

UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

HENDERSON SEMINAR PAPER NO. 53.

BISHOP HENRY MCNEIL TURNER'S COUNTRYMEN:

The Afro-American factor in southern  
African Ethiopianism +

by

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+ Paper read at THE SECOND AFRICAN DIASPORA STUDIES INSTITUTE CONFERENCE held in Nairobi, Kenya, 24-26 August 1981.

One of the ironies of nineteenth century Southern African history is that, while European powers were busy carving out colonies for themselves throughout southern Africa during the last quarter of the century, a group of Black evangelists and ministers was seeking independence, not from the new colonial masters, but from missionaries who had preceded 'formal' imperialists by about a century. This group of rebels set up a network of independent churches throughout southern Africa (1), and by 1916 some observers were suggesting that an "African Reformation" was well underway. Leaders of the white-dominated churches from which independent churches had seceded together with secular white society generally were quick to label unflattering names on the new movement and its leaders; these ran the whole gamut from "separatists", "secessionists", "false prophets", "schismatics", "wolves in sheep's clothing", "mission raiders", to "sheep stealers"; the more irritated critics ascribed this essentially self-determination in church governance to the work of the devil (2). It turns out that those observers who described African Church independency as the "Ethiopian Movement" were, as will be shown in this paper, not far of the mark. Yet the advent of the Ethiopian movement, which was in many respects

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1. The standard work on the rise of independent African Churches remains Bengt. G. Sundkler's Bantu Prophets in South Africa (London, 1948, 1961, 1964). See also, Shula marks, Reluctant Rebellion: The 1906-8 Disturbances in Natal (Oxford, 1970), pp., 52-82; Sundkler, Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists (London, 1976).

2. See, for example, "Bishop Smith at Cape Town", Voice of Missions by Way of the Cross, New York, November 1904; Testimony of D.A. Hunter, South African Native Affairs Commission, Minutes of Evidence Vol. II (Cape Town, 1903) 679, where he said: "Ethiopians ... are rank sheep stealers", by which he meant church secessionists recruited members from established churches. Botswana National Archives, Gaborone (henceforth cited as B.N.A.), 410, R.C. 7/8, "Church Dispute at Kanye", Rev. Edwin Lloyd, at Kanye, to Acting Assistant Commissioner, 27 June 1902.

may aspects an organic development in the history of the Church in Southern Africa, was a far cry from the days when a few intrepid missionaries planted the first mission stations in the Cape a hundred years earlier.

The earliest attempt to bring Christianity to Southern African Blacks was made by Portuguese Catholic priests in the 16th. century, but their missions met with little success and were confined to Mozambique and the Empire of Mwene Mutapa. Protestant missionaries were late comers to the evangelization of Southern Africa. The first mission station was set up in 1737 among the Khoikhoi by the Rev. George Schmidt, a member of the German Lutheran Moravian Protestant Society (also called the United Brethren Society, Unitas Fratrum). However, Boer opposition led to the closure of Rev. Schmidt's mission station in 1743. The Lutherans did not resume mission work again until 1781, when they opened a station at Baviaans Kloof.<sup>3</sup> The turn of the nineteenth century was marked by a spurt of evangelical endeavours led by Protestant missionaries, and the planting of new mission stations seems to have been influenced by the intellectual fervour of the Enlightenment. In 1799 the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) sent Dr. Johan Van der Kemp to South Africa to start a mission station at Bachel; in 1800 the South Africa Missionary Society sponsored Rev. J.M. Kek to accompany an L.M.S. agent, Rev. W. Edwards to start

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<sup>3</sup> J. Du Plessis, A History of Christian Missions in South Africa (London, 1911), pp., 50-60; Peter Kinchiff, The Church in South Africa (London, 1968) pp., 8-12.

a mission station among the Tlhaping, a southern Tswana tribe. Between 1816 and 1859 a network of mission stations was sprawled all over southern Africa; and of these the L.M.S. started Bethesda in 1808; Zuurbraak (1811), Pacaltsdorp (1813), Theopolis (1814), Kafraria (1816), Kuruman (1816), and Inyati in Mzilikazi's newly established Ndebele Kingdom in 1859;<sup>4</sup> the Wesleyan Missionary Society opened <sup>L</sup>Reliefontein in 1816, Wesleyville (1823), Butterworth (1827), Clarkebury (1830); the Glasgow Missionary Society ( a Presbyterian group) opened Chumie in 1820, and Lovedale (1824).<sup>5</sup> The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society planted their first station at Wellington in the Cape in 1829 and in 1833 started a mission station at Morija in Basutoland.<sup>6</sup>

North America played a part in the evangelization of southern Africa. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.), formed in 1810, sent agents to southern Africa in 1835. They set up an ill-fated station at the Zulu capital at Mosega, which was abandoned owing to the wars of the Mfecane, and the Americans then moved to the Natal Coast. A.B.C.F.M.

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4. Richard Lovett, The History of the London Missionary Society, Vol. I (London, 1899), pp. 481-497.
5. Du Plessis, Christian Missions, pp. 165-188; Basil Holt, Joseph Williams and the Pioneer Mission to the South-Eastern Bantu (Lovedale, The Lovedale Historical Series, No. 1, 1954).
6. A. Jaques, "The Story of the French Mission in Basutoland", Christian Express, 1st. March 1902; Leonard Thompson, Survival in two Worlds: Moshoeshe of Lesotho, 1786-1870 (Oxford, 1975) pp. 70-104.

agents subsequently founded the following stations: Amanzimteli in 1837; Umveti (1844); Ifumi (1847); Lindley (1847); Kapumulo (1849); Esidumbini (1850); and Umtwalume (1851).<sup>7</sup> By the 1880s Wesleyan Methodists had put up two schools of note: Healdtown in the Cape and Kilnerton in the Transvaal; the Catholics had Marrianhill in the Transvaal.

Right from the start of their mission to evangelize, Christian missionaries had great difficulty in harmonizing the Christian<sup>611</sup> doctrine with African religions and modes of living. Some of the African practices which missionaries found difficult to reconcile with Christian beliefs were polygamy, beer drinking, and to some extent the secular authority of Chiefs; opposition to these African practices, <sup>by white missionaries</sup> partly led to schism in the Church. But the main issue that led to the birth of independent African Churches was the reluctance of missionaries to promote African evangelists in large enough numbers to the clergy and other positions of responsibility in the Church hierarchy. What was even more exasperating to Africans was that, even when a handful of Blacks were promoted to the Clergy, they did not have the same authority in Church affairs as their White counterpart; and in some instances White lay missionaries had more power than ordained African ministers. On their part African evangelists and ministers were quick to charge missionaries with practising racial discrimination and by extension, negating the Christian brotherhood of man. White missionaries did not accept this

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7. See "Report for 1891", American Zulu Mission, 1890-1899, Volume I, Documents, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; D.J. Kotze, editor, Letters of the American Missionaries, 1835-1838 (Cape Town, Van Rieback Society, No. 35, 1950), pp. 1-20.

interpretation of the scriptures.

Missionary reluctance to ordain an indiginous clergy was not always shared by their Societies in Europe and America. In some instances some of the Societies gave directives to promote an indiginous clergy. For example, the Free Church of Scotland gave the following instruction to a missionary who was going to work at Lovedale in 1866: "So soon as native congregations are formed, the care of them ought as speedily as possible, to be consigned to a Native pastor in time to be supported by natives themselves, while the Europeans should be free to press on for the regions beyond".<sup>8</sup> But the men on the spot, the missionaries, took little heed of metropolitan directives and found excuses for delaying the promotion of Africans to the clergy. As a result, only about a half dozen Africans had been ordained in Protestant churches by 1890.<sup>9</sup> Part of the reason may have had something to do with the presence of "hite settlers in southern Africa, whose large numbers and intercourse with White missionaries induced the latter group to regard themselves as settlers and not mere transients. The General Assembly of the South African Presbyterian Church explained the shortage of African clergy along the same <sup>de</sup> demographic lines. "In this country where there is a

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8. James Wells, Stewart of Lovedale: The Life of James Stewart (London, 1908), p. 289.

9. Richard H. Davis, Nineteenth Century African Education in the Cape Colony (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms, 1969) pp. 229-230

permanent European population, missionaries are unconsciously inclined to regard themselves more or less as settled ministers, and carry on their work through the organization and methods of an ordinary pastorate rather than through the distinctively devolutionary machinery of a mission station. In consequence the entire agency tends to be employed as a means rather than the means to evangelization.<sup>10</sup>

## II

In order to justify their inclination to settle in Southern Africa, missionaries found a ~~lot~~ of excuses to delay the promotion of an African clergy. One of these excuses was to conjure up the image of an incompetent and less persevering African corps of evangelists who had to be supervised by White missionaries at all times to have any work done at all. In 1886 Rev. R. Wardlaw Thompson, the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society certainly played into the hands of an agent of his Society based in Bechuanaland when he supported the allegation that African evangelists were less resilient workers than "hites". Thompson opined that had an evangelist who worked in Lake Ngami "being<sup>e</sup> a European missionary we might have expected a little more resoluteness, and the manifestation of a determination to persevere in spite of all obstacles",<sup>11</sup> But this resilience could not be expected from an African. A year later in

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10. See "Dearth of Students for the Native Ministry", Imvo Zabantsundu, December, 1911.

11. See Thompson to Rev. J.D. Hepburn, 17th. June 1886, Box 19, Outgoing Letters, London Missionary Society Archives, now housed at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

1887, Rev. Thompson seemed alarmed at the suggestion that another evangelist based in Bechuanaland ought to be given more responsibility to run a district and cautioned gradualism, saying "permit me quietly to suggest the soundness of the old proverb festina lente."<sup>12</sup>

The L.M.S. was not alone in having missionary agents who favoured a delay in promoting an African clergy. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions' agents in Natal, whose mission was popularly known as the American Zulu Mission, found numerous excuses for not ordaining Zulu ministers. Thus fifty years after the founding of their mission in Natal, Rev. Charles W. Holbrook informed his Society in Boston, Massachusetts that his work was lagging behind on account of what appeared to him to be congenital reasons: "The rate of progress is slow; for Zulu Character is slow."<sup>13</sup> When in 1887 Dr. Judson Smith, the A.B.C.F.M.'s Foreign Secretary in Boston suggested that a "Native Pastorate" be instituted in southern Africa, Holbrook wrote back saying there were no Zulu men suitable to train for the ministry and that in any case it appeared to him that the Zulu preferred White ministers to ministers of their own colour.<sup>14</sup> Holbrook changed his stance a few months later and informed Dr. Smith that there was now a plan to appoint African apprentices to work under White ministers to screen them for the ministry.<sup>15</sup> But Holbrook's

12. Thompson to Rev. Edwin Lloyd, 22nd. December 1887, L.M.S. Archives, S.O.A.S., London.
13. Holbrook to Dr. Judson Smith (in Boston), 15th. February 1887, American Zulu Mission Archives, African 10/398. Vol. II 1880-1890, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
14. Holbrook to Smith 9th. April 1887 Ibid. Harvard.
15. Holbrook to Smith, 24th. June 1887, Harvard.

apparent change of heart was once more tampered by psychological considerations. He wrote: "The objection to instituting a full Native Pastorate at once is that perhaps a half of those thus ordained lose their mental balance and so conduct themselves as to forfeit the respect of both the missionaries and the Christian natives alike..."<sup>16</sup>

Wesleyan Methodists were just as reluctant as other Protestant missionaries to promote Africans to the clergy. By 1880 they had ordained only one Black minister. The reluctance was noted by Rev. John Kilner a deputation sent to southern Africa in 1880. Rev. Kilner was impressed by the calibre of African evangelists and complained that they were being improperly kept out of the ministry. He reported: "There were many men who doubtless had a call to work who were kept back by a timid, if not at times, a jealous hand."<sup>17</sup> But Wesleyan missionaries in southern Africa criticized Rev. Kilner, maintaining that time was not ripe to train African ministers.

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16. Holbrook to Smith, 23rd. October 1889, Ibid., Harvard.

17. Rev. John Kilner, A Summary Report by the Rev. John Kilner.... Confidential (London, 1881), pp. 11-15.



III

However, while missionary thinking on the issue of ordaining an African clergy was wavering, African evangelists and ministers were beginning to take the initiative to ameliorate their position. The first few steps towards the rise of independent African Churches were faltering <sup>of</sup> indecisive; they ranged from an attempt by members of the Paris Evangelical Mission at Hermon in Basutoland, to secede from the P.E.M. in 1872, which did not succeed,<sup>18</sup> to another indecisive one by a Methodist minister Rev. James Mata Dwane in 1884. Dwane was destined to play an important role in the rise of the independent Church movement. Born in about 1848, James Mata Dwane was the son of Dwane Mcebuka, himself a member of the Amantinde tribe who chose to live with the Amaggunukwebe tribe with whom both son and father became associated for the rest of their lives.

Young Dwane was converted to Methodism by the missionary, William Shaw and was subsequently licensed to preach at Healdtown, Cape on 14th. May 1867. He was ordained into the Wesleyan Church in 1881 and in the same year was appointed to serve in the Port Elizabeth circuit. The sensitive man he was, Rev. Dwane was quick to notice racial discrimination practised in his Church and protested to the authorities in vain. A <sup>m</sup>sympathetic editor of an Afro-American paper later wrote: "After his unsuccessful protests against what he considered to be class [discriminatory] legislation in the Church based on colour line, he sent

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18. Bengt Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa, p. 38.

in his resignation to the president of the Wesleyan Church of South Africa, which remained unaccepted in the hands of the president for six months and was ultimately withdrawn. This was in 1884."<sup>19</sup>

Rev. Dwane's decision to withdraw his resignation presaged his stormy and vacillating career in the independent Church movement; it also forfeited him the distinction of becoming the second African to break with the Wesleyans, which went to evangelist Nehemiah Tile of Thembuland. Tile's resignation marked the first serious secession in the Wesleyan Church in southern Africa. Tile had worked as an evangelist among the Thembu in the 1870s and earned a reputation as a competent preacher. He also wielded some influence with the Thembu chief Ngangeliswe and on one occasion succeeded in persuading the chief to let Wesleyans open a new station in Thembuland. From 1879 to 1883 Tile served as a probationer minister but during that time he quarrelled with his White supervisor the Rev. Theophilus Chubb over issues arising from racial discrimination in the Church. During that time Tile had also become a close adviser to chief Ngangeliswe and an active participant in Thembu politics; he contributed an ox for slaughter at the circumcision of Dalindyebo, the grandson of the Thembu chief, and was known to have addressed a political meeting on a Sunday. The Church

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19. See Henry McNeal Turner, "Vicar Bishop Dwane, of South Africa, Visits this Country (U.S.A.) by Special Orders", Voice of Missions, December 1898; James Mata Dwane, "Historic Epistle. Rev. James M. Dwane, Superintendent of our South African Work to the Bishops ...", Voice of Missions, December 1897.

rebuked Tile for these misdemeanors but the evangelist responded by breaking with the Wesleyans during the second half of 1883.<sup>20</sup>

Tile's involvement in politics remained undiminished after his secession and his activities clearly worried British administrators in the Transkei. In November 1884 a White official advised Ngangeliswe to "have nothing to do with Tile, he will do harm to your people".<sup>21</sup> In January 1885 Tile was arrested and jailed for allegedly inciting chiefs to resist lawful authority, but the charge was subsequently ~~quashed~~ <sup>quashed</sup> by the Attorney-General. Tile's relations with the new Thembu ruler, Dalindyebo were cool between 1885 and 1889. Dalindyebo's indifference to Tile was no doubt influenced by the popularity the evangelist enjoyed among the Thembu but by 1889 mutual respect was restored between the chief and Tile which in turn gave a fillip to the Thembu Church. However this new chief-evangelist understanding was undermined by Tile's death in December 1891, and it took some time for Tile's successor, the Rev. Jonas Goduka to commend himself to Dalindyebo. In addition to the Thembu Church which survived him, Tile's memory was enshrined in his translation of The Pilgrims' Progress, which is considered a literary classic in the Xhosa language, as well as in several hymns he composed during his life time.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere in

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20. C.C. Saunders, "Tile and the Thembu Church: Politics and Independency on the Cape Eastern Frontier in the Late Nineteenth Century," Journal of African History, XI, 4(1970), pp. 553-570.

21. Ibid., 560 ff.

22. Ibid., 561ff. See also, "Tembuland Troublers", Cape Mercury, 16th. March 1893; Editorial, Cape Times, 31st. July 1893.

southern Africa Ethiopian seeds were beginning to sprout.

At the time the American Zulu mission in Natal was justifying the paucity of African ministers as we pointed out above, they were in fact dealing with Ethiopian insurgency at Noodsberg, one of their oldest Zulu stations. The revolt was led by Rev. Ngidi Mbiyana, who in 1887 seceded together with two-thirds of the members of the Noodsberg Church.<sup>23</sup> Rev. Mbiyana was able to sustain his rebellion partly on account of the support he got from the local chief; the chief in turn used his office to create favourable conditions for the growth of Mbiyana's sect. One way in which the chief showed his support for Mbiyana was to summon the remaining faithful members of the American Church at Noodsberg to work on public projects while Mbiyana's followers were left free to organize the new sect and to construct a new Church building not far from the A.B.C.F.M. Church at Noodsberg. By 1890 American missionaries in Natal were sufficiently disturbed by Mbiyana's activities to issue a statement, saying, "Noodsberg has been sadly shaken by the repeated visits of Mbiyana a renegade native pastor who would draw away 'even the elect'"<sup>24</sup> In 1893 Mbiyana's followers were reported to be still getting the cooperation of the chief in the Noodsberg area and that in consequence American missionaries were lobbying Natal government officials to undermine Mbiyana's Church.<sup>25</sup> The cooperation between missionaries and government officials in suppressing Ethiopianism went on unabated well into the twentieth century.

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23. Holbrook to Judson Smith, 24th. June 1887, Documents, Vol. I, American Zulu Mission Archives, Ibid., Harvard.

24. Sec. "Annual General Letter of the American Zulu Mission, 1890", Ibid., Harvard.

25. "Annual General Letter of the American Zulu Mission, 1893," Ibid.

IV

What turned out to be the Afro-American factor in the independent Church movement was by the early 1890s taking shape. Unlike east and west Africa, where large numbers of Africans had been shipped to the Americas as slaves, southern Africa as a geographical region covered in this ~~collection of accounts~~, was little affected by the trans-Atlantic slave trade. But by the middle of the nineteenth century the American presence was much in evidence and an American consul was at Cape; merchants were frequenting the Cape carrying out a thriving business in <sup>agricultural & manufactured goods</sup> ~~which~~ at the same time the Boston based American Zulu mission was becoming firmly established in Natal. These early contracts may have resulted in a few Afro-Americans who worked as hands in ships finding their way to South Africa and if they stayed long enough intermarrying with Black South Africans. According to G.Z. Lethoba, one of the earliest marriages took place between Jacobus Brander, a Sotho man from the Transvaal and Lydia whom he described as "an American Negress"<sup>26</sup>. Their son, Rev. Samuel James Brander was born in Colesburg, at the Cape in 1851.<sup>27</sup> Samuel James Brander was destined to play a prominent part in the independent Church movement at the turn of the twentieth century. In due course some Blacks came to work in the mines as technicians while others opened small businesses in the main towns and mining centers. White Americans seem to have gone to South Africa in even larger numbers than Blacks did and most of them

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26. Alan R. Booth, The United States Experience in South Africa, 1784-1870 (Cape Town, 1976), pp., 83-98.

27. G.Z. Lethoba, The African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa, p 12, unpublished manuscript in the University of Cape Town Library.

worked in the burgeoning industries and commercial sectors in mines, cities and the countryside. By the mid-eighteen nineties White and Black American nationals living in South Africa were estimated to number between 1,500 and 1,800 all told.<sup>28</sup>

Contact between Black South Africans and Black and White Americans led to the spread of ideas between South Africans and Americans on both sides of the Atlantic; more importantly it led to the movement, a small one at that, of Blacks between South Africa and the United States. An indication of the way ideas were spreading between America and South Africa was the lively debate sparked off by Rev. Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba in 1886. Rev. Mzimba, a Free Church of Scotland minister at Lovedale, had that year advised Africans to keep away from politics. Mzimba's thinking was that African participation in politics was likely to ~~vindicate~~<sup>irritate</sup> White missionaries who in turn could feel discouraged ~~from~~<sup>from</sup> providing Africans an education; and if missionaries withdrew from schools, Africans would be the sufferers. Mzimba maintained that he had come to this conclusion after reading a two volume book by the Afro-American historian, George Washington Williams, whom he claimed to have advised Black Americans to improve their lot through education, not politics. Mzimba implored his Lovedale audience: "Let the experience of Africans in America give warning to Africans in Africa to let politics alone at present. Let us be content to be ruled by colonists. Let us only have to do with politics in order to encourage those White men who desire to give us schools and books."<sup>29</sup>

Mzimba's advice was praised by the Whites who had all along feared that White ~~Legacy~~<sup>hegemony</sup> was in danger of being undermined by the numerically superior Blacks. Little wonder that the Afrikaans medium

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28. See United States Consular Letters, Library of Congress, Microcopy I, 191, Roll 18, J.C. Mason, American Consular Agent At Pretoria, 15th. January 1896.

29. Quoted in "The Advice of the Rev. P.J. Mzimba", editorial, Zabantsunda, 2nd. February 1887.

paper, the De Zuid Afrikaan expressed its "great regard" for Rev. Mzimba for engendering the feeling in Blacks that the White man was "baas" (i.e. master). Among the English medium press, the Cape Argus was equally enthused and commented that Mzimba's statement ought to allay fears among Whites that Blacks might clamour to have their own representatives in the Cape legislature.<sup>30</sup> John Tengo Jabavu's paper Imvo Zabantsundu, dissented and criticized Mzimba for uncritically applying the Afro-American experience to a southern African situation that had little in common with its Black American counterpart.<sup>31</sup> The exchange of views that appeared in Imvo in the later half of the 1880s suggests that the emerging African elite in South Africa were informed about the Afro-American experience in the United States of America. A further indication of the Black South African awareness of the Afro-American experience is to be found in an editorial that appeared in Imvo in September 1889. In it the editor encouraged Africans to study the history and conditions of living of Africans of the diaspora to enable themselves to learn lessons that would improve their lot in South Africa. The editorial said, "There are... reasons of a special kind why Kafir young men should learn from books the social problems of the Native races in other parts of the world. Here [in South Africa], there is a hostile [Afrikaner] bond who seek to deprive the Native of education and to cut them out of all hold on the soil. Experience elsewhere shows, that this means perpetual slavery of the bondsman, now abolished, but the slavery of the nominal freeman, who as he cannot own a foot of ground must yield up to the landlord all the fruits of his labour in return for the merest pittance on which a human being can live."<sup>32</sup>

30. Ibid., "Mr. Mzimba's Advice", editorial, Imvo Zabantsundu, 2nd February 1887.

31. "The Advice of the Rev. P.J. Mzimba", loc. cit.

32. See "Education Through Books, No. 11", editorial, Imvo Zabantsundu, 5th. September 1889.

The Black South African quest to know more about Africans of the diaspora was matched by the Afro-American desire to go back to Africa as evangelist<sup>3</sup> teachers, technicians, and entrepreneurs. To be sure the yearning to go back to Africa was as old as the African diaspora itself. Some Afro-Americans in the Americas and the Caribbean who wanted to go back to Africa saw themselves as redeemers of politically White-dominated communities; others ~~invented~~<sup>mooted</sup> evangelical schemes to supplant African religions which appeared to them to ~~negate~~<sup>negate</sup> true religious experience. In 1860, Alexander Crummell, himself an Afro-American missionary to Liberia, urged his fellow countrymen to support missionary work in Africa. "As members of the Church of Christ, the sons of Africa in foreign lands are called upon to bear their part in the vast and sacred work of her evangelization. I might press this point on the grounds of piety, of compassion, or sympathy, but I choose a higher principle. For next to the grand ideas which pertain to the infinite, ~~this~~<sup>His</sup> attributes and perfections, there is none loftier and grander than that of Duty."<sup>33</sup> Crummel also encouraged artisans and businessmen to emigrate to Africa, but he made it clear that in his thinking missionaries were more useful to Africa than were laymen.

But the plea for Blacks to go to Africa did not meet with universal approval: there were some Blacks who opposed the back-to-Africa movement on the ground that the Afro-American had a duty to fight for his civil rights on American soil and not imagine that Africa had a ready refuge for Africans of the diaspora. This group of opponents

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33. Alexander Crummell, The Relations and Duties of Free Coloured Men in America to Africa (Hartford, Conn., 1861), p. 36. See also J. Ayodele Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945 (Oxford, 1973), pp. 18-35.



included the New York City lawyer, T. McCants Stewart and the historian George Washington Williams. In 1884 Williams wrote: "Emigration has virtue in the judgement of some of our discouraged and gloomy brethren. This is an error of judgement. America is the theatre of the Negro's noblest acts. The graves of his ancestry are here. He was married and was given in marriage here. His children were born here; and, while undergoing the crucial test of manhood and citizenship, he cannot afford to withdraw."<sup>34</sup> Some critics of the back-to-Africa movement pointed out that the tropical African environment might prove fatal to the Black settlers, who had become acclimatized to the temperate regions of the American continent.<sup>35</sup> One critic, Rev. T.E. Knox said: ".... to emigrate, we will have to brave the perils and hardships accompanied with disease, sickness and death which always follow such an undertaking".<sup>36</sup> Instead, Knox, like Williams, suggested that Blacks remain in the United States to fight for their rights there, which in his view was the highest form of displaying manhood.

But proponents of the back-to-Africa school of thought contained committed activists who were determined to fulfill their mission at any cost. One such activist was Bishop Henry McNeil Turner, a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E. Church). And it was largely through Turner's efforts that a link was established between the Ethiopian Church of South Africa and the A.M.E. Church of the United States.

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34. George Washington Williams, The Negro as a Political Problem (Boston, 1884), p. 34.
35. See, for example, "African Colonization, Bishop Turner and T. McCants Stewart Disagree...", The New York Age, 3rd October 1891.
36. T.T.Knox, "The Negro is at Home Here", The Christian Recorder, 15th. May 1890, on microfilm, Interdenominational Theological centre, Atlanta, Georgia.

Turner persistently issued impassioned pleas to Black Americans to emigrate to Africa. He believed that the Afro-Americans ought to return to Africa for three main reasons:

- (i) to develop Africa materially and spiritually;
- (ii) to forge black solidarity of Pan-Africanism; and
- (iii) to vindicate the apparent contradictions inherent in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, chief among them being the Black man's failure to understand why a loving God could have let the traffic in human beings go on for centuries without any apparent intervention.

Turner tried to resolve this contradiction by positing that slavery and the slave trade were part of the divine plan. Turner's divine plan seems to have merely explained away an appalling chapter in the history of Black people. Thus on one occasion he was reported to have said that "neither the Southern [United States] man nor the Northern [White] man was responsible for the Negro being on American soil, but that it was through the powerful workings of an all-wise God that the Black man came. He said it was God alone who brought him here to start him on a new career of usefulness, if he would embrace the possibilities awaiting him. It was not the desire on the part of man to enslave another fellow being, but when this country [U.S.A.] was first settled the settlers were in quest of labour and by God's providence the Negro came in answer to the call for labour.... He believed that contact with this powerful and dominating White race would fit the Negro for the redemption of Africa." And in the process of fulfilling this divine plan, the Negro would also be accomplishing a

measure of being "a full man"<sup>37</sup>

While Turner and other Black elites were wrangling over the issue of emigrating to Africa, a Black American choir took the initiative and went on a singing tour to South Africa in 1890. The choir was variously called the "Virginia Jubilee Singers", the "McAdoo Minstrels", or the "Virginia Concert Company"; it comprised of ten members (four men and six women) and half the members were graduates of Hampton Institute, a Black College in Virginia. The leader of the group was Orpheus Myron McAdoo, a native of North Carolina who graduated from Hampton Institute in 1876. McAdoo formed the Virginia Jubilee Singers in 1889 partly to raise money for his alma mater, which was hardly two decades old in 1889.<sup>38</sup> The Choir toured Britain, Australia and New Zealand before going to South Africa in May 1890.

By the time the choir toured South Africa, McAdoo had become an accomplished performer. A contemporary newspaper in Australia had this to say about his singing: "Mr. O. McAdoo gave a bass solo, I am King o'er land and sea, in which the capability of the vocalist thoroughly exceeded all expectations, the strength and mellowness of his rich, deep voice being used with splendid effect. In response to a vociferous recall, the singer gave a feeling audition of that plaintive, yet

37. See "Bishop H.M. Turner, His Lecture on 'whence Came the Negro'?", Voice of Missions, May 1894. See also, "Speech of Bishop H.M. Turner Before the National Council of Coloured Men which met in Cincinnati, Ohio, November 28 1893", Voice of Missions, December 1893.

38. See "Items of Interest, McAdoo, Orpheus M. '76", Hampton Institute Archives, Hampton, Virginia, U.S.A.

beautifully pathetic old plantation melody, 'Old Black Joe'.<sup>39</sup> The choir justified this Australian appraisal and its performance was praised by <sup>both</sup> the Blacks and Whites during its nineteen month tour of South Africa. A report in the Kaffraria Watchman, a Cape colony newspaper, recorded African response to the choir's presence and performance in South Africa. It said: " While the Jubilee Singers were here the natives could not quite understand what sort of people they were. Some of them hesitated to class them as Kafirs, as they seemed so smart and tidy in appearance, and moved about with all the ease and freedom among the White people that a high state of civilization and education alone can give. Occassionally, however, a Kafir would salute a 'Singer' in his own language, and when he failed to get a reply he would look puzzled, exclaim Kwoky! and walk away wondering how his 'brother' did not return the salute. The more of our natives who attended the concerts were simply <sup>n</sup> raptured with the singing and some of them, I believe, would have pawned even their hat for the wherewithal to go to them. Their admiration of their American cousins must have been very great, for the classic crowd was heard to say in the deep drawling style - 'We shall never again hear such spendid singing until we go to Heaven.'<sup>40</sup>

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39. See "The Jubilee Singers' Concert", The Castlemaine Leader, 18th. May 1892. See also, Edward Osborne, in Cape Town, to Principal of Hampton Institute, 21st. October 1890, in Southern Workman February 1891, where he says: "What a wonderful voice Orpheus McAdoo has!".
40. See Southern Workman January 1891, p. 134, being excerpt from the Kaffraria Watchman. See also, Eugene McAdoo to the editor, Southern Workman, January 1894, p. 15.

The Kafraria Watchman's observations are reinforced by an editorial that appeared in Imvo in October, 1890 when clearly praised the choirs performance and assessed its impact on South African society. The editorial suggests that Black pride was enhanced by the Afro-American visitors. "As Africans we are, ofcourse proud of the achievement of these of our race. Their [Jubilee Singers] visit will do their countrymen here no end of good. Already it has suggested reflections to many [Whites] who, without such a demonstration, would have remained skeptical as to the possibility, not to say probability, of the natives of this country being raised to anything above remaining as perpetual heavers of wood and drawers of water. The recognition of the latent abilities of the natives, and of the fact that they may yet play a part peculiar to themselves in the human brotherhood, cannot fail to exert an influence for the mutual good of all the inhabitants of this country".<sup>41</sup> Imvo described Black South Africans as those "who escaped transportation to America" to be enslaved surmised that in the work of the Jubilee tour past and contemporary and surmised that the presence of the Jubilee singers in South Africa would arouse an interest among Black South Africans to study the past and contemporary history of Afro-Americans.<sup>42</sup>

41. See "The Jubilee Singers", editorial, Imvo Zabantsundu, 16th. October 1890.

42. Ibid.

The presence of the Jubilee Singers in South Africa enabled the visitors to observe South African society at close range and to share their impressions <sup>of it</sup> with their countrymen in the United States. In this respect the troupe's leader, Myron McAdoe seems to have been a perceptive observer of South African life. One aspect of South African life that struck McAdoe and which he criticized was racial discrimination. Even though the white republics treated the Afro-American visitors as honorary whites to enable them to move about without much difficulty, McAdoe had harsh things to say about the white rulers of South Africa. He wrote: "There is no country in the world where prejudice is so strong as here in [South] Africa. The native today is treated as badly as ever the slave was treated in Georgia [in U.S.A.]. Here in Africa the native laws are most unjust; such as any Christian people would be ashamed of. Do you credit a law in a civilized community compelling every man with a dark skin, even though he is a citizen of another country, to be in his house by 9 o'clock at night, or he is arrested? Before I could go into parts of [South] Africa, I had to get out a passport and a special letter from the governors and Presidents of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, or we would all be arrested". McAdoe reported that Afro-American workers in South Africa were also discriminated against.

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43. McAdoe to General Armstrong (Principal of Hampton) in "A Letter from South Africa. Black Laws in the Orange Free State of Africa", Southern Workman, November 1890, p. 120.

A few months after his arrival, McAdoo arranged for an African young man called Titus K. Bongiwe to study at Hampton Institute on a \$70 scholarship provided by the choir leader. Unfortunately Titus never reached Virginia; he died on his way to Hampton in what appears to have been a traffic accident in London. Thus the attempt to send a second student (the first was John L. Dube in 1887) to America was to no avail. Yet sufficient interest in Hampton was aroused by McAdoo's ill fated attempt: at least five South African students wrote to the Principal of Hampton applying for places and financial support to study at McAdoo's Alma mater, but it appears help was not forthcoming. The editor of Hampton's student newspaper, Southern Workman pointed out that it was too expensive to pay for the passage and school fees of African students. Hampton Administrators may have had good reasons to be cautious about admitting African students for West Africans had enrolled as students at Hampton as early as the 1870s.<sup>44</sup>

While the Jubilee singers did not experience racial discrimination owing to their honorary white status, other Afro-Americans who lived in South Africa from the 1880s onwards, some employed as technicians and others as entrepreneurs were subjected to racial discrimination as were all Black South Africans; only when a Black American's citizenship was established, usually well after the indignity had been suffered, was the Afro-American accorded some respect or redress.

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44. See letters by McAdoo, William W. Stofile, K. Charles Kumkani, et al, Southern Workman, February 1891. For West African Graduates of Hampton, see "Hampton in Africa", Ibid., June 1897, pp. 120-121. "Our returned African student", Ibid., January 1891, p. 137.

A case in point was that of the Afro-American, John Ross who was assaulted by a White policeman in the Transvaal, (also called the South African Republic) on 15th. January 1893.<sup>45</sup> In September that year Ross sued the Secretary of State of the Transvaal for £2000 damages for what he called 'The insult and degradation that I have been exposed to by having been publicly whipped ... by a policeman of the South African Republic, without any trial and without just cause or reason'.<sup>46</sup> Ross was supported by American Consuls stationed in Johannesburg and Cape Town and Charles Williams, the consul in Johannesburg confirmed some of the observations made by Byron McAdoo in 1896. In one report Williams wrote: "I have the honour to report to you that three coloured American citizens called upon ~~to~~ me today [14th. April 1894] <sup>re</sup> ~~re~~ specting their privileges in the Transvaal: there being a law here as doubtless you are aware, that no [negro] is allowed to promenade on the sidewalks of this town, under penalty of being fined ~~or~~ whipped".<sup>47</sup> Williams expressed the view that

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45. See W.W. Van Ness to Secretary of State, Pretoria, 15th. January 1893, United States Consular letters, Library of Congress, Microcopy F. 191; Clement E. Keto, "Black American Involvement in South Africa's Race Issue", Issue: A Quarterly Journal of Opinion (1973), p. 6-11.
46. See U.S. Consular letters, Ibid., claim of John Ross to Dr. J.W. Leydø, Secretary of State, Pretoria, 16th. September, 1893; Keto, "Black American Involvement", loc. cit.
47. Charles Williams to Charles H. Benedict, U.S. Consul in Cape Town, 14th. April 1894, U.S. Consular letters, Ibid.; Charles H. Benedict to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, 23rd. April 1894, Ibid.



the status of Americans in South Africa could be improved if the United States signed treaties of friendship with the white republics of South Africa, but his suggestion came to naught. On his part John Ross seems to have won his protracted case against the Secretary of State of the Transvaal, as was reported by a Black American visitor to South Africa in 1898.<sup>48</sup>

That the Jubilee Singers fired the imagination of Black South Africans and were a model to be emulated was amply recorded by the White press as well as by Jabavu's Imvo. And just as McAdoo's troupe had been founded partly to raise some money for Hampton Institute, so was a Black South African choir organized ostensibly to raise about £10,000 with which to build technical schools for Africans in South Africa. The leaders of the choir were Paul Kiniwe, an African businessman from Port Elizabeth, Messrs. Balmer, Howell, and Letty - all White men, and a white pianist called Miss Clark.<sup>49</sup>

Paul Kiniwe claimed that he had originally organized the choir single-handed but that Whites <sup>subsequently</sup> took over the leadership and he himself was hired as an assistant. Kiniwe recruited choir members from Lovedale, Kimberley and King Williamstown; among the recruits was Paul's own sister Eleonor Kiniwe, and Charlotte Kanye, a girl from the Transvaal who was destined to introduce Black South African

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48. As is suggested in a letter by Bishop Henry McNeal Turner to the editor, 16th April 1898, in "Bishop Turner sees President Paul Kruger", Voice of Missions, 18th June 1898.

49. See Paul Kiniwe, "Affairs of the African Choir", Imvo Zabantsundu, 1th March 1892; "The African choir", The Christian Express, 1st August 1892, p. 122.

church secessionists to the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States.

"The African choir" as it was popularly known, made a successful singing tour of South Africa early in 1891. This spurred the organizers to undertake a singing tour of Great Britain in July 1891. The Governor at the Cape ~~Port~~ Loch, who attended one of the concerts in Cape Town, bade them farewell and wished the choir a success in Britain. Unfortunately things did not go well for the African Choir. The misfortunes ranged from poor remuneration <sup>paid to</sup> ~~for~~ the singers, inadequate clothing for members of the choir, sex scandal (i.e. one of the girls was impregnated by a member of the troupe) to poor attendance at the concert shows. In the end the choir was stranded in London and members were assisted by charities to go back home. Paul Xiniwe reported that British concert goers were reluctant to support a troupe whose managers were non-Christians.<sup>50</sup> Another factor accounting for the choir's troubles was that Paul Xiniwe was not paid the amount of money he had been promised and seemed to avenge by leaking <sup>to the press</sup> some of the choir's unfortunate goings-on in England. The choir returned to South Africa in disarray and a flurry of criticisms of the choir and its managers appeared in South African papers. A major criticism levelled against the managers was that they had inadequate

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50. Xiniwe, "African Choir", loc.cit.;  
"The African Choir", The Christian Express,  
1st. May 1891, pp. 78-79.

funds to make the tour financially viable. In the aftermath the British Colonial Secretary, Lord Ripon, was sufficiently concerned to warn Black South Africans against taking such uncertain tours in future. He said: "I would suggest that it might be advisable that natives of the [Cape] Colony should be warned ... that they run serious risks in accepting engagements of this character".<sup>51</sup> But, as will be shown later, managers of the African Choir remained undaunted and staged an even more ambitious singing tour of the United States shortly after the Choir's return from Britain.

## VI

In the meantime Black South Africans were increasingly voicing their disapproval of White secular Church governments. In most cases African Christian critics of church government were equally sharp in their condemnation of the way Whites were ruling Blacks. In this aspect the Ethiopian movement (or Independent church movement) was as much spiritual in character as it was political. In the early 1890s another group of church secessionists was added to those already in existence, namely that of Ngidi Mbiyana in Natal and Tile's Thembu Church in the Cape. This time the centre of activity was in the Transvaal and the leader of the secessionists there was a Wesleyan Methodist minister called the Rev. Mangena Maake Mokone. Mokone was born in Bokgaga in Sekukuniland on 15th June 1851. In his youth Mokone experienced some of the aftermaths of the Mfecane, such as the attack by the Swazi in about 1864, which left his parents without land and young Mangena was obliged to go and work on a sugar plantation in Natal in 1870. It was while

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51. See "Lord Ripon and the Native Choirs", Imvo Zabantsundu, 9th. February 1893. Cf. Edwin C. Howell, in a 'letter to the editor, 25th December 1891 (written from the Temperance Hotel, London), in "The African Choir", The Christian Express, 1st. March 1892, p. 35, where he defended the managers of the choir as blameless.

he was in Natal that Mangena was converted to Methodism and he subsequently became a local preacher. He was ordained a minister in the early 1880s and was sent to work in Pretoria. In 1888 Rev. Mokone was ordained an elder of the Wesleyan Church; a year later he became head of the Kilnerton Institution in Pretoria.<sup>52</sup>

Rev. Mokone's tenure as principal of Kilnerton was disillusioning for he discovered that White ministers and laymen discriminated against Africans. Racial discrimination ranged from district meetings where Blacks were separated from Whites but were required to have a White Chairman and a White secretary; a White ministers who were paid higher salaries and fringe benefits which were denied to their Black counterpart, to the flouting of Mokone's authority at Kilnerton, where junior White laymen dismissed students without the principal's knowledge or ~~permission?~~ <sup>permission?</sup> This state of affairs persuaded Mokone to pose rhetorical questions regarding the Wesleyan Church's practices: "If all this is so, where is justice? Where is brother<sup>ly</sup> love? Where is Christian sympathy?" Mokone concluded his indictment by asserting that God would vindicate his decision to resign from the Wesleyan Church.<sup>53</sup>

According to the acting superintendent of the Methodist <sup>Church</sup> in the Transvaal at the time, Rev. George Weavind, Rev. Mokone had made up his mind to resign in 1891 but delayed his action owing to the illness of the superintendent Rev. Owen Watkins. A year later, on 24th. October

52. Lethoba, The A.M.E. Church in South Africa, pp. 13-16.

53. See Josephus R. Coan, The Expansion of Missions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa, 1896-1908, Ph.D. Thesis, 1961, Hartford Seminary Foundation (University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan), p. 440.

1892 Mokone wrote his letter of resignation to Rev. Weavind, saying he now wanted "to serve God in his own way"; Mokone left Kilnerton on 1st. November 1892 and settled in Marabastad, an African location in Pretoria from where he again wrote Rev. Weavind informing him that he was starting an independent mission among Africans. In response Weavind opposed Mokone's resignation and persuaded him to rescind it in vain.<sup>54</sup>

On his part Mokone was quick to organize his new Church and to recruit new members and officers. Mokone seceded with 57 members and was joined by Rev. Samuel James Brander (who had resigned from the Anglican church in 1890) who brought along 157 new members to Mokone's church. Early in 1893 Mokone was joined by Reuben Dhlamini, Jantye Thompson, Joshua Mphela, Jantje T. Tantsi, and Abraham Mngqibisa - all who had been local preachers in the Wesleyan Church.<sup>55</sup>

Rev. Mokone launched his church formally on 5th. November 1893, calling it "The Ethiopian Church", a name that reflected Mokone's ambition to evangelize the entire African continent. Mokone was reobligated to the Ethiopian Church in September 1894. By 1895 the Ethiopian Church had attracted additional clerics: Jacobus Xaba and James Mata Dwane, both former Wesleyan ministers, and Rev. Kanyane who had broken with Anglicans; all three <sup>e</sup> new ministers were obligated to the Ethiopian Church in 1895.<sup>56</sup>

Mokone's quest to evangelize Africa received a boost in 1895. The source of strength at this crucial time in the history of the Ethiopian Church when its viability was <sup>uncertain</sup> ~~certain~~, came from the United States,

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54. See Rev. George Weavind to Marshall Bartley, 26th November 1892, Transvaal Box, 1891-1896, Wesleyan Methodist Missiopyary Society Archives, London. N.B. Methodist Archives have since been moved to the University of Manchester.
55. Lethoba, The A.M.E. Church in South Africa, pp. 14-16.
56. R.R. Wright, et al (editors), The Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Philadelphia, 1947), p.318; J. R. Coan, op. cit., pp. 93-95.

where the African Choir had again tried to make another concert tour in 1894 after the disastrous tour of England in 1891 and 1892. But misfortune again dogged the African Choir as they ran short of funds and were forced to disband in Cleveland, Ohio. Fortunately, one of the members of the Choir, Charlotte Manye, was rescued by the A.M.E. Church, which offered her a place and scholarship to study at Wilberforce University in January 1895. She immediately wrote her sister, Mrs. Kate Makanya, who lived in Johannesburg and informed her of her new venture as a student. A chance visit to Mrs. Makanya at this time by her uncle, the Rev. Mokone enabled the Ethiopian Church leader to learn about the existence of the A.M.E. Church in America.<sup>57</sup> Mokone, who was<sup>s</sup> dying to get some support for his fledgling church, took the initiative to write Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, the presiding Bishop of the A.M.E. Church. In May 1895 Mokone wrote Turner acquainting him with the founding of the Ethiopian Church in South Africa, pointing out that "It is entirely managed by us Blacks of South Africa".<sup>58</sup> He requested Turner's assistance in educating South African students at U.S. colleges and Universities; he also asked for some advice on how he could effectively lead the Ethiopian Church. In response Turner wrote Mokone encouraging him to build up his Church and he also sent him a copy of <sup>the</sup> Voice of Missions, an organ of the A.M.E. Church. The paper seems to have impressed Rev. Xaba, the Secretary of the Ethiopian Church, for he wrote: "The Voice of Missions, your Lordship sent us over, is a very, very important and instructive paper to a

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57. Coan, Op. cit., pp. 101-102.

58. Ibid., Appendix II, p. 442.

Christian community ... its circulation among us has created an extraordinary reinvigoration ...". Rev. Xaba went on to say he was heartened to learn from the Voice that Afro-Americans regarded Africans as their Kith and kin and that Black Americans wanted to evangelize Africa. Now that he had learnt about this latent Black brotherhood, Xaba could now implore the A.M.E. Church to think of the southern extremity<sup>a</sup> of Africa where the Christian gospel had merely been "half baked, and half uncooked".<sup>59</sup>

Turner hardly needed any persuasion since he was already a committed Pan-Africanist and advocate of the back-to-Africa sentiment. In one appeal to the Church published in the Voice, Turner urged young men to go to South as missionaries and workers, pointing out that the "climate is almost the same as Georgia and Tennessee. No one can raise a howl about African fever in Cape Colony, for there they have snow frost, winter and summer".<sup>60</sup>

Letters that were published in A.M.E. Church organs suggest that there was a lively correspondence between members of the Ethiopian Church and Bishop Turner in which messages of solidarity were exchanged. The thinking among Ethiopian Church leaders was moving towards a closer link with the A.M.E. Church. A decisive step to accomplish this end was taken at the Third Annual Conference of the Ethiopian Church held in March 1896, when delegates voted to affiliate their Church to the A.M.E. Church. The preamble to the resolution on affiliation under-

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59. Xaba to Turner, 26th. October 1895, in "South African Letter", Voice of Missions, December 1895; Mokone and Xaba to Turner, 18th. September 1895, in "Ethiopian Mission", Voice of Missions, December 1895.

60. See Turner, in "Letter from South Africa", Voice of Missions, March 1896.

scored Mokone's expressed wish at the launching of the Ethiopian Church in 1893 to evangelize Africa. The preamble said: "This conference is strongly of the opinion that a union with the African Methodist Episcopal Church will not only be hailed by our people, but would be the means of evangelizing numerous tribes of this vast continent".<sup>61</sup> Rev. James Mata Dwane was sent to New York to effect the affiliation and this was carried out on 19th. June 1896, the Ethiopian Church of South Africa becoming the 14th. District of the A.M.E. Church. Dwane was appointed General Superintendent and Vicar-Bishop of the 14th. District. He returned to South Africa in September 1896.<sup>62</sup>

61. L.L. Berry, A Century of Missions of the A.M.E. Church, 1840-1940 (New York, 1940), pp. 76-78; Wright, Encyclopedia, pp. 318-319.

62. Ibid.



## VII

The A.M.E. Church Council of Bishops clearly violated protocol

by appointing Dwane instead of Mokone to head the 14th. District. *But this did not seem to bother the founder of the Ethiopian Church.* Although a senior in rank in the Ethiopian Church, Mokone accepted

Dwane's headship and the latter was quick to assert his position as soon as he returned to South Africa. Dwane conveyed<sup>N</sup> the first conference of the 14th. District at Queenstown in the Cape in April 1897. At that conference, Dwane reported on the success of his mission to America, which included the affiliation of the Ethiopian Church to the A.M.E. Church and the promise to build a college in South Africa at the expense of the mother church; he emphasized that the Council of Bishops, the highest governing body of the A.M.E. Church, expected loyal support from church members in the 14th. District in South Africa.<sup>63</sup> Following the Queenstown meeting there was again a lively correspondence between members of the 14th. District and the American end of the A.M.E. Church and the South Africans kept the Afro-Americans informed about the activities of their District. One of the issues Bishop Dwane and his supporters kept alive was the need to build a school in South Africa and in most letters it was not clear what sort of institutions they had in mind, whether it was going to be a High School, Technical College, Theological Seminary, or a University. In February 1897 Dwane wrote: "Our great need in this country is a first class institution of learning... people in this country are very anxious about higher education. I hope the A.M.E. Church will soon take up this question in earnest. You have not the least idea, my Lord, how much depends on this question. The failure of the White Churches to do so is a source of much discontent,

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63. <sup>e</sup> Barry, op.cit., pp. 76-78; Wright, op.cit., pp. 318-319.

and our church must take the matter up.<sup>64</sup> However, much leaders in the 14th. District differed on the type of institution they would built in South Africa, it is quite clear that from 1897 onwards the quest for higher education became one of the liveliest issues animating the Ethiopian movement; members of Ethiopian Churches were no longer content to <sup>help</sup> help on the removal of racial discrimination alone as the goal of Church independency; they emphasized that the attainment of a good education was a sine qua non to total liberation. And in this new vision of African advancement through education, Ethiopian leaders saw eye to eye with even some African elites who were essentially opposed to the independent Church movement. In due course even the veteran <sup>Journalist</sup> ~~founder~~ John Temgo Jabavu, who occasionally wrote scathing editorials on Ethiopianism was to join hands with disparate groups of African leaders in an effort to found an African University College,<sup>65</sup> a kind of "Tuskegee in South Africa".

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64. Dwane to Turner, 25nd February 1897, in "Our South African Superintendent Writes", Voice of Missions. 1st. May 1897.

65. Several news items on the Native College movement were published in Imvo Zabantsandu. See, for example, "The Proposed Native College, opinions of the Press", 28th. November 1905; "Native Central College, opinions of the Press", 12th. December 1906; "£1000 for the College", 6th. February 1907 - all articles in Imvo.

Meanwhile, Bishop Turner received several letters from the 14th. District, urging him to pay a visit to South Africa. In one letter Presiding Elder Mangena Mekone underscored Turner's sentiments on Afro-American emigration and the <sup>related</sup> ~~was~~ theme of Black solidarity. He implored Turner: "Here in Africa all the nations are gathered [united] except Negroes, my own people, English, Dutch, Germans, Hollanders, French, Russian, Jews, Swedish, Arabian, German Jews. All are doing the work [colonizing], but we are sleeping and will not come to visit the fatherland and then when all is taken ... then we shall begin to cry, like Esau ... Let Africans teach one another --- I am sure we are not inferior to any [race]." <sup>66</sup> The upshot of these appeals and invitations was that Turner, who had previously paid two visits to West Africa, decided to visit South Africa in 1898.

Not that Turner was the first Afro-American cleric to set foot on South African soil. The National Baptist Convention (also known as Black Baptists) sent their agent to South Africa in 1895. Rev. R.A. Jackson, the agent in question, seems to have mounted a modest missionary enterprise in South Africa; by 1898 he had been joined by Rev. and Mrs. John Tule, Rev. George Thomas, Rev. J.I. Buchanan; the Baptists had by that time founded stations at Cape Town, Queenstown and Middle Drift and had 414 full members all told. The Church had also sent four African students to the United States: Monte Kama and Alfred Impey, who enrolled at Extein Nerten and Shaw University respectively,

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66. Mekone<sup>e</sup> to the editor, 22nd. May 1897, in "Grand Letter from South Africa", Voice of Missions, 1st. July 1897.

while Isaiah Nyathi and Alfred Seeme entered Wayland Seminary and Benedict College respectively in Virginia and a Malawian, John Chitembura Chitembura.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless the visit of Bishop Turner was so aggressive and flamboyant that it dwarfed the missionary efforts of Black Baptists in South Africa. Upon his arrival Turner set the tone of his mission<sup>n</sup> by announcing that he was "mighty glad to get my feet once more on the soil of renowned Africa -- - My Masters' business requires haste." Turner was dismayed to find that only a handful of Blacks were ordained into the ministry of Protestant Churches. He thus welcomed the Ethiopian spirit in ferment that led Africans to "discover that Churches of their own race --- would be ~~of~~ far/better/ --- than worshiping among Whites all the time, where they are compelled to occupy a subordinate status".<sup>68</sup> Turner sought to improve on this record by ordaining into the A.M.E. Church ministry, thirty one elders, twenty deacons, and reordained at their own request all the Ethiopian ministers who had been consecrated in the Ethiopian Church before its merger with the A.M.E. Church. Rev. Dwane was confirmed Vicar-Bishop of the 14th. District and he was conferred with the power to ordain ministers into the A.M.E. Church.

Bishop Turner did not restrict his activities to religious issues alone; he dabbled in politics with the fervour of one who had gained some experience as State Representative in Georgia and also one who felt passionately that Black people should improve their lot in Africa.

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67. L.G. Jordan, Up the Ladder in Foreign Missions (Nashville, Tenn. 1904). pp. 15-24;  
P.S.L. Hutchins to the editor, 13th. July 1898, in "About Rev. Jackson of Cape Town, South Africa", Voice of Missions, 1st. August 1898; "Foreign Mission Notes by Secretary Jordan, 8th. July 1898", Ibid.

68. Wright, Encyclopaedia, p. 319.

and in the diaspora. It appears that Turner concealed from Whites some of his political activities arising from his moral outrage at the disabilities suffered by Black South Africans. He did so by speaking on non-controversial subjects in public and <sup>even</sup> at one meeting confirmed some popular beliefs among Whites concerning Black people. For example he urged Black South Africans to "improve themselves morally and intellectually, for only upon education could they depend to rise from ignorance and sloth".<sup>69</sup> A Cape newspaper reported on Turner's advice approvingly, describing the Bishop as a "powerful man with an equally powerful voice" who spoke in a "very interesting and a very telling manner".<sup>70</sup> Turner was well received in Afrikaaner communities and had an audience with Paul Kruger, president of the Transvaal, who encouraged him to evangelize Blacks.<sup>71</sup> At first Turner did not <sup>46</sup> grasp the motive for his favoured treatment; thus when he sent a report from Bloemfontein, Turner said: "But most of the Boers, in our opinion, are kind men. We were never treated better. They treated us to everything but whisky, and that has been offered forty times".<sup>72</sup> Later Turner saw the continued Afrikaaner hospitality for what it was and wrote more perceptively: "The President [Kruger] received our Church with great cordiality, though I must confess, if reports be true, it was not so much from love of it as from distrust of White missionaries, whom he greatly dislikes".<sup>73</sup> Turner returned to America in May 1898.

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69. See "An American Bishop at the Opera House", Cape Argus, 25th. April 1898.

70. Ibid.

71. Wright, Op.cit., p. 319.

72. See "Bishop Turner sees President Paul Kruger", Voice of Missions, 15th. June 1898.

73. H.M. Turner, "My Trip to South Africa", African Methodist Episcopal Review, April 1899.

## VIII

The A.M.E. Church sought to maintain the momentum generated by Turner's visit in the 14th. District by updating Bishop Dwane's leadership skills. The Church did so by inviting Dwane to America to acquaint him with the policy of the Church and with some technics of running a district. He arrived in New York on the 26th. October and spent the next two months lecturing on Christianity in South Africa and also learning the history and doctrine of the A.M.E. Church.<sup>74</sup> Dwane seems to have acquired some popularity with A.M.E. Church audiences for some missionary societies were formed in his honour while some Church buildings were named after him.<sup>75</sup> Before he left the United States in January 1899 Dwane was again promised by the Council of Bishops, just as they had done in 1896, that the A.M.E. Church would shortly build a school in the 14th. District.<sup>76</sup> By March 1899 A.M.E. Church membership in South Africa had risen to 12,500; the Church supported sixteen students at American colleges including one at Meharry Medical College in Tennessee.<sup>77</sup> Yet in spite of its apparent interest in higher education the A.M.E. Church seemed unable to build a school in South Africa. The official history of the A.M.E. Church points out that the delay in funding the construction of the school was deliberate, and steamed from the

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74. See "A Vicar Bishop Dwane of South Africa Visits this Country by Special Orders," Voice of Missions, December 1898.
75. See "Vicar Bishop Dwane, the Connecting Link" Voice of Missions, 15th. March 1899; Nannie Bush, in "Dwane Missionary Society", Voice of Missions, November 1898.
76. See "Dwane, the Connecting Link", loc.cit.; H.B. Parks, "Kaffir University", Voice of Missions, March 1899; "The Queenstown College", Voice of Missions, 15th. March 1899.
77. See "Dwane, the Connecting Link", loc.cit.

Church's reluctance to entrust a large sum of money (about \$10,000) to a bishop who was new at his job.<sup>78</sup> Yet Dwane seems to have staked his clerical prestige on his ability to persuade the Council of Bishops to build a school in South Africa.

The sensitive man he was, Dwane saw the <sup>A.M.E.</sup> Church's delay in building a school as a slap in the face; the procrastination also created doubts in the Vicar's mind regarding the viability of the A.M.E. Church. The upshot was that Dwane secretly approached the Anglican bishop of Cape Town with a view to joining the Church of England in a special capacity that would allow him and his followers to maintain a district identity within the Church. At the same time Dwane unleashed a process to dismantle the 14th. District. He convened a special conference of the A.M.E. Church at Queenstown on 6th. October 1899. At that meeting, which was attended by 39 ministers of the A.M.E. Church, Dwane opened his address by extolling the validity of the episcopacy of the Church of England and proceeded to cast some doubt on the legitimacy of the origin of the A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia in 1787; he then <sup>un</sup>rowdly criticized Bishop Turner for his failure to build a school in the 14th. District. A supporter of Turner reported: "Dwane reiterated your unfaithfulness in promises and rehearsed nearly every point of your [Turner] failure and weakness."<sup>79</sup> Dwane then called for a motion to withdraw the

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78. Wright, Encyclopaedia, pp. 319-320; Parks, "Kaffir University", loc.cit.

79. See J.Z. Tantsi to Turner, 1st November 1899, in "Letters from South Africa; Our Church Troubles in the Dark Continent Ventilated," Voice of Missions, January 1900. "The A.M.E. Conference of Queenstown," The Christian Express, 1st March 1900.

14th District from the A.M.E. Church. After a heated debate in which some members challenged the constitutionality of the meeting, the motion to secede was carried anyway by 35 votes to 4 against, with Presiding Elder Mokone voting for secession.<sup>80</sup> Bishop Dwane, who had had prior contacts with the Anglican Bishop in Cape Town, was able to negotiate a special affiliation of his group of 3000 seceders from the A.M.E. Church with the Church of England; the agreement stipulated that Dwane's group (which was called The Order of Ethiopia, or Ibandla Lase Tiyopia) would retain a district identity within the Anglican Church. The Order of Ethiopia was formally accepted into the Anglican Church in August 1900.<sup>81</sup>

In November 1899 the four ministers who had voted against secession - P.S. Kuze, Abraham Magqibesa, William G. Mashaloba, and J.Z. Tantsi - met to seek ways of preventing more secessions and to strengthen themselves. Shortly after this meeting Rev. Mokone rescinded his resignation from the A.M.E. Church and rejoined the loyalists. He informed the Council of Bishops about his short flirtation with the Dwameites and urged ~~them~~ <sup>the mother church</sup> to send a representative to pacify the 14th District.<sup>82</sup> Turner sent Rev. I.N. Fitzpatrick to South Africa early in 1900 to act as superintendent of the 14th. District. A year later the Church sent Rev. Levi Jenkins Coppin to become the first Afro-American resident Bishop in South Africa. Fitzpatrick and Coppin brought some order to the 14th. District and the former <sup>succeeded in</sup> persuading the Cape government to allow A.M.E. Church ministers to solemnise marriages.<sup>83</sup>

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80. Ibid.; "The South African Church Troubles", Voice of Missions, December 1899.
81. See "The Episcopal Church of the Province of South Africa"; "The Ethiopian Order", The Christian Express, 1st. October 1900.
82. Tantsi Mokone, et al, in "Letters from S.Africa", Voice of Missions, Jan 1900
83. See Fitzpatrick to Prime Minister W.P. Shreiner, 26th. February 1900; A. Dale (for Shreiner) to I.N. Fitzpatrick, 3rd. March 1900, Voice of Missions, 1st. April 1900; Charles Spenser Smith, A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church... (Philadelphia, 1922), pp. 221-223.



The outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) braked the growth of the A.M.E. Church as martial law curtailed the activities of the Church's evangelists. Nevertheless, the Church opened some branches in neighbouring territories. In 1900 Willie Mokalapa, a Sotho evangelist, broke with the French Protestant Missionary Society (Paris Evangelicals) in Buluzi (Barotseland) and started an A.M.E. Church; he was supported by the Lozi King Lebusi Lewanika. In the same year the A.M.E. Church planted a station in Lesotho.<sup>84</sup> In Southern Rhodesia 1900 also saw some renewal of the A.M.E. Church, which had a lull since 1898 when evangelist M.C. Ncube, who founded the A.M.E. Church in Bulawayo in 1896,<sup>1896</sup> broke away to join the Dutch Reformed Church. The A.M.E. Church branch in Bulawayo was reopened by Rev. S.J. Mabote in 1900.<sup>85</sup> Shortly afterwards Rev. Micah Magatho, who had broken with the Dutch Reformed Church, took charge of the A.M.E. Church. At about the turn of the century a former migrant worker in South Africa, Chari Chidembo introduced the First Ethiopian Church (F.E.C.) in the Bikita district. But Chidembo and other Ethiopians such as Matthew Zvimba who founded the Church of the White Bird (Chiri Chena) in 1915, made little headway owing to constant harassment at the hands of Rhodesian government authorities.<sup>86</sup>

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84. Terence Ranger, "The 'Ethiopian' Episode in Barotseland, 1900-1905", Rhodes-Livingstone Journal, 37 (June, 1965) pp. 26-41; Edward Shillito, Francois Coillard: A Wayfaring Man (London, 1923), pp. 217-228; Con A. Rideout, "African Kings Won to the Gospel", Voice of Missions 1st April 1903; L.J. Coppin, Unwritten History, (Philadelphia, 1919) pp. 311-321.
85. See D.D. Khomela, J. Mangabuzane, et al, Historical Sketch of the Zambezi Conference, Manuscript in Makokoba A.M.E. Church, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. I am grateful to Rev. J.M. Ndlovu for letting me read the Ms.
86. See Terence Ranger "The Early History of Independency in Southern Rhodesia", in Centre of African Studies, Religion in Africa, Proceeding of a Seminar Held in the Centre of African Studies (University of Edinburgh, 1964), pp. 52-74; M.L. Daneel, Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches, Vol. I (The Hague, 1971) pp. 351-352.

IX

The advent of independent African churches elicited a variety of responses from both Blacks and Whites. In the African community Jabavu's Imvo Zabantsundu provided a forum in its columns in which the elites aired their views. The tenour of criticism in the paper was largely determined by Jabavu himself, who displayed consistent hostility to Ethiopianism and its proponents. Imvo's first serious comment on Ethiopianism followed Bishop Turner's visit to South Africa. In April 1898 the paper devoted an <sup>ed</sup> editorial on Turners visit which appeared in an Extra issue called Itole le'Mvo. In ~~it~~, Turner was portrayed as a man who believed in the segregation of the races in the United States. It asserted that segregation had no foundation in Christian doctrine as <sup>it</sup> bred animosity between the races. On that score Turner and his philosophy of segregation ought to be rejected by Black South Africans.<sup>87.</sup>

A few months later Imvo endorsed a report that appeared in a Lovedale publication criticising the Ethiopian movement for playing on two volatile sentiments: race and religion. "Among the influences that move men in large numbers, there are none more powerful than those of Race and Religion, and when they are combined the motive force is a very considerable one. The Pied Piper of Hamelin could not have piped ... a note more attractive or irresistible. And the leaders of this new movement, the Ethiopian Church, are making skillful use of these two powerful influences on human conduct. By the former, that of race <sup>of</sup> colour, they make an appeal to certain instincts, of which all are more or less conscious; and to which all, young and old, religious or not are more or less susceptible. By the other motive of religion they appeal

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87. See "Our Negro Visitor", Itole le'Mvo, 20th. April 1898.

to higher feelings to give stability and sanction and a non-wordly aim to the movement in question." <sup>88</sup>

Not that JabaWu alone aired his views on Ethiopianism. Students at some boarding schools are reported to have expressed their views on independent churches. At Elythswood, a Free Church of Scotland school in the Transkei, students debated the question: "Has the time come that we should have churches and schools of our own?" <sup>89</sup> Amos Qunta took the affirmative side, saying Africans now had sufficient numbers of qualified churchmen to take over from white missionaries. He maintained that no country could rightfully lay claims to nationhood until it had set up its own independent churches and schools, supported by its own resources. Qunta also drew parallels on European history where he asserted to have ample examples to show that independence in church and educational institutions had always conferred a sovereign personality to countries that so acquired that independence. On the other hand, J.B. Luti opposed the motion, arguing that the time was not ripe for Africans to run schools and churches independently of white men. He maintained that there was a lot of petty jealousy among Blacks, which hardly enhanced their claims to independence; that there was neither the unity nor the money among Blacks to maintain independent institutions. Luti went on: "We are still in a very low stage in civilization; we have no trade of our own which is the only thing that improves and raises up a nation. Let us not be in a hurry to separate ourselves from our fathers the European missionaries. We must take time to do this. Then there will come a time when civilization will have reached its maturity. Great things can never be accomplished in one day". <sup>90</sup>

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88. See "Race and Religion", Imvo Zabantsundu, 11th May 1898.

89. See "Natives and Independence. At a Debating Society", Imvo Extra, 18th May 1898.

90. Ibid.

The rational approach taken by Blyth<sup>g</sup>wood students in trying to understand Ethiopianism by debating the pros and cons of church independency was initially not shared by White commentators. The Whites were apt to describe Ethiopianism in language couched in military imagery and secessionists were freely criticized for allegedly propounding a theology tailored exclusively for Blacks ("cut in ebony" as one paper put it).<sup>91</sup> A congregational paper complained that Afro-Americans were largely responsible for sowing the seeds of Ethiopianism, politicizing Africans, and polarizing the races in South Africa. The Ethiopian movement lacked any meaningful spiritual content: "But there is not a vestige of spiritual originality in this movement. In connection with it the Ethiopian does not change the skin, nor the leopard his spots but only his ministerial diet. He is taking Black missionary from America instead of White missionary from England. That is all the difference .. [He] kneels to kiss the Black hand whose [mission] promises to make him a bishop."<sup>92</sup> Some observers blamed Bishop Turner for the rise of Ethiopianism. Thus hardly a year after the Cape Argus lavished praise on the A.M.E. Church visitor to South Africa, the tables were turned: "This [Ethiopian] movement has been ~~pastured~~<sup>fostered</sup> and encouraged by that archmischief maker the Black Bishop Turner of the [African] Methodist - Episcopal Church in America".<sup>93</sup> Nor was this Afro-American factor in

91. See "The Future of our Native Churches", Christian Express, 1st. August 1898, being an excerpt from the South African Congregational Magazine.

92. See "The Future of our Native Churches", Christian Express, 1st September 1898, being an excerpt from The South African Congregational Magazine.

93. See "Native Disruption", Christian Express, 7th. March 1899, being an excerpt from The Cape Argus.

Southern African Ethiopianism adequate to explain the rise of the movement: Africans who studied abroad and ministers who paid short visits to overseas countries were partly held responsible for arousing Black consciousness. As one paper put it, "A Native minister who has always implicitly accepted the control of European missionaries perhaps visits England, and is utterly spoilt. Many a good native has gone wrong as a result of six months' social dissipation and moral molly coddling in the old country. He comes back... [saying] I am just as good as these White men, and I will show them that I can break away from their guidance and control, and take my people with me."<sup>94</sup>

However much White opinion might have exaggerated the influence of an overseas visit on potential Ethiopians, it is significant that some of the Church secessions were sparked off by quarrels over the authority to use funds that Black ministers had collected abroad. In 1895 Rev. James Mata Dwane broke with Wesleyans partly owing to the fact that he had refused to hand over to White ministers money he had collected in England;<sup>95</sup> in 1898 Rev. Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba, a minister at Lovedale refused to hand over money he had collected in Scotland in 1893 when he attended the Jubilee celebrations of the Free Church of Scotland. In pleading for donations in 1893 Mzimba said: "The Lovedale congregation in numbers is the largest in the Free Church Kaffraria Mission but it is very poor. It is chiefly made up of widows and women who have no way of supporting themselves but are maintained by their male

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94. Ibid.

95. T.D. Mveli Skota, editor, The African Yearly Register. Being an Illustrated National Biographical Dictionary (who's who) of Folks in Africa (Johannesburg, 1930), pp. 337-344; Dwane, "A Vicar Bishop Visits this Country", loc. cit.

relatives and heathen husbands."<sup>96</sup> The appeal raised £1,500<sup>97</sup> and Mzimba maintained that it should be spent on Lovedale projects, such as the enlargement of the church building and catering for the needy. The White missionaries insisted that the Synod of Kaffraria (the name given to the South African District of the Free Church of Scotland) ought to decide how the money should be spent.

The constraints were clearly exasperating to Mzimba, who was the second African minister to be ordained by the Free Church (the first was Tiyo Soga). Mzimba seems to have also been influenced by the Ethiopian spirit in ferment, which had led to the birth of Mokone's Ethiopian Church in 1893. The result was that the <sup>political</sup> casuist of 1886, who had advised his Lovedale congregation to accept White representation in the Cape legislature, was now determined to promote self-reliance and independence in church government. Mzimba resigned from the Free Church of Scotland on 6th. April 1898 and subsequently issued several statements

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96. See Rev. Mzimba to Dr. Smith, 11th. and 13th. May 1893, Free Church of Scotland Archives, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, No. 7798. For Mzimba's life history, see Livingstone Ntibane Mzimba, Ihali Lobomi Nomsebenzi Womfi Umfundisi Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba (Lovedale, Cape, 1923). I am grateful to Mr. S.J.M. Mhlabi, of the Department of African Languages, University of Zimbabwe, for translating for me portions of Rev. Mzimba's biography. See also R.A.W. Shepherd, Lovedale South Africa. The Story of a Century 1841-1941 (Lovedale, 1941)p.246.

97. Mzimba to Dr. Smith, 29th. May 1893, National Library of Scotland, Ibid.

justified his withdrawal; some of the reasons he gave for resigning had much in common with those advanced by his contemporary, Amos Qunta a student as already stated above at Blyth<sup>S</sup>wood; but Nzimba went further to posit that church independency had been sanctioned by God and of that count Africans were obligated to fulfill the divine plan.<sup>98</sup> On other occasions Nzimba said Ethiopians made Africans more persevering workers and that his senior position among African clergy obliged him to take a lead in setting up<sup>an</sup> independent Church. Nzimba launched an independent church in April 1888 which he called the Presbyterian Church of Africa. He was joined by several church deacons as well as three quarters of the Lovedale congregation.<sup>99</sup>

Elsewhere in southern Africa Ethiopianism was taking root. The Black Baptists, who unlike the A.M.E.Church had had relatively less assertive agents in South Africa since 1895 sent Rev. Charles S. Morris to South Africa in the middle of 1899. Morris was as flamboyant as was Turner and before he returned to the United States in 1901 he had converted over 1000 members to the Baptist<sup>Church</sup> and sent out several reports that dealt with mission work and race relations in South Africa.<sup>100</sup> In Bechuanaland

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98. See Livingstone Nzimba, Umfundisi Nzimba, Chapter XI; Sheila M. Brock, James Stewart and Lovedale: A Reappraisal of Missionary Attitudes and African Response in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, 1870-1905, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1974, 344ff.
99. See Testimony of Rev. Nzimba, South African Native Affairs Commission, Minutes of Evidence Vol. II (Cape Town, 1903), pp. 794-796.
100. See Charles S. Morris to the editor of the Voice of Missions, 24th. September 1899, in "South Africa and her People", Christian Express, 1st February 1900, J. Dexter Taylor, editor, Christianity and the Natives of South Africa (Lovedale, 1928), p. 79; Charles S. Morris, "A work for American Negroes", Ecumenical Missionary Conference Report, Vol I (New York, 1910), pp. 469-470.

the A.M.E. Church opened a station among a migrant Sotho group under Chief Moroka in Francis Town in 1898; but Chief Kgama III of the Ngwato and several other Tswana Chiefs persistently refused to have A.M.E. Church missionaries, maintaining that they were well served by the London Missionary Society. However, the L.M.S. Mission in Bechuanaland had its share of troubles in 1901 when evangelist Mothowa, ae Mohlogeboa broke away to found his own independent sect; by 1903 he had over 700 members and the sect had now been named King Edward VII Bangwaketse Church, a name that seems to have been chosen to curry favour with British officials in the territory for the reigning monarch in Britain was Edward VII.<sup>101</sup>

The turn of the twentieth century saw a relatively freer climate for the spread of Ethiopian Churches. White missionaries and laymen who had initially reacted unfavourably to the rise of Ethiopianism, now saw the movement more as a nuisance than a threat to their hegemony; but whites still thought the movement had to be constantly watched to keep it under control. Thus the South African Native Affairs Commission of 1903-1905, or of whose terms of reference was to investigate the danger posed by Ethiopianism, recommended that the A.M.E. Church be not proscribed; more importantly the S.A.N.A.C. concluded that the pursuit of self-determination in Church affairs was not necessarily a political activity.<sup>102</sup>

The new tolerant attitude was displayed in the White press which mellowed its criticism of Ethiopianism. For example, in 1906 the Christian Express, which had hitherto been overly critical of the Ethiopian movement, carried an editorial in favour of promoting an African clergy and cautioned its readers against excessive criticism of independent Churches, saying "It is no use railing at Ethiopianism, as if it were utterly bad."<sup>103</sup>

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101. J. Mutero Chirenje, A History of Northern Botswana, 1850-1910 (Rutherford and London, 1977), Chapter 6.

102. See South African Native Affairs Commission Report LY Cd. 2499 (Cape Town, 1905) p. 64.

103. See "Schism in the Native Church", Christian Express, 1st. June 1906.



During the first twenty years of the twentieth century Ethiopian sects concerned themselves more with improving facilities for higher education than with politics. In this respect most Ethiopian leaders tried to make up for the dearth of facilities in South Africa by sending students to Black Colleges in America, more especially to Wilberforce University in Ohio, Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. A few students went to predominantly White Universities. In southern Africa itself attempts made by various communities to provide higher education were becoming apparent at the turn of the century.

In 1901 the A.M.E. Church completed its long awaited Bethel Institute at a cost of \$22,000; it was opened on 3rd February 1902 and offered instruction in mainly religious studies in the medium of Afrikaans and English; one of Bethel's three teachers was Rev. D. Msikinya, a South African who graduated from Wilberforce University in 1901. Bishop L. J. Coppin saw several advantages in training African students in South Africa. "Hitherto the native students, boys and girls, who wished to prepare themselves for teachers and missionaries in the A.M.E. Church in South Africa were obliged to come all the way to America or else be prepared in other churches. To this there are two valid objections; first, it is too expensive to come all the way from South Africa to America to get an education, and especially when it was necessary to do preparatory work for the student before giving the higher studies. Such a course requires so many years as to make the work a strain on the missionary department. We have had as many as twenty-two students at one and the same time in our American Schools from Africa, supported by the Church ....Secondly,

it is not good policy to educate students in one church for work in another, and hence the objection to depending on workers for the A.M.E. Church who are trained elsewhere."<sup>104</sup> By 1903 Bethel had an enrolment of 376 boys and girls with a teaching staff of ten. Inspired by Booker T. Washington's Tuskege<sup>e</sup> Institute, Bethel teachers were now expanding the curriculum to include agriculture, carpentry, brick-making, tailoring and leather work.<sup>105</sup> In Natal the Tuskege<sup>e</sup> model was being adopted by Rev. John L. Dube, an American educated <sup>Zulu</sup> minister of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. In 1901 Dube opened the Zulu Christian Industrial School, popularly known as Ohlange Institute. The school's potential in providing industrial education was stated by Dube in rather restrained terms: "We wish to be trained and intelligent 'unskilled labourers', in the house, store, workshop and farms - useful servants and assistants, small jobbers and peasant farmers."<sup>106</sup> This diffident approach to industrial education had much in common with Booker T. Washington's philosophy of education as

104. See L.J.Coppin, "Our South African School", Voice of Missions, 1st October 1902. See also, L.J.Coppin, "The Progress of Our Work in South Africa", Voice of Missions, November 1902; Coppin, "The Dedicatory Service of Bethel Institute, Cape Town, South Africa", Ibid., 1st February 1902; Coppin, "The Outlook in the 14th. District", African Methodist Episcopal Church Review, January 1904.
105. See "The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Institute", Voice of Missions, 1st September 1903.
106. Quoted in W.Manning Marable, "A Black School in South Africa", Negro History Bulletin, Vol. 37, No. 4 (June-July, 1974), pp. 258-261. See also, John L. Dube to Friends Overseas, 30th. April 1914, in "News from Zulu/land", Voice of Missions, August 1914.

applied at Tuskegee. Among institutions started at this time was Tiger Kloof which was opened by the E.M.S. at Vryburg, Cape in 1904; it taught religious as well as industrial courses.<sup>107</sup>

Yet these efforts at higher education by <sup>L.</sup> Ethiopians and missionary <sup>alike</sup> bodies did not satisfy the needs of aspiring African students, some of whom continued to go abroad for their education. The fact that some returning students engaged in political activities to ameliorate the African <sup>conditions of living</sup> was of concern to White government officials in South Africa and neighbouring countries. Secular and missionary opinion was slowly pointing to the need to build a local University College in South Africa proper. This was reinforced by the South African Native Affairs Commission report in 1905. It said: "The Commission is impressed with the advisability of establishing some central institution or Native College which might have the advantage of the financial support of the different colonies and possessions, and which would receive Native students from them all."<sup>108</sup> The perceived danger of going abroad was aptly put by a Cape paper in 1905 which said: "The aspiring Kaffir or Fingo is - - - led to go or send his sons to America for college training, whence he returns full of the arrogant idea of Africa for the Africans - - - They resume life here to propagate sedition and incipient rebellion. But give them at home the training they desire

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107. For Tiger Kloof, see "To Make a Book Talk", in J. Mutero Chirenje, A History of Northern Botswana, Chapter 5.

108. See "Inter-Colonial Native College approved by the Native Affairs Commission", Imvo Zabantsundu, 7th, November 1905. See also, C.T. Loram, The Education of the South African Native (London, 1917), pp. 296-312.

and no such blight may come upon them."<sup>109</sup> Thus for political as well as educational reasons disparate groups of Ethiopians, missionaries, government officials and <sup>an</sup> assortment of laymen banded together to form the Native College Movement. This mixing of strange bedfellows gave the African elite an opportunity to work together for a common cause; in a very real sense African participation in the Native College Movement forged an esprit de corps which matured with the founding of the South African National Congress in 1912. Headed by John L. Dube, the ANC Executive Committee included members of the Ethiopian Movement, businessmen, and teachers from all over the Union of South Africa.<sup>110</sup>

In the event the birth of the A.N.C. did not resolve all the problems faced by Africans. It appears that in the wake of frustrations caused by the failure of the A.N.C. to bring about political change, Africans pinned their hopes in the Native College Movement; a good number of them believed that the provision of a University education would improve the Black man's economic and political status. It is against this background of the newly found Black man's faith in the power of education that news of South Africans graduating from American and British Universities was enthusiastically reported in the African Press.<sup>111</sup>

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109. See "The Proposed Native College, Opinions of the Press", Imvo Zabantsundu, 28th. November 1905, exerpt from the Fort Beaufort Advocate.

110. Peter Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa: The African National Congress, 1912-1952 (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 9-14.

111. See, for example, "Our London Special The South African Natives Created Barristers -at-law", Imvo Zabantsundu, 12th. July 1910; "Mr. D. Tengo Jabavu", "Academic Success", Ibid., 8<sup>th</sup> and 28th July 1914 "A Native S. African in America", Ibid., 2nd September 1913.

Nor was the Afro-American factor wanting in this search for a "Tuskegee" in South Africa: Washington's philosophy of education was praised again and again, the elites pointing out that it was applicable to South Africa. When it was suggested that the Tuskegee principal be invited to South Africa to introduce his educational model, Imvo said: "We are truly grateful to the British authorities for the steps taken in the direction of getting Mr. Washington out - - - Washington, of all Negroes, is one whom all right thinking persons would be glad to see in South Africa. In America he is -- - turning the thought of his people into practical channels, urging them on to excel in everything that they handle to command merit, as all, be they White or be they Black, are only too ready to recognize merit."<sup>112</sup> Washington was unable to go to South Africa owing to commitments in America; nevertheless the College Movement remained undaunted in their efforts to open a "Tuskegee" in South Africa; they put up buildings on land donated by the Free Church of Scotland near the town of Alice in the Cape. The new Institution, called Fort Hare University College was opened in March 1916.<sup>113</sup> Headed by Alexander Kerr, it had a faculty of ~~four~~<sup>lecturers</sup> and the only African lecturer on its staff was Jabavu's son, Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu.<sup>114</sup> Fort Hare was destined to play an important role in the education of Black South Africans. However, initial assumptions by both Whites and Blacks that the College would play the contradictory role of stemming and promoting the growth of African Nationalism remain tenous to this day. A Tuskegee made to measure in South Africa, like its Alabama counterpart, does not appear to have been a good harbinger of revolutions.

112. See "Booker and South Africa", Imvo Zabantsundu, 24th. June 1906. See also, Booker T. Washington to T. Le Roy, 20th April 1908, Booker T. Washington Papers, Box 818, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.

113. See "S.A. Native College. The Opening of the Classes. The Principals' Inaugural, Brilliant Address" "South African Native College Opening Ceremony - - - An Historic Event", Imvo Zabantsundu, 7th March and 15th February 1916.

114. Alexander Kerr, Fort Hare, 1915-1948. The evolution of an African College (New York, 1968)



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