with the words: "I don't know how many people this has stabbed. I've lost count." "If you repent and work for God always, you will one day be forgiven," he was told.



A man turns in his weapon to Bhengu.

The report goes on to say that, Bhengu reached out to the criminal population:

Special provision had to be made for these converts. Some of them brought three lorry-loads of stolen goods, a complete suite of furniture, arms and ammunition, to a police station. Mr. Bhengu said the crusade had swept the city for more than five years. Its success had 'softened the authorities so we have freedom and favour throughout South Africa.' Mr. Bhengu said in South Africa something was needed that could break the power of the 'juju man' who holds sway in literate Africa. Western conquest and colonization caused the Africans to blame Christianity for the loss and destruction of their tradition and culture.

One of his converts testified:

Before I joined Bhengu's church I spent my money on cigarettes, brandy, kaffir-beer, tea-parties (drinking clubs) and buying presents for my boy-friends. I consulted diviners and herbalists on whom I wasted too much money. I now spend my money buying good clothes for my family, good things to decorate my house and on church affairs. I give some to my husband who makes a small saving at the Post Office.

I spend more money at Bhengu's church than what I did at my former church. At the same time I do not feel it, for I have more money since I do not spend it as extravagantly as I did before. (Dubb 1976:66)

5.6.2. Bhengu's Healings and Miracles Ministry

All Bhengu's campaigns were accompanied by some spectacular miracles and healings of the sick and maimed.

5.6.2.1. How Bhengu's healings and miracles ministry started

Bond tells the story of how Bhengu's healing ministry began:

Bhengu told me of the dream he had (also in Lesotho) from which he dated his healing ministry. Up to that time he had prayed for the sick but with small results. In his dream, Bhengu, who was very fastidious about hygiene, found himself in a Basotho hut surrounded and pressed by people afflicted with loathsome diseases. He shrank from contact with them as they reached out towards him. Then in his dream he saw Jesus descend through the thatched roof of the hut. Jesus moved among the sufferers touching them and healing them. Then He ascended through the roof again. As He went, He turned to Bhengu and spoke. 'You do the same' He said. From that time, great miracles began to attend Bhengu's ministry [Bond 2000: 77].

5.6.2.2. The healing of a woman with a hunchback in Duncan Village, East London, 1951

Nongwenya was born with a hunchback, she would walk by bending forward and lifting up her knees. Because her back was badly deformed she could not sleep on her back. She sought help from many quarters, from doctors and traditional healers, but to no avail. She was thirteen years old when her aunt took her to Bhengu's East London crusade, where Bhengu prayed for her. She went home and during that night she woke to find that she was sleeping on her back. There was a cracking sound coming from her spine as the bones loosened and straightened. From that day she walked upright. I confirmed this when I visited her at her house in Mdantsane, East London(interview 2006.12.16).

5.6.2.3. The healing of a man brought in a wheelbarrow in Nelspruit, 1956

Lund and Mangum, who were American missionaries engaged in literature production at the Emmanuel Press in Nelspruit, reported as follows on Bhengu's January 1956 Nelspruit revival:

It began at a watch night service when a group sensed that something was going to happen. They prayed through every night until January 22nd at which time two weeks of special evangelistic meetings were to begin. The church was much too small so was quickly enlarged to more than twice the original size. The first service saw the building filled and with people hanging in the open windows.

Loudspeakers and floodlights had to be installed and the open field surrounding the church soon became "holy ground" as thousands heard and responded to the invitation to get right with God. Gangsters, known in South Africa as "tsotsis" returned stolen goods after conversion and one of their so-called leaders one night gave a wonderful testimony of his salvation and challenged his followers in crime to now become followers in the way of the Lord. Eight responded that night and surrendered to the evangelist all their tools of vice and crime, bringing them in a large Hessian sack.

Huge bonfires of fetishes and medicines took place on several occasions. The revival continued long after the African evangelist left town and the whole community was stirred. Revival fires spread to distant cities and towns.

In a cassette taped message (s.a.) Bhengu mentions this miracle that occurred at one of his conventions and called on Dan Lephoko and Rev Mjaji who witnessed to the miracle to confirm it. A man had broken his back whilst working for the South African Railways in Barberton. In January 1956 he was brought, in a wheelbarrow, to Bhengu's revival meeting at Nelspruit. Bhengu laid hands on the man. He got up out of the wheelbarrow, staggered and walked around.

This miracle happened at the Fort Ball Stadium during a Sunday service, attended by between 3000 and 4000 people. In the audience were Muslims, members of the South African Police Force (White and Black), and a sizeable number of whites. Bhengu challenged the audience: 'I want no philosopher but give me Christ, I want no Mohammed but give me Christ.' The atmosphere was electrical, charged with the presence of God and the anointing of the Holy Spirit on Bhengu.

5.6.2.4. Healing of a crippled man in Nigeria

In a taped message (s.a), Bhengu tells his audience how, on one of his evangelistic trips to Nigeria, God healed a cripple who sat on the side of the road begging.

Whilst I was walking in the street I saw a crippled man sitting on the pavement begging for money. I gave him sixpence and walked on. As I walked on a voice spoke to me and asked, 'Why did you give that man money, are you not my servant?' I then went back to the man and demanded that he give me back my sixpence. I took the money back. 'I am the man of Jesus Christ. Rise and walk!' and I grabbed the man and stood him up. He stood up. He staggered and started walking.

This incident could be said to be similar to the story of Peter and John and the crippled man who was carried and placed at the gate of the temple every day to beg from those who went to the temple (Ac 3:5 – 10).

5.6.2.5. The dramatic healing of a demon-possessed girl

According to Bond (:78-79) this dramatic miracle happened in an African township on the East Rand. The press was in attendance with their cameras.

When Bhengu rose to speak, he found that immediately below the speaker's rostrum a peasant couple from the country were seated on the floor almost up against the platform. With them they had their insane daughter of about 17, lying on a grass sleeping mat. The girl was neglected and unwashed. She stank. Bhengu with his fastidious habits was repelled. The girl kept flailing her arms about feebly, uttering an inane cry...at regular intervals. The rather elderly parents did nothing to quieten her.

A blackness came upon Bhengu's spirit. Revulsion took hold of him, mounting more to an anger. He felt no anointing in the preaching but went through the motions until his sermon was ended. Then he was scheduled to pray for the sick. The people were expectant. The press photographers were poised with their cameras ready. Nicholas Bhengu felt not a spark of faith. How was he to arrange the healing line? As it was, the first in line was this repulsive family, stinking and insane. He just felt he could not pray for the girl before the assembled paparazzi-like crowd of photographers for them to see nothing take place.

He decided he would slip out of the door behind the platform and lay hands on the people as they filed out of the front door, emptying the hall of its crowd. Thus the girl would not be first in line, but last. No one would know whether she was healed or not. Bhengu felt certain she would not be healed.

But when he tried the back entrance, the door was locked! Where was the caretaker with the key? Nowhere to be found! He had no right to lock the door anyway with a crowd like that in the hall! It was illegal! Find the caretaker!

They looked. They waited. They sang. Bhengu sat immobile, face thunderous. At length there was nothing to be done. He had to pray for the girl. Whether she got healed or not, he just had to face it.

As he went down from the platform, there was an expectant hush. The photographers were at the ready. Then the miracle happened. A paroxysm of Godly wrath came upon the man of God. At the top of his voice he shouted out. He cursed the demon in the girl. There was a wail and in the next instant she was on her feet normal, being clutched by her parents. The next morning the newspapers were full of photographs of her being carried shoulder-high from the meeting by members of the crowd. Pandemonium filled the hall.

Of course Bhengu's black mood was nothing but the effect of Satanic power emanating from the girl. As he prayed for her, the Spirit of God came upon him with that special kind of faith to destroy the work of the devil [Bond 2000:78].

Like in the case of Jesus, Bhengu performed many miracles in the course of his campaigns and in ordinary settings. Many people can witness to the thousands of conversions and miracles performed by Bhengu. Many of the witnesses are still alive although some have since passed on to be with the Lord as promised in the Word and by Bhengu who, in his preaching, gave people the assurance of salvation. About Jesus, the Apostle John wrote: 'Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written' (Jon 20:31).

Bhengu's impact was not only felt in South Africa and other countries in Africa. As an evangelist, teacher and prophet, Bhengu had a tremendous influence in overseas countries as well.

Mr. Bhengu, who is 49, received his theological training at the Dunisa Bible Institute and in the United States at Taylor University, Indiana. He has since preached in the United States, Canada and Britain. In Scotland, where he preached before students of Glass glow University, one newspaper headlined his story with: 'Scotland sent David Livingstone to Africa. Africa sends Nicholas Bhengu to Scotland.' 'I have had many offers to stay in other countries,' he told me, 'but there is too much work to be done here among my own people. God has given me the work of making my own people law-abiding and good and my creed is simple. There is no power in the world which can make a bad person good and an unclean

person pure except the power of God.' He sails for Canada in September to attend The World Conference of Pentecostal Churches. 'Between now and then,' he says, 'I hope that Johannesburg's crime rate will have fallen by at least a quarter.' Certainly he has made a sensational start in this direction.

5.7. CHURCHES FOR AFRICA

It is estimated that Bhengu planted more than 2000 churches in South Africa and neighbouring countries. Kirk (1989:33) mentions 'the extra ordinary missionary thrust of the last time centuries, with its emphasis on the planting of self supporting, self governing and self propagating churches.'

Before dealing with Bhengu as an apostle and church planter, it is important to address the meaning, membership and role of the *church*. There are different schools of thought on the subject; these influence how an exegete interprets and applies scripture or responds to situations. A brief overview of some of the key teachings of Roman Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical and Pentecostal thought is set out below.

5.7.1. What is the church?

In Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant circles, divergent views on the meaning of the church exist. Different aspects of the church are usually emphasized:

- **The Roman Catholic view**

In Models of the Church, Dulles (1974, 1987:34 – 38) mentions, among other roles of the Church, the following:

The Church as an Institution. This is the church as deputed by its visible structures with rights and powers. In the Roman Catholic Church the Institutional Church is represented in three ways: teaching, sanctifying and governing; with a further distinction being the church taught, the church sanctified and the church governed. Dulles continues:

But the Church is not a community of equals in which all the faithful have the same rights. It is a society of unequals, not only because among the faithful some are clerics and some are laymen, but particularly because there is in the Church the

power from God whereby to some it is given to sanctify, teach and govern, and to others not.

The phrase 'some it is given to sanctify' does not find favour with Evangelicals and Pentecostals who teach that sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. Torrey (s.a.) says, 'The Holy Spirit sanctifies the believer.'

The Church as Mystical Communion. The image of the Body of Christ is organic, rather than sociological. The Church is seen on the analogy of a human body equipped with various organs. It has an inbuilt vital principle thanks to which it can grow, repair itself ... The Body of Christ as distinct from any natural organism has a divine life-principle. This is said to be the Holy Spirit.

Dulles emphasises the image of the Body of Christ with particular stress on the mystical and invisible communion that binds together all those who are enlivened by the grace of Christ, including not only the earthly but also the heavenly. The angels and the blessed are members of the heavenly Church. He believes the Body is not essentially visible, since it includes all men who are animated by the Spirit of God. 'All the just from Abel on are in the Body of Christ in the Ecclesia ...' (Dulles 1974, 1987:50-51).

- **The Reformed view**

To highlight traditional Reformed thinking on the church, the views of Louis Berkhoff and Johan Heyns are quoted:

Louis Berkhoff (1933: 282 – 283) emphasized the difference between the visible and the invisible church:

In defining the Church it will be 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 be unbelievers and hypocrites and as such form no part of the body of Christ.

Note the phrase 'with their children'. The church as an assembly of believers can be a domestic church or the church in the house (Ro 16:5, 23; I Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phil 2).

For *Johan Heyns* (1980:49) the existence of the church revolves around God's election.

God's acts concerning the Church are elective acts. From among all nations and people he has chosen *these* people for himself. Consequently his acts have a doubly exclusive significance: these people belong to him. His unique acts have created a unique relationship and as his own, his people have been set apart delineated from all who are not his people.

Who belong to the church? Who qualify for membership?

Baptism and faith are interlinked as 'baptism comes from faith and faith leads to baptism' (Kung 1968: 207). 'Faith alone is not the basis of baptism; baptism is more than a sign of the faith and confession, designed merely to confirm faith; conversely, baptism alone is not the basis of faith; faith is not the natural consequence or the automatic front of baptism.' Both of them have their basis in the saving act of God in Christ. According to Kung, 'By being baptised, he becomes a member of the community, by having his sins forgiven, he is included into the communion of saints.' This doctrine of baptism is key to admission into membership of the church.

The Ecumenical theologian, Ryle (in Feinberg (ed) 1958:505-506) raises some questions with regard to the nature of the Church. Where is the one true church? What is this true church like? What are the marks by which this one true church may be known?

The one true church is composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus. It is made up of all God's elect, all converted men and women, all the Christians. In whomsoever we can discern the election of God the Father, the sprinkling of the blood of God the Son, the sanctifying work of God the Spirit, in that person we see a member of Christ's true church.

It is a church of which all the members have the same marks. They are all born of the Spirit; they all possess 'repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,' and holiness of life and conversation. They all hate sin, and they all love Christ. They worship differently and after various fashions. Some worship with a form of prayer, and some with none; some worship kneeling, and some standing.

But they all worship with one heart. They are all led by one Spirit; they all build upon one foundation; they are all joined to one great centre, Jesus Christ. They all even now can say with one heart, 'Hallelujah'; and they can all respond with one heart and voice, 'Amen and Amen' (Ryle cf. Feinberg (ed) 1958:505-506).

It is a church which is dependent upon no ministers upon earth, however much it values those who preach the Gospel to its members. The life of its members does not depend upon church membership, baptism and the Lord's Supper, although they highly value these things, when they are to be had. But it has only one great Head, one Shepherd, one chief Bishop, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone by his Spirit admits the members of this church, though ministers may show the door.

All theological traditions are in agreement on the central belief that Christ is the Head of the Church.

The Church is an organism, not an organization. There is a vital relationship between Christ and the Church, both partaking of the same life, just as there is between the physical head and the body. We cannot join the Church as we would a lodge or any mere human organization. We must be partakers by faith of Christ's life before we can become members of Christ's Church, in the true sense. As the Head of the Church Christ is its Guardian and Director (Eph. 5:23, 24); the Source of its life, filling it with His fullness (Eph. 1:22, 23); the Centre of its unity and the Cause of its growth (Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19; Eph.1:22, 23; 4:15; Col. 1:18; 2:19) (Evans 1974:186).

It is clear from the above that the New Testament Church is God's own creation through the death and the resurrection of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The church is the community of those who are saved; it is a group of people who are individually empowered by the Holy Spirit for service within the community and in external witness; and it is a commissioned community (Hollenweger 1977:424; Hattingh 1986:2-8).

5.7.2. How Bhengu became a church planter

Bhengu often spoke about why he started planting churches. It was during some of his itinerant evangelistic episodes with the church of the Nazarene at a boarding school at

Ndzingeni, Swaziland. Many students had come forward during Bhengu's preaching. Dr Hynd Snr asked Bhengu why when he preached many students came to Christ, but when they (the missionaries) preached not many gave themselves to Christ.

Bhengu said, 'The problem is that you missionaries do not believe that blacks can be genuinely saved. Here at the school you do not allow a young man to speak to his sister without the matron being present to listen to their conversation'. Dr Hynd responded by saying, 'You go and start your own work so we too can criticize you'.

In 1956 Dr Hynd Snr was on furlough and his ship had docked in Durban. It was during this time that Bhengu was conducting his Lamontville campaign in Durban. He fetched Dr Hynd from the ship and took him to Lamontville to show him his work; telling him, 'Here is my work, now you can criticize me'.

5.7.3. Bhengu's Strategy to build churches

Bhengu devised a strategy to build churches by mobilising his people to build their own. In a circular (no date) he urged his churches to give toward the building of churches:

How are we going to build the church buildings on various building sites on offer by the governments of the Republic, Transkei, Bophutswana, Ciskei, KwaZulu, Gazankulu, Leboa, Qwaqwa, Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana? We can easily achieve this without any bulldozing effect. Let us comprehensively read the passage that follows – Let all men collaborate - Let us all direct our ball to the goal opposite us. Read this prayerfully and thoughtfully, calculatively and yieldingly and then act. The need for building big churches is aggravated by factors of our large numbers and multiplication in all places. It is imperative therefore that we should decorate the independent homelands with valuable and attractive buildings so as to promote the nation in the faith we have detected and in the truth and evidence of which we are convinced, setting aside all fables and dreams of the nations. What are we going to do then? R1.00 (sic) man a month from all the Assemblies can never be burdensome on us. We can build them all, can't we?

Bhengu wanted his people to build their own churches themselves rather than depend on money from overseas. Money that was raised from elsewhere was for the Back to God Crusades' evangelistic campaigns only.

5.7.4. Bhengu's first Church: Swaziland

Creamer tells how Bheku came to establish his first church:

The three Carmichael brothers and their sister Jessie Creamer and a married couple met Bhengu in Carmichael's home in Pigs Peak, Swaziland during his evangelistic meeting with the Church of the Nazarene, where Bhengu in an informal manner shared the gospel with them. They all accepted Christ in that meeting. Jessie says that he shared the gospel in a simple but profound manner. It was here that he was requested to establish his first church ever in 1943. In this church I was shown benches that were made in 1943 and are still in use (Interview: Creamer 2003.11.19).

5.7.5. Bhengu builds a big church in Duncan Village 1957

In East London in the late 1950's Bhengu built the largest church in Southern Africa at the time. It was called 'Gwinyazonke' (swallow them all), which meant it could swallow or accommodate thousands of people. It was also used as a Convention Center for Bhengu's work for many years. People came from all over Southern Africa to attend December and Easter conventions where they received inspirational messages and made financial contributions towards the spread of the gospel.

It was at this church that he held his annual conventions and conferences in the 1960s. He planned and directed from this church. It was the hub of his work. It was from here that the work spread to Transkei and rural areas (Ezilaleni). People gave liberally to get the gospel to those who had not heard.

On Friday, 8 June 2001 the *Dispatch Online* carries a photo with the caption, 'The Reverend Nicholas Bhengu preaches to a large congregation in East Bank in 1957'. The accompanying report says that Bhengu had brought a new brand of Christianity to East

London that attracted wide support because it tolerated customary practices such as lobolo and circumcision with commitment to discipline.

5.7.6. Bhengu builds a bigger church in Mdantsane - 1984

After the authorities removed the Duncan village church, Bhengu built even a bigger church in Mdantsane. It was reported in the press that the Assemblies of God was to build a R517 000 church in Mdantsane to replace the old church in Duncan Village.

The head of the church Rev Bhengu said the church would be the biggest in Mdantsane and would accommodate 1 200 people. Mr Bhengu said his church had another building in Mdantsane, but it was too small to accommodate all the congregants – over 5 000 in Mdantsane alone. He said the old building in Duncan Village could accommodate over 3 000 people and had been the centre of the church in South Africa. The centre has since been moved to Thaba Nchu.

Mr Mike Freeman, the architect, said the church was designed to place full emphasis on the pulpit. With this area as the focal point, the walls were designed to radiate out in a series of angled modules to complement the focal point and avoid any disruption of worship, he said:

In order to accommodate the concept of a church and the associated importance of its function in modern-day society, it is vital that a fine balance between economic restraints, functionalism and design impact is achieved.



5.8. BHENGU AND THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

5.8.1. The Assemblies of God's historical and structural formation

The Assemblies of God, the church that Bhengu joined, was born out of the Spirit in Azusa Street, California, Los Angeles, USA in 1904. In South Africa, the first Pentecostal missionaries came at the beginning of 1908. The first Pentecostal church was the Apostolic Faith Mission in Johannesburg, established in 1908 by Mr Lake who worked among some whites.

In 1908 Mr A. E Turney and his wife started missionary work among Africans and established a mission station in rural Doornkop, Mpumalanga among the Pedi-speaking people. This work later came to be known as Assemblies of God. Unlike the Apostolic Faith Church, which started as a white church and started daughter churches among blacks, coloureds and others, the Assemblies of God on the other hand began as an African church. Pentecostal Workers and Assemblies of God from many parts of the USA came together in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914 to formally establish the Assemblies of God. In 1925, in South Africa, Assemblies of God was formed as the South African District Council, to represent groups of American, British, and South African missionaries. It was registered with the South African government in 1917 by Mr Turney.

Later, early missionaries were joined by others such as H.C. Phillips (British) and John. S Richards (from the USA) who was later appointed the General Superintendent in South Africa by the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the USA. C. Austin Chawner from Canada had by this time also joined the Assemblies of God. In 1928 Chawner was elected Secretary of the Assemblies of God in South Africa (Upton 1972).

5.8.2. Missionaries decide to form a South African Assemblies of God

At a conference of missionaries from the USA, Ireland, Britain, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, and other parts of the world held in Shingwedzi in 1932, with the consent of their home councils, it was decided to form a South African Chapter of the Assemblies of God. At this Conference the following Constitutional Declaration was adopted:

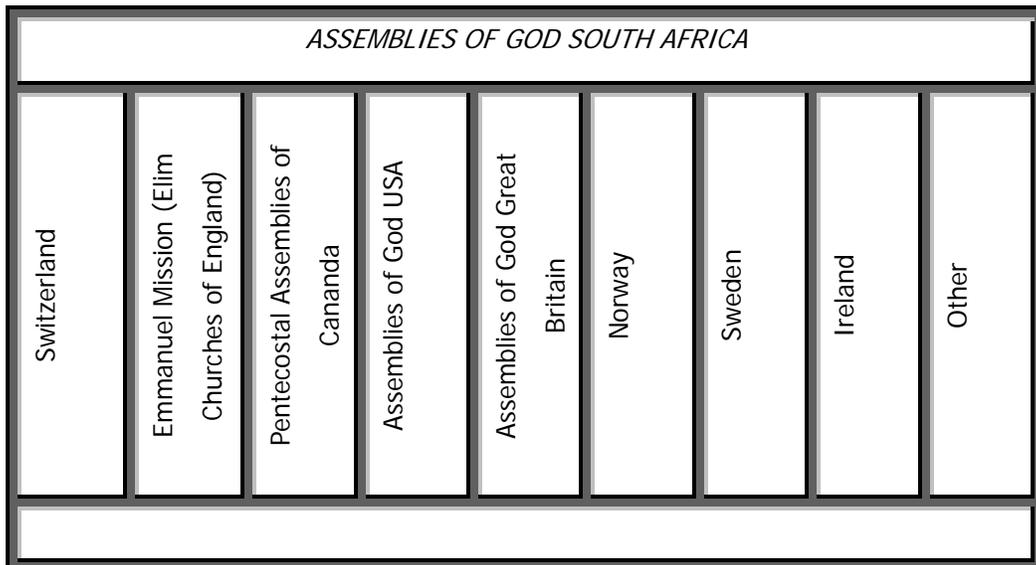
Whereas the Councils at Springfield, US America, and London, Ontario, Canada, have sanctioned the dissolving of the Joint Field Council and the forming of a self governing Field Organisation, subject to the conditions attached hereto; and, whereas the Joint Field Council had been dissolved in order to form the new body; therefore, be it resolved, that we, a body of Pentecostal Missionaries representing the Overseas Councils at Springfield, Missouri, US America; London, England; Zurich, Switzerland; and London, Ontario, Canada; and our co-workers here in South Africa, recognize ourselves as a cooperative fellowship of Missionaries, Christian workers and believers from the local assemblies, to be known as the 'South African Council of the Assemblies of God' whose purpose is to work in

complete harmony, cooperation and fellowship with the councils of the Assemblies of God in other lands, for the promulgation of the Whole Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Southern territories of Africa, and for the promoting of Scriptural methods, unity and fellowship in the work established throughout these territories; and be it further resolved that this field Organisation take over the entire constituency and work as well as the properties, rights and privileges of the Joint Field Council, which has been dissolved.

Dated at Shingwedzi Mission Station, Zoutpansberg District, North Eastern Transvaal, this third day October 1932. The suggested Constitution was then adopted during the sessions of this October 1932 General Conference. Brother C.J.H Bennett of the Assemblies of God in Great Britain was elected Superintendent and Brother C. Austin Chawner of the Assemblies of God in Canada elected Secretary. (Chawner 1962:12-20)

In this structure Bhengu and his friends found an umbrella body that would allow them to preach the gospel without any hindrance.

FOREIGN MISSION BOARDS



These were some of the Pentecostal Missionary Boards that were doing work in South Africa and who with the approval of their Boards joined hands to work under the umbrella of the Assemblies of God. This arrangement was ideal for Bhengu since it would later allow

him to organise and develop his work the way he thought best. In a letter dated 26/07/1995 to Mrs Larsen, a retired missionary with the Emmanuel Mission at Komatipoort who was the living in England, Phillips explains her reasons for joining the Assemblies of God in 1938.

5.9. EVALUATING BHENGU'S CONTRIBUTION

At the end of this chapter it is important to evaluate Bhengu's contribution as missionary, evangelist and church planter. It will be attempted by looking through three lenses at Bhengu's work: by comparing Bhengu's methods of church planting to those of Paul, by testing his work against the so-called 'Seven I programme'; and by evaluating the results of his church planting in terms of the classical "three selves" ideal of building self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches in the world.

5.9.1. Hesselgrave's 'Pauline cycle of church planting'

Hesselgrave (1980) designed what he called "The Pauline Cycle of Church Planting for the USA and overseas". He postulates 10 steps, viz: 1) missionaries commissioned, 2) audience contacted, 3) gospel communicated, 4) hearers converted, 5) believers congregated, 6) faith confirmed, 7) leaders consecrated, 8) believers commended, 9) relationships continued, 10) sending churches convened. (Hesselgrave 1980: 58-59)

Bhengu complied with all ten requirements of church planting set out by Hesselgrave.

Below the criteria proposed by Hesselgrave are compared to Bhengu's strategy:

1. *Hesselgrave*: Missionaries Commissioned:

Bhengu: He was commissioned by God to preach the gospel through which he would deliver his people from the bondage of sin. This is how he explained it, according to Dubb:

The Lord explained to me that I was authorized to serve Him, but I did not know how to go about it. He showed me a great ocean to which He brought

me. There I heard the voices of many people crying in fear of death. They were all under the water and their hands and feet were bound with chains. But they were trying to set themselves free. They all had black faces. When I listened I noticed that one could hear their voices. They were speaking in all African languages and dialects, and yet I was able to understand them all. They were all pointing at me for I was standing on dry land, and said: 'We are dying, we are dying. We are perishing. Help us out of here.' I felt a great sympathy and wanted to help them all out of there. But they were as many as the sands on the seashore. The more that I tried to help them the more I sank into the water. Bewildered I called on the Lord. Jesus appeared and lifted me out. He showed me an open Bible and said: 'This is the Word of Life; study this Word, and through the words of this Book you will break these fetters and free your people from the chains of sin, in which they have been bound for centuries. I wish you to do this' (Dubb 1976:10 [translated from Schlosser 1958:24]).

2. *Hesselgrave*: audience contacted

Bhengu: Audiences were contacted by way of notices setting out crusade meetings, venues, dates, time, and the nature of messages that were to be preached during the crusade(s).

3. *Hesselgrave*: gospel communicated

Bhengu: He preached and explained the way of salvation in a manner that the educated and unschooled could understand. He had thousands of people converted during his meetings and new converts were organized under a local leadership church structure where they would be looked after and disciplined. These churches became sending churches. Mature believers were taught to witness for Christ both in word and deed. They were challenged to talk about Christ in the buses, trains, streets, school and workplaces.

4. *Hesselgrave*: hearers converted

Bhengu: Although it is not possible to estimate how many people came to Christ each evening or at each crusade; hundreds if not thousands came to Christ at each

of Bhengu's campaigns. In January 1956 at his Nelspruit campaign the church had to be extended to accommodate the people. Many hung in windows to hear Bhengu. In East London more than 3 000 converts were baptized in one day.

5. *Hesselgrave*: believers congregated

Bhengu: New converts were introduced to existing churches, where none existed new churches were established. A pastor or a spiritual leader would be appointed to care of the young Christians.

6. *Hesselgrave*: faith confirmed

Bhengu: Teaching and disciplining of converts took place in groups e.g. mothers, girls, youth and men. In these groups and in Bible study groups, young Christians were introduced to the new Life in Christ. They were built up in their new-found faith (Makinana).

7. *Hesselgrave*: leaders consecrated

Bhengu: Leaders were appointed to shepherd the flock e.g. elders and deacons were organized or church committees were elected to guide the church so that there was permanency.

8. *Hesselgrave*: believers commended

Bhengu: Believers who showed leadership capabilities or potential were challenged to take up responsibilities under the leadership of local assemblies. A large number of disciples answered the call to serve the Lord in full time ministry or in various capacities in the church and community. Some of them became youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, women's group leaders etc. Many shared their new-found faith on buses, in the streets and on trains.

9. *Hesselgrave*: relationships continued

Bhengu: Relationships were built across the board among the youth, women, men and those in leadership in the churches. Relationships were continually strengthened through teaching, in worship and witnessing. Local, district, regional, provincial and national structures were established for his purpose. Local, regional,

provincial and national meetings were arranged for various groups to strengthen or foster relationships.

10. *Hesselgrave*: sending churches convened

Bhengu: Bhengu's churches were all taught to give to mission and evangelism. Churches sent out evangelists, pastors, and lady ministers into the world to preach the gospel. Port Elizabeth and East London became the hub of Bhengu's ministry in the area of sending workers into the field. People donated clothing and other belongings to the church to raise funds for evangelism. The Siteki Church in Swaziland was the first to send money to Bhengu in Port Elizabeth in 1945; it sent money to support him. The churches raised what is known as the campaign fund. These monies were collected every Monday at prayer meetings. Members were encouraged to skip their Monday lunch, save the money they would have bought lunch with and give that to the Monday campaign fund for the spreading of the gospel.

5.9.2. Bhengu against the grid of "The Seven I's"

Piet Meiring in (Kritzinger, Meiring and Saayman 1994: 48 – 53) asks the question 'How missionary is the church?' He sets forth what he calls *The Seven I's Programme*, a tool that can be used to diagnose the missionary programme for the church.

- **Inspiration**

Inspiration starts with the pastor in his sermons and home visits by getting the missionary message to his congregation. Bhengu provided his churches with his vision to reach the world for Christ. He inspired them so that they gave money to the Back to God Crusade. Mondays were set aside for fasting and intercessory prayer and for taking the campaign offering.

- **Information**

Information is key to getting the local church involved in Mission work. Bhengu provided his people with information regarding the need to reach the unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Most of this information was given at conferences,

conventions and ministers' fellowships through teaching and mobilization of the whole church.

- **Interpretation**

Interpretation relates to interpreting God's demand both on the vertical and horizontal levels. Bhengu excelled in his interpretation of the vertical message and challenged people to be reconciled to God. His messages were so powerful that people turned to God in large numbers. On the horizontal level he saw criminals return stolen goods to the police. Wherever he preached crime came down dramatically. He stayed clear of party political involvement, believing that his messages were meant for politicians. Despite lack of focused direct political involvement, he did preach against structural oppression and racial discrimination.

- **Involvement**

Bhengu taught and encouraged his people to get involved in the day-to-day needs of the people in the community, by helping their neighbours. Unfortunately not many of the people were involved in the alleviation of poverty within their communities especially through NGO work.

- **Instruction**

Bhengu was heavily involved in training women and girls in his church. Women and girls were trained in sewing, baking, home management etc., whilst men were equipped with business skills. Study bursaries were provided for the youth with the aim of preparing them for leadership roles in the new South Africa for which he laboured in hope. He did not live to see the advent of democracy in South Africa, however. 'All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.' (Heb 11:13 – 16).

- **Investment**

Bhengu mobilized women to raise funds for the Back to God Crusade. These funds were used to buy tents, trucks, and provide stipends for the evangelists and their families. The finances were properly audited and reported at annual Easter conventions in Thaba Nchu.

- **Intercession**

Every Monday was set aside for intercessory prayer. Members were encouraged to fast for the day and pray together for the salvation of those outside Christ. They also collected campaign money for the Back to God Crusade.

5.9.3. The 'three selves'

Since the 19th century, the ideal of the 'three selves' of planting self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating churches, gained wide acceptance in Protestant mission circles. Bhengu indeed succeeded in planting churches that were self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. In his address to the Assemblies of God Conference at Witbank October 1955, he said, 'I want to teach our men to raise funds and finance every programme themselves.'

Although not all Bhengu's churches, however, were set up with elders and deacons. The churches that did not have elders and deacons were constituted with Church Committees who oversaw the work of the church.

This system allowed for churches to elect their own leaders. Elders and deacons were elected for life unless they were found guilty of immoral behaviour or were totally inept in the discharge of their duties. The elections of elders and deacons were conducted by Back to God Teaching, a body established by Bhengu in 1977. Elections of church leaders were conducted by men's organizers.

5.9.3.1. Self- Governing churches (Church Government)

In Ephesians 4:11-12 Paul writes:

It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Apostles establish churches and give leadership to those churches and send out others in an organized manner. Prophets preach or proclaim the word of God, some of it with special divine inspiration. Evangelists announce the good news – the gospel - to those who need to be saved and united with God. Teachers teach Christians doctrines whilst pastors (shepherds) have the responsibility to lead and protect the sheep from wolves and from those who may want to destroy the work from within (Ac 20:28-31). The chief work of the pastor is to look after the sheep and protect them from the wolves.

Bhengu set up systems to govern the churches and to manage relationships.

- **The Role of the Pastor in Bhengu's Churches**

The pastor was key to Bhengu's assemblies. In addition to chairing elders and deacons meetings, he was an ex-officio member of all church committees. Any correspondence to any of the five departments in the church was addressed to the Chairlady/Pastor, Secretary/Pastor etcetera. Before any notices were issued in the church, the pastor had to read them to familiarize himself with the content before they were announced in the church.

A pastor was also expected to help members resolve problems. Bhengu wrote:

A pastor who does these things will never get into problems with his assembly. A Pastor should avoid arguments, strife and autocracy. He should be a father to all kinds, sorts and characters of his sheep. He should be tenderhearted but stern. Never pick up (sic) a quarrel with any of his sheep – avoid showy and haughty spirit, cheap talk, idle or foolish jokes; never listen to stories or tales by people

about others. Be neutral and take no sides. A pastor should never judge, decide and condemn any member by himself autocratically. A good pastor discourages people from bringing cases before the Scripture has been fully followed:

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. When you have something against your brother | Matt 5:23-24 |
| 2. When you have been wronged | Matt 18:15-17 |
| 3. When you see a brother going astray | James 5:16,19,20 |
| 4. When your brother sins | 1 James 5:16-17 |

If people were taught clearly about this, many quarrels and cases could be reduced to the minimum. "A good pastor is a man of prayer and Bible reading and waiting upon God; a pastor should be a man of faith. A pastor who is greedy for wealth, positionalism (sic), fame and high standard of living will not make it: we should think of the sheep more than we think of ourselves [circular:s.a].

Bhengu subsequently elaborated on the role of the pastor (Lephoko 2001:10-11):

1. A pastor should think of the lambs of the sheep. It was not a lamb that was lost. It was a sheep (Luke15:4-7). The lambs of course, need special care. The church needs to produce Sunday school teachers and allow them to work amongst the children.
2. A successful pastor is interested in all departments of the church - fathers' meetings, girls' meetings, Sunday school meetings and all the activities of the Assembly. Once a week Sunday school teachers should meet together with the pastor and discuss the Sunday school lesson. Sunday school teachers are not allowed to miss Sunday school at any cost. It does not matter where they go, even to quarterly meetings, they must come back to take care of Sunday school children on Sunday.
3. Produce Sunday school teachers and work with them among children.
4. Sunday school is the pastor's chief work. He is the Sunday school superintendent.
5. A pastor should teach and produce men fit for the offices of elders and deacons, himself being an example. The hope of every assembly is the production of men who reach our standards, or even a standard above ours.

- **Finances and Administration in local Assembly**

Money collected in the church was counted by three people in front of the congregation and then entered on an A1 Form under specific categories (e.g. tithes, free will offerings, campaign fund etc.) for which the offering had been given. The monies would be banked on the first business day following the service. The following Sunday, deacons would bring a copy of the deposit slip and have the amount read out to the congregation. A member of the congregation would be invited to go forward to examine the deposit slip and the A1 Form to validate that the amount on the form agreed with the amount on the bank deposit slip and announce to the congregation that the money collected had indeed been banked.

A1 FORM: TAKINGS

ASSEMBLY:

DATE: 20

The amounts taken are as follows:

1. Building Fund	
2. Tithes	
3. Freewill	
4. Assembly Business	
5. Campaign Fund	
6. Women's Meeting	
7. Women's H.W.	
8. Girls' Meeting	
9. Girls H.W.	
10. Assembly Bazaar	
11. Sunday School	
12. Miscellaneous	
13. Special Fund	
14. Gift	

15. Youth Meeting	
16. Easter Convention	
17. Annual Convention	
18. Men's Meeting	
19. Target	
20. Talents	
21. Relief Fund	
22. Widows Fund	
TOTAL	

Chairperson:

Secretary:

Funds could only be withdrawn once a month. An A2 Form (a requisition form) would be completed by the deacons, the amount for each item would be read out to the church before withdrawal. The church would approve or disapprove of some items of expenditure. The withdrawal form would be signed by a trustee in the Assembly. The A2 Form was then sent to the District Council Office where the particulars of the request would be checked against specific items relevant to the requested amount on the financial books of the congregation making the request. Bhengu would then approve the expenditure if money was available. The books of the provincial and national departments and of the women's, men's, girls' and youth conventions were audited and reported on at relevant convention meetings where members would have the opportunity to debate the audited accounts.

A2 FORM: TABLE OF EXPENDITURE

Assembly:

In the Deacon's Meeting that was held on the day of 20 at the

NO.	ITEM	R	INCOME	R
1.			Building Fund	
2.			Tithes	

3.			Freewill	
4.			Assembly Business	
5.			Campaign Fund	
6.			Special Fund	
7.			Holy Communion	
8.			Miscellaneous	
9.			Relief Fund	
10.			Pastor's Bonus	
11.			Choir	
12.			Transport	
13.			Sunday School	
14.			Widows Fund	
	TOTAL		TOTAL	

Chairman: Secretary

Approved by: ON THE BEHALF OF THE ASSEMBLY:

Utilize Space for Remarks:

.....

Writing about finances, he said, 'All finances were completely in the hands of the Assembly on behalf of God.' The local oversight was not supposed to dispose of any funds without the approval of the Assembly. Tithes were to be centralized for pastors to share equally and to assist with the support of small and poor Assemblies. (no date) He warned: 'In all money affairs there will be endless troubles.'

Bhengu did not use money for himself or for his family. For Bhengu all monies had to go toward evangelism. "He led a very poor life, it was not a life deserved by a man who built so many churches in each and every city" (Interview: Shabalala 2003.10.12). Bond sums it up:

I found Nicholas Bhengu meticulous in money matters. I came to realize that his word was his bond, precisely and literally. In dealing with him my one concern was

always to ensure that when we made an agreement we both understood precisely the facts, terms and conditions we had agreed on. Once we were in agreement, I knew we had a binding agreement whether it was in writing or not. Never once was I disappointed.

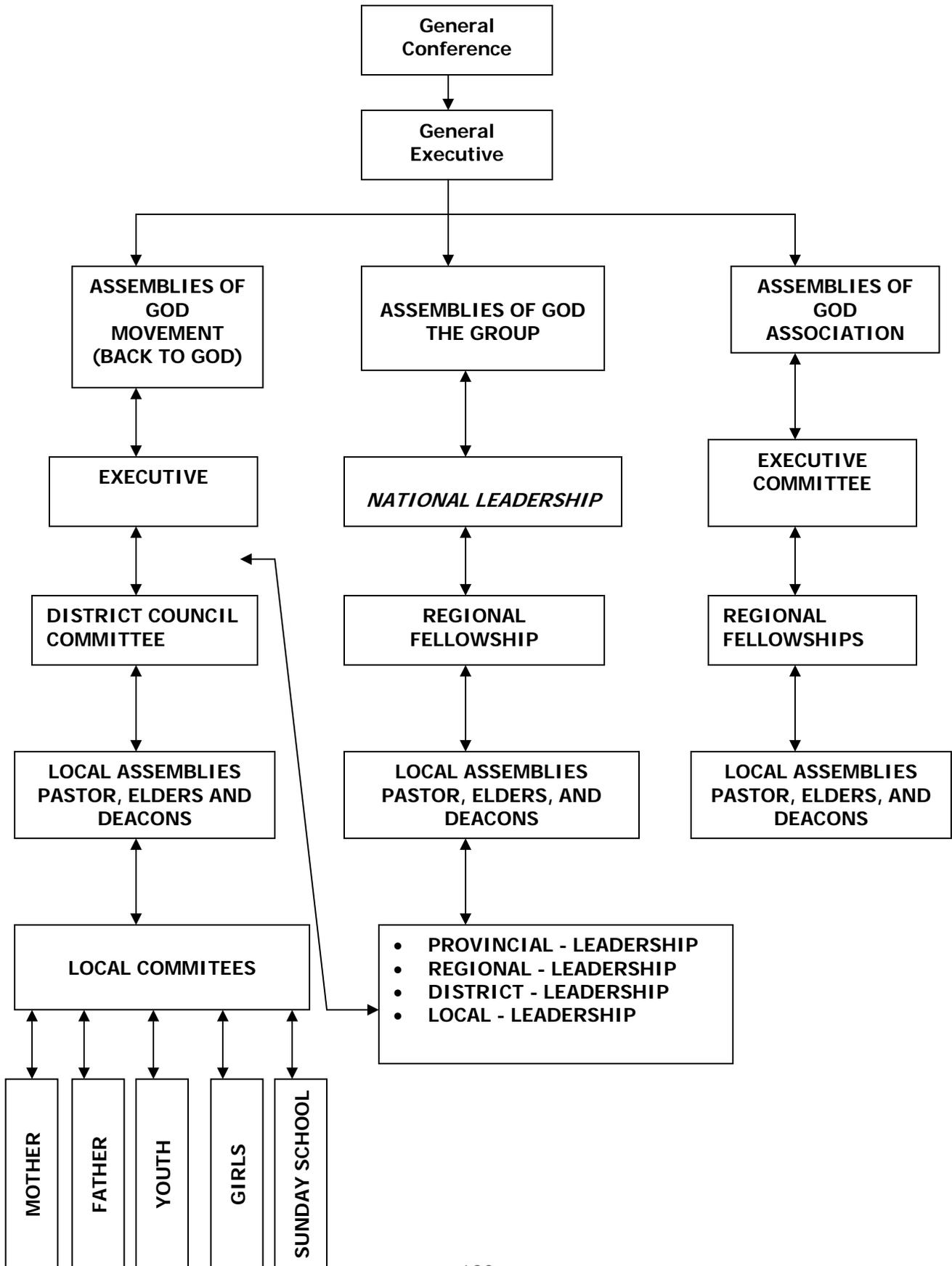
There will be those who use money for their own aggrandisement. Some will overspend and place the church into endless debts. Some will see an opportunity to get rich. The church leaders and the church itself are both capitalistic and scorn at all social concern for the people. That is why people hate churches and their creed[2000:66].

- **District Council Offices**

District Councils were set up to assist assemblies in their work for the Lord and never to control them. 'The offices are there to keep records, see that the money in the Assemblies is recorded, that all expenditures are legitimate before money goes out, see that no unauthorized expenditure or debts are made out. Use the offices, obey the offices, and respect the offices. They are not dictators over you but they are your safeguards and security' [Circular: s.a].

The majority of Bhengu's Assemblies were mature, able to build their own churches, support their pastor, and conduct their own affairs including financial matters. Some Assemblies had financial investments that ran into hundreds of thousands. He taught his people not to get into debt with anyone, not even banks. All movable and immovable church property belonged to the particular church. Church buildings, however, were registered in the name of the Assemblies of God.

Church organization and Church government



5.9.3.2. Self-supporting churches

Bhengu emphasized the need for his churches to be self-supporting rather than depend on foreign financial support. In a circular letter dated 1st November 1967 he wrote:

Dear Co-workers
Greetings in Him!

To all workers who are being supported by Missionaries, our Officers, by my personal help, by District Councils or by other Assemblies and not the Assemblies where they minister:

1. The goal is self-supporting Assembly in Africa
2. While you are getting your temporary support from any of the above sources it is your duty and your opportunity to teach people to give without reservations. Teach them without fear or apology.
3. Supervise the books and the banking carefully.
4. Remember your present help support is temporary; so teach the Assembly so that they can take over your support when the present help dries up.
5. It has come to our notice that some workers do not stress giving for fear they will offend or drive away people.
6. They sometime stress that they want no money as God looks after them. Brother, you must watch out! Your Assembly must get out of a cradle and work like other Assemblies.
7. Teach with love and grace. Pray as you teach giving, demonstrate it.
8. When your present income stops you will starve if the people don't learn giving as part of their worshipping God.
9. They must tithe faithfully and you must tithe faithfully also.
10. They must support God's work by all means.

Self-supporting Assemblies in Africa is our goal!

God Bless You

Yours in Christ Jesus
Nicholas B.H. Bhengu

5.9.3.3. Self-propagating churches

A press report from Germany reads:

WEST BERLIN – Protestant evangelist revival work has spread through South Africa in the past 15 years like wild-fire, an East London minister, the Rev. Nicholas Bhengu, of the Back to God Crusade, said here. He told the World Congress on Evangelism (1966) more than 500 churches have been founded by unappointed and unpaid new converts alone during that period. In East London, attendance at evangelistic meetings reached 42,000. Many converts were channeled back to existing churches but ‘we soon became aware these churches were not prepared to minister to converts from the underworld and heathendom,’ he said.

In spite of his concerns, he still saw an important role for missionaries. ‘The field for missionaries is tremendous. They can work all the way with us and not under us. The need is for Bible teachers, Sunday school promoters, Bible camp leaders and many other activities,’ he continued, ‘where there will be scope for white South African Students to minister but not to lead.’

From time to time tension did arise in the Assemblies of God, for various reasons. Bhengu and his colleagues had to learn to deal with this. Perry (1977:119-123) proposes how to manage conflict creatively. Conflict, he postulates is an inevitable part of growth and life, conflict need not be destructive. He identifies four types of conflict: (1) Intra-personal – conflict within the individual. (2) Inter-personal – conflict between and among individuals. (3) Intra-group – conflict within a group and (4) Inter-group – the conflict which perceives another group with antagonism.

Tensions in the Assemblies of God revolved mainly around constitutional arrangements and leadership, especially with regard to African work, in particular Bhengu’s Assemblies.

In a letter dated 4 June 1977 Bhengu wrote:

The Africans are allocated free. Under the Department of Bantu Affairs and Development:

1. All workers have to be registered and are controlled by the influx control.

2. We can register only one worker for the area as Assemblies of God, and an additional one if the township expands and the church expands.
3. The workers are subject to levy which is paid by the employer with statistics.
4. The workers are subjected to PAYE which go with statistics from the employer.
5. The Location authorities give one house for the minister and his family.
6. The Department grants one church site to one denomination in one township and a second site can be considered only where the township has expansion (sic) as well as the work.
7. Groups will never work in the African work. The Department expects well-organized churches with centralized administration which makes discipline and statistics easy - so characteristic of the Assemblies of God and so entrenched in the constitution and life of the whites section - to (also) work successfully in the African work, since the Political and Social system places it in aforesaid categories

Do you think the groups can, at this time, be dissolved and one social body formed in the white section? IMPOSSIBLE! We will only go to conference to chase a white elephant.

5.10. BHENGU AND EXPATRIATE MISSIONARIES

Addressing an Assemblies of God conference from the thesis National Church, Bhengu read from Mt 28:19: 'Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' He continued:

This is a unique privilege for me to present to the Assemblies of God conference my whole vision and commission. I have been greatly misunderstood and grossly misinterpreted, sad to say mostly by my own African people who in turn misinformed the missionaries whose labours of love and self-denial have made me what I am. After hearing what I am going to say, I am sure every fog which has

been created by such unscrupulous workers who delight in breaking up all the efforts we are making for the unity of the work God and mutual understanding between White and Non white Christians will be eliminated or reduced to the minimum. I am naturally not an ambiguous man and desire to be an open book to all. What I am about to say is my entire soul, the very bowels of my entire being. (Bhengu Assemblies of God 10 October 1955)

1. Missionaries encouraged multiplicity of assemblies in some locations resulting in weakening of our forces
2. They do not understand the African mind.
3. Missionaries give power or assistance to start conflicting work against the mother Assembly.
4. Africans find pleasure in fighting missionaries.
5. Some missionaries frightened by useless friends (African) spread doctrines of multiplicity of assemblies in one area.

Lloyd Jones (in Stott 1975:87) says, 'The hospital does not, cannot and never will be able to take over the functions of the church! It is quite impossible for it to do so... The authentic task of the Church is not primarily to make people healthy... her essential task is to restore men to the right relationship with God... Man's real problem is not simply that he is sick, but that he is a rebel'.

Evangelism is to bring about specific changes, to renounce evidences of domination of sin in our lives and to accept responsibilities in terms of God's love for our neighbour. It is the "total transformation of our attitude" and styles of life (Costas, in Bosch 1991:413).

From the very beginning of his ministry with the Assemblies of God, Bhengu asserted his leadership within the Assemblies of God. He wanted to lead his own work within what he called the federal system of the Assemblies of God without interference from whites and missionaries.

Watt (1992:62-63) reports that Bhengu's stance toward missionaries was cause for unhappiness among missionaries especially the Americans. The Americans wanted to see the Assemblies of God in South Africa organised along the American Assemblies of God

lines. This was rejected by other missionary bodies including white South African church leaders. Watt says, 'Experiences like these made the missionaries feel that Nicolas Bhengu was becoming dictatorial and that he wanted them to take a back seat. Any leadership they had was being challenged.'

Bhengu's strategy was 'only Africans can reach Africans.' According to Bond, the Americans were bent on restricting Bhengu to working in the Eastern Cape by dividing South Africa into regions, each being led by a superintendent who would give permission to evangelists wanting to do work in other regions. This proposal was rejected by the General Executive [Bond 2000:192-193].

Bhengu's problems with the expatriate missionaries started very early in his work in Benoni on the East Rand, Transvaal (now Gauteng). In two letters to friend, Gideon Buthelezi, he urges Buthelezi to come to Benoni and take charge of the work whilst he went to Port Elizabeth. On 15 November 1944 Bhengu wrote to Buthelezi asking him to meet him at Glencoe so that he could go with him to Benoni. He pleaded with Buthelezi: *Abamhlophe bafike baphambanisa izinhloko zabazalwane baxova* (loosely translated: Please let's meet at Glencoe and go with me to Benoni because whites have caused confusion among the brethren).

On 6 January 1945 Bhengu again wrote to Buthelezi in Zulu: *Yenza konke mfowethu ungesabi ngoba abamhlophe bazobakhathaza abazalwane kakhulu, iso lakho lomoya nelenyama malibe kubo kakhulu abase Goli (Johannesburg) abazalwane* (loosly translated: In your power my brother, do not be afraid because whites (*missionaries*) will cause trouble for the brethren. Your spiritual and physical eye must be with the brethren in Johannesburg. Fear nothing.

5.10.1. American Missionaries leave the Assemblies of God – 1964

Bond [2000:192-193] who had been on the General Executive of the Assemblies of God since 1959 and later served as chairman of that Executive for 27 years, writes regarding the attitude of the American missionaries:

They wanted to have South Africa split up into regions, each with a regional superintendent. Every ministry would be confined to a particular region, would work under the direction of his regional superintendent, and could only minister outside the confines of his region if he had the specific consent of the regional superintendent concerned. In effect, they wanted Nicholas Bhengu to be confined to East London and to work under the direction of some missionary regional superintendent.

The Executive responded to this by telling the Americans that far from confining Nicholas Bhengu to a region in the Eastern Cape, we were convinced he had a ministry for all of Southern Africa. We said, "If Bhengu feels led to go and preach in Timbuktu, we'll take up a collection and send him there!" The audacity of these American demands astounded me. Even Morris Williams who spoke for the Springfield missionaries confessed that the American work represented less than five percent of our membership and that the African work numbered more than 90 percent. Yet they were pressing on us these outrageous demands. Of course their plan was to bring Nicholas Bhengu under their thumb. The same fate was intended for James Mullan and his white assemblies.

Bhengu did not want missionaries to play a leadership role in the black Assemblies, certainly not those that had been established by him and others that were under his oversight. They could only come by invitation. He wanted black work to be led by blacks. He did not accept white money to build churches because he wanted blacks to receive God's blessing for building their churches themselves. He would only use white money to preach the gospel. He also warned Phinda against working with some missionaries who were exploiting black workers (Interview Phinda and Ramoroa 2009:02 16).

5.10.2. Elim Pentecostal Church missionaries leave the Assemblies of God – 1977

Ron Gull, one of the Missionaries of the Elim Pentecostal Churches of England who worked with Phillips, wrote a document to explain the problems that led them to leave the Assemblies of God. The written submission was in response to my request. Gull's thesis

gives a comprehensive historical background of the structure and operations of the Assemblies of God that created fertile ground for divisions and splits in the movement.

Gull lists six factors which were paramount for their decision to leave. These might also have prompted others to leave the Assemblies of God.

- **The General Diversity Factor**

Blacks came from diverse African groups whilst the missionaries came from the Assemblies of God in the United State of America, the Assemblies of God of Great Britain and Ireland, the Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance in the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian Pentecostal Churches - each one of them with the mandate to plant churches.

- **The Expatriate Leadership Factor in the 'Mission' Churches.**

As the 'mission' churches matured, indigenous men and women leaders, some of stature, did emerge. Such was the pattern and vision of those days that they were given only limited authority with the overall power remaining in expatriate hands, perhaps for too long.

- **The Assemblies of God Constitution Factor.**

The amalgamation with the Assemblies of God had not been accepted without due consideration and early dissemination among the missionaries of Emmanuel Mission. In fact, the constitution of the Assemblies of God that was passed by the General Conference held at Shingwedzi and its subsequent amendment by the general conference at Witbank in 1955 and 1965 resulted in rather a rigid structure, quite different from that described in 1968.

- **The Back to God factor**

The immense success, under God, of the Back to God Crusade across the nation led by Nicholas Bhengu and others, brought hundreds of newly-formed assemblies into membership with the Assemblies of God. It was inevitable, given the charismatic character and the anointed ministries of such men, that these new assemblies should look to them for ongoing leadership. It was also perfectly natural that these

assemblies should be identified with the crusade that brought them into being even to bearing the name 'Back to God' rather than 'Assemblies of God'. It was obvious that the Back to God group would dominate the Africa section of the work and eventually gain recognition as the main evangelistic arm of that section of the Assemblies of God. It was inevitable too that it would later gain recognition as an official "Group" as allowed in the General Constitution, with its own individual Constitution, its own annual Conference and regular regional and national Conventions.

The 'mission' churches had no such coherent structure to warrant even an unofficial recognition as a 'Group' and were consequently merely regarded as Assemblies of Churches.

- **The Elim factor**

The financial policy of the Back to God movement became progressively more centralised, with local assembly funds being increasingly administered by the staff at the Central Office in Johannesburg, often with Nicholas Bhengu as a controlling signatory of their bank account. As this method of control expanded, doubtless in a worthy effort to combat financial irregularities, some 'mission' assemblies resisted it seeing it as a means of limiting their sovereignty, and a further erosion of the original administrative structure of the Assemblies of God. Some of the resentment was doubtless also due to the fact that this method was only instigated within the so-called 'Black' section of the work. Illustrative of the problem introduced by this control factor, was that experienced by the Waterval Boven assembly. The assembly had been established by an Emmanuel Mission worker, Pastor Luke Mjaji, in 1945, and had been nurtured by him from that time with regular visitation and "revival" meetings. Then, in 1975, a "Back to God" worker holding Assembly of God credentials, Pastor Ngubeni, was directed, supposedly by the African Executive, to take the leadership at nearby Belfast, possibly with a mandate to include Waterval Boven.

- **The 'mission' worker factor**

In the Northern Region there were problems of a very different nature. At Lenyenye, "mission" worker, Pastor Mabitsela, shared the pastoral duties with

another older worker named Malathie. In 1972, when tension was beginning to build up between the local Back to God workers and the mission sector, the African Executive visited Lenyenye and appointed Malatje as the official Pastor. This was done following a so-called 'election' at which even non-members were allegedly allowed to vote in order to marginalize the "Mission" assemblies. Mabitsela had been instrumental up to that time in organising the assembly membership in the erection of the new church building, which at that stage was at roof level. Consequently, when Malatje asked for the church plans, Mabitsela refused to part with them.

Gull assisted Mjaji's group when they decided to leave the Assemblies of God in 1977 to form the Emmanuel Assemblies. He reports:

Following a successful meeting of the Steering Committee, consisting of pastors Mabitsela, Seale, Mjaji, Mdaka, Mahisa and Mahlaule, work began on a suitable constitution. Elim missionaries Frieda Grossen with Ron and Betty Gull, met the Steering Committee in the then Elim Mission house in Hospital Street, Tzaneen, to help with the wording and drafts that finally culminated in what was felt to be a satisfactory document. By August the final draft was complete and in the hands of an attorney in White River for legal consideration.

The Emmanuel Assemblies were official constituted at a conference that took place on 15-16 October 1977 in Ka-Nyamazane, Nelspruit with the following ministers elected to the District Council:

District Chairman:	L. S. Mjaji	Deputy:	J. Mbunda
District Secretary:	M. Ngomane	Deputy:	J. Magagula
District Treasurer:	S. Mdaka	Deputy:	M. Mlambo
Council Member:	S.Khumalo	Deputies:	P. Mnisi and Z. Sibiya

5.10.3. Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada missionaries, as well as some white and black church leave the Assemblies of God -1981.

The departure of the Canadian missionaries, as well as some white and black churches, was precipitated by the amendment of section 5.2 of the property clause in the constitution. Bhengu, who had earlier lost one of his church buildings to a dissident group in Soweto, was eager to protect African church buildings on government-leased land. In his determination to have the constitutional amendment approved by the conference, Bhengu had asked Bond to provide him with his list of nominees for the executive. He then lobbied his African delegates to vote for Bond's nominees [Bond 2000:267 – 269].

5.10.4 The Coastal Assemblies leave the Assemblies of God - 1981

The Coastal Assemblies were a group of churches led by Mike Attlee, one of the leaders appointed by James Mullan as an apostle to lead a section of his work when he retired. In a document *History of the Coastal Assemblies of God* (<http://www.caog.org.za/hist.asp>) the leadership of the Coastal Assemblies of God present their reasons for leaving the Assemblies of God.

The final crunch however came in 1981 at a General Conference of the Assemblies of God when it was discovered that the black delegates had been lobbied for Bond's candidates, and that the outcome of the election for the executive would consequently be in their favour. This left people like Mike Attlee, Noel Scheepers and other important leaders of the Executive of the Assemblies of God without support. Their main concern was the change in property rights amendment in the Constitution which read:

If a property movable or immovable, such as a church building, minister's house or anything else is registered in the name of the Assemblies of God and held under the General Constitution of the Assemblies of God and not under a local assembly Constitution, such property, movable or immovable, is deemed to be held by the Assemblies of God and must continue to be until the General Executive might decide otherwise, etc.

Bhengu's lobbying his people to vote for Bond's nominees led to unhappiness among Ennis's group of Assemblies. Ennis then led the exit from the Assemblies of God. He was joined by Attlee's Coastal Assemblies of God to present their reason for leaving the Assemblies of God.

5.11. BHENGU'S LEADERSHIP'S STYLE

Leadership is a complex concept on which numerous volumes have been written by experts in the field: academics and those who occupy leadership positions in business, politics, church etcetera. Leadership is displayed at different levels, macro and micro situations. Bhengu led both at macro and micro levels. He served on the General Executive of the Assemblies of God almost from the time he joined the Assemblies of God, which is before he established the Back to God Crusade.

It is not easy to pin Bhengu down to any particular leadership style. Bhengu was a Zulu man born at Entumeni outside Eshowe, the colonial capital of KwaZulu (now KwaZulu-Natal) which is in the heart of Zulu culture. His upbringing by Christian parents under the stern discipline of Norwegian Missionaries also had some influence on he how as a Christian minister, led, motivated and directed his people and influenced those outside his work and the Assemblies of God.

5.11.1. Leadership theories

A brief overview of some leadership theories is essential. The following concepts will assist in assessing or determining Bhengu's leadership style:

5.11.1.1. Blanchard's leadership theories

Blanchard (2007:99) in his book *Leading at a Higher Level* deals with situational leadership. He proposes three skills that are essential for a situational leader: diagnosis, flexibility, and partnering for performance. Diagnosis relates to competence - the sum of knowledge and skills an individual brings to a goal or task. The second aspect of diagnosis is commitment; this refers to the person's motivation and confidence about a goal or task.

Bhengu met all three requirements. He was able to diagnose a situation, identifying what was needed for evangelism and church planting. He was flexible to some extent although he could sometimes be quite rigid. He would never bend or be moved from what he perceived to be his God-given mission, no matter what. He partnered with church donors and other churches, political and traditional leaders to accomplish his goal for the sake of the gospel but would not partner with anyone just for the sake of partnership.

5.11.1.2. Avery's leadership theories

Avery (2004:17-26) focuses on what he calls Leadership Paradigms. He names four such paradigms: classical, transactional, visionary and organic. Avery distinguishes each of the paradigms as follows: (1) Classical leadership refers to dominance by a pre-eminent person or an 'elite' group of people. This individual or group commands or manoeuvres others to act toward a goal, which may or may not be explicitly stated. (2) Transactional leadership refers to leaders who view followers as individuals, with more focus on their skills, needs and motives. (3) Visionary Leaders provide vision and leadership. They capture the hearts and minds of their followers with their images of some desired future state. (4) Organic leadership is different: For many people, the organic paradigm represents a radical change of thinking, about leadership, followership and the traditional nature of organizations. It involves letting go of conventional notions of control, order and hierarchy, replacing them with trust and an acceptance of continual change and even chaos and respect for diverse members of the organization. In organic organizations, the members are expected to be self-managing and self-leading.

5.11.1.3. Bhengu's leadership style

Bhengu's characteristic leadership style is evaluated below against Avery's paradigms of leadership.

- **Classical Leadership**

Bhengu exercised a dominating leadership style when he was determined to achieve certain goals, especially during the early years of his ministry. He had full command and control of others to act toward set goals. He would move his ministers or evangelists from one place to another at very short notice by telegram. This was done when a tent had to be brought down and someone was needed to

come and take charge of the work and help plant a church whilst he himself moved on.

- **Transactional Leadership**

Bhengu used this kind of leadership style quite often. He transferred a minister from one place to another based on his skills, needs, and spiritual giftedness and the needs of an assembly. A minister was also transferred when his gift(s) seemed to have served the current local church, or the minister was experiencing some problems at his station.

- **Visionary Leadership**

Bhengu was a visionary. He had received a mandate from God to preach the gospel to all peoples. The vision that commanded him to go from Cape to Cairo, literally consumed him. He provided vision for the Back to God Crusade team, the women and the churches to give to God's mission to win Africa back to God. He captured the hearts and minds of the people by his single-minded goal to evangelize the continent of Africa and beyond. The war cry, 'Africa Back to God, Africa for Jesus - Jesus for Africa' was written on his Back to God Crusade trucks and tents.

- **Organic Leadership**

Bhengu did not totally relinquish control of his churches; he did however allow churches to conduct their own affairs as best they could under the oversight of local leadership: elders and deacons - or church committees where there were no elders or deacons. Local leadership worked under the supervision of District Councils. District Councils did not lord it over the assemblies as strict policies and procedures were to be followed to safeguard the integrity of churches and the good name of the Assemblies of God.

5.11.1.4. Bhengu's leadership qualifications

Bhengu was a great spiritual leader. The spiritual was his focus as evangelist, church planter, apostle, prophet and pastor. Sanders in his book *Spiritual Leadership* (1967,

1980, 1994) sets out a range of qualifications needed for Christian service. Only a few are selected to assist in considering Bhengu's leadership qualifications.

- **Mental qualifications**

A leader must be prudent, a person with sound judgment.... As to behaviour he must be respectable. A well-ordered life is the fruit of a well-ordered mind. Bhengu was certainly self-disciplined and well-ordered. Although he did not have a university degree(which he had set out to achieve by going to Taylor University in the USA), he was self-taught. He developed himself intellectually, and was able to interact with all men at all levels of social, business, political and academic life. He had a sound mind. 'For God give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self discipline' (2 Tm 1:7). He ended up being appointed visiting professor at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, England.

- **Domestic qualifications**

Paul admonishes a married leader to 'manage his own family well and to see that his children obey him with proper respect' (2 Tm 3:4).

Bhengu's two daughters, Waxy and Dawn, described a cordial homely relationship with both their parents. There were family rules 'Mylet was a wonderful woman. She loved reading magazines and she taught us to work and pray together. We wrote to our Dad to encourage him. We all ate together. We would go into his bedroom to share with him. He instilled values in us not to owe anyone. Whilst he was away on ministry Mylet would maintain the rule.'

- **Vision**

Sanders writes. 'Vision involves foresight as well as insight. President McKinley's reputation for greatness rested in part on his ability to put an ear on the ground and listen for things coming. He turned his listening to vision. He saw what lay ahead.' Bhengu saw much further than his contemporaries. For example, although

he did not participate in political activism, he prepared his people for change. He set up bursaries for the youth so that when democracy arrived they would be ready to take up positions of leadership.

- **Humility**

According to Sanders 'humility is the hallmark of the spiritual leader.' Christ told his disciples to turn away from the pompous attitudes of the oriental despots and instead take on the lowly bearing of the servant (Mt 20:25-27). As in ancient days, so today humility is least admired in political and business circles. But no bother! The spiritual leader will choose the hidden path of sacrificial service and approval of the Lord over the flamboyant self-advertising of the world. Dr Gamedze states categorically in an interview (2003.10.18), 'Bhengu was not a show-off person'.

Bhengu was quick to apologise and ask for forgiveness if he had wronged anyone. He was also willing to forgive those who had wronged him (see the letter he wrote to me in 1974).

- **Self Sacrifice**

'Scars are the authenticating marks of faithful discipleship and true spiritual leadership,' says Sanders. Bhengu bore scars of hard work, traversing the country in all kinds of weather. He bore scars of poverty and hunger, of being misunderstood, misconstrued and misinterpreted.

- **Loneliness**

'Because the leader must always be ahead of his followers, he lives with loneliness. Though he may be friendly, there are areas of life where he must walk alone.' Bhengu was often lonely. At times he would rise in the middle of the night to drive alone from one city to another. He did this in 1956 when he left Nelspruit in the middle of the night and drove to East London.

- **Rejection**

'The leader who follows high spiritual standards may find himself following his Master on the pathway of rejection, for "he came unto his own and his own received him not"(Jn 1:11). Bhengu suffered rejection at the hands of his original church. The Lutheran Church expelled him from their mission station when he was saved and again expelled him in later years when he returned to the Mission to build a home (see Funeral arrangements). This kind of rejection was probably most hurtful:

I have lived being misunderstood, misinterpreted, misconstrued and abused by reckless men from all sections and sides. These were all very good for my moulding up as well as humiliation. They were practical lessons to prove theories. They helped to keep me low, selfless and self-effaced. I could not ride a high horse after all my success for they were all His. I was glad when no street, road or avenue in all the townships was named after me. My life was buried with Christ and although I received great honours from the leaders of various countries yet I was never elated to feel that I was above my fellowmen in the street. I am going to lay myself down in death in real equality with all men of low estate. Men who never went to school, never preached to thousands in Africa and overseas. I feel I am worthless. I feel I am nothing. I feel I am nobody but God took my life and used it for His own pleasure as useless as I was. It was all for His honour and glory(see Farewell Message to the Church s.a)Appendix 12.

5.12. THE BACK TO GOD TEACHING TEAM

To safeguard his work, Bhengu established the Back to God Teaching Team. He summoned 24 of his trusted ministers and trained them over two weeks in East London. Among others, their duties were to ordain elders and deacons and supervise Assemblies, District Council Offices and Back to God property. In addition to appointing elders and deacons, the team had to deal with conflicts in churches.

The Teaching Team was not an elected body but was appointed by Bhengu himself. The Teaching Team was charged with the teaching of Bhengu's doctrine. He did not want to leave this most important aspect of the work in the hands of an elected body such as the Executive that might include people who were not sympathetic to his vision. After his death the team would identify other ministers to fill vacant positions. This strategy was based on 2 Tim: 2: 2, a multiplication strategy according to Paul's teaching. Bhengu called his team 'Bhengu's Timothy's'. This team was ordained at the workers' conference uMlazi, Durban in 1077. At the same conference he ordained certain workers who were seconded to other organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ (Dan Lephoko and Siphon Bhengu). He then commissioned them to go to the Assemblies.

Below is the Teaching Team organogram and accompanying responsibilities.

J Donda

