

**TITLE : THE REFORMED APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION  
OF SOUTH AFRICA (1947-1988)**

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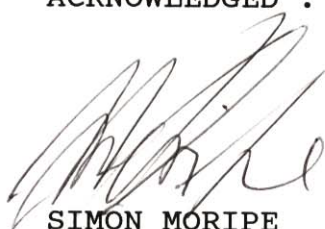
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**SUMMARY**

The name of the church for the purpose of unity, co-operation, service, and discipline is: **The Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.** This church desires to manifest God's love for sinners and to call them to repentance pointing them to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The co-founders of this church are: P C Mosito of Krugersdorp, E J Mokoena of Kroonstad, J Boshomane of Alberton, M Seloi of Johannesburg, T Taupedi of Lichtenburg, J Moropa of Bushbuckridge and A Masilo of Boksburg. All of them were ordained Ministers in the Apostolic Faith Mission. They broke away from the Apostolic Faith Mission in 1945 and held their first Annual General Conference in Premier-mines, in the district of Pretoria in 1946. Their second Annual General Conference was held in Krugersdorp whereby the Executive Committee was formerly constituted: Rev. P C Mosito was elected as the General President and Rev. E J Mokoena as the General Secretary of the church.

The church is well-represented in three of the provinces of South Africa and especially in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The church is part of the Pentecostal movement world-wide. This movement is a movement towards the original purity and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a movement back to the Apostles by the doctrine and practice as committed to the Apostles by Christ Himself; a movement away from dead forms and into living vital truth, a movement of the Spirit of God Himself.

The African features are therefore not expressed through the structures that closely mirror traditional society; but rather through a polity that continues the hierarchical system inherited both from traditional society and from the mother church, and modifies it by the edition of elements from the Methodist forms of government. It could be regarded as a mixed Western polity operating in a characteristically African way.

Worship in this church is simple and flexible and there is also freedom of expression. Worship services are being Africanized but the purpose of Africanization does not mean the abandonment of worship which is Christo-centric in all its essential aspects in its language, prayer, hymns, and rituals, but simply the use of more homely means of Christian worship so that the African worshipper can understand and feel deeply as he or she worships.

Since it is the Christian faith that the church wishes to communicate in African terms, the starting point is the source of the church's faith; we refer here to the Holy books, the foundation document of the church. African Christian theology is concerned to interpret essential Christian faith in authentic African language in the flux and turmoil of our time so that there may be genuine dialogue between Christian faith and African culture.

It is very clear from the Scriptures that Christians cannot be neutral on matters of human dignity, freedom, and equality. The true meaning of politics is not strife, opposition or a struggle to get to the top, but politics have something to do with the welfare of one's people or

with that of humanity in general. The Christians should not be afraid to point out anything which is wrong, even in the highest government affairs, but they must do it out of love and the welfare of the people. Working for the welfare, happiness and good of society should be one of the duties of the Christians.

It should be noted that by looking at the Gospel message from an African perspective, Africans are not simply thinking for themselves but are trying to make their contribution, however small, to the glories, wealth and riches of universal Christian theology.

## OPSOMMING

Die naam van die kerk vir die doel van eenheid, samerweking, die diens en tug is die Gereformeerde Apostoliese Geloofsending van Suid-Afrika. Die kerk wens om die liefde van God vir sonder openbaar te maak en hulle tot inkeer te roep deur hulle te wys op die Lam van God wat die sondes van die wereld wegneem.

Die medestigters van die kerk is: P C Mosito van Krugersdorp, E J Mokoena van Kroonstad, J Boshomane van Alberton, M Seloi van Johannesburg, D Taupedi van Lichtenburg, J Moropa van Bushbuckridge en A Masilo van Boksburg. Hulle was almal geordende predikante in die Apostoliese Geloofsending. Hulle het van hierdie kerk in 1945 weggebreek en hulle eerste Algemene Jaarlikse konferensie te Premiemyn, in die distrik van Pretoria in 1946 gehou. Die tweede Algemene Jaarlikse konferensie is in Krugersdorp gehou, waar die Uitvoerende Komitee formeel ingestel is: Ds. P C Mosito is as Algemene President gekies en Ds E J mokoena as Algemene Sekretaris van die kerk.

Die kerk is goed verteenwoordig in drie van die provinsies van Suid-Afrika en veal in die Transvaal en die Oranje Vrystaat. Die kerk is deel van die wereldwye Pinkterbeweging. Dit is n beweging na die oorspronklike suiwerheid en krag van die Evangelie van Jesus Christus. Dit is n beweging terug na die Apostoliese leer en praktyk soos dit deur Christus self aan die Apostels opgedra is; n beweging weg van dooie vorms en na die lewende waarheid. n beweging van die gees van God self.

Die Afrikaanse kenmerke vind daarom nie uitdrukking in die strukture wat die tradisionele gemeenskap noukeurig afbeeld nie; maar veeleer deur n beleid wat die hierargiese stelsel wat sowel van die tradisionele gemeenskap as van die moederkerk geerf is, voortsit soos gewysig deur die byvoeging van elemente van die Metodistiese vorms van kerkregering. Dit kan beskou word as n gemengde Westerse beleid wat op n karateristieke Afrikaanse wyse opereer.

Aabidding in die kerk is eenvoudig en plooibaar en daar is vryheid van uitdrukking. Dienste word Afrikaniseer, maar die doel daarvan is nie om aan die Christosentrisiteit afbreuk te doen in al die wesenlike aspekte daarvan in taal, gebed, gesang en rites nie, maar eenvoudig die gebruik van huisliker wyses van christelike aanbidding, sodat die aanbidder van Afrika kan verstaan en diep kan beleef wanneer hy of sy aanbid.

Aangesien dit die christelike geloof is wat die kerk in terme van Afrika wil kommunikeer, is die uitgangspunt en bron van die kerk se geloof die ewige, heilige geskrifte, die dokumente waardeur die kerk in die lewe geroep is. Afrikaase christelike teologie wil die wesenlike christelike geloof in egte Afrikaase taal vertolk in die stroomversnellings en verwarring van ons tyd, sodat daar n egte dialoog tussen christelike geloof en Afrikakultuur mag wees.

Dit is baie duidelik uit die skrif dat christene nie neutraal kan wees met betrekking tot sake soos menslike waardigheid, vryheid en gelykheid. Die ware betekenis van politiek is nie twis, tweedrag of stryd om bo uit te kom



nie, maar dit gaan oor die welsyn van mense of van die mensdom as geheel. Christene behoort nie bang te wees om sake wat verkeerd is, uit te wys nie, selfs wat hoogste sake van die Staat betref nie, maar hulle behoort dit te doen uit liefde en vir die welsyn van die gewone mense. Om vir die weslyn, geluk en voordeel van die gemeenskap te werk, behoort een van die hoogste pilgte van die christene te wees.

Daar behoort op gelet te word, dat om na die Evangele te kyk vanuit n Afrika-perspektief, Afrika-teologie nie net aan hulleself dink nie, maar probeer om n bydrae te maak, hoe gerig ookal, tot die eer en rykdom van die algemene, christelike teologie.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This dissertation is affectionately dedicated to my parents, Ledimane and Nkola, who were my source of inspiration. A special word of thanks goes to my brothers and sisters: Phimi, Bangkwang, Bagakilwe, Rabbi, Lesenyanaga, Tebogo, Leeto and Solomon for their encouragement.

I want to thank the Rt. Rev. E J Mokoena and his executive committee for given me the green light to write the history of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. As a new church and a growing church in word and deed it has been a continual source of inspiration and motivation to prepare this dissertation.

I should like to express my sincere thanks for the assistance and encouragement of my promoter Prof. J P Claasen, and also my two co-promoters Prof. D Crafford and Prof J W Hofmeyr both of the University of Pretoria. I would like to thank Prof. H van der Merwe of the University of the North, for he was also one of my sources of inspiration.

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*SIMON MORIPE*

**INTRODUCTION**

Christianity as it reached Africa South of Sahara came via Europe. Britain, France, Germany and Holland came to be colonial powers on the African continent; and Christianity has often been charged with being an instrument employed by the European colonial to enslave and oppress the Africans. With the advent of Christianity and Western civilization Africans have been taught to disregard their way of living.

For centuries Christianity has been divided in three main tradition: Orthodox, Roman and Protestant; to these should be added a substantial African development of Christianity namely the African Independent Churches. These churches constitute a significant portion of Christianity in Africa and a unique spirit in African Christianity. They are rightly called the African Independent Churches because they are new or modern in contradistinction to the African traditional religions of Africa.

The term *independent*, first appeared in a print probably in an address at Johannesburg in 1904 to the first General Missionary Conference where the sub-title "Independence a recent development" was used. Independence in ecclesiastical usage is the principle; that the individual congregation or a church is an autonomous and equalitarian society free from any external ecclesiastical control.<sup>1</sup> These congregations or churches are 'independent' from the Western Mission Churches in finance, organization and forms of worship. The term is a good description for the widespread phenomenon in which large numbers of former

adherents of mission churches have seceded in order to assent their right from a large eclectically control.

We therefore choose the term *independent*, despite its impression, as the best term available to describe those Christian churches which have been founded in Africa, by Africans and primarily for Africans.

The origin of these churches should be seen as a reaction to the Christian Missionaries in Africa. There have been few missionary exponents who had respect towards non-Christian society. It is clear that enormous social, political and religious power has been exercised in Africa.

The Independent Churches themselves are fairly readily grouped into two classes. Those which repeat the Western pattern of the Mission Churches in their doctrine, worship, polity and to a large extent in their ethos, may be called 'orthodox'. In South Africa they are known as 'Ethiopian'. The origin of 'Ethiopian mythology' can be traced back to the history and the Bible. The successful military resistance of the Ethiopian Empire against the Italians' colonial occupation in 1896, is said to have impressed Africans, especially blacks in South Africa. The noble name of Ethiopia symbolized the whole of Africa, a free black Africa, liberated from colonial overlordship and led by the Africans themselves.<sup>2</sup>.

The first time this term was used, was in the Methodist Church in South Africa when a schism occurred in 1892. A minister called Mangena Mokone set up his Ethiopian Church in the Transvaal.<sup>3</sup> He did this because he thought blacks were not getting equal rights with whites in the Methodist Church. Mokone rapidly gained followers. His church was called " The Ethiopian Church ". By this term he meant that it was related to the Ethiopian mentioned in Psalms 68:31; Acts 8:27. This he understood to promise the evangelization in Africa.

The second group is the 'Zionist', 'Spirit' or the 'Apostles' churches. They are 'Pentecostal' movements characterized by features which include baptism by immersion, faith healing and prohibiting of certain foods. The charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit are experienced in abundance. The terms Zionist, Jerusalem, Pentecostal and Apostolic are in the majority. The driving force behind these churches was the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, Zion City, Illinois, United States of America. It was founded in 1896 by J A Dowie as the first "Apostle". The main teaching of this church was divine healing and immersion three times at baptism. In 1906 a crisis occurred: Dowie was eclipsed by his second-in-command W G Voliva. In 1904 the first group of Africans were baptized in Johannesburg and out of this beginning, sprang the numerous groups we find today.<sup>4</sup>

Certain factors are known to have contributed to the rise of the Independent Churches in Africa. These include politics, social, economics, ethnic, liturgical and theological factors.

There is no doubt that the development of political struggle against colonialism and various forms of white minority rule in Africa did contribute to a certain extent to the numerous Independent Churches. Religious factors include the attitude of the missionary enterprise in Africa and the results of the publication of the Scriptures in African languages. As a result, there was an identification of missionaries as agents of colonial interest, who since the struggle to establish churches of national interest, often failed to speak out against the injustices perpetrated by the colonial administration against Africans. Another negative reaction to the missionary enterprise in Africa was contributed by the cynical attitude of missionaries to African culture and ways of worship<sup>5</sup>.

Bishop Neill says that the main cause is the failure of the Whites to make Africans feel at home in their Western-oriented religious institutions.<sup>6</sup>; while. B G M Sundkler in his book *BANTU PROPHETS* lay great stress on the socio-political situation within which these churches arise, especially in South Africa.<sup>7</sup> For the South African Independent Churches; the government Tomlinson report in 1955 provided a long list divided into a dozen positive causes, and also thirty-two negative causes (ignorance, avarice, ambition, imperiousness, faulty Biblical interpretation, multiplicity of missionary agencies, land hunger, personal quarrels, politics, unrest, hankering after ancestor worship, unnecessary delay in establishing autonomous mission churches, missionary ignorance of African psychology, language and culture, the colour-bar within the church). etc.<sup>8</sup>

Ethiopianism and often separatist movements were explained chiefly in terms of African opposition to colonial paternalism being interpreted as a religious strand of African nationalism preparing the way for political independence.

These churches reveal a sense of togetherness among themselves. The members express the desire for a sense of belonging. The individuality of Western civilization did not satisfy their needs. The desire for belonging is one of the element in the formation of a group, and it is expressed in the spirit of a group in worship and daily fellowship.

The African Independent Churches have made a significant contribution in evangelizing unbelievers. Their members often witness to their faith with radiant joy and an assurance of conviction that testifies to their relationship with Christ. They are often in a close relationship with their fellow-men and witness to them in the every day situation of life. They have a great potential for winning their fellow-men.

The Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is one of these churches and one should bear in mind that the African Independent Churches differ widely in style, organization and attitude.



I shall pay much attention to the origin, belief, administration and organization, worship, and history of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. This will hopefully be also a necessary contribution to the establishment and development of theology in Africa, especially with reference to the black people

The study of the Independent Churches in Africa has become of vital importance for an understanding of the rich variety of forms in which Christianity manifests itself on this continent. Since the end of the last century there has been a rapid growth in the membership of the Independent Churches.

Why this church? It is because nothing of it has yet been written down and the fact that many oral witnesses are growing old or die whose oral witness may be important; and this makes this research urgent. As a member of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa I have the privilege and moral obligation to research and write the history of this church. Furthermore as a lecturer in church history at the University of the North, the aim should be to present, as far as possible a complete history of the church in South Africa. This should therefore include the significant history of the Independent Churches, especially that of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

The method followed in doing this research consist of the reading of general histories of the Independent Churches in Africa and especially South Africa. Apart from this, church books e.g minutes of the church councils and committees with reference to the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. These documents are of great value in this connection.

The last source which has provided valuable information is oral communication made to me by different persons who were or indirectly involved in the history of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. The importance of this source, can be clearly seen in the work by J Vansina *ORAL TRADITION*.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE FOUNDING AND GROWTH OF THE REFORMED APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA IN ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age"<sup>9</sup>. In this parting injunction of the risen Lord to His disciples, is given for the first time the office of the Christian Church. It is significant that in His teaching He mentioned the church twice but only towards the close of His ministry.

The distinctive feature of His teaching is the setting up among men of the Kingdom of God - a Kingdom not of this world but a spiritual into which he only can enter who has been born from above. Being spiritual this Kingdom is invisible, but it has an outward bodily manifestation; that manifestation is the visible Church, the *ecclesia*, those who are called out from the world and gathered into a society whose aim is the extension of God's Kingdom.

The history of the modern Africa religious movements reveals a remarkably long list of movements, that have fallen foul of colonial and other governments in Africa. They have been persecuted and this resulted in their dispersion and subsequent expansion. It happened in the days of the New Testament Church and it also happened to the early church in North Africa. In South Africa these movements were explained chiefly in terms of African opposition to colonial

paternalism and also as religious strand of African Nationalism preparing the way for political independence.

According to Peter Hinchliff,<sup>10</sup> the first secession of the African Independent Churches took place in Basutoland (Lesotho) in the year 1872. It was due to political unrest in the territory over its relationship with the Cape Colony; about 150 members of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society congregation at Mount Hermon in Lesotho broke away from the control of the Society and declared that they would no longer be bound by any regulations other than those made by themselves. The schism did not last very long but it made a considerable impression on Europeans who regarded it as political sinister. It is worth noting three factors in the situation which were to recur frequently in future secession the resentment of white control, the possible political implication, and the resistance to disciplinary regulation.<sup>11</sup> The schism made a considerable contribution to the spreading of the Independent churches in Africa and especially in South Africa.

The first permanent secession in South Africa, was the Tembu National Church which was founded by Nehemiah Tile in the Cape. He was a Tembu who had been ordained as a Methodist Minister; unfortunately he quarreled with the Superintendent of the circuit and in 1884 he set up his church, being fully supported by the paramount Chief. The paramount Chief was now declared to be the visible head of the church on earth. Government pressure resulted in the chief renouncing the movement and it soon began losing a lot of ground.<sup>12</sup>

In Sekhukhuniland in Northern Transvaal a white missionary by the name of Winter of the Berlin Missionary Society led the seceders. He maintained that missionaries treated even the educated Africans as inferior and that it was necessary

to create Independent Churches, which can be governed by Africans. Immediately the Lutheran Bapedi Church of South Africa was founded on the 5 April 1892. The Church was founded at a meeting of the representatives from congregations who had dissociated themselves from the Berlin Lutheran Mission at Kgaletlele, Schoonoord.<sup>13</sup>

A Minister called Mangena Mokone of the Methodist Church set up his Ethiopian Church in the Transvaal. He did this because he thought blacks were not getting equal rights with whites in the Methodist Church. Mokone soon gained followers. His organization was called "The Ethiopian Church". By this term he meant it was related to the Ethiopia mentioned in the Psalms and the Acts of the Apostles. Mokone had heard missionaries referring in their sermons to Ps. 68:31 "Ethiopia shall soon stretch her hands out to God", and to references such as that found in Acts 8:27. This he understood to promise the evangelization of Africa. Among his followers, many later became great leaders in this movement, for example James M Dwane. Because Mokone's Church was situated in the region of Pretoria and the Rand, it had a wider horizon than many others and so appealed to many tribes. Mokone also took the passage from the scripture to mean self-government of the African Church under African leaders: Ps.68:31; Acts 8:27.<sup>14</sup>

According to the annual report of the research unit: New Religious Movements and Independent/Indigenous Churches (1 April 1987 - 31 March 1988); under the directorship of Prof. G C Oosthuizen; it was stated that in 1950 there were 9% of the black population belonging to these churches; today there are at least 35% of the black population in South Africa, the most representative church group in this country. They are approaching eight million and find genuine religious satisfaction in over four thousand

denominations. It is estimated that over 150 000 small African Independent Church groups gather one night during the week and again during the weekend - not in churches but even in motorcar-boxes made into a place of worship, in houses but also in garages.<sup>15</sup>

It is however impossible to discuss even shortly the many schism which have occurred, enough to say that at the present moment there are probably thousands of these Churches.

### **THE NATURE OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCHES**

Most of the Independent Churches have emerged spontaneously in areas where Christian missionaries activity has been effective and some of the stronger groups have come from a renewal of the movement. They also occur most readily where the whole Bible is available in the local language. They rarely occur where Christians are few, or where Christianity has only recently arrived. They occur widely in West, East, Central and Southern Africa. The African Independent Churches differ widely in style, organization and attitude.

Some of the factors which make them popular are the common African features which can be often traced to Mission founded African Churches. Many black people belong to the 'mission churches' out of loyalty or respectability and look to an African Independent Church for their deepest needs.

These Churches reveal a sense of togetherness among themselves and they also reveal a dynamic working of the Spirit that transcends the doctrinal and organizational

partitions of denominations. The members of these Churches have a sense of belonging for they could not understand the individualism of western civilization which did not satisfy their needs in the established churches. The desire for belonging was an element in the founding of these churches; and is being expressed in the Spirit of the group both in worship and in daily fellowship.

The Scriptures and the proclamation of the Word are held in high esteem. The Word of God has a central place in the worship service. It is a place of free movement and total participation by everyone in the acts of worship; for the charismatic gifts of the Spirit are experienced in abundance. These Churches place more emphasis on Prayer and they are often called the 'Praying Churches'. There is freedom of prayer according to the Scriptures: pray at all times (Thessalonians 5:17); pray on every occasion, as the spirit leads (Ephesians 6:18); In every church service I want the men to pray, men who are dedicated to God and lift up their hands in prayer without anger or argument (I Timothy 2:8).

Instead of reciting creeds, Africans Christians are more at home in dancing their faith, in celebrating their faith, in shouting their faith and singing their faith. People are not only content to recite their faith in a form of creeds, they want to demonstrate that their faith is not only in the head but in the whole person, body and spirit. The sincerity of their faith and prayer brings many people to a personal relationship with Christ.

On faith healing there is no doubt that the achievements of healing have been great. Faith healing is practiced in relation to the needs of the people. They accept the

injunction of the Scriptures to lay hands on the sick people. Baptism and the Holy Communion are the only sacraments.

The African Independent Churches have maintained the centrality of the historical Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. They also seek direct continuity with the New Testament period. These Churches have made a significant contribution in evangelization to the non believers.

These churches are engaged in a massive attempt to synthesize the Apostolic teaching with authentic African insight, based on biblical criteria derived from the vernacular translation of the Scriptures. These churches are clearly playing an increasingly vital part in the rooting of Christianity in the soil of Africa.

#### **PRELIMINARY DEVELOPMENTS**

The founder of the Zionist movement is J A Dowie who was born in 1847, in Edinburg, Scotland. He then emigrated to Australia where he was being converted into Christianity. He then decided to study theology in Scotland (1869-1872). Dowie was then ordained as the pastor of the Congregational Church in Scotland. By 1878 he decided to become an independent Evangelist.<sup>16</sup> In 1896 he founded the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, Zion City, Illinois, United States of America. The very same year he decided to build Zion City "...an industrial city without any links with sin, disease and poverty. In Zion City there shall be neither liquor stores, theater, park, abattoirs, doctors nor hospitals. The latter were in any case unnecessary in the holy city".<sup>17</sup> In 1906 a crisis occurred: he was eclipsed by his second- in- command, W G Voliva. In the power struggle which took place, he later described Voliva in a sermon as



"that scoundrel, miserable little cur, (dog), traitor and thief"<sup>18</sup> . The main teaching of Voliva's church was divine healing, immersion three times at baptism, and the conviction that the second coming of the Lord was near at hand.

Four people played an important role in planting the Zionist movement in South Africa. The first of these was J Buchler, who was born in 1864 in Switzerland, and died in Johannesburg in 1944. He was a member of the Congregational Church in South Africa and in 1893 was ordained as a pastor of a coloured congregation. However he encountered some problems with infant baptism within the Congregational Church and later resigned from the church. He then founded his own Church namely The Zionist Church among the coloured people.

In 1898 he began corresponding with J A Dowie. In 1902 Buchler visited Dowie in Chichago but unfortunately he could not agree with Dowie on certain issues. In 1903 he decided to change the name of his Church to The Apostolic Faith Mission.

In South Africa Buchler played an important role by healing and baptizing Edgar Mahon who spread the Zionist movement among the Sotho speaking people.<sup>19</sup>

The second person to spread Zionism in South Africa is D Bryant. He was a Baptist and later joined Dowie in Chichago. Because of the broken ties between Dowie and Buchler, Dowie then sent Bryant to spread Zionism in South Africa. He arrived in South Africa on 22 April 1904 and he was welcomed by P L Le Roux, of whom we hear in the next paragraph. Immediately after the death of Dowie, Bryant

left the Zionist movement and went back to the Baptist Church. He died on the 2 October 1939.<sup>20</sup>

The third person who played an important role in spreading Zionism in South Africa is P L Le Roux. He was a missionary of The Dutch Reformed Church. In May 1904 he was baptized in Wakkerstroom and on the 31 of July the same year he was ordained in the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion. The Zulu speaking people followed Le Roux into the Church of Dowie. In the year 1908 he joined the Apostolic Faith Mission.<sup>21</sup>

The fourth person is J G Lake who was an elder of Dowie in America and after receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1907 he broke all ties with Dowie. Lake and his followers decided to come to South Africa as "Apostolic Faith Missionaries". They regarded themselves as humble men and women who are being send by God to South Africa with a message. Their plan was to do missionary work without being bound by any Church.

**THE REFORMED APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION  
OF SOUTH AFRICA IS FOUNDED**

The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is part of the classical Pentecostal movement which originated early in the twentieth century. It is the oldest Pentecostal church in South Africa, and among the oldest in the world.

What is Pentecostalism? Pentecostalism belongs to that stream within Christianity which places a personal experience of the Holy Spirit high among the marks of a Christian. The most important figure within that stream in previous centuries is John Wesley. Indeed John Wesley-

whose own heart was 'strangely warmed', who emphasized the inner 'witness of the Spirit', and taught that sanctification was a second work of grace distinct from and following justification-might well be called the great grandfather of Pentecostalism.<sup>22</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, three significant developments in the United States of America heralded the emergence of Pentecostalism as such. Increasing opposition to holiness teaching within the older denomination, belief in baptism in the Holy Spirit and the fire as a *third* blessing, and there was also a renewed interest in the spiritual gifts, particularly healing. The decisive step was taken at the turn of the century in Topeka, Kansas. There the doctrine was first formulated that 'speaking with other tongues' was initial evidence that a person had received that baptism with the Holy Spirit. This teaching began to gain scattered support in the Southern states of the United States of America during the early 1900s. But it was the revival which began in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, in 1906, which really forged the link between Spirit-baptism and tongues. This three-year-long meeting was the launching-pad of the twentieth century Pentecostalism. Many hundreds of Christians from all over North America, Europe and the third World visited Azusa Street and took the message back home.<sup>23</sup>

The Pentecostal movement considers itself a continuation of the church of the Acts, in Spirit, doctrine and practice. This movement is a movement towards the original purity and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A movement away from dead forms and into living vital truth, a movement of the Spirit of God Himself. The Pentecostal movement ascribes its origin and extension to God. It has in fact been, since its inception, the fastest growing section of the Christian

church. It is important to note that Pentecostalism is not a denomination or a Protestant sect. In fact it represents a fourth major strand of Christianity-alongside Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. This movement is composed of many denominations.

Pentecostalism is for the most part wholly orthodox in its beliefs as far as major Christian doctrines are concerned. A number of Pentecostal churches also regard feet washing as being obligatory as baptism and the Lords Supper. Pentecostal tend to see Jesus Christ in four roles: as a Saviour, baptizer in the Spirit,, Healer and soon becoming king.

Pentecostals worship is patterned on the model given in I Corinthians chapter twelve to fourteen. Spiritual gifts mentioned there are regularly regarded as a norm. The appeal of their spontaneous of worship attracts many people, in which all can participate in their own way.

Ds. Andrew Murray, senior, is the forerunner of Pentecostalism in South Africa. Ds. Andrew Murray, senior, had prayed for many years for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the churches of his adopted country. The younger Murray's never forgot that their father's study door was closed on Friday evenings as the faithful intercessor, spent long hours in a time of fervent prayer for revival.<sup>24</sup>

In August 1859, three ministers issued a call to servants of God in every sphere of service to pray for an awakening throughout South Africa.<sup>25</sup> Interest was built up among Dutch and English folk, so a conference of missionaries and ministers was held at Worcester, 18 April 1860, to hear first -hand accounts of the awakening in the United States and the United Kingdom given by South African ministers or

overseas missionaries. it was called by Profs. John Murray and Nicholas Hofmeyr and their associate in Stellenbosch, Ds. Neethling and was open to ministers and others of all denominations.<sup>26</sup>

The topic of revival was introduced by the Swellendam minister, Dr. Reobertson Adamson, the Scots Presbyterian minister at Cape Town who recounted the story of the American revival of 1858, from its beginnings in a Dutch Reformed congregation in New York until the most recent word of its continued progress throughout 1859, vividly illustrating his talk from his experience therein. He spoke first in English, then in Dutch, and was able to answer questions. His hearers were very deeply moved<sup>27</sup>. Andrew Murray, senior, attempted to speak during the discussion following, but was reduced to weeping <sup>28</sup>.

A Pentecost of days followed the Worcester Conference, approximately seven weeks of waiting between the breathing of the Spirit and the outpouring of the divine power. Andrew Murray, junior, took part in the Worcester conference by leading a prayer, a prayer so powerful that some considered its utterance the beginning of the revival of 1860. His preaching ministry was also powerful in his new charge at Worcester, where he was installed in May of that year, and great expectations were kindled in the hearts of all his hearers<sup>29</sup>.

Rev. van der Lingen of Paarl proposed to his church council that the ten days between Ascension and Pentecost be thereafter devoted to prayer for revival and to evangelistic preaching. This proposal had far-reaching consequences, and set an evangelistic pattern for Afrikaans-speaking community.<sup>30</sup> These Pentecostal services are still held in the Dutch Reformed Church today.

John G Lake and the Apostolic Faith Missionaries left America on 1 April 1908 and arrived in South Africa on 14 May 1908 in Cape Town. They then left for Doornfontein in Johannesburg. In Doornfontein they arrived at a black congregation which later was joined by Indians, coloured and white people. The Pentecostal service was held in Doornfontein on 25 May 1908, and this date is traditionally recognized as the founding of the Apostolic Faith Mission. Lake and the entire congregation later moved from Doornfontein to Bree Street 88.<sup>31</sup> Apostolic Faith Mission grew rapidly from the start as in America; services were originally multiracial.

Certain factors are known to have contributed to the rise of the Independent Churches in South Africa in particular; these include politics, social, economic, ethnic factors as well as the translation of the Bible into African languages and some theological factors.

The policy of segregation was verbally confirmed and sealed by Cecil Rhodes, the Premier of the British Cape colony, and this policy caused more harm than good in South Africa. No church other than the Dutch Reformed Church accepted segregation in principle. But the Apostolic Faith Mission accepted this policy in practice.<sup>32</sup>

The Executive Council of the Apostolic Faith Mission on November 1908 took the following resolution on baptism: baptism of the natives shall in future take place after the baptism of the white people.<sup>33</sup> A few months later the Executive took another resolution on baptism " in future the baptism of whites, coloured and natives shall be separated. This was because a majority of them were Afrikaners in the

**Executive Council of the Apostolic Faith Mission who propagated apartheid. This line of action was taken further whereby all other congregations were established according to race.<sup>34</sup>**

It is a well known fact that most of the African Independent Churches originated from the Apostolic Faith Mission, including the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

According to some of the co-founders of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission; the main reason why they separated themselves from the Apostolic Faith Mission was on the question of a uniform. The Apostolic Faith Mission was no longer interested in a uniform because according to them uniform is no longer important, but most of the black people were very much in favour of a uniform.<sup>35</sup> This new coming church also wanted to free itself from the White dominated Apostolic Faith Mission.

According to the minutes of the Executive Council of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of 1946, this new church held its first Annual General Conference in Premier-Mines, in the district of Pretoria in 1946.<sup>36</sup> The people who organized this Annual General Conference of this new church were: P C Mosito of Krugersdorp, E J Mokoena of Kroonstad, J Boshomane of Alberton, M Selo of Johannesburg, T Taupedi of Lichtenburg J Moropa of Bushbuckridge and A Masilo of Boksburg and all of them were ordained ministers in the Apostolic Faith Mission.

In their first Annual General Conference they decided upon the name of the Church: "The name of the church for the purpose of unity, co-operation, service, fellowship, and discipline is Bantu Apostolic Faith Mission of South

Africa". The term "Bantu" was used in order to comply with the political situation of the time and the Church wanted to identify itself with the main stream of the African Independent Churches in South Africa.

The second Annual General Conference was held in Krugersdorp whereby the Church was formally constituted. The legal constitution of the Church was adopted and the first Executive of the Church was elected: P C Mosito was elected as the first President of the Church and E J Mokoena was elected as the General Secretary and other co-founders of the Church were members of the Executive.<sup>37</sup>

This new church does not regard itself as a sect, but as a well organized Christian body with a legally accepted constitution and it is registered in the Republic of South Africa, and the church enjoys the privileges and facilities that any other recognized church enjoys. This church also regard itself as part of the classical Pentecostal Movement which originated in the early 20th century.<sup>38</sup>

The Rt Rev P C Mosito died on October 1967 and the Executive Council of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa met in Krugersdorp on 3rd December to elect a new President. E J Mokoena of Kroonstad was elected as the new President of The Church and N M Mokoena of Pretoria was elected as the General Secretary.<sup>39</sup>. The Annual General Conference of 1968 which was held in Sharpville approved the appointment of the new General President and the General Secretary.

The church expanded itself into Botswana but encountered some problems with the Botswana Government on the term "Bantu". The Botswana Government could not recognize this Church because of this issue, therefore the Annual General



Conference of 1978 took a resolution to change the name of the Church from Bantu Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa to The Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. The department of plural relations and development was duly informed about the change of the name, and the reply from the department of plural relations and development is as following: "Application change of name: Bantu Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, P120/4/368 to Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. The department confirms the changing of the name as above. The reference number of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa will be P120/4/368".<sup>40</sup>.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

This church desires to manifest God's love for sinners and to call them to repentance pointing them to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Church seeks to trumpet as loudly and forcibly as it can the fact that the latter rain is falling and the harvest is at hand. It seeks to reach every man, woman and child of every nation with the glad Gospel message ( Matt.28:18-19).

Any person who shall be a member of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission shall first be questioned whether he or she shall denounce the worldly pleasures in preference to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the church being satisfied by his or her replies, they shall arrange or cause to be arranged that he or she be confirmed in terms of the constitution.<sup>41</sup>.

Any person so confirmed and declared a Christian, shall observe the following: attend church services every Sunday, attend all devotional services of the church on specified

days, assist in all the activities of the church, study prayer and read the Bible, bless his or her children and bring them up in a Christian like way.<sup>42</sup>

The church is well represented in the three Province of South Africa and most especially in Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The church also has members in Lesotho and Botswana. In Botswana the church is legally registered.

According to the recent statistics of the General Secretary (P L Matlakeng) of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa; the roll of membership of the church is as following:

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>ROLL OF MEMBERS</b>
VOLKSRUST	NATAL	1 563
PAARDEKOP	DO	1 196
KROONSTAD	O F S	1 267
ODENDAALSRUST	DO	1 384
BETHLEHEM	DO	2 150
KESTELL	DO	1 145
WELKOM	DO	1 456
GROBLERSDAL	TRANSVAAL	1 430
BUSHBUCKRIDGE	DO	4 356
LYDENBURG	DO	2 985
MIDDLEBURG	DO	2 874
PIETERSBURG	DO	3 738
HAMMANSKRAAL	DO	2 957
PRETORIA	DO	7 378
GERMISTON	DO	3 591
BOKSBURG	DO	3 169
BRAKPAN	DO	2 682
KRUGERSDORP	DO	3 582
ROODEPOORT	DO	4 379
JOHANNESBURG	DO	6 369
VEREENIGING	DO	2 527

VANDEBYLPARK	DO	4 728
ALBERTON	DO	3 972
RANDFONTEIN	DO	2 683
RUSTENBURG	DO	1 583
KOSTER	DO	1 375
SWARTRUGGENS	DO	2 528
LICHTENBURG	DO	5 927
MAFIKENG	DO	2 648
KLERKSDORP	DO	5 782

In Botswana and Lesotho there are 5 628 bona fide members. The grand total of the roll of membership is 99 522. There are 243 Ministers and 109 Evangelists.<sup>43</sup> The church has up to now erected ten church buildings in the following places: Three in Pretoria, one in Johannesburg, one in Sebokeng, two in Bushbuckridge , two in the Orange Free State and one in Botswana.

#### INTERACTION WITH OTHER CHURCHES

The fission and leadership dispute within the African Independent Churches which had been emphasized in much of the literature did not in fact preclude inter-church contact. There are few Independent Churches which have contact with the Mission Churches. But there are about four reasons why the Mission Churches and the Independent Churches are kept apart.

In the first place there is an abundance of ignorance about the Independent Churches. The Mission Churches regard these churches as an illegitimate organization for whom they share no responsibility or fellowship. Close to this is a second problem of unconcern. The general attitude is that the Independent Churches are a curious organization that endorses sins of the flesh and promotes radical forms of

worship; Therefore they do not bother themselves with them because they do not travel the same way.

A third problem is that the Mission Churches view these churches with an unusual amount of pride. They regard the members of the Independent Churches as not being authentic Christians. Their personal lives and worship style show that they are very simple, emotional and generally naïve about the Christian Faith. Another feature of the missionary type churches is fear. The African Independent Churches display a much closer link to the African World-view than the mission churches. The transference of this African practice, communicate a dynamic to be feared among the mission churches who worry that these churches may get an upper hand.<sup>44</sup>.

Most members of the African Independent Churches come from the Mission Churches. Some of the members of the Mission Churches are reluctant to leave their churches but they are attracted by the healing attributes of the Independent Churches.

It is interesting to note that there is another movement called *Sephiri*, it is a group of people who meet every Saturday night for healing. They do not regard themselves as a church but a healing movement. Most of their members come from the Independent Churches but some from the Mission Churches because it gives them the benefit of healing while allowing them to remain members in good standing in their Mission Churches.

The most common field of inter-church contact is by fund raising. Most of the Independent Churches are not wealthy and many cannot pay their own ministers let alone erect church buildings for themselves. The financial resources of

these churches are often not enough to meet immediate requirements. The service is held most usually on Saturday night and lasts for the whole night; and it involves prayer, singing and addresses. The highlight of the occasion is giving contributions in the form of money..

The African Independent Churches Association (A I C A) was an offshoot of the Transvaal Interdenominational African Ministers Association which was founded in 1915. This association was open to all African Ministers from both Mission and the Independent Churches, but there was soon conflict between Mission and Independent Ministers. The Independent ministers were desperate for their lack of theological education and not belonging to 'proper' churches. Mission church ministers were in the majority, and at no time an Independent minister held any office in the association. This led to the formation of A I C A in 1922<sup>45</sup>. A I C A consisted of ministers determined to have their own organization, who could not boast of formal education and good theological education. They felt snubbed and were made to feel inferior and uneducated by their fellow African ministers from the mission churches. At one stage A I C A was the largest and most successful Association in South Africa. But by 1974 however, it had all but collapsed entirely<sup>46</sup>.

Rev. J R Mthembu came into contact with a representative of a foreign ecumenical agency which had money available for theological education. This representative said that the money might be available to a properly constituted association with a viable programme. He advised Mthembu to get interested Independent church leaders and approach the Christian Institute of Southern Africa to assist them in the necessary organization. Following this, a meeting was organized, and took place at Daveyton near Benoni in

December 1964. In 1965 the African Independent Churches Leaders took a resolution to the effect that " We give our fullest confidence to the Christian Institute of Southern Africa and invite its Director, the Rev. C F B Naude to guide us through every difficulty in the Christian field". The Christian Institute decided to assist the Independent Churches, and they formulated a programme for them. This programme was to be the basis for fund raising overseas. In June 1965 a conference was held in Queenstown, in the Cape which formally established the African Independent Churches Association. A board of management consisting of a president, vice-president, general secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer and two ordinary members was elected at the conference, with Rev. J R Mthembu as the first A I C A President.<sup>47</sup>

The first constitution of the newly formed association gave the following as its aims, objectives and basis: The aim of the Association will be to serve the church of Christ in every possible way and especially the needs of the African Independent Churches. The Association will seek to realise its aims by concerning itself with, although not limiting itself to the following: the theological education of ministers of the African Independent Churches; the establishment of a scholarship fund for theological education; the problems and needs of the members of the Association and the Association is based upon the Word of God the Father, in Jesus Christ the Son, Redeemer and Lord, and in the Holy Spirit. In 1970 A I C A opened its first theological school in Alice in the Cape.

Holding office in A I C A not only gave status but also some financial advantage and as a result of this there was internal competition for positions especially those on the central board. This competition reached a climax at the

annual conference at which office bearers were elected. The 1968 Annual Conference was held in Johannesburg, and the Rev. J R Mthembu and his strongest supporters were voted out, while Bishop Manana was elected as A I C A 's second President. The Mthembu group stopped taking part in A I C A activities, and formed itself into what it called the Interim Committee. Now A I C A was threatened with a major split. In 1969 conference began at Kwa Mashu near Durban, and the dispute between A I C A board and the Interim Committee came to a head. Rev I P B Mokoena acted as a spokesman of the Interim Committee. The Interim Committee avoided taking part in the election in 1969 which they would have lost by a large margin. Thus the 1969 conference ended with a clear defeat for the Interim Committee.<sup>48</sup>

At the end of the 1969 conference one of the Interim Committee supporters, who had been unable to gain position of authority on the committee, formed the Life Aid Independent Churches Association (L A I C A). In March 1970 the Interim Committee announced through the Afrikaans morning newspaper *Die Transvaler*, that they are now breaking ties with A I C A. They founded a new association which was named the Reformed Independent Churches Association (R I C A) and had a Dutch Reformed minister, Ds N van Loggerenberg, as its adviser. Ds van Loggerenberg promised a car for organizing, a theological school in Soweto, railway concession tickets to members and marriage-officers licences. It is said that 46 churches founded this association. Rev I P B Mokoena was elected the first President of R I C A and not Rev J R Mthembu who having lost the R I C A presidency, was prepared to try again in A I C A.<sup>49</sup> The present president of R I C A is now Rev. E J Mokoena, the General President of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa; and now Rev I P B Mokoena is the life president of R I C A .

The urban congregations of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa cut across ties of kinship, language and residence. They will usually meet together for important services as on Christmas, New Year and Ascension day. An invitation may be sent to other African Independent Churches. Usually some considerable effort is made for all congregations to be represented at the most important days in the church calender and in particular at the Annual General Conference which is held on Good Friday. Ordinary members of the church have the opportunity to meet with other congregations to participate in the important services.



**CHAPTER 2****ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION****CHURCH POLITY**

The polity of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is described in great detail in the official Constitution of the church. Much of this represents aspiration rather than achievements.

There is also the Methodist influence to be seen in this church. It appears in many other terms such as " Annual General Conference, District Conference and Circuits "; and the role of the laity in preaching and prayer. Thus the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa incorporates a variety of historical church influences into a single system to adapt to indigenous circumstances.

According to E J Mokoena the General President, the African features are therefore not expressed through the structures that closely mirror traditional Society; But rather through a polity that continues the hierarchical system inherited both from traditional society and from the mother church namely the Apostolic Faith Mission, and modifies it by the addition of elements from the Methodist forms of government. It could be regarded as a mixed Western polity operating in a characteristically African way.

The emphasis on hierarchical order does not necessarily rule out lay activity, whether through integration into the lower ranks of hierarchy or simply by empowering various duties.

The fact is that virtually every church member has some form of responsibility.

It is important to realize that members within their respective offices in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, have clearly defined rights and duties in the constitution of the church. The lowest rank of the church ladder is held by the class leader and the highest rank is that of the General President. His or her role is also specified in the constitution.

### **MANAGEMENT**

The management of the church consists of the following: The General President; General Secretary; Hon. General Treasurer; Presiding Ministers; Ministers; Evangelists; Preachers; Class Leaders; Young People's Guild; Daughter's Movement and Women's League<sup>50</sup>.

According to the constitution of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission, the church elects one of its ministers to be the Head of the church and he is called the General President. His term of office is five years and he shall be elected at the General Conference of the church.

The duties, functions and powers of the General President are the following: to preside at all the conferences of the church and to maintain law and order when the conference is in session; to determine the boundaries of the districts after due consultation with the Presiding Ministers; to transfer one member from one district to the other after consultation with the Committee of the Presiding Ministers; to convene or cause to convene the Annual General Conference of the church; to convene an extraordinary meeting of any

Committee of the church at anytime when circumstances so demand and to do so; to visit the congregations at least once in a year; to exercise a deciding vote; to submit a Presidential address to the Annual General Conference; generally to do anything which may be beneficial to the church and to ensure that the constitution of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is strictly observed by all parties concerned<sup>51</sup>.

The President of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, in order to exercise control over his following has to rely increasingly upon his office bearers representing out-lying congregations. He exercises control within the hierarchical system of the church. At congregational level he is more dependent on his office bearers to implement his decisions. Hence group control relies more on a balance in the play of relations between senior and junior leaders.

The deputy leaders of the General President are the Presiding Ministers. They are the second in command. The Evangelist is after the Minister, and most Preachers can expect to be appointed Evangelist after a period of time. The Ministers have the right to wear a black gown and a clerical collar. The Ministers are more often in charge of a specific congregation.

The Preachers, Evangelist and Ministers are elected by their respective congregation; but presiding Ministers are appointed by the General President of the church with the help of the Executive Committee; and they will all appear before the Ordination Committee which will recommend them to the Annual General Conference for consecration.

The General Secretary is also an important office because he is responsible for church correspondence and all matters of the church, but he should be an educated official; of importance too is the office of the Hon. General Treasurer; and he should be a trustworthy official. The present General Secretary of the is Rev. P L Matlakeng of Meadowlands in Johannesburg; and the Hon General Treasurer is Rev. D Mbipa of Klerksdorp.

According to J Lethuli the chairman of the ordination committee, promotion to a higher grade depends on a number of factors. These include personal spiritual growth, obedience, efficiency, the pioneering of new branches, and length of service. It is clear that promotion is by merit rather than seniority. He further said, this is however a difficult principle to apply in the church.

Lethuli stated that, this church needs Ministers who are one of the people and not one who is imposed upon the congregation for he is the head and the father of the flock. He must help shepherd the flock of God. He must meet the needs of the people and assist them in whatever they need; but above all he must please God and not the people. Good character and general leadership qualities are sufficient for the Ministry.

Lethuli emphasized the point that the ideal leader should not be illiterate. He should at least have some form of formal education and even more theological education. However there are few Ministers in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa who have had some form of formal education and elementary theological education. It is also the main aim of this church that they should have a leadership which is educated. If they are educated they will be able to equip their members.

All believers must be equipped for the Christian service which commanded by Ephesians Chapter four. Believers must be provided with the basic knowledge of the Word of God. Saint Paul spent the entire year in Antioch teaching the Word of God to the followers of Christ. He and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch strengthening the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith.

As soon as the local leader of a congregation of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa has been officially appointed he becomes personally responsible for equipping office bearers in the existing local hierarchy.

The church shall elect one of the ministers in a district to exercise supreme power in the area concerned and he shall be called the presiding Minister. His duties shall be similar to those performed by the minister<sup>52</sup>.

A Minister shall be appointed in respect of each congregation and his duties shall be: to teach and preach the Word of God (Matt.28;19-20); to bless the children; to baptize those who believe in the Christian teaching; to administer the Holy Communion; to pray over the afflicted; to solemnize marriages and to bury the dead.

The church shall elect any member of a congregation to serve as an assistant of the Minister of the congregation and he shall be called an Evangelist. The duties of an Evangelist shall be: to teach and preach the Holy Gospel of God; to bless the children; to baptize those who believe in the Christian teaching; to pray over the afflicted; to bury the dead and to perform all other duties that may from time to

time be assigned to him by the Minister under whom he serves<sup>53</sup>.

The following shall be the duties of a preacher: to teach and preach the Gospel; to bury the dead and to pray over the afflicted.

Every congregation shall organize or cause to organize a movement of women, to be officially known as "Women's League". This league shall meet every week on Thursday and shall be presided over by the wife of the Minister concerned. Full members shall be distinguished by a black dress and a blue jacket. Women who may wish to become members shall swear an oath along the lines indicated in the Holy Books of the Hebrews 13:17 and Thessalonians 5: 12, and shall pin a white cloth on the sleeves of their jackets.

The duties of the women's league shall be: to teach and preach the Holy Gospel of God and to pray over the afflicted ( Mark 16: 17-18)<sup>54</sup>.

Sundkler says that the kingship pattern of Zulu society is imprinted on the leadership of all the African Independent Churches. The leader whether a " Bishop" or a " President " according to him is a King. He further suggested a distinction between a chief type leader (typical of the Ethiopian type churches ) and a Prophet type leader (typical of the Zionist type )<sup>55</sup>.

These patterns which are suggested by Sundkler are not applicable to the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. The church is exercising legal authority<sup>56</sup> (Legal authority is based on an impersonal bond to the generally defined and functional duty of office). The members of this

church speaks various languages of South Africa, and also the leaders are not confined to any particular language group.

The structure of the ministry of this church must be seen against the strongly hierarchical nature of many African societies. The Apostolic Faith Mission which is the mother church but serves only to reinforce a pattern already in existence. At the apex of the structure stands the President of who is the Head of the church.

With regards to the ministry as a whole, it is apparent that this church has created a system that depends more on African tradition of leadership than the western models. It has been reflected in the effectiveness of the growth of the church through the past two decades. This has been possible only through the degree of religious conviction and pastoral concern of devotion to duty and readiness for sacrifice.

Power and authority are distributed among the group and yet one particular member is recognized to be more than the others- a primus inter pares relationship. Leadership is therefore of a charismatic nature and yet the leaders regular power depends upon the group who accorded them that responsibility. Reciprocally the leadership must give priority to the welfare of the church. The leadership symbolizes the well being of the whole church.

The Ministers of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission are "men of the people" because they live close to their people at the simplest of levels and without much financial security. They face the same problems of lack of education and employment. The Minister of this church is allowed to continue any in other occupation despite the fact that, he

is now a man of spiritual power-set apart for the special work of God.

It is widely lamented in Africa that too many of the educated ministers of the mission churches have ceased to be ministers and have become administrators remote from their people, managing schools, institutions and attempting to bring the sacraments at long intervals to a large number of small congregations<sup>57</sup>.

In African society it is generally necessary to be married to achieve full adult status, irrespective of age. It is interesting to note that Ds. M C Vos of the Dutch Reformed Church in the eighteenth century was married before he could go and study theology in Holland, in order to get his legacy. He was not yet of age but marriage overcame this legal obstacle<sup>58</sup>. A candidate for leadership should be a man of one wife (I Tim.3:2; Titus 1:6).

Age is very important in conferring status in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. Seniority continues to play a major part with the result that there is a marked preference for middle aged and older people in a position of authority.

The ideal leader should be a male. Women do not hold office in the formal structure of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. It should be pointed out that while women are in the majority in the church, they are rarely in a position of direct authority except in their Women's league. Their influence however is considerable. Women are not only numerically in the majority, but are also the major fund-raisers. They are really indeed the backbone of this church.



Women also have their own hierarchy. Women hold office by virtue of the position of their husbands and some are elected to office. The leader of the women's league is the Lady President, the wife of the General President of the church. The most important elected position is that of the Chair-Lady, who presides at meetings but not the service. The next position in the hierarchy is the Secretary and the Treasurer. The rest of the hierarchy hold position by virtue of the position of their husbands.

Women's service is known as *Manyano* and are held every Thursday afternoon. Full uniform is worn and only *Manyano* women are present. Uniform is worn by full members of the church. The women's uniform is as follows: Black dress; white blouse; a blue jacket and a white pin cloth on the sleeves of a jacket<sup>59</sup>.

The attitude of the church towards women must be seen against the background of the African tradition of superiority and privilege of the male; and this has been reinforced by the exclusion of women from the ministry by almost all the older churches. The teaching of the Apostolic Church and the practice of the Ante-Nicene Church confirmed that women received a new status in the church that they had rarely enjoyed in the Ancient World. Even with this recognition of equal worth with men, however, restrictions were placed on women, because of the Apostolic understanding of the order of male and female in creation and in the fall of man. Women were not allowed to serve in a position of Spiritual Authority over men in the life of the church. This included the public proclamation of Scripture to men and sacramental functions such as the Holy Communion and Baptism<sup>60</sup>.

In saying the former , there is no implication that women were not gifted equally with men, even having the same gift of teaching. They were however, restricted to the teaching of children ( a higher calling contrary to some modern thinking), and to some other women (Titus2:3-5), to men in private, Priscilla setting forth the way of Christ more accurately to Apollos. It should be considered a model (Acts 18:26).

Since women have been equally gifted by the Spirit for the work of the ministry yet they are kept away from the ministry within the church, and since there is abundant evidence in the New Testament that Saint Paul was assisted by women in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, women are to be incorporated to pursue numerous avenues of service in the church such as to teach and consult other women in the congregation; women may after all care for other women better than a male minister. Moreover administrative positions may be filled by women, that do not concern the Spiritual mission of the church. House visiting and personal Evangelism are areas of responsibility open for both men and women.

The United States Episcopal Church consecrated Barbara C Harris on February 1989 as their first woman Bishop. She was consecrated by Episcopal Primate Edmond Browning and fifty-four other Bishops. The Lambeth Conference of World-wide Anglican Bishops of 1988, in Canterbury, England explicitly but uncomfortably affirmed the right of Anglican Churches to name female Bishops<sup>61</sup>.

#### **BIBLICAL MINISTRY**

It is now necessary to look at Christian leadership from the standpoint of the Bible. Christian leadership is different

from other kinds of leadership because no Christian leader can assume a top or a number one position. Jesus Christ is the only one who is at the top or the number one leader in the church. Jesus Christ commended His disciples for calling Him teacher and Lord (John 13:13 ). These titles showed Him to be their superior in knowledge and authority.

The chief characteristic of a Christian leader must be submission to Christ. The Christian leader must also be the ultimate follower of the Leader Himself. He should also know where the Lord is going so that he can get others to follow him as he follows the Lord. The main purpose of a Christian leader is to guide others in following Christ. His aim should be to focus on Him and to show others how to do it.

Christian leadership is a gift from the Holy Spirit. This leadership is more than a skill to be learned, though it is certainly included. However, one must have the capacity for leadership from the Spirit in the first place or no amount of control will produce the skill necessary for spiritual leadership. This gift, like other spiritual gifts, is sovereignty distributed by the Holy Spirit and is not a matter of human choice or by human effort. Even though it is a product of the Spirit's presence and God grace, this gift requires diligence, faithfulness, hard work and commitment if it is to be exercised effectively.

Jesus Christ is the basis for the ministry. He came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45). His body namely the church continues His ministry. The church as a body exclude two possibilities: that any member may feel himself or herself unnecessary for the functioning of the body, and

that any member may feel he or she alone can fulfill all the functions of the body; so no group can monopolize the ministry.

The church is pictured in the New Testament as a unique organism, although even in its local expression it is more than an organism. The very nature of the body of Christ makes it important for every member to function and contribute to the process of edification; that is why the Spirit provides diverse gifts to the different members. It is clear that the different "offices" and roles in the church are also among the gifts given to the body. The ministry is essentially a team work and a mutual supporting use of gifts.

Although there are no "higher" and "lower" functions in the body, it seems as if there are those with more co-ordination and leadership functions which are also important. The emphasis on the ministry of every believer by Luther (the priesthood of all believers) does not mean that there is no place or regard for certain special and control leadership ministry. Christian leadership is not so much a position as it is a function, this means that it is not a title but a role.

### **CONFERENCES**

According to the constitution of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, the following annual conferences shall be held: Annual General conference; Annual District Conference and the Annual Provincial District Conferences. The Annual General conference shall be held not later than April of each year; the venue shall from time

to time be decided upon by the Annual General Conference and at least one month's notice shall be given<sup>62</sup>.

The greatest expression of the unity of this church in Christ takes place each year at Easter time when all the communities or congregations come together, to commemorate the death and resurrection of our saviour Jesus Christ. This is the most outstanding activity of the church life. Here this church remembers Jesus Christ, who is God made flesh and suffered for our sins. The church is reminded that through His suffering He saved us from sins. The Christians are reminded that He conquered sin and rose again from the dead. It is through Him that the Christians today have the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a happy occasion for the church; a great festival much more than Christmas. The Annual General Conference makes a deep impression upon the members of this church.

The business of the Annual General Conference shall be proceeded with the following order: to open the session with hymn and prayer; to receive delegates' credentials; to read and confirm the minutes of the previous Conference; to elect the following whose term of office shall terminate at the end of the sitting of the conference: Ordination Committee consisting of seven members, Appeal Committee consisting of seven members, Financial Committee consisting of nine members, Resolution Committee consisting of nine members; to receive a Presidential report; to receive the reports of the Provincial and the District Conference; to receive the reports of the delegates; to receive the Hon. General Treasure financial report; to receive the reports of the above committees; to deal with any special business of which due notice has been given as contained in these regulations; to elect all office bearers whose term of office only covers

a year; to deal with any other business of general nature falling within the scope of the Christian Church<sup>63</sup>.

At every Annual General Conference only bona fide members of this church shall have the right of voting on all matters treated at the conference. Non-members may with the permission of the chairman, and at his entire discretion, allow them to participate on certain matters but they do not have the right to vote.

The Annual District Conference shall only be held at the Head-quarters of the church and shall submit its report to the Annual General Conference.

The Annual Provincial District Conference shall be presided over by the General President who in his absence shall delegate his powers to the Presiding Minister of the district. The members of this conference shall apart from the General President consist of the Presiding Ministers, local Ministers and Preachers, and delegates of the League of women<sup>64</sup>.

The duties of this conference inter alia, shall be: to nominate, examine Minister's to be and prepare a list of their names to be submitted to the Annual General Conference; to appoint Preachers and ordain them along the lines indicated in Tim. 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-8; to receive local reports; to inspect the affairs of the Quarterly Committee; to inspect the financial records; to settle local disputes; to submit an annual report to the Annual District Conference and to elect all committees and office bearers at the close of the session .

In practice the Annual General Conference is the highest court attended by all members of the church. The church meets as one body under the chairmanship of the Hon. General President of the church; and the proceedings are set forth in the context of worship. The Annual General Conference is responsible for maintaining peace and order in the church.

**QUORUM** : a 2/3 majority of the membership of any committee or conference of the church shall form a quorum. In the absence of a quorum a meeting of any committee of the church shall be postponed for seven days, same place and same time, and in the case of a conference of the church shall be for a day. Should no quorum be formed the members present at the adjourned meeting of the conference shall form a quorum<sup>65</sup>.

**ORDINATION OF MINISTERS** : All persons who shall be ordained as Ministers shall be tested by the Ordination Committee and after satisfying the requirements shall be ordained by the General President.

**FINANCIAL CONTROL**: Every church committee or council shall elect one of its members to keep the funds of the congregation concerned and shall be called the Hon. Treasurer. The Annual General Conference shall elect one of its members to keep the funds of the church and he shall be called the General Hon. Treasurer of the church<sup>66</sup>.

**FINANCIAL RECORDS**: Proper financial records shall be kept and each congregation shall submit a financial statement duly audited by a qualified Auditor to the General Hon. Treasurer of the church who shall at the Annual General Conference present a summarized statement of all the congregations of the church after being audited by a suitable qualified Auditor.

**SIGNATORIES:** All cheques issued by the General Hon. Treasurer of the church shall be signed by the General President, The General Hon Treasurer and two Ministers who shall be elected at the General Conference. Funds kept by the Hon. Treasurer of the different congregations shall be signed by the Minister of the congregation and two other members of the church committee. All the funds of the church shall be banked at any Commercial Bank or a Building Society<sup>67</sup>.

**DISPUTES :** Any minister or member who is found guilty of vicious or immoral acts shall be deemed to have broken the rule and may be expelled or otherwise disciplined or reprimanded. Suspension, expulsion or re-obligation may be considered itself sufficient punishment.

The findings of any court of law will be used as evidence in considering any charge against a member, but the accused must always be given an opportunity of defending himself or herself before the Committee or the executive as the case may be and before the General Conference prior to final action being taken. In practice the Annual General Conference is the highest Court of appeal<sup>68</sup>.

No member of this church shall have the right to take any matter or dispute in relation to the church or any ordained minister to any court of law until he or she shall have had the matter or dispute adjudicated upon either by one or the other of the said committee and the findings of such committee to be referred to and confirmed by the Annual Conference<sup>69</sup>.

In an event of a major dispute arising, that may bear serious consequences which may lead to a split in the



church, the funds and the properties of the church shall under no circumstances be shared or claimed but shall remain the property of this church to be utilized by those who shall still remain the bona fide adherents of the Reformed Apostolic Faith MISSION of South Africa<sup>70</sup>.

All church buildings and Mission houses registered in the name of the church shall remain the property of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

**HEADQUARTERS:** The headquarters of the church shall be where the chosen President resides.

#### **THE LOCAL CONGREGATION**

The authority of a Minister in the spiritual government of a local branch is much the same as that of the President in relation to the Annual General Conference; and has its parallel in the local working Committee of men and women chosen by the congregation. Elected members may be nominated by the societies or organizations in the branch and voted into office by the whole congregation.

The local committee supervises the premises of the church and finance, especially to help the Minister to run the local congregation; to settle disputes including those between the Minister and the congregation and seek the general welfare of the congregation. The Evangelist also has a considerable influence in the local congregation. He conducts services in the absence of the Minister and holds the congregation together. He is the second in command in the local congregation.

There are societies for young people, men and women who are supposed to attend to the needs and disputes of their own members, and enter into competition with one another. The main society is that of the women because it is the backbone of the church. They meet every Thursday afternoon for prayer meeting and thanksgiving, for sharing the message and giving interpretation to one another; for visiting members in need and general almsgiving.

**STIPENDS** : Each congregation shall be responsible for the payment of the stipend due to its Minister and any and all liabilities incurred by him, or by resolution passed by the standing Finance Committee and confirmed by the Annual General Conference<sup>71</sup>. But generally the Ministers are working just like their members and that is the reason why they are being regarded as the Ministers of the people.

#### **TEACHING**

The church believes in the inspiration of the Scripture as the revelation of the Mind and Will of God. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, infallible rule of faith and conduct, superior to conscience and reason. Thus the Bible forms the foundation and belief of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, and the charismatic gifts of the Spirit are experienced in abundance

The church believes in One eternal God in three persons namely God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the comforter who was sent by the Father even the Spirit of truth. The church also believes in the fall and redemption of man. The fall of man who was created pure and upright, but fall by voluntary transgression<sup>72</sup>.

The church believes in salvation through faith in Christ, who died for our sins and was buried, raised from among the dead on the third day and through his blood we have redemption. It believes in water baptism by immersion in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit for all who really repent and have truly believed with all their hearts in Christ as Saviour and Lord. It also believes in the Lord's Supper<sup>73</sup>.

It also believes in the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the signs following; this experience differs from being born of the Spirit and from sanctification which means the filling of the temple.

It believes in Holiness or sanctification of life and conduct in obedience to the command of God. The church teaches repentance, sorrow for and confession of sin, forsaking sinful ways and justification as God's act of free grace and through sanctification by which man is made holy. The disciples were sanctified before the day of Pentecost (John 15: 3) and then Jesus Christ breathed the Holy Spirit in them (John 20: 21-22). The church believes in tithing. As the tenth was demanded under the law it is the least believers ought to give under the grace and in this way funds will be obtained to spread the Gospel and support the work of the Lord.

The church believes in the Christian Sunday instead of the Jewish Sabbath. Christ rose from the dead on the first day. Christ's resurrection was the most important event in the history of the World. The first day of the week was the day adopted by the early church for religious gatherings and which has ever since been observed (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2). John call this first day of the week the Lord's Day. According to Rev.1:10, he was in the Spirit on

the Lord's Day. It is the day on which Jesus rested from the amazing work of redemption. He rested on this day from all His agony, pain and humiliation. The Lord's Day is the day which the Lord instituted just as the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Table.

It believes in the second coming of the Lord to receive His Bride . It is the blessed hope and comfort of every true believer. The church also believes in the eternal Hell as well as the eternal Heaven. Hell is the everlasting lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels and those whose names are not written in the book of life. The church believes in the New Heaven and New Earth , according to this promise only righteous people will live in this New Earth. (2 Peter 3:13 ; Rev. 20: 10-15). It believes also in the New Jerusalem and the eternal Glory. The destiny of the believer is to be forever with the Lord, His everlasting home is the new Jerusalem<sup>74</sup>.

The teaching of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is basically Biblical and the emphasis is on conversion, baptism of believers through threefold immersion, sanctification and divine healing.

#### **AMENDMENTS OF THE CONSTITUTION**

Every registered member of this church shall at all times be subject to the provisions and rules of the church. The constitution of the church may be only added, repealed, altered or amended at the Annual General Conference of the church duly convened as hereinbefore provided, at which the resolutions in relation to such addition, repeal, alteration or amendment is carried by no less than two-thirds majority of the votes of the members present at such conference.

Furthermore notice of addition, repeal, alteration or amendment shall be served at least seven days prior to the date of the Conference and members of the Conference shall be notified early enough of such intentions<sup>75</sup>.

When the Conference is in session the minutes of the last session shall be read at the opening of the conference. No member may without the permission of the President speak on any proposal or amendment more than once on each, nor longer than five minutes each time, excepting the proposer who has the right of reply.

The President has no vote except where the voting is equal, when he will give a casting vote. He declares the result of the voting and the decision arrived at. His ruling on points of order shall not be disputed unless he himself invites discussion or upon appeal. Any member may appeal from his decision to the conference. It is the duty of the President to call to order any members who contravenes any of the established rules and regulations of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa<sup>76</sup>.

**CHAPTER 3****WORSHIP**

The church regards divine worship as to ascribe supreme worth to God. It is in the words of the Psalmist to give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name (Ps. 29:2). Divine worship embraces the whole of life; for it is our response to God who is everywhere present and active in His Universe. The Bible makes it clear to us that God who is everywhere has willed to reveal Himself at particular times and in particular situations to the people of his choice through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Worship is essentially our response to what God has revealed of Himself throughout; we recognize the nature and claim of God upon us. In a high sense worship includes both the revelation and the response. Worship is a means of renewing contact between people and God or between people and the invisible World. Worship is also a means of creating harmony in the world of mankind. Through worship man cultivates a spiritual outlook on life. He reminds himself that he is both body and spirit, and that he needs to look after both these in order to have full integrity. Without this spiritual direction man would feel lost in the Universe and life would seem to have no meaning.

Worship helps people to feel that there is still a relationship between God and man, and that communication between them is still possible. Worship brings them closer together so that people are able to feel that they are the children of God. Worship creates a sense of friendship between God and the people. Since it is man who strives to

approach God. He does so in the belief that God is approachable<sup>77</sup>.

The subject with which we are concerned however is not worship in general but Christian worship, and in the study of Christian worship the norm is the Bible. The teachings are usually indirect, and the method is that of an example rather than of precept. The Scriptures are saturated with the spirit of worship and so filled with examples of how to sing and pray to God. The Hebrew ways of worship were above all sacrifices, while the New Testament clearly does away with the sacrifices of the Old Testament.

#### THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

The fundamental principle of Christian worship is that it is essentially a corporate activity. It is the act not of an isolated individual but of the whole church. Furthermore there is a fact that Religion as a whole and worship in particular, both in their primitive beginnings and their mustered development have never been something an individual can do in isolation from his fellows.

The significant story of Jacob at Bethel in Genesis twenty eight is regarded as the history of the foundation of a center of worship. The communication of Moses with God in his vision of the burning bush sends him back to his own people with the mission to lead them forth to worship God. Above all he who was to tread the path of Calvary alone said to His followers " Do this in remembrance of me"; so too in the life of the church, the inspiration of individual men and women of vision has led to new depth in corporate worship.

Thomas Aquinas among medieval theologians too took this argument so seriously that he agreed that worship is not for God's sake but for ours. Martin Luther took the story of the lepers (Luke 17:11-19) as an example of true worship. The one leper who was grateful praised God. The event for which he was grateful became an occasion to honor God. Calvin responded that proper adoration of God is the primary purpose of Christianity. It is really indeed that true worship thrives on the recognition that God and grace can not really be thought apart.

The earliest description of Christian worship is found in Acts 2:42. The worship of the early Christians was simple and spiritual. The public service consisted of prayer, praise and the preaching of the Word probably with reading of the Old Testament.

Worship is a personal meeting with God in which we magnify and glorify Him for His personal actions. Worship takes place in and through Jesus Christ, who is the eternal praise of the Father because of his work of redemption. The public worship of God takes place in the community of the church, the body of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation and enactment of the work of salvation, through visible tangible signs. In the physical actions the church prepares to serve the world in anticipation of the return of Christ<sup>78</sup>.



### THE CONTENT OF WORSHIP

The content of Christian worship is Jesus Christ-His fulfillment of the Old Testament, His birth, life, death, resurrection, Ascension and His coming again. The Christ event is central to Christian worship; it also gives meaning to worship. Worship is not a mere memory or a matter of looking back to a historic event, rather worship is the actions that brings the community gathered together in the name of Jesus.

The structure of Christian worship is Word and sacraments including prayers, hymns, doxologies, benedictions, offerings and responses. In response to the self offering of God in Christ for us we offer our praise, our prayer and our gifts. But our realization is that all these are inadequate to express the supreme worth of Him who has created us and redeemed us and brought us to His honor, and so we offer the greatest gift that we can bring- the gift of ourselves (Romans 12:1).

In the hour of worship the congregation in the pew should respond to God's revelation of Himself much as the Prophet Isaiah did (6:1-8), that is in four different ways: firstly there ought to be the feeling of awe and wonder in the presence of the Holy God; secondly there should be the confession of sin both personal and socially; Thirdly there should be the experience of God's cleansing and redeeming grace; and fourthly there should be the dedication of heart and life to God for service among men.

The acts of worship are means of linking the spiritual and physical worlds putting the invisible into touch with the visible. Through worship man becomes an intelligent bridge

between these two worlds and between Creator and creation. The context in which worship takes its place in the Christian church, called by God to worship, in which each member plays his or her part and in which God speaks and the worshipper responds. The meeting is sealed by the Holy Communion through which Christ is presented under the symbols of bread and wine. There can be no doubt that to a great extent worship is the centre of church life.

In some African languages there is no word for worship as such; instead we find other words like to pray, to sacrifice, to perform rituals, to make an offering and so forth. These words describe things and actions which are directed towards God and Spiritual being.

#### **WORSHIP SERVICES**

According to I Mokonyane<sup>79</sup>, the worship services in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission is quite simple, flexible and it is being Africanized. A typical order of service consists of prayer, hymns, sermon, divine healing, offerings and benediction. The purpose of Africanization does not mean the abandonment of worship which is Christocentric in all its essential aspects in its language, prayer, hymns and rituals. But simply the use of more homely means of expression or ordering the essential aspects of Christian worship so that the African worshipper can understand and feel deeply as he or she worships.

The church worships on Sunday, the Christian day of worship. It was observed from the very beginning of the Christian church. It was a radical departure from Judaism which observed Sabbath. The move of the first day of the week was made a weekly reminder of the day Jesus Christ rose from the

dead. Sunday was not observed as a public holiday until the time of Constantine in the fourth century, until then Christians meetings for worship were either early or late in the day. The main service was probably early in the morning although meetings for worship were also held in the evening.

The place of worship is accessible to every-one from the most dignified official to the smallest toddler in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. It is a place of free movement and total participation by every-one in the acts of worship. The emotionally charged atmosphere of the church service offers a feeling of spiritual satisfaction and enjoyment according to most members of this church.

According to E J Mokoena (General President of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa) the opposition by the mission churches to the basic elements of African ways of religious expression thus constitute basically the parting of the ways with the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. Worship in which formalism prevails and where movement, spontaneity and gaiety are restricted or disapproved, has little place in the African situation. Concreteness of expression in worship, regard for group dynamics- concrete expression in dramatic forms are in essence, the elements which have enhanced the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa; which was a means to bring Christianity home to Africa.

The views of many members of this church is that Africans are interested where the whole congregation is involved and where sick people are healed, where demons are driven out and where depressed people find new courage. Salvation according to them is not only for the soul but for the whole person-body, soul and spirit, this was emphasized by

J Moropa one of the co-founders of this church. He further said that the spirituality of their members is not based on books and printed liturgies but on the experience of the presence of God in worship and every-day life. These experiences are exposed and described in songs, proverbs stories, parables and dances.

Oral Christianity is found in all churches in Latin America and Africa but mostly in the African Independent Churches. This Christianity has much in common with European medieval folk Christianity when the Gospel was communicated not through books but through mystery plays, dances (often on a topic of death), pilgrimages and dramatic sermons of Capuchins<sup>80</sup>.

**PRAYER :** Prayer is not initiated entirely by man but depends ultimately on a prior activity of God. God takes the initiative in seeking man (Gen.3:9). The God who speaks to us is also the God who listens to us. The story of Abraham who listened to the voice of God and obeys it also speak with God. Prayer is based on faithfulness of God and of Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit.

The crux of all prayer in the Bible is the prayer of Jesus Christ in Gethsemane where surrender is addressed to God as Father (Mark14:36). In the letters of Paul his concern for his people and their problems is lifted up to God. Almost every letter begins and ends with "Grace". The Bible knows no regulation of time or place and does not prescribe the attitude to be adopted. Prayer seemed from the earliest times to have been an indispensable part of Christian worship as it was for Jesus. Daily prayer was observed in many ways by the first Christians, some prayed three times a day and others got up at midnight to pray. Later daily

services of prayer were held at pilgrimage centers and in monastic communities.

Prayer is the common method of approaching God. It is found in all African societies that people may pray privately as individuals or as head of their families. Prayers are made commonly at public meetings and for public needs, anybody can pray to God at any time and in any place. The most sacred function of the Christian ministry in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is prayer and communal prayer is the key to worship. In this way the entire congregation is involved in some kind of active participation in the liturgical event. This type of churches is sometimes called praying churches.

According to P L Matlakeng the general secretary of this church, prayer is more important than dancing or shouting. It is being regarded as an instrument of spiritual power, and those with spiritual gift are believed to be specially potent in prayer and their intercession are eagerly sought, especially for healing.

John Calvin said that putting on the mind of God through prayer is like gardening. God has sown the seed of religion in all men, but scarcely one man in a hundred is met with who fosters it in his heart, and none in whom it ripens. Prayer changes things. It allows that seed of religion that is in us all to blossom and flower. But reducing prayer to a technique for self-gratification will make our Christianity sick.

The members of this church communicate with God through prayer, pouring their hearts out before Him at any time and in any place. The worshippers would prostrate themselves, usually by kneeling and bringing the pride of man down to

his brow to the humble earth. These members do not beat about the bush when they are saying their prayers. They request such things as: good health, healing, protection from dangers, safety in travelling or some undertaking, security, preservation of life and various benefits for individual or the society. In prayers they also express their gratitude to God for help given to them. They thank Him for their safe journey or the delivery of a child, prosperity, for preservation from danger and sickness.

Thus prayer strengthens the links between man and God and man and his fellow man. Prayers help to renew personal and communal anxieties, fears, frustrations and worries. Prayers also help to cultivate man's dependance on God and increase his spiritual outreach. According to Ndiokwere, it is hard to see any justification for such criticism or condemnation of the members of the African Independent Churches on account of their turning to God when they are in need. They are not just doing it for fun when they rise up early in the morning and at night and pray.

The language of prayer is as far as possible the language of precise conviction and there is little or no space for speculation. The ground of prayer in the new revelation of God in Christ is when all the promises of God find their "Yes" hence we can say "Amen".

**PREACHING:** Preaching is one of the most important activities that happens within the church worship. It normally occupies a central place within the service. The preacher is almost and always placed in a prominent position and the pulpit is one of the most obvious items of furniture in the church building. It is through preaching that congregators are all arrested by the Word of God.

Preaching can never be understood apart from worship. A sermon is not a public speech but it is an element in a worshipping experience. It must be remembered that the sermon is just a part of an extended experience with God. All deep needs that make worship necessary make preaching necessary because the sermon is the most powerful means for bringing about an encounter between God and man. The sermon enunciates the faith that makes worship valid. Worship without a sermon could exploit God for everybody's private fancies. Sermon without the worship could make the preacher the object of service. The human voice, the human eye and the human presence are the means of communication to the human heart.

Preaching is the heart of Christianity because it has been the chief means of imparting the saving truths. Christianity is not something you only talk about but it is something you do. The contrast of words with deeds is a false one. Words are deeds. The greater doer of all was called the Word and the word that started with Him has changed men and nations. This is the reason why Joseph Conrad said " words have set the whole nations in motions and upheaved the dry hard ground on which rests our social fabric... Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the World<sup>81</sup>.

Preaching is also an art, and Black preaching by Blacks is a unique art peculiar to the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and other African Independent Churches. This point was emphasized by J Moropa.<sup>82</sup> Of equal importance with the uniqueness of black preaching is the uniqueness of the context in which black preaching takes place. The black style, which includes the pattern of call- and-response, is very easily traceable to the African culture; such a response requires a participating audience.

In Black preaching style nothing is certain or fixed. The matter of personal involvement also affects the style of the preacher from within. The inner fervor of the preacher has great importance. He also uses rhetorical flair. The effective black preacher is a man of charisma and if he is not a man of charisma he acquires it early and wears it with confidence. Charisma is vital to his preaching and not less vital to his community leadership<sup>83</sup>.

Dialogue is an ancient form of human expression; virtually no human communication takes place without dialogue. It is essential to any kind of meaningful interaction between persons and groups. From early times dialogue was seen as both a purpose and a form of worship.

Preaching remains central in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. Most of the sermons delivered in the church are based on a biblical text and to keep up with this informal approach members of the congregation are allowed to participate in the sermon. Sermons are interspersed with confession, dances, hymns, clapping of hands, ecstatic experience and communal prayer in which everybody prays aloud in unison. In this way the entire congregation is involved in some kind of active participation in the liturgical event.

Amens! and hallelujah's are frequently interjected and it is difficult for a Westerner to find continuity in the sermon but the delivery of the sermon is free and easy and it involves the whole being of a preacher and those who participate. There is no lack of words, explanation or exhortations. The sermon is followed by spontaneous singing. There is a difference between a spiritual amen



which registers the considered approval of the worshipper and the automatic non-thinking response which may punctuate the preachers statement.

Real dialogue on the other hand is fairly discernable and distinguishable, it occurs characteristically in response to the preacher reference to something that is vital in the life experience of the respondent. The congregation also responds to the beauty of language- the well tuned phrase. The congregator is able to respond because he is at home, he is interested in what the preacher is saying because he is involved in the issue as the preacher shapes them with scriptural reference.

The black worshipper needs a kind of preaching which is highly relevant in context and charismatic in delivery. When such content and imagination delivery grips a congregation, the ensuing dialogue between the preacher and the congregation is the epitome of creative worship. Mass participation works to increase retention. Black preaching at its best has stuck to the problems which confront people daily and feel that their needs are being met in the black church. The intimacy leads people to feel literally that they are being addressed personally.

The working of the early church like its evangelism was personal and informal. There was little structure and elements of liturgy. We have the example of Saint Paul's interpretation of worship in I Cor.14:26-40 which implies that there was no sermon as we have it today but that members of the congregation were free to share orally as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Each member was free to contribute his own thoughts regarding the interpretation and understanding of God's Word and there were no professional clergy in the early church. This statement does not rule

out that there should be no professional clergy in the church. Unfortunately many African Independent Churches emphasized this point that in the early church there were no professionals.

Black response and participation is built on this model. It happens to square with the best educational concepts, both starting where people are and keeping them directly involved in the process as God's truth unfolds. The black congregation with its contagious response is the best place in the World to preach the Gospel. According to Mitchell the Black church may also be the best place in the World to hear and be healed. The black preacher has the advantage of hearing reactions and a kind of immediate verbal feed back during his sermonic presentation.

It must however be recognized that preaching is not only a natural skill but the methods that will make it effective can be taught and the mistakes that will spoil it can be pointed out. According to Sweazey the test of a sermon is what happens afterwards and the failure of a sermon is when the person who leaves the church is the same one who entered the church.

**MUSIC :** Whereas black preaching mobilizes public activism, prayer nurtures the personal hope and courage necessary to sustain such action while black sacred music reinforces the sense of power engendered by preaching and prayer. Religious singing is often accompanied by clapping of hands and dancing which expresses people's feeling of joy, sorrow or thanksgiving. Through sacred music and dancing people in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission are able to participate emotionally and physically in the act of worship. The members of this church say music and dancing penetrates into their very being as they worship.

Sacred music reaches deep into the innermost parts of an African and many things come to the surface under the musical inspiration which otherwise may not have been readily revealed. The sacred black music gives outlet to the emotional expression of the religious life and is a powerful means of communication in African traditional life. It helps to unite the singing or dancing group and to express its fellowship and participation in life.

The chief purpose of dancing in the African churches is to express praise and joy in the presence of God. The dancing is corporate but most individuals dance before the Lord rather than with one another in a social manner. The musical rhythm is provided by clapping of hands and no apology needs to be set for the use of dancing in the African churches in worship.

Thousands upon thousands of years ago in what is now known as the late paleolithic age, an unknown artist painted a minor masterpiece on the wall of a Spanish cave. It is to be found in the great rock shelter ...it represents three dancing men. Here in what is virtually the dawn of time, there is impressive evidence of the importance that dancing has had for human existence. In this particular instance what is being depicted is without question religious dance<sup>84</sup>.

The religion of ancient Israel was without question a dancing one. Within the Old Testament itself there are a number of references to it for an example " let them praise His name with dancing" Ps.149:3. What is essential to note is that dance is not an expression of thanks but it is the thanksgiving itself.

Court Sacks recorded his conclusion on the "World History of Dance" that Christianity is ever hostile to dance. Christians were prompted to ignore the dance because so many represented the legends of the gods and to witness them would have been tantamount to idolatry. Luther may have been spared to acknowledge that it was customary for young people to dance at weddings and that he could see no harm in it as long as modesty was preserved, while Calvin was less accommodating and in an Ordinance of February 1547 banned dancing entirely throughout Geneva<sup>85</sup>.

It is now time to recognize that this continuing negative approach to dance on the part of the churches is more of a product of western culture than Christianity per se. Dance is legitimate since dancing is a healthy exercise and a form of recreation. The church which is the body of Christ is also his bride. Just as a Jewish bride dances for her husband so it is right and proper that the church should dance for her Heavenly Bridegroom.

Saint Paul was also concerned that every member of the congregation should play a part. " This is what I mean, my brothers. When you meet for worship, one person has a hymn another a teaching, another a revelation from God, another a message in strange tongues, and another the explanation of what is said. Everything must be of help to the church (ICor:14:26). The parts played were determined by the Holy Spirit who reveals His presence through His gifts: His teaching, prophecy etc. When and if these gifts are suppressed or not given expression there is quenching of the Spirit (I Thess. 5:19) leading to the decay of charisma.

Music is the finest of the fine art and sacred music ought to be the best of all. The choir is the war department of

the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. According to T Taupedi<sup>86</sup>, this has become one of the most prominent factors that attracts people to this church. Hymn singing makes an enormous contribution to worship. The songs had at least as great an effect as the sermons. They are not only expressing joy of Christian experience but also teach the truths of Scripture.

The whole world knows that Africans have music that have rhythm and that they are particularly endowed with a very rich cultural heritage, with indigenous lyrics, idioms and proverbs. The western system of worship which was introduced in Africa, was entirely dead and unrelated to the African way of worship. This is still evident in the inspiring, boring and monotonous order of worship in most of the Older Churches<sup>87</sup>. The official hymn book of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is 'Difela Tsa Zion'.

**HEALING** : Health is a dynamic state of well-being of the individual and the society; of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being; of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with God.<sup>88</sup>

Healing means salvation and peace. It is a term not applicable to things or processes below the level of the organic. Healing implies, further, that the becoming is actually a rebecoming, a restoration of a condition once obtaining but then lost. It does not necessarily imply that the result of the healing will be the same in its particular as the condition that previously obtained, except for one characteristic of wholeness. Thus healing is to be understood as the process of restoring functional wholeness.

According to M Mokoena of Pretoria, Healing in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is one of the most dynamic experience known to him<sup>89</sup>. In the black church prayer is a highly ritualist sacred time of healing and care, and it is part of the worship. In this church the sick people are healed, demons are driven out and depressed people find new courage. The healing that is referred to here, however, is not restricted to the curing of certain diseases. It is rather the holiest healing that brings not only complete health of mind and body to individuals but total well-being to them as well as to social to body to which we belong. Salvation for them is not salvation of the soul but of the whole person.

In the first instance Jesus was firmly convinced of His Father's purpose for human wholeness and salvation (John 3:16 ; 10: 10) and never supported the Old Testament concept of disease as a punishment sent by God. Jesus viewed the individual as a unity of body and mind (Matt. 8: 17). The restoration of the sick people formed part of subsequent Apostolic practices in conforming with the expressed will of Christ. In the days immediate after Pentecost many healing took place at the homes of Apostles (Acts 2: 43 ; 5: 12). Primitive Christians possessed miraculous powers including the gift of healing. Apostle Paul mentions the gift of healing in his list of spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12: 9, 28).

The advent of western missionaries in Africa came first with elementary medical treatment and later with mission hospitals and they brought new hope and help in Africa. But there is an obvious fact that these medical services were inadequate in Africa. The African Independent Churches also

came into being in Africa to solve this problem and the patients who come to these churches are healed by the power of the Holy Spirit and by their absolute faith and dependence upon God. It is the same Spirit that was promised by Jesus Christ, which not only transformed timid Apostles into new men imbued with new powers to preach the Gospel without fear but also gave them power to cure diseases and to drive out demons and evil spirits by the name of Jesus Christ.

The chief medicament in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is water which is consecrated and used in the same way as the olive oil while the laying of hands on the heads of patients is a prominent feature. Faith healing is part of the divine service. This church radically rejects magical practices and in this way the church is able to respond to the needs of the African people.

Turner regards the integration of healing with pastoral care. The message of salvation seems to us a notable instance of the very point of getting to the root of the problem, that many in the western churches are trying to recover

Medical doctors agree that prayer works. That is the conclusion of *Journal of the American Medical Association*. According to a new scientific study, hospitalized heart patients had fewer complications when other people prayed for their recovery<sup>90</sup>.

The church should be pleased at the scientific confirmation of prayer's effectiveness. The church should be almost pleased as it were several years ago when science proved that prayer relieves stress; or as it were when it learned that regular prayer helps a person organize and prioritize

everyday life better. In fact, the church is not surprised that no scientific study has ever suggested prayer is in any way bad.

**BAPTISM:** Go, then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age (Matt. 28: 19-20). In this parting injunction of the risen Lord to his disciples, which Duke of Wellington aptly called the marching orders of the ministry, we have the office of the Christian church for the first time defined<sup>91</sup>.

In Acts chapter two there is an account of Peter's sermon at Pentecost; in reply to the question what are we to do? Peter replied repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus the Messiah, for the forgiveness of your sins. It seems that the only preparation required for baptism was repentance- a turning point from sin to Christ and profession of faith in Him. The baptism of this great multitude on the day of Pentecost was not only their public confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah but also their formal inclusion into the community of believers.

The New Testament churches consisted of those who were believed to be regarded by the Spirit of God and had been baptized on a personal confession of faith in Christ. All people who were added to the church at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost were capable of making and did make an intelligent personal confession of faith. The book of Acts recorded nine separate cases of baptism being administered and proves that the Apostles were faithful to their Lord's teaching.



It was the quite clearly accepted method by which people were admitted into membership of the church as a sign that they had died to the old life and were re-born to the way of life in Christ. It follows that most members were adult because the act of baptism was a definite public confession of the Lordship of Christ. It is impossible if not difficult to determine precisely when children were admitted to this rite. Much ink has been used in debate about whether or not infant baptism is suggested in the New Testament. Certainly there is no specific suggestion that it was; and the very children could not fulfill even the very simple requirement for baptism described in the New Testament. There are however references to the household being baptized, and some who appreciated the solidarity of the Jewish family find it hard to believe that children could be excluded from the covenant. Jesus Christ took little children in His arms, placed His hands on each of them and blessed them ( Mark 10: 16 ). But He nowhere authorized baptism for children. This is the standpoint of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa according to T Taupedi one of the co-founders of this church. He said that they do not believe in infant baptism but in believers baptism. He agrees that children can not be left out of the covenant of God, but they could be included through consecration according to Mark 10:16.

The most obvious demarcation between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic was biblical authority, and that between the Reformers and the Anabaptist was believer's baptism. Believers baptism was for the Anabaptists the logical implementation of the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*. The Anabaptist made the most radical attempt of the Reformation era to renew the church. They all rejected infant baptism and practised the baptism of believers upon confession of faith. According to the constitution of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of

South Africa, full members of the church are baptized upon confession of faith by immersion in a river or dam by the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Any member below the age of eighteen is not regarded as old enough to make a serious decision about baptism.

New members who have been baptized by sprinkling are rebaptized because the church regard that form of baptism as invalid and immersion is recommended. Baptism is usually performed by the Minister or an Evangelist. The sacrament is an outward and visible sign of grace.

**HOLY COMMUNION** : The church at Jerusalem was composed of believers baptized on profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ, who continued steadfastly in the Apostle's teaching and fellowship in the breaking of bread and prayer.

The Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa also believes in the partaking of bread and wine signifying the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The communicants should be full members of the church who were baptized upon profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ. Even members of other churches who have the right to partake in the Holy Communion are welcome.

There are differences among the Ministers of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission on the question of time and the washing of feet. Some celebrate the Holy Communion at night which is accompanied by washing of feet and some during the day without washing of feet.

Washing of feet of the disciples of Christ is a command of Christ but lacks the element of universality and was widely not practised as a rite in the early church; on the other

hand the command to baptize and to break bread are accompanied by words indicating that these things were to be observed perpetually by the followers of Christ.

The Holy Communion services are held quarterly in the Reformed Apostolic faith Mission of South Africa and the Ministers have the authority to administer the sacrament which consists of bread and wine. The Minister should bless the elements of the Holy Communion and then administer it to the communicants; and after giving the bread and wine he then blesses each communicant. The Holy Communion service is the crown of this church.

According to A Masilo one of the co-founders of this church, By the Holy Communion the church remembers Christ's redeeming grace just like the Passover out of which it grew. The Christian Supper teaches us to look back upon the meaning of our redemption. It is also a symbol of Christ's death on the cross for us sinners, 'This is my body which is broken for you'. There is also the thanksgiving feast at the Lord's Table , we thank Him for all his mercies past present and future, the forgiveness of our sins and assurance of life everlasting. The Lord's Supper also has a future reference " I tell you I will never again drink this wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in my Father's Kingdom " (Matt. 26:29). He pointed forward to that day when His disciples shall share with Him the joy and glory of eternal life.

The Lord's Supper is a pledge of Christians loyalty to Christ and to our fellow man and it is the controlling feature in Christian worship. The sacrament is the symbol of Christian hope ' As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you do preach the Lord's death till He comes.

**OFFERINGS TO THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH:** The offerings of Christians material gifts still has place in the worship of the Christian church. The offering of these gifts is no less an act of worship. It is the offering of Christians substance, the symbol of our toil and God's blessing as a recognition that all we have comes from God. In response to the self-offering of God in Christ for us we offer our praise, our prayers and our gifts but with the realization that all these are inadequate to express the supreme worth of Him who has created us and redeem us and brought us to His honor and so we offer the greatest gift that we can bring - the gift of ourselves (Rom. 12:1).

The Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa attempts to use the method of direct giving and "Bazaars". Voluntary giving at Sunday services is only a small part of church income, much more is given at irregular intervals at special thank offering. The system of tithing works well for some branches in the church and has undoubtedly produced a more regular source of income; and these branches were able to erect church buildings, for example the branch of Mamelodi in Pretoria, Meadowlands in Johannesburg, Sebokeng in Vereeniging, Matibidi in Bushbuckridge and Serowe in Botswana.

The local congregation could raise funds by holding night vigil for fund raising and they are free to invite other local churches to their night vigil. The fund raising rallies are organized on a competitive basis, involving every conceivable group in the church and even some outsiders. The groups present their offerings separately at a special service with singing and dancing. In this way the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is fully in line with the distinctive African manner of raising funds.

The funds are entirely under the control of the local committee and this committee should ensure that the Minister is not the Hon. Treasurer at the same time. The main local expenses concern the renting or maintaining of the church building in which they worship, allowances or stipends for the Minister and the contribution towards the entertainment of visitors. The major goal is to save enough money to erect church buildings and this statement was emphasized by I Mokonyane the chairman of the building committee of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

Indeed it is difficult to communicate the essence of worship in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa through the printed word. It is better to do films or a play about it. According to E J Mokoena The General President of The Church, the purpose of Africanization is not the abandonment of worship which is Christocentric in all its essential aspects but it is a means of expressing or ordering the essential aspects of Christian worship so that an African worshipper can understand and feel deeply as he or she worships..

## CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGY OF THE REFORMED APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION  
OF SOUTH AFRICA

Christian faith exists of necessity in speaking of God; it is our human response to God's Word. This is what we call with a Greek term *Theology* (from *theos* = God and *logos* = word). Whenever this "Word of God" is articulated, there men and women who are involved in theology, whether they know this term or not. It is generally acknowledged that there is theology in the studies at a theological College or a Seminary. But this is by no means the end of it: every sermon in a parish church is theology in the same way as the witness of an elder or a lay-preacher to his little flock in an out-station: when a loving mother relates Biblical stories to her children, she is involved in theology in the same way as the mine worker who discusses the very issue of life with his fellow worker; the Independent African Bishop who lays his hands in an intercession on a sick person for healing acts theology in the same way as the congregation performing its rituals and symbolism in the course of divine worship. All this is theology, it is speaking of God responsively in a given situation<sup>92</sup>.

According to Fr. M. Amaladoss an Indian Jesuits priest who works in Rome, theology is not a science, with its first principle and logical argumentation. It is oriented, not only to praxis as a moral dimension, but also to *sadbana*, or a spiritual effort, leading to self realization. Theology is born out of life experience, and is meant to lead to a spiritual experience. Its focus should not only be the church, but the wider reality of the Kingdom of God<sup>93</sup>.

Theology is not abstract speculation or an academic game, running alongside of raising and answering questions. Certainly in Christianity we believe that God cannot be fathomed in His totality " How great are God's riches! Who can explain his decisions? Who can understand his ways? (Romans 11 : 33); " For our life is a matter of faith not of sight" (IICor.5:7). Christian theology is concerned with the Gospel and nothing more or else. The ultimate foundation of theology is the holy books of the Christian community which reflect the divine revelation in terms of Hebrew and Greek thought structures. For all generations, this ancient response of the people of God to His revelation in Jesus Christ will remain the well from which we draw.

Theology has the essential task of searching for the relevancy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the situation in which we find ourselves in. Every witness of the Gospel speaks his special language, uses his own terminology and teaches his own problems according to the time and place to the very people who he addresses. Theology is also rooted among other things in man's experience or a people's experience. That is the reason why today in South Africa, we have Black theology or liberation theology.

The Gospel does not turn Africans into Europeans or Americans by engrafting them into His fellowship, in the same way as He did not expect the Hellenes to undergo Jewish circumcision when accepting them into His church. The Gospel must relate itself to the realities of life in Africa. These realities are historical in character; that is they encompass the past traditional heritage, the present day problems and needs and the future goals and expectations.

Christianity was born out of the matrix of Judaism in a Semitic context and it came to Africa by a circuitous route; in due course Christianity appeared in Egypt and Roman North of Africa and Ethiopia in the East. It came in the first three centuries of the church's existence long before Europe was Christianized. North African Christianity not only produced theological giants like Augustine of Hippo, Tertullian and Cyprian but also indelible marks on Latin Christianity<sup>94</sup>.

During the seventh century, however Islam practically wiped out the early traces of Christianity in North Africa, and expanded its influence as far as the Equator. It wasn't until eight century and later that Christianity was reintroduced by the Portuguese people in Africa. Prince Henry of Portugal who is said to have been motivated by a desire to preach the Gospel, pioneered in sending expeditions to Africa<sup>95</sup>.

At the end of the 15th century, the Portuguese under prince Henry were continually attempting to find a sea way to India. There was at the same time the intention of finding the Kingdom of Prester John, a Christian Empire in the center or East Africa. This idea probably stems from the news which had filtered through to Europe about the Coptic Church in Abyssinia or Ethiopia.

However, Christianity as it reaches Africa South of the Sahara came via Europe. This observation is important because, since European powers like Britain, France and Germany came to be colonial powers on the African continent. So when we use the term "Africa" we refer to the African people's religiousness in the flux and turmoil of the modern world.



As the struggle for the re-discovery of Africa continues unabated, it is proper that all wrong beliefs be swept aside about Africa. It is a common knowledge that there is no country in the world which can claim that its national customs and festivities were originally Christian in nature. What has happened is that in the course of centuries, Christian context have been put into what originally were pagan customs in the countries which have now adopted Christianity<sup>96</sup>.

It is a well known fact that over a long period the Africa past has not been given theological significance as far as the present direction of Christian life; at best the past was something to be forgotten and at worst something to be abandoned. It is a common knowledge that the past can serve as a source of inspiration in moments of despondency. The past very often gives context to the kind of faith a person has about his destiny. It is this fact which has increasingly drawn the attention of many to the need to restructure the African past. The traditional heritage has been a fruitful point of departure in the task of theology in Africa<sup>97</sup>.

Another wrong belief which must be swept aside is that the Scriptures teach that Africans are cursed. God accordingly intended them to be a nation of servants. Ordinary people however believe in the freedom and dignity of man because man is the highest creation and God made him in His own image (Gen.1:27). Man is the masterpiece of creation. The importance of man is also seen in the fact that God made the salvation of man a personal matter "For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life" (John 3:16). "Peter began to speak: I now realize that it

is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. Whoever worships Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him, no matter what race he belongs to " (Acts 10:34-35). Moses a great servant of God married an African girl and God approved Moses marriage.

Many missionaries arrived in Africa with wrong ideas regarding the African and his way of life. The early missionaries laboured under the assumption that Africans were without religion, education or culture and Africa provided a virgin field where they could sow the seeds of Western religion and civilization. The negative reaction to the missionaries' enterprise in Africa also contributed to the attitude of the missions to African culture and ways of worship. The opposition of the missionaries to the basic elements in African forms of religious expression, for example dancing and the use of local instruments, was clearly demonstrate<sup>98</sup>.

In their zeal to save the souls of Africans from eternal damnation, the early missionaries mixed Christian principles with Western culture. Christianity became identified with Westernism. The situation was further confused by the characteristics of different foreign missionary bodies each with its own distinctive tradition and this robbed Christianity of its universality.

#### **AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

Since it is the Christian faith that the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa wish to communicate in African terms, their starting point is the church's source of faith and here they refer to the holy books, the foundation

document of the church. E J Mokoena emphasized that African Christian theology has to be rooted from the Bible.

It should be noted that by looking at the Gospel messages from an African perspective, Africans are not simply thinking for themselves but they are trying to make a contribution, however small, to the glorious wealth and riches of universal Christian theology. This theology is concerned to interpret essential Christian faith in authentic African language in the flux and turmoil of our time, so that there may be genuine dialogue between Christian faith and African cultures. It is to serve the cause of clarity of faith and worship in our specific African and human context, which is a manifestation of the universal human expression.

The church of Christ must exhibit its marks in any place and any time, failing which it will lose its character as a church of Christ. It has a responsibility to exhibit them in a distinctive way, incorporating into service whatever heritage or cultural values it may have been given by God's grace. To understand the Gospel within a specific context and life situation; the gospel should be heard by an African man in his own concrete situation. The Gospel must permeate deeply the spiritual and holiest African world view. An African must be taken seriously in his essence as a human being, with his own characteristic and qualities, with his own ways of thoughts, concepts and expression.

An African must read the Bible with his own eyes, listen to the Word of God with his own ears, ponder over it with his own brain, respond to it with his own mouth and words. The Gospel must be so presented to men and women that its contemporary and compelling relevancy is recognized so long that it disappears from its foreign guise, initiating and

reproducing the characteristics of a church in some remote and alien land. Despite the dangers of identification with this world, we urge that foreignness in the more earthly sense of the word is something to be outgrown with all possible speed. The church should take a positive yet critical attitude to the national cultures. The church has the right and duty to make captive to Christ such elements of these cultures as can serve as vehicle of Christian truth. There are situations in which the church has to sever itself completely from the elements in cultures which are directly antagonistic to the Christian faith<sup>99</sup>.

The Christian God is indeed the universal Father and a Father of Africa as a father speaks not to some abstract and therefore not really to a non-existent man, but to men with all their individual national, cultural and historical condition and particularities. The mission of God will vary from place to place but it will be the same message on the part of him who imparts the message of God in Christ Jesus. But the one who transmits the message and the one who receives it varies from place to place and from historical period to historical period. New circumstances, new localities lead to new perspective. This is how the Gospel speaks to people. The result is an original theology which has not adopted or indigence Western theology. It permeates every day life by awareness of the presence of the Lord who promised to be with church always to the close of the age.

The phenomenon of African active participation in the spread of the Gospel in Africa enables Africans to recognize its relevancy to their way of life and with a design to employ the most effective methods to drive home its message to fellow Africans.

Christianity as it was presented by the early missionaries in Africa was completely foreign to Africans and this robbed Christianity of its universality. This Western Christianity became spiritually unsatisfactory because the Africans could not see its relevancy to his life, and the result was an ambivalent spiritual life. At a time of crisis the believer would go back to traditional measures. The need for a spiritual revolution became urgent, and it soon became manifest that the Holy Spirit could speak directly to the African to save the church in Africa from extinction that had been the fate of the North Africa church centuries before<sup>100</sup>.

The Holy Spirit descended and called Africans to express Christianity in a language that would be understandable and meaningful to the people. Thus came into existence the phenomenon of the African Independent Churches. The forerunners of these churches were Ministers and Evangelists of the Mission Churches; for an example we have William Wade Harris who was a travelling Evangelist in West Africa. These founders of these churches were people yearning for spiritual satisfaction, seeking and obtaining answers to questions for which there were no solution in the Mission Churches.

This rediscovery of our "Blackness" has led us to realization that our world-view, value system and attitude, are different from those which have given rise to the theologies that we have acquired from outside Africa, different from the particular African context that I have evoked above.

The African world-view is characterized by wholeness, order and interdependence. The human person discovers himself or herself to be in relation to others and to the world. Out

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of such perspective arises an integral humanism, that transcends the dichotomies between the secular and the divine.

The Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa generally accept the basic doctrine of the church. They believe strongly in the Bible regarding it as the sole authority for the Christian. They also believe in the Holy Trinity, in God The Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It must be pointed out that the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa does have theology even if is not formal but informal. Informal theologising is done in various ways, for example through singing, prayer and preaching.

As far as theologising through music is concerned, African Christians have for a long a time been giving indication of what they would like to do in worship in the church. The singing is usually spontaneous and the singing of lyrics calls for an initiator who must be very familiar with the stories of the Bible and be able to relate it to the life circumstances of his people. He should also be sufficiently aware theologically to be able to fit the lyric into the preacher's message as it is being developed. The language is concrete and expresses the thought of a God who cares for the person in all life's situation, both spiritually and physically.

Singing and dancing are a very important feature of life in Africa; these two activities go on in joy, and in sorrow at worship. It is important to note that in Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa dancing is a regular feature.

The important dimension of informal theologising in the contribution being made through life and work of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, to the African Christianity, emphasizes the fact that worship must be an authentic encounter with God. In the life and work of this church we find the following: the doctrine of the Spirit; Apostolic zeal; missionary power; the sense of belonging; a new community; universality of the church; tolerance; evangelical simplicity; love; worship (liturgy is flexible); faith healing (both the spiritual and physical needs of their members are provided very effectively); counselling; private and family prayers; the daily problems of every one are attended to by the community and the art of joyful giving.

The effectiveness of the ministry of this church illustrate the fact that God can speak to the Africans in their own language and their own traditional and cultural setting. This church displays a much closer link to the African world-view.

In this Spirit Africa Christian theology is concerned with the living omnipotent God who is to be approached in deep reverence. It translates the salvation by the cross of Jesus Christ into the wholeness of life, which also involves physical healing and social reconciliation where sins are forgiven. It is inspired by the new Christian fellowship with the full expression of joy which makes one to dance and cry. This Africa Christian theology helps an African to experience Christ as Lord and saviour in his reborn life.

The whole purpose of the African Christian theology is to enable African Christians to serve God within and not outside his own culture. In fact we are trying to contextualize the gospel. This simply means to place the Gospel in relevant conditions or context. The context is however not passive but dynamic. In this way the Gospel can play a meaningful role in the cultural circumstances (political-social-economic, etc.).

Contextualization may be explained by way of an image of a grain of wheat. The seed disappears into the soil and when the seed sprouts, it is different from the seed and still the same, viz. wheat. Thus it is the same eternal gospel that is contextualized in Africa.

Fr. Amaladoss point out the following challenges facing the African Christian theologian. He wishes to see Africa Christian theology moving further, in the spirit of dialogue with traditional African religions. These religions should not be seen as valueless by-gones. He further suggest that these religions may offer a foundation for developing an African theology, based upon cultural and intellectual categories; and being helpful in understanding the religious roots of an African Christian view and way of life.

Fr. M Amaladoss is surprised that theologians and church leaders in sub-saharan Africa rarely speak about Islam, as a religion to dialogue and collaborate with. He says it would be valuable to explore the implication of living together, as Christians and Muslims, in the same civic society (in countries like Nigeria, Sudan and Tanzania).



Africa has some valuable resources in its holiest approach to life, nature and community, that could creatively interact with science and modernity for building up of a new African society. Fr. Amaladoss says if this is not done we would be repeating the mistakes of the first world. The phenomenon of secularization, which seems particular to Europe and North America, may not be a serious problem for Africa or India. But, an uncontrolled use of science and technology can adversely affect the quality of life, with consequent damage to individual persons and social groups<sup>101</sup>.

He further said, it has become a trend to marginalize the African Independent Churches, as syncretist. They seem to be syncretist foe a Christian observer, who looks at them from outside; but in their own experience, these churches certainly offer some creative ways, in which their members can integrate, to their own satisfaction, their concerns, values and aspirations, with some Christian elements. He wonders whether a closer study of African Independent Churches: by dialogue with them, would not give us some valuable insights into the real needs of our Christian faithful, and into the process of involving popular and more effective inculturation<sup>102</sup>.

Africa Christian theology should resist the temptation of becoming a "science", looking for an abstract philosophical base, and risk becoming artificial in the process. Academic theology usually becomes a discourse, that has limited circulation within a closed circle of intellectuals. rejection of an imported system may be one way towards affirming the authenticity of fostering inculturated African Christianity.

The African Independent Churches constitute an Africa Reformation and that it is out of this that an African Christian theology emerges. We can thus conclude that through these churches Christianity has come to stay in Africa.

#### THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

All groups of people in society need leaders. The church can be seen as God's pilgrimage people in the world, and is no exception to this rule. As good quality of the leaders is highly valued, much attention has been paid to educate the leaders in the various fields of life.

Through the history of the church, education of the leaders of the church has usually been an important activity of the church. Be it at the ancient catechismal school at Alexandria, the monastic or cathedral schools of the middle ages, the education for the ministry in particular has been regarded as central to the life and witness of the church but this should also include ordinary members because too often the ministry of the church is restricted to a few people, and they are regarded as the head of the church<sup>103</sup>.

The main purpose of educating leaders is to equip them for the role, as enablers of the members of the church. All the members of the church are called to minister to God, to each other, and through the body to those outside, in a God honorable way and the leaders should lead the church towards just that.

Theological education has a unique and strategic function. The higher the quality of the church leaders including the ministers, the better the members will be equipped for their witness and for the edification of the church.

In the first instance the education of church's leaders must be relevant. The context is of utmost importance. Most of the early missionaries did not take seriously the lifeview or religion of the people of Africa, because they considered it as laughable and primitive superstition. Thus nothing less than the future of the church and even the Kingdom of God in Africa was at stake.

The guiding principle in the process of contextualization is that the core of the Gospel should be intact. Contextualization means accepting the Gospel and understanding it in the African situation, not one that is borrowed. The theological education must be consistent with the Biblical view of the ministry.

It is certain that many leaders of the African Independent Churches clearly realize the value and necessity of proper theological education, to improve their theology and administrative abilities. The first attempt to educate the leaders of the African Independent Churches was made in 1967 by African Independent Churches association. This association had been officially established in 1965, under the auspices of the Christian Institute, and especially its director Dr. Beyers Naude.

The top priority of the African Independent Churches Association was raising funds for the building of their own theological seminary and for the establishment of their own correspondence course. At last this association was able to rent a building in Alice in the Cape in 1970.

These leaders need to be helped to get the necessary education and to serve the church without in any way being a financial burden. The whole Christian community; all spiritual gifted people must benefit by their education. The educational principle to be followed must be such that the leaders are properly equipped for the real context. They must be able to relate their education to the situation of the people they shall be going to serve. Theological education which does not apply itself to the realities of congregational life is irrelevant.

Most of the ministers of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa are not educated. But a few of them have formal education and elementary theological education from various Bible Schools in the country. The Ordination Committee of this church took a resolution in 1988 to the effect that in future no minister will be ordained if he does not have formal education. They further encouraged ministers to study theology at various theological Schools in the country, because they do not have their own theological school<sup>104</sup>.

## CHAPTER 5

## THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Every man lives in two worlds. He lives within the four walls of the place that he calls home, and where his companions are the members of his own family, this is his private home. But equally a man has to go out of his house and home and has to live in a public world. He is not only a member of a family but he is also a member of a community, a state and a world. He is not only a private person but he is a public citizen.

A man's attitude to the world can take more than one form. He can be totally immersed in the world. He can plunge into it and live as if there was no other world. His attitude may be: 'Eat, drink and enjoy yourself, for tomorrow you die'.

A man can take the opposite course and completely renounce this world. There has always been a strain of so-called Christian thought which had no use for this world at all; and there always have been people who quite deliberately and as completely as possible divorced themselves from the world. The third and the fourth centuries were the great days of the monks and the hermits, when they deliberately turned their backs on life and on men and went to live in the desert.

So then there are people who are immersed in the world, and there are people who in the name of Christianity have renounced the world. From the point of Christian ethics immersion in the world nor isolation from the world can be

right. Jesus Christ was quite clear that His men were not of this world (John 17:14,16). So much so were they not of this world that he warned them that the world would hate them as it hated him (John 15: 18,19,;17:14). It is therefore clear that no follower of Christ can be immersed in the world. On the other hand (Jesus Christ was equally clear that God loved the world (John 3:16). He did not pray that His men should be taken out of this world but that they should be kept from evil of the world (John 17: 15); and in the end He deliberately and with set purpose sent them out into the world (John 17:18; Matt.28:19). In Matthew 22:21, Christians are commanded to pay the Emperor what belongs to him, and to pay God what belongs to Him.

Should a Christian take part in politics? In any part of the world Christians are divided on whether they should take part in politics or not. African Christians are no exception but there is a major reason why the majority of them have avoided politics. Many missionaries who preached the Gospel in Africa in the past, taught Africans that it was wrong for Christians to take part in politics; but while they themselves took part in politics and above some were paid by their own government.

What is politics? The true meaning of politics is not strive, opposition or a struggle to get to the top, but politics have something to do with the welfare of one's people or with that of humanity in general. The welfare of man is both spiritual and physical, and it is wrong to regard man only in a spiritual sense and it is equally wrong to think of man only in a material sense.

The Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and other African Independent Churches are accused of being too inward-looking and having no interest in politics.

E J Mokoena emphasized the point that their members are the poorest of the poor, the people with the lowest jobs of all. They are what they call the 'working class'. The people know what it means to be oppressed, exploited and crushed. The Africa Christians who belong to the mission churches also felt humiliated and discriminated against and dominated just as they are at work and in the rest of the society. But the Christian Church knows that God does not approve of this evil and that racial discrimination and oppression is rejected by the Scriptures.

And so what do the people say about politics? They join political organizations or trade unions and take part in the struggle for liberation. But it is a matter of individual choice. Members of the same church will join different political organizations or trade unions and some will choose not to join any of these

The politics of South Africa are mainly concerned with liberation of the dispossessed, from the oppression of the white minority government, and also with upholding of the importance of man and his place of honour in human society. Man is endowed with human rights and freedom to exercise these rights. In a democratic society all men are equal and must enjoy opportunities to develop their talents. There can be no room for discrimination between individuals or groups on the ground of race, tribe, colour or creed.

It is very clear from the Scriptures that Christians cannot be neutral on the matter of human dignity, freedom and equality. Men like Moses, Joshua and Nehemiah took part in politics. Moses prayed for the deliverance of his people from under the foreign rule. The weeping Prophet Jeremiah said "I will go to the people in power and talk with them. Surely they know what God requires, what the lord wants them to do" (Jer. 5:5).

In National affairs Christians should play the role which was played by the Old Testament prophets. The Christians should not be afraid to point out anything which is wrong, even in the highest government affairs, but they must do it out of love and for the welfare of their people. Working for the welfare, happiness and good of the society should be one of the duties of the Christians. Therefore Christians even when they are involved in politics should never forget the spiritual welfare of their people and that of humanity.

The church is called to serve and not to be served. Jesus Christ the Lord has said: "I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you received me in your home, naked and you clothed me, in prison and you visited me. The righteous will then answer him, when Lord, did we see you hungry and fed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothed you? When did we see you sick or in prison, and visited you? The King will reply, I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me" (Matt.25:35-40). He further said: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and to announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people" (Luke 4:18-19). This classical statement identifies the task of the church as primarily one to bring wholeness to those in need.

Health is a dynamic state of well-being of the individual and the society; of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being; of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with God.



**THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES AND  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT**

The Tomlinson report of 1954 had drawn the blue-print of apartheid societies. It dealt with African life in all its aspects and thus affects also the future of the Independent Churches in South Africa. Some of the architects of the new society were Verwoerd, Eiselen, Prinsloo and De Wet Nel.

In 1953 Rev C J Lucas and Rev J Chiliza made a plea to Dr. Eiselen to recognize the Black churches and he said " I wish to inform you that the department in principle favours the independence of the Bantu Churches from European control when the ability of the office bearers designated to administer the affairs of the church is in an efficient manner. The department will therefore consider sympathetically the future recognition when transfer of Moderatorship to a Bantu office-bearer takes place "<sup>105</sup>.

In 1955 a Zulu politician by the name of A W G Champion met Dr. Verwoed at Nongoma. Champion made a pious plea on behalf of the Black churches with an elegant reference to the founder of our faith "the harvest is plentiful". He was thus pleading for the recognition of the Black churches. The whole machinery of church recognition had obviously been thrown out of gear and the Government was seeking a new approach<sup>106</sup>.

The Tomlinson report regarded the proclamation of ecclesiastical independence among the Bantu people as essential. The Commissioners felt that the time had arrived for a new approach to the problem . It thus recommended

that all churches and missionary societies at work among the Bantu be registered with the state and except in very exceptional cases the state should for an indefinite period grant recognition to no new churches.

In 1957 the government issued far reaching amendments: Churches in South Africa having a following of one million or more souls of all races would automatically qualify for church sites and this rule only applied to the Methodist, Anglican and other established churches. Other churches would have to show that they had a following of one hundred baptized members over the age of fifteen, to possess a regular constitution, to show general signs of progress, to possess at least six congregations, the ministers should be educated, possess moral integrity and an ability to discharge civil functions. If the requirements were met then the church concerned would be recognized by the state. Many of the Black churches were unable to meet these requirements<sup>107</sup>.

In February 1959 this was followed by instructions more specifically affecting the Independent churches. By December 1960 church sites occupied by unrecognized churches in the urban areas had to be vacated. The new rule hit almost all the Independent churches and threw them into a severe crisis. The crisis was part of the general influx of Africans into urban areas in the late fifties. On many occasions government ministers particularly Dr. Verwoerd and De Wet Nel expressed concern over the rising number of the non recognized Bantu churches. A few years later Dr. Verwoerd suggested that the Independent Churches should unite into five churches. He thought that the whole problem would probably be easily handled by the administrators. But the Independent leaders could not of course appreciate this point.

Government machinery of recognition of churches initiated in 1925 was discontinued in about 1965. From 1900 only eleven Independent Churches were recognized one of these moreover the Ethiopian Church of South Africa was struck off the list in 1953. The total number was reduced to ten and out of these only four were recognized after 1925 i.e in the period regulated by the rules of the Native Affairs Commission laid down in 1925. These four were the Bantu Methodist Church of South Africa 1933; African Congregational Church 1937; African Orthodox Church 1941 and finally African Gospel Church 1948<sup>108</sup>.

The Bulhoek tragedy of 1921 when one hundred and seventeen of Enoch Mgijima's "Israelites" were fatally wounded and some number of them killed, revived all the old fears that the Independent Churches were politically dangerous. The government appointed a Commission to enquire into the whole matter. The Commission exempted missionaries from the blame but recognized that the anti-white feeling was growing. There seemed no way of preventing this except by giving Africans their Church alongside the white parent body in which they would have complete responsibility. This was in fact the policy adopted by the Dutch Reformed Church but most of the established churches continued to try to retain their black and white members<sup>109</sup>

The church in general should play an important role in housing, wages or salaries, food, clothing, public matters, education, social justice, medical facilities, community development and politics. The Bible begins with the statement that, in the beginning, God created heaven and earth, meaning all that exists. It means that the whole of reality, and the whole of human existence, must be seen in relationship of God. The laws of the Old Testament, the

history of Israel, the Wisdom literature. the New Testament, all deal with the whole of life and the whole of reality in relation to God.

#### SHARING OF RESOURCES: A BIBLICAL REFLECTION

The first group of believers was one in mind and heart. No one said that any of his belongings was his own, but they all shared with one another everything they had. With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God poured rich blessing on them all. There was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale, and the money was distributed to each one according to his need (Acts 4:32-35).

The church was one heart and one soul, a unity shared in Christ and soon to be expressed in the communion of the Lord's table. The free authority of the Apostles was expressed, not as a prerogative but as a gift of Christ who set them free for this contribution to the community. This liberation power then flowed naturally to all the members and through them to those most in need.

Their unity of heart and soul is created not by the human response to God but by the action of God calling the people and bringing them into the life and work of the risen Christ. The believers of those first days after Pentecost were drawn into a community not of their making, grasped by a reality which overwhelmed their own imagining, and directed by hope they could not have given themselves. The unity of the New Testament church, like the unity of the body and spirit, it includes all that is earthly and

historical, in the purpose and direction given it by God the Creator.

The unity of the church in love is a resource that can be shared with those who come. But from that unity the church reaches out to all the world in love, through all its acts of sharing, with an invitation. If we today could live the community that was the direct experience of those first Christians, the church today could not have ask this question of sharing resources. The church would know, as the first Christians did. The Christians responses should be natural and spontaneous.

The poor: In the New Testament poverty is clearly distinguished from need. One may be needy (*chreia*) without being poor (*ptochos*). All people have needs and are debtors to others to help them. The needs may be short term or long term. They may be slight or desperate. They may be physical or spiritual, as physical they are usually temporal. One may be sick today and if well cared for, healthy tomorrow. It was need in this immediate sense which the Apostles met with the contribution of the believers in the earliest church (Acts 4:35). Spiritual needs are always permanent. No one is self-sufficient by having adequate possessions.

Poverty is another matter. It is a long term condition which tends towards permanence. It is a need that is not met by caring and healing responses of others, or which may be too deep a disability ever to be met. It is a one sided condition and not a mutual one, a dependence that dehumanizes and excludes the victim from the community, threatened by that ultimate exclusion which is death.

Poverty too has more than one form. It usually has an economic component. The physical means of survival are in short supply. To find them is a continual struggle. The Hebrew word *ebyon*, translated sometimes poor and sometimes needy. But it is the institutionalization of this condition in a system which enforces and intensifies economic need that gives poverty its social character; for this Hebrew had another word, *ani*, with a connotation of being victimized or oppressed. The third dimension of poverty this time is rooted not in external condition but in the person: weakness, incapability to carry the full burden of life, connoted by the Hebrew word *dal*.

The New Testament word *ptochos* is heir to all the above mentioned Hebrew words. Poverty is a social condition, perpetuated by the powers of this world. It is also a personal condition of physical handicap, disease, or of mental or inability to cope with life. These forms of poverty interact and often reinforce each other. Together they challenge the sharing mission of the church.

#### THE CHURCH AND THE POOR IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

CALVIN: It cannot be said that Calvin had ever personally experience material need, poverty although of course there were moments when as a young man he was rather hard up, but after all, which young man is not? From early childhood when his father introduced him to the higher ranks of society young Jean Calvin, though certainly not rich, was never pressed for necessities. In youth he constantly moved in the clerical and social circles who were benefitting from the growing wealth of the sixteenth century. He knew by personal observation the luxurious mode of life of leading families. As a Reformer, he was sensitive to the cause and consequence of the 'liberties' of the rich, he would berate

their conduct as a perversion of Christianity. From his own observation, however, Calvin was familiar with the other side of his wealth of the moment - poverty equally determined by the circumstances of the time<sup>110</sup>.

Calvin in first rejects a superficial, fatalistic understanding of a Biblical verse "the poor you have always with you". The apparently inescapable fact of poverty makes people inclined to just go on resignedly with the business of the day. The sin of resignation, at the bottom human lovelessness, seeks to divert attention from the fact of poverty in innumerable ways. God, however, did not put the saying about lasting poverty into the world so that we men might accept fatalistically the condition of this world, but so that man, the Christian, should do what is necessary and combat poverty.

"The poor you have always with you" it still remains God's Word. Calvin, however understands it not as a re-assuring explanation to the social *status quo* but as a pointer to the mysterious ways of God. The poor man in the world points to God's mystery, which man must not approach too near with explanations and theories.

Calvin sees a certain meaning of the question of poverty in the fact that God here took the rich and the poor into His good school. God could of course, remove in a trice all poverty from the world, but He wants to try our faith. The divine test of the rich man proceeds in two ways. The rich man has simply received the wealth in God's impenetrable providence. If he recognizes and acknowledges this, he will take care not to use this wealth as a power against his neighbor.

According to Calvin's message, to his exegetical insights, it is clear that the rich man needs the poor man more than the latter needs him. God in his miraculous power can and will care for the poor man. Calvin was very practical and realistically always has in mind material wealth and material poverty.

Calvin carefully distinguished two sides to the deaconate, firstly the administration of the church poverty, collections and gifts for the poor, and secondly direct assistance to the poor, the sick and the orphans, and without deaconate there is no *Ecclesia*<sup>111</sup>.

#### AFRICAN TRADITION

In African tradition, sharing is a state of mind, a practice, an institution and an element of culture. It implies giving when one has nothing to give and distributing goods among the original owner and his or her peers without any preliminary agreement being formalized.

Generosity of heart is expected of everyone. In fact it is even insisted that sharing should go round the full circle. This comes forcefully, for instance, in Sotho we have the following saying *Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang* (Living is essentially being with others). Thus everyone is reminded that to exercise solidarity is for their own good, as a great African leader, diangienda Kutima, spiritual head of the Kimbanguist church, has said: "I help myself when I help others" (*Go fa ke go fega*).

Sharing as generosity and as something reciprocal, therefore, amounts to a moral obligation on all; all can claim the right of reciprocal giving and receiving. Thus the idler, the good for nothing, the beggar, the parasite,



the skinflint and the egoist have no place in the African society, for either they do not work and are of no use or else they do work but no one can see what becomes of what they produce. The moral obligation to give is synonymous with living itself and opposite, clearly in refusal to give. Those who refuse to give are not merely socially ostracized and placed beyond protection; they also are the real enemies of society for they expose it to the dangers of death. Refusal to give is refusal to identify with others since giving implies relation with others; then by the same token it is a kind of killing, since living is essentially being with others.

The principle behind all this is entirely at one with traditional African anthropology, which represents the human being as essentially an order within an order which is a relation of being and living in the world, implying life received, shared and fully entered into. Thus the human being is not just alongside many, but a being who is the product of one's relations with others: parents, relation by marriage, friends and acquaintance.

Production for its own sake is nonsense. Production makes sense if it is placed at the disposal of one's peers as a means of social security or mutual aid, and this makes it a channel for social communication and a means of preventing hostilities. Thus though sharing presupposes production, it is not a mere function of production - rather the opposite; production starts from the fact of sharing. Each person must work to come to the aid of his or her parents, family people of village, relation by marriage, friends, acquaintance, however a problem crops up for any of these. But the gift offer is by definition primarily the gift of self - availability for others: weeping with those who weep

and rejoice with those that rejoice - in fact being with others and sharing in their suffering and their joy.

The time and place of giving raises no question, one gives at any time and no matter where one is. There are however special circumstances which call for sharing: illness, mourning and festivals, such events provide a significant, strategic opportunity to confirm and demonstrate sharing relationship.

There are however other forms of sharing which have a wider field of application and go beyond what is regulated by clan and marriage structures and the like. There are for instance, certain associations in which individuals are linked together directly, individually and voluntarily, quite apart from clan, village or relations., yet involving strong bonds of friendship and acquaintance. In such instances, the persons associating with each other undertake by firm agreement to pool goods or service and distribute them in rotation, absolutely interest-free, to support or promote their individual or collective enterprise<sup>112</sup>.

Some of these associations are found widespread in the urban areas in South Africa. They are being called *mogodisano* or *makgotla*. It is a group of people, in which each may contribute the same amount of money or goods to be distributed in rotation among themselves, each taking an amount or goods equal to the individual's contribution multiplied by the number of partners in the *mogodisano* or *makgotla*. Contributions and payments are periodic but on the same time, at the dwelling of the partner whose turn is to be the receiving end, and who will on this occasion offer food and drink and if possible music and even dancing.

These associations may be of strategic importance, especially in development enterprise where they can be a means of enabling each partner to amass initial capital through this pooling of resources. These associations should be supported by the church, because they can play an important role in the economy of our country.

#### AFRICAN CHURCHES

Sharing takes place today in the African churches as something deriving from the African tradition, though the reason behind it and its meaning may be outside the experience of the faithful. Its development and application however, vary within the various contemporary African churches communities. It does not everywhere have the same importance or dynamism.

In those churches that are the direct product of Western Christian missionary effort, and where Westernization have gone hand in hand, the practice of sharing is secondary in relation to the means of subsistence and development available to them through the parent organizations, despite a genuine quest for indigenization or inculturation; and outside aid is very evidently very significant.

It is in the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and other African Independent Churches that sharing is really organized on a more or less systematic institutional basis, to ensure not just subsistence but also equipping needs. Joy in giving is great and is compounded by the enthusiasm and sense of fellowship which binds members of the congregation together, and above all by the awareness of responding to the appeal of the church and of the authority who is present with them and who recognizes each of the faithful givers.

They will give several times during a single night vigil and various groups will compete, each undertaking to give more, and making every effort to do so, through the repeated contribution of their members. At the end of the night vigil, totals are counted and the results are announced to the congregation, with congratulations to the groups achieving the highest figures. The meeting is asked to make the last effort, if the total so far collected is thought inadequate in relation to the need indicated.

Sharing or redistributing and reciprocity is the traditional political economy. This embraces essentially both solidarity and the principle of community, and is characteristically African. Consequently it can be said that African redistribute their resources and so in doing create structures of productive reciprocity which are themselves in turn a motivation for production.

Thus those Christians communities which have the means and have been made aware of the problems of poverty could be sharing with others so build a loving humanity.

#### MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The church is part of the world, that part which has heard the Good News in order to live it and make it known. The Christians are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through them. "We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into His friends!" (II Cor. 5:20). The love of the church overflows, with Christ its Head and living center, it is a movement into the world, discerning and responding to his taking form there, transforming the world's own religions, ideologies, cultures and structures

of power, serving the world by its witness, its resources and the style of life.

The laws required justice for the sojourner, especially in its strong Levitical form: the stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as a native among you and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Lev. 19:34); it is a song of openness of the covenant promise. Jeremiah urges the Jews in Babylonian exile to seek the welfare of the city where the Lord has sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare (Jer. 29:7).

The people of God in the church are no longer a nation living always in tension with a universal calling. They are a community chosen out of many nations, drawing the whole heritage of God's dealing with Israel to inform their life in Christ for the nations. They are not a culture, though they generate and penetrate cultures to express the presence of Christ in the life of many people. They are not a class, not even the class of the poor or the oppressed, much less than the established, possessors of wealth, but stewards of all the grace of God, of the spirit of body, for the world. They are the world grasped by the unifying and liberating Spirit of God in the midst of world's economy.

The action of the church in the world is at one and the same time mission and service. The two cannot be separated at any time without falsifying both. It is a reality of God's economy which is an issue, the economy by which the churches live and which is intended for the world. The church's use of earthly resources - its relief fund, its development projects, its financing of the Ministers and Evangelists and all office-bearers, and its support of the struggle for

political liberation is a witness to God's economy and is only understandable there<sup>113</sup>.

#### THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN DEVELOPMENT

The church forms part of the wider community, and it should endeavor to shape itself according to the values, and goals and spiritual power of Jesus Christ. The local congregation should therefore develop a community with a lifestyle whereby the basic problems of life can be solved by living according to the order of God in all relations: relation to God, nature and to each other.

Christians are not taken out of this world, but they should remain in this world but live in a way different from the world. In this way people will see an alternative for a better way of living and they will also see a possibility of overcoming their problems. In this way the church will create a new atmosphere in a society. The church should strive for a better quality of life in a society.

In this last half of the 20th century, churches find themselves in a very new environment, which for the first time offers the possibility of making the benefits of civilization available to the whole human race. The danger exists, however, that the churches may be abetting the greatest social injustice in history by their inaction.

Clearly the churches do have a special competence and responsibility to seek out and provide leadership on those issues of justice. The church has a certain unique potential for providing leadership in development. First

the church cuts across many classes and geographical lines, secondly, Christianity has much to say on the subject of social justice and once injustices are apparent, the forces within the church seek an honest treatment of the issue and challenge the church to take the lead in encouraging remedial change.

Christians teaching stirs many to action on behalf of Christian principles. It was the action of individuals and small groups within the church that provided the fundamental source of support for the civil rights movement from the white community in the United States of America, for social and political justice in Brazil and other Latin American Countries.

The church and its members are called to be stewards of the unsearchable riches of Christ, to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things (Eph.3:8-9). The responsibility of the church is limitless. Its stewardship includes the things of the spiritual and material world, of faith and hope and love, of culture, politics, economic and ecology.

We are stewards witness to all that, this means for the world in terms of economic policy, cultural creativity, political analysis and action, care for and liberation of the poor, the distribution of goods, the curbing of domination and the cultivation of human community on all knowledge able and effective. It is essential (Luke 12:43) that they be faithful and wise, for these qualities we would do well to pray. It is really indeed that the church is in essence to help all people, especially those who suffer, to

**search for the kingdom and its righteousness, and by living according to the will of God.**



### THE ROAD AHEAD

The concern of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa in African Christianity is an attempt to create a synthesis between African culture and Christianity, despite the fact that it is done in an informal way. It aims at abolishing syncretism which renders African Christianity ineffective. It attempts to use African concepts and African ethos as a vehicle for the communication of the Gospel in an African context.

The Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa just like other African Independent Churches is striving to Reformation. Africanize the Western forms - making Christianity indigenous within the African soil, just like New Testament churches whose stories are revealed in Acts and the Epistles. This church allows the participation of the laity, the aim being that they should have a sense of belonging, which is important. Worship and the rites of this church are all basic elements in the expression of a dynamic Christianity and not foreign to Scriptures.

Christianity originated in Palestine, and it came to Africa after Pentecost. God wanted the Gospel to come to Africa after it had started in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. God arranged that Philip should witness to an African. "An angel of the Lord said to Philip, get ready and go south to the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza. So Philip got ready and went. Now an Ethiopian eunuch, who was an important official in charge of the treasures of the queen of Ethiopia, was on his way home. He had been in Jerusalem

to worship God and was going back home in his carriage. As he rode along, he was reading from the book of the prophet Isiah" (Acts 8:26-28).

In Acts 11:20, we are told that the people from Cyrene were quite active in the leadership of the church in Antioch; and then later in Acts 18:24-28, we are told of Apollos of Alexandria who became a Christian while on his visit to Ephesus. This man from Africa in turn became a missionary to Europe by preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ to the People of Corinth.

Christianity came into Africa in the first three centuries of the church's existence, long before Western Europe was Christianized. The modern church in Africa is deeply indebted for the contribution made by such great African Church Fathers as Tertullian, Augustine and others. It was Tertullian who wrote plainly about the doctrine of 'Trinity' in order to express our understanding of the Godhead. Then, too, we noted that it was Augustine who made such a great contribution to the Christian theology. As we look back over history, we can see that without the contribution of these African Christian leaders the church today would be quite different. These early African Christians leaders, made a rich contribution to the church's heritage, but not just to the heritage of Christianity in Africa, but to the church throughout the entire world<sup>114</sup>.

However, as it reached Africa South of the Sahara came via Europe, with an European stamp on it; and so in the African context if there is to be a serious and deep communication and rooting of the Gospel of Christ, the African stamp will have to replace the European stamp, and that is what is done

**by the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and other African Independent Churches.**

**It is clear that the African Independent Churches have challenged the Mission Churches in Africa; to take the traditional African values more seriously. No study of Christianity as it is developing in Africa would be complete without the serious account being taken of the life and thought of the African Independent churches.**

The future of the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa looks very bright if they could take the following points very seriously: when Jesus Christ spoke of ministering discipleship, He warned against failure to count the cost (Luke 14:25-33), it has become far too fashionable for men to move in and out of the ministry at will with little or no consideration for this matter; the most important criterion for selecting church leadership should be spiritual qualification notwithstanding formal education; the true test of man's qualifications for church leadership must be based on quality-not quantity; Local church leaders are to truly fulfill a pastoral and teaching role; to delegate responsibility to qualified people; all committees should be organized to meet the needs of the people; the organization should be simple; the organization should be flexible; effective Christian communication must include an in-depth ministry to a select group, as well as a ministry to the larger group of Christians; the church should show a vital concern for government leaders and the state of the nation; the church should determine its current needs in the light of biblical, historical and cultural perspective; the church should formulate immediate and long-range objectives and goals; All believers must be equipped for Christian service. The very nature of the body of Christ makes it

important for every member to function and contribute to the process of edification.

"Be careful how you Build!" warned Saint Paul. a church can be weak and immature if it is constructed of wood and hay. Or it can be strong and mature if it is composed of gold, silver and precious stones (I Cor.3:10-15). If it is immature, it reflects impatience, jealousy, strife, divisions, pride, arrogance and unbecoming behavior. If it is mature, it reflects a growing love, a unity of faith, and a steadfast hope. The church today needs leaders of the same dedication and commitment like Saint Paul, who was determined with his whole heart to bring the whole Gospel to their whole city or neighborhood. He left no stone unturned in devising means to reach the people .

The Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa has taken a good move by erecting church buildings as a sign of progress, and many congregations of this church are eager to erect their own church buildings. All standing committees in the church are prepared to help in this regard, especially the Mother's Union. The building fund committee of this church has a central fund by which they are able to erect church building were necessary.

The Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is engaged in a massive attempt to synthesize the Apostolic *kerygma* with the authentic African insight, based on the biblical criteria derived from vernacular translations of the Scriptures. They also contribute to the genuine African Christianity in terms that can be understood by African societies. Independence is clearly playing an increasingly important part in the rooting of the Christian faith in the soil of Africa.

It is clear that the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and other African Independent churches have taken up the challenge by the mission founded churches in Africa; to take traditional African values seriously. They have for instance challenged the half-Christians who go to church respectably, but who in secret with a measure of guilt feelings go to a diviner to seek the cause and cure of illness. These churches employ their African culture, their cosmology, experiences and celebrities to appropriate the Christian message and incorporate it into their daily life.

The church of Jesus Christ is energetic and alive, but the challenges ahead are sobering; and they will not be met if we just repeat what we have always done. Never in the history of the church have we had so many different factions that can not seem to work together. Efforts are duplicated, some basic theological beliefs have been weakened. The world is growing rapidly more secular making Christianity seem less and less meaningful. If the church is to be effective until the Lord's return, it needs a fresh vision for the future built on a well-interpreted past. The church must make history and not repeat it. The church is neither democracy nor republic; it is a theocracy. The Bible is a covenant document divinely revealed and deposited with the church by the Sovereign Himself. In it are the principles of management that the Sovereign has imposed upon His subjects.

Really indeed the Reformed Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and other African Independent Churches have made an impact on the formation of African Christian theology on the African continent.

The church faces the future in full confidence on the Lord and is ready and willing to increasingly fulfill its calling in this part of the world.

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