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NICHOLAS BHEKINKOSI HEPWORTH
BHENGU'S LASTING LEGACY:
A study of the life and work of one of Africa's greatest
pioneers

By

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DECLARATION

I Daniel Simon Billy Lephoko, do hereby declare that the publication submitted for the doctoral degree has not previously been submitted to this university or any other tertiary institution for such a doctoral degree.

I further declare that the publication is my own work and that I be recognised as the copyright holder of the thesis.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D S B Lephoko', written over a horizontal line.

28 April 2010

D S B Lephoko

DEDICATION

The study is dedicated to:

- Firstly and foremost to my wife Aggie and our children, especially my son Kenneth Winston Sikhumbuzo who, in spite of me being unable to spend quality time with him during my studies, still loves me.
- Waxy, Mvusi, and Dawn, Bhengu and Mylet's children, who generously agreed to be interviewed and provided three family photo albums for the research.
- Aaron Musa Shongwe and his wife Linda (my spiritual children) for transporting me to Durban (3 times), Swaziland (once), Entumeni (once) to conduct interviews in their car without charge; I thank you son and Makoti for your generosity.
- The Mothers' Movement, the women who annually generate millions of Rand to fund the Back to God Crusade for the realization of Bhengu's vision to preach the gospel from Cape to Cairo.
- Researchers and church leaders interested in effective strategies used by Bhengu in the development of an organization that continues to grow and still touches many lives, twenty five years after his death.
- Mrs D D Gumede widow of Alfred Gumede a friend, colleague and one of Bhengu's early associates who joined the Emmanuel Mission and Assemblies of God with Bhengu. The study is also dedicated to their children.
- The children of Gideon and Virginia Buthelezi, one of Bhengu's early associates. Buthelezi was the first person to support Bhengu financially when Bhengu set out to Port Elizabeth in 1945. It is also dedicated to their children especially to Bongani and Thelma who agreed to be interviewed and provided correspondence between Bhengu and their father dating back to 1938.
- Professor Sibusiso Bhengu, son of Jeconia Bhengu's elder brother for agreeing to be interviewed on two separate occasions.
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**NICHOLAS BHEKINKOSI HEPWORTH BHENGU'S LASTING
LEGACY:
A study of the life and work of one of Africa's greatest
pioneers**

A number of articles in books and newspapers have been written on the life and work of Nicholas Bhengu, in the past four decades. However, to date no focused academic research had been devoted to his life, his mission, his message and his influence in South Africa as well as beyond the borders of South Africa.

The different chapters in the thesis focus on Bhengu's life, his call to ministry and the role he played in South Africa, in rest of Africa, and beyond the borders of our continent. Although Bhengu did not overtly address political issues by supporting either the liberation movements nor the Nationalist Government, the impact of his work was felt by both to the extent that liberation movements such as ANC criticised him for not lending his public support to the struggle they waged against apartheid. On the other hand, the South African government also tried to co-opt him as an ally of their socio-political ideology. The government disappointed by Bhengu's lack of support for its political programme, became suspicious of his intentions and set the Special Branch of the South African Police to monitor his movements, teaching and preaching.

Bhengu ministered during a tumultuous period in the history of South Africa which called for people as well as the faith communities to take sides for or against the system of apartheid. Bhengu's teaching and preaching had a great impact on the social and political psyche of the people in South Africa. Through his Back to God Crusade he, with great effectiveness, called people to return to God. Thousands devoted their lives to God. Wherever Bhengu conducted his crusades, crime went down significantly, with criminals turning in their weapons of trade and returning stolen goods to the police. He also performed spectacular healings and miracles.

Apart from his evangelistic campaigns, Bhengu planted churches, established a formidable women's ministry that to this day continues to raise millions of Rand to fund the Back to God Crusade. The Youth Ministry provides bursaries for young people to study in any field of their choice. Bhengu's goal for providing these bursaries was to empower a new generation to contribute to the development of their country. He also established self-governing, self-supporting

and self-propagating churches, at a time when Black Churches were dependent on handouts from missionary sending agencies.

The study finally evaluates the contribution and lasting legacy of Bhengu: his example, his missionary endeavours, his preaching and church planting efforts, his socio-political involvement, and his leadership. The strategies that he employed to building a cohesive and successful movement – the Back to God/Assemblies of God Movement – receive special attention. The impact of the movement is still felt in South Africa and the neighbouring countries, Swaziland, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, twenty five years after his death. There is every reason to consider Nicholas Bhengu to be the Billy Graham of Africa.



KEY TERMS

Africa

Apartheid

Assemblies of God

Back to God/Assemblies of God Movement

Church Planting

Church Struggle

Communism

Crusades

Ecumenism

Evangelism

Maxism

Mission

Missionaries

Reconstruction and Development

South Africa

Theology

| | |
|--|-----------|
| DECLARATION..... | i |
| DEDICATION | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| SUMMARY | iv |
| KEY TERMS | vi |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | vii |
| | |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1. RELEVANCE OF STUDY | 1 |
| 1.2. RESEARCH GOAL | 2 |
| 1.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | 2 |
| 1.4. PARTICIPANT OBSERVER | 3 |
| 1.5. DEFINITION OF TERMS | 4 |
| 1.5.1. Baptism of the Holy Spirit | 5 |
| 1.5.2. Contextualisation | 5 |
| 1.5.3. Culture | 5 |
| 1.5.4. Diakonia | 6 |
| 1.5.5. Ethics | 6 |
| 1.5.6. Evangelism | 6 |
| 1.5.7. Key Leadership Factor | 6 |
| 1.5.8. King and Church | 7 |
| 1.5.9. Kerygma | 7 |
| 1.5.10. Koinonia | 7 |
| 1.5.11. Mission | 7 |
| 1.5.12. Pentecostal Mission | 8 |
| 1.5.13. Spiritual Leadership | 8 |
| 1.5.14. Theology | 8 |
| 1.5.15. The Church | 8 |
| 1.6. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS | 9 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 2: SOUTH AFRICA, 1948 – 1985. THE CONTEXT OF BHENGU’S LIFE AND WORK | 12 |
| 2.1. INTRODUCTION: TURBULENT TIMES FOR SOUTH AFRICA | 12 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 2.2. THE BIRTH OF TWO POLITICAL FORCES: THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND THE NATIONAL PARTY | 12 |
| 2.2.1. The Founding of the African National Congress (1912) | 12 |
| 2.2.2. The Founding of the National Party (1914)..... | 14 |
| 2.3. THE NATIONAL PARTY ASSUMES POWER (1948) | 15 |
| 2.4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES: POVERTY AND DISRUPTION OF FAMILY LIFE.. | 19 |
| 2.5. REACTION AGAINST APARTHEID | 20 |
| 2.5.1. Growing opposition..... | 20 |
| 2.5.2. Sharpville | 20 |
| 2.5.3. Rivonia Treason Trial | 21 |
| 2.5.3.1. The State Case | 22 |
| 2.5.3.2. Mandela's Defence | 22 |
| 2.5.4. Soweto – 1976 Student Riots | 23 |
| 2.6. MARXISM AND COMMUNISM | 24 |
| 2.7. THE STATE BECOMES MORE REPRESSIVE | 26 |
| 2.8. POLITICAL RE-ENGINEERING | 26 |
| 2.9. THE CHURCHES AND APARTHEID | 27 |
| 2.9.1. A challenge to the Christians: the role of the churches in times of violence | 27 |
| 2.9.2. The attitude on race of the early settlers | 28 |
| 2.9.3. The church's response to apartheid | 30 |
| 2.9.3.1. Churches divided on apartheid | 30 |
| 2.9.3.2. The Afrikaans Churches | 32 |
| 2.9.3.3. The DRC defends apartheid on theological grounds | 33 |
| 2.9.3.4. The English Mainline Churches | 34 |
| 2.9.3.5. Pentecostal and Charismatic churches | 35 |
| 2.9.4. Church initiatives to address apartheid | 38 |
| 2.9.4.1. The Cottesloe Consultation, 1961 | 38 |
| 2.9.4.2. The Durban Congress on Mission and Evangelism, 1973 | 39 |
| 2.9.4.3. The South African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA) 1979 | 40 |
| 2.9.4.4. The National Initiative for Reconciliation, 1985 | 41 |
| 2.9.4.5. The Kairos Document, 1985 | 42 |
| 2.10. NICHOLAS BHENGU'S EFFORTS TO STEER THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AWAY FROM APARTHEID | 44 |
| CHAPTER 3: THE MAN NICHOLAS BHENGU | 47 |
| 3.1. INTRODUCTION | 47 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 3.2. BHENGU'S ROOTS AND PLACE OF BIRTH – THE ENTUMENI LUTHERAN MISSION STATION | 48 |
| 3.2.1. Bhengu's Family Tree | 49 |
| 3.2.2. Christian Family Background | 51 |
| 3.2.3. The Missionary Founder of Entumeni (Gleaned from my visit to the Lutheran Museum on 17 January 2009) | 52 |
| 3.3. BHENGU'S EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND | 54 |
| 3.3.1. Bhengu's theological training | 55 |
| 3.4. BHENGU SEEKS EMPLOYMENT | 56 |
| 3.5. BHENGU'S CONVERSION | 56 |
| 3.6. THE LUTHERAN CHURCH REJECTS BHENGU'S NEW FOUND FAITH | 57 |
| 3.7. BHENGU'S FIRST ASSOCIATES..... | 58 |
| 3.7.1. Job Y Chiliza – The Man who Discipled Bhengu | 59 |
| 3.7.2. Alfred Lawrence Gumede | 60 |
| 3.7.3. Gideon Buthelezi | 62 |
| 3.8. BHENGU MARRIES MYLET NDLELA | 63 |
| 3.8.1. Bhengu and Mylet's Children | 64 |
| 3.8.2. Bhengu's Second Marriage to Nokwethemba Mthethwa | 65 |
| 3.8.3. Relationships in the family | 66 |
| 3.8.4. Money Management in the home and church | 66 |
| 3.9. MYLET'S FUNERAL | 67 |
| 3.9.1. A Valediction to a departed friend – Mylet Bhengu | 67 |
| 3.9.2. Interpreting the Statements in the Valediction | 69 |
| 3.10. BHENGU'S HOME GOING, GROOTE SCHUUR..... | 72 |
| 3.10.1. A Sad Good - bye | 72 |
| 3.10.2. Bhengu's Funeral Arrangement | 72 |
| 3.10.3. An analysis of Bhengu's funeral instructions | 74 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 4: BHENGU'S MESSAGE – HIS PREACHING AND THEOLOGY | |
| BEHIND HIS PREACHING | 77 |
| 4.1. INTRODUCTION | 77 |
| 4.2. BHENGU'S VISION AND CALL TO MINISTRY | 78 |
| 4.2.1. Bhengu's call to Ministry | 78 |
| 4.2.2. An analysis of Bhengu's vision and call to ministry | 79 |
| 4.2.2.1. Authorisation by the Lord to serve him | 79 |
| 4.2.2.2. Nationalities of people in the vision | 79 |



| | |
|--|------------|
| 4.2.2.3. The cry of their hearts | 80 |
| 4.2.2.4. The Lord showed me “an open Bible” | 80 |
| 4.2.2.5. The Lord’s command “I wish you to do this” | 80 |
| 4.2.3. Biblical Motifs: Bhengu’s call compared to the call of Moses and that of the Apostle Paul | 81 |
| 4.2.3.1. Moses’ call to deliver the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt | 82 |
| 4.2.3.2. The call of Paul | 82 |
| 4.3. BHENGU’S THEOLOGICAL ROOTS AND TRAINING FOR MINISTRY | 84 |
| 4.3.1. The influence of Lutheran Theology on Bhengu | 84 |
| 4.3.2. The influence of Evangelical Theology on Bhengu | 86 |
| 4.3.3. The influence of Pentecostalism on Bhengu | 86 |
| 4.4. BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT | 87 |
| 4.4.1. The Evangelical view on Spirit Baptism | 88 |
| 4.4.2. Torrey breaks ranks with Evangelicals on the issue of Spirit Baptism | 89 |
| 4.4.3. The Pentecostal view on Spirit Baptism | 91 |
| 4.4.3.1. Agreement among Pentecostals | 92 |
| 4.4.3.2. Gee on Spirit Baptism | 93 |
| 4.4.3.3. Du Plessis on Spirit Baptism | 95 |
| 4.5. BHENGU’S DECLARATION OF FAITH | 95 |
| 4.6. BHENGU IS BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT | 98 |
| 4.7. BHENGU’S TEACHING AND PREACHING | 102 |
| 4.7.1. Centrality of the cross in Bhengu’s preaching | 103 |
| 4.7.2. Perfectionism | 105 |
| 4.7.3. Bhengu on healing | 106 |
| 4.7.4. War on sin and crime | 106 |
| 4.7.5. Bhengu on superstitions | 107 |
| 4.7.6. Bhengu understood the psychological and emotional make – up of his audience | 108 |
| 4.7.7. Bhengu was a great story teller | 109 |
| 4.8. BHENGU PREACHED AND TAUGHT UNDER THE ANOINTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT | 109 |
| CHAPTER 5: BHENGU THE EVANGELIST AND CHURCH PLANTER | 113 |
| 5.1. INTRODUCTION: BHENGU’S UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION AND EVANGELISM..... | 113 |
| 5.1.1. Missio Dei and Missio ecclesia | 113 |
| 5.1.2. Biblical Missionary task | 114 |
| 5.1.3. Bhengu the Missionary | 115 |
| 5.2. BHENGU THE EVANGELIST | 119 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 5.2.1. Bhengu preaches for the Church of the Nazarene in Swaziland | 120 |
| 5.2.2. Bhengu preaches for the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Phokeng Rustenburg | 121 |
| 5.2.3. Bhengu preaches on the Mines – East Rand | 122 |
| 5.2.4. Bhengu goes to Port Elizabeth | 122 |
| 5.2.4.1. Bhengu expands crusade to Korsten | 123 |
| 5.2.5. A Macedonian call for Bhengu to go to East London | 124 |
| 5.3. BHENGU, THE CHURCH PLANTER: HOW BHENGU ESTABLISHED THE BACK TO GOD CRUSADE | 125 |
| 5.3.1. Bhengu organizes and sets objectives for the Back to God Crusade | 127 |
| 5.3.2. Constitution of the Back to God Crusade | 127 |
| 5.3.3. Regional Teams and Team Leaders | 129 |
| 5.3.4. Bhengu sets qualifications for Evangelists..... | 132 |
| 5.4. WOMEN FUND BACK TO GOD CRUSADE | 134 |
| 5.4.1. The Back to God Crusade Annual Financial Audit presented at Mothers' Easter Conventions | 137 |
| 5.4.2. White Assemblies partner with Bhengu in spreading the gospel through financial giving | 137 |
| 5.4.3. Bhengu reports to donors | 142 |
| 5.4.3.1. Bhengu reports from Port Elizabeth 1948 | 144 |
| 5.4.3.2. The Eshowe report 23 November 1969 | 146 |
| 5.4.3.3. The Msinga report August 1970..... | 147 |
| 5.4.3.4. The Lesotho report | 148 |
| 5.4.3.5. Mylet Report to donors | 149 |
| 5.5. PASSION AND COMPASSION IN BHENGU'S MESSAGE | 149 |
| 5.6. THE IMPACT OF BHENGU'S MESSAGE | 151 |
| 5.6.1. Changed lives | 151 |
| 5.6.2. Bhengu's Healings and Miracles Ministry | 153 |
| 5.6.2.1. How Bhengu's healings and miracles ministry started | 153 |
| 5.6.2.2. The healing of a woman with hunch back in Duncan Village East London – 1951 | 154 |
| 5.6.2.3. The healing of a man brought in a wheelbarrow in Nelspruit – 1956 | 154 |
| 5.6.2.4. Healing of a crippled man in Nigeria | 155 |
| 5.6.2.5. The dramatic – healing of a demon possessed girl | 156 |
| 5.7. CHURCHES FOR AFRICA | 158 |
| 5.7.1. What is the church? | 158 |
| 5.7.2. How Bhengu became a church planter | 161 |
| 5.7.3. Bhengu's Strategy to build churches | 162 |



| | |
|---|-----|
| 5.7.4. Bhengu's first Church: Swaziland | 163 |
| 5.7.5. Bhengu builds a big church in Duncan Village 1957 | 163 |
| 5.7.6. Bhengu builds a bigger Church in Mdantsane 1984 | 164 |
| 5.8. BHENGU AND THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD | 165 |
| 5.8.1. Assemblies of God historical and structural formation | 165 |
| 5.8.2. Missionaries decide to form a South African Assemblies of God | 166 |
| 5.9. EVALUATING BHENGU'S CONTRIBUTION | 168 |
| 5.9.1. Hesselgrave's 'Pauline' cycle of church planting | 168 |
| 5.9.2. Bhengu against the grid of "The Seven I's" | 171 |
| 5.9.3. The 'three selves' | 173 |
| 5.9.3.1. Self Governing churches (Church Government) | 174 |
| 5.9.3.2. Self supporting churches | 181 |
| 5.9.3.3. Self propagating churches | 182 |
| 5.10. BHENGU AND EXPATRIATE MISSIONARIES | 183 |
| 5.10.1. American Missionaries leave the Assemblies of God - 1964 | 185 |
| 5.10.2. Elim Pentecostal Church missionaries leave the Assemblies of God - 1977 | 186 |
| 5.10.3. Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada missionaries, as well as some white and black churches leave the Assemblies of God - 1981..... | 190 |
| 5.10.4. The Coastal Assemblies leave the Assemblies of God - 1981 | 190 |
| 5.11. BHENGU'S LEADERSHIP STYLE | 191 |
| 5.11.1. Leadership theories..... | 191 |
| 5.11.1.1. Blanchard's leadership theories | 191 |
| 5.11.1.2. Avery's leadership theories | 192 |
| 5.11.1.3 Bhengu's leadership style | 192 |
| 5.11.1.4. Bhengu's leadership qualifications | 193 |
| 5.12. THE BACK TO GOD TEACHING TEAM | 196 |

CHAPTER 6: BHENGU'S PROPHETIC ROLE: HIS SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLITICAL STANCE AND PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES **199**

| | |
|---|-----|
| 6.1. INTRODUCTION: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION | 199 |
| 6.2. THE PERENNIAL DEBATE: SPIRITUAL GOSPEL VERSUS SOCIAL GOSPEL | 201 |
| 6.3. BHENGU AND POLITICS | 206 |
| 6.3.1. Bhengu criticised for his non party political stance | 208 |
| 6.3.1.1. Bhengu criticised by Chief Albert Luthuli – former President of the ANC and Nobel Prize winner | 209 |
| 6.3.1.2. Bhengu criticised by Professor Sibusiso Bhengu (his nephew) | 209 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 6.3.1.3. Bhengu criticised by Lawrence Tutu (his church member) | 210 |
| 6.4. BHENGU'S SOCIO POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ON CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICA | 213 |
| 6.4.1. <i>Daily Dispatch 1966</i> : Not enough changes in South Africa | 213 |
| 6.4.2. <i>Daily Dispatch 1966</i> : Bhengu on race | 214 |
| 6.4.3. <i>Daily Dispatch 1966</i> : Bhengu on separate development | 214 |
| 6.4.4. <i>Daily Dispatch 1966</i> : Bhengu on white responsibility | 215 |
| 6.4.5. Bhengu's message to political leaders | 217 |
| 6.4.5.1. Bhengu preaches to the ANC | 217 |
| 6.4.5.2. Bhengu preaches to King Sobhuza II of Swaziland | 218 |
| 6.5. BHENGU A PERCEIVED AS A THREAT BOTH TO THE STATE AND TO BLACK REDICALS | 218 |
| 6.6. BHENGU'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.... | 219 |
| 6.6.1. Bhengu and Socialism | 219 |
| 6.6.2. Bhengu develops future leaders through education | 221 |
| 6.6.3. Bhengu trains women in self – reliance | 221 |
| 6.6.4. Bhengu develops church leaders | 223 |

**CHAPTER 7: BHENGU AS AN ECUMENICAL FIGURE: RELATIONSHIP WITH
OTHER CHURCH DENOMINATIONS 227**

| | |
|--|-----|
| 7.1. INTRODUCTION | 227 |
| 7.2. ECUMENISM: A WORLD WIDE PHENOMENON | 227 |
| 7.3. THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES IN ECUMENISM | 230 |
| 7.4. BHENGU STRADDLED THE PROTESTANT, EVANGELICAL AND PENTECOSTAL DIVIDE.. | 232 |
| 7.5. BHENGU SUPPORTED ECUMENICAL INITIATIVES | 232 |
| 7.5.1. Africa Enterprise | 233 |
| 7.5.2. Campus Crusade for Christ SA | 234 |
| 7.5.3. Africa Co-operative Action Trust – Food Faith and Work for Africa | 235 |
| 7.6. FEDERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF SOUTH AFRICA | 235 |
| 7.7. BHENGU'S FAREWELL MESSAGE: A CALL FOR UNITY | 235 |
| 7.8. A CALL FOR PRAYER FOR AFRICA AND ITS LEADERS | 236 |
| 7.9. TO THE VERY END, AN ECUMENIST WITH AN EVANGELICAL HEART | 236 |

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION – BHENGU'S LASTING LEGACY 243

| | |
|--|-----|
| 8.1. HYPOTHESIS REVISITED | 243 |
| 8.2. BHENGU, CALLED AS A WITNESS IN A TURBULENT TIME | 243 |
| 8.3. THE MAN, NICHOLAS BHENGU | 245 |
| 8.4. BHENGU, THE PREACHER | 246 |



| | |
|--|-----|
| 8.5. BHENGU, THE EVANGELIST – THE “BILLY GRAHAM OF AFRICA” | 246 |
| 8.6. BHENGU, THE STRATEGIST | 249 |
| 8.7. BHENGU, THE PROPHET | 251 |
| 8.8. BHENGU, THE ECUMENIST | 253 |
| 8.9. BHENGU, THE LEADER | 254 |
| 8.10. BHENGU, A SERVANT LEADER | 257 |
| | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 260 |
| ANNOTATED PHOTOCOPIES OF PRIMARY SOURCES | 270 |
| PERSONAL INTERVIEWS RECORDED ON CASSETTE TAPES | 274 |
| TELEPHONIC INTERVIEWS | 278 |
| WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS | 279 |
| BHENGU’S TAPED SERMONS | 280 |
| GLOSSARY | 281 |
| APPENDIXES | 283 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. RESEARCH GOAL

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

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

1.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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

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

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

1.4. PARTICIPANT OBSERVER

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

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

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

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

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

To Dan Lepoko (sic)

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

With warm greetings

John Bond, September 2003

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

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

1.5. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are used in the study:

1.5.1. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

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

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

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

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

1.5.2. Contextualisation

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

1.5.3. Culture

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

1.5.4. Diakonia

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

1.5.5. Ethics

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

1.5.6. Evangelism

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

1.5.7. Key Leadership Factor

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

1.5.8. King and Church

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

1.5.9. Kerygma

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

1.5.10. Koinonia

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

1.5.11. Mission

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

1.5.12. Pentecostal Mission

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

1.5.13. Spiritual Leadership

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

1.5.14. Theology

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

1.5.15. The Church

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

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

1.6. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The study consists of eight chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

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

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

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

Chapter 3: The man Bhengu

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

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

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

Chapter 5: Bhengu: Missionary, Evangelist and Church Planter

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 8: Conclusion - Bhengu's Lasting Legacy

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

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

2.1. INTRODUCTION: TURBULENT TIMES FOR SOUTH AFRICA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Included are the key phrases:

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

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

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

2.2.2. The Founding of the National Party (1914)

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

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

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

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

2.3. THE NATIONAL PARTY ASSUMES POWER (1948)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5. REACTION AGAINST APARTHEID

2.5.1. Growing opposition

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

2.5.2. Sharpeville

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5.3. Rivonia Treason Trial:

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

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

2.5.3.1. The State's Case

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

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

2.5.3.2. Mandela's Defence

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

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

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

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

2.5.4. Soweto 1976: Student Riots

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.6. MARXISM AND COMMUNISM

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

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

Marx declared:

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

With regards to communism Marx said:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.7. THE STATE BECOMES MORE REPRESSIVE

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

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

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

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

2.8. POLITICAL RE-ENGINEERING

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

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

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

2.9. THE CHURCHES AND APARTHEID

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.9.2. The attitude on race, of the early settlers

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

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

Included in the charter was the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.9.3. The Churches' response to apartheid

2.9.3.1. Churches divided on apartheid

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

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

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

Source: Kritzing, 1984:9

2.9.3.2. The Afrikaans Churches

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

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

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

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

2.9.3.3. The DRC defends apartheid on theological grounds

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.9.3.4. The English Mainline Churches

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.9.3.5. Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.9.4. Church initiatives to address apartheid

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

2.9.4.1. The Cottesloe Consultation, 1961

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

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

The conference issued the following statement:

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

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

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

2.9.4.2. The Durban Congress on Mission and Evangelism, 1973

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.9.4.4. The National Initiative for Reconciliation, 1985

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.9.4.5. The Kairos Document, 1985

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

The preface to the statements reads:

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

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

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

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

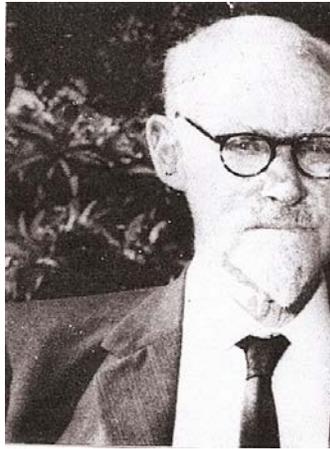
- **Church theology.** The Kairos document recognises the fact that English churches criticised the apartheid system, albeit “in a limited, guarded and cautious way ...”

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

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

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

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



Missionary HC Phillip



Mrs Jean Phillip

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 3

THE MAN NICHOLAS BHENGU

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Nicholas B Hepworth Bhengu was one of the most prominent church leaders in Africa: an evangelist, prophet, teacher and church planter. *Time Magazine* described Bhengu as the Black Billy Graham of Africa. In an interview I conducted with Dr Sam Hynd, a missionary medical practitioner with the Church of the Nazarene in Swaziland, Dr Hynd had this to say about Bhengu:

So naturally I got to know him and I was impressed, not by his preaching, but the manner and the way he spoke. This man was a powerful black with a real message and one that was powerful; so I was impressed many times by that.

Dr Hynd also said that he missed Bhengu when he was not invited to their youth camps.

“Bhengu was powerful, spiritually and in every other way as a person, his personality, his voice; he was commanding and was sensible in what he said, so he could not help but make an impression in widening his ministry”

Lawrence Tutu, a former journalist with *Daily Dispatch* in East London, in his book *Twilight of the Struggle* [1986:112] writes:

History has a way of endowing societies with men who are a notch above the ordinary folk. The history of religion is no exception. And so it came to pass that the South African world of black theology was blessed with one Nicholas Bhenkinkosi Hepworth Bhengu – a towering religious revolutionary who carved for himself a neat saintly niche within the parameters of human failings. When the old Pied Piper of the pulpit was laid to rest at his Pietermaritzburg home a few weeks ago at the ripe old age of 76, it brought to a close the fading reign of an evangelical enigma.

Nicholas Bhengu had all the material and psychological rearing that was to catapult him into his role as an international evangelist with the stature of a homespun Billy Graham: the son of an authoritarian Lutheran Pastor whose pronounced limp was goaded him to devise unorthodox means of not sparing the rod; a strict Zulu tradition of authority; and a feature that is never strange to black rural families – poverty. “I don’t like to see people wasting food and money. If they don’t know what to do with it they must give it to the needy and hungry,” he once said with his mind on his boyhood days when he did not have sugar to sprinkle over his porridge and used the juice squeezed from sugar cane stalks.

3.2. BHENGU’S ROOTS AND PLACE OF BIRTH – THE ENTUMENI LUTHERAN MISSION STATION

Bhengu was born of Christian parents on 5 September 1909 at Entumeni, a Norwegian Lutheran Mission Station near Eshowe, former Capital of Zululand (now KwaZulu – Natal), founded in 1852 by Rev Hans Schreuder of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission. On 7 January 2009 I visited the Schreuder homestead. My notes of the day read as follows:

The Mission is situated some 21 kilometres north west of Eshowe in Kwazulu-Natal. The original *mission* station church is now old but still towers over the beautiful rolling hills and valleys in the area. From Bhengu’s parents’ home on the Eshowe – Nkandala Road - to the church it’s about two kilometres as the crow flies, otherwise the road meanders alongside a huge forest that stretches for a few kilometres down the slope. We were led by Rev Simeon Zulu, a retired Pastor of the Lutheran Church living in the area whose sister was married to Jeconiah, Bhengu’s elder brother. Rev Zulu also took us to Bhengu’s homestead which no longer exists in its original form. In its place there stands a beautiful new house which is occupied by his niece Esabel, Jeconiah’s daughter to the east of the homestead is the chief of Entumeni, Chief Ntombi Dube’s kraal. (Personal observation on visit to the area (2009-01-07)).

3.2.1. Bhengu's Family Tree

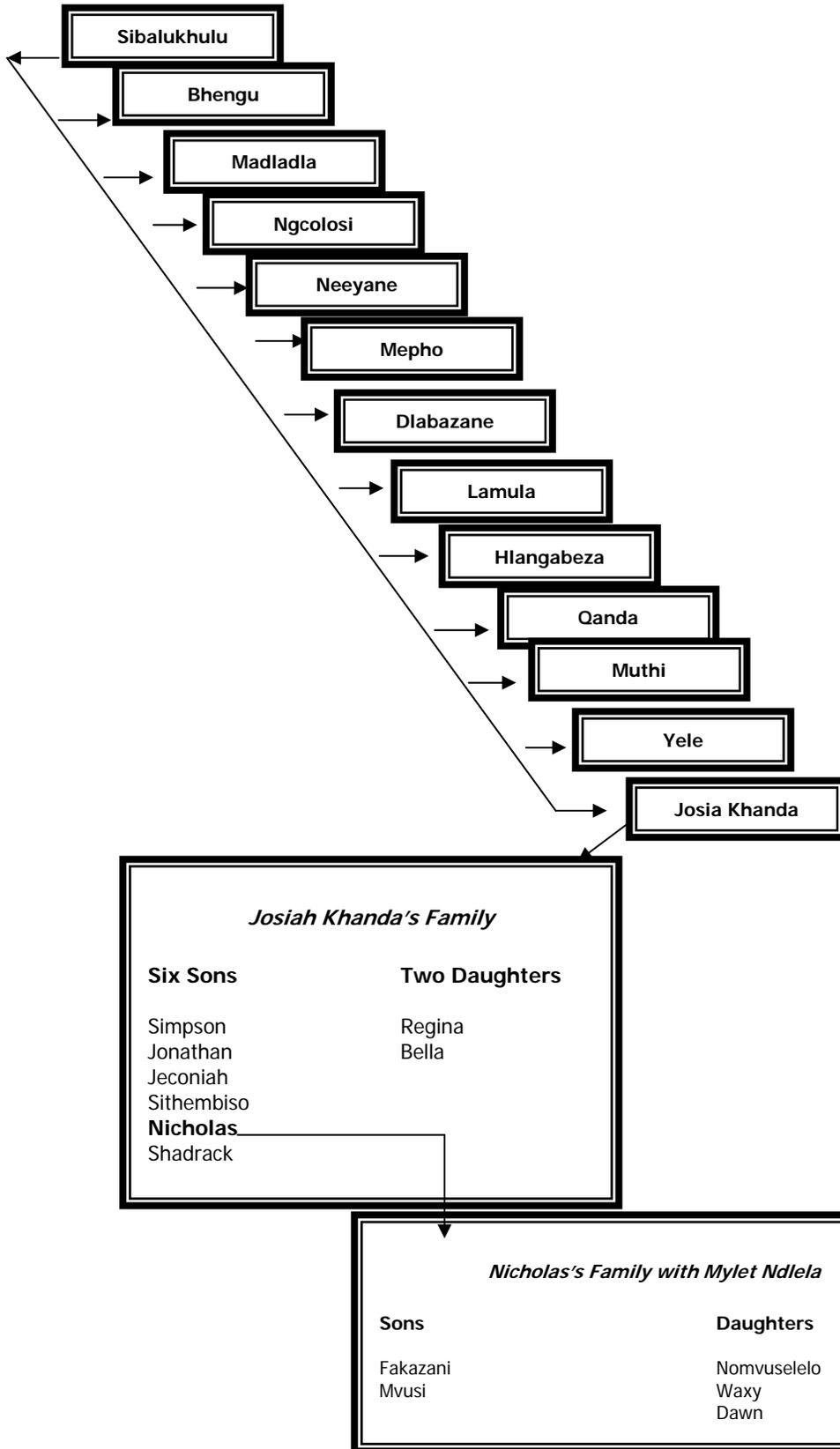
The genealogy of Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu was submitted in writing to me by Geoff Bhengu, Bhengu's nephew, son of Jeconiah as follows: Nicholas ka Josia Khanda, kaYele, kaMuthi, kaQanda, kaHlangabeza, half brother to kaNkungu, kaLamula, kaDlabazane kaMepho, kaNgcolosi, kaNceyane, kaMadladla kaBhengu, kaSibalukhulu who left for Swaziland after a royal dispute within the Zulu Kingdom.

It is not clear who Hlangabeza was, but it would appear that he was a chief. It is likely that he was the same Hlangabeza who had a fight with Chief Gayede:

On one occasion two chiefs, Gayede and Hlangabeza, who lived near Untunjambili, quarrelled about a very small matter and began fighting. The armies were camped near the Tugela River. The strife had begun. Some were wounded, others had fallen. When Nils Astrup heard of the battle, he took his faithful evangelist Samson with him and went down into the valley on the dry river bed. As he took his stand in front of the two armies, he raised his cane into the air and called out, "Hlangabeza and Gayede, cease your fighting until I have spoken with you." He parleyed with the one and then with the other, with the result that both chiefs told their men to go home. (Lawrie s.a.)



BHENGU'S FAMILY TREE



3.2.2. Christian Family Background

Bhengu's father, Josiah Khanda, was an evangelist of the Lutheran Church. The children were brought up as Christians. Jeconia and Shadrack were ministers of the Lutheran Church (now the Evangelical Lutheran Church). Jonathan was a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, whilst Nicholas ministered with the Assemblies of God. One of his two sisters, Bella Zungu, ministered alongside him as an evangelist in the Back to God Crusade. She was trained at the African Bible Institute, an Assemblies of God Bible College in Witbank (Interview: Vilakazi & Bhengu, 2003.07.02).

At the Assemblies of God General Conference on 10 October 1955, Bhengu addressed the Conference on The National Church. He said the following about his Christian upbringing:

Now in the formation of the birth of the National Church I shall be the last to oust or disfavour the fellow-yokemanship (sic) or inclusion of the foreign and local white missionaries. The Church of Christ is definitely not composed of people of one colour. We visualise the birth of a Holy Ghost propelled Church in the entire continent where the scope for European participation will never end.

Bhengu was always proud of his missionary upbringing – and the work done by the Lutheran missionaries was indeed something to be proud of. More than a century before Bhengu's calling, the first Lutheran Missionary, Hans Schreuder, arrived in Zululand.

3.2.3. The Missionary Founder of Entumeni (Gleaned from my visit to the Lutheran Museum on 07 January 2009)

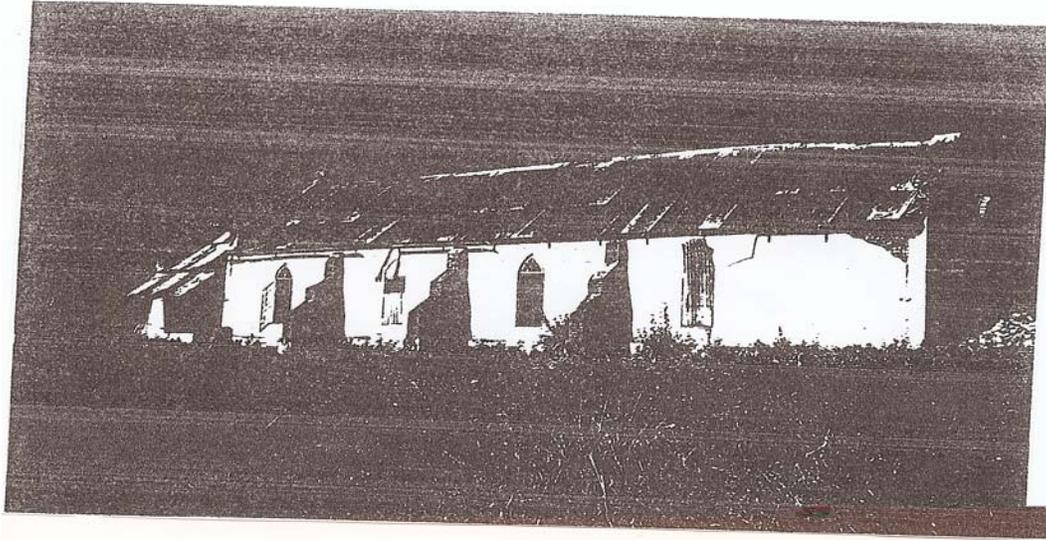


Hans P S Schreuder

Hans Paludan Smith Schreuder, born in 1817, was an early Lutheran missionary in Zululand. He initially failed to get permission to start work at first. When King Mpande had a bad attack of rheumatism, however, a visiting chief advised him to send for Schreuder. Schreuder managed to cure Mpande and so was allowed to start a mission station near Empangeni. Schreuder moved to Eshowe in 1860 together with Mpande to escape the malaria epidemic. He later established the Entumeni mission.

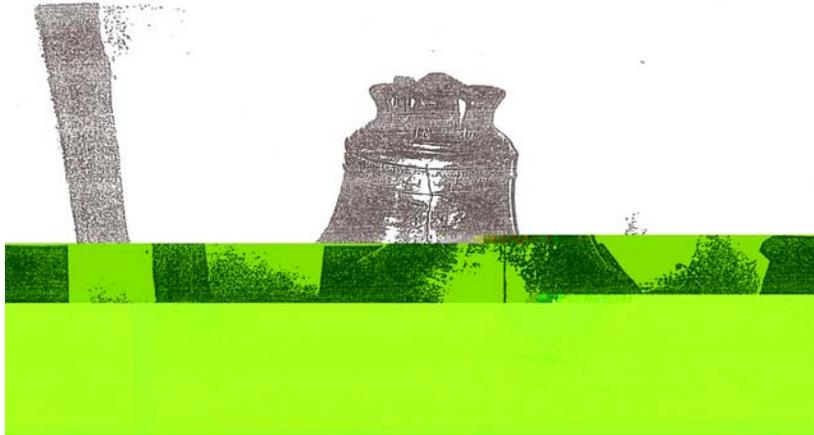
Schreuder was appointed Norwegian bishop of the country in 1866. Schreuder became a Zulu scholar and writer and was one of the few missionaries for whom Cetshwayo had any respect. Nevertheless Bishop Schreuder left Zululand for Natal at the outbreak of the Zulu War. Cetshwayo appreciated Schreuder's role as Gods messenger. During the hostilities the mission land was allocated to John Dunn, but once the crises passed Schreuder claimed Entumeni back. After major attempts to retain the land, Dunn had to relent.

Schreuder supported the division of Zululand into chiefdoms from 1879 until his death in 1882. He felt that these conditions would favour Lutheran “state churches” in Zululand.

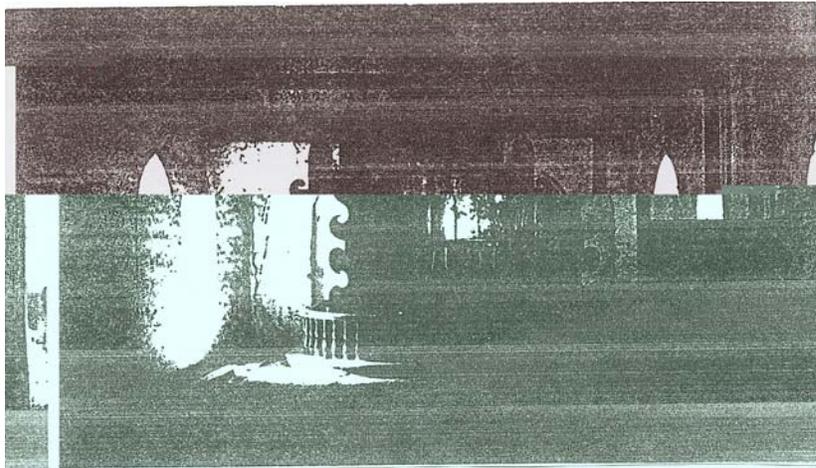


The old Entumeni Lutheran Church

In 1906, during the Bambata Rebellion the Entumeni Church was destroyed. The church tower with the bell collapsed into dust. The bell split into two halves. In 1978 when Chris Henstock and his father were looking for trees at Entumeni, he found one growing through a bronze ring, which was the base of the bell. The second half of the bell was subsequently found nearby, buried in the soil. The bell is now on display at the Eshowe Fort.



The Entumeni Bell



The original altar and pulpit

3.3. BHENGU'S EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Addressing an Assemblies of God Conference, Bhengu mentioned the fact that he was educated and disciplined by the Norwegians:

I am personally indebted to the missionaries who brought about the conversion of my grandmother whose husband, my grandfather, had died. He was a Chief in the Pomery Area and had many wives. My father was brought up by the missionaries and finally became a worker for the Mission and crossed with the Norwegian Lutheran Missionaries to Zululand.

We were thus born in the Mission Station and educated and disciplined by the strong

hand of the Norwegians as their own children". From the above it is clear, therefore that Bhengu did receive this primary education at the Lutheran Mission Station, although it could not be established with any certainty as to the level of the education he received at the mission station.

Hollenweger states that Bhengu attended the Lutheran missionary school in Entumeni and from 1925 the Roman Catholic missionary school in Inkamana and Mariahill (Hollenweger 1972:126). This information is however disputed by Professor Sibusiso Bhengu, Bhengu's nephew and the first Democratic Minister of Education in Nelson Mandela's Cabinet. Professor Sibusiso Bhengu says:

My uncle never had a formal education, neither did he attend Inkamana or Marianhill Catholic schools. He studied privately attending night school classes in Durban, in that way earned his Matric Certificate" (Telephonic interview, Bhengu: 2004.01.06).

Professor Sibusiso Bhengu's remarks are corroborated by Samuelson Fihlela, Bhengu's sister Regina's son. Samuelson Fihlela states:

My uncle never went to a formal school. He taught himself by reading newspapers and then attending night school in Durban and Kimberley. In this way he obtained his Senior Certificate" (Telephonic interview, Fihlela, through his daughter Ntombi: 2004.01.07) (in Lephoko 2004:8). This is also confirmed by his two daughters Vilakazi and Bhengu (Interviews 2003.07.02)

3.3.1. Bhengu's theological training

After his conversion in Kimberley Bhengu returned to Durban and having been assured of his call to ministry, he proceeded to KwaDumisa Bible School (now Union Bible Institute in Pietermaritzburg) where the Reverend Fred Suter served as principal. According to Bond, Suter was the man Bhengu "loved better than his own father". Mr Suter was one of the most outstanding evangelical Bible teachers of his time in South Africa. He was nicknamed "the man who loved the Zulus". Bhengu was at KwaDumisa from 1934 to 1936. He subsequently went to Taylor University in Indiana, USA to pursue a degree in theology

which he unfortunately did not complete. He had to return home when Mylet became ill with Tuberculosis.

3.4. BHENGU SEEKS EMPLOYMENT

Bhengu came from a poor family in rural KwaZulu-Natal. He realized early in life that he needed to find work. He had grown up eating *izinkobe* (samp meal) which he later hated and never allowed his children to eat. Because of poverty, he was driven to find employment from a white man in the area in order to survive. The white man always sent him to buy meat for his dogs but never gave Bhengu any of the meat. As a result he never wanted to keep dogs. He later got a job as health inspector at Makhathini Flats, a malaria-infected area. From Makhathini Flats he went to Durban where he was employed as court interpreter clerk at the magistrates court in Warwick Avenue. Despite the fact that they were looking for someone who could type (which he could not do), he was offered the job as interpreter (Interview: Vilakazi & Bhengu, 2003.07.02).

From Durban Bhengu proceeded to Kimberley seeking better employment opportunities. It is not known what kind of employment he had in Kimberley. In 1929, whilst he was in Kimberley, he was converted under the ministry of two young white American evangelists from the Full Gospel Church of God and became a born-again Christian.

3.5. BHENGU'S CONVERSION

The story of his conversion is related by Hollenweger (1972:127) in the following words, as told to him by Bhengu. It is quoted in full:

The upheaval that led to his subsequent career was his conversion in the course of a mission by two young Americans belonging to the Full Gospel Church. He broke off his connections with the Communists, the Bible Students and the Seventh Day Adventists. Two things in particular had attracted him in the revival preaching; the American pronunciation and intonation of English, and the simplicity of the interpretation of Isaiah 53. Verse for verse, line for line, the two evangelists built up their preaching on their personal experience. Thirdly, the joy and sincerity with

which they proclaimed their message aroused in him the desire to be one of their followers. But he asked himself whether people of his race could equal the two young white men.

Bhengu gives a vivid description of the inner restraints he had to overcome before he could manage to speak to the preachers. He would willingly have gone forward when sinners were called to the penitents' bench. But he was afraid to lose prestige in the eyes of his girlfriend. At least he did not want to be the first to come forward, and no one else led the way. But the conviction that if he were not converted that night, he would never be saved and would die a sinner drove him to ask to speak to the preachers. Bhengu's account clearly indicates that it was fear of eternal damnation, which drove him to this step. From his own experience Bhengu now hammers home to his audience the lesson: 'Do not delay the decision! Tomorrow may be too late! Do not wait for another to take the step first!'

Bhengu had to overcome other psychological difficulties before he could come to the knowledge that he was saved. After talking and praying with one of the preachers, he was asked whether he now felt he was saved. Bhengu said 'I do not feel anything yet.' The preacher then asked whether Bhengu had any money on him and could feel that. Just as he had no need to feel the money to be sure that he had it with him, so he could take his salvation for certain. "From that time faith came into my heart. I did not wait for feelings of any kind, but took the word of God and thanked him in prayer". But he felt the effect of his conversion the next morning, when he found himself incapable of smoking and drinking as usual. The mere smell of tobacco and gin made him feel sick. He asked, "What's gone wrong with me? A thought came – maybe this is the result of salvation. I knelt down to pray for the first time from the heart and I said, "Thank you God for Jesus your Son who died my death and now I am saved and have eternal life. My name is in the Book of Life".

3.6. THE LUTHERAN CHURCH REJECTS BHENGU'S NEW-FOUND FAITH

After his conversion experience in Kimberley, Bhengu returned home to Entumeni and tried

to give testimony of salvation to his own people, but was rejected by his church. His testimony was not welcomed. The church accused him for teaching heresy because it said it was not possible to get saved on this side of the grave. When he tried to join the Salvation Army he was refused membership by a white group on racial grounds (Hollenweger 1972:127-128). At many conferences Bhengu spoke about his rejection and the fact that even in his old age he was ejected from Entumeni when he tried to build his retirement home there. On 26 October 1985, the *Daily News* used the caption "Death of heretic" when reporting the death of Nicholas Bhengu. It said "The Rev. Nicholas B.H. Bhengu who was labelled "heretic" by his mission has died in Cape Town at the age of 76". The report is an indication of how Bhengu felt about his relationship with the Lutheran Church.

One of the people who opposed Bhengu was a Lutheran pastor on the Station, called Astrup. He was opposed to Bhengu visiting houses of congregants, conducting prayers and preaching of his new gospel Astrup accused Bhengu of bringing bad spirits (Imimoya emibi) among the people. A case was brought against him at Eshowe Magistrate's Court. The magistrate dismissed the case and said to Bhengu, "Young man, go back to Entumeni and preach so that people can stop drinking" (Interview Zulu. 2009.01.09).

Professor S Bhengu explained that the land from which Bhengu had been ejected had been given to the Lutheran Church by the Government of the day. Prof Sibusiso Bhengu said that Nicholas Bhengu was not well received with his new brand of evangelisation. He wanted to build a church on the mission station; it was this that was rejected by the people. He was nonetheless at liberty to build his home there since he was a son of the soil. He was permitted on numerous occasions to pitch his evangelistic tent from which he preached and many people on the station, including some of Bhengu's own family members, came to accept Christ as their personal Saviour. Professor Bhengu himself was saved at Bhengu's Clermont campaign in Durban in 1956 (Interview Bhengu 2006.01.05).

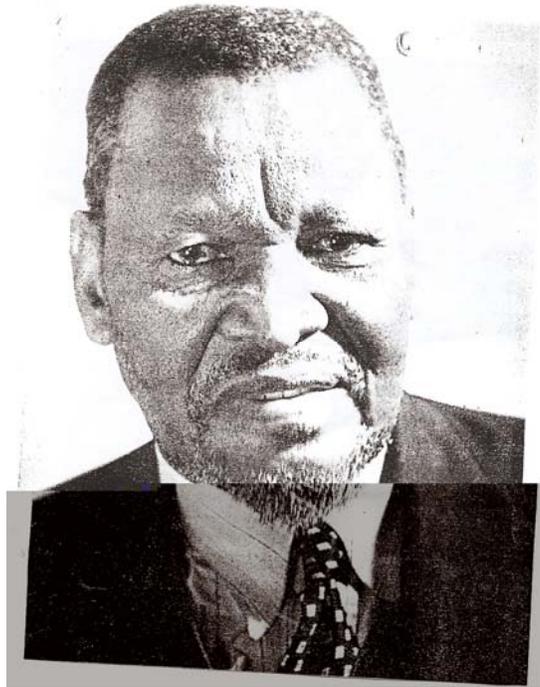
3.7. BHENGUS FIRST ASSOCIATES

Early in his Christian journey Nicholas Bhengu came into contact with many people – among them Job Chiliza, Alfred Gumede and Gideon Buthelezi - who became some of his

first partners in ministry.

3.7.1. Job Y Chiliza – The Man who disciple Bhengu

After Bhengu got saved in Kimberley in 1929, he had an urge to go back to Durban. In Kimberley he joined the Full Gospel Church of God at Kimberley Primary because this was where he had come to Christ. This church commended him to the care and



Job Y Chiliza

discipleship of Job Chiliza who was at the time a minister of the Full Gospel Church of God in Durban.

Job Chiliza was born in Mzumbe on the South Coast in 1886 and died in 1962. His original church was the American Board Mission in which he and his friend M.D Mseleku were ordained as preachers by the Church. In 1925 he was troubled by words, which he understood to be the Word of God calling upon him to go and preach the gospel.

In 1942 Chiliza left the Full Gospel Church of God and joined the Pentecostal Holiness Church. Before this, in 1920, Chiliza had already established his own church, the African Gospel Church. In the Holiness Church, Chiliza and his people were allowed to retain their

property under their own name. Because they, as a church, were joining another church, they were given a new name – the African Gospel League (Telephonic interview Mzolo 2004.09.25).

In 1946 the Pentecostal Holiness Church informed Chiliza that they were going to dissolve the African Gospel Church. Chiliza rejected this decision. Instead he restructured his African Gospel Church. Pastor Lucas assisted Chiliza to have the church, the African Gospel Church, registered with the government in Pretoria. (Mzolo and Nondaba – s.a). Chiliza was a visionary and a powerful preacher. (Sundkler 1976:85)

3.7.2. Alfred Lawrence Gumede

Alfred Gumede was born at Illovo in the district of Umzinto on the South coast on 3 May 1910. Gumede trained as a teacher at Mariannahill College outside Durban. He was at that time a nominal member of the South African General Mission (Personal communication with Gumede 1959). In 1931, whilst teaching at a Lutheran School at Mpaphala in KwaZulu, he first heard about Bhengu. He left Mpaphala at the end of 1931 to take up a teaching position at the South African General Mission School at KwaDumisa, where he stayed until 1933. Subsequently he taught at an Anglican School in Malizayo, where he met his wife Dorothy Dladla. She was born on 06 May 1910, she will celebrate her 100th birthday on 6 May 2010.



Alfred L Gumede

During school holidays Gumede would visit the Bible School at KwaDumisa. In 1933 Gumede was converted under the ministry of Rev Suter, principal of the Bible School where Bhengu trained for the ministry. At this time Bhengu heard of this teacher who had recently come to the Lord and started corresponding with Gumede. They had not met yet (Interview Gumede 2009:01.7).

In 1934 Gumede heard of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit and became thirsty for the experience. The following year he visited people who had been baptised in the Holy Spirit. That year he heard that Bhengu had been invited to speak at an Easter Convention. He walked many kilometres to join Bhengu at the convention. He met Bhengu and another man; and together they went into the church to pray and thank God for bringing them together. Bhengu and the other man started praying. Gumede hoped they would stop so that he too could pray but they didn't.

He relates the events of that meeting:

I started praying too. I opened my mouth and prayed in my language, 'Father who is in heaven', after saying these words I could not pray any longer. I felt like it was a real physical hand that touched me. Its power on me was so heavy, it gently pushed me. I then found myself lying on the floor. I felt something welling up in my belly. This power filled me with joy and I started shouting 'Amen!' I could not stop and went on and on. The experience went through my whole being and I can't express how I felt. I was rolling on the floor not because I wanted to; it was the experience that caused me to roll. I rolled until I came up against the door. I was shouting and rejoicing. (Gumede interview by: Watt 1986.10.28)

In 1941 Bhengu planted a church in Benoni. He left Gumede to pastor the work when he went to Port Elizabeth in 1945. In the same year 1945, Gumede left Benoni to go to Union Bible School in Pietermaritzburg. He later joined Bhengu in Port Elizabeth where he taught at Pilgrims Bible School, founded by Bhengu. Gumede died in 1991 (Interview. Gumede 2009:01:08).

3.7.3. Gideon Buthelezi

Gideon Buthelezi was one of the first people Bhengu met after his conversion in Durban. He met Buthelezi in a restaurant in Durban when he overheard him sharing Christ with someone in the restaurant.



Gideon Buthelezi

Bhengu went over to Buthelezi and together they shared how they each had met Christ. From that day onward they became friends. Mkhize and her husband were Buthelezi and Bhengu's first converts in Hill Crest, Durban. Buthelezi started work in Durban and Northern KwaZulu. (Interview: Mkhize, 2005.01.04). Buthelezi and Gumede were the two people closest to Bhengu. They joined Bhengu at the Emmanuel Mission in 1937 and the Assemblies of God in 1938.

On 4 July 1957 Buthelezi died at the age of 49 in Vereeniging where he had been ministering with Evangelist Phillip Molefe, who was at the time a minister of the Assemblies of God. Molefe had on occasion ministered alongside Bhengu in some of Bhengu's major crusades including his Soweto Crusade of 1958. Buthelezi was the first to get married, followed by Gumede and then by Bhengu.

It was to Buthelezi that Bhengu turned for financial support early in his ministry: In 1938 he wrote to Buthelezi for assistance shortly after his marriage to Mylet Ndlela. He also wrote to him from Ladysmith, on 22/3/1941, Pietermarizburg 4/1/1942, Ladysmith 22/9/1942, Ladysmith 12/7/1942, Kingsley 15/11/1944, Port Elizabeth 6/1/1945, Port Elizabeth 13/3/1945 and Port Elizabeth 15/12/1945. All correspondence between Bhengu and Buthelezi was in Zulu. The letters indicate a strong spirit of brotherhood (calling each other *mfowethu* – brother) as well as a shared concern for the Lord's work.

Gumede also asked Buthelezi to help take care of the church in Benoni while Gumede was in Port Elizabeth. His major concern was with the white missionaries who were bent on causing trouble on the East Rand.

3.8. BHENGU MARRIES MYLET NDLLELA

It was while Bhengu was conducting a revival in Pietermarizburg that he met Mylet's mother, Mrs Ndlela (Nee Mkhize). Sensing her commitment to the Lord, in typical African tradition he asked if she had a daughter that he could marry. Mylet was at the time a student nurse at King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban. After the wedding she did not return to King Edward VIII to complete her training.



Mylet Bhengu Mylet was a beautiful and serene person, full of love and compassion.

Bond describes her beauty and personality:

Nicholas Bhengu's first wife, Mylet, was one of the most beautiful women I have ever known. Her beauty was both outward and inward, for her character was as lovely as her face. My wife Enid first saw her at one of our general Conferences. She still recalls how spell-binding Mylet was. Enid simply could not take her gaze off her.

Throughout her life, Mylet struggled with poor health and she died comparatively young in 1971. About 5000 mourners attended her funeral in Pietermaritzburg. I was among those privileged to speak at the service, and then I laid her to rest in the nearby cemetery. For all the rough and ready layout of a typical township graveyard, it was a tranquil spot set among surrounding hills and fringed with tall trees.

As I pronounced the words of the final committal, "In sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the dead", my heart was alive with the thought of Christ's second coming attended by crowds of angels filling the vale, calling the dead from the dust [200:89].

Mylet had contracted TB and was in hospital for two years from 1950-1952. Her children Waxy, Mvusi and Dawn were placed in a Children's Home in Queenstown. They were later removed by their aunt Mabel Dombo Ndelela, Mylet's younger sister, and taken back to Port Elizabeth where she and Violet Hillary, Bhengu's co-worker, looked after them. Bhengu, who had enrolled at Taylor State University in the United States of America to study Theology, was forced to come back to be with the children and Mylet. He never returned to pursue his studies in America (Interview: Vilakazi & Bhengu 2003.07.02).

3.8.1. Bhengu and Mylet's Children

Bhengu and Mylet had five children: Nomvuselelo Adelaide, Fakazani, Waxy Ruth, Mvusi and Dawn. Both Nomvuselelo and Fakazani died young. Nomvuselelo (Revival) was their first-born. She fell ill during one of the many evangelistic outreaches Bhengu and Mylet undertook. They were preaching with Rev Kenneth Spooner an African American missionary of the Apostolic Pentecostal Holiness Church in Rustenburg and on surrounding farms in the area.

Nomvuselelo had been sickly and died during one of their evangelistic outreaches. With no money to buy a coffin they emptied their tin trunk of their clothes, placed the tiny body in it and were going to bury her on the side of the road when the owner of the farm on which they had been preaching intervened. He offered them some tomato boxes to make a coffin. Bhengu declined and buried Nomvuselelo in the tin trunk on the farmer's property in Hunters' Rest where the Hunters' Rest Hotel is now situated. The farmer made a rockery on the grave. According to Phinda in an interview, Bhengu would visit the grave to say a prayer whenever he was in the area, possibly to reminisce over the cost of discipleship to his life and the resulting death of two of his children. After their death he never allowed his remaining children to be out in the cold, fearing for their health. He would not even allow them to attend evening prayer meetings (Telephonic interview Vilakazi 2004.01.09).

3.8.2. Bhengu's second marriage, to Nokwethemba Mthethwa

Three years after the death of Mylet on 26 January 1974, Bhengu married Nokwethemba, a school principal, in Durban. She came from outside the Assemblies of God but was saved in Clermont Township in Durban during one of Bhengu's *Back to God* Crusades. In September 1974 Bhengu and Nokwethemba went to Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham where he was a visiting professor in Mission and Evangelism. According to Nokwethemba, he was intrigued by Islam, and attended Islamic classes to broaden his knowledge of that religion (Telephonic interview, Nokwethemba Bhengu 2003.10.27). This was confirmed by Bhengu himself in a letter to me (quoted above):

I lecture and do research work extensively. I also attend classes of other professors. It was a bit difficult at first as I lecture to graduates mostly but the Lord is helping me through. I wish you could have had this opportunity, as you are younger. There is nothing much I can do at my age.

It was not easy for Nokwethemba to step into Mylet's shoes. Mylet and her husband had started the Mothers' Ministry. It was therefore not easy to adjust to working with women who had been led by a charismatic and gifted person such as Mylet.

She worked with other women who were already key and capable leaders in the work:

Doreen Sikiti who was Secretary during Mylet's time, B Qina, B Nodada, Monica Tembe, N

Bafo and D Mofokeng. Sikiti took over the chairmanship after Mylet's death with Qina becoming Secretary. Nokwethemba became chairperson of this work after the death of Sikiti. Sikiti, Nododa and Bafo have since passed on.

Nokwethemba also testified to Bhengu's simple lifestyle. He would not spend the church's money on himself. All the money had to go toward mission and evangelism to bring people back to God. He lived in a four-room matchbox house in the township among his people. He warned his ministers not to live beyond their means (Telephonic interview: Nokwethemba Bhengu 2003.10.27). Bhengu did not have children with Nokwethemba.

3.8.3. Relationships in the family

Both Waxy and Dawn, Bhengu's daughters, describe the relationship between them, their brother Mvusi and their parents as having been very good. Their parents were like friends to them. Mylet was always at home with the children, unless she joined her husband on ministry trips. She loved women's magazines, gardening and roses.

She taught her children to work by allocating each of them certain household chores and giving each a plot to cultivate vegetables. After supper or prayer she would play games with the children and read Bible stories to them. Prayer was the lifestyle of the Bhengu family. There were occasions when Bhengu would rush out of the house without praying, in a hurry to get to work, and the children would call him back to come and pray with them. He always humbly obliged.

3.8.4. Money management in the home and church

Bhengu was very strict about what money was used, both in the home and the church, and how it was spent. He taught his children not to ask for money. He never asked anybody for money for himself. His children were taught to live by faith. The children were rebuked for asking for Christmas gifts or money from other people. If anyone gave the children money, Mylet would take it away from them. He did not live above his people; he lived like them in a four-roomed house in a township although he could afford a better house. In Mthatha, where he had a big house, he brought some of his ministers to live

with them. He taught them to share whatever they had with others.

He was against wastage and getting the church into debt by spending too much on church buildings or furniture. He urged regions to work together to build churches. In order to assist congregations who were building churches, he would send circulars to organisers and extend invitations to become involved, adding financial targets. This method created a spirit of unity and oneness of purpose.

3.9. MYLET'S FUNERAL

When Mylet died on 26 May 1971, she was buried in Pietermaritzburg, her home town. Bhengu was later buried there himself. At the time I was living in Pietermaritzburg and was the official interpreter at Mylet's funeral. Rev Louis Botha Potgieter, general secretary of the Assemblies of God, preached on the text "Let me die the death of a saint" (Num 23: 10). Bhengu had written a valediction in honour of his wife, which was read at the funeral service by Prof Sibusiso Bhengu. The valediction is quoted below in full [Bond 2003: 90 – 91].

3.9.1. A Valediction to a departed friend - Mylet Bhengu

1. You began from nothing and saw nothing ahead,
Before you there was blankness and at times a mirage;
The desert, hunger and want were your food,
But in you was an indomitable spirit to press on,
In you was the will to look up and go on.

2. Your mate whose mind was made of flint enwrapped in lightning,
Whose heart was more than that of a lion,
Whose horns of faith overcame the bulls of Bashan,
Drank his inspirations and saw his visions, with you.
Forsook all like the Abraham of old.

3. You and your mate welded together by God's Spirit,
He and you became one in one by God's hand,

Both of you had nothing but the love and the will,
Your God, the Saviour, the Holy Spirit and the Bible to lead you.

4. These were your weapons and sources of strength,
Your portion was in humiliation, opposition and poverty,
Sickness also decided to assail you more than your mate,
Your will and faith to bring up your children in the fear of God,
And to work for God alongside your husband, were your food.

5. Towards sunset you saw unprecedented success,
In Africa, where the sons and daughters rose from dust,
To be honourable citizens of both heaven and Africa,
Orphans became doctors, nurses, teachers and lawyers,
Ministers of the Gospel rose from nothingness yearly.

6. Alas, my true friend, the angel was counting your years,
Twice you bore excruciating pain's periods.
Without complaint your faith and will were compensated.
Prayer plus all available care succeeded,
You recovered to cover more for God and humanity.

7. The last count came, the third period of suffering,
Prayer rang throughout the world where your name
Was known through your mate and your labours of love,
Medical science was resorted to in every instance,
But the angel had his last and final count.

8. Wednesday morning May 26th 1971
will never leave our memory,
When your life's friend, husband and partner in tears and sadness,
Was left bereft, forlorn, bewildered and puzzled,
Ruth, Mvusi, Dawn, on his side
Under a dark cloud of sorrow, hopelessness and despair

9. But the morning star rose from the Lord our God,
"Your beloved is not dead, she has gone home before you,
You are also under a count, sooner or later you will follow.
Rejoice therefore, rejoice with the angels above,
For she loved and served the Lord to whom she has gone now"
10. Sleep therefore, sleep my beloved friend,
Sleep for a while,
Rest in peace in the bosom of your beloved Saviour,
Sing with us and we shall sing with you,
"JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING"
Soon your beloved friend will join the march on the golden streets,
He is left to rectify his mistakes and set God's work in proper order.
"GOOD NIGHT MYLET, GOOD NIGHT"

3.9.2. Interpreting the Statements in the Valediction

Some of the key phrases in the poem are highlighted below to examine Bhengu's thinking and how he and Mylet responded to suffering, their calling, commitment to God, their tenacity in serving Him and their longing for heaven.

1. *The desert, hunger and want were your food.*

There were times that they had no food to eat, Bhengu would recount their suffering to his people and yet they would survive.

2. *Your mate whose mind was made of flint enwrapped in lightning whose horns of faith overcame the bulls of Bashan.*

Bhengu experienced opposition from many directions inside and outside the Assemblies of God, even from his own people at Entumeni who refused him a site to build a home a few years before his death. However, he never lost faith in God. The bulls of Bashan goaded him. In all this Bhengu did not lose faith in

God. Like a flint he remained focused in his vision – a flint used with steel to produce an igniting spark (Pearsall (ed) 1999: 543)

3. *You and your mate welded together by God's Spirit... Both of you had nothing but the love and the will, your God, the Saviour and the Holy Spirit and the Bible to lead you.*

They put their faith in the Bible and the Holy Spirit to lead them in adversity. They were first welded together in marriage late in their ministry and their complete trust in the Bible and the Holy Spirit guided them.

4. *Your portion was humiliation, opposition and poverty.*

Jessie Creamer during an interview said, "Bhengu had sold his house in Vryheid and poured all the money into ministry. He had nothing, no wealth, but gave his all to God. He never asked or told anyone about his lack. He would sometimes wear a shirt that was torn on the back and would not take off his jacket for fear of exposing his bare back." Jessie and her family would once in a while send him some money for the work of God in Port Elizabeth (Interview: Creamer, 2003.11.19). This statement is confirmed by Gamedze. "He would wash a shirt and wait for it to dry and wear it, and would do the same again and again"

5. *Towards sunset you saw unprecedented success in Africa where the sons and daughters rose from Christ to be honourable citizens of both heaven and Africa... Orphans became doctors, nurses, teachers, and lawyers, ministers of the gospel rose from nothingness yearly.*

Bhengu exhibits a spirit of triumphant exuberance in his ministry; the fruit of his and Mylet's labours are exhibited for all to see. Apart from their own children, Bhengu and Mylet had educated many others at their own expense. It is these children that Bhengu is parading here for others to see. He is obviously elated with Mylet's cooperation in this venture.

6. *Without complaint your faith and will were compensated. Prayer plus all available care succeeded. You recovered to cover more for God and humanity.*

Without complaint Mylet endured excruciating pains, she had lost her health when she contracted TB but due to prayer and support from many people her condition improved. Those times of reprieve from illness were used to do more for God and humanity, something Bhengu must have appreciated.

7. *Medical science was resorted to in every instance, but the angel had his last and final count.*

In the end prayers from around the world and medical intervention in every instance were to no avail. The angel had the last word and she was gone.

8. *Was left bereft, forlorn, bewildered and puzzled, Ruth, Mvusi, Dawn on his side under a dark cloud of sorrow, hopelessness and despair.*

Bhengu admits to human spiritual frailty. Even as a preacher the death of his wife left him totally bewildered and in despair with his children by his side.

How often do we hear Christians say "This is a revival" when referring to the death of another Christian. Here Bhengu pours out his emotions under a dark cloud of sorrow and hopelessness, but this is tempered by the words in stanza 10: "Sing with us and we shall sing with you" and "JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING"

9. *Your beloved is not dead, she has gone home before you, you are also under a count, sooner or later you will follow.*

This explains his assurance and conviction about a new life in heaven. Indeed in 1985 Bhengu joined his wife in heaven. He must have been looking forward to walking on streets of gold together; something he tried to give his people through his preaching of the gospel of love, forgiveness and the certainty of

eternal life through faith in Christ Jesus.

10. He is left to rectify his mistakes and set God's work in proper order.

Bhengu always thought there was a better way of doing God's work. He continually sought through prayer and dedication of himself and the team to God to find that better way. One of the reasons why he refused to write a book was the fear that he would not be able to change whatever he might have written should God show him a better way. This is what he told me in his office in Soweto in May 1985, the year he died, when I encouraged him to write about what God had done through him. Bhengu welcomed the establishment of a Teaching Team as he hoped they would help rectify his mistakes by setting things in order in the assemblies. He never flinched from admitting his mistakes openly and in public whenever necessary.

3.10 BHENGU'S HOME GOING GROOTE SCHUUR

3.10.1. A Sad Good-bye

In October 1985 the spiritual giant, and great leader and apostle, Nicholas Bhengu went to be with the Lord. He died in the Grootte Schuur Hospital, Cape Town. This man had won the hearts of whites and blacks alike throughout South Africa and abroad, with his simple but profound preaching, spiritual insight and wisdom. Had he remained in his early vocation as trade union member and member of the Communist Party, there is no doubt that he would have risen to great political heights. God took a hold of his life and he is now seated before the King of kings and because of this ministry many others will be seated there too.

<http://www.caog.org.za/hist.asp>

3.10.2. Bhengu's Funeral Arrangement

In an undated sermon he preached before his death, which he called "home going", he prepared his people for his departure. He warned them to guard against those who were

seeking positions and fame in the church; people who were not led by the Spirit of God; people who would seek to undo all that he had built over so many years; people who were after money to enrich themselves. He also said that true leaders should depend on the Holy Spirit to lead the people of God.

Before he died, he gave directions on how his funeral was to be conducted:

1. The coffin shall be supplied by the undertakers without consultation with either relatives or church people.
2. The hearse shall take the corpse from the mortuary direct to the grave and neither to my home nor to church.
3. There shall be no funeral service either at home or at the church.
4. Hymns shall be selected by me which shall be sung while the coffin is being lowered.
5. No speeches, no preaching, no ceremony and no wreaths. Absolutely none.
6. Announcements on the air and in the press should be as follows:
"Nicholas Bheka, son of Josiah Khanda, son of Yele Bhengu. Born on September 5th 1909 at Entumeni Mission Station, expelled twice for his faith by the mission as a heretic, first as a young man, 21 years old. Came back to settle down in his father's land, built a home and was forced to leave in 1973 and settled at Mtunzini. Died at so-and-so on so-and-so at the age of so-and-so." Nothing else should be said, absolutely nothing! No watch night services anywhere and no substitutes.
7. Absolutely no slaughtering of any beast of any sort, not even a chicken and no food provision of any kind.
8. The burial or funeral shall take place three days after my certified death and no more.
9. The funeral should take place any day of the week and should not wait for friends, relatives or church people.
10. All expenses shall have been paid for and there shall be no money collected or given for my funeral [Bond 2000: 53 –54].

It is clear from the above that Bhengu was a wounded man after a series of rejections - first when he tried to witness to his own people at Entumeni after his conversion and again when he tried to settle there. It was not only the Lutheran Church that rejected him.

Within the Assemblies of God and in the Back to God Crusade there were people who injured him with their venomous criticism. For strength he often quoted a text from Isaiah 54:17

No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me declares the Lord.

He was hurt by people who misunderstood him, misinterpreted him and told lies about him. The divisions and splits in the Assemblies of God also hurt him, after he had tried so hard to preserve unity in the church.

3.10.3 An analysis of Bhengu's funeral instructions

Many people were shocked when Bhengu's funeral instructions became known. I was one of those who were devastated by this move. Like many in the movement who had known and worked with Bhengu for many years, I could not understand how a man of his stature could have given such instructions. They raised a number of questions, such as: What could have led him to such a decision? I actually cried when the instructions were read to me on the phone by Rev Josiah Donda. I could not believe that a man of Bhengu's calibre could have taken such a position, depriving people of the opportunity to share testimonies of his work for God. God had used him to transform their lives and we were all aware of the impact of his ministry worldwide.

I do not intend to analyze all the statements but rather to highlight a few points in the document. In doing so, I believe that some light could be shed on his attitude to speeches and the slaughtering of beasts.

My analysis of selected statements could be judged as being highly subjective. However every effort is made to be as objective as possible.

- *... The hearse shall take the corpse from the mortuary direct to the grave and neither to my home nor to church. There shall be no funeral service either at home or at the church.*

This statement sounds strange considering that members of Bhengu's church had always been brought to the church for funerals. Speeches and preaching were allowed. He himself preached on many of these occasions. When Dan Masondo, one of Bhengu's key pastors, died in 1983, Bhengu ordered his body to be brought to the church in KwaMashu, Durban before it was taken to KwaMashu Community Hall for the funeral service. Bhengu was scheduled to but chose to deliver a speech and asked Pastor Messinah Donda to deliver the sermon. I attended Masondo's funeral and was the interpreter.

- *... Expelled twice for his faith by the Mission as a heretic, first as a young man, 21 years old. Came back to settle down in his father's (sic) land, built a house and was forced to leave in 1973 and settled at Mtunzini. Died ... nothing else should be said, absolutely nothing. No watch night services anywhere and no substitutes.*

The issue of Bhengu having been forced to leave his place of birth, his father's land, must have been very traumatic for him. It was as if he had been uprooted from his homeland, from kith and kin – “expelled at age 21 and again in 1973 and settled at Mthunzini”. It would seem that he wanted the world to know that he had been rejected and thrown out for his faith. He saw himself as a martyr for his faith.

- *... No slaughtering, no chicken no food*

One can only speculate why he did not want food served at his funeral. It is an African custom to invite mourners to return to the home of the deceased after burial to have a meal which includes meat of a beast slaughtered for the occasion. A basin of water treated with some herbs is placed at the entrance of the kraal for mourners to wash their hands before food is served. It is done to remove the curse of death from those who attended the burial.

The slaughtering of a beast or chicken – a spilling of blood at funerals is an African tradition done to appease the departed ancestors (amadlozi), those who have gone before, and to cleanse those who remain behind from the curse of death.

Mbiti (1969:151) writes about this practice among the Ndebele tribe:

We see a number of meanings in these funeral procedures. The spear with which the eldest son strikes the grave is a weapon of defence and protection and when used for this occasion it neutralizes all danger on the way to and in the new country where the dead man is going. Personal belongings are buried with the body to accompany the deceased man, so that he does not find himself poor in the hereafter: these things are part of him and he must not be robbed by the surviving relatives (or else he will visit them and demand what is his own). The animal killed afterwards serves, as it is called, to “accompany” the deceased, to provide him with food on the way and livestock in the next world. Drinking “medicine” made from the ashes of the burnt bones is a rite whereby the departed is mystically united with the members of his family and community who are still alive. Washing in the river is a ritual act of cleansing from the pollution caused by death; and the same applies to the rite performed a month or two later, when the implements are washed with beer. At that ceremony, children are given protective medicine to drink, as a counter measure against death.

Bhengu was acutely aware of this custom. It would appear that he did not want to participate in it in death. He banned it!

CHAPTER 4

BHENGU'S MESSAGE - HIS PREACHING AND THE THEOLOGY BEHIND HIS PREACHING

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In order to establish Bhengu's manner of preaching and the theology that influenced it, it is important to look at his call to ministry and the church environment in which he was raised - the *Lutheran* mission – the theological training he received at an *Evangelical* Bible School at KwaDumisa and the impact of *Pentecostalism* on his ministry. I will seek to show that all of the above had some influence on his ministry, notably Pentecostalism through his five decades of association with the Assemblies of God, but that he still in many ways remained a Lutheran in his liturgy.

According to Ntshangase, the liturgy introduced by Bhengu in his churches was the result of his Lutheran background (Ntshangase interview 2005). Ntshangase's assertion is supported by Bhengu's two daughters, Waxy Vilakazi and Dawn Bhengu. They say Bhengu often sang Lutheran hymns at home with the family. He was also proud of his Lutheran background as can be seen from the thesis he presented at the Assemblies of God Conference in Witbank on Wednesday October 10 1955. In it he said among other things, "We were thus born in the mission station and brought up and educated and disciplined by the strong hand of the Norwegians as their children." He received his Bible training at KwaDumisa, an Evangelical Bible School under the leadership of Rev Fred Suter, one of the highly respected Evangelical theologians of the time.

Bhengu was also well travelled. He preached around the world and spoke at numerous international conferences, which exposed him to many leaders in business, politics and diverse Christian circles.

4.2. BHENGU'S VISION AND CALL TO MINISTRY

From Bhengu's own testimony, it can be construed that the vision outlined below had a tremendous impact on his life and work.

4.2.1. Bhengu's call to Ministry

Bhengu often spoke about his being called by God. I remember talking to him and a Mr Mkansi at whose home he was staying during his evangelistic crusade in Nelspruit in 1956. He told us that God had spoken to him specifically in a vision, summoning him to go and preach Jesus Christ to the masses who were enslaved by sin and living in poverty and oppression.

Dubb quotes a first-person account of what happened:

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 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)

Dubb describes Bhengu's vision of African people as being as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. They were drowning in a great ocean and calling out to him to rescue them (Dubb 1976).

4.2.2. An analysis of Bhengu's vision and call to ministry

In order to understand Bhengu's preaching and the theology behind it; it is essential to analyse the vision God gave him.

4.2.2.1. Authorisation by the Lord to serve him

"The Lord explained to me that I was authorised to serve him..." Bhengu believed he was authorised and mandated by the Lord to preach the Good News. He never doubted that the authority to preach had come from the Lord. Bhengu often spoke about the call of God upon his life. I remember talking to him and Mr Mkansi at whose home he was staying during his evangelistic crusade in Nelspruit in 1956. He told us that God had spoken to him specifically in a vision and commanded him to go and preach Jesus Christ to the masses who were enslaved by sin and living in poverty and oppression.

I remember Bhengu's illustration of a traffic officer who was standing in the blistering sun directing traffic, who said to him, "Do you think I like standing here? I am under orders to be here." He believed he was under orders to preach. He was consumed with the vision, like Paul who said, "I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven" (Ac 26:19). It can also be said here that Bhengu was not disobedient to the vision. He never flinched, not even under political pressure and socio-economic conditions of deprivation.

4.2.2.2. Nationalities of people in the vision

They all had black faces, in this context they were African. They spoke in all African languages and dialects, but he was able to understand them all. It is not surprising that he had a vision and passion to preach the gospel from Cape to Cairo. He also had a special interest in speaking African languages: isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi, Tshivenda and Xitsonga - he spoke most of these languages fluently and wrote

most of his church circulars in isiXhosa. His war cry “Africa Back to God! Africa for Jesus - Jesus for Africa!” fits well with the vision of black Africans to whom he felt specifically called. Although the faces of the people were black, Bhengu understood that the gospel was to be preached to all nations (Mt 28:18-20) He preached to all nations around the world in the USA, UK, Sweden, Norway, Canada, Japan and other countries.

4.2.2.3. The cry of their hearts

The people Bhengu saw were all pointing to him and appealing to him to rescue them. They cried, “We are dying, we are dying! We are perishing. Help us out of here.” They were nobodies in the South African scheme of things. Bhengu saw his people (blacks) as people needing help. They were drowning under the yoke of sin, poverty and political oppression by successive white regimes, from colonialism to apartheid.

4.2.2.4. The Lord showed me “an open Bible”

The Lord showed him 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 chains of sin, in which they have been bound for centuries.”

In one of the articles in his Declaration of Faith, Bhengu declares that the Bible is “the supernatural plenary inspiration of the scripture, that it is inerrant in the original writings and of the supreme, absolute and final authority, in all matters of doctrine, faith and conduct” (Hollenweger 1972:518). The open Bible is a sign of the authority of the message God wanted him to preach to his people in chains of sin (Hollenweger 1972:4).

4.2.2.5. The Lord’s command “I wish you to do this”

From the vision that Bhengu saw, it is clear that the Lord decreed that Bhengu should preach. “I wish you to do this.” It can be deduced that he was propelled by these words in pursuance of the Lord’s will for him.

Scripture is clear that it is God who calls his servants to his service. He called Moses (Ex 3:10-14), Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-10), Isaiah (Is 6:8-13) and Paul (Gal 1:1-2, 15-24). Luther says, "For if God does not summon you to do a work, who are you, you fool, that you dare to take it upon yourself? ... A calling is necessary for good work..." [Ebling 1970: 17].

Spurgeon (1954: 26-31) after raising the question, "How many a young man knows whether he is called or not?" proceeds to identify a number of indicators. Only three of these are mentioned below:

1. The first sign of the heavenly calling is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work. In order to experience a true call to the ministry there must be an irresistible, overwhelming craving and raging thirst for telling to others what God has done to our own souls. This desire must be a thoughtful one.
2. In the second place, combined with the earnest desire to become a pastor; there must be aptness to teach and some measures of the other qualities needful for the office of a public instructor.
3. In order further to prove a man's call, after a little exercise of his gifts, such as I have already spoken of, he must see a measure of conversion work going on under his efforts, or he may conclude that he has made a mistake, and therefore, may go back by the best way he can. Spurgeon decries the fact that "Hundreds of young men have missed their way, and stumbled against a pulpit...."

4.2.3. Biblical motifs: Bhengu's call compared to the call of Moses and that of the Apostle Paul

An attempt is made to compare the call received by Bhengu to those of two great men in the Bible: Moses, who led – the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt and Paul who was called to be an apostle to the gentiles and their kings. Below are some similarities between Moses, the Apostle Paul and Bhengu. All three men were called and sent by God in extraordinary ways.

- Moses met God in a burning but unconsumed bush whilst grazing Jethro's sheep
- Paul saw the Lord on the road to Damascus.
- Bhengu met God in a vision in which he was standing on the sea shore.

4.2.3.1. Moses' call to deliver the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt

God spoke to Moses and commanded him to go and bring the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. The call was specific and was accompanied with power and authority.

The Lord said "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out that land into a good and spacious land, one flowing with milk and honey... So now go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." (Ex 3:7-10)

4.2.3.2. The call of Paul

Paul's call was also specific. He had been persecuting the church, authorized by the Jewish high priest to arrest Christians and bring them to Jerusalem to be tried. (Ac 9:2) On the Road to Damascus Paul met Jesus who struck him down with lightning and called him to be his minister to the gentiles.

Giving evidence before King Agrippa, Paul defended himself by presenting the circumstances leading to his call:

'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen and what I will show you I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sin and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me' (Ac 26:12 - 20)

Paul said about his call, "So then King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven" (Ac 26:19). Paul was able to call himself "an apostle sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." (Gal 1:1,15).

He added, “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus.” (Gal 1:15 - 17)

Bhengu’s followers called him an apostle, prophet and evangelist. They sensed the special calling in his life and ministry.

| Moses Exodus 3:1-17 | Paul Act 9:3-6 | Bhengu's Vision |
|--|--|---|
| <p>1. The vision of a burning bush Ex 3:2</p> <p>2. God speaks out of the bush. 3 Ex:4</p> <p>3. God tells Moses that he has heard the cries and seen the affliction of his people. Ex 3:7</p> <p>4. God sends Moses to rescue his people from bondage in Egypt. Ex 3:10</p> | <p>1. Vision on the Damascus road. Acts 9:3</p> <p>2. Jesus speaks to Paul from heaven Ac 9:4-6; Ac 26: 14-18</p> <p>3. Jesus sends Paul to preach to the Gentiles and their kings. Ac 9:15-16 “also ... and how much he must suffer for my name”</p> <p>4. Jesus sends Paul to preach a message of deliverance to open their eyes from darkness, to light</p> | <p>1. He saw a great ocean</p> <p>2. Jesus speaks to Bhengu in a vision on the seashore</p> <p>3. Bhengu hears the cries of the people who are drowning.</p> <p>4. Jesus sends Bhengu to deliver his people from the chains of sin and death (Dubb 1976:10)</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>5. God spells out the task. Moses is to bring his people out of Egypt. Ex 3:10</p> <p>6. God's promise to be with Moses Ex 3:12</p> | <p>and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Him.</p> <p>(Ac 26:14-18)</p> | |
|--|--|--|

4.3. BHENGU'S THEOLOGICAL ROOTS AND TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

It is postulated that Bhengu's preaching and theology were influenced by at least three theological schools of thought: Lutheranism, Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism.

4.3.1. The influence of Lutheran Theology on Bhengu

As a young man he grew up in the Lutheran Church, his father was an evangelist with the Lutheran Church whilst two brothers, Jaconiah and Shadrack, were ministers with the same church. It is conceivable that the Lutheran Church would have had a considerable influence on his theological background. This view is also supported by Professor Sibusiso Bhengu, Bhengu's nephew, who reports that Bhengu used to go back to the mission station, pitch a tent and preach there. His two daughters, Waxy and Dan, say that their father used to sing Lutheran hymns at home.

Below reference is made to the three theological schools of thought that influenced Bhengu's ministry: the Lutheran, Evangelical and Pentecostal theologies.

Some aspects of Luther's theology that may have influenced Bhengu's theology. Five of Luther's doctrines that might have had an impact on Bhengu's teaching and message are selected.

- **Sola Scriptura**

The Bible held, in Luther's view, supreme authority. Neither the church nor the pope possessed authority that could militate against the authority of the Bible. Scripture is God's Word with the power, the majesty, the authority and infallibility of God Himself (Hanna 1984:119).

- **Justification by faith.**

Luther was struck by Rom 1:17. "For in the gospel righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith." It was this verse that shook Luther and later the Roman Catholic and the world. In 1545 Luther wrote "... it was about the justice of God that I pondered..." (McKim 2003 88-90)

- **The Law and the Gospel**

According to Luther; the law relates to "all statements of scripture that uncover the sins of humans and accuse them. In contrast, the gospel includes all statements that promise comfort, redemption and the grace of God." (McKim 2003:106). Luther said the proper understanding of the distinction between the law and the gospel was the hallmark of a theologian.

"Virtually the whole of the scripture and the understanding of the whole theology depends on the true understanding of the Law and the gospel. Anyone who can properly distinguish the gospel from the Law may thank God that he is a theologian" (Ebeling 1964:111)

- **Luther's attitude towards authorities**

Luther believed that temporal authority was God given and necessary for the maintenance of external order without which the church would be unable to exist. He believed though that the church had authority to bring about church reform based on the gospel which may be against official church government. (McKim 2003:107)

- **The human free will**

Luther disagreed with Erasmus, who defined free will as "that power with which humans can turn toward or away from what leads them to eternal salvation". Responding to Erasmus, Luther argued that Erasmus's doctrine of free will was

ineffective without any reference to Christ, because in essence it meant that humans would receive God's mercy through their own merit. He believed that human will was based on the acceptance of the fact that Christ had redeemed mankind. (McKim 2003:110)

4.3.2. The influence of Evangelical Theology on Bhengu

Bhengu received his theological training from Kwa Dumisa Bible College, which later became the Union Bible Institute, in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. He trained under Rev Fred Suter, one of the well-known and respected Evangelical Bible teachers of his time. Suter was nicknamed "The man who loved the Zulus". According to Bond, Bhengu said of Rev Suter: "He was a real father to the students, an excellent Bible teacher of matured (sic) and a gentleman in the true sense of the word. I personally loved him above my own father. He was so loving. He called me his son, and his teachings had a real power to my soul" [Bond 2003: 47].

Bhengu sent some of his ministers to the Union Bible Institute even though he was unhappy with their opposition to the Pentecostal message of speaking in tongues. As an Evangelical himself Bhengu believed in the fundamentals of Evangelicalism, among them that "the transforming work of God in people's lives through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit results in a life of repentance, worship and personal relationship with Jesus Christ" (Olson Spring 2003).

4.3.3. The influence of Pentecostalism on Bhengu

Bhengu was also influenced by the Emmanuel Mission, founded by HC Phillips, and by the Assemblies of God. His first contact with Pentecostalism was in Kimberley where he was converted under the ministry of two white American Full Gospel Church evangelists. After his conversion Bhengu returned to Durban and was placed under the guardianship of Rev Job Chiliza, who was at the time a minister of the Full Gospel Church of God in Durban. Chiliza explains how he was baptised by the Holy Spirit. "In 1922 on a Sunday, I was baptised by the Holy Spirit. I felt as if I was flying right up. Only after a while I realised that I was still here on earth." (Sundkler 1976: 56).

In 1938 Bhengu joined H C Phillips of the Emmanuel Mission in Nelspruit. Phillips was a missionary of Elim Four Square Church in England, a Pentecostal church. In 1938 Phillips took Bhengu, Gumede and Buthelezi with him into the Assemblies of God. Jean Phillips writes:

H C P was the superintendent of the African schools for many years. As he was having a lot of trouble with the teachers, he decided to advertise in the Zulu paper "Ubaqa" for two teachers of impeccable character. Mr Bhengu who was a court interpreter saw this advertisement and wrote to H C P explaining that he was not a teacher, but was interested and would like to see the Emmanuel Mission constitution. H C P sent this to him and the reply came: "... I believe like you do, I would like to come and work with the Emmanuel Mission, not as a teacher but as an evangelist". Having trained in the Dumisa Bible School under the Rev Suter, H C P knew that he was well versed in the Word of God. As Bhengu was about to be married, arrangements were made for him to come to Nelspruit with his new bride in the New Year. This he did. From the moment he began his ministry the Lord put his seal upon his ministry and blessed him in a very wonderful way, when the Emmanuel Mission amalgamated with the Assemblies of God, Mr Bhengu, who was then a member of the Emmanuel Mission, joined in with us. This was the beginning of his fruitful ministry in the Assemblies of God." (s.a.)

4.4. BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Among mainline Protestants, Evangelicals and Pentecostals a theological debate on the baptism in the Holy Spirit has been going on for decades, some of it very sharp and divisive, with each group taking a firm stand regarding what it perceives to be the correct interpretation of disputed scriptures. Bhengu, ultimately, had to define his position in this regard. It is important to determine, briefly, the various viewpoints.

4.4.1. The Evangelical view on Spirit Baptism

The traditional view on Spirit Baptism is portrayed by three eminent Evangelical leaders:

- **Billy Graham's teaching on Spirit Baptism**

Billy Graham, one of the leading evangelical church leaders, a world renowned evangelist who saw hundreds of thousands of people - if not millions - come to Christ through his evangelistic crusades has this to say:

"However, in my own study of the Scriptures through the years I have become convinced that there is only one baptism with the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer, and that takes place at the moment of conversion. This baptism with the Holy Spirit was initiated at Pentecost, and all who come to know Jesus Christ as Saviour share in that experience and are baptised with the Spirit the moment they are regenerated. In addition, they may be filled with the Holy Spirit: if not, they need to be.

The scriptural usage of the word baptism shows that it is something initiatory both in the case of water baptism and Spirit baptism, and that it is not repeated. I can find no biblical data to show that the baptism with the spirit would ever be repeated. "For by one spirit we were all baptised into one body" (1 Cor.12:13) the original Greek of this passage makes it clear that this baptism of the spirit is a completed past action (Graham 1978:62-63).

- **Unger's teaching on Spirit Baptism**

Unger asserts that this baptism of the Spirit as taught by Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals and Charismatics is the "... new errors to trouble the peace and doctrinal purity of the church." (Unger 1974:35). He also asserts that miraculous signs, gifts of healing and tongues gradually disappeared from the church after the apostolic age when the New Testament was written down.

- **Scroggie's teaching on Spirit Baptism**

A careful examination of the New Testament Scripture leads us to believe that the miraculous speaking tended to cease even during the Apostolic period, and was operative chiefly before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. when the Chosen People were de-nationalized, for the time of the present age of grace [Scroggie:s.a 32].

From the foregoing Evangelical leaders, it is clear that they believe baptism with the Holy Spirit to take place at regeneration, there is no other such baptism as taught by Pentecostals and Charismatics. Miracles gradually disappeared as the Church was firmly established.

4.4.2. Torrey breaks ranks with Evangelicals on the issue of Spirit Baptism

Probably the first evangelical scholar to break ranks with the evangelical stance on baptism in the Holy Spirit was Torrey, in his book *What the Bible Teaches*. Torrey was Principal of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, USA, a highly respected Evangelical Bible college established by the world renowned evangelist, L Moody. He taught baptism in the Holy Spirit as a second blessing after salvation. This happened to equip the believer with power to witness for Christ. This was obviously a brave step and possibly one that attracted dissent from his peers within the evangelical fraternity.

On the subject of baptism with the Holy Spirit, Torrey begins by quoting extensively from the scriptures on which Pentecostals base their doctrine of Spirit baptism: Ac 1:5; 4:8; 10:44-46; 11:15-17; 19:2-6, etc.

Torrey quotes all the above verses in full. Below I quote only the texts that mark Torrey's departure from the stance taken by evangelicals: "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." (Heb 2:4).

Torrey put a number of proposals on the table to substantiate his views, three of which are quoted below:

Second Proposition: The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a definite experience of which one may and ought to know whether he has received it or not.

Compare Ac 8:15, 16 - "... who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Gal.3:2 – “This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

Ac 1:5 – “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

Here was a company of regenerated men pronounced so by Christ Himself. “Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you,” and John 13:10 - “Jesus said to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.”)

And yet the baptism with the Spirit lay for them some days in the future.

Ac 8:12 - “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized.”

There were certainly in this company of baptized, both men and women, some regenerated people, but we read in verses 15 and 16: “... who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)”

Regenerated but not baptized with the Holy Ghost. We see the same thing in Acts 19:1,2: “And it came to pass, that while Apollo was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.”

Compare v.6 - “And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied.”

Third Proposition: The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is an operation of the Holy Spirit distinct from and subsequent and additional to his regenerating work.

A man may be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and still not be baptized with the Holy Spirit. There is an impartation of power and the one who receives it is fitted for service. Every True Believer has the Holy Spirit. Rom. 8:9 “But ye are not in the flesh, not in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” (see also, 1 Cor.6:19.)

But not every believer, as we shall see, may have the Spirit. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit may be received immediately after the new birth – as happened to the household of Cornelius. In a normal state every believer would have the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, as in the Church at Corinth. (1Cor. 12: 13- “ For by the one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”)

In such a normal state of the church the Baptism with the Holy Spirit would be received immediately upon repentance and baptism into the name of Jesus Christ. However, the Baptism with the Holy Spirit has been allowed to drop out of sight, and the church has had so little expectancy along this line for its young children that a large portion of the church is in the position of the churches in Samaria and Ephesus, where someone has to come and call the attention of the believers to their privilege in the Risen Christ and claim it for them.

Fourth Proposition: The baptism with the Holy Spirit is an experience connected with and primarily for the purpose of service.

The Baptism with the Spirit is not primarily intended to make believers happy or holy, but to make them useful. In every passage in the Bible in which the results of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit are mentioned they are related to testimony and service. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit has no direct reference to cleaning from sin. It has to do with gifts for service rather than with graces of character. It is the impartation of supernatural power or gifts in service, and sometimes one may have rare gifts in service, and few graces.

4.4.3. The Pentecostal view on Spirit Baptism

The Holiness movement of John Wesley had a distinct impact on the rise of Pentecostalism. Wesley taught the second blessing experience, including Christian perfection as distinct from justification. He believed that such experiences would become as numerous as conversions (Synan 1975:59- 61) . In addition to Wesley and his holiness revival, there are two people who are regarded as initiators of Pentecostal revival: Charles Fox Parham (1873 – 1929) and William Joseph Seymour (1870 – 1922). Parham had left the Methodist Church after experiencing healing from rheumatic fever. He started a healing

ministry in Topeka, Kansas in 1898 where he established a healing home. Parham was later associated with Stanford who had come from the Baptist church. Influenced by the Holiness Movement, Stanford believed in sanctification and divine healing.

William Seymour, an African-American son of a slave, had been discipled by Parham, but it was Seymour who preached healing at the Azusa Street Revival (1904 - 1906). It began among the poorest of the poor. The meetings were interracial and intercultural. Azusa led to the founding of denominations such as the Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God and the Church of God in Christ. It saw the beginning of what is now known as classical Pentecostalism. (Anderson 2006-04-23/2:107-111)

4.4.3.1. Agreement among Pentecostals

Among Pentecostals there are general agreement on the central doctrines of the Christian faith. These include:

1. That Jesus Christ can/should be personally encountered as saviour of the sincerely repentant sinner, resulting in regeneration to a transformed life.
2. To every believer there is an experience of God's Spirit available according to the pattern of Spirit baptism found in the history of the first-century church in Acts.
3. The power of God is revealed today in the lives of individuals and communities as it was in the early Christian communities.
4. A sincere attitude of praise and worship should mark the life of the individual believer and the liturgy of the whole group.
5. The regenerate is obliged to reveal a distinctively Christian life-style based on discipleship of Jesus.
6. The goal of the individual believer, of the local church, and of the large Pentecostal community, is to further the mission of Jesus.
7. Jesus is coming again, to judge the world, and to apocalyptically renew creation.

(Clark and Lederle et al, 1983:17)

4.4.3.2. Gee on Spirit Baptism

Warner in a foreword to Gee's book *Now that You have Been Baptised in the Spirit* writes:

For many years the late Donald Gee was a leading Pentecostal preacher and writer. His pulpit and writing ministries contributed much to not only his own British Assemblies of God but to the worldwide Pentecostal Movement as well. During his long and fruitful lifetime he served as pastor, editor, writer, church official, and throughout the world as a speaker, visiting at least 60 countries. And several of his books were translated into as many as nine languages.

The publisher is pleased to add *Now that You're Been Baptized in the Spirit* to the Donald Gee book series so well received by Christians in many lands. (Warner (ed) in Gee: 1972: ii-iii)

Gee says the following concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit:

With them it was no mere intellectual assent to some article in a creed defining an orthodox doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit. Neither were they satisfied to acquiesce to a vague idea that in some indefinite manner the Holy Spirit had been imparted upon conversion. They gladly and thankfully recognised his gracious operations in their regeneration and sanctification, but their own personal reception of the Holy Spirit was an intensely vivid experience. They knew when He came, where He came, *how* He came.* Nothing reveals this more than Paul's searching question to certain disciples whom he immediately sensed to be spiritually lacking in a vital part of their Christian inheritance: "Have Ye *received* the Holy Ghost?" (Ac19:2). The challenge was to experience, not to doctrine. How significant! An Ephesians "Pentecost" speedily rectified their shortcoming, and it was an experience as vivid as all the rest had received: "They spoke in tongues and prophesied."

The above passage, like its parallels, reveals that there is an intimate connection between the supernatural gifts of Spirit and the initial Baptism with the Holy Spirit. They constituted one of the accepted results of that blessing in the corporate life and activity of the assemblies; and the spiritual gifts with which their gatherings were enriched all arose out of the fact that the individuals comprising them were personally filled with the Spirit.

The very phrase “manifestation of the Spirit” makes this clear. (1 Cor. 12:7). The Greek word is *phanerosis*, a shining forth. Those nine “gifts” that follow are examples of the different ways in which the indwelling Spirit might reveal Himself through believers. It is the light shining through the lantern. A splendid modern illustration is provided by the well-known pocket electric flashlight. There is the power of the battery within the lamp that shines forth (literally *manifests* itself) whenever the owner places his finger upon the trigger. (Gee 1937:4-5)

Gee, however warns against what he calls disappointing baptisms. He categorises them into three groups: The first group are people who have experienced no change in their lives after the Pentecostal baptism. The second group are people who, when they receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, receive some of the gifts of the Spirit, but they do not have any fruit of the Spirit. They seem to be able to speak in tongues but do not have love. They have the outward manifestation of the Spirit but we are sorry to say their lives and testimonies are very far from what they ought to be; there is something wrong with a baptism in the Holy Spirit that only gives gifts and doesn't make them more holy. It is a disappointing baptism - if not to them, it is to others. The last group are those who have gifts and also fruit and yet who do not have any real power. They can speak in tongues and their lives are blameless, but you could not really say they have power in their lives. “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” (Gee 1972: 24- 25).

From the above self-criticism by one of the foremost pioneering fathers of Spirit baptism, it is clear that Spirit baptism does not create super-Christians.

I met Donald Gee in 1956 when he visited our church in Nelspruit after Bhengu's revival in January 1956. He preached on how as a little boy he had a tomato garden in the yard of their home. He would get up every morning to check if there were any tomatoes. One night whilst he was asleep his mother tied a beautiful red tomato to a branch. He said that he was ecstatic when he saw the red tomato; he was however disappointed when it fell off as soon as he touched it. The point he was making was that tangible fruit grow over time unlike spiritual gifts which one can receive almost instantaneously.

Gee is supported by other Pentecostal writers including David J du Plessis, one of the world renowned Pentecostal leaders of the twentieth century who went around the world introducing the ministry of Spirit baptism and the attendant manifestations of the Spirit to numerous mainline churches, including the Roman Catholic Church.

4.4.3.3. Du Plessis on Spirit Baptism:

Gee was supported by David du Plessis, one of the renowned Pentecostal leaders of the 20th century, who travelled the world introducing the ministry of Spirit baptisms to Protestant churches as well as to the Roman Catholic Church. Du Plessis explained his views:

The Church is the agent, water is an element and the new Christian is the object. This then becomes the second event in his life. He has now received the Spirit (Ezek. 36:26; John 1:12, 13; John 3:6-18) and has been accepted into the Church. The regenerated sinner, now a new member of the Christian Church, must be baptised in the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. Christ is the agent, the Holy Spirit is the element, and the believer is the object. Being baptized by the Spirit into the body is not an encounter with the Church but with the Holy Spirit. Baptism in water is not an encounter with the water but with the Church. The baptism into the Holy Spirit is not an encounter with the Spirit but with Christ the baptiser. This means total surrender and absolute commitment to Jesus. Without this He cannot baptise you in the Spirit. (Du Plessis 1970:70-71)

4.5. BHENGU'S DECLARATION OF FAITH

Bhengu found it necessary to develop for himself and his church statements of belief to protect his work:

The members of this mission declare their belief concerning:

1. The Trinity of the Godhead, i.e. Father, Son and Holy Spirit; co-equal and eternally existing in three persons as one God.

2. The deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, that He was begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, possessing a sinless nature; that His death was penal, vicarious and substitution; and that he was raised bodily from the dead on the third day.
3. The personality of the Holy Spirit, and that as promised, He came down from Heaven on the Day of Pentecost, to dwell permanently in the Church and in the body of each believer, and that He is the efficient power for godly living, Christian service, and spiritual worship.
4. The supernatural plenary inspiration of the Scripture, that it is inerrant in the original writings and of the supreme, absolute and final authority, in all matters of doctrine, faith and conduct.
5. The ruin of the human race is universal, total, and irremediable by human effort whatsoever.
6. The shedding of the blood of Christ is the only ground of justification by God, forgiveness of sins, and peace with God.
7. The necessity of the new birth as the only ground of entrance into the Kingdom of God.
8. Salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ.
9. The observance of the ordinance of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
10. It is the privilege of all who are born again through faith in Christ Jesus to be assured of their salvation, and that they are at present in possession of eternal life, and delivered from judgement and the wrath to come.
11. Satan is a living personality, a veritable being.
12. The true Church which is his body, of which Christ is the absolute Head, is composed of regenerate persons.
13. That the Gospel of Christ issuing from His death and resurrection should be preached without reserve or qualification to every creature under Heaven.
14. That the return of the Lord Jesus will be personal and premillennial, and so far as the Church is concerned it is imminent.
15. The literal resurrection of the body of both the just and the unjust.
16. The eternal blessedness of the just and the eternal punishment of the unjust.
(Hollenweger 1972:517 – 518)

The Bhengu Declaration of faith is similar to that of the Assemblies of God, Things Commonly Believed Amongst Us but it differs on its inerrancy emphasis on the inerrancy of scripture.

A closer look reveals that Bhengu's Declaration of Faith is in every respect *Evangelical*. The only section that may be regarded to suggest a semblance of a link to Pentecostalism is Statement 3 on the Holy Spirit, "The personality of the Holy Spirit, and as promised, He came down on each believer, and that He is the efficient power for godly living, Christian service, and spiritual worship". The phrase 'spiritual worship' was the central focus of Bhengu's liturgical Sunday Worship Service which he based on 1 Corinthians 14: 26 - 33, 37, 39, 40). These verses are read every Sunday at the beginning of the worship service. Verses 34 to 36 are however skipped because they suggest a restriction on women's participation in church worship.

Although the worship service is directed by men, women participate fully in the service - in speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, reading of scriptures, singing of hymns, prophecy etc., with the accompanying controls as set out in these verses: "...All these must be done for the strengthening of the church" (1 Cor. 14:26) and "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (I Cor. 14:40). Doing things in a fitting and orderly way was Bhengu's objective.

Bhengu's credo reflect the traditional views of the *Pentecostal* churches as well.

The doctrinal statements of all three major Pentecostal Churches – the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God and the Church of God (Cleveland) – are mentioned by Hollenweger. These include the baptism with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and divine healing. Speaking in tongues is regarded as proof of baptism with the Holy Spirit. According to the Apostolic Faith Mission, "The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a gift of power upon the sanctified life; so when we get it, we have the same evidence as the Disciples received on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2. 3,4), in speaking in new tongues....". As seen by the American Assemblies of God "The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance" (Acts 2.4). The Church of God (Cleveland) states: "... speaking with other

tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, ... that is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost." (Hollenweger 1972: 513-518).

Bhengu did not teach speaking in tongues in his Back to God Crusade campaigns because he believed that speaking in tongues was not the essence of the gospel that brings people to repentance and salvation in Jesus Christ. He did, nonetheless, believe in tongues especially in the use of tongues to speak to God in private. In this way he was following Paul's teaching: "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than a thousand words in a tongue". (1 Cor 14:18-19)

In 1976 at the first Campus Crusade for Christ Executive Seminar in Plettenburg Bay to which Bhengu and his wife Nokwethemba had been invited (Campus Crusade for Christ, a typical evangelical organisation that rejects speaking in tongues) Bhengu invited me to his hotel room and asked me, "How do those who do not believe in speaking in tongues speak to God?"

4.6. BHENGU IS BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

In a taped message Bhengu gives his testimony with regard to his own baptism in the Spirit. The part of his message that relates to the baptism in the Spirit is quoted in full below:

When Jesus went to heaven he promised that he would send God the Holy Spirit and he came. Some people believe that we are the tongues people: Many people see me and say, "We are very sorry Bhengu, because you joined the tongues movement." I belong to Jesus but I also believe in the baptism in the Holy Ghost and I believe in the baptism in the Holy Ghost (he repeated for emphasis), that Holy Ghost with no difference from the first experience of the first Church.

I belong to Jesus, I believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Are there two or three Gods, no, there is only one God ... no one can explain that, if one can explain that, then God ceases to be God, he becomes our equal.

When I got saved I had nobody to teach me and I had no Bible. One day, the same week I was saved, something said to me I must go to the rubbish bin. I did not know why I should go there; I started digging and saw an old Bible without covers. It was a Xhosa Bible. I took it out, that was my first Bible provided by God himself. From there on I read the Bible – the Word of God. This apparently re-enforced his calling.

I started talking to people about the baptism in the Holy Spirit after I had heard Stephen Jeffries in Durban and Bloemfontein. People were arguing, but I said, "It is written." I had no one to teach me but the Spirit of God made me believe that what Stephen Jeffries was doing was right. As I was reading my Bible I saw water baptism mentioned in the Bible. I went from Kimberley to Bloemfontein to be baptized. I came back; I believed in the baptism in the Holy Spirit. For five years I prayed to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. I went to many people; some shook me and did lots of other things, others spat on me.

I will never forget one day. I was preaching, God was baptizing my converts but not me. It was because of my unbelief. I went to Bible School, I had given up hope and thought God did not like me, he did not want me to be in the company of these crazy people. I joined the Evangelicals.

I went to Bible School to obtain a diploma and prestige. Our text book at the Bible School was Torrey's book 'What the Bible Teaches'. The book was being translated into Zulu by the Principal. He wanted people who spoke pure Zulu to assist him; we were busy reading the book and proofreading it. The book was again prescribed for the second year. When we got on to the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, I read it with all my heart and mind, I wanted to know what the Doctrine was all about. I will never forget the day when I got to know that one can be baptized in the Holy Spirit. The book said, "It was the same way you were saved. You did not wait, you believed that when you prayed and asked God for something you must believe that you had received it and you would receive it." It was nine in the morning. Something in me said, "You have been worrying God for all these years. The first day you prayed, God baptized you, but you did not believe." We used to stop

classes at nine in the evening. We had to go to our dormitories, by 9:30 pm all lights had to be out and everyone had to be in bed. I invited four of my brothers to go and pray for the baptism in the Holy Spirit at a Bible School where they did not believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but believed in Torrey's book.

I said, "Young men, tonight I am going to pray alone." I said I was going to ask God to fill them, but that I was going to thank God because he had already filled me. They said that they were going to join me. One of them started praying, thanking God. Heaven came down and I followed. I only said three words and all five of us were baptized at the same time. We did not know where we were. We shouted, we closed our ears, we were down on the floor, we made noise, we were crying, we were weeping, we were giggling, we were laughing, we did not know what to do. I was the only one that had been at Pentecostal meetings. The rest of the group knew nothing about Pentecostals; they were Congregationalists and all kinds of denominations.

I will never forget that day (sic) evening. We were there until 2am. We knew we had broken school rules, we did not know what to do. We held each other's hands and tiptoed to the door, but as soon as we opened the door, the whole thing started all over again. We ran back to the chapel. Each time we tried to open the door it would start all over again. We ran back and forth.

I took out a handkerchief and muzzled the people. Back in our dormitory, one of the young men was rocking in his bed, so I took my belt and tied him to his bed so that he would not fall over. (Bhengu – cassette-recorded sermon s.a). In his testimony there is no evidence that he spoke in tongues as an initial evidence of Spirit as taught by Pentecostals including the Assemblies of God.

It is significant that not once does he mention that he or the others spoke in tongues. This phenomenon was also true of Gumede; he too never spoke in tongues at baptism yet both Bhengu and Gumede had a definite experience of baptism in the Spirit.

Neil Scheepers, a minister and a member of the Executive of the Assemblies of God, who was responsible for raising funds in white churches to support Bhengu's Back to God Crusade, affirms that Bhengu did speak in tongues but never promoted it by laying hands on people to receive Spirit Baptism. He remembers:

We in the predominantly westernized way of thinking understand speaking with tongues in more biblical terms, we were strict that there would be interpretation.

Among predominantly black people it was very difficult to control the movement of the Spirit among them. In those days when he preached, the Spirit came down and people were healed. People became emotional and hysterical. Bhengu would totally control the situation. He did not like the American general speaking in tongues.

He himself did speak in tongues, he also had prophecy and various other things. He encouraged me. Personally in all the years that I knew him I never saw Brother Bhengu praying for people to speak in tongues. He prayed for God's Spirit to come down: It was however the presence of the Spirit, fullness of the Spirit in the meetings that was the thing that caught everybody and those who were leaders used to speak privately in tongues.

This was what was judged by the American Assemblies of God where they had a message in tongues and a message in interpretation of tongues and they judged that he was not a Pentecostal man because he did not have that in churches. When people babbled it was ecstatic utterances and it was not to be seen to be man, it was an ecstatic utterance of joy in terms of the fullness of the Spirit of God but he didn't like it to take place in public too much because it caused chaos rather than order. That was the beginning years of the Pentecostal message.

Scheepers's observation is supported by Bond, who has the following to say on Bhengu and tongues:

Nicholas Bhengu had reservations on that dogma, initial evidence. He believed strongly in speaking in tongues but he deprecated the insistence of some

Pentecostal enthusiasts on trying to get people to speak in tongues. The reasons for his reticence are understandable. For one thing, he used to say that were he to lay hands on his converts, some of them would make such a big thing of it that forever after they would claim a special charisma because his hands had been laid on them. He understood the people he was ministering to. He also used to claim that if he told them to speak in tongues they would say something, whether true or false, genuine or simulated. He preferred to trust God to come down in his meetings in spontaneous outpourings of the Holy Ghost. In his evangelistic crusades he used to expect this to happen. He used to speak of the event as a “breakthrough”. When the “breakthrough” came, as invariably it did, wonderful things would happen. People would be baptized in the Spirit. Healings would take place. The power of God would sweep over the people with mighty revivalistic force. [Bond 2000, 71-72].

Bond continues:

In 1964 when missionaries from the American Assemblies of God, split from us this matter of the “initial evidence” as they called it, was used as a stick to beat Bhengu with as though he were doctrinally unsound.

Bond believes that Bhengu probably had more of the Spirit’s working in his life and ministry than any other person he ever knew.

4.7. BHENGU’S TEACHING AND PREACHING

Bhengu was not an ordinary preacher. He was specially gifted in speech, and in his command of languages. James Stalker quotes the German theologian Tholuck as saying, “A sermon ought to have heaven for its father and the earth for its mother. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes that ‘the business of preaching is to relate the teaching of the scriptures to what is happening in our own day.’ Professor Ian Pitt-Watson writes, ‘Every sermon is stretched like a bowstring between the texts of the Bible on the one hand, the problems of contemporary human life on the other. If the string is insecurely tethered to either end, the bow is useless’. Bishop Stephen Neill develops another metaphor. ‘Preaching is like

weaving,' he writes. 'There are the two factors of the warp and the woof. There is the fixed, unalterable element, which for us is the Word of God, and there is the variable element, which enables the weaver to change and vary the pattern at his will. For us that variable element is the constantly changing pattern of people and of situations (Stott: 150).

Bhengu's message and manner of preaching may be summarised in at least four ways:

1. The centrality of the cross and redemption through the death of Jesus Christ
2. Addressing specific areas of need of his audience
3. The use of stories from daily life, to illustrate his sermons
4. Total dependency on prayer and the anointing of the Holy Spirit

4.7.1. Centrality of the cross in Bhengu's preaching

The cross was central to Bhengu's preaching. In his book *We serve a Big God*, Roberts quotes from a sermon preached by Bhengu in the USA:

The cross is our starting point, and I preach the cross of Jesus Christ as a starting point for Africa. The Bible says the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that are perishing but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. It is a starting point for the one, who has lost his way and has wandered far from God.

The backsliders had God before they lost their way, they do not know their way back, and often wander from church to church trying to find peace for their souls, but they have no peace until they make right with God. Jesus Christ died on the cross, went to the place of the skull, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Golgotha, and Jesus Christ Himself carried his cross to Golgotha. He expects us to pick up our cross and deny ourselves if we are to follow Him. You wonder how we can win the souls of people in Africa and the world. We lift up Jesus, the Saviour who died on a cross and prayed for all the guilty. He paid our penalties and on the cross became sin so that we can be forgiven for our sins, and from the cross find

our way home. Backsliders who had given up on God find their way back through the cross.

We are preaching the cross in Africa, and many people who have never heard of Jesus Christ are coming to the Lord. We preach in very simple terms, they understand and the Spirit of God touches their hearts. (Roberts 26 – 27, s.a).

In one of the Assemblies of God Conferences in 1959 I remember him preaching on Jesus on the cross “along with the criminals - one on his right, the other on his left “, (Lk 23: 33). He showed how the one criminal insulted Jesus whilst the other on his right pleaded for forgiveness and was instantly forgiven, “... I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” Lk 23: 43). He proceeded to illustrate his message with a story of a hobo who lived in a dirty, dilapidated shanty until someone gave her a bunch of beautiful flowers. She took the flowers home, placed them on the table then realised that the tablecloth was dirty; she washed the cloth and discovered that the walls were filthy. She then started cleaning up the whole house. Jesus made the difference in her life.

The following sermon is an extract from a cassette-taped message preached by Bhengu at one of his conferences. The title of his message was: What do we emphasise? Bhengu proceeded to outline what he emphasised:

As I grow old I begin to value every minute, I realise that we did not do what we should have done: to be disciples, bring forth disciples who will in turn bring forth disciples. Our message did not create the impact it should have. We just scratched the surface....The gospel has not failed. But God forgive us and God help us in the little time we have at our disposal. What is happening in Africa and rumours of war it's because the gospel has not made an impact.

It is our message, our highest message and our best message. We do not emphasise things about him, but we emphasise Him. What do we say about Him?

Below he deals with the person of Jesus Christ, the second member of the Godhead - the One God:

We preach Jesus- why? Because this Jesus we are persuaded, we are convinced and we are convicted that this Jesus is God, nothing less, nothing more. He is God! We are also persuaded that this Jesus is the only Saviour of mankind; We are also persuaded that Jesus died for us all and paid our debt on the cross of Calvary. We have a message to give to the nations that Jesus and nothing else but Jesus, and nobody else but Jesus is the Saviour of mankind: and that this Jesus having accomplished everything, having paid our penalties, died on the cross, gave up the ghost and was buried; but on the third day he rose from the dead. We have a living message and therefore our message is alive, because our message is alive, it is living Jesus rose from the dead. All that is left is for the sinner to accept the work that Jesus died on the Cross, what Jesus did.

It is not the amount of agonising, it is not the amount of sins that we brought, it is the acceptance of the work of Christ on the Cross (Bhengu: cassette tape s.a).

4.7.2. Perfectionism

Schlosser (in Holleweger 1972; 129) says the following about Bhengu's preaching:

Bhengu adopts the latent perfectionism of the Holiness and Pentecostal movements and he teaches that Jesus' redemption is final. The *simul justus, ac peccator* of Lutheranism is completely incomprehensible to him.

According to Schlosser in Holleweger, Bhengu accused white Missionaries of an indiscretion:

The White Protestant missionaries definitely give a false interpretation of the Bible "when they always drag the burden of sin around with them". This is a doctrine of which as Africans they can make nothing. For the White missionaries easily conclude that the Blacks have to bend their backs to carry the burden of sin laid upon them.

4.7.3. Bhengu on healing

“I will prove that there is a God and that he is stronger than the Devil!” he said, and did this by means of faith healings, “for without them my church would be as empty as the other Protestant missions.” He added, “If I was not convinced that the missionary command had to be carried out in all its parts, both teaching *and* healing, I would not have begun to preach.”

Bhengu regarded hostility to medicine as a regrettable mistake on the part of many Pentecostal churches. “I have never heard any testimonies about healings of organic diseases,” he said. On 8 April and 2 November 1953 Bhengu affirmed that in East London he cooperated with two doctors, to whom he sent everyone suffering from an organic disease (Schlosser in Hollenweger 1972:129).

This however did not stop Bhengu proclaiming the healing of the organically sick. In the vernacular his church was known as the ‘Healer’s Church’ (icawe kamphilisi – of the healer).

God desired a healthy mind in a healthy body. “The body is the temple of God,” he said. “It is our duty to keep this temple pure and avoid everything that can harm it. And therefore I do not need to forbid my followers to smoke and drink. I only draw their attention to the ruin of their health – and their finances! And the result? None of my people smokes or drinks.”

4.7.4. War on sin and crime

Bhengu declared war on sin and crime. Thousands were converted, including thieves who returned stolen goods by the van-load and murderers, who confessed and gave themselves up to justice. Many tsotsis (African gangsters) were converted and some became able ministers of the gospel. An amazed police major told James E Mullan, an Assemblies of God missionary from England, “Mr Mullan we have confidence in Mr Bhengu and we want this work to go on by all means”.

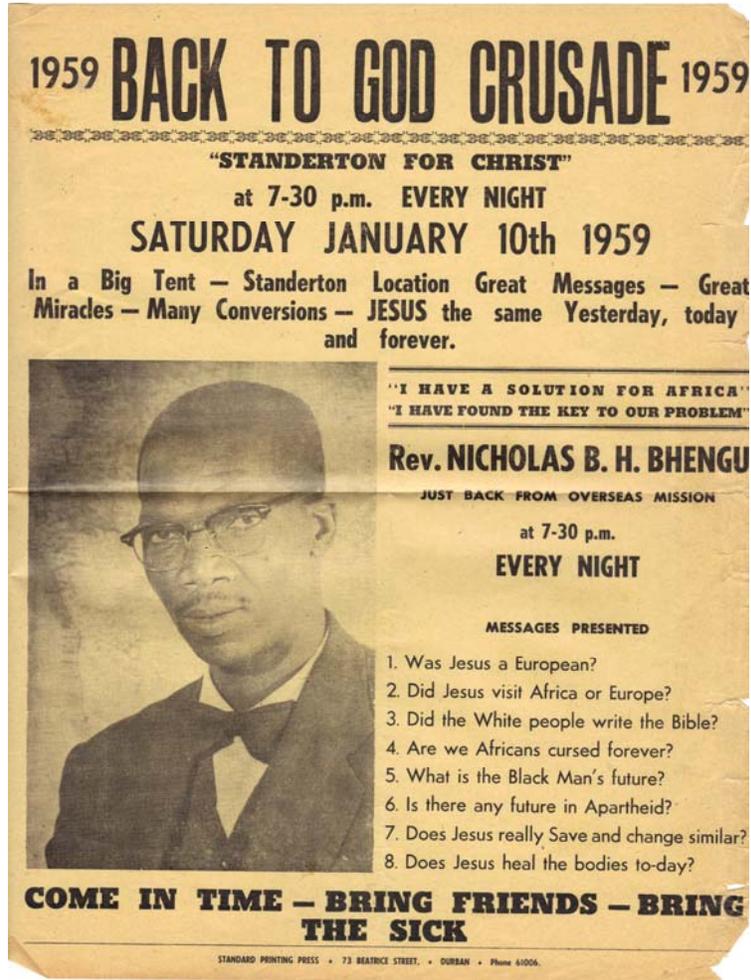
4.7.5. Bhengu on superstitions

Bhengu was not obsessed with ancestral worship, he believed the gospel that accepting Jesus Christ would deal with that:

It surprised me to find that there were so many people who didn't believe in the existence of God. I was amazed at that discovery, and thanked God that I was an African. In Africa, we have not yet reached that stage where intellectualism controls our thinking. We learn of such things as evolution and we study them in order to pass our examinations, but we make fun of such things when we are at home. Most African people don't know how to serve God and most have never set foot in a church in their lives, but if you tell them that there is no God, they will laugh at you. They believe that somewhere there is a God who exists. I have struggled with American and English missionaries at interdenominational conventions, telling African people that, because you can never find God by rationalizing. When people believe in God superstitiously - a word about superstitions - I just tap into the same belief they have and switch them onto God. That is the beginning of great things to speak to them about "My big God" [Roberts s.a:8].

4.7.6 Bhengu understood the psychological and emotional make-up of his audience

He raised and answered questions people were asking.



Bhengu had an understanding of people and human nature. (Lloyd – Jones 1971:110)

Katesa Schlosser says the following about Bhengu’s preaching and reason for his success:

Bhengu works with psychological means. First he tries to provoke curiosity so that people can come to his services. He also knows how to deal with people’s needs to socialise and to assert themselves. The service should never be boring. Important for him are, is the sense of community within the congregation. Apart from that people join Bhengu out of “a desperate need of their psychological and physical

needs” (Schlosser. Free translation by a German Theology student at the University of Pretoria 2003).

4.7.7. Bhengu was a great story teller

He told stories to explain his messages - like the parable of the farmer (Mt 13:3-9) and the parable of the seed (Mt 13:24 –30). He talked to people about spiritual things using earthly examples people could relate with.

At one level, Bhengu was easy and sociable, a charming companion, always interested in one’s conversation, and for his part ready to launch into appropriate anecdote to beguile whatever company he was in. He was unequalled as a raconteur, and I never heard him repeat a story. He boasted to me once that he could preach a different sermon on each of the 365 days of the year without repetition and he had a different story to embellish every sermon he preached. In conversation his language was precise and his flow of thought explicit.

Yet at another level, Bhengu was an enigma. Sometimes I found that while I could understand perfectly the words and sentences he was using, I could not fathom the thought processes behind what he was saying. [Bond 2000:93-94]

4.8. BHENGU PREACHED AND TAUGHT UNDER THE ANOINTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Bond describes how powerful Bhengu’s preaching was, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit:

To listen to Nicholas Bhengu at his most anointed was an elemental experience. One of our white ministers who had heard George Jeffries, the famous Welsh evangelist preaching in the early days in England said when Jeffries went into a ‘hwyl’ they would switch off the microphones and he could be heard in every corner of the vast auditorium.

Bond continues:

I have a personal reason for remembering Nicholas Bhengu as a preacher. I had an adopted sister, Pat, of whom I was very fond. She never went to church, (processing) to be an atheist. I think there had been a sadness in her life and she was wounded in spirit. Unfortunately she had a strong dislike for Africans.

In the 1950s when I pastured a small congregation in Durban, the church bought an old YMCA hut in Moore Road which could serve us as a place worship. My sister came to the dedication service we held. Nicholas Bhengu and several others were invited as speakers. Shortly before he was due to speak I noticed he was jotting down notes on a scrap of paper with a stump of pencil. I realised he was preparing his address at the last minute while sitting there on the platform. "You old scoundrel," I thought fondly to myself. When his turn came, he spoke for about 20 minutes. He transfixed us all. Afterwards my sister Pat confided to me, "I like Nicholas Bhengu, John; he's the only black I don't hate!" Please pardon the sentiment. It was she who felt it, not I. Some weeks later she said to me, "I like your little church, John; you can count me as a member" [Bond 2000:60].

Another testimony reads as follows:

During those remarkable days in East London, God so poured out his Spirit that it was like the Acts of the Apostles all over again. As Bhengu preached a crippled suddenly jumped up, shouted and threw away his crutches. As he walked and then ran, there was an uproar. It was God at work! Nicholas Bhengu said, "We did not pray for him, Jesus healed him and he shouted and the people knew that Jesus heals today".

On another day, a crowd of over 7,000 were assembled in the open air. While they were singing a simple Christian chorus, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon the household of Cornelius when Peter was preaching in Acts 10.

This happened at half past ten in the morning and a great crowd was still there when darkness fell. Small boys of just 12 years old talked in tongues and

prophesied. It was impossible for Bhengu or anyone else to preach. The news of what was happening spread and sightseers came and they too were converted. The numbers continued to increase and the Lord continued to save and baptize them with the Holy Ghost and fire.

The people were so under the power of God that they could not walk. Many of them were prostrated and lay as though they were dead. Bhengu sent for buses to come and take the people to their homes but as soon as the bus drivers and conductors tried to pick them up they themselves came under the power of the Holy Spirit. They said to Bhengu, "As soon as we touch them this comes into us."

In 1971, a Zulu queen was baptized in front of a crowd of 5,000 witnesses. Influential African political leaders were among the converts.

Bhengu is now 75 years of age and respected by both black, white and coloured, throughout South Africa. He has preached throughout Africa and visited Japan as well as Britain, Canada and America. (<http://hometown.aol.com/thewaycm/revival/africa.html>)

Dr Gamedze, a leading evangelical leader in Swaziland, a man who knew Bhengu very well, attributes the power of Bhengu's preaching, his works of miracles and the thousands of people who gave their lives to Christ to three things:

1. He was a born-again and anointed man of God.
2. He was a man of prayer.
3. He was commissioned - he understood his calling very clearly. It was really a gift of the Holy Spirit that was propelling him.

Gamedze further explains:

Bhengu was not a show "off" person, especially in the area of tongues. He understood or used tongues to charge his batteries. Anointing would fall on him as he delivered his sermon. When he delivered his message, the audience would be swept and fall under the anointing (Interview Gamedze 2003.10.23).

* * * * *

When Nicholas Bhengu passed away, South Africa - indeed, Africa – lost one of its most gifted preachers and teachers. Gleaning from his rich background, his Lutheran roots, his Evangelical training and his Pentecostal passion, he had much to offer. He set an example that should be studied carefully, and should be followed, by generations to come.

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

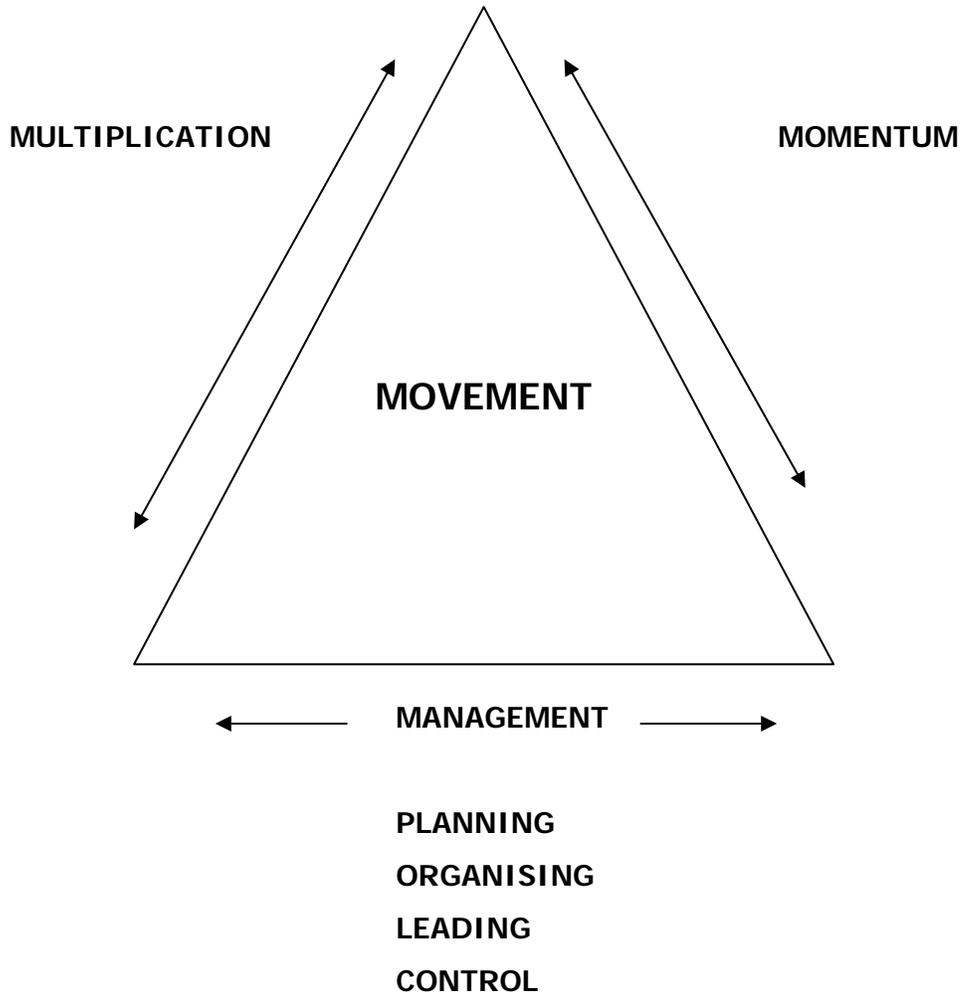
In the minds of many, one of the greatest achievements of Nicholas Bhengu was the establishment of the Back to God Crusade. By doing this, he joined the ranks of church planters in Africa.

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 |

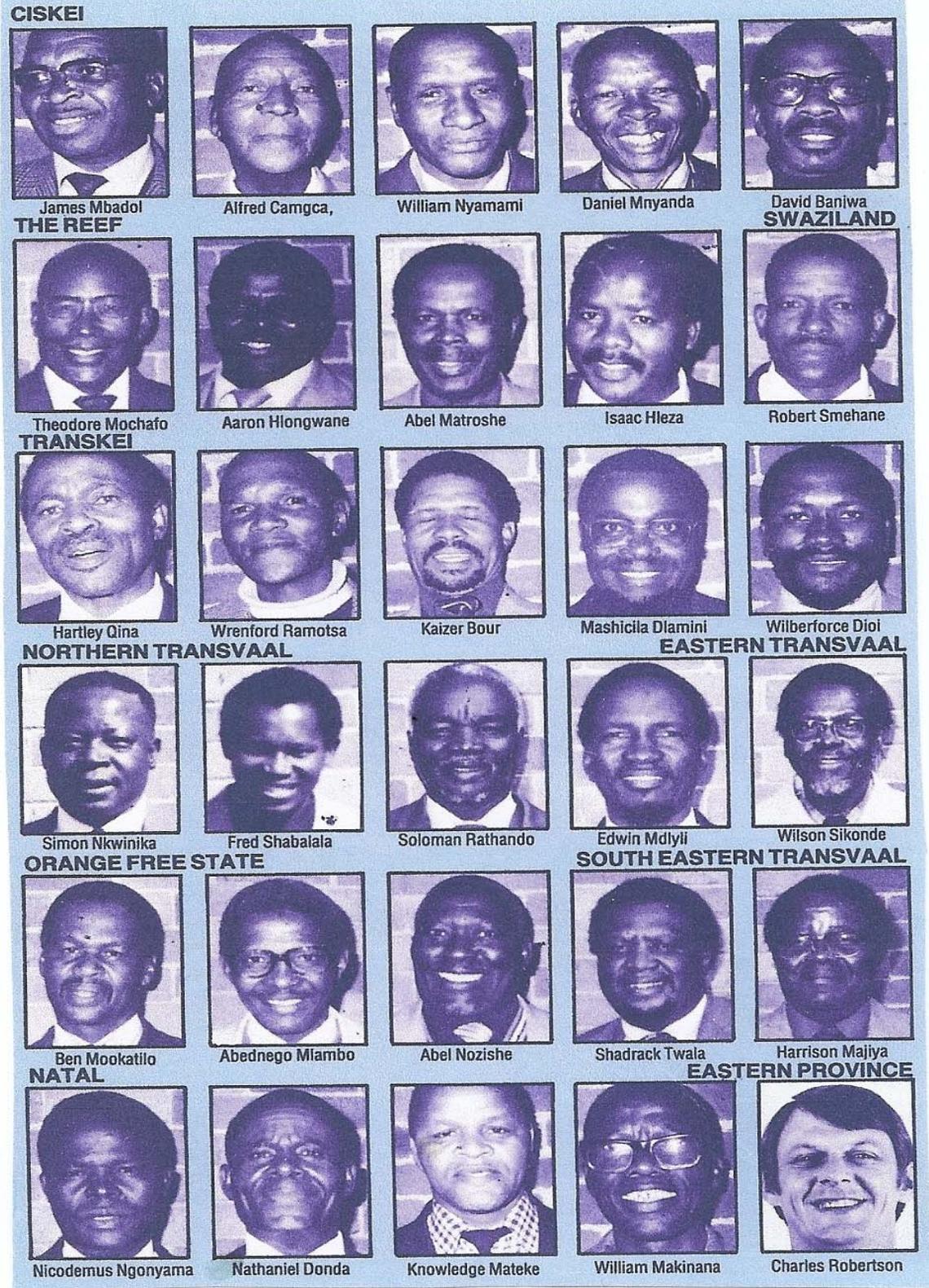
| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 7. Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga Lowveld) | Leader to be appointed. |
| 8. Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo) | Leader and assistants to be appointed |

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 Pet 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:

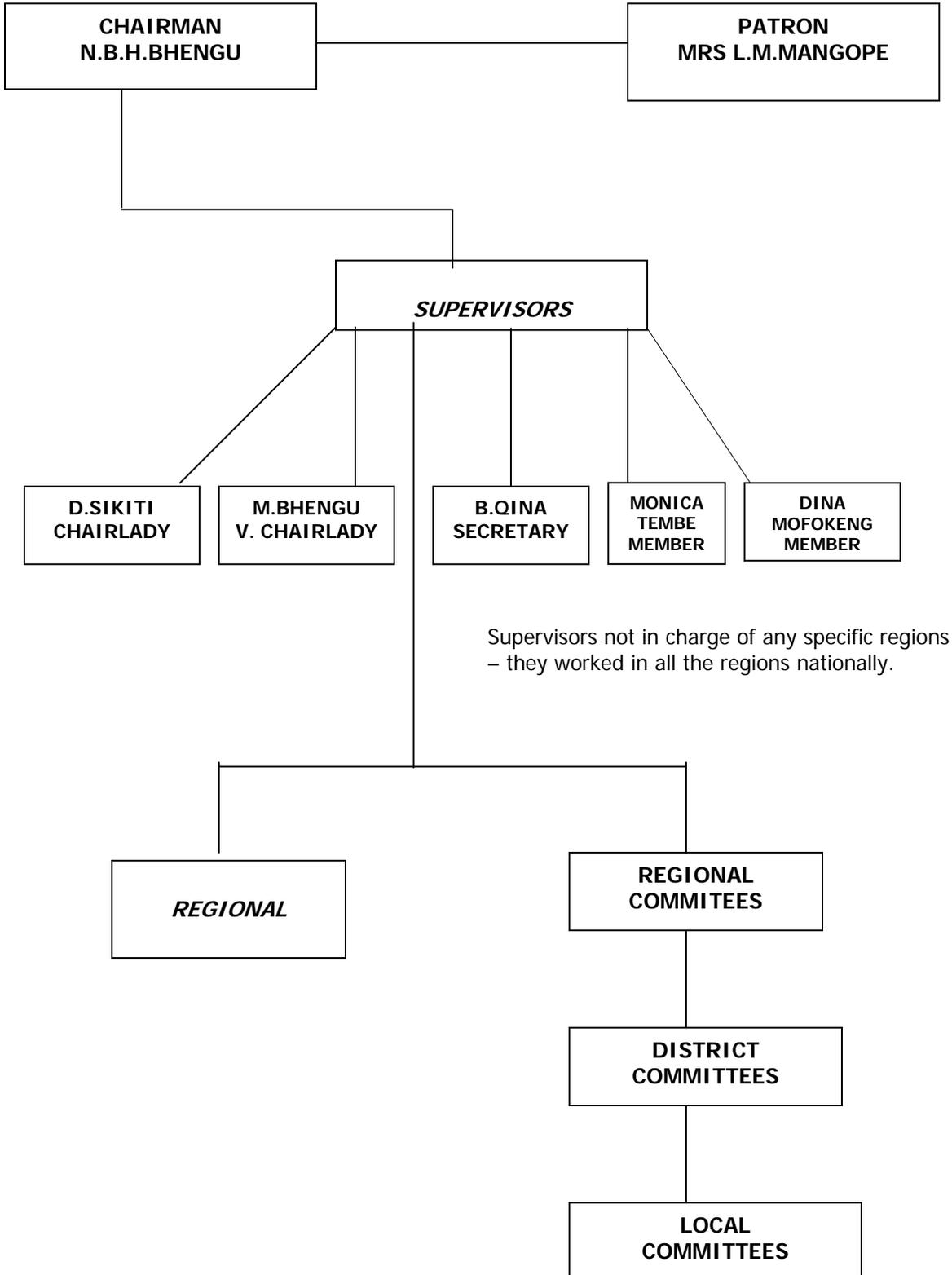
It was during one of his fund-raising episodes in Brooklyn, New York, USA that whilst he was praying to God, God spoke to him and told him to go back to South Africa to raise money for the work there. That night in a vision he saw an African woman wearing a typical ‘doek’ (headgear). He then heard the 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.

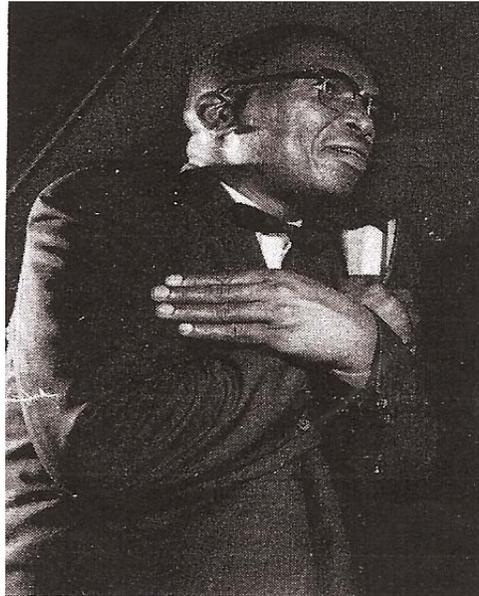
5.5. PASSION AND COMPASSION IN BHENGU'S MESSAGE

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

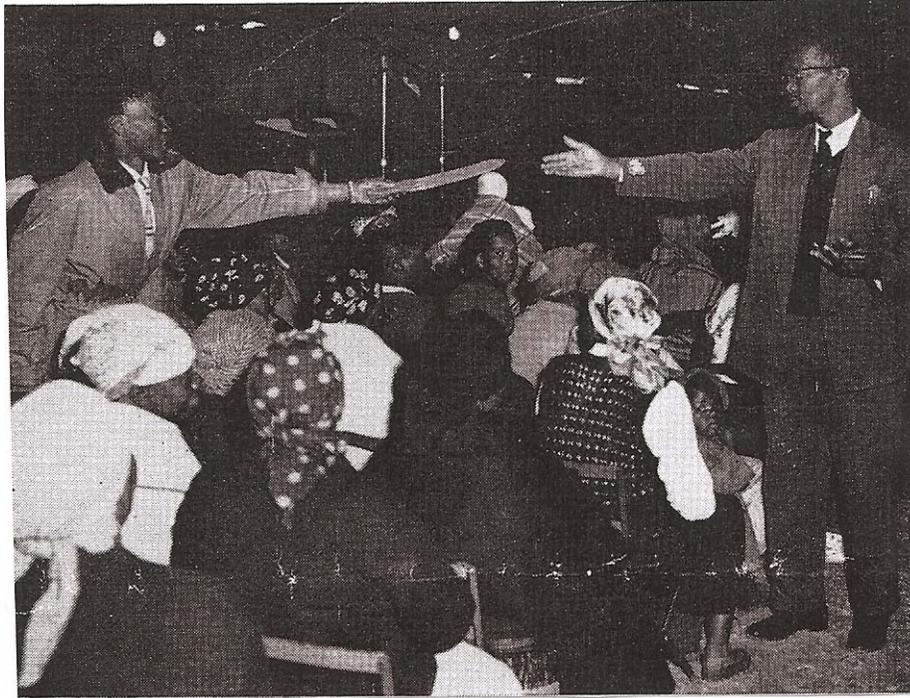
It did not matter where he preached, whether in cities or rural areas, crime came down; people turned stolen goods and their tools of trade in to Bhengu. Stolen goods and weapons were then taken to the police in truck loads. The Johannesburg *Star's* staff reporter (in *Mission News* October, 1958),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

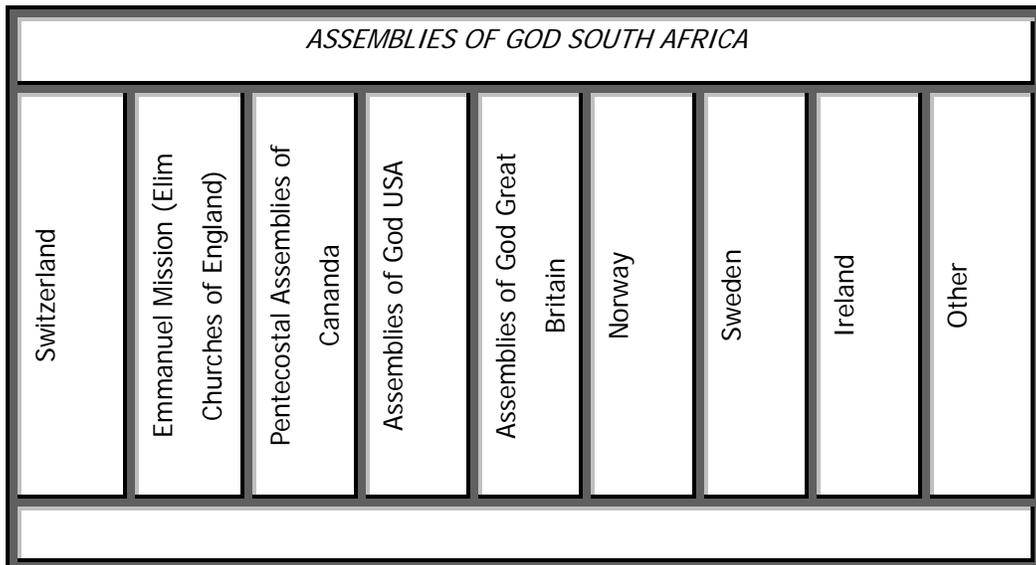
Whereas the Councils at Springfield, US America, and London, Ontario, Canada, have sanctioned the dissolving of the Joint Field Council and the forming of a self governing Field Organisation, subject to the conditions attached hereto; and, whereas the Joint Field Council had been dissolved in order to 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.

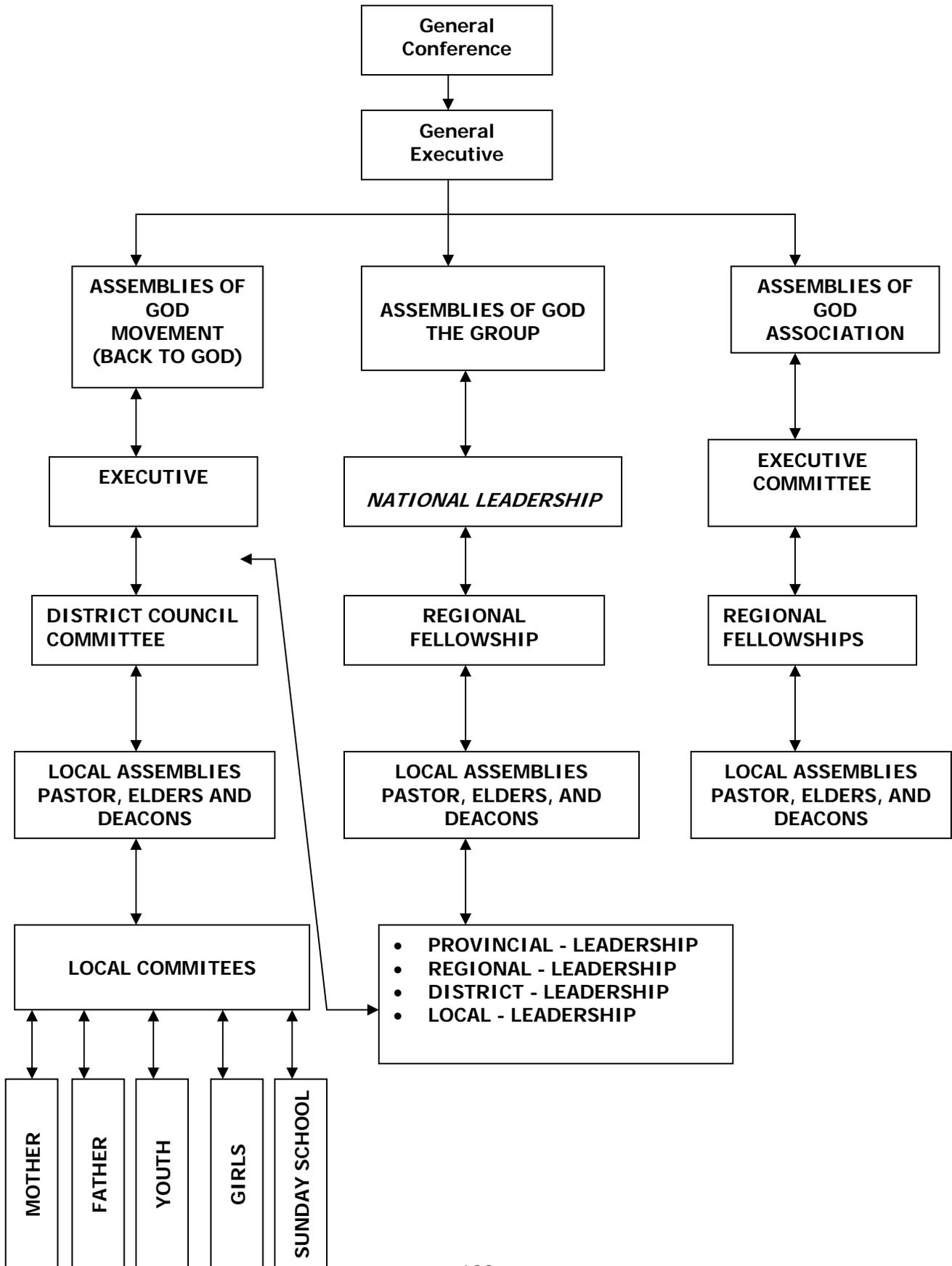
There will be those who use money for their own aggrandisement. Some will overspend and place the church into endless debts. Some will see an opportunity to get rich. The church leaders and the church itself are both capitalistic and scorn at all social concern for the people. That is why people hate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

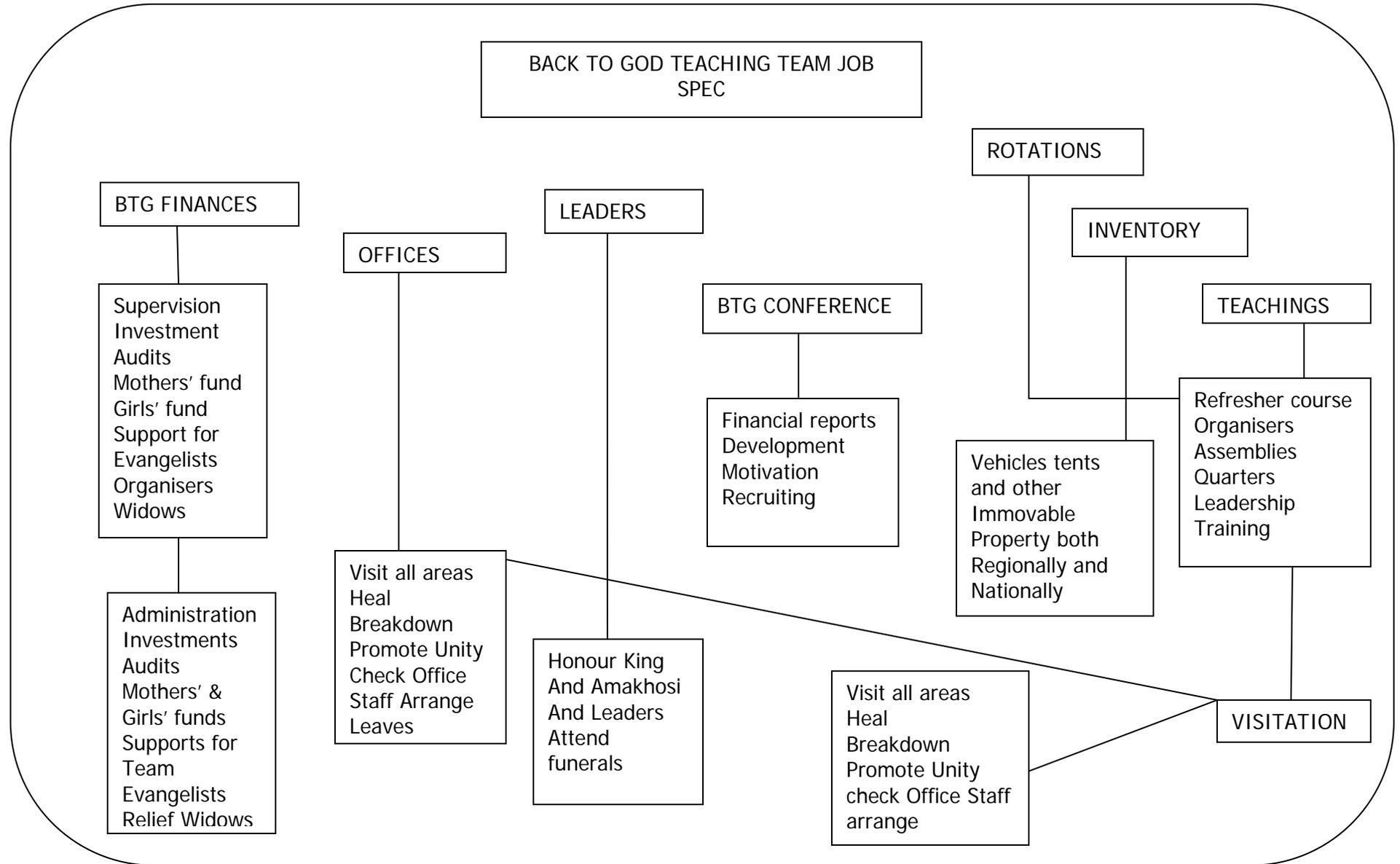
5.12. THE BACK TO GOD TEACHING TEAM

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



CHAPTER 6

BHENGU'S PROPHETIC ROLE: HIS SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLITICAL STANCE AND PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

6.1. INTRODUCTION: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION

Chapter Two sketches the context within which Bhengu ministered. The stage was set with the founding of the ANC in 1912 and the National Party in 1914 respectively. Both organisations came into being in Bloemfontein. The ANC's objective was to seek equality for blacks, in particular African people, whilst the National Party sought to establish Afrikaner identity - language, culture, religion and racial purity - for its people.

The socio-political landscape in South Africa changed dramatically when the National Party came to power in 1948. The National Party enacted laws that would cause pain and suffering to other races, notably blacks. These included pass laws which restricted movement of black people; the Bantu Education Act designed to keep blacks subservient to whites as suppliers of labour on mines and on farms; and the creation of the Bantu Homelands. The latter epitomizes grand apartheid as Dr Verwoerd, then Minister of Bantu Affairs in JG Strydom's government, orchestrated the division of the country into African ethnic groups: Zulu, Swazi, Venda, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Tswana, Tsonga, Xhosa (Transkei and Xhosa Ciskei), giving self- rule and independence to those who asked for it. The National government also established Coloured and Indian residential and business areas.

During this period life in South Africa was based on race. The colour of a person's skin determined what he could or could not do: where he could live, send children to school or university, die or to be buried. This state of affairs led to racial polarisation. Attempts by Liberation movements to find a negotiated settlement failed, leaving organisations such as ANC and PAC with no option but to take up arms and fight for liberation. South Africa was inevitably plunged into a prolonged war for liberation led by Liberation movements with counter attacks by the State. This period lasted for about fifty years and resulted in the deaths of thousands of black people and some coloured, Indian and white people.

The church was, inevitably drawn into the fray. Many churches made pleas to government in an attempt to bring a socio-economic and political solution to apartheid. Several conferences were organised to address the problem. These efforts by the broader church to find a solution to the scourge of apartheid ended up dividing the Evangelical, Pentecostal, English and Afrikaans churches on grounds of race and the diverse strategies to defeat apartheid.

Clearly Bhengu, as one of prominent church leaders of his time, would have been expected by both the government and liberation movements to take a stand for or against apartheid. It was not an easy road that he had to travel in pursuit of his calling and mandate to preach the gospel to all creation. (Mat. 28: 18-20), He endured criticism from liberation movements for not joining the struggle. He was monitored by government agents who feared that he might turn the people against them.

The colonisation of South Africa began with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in the Cape on 6 April 1652. He had been sent by the Dutch East Indian Company to set up a halfway station between Europe and India to supply fresh produce to passing ships. Jan van Riebeeck introduced the Protestant Reformed faith to the country. For many years the Dutch Reformed Church was the dominant faith among the majority of White Afrikaners. However, the occupation of the colony by the British in 1806 opened space for other church denominations to do mission work: Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican and societies such as the London Mission Society and others.

Cochrane (1987: 182- 183) says:

The end of the nineteenth century brought the diamond and gold discoveries, transformed the economic geography of the region, introduced the first major phase of industrialisation, and set up labour supply and control systems matched to the unique conditions of a tight monopoly in the diamond market and a usually strict monopoly on the low-grade, highly capitalised, but immensely rich gold reefs. From this point on the economy of South Africa was locked into structures that would produce a marked degree of exploitation of colonised labour, a white labour aristocracy, and underdevelopment of the rural reserves. That the gold reefs lay in a Trekker Republic generated at first an imperial war and then a peculiar and momentous competition between national and foreign capital, a competition for hegemony in the face of various recurrent threats from labour.

Mojake (in Saayman 1991:25) has this to say:

It is against this background of vast economic forces that the influx of missionaries to the colonies acquires meaning. The missionaries came from a capitalist Christian civilization that unblushingly formed religious sanctions for inequality, as it does to this day, and whose ministers solemnly blessed its wars of aggression. Churches became captives of the ruling elite whose focus was bent on making profit from cheap black labour.

Cochrane (1987:183) castigates them for colluding with colonial masters of the day:

White governments created labour reservoirs for cheap black labour in the native reserves with the cooperation of chiefs. The captivity of the churches to the ruling powers and their functional dependency on the industrial economy, itself connected in important ways to the imperial metropolis, can be understood at a number of levels. The Victorian tradition, a colonial mentality, the structures of the church itself, the material interests of its white members, and the impact of European immigrants – all played a part in determining the theory and the practice of the Church along lines prejudicial to the colonised indigenous people and the working class in particular. Regularly the Church stumbled through confusion, ambiguity, inactivity, and occasional protest from its black members among whom it desired no loss of influence. Its undoubted contribution to their welfare and to their ability to cope in a new environment imposed upon them, does not undermine or reduce the force of this assessment of the Church in relation to blacks and to the working class in particular.

6.2. THE PERENNIAL DEBATE: SPIRITUAL GOSPEL VERSUS SOCIAL GOSPEL

The debate around spiritual versus social gospel has been raging on for many decades to the point of causing divisions between Evangelical-Pentecostal groups and World Council of Churches denominations.

The controversy was about what the gospel entailed – spiritual matters, saving of souls or changing societal structures to make life somewhat more bearable for the poor and oppressed.

The Evangelical theologian, Michael Green [1992: 15 – 16], addresses the inseparable need of both spiritual and social gospel. He believes that it is wrong to separate them. In

essence the one should not exist without the other. Jesus did both, he preached and he fed and healed the people:

What is more, evangelism is neither Christian proclamation alone nor Christian presence alone. It is both. There has been a disastrous tendency for some Christians to concentrate on proclaiming the gospel without showing it; so to emphasize that the feeding, the healing, the educating and the liberating fall in the background. In reaction those who have concentrated on a 'social gospel' have been content to get among people and embrace them with the arms of Christ's love without bearing any overt witness to the one in whose name they do it . The very idea of separating the spiritual from the social gospel does despite to the New Testament. Jesus went about doing good and preaching the good news of the kingdom. His followers must aim for the same balance. There is only one gospel - of a God who reaches people in their need, rescues them, builds them into a new society, and is concerned with every aspect of their lives in this world and the next. This message must be both proclaimed and lived out. Presence alone and proclamation alone are equally useless. The early Christians employed both. So must we.

Lloyd-Jones (in Stott 1975:87) writes: "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." Lloyd-Jones believes that the ministry of the church is primarily to restore people to God.

It is common knowledge that the majority of Evangelicals lay high priority on the salvation of man's soul and the need of an individual to be connected to God through the New Birth or regeneration. The Gospel of John with its emphasis on being born again is seen as key to a change from death to life.

"I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying "You must be born again." The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit. (Jn 3:5-8)

The Apostle Paul maintains that being saved means becoming a new creation:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:17 - 21)

This newness in Christ should be the guiding light in changing, not only the lifestyle of an individual; it should also impel the new person in Christ to become an ambassador for a change model, structural or societal renewal including socio-political transformation.

So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. (Phil 2: 15 – 18)

According to John Stott, in the eyes of many the most prominent Evangelical thinker at the end of the 20th Century, the priority of the Gospel, the heart of our calling, is service evangelism. Referring to the Lausanne Covenant (par. 6), he wrote (1925:35f):

Christians should feel an acute pain of conscience and compassion when human beings are oppressed or neglected in any way, whether what is being denied them is civil liberty, racial respect, education, medication, employment, or adequate, clothing and shelter. Anything which undermines human dignity should be an offence to us. But is anything so destructive of human dignity as alienation from God through ignorance or rejection of the gospel? And how can we seriously maintain that political and economic liberation is just as important as eternal salvation? Both are certainly challenges to Christian love. But listen to the apostle Paul when he writes with solemn emphasis about this concern for his fellow Jews: "I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race' (Romans 9. 1-3). What was the cause of his anguish? That they had lost their national Jewish independence and were under the colonial heel of Rome? That they

were often despised and hated by Gentiles, socially boycotted and deprived of equal opportunities? No. 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved' (Romans 10.1), and the context makes it plain beyond doubt that the 'salvation' Paul wanted for them was their acceptance with God (v. 2 -4)

In South Africa the debate was of equal importance. Wilem Nicol saw David Bosch and Albert Nolan as representatives of the two sides. Bosch, in Nicol's view, over-emphasized the role of the church as minister of reconciliation by creating an alternative community in the world, not taking God's providential activity in the world seriously enough. Nicol (1990:93) compares Bosch, the DRC theologian, with Nolan, the Roman Catholic priest:

For Bosch, Christian reconciliation precedes social justice, while the reverse is true for Nolan. Bosch pleads that the church should keep a critical distance from any specific historical movement like the present struggle, Nolan sees it as the main task of the church to give its full support rating to the struggle. For Bosch the liberating role of the church is indirect in that it should in its uniqueness and weakness be a catalyst of change, while Nolan calls the church to directly empower the masses. Bosch stresses powerlessness, and Nolan power, but neither emphasises the unconventional combination of the two that leads to non-violent action. Social analysis and planning of liberation strategy are for Bosch not really the task of the church and theology, while for Nolan they are.

Nicol believes that Nolan's way is the correct one:

. . . If the church reads the signs of the times like the suffering and hope of the poor, and the actions of the trade unions and the political organisations working for liberation, she can have no doubt as to what God is doing in South Africa today. The church should proclaim this as the gospel and thereby give very powerful support to the struggle. This proclamation is not abstract. The church should "encourage people" to participate in the struggle, "support the organization" in the struggle, "protest", "propose new ways of acting" and "even give a helping hand" (1988:217). She does not spread a spirit of violence, but if some violence should occur within the struggle, it should not frighten the church from supporting it. All this should be done by the church as institution which is distinguished from the church as the people who belong to it. The meaning of the distinction is to show that the latter, and not the former, can move into practical politics, formulate policies and thereby make compromises. The church as institution should shun this

as a third way. So from the uniqueness of the church, Nolan makes the opposite deduction to what Bosch makes: Nolan deduces that the church should uncompromisingly side with the struggle, while Bosch deduces that the church should keep a distance.

In his widely acclaimed book *Transforming Mission*, David Bosch provided a historical note to the controversy (1991:297):

By the end of the nineteenth century the rift between conservative (or fundamentalist) mission advocates on the one hand and liberals (or social gospellers) on the other was becoming ever wider. Still, representatives of both groups could argue that evangelism preceded civilization, while other spokespersons again of both persuasions could plead equally convincingly for introducing civilization as a precondition for evangelism. They therefore did not necessarily differ about strategy in this respect, for the simple reason that all of them, whether liberal or conservative, postmillennialist or premillennialist, were committed to the culture of the West, which they propagated equally vigorously. Where they did, however, increasingly differ was about the overall aim of mission. Whereas some insisted that the grand object of mission was not to bring pagans into an ordered and cultured society but to bring them to Christ and eternal salvation, others were more concerned about the creation of a gospel-centred civilization and the benefits this could bring to all nations than about doctrine and people's eternal destiny.

My personal view is that a balance should be struck between the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of the gospel - bringing the people to Christ but also teaching them to be salt and light (Math 5:13ff):

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

In my book, *A Guide to Dynamics Youth Leadership – A challenge to the Church* (4th Edition 2001) I write:

In South Africa the question of racism has become a bone of contention. Blacks accusing whites of racism and vice versa. Racism is the attitude that says one race is superior to another. It is the product of the sinful nature inherent in all men. It must be seen as sin and that racial attitudes displease God. Christians are not immune to this sin. Although in public most Christians will pretend all is well, whilst in private the venom is spewed out against others, thereby poisoning them as well. We should help our youth to deal with it and try to root it out at an early stage of their development. We should care enough to confront a brother or sister when they express a racial attitude. But we also need to deal with it in our own lives before we attempt to look at the speck of sawdust in our brother's eyes while paying no attention to the plank in our own eyes. (2001:22)

Cassidy (1989: 323) emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit as the enabling power for involvement in dealing with issues confronting the church and society.

Deep Christian spirituality, where the Holy Spirit is empowering and in charge, has got to the matrix from which all human endeavours flow, especially those which relate to the four categories of this scripture - the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed. And if Jesus had to move in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14) and had to have the Spirit of the Lord upon him (Luke 4:18) in order to fulfil his liberating mission, then certainly we cannot manage with less.

Whether, therefore, we see ourselves preaching good news to the poor, releasing the captives, restoring sight to the blind or setting at liberty the oppressed, we need the Holy Spirit in control to ensure that each activity is done in his time and way.

Any method of working for either spiritual or any other kind of freedom which does not go the Spirit's way is therefore to be held in suspicion.

6.3. BHENGU AND POLITICS

Amongst all the forces at play in the country between the theological differences of his time, Nicholas Bhengu had to find his own position, to define his message.

Bhengu did not participate in party political activities, he was however very much alive to the happenings in the country. He had committed himself to preaching the gospel by which he hoped to bring peace and stability amongst different racial groups which would

result in eliminating racial and political tensions with the ultimate goal of introducing democracy in South Africa.

Bond [2000:100-101] says the following about Bhengu and the political situation in South Africa:

In a very true sense, Bhengu would not allow himself to become captive to any political faction. Thus he kept in a position where he could minister to everybody. Perhaps it was due to his wisdom. Perhaps it was due to the sovereign working of God. Bhengu seemed to find favour with all political leaders in apartheid South Africa, both black and white. He even found a high degree of tolerance from the South African government, although it fell short of outright favour.

There was a time towards the beginning of his ministry when the Department of Native Affairs placed some strictures on him, accusing him of being a Communist. On the advice of Jim Mullan, Bhengu wasted no time but sought an audience with the Secretary for Native Affairs. At that time, it was a certain Dr Louis Eiselen. Bhengu completely won the day. With a gentlemanly grace that none of his successors ever sought to emulate, Dr Eiselen personally apologised to Bhengu, first verbally and then followed it up with an official written apology. A decade later such courtesy would have been unthinkable from any native administrator. By then the Department had become a virtual kingdom within a kingdom. Many of the officials were dictatorial, masterful and arrogant.

In the 1960s some black radicals regarded Bhengu as a "sell-out". He received threatening letters in the post. "Bhengu, look what you're doing to us!" "When we get you, we will boil you in oil". Yet in the same period, radical activists sent Nicholas Bhengu messengers to promise that in times of trouble, none of his churches would be burnt down. Later from Robben Island, verbal messages were conveyed. "Greet our father for us". "Tell him that I was the one who came to him in East London about not burning churches".

A few years ago at a diplomatic function which I attended, I made myself known to the head of the Foreign Affairs Department, an ANC government official. He said, "Oh, the Assemblies of God! I know you! You're for us! Well, to some extent at any rate!" The statement was equivocal but friendly. When the African church dedicated the conference centre which it had purchased for some four million Rands at Henley-on-Klip, President Mandela consented to be the guest of honour. I had the

privilege with others of sharing the platform with him and with Mrs Mary Metcalfe, the MEC for Education who spoke glowingly of the Assemblies of God's efforts at educating black children and women.

Yet in the apartheid era, homeland leaders courted Bhengu's friendship. George Mtanzima, then President of the Transkei, visited the Back to God East London Convention and spoke there. Bhengu had no choice but to open the platform to him. His speech somewhat embarrassed Bhengu with its racialism. Mtanzima expatiated on heaven. He said, "If I get to heaven and there's white man there, I'll walk out! Bhengu had to wait until the following day to repudiate the statement in Mtanzima's absence. He did so with characteristic wit. "If you get to heaven," he asked, "and there's a white man there and you walk out, where will you walk to? There are plenty of white men in the other place."

This has to be powerfully stressed, because much so-called Christian action, be it supposedly spiritual or in the socio-political arena, so lacks the style and fruit of Christian grace and spirituality that it becomes a travesty of the gospel and a source of utter confusion to a watching world. The non-Jesus spirit makes those who might otherwise be willing to change stubbornly resistant to doing so.

6.3.1. Bhengu criticised for his non-partisan political stance

The struggle against apartheid was fought on many fronts: churches, liberation movements, labour unions, student bodies, international organisations and others participated.

It was to be expected that a man of Bhengu's stature would publicly oppose the apartheid governmental and support the struggle for political freedom. Instead, Bhengu continued to minister to homeland leaders. He also invited them to his church conventions. For this, Bhengu was strongly criticized. Inter alia by Chief Albert Luthuli, the highly respected president of the ANC. His family, too, was perplexed. Black journalists, above all Lawrence Tutu, openly raised their voices against Bhengu's stance.

6.3.1.1. Bhengu criticised by Chief Albert Luthuli – former President of the ANC and Nobel Prize winner.

Schlosser (Hollenwegen 1972:136) speaks of Bhengu being in the crossfire of politics and of Luthuli's criticism:

Bhengu pleads for peace with the whites – a phenomenon amongst 'educated natives' in the Union of South Africa – and is consequently branded and threatened as a 'traitor' by the nationalist natives who belong to the African National Congress. In fact in South Africa it is no longer so easy even for a Pentecostal pastor to remain outside politics, something which is incomprehensible to most of his colleagues in other countries. Albert Luthuli, who died in 1967 while under house arrest, was a lay preacher of the American Congregational Church and President of the African National Congress, and in his youth was a teacher in a village near Bhengu's home. Ketesa Schlosser reports:

He told me that he respected Bhengu as a sincere and honest man. Bhengu, who is conscious of the danger that threatens him from the extremists of the African National Congress, has in his turn a great human respect of Luthuli; 'He is one of the best Christians we have. But I do not understand why he has declared his support for the passive resistance movement.'

She decries the fact that Bhengu was left to fight the attacks alone without the support of South African and World Pentecostal Movements. 'He was left to deal with these difficult problems completely on his own.' She concludes 'Bhengu is far from a blind admirer of whites, but he is too reasonable to be a fanatical black nationalist.'

6.3.1.2. Bhengu criticised by Professor Sibusiso Bhengu (his nephew)

Professor Sibusiso Bhengu is Bhengu's nephew, son of Jeconiah. Sibusiso Bhengu went into exile in Switzerland. Bhengu mentions him in a letter he wrote to me from Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, England. 'My nephew (Sipho's younger brother) has written his Thesis for PhD in Switzerland. We are going to have a Doctor in our family, and he loves the Lord Jesus. This is a wonder of wonders.' (cf 6:12:1)

Professor Bhengu (in an interview 2005.01.04), said about his uncle, 'We were all puzzled by my uncle's lack of open support for the ANC's liberation struggle. It was as though he was sitting on the fence'.

6.3.1.3. Bhengu criticised by Lawrence Tutu (his church member)

Bhengu's arch critic, however, was Lawrence Tutu, a member of his East London Assembly. Tutu, whose parents were staunch and trusted members of Bhengu's East London church, wrote a number of articles in the *Daily Dispatch* in which he criticised Bhengu. Tutu's grievance was that whilst Bhengu invited Homeland leaders to his church conferences and conventions to address gatherings, he did not do the same for liberation movements. Bond, concerned about Lawrence Tutu's articles in the press, prompted Bhengu to respond. An open letter written by Bhengu is of such importance, that I quoted the key points:

7th May 1980

Dear Brethren

Greetings in His Name!

Quite a number of articles have been appearing in the Daily Dispatch about Assemblies of God and me. These articles have disturbed those who do not know Mr Lawrence Tutu personally plus those who rejoice at seeing mud thrown at the Assemblies of God and at me personally. But I have never worried myself concerning the small men who try to pull me into political controversies so that I attend to them instead of concentrating on God's work which is so important to me at this time. They are too small to attend to and if I do attend to them I would be making him great.

I am surprised if these articles have disturbed the brethren in our fellowship. These brethren have known me for years and know that I do not change.

Lawrence Tutu has been writing many things in the past with his friend, the late Hargrievs Mpetukana, who tried a smear on me, but the brethren finally found that it was all a concoction of lies.

The following points have to be considered:

- Lawrence Tutu earns his livelihood as a journalist and needs material for the press and so he finds his target or victim in me.
- Lawrence Tutu is not really shooting at me; he is shooting at Homeland Governments and the South African Government indirectly.
- All the statements in the press are a distortion of facts from a disgruntled, frustrated and venomous person who cares for neither the Church he claims to belong to nor any person in any station.
- Tutu has no scruples for the Church and his theological ideas are questionable and border on modernism. I have all the clippings here with me from the newspaper. It was not my intention to write this letter of explanation but Brother Bond felt I should say something to the Executive and so I am doing so.
- Tutu's mother was one of the most faithful and saintly followers of Christ and member of the East London Assembly. Tutu's mother died in the faith. His father is an ardent Christian brother and deacon in our East London Church. I had decided to keep silent as an honour to Lawrence Tutu's late mother and to his father who has never been found at fault since he was saved in 1950 in the East London Revival.
- Chief Justice Mabandla was at the convention in 1978 and was invited again in 1979 but apologised because he was held up somehow. Did the press interview Chief Justice Mabandla? Chief Mabandla was only left out one year and the fault was made by the staff which sends out invitations.
- We invite anybody who is a leader, we make no preference for parties. We maintain our neutral position in party politics but honour chiefs and all

leaders. This is why I attended Chief Botha Sigcau's funeral in Transkei, Mr Biko's funeral at Graaf Reinet. I am a Christian and I adhere to the Bible and to I Timothy 2:1-4 which Tutu has doubts about.

- I am a Christian first of all and I am a brother to all men of good will irrespective of tribe, ethnicity, colour, political or denominational affiliation. Tutu and the venom in the press will not change me an iota.
- Everyone knows that we began to invite chiefs and leaders since 1957 at the dedication of the East London Church and they have been invited yearly ever since. We operate in the homelands and almost 75 per cent of the Blacks come from and return to the homelands. We, therefore, have no choice but honour chiefs and leaders in those homelands.
- We have people from all parts of the world in our churches and we cannot afford the luxury of favouring certain parties and disfavouring others. We are a church catering for the spiritual and social welfare of the people and so we do not bark.
- Finally we believe and teach what the New Testament teaches. We love God, we love the brethren, we love fellowship. If Lawrence Tutu had anything he thought will be harmful to the body of Christ, he should have discussed it with us if he did not intend to damage our good name to the simple folk who read the newspaper. His motives are questionable and his Christian spirit is also questionable. I will not write and disgrace him to the public through the press but I am writing to those who are worried and depressed by these articles.

Yours in his Fellowship

Nicholas B.H. Bhengu

In view of Bhengu's use of strong language, I invited Lawrence Tutu to provide copies of his articles on Bhengu's inability to give liberation struggle leaders an opportunity to address his meetings. Tutu promised to check with his former newspaper, *Daily Dispatch* but has not come back to me.

6.4. BHENGU'S SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ON CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is interesting to note that, in spite of the criticism levelled at Bhengu by one of its reporters (Lawrence Tutu), The East London *Daily Despatch* reported very positively on Bhengu's role in bringing socio-political changes to South Africa. Three examples, all taken from the year 1966 will suffice.

6.4.1. *Daily Despatch* 1966: Not enough changes in South Africa

East London - South Africa's policies had caused hostile and rebellious attitudes abroad and the country's domestic strife had estranged her from the West as well as the Third World countries.

This was the warning sounded by Rev N. Bhengu, widely travelled evangelist and social reformer who was reporting on his impressions and experiences about the attitude of overseas countries towards South Africa at a lunch forum of the Institute of Race Relations.

He said the West was ready to lend a helping hand to anyone who promised to destroy South Africa's racial society. He said the task of every South African was to extend a hand of friendship. "We are all component parts of South Africa. We must behave, talk and treat men like people – we must do to others like we would like others to do to us." Rev Bhengu said:

Fears especially among Christian circles were that changes in South Africa were too few. There is a great concern to assert and affirm the Christian stand without dabbling in politics, just the simple teaching of the Gospel. But the Gospel message itself is becoming meaningless."

He said although South Africa was militarily strong it could not withstand a long drawn-out war. There had to be changes in the relation of man to man. Rev Bhengu said there were two alternatives - violence and peaceful negotiation - and he urged for the latter with patience. "It will be a slow process it, will need a good

education and patience when people's hearts are changed and their minds are purged of poison which has been there for years."

6.4.2. *Daily Dispatch* 1966: Bhengu on race

East London - The race problem was troublesome but not a hindrance to the work of evangelism in any country, the Rev. N.B.H. Bhengu, head and founder of the Assemblies of God and Back to God Crusade, said in an interview yesterday. He returned yesterday from Berlin, West Germany, where he attended the first World Convention on Evangelism, and from Canada and the United States. There were allegations that evangelism did not progress in a country faced with race problems like South Africa. This was not correct, Mr Bhengu said. "Even the countries without race problems cannot claim to have advanced the work on evangelism better than we have done in South Africa," he said. "Nothing can stop the work of God. No laws can stop the spread of the Gospel."

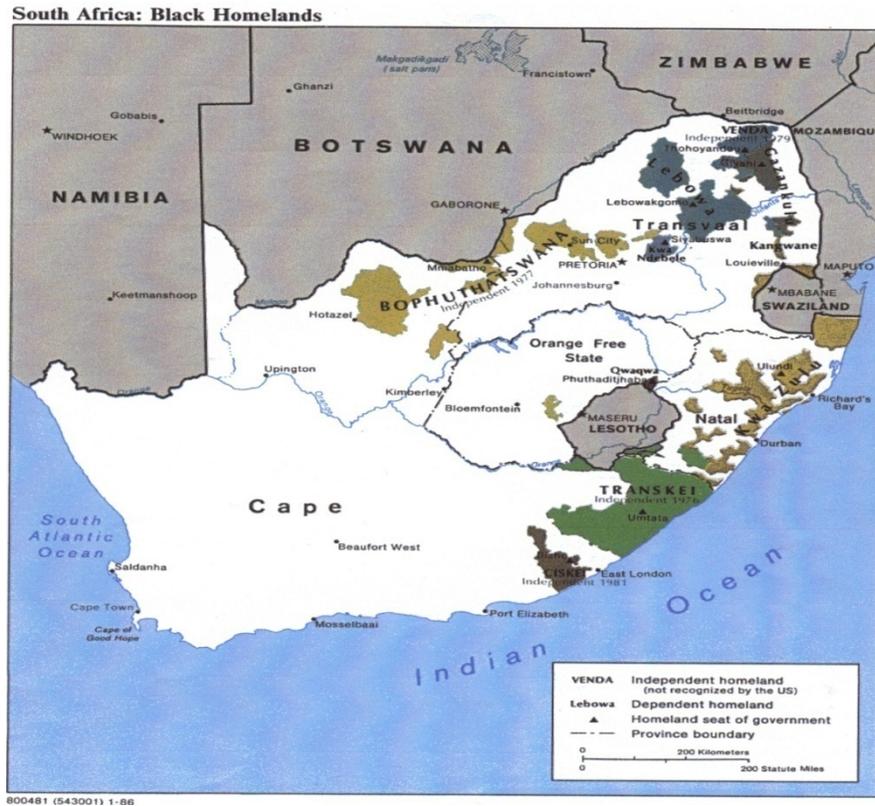
6.4.3. *Daily Dispatch* 1966: Bhengu on separate development

Bhengu was not an admirer of separate development as an ideology or solution to South Africa's race and socio-political problems. Because many of his people came to the cities from rural South Africa, however, he was compelled to work with homeland leaders in order to reach their people with the gospel.

The *Daily Dispatch* reported that Bhengu said that separate development had its own difficulties as the developed Africans had to be at the beck and call of the undeveloped, who manned institutions like tribal authorities. He also said that members of his congregations were sometimes victimised in certain rural areas because of their faith: 'It has been difficult for us to obtain church sites in some rural areas,' he said. 'We have been opposed by chiefs and their tribal authorities. Some bigoted Christian churches have even opposed our establishing congregations in their midst. It is our intention to establish a Bible school in the Transkei. We are meeting with strong opposition in some areas and we may be forced to establish it in the Free State.'

Some of these areas – Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei - opted for so-called independence from South Africa. Other homelands which did not opt for independence but

accepted legislative functions in their areas were Kwa-Zulu, Ka-Ngwane, Kwa-Ndebele and Qwa Qwa. Bhengu had to work within these structures as well as some white areas of South Africa.



A map of homeland areas

The fact that some homelands leaders did not grant Bhengu church sites indicates he was not the darling of homelands authorities.

6.4.4. Daily Dispatch 1966: Bhengu on white responsibility

White South Africans, also had a grave responsibility in meeting the challenges of apartheid, Bhengu said. His message, captured by an East London journalist, left no doubt about that:



The Rev. Bhengu speaking to a White audience in East London.

African preacher on White responsibility

EAST LONDON — The Gospel of Jesus Christ was the only salvation against the pending catastrophe and the holocaust of war that was now facing the world, the Rev. N. B. H. Bhengu, of the Assemblies of God, said here over the week-end.

Mr. Bhengu, founder of the non-White section of the Assemblies of God, was addressing a White audience at the City Hall on Saturday night.

The world was seething and boiling. People stood in awe watching what was to happen. The Africans were puzzled and bewildered by what was happening today, but Christ was the answer, he said.

"The Europeans in this country have a great responsibility. Of these to whom much has been given, much will be expected," he said. "The European Christians have done much to help us in our task and much has been accomplished."

A lot of missionary work has to be done. This was a challenge for 1968. The message of God had to reach the population in greater measure, and this was the answer to race relations and a remedy to all political upheavals.

People were looking at the United Nations Organisation with interest. There was no peace. World leaders were sitting and talking under fear and rumours of war throughout the world.

"Help us to rescue the souls of our men in peril. Rescue them from the pending bloodbath," he said. "Rescue them from communism. Rescue them from mad nationalism."

Mr. Bhengu said he committed himself to communism when he was a young man. This he did through vague promises. But now he had committed himself to God.

—DDR.

6.4.5. Bhengu's message to political leaders

As a prophet and evangelist Bhengu preached the Word of God to all people including politicians, traditional leaders, business students, youth - the rich and poor without distinction. They all needed to hear the message of salvation, the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of a future in heaven with their Creator.

6.4.5.1. Bhengu preaches to the ANC

In 1951, Dr Gamedze a prominent Evangelical leader in Swaziland, was on a ship bound for England. He told me the following in an interview in 2003:

Whilst the ship docked in Port Elizabeth, I requested to disembark to go and see Bhengu in Port Elizabeth, with a plan to drive with him from Port Elizabeth to East London. During this time I got to know more about Bhengu and all the suffering he went through. He related of times when he had only one shirt. He would wash the shirt and wait for it to dry, wear it again until it was torn. He always wore a jacket so as not to show the tear in his shirt. Bhengu also told me about how he had lost his child and since he did not have money to bury the child he used his suitcase, he used his suitcase to bury the child on the roadside.

For a man to go through all that because of the gospel! He is an example of what an apostle should be - that's why I had so much respect for Bhengu. When we got to East London there was a big commemoration of the ANC youth league and there was a great presence of police. I expressed concern at the risk of being arrested especially because of the special permission I had obtained to leave the ship. I decided to remain in the car whilst Bhengu went ahead to address the meeting.

Bhengu had a way of capturing crowds. He would start with jokes and stories. He would just deliver the powerful message during the last five minutes. This meeting ended well. I remained in East London for some days. Bhengu told me that he was going to meet the people who were saved on that day. I did not believe that any one got saved on that day. This taught me that 'anointing has nothing to do with what you say - it has something to do with the power that propels what you say.'

(interview 2003.10.18)

Gamedze is corroborated by Nene, who told me (interview 2003.07.02):

In Port Elizabeth, Bhengu lived in an ordinary four-roomed municipal house. As children we used to sing for the ANC. Bhengu was often invited to pray at ANC meetings where crowds were singing liberation songs. We would go and sing in the mountain, sometimes in the rain. Mandela was also there. The police wanted to lock us up as Communists. Rev Molefe took Bhengu to Pretoria where he explained his mission for preaching the gospel.

6.4.5.2. Bhengu preaches to King Sobhuza II of Swaziland

Dr Hynd of the Church of the Nazarene talks about how King Sobhuza used to invite Bhengu to preach at the King's Imbizos (gatherings of the nation).

Hynd (interview 2003-10-18) says this about Bhengu:

His ministry widened from the Nazarene... He had links to the Assemblies of God ...I would say that he had a big influence. His influence widened and others were invited and then somehow ... I don't quite remember how but I see here there's a mention of his relationship to the king. The king was always very open to the evangelists who came, and invited them to come. Bhengu then developed a pretty close relationship with king Sobuza II who would invite him here. He used to call us all together, Christians, for special times, for prayers and national events... He would invite someone to speak to us... Bhengu,... was that powerful, spiritually and in every other way as a person, his personality, his voice, he was commanding, he knew what he was saying and he was sensible in what he said so he could not help but make an impression, widening his ministry.

6.5. BHENGU PERCEIVED AS A THREAT, BOTH TO THE STATE AND TO BLACK RADICALS

As mentioned before, Bhengu refused to bow to the state or to black radicals. Dr Moses Ntshangase, (interview 2003.09.24) one of Bhengu's highly educated ministers, had this to say about Bhengu and politics:

Bhengu was born into a certain social environment. He was involved with the Communist Party's concern for the poor, and with the people who were as opposed

to the elite who were enriching themselves. Communism proper is Biblical. The liberation motif came through very strongly in Bhengu's preaching. He said that people can have political freedom but still not be liberated if their spirit is still in bondage. He was saying, people can have political freedom but if they are not liberated in their spirit they would still be oppressed. He hammered in the fact that we needed to be liberated spiritually in order to participate in the political arena as liberated people.

Ntshangase told me that Bhengu used to be followed by the Special Branch in South Africa. The police were not totally convinced that he was preaching the gospel only. Because he had a large following of people coming to hear him and gangsters getting converted and turning their weapons in to him, they felt that he was too powerful and could easily turn the people against the State. But Bhengu was faithful to his calling.

6.6. BHENGU'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Bhengu's vision and strategy was to develop young black men and women to participate at all levels of entrepreneurial activities. His aim was to prepare them for leadership when freedom from apartheid eventually arrived. Bhengu was convinced that South Africa would one day become a free country where one's standing would no longer be not based on the colour of one's skin. He established development programmes for young people and for women.

6.6.1. Bhengu and Socialism

I own a copy of one of Bhengu's sermons on socialism, based on Matthew 5:32 (cassette taped message - no date). For lack of space I will not transcribe the message in full. Parts of the message are in IsiZulu, IsiXhosa and English. It may be said without any doubt that Bhengu's early association with Communism influenced his socio-economic outlook. Some parts of message are a free translation from IsiZulu and IsiXhosa to English:

Jews are capitalists. When Jesus came he found that there were poor and rich people. You only need to read your Bible, without asking me; you will see what

Jesus did. Among Xhosa-speaking people, there are those who have livestock and those who have none. Black people are not capitalists in the Western way of life. When people have no food because there was no rain in their area, they would go to those who have, to ask for food. In African culture, he who has gives to him who has nothing. If I have cattle and you have none but want to get married, I lend you cattle to go and pay lobolo for your wife. You are allowed to pay back when you can with no interest charged.

In African culture there is no capitalism as experienced in the West. When someone has no cows, he is loaned a cow so as to have milk to feed his children, so that his children may not die from kwashiorkor. In Western culture a ten times millionaire will ignore you. African people look after one another, we do not watch other people suffer when we can help.

Soviet Russia's socialism is premised on Karl Marx's scientific socialism. This socialism is like religion, it does not address the question of racism, tribalism and ethnicity;

We Christians are socialists. He who is in us (Jesus) although he was rich, He became a socialist and He had compassion. The difference between Marx's dialectics and us Christians is based on two things.

- The Communist says, what is yours is mine
- Christianity says, what is mine is yours. Christian Socialism is nothing more than compassion.

Capitalism: the rich have plenty to eat and what is left is given to the dogs when there are hungry people around them. Compassion is not forced on people, it is not forced on people at gun point. I went on tour to Israel. Our bus stopped at a place near the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus had sat and taught thousands of people. I visualised him sitting and teaching the people for three days. He had compassion because the people were hungry.

Jesus had compassion. He did not send the people away hungry; he feared they may collapse on the way. He fed the multitudes. Capitalists would have sent the people away whilst they remained behind to feed themselves. They don't care about the hungry as long as they themselves are full. This attitude is the cause of wars and industrial strikes among the workers and on mines. There is a lack of compassion, Christ's compassion. Christ's heart of compassion can eliminate the

strikes. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. It is not right that you should eat pudding but give me only pap (maize porridge) to eat. Why do you do that to me when our needs are the same, only compassion can address that

6.6.2. Bhengu develops future leaders through education

Bhengu believed that education was the key that would unlock talents embedded in the youth and women. According to Ntshangase, Bhengu was well ahead of his generation in introducing reconstruction and development programmes in the church long before the ANC thought of it.

As early as in the 1960s, Bhengu established a Bursary Fund for the youth to enter tertiary institutions. Provincial Education Boards were formed throughout the country. Led by special committees, funds were raised at local, district and regional levels for this purpose. Provincial Boards would receive bursary applications and select deserving candidates for funding. After successfully completing his studies, a bursar would refund the money so that others could also benefit. In a circular (s.a) Bhengu set up structures and procedures to facilitate raising and distribution of funds (see Appendix 5).

Thousands of young people were assisted in this manner. Some of them hold high positions in government, business, church, institutions of higher learning, etc.

6.6.3. Bhengu trains women in self-reliance

The relationships and roles of women and positions of leadership have always been a thorny matter to deal with in a satisfactory manner – as Bhengu also found.

Kretzschmar and van Schalkwyk (UNISA tutorial latter TIC 301 – B/501/2001: 18-19) address the lack of common transformations among churches regarding women in leadership positions. Whereas many Protestant Churches do ordain women in priestly positions, others such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church still resist the ordination of woman.

This point can be illustrated by using the issue of leadership in the church as an example. For twenty centuries, the vast majority of men and women have argued that it was

acceptable for men to be priests, ministers and pastors but not for women. During this time individual men and woman have rebelled against this common understanding, but they were the exception to the rule. During the twentieth century, however, an increasing number of men and women from certain sectors of society have adopted a different view and agreed to the ordination of women. The vast majority of Protestant churches do now ordain women to the ministry. However, certain Protestant churches, together with other churches such as the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches, do not accept the notion of women's ordination. Therefore, these churches do not have women in senior leadership roles within the Church. There are no female Bishops and Cardinals. This leads to the question: Why have certain Christians accepted the validity of the ordination of women whereas other Christians have not? Is it not true that these two groups understand the identities and roles of women differently.

Bhengu empowered women by creating entrepreneurial opportunities for them to earn money for themselves, feed their families and send their children to school. He organised women at local, regional and national levels. These women were taught to use their hands to create wealth, by sewing, knitting, baking and cooking.

Women were also taught how to look after their families, and how to keep their homes clean and presentable as befitting Christian women. He integrated the reds (unschooled) from rural areas and the schooled (educated) people, creating a bond between the two groups. He made it clear to them:

In heaven the streets are shining gold and the dresses shining white. Let us, as good Christians, be as clean and shining in our appearance as we can, even here It is difficult for people to break away from their old customs. Africans in the country like to relieve themselves in the bush, but here we have lavatories. Use them. I shall not be pleased to hear that dirty paper is lying about in them. I see that you are even too lazy to flush the lavatories. That is being very dirty. This church, too, is cleaned every day, but look at it just now, with all these papers lying around. It is this kind of thing that makes the location streets unnecessarily dirty too. (Hollenweger 1972:134)

Women in Bhengu's church acquired skills that made them stand out in home management and business. They became shining examples of what African women could do for themselves. Even though many of them, especially those from rural areas, had not had

much education they were able to compete with educated people for social and economic challenges with success.

Haddad (2003:441-442), speaking on poverty, women's networks and faith among the Nxamalala in Vulindlela, KwaZulu – Natal, says:

My experience in working with the women of Nxamalala in Vulindlela, is that they literally attribute their survival to God. In times of dire need they are unable to “explain” how they manage to provide meals for their children or pay their school fees. For them, God provides these material needs. The following excerpts from Bible study group discussions illustrate this point:

Umyeni wami washona ngo 1988 ngasebenza waphela umsebenzi kodwa uNkulunkulu uyangipha nje ukudla ngidle . . . Ngihleli ekhaya angisebenzi . . . Nazi izingane ziyafunda kodwa uNkulunkulu uyangisiza ukuthi ngikwazi ukuthola ukudla ngidle . . . [My husband passed on in 1988, I worked and I lost a job but God always gives me food to eat . . . I am at home. I am not working. Here are the children; they go to school, but God always helps me to get food to eat . . .] (Janet Nzimande, 27 May 1999, Nxamalala).

Sifundile ke manje ukuthi, “Nkosi yami” uma uthi nje hayi ake ngiyekele kuJesu, gempela imali ebengiyithola ibiyisimangaliso nje ukuthi bengiyithola kanjani angazi, kodwa ngangibona nje hawu, nonesikweleti sami esidala nje ngibone nje hawu ngibone ukuthi hayi ngamandla kaNkulunkulu. [We have now learned that if you just say, ‘My Lord, let me leave everything with Jesus,’ ... in fact, the money that I was getting was mysterious because I don’t understand how did I get it, but I found anybody that owed me, paying my money back, and I realised that it was the power of God] (Thembani Khoza, 27 May 1999, Nxamalala).

Bhengu created networks for the women in the church. These networks proved to be highly effective: women prayed together, and shared their knowledge and skills with one another, especially during difficult times.

6.6.4. Bhengu develops church leaders

For Bhengu leadership development for church leaders was a critical element to successful ministry. He sent some of the ministers to overseas institutions for training, such as Rev Fred Shabalala to Christ for All Nations Theological College in Houston, Texas, USA.

He gave his blessing to White churches to support Elijah Maswanganyi. In this regard Bhengu wrote to Bond to say that he had no objections to White churches giving support to Maswanganyi:

14/01/1980

Mr J. W. S. Bond
Assemblies of God
P.O. Box 10555
Johannesburg
2000

Dear Brother Bond,

Greetings in His Name!

1. I am writing to confirm that I have absolutely no objections if you open the Assemblies doors for Brother Maswanganyi to come in and present his Mission and Vision to the people of God. I accept what the Lord leads the people to give for or to the Back to God Crusade and would not like to monopolise or restrict them to my Missions or Visions only. People are led by God to give to that which they feel is a worthy cause.
2. I also have similar convictions about Siphso Bhengu. Those workers or individual Christians or Assemblies wishing to invite, help and maintain him are absolutely free to do so. I should not feel I am the only person to be helped. The Lord leads His people all the day long.'
3. I leave for Rhodesia on 17/01/1980 and shall be there till the middle of February.

God bless you, Jesus in Him

Signed: Nicholas BH Bhengu

Bhengu also encouraged and supported Ntshangase to study both locally and overseas notably the USA. He arranged with John Bond for financial support.

On 17 September 1979 Bond wrote to the Commissioner for the Department of Co-operation and Development requesting that Ntshangase be granted a passport to travel to the USA to study at Drew University.

On numerous occasions Bhengu encouraged and supported young men and women to study and improve their academic qualifications.

Rev. Nicholas Bhengu

P.O. Box 10555

JOHANNESBURG

TEL. 23-0449

Dear Moses

Greeting in His Name!

Thanks for your letters I received this morning on my arrival from Rhodesia. I am in agreement with your ambition and plans for your knowledge. You have my wholehearted approval.

I am unable to write anything more because I have a big pile of letters on my desk.

The heart desires to say much more in volumes but I have no time.

Correspondence has accumulated much while I was away.

God bless you and greet all the students for us

Yours in his fellowship

Signed: Nicholas B. H. Bhengu

Another of Bhengu'd protégés was Rirchad Sihlobo Ngidi, who was saved and blessed by Bhengu for the ministry. In his book *What a giant of faith* [s.a:10-11], Khathide writes on how Ngidi, the man he calls a 'giant of faith', got saved during one of Bhengu's campaigns in Lamontville township on the outskirts of Durban:

Ngidi, having seen God work miracles through the ministry of Bhengu, asked for an appointment to see Bhengu. It was in one of these tent revival meetings of Nicholas Bhengu that Ngidi found rest for his soul. The miracles that Jesus did through the hands of Nicholas Bhengu captivated the attention of Richard Ngidi. Within days of his new birth experience Ngidi knew that he had not been saved to be a pew-warming Christian. He knew that God was choosing him for high destinies.

Before the revival meeting came to an end Richard requested an audience with the preacher, Rev. Bhengu. The preacher agreed and an appointment was made. Rev. Bhengu asked, 'What do you want, young man?' 'Mfundisi, (Pastor) I am here to ask a very serious question.' 'Go ahead'. 'How did you receive the power of God to heal the sick?' Before the old man could answer the question, he took a deep breath and asked: 'Have you received Christ as your Lord and Saviour?' 'Yes, I have.' 'When?' the old man probed. 'During this revival'. Rev. Bhengu directed another question at Richard Ngidi, 'Do You know anything about the power of the Holy Spirit?' 'Not quite". Rev. Bhengu then began to give Richard Ngidi a lecture on the power and the workings of the Holy Spirit. He told the young man that anybody who was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit was capable of doing works of power. This was the challenge Richard was looking for. He then asked the preacher to lay hands on him in order that he might experience the power of God's Holy Spirit in his life.

As soon as Richard left the preacher, he knew that a change of identity had occurred in his life. He was to trust God for a great move of the Holy Spirit. For him there would be no going back.

Like his spiritual father and mentor, Ngidi was greatly used of God. He saw thousands of people come to Christ, lives charged and remarkable developments taking place.

CHAPTER 7

BHENGU AS AN ECUMENICAL FIGURE: RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

Right from the beginning of his ministry, Bhengu became involved in inter-denominational work, reaching out to, and preaching for other denominations. He was not in favour of “sheep stealing”. In his crusades in East London and other places, he encouraged his converts to return to their own churches. He was however forced to accept into his church those who were not churched or who felt that their new-found faith would not be welcomed in their original churches. He attended and spoke at various ecumenical conferences in South Africa, the rest of Africa and overseas: the UK, the USA, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Scotland, Singapore etc. Bhengu also seconded his men to para-church organisations and sent his ministers to non-Pentecostal Theological Colleges.

7.2. ECUMENISM: A WORLD WIDE PHENOMENON

In reaching out to Christians from other denominations, Bhengu proved himself to be a man of his time - for the 20th century may indeed be called the ecumenical century, in the history of the Christian Church.

What do we mean when we speak about ecumenism, and the ecumenical calling of the church? According to Tenny (1967: 232-233) the word *ecumenism* derives from the Greek *oikoumene*, meaning the whole inhabited world.

An older adjectival derivative is *ecumenical*. Thus the first worldwide councils from Nicea (A.D. 325) were described as ecumenical, and the patriarch of Constantinople claimed to be the ecumenical bishop in virtue of his assumed primacy. More recently, the term ecumenical has come into Protestant usage through missionary conferences aimed to bring the Gospel to the whole inhabited globe (New York, A.D. 1900). It was adopted by Archbishop Söderblom of Sweden when, after the First World War, he convened a conference to study the role of the church in

reconstruction (Stockholm, A.D. 1925). Since then, the efforts of the churches to work together and to try to achieve closer unity have been commonly styled the Ecumenical Movement, and ecumenism has been coined to express concern for, participation in, or the fulfilment of this or similar movements.

The goal of ecumenism was to build fellowship and unity among churches. The World Council of Churches (WCC) is by far the largest ecumenical body in the world, and includes the majority of Protestant and Orthodox Churches – with the Roman Catholic Church as a participant observer. The WCC was established on 23 August 1948, when four ecumenical streams merged: Life and Work, Faith and Order, the International Missionary Council and the World Council for Christian Education (Raiser 1991: 23- 24). Today 340 churches from 115 countries belong to the WCC.

In South Africa the ecumenical ideal was first fostered by the mainline churches who founded the Christian Council of South Africa, that in later years was to become the South African Council of Churches. According to Thomas (2002: xviii-xxvi) many churches, or “blocks” of churches, took part in the process. The first block of churches comprised the English speaking churches, the Methodist, the Presbyterian and Anglican Churches. The second block included the Lutheran Church, the Tsonga Presbyterian Church, the Moravian Church and the Rhenish Mission, as well as the Hermannsburg Mission. The third block included the Afrikaans churches, especially the Dutch Reformed Church which identified with the apartheid policy of the National Party government, and who has over the years divided itself into a family of churches, with different “sister churches” for Whites, Africans, Coloureds, and Indians. The fourth block was occupied by the African Initiated Churches, churches in search of black selfhood. This group emerged as early as in the 1880s. The largest denomination of this group is the Zion Christian Church (ZCC). The last group mentioned by Thomas is the Pentecostal block, with churches like the Apostolic Faith Mission where, according to Thomas, whites retained power and control – although, in recent times, a number of black members of Pentecostal Churches did step out of this control, one of them being the Rev. Frank Chikane.

In Bhengu’s time the following churches belonged to the S A Council of Churches:

Membership of the South African Council of Churches, 1975



| Black churches Founded by mission societies | African Independent churches | Multiracial With a Black majority | Multiracial With a White majority | White Churches | Mission Societies |
|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Bantu Presbyterian Church | National Baptist Church | Church of the Province of South Africa | Presbyterian Church of South Africa | Baptist Union* | Paris Evangelical Mission |
| Evangelical Lutheran Church Cape/Orange | African Baptist Church | Methodist Church of South Africa | Salvation Army | Evangelical Lutheran (Transvaal)* | |
| Evangelical Lutheran Church South Eastern Region | African Baptist Church | United Con- gregational Church of South Africa | Society of Friends (Quakers)* | | |
| Evangelical Lutheran Church Transvaal | African Methodist Episcopal Church | Roman Catholic* | | | |
| Evangelical Lutheran Church Tswana Region | | | | | |
| Moravian Church Eastern Cape | | | | | |
| Moravian Church Western Cape | | | | | |
| Nederduiste Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika | | | | | |
| Tsonga Presbyterian | | | | | |
| United Methodist | | | | | |
| United Evangelical Lutheran Church Of South West Africa* | | | | | |

* These were observer member churches which while having full rights of participation and speech in the organisation, did not have voting rights on its committees or national conference.

7.3. THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES IN ECUMENISM

Despite the unity that is very dear to the different churches, there are also many theological differences. One of these differences has to do with the role of the church in society. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance was, over many years quite critical of the World Council of Churches brand of Liberation Theology. The approach by the World Council of Churches to equate salvation and liberation with structural political liberation and social change, to the point of supporting strategies that sought to overthrow unjust governments through violent means, was also of great concern for Evangelicals and Pentecostal Churches.

In his book *Barriers to Ecumenism. The Holy See and the World Council of Churches on Social Questions*, Thomas (1983:15) presents the ideological difference between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches on salvation and liberation: In its insistence on a strict separation between Christian faith and any aspect of a historical ideology, we meet that dimension of Catholic thought often called, whether in praise or blame, "otherworldly," and contrasted with the "this-worldly" activism of the World Council. This distinction is such an old cliché that one advances it with some hesitation, and yet there is something to it after all. Roman Catholicism has been traditionally reluctant to identify salvation with any intermundane liberation. Salvation is not historically immanent, does not deal with the material situation, but is beyond all temporal hopes. The kingdom of God is reached by faith and membership in the Church, not "by the mere changing of structures and social and political involvement". It should not be interpreted "as being present wherever there is a certain type of involvement and activity for justice". The Church's commitment to the needs of the disinherited notwithstanding, "it is wrong to state that political, economic, and social liberation coincides with salvation in Jesus Christ". "This idea of Christ as a political figure does not tally with the Church's catechesis". "[Christ's] mission was not in the social, economic, or political order. Likewise Christ did not give the Church a mission which is social, economic, or political, but rather a religious one."

Despite all the differences within the ecumenical family, McLeod (in Murphy and Asprey (eds) 2008:108) defends and calls for unity among all Christians. In essence the church

has no choice but to be ecumenical. It is a given from God. This underlying family unity exists regardless of whatever may divide us: denominational allegiance, church order, doctrinal differences, cultural divergence or liturgical oddity. Even in our sectarian hatreds we are one; and we are one especially in Christ Jesus. Every single believer is united to Christ. He lives in us (Galatians 2:20). And because Christ and the Spirit, the second persons of the Trinity, are inseparable (2 Corinthians 3:17), we are equally united to the Spirit. We are baptized in him, led by him and filled with him. By him, by means of this baptism in the Spirit, we are incorporated in to the body of Christ, sharing in its life, and related to every other single member. This body is one. Christ cannot have two bodies. And this is the only place where we can enjoy salvation. Every saved person is a member of this body. This is the essential meaning of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. If someone is not a member of this body, he or she has no share in salvation.

This body is the church, consisting of all believers spread geographically throughout the world and distributed historically through every age from Pentecostal to the end of time. The clergy, and even the Magisterium, cannot distinguish themselves from it. They are part of it. Every minister, priest and bishop is first and foremost a member of the laity, the people of God. No further grace puts us outside or above this people. Even Christ himself is a member of it: the Chief Shepherd is also a Lamb (Revelation 7:17). Only in this body of Christ, dependent on its every other member, have we any spiritual life; and only in living, organic contact with this body are we any use. And it is just this body, in its entirety, which is holy, catholic and indefectible.

In recent years, these sentiments were shared by Catholic theologians and church leaders. Pope John Paul II's strong statement in this regard, reverberated in ecumenical circles: The ecumenical movement must not be allowed too flounder. The reunion of Christians is divinely willed. This is based also on the fact that Christ prayed that the church should be united Derr (1983:3-7).

7.4. BHENGU STRADDLED THE PROTESTANT, EVANGELICAL AND PENTECOSTAL DIVIDE

Bhengu was both Evangelical and Pentecostal in his theology and ministry, with heavy learnings toward Pentecostalism, since this is where he spent most of his life and work.

According to Bebbington (quoted by Ranger, 2008:5) Evangelicalism revolves around the following: *conversion* (emphasis on the need for change of life), *activism* (emphasis on evangelistic and missionary efforts), *biblicism* (a special importance attached to the Bible) and *crucicentrism* (emphasis on the centrality of Christ's sacrifice on the cross). Bhengu seems to have fitted this mould perfectly.

When, after the merger of the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches, IMC members withdrew from the WCC, an evangelical ecumenical body was formed in 1966, operating from Wheaton (Ohio). The subsequent conferences of this movement at Wheaton (1966) Lausanne (1974) and Manila (1989) was attended by Bhengu as well. He identified wholeheartedly with the Lausanne movement's emphasis is on the priority of evangelism – but acknowledging, in the words of David Bosch, that “evangelism also summons us to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witnesses, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation” (Bosch 1991:461).

7.5. BHENGU SUPPORTED ECUMENICAL INITIATIVES

Bhengu was a man of influence in ecumenical circles. He attended, spoke and lent support to national and international initiatives: the Pentecostal World Conference in Toronto, Canada in 1952, the Lausanne conference in 1966, the Durban Congress on Mission and Evangelism in 1973, the Pan African Leadership Assembly, Nairobi, Kenya in 1974, as well as the World Charismatic Renewal Conference in Singapore, 1978, to mention just a few.

In 1979 the South African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA), one of the most influential events in the recent history of the churches in South Africa, was held in Pretoria. David Bosch who served on the SACLA committee with Bhengu wrote in his foreword to Watt's book *From Africa's Soil – The story of the Assemblies of God in Southern Africa*:

I have been privileged to know two of the leaders I referred to above: Nicholas Bhengu and John Bond. From first to last, their integrity and the quality of their leadership impressed me. I first heard about Bhengu and his remarkable ministry when I was a missionary in Transkei in the late fifties and the sixties, but I only came to know him intimately during the 1973 Durban Congress on Mission and Evangelism. Since then we were together many times until he passed away. I particularly remember his participation in the committee that organised the South African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA), which was held in Pretoria in July

1979. For two years before this we had met monthly to discuss all possible aspects relating to the planning of that mammoth convention. Bhengu attended virtually all the committee meetings. At many critical moments he gave quality to our deliberations, always in his modest and quiet way. For me, Bhengu epitomised the Assemblies of God (in Watt 1992:12).

Bhengu supported credible evangelical Christian para-church organisations: Campus Crusade for Christ, Africa Enterprise, etc. Although he had some reservations about their position on Pentecostal experiences, he nonetheless seconded some of his men to work with them.

7.5.1. Africa Enterprise

Africa Enterprise was founded by Michael Cassidy in 1964 with a vision to evangelize the cities of Africa. These citywide missions are usually interdenominational and serve to unify the church in local cities. Over the years, AE has developed considerable credibility among the churches throughout South Africa because of its ability to mount such missions and unite the church. AE also mounts major congresses of church leaders of particular topics. Three have been particularly significant: the Durban Congress on Mission and Evangelism (1973), the South African Christian Leadership Assembly (1979), and the National Initiative for Reconciliation (1985). Two other foci in Cassidy's ministry are important: his keen interest in influencing leaders, both political and ecclesiastical, and his untiring efforts to bring leaders together. His efforts to reconcile warring political parties in the province of KwaZulu Natal during the 1980's were significant. In the National Initiative for Reconciliation, convened at the height of that period's political unrest, AE under Cassidy's leadership proved itself the one Christian group with the credibility to organize a meeting of racially, politically, and denominationally diverse church leaders, even though the conference and subsequent follow-up meetings served mainly to highlight the vast differences between blacks and whites on the issue of reconciliation. To Africa Enterprise he seconded Abiel Thiphanyane. Bhengu also served on Africa Enterprise Board of Reference (Ranger (ed), 2008: 204 -205).

7.5.2. Campus Crusade for Christ SA

Rossouw (1989:22) describes the establishment and vision of the founders of Africa Enterprise and Campus Crusade for Christ International:

In a vision that he received in 1951 Bright got the idea to start preaching the gospel on university campuses. The programme was launched in Los Angeles and in the course of time extended to the rest of the USA and South America. The headquarters of the enterprise was moved to Mound, Minnesota in 1956. By 1960 there were already 109 full time workers. In 1963 the current headquarters, the Arrowhead Springs Hotel, was bought for two million dollars.

Bright, according to Rossouw, offered three reasons for the success of the CCC ministry:

- Dedication to the Saviour and his cause in all circumstances;
- Strong emphasis on the work and ministry of the Holy Ghost in the life of every believer;
- Special, exact and thorough training and equipping of every co-worker.

Bright calls their evangelization, used in a wider sense than we are accustomed to, "aggressive evangelization". In his own words he describes it as follows: "By aggressive evangelism I mean going to men with the good news of our living Christ and His love and forgiveness, not in an argumentative tone nor with the high pressure techniques but taking the initiative to tell (as the apostle Paul wrote), all men everywhere about Christ". He continues: "We realize that this can best be accomplished by multiplication rather than through addition"

Bhengu seconded Siphso Bhengu, John Ndlovu, Charles Maphosa and Dan Lephoko to Campus Crusade for Christ International. He held Campus Crusade for Christ in very high esteem, despite the fact that CCC Intl was opposed to speaking in tongues, prophecy, etc. Approving my secondment to CCC in 1973, he said. "Campus Crusade for Christ had some of the best methods of reaching out to people with the gospel and training them to become disciples." Bhengu confided to me that if he were young he would have joined it himself. He opened his churches to CCC to train his ministers and hundreds of his church members in lay evangelism and in discipleship.

7.5.3. Africa Co-operative Action Trust – Food Faith and Work for Africa

One of Bhengu's colleagues, Joseph Dambuza was seconded to ACAT, a Christian organisation that worked in Rural Development among the poor. Dambuza was its Regional Director in Ciskei. Dambuza also worked for the Student Christian Movement

7.6. FEDERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Theological education was dear to Bhengu's heart. He therefore sent Moses Ntshangane, one of his very able co-workers, to the Federal Theological Seminary of South Africa, where students of a number of main-line churches were trained. Ntshangane received his theological education from the same institution at which he later became Dean of students. He also worked for the Pietermaritzburg Urban Mission Project, an SACC initiative, with Bhengu's blessings - whilst still pastoring Assemblies of God Churches.

7.7. BHENGU'S FAREWELL MESSAGE: A CALL FOR UNITY

A few years before his death, Bhengu started to preach about his immanent departure. He gave instructions on what the church should do when he was no longer around. He also warned against those who would see his departure as an opportunity to create division in the church, and replace the Holy Spirit by elevating academic achievement in the work at the expense of the role of the Holy Spirit. He also called for unity in the broader church.

In his farewell message to the church, he wrote *inter alia*:

Build the Church of God. The names of our Churches are our own inventions and not God's! Let the Christians come together a God's children. Build the Nation when you are remembering that you are part of that Nation and you are in for a specific purpose for God. Pray for all leaders in Africa, support leaders of your Nation and present Christ to them by all means. The Church is the light of the world. The Church is the salt of the earth and the Church should lead the Nation to Peace, Unity and Prosperity

In this, Bhengu strongly emphasized the role of the church as God's agent for Nation building. He used phrases like: "Build the church of God", "Church members have the responsibility to build the church. The church belongs to God". The church is "God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." In this respect he emulated Paul in his address to the Ephesian Church leaders:

I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me the task of testifying

to the gospel of God's grace. Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent to the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:23-35).

7.8. A CALL FOR PRAYER FOR AFRICA AND ITS LEADERS

Bhengu encouraged his followers to pray for all leaders in Africa:

"Support leaders of your nation and present Christ to them, by all means", Bhengu used to say. Praying for those in leadership was paramount in Bhengu's life and ministry. His liturgy includes praying for all leaders regardless of who they were. This is based on Paul's teaching in which he urges the church to pray and intercede for "everyone, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in godliness and holiness (1 Tim 2:1-7). Praying for those in leadership includes kings, political as well as homeland leaders, and all those in authority.

7.9. TO THE VERY END, AN ECUMENIST WITH AN EVANGELICAL HEART

Bhengu was an ecumenist – as the previous paragraphs do witness. He nevertheless kept to his evangelical credo, and used every opportunity at conferences and assemblies, as

well as in dialogue with ecumenical partners, to warn against the inroads that liberal theology – in his opinion – was making in the Christian community in his time.

In a personal letter he wrote to me from Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, on 12 November 1974, Bhengu expressed his dismay with Liberal Theology which sanctioned and blessed everything including killings. Liberal Theology, Bhengu says it puts Jesus Christ on par with Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius by saying “all religions are all right”:

Theology is one of the things that killed the early Church and has destroyed the faith of many in the Western world; a matured (sic) man only can survive. It is a battle of champions and survival of the fittest. There is more theology but all Churches are dreamy and dead! This is a lesson to Africa, Africa Awake! They find enough theology to sanction bloody revolution and everything. They find theology to place Jesus Christ at (sic) par with Mohammed, Buddha and Confucius, all religions are alright! Africa must reject the Western philosophies! Jesus is God, Jesus is King and Jesus is the only Saviour! He is the only one who rose from the dead! Others, all of them came from below but Jesus came from above and is above all. (John 3:31.)

With Love to all in your family and in the family of God

Yours in his fellowship,

Signed: Nicholas BH Bhengu

In a letter to John Bond, on 20 November 1974, also written from Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, Bhengu expressed his disquiet with Liberal Theology, Black Power and Black Theology:

There are serious developments in Africa today. (1) There is Black Power (2) There is Black Theology which seeks (both) to throw away old accepted Theology and resuscitate Africa's primitive beliefs. These are supported and funded by the universities and Theological Colleges of the West. Theology explains away the

Bible word by word, statement by statement and sentence by sentence, it's giving pagan origin of what influenced the writers of the Bible until the Bible, ceases to be the word of God. This is where Black Theologies step in. Do you realise the implication? The truth must be broadcast in Africa as never before to forestall this evil devices of the devil. I feel we ought to send a few young men to Bible Schools and then to Theological Colleges in order to equip them with weapons to counteract Liberal Theologies. So I am already here, I am a member of the central staff as a lecturer and attending many other lectures. I do research work at the same time. Each lecturer opens my eyes more as to the situation; the church in the West is completely off the line! Bless God for the Evangelical groups which I met in Lausanne in July.

Signed: Nicholas BH Bhengu

At PACLA (Pan African Leadership Assembly) Bhengu used the opportunity to address church leaders from across the African continent (Cassidy and Verlinden (eds) 1978: *The Gospel for Everyman*, 633-634). He never missed an opportunity to present Christ the Saviour even among these eminent church leaders. After relating stories about Admiral Byrd, the explorer to the North Pole and the propensity of sheep to go astray, Bhengu went straight into the finished work of Christ on the cross, ending his message with an appeal to his audience to accept Christ:

In the Word of God I find one thing. Jesus said in John 10: "I am the door; if any man enters by me, he will be saved." That is definite. In John 14:6 He says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." In 1 Corinthians 1:8 is found the preaching of the cross. What is this cross all about? It must be the starting point. When you want to be saved, you can't be saved any other way. There must be a starting point.

What happened on the cross? Was this just two sticks which someone put together? No. Something must have happened on the cross. Romans 5:10 says when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Now

we get somewhere. Our reconciliation with God is by Jesus Christ who died on the cross. In 2 Corinthians 5:20: 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you . . . '

'Verily I say unto you, he that heareth my Word and believeth on him that sent me, has everlasting life. And whoever believes in me shall never die . . . For God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life . . . I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live'. What must I do to be saved? Believe on the lord Jesus Christ . . . He that has the Son has life. He that has not the son has not life . . . 'hat is the story of the cross. This is the only way. If you want to be at peace with God, if you want to get right with God, the whole job has been done.

Jesus Christ on the cross accomplished everything so that we could start from the cross and walk straight to God. Without the cross there is no salvation. What is it? It is the payment that Jesus accomplished on the cross. He poured out His soul on the cross. He paid with His very life on the cross. He died on behalf of sinners. He died in our stead. He died our death. Where I should have died, Jesus died so that I might believe in Him. I should die no more. What is left for me to do? 'To accept Jesus Christ because he came to His own and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him. He gave them the authority to become the sons of God.'

If you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, you are taken from the place of sinners and placed among the sons and daughters of God. This comes by faith in Jesus Christ. Not only to believe that He is the Son of God, not only to believe in His incarnation. It is all very good to believe in those things, but the greatest thing is the death of the Son of God on the cross. So we have got free salvation. We don't work for it. We don't have to toil for it. All we have to do is to accept the work done by Jesus Christ on the cross.

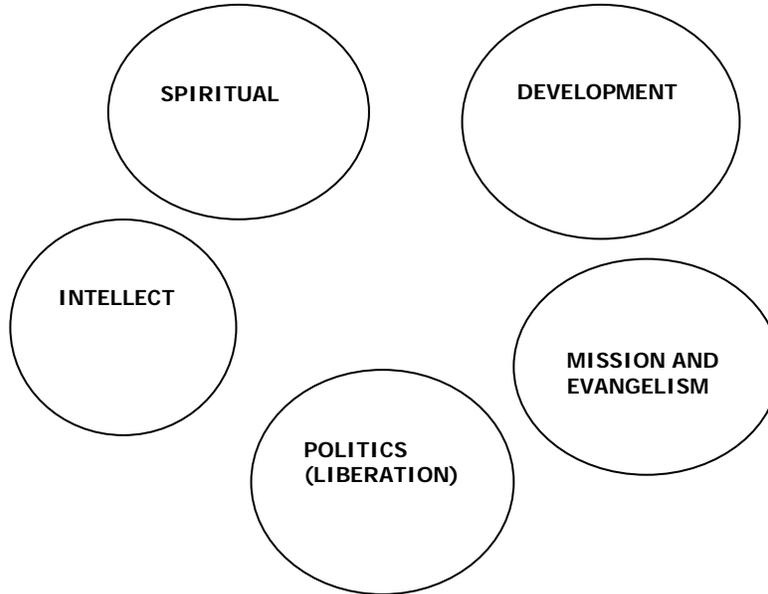
That is how we are accepted by God in His beloved Son. That is how salvation comes to us. We are all lost like sheep. We don't know how to get home. We don't know how to get back to God. But there is the cross. It is planted there. Remember

how the man rejoiced when he found his tent. He could have drifted further and further away but he provided himself with a starting point and that made it possible for him to find his tent. Then he went into the tent, he lit his stove, he warmed himself, he made soup, he made some coffee, and then he was warmed again. The joy he had. The assurance he had. He was inside his tent. He was saved from being frozen to death. How he thanked God to be in the tent. How he rejoiced for he knew he was safe. When you accept the Lord Jesus Christ, you know you are safe; you know you are at peace with God because Jesus satisfied God. The wrath of God fell upon him and the punishment fell upon him that we should get no more punishment. There is therefore no condemnation waiting for us. We have passed from death unto life. It is not because you are better than others. Jesus has done it for us. And the only way to please God is to accept His Love. God loves you [s.a 19:633-634].

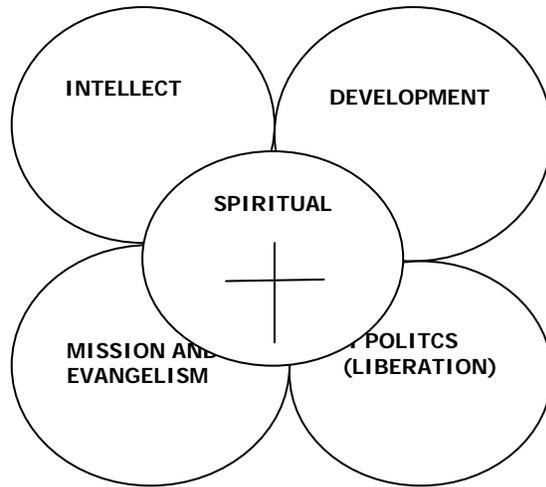
Nicholas Bhengu, an ecumenist and an evangelical, to the very end!

Bhengu developed the following integrated networks for his work, the Back to God Crusade, Women's Ministry, Girls' Ministry, Men's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Teaching Team and Sunday School. Although all of these had their own committees, they nonetheless worked together and supported each other.

Bhengu rejected the disintegrated strategy below:



The strategy he employed was an integrated one



Bhengu was a great evangelist and church planter, committed to bringing people the simple, undiluted Good News of salvation through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross; establishing them in a community of the saints; building them up in a relationship with God and others and challenging them to become part of God's missionary plan by involving them in giving and by commissioning them as missionaries in their own right.

Bhengu's leadership style may be regarded as dictatorial when the need of the hour demanded it, consultative when seeking the opinion of others, or pioneering when charting a way forward. But he never strayed from what he saw as God's demand on him:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age (Mt 28:18 – 20).

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION: BHENGU'S LASTING LEGACY

8.1. HYPOTHESIS REVISITED

At the beginning of the study, the hypothesis was posed that Nicholas Bhengu may be considered one of Africa's greatest Christian pioneers, who during a turbulent time in Southern played a significant role, particularly in South Africa by pioneering the development of self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting churches, at a time when most black churches were heavily dependent on support from missionary sending countries and institutions. His theology, his evangelistic campaigns, his leadership style, his prophetic voice at a time of political and social upheaval in South Africa as well as his ecumenical sensitivity, left a lasting imprint on the ecclesiastical scene in South Africa, and the rest of Africa and the wider world.

From the research that was done - the many *literary* sources that were used as well as the various *interviews* that I conducted with men and women who had crossed Bhengu's path, who benefited from his ministry and who had become his co-workers - it was clear that the hypothesis was proved to be correct. Bengu has indeed left a lasting legacy not only to us today, but to generations to come.

In this chapter, to conclude my thesis, I attempt to underline some of the main findings in the previous chapters.

8.2. BHENGU, CALLED AS A WITNESS IN A TURBULENT TIME

The Bible as well as Church History tells us that God endows his servants with special talents for their ministry, suited to the specific needs of their time. This was the case with Nicholas Bhengu. The times in which the evangelist from Zulululand was born and was called, were full of challenges: socially, politically and economically. In 1910 the Cape, Natal and the two Boer Republics, Transvaal and Free State, formed the Union of South Africa. For Whites a new political future beckoned. Blacks were left in the wilderness.

The coming to power of the National Party in 1948 introduced a system that governed the lives of all people in the country: education, homelands governments and employment opportunities were regulated by law. Apartheid laws were challenged by liberation movements such as the ANC (African National Congress) and PAC (Pan African Congress), who after a protracted attempt to persuade the government to negotiate an acceptable political settlement acceptable to all the people had been rebuffed, resorted to armed struggle.

The Church in South Africa was challenged to help find solutions for the country's problems, to help to bring a very unjust dispensation to an end. A number of initiatives were launched, *inter alia* the Cottesloe Consultation, the Durban Congress or Mission and Evangelism, the South African Christian Leadership Assembly and the National Initiative for Reconciliation

These initiatives did help to conscientize their members, and to work towards reconciliation. But it also divided the churches, especially the Afrikaans speaking churches which supported government policies, and the English speaking churches, aligned to the South Africa Council of Churches, that were vocal in their opposition to apartheid.

In attempt to find a solution, President PW Botha introduced the so-called Tri-Cameral System of Government, in attempt to create a new dispensation for the country. This move was rejected by the majority of South Africans. A large number of political, civil and religious groups came together to form the United Democratic Front (UDF), which developed into a powerful organ in the fight against apartheid. In reaction to the strong opposition that was mounting in the country, the government declared a state of emergency. Troops were sent into the townships, across South Africa, to quell the violence that was erupting. Rent boycotts and attacks on township councillors and other people perceived to be supporting the status quo, became the order of the day. In Soweto students rose up against the use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction in schools.

Bhengu's legacy as a leader, family man, preacher: evangelist, prophet, ecumenist, and strategist must be measured in relation to all of this. He was truly a man of his time.

8.3. THE MAN, NICHOLAS BHENGU

Bhengu was born of peasant Christian parents, his father and mother being devout members of the Lutheran Church. Bhengu's father had been brought up by Norwegian missionaries and he later became a worker for the mission. Three of his brothers were ministers of religion as well. Religion played a significant role in Nicholas Bhengu's home. Appreciative of his upbringing under the strong discipline of Norwegian and missionaries, he and his wife Mylet wanted to raise their children, Waxy, Mvusi and Dawn, in Christian values. Prayer was a vital part of their lives. But there was love in the family, the parents were like friends to their children. They were taught never to beg, and never to owe anyone money. The children knew for that they would not inherit anything from their father. He had put all his resources into the ministry. The only inheritance they would get was education.

His call to ministry was dramatic. He saw a vision of many people drowning in the ocean. He heard them cry for help. They pointed at him to pull them out of the ocean. It was then that the Lord spoke to him and showed him a Bible and told him that it was with the Bible that he would be able to rescue the people. Bhengu's call to ministry may be likened that of Moses who was called and given a mandate by God to go to Egypt and living out the children of Israel out of bandage. Paul had a similar experience when the risen Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus, while on his way to persecute Christians.

Bhengu was a man of prayer which, according to his friend Bond, explained the power of his personal life and ministry. The death of his wife Mylet left a huge vacuum in his life. The valediction he wrote to her expressed the beautiful and deep companionship that existed between them. She had suffered with him. They had been "welded together by God's Spirit". They were one in God's hand. He had lost a friend.

Bhengu made arrangements for his own funeral with strict instructions. He wanted for himself a simple inexpensive funeral - during the time when black funerals used to cost a fortune to the poor. He decreed that there would be no speeches, no slaughtering of a beast. Bhengu's banning of speeches, a sermon and the slaughtering of a beast at funeral was a surprise to many, especially to his followers. But it is quite understandable that Bhengu, a strong crusader against any form of ancestor worship did not want, in death, to be associated with the practice of slaughtering of a beast, or any ritual that may have been associated with ancestor worship.

8.4. BHENGU, THE PREACHER

Bhengu's theology had different roots. He was born and raised at Entumeni, a Lutheran Mission station where he received his early education there. He was also a convinced Evangelical, having attended the KwaDumisa Bible College, where he trained for the ministry. But his longest association was with the Assemblies of God, one of the largest Pentecostal Churches in South Africa, which had the greatest impact on his life and work, especially on his preaching and healing ministry. The many healings and miracles that took place at Pentecostal crusades made a huge impression on him.

Bhengu preached Christ. He spoke of the cross of Jesus Christ being his starting point of his sermons, as well as the core of his messages. He preached the cross to all people regardless of their station in life: to politicians, educated or uneducated, rich or poor, to church members and church leaders alike. He emphasised Jesus as the only redeemer. He declared war on crime, ancestor worship and superstition. The healing ministry he exercised was to authenticate the power and existence of God.

Bhengu was an accomplished story teller. He prepared his sermons with anecdotes that helped him get his message across to the people. He understood the psycho-social and cultural needs of his audiences. He called people to go back to God. He was not judgemental in his preaching. He invited drunks, boyfriends or girlfriends, the sick and criminals, to come to his meetings as they were. He trusted the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to change their lives once they were there. That is how he himself was converted. He had gone with his girlfriend to a meeting in Kimberly, where God transformed him.

Above all Bhengu depended on prayer and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in his preaching ministry. He was an anointed man of God.

8.5. BHENGU, THE EVANGELIST - THE "BILLY GRAHAM OF AFRICA"

As an evangelist Bhengu pioneered tent evangelism in South Africa. He travelled around the country preaching from his huge marquee tent in cities, and towns and in rural communities. His crusades were highly successful. Hundreds of thousands of people gave their lives to Christ. Starting from Port Elizabeth, in 1945, he moved to East London from where he launched the Back to God Crusade organisation. The East London crusades were

so effective that on one occasion, in one day, he baptised 1300 converts. In his crusades Bhengu addressed crime. Many people returned stolen goods which were taken to the police in truck loads. In many cases Bhengu would be accompanied by the perpetrators of crime, who were willing to face prosecution at the hands of the law.

The Back to God Crusade was used by Bhengu to plant churches, hundreds of which were planted throughout South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho, Mozambique, Botswana and Namibia. Bhengu was serious about his reports to his donors. He wrote quarterly reports on what was happening at each tent campaign. Reports to white churches were organised by Noel Scheepers. Scheepers also organised a special meeting in East London for Bhengu to address his donors about the status of the work. Bhengu's first official report was probably written in Port Elizabeth, on 10 February 1948. In true Pauline style Bhengu mentions his companions Gumede, Dlamini, Ggcobo and Burman (I Cor 16:20; Phlp 4:21-23).

Bhengu had a passion for souls and empathy for his audience. He explained the gospel in simple language so people could understand. He wanted to see people throwing away the burden of sin. He was critical of missionaries who made it difficult for converts to do so. He once told Schlosser (in Holleweger 1972:129):

The White Protestant missionaries definitely give a false interpretation of the Bible 'when they always drag the burden of sin around with them'. This is a doctrine of which as Africans they can make nothing. For the White missionaries easily conclude that the Blacks have to bend their backs to carry the burden of sin laid upon them.

The same idea was also expressed in the testimonies made about his own conversion (source?):

Today I believe in the assistance of God Almighty and I fear him, for I have learnt that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I am no longer what I used to be, *udlalani*, an aimless lover of woman.

Because of the impact of his Back to God Crusade, Bhengu was often called "the Billy Graham of Africa". This is how a journalist, writing for the American newsmagazine *Time* put it (*Time Magazine*, 23 Nov 1959 p 56):

One of the strongest Christians influences in Africa is a 50 years old Zulu with a special line moustache and horn rimmed spectacles who has a knack of persuading criminals to turn in their weapons and often themselves. Wearing a dark business

suit, the Rev Nicholas Bhengu stands on a packing case platform and says quietly in Zulu: “Ubugebengu abukhokheli lutho [Crime does not pay].” There is movement in the crowd, especially among the young toughs is ducktail haircuts, dungarees and safari jackets. “Nikelani izikhali zenu nani kuNkulunkulu [surrender your arms and yourself to God].” He continues, and a pile begins to grow at his feet knives, blackjacks, brass knuckles (natives are forbidden to own fire carted arms), and quantities of stolen goods. At one meeting police carted away three vanloads, and it is not usual for Evangelist Bhengu to end up by walking down to the police station hand in hand with someone on the wanted list.

It was inevitable that Bhengu became known throughout Africa as the black Billy Graham – although his manner and technique were quite unlike Graham’s. He used no publicity or promotion to advertise his campaigns, and his only assistance was a ten member choir of amateurs supplied by the churches of his mission. His platform presence was almost subdued. But whether he was talking to black audiences or white, Bhengu woved a spell no less effective than Billy’s. *Time’s* reporter continued:

Last week Bhengu was busy in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. Whites jam packed Salisbury’s Methodist Hall to hear him tell them, in precise English, what was wrong with white Christianity: “The greatest dangers in Africa today are Communism and Islam. Both offer the African equality. The churches are divided. There are too many and their different dogmas and doctrines are too confusing for Africans. Christianity has failed in India and China because Christians have failed to live up to Christ’s teaching, and in Africa it’s proving an empty shell for the same reason

Although Bhengu did not enjoy the luxury of the American evangelist’s organisational capabilities such as television, worldwide networks, financial muscles, the equipment available to Billy Graham at his quarters in Memphis Tennessee I visited in November 1986. Bhengu was able to do a lot for his Lord with whatever little resources he had at his disposal. Another significant difference between Bhengu and Billy Graham is that Graham was an itinerant evangelist. He work with and valued partner churches to take care of his converts, to accept them in their congregations, and to build them up in their faith. Although Bhengu also started as an itinerant evangelist, he started planting new churches as early as 1943. He used the churches that he established to conserve the results of his

crusades. These churches were to be the launching pads for further missionary outreaches in the area.

8.6. BHENGU, THE STRATEGIST

Bhengu registered the Back to God Crusade as a Section 21 company (Companies Act No. 61, of 1973: Registration No 21/76/22) in order to be able to raise funds from individuals, groups of people or organisations. Most of his financial support came from the women in the church. The second largest donor was White Assemblies of God Churches. Occasionally Bhengu would go overseas especially to the USA to raise funds. It was whilst he was in America that he saw a vision about organising women back home to raise money for the Back to God Crusade.

Bhengu developed strategies to empower different groups in the church: women, men, youth, and girls to be self-sufficient. He also established policies and procedures for good governance in his churches. He assigned responsibilities for each group or department in the church. The project was initiated by Bhengu and his first wife Mylet. In 1961 they were assisted by other women, Sikiti , Buthelezi and Mngoma. Later the team was enlarged to include Moduka and Qina. A total of R2000 was collected at the first mother's convention in 1969, in Bloemfontein. The amount of money raised is used to buy equipment: tents, tracks, chairs, generators and to support crusade workers. Women continued to raise more money. In 1969 they raised R 2000 and in 2010 they collected R 11 m. He divided the country into regions. Each region brings their bags at Thaba- Nchu over Easter Holidays, to be opened.

Women were assigned the responsibility of raising funds for Back to God Crusade. Women caught Bhengu's vision of the evangelisation of Africa from Cape to Cairo. Each local Assembly had a committee consisting of women responsible for organising the spiritual and raising of funds, and skills development for women. Organisers were trained to visit local churches and regions to teach and encourage women to stay focused on Bhengu's original vision. Supervisors operated at national level. In local churches the women were supported by the whole church.

A similar strategy for *men* was devised. They were also organised at local, regional and national level. Their mandate was to raise money to build churches. They also took money

to ThabaNchu during the Christmas season. The projects assisted churches to buy land and to build their own churches without having to go to the bank to borrow money, something that Bhengu was adverse to. He wanted the church to be debt free. Men also had special services, once a week, where they met for fellowship. They taught one another about how to be a good parent, and how to help manage church affairs. Young men joined the senior men to learn how they should look after their families when they get married.

Bhengu's people built their churches themselves, without any money from overseas or borrowing money from the bank (see 5.8.4). Bhengu wanted his people to be proud for doing things for themselves. This motivated congregations to work together by encouraging and assisting each other, by lending a helping hand to a sister churches. Bhengu believed in the *youth*. They were the future leaders of this country. For Bhengu it was important that the youth be developed spiritually, physically, emotionally and intellectually, if they were to become well rounded individuals and builders of the nation.

The Youth were also organised in the same pattern as women and men. Their responsibility was to raise funds, to assist young people who went to tertiary institutions with bursaries. Education Boards received and evaluated applications, and disbursed money to deserving students. Bhengu's vision with the bursaries was to provide quality education to young people who eventually would take up leadership positions in society, once democracy arrived. Some of the young people who benefited from the fund include Vusi Mona (Chief Communications Director in President Zuma's Presidency), Dr Honey Mabuza (lecturer at the Medical University of South Africa) and Mxolisi Lephoko (who established a thriving church on the Hill in Nelspruit). There are many others around the country working in government, business, some of them are in politics, who also benefited from Bhengu's bursary scheme.

Girls had the responsibility to furnish mission houses. They had special services on Wednesday evenings in which they received spiritual teaching and collected money for their project. The funds were also collected at Thaba Nchu over the Christmas weekend.

The churches that were planted were governed by pastors, elders and deacons. They gave oversight to all matters relating to the church. Church governance was paramount in Bhengu's mind. Church money was to be protected and used according to policy and

procedure agreed to and as directed by Bhengu. Money was to be collected and counted by at least three people (deacons) before the congregation and banked on the first business of the week. A bank slip was produced to the church on Sunday for examination by members of the church, to satisfy them that the money was safely banked. Three signatories were required for cheque payments. Bhengu's signature was the control signature, the other two representing the local church. To set an example to others, those who collect money had first to put their own money on the table. If they declined, they were prohibited to receive the collection from the people.

8.7. BHENGU, THE PROPHET

Bhengu was a prophet called by God to proclaim the message of salvation to all people. He testified before great and small, to kings, political leaders, to scholars at Cambridge and Oxford, to hundreds of thousands across the globe. He had one message to all of them: "Christ is the only Saviour". His approach was in the Pauline style of presenting Christ:

So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the gentiles (Ac 26: 19).

He stood for what he believed God had sent him to do. He did not flow with the tide. He actually swam against it, despite all criticism levelled against him by those who felt he should join the struggle and fight apartheid from the pulpit and support the armed struggle. For a self-confessed Evangelical and Pentecostal, he did not shy away from speaking about socio-political matters – something many of his colleagues never dared to do. Bhengu criticised the Nationalist government openly as seen from the *Daily Dispatch* newspapers cuttings in Chapter Six. He preached the Word as per Paul's instruction:

"... in season and out of season". In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season;

correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. (2 Tm 4: 1 – 5)

According to Hugh Wetmore, retired missionary and lecturer at the Union Bible College in Pietermaritzburg (interview 2009:01-09), “Bhengu did not compromise on sin, he called sin, sin. He held up high the flag of evangelism in South Africa when it was not popular to do so”

Balcomb (in Ranger (ed) 2008:212) says:

Although Bhengu did not enter the struggle against apartheid on a political level, it is clear that his ministry had profound effects on apartheid. That he bequeathed a moral and social legacy affecting the future of democracy indeed, one that helped prepare the way for democracy is clear. Individuals converted to evangelical Christianity through the Back to God movement populate every sector of black society: teachers, lawyers, traders, clerks, businessmen, gardeners, and even politicians. Bhengu’s teaching emphasizes the pre-eminent existence of a transcendent reality that relativizes the material realm, centralizes spiritual values, exalts the dignity of the individual, and compels political reflection to imagine radical alternatives.

From the above it is clear that Bhengu’s legacy as a prophet will last for a long time. He was a man who was willing to stand alone. In response to Lawrence Tutu’s criticism, he charged Tutu as man with “no scruples for the church” and that his theological ideas “were questionable and boarded on modernism”. He committed himself to continue with what he was doing by saying “I am a Christian first of all, I am a brother to all men of goodwill, irrespective of tribe, ethnicity, colour, political or denominational affiliation. Tutu and the venom in the press will not change me one iota” (see 6.4).

Bhengu was a man of conviction. He was not ashamed of the gospel he preached. He was under an obligation to preach it to all people:

That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (Ro 1: 14-18):

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power (I Cor 2:1-5).

8.8. BHENGU, THE ECUMENIST

Bhengu was an ecumenist at heart - although he did have a theological difference with WCC for their support for armed struggle. He also had problems with liberal theology which, in his opinion, placed Jesus on par with other founders of religions such as Mohammed, Budha and Confucius. As a true evangelical he rejected any notion that there could be salvation without Christ. He further he called upon African Christians to reject Western secular philosophies. He emphasised "Jesus is God, Jesus is King and Jesus is the only Saviour!" (cf 7.5.1).

Despite all his concerns he still supported ecumenism, and reached out and related to Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches alike. In a 1968 report, Bhengu delighted in his contact with other denominations (1968 report):

After the great crusade in Johannesburg, I left at the end of April 1968 for Canada and the United States, where I was a convention guest speaker at the People's Church in Toronto Canada.

Space will not allow me to give a full report of what I saw in that great church, with no branches, just one church supporting over 300 missionaries in many countries. For the first time in the history of that church, its Magazine will feature names of

three African workers. They will support these workers for one full year and the \$1200.00 has been sent to our office already for monthly allotments.

In Los Angeles at the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International World Convention I saw what I had never expected to see in this life. I saw Anglican bishops, Roman Catholic priests, nuns and university professors of theology, Doctors of Divinity, judges, attorneys and celebrities from all walks of life. These all have had a touch of Charismatic revival with real experience of glossolalia (speaking in tongues), no sophist or sceptic could easily dismiss this from such learned men and women of our modern times. There is definitely a new move by laymen. This is real ecumenism brought about by similar deep experience of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Bhengu was involved in a large number of ecumenical initiatives, in South Africa, Africa, and in the wider world. His presence at PACLA (Nairobi, 1976) and SACLA (Pretoria, 1979) was deeply appreciated by representatives of many denominations. His support of para-church organisations such as Africa Enterprise and Campus Crusade for Christ, was an encouragement to many of his colleagues.

8.9. BHENGU, THE LEADER

Bhengu was not an easy man to understand. He was a man who depended on the Spirit most of the time. He would say that when God told him to change direction, he would do so without any hesitation and would apologize to his people for having taken a certain course.

Bhengu was a *powerful leader* who, when convinced of the leading of the Spirit, would let no one convince him otherwise. A typical example is that no politician, including liberation leaders or government officials, would get him to toe the line. He was very assertive and did not gladly accommodate adversaries. He did not try to curry favour with anybody. Like Paul, Bhengu could say, "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ". (Gl 1:10)

Bhengu was an *African leader* to the core, who tried to blend his culture with the Bible in his preaching and teaching. In 1955 Bhengu had demanded that Africans should lead the Church's work in Africa. This was two years before the independence of the Ghana, the

first Africa country to receive independence from Britain, its former colonial power. He said that Africans had no desire to lead the whole church, but “we want to accomplish what no other man will accomplish in Africa”, but the Africans.” (Bhengu 10.10.1955, see appendix 8).

Bhengu was an Africanist. But as a Christian he promoted an Africanism that accommodated other people in the country, that reached out to all human beings around the world. He was in agreement with Steve Biko who spoke of Black Consciousness as the process that makes a man see himself as being complete in himself. “It makes him less dependent and more free to express his manhood” (1972:92). In his quest to promote African leadership, he instituted a bursary fund for young men and women to study at tertiary institutions to prepare them for leadership, to rediscover their African identity.

As far as Western missionaries were concerned, he did not call for a moratorium, for missionaries to go home, but assigned to them the responsibility to teach and empower African workers, to be able to take the lead. His dream for Africans to take leadership in Africa has since come true in the church, in government and in civil society.

Bhengu was a *visionary leader*. A leader was once cautioned: “Do not walk ahead of me, I may not be following. Do not follow me for I may not be leading. Walk along side me and be my friend.” Leadership is about building harmonious relations with those you lead. It is also about walking alongside the people that you are leading (Lephoko 2001: 98). Do not disappear out of their sight. This was the way Bhengu led his people.

It has already been stated elsewhere in this thesis that Bhengu had a vision of reaching all of Africa for Christ. Indeed he travelled to many parts of Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria and planted churches in Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Mozambique, Namibia, Lesotho and Botswana (Bhengu 10.10.1955):

We want to evangelise before these threatening powers of darkness swallow the sub-continent. A powerless church, broken fragmentary kind of movement whose groups are disunited, who hate, fight and devour one another and are split into factions, will neither impress the world nor bring an impact to the dark continent.

Fear grips the missionaries and many denominations as they see the inevitable birth of a National Movement. Distrust and suspicion rule in some quarters. Africans pose as friends of the missionaries and carry false news and subvert everything and destroy everything we are trying to build for the church in Africa.

We visualise therefore, united church with autonomous Assemblies throughout the country. Assemblies well taught in the doctrines of the bible, whose monies are kept on order by the elected officers of the Assemblies and books kept in order so that the African leaders will be debarred from becoming capitalists by taking all the money to themselves. Where the workers are supported by the Assemblies and everything goes through the hands and books of the church. Where there will be scope for White South African Students to minister but not to lead, and permanent scope for foreign missionaries as we shall always need them.

Today the missionary must take heed and not impede or frustrate this move but rather co-operate with us and assist us towards that goal.

As a visionary leader Bhengu was able to motive and build teams, but he led the charge. He motivated women who caught his vision to raise money for the evangelization of Africa. He constantly kept the vision of reaching Africa driven by the slogan "Africa Back to God: Africa for Jesus and Jesus for Africa". He organised and built teams to accomplish his goal: evangelists women, men, girls and youth all rallied behind this goal.

Shawchuck and Heuser (1993:70,71) say the following about a vision:

There are, however, not two but three dimensions of a vision for ministry. The vision gives (1) new insight into the glory and grandeur of god-an "upward" view of God, and (2) new insight into the severe limitations of oneself, an "inward: view of the self. The perspective becomes three dimensional if the vision (3) gives new insight into how things might be an "outward" view of circumstances as our ministries might influence them.

A three-dimensional vision is the "impossible dream," in which god is dreaming god's dream in the heart of those who are called to lead. Such "vision" requires a particular "eyesight" that does not match the seeing of those who are not thus

“sighted.” so they tend to label the one with vision as crazy or dangerous or harmless but “blind” to reality.

This consuming vision that Bhengu had, was not always shared by expatriate missionaries and politicians. It was often the cause for their unrelenting criticism of him, labelling him as crazy, dangerous, and blind to reality. He complained of being “misconstrued, misunderstood and misinterpreted.” (Farewell Message to the Church see appendix 12).

However, it is true that Bhengu, once convinced of the way he had to take, would not let anyone stand in his way even though it might cause hurts along the way, notably among missionaries and some whites in the church.

8.10. BHENGU, A SERVANT LEADER

Servant leadership is a big challenge to Christian leaders. When men rise above their equals, the temptation to lord over them becomes enticing. In recent times or successful Christian leaders are called by names that would have made Bhengu shirk: “the man of God”, “the spiritual eagle”, and many others. Some of the great men of God have their Bibles carried for them by assistants, as they escort him to the pulpit.

Jesus warned his disciples against becoming lords of the people:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. for even the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as ransom for many. (Mk 10:41-45)

Peter echoed his Master’ words in admonishing church leaders not to lord it over those God has appointed to them to lead. They must not be greedy for money. They must be humble, “humble yourselves therefore under God’s might hand, that he may lift you up in due time” (1 Pe 5:1-6).

In spite of his very strong personality, Bhengu was a true, humble, servant who tried to serve his people. He was not greedy for money. In May 1985 I flew to East London to see

Bhengu. I went to ask him to serve on our Life Ministry Board (Campus Crusade for Christ SA) of which at the time I was the national director. We talked till about midnight. He said to me “Dan, I have suffered a lot in my life. I was poor, so money has no meaning to me except that I use it to do God’s work and not for personal gain”.

At conference and conventions he would walk around to ensure people were well served even to the extent of checking the menu.

In his book, *The Master Plan of Teaching*, Matt Friedman speaks of the servant as the wise fool:

There is perhaps no better way to describe the servant-teacher. First of all, he is “foolish” enough to take Jesus’ advice to heart. He truly desires to emulate the Master: washing his students’ feet, laying down his own life for the lives and careers of his disciples, taking up his cross daily and following after the dreams of God. Let’s face it, in they, short haul those choices seem rather foolish. Your friends and family, probably just like Jesus’, tell you to wake up and be sensible – save your life for something better, go for the gusto, climb the corporate ladder, make some real money, choose a more profitable profession, or set your own agenda (Friedman 1990:152).

This is what we will remember Nicholas Bhengu for. He was in all respects a servant-leader, the man who was foolish enough, to take Jesus’ advice and Jesus’ example to heart.

* * * * *

Nicholas Bhengu was indeed the Billy Graham of Africa. He accomplished much for his Lord, for the Church, and for the continent of Africa. Through his work he lifted the lives of ordinary people *and* established links with leaders in high places. He prepared Africans for the dawn of democracy in South Africa. He was a great apostle, a prophet, and an evangelist. The call for Africa to go to God, still rings out in the townships and in the mountains.

With all his successes, Bhengu was still human, with faults and frailties like all of us. He was intolerant of people who differed with his vision. The way he organised his work was one of the causes for missionaries and for some white and black churches to leave the

Assemblies of God. One such instance was the Cyara Conference (1981) when he canvassed his followers to vote for Bond, in an attempt to change the Constitution. The appointment of elders and deacons into life positions in the church, is another such instance. Because of old age some of the men have lost their sharpness of mind and are unable to respond to the changing situation currently in our country.

But in the end, Paul's words to Timothy are appropriate in describing Bhengu's ministry:

"I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, when the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearing (2 Tm 4:7f).

I can hear the Lord saying to the man that He had called, many years ago, who had travelled the world over for his Master: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness" (Mt 25:21f).

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ANNOTATED PHOTOCOPIES OF PRIMARY SOURCES

Bhengu, NBH

Assemblies of God – Back to God Mothers’ Convention. (1983/1984) Reports/Accounts

The report starts with a message by the then First Lady of the Republic of Bophuthatswana Mrs. LM Mangope, Patron in Chief. It is followed by a profile of the organization – history, mothers’ activities and lists members of Regional Committees.

Assemblies of God – Women’s Organisation (1978.11.01)

He sets out the duties of organizers and how they ought to conduct themselves and banking of money.

A storm in a Tea Cup – Are whites planning for an Exodus in the Assemblies of God to start a New Movement (s.a.)

He outlines how he met WF Mullan, James E Mullan and HC Phillips in Nelspruit. He is worried that whites were planning to pull out of the Assemblies of God.

Back to God Crusade (1967.11.01)

This circular deals with the organization of Back to God Crusade campaigns. Eight regions are set out with their crusade leaders including the modus operandi.

Bhengu’s response to Tutu attack in the *Daily Dispatch* (1980.05.07)

Bhengu was asked by John Bond who was at the time the General Chairman of the Assemblies of God to respond to Tutu’s attacks. In this document he outlines his philosophy of ministry toward all people including Homelands leaders, and leaders of Liberation Movements.

Centralization of Assemblies Tithes (s.a.)

He praises those Assemblies who did well. Because centralization had become a burden on the offices he recommends that Assemblies keep tithes until further notice.

Constitution of the Back to God Crusade (s.a.)

Sets out objects prerogatives and general functioning of the organization.

Farewell Message to the Church (s.a.)

He warns against those who seek fame and do not live as he did. He also urges his followers to work for the unity of the Church and help build the Nation.

Letter to Dan Lephoko (1974.12.11)

He responds to a letter I had written to him in September 1974 regarding his request that I edit the Back to God magazine.

Letter to Scheepers (1982.05.11)

Scheepers was responsible for raising funds for the Back to God Crusade in the Eastern Cape. The undated circular about A Storm in a Tea Cup refers to whites that were planning to leave the Assemblies. Scheepers was one such person. Bhengu is appreciative of the work done by Scheepers and reassures him of his support.

Nairobi (1976.12.9-19)

In the sermon Bhengu portrays Jesus as the only Saviour.

Bhengu's Last Message before he died. He preached in 1985 at Thaba Nchu.

Sermon Bhengu preached at PACLA (Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly)

The National Church Thesis at Assemblies of God Conference, Witbank (1955.10.10)

He sets out his vision based on Mat 28.19. He sketches the historical background of Christianity in Africa and the role whites should play in helping Africans reach Africans. He emphasises the fact that in Africa only Africans can lead Africans.

To all Assemblies' Pastors and District Councils (s.a.)

Here, he is dealing with the role of the Pastor, and how to solve conflict in the Assemblies.

Bond, J

Inscription to Dan Lephoko [2003.09] in a complimentary copy of his book *For the Record – Reflections on the Assemblies of God*.

Bosch, DJ

Salvation: A Missiological Perspective (s.a.)

He traces the missionary movement and the different interpretations on the matter including: The Greek Patristic mission, Salvation in the Western Church, Salvation in the Modern Era. He concludes by saying “The integral character of salvation demands that – the scope of the church’s ministry be more comprehensive than has traditionally been the case”.

Daily Dispatch, East London

Daily newspaper Reports on different activities at different times between 1964, 1976-1985. It reported mainly about the work in East London: his dealings with political leaders and vision for Africa,

Revival in Africa

It looks at revivals in Zaire, Rwanda, Uganda and “... Africa must get back to God out of which was born” Back to God Crusade. It also refers on how Bhengu had “declared war on sin, and crime”. and ancestry worship

<http://hometown.aol.com/thewaycm/revival/africa.html>

Scheepers, N- 20 May 1982

A circular letter to Eastern Cape Assemblies of God.

Scheepers sets out his involvement with the Back to God Crusade for which he raised funds. He also addresses the breakaway by the Assemblies of God Fellowship and Bhengu’s efforts to try and heal the rift between the Assemblies of God and Assemblies of God fellowship

UPTON, GR

The Austin Chauwner Story (*Action Magazine* October 1972)

Upton traces Chauwner's background and his missionary work in Zululand and

Mozambique. Chauwner was one of the early founders of the Assemblies of God. I also worked with him and travelled with him and Alfred Gumede to Zimbabwe then Rhodesia and Mozambique on a Bible teaching tour to the churches in 1960.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS RECORDED ON CASSETTE TAPES

The researcher conducted interviews with the following people and recorded their responses on audio cassette tapes. In addition to personal interviews conducted by the researcher, there were also tapes that were made available to me by other people.

Bhengu, D and Vilakazi W (2005.01.03)

Bhengu and Vilakazi are Bhengu's daughter with Mylet, they provided family photographs and information about life in the home.

Bhengu, S (2005.01.04)

Professor Bhengu is Jaconia Bhengu's elder brother's son. He was the first Minister of Education in Mandela's Cabinet. Bhengu spent many years in exile in Switzerland before returning home after the unbanning of the ANC. He served as South Africa's Ambassador to Germany.

Bond, J (2006.08.04)

Bond worked closely with Bhengu for more than thirty years as General Chairman of the Assemblies of God. He also provided me with files containing valuable documents between him, Bhengu and others

Creamer, J (2003.10.19)

Creamer met Bhengu in 1943 whilst he was preaching for the Church of the Nazarene in Swaziland. She and her two brothers and their wives were converted during an informal gospel presentation in their home by Bhengu.

Crumpton, D (2006.12.14)

Crumpton knew Bhengu very well. Crumpton is a world renowned Christian leader and lives in East London. He is the man I helped organise both the 1977 and 1980 Renewal conferences in South Africa

Donda J (2003.10.10)

Donda is a long serving former member of the General Executive of the Assemblies of God.

He was former Chairman of Back to God Crusade as well as of the Teaching Team. He recorded on disc tapes Bhengu's Training of the Teaching Team in East London in 1977.

Gamedze, A (2003.10.18)

Gamedze had been associated with Bhengu from the late 1940s in Swaziland. He gives an ecumenical and perspective on Bhengu's work among the Churches in Swaziland and his special relationship with the late King Sobhuza II.

Gcwabe, TA (2005.09.18)

Gcwabe is senior pastor and former member of the General Executive of the Assemblies of God. He is also a member of the Teaching Team.

Golimpi, Mfene and Xengwana (2006.12.17)

They are some of Bhengu's first converts in East London in 1950

Gumede, DD (2007.03.02, 2009.01.07)

Dorothy Gumede turns 100 years old, is the widow of Alfred Gumede one of Bhengu's early champions. He formed the Emmanuel Missions and the Assemblies of God with Bhengu and Buthelezi.

Hynd, S (2003.10.18)

Dr Hynd is a retired Medical Practitioner in Swaziland. He is a member of the Church of the Nazarene and met Bhengu in the early 1940s whilst Bhengu was preaching for the Church of the Nazarene in Swaziland. His father founded the church of Nazarene in Swaziland and also built a Hospital for the Manzini Swaziland

La Foy, C (2003.09.22, 2009.01.08)

La Foy is former General Secretary of the Assemblies of God. For more than 30 years he served with Bhengu on the General Executive of the Assemblies of God. He tells how Bhengu encouraged Coloureds and Indians to form themselves into a Group. In the meeting of the General Executive, Bhengu announced "Coloureds and Indians are now Assemblies of God Association" and so it was. He also relates how Bhengu was keen for the Assemblies of God to join SACC.

Mdlalose, F (2003.10.12)

Mdlalose is one of the very first girls organisers trained by Bhengu. Mdlalose gave valuable insight to girls work.

Mkhize (2005.01.03)

Buthelezi's first convet in Hillcrest, Kwa-Zulu Natal and was first to be trained by Mylet on how to manage household.

Mofokeng, B (2005.01.16)

Mofokeng is a senior pastor in Bhengu's work. He is also a member of the original Teaching Team twenty four members appointed and trained by Bhengu in 1977.

Mofokeng, D (2005.01.16)

D Mofokeng is wife of B Mofokeng. She is one of the second crop of Supervisors appointed by Bhengu. She also worked with Mylet. Bhengu's first wife and his second wife Nokwethemba

Nkomonde, VM (2003.09.24 and 2005.01.03)

Nkomonde has been a member of the General Executive of the Assemblies of God for more than 25 years and also serves on the Teaching Team and Back to God Crusade Executive.

Ntshangase, M (2003.09.24 and 2005.01.04)

Ntshangase lived in Pietermaritzburg and had many dealings with Bhengu. He is also a minister of the Assemblies of God. He says "Bhengu exercises a situational leadership style". Ntshangase passed on 20.12.2005.

Phinda and Ramoroa (2009.02.16)

Both Ramoroa and Phinda former members of the Assemblies. Phinda left to form the Bophotatswana Assemblies of God.

Sambo, E (2010.04.200)

Sambo is a youth organiser in Gauteng. He also provides expert legal advise to other province as well.

Shabalala, FV (2003.10.12)

Shabalala is a senior pastor and former member of the General Executive. He served as Vice - Chairman of Back to God Crusade during Bhengu's time. Became the first Chairman of Back to God Crusade after the death of Bhengu until July 2003. Some people thought he was Bhengu's right-hand man.

Tembani (2004.12.28)

Converted in Bhengu's first crusade in Port Elizabeth in 1945

Tembe, M (2005.04.09)

Tembe is one of the second crop of Supervisors of the Mothers Ministry appointed by Bhengu. She also worked with Mylet. Bhengu's first wife and Nokwethemba

Vena, F (2003.09.24 and 2005.04.09)

Vena is one the surviving first converts of the Port Elizabeth campaign in 1945. Her story is about how Bhengu arrived and started the work in Port Elizabeth and Korsten. She is also an organizer in the Mothers Ministry.

Vilakazi, W and Bhengu, D (2003.07.02 and 2005.01.03)

Waxy Vilakazi and Dawn Bhengu are Bhengu's daughters by Mylet. They gave information regarding relationships between themselves and their parents, they also provided family photos including their parents wedding photo to the parents.

Wetmore, H (2009.01.09)

Wetmore is a retired missionary and lecture at Union Bible Institute in Petermaritzburg.

Zulu, S (2009.01.07)

Zulu is a retired Lutheran Pastor and lives in Entumeni Lutheran Mission Station. He took me and Shongwe, my companion on the tour of the mission station and to Bhengu's parent's original homestead. His elder sister was married to Shadrack Bhengu's younger brother.

TELEPHONIC INTERVIEWS

Bhengu, S (2004.01.06)

Professor Bhengu is Jaconiah's son, Bhengu's elder brother

Bhengu, N (2003.10.27)

Nokwethemba was Bhengu's second wife. She accompanied Bhengu to Selly Oak Colleges and provided information on his work as a visiting professor t and how Bhengu managed money at home and in the church.

Fihlela, N (2004.01.07)

He is Regina's son, Bhengu's sister.

Phinda, D (2003.10.31)

He is former pastor of the Assemblies of God, who now lives in Rustenburg and relates the story of Bhengu burying his first daughter on a farm near Rustenburg.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Bhengu, G (2003.10.02)

G Bhengu is Jaconiah's son and younger brother to Prof. S Bhengu. He provided the information on the family tree.

Vilakazi, W (2004.01.09 and 2006.01.11)

She gave the written submission on the information about their parents.

Wetmore, H (2003.10.28)

Wetmore was on the Union Bible Institution teaching when Bhengu often sent his workers to be trained at the institution.

Watt, C P

Watt is General Chairman of the Assemblies of God, provided information on Bhengu's spiritual ministry and legacy as he sees it.

BHENGU'S TAPES SERMONS

The messages by Bhengu were not dated

1. His farewell message to the church
2. Baptism with the Holy Spirit
3. Apostleship
4. Christian socialism
5. What is a Church and how to behave in the Church
6. What you must do when I die
7. Division in a Church

GLOSSARY

Assemblies of God Association

Predominantly Coloured and Indian Assemblies of God work

Assemblies of God Group

Predominantly White Assemblies of God work

Back to God/Assemblies of God Movement

Predominantly African Assemblies of God work

Back to God Teaching Team

A group of handpicked pastors trained and appointed by Bhengu to teach in the Back to God/Assemblies of the Movement Churches. Their responsibilities include: appointment of elders, deacons, ordination pastors at conferences, oversight of District Council offices, Back to God Crusade trucks and others. They are the custodians of Bhengu's teaching and protectors of his work.

District Council Committee

Means a committee of elected pastors, responsible for overseeing the affairs of the Back to God/Assemblies of God Movement in a particular district.

Education Board

Education Board is a structure that collects and disburse bursary funds to deserving youth for tertiary education.

Fathers

Means married men with or without children.

General Conference

General Conference is the highest decision making body of the Assemblies of God. Its membership consists of: accredited ministered, probational ministers, elders, delegates

from local Assemblies, organisers and pastors wives.

General District Council

Means a district conference, which is attended by accredited ministers, probational ministers, organisers, elders and delegates from local Back to God/Assemblies of God Movement.

General Executive

Members of the General Executive are responsible for the whole of Assemblies of God. It consists of pastors elected at a biannual General Conference, as stipulated in the Constitution of the Assemblies of God section (a) of the Rules of Procedure.

Mothers Movement (Ministry)

Means ladies movement of married women, with or without children.

Organisers

Means all those appointed to work among: mothers, fathers, youth, girls and Sunday School to help promote the work within their designated groups, motivating them both for spiritual enrichment and fundraising.

Supervisors

Women appointed to supervise both mothers' ministry and in some instances girls' work as well.

Youth

Means all the youth in the movement including young men and young women.

APPENDIXES

1. Bhengu Funeral Instructions
2. Constitution of the Assemblies of God – Groups of Associations and Things Commonly believed among Us
3. Letter from Bhengu to Dan Lephoko
4. Structure of Youth Committees
5. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit: The Initial Experience and Continuing Evidences of the Spirit-Filled Life
6. The History of the Emmanuel Assemblies
7. The National Church
8. Mothers' Organisation and Organization of the Women's Meeting
9. Mothers Regions
10. Evaluation of current status of Bhengu's lasting legacy
11. Farewell Message to the Church