

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE AFRICAN DISTRICTS OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH: A HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT



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University of the Western Cape.

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May 2010

DECLARATION

I, Adonis Carolus Booyse, declare that “**The sovereignty of the African districts of the African Methodist Episcopal Church: A historical assessment**” is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references for the Ph. D degree.

Signature:.....

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful to God for giving me the knowledge, understanding and strength to complete this thesis. All glory, honour and praise to the almighty God through His Son Jesus Christ who continues to keep me in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, prof. Ernst Conradie for his invaluable advice, guidance and inspiration. He guided my academic development with great insight. The achievement is a direct result of his brilliance and diplomatic manner in pointing out the areas in my work which required refinement.

My sincere appreciation is to Dr. Edward Smith, a lifetime friend of mine, who greatly assisted me with the editing, styling and academic insight of this thesis. I must confess that times when I was completely lost, having strayed away from the conceptual framework, you provided me with the intellectual beacons to reach my destination.

A special word of commendation to Dr. Daniël Adams for his helpful suggestions on the recommendations.

To my wife Elsabie and sons Ellsforth and Ashley, a sincere word of thanks for your tolerance and encouragement to achieve high levels of quality and excellence in all things that I do. Thank you for permitting me to travel Africa and America to do my research. I therefore dedicate this thesis to you.

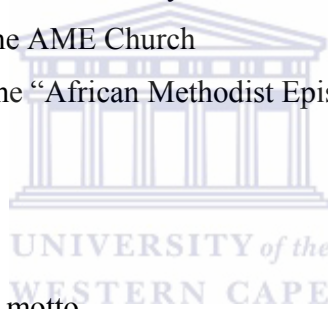
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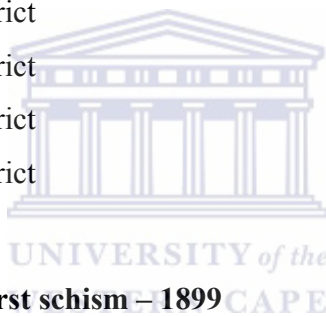
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ABSTRACT

The worldwide African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME Church) is divided into 20 regional districts. These include thirteen districts in the United States of America (Episcopal Districts 1-13), six districts on the African continent, namely Episcopal Districts 14, 15 and 17-20 and one that comprises Suriname-Guyana, South America, the Caribbean, Windward Islands, Virgin Islands, Dominican Republic, Haiti Jamaica, London and the Netherlands (Episcopal District 16). Each of these districts is administered by a bishop assigned at the seat of the General Conference which is conducted every four year. The General Conference is the highest decision-making body of the AME Church.

This research project focuses on the relationship between the American and the African districts of the African Methodist Episcopal Church during the period from 1896 to 2004. It investigates the factors which led to the tensions emerged in the relationship between the American districts and the African districts. It specifically investigates the reasons for the five secession movements that took place in the 15th and 19th Districts of the AME Church in 1899, 1904, 1908, 1980 and 1998.

The research problem investigated in this thesis is therefore one of a historical reconstruction, namely to identify, describe and assess the configurations of factors which contributed to such tensions in relationship between the AME Church in America and Africa.

The relationships between the American and the African districts of the AME Church have been characterised by various tensions around the sovereignty of the African districts. Such tensions surfaced, for example, in five protest movements, which eventually led to secessions from the AME Church in South Africa.

The people of the African continent merged with the American based AME Church with the expectation that they would be assisted in their quest for self-determination. The quest for self-determination in the AME Church in Africa has a long history. The Ethiopian Movement was established by Mangena Maake Mokone in 1892 as a protest movement against white supremacy and domination in the Wesleyan

Methodist Church. However, the lack of infrastructure within the Ethiopian Movement and the constant harassment from the Governments of South Africa in the formation of black indigenous churches compelled Mokone to link with a more established and independent Black Church. The AME Church presented such an opportunity to Mokone. The parallels of subordination in the history of the Ethiopian Movement and the AME Church in America gave Mokone to hope that the quest for self-reliance could be attained within the AME Church. This hope was however short lived.

The American AME Church's promise to ensure that indigenous leadership within the AME Church in Africa would receive first priority and that their quest for the erection of an educational institute for blacks immediately following the merging of the AME Church and the Ethiopian Movement.

In 1899 Dwane and others severed ties with the AME Church to form the *Ethiopian Church* under the auspices of the Anglican Church. They argued that the church was in breach of the promises made when they initially joined it.

The revolt of James Dwane made the remaining leaders such as Samuel Brander and Simon Sinamela in the AME Church believe that the church was not yet ready for indigenous leaders. They therefore requested the AME Church in America to rather send an American bishop to remedy the unhealthy situation among church leaders and laity. Their request was honoured and at the General Conference of 1900 Bishop Levi Jenkin Coppin was assigned to South Africa. Soon tension between Coppin and church leaders emerged. Coppin not only warned the church against political interference with the South African politics, but also brought with him a number of African Americans to take up leadership positions within the AME Church in South Africa. This attitude of Coppin towards the leaders of the AME Church in South Africa paved the way for a second revolt against the AME Church in 1904 when Brander and his followers resigned from the AME Church to establish the *Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion*.

The discontentment within the AME Church in South Africa towards the dominancy observed by the AME Church in America led to another revolt which paved the way

for the third schism in 1908. This time a number of ministers and lay person under the leadership of Ngcayiya, Sisubu and Kumalo broke away from the AME Church to re-establish the *Ethiopian Church of South Africa*.

The period between 1908 and 1976 can be described as a time of serenity. Unfortunately the administrative style of Bishop George Ming who was assigned to South Africa in 1976 was of such that another split within the AME Church in South Africa was predicted. The failure of Ming to submit proper financial reports and his constant harassment of church leaders led to the fourth schism in 1980. This time TV Khumalo, minister of the Orlando West AME Congregation in the Transvaal, his congregation and a number of members from other AME Churches seceded the church to form the *African Methodist Episcopal Church in Africa*.

A fifth wave of revolt was experienced in 1996 when the so-called *Concerned Alliance* was formed. The inability of the AME Church in the 15th Episcopal District to administer the church's business properly led to severe discontentment which eventually paved the way for another breakaway movement, the *Community of Faith* that was established by Lionel Louw in 1998.

From the inception of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa in 1896 only two South African born bishops were elected to serve Episcopal Districts in Africa. The election of Francis Herman Gow as bishop, for example, was forced upon the AME Church since the Parliament of the Union of South African for a long period of time refused American bishops entry to perform their Episcopal duties. Since Gow was educated in America for more than twenty years before pastoring resumed duty as a minister in South Africa, he was recognised as being the most suitable candidate to satisfy the parliament of the Union of South Africa. Only sixteen years after the retirement of Gow as bishop, the need was felt to elect another South African to the bishopric. In order to accommodate Herald Ben Senatlé, the 19th Episcopal District was formed in 1984. Neither of these bishops ever had the opportunity to serve in America.

The tensions which characterised the relationship between the American and the African districts of the AME Church, led to the formation of the *African*

Jurisdictional Council in 2000. At the General Conference of the AME Church in 2000 serious attention was given to the importance of developing the AME Church in Africa. Among others, the *African Jurisdictional Council* had to develop a structure that will address the needs, aspirations, beliefs and cultures of the members of the AME Church on the continent of Africa. Furthermore, the *African Jurisdictional Council* had to negotiate with the Episcopal authorities to secure leadership positions within the hierarchical structures of the church for persons from Africa. To accommodate all Districts outside the boundaries of the USA, the *African Jurisdictional Council* ceased to exist and at the General Conference of 2004 the *Global Development Council* was formed. Although the name has been changed, the aims and objectives remained the same.



Chapter 1

Introduction and overview

1.1 Introduction

The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is unique in the sense that its origins could be ascribed to sociological, rather than theological or doctrinal differences with other denominations. The AME Church was established in the second half of the eighteenth century in the United States of America (USA) as a reaction to what was perceived as to be white supremacy in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. During the course of the next century the AME Church spread its wings to other parts of the world, including Africa where its message resonated with the experiences of other black people.

It is quite clear that the AME Church was never meant to become a vehicle of oppression, rather that equality among its members should be respected at all times.

Despite the noble ideals of the founding fathers of the church, the relationship between the American and the African districts of the AME Church has been characterised by tensions around the sovereignty of the African districts. Such tensions surfaced, for example, in five protest movements which eventually led to schisms in the AME Church in South Africa in 1899, 1904, 1908, 1980 and 1998.

This study will investigate the relationships between the American and the African districts of the AME Church during the period from 1896 to 2004. It will focus on the interaction between the General Conference of the AME Church and Episcopal Districts 15 (based in the southern part of South Africa, Namibia and Angola) and 19 (based in the northern part of South Africa). It will focus on such interactions at a denominational level as these are reflected in official documentation and correspondence of the church. It will describe the events and assess the factors which contributed to such tensions between the American and the African districts of the AME Church and which ultimately resulted in schisms.

1.2 Context and relevance

1.2.1 AME Church as a worldwide organisation

As from 1816 the AME Church rapidly expanded from the Middle Atlantic States to New England and Missouri. Although its borders spread to South Carolina in 1820, it was threatened with the so-called *slave power* and the new denomination was forced to retreat until after the Civil War in 1865. However, this setback did not inhibit the founding of congregations in the slave states of Kentucky and Louisiana at the end of 1840. In the 1850's congregations were also planted in San Francisco and in parts of California (cf Campbell 1989: 14).

The AME Church was never restricted to North America only. In 1824 congregations were established in Haiti and in 1840 in Canada (cf Singleton 1985: 32). During the same period congregations were also established in the Caribbean, the Dominican Republic, Barbados and Cuba (cf Coan 1987: 24). In 1856 religious bodies for the AME Church were established in Bermuda and British Guiana and during the early 1900's congregations were organised in Jamaica, Trinidad and the Virgin Islands (cf Singleton 1985: 75).

At present the AME Church has a presence in the USA, South America, Canada, Caribbean, Europe and Africa (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 233 – 235).

1.2.2 The African Districts

The first AME Church in Africa was established in 1827 in Liberia (cf Wright 1963: 31). The church in South Africa was established in 1896 and from there it spread to Zimbabwe in 1900, Botswana in 1903 and Namibia in 1946 (cf Mkwanzazi 1992: 7-9). Between 1927 – 1936 the church penetrated into Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania¹ and Angola in 1994 (cf Centenary Brochure of the 19th Episcopal District 1996: 15)

Efforts to start congregations in Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan never materialised due to the secession of Dwane in 1899 (cf Coan 1887: 107). It can be assumed that during

¹ No exact dates available for the establishment of the AME Churches in these countries.

1996 – 2000 congregations were established in the Ivory Coast and Togo (14th Episcopal District); the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda (17th Episcopal District) (cf General Conference 1992).

Although Daniel Coker² planted the first AME Church in Sierra Leone and Liberia during the American emancipation programme to Africa in 1820, the church did not have a long life span (cf Gregg 1980: 53). Henry Turner succeeded to properly establish congregations in Liberia and in Sierra Leone in 1891 (cf Wright 1963: 31).

The first serious attempt to establish AME congregations in Southern Africa was in 1896 when the Ethiopian Movement merged with the AME Church. James Dwane was sent from South Africa to embark on the merging of these two churches (cf Roux 1978: 81). This took place in Atlanta, Georgia on 19 June 1896. At this meeting Dwane was appointed leader of the South African Church until such time a bishop was appointed. He also received the promise that enough money would be raised for the prospective college he had in mind (cf Campbell 1989: 139).

The decision to elevate Dwane to the most senior position was not well taken by the newly established church in South Africa. The leaders of the Ethiopian movement felt that since Mangena Maake Mokone started this movement he should have been the first to be considered as the leader. Tension between members in the newly formed AME Church therefore became evident (cf Coan 1987: 65). However, Dwane worked tirelessly to extend the church and when Turner visited the South African branch of the AME Church in 1889 he found a membership of more than 11 000 believers (cf Campbell 1989: 138).

Although there are different interpretations of the establishment of the AME Church in Zimbabwe (formerly known as Rhodesia), a respected minister in Zimbabwe, Clement Mkwanzu (1992), records in his book *The History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Zimbabwe* that the AME Church was planted in Rhodesia in

² Daniel Coker was the first elected AME bishop, but renounced this offer in favour of Richard Allen who he believed was the most suitable candidate since it was Allen's idea to start a church for blacks. His emigration to Africa was not to plant an AME Church, rather he concerned himself with the emancipation programme of the United States to Africa.

1900. He substantiates his argument on the basis of information derived from SNJ Tladi's book *Missions in Southern Rhodesia*.

Amongst others, Tladi was a minister of the AME Church in Southern Rhodesia for fifty years and according to Tladi the church began in 1900 under Bishop Levi Jenkin Coppin (cf Mkwanzazi 1992: 7). Mkwanzazi himself was a minister of the church in Zimbabwe for almost forty years.

The establishment of the AME Church in Namibia took place during 1946 when 3 200 members broke ties with the Rhenish Mission Church to join the AME Church under the leadership of Hendrik Witbooi (Sr.). Prior to the establishment of the AME Church in Namibia a small group of people in Walvis Bay held services in the house of Martha Utusisise during 1925. They came in contact with Francis Herman Gow (later Bishop Gow) from Cape Town who encouraged them to organise an AME Church. Bishop Gow was also instrumental in sending AME missionaries to enhance the process of establishing the church in Namibia, then known as Southwest Africa (cf Centenary Brochure of the AME Church in Southern Africa 1996: 40).

The lack of documentation makes it difficult to determine the exact dates for the establishment of a number of churches in Africa. However, records show that by the 1950's churches have been planted in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Cote D'Ivoire, Angola, Zambia, Burundi, and the Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Tanzania, Rwanda, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland.³

1.2.3 Structural relations between the African and American districts

The worldwide AME Church is divided into 20 regional districts. These include thirteen districts in the United States of America (Episcopal Districts 1-13), six districts on the African continent, namely Episcopal Districts 14, 15 and 17-20 and one that comprises Suriname-Guyana, South America, Windward Islands, Virgin Islands, the Caribbean islands, Dominican Republic, Haiti Jamaica, London and the Netherlands (Episcopal District 16).

³ Historical data for the establishment of the AME Church in a number of countries in Africa is not available. However, the distance between the South African countries can be used as a guideline to reference the church's establishment.

Each of these districts falls under the jurisdiction of one bishop who is appointed by the Episcopal Committee⁴ of the General Conference⁵ of the AME Church and who has to report to the General Conference that meets every four years.

The AME Church is a connectional body. Connectionalism means that every part of the church is in some way connected to another part. All commissions, departments, committees and societies are working together in a hierarchical way. Every congregation and organisation within the church is accountable to somebody, for example the local congregation is accountable to the Presiding Elder, the Presiding Elder is accountable to the bishop and the bishop is accountable to the General Board and General Conference.

Membership outside of the USA consists of approximately one-quarter of the total membership of the AME Church and is normally referred to as the “overseas districts.” The Episcopal Districts are further divided into a number of Annual Conferences of which the assigned bishop is the head. Amongst others, he has the authority to appoint ministers to various pastoral charges. The highest decision making body within an Episcopal District are the Annual Conferences.

The AME Church is governed by *The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church*, also referred to as *the book of law* of the AME Church. The General Conference that is held every four years in various cities, thus far always in the USA, is the highest decision making body of the entire church and its decisions supersede all decisions made by any Annual Conference. Delegates to the General Conference are elected by all Annual Conferences in the entire AME Church.

1.3 A summary of the tensions between the African and American Districts

The Ethiopian Movement merged with the American based AME Church with the expectation that they would be assisted in their quest for self-determination. The quest for self-determination in the AME Church in Africa has a long history. The Ethiopian

⁴ A committee elected at the General Conference to assign among others, bishops to various districts.

⁵ The highest decision making body of the AME Church.

Movement founded by Mangena Maake Mokone in 1892 protested against white supremacy and domination in the church. This is evident in Mokone's manifesto to the Wesleyan Methodist Church, where he gave his reasons for abandoning that denomination (cf Campbell 1989: 104-106).

The lack of infrastructure within the Ethiopian Movement and the constant harassment from the government of black indigenous churches compelled Mokone to link with a more established independent Black Church. The AME Church presented such an opportunity to Mokone. The parallels in the history of the Ethiopian Movement and the AME Church gave Mokone the hope that the quest for self-reliance could be attained within the AME Church (cf De Gruchy 1982: 43).

However, this hope was short lived. After only three years, James Dwane and others severed ties with the AME Church. They argued that the church was in breach of the promises made when he initially joined it. Among others, the church promised to ensure that indigenous leadership within the African church would receive first priority and that their quest for the erection of an educational facility for blacks would soon be realised (cf Coan 1987: 88-89). Dwane became disillusioned and left the AME Church with more than 3 000 members in 1899.

The revolt of James Dwane after only three years of the existence of the AME Church in South Africa made church leaders such as Samuel Brander and Simon Sinamela believe that the church was not yet ready for African leadership. They therefore urged the church to send out an American bishop to remedy the unhealthy situation among the church leaders and laity. Bishop Levi Jenkin Coppin, elected in 1900, was assigned to the South African district.

Tensions between Coppin and church leaders soon emerged since Coppin warned the church not to get involved in any political activities and that he could not manage to keep the promise made by Turner to erect the South African College. These were the signals for discontentment between the American based AME Church and the South African AME Church (cf Campbell 1989: 166).

Coppin also forced the South African members to contribute financially to the expenditure of the AME Church. South Africans felt that such an injustice on the side of Coppin could not be accepted and most of them refused to pay into the coffers of an allegedly wealthy black American church as they called it (cf Campbell 1989: 165). At the Aliwal North Conference in 1903 delegates had to be elected for the 1904 General Conference (synod) in the USA. The South African Conference had to send eight delegates, but Coppin insisted on only two elected delegates from South Africa and that the rest of the positions are allocated to “responsible ministers” from the United States serving in South Africa (cf Campbell 1989: 170).

All these restrictions and obligations paved the way for a second revolt against the AME Church when Brander and his followers resigned from the AME Church to establish the *Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion* in 1904. Samuel Brander, in his testimony before the *Bantu Commission* in 1904 said that in joining the AME Church they thought that, being of the same colour, they would be assisted by their fellow church members in America. However, they soon realised that they were “helped down” and that Americans took all the best positions without telling them a word, sending men from America (cf De Gruchy 1979: 44). It is evident from the testimony of Brander that the black South Africans perceived their linkage with the AME Church as one of domination and subjugation.

It was not predicted that a third revolt would take place in the AME Church in South Africa, but when Charles Spencer Smith was assigned bishop of the AME Church in South Africa in 1904, it became evident that he administered the church in a despotic manner which was unsuited to the South African environment. A few weeks before the General Conference of 1908, the AME Church experienced its third schism. Under the leadership of Ngcayiya almost a thousand members broke away from the AME Church to re-establish the original Ethiopian Church of South Africa started by Mokone.

The discontent of Africans toward American domination led to a fourth revolt when a breakaway group in 1980, formed the *African Methodist Episcopal Church of Africa*

under the leadership of Rev. TV Khumalo.⁶ The sentiments expressed then were very similar to those expressed by Dwane in 1899. In an open letter to Bishop Harold Ben Senatlé, Khumalo (1995) wrote: “Our main source of dissatisfaction was that the AME Church was being controlled in the USA and had an inordinate American influence and very little, if any, African input except for the sentiment that was occasionally verbalised” (Khumalo 1995: 1).

A fifth wave of revolt was experienced in 1996 when the so-called *Concerned Alliance* was formed. The newly elected bishop assigned to the 15th Episcopal District in 1992 revealed a hostile attitude toward a number of clergy and laypersons which in the end led to the fifth revolt. This time the *Community of Faith Church* was established in 1998 under the leadership of Rev. Lionel Louw.

1.4 Tensions with reference to the 15th Episcopal District

The Episcopal Committee elected at the General Conference has the authority to appoint bishops to various Episcopal Districts within the AME Church. Although the members of the General Conference have the right to vote against such appointments, this has never happened before. Bishops are appointed in a particular district for a period of four years at a time. The constitution of the AME Church makes provision that a bishop can only serve a maximum period of eight years in an Episcopal District.

Since there is a widespread perception that Africa is used as a “training field” for newly elected bishops, those Americans appointed to Africa typically only serve for four years here before they are sent to one of the American districts. Bishops tend to stay in Africa for a period of 8 years or more only if they are appointed to the 15th and 19th Episcopal Districts – which are the largest districts in Africa and are financially stronger than some of the American Districts.

From the inception of the AME Church in South Africa in 1896 only two South African born bishops were elected to serve the 15th and the 19th Episcopal Districts. They were Francis Herman Gow (1956-1972 in districts 14 and 15) and Harold Ben Senatlé (1984-2000 in district 14, 19 and 15). Neither of them ever had the

⁶ Khumalo became the first bishop of the newly established A M E Church in Africa in 1980.

opportunity to serve as bishops in America. As from 1900 twenty-five American born bishops served the church in South Africa.

Whenever an American bishop is assigned to Africa, he/she typically comes prepared with his or her own programmes before making any needs assessment. Though people in the hierarchical structure of the church are called together to assist in the planning of the Episcopal District, the bishop ensures that his programme receives priority. The church then has to comply with the programme of the bishop. Whatever the programme of the bishop might be, the church has to ensure that large amounts of money are raised. To substantiate the above argument, Bishop Samuel Green who was assigned to the 15th Episcopal District in 2004 had as his first priority to purchase an automobile of R450 000-00 and to sell the Episcopal Residence in Constantia in order to build a new one in Durbanville for R3.5 million. The church's greatest concerns in Africa in general, but in South Africa in particular, are the high level of poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, unemployment, low income of its members, a lack of a proper infrastructure such as archives, libraries, historical institutions and health care. However, the normal practice for American bishops who served in the African districts was that they always came prepared with their own programmes without consulting with the African constituency.

Since the Episcopacy gives a bishop authority to appoint leaders such as Presiding Elders (ministers who preside over a specific Presiding Elder's district within an Annual Conference), treasurers and bookkeepers, they have to function directly under his/her control and are first and foremost accountable to him or her. Disloyalty may lead to dismissal.

The unhealthy situation at present is similar to situations in the past and has the potential to explode in such a way that another split within the church is possible. Tensions resulting from this unhealthy situation are evident at every conference and Episcopal District meeting. Whenever financial reports are discussed, bishops are on the alert for any questions that may have a bearing on excessive expenditure. Members normally demonstrate their disillusion with bishops who do not ensure proper accountability.

As a member of the church I have a keen interest in the factors which led to so many tense situations in the church. In this thesis I will investigate the historical factors which contributed to such tensions.

1.5 Statement of research problem

This research proposal will focus on the factors which contributed to the tensions which emerged in the relationship between the American districts and the African Districts. More specifically, it will report on the reasons for the five schisms that took place in the 15th and 19th districts of the AME Church in 1899, 1904, 1908, 1980 and 1998.

The primary research objective of this research project may be formulated as follows:

To identify, describe and assess the configuration of factors which contributed to such tensions in the relationship between the AME Church and its African districts and resulted in various schisms.

In particular the impact of the following factors, which may have contributed to such tensions, will be investigated in further detail in this research project:

- The election of bishops;
- The allocation of funds;
- Attention to urgent social needs;
- Perceived attitudes of superiority; and
- Cultural sensitivity:

1.6 Statement of the research hypothesis

In this study I will argue that the relationship between the component of the AME Church in America and Africa was characterised by serious tension, which eventually led to five schisms in South Africa. The AME Church in South Africa found the AME Church in America appealing towards establishing an own identity and freedom of religious expression, hence the quest for inclusiveness and trustworthy relationship. Since the inception of the AME Church in Africa the leadership resided in the US. However the breakdown in the anticipated relationship and lack of shared leadership, culminated in five schisms. This thesis will investigate the way in which the above-

mentioned factors contributed to the strained relationship between these entities which paved the way for the schismatic movements.

1.7 Introducing the concept of schism

1.7.1 Meaning of schism

Since the investigation of this research proposal focuses on the schismatic movements within the AME Church in South Africa, it is imperative to briefly discuss the meaning of the term “schism” and its origin. The word schism (from the Greek *schisma*) simply describes a state of dissociation or separation. It is normally used to describe a formal breach of union in a Christian church (cf *Free dictionary*). The term occurs in the books of the New Testament (I Cor., 1:12) but is commonly used to describe breaches of unity in the Christian church.

1.7.2 The first great schism

As from the fourth century the Western and Eastern Orthodox Churches experienced serious problems because of cultural and political differences. Certain practices in the Eastern Orthodox Church (situated in Constantinople) were deemed not acceptable in the Western Church (situated in Rome). Furthermore, the Western Church regarded themselves as superior over their Eastern counterpart (cf Pillay 1991: 114). Pillay (1991: 116) also mentions that while the Pope was regarded as the senior bishop of the Church and had the authority to act accordingly, he allowed his sub-ordinates to interfere with the cultural and political matters of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Eastern Orthodox Church was concerned about the recognition of the *filioque*,⁷ especially the interpretation of it by the Western Church. Apart from the *filioque* the Eastern Orthodox Church also disputed the use of icons in the church, which they believed to be in direct conflict with Christological ideas. Pillay (1991: 102) notes that the Eastern Orthodox Church based its argument upon the Old Testament idea that idols are forbidden by the Word of God. To the Eastern Orthodox Church it was unchristian to picture somebody who is both God and man. On the other hand the

⁷ The term *filioque* is a Latin term for “And the Son,” a dogmatic formula which expressed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that proceeds from both the Father and the Son. Eastern theologians argued that there must be a single source of divinity which is vested in the Father. They therefore held the opinion that the Holy Spirit came from the Father and was expressed through the Son (cf Pillay 1991:10).

iconoclasts (Western Church) argued that there was nothing wrong in having a painting of Christ. To them the painting only depicted the humanity of Christ and that is clearly separated from His divinity. The Western Church furthermore based its argument on the Church's Doctrine of the embodiment of the *Logos*⁸ of God.

These controversies led to estrangement between the Western and Eastern Orthodox Churches, which finally resulted in a schism in 1054. This schism between the West and East is referred to as *The Great Schism*.

Pillay (1991: 116) reports that the dispute leading to the 1054 split was not so much about theological differences, but it had to do with the liturgical and disciplinary differences between the two churches.

1.7.3 The Protestant-Roman Catholic schism

The second great schism took place during the 16th century when the Protestant Reformation of the Church took place under Martin Luther. Pillay (1991: 124) comments that during the 16th century the term "rebirth" was used by the humanists. They argued that the political power vested in the Pope would lead to the abuse of his ecclesiastical authority in the church. Pillay (1991: 129) furthermore notes that the power vested in the Pope was so extreme that he could at all times call upon the bishops, archbishops and cardinals as his instruments to wield political power in Europe. In executing his dominant power in Europe, the Pope was drawn into a series of wars that financially drained Europe and the church. In order to recapitalise the church, the Pope was forced to sell indulgences (letters for the forgiveness of sin) to the people, and this opened the door for serious abuse. The Pope even went a step further by allowing his agents to sell letters of indulgences in advance to people for future sins that might be performed and even to those members with relatives already deceased for the forgiveness of sins (cf Pillay 1991: 130).

Brendler (1991: 141) states that it was in those crucial times in 1517 that Martin Luther, a long time critic of the unchristian practices of his church, reacted by publicly reaffirming that justification from sin could only be obtained through

⁸ Logos is a Greek word which simply means "Word."

repentance and the grace of God. The Bible is the only standard for Christians. Therefore, all Christians should hold on to Scripture alone, which forbids humankind to sell indulgences for the forgiveness of sins. Brendler (1991) also quotes a letter in this regard to Willibald Pirckheimer on 20 February 1519 in which Luther states: “I will preserve and acknowledge the power of the high priest, but I will not permit the Holy Scriptures to be corrupted” (Brendler 1991: 145)

Luther’s uncompromising attitude brought him into trouble within the Roman Catholic Church. Lindsey (1963: 65) nevertheless notes that in spite of Luther’s harassment by the Roman Catholic Church he continued to condemn the selling of indulgences as a practice. It was against this background that Luther argued that the Roman Catholic Church pursued their own counsel and wisdom and by doing this they instituted their own righteousness before God.

Luther gained much support in Europe for his stance against the selling of indulgences (cf Pillay 1991: 129). Pillay (1991: 136-137) also comments that the watershed period between Luther and the Roman Catholic Church came when Luther in 1515 served as pastor of eleven monasteries and convents in Mainz and Maagdeburg. At that time Pope Leo X had given permission for the selling of indulgences in the cities where Luther served as a pastor.

This act forced Luther to publish his 95 theses in which he tried to create public debate on the matter of indulgences. Luther’s 95 theses were published on 31 October 1517 on the front door of the church in Wittenberg. Among others, Luther condemned the selling of indulgences; arguing for justification through the mercy of God; that the church is an assembly of believers trusting in the atonement of Christ; that religious authority lies with Christ who is the head of the church and that our faith does not free us from works, but from false opinions concerning our works (cf Pillay 1991: 140 – 141). This theology paved the way for the birth of the Protestant church movement.

The reaction of the Roman Catholic Church was to try and persuade Luther to withdraw his statements. Several attempts to silence Luther through trials were unsuccessful. Instead, Luther continued to burn the bulls for the summonses against him in public. He also burned a copy of the canon law and the writings of his

opponents in the church (cf Brendler 1983: 190). His actions compelled the church to summon him to the Diet of Worms to defend his theology. Brendler (1983: 205-210) notes that his hearing lasted eight days. He was asked to defend and explain why he identified himself with the books which he had published against the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. When Luther eventually was granted the chance to defend himself, he uttered the famous words: “Here I stand, so help me God, I can do nothing else. AMEN.” Luther was immediately expelled from the Roman Catholic Church.

Pillay (1991: 139) notes that Luther successfully established the Protestant Church in Scandinavia when Prince Frederick of Saxony declared the entire Scandinavia a Protestant country. In 1537 a national Protestant church was established in Denmark. The Protestant Church also made good progress in Sweden. The German merchants established the Protestant Movement in Iceland. All properties of the Roman Catholic Church were confiscated by the emperor of Iceland and handed over to the Protestant Movement.

1.7.4 The Anglican-Methodist schism

Pillay (1991: 206) comments that the Anglican Church in the 18th century lost members to both the Roman Catholic Church and the Dissenters (predominantly a middle-class group) due to its refusal to implement religious reforms. Pillay (1991: 207) also notes that England experienced social and economic upheaval during this time. For example, students who did not comply with the rituals and style of worship of the Anglican Church were expelled from Oxford University thus causing social turmoil.

It is against this background that John and Charles Wesley, then students at Oxford (1721) organised a group of students that conducted daily prayer sessions for the spiritual restoration of England. They inspired students to be disciplined and methodical in their studies and spiritual devotions. This group earned the nickname “Methodists.” The Wesley brothers also organised evangelical revival campaigns. They preached a simple, yet practical message that allowed the lower class citizens to understand the gospel of Christ. This “Methodist” approach brought new life to a part of the Anglican Church (cf Hulley 2006: 57). The Wesleyans utilised the Anglican Church as a platform to reform the church through the establishment of missionary

societies in 1796 (cf Pillay 1991: 208). Payne (1981: 7) notes that the secret of John Wesley's spirituality was vested in the fact that he was a "Methodist" by utilising his time methodically and punctually when preaching, reading, writing and organising in order to stay in communion with God in all that he did.

Both Pillay (1991: 208) and Hulley (2006: ix) note that although John and Charles Wesley travelled to North America with their evangelical approach, they never left the Anglican Church although they played a pivotal role in the founding of the Methodist Movement. While in North America, John Wesley ordained Thomas Coke as the first Methodist Superintendent without the knowledge of the Anglican Church. In 1784 he established the Methodist Episcopal Church in America and ordained Coke and Ashbury as its first bishops.

It was only after John Wesley's death in 1791 that a large number of Anglican Church members seceded to formally establish the Methodist Church in England. Attwell (1989: 2) notes that the main reasons for the Methodist secession from the Anglican Church was due to the influence of John and Charles Wesley on the lives of the Anglicans in England; the enormous growth of the Methodist Church in North America; the evangelical simple approach of John Wesley and the refusal on the side of the Anglican Church to restructure the church in order to accommodate the ordinary person.

1.7.5 The Methodist – African Methodist Episcopal schism

The AME Church emerged as a protest movement against white supremacy in 1787 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Before 1787 all blacks and whites worshipped in the St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia. Blacks had to occupy the back seats during worship services and they were not allowed to take Holy Communion together with their white counterparts. Furthermore, they were denied the opportunity to kneel at the altar with whites during prayer sessions. In the beginning these practices were acceptable to blacks; however during the early 1780's it led to dissatisfaction among blacks. The American Revolution of 1783 also awakened a spirit of resistance among blacks to such treatment.

The resistance of blacks against white control resulted in the organisation of the first Black Baptist Church in 1782. This was followed by Congregationalists, Methodists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians between 1787 and 1822 (cf African American Jubilee Edition of the Bible 1999: 198).

Richard Allen, founder of the AME Church in America, describes the events that led to the severing of ties with the St. George's Methodist Church as follows: "One Sunday, as these Africans, as they were called, knelt down to pray outside their segregated area, they were actually pulled from their knees and told to go to a place that had been designated for them. This of course, added insult to injury, and the Negroes said: "Wait until prayer is over and we will go out and trouble you no more" (Gregg 1980: 13). In 1787 these blacks then finally left the St. George's Methodist Church to form their own worship group.

Before the AME Church was established, Allen and Absalom Jones formed the *Free African Society* in 1787. This organisation became the first independent black group in America to work towards the abolition of slavery. Furthermore, they established the first insurance company for blacks in Philadelphia. It was a mutual aid society that provided for the care of widows and orphans (cf Foster 1987: 30).

Though the Free African Society was not a religious body, they continuously engaged in religious activities. It therefore paved the way for the establishment of the AME Church. A meeting was called in April of 1816 to discuss the formation of a religious body. At the same meeting the AME Church was formally established (cf Singleton 1985: 23).

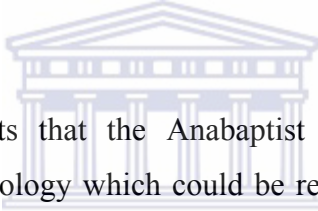
Singleton (1985: 25) reports that the dispute leading to the establishment of the AME Church was not so much about theological differences, but it had to do with sociological issues such as perceived racial superiority.

1.7.6 The Roman Catholic-Anabaptist schism

Klaassen (1973: 63) notes that the Anabaptist Movement was established during the 16th century in reaction against the unchristian practices of the Roman Catholic

Church. A number of practices by the Roman Catholic Church eventually led to a split between the Anabaptists and the Roman Catholic Church:

- The Anabaptists condemned the practice of oaths as prescribed by the Roman Catholic Church.
- As Christian Believers they also rejected the resolving of disputes between church members in a secular court according to 1 Corinthians 6: 1-11.
- They did not believe in the use of weapons against wrongdoers.
- They believed that the civil government belonged to the world and not to the pope and as believers in God nobody should be allowed to hold any office in government.
- They rejected the wearing of wedding rings.
- They believed that baptism can only be administered to adults who have the ability to believe in God, hence the name “Anabaptist” (cf Klaassen 1973: 1).



Pillay (1991: 157) comments that the Anabaptist Movement did not have an obligatory theology, but a theology which could be regarded as a selection of belief systems. Among other they believed that forgiveness of sin is only possible through the grace of God and that the only the Holy Spirit can empower one to speak in tongues. Furthermore they believed that only those whose hearts, minds and beliefs agreed with the doctrine of the Anabaptists could become part of the church of Christ. They also believed that humankind should not fear any judgement made by men/women because God is their supreme judge.

Klaassen (1973: 7) notes that the Anabaptist Movement grew so rapidly that by the dawn of the 16th century it was established in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and other parts of Europe.

1.7.7 Concluding remarks on schisms

From the previous discussion it is evident that there are a number of reasons for schisms in Christian churches. Among these are theological (e.g. Roman Catholic-Protestant schism); liturgical and disciplinary differences (e.g. Eastern Orthodox-Western Church schism); ecclesiastical (e.g. Anglican Church- Methodist schism);

sociological (e.g. Methodist-AME Church schism) and political and doctrinal differences (e.g. Roman Catholics- Anabaptists).

1.8 The need for a study of this nature

The AME Church – Methodist Church schism is generally regarded as the first one that is ascribed to a moral issue rather than theological or ecclesiastical differences. The AME Church went to the extent of excluding certain categories of membership, for example those who were slave owners. This created a tension within the AME Church where it strove to be as inclusive as possible to accommodate members from all walks of life, yet it excluded slave owners.

Subsequent to the establishment of the AME Church, the Christian church is facing other sociological reasons that have, or may in future, cause schisms. Paramount among these issues is whether females can be considered for ordination, recognition of same-sex marriages, etc.

A study of schisms in the AME Church could contribute towards a better understanding of the factors that may impact future schisms based on factors other than theological, ecclesiastical or liturgical.

A further motivation for this study is that no similar research on the schisms in the AME Church has been done. However, it must be stated that schisms based on sociological factors have since become common place. Conflict and schism have accompanied the multiplication of ethnic churches, for example in Korea (cf Shin, 1988). This study will therefore not only contribute towards a better understanding of the AME Church, but also to an appreciation of splits and re-splits in other denominations.

The methods of investigation, which I will use in this research proposal to substantiate my argument, will comprise of brief surveys, comparisons, critical assessments and an in depth analysis.

1.9 Literature review

The following survey of literature on the relationship between the AME Church and its African districts will serve as background for this study:

- CH Wesley (1935) in his book *Richard Allen, Apostle of Freedom* gives an outline of the treatment meted out to Negro slaves within white dominated churches. He has it that the AME Church has its origin against the background of slavery and the inhumane treatment towards Negroes in the St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia, USA.
- J H Franklin (1980) in his book *From Slavery to Freedom* tells the story of how Richard Allen not only inspired blacks to work for their own freedom, but also assisted them financially to gain it. Franklin has it that the humanitarian attitude of Richard greatly contributed to the church's growth.
- J White (1990) in his book *Black Leadership in America* portrays the reason for Richard Allen, the founder of the AME Church, to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church. He concludes that Allen could no longer endure the white hostility against blacks. Allen became convinced that only a separate church, served by blacks could meet the spiritual and temporal needs to free blacks. The result was that Allen began to organise and implement a black interpretation of Wesleyanism.
- In *Martin, Malcolm and America*, JH Cone (1991), argues that the AME Church did not separate themselves from whites because of different doctrinal views of Christianity. They only rejected the ethical behaviour of whites and racism that was based on the idea that God created blacks inferior to whites. The establishment of the AME Church therefore was to prove that blacks had the same capabilities to operate a denomination as whites. He furthermore emphasised the fact that blacks believed that God created them equal to whites, hence their succession from white dominated churches.
- In TD Verryn's (1957) book, *A History of The Order of Ethiopia*, he sketches the formation and growth of this church as from 1898. He gives an outline of the problems between the American AME Church and the South African Church and the schism which eventually led to the formation of the "Order of Ethiopia." Verryn furthermore explains that the idea of the Ethiopian Movement was to form a "union" with the American AME Church. Instead,

the American AME Church absorbed the Ethiopian Movement, rather than to unite with them. This action on the side of the American AME Church brought about much conflict between the churches in South Africa and America.

- S Dwane (1989) in his book *Issues in the South African Theological Debate*, portrays the reasons why James Dwane left the Methodist Church to join the AME Church, but to his dissatisfaction left the AME Church within three years due to promises made and not kept.
- JS Coan (1987) in his book *Flying Sparks* gives a broad outline of how the AME Church in America absorbed the entire Ethiopian Movement with promises of a theological school to be built and maintained by the AME Church in America. Conflict arose as a result of what was perceived as broken promises and Dwane broke away from the AME Church to form the *Order of Ethiopia*.
- J Du Plessis's (1911) book *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa*, outlines the idea of *Apostolic Succession* and how it made Dwane believe that the election of bishops within the AME Church was not valid.
- JT Campbell (1989) in his dissertation *Our Fathers, Our Children: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* makes a remarkable observation. He describes how Bishop Henry McNeil Turner, first AME bishop to organise the church in South Africa, enthused South Africans about African-American wealth. Soon after his speech, Turner borrowed money from the same people to pay for his train fare to Cape Town. Campbell is of the opinion that the borrowing of money should have opened the eyes of the South Africans that the African Americans were not that wealthy, as Turner impressed on them. This planted the seed for follower disillusionment.
- J Spencer (1996) in his book, *AME Church, What now?* states that the AME Church established its relationship with Africa within the entanglements of Western imperialism and colonialism, and this reality has left a residue that negatively colours our current disposition toward Africa. He draws attention to the fact that senior positions had always been secured for the Americans at the cost of the Africans. He furthermore comments that the AME Church has failed in its mission to properly develop the church in Africa.

- Singleton (1985) in *The Romance of African Methodism* gives an outline of the way in which the bishops of the AME Church misused their Episcopal powers. The claims that the spirit of freedom proclaimed by leaders such as Richard Allen, Daniel Payne, Henry McNeil Turner and others was gradually replaced by a tyrannical attitude by many bishops.
- Payne, a former bishop, thought that the attempt to extend the AME missions into Africa at that time or within the near future was to allow zeal to outrun common sense. He also thought it was an endeavour to establish African Methodist Imperialism (cf *AME Review* July 1884: 5).

1.10 Limitations of the study

This study focuses only on the causes of the various schisms that have occurred in the AME Church in the Southern Africa region since 1896. It does not cover splits that may have occurred in other African districts of the AME Church. Furthermore, it focuses on official and structural relations between the districts and how these contributed towards schisms. It therefore excludes reports on the feelings or perceptions from members or congregations.

The study is confined by the availability of primary sources. It was difficult to obtain records because there is no official archive or resource centres for the AME Church in Africa. Minutes of official meetings, such as Annual Conferences, were hard to come by. The reasons for this situation are that minute books were in the possession of secretaries who are either deceased or have left the Cape Annual Conference and that the American bishops took all literature upon the termination of their period of work in Africa. Furthermore, during 2009 all official documents in the headquarters of the 15th Episcopal District were destroyed through “suspicious” burglary. There is no central repository where these documents could be accessed. Neither does the church have a historiographer or archivist that could be approached for relevant documentation. In some instances the researcher had to rely on the verbal accounts of participants. This then had to be triangulated with other accounts to establish the veracity of the argument.

I carefully compiled my own collection of relevant research material from disparate sources. This involved obtaining copies of written records that were available and interviewing and transcribing interviews with relevant people. Through these methods a collection of 24 files with approximately 150 documents were compiled by the researcher. To give further impetus to the research programme, bishop Sigcua Dwane, grandson of James Dwane and bishop of the *Ethiopian Church under the auspices of the Anglican Church* in the 1990's was consulted on numerous occasions. Research was done with the members of the *AME Church in Southern Africa* in Johannesburg and at the Sol Plaatjie Museum in Kimberly on the history of Samuel Brander. Furthermore the researcher travelled throughout the continent of Africa and the USA to gather information relevant to the study. I have done research in the National Archives of the United States in Philadelphia, The Sunday School Union of the AME Church in Nashville, Wilberforce University in Ohio, The Turner Theological Seminary in Atlanta and the Tuskegee University Archives in Alabama. All these archives have a collection of works by bishops who served in Africa.

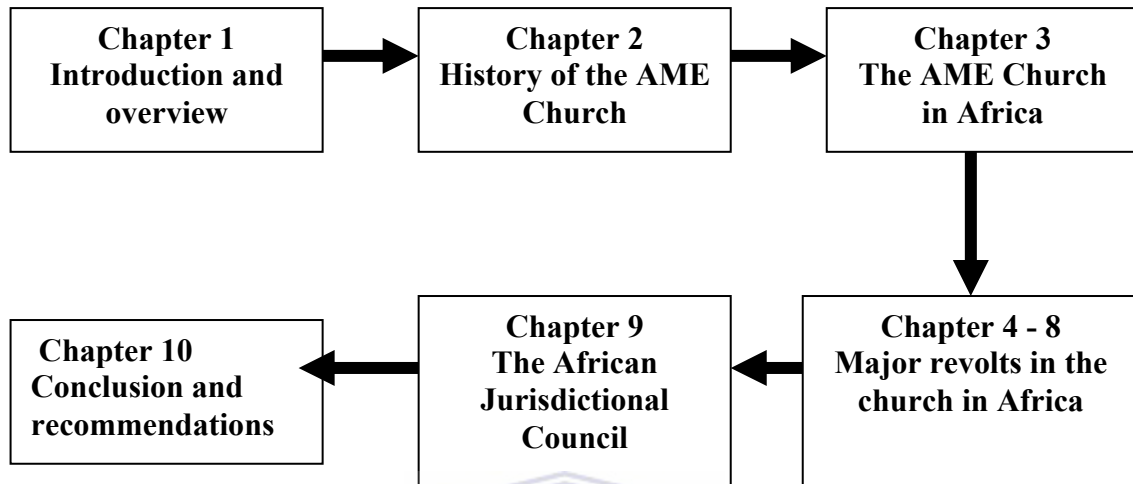
The role of the researcher in this study is that of historiographer and participant observer. I am an ordained minister of the AME Church in South Africa. As historiographer I had access to the available literature. As participant observer I was able to gain a close and intimate familiarity with members of the AME Church in South Africa and to better understand their practices. Furthermore, it allows me to develop a better understanding of the relationships among members of the AME Church in South Africa and the relationship between the American- and South African based churches.

The challenge in this type of research strategy is to ensure that the researcher remains an "outsider." To guard against subjective reporting, I built up an elaborate archive of relevant documents to make the data in these documents the focus. Furthermore, I made an attempt to focus on in the actual text of these documents and not on personal observations. This approach helped to minimise subjectivity in documenting the results of such research.

Even though the contributing factors for the schisms had been identified, an analysis of the factors will be done only briefly. This study is confined to schisms in the AME

Church in the South African context and no claims about generalising the findings are made.

1.11 Overview of this study



In chapter two I have provided a brief history on the AME Church as a worldwide organisation. In this chapter the expansion of the church from 1787 to 1878 is discussed. Books, pamphlets and journals on the history of the AME Church were used to substantiate the research.

In chapter three I have discussed the establishment of the AME Church in Africa. This chapter also called for a discussion on the reasons why the AME Church in America in its infant years could not afford to expand its boundaries outside of the United States, but ignored the warning signals, and continued to expand the church into Africa. Sources such as the AME Church's quarterly periodicals, articles written by various AME scholars, General Conference Minutes, Annual Conference Minutes and reports of the various Episcopal Districts to the General Conference have been used to substantiate my findings. Furthermore, relevant materials in the archives of all provinces in South Africa where the AME Church exists, as well as at the Historical Research Centre at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) which has a vast collection of information in the Fortuin-, Gordon- and Kadalie files were researched. Newspapers such as *The Cape Argus*, *The African Leader*, *The Star*, *The South*

African Spectator, etc. frequently advertised articles on the AME Church. A critical analysis of these articles was employed to evaluate my findings.

On the basis of the discussion in chapter three, I have investigated in chapters four, five, six, seven and eight the reasons for the five major schisms in the AME Church. I have described the root causes for the Africans' dissatisfaction towards the American AME Church. Among others I have discussed the roles of James Dwane, Samuel Brander, Ngcayiya, Khumalo and Lionel Louw, respected South African Church leaders who led these revolts.

In these five chapters, which constitute the core of the thesis, I have drawn on a variety of sources in order to offer a detailed description and a critical assessment of the factors which contributed to the secession movements and the prevailing tensions between the African and the American districts of the AME Church.

Papers written and presentations delivered by the leaders of the AME Church have been evaluated and personal interviews conducted with leaders and members to determine the validity of the secessions. Most of the secessions led to court cases from the side of the AME Church to defend its position. These records had been studied to obtain balanced views on the secession movements.

In chapter nine I have discussed the efforts made towards addressing the underlying causes of schisms. More specifically, I have concentrated my efforts on the role of the *African Jurisdictional Council* as the vehicle to bridge the divide between the American and African counterparts.

In chapter ten I concluded the findings of this study and made some recommendations for the future.

Chapter 2

A brief History of the AME Church

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the factors that gave rise to the establishment of the AME Church as a protest movement against white supremacy will be discussed. Richard Allen, founder of the AME Church in America, expressed himself in the following manner that led to the severing of ties with the St. George's Methodist Church. "One Sunday, as these Africans, as they were called, knelt down to pray outside their segregated area; they were actually pulled from their knees and told to go to a place that had been designated for them" (Gregg 1980: 13). This action on the part of their white counterparts forced a group of Negroes to immediately leave the St. George's Methodist following the prayer session (cf Gregg 1980: 13). In 1787 these blacks finally left the St. George's Methodist Church to form their own group for worship.

The significance of the name, as well as the motto will also be discussed as these provide an important context for understanding how the AME Church deviated from its founding principles in its treatment of the African districts.

2.2 Factors that played a role in the establishment of the AME Church

2.2.1 The American Revolution

Wesley (1935) notes that: "the history of the American nation is from one point of view a record of the efforts of individuals and peoples in their pursuit for freedom (Wesley 1935: vii). According to Wesley (1935) the American Revolution awakened within the blacks a spirit to fight for their own freedom and not to depend on others to negotiate on their behalf. It is against the background of Wesley's argument that McPherson (1965) notes that blacks were not only denied the rights of citizenship, but due to their status as slaves, were also denied the rights of humanity. They were regarded as property, rather than as human beings (cf McPherson 1965: vii). When the opportunity arrived, they became actively involved in every aspect of the war because they interpreted their involvement as a means to also fight for the abolition of slavery.

Singleton⁹ comments that: “The rise of African Methodism in the United States during the latter part of the eighteenth century was no mere accident. It grew out of the spirit of the times and represents in a concrete way the doctrine of the Rights of Man – a social and political philosophy in England and Europe, and whose influence was felt in America” (Singleton 1985: 1).

Coan¹⁰ (1987) supports the argument of Singleton and notes that “the rise of the AME Church must be seen against the background of the African American’s struggle for freedom and equality of opportunity in the United States” (Coan 1987:1). The black American’s involvement in the Revolutionary War for the independence of the USA became the gateway to their struggle for freedom.

For more than ten years (1773–1783) tension had been building between Great Britain and the American colonies since the British government passed a series of laws to increase its control over the colonies. The American colonies strongly rejected the new laws, especially the tax laws and the fact that they had no representation in parliament. The fact that the American colonies disagreed with these new measures forced upon them angered the British government. A revolution seemed unavoidable. George Washington managed to unite all thirteen colonies against Britain and entered into dialogue with the French government for support if war should have been the only option to remedy the evil (cf Dunan 1973: 196).

After Britain ordered its troops to Boston to take action against the rebels, the Revolutionary War broke out in 1775 (cf Milbank 1992: 142). Appiah (1985: 84) describes that in 1775 George Washington banned the involvement of blacks in the army. Washington was of the opinion that after the war blacks would insist on freedom, liberty, property and equality, but he soon realised that the shortage of men would cost the Americans the war. He therefore re-employed the blacks in 1777 (cf Appiah 1985: 84). The black re-admission to the war afforded them the opportunity to

⁹ Singleton’s passion for social welfare in the light of the Blacks freedom for equality made him to study Social Science. In his work he describes the role played by the AME Church during the era of slavery.

¹⁰ Josephus Coan served as General Superintendent (head of the church) in the absence of bishops. He also served as principal of the R R Wright Theological Seminary in Evaton, Johannesburg between 1939 and 1947.

constructively organise developments amongst themselves to address their social and economic circumstances.

The American colonies successfully won the war against Great Britain in 1783 when Britain recognised the United States' independence with the Paris peace treaty signed on 3 September 1783 (cf Milbank 1992: 142).

Immediately after the war, the American colonies organised themselves as the United States. The war did not, however, secure any freedom for blacks in America. The revolution however, forced the blacks to fight for conditions that would satisfy their living conditions. McPherson (1965) summarised the awakening spirit of blacks in America as follows: "The Negroes did not remain passive in their quest for freedom. Negro orators and writers provided leadership in the struggle for the abolition of slavery, emancipation and equal rights. They were actively involved in movements to improve their education" (McPherson 1965: xi).

John White (1990), a black American in New York, depicts a historical view on the developments of the black race in America and their quest for freedom from slavery between 1800 down to the outbreak of the civil war. In 1827 a group of black New Yorkers organised themselves by establishing the *Freedom's Journal*, the first Black newspaper to campaign against racism in America and the abolition of slavery. The newspaper also published articles which rejected the proposed emigration of free blacks to Africa. All the restrictions meted out to blacks awakened a spirit of freedom and equality in the land of their birth (cf White 1990: 5).

2.2.2 Resistance within the Church

This resistance of blacks against being controlled by whites soon awakened a spirit of opposition among blacks in churches in the USA. The first Black Church to be organised during the war was the Black Baptist Church in 1782. The Methodists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists and Presbyterians followed the example of the Baptist Church from between 1787 and 1822 (cf African American Jubilee Edition of the Bible 1999:198).

Blacks belonging to the St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia also realised that they were treated as second class members. These blacks (or Negroes as they were called) had to occupy the back seats during worship services. They were not allowed to take Holy Communion with their white counterparts and were refused the opportunity to kneel at the same altar with whites during prayer sessions. This practice, which in the beginning was acceptable to blacks, led to severe dissatisfaction soon after the American Revolution in 1783. Baldwin (1983) comments that in 1784 black Methodists started to hold their own meetings without the permission of their white superiors in the Methodist Church (cf Baldwin 1983: 26). In the beginning blacks were allowed to do so, but with proper white supervision.

The intention of the St. George's Methodist Church leadership was to minimise discontent and to curb any possible idea of a revolt among the blacks (cf Baldwin 1983: 26). Discontent and an eventual revolt became unavoidable. Foster (1987) notes that: "The AME Church was born in the midst of the American Revolution. While the colonists were busy shaking the chains of ecclesiastical tyranny and economic oppression, descendants from Africa were in the process of removing the tentacles of slavery and establishing the truth that all men and women should be free" (Foster 1987: 20). Foster (1987) further notes that the establishment of a *New Nation* gave impetus to the establishment of a *New Church* for blacks in America (cf Foster 1987: 20)

2.2.3 The leadership of Richard Allen

Richard Allen, founder of the AME Church, played a vital role in the freedom from oppression for blacks. He was born on 14 February 1760 as a slave to Benjamin Chew of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. He was of African descent. Foster (1987) notes: "Philadelphia became a city of historic bearing in 1776 when the colonies united in faith, courage and determination to declare a new nation. By that time Richard Allen was only sixteen years of age" (Foster 1987: 25). The uniting forces in the USA influenced Allen's thinking about slavery and therefore worked towards his own freedom since he could no longer endure the hardship and second class citizenship thrust upon slaves. Fortunately for Allen, his slave owner was a good, kind, affectionate, tender and humane person (cf Wesley 1935: 17).

Chew allowed all his slaves to attend prayer meeting every Thursday, but the slaves would not attend any meeting without finishing their crops for that specific day. Chew greatly respected this kind of attitude amongst the Blacks and boasted of his slaves for their honesty and industry. Chew convinced himself that religion made slaves responsible for their daily tasks, notwithstanding the criticism of his fellow slave-owners (cf Gregg 1987: 13). Chew also encouraged slaves to save enough money to buy their own freedom. Allen was the first to purchase his freedom in 1777 and soon thereafter he was converted into the *Methodist Society* and was later admitted to preach at their meetings.

Allen's first obstacle after obtaining his freedom was to secure a living for himself. Wesley (1935: 19) explains that in slavery a person's occupation was secured and his living was assured. Many Negroes who became free had been kept in such dependence in slavery that it was exceedingly difficult for them to develop an initiative for themselves in freedom. Gregg (Gregg 1987) concurs with Wesley that a free slave faced all kinds of restrictions: "Prior to 1780 free Negroes faced practically all restrictions and regulations imposed upon them. For the slightest offence they could be arrested" (Gregg 1987: 18).

They were not equal to white men before the law, had very few rights of citizenship, and politically Negroes were regarded as a "non-entity." Since Allen purchased his freedom by saving money from cutting wood, he used such experience for his first occupation. His best opportunity for a new job came when civil government needed ox wagon drivers to transport salt. Allen used the opportunity to make stops on his journeys and preached to small groups on the road for he was convinced that his ultimate profession would be to seek and save his *lost brothers and sisters* (cf Wesley 1935: 23). This afforded Allen the opportunity to advance his preaching skills. In 1799 Bishop Ashbury of the Methodist Church ordained Allen as the first Black American minister and after the AME Church was properly organised, Asbury consecrated Allen in 1816 as the first bishop (cf Gregg 1980: 41).

Richard Allen concerned himself about the religious, social and physical conditions of people. During the dreadful yellow fever in Philadelphia in 1793 Richard Allen became personally involved to help the people infected and affected. Ransom (1950:

79) notes that this was the most disastrous epidemic ever in the history of the American people. He further remarks that for a century afterwards, the disease remained an annual threat to the people in many states. Richard Allen was the first to organise aid for the entire population of Philadelphia in combating the fever (Ransom 1950: 82). Allen was also instrumental in organising the first *Convention of Coloured Men* of the United States in 1830 to improve the living conditions of Coloureds (cf Wright 1963: 68).

When in 1816 the *American Colonisation Society*, an organisation to promote the immigration of free black people to Africa, Richard Allen rigorously acted against such idea. He argued that this was an act of the American Colonisation Society to rid themselves of the freed slaves and at the same time cling to slavery as a measure of cheap labour. He and his followers believed that slavery should be abolished entirely and therefore organised anti-slavery campaigns (cf Wright 1963: 67).

Handy (1969: 27) substantiates the argument of Wright by disputing the formation of the American Colonisation Society since it was an attempt on the side of white Americans to rid themselves of free slaves. According to Handy, whites believed that blacks would never attain equality in white America and that their presence will sooner or later evoke an upheaval in America. Whites however believed that the slave rebellion in 1831 in Virginia under Nat Turner was so cruel that it cost the lives of hundreds of people. It was against this background that many blacks resisted the idea of the American Colonisation Society and Richard Allen was in the forefront to organise protest meetings against such action.

2.2.4 The formation of the Free African Society

Before the AME Church was formally established, the dissident group that left the St. George's Methodist first organised the Free African Society under the leadership of Richard Allen and Absalom Jones in 1787. It was the first independent black group in America to work towards the abolition of slavery and to provide help to one another (cf Campbell 1989: 4). Furthermore, Allen and Jones established the first insurance company for blacks in Philadelphia. It was a mutual aid society to provide protection for the care of widows and orphans of deceased members (cf Foster 1987: 30). It furthermore provided spiritual encouragement to Philadelphia's black community.

This organisation also paved the way for other Blacks in New York, Boston and Newport to organise their own mutual aid societies (cf Ransom: 1950: 93).

Coan (1978: 84) remarks that from the beginning the St. George's Methodist Church harassed the Free African Society with rigid opposition. The struggle lasted until 1799. In that year the Supreme Court rendered a decision which gave the group legal rights to separate from the Methodist Church and to form an independent church.

Though the Free African Society was not a religious body, they were continuously engaged in religious activities. This gave Allen the opportunity to propagate a proper structure for church organisation. Despite the Methodist Church's suspicion about Allen's movements, Allen remained a loyal Methodist. Gregg (1987) summarised the feelings of Allen in this way: "Richard Allen was fundamentally a Methodist. Allen saw no religious sect or denomination that would suit the capacity of the coloured people better than the Methodist Church. The Methodist doctrine or Christian beliefs is plain and understandable" (Gregg 1987: 14). The result of Allen's convictions was that he persuaded a number of the members of the Free African Society to form a church with Methodist traditions and beliefs (cf Wesley 1935: 49).

His active involvement in gaining members for his proposed church brought him into great trouble. This also led to his expulsion from the Free African Society in 1790. This action affords Allen the opportunity to start the church he longed for (cf Campbell 1989: 4).

Before the AME Church was formally organised, Richard Allen bought a piece of land on the corner of Sixth Street and Lombard Street in Philadelphia. He also purchased an old structure that was formerly used as a blacksmith shop. His associates assisted him to construct it on the piece of land bought and reframe it into a place of worship. In July 1794 this place of worship was officially dedicated and named *Bethel*. This place of worship gave Allen the appropriate opportunity to organise the AME Church (cf Wright 1963: 57-58).

2.3 The establishment of the AME Church

The AME Church was formally established in April of 1816. William Paul Quinn, a future AME bishop and an influential leader of the church was present at this meeting. However, his tender age prohibited him from taking part in the deliberations (cf Singleton 1985: 23).

Before the AME Church was properly organised, discussions and consultations under the leadership of Richard Allen were conducted with five breakaway groups in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These deliberations and debates resulted into the establishment of the AME Church. From the outset the organisers made it clear that the newly formed church would stay in line with the doctrine, discipline and order of the Methodist tradition. As an indication of this allegiance, Wright (1963) notes: “As proof that there was no theological difference with the Methodist Church, they adopted the 29 Articles of Religion, the Catechism of Faith, the General Rules, and the polity of the Methodist Episcopal Church” (Wright 1963: 14).

The news of the newly established AME Church soon spread to a neighbouring city, Baltimore. The leader of this dissident group in Baltimore was Daniel Coker. He and a small group also left the Methodist Church in Baltimore as a result of the same treatment Richard Allen and his group experienced in Philadelphia. Contact was built up with Allen and his group with the result that the Baltimore group immediately joined the AME Church. This contact enabled the fledging church to spread its wings at a very early stage following its establishment (cf Singleton 1952: 22-23).

A joint meeting with the group of Philadelphia and Baltimore held on the 11 April 1816 in Philadelphia tabled a resolution to the effect that the AME Church be established. Singleton (1952) records the resolution as follows: “that the people of Philadelphia, Baltimore, and all other places, who should unite with them, shall become one body under the name and style of the AME Church of the United States of North America, and that the book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church be adopted as our Discipline until further orders” (Singleton 1952: 21). The church officially started with sixteen members with Daniel Coker as their first leader (cf Gregg 1980: 13).

In its infant stage the organisation of the church was severely criticised by its Methodist opponents. Wright (1963: 16) notes that one of the AME members, Levi Coppin convinced a white member of the Methodist Church which tried to win the dissident group back to the Methodist Church that the AME Church would rather prefer to suffer in poverty than to re-unite with the Methodist Church.

2.4 Significance of the name “African Methodist Episcopal”

2.4.1 “African”

The founders of the church were from African descent. These members’ forebears were slaves imported from Africa. It is important to note that its originators were Africans in America. Coan (1987: 3) notes that it was never the idea of the founders to start a “segregated church”, but a church which is inclusive of all races. He substantiates his argument that with the notion of “Man our Brother” as part of the church’s credo, the church was opened to all races and colour.

2.4.2 “Methodist”

The term Methodist refers to the Methodist Church of which the church is an offspring. Furthermore, the newly formed church based its organisational structures upon the doctrine, discipline and church order of the Methodist Church. Till today the church forms part of the Methodist tradition and belongs and has binding ecumenical ties with the Methodist Church.

2.4.3 “Episcopal”

The term Episcopal implies that the church’s hierarchical structure starts with the bishops. However, it is important to note that the bishops are not the highest authority in the church, but have immense power of authority.

2.5 The significance of the motto

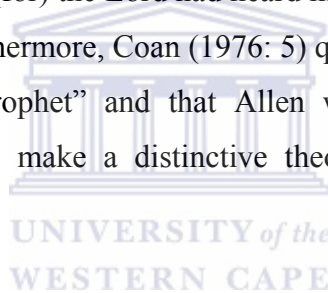
The motto¹¹ of the AME Church which reads: “God our Father, Christ our Redeemer and Man our Brother”, was formulated by Daniel Alexander Payne, the sixth bishop of the AME Church. This motto speaks of Payne’s commitment to equality as he stated: “I am opposed to slavery, not because it only enslaves a black person. Were all

¹¹ Also referred to as the slogan of the church.

slaveholders in this land people of colour and the slaves white, I would be as thorough and uncompromising an abolitionist as I now am. Whenever I see a person enslaved by somebody else, without respect to his or her complexion, I shall lift up that person. I shall lift up my voice to plead for his or her cause. I shall do it not merely from the sympathy which a person feels towards the suffering of others, but because God, the living God, whom I dare not disobey, has commanded me to open my mouth for the dumb, and plead the cause of the oppressed” (Coan 1976: 13).

2.5.1 “God our Father”

Coan is of the opinion that Allen experienced God as a liberator from oppression. Allen believed that God’s presence is felt in all walks of life. Allen himself was a slave but was afforded the opportunity to purchase his own freedom. Wright (1963) captured Allen’s words of his conversion: “I cried... and all of a sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off... (for) the Lord had heard my prayers and pardoned all my sins” (Wright 1963: 47). Furthermore, Coan (1976: 5) quoted Talbot when he wrote of Allen as God’s “fearless prophet” and that Allen was accurate and appropriate because he took the risk to make a distinctive theological assessment of God’s presence in this world.



Allen firmly believed that God is the God of the oppressed, the poor and the orphans, and that black people can be assured that God is their sustainer in life (cf Coan 1976: 8). This idea of God was evident in the black Americans struggle for freedom. In this regard, Abraham Lincoln describes Bishop Henry McNeal Turner as a politician in his own rights. To substantiate Turner’s non-negotiable stance on oppression, Lincoln remarks that Turner forbade his congregation to sing the hymn “Wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow.” Turner’s argument was that washing makes one clean and not white. Turner believed that white is not a sign of purity and that God is not white (cf Lincoln 1967: 19).

2.5.2 “Christ our Redeemer”

The founders of the AME Church had something specific in mind when they affirmed that Christ was their Redeemer. They believed that Christ was sent by God to liberate everybody from sin and to reconcile people unto God. Jesus’ first public speech in Nazareth forms the key element to their understanding of whom Jesus is: “The Spirit

of the Lord is upon me for He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor...” (Luke 4:18).

2.5.3 “Man our Brother”

Singleton’s (1952: xviii) explains that Richard Allen interpreted religion as the “Fatherhood of God” and the “brotherhood of man”. The organisers of the AME Church firmly believed that God is manifested in the lives of all peoples in the world. To this end, in God’s programme for the harmonious living of His people, neither colour nor discrimination should determine the churches’ boundaries. Singleton (1952) furthermore quotes Du Bois: “... the test of American Christianity is the test of the colour line” (Singleton 1952: xix).

The church leaders firmly believed and lived out this motto to the effect that Payne expelled one of his preachers who refused a white lady who sought membership into the AME Church (cf Cone 1976: 13).

2.6 A contemporary view of the motto

The use of sexist language in the motto of the AME Church became a serious concern for some members. The aim of the church was to adjust the motto so that it corresponds to the change in language and tone for the new millennium. Furthermore, the church was not only concerned about the use of inclusive language, but also about the fact that the Holy Spirit, which forms an integral part of the Trinity, is not mentioned in the traditional motto. To this end, two attempts were made at the General Conferences of 1996 and 2000 to reformulate the motto. At these two conferences a bill was tabled to change the motto to: “God our Creator; Christ our Redeemer; Holy Spirit our Comforter and Humanity our Family”. At both conferences this bill was not accepted (cf General Conference Bills of 1996 and 2000). It was only at the General Conference of 2008 that this issue was discussed once more and that the General Conference voted in favour of the newly designed motto.

2.7 The subsequent growth of the AME Church

The harassment on the side of the St. George’s Methodist Church made the AME Church aware of the importance to further extend its boundaries. Allen and his

followers embarked on a missionary programme. Congregations were established in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Newport, New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia and the eastern shores of Maryland (cf Campbell 1989: 13). In 1818 Morris Brown went to Charleston, South Carolina, and in less than a year organised a congregation with 1,848 members (cf Coan 1987: 9). Campbell (1989) notes that the AME Church grew so rapidly that by 1880 it had sixty three congregations and more than hundred thousand members in Georgia alone. By then the total members of the AME Church stood at more than half a million. He further comments that by the opening of the twentieth century, it had become, in the words of WEB DuBois, “the greatest Negro institution in the world” (Campbell 1989: 41).

With the rapid growth of the church it became evident that a bishop should be elected to oversee the work of the church. Singleton (1985: 22) remarks that Daniel Coker was elected in 1819 as the first bishop, but resigned in favour of Richard Allen whose efforts to organise and expand the church he felt weighed much heavier than his own. Richard Allen was then consecrated as bishop with the imposition of the hands of five ordained ministers.

As the church membership grew it became evident that due to vast distances the church had to be divided into Episcopal Districts. For this purpose, more bishops were needed. Morris Brown was elected a bishop in 1828 to assist Richard Allen in his work until Allen’s death in 1831 (cf Wright 1963: 116).

In 1841 William Paul Quinn was appointed as assistant to Bishop Morris Brown. His impressive report at General Conference of 1844 for the states of Ohio secured his election as bishop. He reported the establishment of 47 new churches, 1080 members and 72 congregations (cf Wright 1963: 284). The first General Conference held in New York in 1852 elected both Willis Nazrey and Daniel Payne as bishops. It was at this General Conference that the church was divided into three Episcopal Districts. Bishop Brown was assigned to the 1st Episcopal District consisted of Philadelphia and New England Conferences. Bishop Quinn was assigned to the 2nd Episcopal District of the Baltimore and New York Annual Conferences and bishop Nazrey to the 3rd Episcopal District comprising of the Indiana and Canadian Annual Conferences. At this General Conference bishop Daniel Payne was entrusted with the ecumenical and

educational affairs of the church. These bishops also formed the *Bishops Council* where decisions were made on behalf of the church in the interim of the General Conference which was conducted every four years (cf Wright 1963: 258).

Currently the 1st Episcopal District comprises of the Philadelphia-, New Jersey-, New York-, Western New York-, New England- Delaware- and Bermuda Annual Conferences. The membership for the First Episcopal District is approximately 159 000. The Baltimore-, Washington-, Virginia-, North Carolina- and West Carolina form the 2nd Episcopal District with a total membership of approximately 101 648, whilst the 3rd Episcopal District consists of the Ohio-, North Ohio-, South Ohio-, Pittsburgh- and West Virginia Conferences with a membership of approximately 90 000.

Many congregations were established as the church became more and more stabilised. This resulted in the election of bishops at almost every General Conference after 1852. Episcopal boundaries constantly changed due to the missionary expansions. The church also had the responsibility to secure Episcopal Districts for the newly elected bishops. Bishop Thomas Ward established churches and organised Annual Conferences in North Georgia in 1874, Arkansas in 1876, Southeast Texas and Oklahoma in 1879, Missouri in 1882 and South Kansas in 1883. All bishops elected after Thomas Ward were assigned with the same responsibility of extending the church (cf Wright 1936: 351).

Since limited data is available it is almost impossible to determine the exact dates when the various Episcopal Districts were formed. Furthermore, as the church grew, the Episcopal District boundaries constantly changed.

The 4th Episcopal District was organised at the 1872 General Conference, which consisted of the Illinois-, Indiana-, Missouri- and California Annual Conference. Presently this District comprises of Indiana, Chicago, Illinois, Michigan and Canada with a membership of approximately 116 000 members.

Three Episcopal Districts were added to the church at the General Conference of 1888. The 5th Episcopal District then consists of Kentucky- and Tennessee

Conferences, the 6th Episcopal District comprised the South Carolina- and Georgia Conferences and the 7th Episcopal District was made up of the Alabama-, North Alabama- and Florida Conferences. The estimated membership currently for the 5th Episcopal District is 95 510, which consists of the Missouri-, Kansas-Nebraska-, Desert/Mountain-, Northwest Missouri-, California-, Southern California- and Pacific Northwest Annual Conferences. Presently the 6th Episcopal District comprises the Georgia-, Southwest Georgia-, Atlanta-North-, Macon-, South Georgia- and Augusta Annual Conferences with a membership of 137 000. The Palmetto-, South Carolina-, Columbia-, Piedmont-, Northeast-, South Carolina- and Central South Carolina form the 7th Episcopal District with a membership of approximately 135 000.

The General Conference of 1884 added two more Episcopal Districts to the church. The 8th Episcopal District consisted of Mississippi, Arkansas and Indiana and the Ninth of the entire Texas State. Currently the 8th Episcopal District comprises of the Mississippi-, East Mississippi-, Northeast-West Mississippi-, Central North Mississippi-, North Louisiana-, Central Louisiana- and the Louisiana Conferences with a membership of approximately 94 000. The 9th Episcopal District included the Alabama-, North Alabama- Central Alabama-, East Alabama-, South Alabama- and West Alabama Annual Conferences with a membership in the region of 92 000.

At the General Conference held in 1888 another two Episcopal Districts were added. The 10th Episcopal District consisted of all the Annual Conferences in the states of Kentucky and Tennessee. Presently the 10th Episcopal District comprises of the Texas-, North Texas-, Northwest Texas- and Southeast Texas Annual Conference. This District has approximately 90 000 members. The 11th Episcopal District was formed by the Ontario-, Nova Scotia- and Bermuda Annual Conferences. Currently the 11th Episcopal District comprises of the Florida-, Central Florida-, West Florida-, East Florida- and the Bahamas Annual Conference with a membership of 149 000.

The General Conference of 1892 introduced the 12th Episcopal District with the same Annual Conferences which formed part of the 11th Episcopal District and located all Annual Conferences in Florida under the 11th Episcopal District (cf Wright 1936: 324-337). Currently the 12th Episcopal District consists of the Oklahoma-, Central Oklahoma-, Arkansas-, West Arkansas-, Central Arkansas-, East Northwest Arkansas-

and South Arkansas Annual Conferences. The membership for this Episcopal District is estimated at 101 000.

At the 1900 General Conference another switch in boundaries was made with the introduction of the 13th Episcopal District. The Tennessee-, East Tennessee-, Kentucky- and West Kentucky Annual Conferences were placed under the jurisdiction of this Episcopal District. The same Annual Conferences are currently part of the 13th with a membership of approximately 91 000.

With the official organisation of the church in South America and West Africa between 1896 and 1900, these Annual Conferences were placed under the jurisdiction of the 3rd Episcopal District (cf Wright 1963: 156).

Although the church expanded its boundaries to West Africa with the formation of the Liberian Conference in 1878, this Conference remained a part of the 3rd Episcopal District until 1908 when the General Conference elected William Heard as bishop for West Africa (cf Gregg 1980: 54). During Heard's four year term as bishop of West Africa, the church did not formally organise an Episcopal District for this area (cf Wright 1963: 219).

As in the case with the church in North America, Episcopal Districts in Africa constantly changed. When Levi Coppin was elected bishop at the General Conference of 1900, he was appointed to the 14th Episcopal District which comprised of South Africa. With further expansions in Africa, the South African Annual Conferences were changed to the 17th Episcopal District including Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Basotuland (now Lesotho) in 1928. In 1948 the 14th Episcopal District was again changed, this time to the 15th Episcopal District which comprised of the Republic of South Africa. In 1952 Lesotho and South West Africa (now Namibia) were added to the 15th Episcopal District. In 1962 Lesotho was released from the 15th Episcopal District and in 1984 the 15th Episcopal District was divided into two Districts, namely the 15th and 19th Episcopal Districts respectively (cf Minutes of the General Conference of 1984).

As the church grew in Africa, Episcopal Districts stabilised. The 14th Episcopal District was formally established in 1920 with the Liberian- and Sierra Leone Annual Conferences. Currently the 14th Episcopal District consists of the Sierra Leone-, Liberia-, Ghana-, Nigeria-, Cote D'Ivoire- and Togo-Benin Annual Conferences with a total membership of 25 600.

The boundaries of the 15th Episcopal District were finally established in 1984 with the Cape-, Namibia-, Kalahari-, Eastern Cape- and Queenstown Annual Conferences. In 1995 more than 12 000 members from the *Independent Methodist Church* in Angola joined the AME Church and were added to the 15th Episcopal District (cf Centennial Journal of the AME Church in Southern Africa 1996: 24). The current membership of the 15th Episcopal District is approximately 56 694.

Although the 16th Episcopal District is not located in Africa, it forms part of the Districts outside of the borders of the USA. All Episcopal Districts outside of the borders of the USA are currently under the jurisdiction of the *Global Development Council*.¹² The 16th Episcopal District was formally organised at the 1940 General Conference and comprise of the West Indies-, Islands of the Sea-, Guinea- and South American Annual Conferences. Recently Suriname-Guyana, Windward Islands-, Virgin Islands-, Dominican Republic-, Haiti-, Jamaica- and the London Annual Conferences were added to the 16th Episcopal District. This District has a current membership of approximately 49 000.

Between 1900 and 1936 the AME Church penetrated into Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambezi and Zimbabwe. Annual Conferences in these countries were spread among the already existing Episcopal Districts. It was only at the General Conference of 1956 that the 17th Episcopal District was established within the above mentioned countries (cf Mkwanzu 1992: 11). During the 1940's onwards Malawi, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Congo Brazzaville were also added to the 17th Episcopal District. At the General Conference of 2004 the 17th Episcopal District was again divided into two Episcopal Districts to

¹² The Global Development Council (GDC) was established at the General Conference of 2004 to ensure growth and economic development within the AME Church outside the borders of the USA.

add the 20th Episcopal. Currently the 17th Episcopal District consists of the South East Zambia-, South West Zambia-, North East Zambia-, North West Zambia-, Zambezi, Congo Brazzaville-, and Rwanda- and Burundi Annual Conferences, which became the largest Episcopal District in Africa. It has a membership of approximately of 105 829.

The 18th Episcopal District was also officially established in 1956 and included congregations in Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland. This is the only Episcopal District with borders which never changed since its inception. The membership of the 18th Episcopal District is approximately 28 200.

The division of the 15th Episcopal District into two Districts in 1984 paved the way to formally establish the 19th Episcopal District, which comprises of the Orangia-, East-, West-, Mokone Memorial- and Natal Annual Conferences. This Episcopal District currently has a membership of 86 439.

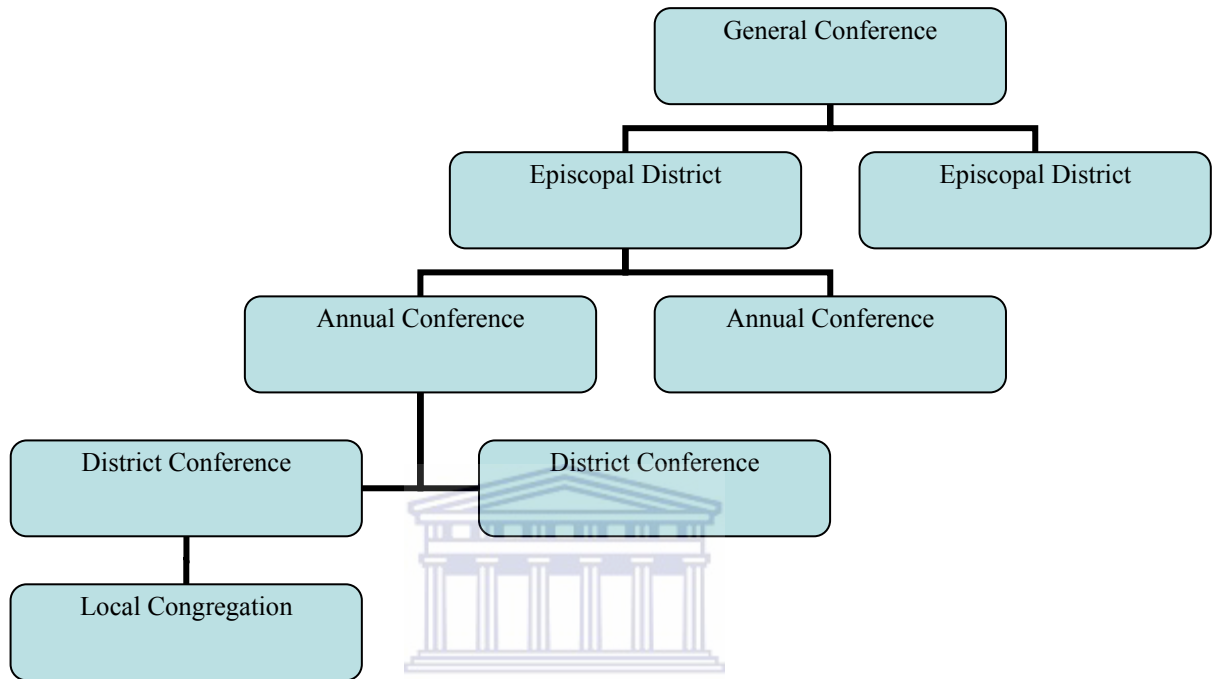
The General Conference of 2004 added another Episcopal District after a decision was made to divide the 17th Episcopal District into two parts. The 20th Episcopal District was then established with the Malawi North-, Malawi South-, North East Zimbabwe-, South West Zimbabwe- and Central Zimbabwe Annual Conferences. The total membership for this District is rated at 68 850 (cf *Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church* 2004, 233-235).

The total membership for churches in North America, according the calculations made from the *Official Directory* of the General Conference of 2004 is 1 451 158. The total number of membership for the Episcopal Districts outside the borders of North America is estimated at 420 612. Since representation at the General Conferences (where bishops are elected) is based on membership, this has a significant bearing on the election of bishops and other office bearers. Due to their number superiority it is almost inevitable that the leadership positions in the AME Church are filled by North Americans.

2.8 The structures of the AME Church

2.8.1 The organisational structure

The organisational structure of the AME Church is a hierarchical one organised along different conferences. The structure is depicted below in figure 1:



a) General Conference

The General Conference is the supreme body of the AME Church. It is composed of all the bishops and General Officers, College Presidents, Deans of Theological Seminaries and Chaplains of the Armed Forces as well as an equal number of ministerial and lay delegates elected by each Annual Conference. The General Conference meets every four years, but may have extra sessions in cases of emergencies.

b) Episcopal District

The General Conference is divided into twenty Episcopal Districts of which a bishop, who is the head, is assigned to each Episcopal District. An Episcopal District comprises of all Annual Conferences within its boundaries. The Episcopal District meets annually on the call of the bishop to discuss:

- The economic development of the district.
- The membership growth on the district and design plans to increase it.

- Report on the financial situation of the district and if deemed necessary, increase or decrease the financial budget of the various Annual Conferences.
- Elect and appoint Episcopal officers.
- The election of officers on the various committees for the General Conference the year prior to the General Conference (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 130 - 131).

c) Annual Conference

The Annual Conference consists of all congregations within a Presiding Elders' District, e.g. Cape Annual Conference. The assigned bishop of that specific Episcopal District is the head of all Annual Conferences. The Annual Conference meets annually on the call of the bishop. The delegation to such Annual Conference is the minister of a local congregation and one delegate elected by the congregation to represent the members of that particular congregation. Furthermore, all presidents of the Lay Organisation, Young People's Department, Board of Christian Education, Women's Organisation, and retired ministers form part of the Annual Conference.

The agenda of an Annual Conference is prepared by the bishop who is also the chairperson. Among others, the work of an Annual Conference is to report, discuss, adopt or reject the work of the following committees:

- The State of the Church.
- The State of the Country.
- The Presiding Elders' salaries.
- The Board of Examiners which reports on the students for the active ministry.
- The recommendations of the Board of Examiners to ordain ministers.
- Pensions and Stipends for active and retired ministers.
- The Trustee Board which is responsible to report on the physical conditions of church buildings and parsonages, the building of new church structures, the outstanding mortgage balances on local congregations and the progress of building projects within boundaries of the Annual Conference.

- The Annual finance report of the conference.
- Efficiency committee on ministers who were charged for negligence of duty and those that applied for retirement.

Furthermore, ministers have to report on the conditions, income and budgets rose for the work of the Annual Conference. The duty of the bishop is to appoint members on various committees and assign ministers to various congregations (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 224 - 225).

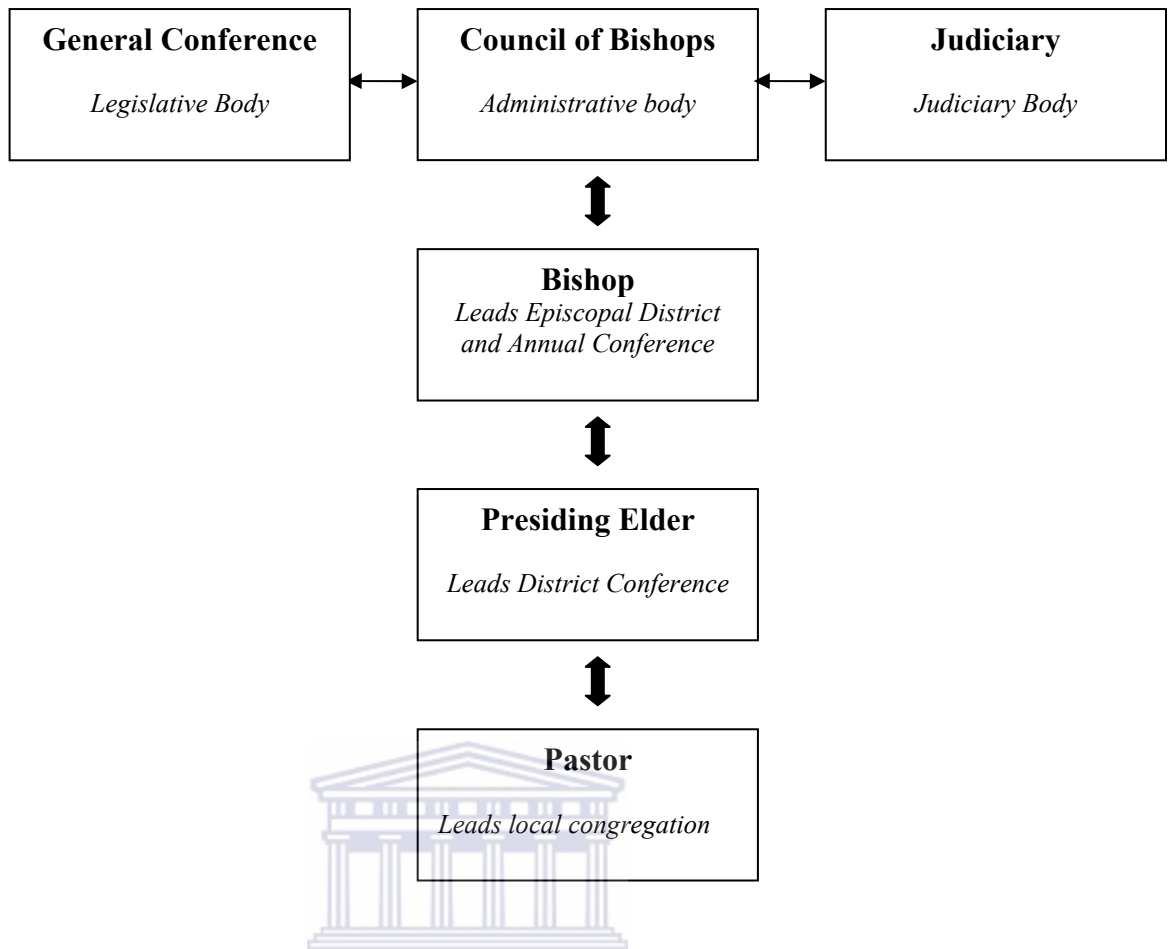
d) District Conference

Each Annual Conference is divided into Presiding Elder Districts. The Presiding Elder Districts are made up of local congregations in more or less the same geographical area. A minister is assigned by the bishop as a Presiding Elder. A Presiding Elders' District Conference is conducted annually for the purpose of Christian Education; accepting or rejecting applications for members applied for the active ministry; deal with reports of all local congregations in his/her district on developing community programmes, finances, membership, functioning of organisations within the local congregation and the spiritual progress or needs.

The Presiding Elder must conduct four Quarterly Conferences each year at a local congregation to determine the efficiency of the minister, the effectiveness of the ministry of the congregation and to give proper direction to all church matters if deemed necessary (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 116).

2.8.2 Decision-making within the AME Church

The decision-making structure of the AME Church is depicted in figure 3 below:



- The General Conference is the legislative body in the church. It meets every four year to discuss matters pertaining church development, strategic planning for the AME Church, adopt or reject new legislations, elect bishops and General Officers and the Episcopal Committee under the jurisdiction of the General Conference assign bishops to various Episcopal Districts.
- The Council of Bishops is the executive branch of the church. This council meets annually to implement and enforce the decisions of the General Conference. Every bishop must submit a written report of the work done in his/her Episcopal District.
- The *Judiciary Council* is elected at the General Conference. In the period between General Conferences this council meets to discuss and determine any appeals from members of the church against the decisions made by a bishop in an Annual Conference which is contrary to the law of the church. The Judiciary Council reports to the following General Conference on their findings and makes suggestions to the same on how to deal with a

bishop found guilty of any offences forbidden by the law of the church. The General Conference, after hearing the report of the Judiciary Council, has the authority to decide whether a bishop found guilty may be suspended for a period of time. In serious offences a bishop's name may be dropped from the role.

- The highest office in the AME Church is that of a bishop. Only ordained elders can be elected to the bishopric. All bishops are elected for life by a majority vote of the General Conference, which meets every four years. The Episcopal Committee assign bishops to various Episcopal Districts to oversee the work of that specific District. The law of the church binds a bishop in the execution of his/her duties. A bishop, who does not adhere to the law and is found guilty of maladministration or any other offence described by the law of the church, can either be suspended or expelled. The law of the church further determines that all bishops must retire after the age of seventy-five. Bishops report annually on their work to the General Board.
- The chief officer on the Episcopal level is the bishop assigned to that specific district. It is the duty of the bishop to preside in all Annual Conferences and determine pastoral appointments of all the pastors at the Annual Conference. The bishop has the authority to refer ministers that are not in good and regular standing in the church, to the *Ministerial Efficiency Committee*. The bishop also has the authority to appoint committees in the execution of his/her task and these committees are answerable to the Annual Conference for actions taken. Furthermore, the bishop has the right to appoint an accountant and treasurer to administer the financial affairs of the Episcopal District.
- It is the duty of the Presiding Elder to ensure that the programme of the church is duly implemented in the local congregations. The Presiding Elder meets with all Pastors and officers of a congregation once a quarter to determine the progress on the work of a local congregation, and if deems necessary to give advice to enhance the work locally. It is also the duty of the Presiding Elder to conduct a Presiding Elders' District

Conference Annually for the purpose of promoting the work of the District and to collect the funds of all local churches to the Annual Conference.

- The bishop of that specific Episcopal District appoints the minister in charge of a local congregation. The duty of the appointed pastor is to ensure that the administrative affairs of the congregation are sound and that all organisations on local level are organised to ensure the smooth running of the congregation. The pastor in charge is answerable for his duties to both the Presiding Elder and the bishop in charge.

2.9 Aspects of the life and work of the AME Church

2.9.1 Confessional nature

The mission of the AME Church is to administer to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people in communities where it exists. Every local congregation must have a policy document to this effect. This policy document must make provision for the preaching of the gospel at times designated by the congregation. Furthermore, the programme of the congregation must be designed in such a fashion that adherence is given to the poor, the jobless, the fallen, the sick, etc. Ministries to prisoners, hospitals, nursing homes, old age homes, mental institutions, environmental awareness programmes form an integral part of the mission of the church. The encouragement of economic - thrift and advancements as part of policy making for local congregations is essential for an improved lifestyle (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 15).

All probationers¹³ are instructed for at least one year in the belief system of the church. A prescribed book, which explains the belief system of the church, is made available to all probationers and classes are conducted regularly before they are accepted into full members.

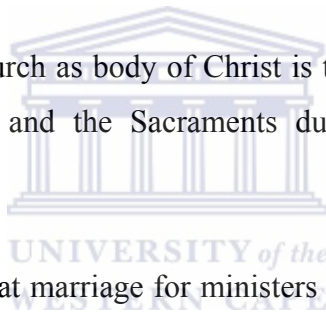
The Holy Trinity, as the Maker and Preserver of all things forms an integral part of the belief system of the church.

¹³ A probationer is a person of the church 14 years and older without full membership status as well as members from other denominations other than the AME- or Methodist Church. Those members from denominations other as the above are instructed on the Doctrine and Discipline for three months before receiving full membership status.

The confession of faith is based on the Apostles' Creed, which forms part of the Sunday worship. Members of the AME Church must confess that they believe in all the canonical books of both the Old and New Testament for the salvation of their souls. Since the original or birth sin makes all human beings sinful before God, AME members are encouraged to confess before God and try to live a life, which is pleasing in the sight of God. Furthermore, the church believes that salvation from sin is only possible through the grace of God. It is therefore imperative for all its members to seek salvation by grace through the will and work of the Trinity.

The only two sacraments administered by the church are the Eucharist and baptism. The water used at baptism and the bread and wine used at the Lord's Supper are symbols through which the Trinity makes known its presence in our common life.

For the AME Church, the church as body of Christ is the visible congregation where the pure Word is preached and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance.



The AME Church believes that marriage for ministers need not be prohibited since it is not commanded by God's law to vow the estate of a single life. It is therefore lawful for ministers and all other Christians in the AME Church to marry at their own discretion.

2.9.2 Ecumenical relations

In the AME Church a bishop is appointed to the office of *Ecumenical Affairs*. The appointed bishop has as his duty to ensure that the church has official, direct and ongoing contact with the World Council of Churches, National Council of Churches and World Methodist Council on Church Union. This office enables the church to maintain direct contacts with developments affecting the churches, as well as to participate actively with other denominations.

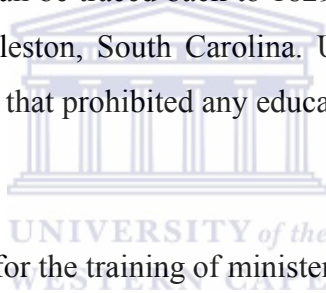
The AME Church participates in various ecumenical structures. Furthermore, the AME Church in the USA with its membership at the Congress of Black Churches

focuses on issues that affect the lives of black people. This organisation has as its aim the liberation and security of blacks in the communities in which they live.

2.9.3 Educational Institutions

In the early years of the church it became clear that the lack of education became a threat to the continuous growth of the church. It was not until 1833 that the church seriously addressed the issue of formal schooling. Pastors sent to various congregations received mandates to immediately organise day schools in the communities they served (cf Gregg 1980: 73).

The pioneer in education was Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne who joined the AME Church in 1841. He joined the church as a well-educated person. He was educated in Latin, Greek, astronomy, history, zoology, geology and theology (Wright 1963: 267). His experience in education can be traced back to 1829 when he established a school for people of colour in Charleston, South Carolina. Unfortunately, this was closed down by governmental orders that prohibited any educational training for coloureds in 1835.



Payne designed a curriculum for the training of ministers. In 1856 when the Methodist Church established Union Seminary in Ohio, Payne represented the AME Church at the opening ceremony. In 1862 the Methodist Church closed down the college and Payne encouraged the AME Church to buy the property to start a theological institute. He immediately started the Wilberforce University for the AME Church, which became the first college of higher learning in America owned and controlled by people of colour (cf Wright 1963: 270).

Theological schools were opened in both America and Africa. Institutions of higher education include Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce, Turner Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Allen University in Columbia, Paul Quinn College in Dallas, Edward Waters College in Jacksonville, AME University in Monrovia and R R Wright Theological Seminary in Johannesburg. Enrolment within these institutions shows a slow growth. The AME University in Monrovia, Liberia with more than eighteen hundred students has the

highest number of registered students in any AME educational institute (cf Report of the 14th Episcopal District to the General Conference of 2004).

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter it was shown that the American Revolution stimulated within the blacks a spirit not only to fight for their freedom as slaves, but also for their religious freedom. This was due to the fact that Richard Allen and his followers believed that God has created all persons equal and that the same opportunities the whites in North America enjoyed should be granted to all races.

In the beginning Richard Allen and Absalom Jones were cautious not to start a denomination immediately after they left the St. George's Methodist Church. They rather preferred to start an organisation, the Free African Society to gain as many blacks to support them in their quest to eventually start a congregation. Since the Free African Society was administered as a welfare organisation and at the same time embarked on programmes for the abolition of slavery, blacks found it attractive and joined in their numbers. The result of this was that Allen could convince a number of the members of the Free African Society to form a church with Methodist traditions and beliefs. Allen's constant promotion of a church led to the formation of the AME Church.

Amidst the constant harassment and severe opposition, the AME Church in its infant stage proved to grow enormously. Notwithstanding the persecution of the church, it grew in its first hundred years to more than half a million members and was referred to as the greatest Negro institution in the world.

Since the AME Church concerned itself with the education of its members it gave rise to the establishment of many institutions which further stimulate its membership growth.

In the next chapter the AME Church in Africa will be discussed. Among others, the debate around missionary expansion and the establishment of the various Episcopal Districts will be discussed.

Chapter 3

The AME Church in Africa

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the expansion of the AME Church beyond the borders of North America, particularly into Africa will be discussed. Research material regarding the expansion and development of the church in Africa is limited. However, the resources available were utilised to construct a picture of the establishment of the various Episcopal Districts in Africa. The debate around missionary expansion is highlighted and a brief history of the establishment of each of the African districts will be provided.

3.2 Historical overview

When the AME Church was established in West Africa in 1878, it formed part of the the 3rd Episcopal District. The 3rd Episcopal District is located in the United States. Between 1900 and 1932 West Africa was removed from the 3rd Episcopal District to form part of the 13th Episcopal District, also in the United States. It was only in 1956 that the boundaries for West Africa were fixed when it became an Episcopal District on its own, namely the 14th Episcopal District.

Since 1900 all other congregations established in Africa were placed under the jurisdiction of the South African Conference, which then formed the 14th Episcopal District. Therefore all congregations in countries such as Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Swaziland and Basutoland (now Lesotho) formed part of this district. It was only in 1956 that the boundaries of the Episcopal Districts in Africa were once again fixed.

Wright (1963: iv) comments that as the AME Church expanded its boundaries in Africa, more changes took place. The General Conference of 1956 divided the Southern African work into three Episcopal Districts, i.e. the 15th Episcopal District (which was composed of the Cape Province, Natal, Orangia, Northwest Transvaal, South East Transvaal and South West Africa Annual Conferences); the 17th Episcopal District (which was composed of the Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and

Central Africa Annual Conference); and the 18th Episcopal District (which was comprised of the Basutoland, Swaziland, Bechuanaland and Portuguese East Africa Annual Conferences).¹⁴

The full picture of Episcopal Districts that were established in Africa reads as follows:

- The boundaries of the 14th Episcopal District were fixed in 1956 with the Liberia-, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire and Togo-Benin Annual Conferences.
- The 15th Episcopal District's boundaries were fixed in 1956 with the Cape-, Kalahari-, Eastern Cape-, Queenstown-, Orangia-, Natal-, Northwest Transvaal-, South East Transvaal- and South West Africa Annual Conferences. However, these boundaries changed in 1984 when the 19th Episcopal Conference was introduced. Currently the 15th Episcopal District comprises of the Cape-, SWA (Namibia)-, Kalahari-, Eastern Cape-, Queenstown- and the Angola Annual Conferences.
- The 16th Episcopal District was established in 1940 with the Suriname-Guyana-, Windward Islands-, Virgin Islands-, Dominican Republic-, Haiti-, Jamaica- and London Annual Conferences. Although the 16th Episcopal District does not form part of the Episcopal Districts in Africa, it is united with Africa through the Global Development Council.
- The 17th Episcopal District was finally organised in 2004 with the South East Zambia-, South West Zambia-, North East Zambia-, North West Zambia-, Zambezi-, Congo Brazzaville-, Katanga-, Kasai-, Kinshasa-, Mbuji-mayi-, Rwanda- and Burundi Annual Conferences.
- The 18th Episcopal District's boundaries were also determined at the General Conference of 2004 with the Lesotho-, Swaziland-, Mozambique- and North East Lesotho Annual Conferences.
- The 19th Episcopal District was formed in 1984 with the Orangia-, West-, MM Mokone- and Natal Annual Conferences.
- The 20th Episcopal District was organised at the General Conference of 2004 with the Malawi North-, Malawi South-, North East Zimbabwe-,

¹⁴ Unpublished paper on *The Southern African Boundaries in 1956*. Author unknown.

South West Zimbabwe- and Central Zimbabwe Annual Conference (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 234-235).

3.3 The debate around missionary expansion

Coan (1987: 7) notes that the AME Church since its inception felt that missionary endeavours outside the borders of the USA were imperative for church growth. Gregg (1980: 52) furthermore states that the AME Church was not so much interested in economic growth, but in expansion into foreign fields.

In 1820 Daniel Coker, a prominent AME preacher, together with a number of African Americans went to Liberia under the auspices of the American Colonization Society to identify emigration opportunities in Africa (cf Singleton 1985: 68). It must be stated that the AME Church did not participate in this programme. Despite the opposition of the AME Church, Coker nevertheless established a congregation in Liberia. Coker never received any kind of support for this effort and this resulted in a brief lifespan of the AME Church presence in Monrovia, Liberia (cf Wesley 1935: 216).

The first serious attempt by the AME Church to penetrate into Africa to establish AME congregations outside the boundaries of the United States was in 1824 in Haiti. The AME Church accepted an invitation from the *Haitian Government* to send free Negroes for missionary purposes (cf Wesley 1935: 215).

It was only in 1828 that the General Conference of the AME Church seriously addressed the issue of missionary expansions outside the borders of USA. At this conference a decision was made for the expansion of the church into Africa (cf Wesley 1935: 218). Daniel Alexander Payne, a bishop in the church at that time, strongly argued against any attempts to extend the borders of the AME Church outside the boundaries of North America. He argued that the church at that time was too poor and had too many financial obligations at home to embark on any missionary expansions into Africa (cf Coan 1987: 13). Payne also stipulated that the idea of expanding the church into Africa would give credence to the American policy of emigration to Africa, an idea the church strongly rejected. Payne thought that the

attempt to extend the AME missions into Africa at that time or within the near future was to allow zeal to outrun common sense. He also thought that it was an endeavour to establish African Methodist imperialism in Africa (cf AME Review July 1884: 5)¹⁵. The church nonetheless ignored the argument of Payne and continued with its plans for missionary expansions into Africa. The consequences of Payne's warning and the ignorance of the church will be discussed in later chapters.

Another point of concern is that with the expansion of the church in Africa, the boundaries of the Episcopal Districts constantly changed, but as the church grew, Episcopal Districts slowly became stabilised.

3.4 The 14th Episcopal District

Although Coker made the first attempt to start the AME Church in Liberia in 1820, it was the AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, which raised funds in order to send a missionary to Liberia. Thirty-one members of this congregation were sent and the group arrived in Monrovia in 1878. After consultation with the Liberian Government, the group organised a congregation in Monrovia (cf General Conference minutes, 1896: 83-84). This attempt to start missionary work seemed to be a failure, because a number of the Americans went home soon after the establishment of the church. Even Rev. Samuel Flegler, who was appointed as minister of the church in Monrovia left after two years and SJ Campbell took over his work (Campbell 1989: 66). Campbell (1989: 69) notes that the main problem with the stabilisation of the AME Church's West African missions was the lack of funds.

In some way church members in Freetown, Sierra Leone heard about the AME Church. It can be assumed that those members en route back to the USA, spent some time in Freetown and the story of the AME Church was told. It is not known to which church the people in Freetown belonged, but it is evident that they were eager to rid themselves from white dominance. In 1885 they wrote to the leadership of the AME Church in the USA and requested affiliation with the AME Church, which was granted (cf Campbell 1989: 68).

¹⁵ The AME Review is a quarterly journal published by the AME Church.

The West African church experienced an extremely slow growth in membership. From 1878 to 1891 the membership was 225. In 1891 Bishop Henry McNeil Turner was sent to West Africa to organise the Liberian Annual Conference, which comprised of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Although the church expanded its boundaries to West Africa and the Liberian Conference was organised in 1891, this Conference remained a part of the 3rd Episcopal District until early in 1908 when the General Conference elected William Heard as bishop for West Africa (cf Gregg 1980: 54). Even during Heard's four years term as bishop of West Africa, the General Conference did not formally organise an Episcopal District for this area (cf Wright 1963: 219). The 14th Episcopal District was only formally organised in 1956 with the Liberian- and Sierra Leone Annual Conferences. Currently the 14th Episcopal District consists of the Sierra Leone-, Liberia-, Ghana-, Nigeria-, Cote D'Ivoire- and Togo-Benin Annual Conferences with a total membership of 25 600.

The first educational institution, which opened its doors, was the Shaffer Boys' High School in Arthington, Liberia in 1902 under the administration of Bishop Shaffer. This school offered elementary education in geography, grammar, arithmetic and history. As the school progressed, a curriculum was introduced to prepare students for work in the agricultural market (cf Wright 1963: 264).

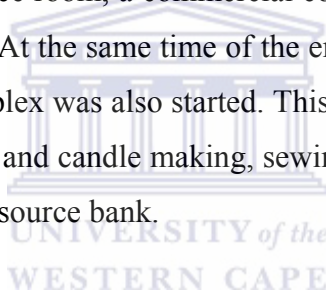
In 1920 Bishop Brooks was assigned to West Africa. Upon his arrival in Monrovia, Liberia, he negotiated the purchase of twenty acres of land for the erection of a College. Under his administration Monrovia College was erected. This college became the first institution of higher learning in the AME Church in Africa. In recent years the name was changed to the AME University and at present it has an enrolment of over eighteen hundred students, the largest student body in the entire AME connection (cf 14th Episcopal District report to the General Conference 2004: 4).

In 1944 John Clayborn was elected bishop and assigned to West Africa. Although World War 2 was still in progress, Clayborn did not use that as an excuse to attend to his overseas duties. He went to West Africa by plane and was the only bishop who assumed duty in Africa during the war. Immediately upon his arrival, he revived the

Shaffer Boys' School, which was on the verge of closing down. Clayborn redesigned the curriculum of the school, opened it to both boys and girls and renamed it the Shaffer Smith Elementary School. This school lasted until the early 1970's (cf Wright 1963: 135). He organised Clayborn College in Sekondi, Ghana and the Clayborn Industrial School in Monrovia. Clayborn also revived the Monrovia College.

The growing number of pupils at Richard Allen High School in Freetown, Sierra Leone, compelled the church to construct more classrooms to accommodate all. The number of classrooms built and the student roll is however not available.

In 2002 the 14th Episcopal District started with the Richard Franklin Norris Administrative Complex in Monrovia, Liberia. This doubled-storey building serves as the headquarters for the 14th Episcopal District. It houses the bishop's office, offices for the secretaries, a conference room, a commercial computer and an Internet centre, reception and waiting rooms. At the same time of the erection of the headquarters, the Mary Norris Missionary complex was also started. This complex is utilized as a Skills Development Centre for soap and candle making, sewing, tie dying, parent education, family empowerment and a resource bank.



The Liberian Civil War in 2002 was disastrous for the AME Church since the Jordan Agricultural School was severely damaged by protest demonstrators. The restoration of three of the seven buildings had been completed in 2003 only to see them occupied and seriously damaged during the last outbreak of fighting in 2004 (cf 14th Episcopal District Report to the General Conference 2004: 4).

3.5 The 15th Episcopal District

The history of the 15th Episcopal District is well documented. For this reason a more comprehensive account can be given on the developments within this Episcopal District. Moreover, the establishment of AME congregations in Africa, except for the 14th Episcopal District, was due to the missionary efforts from South Africa. The emergence of the AME Church in South Africa has to be understood against the background of the *Ethiopian Movement*. The roles played by Mangena Maake Mokone and Charlotte Manye Mxeke in this regard deserve some special attention.

3.5.1 Mangena Maake Mokone

Mangena Maake Mokone was born in 1852 in Bokgaga in the Old Transvaal Province. His father was a local Swazi chief. While still very young, Mangena's father was killed in one of the tribal wars that raged during that time. As a result of this, Mokone had to leave home before he was twelve years of age. He began work in the sugar cane fields of Pietermaritzburg (cf Roux 1978: 79). Mokone was encouraged by his employer to attend church services and class meetings of the Methodist Church in Aliwal North Street. Mrs. Steel, his employer, also encouraged him to enrol for the night classes, which were then offered by the Methodist Church School. One night in 1874, while attending a class meeting, Mokone had a profound experience with God. The preacher compared the work of the devil to that of a hunter who digs a pit for unexpected animals to fall in. This sermon turned his life for the better. Rev. Hlongwane baptised Mokone (cf Roux 1978: 79). Mokone then decided to devote the rest of his life to the work of God.

In 1875 Mokone started to attend night classes in preparation for his entry into the ministry. He was an outstanding student and was soon appointed as a teacher. His leadership qualities were also recognized and after two years of teaching, he was appointed a school principal.

Mokone became a lay preacher who was especially endowed with spiritual power. Sundkler (1948: 39) notes that Maake Mokone was a distinguished preacher of the Methodist Church. During one of his fiery sermons, Mokone had the congregation on their knees, shouting and singing for Jesus. The neighbouring whites rushed into the church building and shouted "Vuka, boys! Vuka!" (Get up boys! Get up). Whites could not understand that this was not a pagan act, but a powerful manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Roux (1978: 80) argues that the European missionary superintendent was sent to replace Mokone by a person who would not frighten the blacks with "hell fire." The ignorant whites demanded that Mokone be replaced for they believed that he was inciting a riot.

After six years of teaching and preaching, Mokone became an ordained preacher. He was recommended by his Superintendent as a “superior preacher ... a man with wisdom, whose pity was real and who was anxious to preach the Gospel to his countrymen” (Centenary Brochure of the AME Church in Southern Africa 1996: 19). Mokone served the Methodist Churches Newstead in Natal, Prudery and Pretoria. He was also instrumental in translating the catechism book in 1885 in the Sepedi language. His first attempt to improve the educational level of the blacks was with his appointment as Principal of Kilnerton Institute.

As principal of Kilnerton Institute, Mokone soon realised that whites discriminated against blacks. Black ministers were obliged to yield on all points to white ministers. In addition, most of the privileges enjoyed by white ministers were denied to blacks. Mokone realised that the only solution to this problem was that blacks in future have their own conferences to discuss matters concerning them. The Methodist Church was in favour of such an arrangement, but considered it appropriate that a white chairperson should conduct their meetings (cf Campbell 1989: 103). It should have been obvious that black ministers were still under strict control of their white leaders. Such a disclosure on the part of the white leaders became unbearable for Mokone and he and his followers resigned from the Methodist Church in October 1892 (cf Dwane 1989: 86).

In 1892 Mokone submitted a list of fourteen complaints to his superiors. This letter later became known as the *Founder's Declaration of Independence*. In his declaration he made known his disappointments with the Methodist Church. In this manifesto he submitted fourteen reasons for him and others severing ties with the Wesleyan Methodist Church and handed it to the minister of the Wesleyan Church in Pretoria (cf Campbell 1989:104 - 106). Among others, he attacked the Methodist Church for conducting meetings for blacks separately from whites but still have to be satisfied with a white chairperson and secretary. Financial allowances were given only to white widows and orphans of deceased ministers. The salaries of white ministers were 80% more than those of black ministers. Black ministers were prohibited to solemnise marriages, administer the baptism and Holy Communion. Furthermore they had to provide their own homes, while the church provided parsonages for white ministers and their families (cf Mbiti 1969: 70 - 71). On 20 November 1892 Mokone and fifty

others broke away from the Methodist Church and started the Ethiopian Movement (cf Campbell 1989: 104 – 106).

3.5.2 Charlotte Manye Maxeke

Charlotte Manye was born on 7 April 1873 at Fort Beaufort in the Cape Colony (cf Coan 1987: 47). Since her parents belonged to the Wesleyan Church, she received her early school training at the Wesleyan School in Uitenhage. From Uitenhage she embarked to continue her studies at Edward Memorial School in Port Elizabeth. While in Port Elizabeth, her family moved to Kimberley for better job prospects. Upon completion of her courses, she joined her parents and started teaching and music lessons (cf Coan 1987: 47).

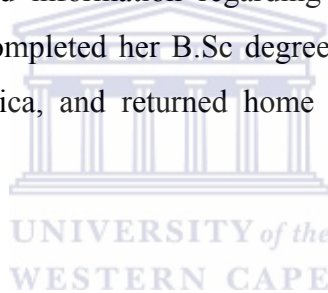
Charlotte's true joy was music. A certain Mr. Bam from Kimberley took cognisance of her singing talents and invited her for an African tour to England and then to the United States. The tour was organised to raise funds to build an industrial school for Africans (cf Xuma 1930: 9). The England tour failed, not because of poor performances, but due to non-payment by the organisers. Campbell (1989) comments that: "From the outset, however, the choir was dogged by recriminations and allegations of broken promises" (Campbell 1989: 29).

When the organisers announced a second tour to the USA, Charlotte again joined the group. This time the tour lasted a whole year, but again it was faced with failure. The group disbanded in Cleveland, Ohio. Some came back to South Africa and others decided to stay in America. Charlotte was one of the people who wanted to stay to further her own education (cf Campbell 1989: 129). In a sense, the failure of the tour and the accompanying hardship was a blessing in disguise. Charlotte realised her dream to be educated in America (cf Coan 1987: 47).

The group was destitute in Ohio. Here they met up with the Reverend Reverdy Ransom, an ordained elder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He took pity on them and accommodated them in one of the settlements his congregation had established for the destitute (cf Campbell 1989: 129).

With the help of the AME Church Mission Department, the group registered at the University of Wilberforce in Ohio. During her first year at university in 1894, under the influence of Bishop McNeil Turner, she wrote to her aunt, Ms Kate Manye, living in Johannesburg. At the time of writing the letter, she had no idea what far-reaching effect this letter was going to have. She described life in America; the progress blacks were making, their fine homes, their educational institutions and naturally the AME Church (cf Centenary Brochure of the AME Church in Southern Africa 1996: 23).

Ms Manye showed the letter to her uncle, the Reverend Mangena Mokone, who was then an ordained minister of the newly formed Ethiopian Movement. He was very impressed and wanted to know more about the independent African Methodist Episcopal Church in America. This letter was the instrument that brought African Methodism to South Africa. Reverend Mokone and Bishop Turner started corresponding and exchanged information regarding their respective churches (cf Coan 1987: 48). Charlotte completed her B.Sc degree, married Marshall Maxeke, a fellow student of South Africa, and returned home to start a school for boys in Pietersburg.



3.5.3 The Ethiopian Movement

The history of the Ethiopian Movement is imperative for this study as this movement merged with the AME Church in 1896. Long before this movement was started, a number of South African blacks felt the desire for emancipation from what was perceived as white dominated churches. In connection with the rise of Black Independent Churches, Gerdener (1958) notes that “...we must sooner or later so reform Church dogmas as to bring Christianity away from European cultural ideologies, down to within reach of black cultural life” (Gerdener 1958: 194).

Soon after the establishment of the Ethiopian Movement, a controversial figure, James Mata Dwane, became a member of the Ethiopian Movement in 1894 (cf Verryn 1957: 68). Roux (1978: 81) states that Dwane was a man of outstanding ability and energy, but one with an opportunistic streak in him. He and Mokone struggled for leadership

positions. Verryn (1957: 68) concurred with Roux by arguing that Dwane seriously challenged Mokone's popularity amongst the laity.

Dwane left the Methodist Church because of funds that he personally raised in England for a college for blacks, but the Methodist Church decided to use the money as general church funds. Coan (1987: 47) notes that by 1896 the Ethiopian Movement had approximately 3000 members and twenty ministers. It was soon discovered that a lack of infra-structure, the establishment of a number of other Black Churches, the lack of funds and the members' quest for self determination sooner or later forced them to join up with another church.

The merging of the Ethiopian Movement with the AME Church must also be understood against the background of the AME Church's attempts to expand its missionary programmes to South Africa. Approximately eight years after the formation of the AME Church in the United States, a programme was designed to extend its borders outside of the country. The *Voice of Missions*, one of the official publications of the church announced the following: "the earliest conferences in the infancy of the connection passed resolutions and entered upon discussions looking to the organisation of missionary work" (*Voice of Missions*, March 1894: 1).

Charlotte Manye brought the Ethiopian Movement into contact with the American AME Church. Coan (1987) comments that the similarities between these two churches gave impetus to the merging procedure: "It is to be noted that the beginnings of the AME Church in Philadelphia in 1787 and of the Ethiopian Church in Pretoria in 1892 had striking similarities. Both churches arose out of Methodist bodies as African protest movements against unchristian discrimination" (Coan 1987: 43). He furthermore notes that both churches followed the doctrine of the Methodist Church, which made it easier for them to merge.

James Dwane became instrumental in the merging process of the Ethiopian Movement with the AME Church. On 17 March 1896 a meeting of the Ethiopian Movement was held to discuss the possibility of merging with the AME Church. After a lengthy debate and due consideration, the Ethiopian Movement resolved to seek affiliation with the AME Church. Three men were elected to consolidate the union of

the Ethiopian Movement and the AME Church. They were Mokone, Dwane and Xaba. Since the Conference did not have the money to send these men to America, each one had to raise his own funds. In the end, Dwane went alone (cf Roux 1978: 81). A special session to discuss the resolution of the Ethiopian Movement was held on 19 June 1896 in Atlanta, Georgia. At this meeting the Ethiopian Movement ceased to exist and was absorbed by the AME Church. At the merging session Dwane was also appointed as leader of the AME Church in South Africa. At the same meeting Dwane was promised that he would become the next bishop for the AME Church in South Africa and that the AME Church in the USA secure enough money for the envisaged college (cf Campbell 1989: 139). Bishop Turner visited the newly constituted AME Church in South Africa in 1898 to have discussions on the administration, doctrine and polity of the AME Church. Here he found a membership of more than 11 000 (cf Campbell 1989: 138).

Levi Coppin was elected a bishop at the 1900 General Conference and was appointed to the 14th Episcopal District which comprised of South Africa. With the expansion of the AME Church into Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Basotuland (now Lesotho), these congregations were added to the 14th Episcopal District. In 1956 the 14th Episcopal District became the 15th Episcopal District.

3.5.4 The expansion into the rest of Southern Africa

The inception of the AME Church in Namibia can be traced back to 1925. History has it that a certain woman called Martha Utusisise with her little child moved from Upington to Walvis Bay. Apparently she belonged to the AME Church in Upington. In Walvis Bay she organised in her home a congregation which was to become the St. John AME Church. This small beginning ended up in negotiations between the AME Church and the Rhenish Mission Church under the leadership of Rev. Francis Herman Gow of the AME Church. After lengthy discussions, members of the Rhenish Mission Church broke away and joined the AME Church in 1946 with more than three thousand members. The reason for their breakaway was due to the fact that they desired to rid them of colonial rule within the Rhenish Mission Church (cf Centenary Brochure of the AME Church in Southern Africa 1996: 40).

In 1956 Lesotho and South West Africa (now Namibia) were added to the 15th Episcopal District. In 1962 Lesotho was released from the 15th Episcopal District and in 1984 the 15th Episcopal District was divided into two Districts, namely the 15th and 19th Episcopal Districts respectively.

The boundaries of the 15th Episcopal District were finally fixed in 1984 with the Cape, Namibia, Kalahari, Eastern Cape and Queenstown Annual Conferences. In 1995 more than 12 000 members from the Independent Methodist Church in Angola joined the AME Church and were added to the 15th Episcopal District (cf Centenary Journal of the AME Church in Southern Africa 1996: 24). The total membership of the 15th Episcopal District is currently estimated at 56 694 members.

3.5.5 Development programmes

Bishop Levi Jenkin Coppin was elected the first bishop to be assigned to South Africa (cf Wright 1963: 147). The first major achievement for the church was to gain recognition from the Government of the Cape Colony, which was granted on the 21 March 1901. The AME Church in the Cape Colony could now for the first time apply for church sites and the Government officially recognised its marriage officers (cf Wright 1948: 320). Also in 1901 the first building in the Cape Colony was purchased in District Six, Cape Town. It was a twelve-classroom building and operated as a school, called *Bethel Institute*. Rev. Henry Atterway, an Afro-American was invited by the bishop to become the principal of the school. This school rapidly grew in numbers, which resulted in the increase of the staff to twelve within two years (cf Wright 1948: 320). Bishop Levi Coppin also invited Rev. John Gregg from Kansas City, USA, to assist Rev Henry Atterway.

While at Bethel Institute, Gregg made a close study of the economic and social conditions in the Cape Colony. He came to the conclusion that the pressing need of the people in the Cape is a practical, literary, mechanical and industrial form of training, based upon the principles of Booker T Washington¹⁶ in the United States of

¹⁶ Washington advocated that justice for black Americans would only come through economic self-improvement rather than political self-assertion. During the 1850's he found Tuskegee Institute in Alabama to advocate the virtues of thrift and industry, education and capital accumulation.

America. His plans came to fruition when he bought a large farm, situated on the Hopefield Railway line near Malmesbury. A triple storey building was erected in 1903, which accommodated a large school and dormitories. Gregg also secured property for an industrial settlement. The institution opened its doors on 2 March 1902 with two teachers and fifteen boys. Among others, seventy cattle, six horses, two mules, two hundred sheep, pigs and fowls were bought. Gregg also started with a dairy, gardening and farming project. With the growth of the institute the building seemed to be inadequate. The Payne Hall was designed and constructed in 1905, which served as boarding house with twenty-two sleeping rooms.

The Industrial Institute was not supported by the government; however it did follow the curriculum of the Education Department. The institute offered education in the fields of agriculture, dairying, stock raising, poultry, carpentry and cabinet making, brick making and masonry. Music lessons also became an integral part of the curriculum. Even a small library was opened to accommodate students. The student enrolment, which was fifteen in 1904 increased to thirty-five in 1906.

Due to a lack of funds the school was forced to close its doors in 1906. The Reverend Andrew Phigelandt who was the AME minister of that area availed himself of the opportunity to open a day school where the institute was (cf Booyse 2003: 60 - 61).

In 1928 the first Episcopal residence for the bishop was bought in Woodstock, Cape Town. This residence was sold in 1995 and new residence was bought in Great Constantia. The buying of this residence coincided with the approaching centenary anniversary of the AME Church in Southern Africa in 1996. Some members openly protested against the buying of the residence since they felt that priority should have been given to the preparations of the centenary anniversary. The dissatisfaction of members led to a split in 1998. Currently the newly erected Episcopal residence is situated in Durbanville, Cape Town.

In 1971 a site in Bellville, Cape, was bought for the amount of R15 000 for the proposed Publishing House that also serves as the Headquarters of the 15th Episcopal District. The building project was completed in 1975. The machinery was purchased for the operation of the Publishing House, staff was appointed and contracts for many

publications were secured. Soon the press experienced serious financial difficulties due to the mismanagement of funds and the inadequate training of staff. The Publishing House had to close within three years of its existence.¹⁷

3.6 The 16th Episcopal District

Although the 16th Episcopal District is not located in Africa, it forms part of the Districts outside of the boundaries of the USA. All Episcopal Districts outside of the borders of the USA fall under the auspices of *Global Development Council*. The 16th Episcopal District was formally organised at the General Conference of 1940 and comprised of the West Indies-, Islands of the Sea-, Guinea- and South American Annual Conferences. Recently Suriname-Guyana, Windward Islands-, Virgin Islands-, Dominican Republic-, Haiti-, Jamaica- and the London Annual Conferences were also placed under the jurisdiction of the 16th Episcopal District. This District currently has a membership of approximately 49 000.

Wright (1963: 42) comments that during the infancy stage of the 16th Episcopal District not much attention was given to the development of this district. Bishop Alexander Allen was appointed to this District from 1940 to 1948 with almost no support from the General Church. Wright (1963: 305) further notes that Bishop Odie Sherman served the District for only one year in 1957 and Bishop William Wilkes for three years from 1948 to 1951. The main reason for bishops not attending to their work in the 16th Episcopal District was that most countries then were under-developed and bishops had to walk long distances to reach their congregations.

Serious attention was given to the development of this Episcopal District only during the 1970's. Although no dates are available, information in reports to the General Board and General Conference gave an account of the work done in the 16th Episcopal District. The reports to the General Board and General Conference reflected that through the assistance of the "Service and Development Agency (SADA)" of the AME Church, a new site and building for the extension of the Richard Allen

¹⁷ Reports on the closure of the Publishing House and the debates that followed cannot be obtained. Personal interviews were conducted and verified to determine the state of affairs then.

Hildebrand Clinic was purchased in Port au Prince, Haiti. Since Richard Allen Hildebrand was elevated a bishop in 1972 and appointed to the 16th Episcopal District, it can be assumed that the first part of the clinic was erected in the early 1970's. The new facility erected in 1973 also provides space for patients and extended pediatric care.

The 16th Episcopal District introduced among others, a strategic planning Committee to promote community access for health care. Among others, they convened the Edith Ming Health and Wholeness Conference, which provided health screening and workshops on HIV/AIDS to more than five hundred Haitians. The English Language Speaking School in Laromana, Dominican Republic, provides daily instruction to more than one hundred youth and adults. Furthermore, a scholarship fund programme was introduced to train young people in the art of steel band music (cf Report of the 16th Episcopal District to the General Conference of 2004).

3.7 The 17th Episcopal District

Between 1900 and 1936 the AME Church penetrated into Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambezi and Zimbabwe. Annual Conferences in these countries were spread among the already existing Episcopal Districts. It was only at the General Conference of 1956 that the 17th Episcopal District was officially established (cf Mkwanzu 1992: 11). AME congregations established in Malawi, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Congo Brazzaville were also added to the 17th Episcopal District.

At the General Conference of 2004 the 17th Episcopal District was divided into two Episcopal Districts e.g. the 17th and 20th Episcopal Districts. Currently the 17th Episcopal District consists of the South-East Zambia-, South-West Zambia-, North-East Zambia-, North-West Zambia-, Zambezi, Congo Brazzaville-, Rwanda- and Burundi Annual Conferences, making this District the largest in Africa. It has a membership of 105 829 people.

Between 1996 and 2004 this Episcopal District, especially Zambia, formed the hotbed for African Methodism. Restrictions by members were placed on American bishops to perform their duties.

The Quadrennial report of the 17th Episcopal District to the General Conference of 2004 has it that upon the arrival of its newly appointed bishop in 2000, an interim committee was formed to prohibit his entrance to any church in Zambia. The report has it that several of the members of the interim committee were governmental officials and drew large numbers to support their efforts in restraining the bishop in the performance of his duties. During the bishop's four year tenure he was prohibited from performing duties for three and a half years until the matter was resolved by the High Court which authorised the bishop to perform his duties without interference. According to the 2004 report of this district, membership in that short space of time grew from 66 000 to over 97 000, a claim that still needs to be assessed. Furthermore, four new congregations were established in Lusaka.

Developments within the 17th Episcopal District include among others, the establishment of the Solid Foundation Nursery School with an enrolment of forty pupils in Rwanda, as well as a saving and credit programme for the community through a Micro Finance Institution. Further developments in Rwanda include a Nursery School, Teacher's Information Centre, a guesthouse and a conference hall in Kimironko, Rwanda (cf Report of the 17th Episcopal District to the General Conference of 2004).

3.8 The 18th Episcopal District

The 18th Episcopal District, comprising of annual conferences in Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland, was also officially established in 1956. This is the only Episcopal District of which the borders never changed since its inception. The current membership of the 18th Episcopal District is approximately 28 200.

During the past fifteen years the 18th Episcopal District placed a high priority on education and self-help programmes. The educational programmes offered were designed to empower the members of this District. Prior to the implementation of

empowerment programmes, the first major construction in the 18th Episcopal District was the erection of the FC James Centre in Maseru, Lesotho in 1977. This centre is utilised as a health clinic and in later years it also became the headquarters for the 18th Episcopal District. Attention was also given to computer literacy classes. In 2000 the John Baker High School in Mafekeng, Lesotho, the District's largest high school with an enrolment of 1 000 students received their first computer centre with twenty-five computers. Another computer centre was launched, called the Delta Computer Centre in 2002, to render services to the twenty six AME Schools in Lesotho and Maseru. This centre is housed in the FC James complex.

Much has been done to renovate the existing schools in towns such as Serulite and Semonkong in Lesotho and Lobatsibeni in Swaziland. During the late 1990's a skill development centre for teachers was launched at this school to improve the quality of teaching. At present the AME Church operates twenty-five primary schools and five secondary schools in the Kingdom of Lesotho and two primary schools in Swaziland. The thirty Lesotho schools had an enrolment of 4 460 pupils and 110 teachers in 2004. One of the greatest challenges the AME Church in Lesotho had to face was that in 2002 the Department of Education introduced free tuition to all school children. The introduction of free education presented many problems for the AME Church such as the influx of students, the inadequate numbers of teachers and the shortage of books and other equipment. In response the church had to do a survey on how best it could assist both learners and educators. To this end a working relationship was established with the United Nations Children's Fund which awarded the District a grant to provide in-service training programmes to prepare teachers to easily adapt to the new curricula and how to deal with the increasing number of pupils per class.

Emphasis during the past eight years was also placed on health education, as this has become a priority within the 18th Episcopal District. To address this issue, the Joan Cousins Centre was constructed in Lobatse, Botswana in 1999. The primary objectives of this centre are to provide services to victims of HIV/AIDS, youth and women's programmes. In 2002 another service was added to this centre, namely that of an orphan programme which takes care of the orphans of HIV/AIDS victims. HIV testing and AIDS counselling forms an integral part of this centre. This programme is sponsored by the American Embassy in Gaborone, Botswana.

In 2003 three homes for orphans were erected in Mbabane, Swaziland, with the assistance of donors from the USA. Each house has twelve children with housemothers, nurses and a cleaning and cooking staff. Most of the food for these projects is planted by students on a day-to-day basis and some of the proceeds are selling on the local market as an additional income to the planters. In the same year a new initiative started which is called H.A.N.D.S (Holistic Approach to Nurturing and Developing Skills). This is an after-school programme conducted in Gaborone, Botswana. The programme is for youth that belong to families grappling with the HIV/AIDS disease. The children receive meals, tutorial help, and cultural enrichment activities such as arts and crafts, music, drama and structured recreational activities (cf Reports of the 18th Episcopal District to the General Conferences of 2000 and 2004).

3.9 The 19th Episcopal District

The division of the 15th Episcopal District into two Districts in 1984 paved the way to formally establish the 19th Episcopal District, which comprises of the Orangia-, East-, West-, Mokone Memorial- and Natal Annual Conferences. This Episcopal District currently has a membership of 86 439 people.

Wright (1948: 526) notes that with the closure of the Chatsworth Machine and Industrial School in Chatsworth near Malmesbury in 1906, the need was felt to establish another school, but this time as an educational institute for higher learning. Long before the arrival of Bishop Robert Wright to the South African mission field, Rev. J Z Tantzi and others, who completed their studies at Wilberforce Institute, Ohio, spearheaded this idea. A plot was secured in Evaton, Johannesburg. In 1908 they opened the Wilberforce Institute of South Africa. This school was conducted in a small hut of burnt bricks. Owing to the bad condition of the school, it was closed for some time until Bishop Johnson was appointed to South Africa in 1920. Negotiations with Bishop Johnson resulted in the erection of a double-storey building. It was called the Fanny Coppin Institute, which housed a dormitory for girls on the second floor. Even this school never opened its doors due to a lack of teachers. In 1916 Bishop Becket was appointed to the South African field. His main concern was to ensure that

the school operated. He elected a Trustee Board to negotiate the opening of the school and between 1916 and 1920 the school grew rapidly to the extent that one-hundred-and twenty pupils were enrolled. Unfortunately, due to weak administration and the lack of funds, the school had to close again.

Impetus was given to the growth of the institute with the assignment of Bishop Robert Wright in 1936 to the South African mission field. Although the school was re-opened, the church was compelled to close its doors between 1937 and 1939 to rebuild it due to its dilapidated condition (cf Wright 1948: 527). Wright's priority was to improve the educational standards of the Wilberforce Institute. In 1939 the New Lydia Wright School for secondary education was officially opened. It was because of the erection of this building and constant deliberations with the Transvaal Education Department that the school was recognised and subsidised by the government. The enrolment gradually increased to 102 students in 1942. Another course, the Junior Certificate for teachers' training was introduced. Additional classrooms and offices were erected to offer a number of careers at the Institute. Although the name of the Institute was never changed, erection of additional buildings each received its own name. All these institutions are located on the premises of the RR Wright Educational Institute in Evaton, Johannesburg.

Ministerial training has been offered at Wilberforce Institute since 1920. However, it was under the leadership of Bishop Robert Wright that the institute began to make remarkable progress. Wright appointed Josephus Coan, a graduate from Howard University and Yale University Divinity School to become dean of the Wilberforce Institute in South Africa in 1938, a position he held until 1947. Prior to this position, Coan was dean of the Turner Theological Institute in Atlanta, Georgia. (cf Brown 1995: 10-11). A three-year course in theology was offered that led to a diploma in theology obtaining from the Joint Board of Theology in Southern Africa. The accreditation of these diplomas is still negotiating with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The school was opened to all Christian denominations. Subsequently the name of the Theological Institute was changed to *RR Wright School of Religion* in 1939 and as from 1996 it became the RR Wright Theological Seminary. The current enrolment at the Theological Seminary is 67 students. The seminary is located in Evaton, Johannesburg.

The Norman College, registered with the Department of Education in 1945 offered a Teachers' training programme. This college first offered the Lower Primary Teachers' Certificate, but in 1946 it extended to offer the Higher Teachers' Diploma also. In 1944 the enrolment was 140 students (cf Wright 1948: 527). However, this school did not have a long lifespan due to a lack of funds.

Masonry, tailoring and shoemaking courses were introduced in 1940. Due to the shortage of funds, teachers had to use their own equipment to train the students. Masonry became such a popular trade that students assisted in the erection of the Domestic Science Centre in 1943 and the Boys' vocational building in 1944. This department closed its doors during the latter part of the 1960's (cf Wright 1948: 529).

For several years a course was offered in typing, bookkeeping and shorthand. Successful students became clerks in governmental departments, bookkeepers and secretaries of large businesses. Tuition was also given in music and the Wilberforce Vesper Choir was organized to sing at evening services in and around Johannesburg. Their music was also recorded and broadcasting has been continuous.

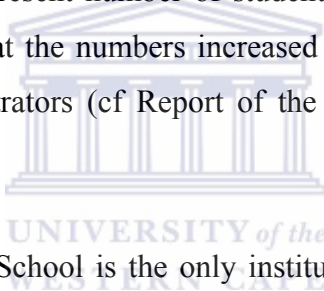
The Crogman Community Clinic was completed and dedicated in 1939 as a result of a student who died on the Wilberforce campus in 1937 because no doctors or nurses were available to attend to ill-health students. With the opening of this Community Clinic on the campus of Wilberforce, the *Native Affairs Department* took the responsibility to pay 60% of the monthly expenditure and also to pay for the medical staff (cf Wright 1948: 529). This clinic also closed its doors during the late 1950's.

Although the *South African Christian Recorder*, a newspaper of the AME Church in South Africa initiated in 1902 was published in Cape Town, this service was taken over by the Wilberforce Printing Press that played a significant role in spreading the news of the AME Church to neighbouring countries.

During the 1960's the R R Wright Institute went through a time of great tribulation. The main reasons being the appointment of Americans as principals of the various schools, the lack of funds resulting in teachers often not being paid and the

deteriorating conditions of the buildings. These factors led to the closure of the major operational functions of the school.

It was only as from 2000 that serious attention was given to the re-opening of some of the institutional work. The High School re-opened in 2002 with twenty-one learners. To improve the student numbers, the school officials had to visit local churches, develop relationships with local politicians and community institutions, and engage with local high schools. A curriculum was set in consultation with the Department of Higher Education. A working relationship was established with five high schools in the area, which exchanged extra classes in mathematics and science, as well as special workshops for students on drug awareness, career exploration, etc. A bridging programme was designed to improve the skills of learners for entering institutions of higher learning. Furthermore, in-service training for educators is conducted on a regular basis. Although the present number of students enrolled at the school is not available, one can assume that the numbers increased drastically with all the efforts made by the school administrators (cf Report of the 19th Episcopal District to the General Conference 2004)



The RR Wright Theological School is the only institute that never closed its doors. When Harold Ben Senatlé was elected bishop in 1984 and assigned to the 19th Episcopal District in 1988, his first priority was to erect a complex, which is sustainable and at the same time generates enough funds for the AME Church. Under his administration a four storey building was erected and was named the HB Senatlé AME Centre. This building in Rissik Street, Johannesburg serves as headquarters of the 19th Episcopal District. Among others, it also houses offices for general practitioners, dentists, attorneys, HIV/AIDS information centre, Women's Desk and Youth Desk.

3.10 The 20th Episcopal District

The 2004 General Conference added another Episcopal District after a decision was made to divide the 17th Episcopal District into two. The 20th Episcopal District was then established with the Malawi North-, Malawi South-, Northeast Zimbabwe-,

Southwest Zimbabwe- and Central Zimbabwe Annual Conferences. The total membership for this District is rated at 68 850.

Taking into consideration that this District is only six years old, no major developments could have taken place. Information derived from the report to the 2004 General Conference has it that no developments, except for church buildings, took place. The report further mandated the 2004 General Conference to divide the Annual Conference in Malawi into two due to the bad infrastructure of the country. This resolution was passed.

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter it was shown that the expansion into Africa was driven from a missionary point of view, and that, in this case, the missionaries were African Americans. They initiated the planting of congregations, decided on the development programmes and provided the leadership to execute these programmes. However, it must be noted that no clear programme existed to develop indigenous leadership to continue and expand on the programmes that were put into place. It is not surprising that most of these programmes faltered.

In the next chapter the simmering discontent among indigenous leaders, the tensions that led to the first secession, will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

The first schism – 1899

4.1 Introduction

The schisms within the AME Church must be studied against the background of the secession movements within South Africa during the period 1884 to 1899. Skota (1932: 34) notes that the submissive role imposed on blacks by missionaries gave impetus to the rise of *separatist* church movements. Coan (1987: 36) notes that Sundkler describes the separatist movement as a symptom of the awakening of Bantu race-consciousness and that it is therefore a logical reply to the white policy of segregation within the church. The annual report of the *Native Churches Commission* (1925: 25) noted that many rules and regulations imposed by white missionaries, restricted black ministers in their pastoral duties. Among others, black pastors were only allowed to minister to their own people. Furthermore, black ministers and their congregants had separate places of worship and they constituted separate districts. The dilapidated state of their parsonages as well as the meagre salaries they earned was of grave concern to black pastors. These were all factors that contributed to the secessionist movements among blacks.

The submissive role blacks had to endure became unbearable to some of them and they decided to secede from the missionary movements to form their own churches. In connection with the rise of black independent churches, Gerdener (1958) notes that “... we must sooner or later so reform Church dogmas and customs as to bring Christianity away from European customs and cultural ideologies, down to within reach of black customary and cultural life” (Gerdener 1958: 194).

Nehemiah Tile was the first to secede from the Wesleyan Methodist Church when he organised the Tembu Church in 1884. Mokone who formed the Ethiopian Church Movement in 1892 followed him. In 1898 Morris organised the African Coloured Baptist Church. By 1933 government statistics recorded 272 independent African churches. It is against this background that Roux suggests that if all black churches could have been united into one single church, they should have been a factor the government of South Africa could not afford to ignore (cf Roux 1978: 77 - 86).

In the following section the reasons for the first secessions within the AME Church in South Africa will be discussed.

4.2 Rise of the Ethiopian Movement

Maake Mokone initiated the break with the Wesleyan Methodist Church, which ultimately led to the formation of the AME Church in South Africa after tolerating the hurtful treatment meted out to blacks for a long time as minister of the church. However, things reached a turning point with the introduction of segregated black and white district conferences in Transvaal in 1886 (Campbell 1989: 104 - 105). Mokone complained that although the district conferences were separate from the whites, the chairperson and secretary of the black district conferences remained white people. Salaries of white ministers were 80% more than those of black ministers. Financial allowances were only given to white widows and orphans of deceased ministers.

Black ministers were prohibited to solemnise marriages, administer baptism and the Holy Communion. As principal of the Theological School at Kilnerton Institute, Mokone was never consulted whenever decisions about the institute were made. Mokone eventually summarised fourteen complaints against the Wesleyan Methodist Church in which he announced the reasons why it would be better for him to sever ties with the church. These complaints were later referred to as *The Founder's Declaration of Independence* (cf Mbiti 1969: 70 - 71). On 20 November 1892 Mokone and fifty others broke away from the Methodist Church and started the Ethiopian Movement (cf Campbell 1989: 105).

During the period 1892 to 1895 the Ethiopian Movement struggled to survive. Their quest for self-determination, the lack of infrastructure and the constant harassment from the government of black indigenous churches compelled Mokone to seek a link with a more established, independent Black Church. The AME Church presented such an opportunity to the Ethiopian Movement. By the time Mokone built contact with the AME Church in America, a number of students were already enrolled at the Wilberforce University of the AME Church in Ohio. Furthermore, the American districts had a number of other universities, well-educated leaders, a number of cathedrals for church services and a number of infrastructures which ensured continuity in growth (cf Campbell 1989: 130 - 131).

The parallels in the history of the Ethiopian Movement and the AME Church gave hope to Mokone that the quest for self-reliance could be attained within the AME Church. This hope was however short-lived. Johnson (1977: 17) notes that the AME Church in America had made promises to erect clinics and educational institutions of the same standard as in America. However, nothing came to fruition in the early years of the existence of the church to the effect that many left the church for other denominations for the sake of their children's education.

4.3 Brief profile of James Mata Dwane

A profile of James Mata Dwane is imperative for this study since he was instrumental in leading the first secession within the AME Church.

James Mata Dwane, born in January 1848 near Queenstown in the Cape Colony, was the son of Mcebuka and Nosali Dwane. Since James' mother was concerned about formal education, they moved to Middledrift in the land of Chief Kama of the AmaGqunukweba tribe. In Middledrift Dwane's father worked as chief counsellor for Chief Kama (cf Dwane 1989: 87). The chief became keenly interested in the wisdom exposed by the young Dwane and at the occasion of his birthday he ordered his sub-chief to donate to James twenty calves and a bull with the hope that Dwane would make a living in stock growing. The chief also gave him the name *Intsika*, which means *the pillar of my house* (cf Dwane 1989: 87).

However, instead of growing stock, Dwane was more interested in the Christian ministry and at the request of his mother attended the Anne Shaw Mission School in Middledrift. This was a Wesleyan Methodist school for whites only. The Rev. Lamplough soon realised the intelligence of Dwane and immediately enrolled him at the school without the permission of his white colleagues. During his first examination Dwane obtained the highest marks in his class. This outcome mobilised the parents of the white children to oppose Lamploughs' decision and Dwane had to leave the school.

Lamploughs, still concerned about Dwane's future and his academic abilities, organised that he be enrolled at the Healdtown School in the Eastern Cape. Here

Dwane once again proved his outstanding academic capabilities. He enrolled as a teacher and qualified with distinction in 1869 (cf Dwane 1989: 86). Upon completion of his teachers' training course he taught at the Healdtown School. Dwane's passion was, however, the Christian ministry. Coan (1987: 58) comments that the conversion of Dwane came after many years of inner struggle between his pagan ideas and the Christian teachings he had received.

It is however imperative to focus on the Nonqawuse cattle killing episode that took place in 1856 since this episode had a pivotal role to play on the lives of the Dwane family. Nonqawuse referred to herself as a prophet. She advised the black people to slaughter all their cattle on a certain day in 1856. She propagated that her ancestors had given her this message. This ceremony will end the almost half century of war between blacks and whites. The white man will then be chased out of the country. In obedience to the ancestors, she proclaimed, millions of cattle would sprang out of the earth and great fields of corn would then appear ready for eating (cf Roux 1978: 36-37). At that time Dwane was only eight years old. The episode had a lasting effect on him as a young boy. His family was ready to take part in the slaughtering of 1856, but was advised by Chief Kama not to do so (cf Dwane 1989: 87). The proclaimed prophecy of Nonqawuse never took place and destroyed almost the whole Xhosa nation who participated. This episode paved the way for the Dwane family to revisit their beliefs in the pagan system and rituals. Although they did not denounce their belief systems in total, they became aware of the fact that involvement in the so-called European style of Christianity would assist them to discern between ancestral beliefs and Christianity. As a result of the aforementioned, Dwane's mother started to attend church services at the Methodist Church. The interest shown by his mother brought about a turning point in Dwane's life. His conversion followed soon and he was baptised in the Methodist Church in 1867 (cf Campbell 1989: 114). After his conversion he immediately began to evangelise the people among his clan.

In 1872 he enrolled as a theological student at the Healdtown Theological School. He was ordained a minister in the Methodist Church on 15 January 1881. He served the Methodist Church as Pastor in Healdtown, Port Elizabeth, East London, Grahamstown, Kimberley, Mount Coke and Glen Grey. In Glen Gray he was promoted to Superintendent of the church in the Eastern Cape (cf Dwane 1989: 88).

Dwane's vision was to improve the quality of life of his people. He believed that this could only be achieved through formal education and he therefore advocated the idea of an industrial and academic school. Dwane¹⁸ (1989: 5) interprets James Dwane as a man who for his whole life strived for the education, evangelisation and social advancement of black people. The suffering of the black man or woman at the hand of the whites forced him to unite with other black leaders to work towards the improvement of the conditions for blacks. Support from the black constituency within the church encouraged him to consult certain senior ministers in the Methodist Church about his proposed scheme of a school of higher learning for blacks. He even offered to raise the available funds for the institution.

Ministers with whom he consulted were keen to assist and even drafted letters of approval to prospective donors. Meli (1988: 13) notes that the ministers of the Methodist Church who had given consent to Dwane to raise the necessary funds were convinced that Dwane possessed in him the outstanding ability to successfully influence his donors. Furthermore, Dwane was a gifted speaker and possessed an impressive personality. To substantiate the above, Dwane (1989) quotes J Smith Spencer, secretary of the Methodist Church who states that: "Dwane is one of the best known of seventy four black ministers in the South African connection. On several occasions Dwane had been elected by his fellow ministers to represent them at the Annual Conferences. Though his native language is separate from ours, yet he had the ability to address any English speaking audience" (Dwane 1989: 89). Bali (1991: 75) remarks that in his own Circuit Dwane was always heartily received and voluntary promises of help were readily given to him.

Dwane immediately put his plan into action and in 1892 he visited the United Kingdom for his fundraising campaign (cf Campbell 1989: 114). He emphasised the need of an institution for higher learning for blacks in South Africa and also produced the letters of approval by the ministers of the Methodist Church. Wherever he went, local Methodist congregations gave financial support. At the end of his tour, he had

¹⁸ Bishop Sigqibo Dwane was the grandson of James Dwane and became the first bishop of the Ethiopian Church under the auspices of the Anglican Church.

raised more than three thousand pounds sterling, an amount, which could have been used to complete the educational building he had in mind.

An enthusiastic Dwane left the United Kingdom with the expectation that his long-lived dream had at last come true. Little did he know that the Methodist Church had other plans for the money he had raised. At home he was forced to surrender the money to the authorities of the Methodist Church which argued that the money should be used for the general expenditure of the church. After a heavy and lengthy debate, Dwane handed over the money to the church's officials. Dwane (1989: 90) notes that one of the ministers present at the meeting in an arrogant manner reminded Dwane that the money he collected was contributed by white people and that he therefore had no say in the manner in which the money should be spent. Moreover they argued that Dwane went to the United Kingdom to raise funds during a time when black people in South Africa were not entrusted with the administration of any finances. The Methodist Church could rely on the support of the Commission of Native Affairs who shared the view that blacks were not able to handle their own financial affairs (cf Native Churches Commission Annual Report: 1925). Dwane surrendered the money to the Methodist authorities and left the church.

Dwane could no longer associate himself with the Wesleyan Methodist Church as it was clear that whites did not have the interests of blacks at heart. In fact, he felt that whites used Christianity as an instrument to oppress blacks.

4.4 Dwane and the Ethiopian Movement

Dwane joined the Ethiopian Movement either in 1894 or 1896. The exact date of membership is not known with the controversy that was created among members of the Ethiopian Movement about Dwane's sudden leadership position in the newly formed church. However, his presence within the Ethiopian Movement was immediately felt but this was not without any debate. For the purpose of this discussion, I will first focus on the positive comments attributed to Dwane. Later on I will concentrate on the negative impact of Dwane's presence in the Ethiopian Movement.

Roux (1978: 81) interprets Dwane as a “prophet” and a man of great gifts and with outstanding abilities and energy. Verryn (1957: 68) concurs with Roux. To him, Dwane at once made his presence felt by drawing large crowds into the Ethiopian Movement. Verryn describes Dwane as a man with the ability to keep his audiences spellbound when making a speech and so managed to gain great respect. Meli (1988: 13) is of the opinion that Dwane seriously challenged Mokone’s popularity among members of the Ethiopian Movement. Meli (1988: 13) further notes that Dwane was a man with great ability, with a powerful personality and was soon unofficially seen as the leader of the Ethiopian Movement. Campbell (1989: 133) comments that when Dwane visited America for the union between the Ethiopian Movement and the AME Church, the latter cited him as “a man of native nobility with a Western educated mind” (Campbell 1989: 133). The AME Church had no doubts in their minds that Dwane was the most suitable representative of the Ethiopian Movement to transform the minds of his followers to the doctrine of the AME Church.

During 1896 Mokone became concerned about the future of the Ethiopian Movement. As mentioned earlier, the lack of infrastructure within the Ethiopian Movement and the constant harassment from the government of black indigenous churches were two major concerns. Mokone came to the conclusion that it would be in the best interest of his church to join the AME Church in America. For this purpose he and his ministers called together a special Conference in Pretoria on 17 March 1896 (cf *Voice of Missions* November 1897). It was during this decision-making Conference that the Tembu Church of Nehemiah Tile joined the Ethiopian Movement.

Among others, Sundkler (1948: 40) offers a remarkable statement concerning this special conference of the Ethiopian Movement to unite with the AME Church. According to him, Mokone was successful in his effort to call together all *Independent Black Churches* for a conference on this matter. If Mokone managed to gather all *Independent Church Movements*, Sundkler argues, then that was one of the first serious attempts to unite the various Independent churches under one umbrella. However, a report presented to both *Houses of Parliament of South Africa* in 1925, by the Governor General, states: “Tribal differences make it difficult for Native bodies to work together and it will be a long time before union among the smaller bodies is effected. Spasmodic attempts at union take place periodically but these generally end

in nothing but pious talk and indefinite resolutions. Not only tribal differences, but selfishness, personal ambition and the fear of losing control are strong elements in reaching any unity among natives.”¹⁹ At the end of this conference, only the Ethiopian Movement supported a resolution to unite with the AME Church. It should be noted that its membership at that time was approximately 2800.

James Dwane’s election as one of the delegates to establish the union between the Ethiopian Movement and the AME Church was therefore no surprise. He and Jacobus Xaba, the secretary, were deputised to go to America for this purpose. The Rev. Xaba was instructed to forward all relevant documentation to the AME Church in connection with the decision to unite, as well as the resolution that had been made. Unfortunately, this conference of 1896 also decided that each delegate had to raise own funds for the trip to the USA. Eventually only James Dwane managed to raise enough funds and went alone to consolidate the union between these two churches (cf *Voice of Missions* June 1896).

Coan (1987: 61) notes that Dwane met with the senior bishop of the AME Church, Bishop Henry McNeil Turner and members of the North Georgia Annual Conference on 19 June 1896 in Atlanta, Georgia. After the resolution of the Ethiopian Movement was ready to unite with the AME Church, the North Georgia Annual Conference unanimously accepted it. It is noteworthy that no attempts were made by the AME Church to first negotiate with the Ethiopian Movement on the impact of the unification process on both churches before absorption. It seemed however, that Bishop Turner, after receiving correspondences from the Ethiopian Movement, assumed that the latter desired to be absorbed into the AME Church. This assumption in the end had far reaching consequences for the AME Church in South Africa.

A document of unification was issued on 6 July 1896 in Atlanta Georgia and certified as a true reflection of the wishes of the Ethiopian Movement. Among others, the drafted resolution from the side of the AME Church in America clearly states that James Dwane had been appointed as General Superintendent²⁰ of the South African

¹⁹ Report of Native Churches Commission presented to Parliament in 1925, section 12, page 35.

²⁰ The task of a General Superintendent is to act as leader in the church in the absence of a bishop.

AME Church²¹.

Before Dwane left America in September of 1896, he toured the country and met with numerous AME Church leaders in Philadelphia, Washington and Atlanta. He also visited a Presiding Elders' Council of forty presiding elders in Atlanta. At each gathering Dwane was afforded the opportunity to address these gatherings. His presence in America was undoubtedly a confirmation to the church in America that he was the right person to lead the AME Church in South Africa (cf *Voice of Missions* 1896: 2).

At every occasion afforded to Dwane to address gatherings, he emphasised the necessity of a school of higher learning for Africans to become accredited ministers, teachers and craftsmen. He assured his audience that if they made funds available for a prospective college it would enable Africans to establish civilised government in South Africa (cf Roux 1979: 81).

At the end of Dwane's tour he was sent home with a twofold task:

- To re-obligate the members and ministers of the Ethiopian Movement into the fold of the AME Church; and
- To supervise work and to ensure that church expansion takes place.

Upon Dwane's arrival in South Africa, he immediately called together all members of the Ethiopian Movement. It can be assumed that this meeting was held sometime during November or December of 1896 since Dwane sailed back home on 22 September 1896 (cf Coan 1987: 63). The "amalgamation document" of the AME Church in America was discussed and approved by the meeting.

4.5 Dwane's appointment as General Superintendent in South Africa

Although the members of the newly formed AME Church in South Africa reacted with mixed feelings to the sudden appointment of Dwane as General Superintendent, they nonetheless accepted it and pledged their loyalty to Dwane.

²¹ A German scholar, sent to South Africa to study the growth of African Methodism, discovered the document that deals with the unification process between the Ethiopian Movement and the AME Church which was in the possession of a relative of James Dwane.

Between 1896 and 1898 the AME Church grew rapidly. This was in part due to Dwane's efforts to travel widely to recruit members for the AME Church. Coan (1987: 69) makes the point that the growth was probably due to the association of the term *African* in the name of the church. To Coan, many black South Africans interpreted the term "African" as "divinely inspired."²² Reports on the growth of the church show that the AME Churches grew rapidly in areas such as Pretoria, Klerksdorp and Johannesburg where new congregations were established (cf Coan 1987: 70 - 71).

Dwane and his followers organised numerous revival campaigns in the Eastern Cape and managed to draw hundreds of Africans into the AME Church fold. Even some Wesleyan Methodist members, who at that time had become more disillusioned, joined the AME Church. In some instances Dwane and Mokone managed to accept entire congregations of Africans into the AME Church. Another report has it that Tantsi and a number of singers went on a week long evangelism campaign in one of the kraals²³ in Johannesburg. Their campaign was so successful that they won over all inhabitants of the kraal, including the chief. Campbell (1989: 138) notes that in Johannesburg the Rev. Edward Tsewa managed to win over three congregations for the AME Church, probably from the Independent Presbyterian Church. In Cape Town people in District Six, Raapkraal (now Retreat), and Simonstown, as well as Worcester, joined the AME Church. Although reliable statistics are not available, it can be assumed that by 1899 the membership of the AME Church in South Africa had grown to almost fourteen thousand.²⁴

Verryn (1957: 73) notes that Dwane's enthusiasm made him write a letter to Cecil John Rhodes for permission to establish an AME mission in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Dwane furthermore drew up plans for fundraising to send African

²² "Divinely inspired" simply means that the Africans believed that God sanctioned the establishment of the AME Church in a time when the Africans doubted any affiliation of their Movement with a white church.

²³ A village familiar to South Africa during the 18th - 20th century where Africans lived in huts with fenced borders.

²⁴ Information on the progress of the A M E Church in South Africa were regularly published in the *Voice of Missions* dated March 1897, May 1897, November 1897, January 1898.

missionaries to King Menelik of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) in the hope of spreading the activities of the AME Church further into Africa.

Jacobs (1982: 178) assumes that the rapid growth of the AME Church in its infant state was due to two significant factors: Firstly, the harassment of the newly formed church by white clergy and the fact that they attempted to derail its recognition by the colonial government. Secondly, the *Voice of Missions*, the official newspaper of the AME Church was widely distributed in South Africa. Bishop Turner, the publisher of *The Voice of Missions*, constantly professed his views on the need for the international solidarity of blacks. Jacobs (1982: 178) describes that among the subscribers were discontented indigenous leaders such as Sigcau of Pondoland, Dalindyebo of Tembuland, Lerotholi of Basutoland and Cape activists like Walter Rubusana and Kirkland Soga.

The 2800 members who reported for the AME Church conference in 1896 had increased to more than 7 000 in 1898. When Turner, the senior bishop of the church visited South Africa at the end of 1898, it was reported that the membership stood at approximately 10 000. Turner expected the membership to double before the 1900 General Conference of the church.²⁵

Dwane also notified the Cape, Orange River and Transvaal governments of the process of moving from the Ethiopian Movement to the AME Church. His next step was to formally organise the South African Annual Conference of the church. This was done in Queenstown from 6 to 11 April 1897. At this conference JG Xaba was elected secretary to write the minutes in English, SH Sinamela as secretary to write the minutes in Sesotho and W W Skweyiya to write the minutes in Xhosa. The Rev. H Matsolo was elected conference treasurer. The conference also elected a commission consisting of J Dwane, M Mokone J Xaba, J Tantzi and J Gqamana to negotiate with the Wesleyan Church for the possible purchase of property, which was then on sale.²⁶

²⁵ A paper delivered by Turner entitled *My trip to South Africa* that was published in the *AME Review* of April 1899.

²⁶ Article in the *Christian Recorder* of March 1898 on the organisation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa.

The rapid growth of the AME Church during 1896 to 1898 brought about serious discussions on how to deal with the expansion problem. The first step was to divide the South African Annual Conference into two conferences namely the Transvaal Conference and the South African Conference. The South African Conference then consisted of all regions outside the borders of Transvaal (cf *Voice of Missions* February 1898).

It can therefore be ascertained that James Dwane's entrance into the AME Connection gave impetus to the steady, if not fast growth of the church.

4.6 Dwane as vicar-bishop of the AME Church in South Africa

Roux (1978: 81) has it that although Dwane was a man of great gifts, he had in him an opportunist streak. He further stresses the point that Dwane and Mokone constantly competed for leadership positions within the AME Church. Campbell (1989: 133) concurs with Roux when he describes Dwane as a controversial figure since he successfully manoeuvred his election as delegate to America to discuss the possible union between the Ethiopian Movement and the AME Church.

I would like to deal now with Dwane's next position in the hierarchical structure of the church, which was as vicar-bishop. In 1898 Dwane managed to convince the Transvaal Annual Conference and the South African Conference that Episcopal supervision locally would be of the utmost importance to ensure continuous growth in South Africa. Only a bishop who resides in Africa would be able to have continuous contact to oversee the growth of the church (cf Coan 1987: 86) The General Conference of the AME Church is the only body empowered to elect and consecrate bishops and this takes place every four years. This meant that the South African constituency had to wait until 1900 for a bishop to be elected.

In the meantime Dwane suggested that Bishop Turner appointed a vicar-bishop²⁷ in the interim. James Dwane, firmly established in his position as General Officer, convinced both Conferences that he would be the most suitable candidate for this

²⁷ *Vicar Bishop* simple means vice-bishop, but with the authority to ordain and assign preachers to various assignments. Such an office never existed in the AME Church.

position. It is therefore essential to give an account of the resolution in its whole as decided upon by the Transvaal Annual Conference on 5 April 1898 in Pretoria and the South African Annual Conference on 16 April 1898 in Queenstown to this effect: “That we humbly and reverently pray to his lordship, the Senior Bishop of the AME Church, our present honoured chairman, to consecrate our General Superintendent, and invest him with the power of ordination, that we, in South Africa may also have Episcopal supremacy present with us, and such recognised authority as will keep our ministry and church here in harmony with our mother, the AME Church, the world over. If this request is granted, the vicar-bishop shall be obliged to take orders from the Senior Bishop and the General Conference. We hereby renew our fidelity to the AME Church and the covenant to abide by its rules and authority. We ask only this favour in the interest of ours in South Africa” (Minutes of the joint Transvaal and South African Conference 1898).

Although the resolution in its full content appeared in the *Voice of Missions* of June 1898, it was for the first time reported to Bishop Turner upon his visit to South Africa in April 1898. It must however be stated that although the resolution was passed by a majority vote, a significant number of attendees at the two various Conferences strongly rejected this decision. The reason for their dissatisfaction will be discussed later.

At the request of Dwane and Mokone, Bishop Turner visited South Africa in 1898. Among others, Turner officially established the two Annual Conferences. Coan (1987: 89) notes that Turner also ordained during his six-week tour in South Africa sixty ministers. This action on the part of Turner in the end created serious consequences about the authenticity of the AME Church in South Africa. At the same time an appointment was made with President Paul Kruger to seek official recognition for the church by the Transvaal Government. It is reported that Paul Kruger admitted that he had never before extended his hand to greet a black man (cf Cape Argus 23 April 1898).

Turner also had an audience with the President of the Orange Free State. These two governmental leaders officially acknowledged the AME Church and empowered its ministers the right to legally solemnise marriages. Turner’s cordial welcome by both

governmental leaders made him believe that prejudice among South African whites had nothing to do with race issues. He concluded that prejudices in America in comparison with South Africa were much more visible and severe. He even took the liberty of announcing that the white people of South Africa showed greater respect for an African scholar.²⁸

Turner's impression of white perceptions of blacks must be viewed against the background of his short tour of six weeks in South Africa. For such a short period of time it is almost impossible to determine the natural behaviour of people where conflict over black secession movements prevailed for almost a decade. Furthermore, Roux (1978: 82) argues that governmental officials in South Africa feared all attempts by Africans to initiate political change in the country. He stresses the fact that when Turner sought permission for the AME Church in the Transvaal Government, President Paul Kruger unwillingly permitted it by stating: "Let the Kaffir preach to the Kaffirs, why interfere with them" (Roux 1978: 2). Through these words Turner had to learn the attitude of whites towards blacks.

Verryn (1957: 73) notes that Bishop Turner publicly commended James Dwane on his great achievements to extend the AME Church in South Africa. The bishop took Dwane's vision for the church very seriously. It was at this moment in time that the leaders of the church took liberty in handing over the resolution made to Bishop Turner. After the bishop had read the resolution, Dwane, in his speech re-affirmed his commitment to the AME Church should the request be granted. Coan (1987: 87) records that Dwane publicly promised the bishop that he would remain a loyal minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church until his death. He furthermore endorsed his obedience and loyalty to the senior bishop until such time the General Conference appointed the official bishop for the work in South Africa.

Coan (1987: 88) notes that the request to elevate Dwane as vicar-bishop came as a surprise to Turner since his mission was among others to ordain ministers and to

²⁸ A summary of an article appeared in the *AME Review* of the AME Church, "My trip to South Africa" by Turner, which appeared in the April 1899 edition, page 9 to 13.

officially organise the church. Turner was caught by surprised with such a request since the AME Church had never in the past elevated persons to the office of vicar-bishop, nor did the law of the church allow it. The request became a predicament to Turner. Should he adhere to the request, he would then allow an action not permitted by the church order which would have serious repercussions especially in the United States. Should he ignore the request, the possibility might exist that the newly formed AME Church in South Africa would seek affiliation with another congregation as this was prevalent among Africans during the secession period.

Campbell (1989: 136) notes that after due consideration Turner took the risk of appointing Dwane as vicar-bishop and invested in him the power of ordination. Turner even went a step further by re-assuring the AME Church in South Africa that the money promised for the prospective college would be forthcoming as soon as the Easter Fundraising money of 1899 had been collected. He visited the planned site for the college in Queenstown, a plot donated by Chief Kama who was a patron of Dwane. He also promised Mokone \$1000 for the erection of a building in Cape Town (cf Campbell (1989: 139 - 140).

Turner's comments on his visit to South Africa appeared in the *Voice of Missions* of November 1898. In it he describes the wonderful and successful enterprise of his missionary experience in South Africa. He further stressed the fact that black South Africans are not beggars. They just needed help for the erection of a college. Turner predicted that the day would come that Americans would be financial assisted by South Africa, referring to the rich mineral wealth of the country (cf *Voice of Missions* July 1899). His journey to South Africa however revealed that he had to borrow money in the Transvaal for his train fare to Cape Town. Campbell (1989: 140) notes that the borrowing of money should have been an eye-opener to the Africans about the African-American state of wealth. Nonetheless, they took the promises made by Turner seriously, which inevitably planted the seed for future disillusionment.

Although no literature on Dwane's work, except for the eighteen ministers he himself ordained as vicar-bishop is available, it can be ascertained that Dwane took his new position very seriously by operating an office to oversee and administer the work of the church (cf Campbell 1989: 143).

Turner left home at the end of May 1898. Coan (1987: 95) notes that upon the arrival of Turner in the United States he called together the General Board of the AME Church to discuss the extraordinary action of elevating Dwane as vicar-bishop. While on his way to the United States he thoroughly prepared his address to defend his action since he knew that a controversy would break loose. He emphasised the importance of having a resident head in South Africa with limited Episcopal powers. He also substantiated his argument that in the same areas where AME missions extended, the Church of England had eight and the Roman Catholic Church five bishops. His high regard for James Dwane and his moral and intellectual qualifications had made him the best person for the position of vicar-bishop. Turner furthermore emphasised that Dwane was well trained in all African languages and could relate far easier to the local circumstances than an American bishop could do. Turner concluded his argument by explaining the vast distances travelled between towns within the borders of South Africa in executing of a bishop's administrative duties.

To Turner's surprise, his action to elevate Dwane as vicar-bishop was greatly appreciated, but little did he know that some of his colleagues did not take his action in good spirit. He therefore waited until the Bishops' Council convened to thoroughly discuss this matter.²⁹

4.7 Discontent on Dwane's elevation to the bishopric

Campbell (1989: 141) records that in 1898 tension within the AME Church in America broke out over Dwane's appointment as vicar-bishop. In a letter denouncing Bishop Turner's actions, Bishop Wesley Gaines spelled out the irregularity of Turner's action. It should be noted that Bishop Gaines never had a cooperative relationship with Turner. Furthermore, Turner was from the south and Gaines from the north of the USA. It can be assumed that Gaines took this opportunity of attacking Turner since tension usually prevailed between bishops of the south and the north.

²⁹ It should be noted that some of the AME Church bishops in America took the unauthorised consecration of Dwane seriously, though no concern on this matter was evident with the South African missionaries.

Gaines, in an article, entitled *Defense of Church Law*, which appeared in the *Christian Recorder* of 1 December 1898 denounced the action of Bishop Turner since the creation of the office of a vicar-bishop was not in line with the policy and practice of the AME Church. Therefore, Gaines felt obliged to charge Turner with mal-administration. Gaines even went a further step by circulating his article in the USA and South Africa. The appearance of the article in South Africa paved the way for doubts and disruption, not only among members of the AME Church, but moreover among the missionaries and colonial officials who for a long time questioned the legitimacy of the AME Church. A copy of Gaines' article was even sent to WP Schreiner, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony (cf Walker 1957: 53).

The severity of the criticism by Gaines distracted the church from other relevant issues that had to be addressed. In response to the criticism of Gaines, Turner argued that by consecrating Dwane a vicar-bishop, the American districts were brought closer to the South African district. He further argued that his action to consecrate Dwane would in the end have far reaching financial possibilities for the American church with the vast mineral wealth in South Africa (cf *Voice of Missions* July 1899). Turner concluded that Dwane was instrumental in gaining more than 10 000 members for the AME Church, whilst Gaines could only dream of accepting such membership within that short space of time (cf *Christian Recorder* 29 December 1898).

Although Gaines' criticism on Turner was a bone of contention for a long time, the Bishops' Council approved Turner's action. At the same Council it was also approved that Turner be allocated \$5,000 as a token of appreciation for the work he has done in South Africa (cf Coan 1987: 97). However, the action of Turner had far reaching consequences on the future of the AME Church in South Africa.

4.8 The South African reaction to Dwane's appointment

Rev. H B Parks of the Missionary Department of the AME Church has it that several preachers under Dwane's leadership were absolutely satisfied with his mission to America and the new position bestowed upon him. However, this was not the universal case.³⁰ Campbell (1989: 135) notes that any bitterness on Dwane's

³⁰ The annual report by the secretary of Missions, Rev. H B Parks, 1896-1897.

achievement was temporarily set aside as Dwane recounted the success of his mission to the USA, as well as the wonderful progress of the American AME Church. He also elaborated on the promises given by the church to financially assist the church in South Africa with the building of the South African College.

It is against this background that it is imperative to determine the date of Dwane's affiliation with the Ethiopian Movement, which eventually gave impetus to discontent among members of the newly formed AME Church in South.

There is no agreement among scholars on Dwane's entrance into the Ethiopian Movement. Elphick (1997: 214), Gerdener (1958: 112), Roux (1978: 81) and Verryn (1957: 68) record Dwane's affiliation in 1894, whilst Meli (1988: 13) Johnson (1977: 4), Dwane (1989: 92) and Campbell (1989: 133) are of the opinion that Dwane joined the Ethiopian Movement in 1896. Dwane (1989: 91) notes that James Dwane held strong social and political views and when he left the Methodist Church in 1894, he joined the *Imvo Zabantsunda*³¹ newspaper as a journalist. This was the first African newspaper started by John Tengo Jabavu in 1884. Dwane (1989: 92) further comments that James Dwane was invited to a Conference of the Ethiopians held in Pretoria during March 1896. It should be mentioned that Sigqibo Dwane was not only the grandson of James Dwane, but also a scholar that has done thorough research on the life of James Dwane. Furthermore, the date given by Sigqibo Dwane supports the reason on why members of the AME Church in South Africa reacted against Dwane's sudden achievement.

It is against the background of Bishop Gaines' letter that the slumbering critics on Dwane's achievement came to the fore. His opponents now openly attacked Dwane for his position within the church. They were not in favour of Dwane's trip to America without being accompanied by the other elected delegate, J G Xaba. His opponents felt that Dwane had a hidden agenda and it came as no surprise to them that he managed to become first general superintendent and then vicar-bishop. They were of the opinion that Dwane's recent connection to the Ethiopian Movement made him less

³¹ The *Imvo Zabantsunda*, also known as the "African Opinions", was a black political newspaper.

qualified for such positions. Furthermore, they felt that if any position should have been given, Mokone should have been the recipient since he was instrumental in organising the Ethiopian Movement, and the subsequent merging process with the AME Church. They argued that Dwane was their representative on a mission to “unite” with the AME Church. Instead, the AME Church “absorbed” the Ethiopian Movement into the AME connection (cf Verryn 1957: 72).

Dwane was further accused of settling himself in an office from where he instructed the ministers on how to develop the church without being personally involved in any expansion programmes. Even the annual salary of one hundred pounds sterling to Dwane came under attack. The dissident group also felt that Dwane favoured his own son by sending him to America to further his education at the AME universities in America. These accusations furthermore sowed the seed for the first secession movement within the AME Church in South Africa.

4.9 The reaction of missionaries and governmental officials

The distribution of the letter of Bishop Gaines had far reaching consequences for the future of the AME Church in South Africa. Jacobs (1982: 177) notes that the European clergymen criticised the AME Church for expanding its borders into the Cape Colony since they felt that the missionary field by that time was already overcrowded. They argued that the colour of the AME ministers placed them in an advantaged and competitive position. The numbers of secessions from almost all European denominations made them believe that the AME Church was part of a plot of missionary raiders who did not evangelise members, but were taking over members of well established missions. Gerdener (1958: 165) articulates this view when he notes that the AME Church grew at the cost of other well established churches. Campbell (1989: 139) states that the church’s opponents argued that Turner’s action with the mass ordination of ministers contributed towards the gradual destruction of Christian standards.

Verryn (1957: 74) comments on the concern of the Native Affairs Commission about the mass ordination of unqualified ministers by Bishop Turner. This action on the side of Turner made them believe that the AME Church did not have the capacity to continue its work in South Africa. Their assumption was based on the letter

distributed by Bishop Gaines. Although the AME Church was recognised by both the Cape and Transvaal governments, the influence of the white missionaries made these governments reluctant to allocate school sites to the AME Church, especially on crown lands and in the districts where European missionaries were already operating. To combat the progress of the AME Church, the Native Department designed a policy for land application in such a way that many requests for plots were denied to the AME Church (cf Jacobs 1982: 182). Even the secretary for Native Affairs in 1899 went so far as to concur that the AME Church did not own the right to state security. For this reason he announced that the church should be monitored and its growth restricted through a denial of church and school sites, as well as the issuance of marriage forms (cf Jacobs 1982: 183).

In an article which appeared in the *Imvo Zabantsunda*, 20 April 1898, Tengo Jabavu accused Bishop Turner of sowing the seeds of racial indoctrination. He assumed that Turner's agenda was not so much to spread the gospel, but rather to organise an exodus of black Americans into South Africa. Some colonists in South Africa shared his view. Campbell (1989: 139) notes that even the *Christian Express* summarised Turner's visit to South Africa as the 'Arch-mischief maker' whose speeches had poisoned the minds of the natives against the whites, evoked disruption, and encouraging suspicion and discontent.

The internal trouble the AME Church experienced through Dwane's achievement unfortunately paved the way for missionaries and governmental officials to take serious action based on questions about its legitimacy. Jacobs (1982: 179), however, notes that Africans did not join the AME Church because of doctrinal considerations. Instead it was as a result of the large number of educational facilities operated by the church. This assumption of Jacobs can be substantiated because the Africans were restricted in making meaningful progress in missionary schools as indicated by Mokone when he left the Methodist Church. Furthermore, the success of Charlotte Manye at Wilberforce, Ohio, an AME university convinced the Ethiopians that it should be in their best interest to join the AME Church.

Dwane was seriously troubled by the reaction of Bishop Gaines, his colleagues, the missionaries and the Department of Native Affairs. He began to doubt the legitimacy

of the AME Church.

Before Dwane could have taken any action, Bishop Turner summoned him to come to the United States in 1898 in order to officially recognise him as the leader in South Africa, as well as to train him in the general administration of the AME Church (cf Coan 1987: 102). Sundkler (1948: 41) suggests that Dwane harboured hopes that he would be raised to the status of a full bishop and therefore adhered to the call of the bishop. In America, Dwane was assigned to preach a sermon at the North Georgia Annual Conference. While preaching, he announced his plan to establish the Turner Normal School at Queenstown. This conference approved the plan for the South African College and pledged to assist financially.³² Dwane also attended the North and Central Alabama Conferences and again the proposal to erect a South African College was approved with financial aid from these conferences. In addition, Dwane visited the South Carolina Annual Conference, North East South Carolina Conference and the Columbia Conference. At all these conferences he was afforded the opportunity to preach and to discuss his plans for the South African College, which were accepted favourably (cf Christian Recorder 9 February 1899).

Dwane, well aware of the tension in the church due to his appointment as vicar-bishop, left no stone unturned to address this issue. In his attack on Gaines, Dwane reminded the church of the awesome responsibility to extend the work of the church and that the church had no time to waste on little technicalities of the law. He further reiterated that for as long as nothing in the law of the church explicitly forbids the inauguration of vicar-bishops, nobody has the right to lay a charge against anybody that deems it necessary to do so (cf Coan 1987: 110).

In the light of the promises made, Dwane hoped to go home with enough money to start the building project. However, he left with nothing. Bishop Turner promised that as soon as the *Easter Drive collection* for 1899 had been counted, \$10 000 would be sent to South Africa to complete the project. The bishop hoped to raise \$30 000 of which \$20 000 would be used for local missionary endeavours. Unfortunately for Turner, the church could hardly raise \$20 000 due to divisions in the church on

Dwane's appointment as vicar-bishop (cf Voice of Missions September 1899)

4.10 The secession meeting

Dwane left home some time in September-October 1899 with his status as vicar-bishop not yet clarified by any organisational structure of the AME Church. He furthermore left the United States with no money for the prospective college. En route home, he seriously considered the validity of the AME Church and the promises to assist with the building project that were not kept.

Living in Queenstown, Dwane was acquainted with the rector of the Anglican Church, Julius Gordon, who ministered there from 1898 to 1906. Verryn (1957: 76) notes that Dwane began to doubt the legitimacy of the AME Church to claim apostolic succession.³³ Dwane immediately visited Gordon to discuss the AME Church's position on the election of bishops. Wood (1913: 323) notes that Gordon explained to Dwane that the AME Church did not have the authority to issue Episcopal orders, since they never received them. He convinced Dwane to write to Archbishop West-Jones in Cape Town for permission to establish the Order of Ethiopia under the auspices of the Anglican Church. This meant that the Order of Ethiopia would be operating separately from the Anglican Church with the election of its own bishop.

In his letter to West-Jones, Dwane made it clear that the Order of Ethiopia wanted authoritative orders and autonomy and that they would resist white control. Verryn (1957: 79) comments that in the reply of West-Jones he sympathetically responded to Dwane's request. West-Jones was of the opinion that for cultural reasons a black Province of the Church, with black priests and bishops and the freedom to adapt ceremonial issues that fitted black ethos were important. He nonetheless stressed in his correspondence that this was his personal opinion.

Convinced by the injustices meted out to him on the part of the AME Church, Dwane called together the Queenstown Annual Conference in October 1899. Members of the

³² North Georgia Annual Conference Minutes, 1898 at the reserve shelf of Turner Memorial Theological Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

³³ The authority to elect and consecrate bishops.

Cape Annual Conference were also invited. Dwane spelled out why it became necessary to sever ties with the AME Church. He disclosed three reasons for his secession.

- The first reason was the effects of Bishop Gaines' letter, which was widely circulated. Bishop Gaines' evoked hostility among white missionaries, but was also taken as the reason for the Cape Colony not to recognise the AME Church. Furthermore, the letter influenced a number of prospective donors not to support the proposed college in Queenstown financially (Walker 1957: 143).
- Dwane's second reason was that the church had no authority to create bishops. The controversy over his office as vicar-bishop let him to believe that the AME Church had no Episcopal rights.
- Dwane's third reason was about the money promised to erect the proposed college that never materialised, as well as the promise given to Mokone that he would receive \$1 000 for the erection of a church in Cape Town (cf *Voice of Missions* June 1900).

Except for four ministers, the whole conference voted in favour of Dwane's secession proposal. The conference further voted to follow Dwane into the white Anglican Church of the Province in South Africa with almost six thousand AME members.

In a strongly worded letter published in the *Christian Recorder* of 7 December 1899, the Rev. Frances McDonald Gow of Cape Town requested Bishop Turner to come to South Africa to defend the AME Church and rectify where possible, the mistakes on the side of the church. In his correspondence he stated the reasons for Dwane's secession and hoped that Bishop Gaines would be reprimanded for the damage he had done to the church.

Roux (1978: 83) notes that Dwane's newly adopted church kept a number of surprises for him. He never became a bishop because the Anglican Church denied that they ever promised him such a position. Coan (1987: 127) comments that Dwane was forced to be re-ordained and that the church officials advised him not to mention the fact of his

previous ordination in his communication with the Archbishop. In 1904 trouble broke out between Dwane and his seniors over Dwane's method of keeping accounts.

When the Anglican Church supplied two priests during Easter of 1905, Dwane refused to provide an interpreter. He even circulated a letter urging the Ethiopians not to take Holy Communion out of the hands of white priests. This action of Dwane made him lose his ministerial licence. Dwane then remained a follower of the Order of Ethiopia until his death in 1915 at the age of 65 (cf Roux 1978: 83).

4.11 Main reasons for the schism

The reasons for the first secession movement are intertwined in the developments of the South African AME Church. In some cases one has to draw conclusions as to why the first schism within the AME Church in South Africa took place. The concluding part of this chapter highlights the reasons for the first secession movement.

4.11.1 The financial instability of the AME Church in America

Gregg (1980: 52) notes that long before the AME Church reached a point of economic stability it embarked on a plan for missionary outreach in Africa. The first attempt to spread the AME Church in Africa was done by Daniel Coker of Baltimore through a mission to Liberia in 1820. This attempt was met with failure due to the lack of funds on the part the AME Church to sustain the work in Liberia. Johnson (1977: 3) records that the AME Church in America during the early 1891, once more made serious attempts to re-establish mission stations in Sierra Leone and Liberia. In 1891 Turner organised the first Annual Conference and ordained the first "local elders".³⁴ Campbell (1989: 69) records that Turner sent one of his ministers, Reverend Alfred Ridgel to Liberia in 1893 to advocate the AME Church. Ridgel spent more than a year touring Liberia in order to raise funds to pay his passage back home. Campbell's (1989: viii) findings proved that by 1920, less than a thousand members belonged to the AME Church. The irony was that these were all Afro-American settlers that were members of the AME Church. These people came to Africa to support the American Colonisation Society, which encouraged African Americans to occupy the African

³⁴ Local Elders only have ministerial status in the congregation where they perform duties. When moving to another congregation, they lose their status as *Local Elders*.

fields. It is evident that these Afro-Americans were mostly recruited by the American Colonisation Society, and not by the AME Church itself. It is thus clear that the AME Church by that time did not have the economic strength to embark on any missionary enterprises outside the boundaries of America.

When Turner saw the opportunity to establish the AME Church in South Africa in 1896, he was warned by Bishop Daniel Payne not to enter into any foreign field at that time. Coan (1987: 13) remarks that Payne believed that the church was too poor. Furthermore, Payne was concerned that the church could hardly meet its financial obligations at home, and to expand to South Africa was to Payne an attempt to establish “African Methodist Imperialism” in South Africa. However, the warning signals from Payne were ignored by Turner who went forth with his plans to establish the AME Church in South Africa.

As mentioned earlier, Campbell (1989: 140) cites that when Turner borrowed money for train fare to Cape Town in 1898, it should have alerted the Ethiopians that the AME Church in America did not have the financial capacity to fulfil its obligation towards the church in South Africa.

Turner placed much emphasis on the Easter Day offering of 1899. The collection of the Easter Day offering was introduced in 1884 for the sole purpose of missionary work. It must however be stated that the bulk of the money was earmarked for church expansion in America alone (cf Campbell 1989: 69). The promise of Turner to encourage the members of America to increase the offering from \$20 000 to \$30 000 became a fatal practice. Among others, the AME Church did not have the capacity to raise that amount of money, but were also reluctant to donate any money to South Africa for the proposed College because of the controversy between Turner and Gaines. When the money was not forthcoming from the American AME Church, Dwane began to doubt the economic strength of the church. Even the promised \$1000 for Mokone to build a church in Cape Town, came under question.

4.11.2 The influence of Bishop Gaines’ actions

Coan (1987: 126) records that all sources agreed that the action of Bishop Gaines played a vital role in the secession of 1899. Although the church enjoyed recognition

in the Transvaal and Orange Free State Republics, it was not the case with the Cape Colony. Gaines' action and letter which he had sent to South Africa, was used as a tool in the Cape Colony not to recognise the AME Church. Furthermore, Bishop Turner's mass ordination and the consecration of Dwane, made things worse for the AME Church in the Cape Colony.

Sundkler (1961: 65) notes that it was the AME Church, which brought the Cape Government into contact with the problems of the separatist church movements. Therefore, a letter was written by the government of the Cape Colony to the AME Council of Bishops to first clear the matter before granting permission to the church. The turmoil within the church did not allow the constituency to act on this matter promptly (cf Campbell 1889: 141). The delay on the side of the church to resolve the problem empowered the Cape Administration to announce its intention not to entertain any applications for school grounds, church sites and marriage licences for ministers of the AME Church. Furthermore, Sundkler (1961: 65) concurs with Campbell that the action of Gaines caused unrest between Africans and Europeans. The Prime Minister, WP Schreiner, was bewildered by the low educational standard of ministers of the AME Church who applied to be marriage officers. In 1899 he ordered that all marriage licences granted to AME ministers be declared invalid.

In the wake of the controversy between Turner and Gaines, Turner called Dwane to the United States to clarify this matter. It is assumed that Dwane had to use his own funds to get to the USA. Dwane set foot in America at a time when efforts were made to raise the expected amount of money for the proposed College in South Africa (cf Johnson 1977: 5). When Dwane and Gaines met, an intense debate broke loose. Coan (1987: 109) solely concentrates on Dwane's argument since Gaines' disputes on the vicar-bishop by then was common knowledge. Dwane defended himself by stating that those people, who followed Jesus, were regarded in this world as lawbreakers, and yet they convinced people to follow Jesus. Furthermore, Dwane clearly stated that he would always be obedient to the law, whether instructions from the Bible or church laws, but reiterated that when the law comes in the way of progress and the improvement of people's lives, the law ought to be ignored.

Dwane toured the USA and wherever he went, he again stressed the importance of the

Easter Day Collection in order to assist South Africa with the erection of the College. In the end Dwane left home with no single cent for the erection of the college. It is thus clear that the controversy between Turner and Gaines played a vital role in the secession movement.

4.11.3 The Apostolic Succession

The South African government's harassment of the AME Church, the promised money for the college that was never forthcoming and the actions of Bishop Gaines to discredit him, made Dwane believe that the AME Church had no reason to exist. Verryn (1957: 76) notes that while Dwane toured America, he had already begun to doubt whether the AME Church could legitimately claim apostolic succession. Verryn (1957: 76) also notes that when Dwane visited America for the second time in 1899, he felt the negative disposition of people about his position as vicar-bishop.

Hinchliff (1968: 92) argues that Dwane became more and more disillusioned with the AME Church. Dwane's opinion was that the AME Church wanted too much control. He therefore called the 1899 meeting and severed ties with the AME Church to form the Order of Ethiopia under the auspices of the Church of the Province of South Africa in the hope that he would be elected bishop of the newly formed church. Unfortunately for Dwane, the Anglican Church never honoured this promise and he remained an ordinary member of the Order until his death in 1916.

4.12 Conclusion

Roux (1978: 81) comments that Dwane was a person with outstanding gifts and abilities. He also describes him as prophet, a man who had made tremendous efforts for the cause of the black man. Unfortunately, Dwane had an opportunistic streak in him according to Roux (1978: 81).

It is evident that James Mata Dwane was far ahead of his peers. He strived to uplift his people politically, economically and educationally. He was concerned about the oppressed and exploited people. Unfortunately for Dwane, the AME Church was too small for his aspirations. Notwithstanding Dwane's opportunistic streak, the AME Church should have dealt with the Dwane issue in a more accommodating way. The false hope that the church gave him sowed the seeds of eventual schism and hostility.

The AME Church should have been honest, not only with Dwane, but the entire South African constituency regarding its financial position and the hierarchical structures of the church.

In the next chapter I will show that this first schism was a case of lessons never learned and that further schisms would follow.



Chapter 5

The second schism of 1904

5.1 Introduction

Campbell (1989: 147) compares the secession of Dwane and his followers with that of a “thunderbolt” that ripped the AME Church in South Africa into pieces. White missionaries concluded that the missionary endeavours of the AME Church were futile exercises. The governments of Transvaal and the Cape Colony denounced any future ordinations of ministers because they came to the conclusion that the AME Church did not meet the educational standards set for the ordained ministry. A number of Africans came to believe that the AME Church never had the financial capacity they boasted about. This was evident from the promised funds for the Educational College in Queenstown which they never received, as well as the money promised to Mokone to erect a church building in Cape Town. Both missionaries and governmental officials alerted themselves by becoming keenly interested in the works of the AME Church in South Africa, especially after the second secession.

History has a habit of repeating itself unless we learn the lessons that it provides. Evidently such lessons were learned in the case of the AME Church in South Africa because the second schism, which is described in this chapter, took place a bare five years later.

5.2 Initial steps aimed at rebuilding the foundation

Maake Mokone, one of the founding members of the AME Church in South Africa, also left with the dissident group. Sundkler (1948: 39) notes that Mokone was a man of integrity, who distinguished himself as an outstanding preacher and leader. He further notes that Mokone was never in the forefront of business and decision-making within the AME Church, but his advice given to the enhancement of the church never went unnoticed. Roux (1978: 80) concurs with Sundkler as he notes that Mokone was accomplished with special spiritual and educational gifts. He became the first black Principal of the Kilnerton Theological School in the Wesleyan Methodist Church for the training of black preachers. He therefore was a respected person among all members of the AME Church, as well as governmental officials with whom he came into contact.

After serious soul searching about the severing of ties by Dwane and his followers, Mokone reversed his initial decision and rejoined the AME Church. His return was not without any remorse. Coan (1987: 135) mentions that Mokone, after his return to the AME Church contacted Francis McDonald Gow, leader of the AME Church in Cape Town, to discuss in detail the decision of the Queenstown Conference to break away from the AME Church. He furthermore advised Gow to correspond with Bishop Turner and explain the way in which Dwane conducted the conference which led to the secession. Campbell (1989: 147) records a letter written by Mokone to Bishop Turner in which he apologised for the damage he had done to the church. This action by Mokone in some way guarded the AME Church from further criticism especially from the Separatist Church Movements (cf Coan 1987: 135).

The prevailing turmoil between 1899 and 1900 left the American AME Church with no other choice than to send a certain Rev. F N Fitzpatrick from Arkansas, one of its senior ministers, in the place of Bishop Turner who then was struck with ill-health to save the church from total destruction. In the meantime the loyalists of the AME Church in South Africa, people such as Gow, Kuze, Tantsi, Xaba, Samuel Brander, Simon Sinamela and others tried everything they could to save the church from total destruction (cf Coan 1987: 134). Fitzpatrick was requested to conduct the remaining Annual Conferences and at the same time encourage the members of the AME Church in South Africa to remain loyal (cf Campbell 1989: 148).

Coan (1987: 130) however, is of the opinion that the promoters of the AME Church in South Africa, eventually began to understand the wisdom of Bishop Payne's advice that the church was at that time too poor to enter and conduct missionary work in any foreign fields outside the boundaries of America. Campbell (1989: 71) concurs with Coan when he records that Tanner between 1880 and 1890 strongly resisted any expansion of the church to Africa as the church was not yet ready for any evangelistic developments outside the boundaries of America.

The first schism in the AME Church strengthened white perceptions that blacks are incapable of surviving without white guidance and that the AME Church will soon cease to exist. Roux (1978) notes that in 1899 the *Church Missionary Society in London* declared the following: "It is our desire that when Native Christians in any

country are sufficiently numerous and matured ... the church should become either independent or an autonomous branch of the English Church, in either case in communion with other Anglican Churches should be established” (Roux 1978: 82). This in effect meant that Africans within the Anglican Church could operate independently from white dominated churches with their own bishops. The preferred model was clearly for separate churches when a vaguely defined criterion of *native Christian maturity* was reached.

5.3 The request for American leadership

After the first schism, the members who stayed loyal to the AME Church requested from the American AME Church that an American bishop be assigned to the Southern Africa colonies. The reasons for such an appeal were among others, the recent schism of Dwane and the negative impact it had on the AME Church in South Africa. Furthermore the reasons included the harassment of black church leaders by the government and white missionary workers, the inferior educational standards of blacks and the establishment of a number of independent black churches. Campbell (1989: 150) notes that Brander and Sinamela, two AME Church leaders in the Transvaal, agreed that an African bishop was at that time a failure and appealed to the AME Church in America to rather send a bishop from America. These two leaders were of the opinion that the resentment of Dwane’s premature promotion as leader of the AME Church in South Africa would assist the church to rid itself from any chauvinism that had been built up during Dwane’s tenure as vicar-bishop. Sinamela agreed that the election of an African bishop at the 1900 General Conference would be a mistake due to the sudden secession of Dwane (cf Voice of Missions, June 1900).

This request of the South African leaders after the first schism was regarded by a number of scholars as a noble one because the AME Church in South Africa did not want to go through similar tensions and uncertainties as in 1899. Moreover, Roux (1978: 82) records that it seemed that the AME Church in South Africa before the schism of 1898 was not big enough to accommodate both the ideas and aspirations of Mokone and Dwane.

Coan (1987: 150) concurs with the previous two authors when he remarks that several letters from ministers and lay people in South Africa to the AME Church in America,

requested American leaders to assist the church in South Africa. Through all these correspondences the ground was now solidly laid for the Americans to take control over the church in South Africa. It is however important to note that the members of the AME Church in South Africa, under the current circumstances, only sought assistance and leadership from the AME Church in America until the wounds of the secession were healed. Coan (1987: 150) notes that the South African AME Church requested the leadership of either Bishop Turner or Bishop Lee to assist them to restore the damage done by Dwane and his followers. The request from the AME Church in South Africa was for a temporary intervention.

From the request of the AME Church in South Africa, two schools of thought in the America districts emerged. Campbell (1989: 150) mentions that the Turner supporters understood the request of the remaining AME Church members in South Africa to have an American leadership temporarily until the rift had been healed. A second group criticised the anointing of an African to the bishopric who knew nothing about African Methodism and proposed a permanent form of American leadership. The anti-Turner group convinced the General Conference of 1900 to send the newly elected Bishop Levi Jenkin Coppin with a couple of African American church leaders to administer the church in South Africa. This decision eventually paved the way for a second schism.

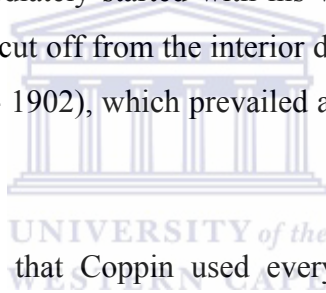
5.4 Historical background on Levi Jenkin Coppin

For this study it is important to provide a brief historical background on Bishop Coppin. Wright (1963: 146) notes that Bishop Coppin was born on the 24 December 1848 in Frederickstown, Maryland. At the General Conference of 1888 he was elected editor of the AME Review, a scholarly journal produced by the church. Before his election as bishop at the General Conference of 1900, the Episcopal Committee recommended that five bishops be elected of which one should be sent to South Africa. Upon his election, Coppin was therefore assigned the Fourteenth Episcopal District, which then comprised of the Cape Colony, Transvaal and the South African Republics.

Coppin's passion was writing. After being elected bishop and appointed to South Africa, he continuously recorded all his work and deliberations. His writings on his

South African experiences are recorded in *The South African Letters*, and *Observations and Things in South Africa*.³⁵

Campbell (1989: 151) describes Coppin as an educator who has published a number of books on church polity and doctrine. He further notes that Coppin had a keen interest in Africa. It is however strange that many bishops observed the South African assignment as a four year “wilderness period.” This simply means that bishops regarded assignments to Africa as a period out of civilisation. However, Coppin was thrilled at the opportunity to be assigned to South Africa. Bishop Coppin did not come alone to South Africa. He brought with him his wife Fanny Coppin, Rev. and Ms. John Gregg, Rev. Henry A Atterway and C M Tanner. The contribution of each of them will be discussed as the story of the bishopric of Coppin in South Africa unfolds. Coan (1987: 168) records that Coppin and his company arrived in Cape Town on 19 February 1901. Coppin immediately started with his work when he arrived in Cape Town. Unfortunately, he was cut off from the interior due to the bubonic plague³⁶ and the Anglo Boer War³⁷ (1899 - 1902), which prevailed at that time (cf Campbell 1989: 154).



Campbell (1989: 160) notes that Coppin used every opportunity to try to sway existing views on the competency of black leaders. In Kimberley he preached on Romans 13 to a large audience and presented a thorough exegesis on the importance to obey civil law. Coppin gave a number of public lectures to audiences that included the respect for white missionaries and government, but it appears as if these efforts met with little success to break down existing perceptions about the competency of black leaders.

5.5 The issue of proselytising

For the purpose of the study it is important to briefly highlight an important discussion Coppin had on board the ship whilst en route to South Africa. The *Christian Recorder* of 4 April 1901 records Coppin’s first serious dialogue with a

³⁵ Information is available on the reserved files at the Wilberforce University in Ohio, Pennsylvania.

³⁶ The bubonic plague, a disease spread by rats that swell the armpits, broke out in South Africa which was a life threatening disease.

³⁷ The Anglo Boer War made it impossible for people to move freely from one Republic to another.

Wesleyan minister. The discussion generally was on church matters and here Coppin was informed that ex-vicar bishop Dwane was made a deacon in the Ethiopian Anglican Church of Cape Town. Coppin was also warned by the Wesleyan minister not to increase the AME Church membership by taking members of well-established missionary churches. Coppin was made aware in no uncertain terms that white missionary churches in South Africa were harsh on proselytism. The Wesleyan minister concluded his speech by reiterating that any mission in South Africa is to the unsaved and to those who did not have a church home and if a person of a well established church was to join another church, it had to be by choice and not by persuasions.

The discussion between Coppin and the Wesleyan minister alerted Coppin to be aware of any proselytism that will not only discredit the AME Church with other missionary churches, but also with the government. Gerdener (1958: 165) remarks that the AME Church never in the past evangelised to gain membership, but rather took over members of well established churches. Gerdener (1958: 165) justifies this view with reference to Bishop Turner who spent six weeks in the country in 1898 and received several thousand members into his Church.

Notwithstanding the fact that Coppin was on the alert for any accusations of this nature, the influx of African Americans made the missionaries believe that the Americans had come to South Africa to sow the seed of dispute. Furthermore, many missionaries held the opinion that the AME Church was not a church, but a rebellious political movement. For the white missionaries Ethiopianism was simply a political organisation under the umbrella of the church (cf Campbell 1989: 155). Coan (1987: 187 - 188) notes that the government acted accordingly. A travel permit to conduct an Annual Conference in Transvaal was denied to Coppin. Even the Orange Free State Conference in Bloemfontein could not be conducted for the same reason.

Campbell (1989: 155 - 156) notes that all South African governments took steps to ensure that the AME church would cease to exist. In Natal AME ministers were deported or turned away from the borders. The British administrators in the former Boer Republics denied AME ministers the pass exemptions available to African ministers in mission churches because of their low educational qualifications. The

Governments of South Africa also denied school grants were and access to church sites. To worsen the situation, AME ministers in the interior of the country operated without supervision as from 1898 - 1907.

In the Cape Colony things went slightly better. The AME Church was officially recognised by the Cape Colony in 1901 and the Secretary of Native Affairs recognised AME ministers as marriage officers in an undated letter written to Coppin by the secretary.³⁸ The Secretary however, went a step further by proclaiming that only an American Bishop can sanction such an application on behalf of the candidate for marriage officers and sent it to the Office of Native Affairs for approval. The same procedure applied to applications for church sites, school grants and discounted rail fares for ministers. However, the bishop was responsible for any misconduct by his subordinates (cf Jacobs 1982: 181).

The treatment meted out to the AME Church by the governments of South Africa alerted Coppin to the practice of proselytising. The evangelistic conditions in South Africa were however conducive to proselytising for the AME Church since many missionary stations operated without any supervision. The AME Church had won over many members, until Coppin seriously warned the church to refrain from proselytising. He even went a step further by announcing that any member found guilty of sheep stealing, would immediately be suspended from the church. The issue of proselytising brought about the first real tension between the Africans and African American leaders (cf Campbell 1989: 161).

Notwithstanding Coppin's somewhat harsh treatment, AME ministers and lay people started a number of congregations in white missionary fields. It should however be noted that Coppin's fear for the action of the South African governments was much greater than that of his members.

Makiwana (in Campbell 1989: 162) concurs with other authors that the governments of South Africa were well aware of the fact that the AME Church took their members from other churches rather than from heathendom. AME leaders would generally

³⁸ File no.13.5 of AC Booyse: Letter to Coppin to recognise the AME Church in the Cape Colony.

enter areas after receiving calls from discontented African Christians. However, Makiwana admits that members taken by the AME in that way were in any case without pastoral care for many years. Between 1901 and 1903 AME preachers opened churches and schools in close proximity of European missions. Makiwana further argues that for AME members it was not simply a question of denominational preference, but a crusade to demonstrate that Africans could and should control their own lives. Campbell (1989: 163) records that Henry Reid Ngcayiya, after a reprimand by the bishop, ignored him and established a number of AME Churches throughout the Eastern Cape and Ciskei. He also organised congregations in Oxkraal and Tsitsikama, two of the most densely populated government locations in the Queenstown District. When the government reprimanded Ngcayiya, he simply responded by accusing the government of treading upon the rights of African taxpayers (cf Campbell 1989: 163).

5.6 The 1902 hearings

In the end, the government had no other choice but to call in Coppin and the leaders of the AME Church to appear before the Native Commission. This was done in 1902. The AME Church was first and foremost accused of being a political party with its own nationalistic aspirations. The second charge was that the AME Church was purely seen as a “political party” and not a church movement. The third charge against the church was that its doctrines were severely political. The fourth charge against the church was that it did not have the capacity to evangelise or to recruit members, but preferred to proselytise. The fifth charge against the church was that it was sowing the seeds of racial hatred against white people (cf Coan 1987: 199 - 200).

It is evident that the questions posed to the AME Church were more about its political activities than its proselytising. In response to all these accusations the church leaders emphasised that they did not have any business in the political affairs of the country; their aim was to spread the gospel among the unsaved. It further defended itself by stating that up till that point no governmental official could have brought any charge against any member or minister for any rebellious action against the state. In connection with the charge of proselytising, the leaders of the AME Church were clear that they simply worked among people where the white missionaries did not do any evangelical work (cf Coan 1987: 204). No charges were laid against the AME

Church since it was clear that the administration of Native Affairs could not find any solid ground against the AME Church for prosecution. However, Campbell (1989: 163) describes that Coppin was ordered to condemn the work of Ngcayiya in Peddie and to make certain that the dilapidated building in which he was conducting services, be demolished. This Coppin did, but Ngcayiya erected a temporary structure in the backyard of one of his members to continue his work.

Coppin's hope to work in harmony with South African government and his demand to Ngcayiya to demolish his place of worship, sowed the seed for future discontentment within the AME Church.

5.7 Factors that contributed to the second schism

5.7.1 The role of Samuel Brander

The role of Samuel James Brander deserves special attention in this regard. Sundkler (1970: 39) records that Samuel Brander was one of Mokone's colleagues who founded the Ethiopian Church in 1892 and together with Mokone united with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa in 1896. In 1904 he became the founder of the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion. Millard (1999: 1) notes that for some time before 1904 Brander sought a religious home outside the AME Church.

He was born in Colesberg, Cape Colony, in 1851 and was baptised by the Rev. Richard Giddy in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. An article written by Millard in 1999 reports that Brander himself wrote that his mother, Lydia Brander, was an African American. When he was born there were very few Americans in South Africa. The assumption can therefore be made that he found it easy to associate with the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Brander's father was a Methodist lay preacher and after a quarrel with the white minister of the church, he left the church and became an Anglican. Even though Samuel was a leader in the Methodist Church, he relinquished his church affiliation to join his father in the Anglican Church.

In 1873 he went to Kimberley to work in the diamond industry as a transport contractor. In 1884 his family moved to Potchefstroom where Samuel became a

catechist in the Anglican Church. He was then sent to the Waterberg District to work. In the Waterberg District he built a school and a church from the money he earned and applied to Bishop Bousfield of the Anglican Church in Pretoria for a refund of the money he had spent. The bishop refused to reimburse him. An argument ensued and Brander left the church after fifteen years as an active member. Brander left the Anglican Church in the same year the Ethiopian Church Movement was established and he and a number of Anglican members joined this newly established church. When the Ethiopian Movement merged with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Brander was part of the group and was ordained by Bishop Turner as minister in 1898 (cf Millard 1999: 1).

Brander never became a leader in the AME Church because he was always sceptical about the leadership style of the African Americans. While being a member of the AME Church, he established contact with the Roman Catholic Church for he cherished the way it conducted its liturgical services (cf Campbell 1989: 171).

5.7.2 The South African College

Coan (1978: 165 - 166) notes that the 1900 General Conference of the AME Church voted in favour of establishing the South African College. Although the South African delegation made an appeal for \$15 000 for the erection of the College, the General Conference of 1900 voted for \$10 000. The General Conference furthermore decided that the \$10 000 would be divided in four yearly instalments of \$2 500 of which the General Treasurer at the rise of the General Conference would grant the first payment. The \$2 500 would be entrusted to the newly assigned bishop of South Africa in order for the building process to proceed as soon as he arrived in South Africa. This College was supposed to be erected in Queenstown. The General Conference also decided that the college, when in operation, should be open to all Africans, notwithstanding any person's church affiliation.

Campbell (1989: 164) reflects that although the General Conference of 1900 instructed the General Secretary to hand over to Coppin the amount of \$2 500, it never materialised. The assumption is made that the American districts were not willing to entrust any money towards a College of Higher learning for blacks in South Africa. It was not an issue of insufficient funds, rather the negative perceptions

created by the secession of Dwane since African Americans in their numbers denounced any developmental programmes for Africans.

Coan (1887: 166, 171) notes that Coppin immediately started a fundraising effort whilst in America to save the church from embarrassment in South Africa. Coppin published articles in the *Voice of Missions*, the *Christian Recorder* and the *AME Review* to appeal to members of the American Church to assist him raising only \$5 000 to start the College. Coppin even suggested that if each minister, evangelist and preacher of the Church only contributed an amount of \$1, the goal of \$5 000 would be reached easily. All these contributions did not come fast enough, so Coppin had to appeal to the congregations to make some contributions. In the end, Coppin was only able to raise \$1 519-80. As a last measure, he left his Cape Town address for those who still wanted to make any donations.

The ill-fated promises made by the American districts did not go down well with Coppin. In a strongly worded article in the *Voice of Missions* of June 1900, he reminded the church about promises made and not honoured. In it he noted that the South African church had to honour all financial obligations towards the American districts. The *Easter Day collection* and the *Endowment Day collection* for church extension had to be given equally by both South African and American leaders. Furthermore, Coppin reminded the church that three-quarters of the money raised at special occasions is utilised for retired bishops, connectional schools, church newspapers and a number of other agencies the Church in South Africa had never seen, nor had the benefit of. A furious Coppin wanted to know from the AME Church why a wealthy black church in America obligated the poor South Africans with their needs to make these payments. Coan (1987: 166) notes that Coppin reminded the American church that his appointment to South Africa was first and foremost to take care of the erection of the college.

Coppin however only arrived with the money he personally collected. When Coppin promised his newly appointed constituency that the money promised by the General Conference of 1900 was still forthcoming, a wave of discontent sounded throughout the AME Church in South Africa. This action on the part of the American districts created serious distrust within the South African district. A number of South Africans

eventually refused to pay the required subscription fees (cf Campbell 1989: 165). This in effect placed another stratum of stress on the AME Mission which eventually paved the way for another schism.

The AME Church in America at the time of Coppin's visit was not financially able to assist the AME Church in South Africa. However, it remained silent on this matter (cf Coan 1987: 165). Furthermore, the first schism was exploited as an excuse for the funds not forthcoming. To this effect, Coan (1987: 166) notes that before Coppin left the soils of America, three farewell parties were held for him. The money spent on all these ceremonies could have been used to assist Coppin with the proposed building project in South Africa. Furthermore, the farewell ceremonies could have been used as a tool to raise funds for the proposed South African College.

Coppin now had to decide what to do with the money he had collected for the proposed college. Campbell (1989: 164) notes that Coppin was clear in his mind not to erect the college in Queenstown as suggested, but in Cape Town where he could have direct control over the progress of the building. Furthermore, Coppin used the war as a reason why he could not travel to the interior of the country to build a school in Queenstown. In the meantime a Cape Town Episcopal residence was bought in the Gardens, Cape Town.

At the time of Coppin's negotiations for a suitable site to build the proposed school, a double-storied building on the corner of Hanover and Blythe Streets in District Six became available for sale. The purchased price was \$22 000 of which a deposit of \$4 000 had to be paid. The sale of this property was published in the *Voice of Mission* of September 1901. In this periodical Coppin explains that the property consists of twelve rooms which could be converted into a primary and high school. Adjacent to the school was an empty plot, which was also for sale. Coppin left no stone unturned to ensure that the AME Church should buy the property. Coppin regarded this as an opportunity to restore the image of the AME Church in South Africa (cf Coan 1987: 172).

He promptly informed the American districts that this project would restore the image of the South Africa district. Coan (1987: 171 - 175) notes that Coppin contacted the

secretary of Missions of the Church, Dr. H B Parks to explain the importance of securing the property for the AME Church. Coppin succeeded in receiving the money after Parks had consulted with the bishops of the church in America. The Department of Missions donated \$3 500 and \$500 came from the *Department of Church Extension*. The *Bethel Institute*, which offered primary, secondary, teaching and missionary training, officially opened its doors on 3 February 1902 after many renovations were done. The school was opened with an enrolment of approximately three hundred pupils from various religious backgrounds (cf Coan 1987: 175 - 178).

Campbell (1989: 164) notes that the decision of Coppin to build a college in Cape Town further frustrated the members of the interior as they saw it as a form of American favouritism towards the Cape. Notwithstanding the dissatisfaction of the members of the interior of the country, Coppin still decided to continue with his plan to start the school in Cape Town. The fact that Coppin decided on his own to erect a school in Cape Town, further contributed to the tense relationship between the American districts and the South African district.

Another step of Coppin that did not go down well was the appointment of African Americans and the African students who had studied in America as teachers. He appointed Henry Attaway from America as principal of the school and his wife Carrie Lee Attaway as one of the teachers, along with the South African graduates Charlotte Manye and Henry Msikinya (cf Campbell 1989: 166). Attaway was also appointed Presiding Elder of the newly formed Cape District. Campbell (1989: 166) interprets the appointment of Attaway as principal, as well as Presiding Elder as yet another layer in the already controversial situation in the Church in South Africa.

Within four years of operation, the church lost Bethel Institute due to non-payments of the bond. It is thus evident that the American Church was not ready to invest in foreign countries. The South African situation in a short period of time proved that the American AME Church in some aspects became an albatross around the neck of the South African Church.

5.7.3 Reliance on foreign leadership

The Rev. Allen Henry Attaway accompanied Coppin on his first trip to South Africa.

In South Africa, Coppin appointed Attaway as Presiding Elder of the Cape District as well as General Superintendent. When Bethel Institute was officially opened, Attaway was appointed as principal. It was at Bethel that his inability to administer the school properly came to the fore. Campbell (1989: 167) notes that Attaway was not equipped enough to design a curriculum that suited the needs of the Africans. He simply combined the missionary syllabus of the Cape Colony and that of the Afro-American industrial institutions for the school. Little educational progress was made.

Furthermore, the church was embarrassed when in 1904 it was announced that the school was in arrears with its bond to the amount of \$14 000. The Bethel Institute was therefore literally bankrupt. Again, the General Conference of 1904 voted in favour of \$10 000 to reduce the bond, but this agreement was also never honoured (cf Coan 1987: 223). The Church eventually lost Bethel Institute in 1905, after only four years of existence due to the weak administrative skills of Attaway.

The *South African Spectator*, dated 9 November 1901, a black newspaper, published an article on Attaway while General Superintendent of the Church in South Africa. The author of this newspaper notes that Attaway cautioned that members and ministers who are actively involved in the political life of the Governments of South Africa could be expelled from the church. Furthermore, any member who crossed the line of white dominated religious boundaries would be no longer regarded as a member of the AME Church. Attaway ordered his ministers when entering new fields of labour, to first and foremost report to the magistrate of that area and to render all possible assistance in the administration of the law in that area. All these incidents further contributed to the suspicion that the AME Church in America was not capable of taking control of the AME Church in South Africa.

Coppin also invited John Gregg, an AME minister to assist with the South African work. At first he was a teacher at the Bethel Institute until its bankruptcy in 1905. With the bankruptcy of Bethel Institute, Gregg decided to find his way to Chatsworth, some forty kilometres north of Cape Town. The first AME Church in the Cape was built here. The Chatsworth AME Church at that time possessed hundreds of acres of land. Gregg made a close study of the economic and social conditions in South Africa. He came to the conclusion that the most pressing need of the people in South Africa

was a practical, literary, mechanical and industrial training school. After due consideration and consultation with the bishop and the minister of Chatsworth, a large farm, situated on the Hopefield Railway line, was purchased, a large school was erected and properties were secured for an industrial settlement. (cf Booyse 2003: 60).

No source reveals where the church received the money from to erect such a building with all the necessary equipment and farming industry. Nonetheless, among others, seventy cattle, six horses, two mules, two hundred sheep, pigs and fowls were bought. The dairy-, gardening- and farming industries were immediately started with. The enrolment increased from fifteen in 1905 to thirty five in 1906. Again, due to non-payment of arrears, the school had to close its doors in 1906 due to another bankruptcy.

5.7.4 Unacceptable attitudes of superiority

In 1902 Carleton Miller Tanner, an AME minister from Philadelphia, came to South Africa. He became a member of the South African AME Church at the South African Conference held in Port Elizabeth. At this conference, Tanner was appointed editor of the South African Christian Recorder and also Presiding Elder of the Cape Town District. Before his arrival to South Africa, he was already a controversial figure in the eyes of the AME Church members in South Africa. Campbell (1989: 173) notes that Tanner went so far as to announce the introduction of a group of Americans to supervise the work in South Africa.

Before Tanner left America for his South African mission, he published a book entitled *A Manual of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (1903). In it he argued that Africans would hardly understand the laws and practices of the AME Church due to their low level of education. These accusations appeared in the *South African Spectator* of October 1903 and were widely read by the AME Church members in South Africa.

When the opportunity was afforded Tanner to address the South African AME Conference in Aliwal North, he openly advocated stricter American control of the South African branch of the Church. The South African constituency did not appreciate the arrogance in which Tanner conducted his speech. At Aliwal North

where Tanner and the South African AME members met each other face to face, AME leaders confronted him openly. Brander, Tantsi, Ngcayiya and Khumalo decided to send a letter of protest to the General Conference in America. In their complaint they mentioned that the conditions in the AME Church in South Africa were not different from those in the white mission churches. They furthermore complained about the fact that the indigenous members were not consulted when decisions are made for the Episcopal Districts and that the best positions were kept for the African Americans serving in South Africa. The way in which Tanner belittled the members of South Africa further spread the seed of discontentment.

5.7.5 Election of delegates to the 1904 General Conference

Campbell (1989: 170) records that at the Aliwal North Conference in 1903 the delegates to the 1904 General Conference had to be elected. The South African Districts were entitled to send eight delegates. Coppin however, decided to elect only two South African delegates and announced that the extra six seats should be occupied by Americans on behalf of South Africa. This together with the other ill-fated and destructive manner in which the Americans ruined the AME Church in South Africa, did not only tear the Aliwal North Conference apart, but also the entire AME Church in South Africa (cf Coan 1987: 205). The Aliwal North Conference was the final contributing factor that led to the second schism.

5.8 The second schism and its aftermath

The ground was now solidly laid for yet another schism. It therefore came as no surprise that the second secession movement within the AME Church in South African took place in 1904. Samuel Brander with more than one thousand members seceded from the AME Church to establish the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion. Brander himself later became archbishop of this newly formed church.

The initiative taken by the leaders of the AME Church in South Africa to request for an American leader after the first schism was an attempt to restore the church in South Africa. The AME Church in America was of the opinion that the church in South Africa was not yet ready for any leadership positions and for this reason an influx of African Americans took place who occupied leadership positions. However, the AME Church in South Africa was of the opinion that American leadership was needed until

the unhealthy environment of the first schism had been restored to normality.

De Gruchy (1979: 42) notes that Samuel Brander and members of his newly founded church appeared before the South African Native Affairs Commission in October 1904 and made a damaging confession regarding the AME Church to justify the establishment of their newly founded church. They testified that the Americans had promised to build a college for teachers and to provide ministerial training, which never materialised. They also send men from America to fill the best leadership positions in the South African constituency. The South African Church had to raise large sums of money which was used by the American church. What troubled them most was the fact that they had seen the Americans as their brothers and sisters since they were also black and lived under the same conditions as the South African blacks. Instead of helping them, they pulled them down and it was for that reason that they left the AME Church.

5.9 Conclusion

Kreitner and Kinicki (2004: 490 - 494) argue that conflict in organisations typically arises as a result of personality, inter-group thinking and cross-cultural issues. Personality conflict is based on personal dislike, disagreement and different styles. Inter-group conflict is based on competing interests. Cross-cultural conflict is based on different assumptions on what is acceptable to the group.

All the different types of conflict were present in the built-up to the second schism. Personality conflict manifested itself in the leadership style of the bishop and the aspirations of Samuel Brander. Clearly Coppin felt more at ease with the African Americans in leadership positions, thus creating inter-group conflict. The cultural divide between the South African blacks and the African Americans manifested itself in the unacceptable attitudes of superiority. What was evident from the aftermath of the second schism was that there was no conflict resolution mechanism in the AME Church. This void would be experienced in future schisms that will be discussed in the next chapters.

Chapter 6

The third schism of 1908

6.1 Introduction

The aftermath of the second schism signalled a change in the approach of the American districts towards the South African district. This change was built on an assumption that relationships would normalise if the American church showed greater respect for the wishes of the AME Church in South Africa. Campbell (1989: 172) notes that the General Conference held in Chicago in 1904 began to grasp the problems that the South African district had with the American bishops assigned to them. The General Conference came to realise that the South African AME Church was no longer interested in African American ministers and lay persons serving in South Africa in leadership positions, thus denying indigenous leaders such opportunities. It was clear that the South African church desired greater control over its own business; an opportunity that was denied to them in the past.

This envisaged change in approach was short-lived and confined to the corridors of power at the General Conference of 1904. This study will show that the good intentions expressed were never put into practice. In fact the conditions that would create yet another schism were slowly building almost simultaneous with the good intentions expressed by the General Conference of 1904. In this chapter the conditions that created the third schism in 1908 will be discussed.

6.2 A glimmer of hope for change

Tanner, an African American who served as the editor of the *South African Christian Recorder* from 1902, announced at the 1903 Cape Annual Conference that tighter American control over the South African district would be established to maintain order within the Conferences. This announcement was taken as an insult to South African blacks.

He also expressed the desire to be elected a bishop and be sent to South Africa in order to teach South Africans how to administer church affairs properly. Campbell (1989: 169) notes that in December 1903 at the start of the Transvaal and Cape

conferences at Aliwal North, Tanner circulated the South African Christian Recorder in which he described African ministers as ill-educated and illiterate. He also alleged they had no sense of financial administration and that did not understand the laws of the AME Church. These provocative remarks brought about turmoil within the conference as well as the American districts who frowned upon Tanner's arrogance.

The AME Church in America promptly reacted to these allegations and ordered Tanner to immediately stop publishing the periodical and return back home to America. With the American bishop and his entourage out of the country for a while, the South African district became cautious not to overstep its political boundaries as this would antagonise the South African authorities. Wright (1980: 16) remarks that the South Africans preferred to struggle along in their own poverty rather than to be seen as beggars in the eyes of the AME Church in America or the South African authorities.

The period from 1903 to 1904 presented a brief glimmer of hope. The America district was beginning to understand the depth of feeling of the South African district against foreign leadership that displayed such an arrogant sense of superiority. The South African district cautiously awaited the assignment of yet another African American bishop in 1904. However, it was also obvious that they would no longer tolerate the hostile attitude of the newly appointed bishop.

6.3 Background on Charles Spencer Smith

It is imperative to provide some background to Charles Spencer Smith to understand why the American districts decided to assign him to South Africa in order to create an atmosphere conducive for church growth. Wright (1963: 317) notes that Smith started working in the furnishing industry at the age of twelve. At the age of fourteen he became a worker in a boarding house and when he resigned this job, he worked as a porter in a barber shop. He was also a cook and waiter on a boat travelling the Great Lakes.

Hill (1993: 17) remarks that while Smith was exposed to a number of jobs in his early years, he became aware of the hardships that African Americans had to endure. He

therefore became actively involved in politics and in 1874 he was elected a member of the State Legislature in Alabama, USA. Hill (1993: 17) also notes that Smith at the age of seventeen became involved in politics. While in Mississippi he became acquainted with some prominent blacks in politician. Smith was one of the organisers of an Independence Day celebration for blacks 1873. This gathering was attended by more than 20 000 people. As the keynote speaker, Smith based his theme on racial harmony. As political activist he organised a state political convention of leading blacks in Bullock County. The aim of this convention was to discuss the needs of blacks and how those needs could have been addressed. His oratorical skills assisted him in becoming elected as a Republican member of the Alabama legislature in 1874.

Hill (1993: 18) comments that Smith's involvement in public politics followed a period of tension and violence. He and his colleagues had to fight against blacks in racial inequalities and the right for blacks to vote. In 1876 Smith lost his re-election to the Alabama Legislator. He withdrew from politics and studied medicine at Central Tennessee College where he completed his medical degree in 1880; however he never practiced as a medical doctor.

Wright (1963: 317) remarks that Smith joined the AME Church in Jackson, Mississippi in 1870 and in 1871 he applied for a license to preach. His administrative skills were soon discovered and he was utilised by the church in many respects. He was licensed to preach in 1873 and was ordained as a minister in the AME Church in 1876.

In 1894 he was unanimously elected Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer of the general AME Church. At the same General Conference he was also elected as one of three committee members to work on the church's new catechism book. Also at this same General Conference he managed to get the following resolutions approved, all with a substantial majority:

- That the doctrine of apostolic succession should form part of the AME Church's faith, and

- That the wearing of clerical gowns and robes be introduced as the official dress code for bishops and ministers during worship services (cf Wright 1963: 319).

Hill (1993: v) portrays Smith as one of Michigan's most influential black preachers during his time.

Furthermore, Wright (1963: 319) comments that Smith was a great organiser. In September 1884 he organised a group of people to visit Sierra Leone, St. Paul and de Luanda in West Africa. In 1895 he and a group toured the West Indian Islands and South America. He himself brought the church under the impression of his love for Africa and always referred to it as his motherland.

Wright (1963: 319) also notes that Smith, one of the church's wealthiest persons, erected the Sunday School Union Building in Nashville Tennessee and paid all of the debt for its erection. He officially established Children's Day in the church and made it an annual event across the international AME Church. Smith produced the first Sunday school literature published by African Americans. In the ecumenical sphere he represented the church at the 1891 Methodist Ecumenical Conference in Washington DC and in 1901 in London, England. He was also elected to represent the church in Toronto, Canada in 1911 at an Ecumenical Conference. He became the first black man to receive an honorary doctorate from Victoria College, Toronto, Canada.

As head of the Sunday school Union, Smith was a profound author of Christian literature. He believed that writing forms part of an educational ministry and he encouraged his peers to assist him in writing Sunday school literature to be published and distributed in the church.³⁹ Hill (1963: 11) observed that whilst at the Sunday school Union, Smith published a number of books for the Sunday school and in this way Smith improved the quality of the work for the Sunday school.

³⁹ Smith's report to the First Quadrennial Convention of the Sunday school Union on 19 May 1884. The Report can be found in the archive of the Sunday School Union Publishing House in Nashville.

Smith was uncompromising in his view towards the *episcopacy*. He advocated respect for the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church and was serious about church order (cf Wright 1963: 321). He advocated that no bishop had the right to refuse any assignment to any Episcopal District where he/she was assigned to. Hill (1993: 34) notes that Smith's uncompromising stance towards the law of the church encouraged him to remind all Annual Conferences conducted by him that there is nobody above the law of the church, and should anybody fail to obey the law, the church should deal with such a person.

Smith succeeded Bishop Turner as historiographer of the AME Church. In this capacity he authored among others, the second volume of the history of the AME Church from 1890 to 1920. One of his most outstanding publications as historiographer was *Glimpses of Africa*, published in 1885. This was the story of his experiences to Africa in 1884. In his introductory notes Smith states that the purpose of this journey was to observe the status of Africans. In preparation of this journey, he presumed that the Europeans should be condemned for the mistreatment and inhumane behaviour towards blacks. He even expressed the belief that the Europeans would not be able to dominate Africa for ever and that Africa would redeem itself and its descendants from bondage.

After his return from Africa, his attitude towards the Africans changed entirely. He publicly announced that he had been too optimistic in his initial ideas about Africans. He came to the conclusion that Africans were doing nothing to improve their situation. He described the Africans as childlike, irresponsible adults, of nature a lazy people. Africans did not have the capacity to manage their own religious affairs. He furthermore declared that he was of the opinion that the Europeans are in Africa to stay and that he would by no means interfere in the prevailing state of affairs of blacks (cf Smith 1885: 5).

Smith was elected a bishop of the AME Church at the 1900 General Conference and assigned to the 12th Episcopal District, which then comprised of Ontario, Nova Scotia, Bermuda and West Indies (cf Wright 1993: 320).

It is against this background of Smith that the General Conference of 1904 regarded him as the most suitable bishop for the South African mission field. The Episcopal Committee, whose responsibility it is to assign bishops, recommended Smith to serve as bishop of the AME Church in South Africa in order to resolve the problems of the South African Church. The American district was of the opinion that Smith's educational background and his deeply rooted knowledge and understanding of church administration, would assist him in normalising the prevailing unhealthy relationships within the AME Church in South Africa.

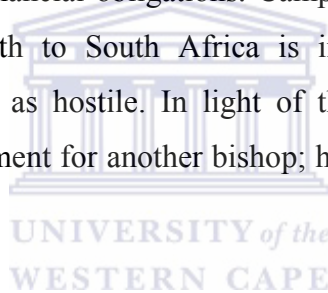
Hill (1993: 21) portrays Smith as a man of good character and with exceptional organisational skills. Campbell (1989: 174) however, differs when he notes that Smith's negative attitude towards the South Africa district paved the way for another schism. The majority of the delegates at the General Conference of 1904 were of the opinion that in order to bring about peace and stability to the South African district in the interim, no American bishop was suitable for such an assignment. However, it would be in the best interest of the church to elect and send a *missionary bishop*⁴⁰ to South Africa after the second schism. The idea of electing a missionary bishop for South Africa was a point of discussion especially among the bishops for more than a year before the General Conference of 1904.

In contrast to the idea of a missionary bishop, Smith in an article in *The Voice of Missions*, February 1903, predicted that a split would be inevitable should the possibility of a missionary bishop for South Africa be discussed at the General Conference of 1904. Ironically, though Smith was against the election of a missionary bishop, he in the end joined Bishop Turner, his lifelong friend, and a group of delegates to promote the election of a missionary bishop for the South African mission field. Their argument was based upon the cultural and language differences of the South African people. Even with Coppin's presence in South Africa, eruption broke loose over the possible assignment of yet another American bishop to South Africa. The South African district also held the opinion that the church would never grow with an American bishop serving in South Africa (cf Campbell 1989: 175).

⁴⁰ A missionary bishop is elected from among the indigenous people to serve them.

However, an article that appeared in the *Voice of Missions* of August 1903⁴¹ warned the church against the election of a missionary bishop because such action would interfere with the established procedures for electing and rotating of bishops. When rumours at the General Conference of 1904 spread that Smith might be sent to South Africa, the conference was in turmoil (cf Campbell 1989: 175). In the end, Smith was assigned to South Africa. Campbell (1989: 174) describes the assignment of Smith as particularly pathetic since Smith was seen as an autocratic and uncompromising leader. Campbell (1989: 173) also notes that a vast number of Americans warned the South African delegation about the arrogant attitude displayed by Smith.

The South Africans were also reminded of Smith and Coppin's views that any expansion outside the boundaries of America, would be too costly and that the American districts would never be able to satisfy the needs of South Africa while they were struggling with huge financial obligations. Campbell (1989: 174) further notes that the assignment of Smith to South Africa is incomprehensible since Smith regarded the South Africans as hostile. In light of the above, the South Africans actively promoted the assignment for another bishop; however this campaign was not successful.



6.4 Relationships during Smith's tenure as bishop

Smith became the first bishop in the AME Church to be assigned from an American district to the South African district. This was regarded by a number of Americans as a demotion. Campbell (1989: 174) comments that Smith viewed his appointment to South Africa with mistrust and outright animosity. Smith had very little understanding of the South African church or of local practices. This was evident when he uncompromisingly refused to acknowledge the influence of African cultural life on the AME Church in South Africa. He publicly denounced the practices of *inyangas* or *sangomas*.⁴²

To Smith, Africans had not yet come to grips with Westernised ideas and he regarded this as an obstacle in his effort towards transforming the AME Church in South

⁴¹ Author unknown

⁴² Inyangas are doctors and sangomas are traditional healers.

Africa. Wright (1963: 320) comments that Smith's attitude towards the South African blacks did more harm to the church despite the fact that he was sent to bring about peace and initiate progressive church development in South Africa.

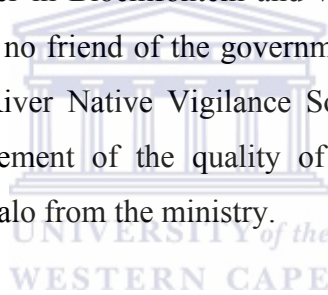
Smith believed that Africans understood little about missionary work, hence their apathy towards Europeans. For this reason Smith was of the opinion that blacks rebelled against the white people because they felt inferior to them. Furthermore, Smith was suspicious of the African's capacity to control their own religious affairs. Smith wrote in *Glimpses of Africa* (1885), that: "It is impossible for any people only one generation removed from barbarism to comprehend and successfully grapple with the genius and multifarious ramifications of an ecclesiastical organism" (Campbell 1989: 175). Smith criticised the General Conference for sending him to South Africa, even though his sentiments regarding the continent were well publicised.

Cone (1987: 222) notes that when Smith arrived in South Africa on 11 October 1904, internal conflict between him and the South African AME Church leaders started immediately. The prevailing tensions at the Rand gold reefs about wage disputes at the beginning of the twentieth century eventually led to several revolts between 1906 and 1922 (cf Roux 1978: 143). Blacks first vented their anger against whites about the treatment meted out to them with the 1906 rebellion. It is assumed that it was on account of these tensions between blacks and whites that Smith called together all Presiding Elders of his newly assigned Episcopal District to discuss their attitude toward whites. Campbell (1989: 175) reports that Smith strongly reprimanded the Presiding Elders against the following:

- That should any minister of the Episcopal District be found guilty of any riotous offence in the diamond or gold mines, such person be immediately suspended from the church.
- That ministers who were found guilty of proselytising also be suspended.
- Those ministers involving themselves in politics in South Africa would be suspended and that the government authorities would be notified accordingly in such cases in order to declare the ministers' marriage licenses null and void.
- That ministers who worked with Chiefs that have been deposed by the government authorities also be suspended.

At the close of the meeting with the Presiding Elders, Smith requested an audience with the South African Native Commission which at that time met in Cape Town. At that meeting Smith unconditionally pledged his support to the authorities in South Africa and ensured them of his intention to expel any minister involved in politics or anyone who would use the pulpit to advance his or her political aspirations. When he was questioned about the AME ministers' involvement in politics in the interior of the country, Smith explained that due to the fact that he had no travelling permit, it was impossible for him to personally take care of those ministers who were actively involved in politics (cf Campbell 1989: 175).

Campbell (1989: 176) further notes that Smith in his attempt to demonstrate to the government his honest intentions, summoned Benjamin Kumalo to Cape Town who at that time resided as a minister in Bloemfontein and was in effect a friend of Chief Lerotholi, a Basuto who was no friend of the government. At that time Kumalo was chairperson of the Orange River Native Vigilance Society, a minority cluster that worked towards the improvement of the quality of life for blacks. Smith acted promptly by suspending Kumalo from the ministry.



6.5 The financial situation during Smith's tenure as bishop

When Smith arrived in South Africa, the financial situation in the church was chaotic. Coan (1987: 222) reports that the Bethel Institute in Cape Town had been bankrupt to the amount of \$14 000. Furthermore, ownership of the Northcote Episcopal residence, where Bishop Coppin stayed, was in jeopardy due to non-payments of the bond. Although the General Conference of 1904 approved a sum of \$10 000 to pay for the school and episcopal residence, Smith brought no funds to meet these crucial needs. Campbell (1989: 178) notes that Smith welcomed the serious indebtedness of the AME Church in South Africa, since to him it was a matter of irresponsibility on behalf of the AME Church in South Africa and he used this situation as proof that the AME Church in South Africa had never been taught how to administer its own financial and administrative affairs.

In 1905 Smith made an unannounced journey back to America. Some of the South African Church members were under the impression that he went to America to raise the necessary funds for the school and the residence. These were merely speculations.

While Smith was in America, five Presiding Elders in South Africa formed a committee to suspend Bishop Smith as bishop for the AME Church in South Africa.⁴³ Reasons for the suspension of the bishop was that the Presiding Elders were under the impression that the money for the indebtedness was given to the bishop on his first trip to South Africa and that he had left unannounced with all the money the American Church had given him for the redemption of the bonds.

The bishop eventually arrived back in South Africa in August of 1905. He again called together all the Presiding Elders and suspended the five Presiding Elders that suspended him. Although the amount is not known, Smith made a payment on the indebtedness of Bethel Institute (cf Coan 1987: 226).

6.6 Smith's chaotic reign comes to an end

Campbell (1989: 180 - 181) notes that the last months of Smith's administration in South Africa can be described as a time of chaos. S J Mabote, one of Smith's opponents and minister in Transvaal, found himself without a travelling pass since Smith had reported him to the South African authorities for seceding from the AME ministry. Reverends Ngcayiya, J Z Zantzi, Henry Msikinya and Isiah Sishuba, all well respected indigenous leaders, were also removed from the roll of marriage officers. In Peddie the authorities rejected the erection of a church building when Smith refused to sign the necessary documentation for the construction of the church building.

Campbell (1989: 181) comments that in Cape Town Smith was almost assaulted when attempting to remove F M Gow, also known as the "father of the church" in Cape Town and organiser of Bethel AME Church in Cape Town, District Six, with JJ Pearce, an African American. In Bloemfontein the church was split into two with the

⁴³ The five Presiding Elders were H R Ngcayiya, I S Sishuba, J Z Tantsi, S J Mabote and B Kumalo. See *report on the Church*: January 1906. Information obtained from the E M Gordon collection at UWC.

Kumalo camp aggressively working towards ending the Smith regime and the Ngcayiya group that did every thing to save the church from total destruction (cf Campbell 1989: 181). Wright (1963: 320) notes that Smith could no longer carry on with his position in South Africa because ministers in South Africa felt that he was too autocratic.

Tension and conflict in the AME Church became so severe that the AME Church was divided into two denominations. In Thaba 'Nchu, the AME Church members, staunch supporters of Smith, decided to break away to form the "Smith AME Church". The *Smith - AME Church* operated as an autonomous branch of the AME Church (cf Campbell 1989: 181). These actions of Smith against the AME Church in South Africa convinced the white missionaries and the authorities that the AME Church was and would never become a unified body. Instead, they believed that the AME Church in South Africa was divided as never before (cf Coan 1987: 225).

The opposition of the South district against Smith left the *Council of Bishops* with no other choice than to remove Smith from South Africa after almost two years. He was then sent to West Africa and Louisiana where he encountered more or less the same problems. Coan (1987: 225) concurs with the members of the American districts that Smith's arrogant attitude after a brief and stormy period in South Africa forced the bishops of the church to remove him from South African district to another Episcopal District. Coan (1987: 239) notes that Smith, who was supposed to stay for four years in South Africa, initially only spent eighteen months in his assigned field.

6.7 Restoring the damage of the Smith episcopacy

A third secession in South Africa was not predicted as a number of leading church people in South Africa did everything they could to prevent any secession movements. Coan (1987: 226) notes that in the absence of Smith, Francis MacDonald Gow became the interim leader in the AME Church in South Africa. Through correspondence with the Native Commissioner, Gow succeeded in lifting the suspension of all those suspended by Smith. These persons were officially restored to their previous leadership positions.

Wright (1963: 156) states that Bishop William Benjamin Derrick was appointed to South Africa to bring about stability and peace in the church. During Derrick's assignment to South Africa, he was also bishop of West Africa. Wright (1963: 156) furthermore comments that while Derrick was in South Africa, he prepared plans for the erection of the Lillian Derrick Institute in Evaton, Johannesburg, a theological school for AME ministers.⁴⁴

Coan (1987: 239) notes that due to ill-health Derrick only served South Africa for eight months. Campbell (1989: 182) supports the argument of Coan by stating that Derrick was too ill to leave the United States. He only arrived in South Africa in 1907 and remained in South Africa for only a few months before the General Conference of 1908 convened.

While in South Africa, Derrick called together all Annual Conferences in South Africa in 1908. His aim was to reconcile all members of the church. African leaders however, after the attempts made by Derrick refused to reconcile. The loyalists to Bishop Smith were furious by the return of what they called the rebels. This unhealthy situation in the AME Church in South Africa subsequently paved the way for another schism in 1908 (cf Campbell 1989: 183).

6.8 The third schism in 1908

Campbell (1989: 183) writes that a few weeks before the 1908 General Conference, the AME Church in South Africa experienced its third schism. More than a dozen ministers led by Ngcayiya, Sisubu and Kumalo broke away from the AME Church to re-establish the Ethiopian Church of South Africa. It was an attempt from the secessionists to rebuild the original dream of Mokone for the Ethiopian Church. Their statement of independence this time was not directed against the white Europeans, but against African Americans.

Campbell (1989: 184) furthermore notes that it seemed to the American districts that the South African district had now gone through its final schism and that it would finally reach stability. The American church came to the conclusion that the conflict

⁴⁴ The name Lillian Derrick Institute has changed to Wilberforce Seminary and is still in existence.

between the South African and American churches had been resolved and that leadership positions could now be entrusted to South Africans. Coan (1987: 241) notes that the optimism of the AME Church in America paved the way for the five delegates from the AME Church in South Africa to be elected on various organisational committees for the General Conference of 1908.

6.9 Conclusion

It is evident that Smith's approach towards the AME Church in South Africa caused the third schism. His autocratic leadership style was unsuited for the South African environment. On his African tour in the 1880's Smith did not familiarise himself sufficiently with the harsh conditions under which Africans had to live. Furthermore, his presumptions of Africans as childlike, irresponsible adults and of nature a lazy people can only be described as toxic for his role as bishop in South Africa. His belief that the Africans did not have the capacity to manage their own religious affairs was without foundation and his approach not to interfere in the prevailing state of the affairs of blacks could be seen as a dereliction of his responsibilities.

When assigned to the South African district he preferred to seek favour with the South African authorities and the white missionaries. He condemned all leaders involved in politics without ascertaining the reasons behind their involvement. Ministers who did not adhere to his call to withdraw themselves from politics were referred to the Commission of Native Affairs and their marriage licenses were summarily revoked.

Smith also placed a restriction on any kind of proselytising as he was of the opinion that the South African district made them guilty of stealing members of well established white missionary churches. His refusal to sign documentation for the erection of AME Church building in South Africa made him an unacceptable leader amongst most of the AME Church members in South Africa. He did not respect the cultural life of the Africans because he regarded it as a way to remain uncivilised. Smith furthermore damaged the AME Church in South Africa by not redeeming its bonds for the school in Cape Town and the Episcopal residence. He felt that it should not be the responsibility of the AME Church in America to redeem the debts incurred by the AME Church in South Africa.

Campbell (1989: 177) notes that Smith's negative attitude towards the AME Church in South Africa brought about much tension and friction, tensions which led to the third schism.



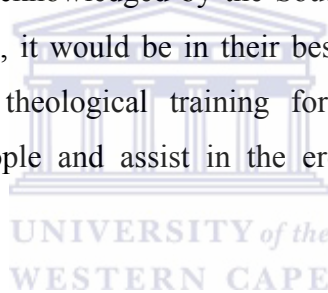
Chapter 7

The fourth schism of 1980

7.1 Introduction

The period between 1908 and 1976 can be described as a time of tranquillity and quiet diplomacy within the AME Church at large. The American districts eventually came to the conclusion that if no developmental programmes were implemented, the possibility existed that it would have no option than to close its missionary endeavours in South Africa. Furthermore, the American districts realised that they should be cautious in their decision to send bishops to South Africa that would discredit the church.

Wright (1948: 321) notes that the American districts came to the conclusion that if they wanted to be properly acknowledged by the South African districts and by the governments of South Africa, it would be in their best interest to develop the local churches through effective theological training for their ministers, educational programmes for the lay people and assist in the erection of church- and school buildings.



7.2 The election of John Albert Johnson as bishop

This change in course by the America districts was evident at the General Conference of 1908 where John Albert Johnson was elected as bishop for the South African mission field to restore the damage done by previous bishops. Wright (1963: 234) comments that Johnson had in him the ability to reconcile a divided people with his humane attitude and sound administrative skills.

This became evident during his ministry at the Union AME Church, Philadelphia and Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC, where he was able to restore peace among members who were in conflict with each other. At the election of bishops in 1908 Johnson obtained 437 votes out of 445, the largest percentage of votes ever received by a bishop elected. Well aware of the fact that he was earmarked for the South African mission field, he announced that: "I will go to South Africa and do my best and if the Bethel Institute property in District Six, Cape Town, is worth redeeming, I shall recommend its redemption immediately." (Campbell 1989: 185). In

this endeavour to save the church from further embarrassment, Johnson, with the assistance of the American and South Africa districts, successfully redeemed the bond of Bethel Institute in 1911.

This was the first step towards restoring the image of the South African district. Johnson utilised the redemption of the bond for the Bethel Institute as a vehicle to encourage local congregations to do their utmost best to prove to the authorities that the AME Church did have the capacity to develop programmes which in the end would be beneficial to the local people. Johnson's positive approach towards his work in South Africa afforded him another opportunity to be re-assigned to South Africa at the General Conference of 1912. Furthermore, the possibility to send him back to South Africa at the 1916 General Conference also became a point of discussion. Unfortunately this could not happen since the law of the church prohibited any bishop from serving three consecutive terms in any Episcopal District (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church, 2004: 213).

7.3 The establishment of the Wilberforce Institute

Johnson's outstanding work and his positive influence encouraged the members of the South African districts to continue to build on the foundation laid by him. Rev. J Z Tantzi and others collected funds to purchase a plot in Evaton, Johannesburg, for the erection of the Wilberforce Institute. Although building plans for this institute were secured by Bishop William Derrick and the proposed name was the Lillian Derrick Institute, it was changed to Wilberforce Institute in 1908. The reason behind the name change was that those persons who were the driving force behind the erection of the institution mainly completed their studies at Wilberforce University in America (cf Wright 1948: 526).

During the fundraising process, the members of the South African districts felt the need to open an institution with temporary structures until enough funds were secured to erect a permanent structure. However, due to the dilapidated state of the buildings, the school only operated for two years. In the meantime with Johnson's assistance extra funds were raised in America to the effect that by 1914 enough money was collected to erect a double-storey building.

In the beginning the school struggled to attract students. However, the assignment of Bishop William Becket to the South Africa districts in 1916 brought renewed hope that the school would be rebuilt. Beckett's vision was to drastically improve the enrolment of students. For this reason he elected an Episcopal Trustee Board whose main purpose was to recruit students for the school. Within a year of Becket's assignment the enrolment exceeded a hundred students.

The Episcopal Board of Trustees was entrusted with the task to appoint teachers. The committee appointed South African born students such as Tantzi, Maxeke, Msikinya and Mabote who had completed their degrees at Wilberforce University in America. At the time of the appointment of teachers, the school was not yet officially recognised by the South African Union, but Beckett ensured that enough funds were raised to pay the salaries of the teachers and for the maintenance of the building. This was done without any incurring debt during Beckett's tenure as bishop in South Africa. Funds raised by the women of the American districts together with the registration fees paid by the students assisted the institution to meet its financial obligations. Furthermore, a certain percentage of the income of all Annual Conferences was donated annually to the Institute (cf Wright 1948: 527).

In the beginning the school only provided education for learners from grade one to eight. Wright (1948: 527) notes that the Trustees of the Wilberforce Institute in Evaton, Johannesburg, in 1936 discussed the implementation of opening the institute to students for tertiary education. To realise this dream, the Trustees advocated the idea of a self-help, self-initiative and self-reliance programme in order to erect more buildings to achieve this goal. At the end of 1940 enough funds were raised to commence with the new building project.

New facilities were opened such as a practicing school for prospective teachers, a secondary school, a theological training centre, a school for carpentry and brick making, tailoring and shoemaking. As from 1940, a number of students enrolled for the active ministry in the AME Church. The theological training centre was named the RR Wright School of Religion in honour of Bishop Richard Wright who was instrumental in raising funds for this faculty when assigned to South Africa in 1936. The school rapidly grew and in 1944 the enrolment was 610 (cf Wright 1963: 373).

Wright was also instrumental in raising funds on his American trips, which enabled the institution to erect twelve more classrooms (Wright 1948: 527).

For a short while a printing and commercial course was also introduced, but due to the lack of equipped trainers, this course had to be discontinued. The school grew so rapidly that the Board of Trustees had no other choice than to utilise several church buildings to accommodate pupils until new classrooms were erected in 1948 (cf Wright 1948: 528).

Although the RR Wright Institute is still operating, most of the facilities were subsequently closed down. Today the institute operates with a primary school, secondary school, and the RR Wright Theological Training Centre currently under the auspices of the Joint Board for Theology in Southern Africa.

7.3 Further developments in South Africa

In 1924 the General Conference assigned Bishop John Gregg to South Africa. He was well acquainted with the conditions of the South African districts since he assisted Bishop Coppin in operating the Chatsworth Normal and Industrial School near Malmesbury. Since the AME Church lost its first Episcopal residence due to non-payment, Gregg liaised with the 14th Episcopal District (now the 15th Episcopal District) to buy a residence in Walmer Road, Woodstock in 1928. Gregg was also instrumental in raising funds through the Women's Department of the American districts to erect a Gothic style church building, Bethel Memorial, in District Six, Cape Town. This building was demolished during the 1970's due to the enforcement of the Group Areas Act (cf Centenary Anniversary Brochure of the AME Church in Southern Africa, 1996: 21).

George Benjamin Young who was elected bishop at the 1928 General Conference became instrumental in expanding the borders of the church into Zimbabwe⁴⁵, Zambia and Swaziland. He played an important role in erecting a building in Bulawayo to operate the South African Burial Society in 1935, which at that time was the largest burial business conducted by blacks in Zimbabwe (cf Wright 1963: 378). During

Young's tenure the 14th Episcopal District comprised of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Swaziland.

At the General Conference of 1932 David Henry Sims was elected a bishop and assigned to the 14th Episcopal District. In 1934 Sims was invited by the Students' Council of the University of Stellenbosch to address the students on race relations. He thus became the first black person to address the students at the university. In his address he acknowledged that the South African authorities were making greater progress than the Americans with regard to race relations. He was afforded a standing ovation at the end of his address (cf Cape Argus, 17 December 1936).

The bishops that succeeded Sims ensured that the AME Church in South Africa remained stable and although little was done to expand the boundaries of the church, or introduce meaningful developments, the church grew in membership. A significant event that took place during this period was that Francis Herman Gow, after more than twenty years in the United States, came back home to South Africa to become Principal of the RR Wright School of Religion in 1924. He was later assigned as Pastor of Bethel Memorial, District Six. He was also appointed General Superintendent during the administration of Bishop John Gregg in 1925 (Wright 1963: 189).

7.4 The government views on African American bishops assigned to South Africa

From the inception of the AME Church in South Africa, the authorities, though not eager to allow African American bishops to be assigned to South Africa to perform their Episcopal duties, tolerated their presence. However, the number of schisms within the AME Church; its questionable actions such as proselytising; the perception that the African American bishops encouraged members to disrupt the political peace in the country, made the Union believe that African Americans were not honest in their promises. The Union therefore in 1950 decided not to allow any African American bishop to serve in the country for a period exceeding six consecutive months.

⁴⁵ Although the AME Church in Zimbabwe (ertswhile Rhodesia) started its missionary endeavours in

To this effect, a letter from the Secretary for the Interior of the Union of South Africa, dated July 1953 to Rev. Francis Herman Gow, then minister of Bethel Memorial, District Six in Cape Town and also General Superintendent of the 14th Episcopal District, made it clear that the request for Bishop F D Jordan, newly assigned bishop for the 14th Episcopal District, to enter the country for a four year period was denied. However, the letter stated that the bishop would be granted a six months permit to enter, but with strict controls attached.⁴⁶

Balia (1991) explains the reason for the report of the Secretary for the Interior as follows: “The tendency of the Christian Bantu to continually increase the number of churches and sects serving his religious life, mostly under outside influences and to the detriment of good mutual relations, unity and the participation in important privileges accorded by the State, has been observed with much regret by the Government. It therefore believes that it is in the interest of the Bantu of South Africa, and in line with their increasing desire for self-determination, that their church organisations in the Union should be self-contained and not administered from other countries, where conditions are usually quite different. In order to aid the Bantu to achieve this, the Government feels that it must discourage at this stage, further importation of Negro church leaders for Bantu Churches in the Union” (Balia 1991: 71). The Union of South Africa was of the opinion that since the AME Church had been operating for more than fifty years in South Africa, it should have had equipped enough leaders in South Africa to administer church affairs.

Gow refused to accept this state of affairs between the church and the government. Although he was well aware of the fact that the AME Church had been named in the government’s political warning list, and that the name of one of its ministers, Rev. Nimrod Tantsi, then acting president of the ANC in the Transvaal, was listed under the *Riotous Assembly Act* of 1930 and could therefore not attend any gatherings, he responded to the letter send by the Secretary for the Interior.⁴⁷ Gow explained that the

1900 it was only properly organised as an Annual Conference in 1928.

⁴⁶ File no. 3 of EM Gordon at UWC library under the heading “correspondences”, dated 1957.

⁴⁷ Newspaper clippings from the scrapbook of Kadalie at the UWC under the heading *AME Priest Banned*, 9 July 1953 (newspaper unidentified)

AME Church was not a Bantu church since it had over 17,000 members that were classified as coloureds. He also explained that the church was not a sect as determined by the Union of South Africa since it had its roots dated back to 1787 in the United States. He concluded his letter by stating that he failed to understand why the AME Church was treated differently to other denominations that came from foreign countries.⁴⁸

Gow also applied for an audience with the Secretary for the Interior which was granted on 29 April 1954. Gow led a deputation of ten ministers and laypersons to discuss this matter. He explained the history of the AME Church in America and in South Africa. He made it clear that as General Superintendent of the church in South Africa, he did not have the authority to perform important duties that a bishop had. For instance, he could not ordain ministers of the church. He also pointed out that Bishop Jordan was permitted entrance to Southern Rhodesia to perform his Episcopal duties there. Gow emphatically stated that it seemed as if the government wanted the South African districts to break ties with the American districts. Although the Secretary denied that this was the government's motive, he refused to change the conditions pertaining to the entrance of Bishop Jordan for a period longer than six months at a time.

In an interview with Albert Dunmore of the Pittsburgh Courier in 1956 Gow made it clear that a newly designed policy of the Union of South Africa prohibited American Negro bishops or church leaders to administer the business of the AME Church in South Africa (cf Pittsburgh Courier, 19 May 1956: 2).

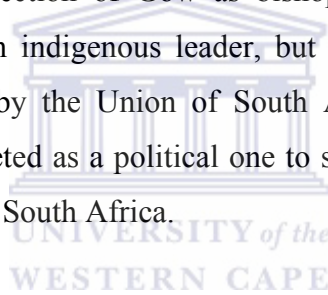
Van der Ross (1973: 766 - 767) notes that the government's action not to allow African Americans for long periods in South Africa was based on the fear that black American leaders had the potential to challenge the spirit of submissiveness that the white government sought to instil in black people. Furthermore he remarks that it was most likely connected with the general disfavour with which the Union looked on foreign influence on South African blacks, especially when these foreign influences were likely to be of a liberalising nature. Van der Ross further comments that while

⁴⁸ Francis H Gow to Secretary of the Interior, 17 July 1953 in the EM Gordon files at UWC.

other churches in South Africa segregated blacks from white members in worship, the AME Church constantly ignored this practice.

A flow of correspondence also took place between Gow and the Council of Bishops to keep the leadership informed of the situation in South Africa. Gow explained that the Secretary for the Interior of the Union of South Africa was unyielding in his attitude towards African Americans entering the country to administer the work of the church and that he could not cope with all the work which was supposed to be done by a resident bishop. Gow's argument was that should the church neglect to address this crucial issue, the church in South Africa might face further schism.

After thorough discussions the American districts came to the conclusion that the election of an African bishop for South Africa would resolve the problem. Spencer (1996: 16) notes that the election of Gow as bishop was not an attempt by the American Church to elect an indigenous leader, but rather a way to eliminate the pressure placed upon them by the Union of South Africa. Gow's election to the bishopric can thus be interpreted as a political one to satisfy the constant harassment of the church by the Union of South Africa.



7.5 The election of Francis Herman Gow as bishop

It is essential to understand why the 1956 General Conference opted to elect Francis Herman Gow as a bishop for the missionary work in South Africa.

An article in the Cape Times (1956) notes that Gow was born in 1887 (cf Cape Times 1956). His father, Francis McDonald Gow, was a West-Indian citizen who immigrated to South Africa in the early 1880's. Gow (Sr.) moved to District Six, Cape Town, where he became a fulltime photographer. When the AME Church was organised in District Six, Cape Town in 1898, Gow Sr., became a member. He was subsequently ordained as a minister of the AME Church and assigned as the second Pastor of Bethel Memorial in District Six.

Francis Herman Gow completed both his primary- and secondary education in District Six, Cape Town. He left South Africa in 1904 to further his studies in America. Wright (1963: 188) remarks that Gow attended Wilberforce University, Tuskegee

Institute, Miami University and Lane Theological Seminary. He received the DD-degree from Morris Brown College and the LLD-degree from Allen University. After the completion of his theological studies he served AME congregations in Cincinnati, Charleston and West Virginia. On his return to South Africa in 1924 he served at Bethel Memorial AME Church in District Six, Cape Town.

While in America, Gow taught at *Tuskegee Institute* as a member of the Department of Music. He also served as pipe organist at the Alabama School. In 1924 he turned down several offers of employment in the United States to accept the appointment as principal of the Wilberforce Theological School in Johannesburg (cf Pittsburgh Courier, 19 May 1956: 2).

Wright (1963: 189) notes that Gow, during his more than twenty years in America, was granted American citizenship. He served his country in the First World War. However, he did not serve a long time because of his belief that war cannot be a way to reconcile people.

Back in South Africa, Gow made his presence felt immediately. His involvement in the upliftment and empowerment of the coloured people attracted him to the *African People's Organisation*, a body which was established to secure political rights for the coloured people in South Africa. Lewis (1987: 190 - 192) notes that in 1939 the federal council of the National Party petitioned the Parliament for the social, political and economic segregation of coloureds and whites. To oppose the ideas of the National Party, Abdurahman, the President of the African People's Organisation, launched a protest action on 26 March 1939. Gow was very prominent in the organisation of this protest action.

This protest action was preceded by a National Day of Prayer, which was conducted by Gow in Wynberg. Almost 3000 people attended this gathering. Lewis (1987: 203) furthermore comments that at a special meeting in May 1942 Gow was elected President of the African People's Organisation. Upon his election, Gow's commitment to the social welfare of coloured people became the driving force behind his revival of the organisation. He and his secretary toured all four provinces to rebuild the African People's Organisation.

Lewis (1978: 211 - 212) notes that in 1943 Gow and seven African People's Organisation members joined the *Coloured Advisory Board* that was introduced by the Parliament for the upliftment of the conditions of the coloured people. Gow was again elected chairperson of this Council. At the inaugural meeting of the Council, Gow made it clear that in order for the Council to make constructive progress, the Government had to discontinue its idea of segregating whites and coloureds; that no Coloured Affairs Departments be established and that it should not tamper with the votes in any elections. The Coloured Advisory Board drew up a memorandum in which it declared its main concerns about better nutrition, health services and housing, improved educational facilities, a wider range of employment and improved wages and economic conditions for coloured people.

The Parliament acknowledged the aspirations of the Council. However, Gow soon discovered that Parliament was not serious in addressing any of the issues raised by the Council. Gow therefore resigned from the Council when he realised that his efforts to improve the relationships between the Government and the Coloured Advisory Council did not bear fruit (cf The Drum Newspaper, July 1956: 27). Lewis (1987: 222) observed that at the conference of the African People's Organisation in March 1944, Gow was replaced with Dr. ET Dietrich as President since the conference maintained that although Gow had resigned from the Coloured Advisory Council, he continued to consult with members of Parliament for better conditions for the coloureds.

Gow's love for music secured him a post as music master at the Zonnebloem College for four years. During his tenure at Zonnebloem College he took liberty in connecting himself with other musical institutions. He established the Coleridge-Taylor Musical Society which was responsible for performing a play called "The Emancipation Pageant". This play was in commemoration of the centenary celebration of the liberation of slaves in South Africa. Seven hundred people took part in the play which was presented at the Green Point Track in 1935. This two hour play was attended by more than two thousand people (cf The Drum Newspaper, July 1956: 27).

Wright (1963: 189) notes that Gow was elected a delegate to every General Conference between 1936 and 1956. He served on various committees at the General Conference. Gow made three attempts to become a bishop in the AME Church. The unhealthy situation between the connectional AME Church and the Union of South Africa paved the way for Gow to eventually be elected as bishop at the General Conference of 1956.

He was elected on the first ballot with 1 355 votes out of 1 544, one of the largest majorities ever obtained by a candidate in the history of the AME Church. In an interview with Albert Dunmore, journalist for *The Pittsburg Courier*, Gow not only expressed his gratitude towards the church, but promised that he would constantly liaise with the representatives of the Union of South Africa to lift the restrictions placed on African American bishops to serve in South Africa. Gow was assigned to serve the South African branch of the church for eight years (cf *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 May 1956: 2). At this General Conference the 14th Episcopal District became the 15th Episcopal District which comprises of the Union of South Africa and the erstwhile South West Africa.

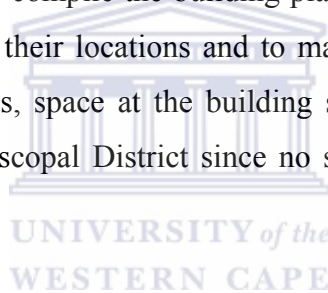
7.6 The AMEC Printing and Publishing House

The establishment of the AMEC Printing and Publishing House was envisioned by Bishop George Dewey Robinson. Prior to his election as bishop, he served as pastor in one of the largest congregations in the American districts. He was minister of Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC, with a membership of more than six thousand. This congregation became home for most of the South African ambassadors residing in Washington, DC, during the post-apartheid era. Robinson administered numerous community projects, including a housing scheme, Day Care Centre, Musical School, After-Care Centre for children to do their homework and a transport ministry. The congregation also operated its own banking scheme where the community could open financial accounts. Robinson was elected to the bishopric in 1968 and appointed to the 15th Episcopal District.

Robinson's real interest was printing. Prior to his ministry he worked at a printing press. The knowledge he gained at the printing press paved the way for him to operate his own printing press. He later became a manager of a Printing and Publishing House

(also referred to as AMEC). In the 15th Episcopal District, he realised that his long cherished dream might come to fruition. He believed that a project of this magnitude would not only empower the people of the 15th Episcopal District, but would also assist the congregations in paying smaller annual financial budgets to the General Church. The vision to empower the members of the 15th Episcopal District was made possible with the introduction of a Self-Helpers Club which was responsible to raise the funds for the prospected Printing and Publishing House.

At his first Episcopal Planning meeting in January 1969, Robinson discussed in detail the plans he had in mind for the progress of the 15th Episcopal District. His proposed plan was well accepted since he was assigned at a time that the negativity over American leadership had for a while abated. At this meeting a committee was elected to work on the logistics of the proposed printing press. Among others, the committee had to secure a piece of land; compile the building plans; make a feasibility study of existing printing presses and their locations and to make a needs assessment. Apart from the running of the press, space at the building should also be allocated for a headquarters for the 15th Episcopal District since no such offices were in existence then.



At the same meeting Robinson also discussed possible fundraising efforts. Although he promised to raise funds in America, he emphatically made it clear that the bulk of the money should come from the 15th Episcopal District. This idea would instil in the members the pride of ownership. Robinson further proposed that the funds be administered as the Self-Helpers Club Fund and that a committee be elected to administer the funds. People who attended the Planning Meeting admitted that the overwhelming response toward such a project surpassed the imagination of attendees. A Prayer and Fasting Committee was elected to guide congregations in prayer sessions at specific times and a time-table for fasting was compiled.

In the meantime the bishop visited Presiding Elder Districts to sell the idea of the proposed project. He furthermore published his plans for the prospective Printing and Publishing House in AME Magazines such as the Voice of Missions, AME Review, The Christian Recorder and the Missionary Magazine to sell the idea of the Printing and Publishing House and to solicit the congregations to make financial contributions.

Publications such as Sunday school literature, Youth programmes, Women's and Men's literature were brought from the Printing House of the AME Church in America. A working committee was also established to translate the existing Sunday school literature of the AME Church in America into the various languages of South Africa and to ensure that the literature would accommodate cultural differences. Assistance from outside the church was also used to help this committee with its work.

Unfortunately for Robinson, his term of four years in the 15th Episcopal District was too short to see his dream coming to fruition. He nevertheless, with the assistance of the American districts managed to raise enough funds to purchase a piece of land in the industrial area of Bellville South, a 1500 m² plot for an amount of R15 000. Funds were also raised to erect the building to window sill height. Before Robinson left the soils of Africa, he submitted the deed of transport to the Episcopal secretary of the church. At the time of his departure for the America, R60 000 was spent on the construction of the building and the purchase of the plot. It was hoped that the General Conference of 1972 would reassign Robinson to the South African district, but his untimely death at the same General Conference made this impossible.

His successor, Frederick Colhoun James, left no stone unturned to continue with the building project. Early in January 1973 James organised a meeting with the leaders of the 15th Episcopal District at Kraaifontein to discuss the continuation of the building project. During the term of George Dewey Robinson the church decided not to make use of a building contractor, but rather used its own people with building skills. At the January 1973 meeting James convinced the District that it would be in its best interest if the project could be advertised to offer the building project to an independent contractor. James argued that should the erection of the building be contracted to an independent builder, it would be easier to contact that builder for any defaults on the building. After a lengthy debate, members at the meeting voted in favour of an independent building contractor.

A tender was issued and all responses publicly opened, studied and voted upon at a special meeting of March 1973. The tender for the erection of the Printing and Publishing House was granted to a certain Des Crowie and Company, who

immediately began with the building construction. The building project continued in March of 1973 and was completed in July of 1973. Upon the completion of the building all printing machines and other equipment were installed.⁴⁹

The building was officially dedicated on Sunday 8 July 1973 and dignitaries attending the ceremony were among others, Mr Friedlander, mayor of Cape Town, Mr Erntzen, a respected printer in the Cape area and Mr P Louw, an organiser of the Sportsman Christian Annual Service. In his speech, Bishop Fred James announced that the erection of the building had cost the church R150 000. He also declared that the money for the project was raised entirely by the members of the 15th Episcopal District and that the church did not owe a cent. However, members still had to raise funds to the amount of R56 080 for capital investment. It is assumed that this money was needed for the printing machines and equipment bought. James in addition announced that R2 000 was raised within twenty minutes at the dedication ceremony.⁵⁰

Prior to the opening of the Printing and Publishing House, the staff members were trained. Henry Warner was appointed the first manager of the AME Church Printing and Publishing House (AMEC). His experience in printing works made him the best candidate for this position. Warner's first employment was at Colemco, a Printing and Box making company in Salt River. At first he was a delivery boy. Some years later he was promoted to the Typesetting Machine Department. After a few months he was awarded a certificate as a qualified printer. It is thus obvious that when the church was in need of a capable manager, Warner had the right credentials.

Booyse (2000: 6 - 7) notes that Warner did everything he could to let the work flourish. Booyse furthermore notes that Warner inspired local congregations to support the printing press by printing material such as church bulletins and anniversary brochures, funeral programmes and wedding programmes at AMEC. He also convinced small businesses to do their printing at AMEC. Warner went so far as

⁴⁹ File no. 3.4 of AC Booyse under the heading: "A Short history of the founding and building of AMEC. The author of this paper is unknown and no indication is given when and where the paper was discussed.

⁵⁰ Article in *Cape Times* of 9 July 1973:2 under the heading: "Bishop opens Printing and Publishing House.

to convince his former clients to support the church's printing business. He and his printing team successfully managed to produce printing material of high quality. AMEC never made a loss because James ensured the establishment of a Board of Control which administered the business of the printing press. Unfortunately when the quadrennial from 1972 to 1976 ended, James was assigned to another Episcopal District.

7.7 Factors that led to the fourth schism

At the General Conference of 1976 George Donald Kenneth Ming was elected a bishop and assigned to the 15th Episcopal District. From the inception Ming took control of all the work in the 15th Episcopal District. His first action was to take control over the AMEC printing press. Soon Ming and Warner were at loggerheads over the administration of the printing press. Ming then dismissed Warner and appointed Rev. Henry Carelse with the assistance of the Board of Control as manager of the printing press. Little progress was made. A copy of the minutes of the Board of Control, dated 5 December 1978 has it that the bishop did not accept the financial report of the treasurer and notified the manager of his intention to reduce the staff. It can therefore be assumed that the work at the printing press deteriorated. A new manager was appointed in early 1979.⁵¹

Since 1978 no reports were submitted on the work of the printing press and the printing press was on the verge of insolvency. Staff members had to be retrenched due to the fact that no new business was forthcoming. Local congregations which made use of the printing press for their programmes either never paid their debts or seldom made payments. By 1989 the printing press was declared insolvent. As a token of payment, the manager was offered a printing machine while the rest of the equipment was sold at a loss.⁵²

Another concern was the way in which the ministers' pension fund was dealt with. No proper reports could be given and Ming was blamed for his inability to redress the

⁵¹ Interview with Donald Mbambo in 1978 on the discontentment between the lay and Bishop Ming. He was the President of the *Lay Organisation* in the Cape Annual Conference.

⁵² Interview with Henry Warner in 1990 on the management of the AME Printing and Publishing House.

situation. In 1980 the lay persons of the 15th Episcopal District requested an audience with the bishop to address their concerns. The negotiations between the bishop and the lay persons ended in a disaster since the bishop was not in a position to clearly explain why the printing press was declared insolvent and what happened to the ministers' pension fund (cf Booyse 2000: 10). Charges of maladministration and misconduct were laid against the bishop by the lay persons of the 15th Episcopal District.

Ming used his Episcopal authority to deal with his opponents. His first step was to suspend the whole executive body of the Lay Organisation in the Cape Annual Conference. Since this act on the part of Ming was not in line with church law, the executive which was dismissed was referred to as The Executive in Exile.⁵³ They nonetheless continued their duties until July 1980 at the seat of the Lay Convention held in Piketberg. At this conference they handed over the work to the newly elected executive body.

The Paarl congregation with its minister was also involved in the dispute with Ming. Ming then assigned the minister of Paarl to Ceres in 1979 and assigned another minister that supported Ming to Paarl. This action led to a split in the congregation and because the minister assigned by Ming to Paarl could not reconcile those two groups, the one group left and started a new AME congregation in Paarl. At the Annual Conference of 1979 the minister assigned to Ceres was charged and the Judiciary Council of the Cape Annual Conference recommended that he be suspended for two years. The Cape Annual Conference approved his suspension.

At a special meeting held by the Orlando West AME congregation in the Transvaal in 1980, the members placed on record their dissatisfaction with the Judiciary Council of the AME Church for refusing to accept the charges against Ming. This was a

⁵³ The term "Executive in Exile" simply refers to the Lay Executive Board who was not allowed to conduct any meetings in any church building.

watershed moment for this congregation and they resolved to secede from the rest of the church.

A number of factors led to their decision to secede from the AME Church, which include the following:

- That the American bishops administered the church on their terms and conditions.
- That the AME Church in America did not recognise the fact that the church in South Africa had enough capable leaders to be elected as bishops.
- That money collected by the church in South Africa was not properly accounted for.
- That no substantial reasons were given for the insolvency of the printing press.
- That no reasonable explanation was given about the missing machinery and other equipment of the printing press, nor was the bishop in a position to report what happened to the money should the machinery and equipment have been sold.
- That except for the printing press that was operated from Cape Town, the 15th Episcopal District had no infra-structure.
- That the AME Church in America had sent a commission to determine the rezoning of the 15th Episcopal District without informing the church in South Africa.
- That at the General Conference of 1980 the South Africans were not allowed to discuss infrastructure proposals that would empower the members of the AME Church in South Africa.
- That the members of the various congregations had erected their own structures with their own money, but the American Church was claiming ownership of all buildings.
- That the AME Church in South Africa had been treated as a colonial church to the benefit of the AME Church in America.
- That the South Africans were psychologically oppressed and exploited by the American districts.
- That although charges against Ming were laid in a proper manner and reported to the preliminary inquiry committee, the Bishop's Council and the Judicial

Council, founded Ming not guilty on the ground that there was no sufficient evidence.⁵⁴

A special meeting of the disgruntled members was held on Sunday 24 August 1980 in Orlando West, Johannesburg to discuss its dissatisfaction with the AME Church. At the meeting a motion was made to secede from the AME Church. More than five hundred members established the *AME Church in Africa* with Rev. TV Khumalo as their first Pastor. At the first Annual Conference of the AME Church in Africa Khumalo was elected and consecrated as its first bishop.

7.8 The proposal for re-unification

On 12 April 1995 Bishop TV Khumalo submitted a memorandum requesting the reunification of the AME Church in Africa with the rest of the South African district. This memorandum was intended to be for the attention of Bishop Harold Ben Senatlé, then bishop of the 19th Episcopal District. The memorandum can be interpreted as an invitation to Senatlé and ministers and members of the AME Church to discuss the possibility of amalgamating with the AME Church in Africa. In this memorandum Khumalo discusses the reasons why they seceded from the American wing of the AME Church.

The memorandum states that at the biennial General Conference of the AME Church in Africa held from the 7 to 11 December 1994, a resolution was accepted that the AME Church in South Africa and the AME Church in Africa should negotiate the process of a re-unification in order to form one church in South Africa. It also requested that the name of the church be the *African Methodist Episcopal Church of Southern Africa*.

The General Conference of the AME Church in Africa furthermore suggested that for the convenience of both denominations, the implementation of a special committee to work out the logistics be established.

⁵⁴ Article in the Post Newspaper of 25 August 1980 under the heading: *Angry AME Parish break ties with US*.

The AME Church in Africa proposed that a task group, called *The Reconciliation and Re-Unification Task Group* (RRTG) be formed to work on the following:

- To discuss with the AME Church in South Africa the resolution of the Biennial Conference of the AME Church in Africa.
- To negotiate peace as Christians.
- To distribute a memorandum to all decision-making structures for an open discussion in order to arrive at a democratic decision concerning re-unification.
- To establish a Reconciliation and Re-unification Task Group.
- That the two Reconciliation and Re-unification bodies have regular meetings to work out the technicalities of this process.
- That the American AME Church in America be made aware of this development.
- That the church retain spiritual ties with the AME Church in America.
- That the two Reconciliation and Re-Unification Groups be mandated to work out the allocations of bishops, ministers, finances and all ecclesiastical matters.
- That institutions such as the South African Council of Churches be identified to play a meaningful role in this process.

It is obvious that this memorandum was never discussed in the 19th Episcopal District since it seems that the suggestions had the potential for another secession – which the church could not afford.

7.9 Conclusion

The period between 1908 and 1976 was characterized by tranquillity in the relations between the American and South African districts. However, all the good work that was done during this period came to naught with the build-up to the fourth schism in 1980. Once again the schism was fuelled by the leadership style of an African American bishop and the dismissive way in which legitimate concerns from the South African district were treated.

What is however reassuring was the attempt by the two South African factions to resolve their differences. This attempt at conflict resolution was driven by South Africans with no involvement from the American districts.



Chapter 8

The fifth schism of 1998

8.1 Introduction

The 1980s and 1990s were characterised by huge turmoil in the South African political scene. As the government's apartheid policies became increasingly unpopular, South Africa was characterised by increasing non-violent protests, an armed struggle, economic and cultural sanctions by the international community and pressure from anti-apartheid movements around the world. This left the government with no other choice than to seriously consider whether to continue with its apartheid policies.

The period between 1989 and 1996 was generally one of great expectations for South Africans. The end of more than forty years of apartheid rule was in sight. The increasing opposition to apartheid in the final decades of the twentieth century left the ruling National Party and its leader, FW de Klerk, with no other choice than to act swiftly to dismantle a regime that was unjust and oppressive. On 2 February 1990 FW de Klerk took the first bold steps of a process to reconciliation. It was done through the unbanning of liberation movements such as the African Nation Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress and releasing an icon of the struggle, Nelson Mandela.

These were major steps in the process of dismantling apartheid and over the next few years a new political dispensation began to take shape where universal franchise, equality before the law and full participation in political affairs by the previously marginalized became entrenched in the constitution of the country. The wave of hope that gripped the country was also felt in ecclesiastical circles.

8.2 The change in the AME Church-state relationship

It must be stated that the leadership of the 15th Episcopal District always displayed an attitude of extreme caution when it came to discussions on political issues. Some bishops did not even allow any such talks at Annual Conferences. This attitude could be ascribed to the suspicion held by the authorities that the African American bishops could mobilize black people to oppose government policies. The South African government took a series of steps to avoid this kind of situation from developing. In

1952 Bishop Frederick Jordan was granted a working permit for only three months after two years of negotiations. It was only during his last year that a six month permit was granted, which was enforced with strict limitations (cf Cape Times, 18 March 1956). It is against this background that African American bishops were always on the alert when political issues regarding South Africa were discussed during Annual Conferences.

In stark contrast to the careful approach by the leadership of the 15th Episcopal District, various ministers and lay people of the AME Church played an active role in the non-violent protests that characterised South Africa in the latter half of the 1980s. In fact, a large proportion of its members and ministers were active agents in the struggle for a new South Africa. In 1983 eighteen ministers of the Cape Annual Conference in the 15th Episcopal District drafted an article which appeared in the erstwhile *Cape Herald* on 21 December 1983. In this article these ministers emphasised the fact that the introduction of the tri-cameral system was a more refined method for retaining white denomination and economic control. This group also pointed out that the new constitution endorsed the following:

- Perpetuation of white denomination;
- Acceptance of the Group Areas Act;
- Acceptance of the homelands and the cheap migrant labour system, and,
- Acceptance of separate and unequal education.

This article became known as the “Kraaifontein Declaration”⁵⁵ since the Cape Annual Conference was hosted in Kraaifontein in 1983. On 29 December 1983, the *Cape Herald* carried an article by the bishop of the 15th Episcopal District in which he denied that the AME Church had anything to do with the publication. He also denounced it as the work of disgruntled AME ministers. He referred to the AME Church’s twenty-third article of religion which states that all its members must be obedient to the civil law of any government.

In 1986 at the Cape Annual Conference, held in Montagu, the continued inclusion of the national anthem in the hymnal of the AME Church became a heated point of

⁵⁵ File no. 9 of A C Booyse under the heading “Kraaifontein Belydenis en Deklerasie.”

discussion.⁵⁶ Conference attendees requested the immediate scrapping of the national anthem from the AME Church hymnal and that it be replaced by the hymn *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*. Although the scrapping of the national anthem from the hymnal only took place years after this discussion, it is indicative of the depth of feeling that pervaded the AME Church with regard to the existing political regime.

At each Annual Conference a *Report on the State of the Country* is drafted by a joint ministerial and lay representative team. The report presented to the Cape Annual Conference was presented as the official position of the AME Church on the state of South Africa and called for the following:

- The immediate release of Nelson Mandela;
- That the tri-cameral parliament be abolished immediately;
- That the state of emergency be lifted immediately;
- That parties which fight the cause of freedom be unbanned;
- That all political detainees be released; and
- That the AME Church denounced apartheid as a sin since all people are created equally in the image of God.

The boldness with which the AME Church South African leadership took on the government in defiance of the cautionary approach displayed by American bishops soon manifested in a demand for greater autonomy for the South African church.

8.3 The Kraaifontein Consultation

At the 1991 15th Episcopal Planning meeting held in Port Elizabeth a motion was passed to discuss new structures for the AME Church in Africa. The presiding bishop, Bishop Robert Thomas (Jr.), called a special meeting at Kraaifontein on 18 April 1992 to discuss this matter. One member of each Annual Conference was elected to serve on a committee that would prepare legislation to give effect to this idea of greater autonomy for Africa. The committee was given a deadline to prepare the necessary documentation in time for the General Conference of 1992.

⁵⁶ File no. 11.1 of AC Booyse: Report on *The State of the Church – 1986* to the Cape Annual Conference.

The following pertinent points were stressed at the Kraaifontein meeting:

- That an *African Jurisdictional Conference* be formed which will have representation of all Episcopal Districts on the continent of Africa.
- That the African Jurisdictional Conference be held prior to the General Conference to formulate a resolution to be tabled for the formation of such entity at the General Conference of 1992.
- That the General Conference be requested to approve the recommended legislation for the development of the AME Church in Africa.
- That the African Jurisdictional Conference should have the authority to pass legislation, elect bishops for the continent of Africa and decide on issues affecting the Episcopal Districts on the continent of Africa.
- That the African Jurisdictional Conference should have the power to elect representatives to the General Conference to inform on the progress of the church in Africa.
- That it shares ideas, programmes, personnel and resources to the General Conference to approve, amend or change recommended proposals.⁵⁷

8.4 The restructuring proposal

In 1992 Rev. Peter Mentoor, then minister at Metropolitan AME Church in Mitchell's Plain, was instructed to prepare a paper on new structures for the AME Church on the African continent. The paper was a discussion document at the Cape Town District Presiding Elders' Conference held in Mitchell's Plain during the week-end of 24 – 26 April 1992. Mentoor took the liberty to address some of the pertinent points discussed at the Kraaifontein Consultation meeting.

8.4.1 Seizing the opportunity

In 1987 American districts celebrated the church's bicentenary year. This celebration was characterised by solemnity and ceremony. At the General Conference of 1984 Bishop Vinton Ralph Anderson was appointed by the Episcopal Committee as ecumenical officer for the sole purpose of organising these celebrations. As part of the celebration a new hymnal and liturgical book for the entire church were produced. No

⁵⁷ File no. 11.2 of AC Booyse: Content of discussion to be found in Mentoor's paper *Beyond 1996: New structures for the AME Church on the continent of Africa*.

Episcopal Districts outside the boundaries of America participated in the organisational structures, nor did they take part in any festival. Mentoor (1992:1) records that festivities were characterised by sparkle and extreme celebration.⁵⁸ He expressed the sentiments that the forthcoming centenary anniversary of the AME Church in South Africa in 1996 should take place in similar manner.

Mentoor (1992: 3) requested that the centenary celebrations be utilised to address the importance of suitable structures for the AME Church in Africa that would be contemporary in the context in which the church exist. More specifically he called for the establishment of an administrative entity on the African continent for the purpose of monitoring and reviewing the Episcopal work in Africa. There was a need for improved administration and management of the overseas work of the AME Church. Mentoor (1992: 3) argued that such structures for renewal could not be independently organised by the bishops assigned to overseas Districts, neither could it be allowed to place connectional structures in jeopardy.

Mentoor (1992: 4) cites Chappelle's proposal to the General Conference of 1992 in which he called for a *Modified Episcopal District* for overseas districts. A Modified Episcopal District simply means that all overseas districts must be administered as semi-autonomous districts by electing their own structures and having their own General Conference. The idea of a Modified Episcopal District was Chappelle's attempt at offering a solution to a problem already identified in 1981.

8.4.2 Restructuring the episcopacy

Mentoor (1992: 5) called for the retention of the Episcopal system albeit with some modifications. If the AME Church on the continent of Africa were to be reconstructed, the episcopacy should continue to exist as a permanent part of the new structure. Bishops for Africa should be elected at the seat of the Africa Jurisdictional Conference prior to the General Conference. The General Conference in return should elect bishops who should serve the American Church. It was further proposed that the office of bishop should be a rotating one and only for a specified period. After the

⁵⁸ Paper delivered by Mentoor at the Cape Town District Conference on 25 March 1992 at Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town.

specified period as prescribed by the General Conference, the bishop should have the right to stand for re-election or should return to the pastorate.

It was further suggested that the bishop should be accountable to an Episcopal District Committee rather than a committee constituted by the General Conference. Reports should be given to each Annual Conference conducted, where rulings and decisions will be made and the planning of programmes be discussed. This restructuring of the Episcopacy does not, however, affect the bishop's power of assigning ministers to various congregations.

8.4.3 Retaining connectionalism

The Kraaifontein discussion made it clear that any attempt that threatened the connectional nature would permanently close the doors to all African followers of the AME Church. However, connectionalism should not be equated with American control. Mentoor (1992) commented that African districts cannot be held captive simply because "we are *slaves* to a crude form of Americanism which we confuse with connectionalism" (Mentoor 1992: 6). He noted that *connectionalism* could be different to *colonialism* whereby decisions are made for and on behalf of Africans by a paternalistic American wing of the church. He proposed a new definition of connectionalism as an administrative machine that will be under the control of local leadership.

8.4.4 Developing indigenous leadership

Louw (1987: 9) suggested that it would be most fitting if the 1996 General Conference was held in South Africa and that another African be elected as bishop. Hinds (1988: 2) argued at the General Conference of 1988 that the AME Church had to express the necessary confidence in African leaders if it was serious about indigenous leadership. He furthermore emphasised that the growth in membership, expansions of ministries, progress in development and the creation of self supporting African districts would eventually emerge if the concept of indigenous leadership was supported.

8.4.5 Implementing smaller Episcopal districts

Mentoor (1992: 8) notes that smaller Episcopal Districts would assist greatly with the effectiveness and control over the church and enhance opportunities for growth and expansion. This allows for easier compilation of information on local congregations and Pastors for decision-making and programmes for the church would then be accumulated more effectively. It would further ensure improved control of the administration of the church. He was of the opinion that the Cape Annual Conference with its seven Presiding Elder Districts and a total membership of more than forty thousand could become an Episcopal District on its own.

8.5 McKinley Young as bishop of the 15th Episcopal District

The AME Church in South Africa was looking forward with great expectations to the centenary celebrations of 1996. The expectation at the 44th session of the General Conference held in Orlando, Florida in 1992, was that the newly appointed bishop for the 15th Episcopal District would give impetus to the long cherished dreams of freedom and ecclesiastical renewal. The elected bishop, McKinley Young from Atlanta, was a young minister with an ideology and background consistent with many of the clergy and members of the 15th Episcopal District. He was well acquainted with the Civil Rights Movement in America. The church building where he pastored in Atlanta, Georgia, was in close proximity of the Martin Luther King (Jr.) Museum.

Prior to his election, Young was minister one of the mainline AME Churches in Atlanta, Georgia. His membership at that congregation exceeded six thousand. His ministry included among others, four different choirs, a housing scheme that generated a monthly income for the church and transport services for the community and church members.

The majority of members of the 15th Episcopal District welcomed the assignment of Young. At that time he was in his early forties, but matured in the work of the church since he had more than twenty five years of experience in the ministry. At the time of his assignment he was acquainted with many South African leaders since he visited the country on numerous occasions. When appointed to 15th Episcopal District, he even took the unusual step to bring along his family and enrolled his youngest child in one of the South African Schools, something that last happened in 1932 when Bishop

Daniel Sims also educated his child in South Africa. It is against this background that the people of the 15th Episcopal District welcomed his presence in the country and were convinced that his constant visibility would assist the church in embarking on the neediest programmes that were neglected in the past. It was generally accepted that Young had the right credentials to embark on the necessary changes to transform the church.

The tenure of the newly elected bishop, the Rev. McKinley Young, from 1992 to 1996 coincided with the dawn of a new political dispensation in South Africa in 1994 as well as the celebrations of one hundred years of African Methodism in South Africa in 1996. It was expected that the newly elected bishop would invest his time in such a manner that both events would be accommodated for.

Young started his Episcopal term with a flurry of activities that caused great optimism among church members. He visited the majority of congregations, inspected the church buildings and met as many members as time permitted. Furthermore, he consulted with all committees within the 15th Episcopal District, as well as with all the auxiliaries of the church. He implemented a database of all ministers and buildings to ensure that the information in the office was accurate.

Young was instrumental in signing an agreement with Jurgen Keuper of the Evangelical Church in Gladbach, Germany on 11 October 1995. This document was signed by the bishop and a member of the Namibian Annual Conference, Rev. BG Kauraera on behalf of the Namibia Annual Conference. The agreement provided a framework for common projects, dialogue and the exchange of human resource development in an ecumenical context between these two partners (cf Centenary Brochure of the AME Church in Southern Africa, 1996: 24).

He also appointed an archivist to ensure that all records be stored within the church's headquarters in Bellville South. A working committee was established to assist the archivist in performing his duty because the work involved wide travelling. His seriousness about the archive is vested in the fact that he allocated funds to buy at least five movable shells and consulted technicians to do the lay-out of the archive in such a way that the archival material would not be spoilt due to unfavourable weather

conditions. Apart from the place where the archival material should have been, memorabilia and other material were stored, and an archival reading room was also set in place. The committee worked constantly to ensure that a constitution be drawn up, an annual budget be prepared of which the bishop himself offered to collect the money for the archive.⁵⁹

To give impetus to the centenary celebrations in 1996, Young introduced a series of lectures to commemorate the life and role of Francis Gow, the first South African born bishop. He furthermore successfully negotiated with the Independent Methodist Church in Angola for the merging of the latter with the AME Church. The result of this effort brought more than 12 000 members and thirty ministers into the fold of the 15th Episcopal District (cf Centenary Brochure of the AME Church in Southern Africa 199: 14). Unfortunately, his leadership style and his constant harassment of ministers paved the way for secession within the church.

It soon became clear that Young was not the charismatic leader the people of the 15th Episcopal District assumed. The problems created by previous African American bishops in South Africa were beginning to loom very large in Young's approach. During his term of office paternalism, opportunism, submissive politics and a lack of financial support greatly hampered the church's development.⁶⁰

8.6 Setting of priorities under Young's administration

The Episcopal residence for the 15th Episcopal District was bought by Bishop John Gregg in 1928 in Woodstock (cf Centenary Brochure of the AME Church in Southern Africa 1996: 22). The purchase of another residence was long overdue due to the exorbitant maintenance expenses on this residence. Brendt (1997: 14) reports that Young's first priority was to put the Woodstock residence on sale for a property in Constantia valued at R850 500 in 1994. This proposal was tabled at the 1993 Mid-Year Conference held in Victoria West. The proposal evoked endless debates. Members were of the opinion that the approaching centenary celebrations scheduled

⁵⁹ File no.12.2 of AC Booyse: Script on the archive.

⁶⁰ Interviews conducted with members and clergy on the administrative style of Young.

for 1996 should be given preference. They argued that a committee was already set in place in 1988 to streamline the preparation for the centenary celebrations.

Should the 15th Episcopal District opt to purchase the Constantia property, the Woodstock residence could then be utilized as a museum for African Methodism in Africa. This idea would have been a boost for the centenary celebrations. Furthermore, focus should also be given to the forthcoming national elections in 1994. Church buildings should be made available for voter education in order to prepare people for the election procedures. Tension and discontentment was prevalent during the debate. In the end the majority of delegates voted in favour of the purchase of the new residence in Constantia. To finance this project a resolution was tabled and accepted that all congregations within the 15th Episcopal District should make financial contributions six-monthly every year to redeem the bond on the new residence. The full amount of the residence was paid within less than three years although it must be stated that no audited reports were ever made available.

Young's next step was to purchase a new automobile. This proposal was tabled at the Mid-Year Conference of the 15th Episcopal District held on 13-15 May 1994 in Queenstown (cf Minutes of the 15th Episcopal District 1994). At this Conference a dissident group from the Victoria West Conference absented themselves. Without any debate the majority of delegates voted in favour of the purchasing of a new car for the amount of R250 000. At the same Conference Young promised that he would do justice to all important events of the church. He stressed that he did not regard the centenary celebrations and the national elections as trivial, but would do everything he could to prove that these events were just as important as any other programmes in the church.

Brendt (1997: 12 -13) interviewed Lionel Louw on the involvement of the AME Church on the church's involvement in the 1994 general elections. Louw fervently believed that the church should be involved in the social development of people and communities, hence his effective participation in the struggle for freedom. During the political struggle in the anti-apartheid era, Louw was involved at both local and national levels. Louw served as chairperson of the Western Province Council of Churches. He also served as executive member of the South African Council of

Churches. Louw was of the opinion that Young was only interested in himself and that he promoted political involvement that would be in his own interest.

Young did initiate a voter education programme that was designed to explain the procedures of voting. He also motivated members of the 15th Episcopal District to cast their ballots during the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. This programme was financed by the AME Church in America to the tune of \$120 000 (cf Centenary Brochure of the AME Church in Southern Africa 1996: 24).

8.7 Other contributing factors to the deterioration of relationships

8.7.1 The fulltime ministry

When Young commenced his work in South Africa, most of the ministers were serving on a part-time basis. This is a common practice in many denominations in South Africa since many congregations are unable to afford fulltime ministers. In practice there were a small number of ministers serving in a fulltime capacity. Five months into Young's Episcopal term he announced at the Cape Annual Conference of 1992 that the appointment of fulltime pastors is a necessary step for church growth. Full time ministers serving smaller congregations would therefore be promoted to larger congregations that could afford them.

Young emphasised that it was unethical for ministers to have a secular job with extra financial income, while others were struggling to make ends meet. Ironically the matter of fulltime ministers had never been raised again after the Cape Annual Conference of 1992. However, Young presented this new status as his personal preference and this was not subjected to any public scrutiny or debate during any Conference conducted by him.⁶¹ Furthermore, no policy in this regard had been formulated by any Conference under Young's administration.

The issue of fulltime Pastors was raised again at the Cape Annual Conference of 1995 held in Worcester. In this regard Louw (1996: 5)⁶² notes with reference to the accommodation for Pastors the following salient points:

⁶¹ This information was verbally given to the members of the Cape Annual Conference in 1992.

⁶² This report forms part of Rev. Lionel Louw's answering affidavit in the Supreme Court, Cape Town, 1996.

- That in 1995 the Cape Annual Conference consisted of 71 congregations.
- That 16% of these congregations were without church buildings. Members either had to worship in classrooms or at the houses of certain members.
- That 41% of these congregations had no parsonages to the effect that Pastors had to provide homes for themselves and their families.

It is against this background that Louw questioned the motivation to force ministers to become fulltime clergy.

Louw (1996: 6) furthermore argues that according to the study made at the 1995 Annual Conference, twelve ministers never received any salaries for the year. This situation was not due to the fact that members refused to pay any salaries, but because most of them were at that time unemployed or seasonal workers. In 1995 59 ministers earned a salary of approximately R1 200, six ministers R200 per month and six ministers earned R2 800 per month. Louw reminded the conference that one should also bear in mind that most of the money raised at local churches is used for expenses to various church conferences. Furthermore, local congregations had to erect their own church buildings with the meagre income and also had to maintain the buildings. It was against this background that ministers were forced to opt for secular jobs.

8.7.2 The assignment of Pastors

At the close of the Cape Annual Conference on 17 December 1995 Young issued assignments to all ministers. He also announced that all Pastoral assignments which did not bear his signature should be regarded as temporary appointments and that ministers affected would receive other assignments on 15 January 1996 at the Episcopal Planning meeting. A group of ministers who received temporary appointments then instructed the Chennels Albertyn Attorney's Firm⁶³ of Stellenbosch to intervene.

The Episcopal Planning meeting in Bellville was attended by many Americans who were in South Africa for the centenary celebrations the previous day at the Good

⁶³ Letter dated 6 January 1997 from Chennels Albertyn Attorneys Firm to inform the Peace and Reconciliation Committee of a process of reconciliation prior the Court Case. Ref. 978MC.

Hope Centre, Cape Town (cf Spencer (1996: 2). However, the assignment of Pastors was never done at the Bellville venue. Instead Young announced that assignments would be issued at the evening session of the Episcopal District meeting to be held in Hazendal, Cape Town. Turmoil broke out at this meeting and the American guests had to vacate the hall through the back in fear for what could happen to them. The assignments were eventually read and issued at 22h00 that night. The most controversial assignments were as follows:

- Rev. Benjamin Sass of Robert Thomas, Mitchell's Plain with a membership of approximately one hundred was assigned to Metropolitan, Mitchell's Plain with a membership of five hundred and fifty.
- Rev. Peter Walker of Agnes Hildebrandt, Manenberg with a membership of approximately one hundred and fifteen was assigned to Bethesda, Worcester with a membership of approximately eight hundred and fifty.
- Rev. Peter Mentoor of Metropolitan, Mitchell's Plain with a membership of approximately five hundred was assigned to Agnes Hildebrandt in Hanover Park with a membership of approximately eighty.
- Rev. Dr. Andrew Josias of Bethel, Cape Town with a membership of approximately six hundred and fifty was assigned to Ebenezer, Bellville with a membership of approximately three hundred and thirty.
- Rev. Daniel Jacobs of Bethesda, Worcester was assigned to Robinson Chapel, Bonteheuwel with a membership of approximately two hundred.
- Rev. Dr. Lionel Louw of St. Matthews, Eureka Estate in Elsies River with a membership of approximately eight hundred and seventy was assigned to Ebenezer, Retreat with a membership of approximately two hundred and sixty members.
- Rev. Leslie Pezi who was transferred from the Eastern Cape Annual Conference was assigned to St. Matthews, Eureka Estate in Elsies River.

With these assignments issued, turmoil erupted among church members. Some were devastated while heated arguments developed and accusations were bandied about. The church was in total disarray and another split was looming. Three ministers were denied access to their newly appointed congregations the next Sunday. They were Rev. Benjamin Sass, Rev. Peter Walker and Rev. Leslie Pezi. Furthermore, they were

denied access to their parsonages. These affected ministers had to survive without any financial income until such time the dispute was resolved.

On 3 February 1996 Young requested that court orders be issued to a number of members. He called the Presiding Elders to a meeting to strategise on the most appropriate methods to install the ministers who were denied access to their newly assigned congregations. The meeting also resolved that the ministers, loyal members and the Presiding Elders had to go to the church premises to install the newly assigned ministers. Through this action more damage was done since in the end members had to be escorted by the police away from the church premises. Young then officially initiated legal action against certain members and ministers of the church in the Supreme Court.

8.7.3 The Supreme Court case

On 5 February 1996 Young instructed the attorney's firm Mellenics to prepare and serve summonses on at least eleven members of the AME Church who had protested against his assignments.⁶⁴ On 14 March 1996 the Supreme Court ruled as follows on the matter:

- That the accused should not disrupt nor prevent the continuation of any service or meeting of the African Methodist Episcopal Church conducted within the Fifteenth Episcopal District of the AME Church, in the Western Cape, in any manner whatsoever.
- That they will not interfere with or prevent or hinder any minister of the AME Church within the 15th Episcopal District, in the Western Cape, performing his/her ministerial duties in any manner whatsoever.
- That they should not deny the Presiding Bishop of the 15th Episcopal District or any minister, Church official, member or visitor of the church, access to any building, parsonage or other property belonging to or used by the AME Church within the 15th Episcopal District in the Western Cape.
- That they should not assault or threaten to assault any member of the AME Church within the 15th Episcopal District, in the Western Cape.

⁶⁴ Case no. 3039/96 of the Supreme Court of South Africa – Cape of Good Hope Division. Cape Town: Thursday 14 March 1996, before the honourable judge, Mr. Justice Selikowitz.

- That they should not deny the Presiding Bishop of the 15th. Episcopal District of the AME Church or the Presiding Elder of the Cape Town District access to all books and records relating to the activities of the Metropolitan AME Church in Mitchell's Plain, the St. Matthew's AME Church in Elsies River and the St. Francis AME Church in Belhar, including but not limited to all financial records, bank statements and cheque books.
- That the Rev. Benjamin Sass should be allowed access to the parsonage of the Metropolitan AME Church at Mitchell's Plain, situated at 38 Ajax Way, Woodlands, Mitchell's Plain, Western Cape, on or before Monday, 17 March 1996, and that respondents will further allow him free and undisturbed possession of said property pending a resolution of the issue of appointment.
- That accommodation should be provided for the Rev. Leslie Pezi by the Steward Board of St. Matthew's AME Church in consultation with the Rev. Paul Messiah (Sr.), the Presiding Elder for the Cape Town District of the AME Church. The cost of such accommodation shall be paid for by St. Matthew's AME Church and shall be provided on or before 1 April 1996.

The Supreme Court further ordered that the assignments of the Rev. Benjamin Sass, Rev. Leslie Pezi and Rev. Ursula Higgins must be dealt with by a conciliation committee meeting in terms of the provision made by the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church.

Before any attempt to discuss the reconciliation process, it is imperative to respond on Louw's affidavit in the Supreme Court after he was charged by the bishop for pastoral interference.⁶⁵ In Louw's (1996: 6) affidavit to the Supreme Court he discussed an extremely sensitive issue. In 1994 Bishop Young left the minister of Ceres who was in a fulltime capacity without any pastoral assignment. This minister sided with the disgruntled group. The minister had to leave the 1994 Annual Conference due to the sudden death of his mother.

⁶⁵ "Pastoral interference" simply means that if one pastor interferes with the work of another a charge can be laid against that pastor.

In the midst of mourning and on the eve of Christmas the family was confronted with the hopeless task of having to move out of the parsonage and to find a new home and another source of income.

With regard to the assignment of ministers, the law of the church is clear. *The Minister's Bill of Rights* as found on page 112 in the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church unequivocally states the following privileges to ministers of the AME Church. The Bill of Rights commences with a preamble that affirm, declare and enact the basic rights for the ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church:

- “That a pastoral appointment equal to their abilities, training and experience be issued to Pastors if such post is available.
- That the new appointment be comparable or better than the previous one provided the pastor has not been found guilty under Judicial Administration.
- A comfortable parsonage shall be furnished for the pastor and his family within the agreed means of the local church by the Trustees of the church.
- The assigned pastor must occupy the parsonage within thirty days after receiving his/her appointment. In the case of a pastor's widow, ninety days are given to the widow to relocate.
- Apart from the salary, the pastor is entitled to adequate hospitalisation, social security tax, medical insurance and free education for his/her children up till the age of twenty one years.
- The bishop in charge must notify the pastor in writing of his intent to move him/her to another congregation. The bishop must also submit reasons for the same.
- A bishop is forbidden to insult a pastor, either in private or in public. Such action would make the bishop subject to the charge of maladministration” (Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Church 1992: 112 - 113)

8.8 The fifth schism takes shape

Whenever tension and resistance are apparent within any organisation, splits are anticipated and possible. In the case of the Cape Annual Conference of the 15th Episcopal District, the church split into two groups: the Peace and Reconciliation

Committee was formed to support Young and his programme, while the Concerned Alliance supported the rest of the members of the church with their ideals and aspirations of reforming the Cape Annual Conference.

The majority of the members in the 15th Episcopal District supported Young. Approximately 60% of the members of the Cape Annual Conference supported the Peace and Reconciliation Committee, 20% supported the Concerned Alliance while a further 20% were non-committal. The rest of the Annual Conferences within the 15th Episcopal District either sided with Young or totally abstained from any activity that might jeopardize their position in the church.

8.8.1 The Peace and Reconciliation Committee

As indicated earlier the Peace and Reconciliation Committee supported the programme of Young. Its members were those that voted earlier in favour of the purchase of the new Episcopal residence and a new automobile. This committee even encouraged the bishop to call for a court order against those members who did not allow their newly assigned ministers into their pulpits and eventually encouraged him to file court orders against certain members of the AME Church in the Cape Annual Conference.

The main purpose of the Peace and Reconciliation Committee was to pledge support for Young's programme of action. In a statement as found in their undated publication *The Truth – Peace and Reconciliation Committee*, the Concerned Alliance is described as rebellious, plotters and people without conscience intent on destroying the house of God. Furthermore, it portrays the Concerned Alliance as a group of people with the sole mission of deceiving and misleading the church. This committee called on the Concerned Alliance to rather sow the seeds of comfort, love, reconciliation, friendship, unity and honesty in order that the AME Church might be healed from the wounds it now experienced.⁶⁶

8.8.2 The Concerned Alliance

⁶⁶ The editors of *The Truth* were Rev. William Legolie, Rev. Peter Walker and Rev. Ursula Higgins.

The Concerned Alliance was more concerned about healing the rift in the 15th Episcopal District, hence its respect for the court order. It advocated adherence to the mission of the AME Church which encourages the ministry of spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional and environmental healing. The mission furthermore persuades members to seek and save the lost, feed the hungry, cloth the naked, provide housing for the homeless and to cheer the fallen. The church should be engaged in seeking jobs for the jobless and administering to the needs of those in prison, hospitals, nursing homes, and institutions of mentally sick persons and to those in old aged homes.⁶⁷ It is against this background that the Concerned Alliance found it extremely irritable that preference had been given to items that are not of importance. It is therefore clear that the inadequate time spent in preparing for the democratic elections of 1994 and the frail arrangements of the centenary celebrations would have frustrated many members of the 15th Episcopal District.

The problem however, especially in the AME Church, is not the office of a bishop, but the power vested in the person. The office of the bishop is too powerful, costly and open to authoritarianism and abuse as discussed in the current and previous chapters. However, one should be reminded that bishops are human too, and they are subject to the same temptations and errors of judgment just as Pastors and ordinary church members, though most bishops acted as they are not infallible. The dilemma with Young was his adamant stance to refuse to negotiate with the dissident members of the church.

With all the turmoil within the 15th Episcopal District, it became a question of time as to when another schism would take place. Although the Concerned Alliance met regularly since 1993, these gatherings were unofficial. Its aim was to come together as a fellowship group and to discuss the irregularities in the church and how they could be rectified. In the meantime it worked on a programme to attract more members of the church to the alliance. The Concerned Alliance was officially established in 1996 with 30 ministers⁶⁸ as well as members from the following congregations in the Cape Annual Conference:

⁶⁷ Section 1 of the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2004:15.

⁶⁸ File 14.4 of AC Booyse: List of ministers signed the “Robertson Declaration” on 21 March 1996.

- Bethesda, Worcester,
- Metropolitan, Mitchell's Plain,
- St. Francis, Belhar,
- St. Matthews, Elsies River,
- St. John, Kensington,
- St. Joseph, Paarl,
- Sims Chapel, Stellenbosch,
- St. Peter's, Kylemore,
- Ebenezer, Retreat,
- Trinity, Grassy Park.⁶⁹

A point of concern in the Concerned Alliance was the publication of a monthly newspaper by one of its members known as *Com-Met*. This exacerbated the division since it frequently launched attacks on the Peace and Reconciliation Group. However, the paper did not portray the vision and objectives of the Concerned Alliance, which was to bring about reconciliation between the two disputing parties.

8.8.3 The reconciliation process

In accordance to the ruling of the Supreme Court Order that churches should not resolve their problems in a public court of law, a process of reconciliation was considered. The Concerned Alliance had on numerous occasions tried to set up meetings with Young, but received no response. On 14 December 1996 the Concerned Alliance instructed its secretary together with five other supporters to draw up a memorandum that would be handed over to the bishop before pastoral assignments could be made. This memorandum highlighted the following points:

- That the Concerned Alliance of the AME Church wishes to place the conflict in the Church in a proper perspective.
- The 1992 – 1996 Quadrennial in the 15th Episcopal District was marked by Episcopal leadership that bordered unto on *ultra montane*⁷⁰ syndrome.

⁶⁹ Article from Com-Met Publication, 1996, under the heading: *McKinley Young in the Cape Conference: The Concerned Churches' perspective*.

⁷⁰ Adherence to the belief or demanding obedience to the fallacy that Episcopal or Papal leadership should possess or claim for itself extensive and absolute power.

- The pastoral assignments made on 15 January 1996 intensified the conflict through the victimisation of certain ministers.

Other conciliatory attempts made by the Concerned Alliance include a request that the Council of Bishops elect an independent mediator to facilitate a reconciliation meeting between the two disputing parties.⁷¹ Bishop Richard Chappelle of the 17th Episcopal District was appointed as mediator. On 10 April 1996 the attorneys of the Concerned Alliance and Young met with Bishop Chappelle. This marked the commencement of the reconciliation process.⁷² Its aim was to determine the objectives and purpose of the reconciliation process. At this meeting it was made clear that according to the law of the AME Church, problems of this nature should be resolved internally (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 1992: 282). It was furthermore emphasised that as a matter of principal, Christians should stay clear of secular institutions such as Courts of Law. In this regard Young had clearly acted in contempt of the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church. This meeting agreed on the following:

- That the first meeting was scheduled to be held at the headquarters of the 15th Episcopal District on 11 April 1996.
- That the purpose of the first meeting would be to deal with technicalities.
- That an interpreter would be arranged by Chappelle for the representatives of the Concerned Alliance congregations.
- That the mandate and credentials of the representatives of the Concerned Alliance members would not be disputed.
- That the secretary of the Episcopal District, Rev. Leslie Scott, immediately inform all concerned parties of the meeting the next day and that only fifteen representatives of each negotiating teams be present.

It is important to note that the Concerned Alliance prepared a memorandum for the reconciliation meeting, but was never given the opportunity to discuss it. This memorandum spells out the reasons for the Concerned Alliance's dispute with the administrative style of Young. However, with some amendments, it was discussed

⁷¹ File no.14.10 of AC Booyse: The preliminary meeting to the process of reconciliation by Chappelle.

with Young's successor, Bishop Harold Senatlé upon his arrival to the 15th Episcopal District in 1996. Some pertinent issues in the memorandum will be discussed to give an overview of what the Concerned Alliance had in mind for the reconciliation meeting:

- Four congregations were left without pastoral appointments. Those congregations were Metropolitan, Mitchell's Plain; St. Joseph, Paarl; St. Matthew, Elsie's River and St. Francis, Belhar. Furthermore, three congregations were some of the largest in the Cape Annual Conference. It should also be noted that ministers who by the Supreme Court order never returned to their respective congregations, preferred to establish smaller congregations.
- The break-away groups caused further division in the church and that negotiations with these groups were important to accommodate the dissident group within the church.
- That Allen Temple George in the end received two pastoral appointments which led to another court order.
- That the Rev. Isaac Legolie, the most senior minister within the Cape Annual Conference was left without any pastoral appointment. At the 1995 Annual Conference in December he received a pastoral appointment to Hanover Park. On 15 January he was assigned to Chatsworth near Malmesbury. Again in 1996 he was assigned to George without consultation with either Rev. Johannes Carnow who had also been assigned to George in January 1996.
- In 1996 the characters of both the Rev. Jacobus Carnow and Rev. Adonis Booyse were tainted without any proof of misconduct. Public apologies from the persons who made the motions are considered necessary to rectify this matter.
- No proper financial reports had been given over the period of 1993 – 1996. There was no clear indication of the indebtedness of the Episcopal residence, Episcopal car, the Pension Fund, the quadrennial travel for the General Conference, funds provided by the General Church for the expenditure of the General Conference, the Episcopal fund, indebtedness on

⁷² See report from the Llandudno Camp of the Concerned Alliance, date 16 June 1997, page 1

the headquarters of the 15th Episcopal District, attorney's fees and the centenary celebrations.

- Since Young compelled the George congregation to take legal action, funds should be made available to that congregation to pay its legal fees.
- Since another Supreme Court case was scheduled for 2 September 1996 and Young at that time had already left the country, what would be the next step for the church?
- What is the church intending to do to restore its ecumenical participation with the Western Cape Council of Churches and the South African Council of Churches?
- The manner in which the assignment of the Presiding Elders was dealt with was unacceptable. They received assignments on 17 December 1995, 15 January 1996 and again on 28 February 1996. Since this action is contrary to the law of the church, it is proposed that the original assignments issued on 17 December 1995 be re-instated.
- Since in the opinion of the members of the Concerned Alliance the centenary celebrations did not meet the standard to the heritage of our church, another event be planned to do justice to this event.⁷³

WESTERN CAPE

In the same way the Peace and Reconciliation Committee also prepared a memorandum for their concerns to be addressed at the reconciliation meeting. Unfortunately, they too were not given the opportunity to raise issues. It was therefore in the interest of both parties that their concerns be dealt with. The following are the matters that concerned the Peace and Reconciliation Committee:

- That the church continues with the Supreme Court case until all problems have been resolved.
- That all avenues be exhausted to restore relationships among the members of the Cape Annual Conference.
- That everybody should be honest in the way in which reconciliation is sought.
- That the leaders of the church, especially the ministers, should take the first step towards the process of reconciliation.

⁷³ Memorandum compiled by the Concerned Alliance: 1996.

- That the pastoral assignments of any bishop be respected
- That the Concerned Alliance acknowledges the fact that the bishop on two occasions called together the Stewards of the disgruntled group, but that they refused to meet with the bishop.
- That according to AME policy, the bishop is the only person to interpret the law of the church at an Annual Conference. In the Presiding Elders' District this is the authority of the Presiding Elder and on local church level, the Pastor is the interpreter.⁷⁴

With the commencement of the reconciliation process with Chappell, he made a conflicting announcement. In his address he mentioned that he already met with some members of the Peace and Reconciliation Committee. At this stage he was interrupted by the members of the Concerned Alliance who were of the view that his meeting with any group prior to the reconciliation process was irregular since he acted against the rule of the reconciliation procedure. Furthermore, they felt that the chair would in the end submit a subjective judgment of the whole process. On the request of the Concerned Alliance the meeting was then adjourned for a couple of minutes to grant the Concerned Alliance time to caucus.

When the meeting reconvened the chairperson made another unpopular announcement. He stated that he was brought under the impression that the meeting would only last for two hours and that he had some other commitments to attend to. Objections were also made to the presence of Rev. Benjamin Hoorn and Rev. Samuel Engelbrecht who represented the Peace and Reconciliation group, while their names never appeared on the original list, and the refusal of Young to allow Rev. Aaron Joubert and Rev. Jacobus Carnow to represent the Concerned Alliance. The attorney for the Concerned Alliance objected to the fact that the chairperson did not honour the agreement made to the Supreme Court, the Attorney's firm for the Peace and Reconciliation Committee and the attorney of the Concerned Alliance by holding an exclusive closed meeting. In response to this objection, Chappelle noted that Bishop Young had the right to invite whomever he wished, and that such objections would

⁷⁴ File no. 15 of AC Booyse: Booklet by the Cape Annual Conference held in December 1996 during a mediation process between the two disputing parties.

not be entertained. Another concern was that the chairperson never provided an interpreter as promised.

At this junction Chappelle announced that he had some other commitments to attend to and that he did not see his way open to continue with the reconciliation process. He resigned as chairperson and informed Young to arrange for another chairperson. The meeting adjourned with no progress made. Another meeting was scheduled which was never held.⁷⁵

In the meantime the Concerned Alliance had no other choice but to charge Young with maladministration and sowing seeds of discontent. This charge was forwarded to the General Secretary but the Judiciary Council never acted upon it and it was never entertained at the General Conference of 1996. Young was assigned to be the *Ecumenical Officer* of the church. The post was utilised for bishops with no assignments to any Episcopal District. Thus such bishop is stripped from his/her powers to administer an Episcopal District.

With the newly assigned bishop, Bishop Harold Senatlé it became clear that the Peace and Reconciliation Committee became interested in withdrawing the Supreme Court Case, but with certain conditions. To this effect a letter was issued to the Concerned Alliance for a meeting on 7 January 1997. In response to this letter the Concerned Alliance made it clear that if the Supreme Court Case was not withdrawn unconditionally, it did not see its way open for another meeting. The proposed meeting never took place.⁷⁶

8.9 The way forward for the Concerned Alliance

Based on the numerous efforts of the Concerned Alliance to address the current relations, without any success, it began a strategic working programme for the improvement of the situation within the AME Church. At this stage no one would have predicted that the on-going deliberations of the Concerned Alliance would eventually lead to another schism within the AME Church.

⁷⁵ File no. 14.10 of AC Booyse: 11 April 1996, page 2 under the heading: "Concerned AME Churches with Bishop Chappelle presiding.

⁷⁶ File no.14.8 of AC Booyse: Letter from Chennels Albertyn Attorneys, date 6 January 1997.

8.9.1 The Robertson Declaration

Ministers and members of the Concerned Alliance met in Robertson on 21 March 1996. At this meeting a declaration was formalised, which stated that:

- The Episcopal leadership of the Fifteenth Episcopal District for the past four years had betrayed the liberatory and reconciliatory heritage of African Methodism through his oppressive leadership style.
- That Young used tactics to victimize ministers that opposed his programme.
- That Young settled disputes in a public court of law to destroy ministers and members who acted against his will.
- That Chappelle was incapable to arrange proper mediation with disputing groups as instructed by the law of the church and the Supreme Court.
- That Young was unable to seek for proper recognition for the 15th Episcopal District with the General AME Church after one hundred years of existence of the church in South Africa.
- That Young did not have the capacity to make provision for the multi-cultural diversity not only present in the AME Church, but also in the Republic of South Africa.
- That Young demonstrated no interest in the development of appropriate structures and programmes for the 15th Episcopal District.
- That Young refused to seek affiliation with ecumenical partners nationally, regionally and internally independent of the American AME Church, i.e. like other denominations to establish membership of ecumenical bodies such as the All Africa Conference of Churches, World Council of Churches, and World Methodist Council in their own right.⁷⁷

8.9.2 The Bloekombos Deliberations

The name Bloekombos is derived from a small community which is situated north of Kraaifontein. Among others, it has a camping site and chalets for groups to gather. The Concerned Alliance organised a week-end camp on 9 and 10 August 1996 to discuss a strategic plan that would improve the conditions within the Cape Annual

⁷⁷ File no. 14.13 of AC Booyse: *The Llandudno Consultation*.

Conference of the AME Church. A number of decisions were taken at this gathering under the theme: “Challenged to seize opportunities for renewal and change”.

Assignments were given to certain members of the Concerned Alliance that would be discussed and voted upon. The first discussion was based upon a relevant vision and mission for the AME Church. The vision was formulated as follows:

That we the members of the AME Church in the Cape Annual Conference envision a church which will transform the Kingdom of this world to the Kingdom of God through the radical preaching of God’s love for this world as manifested in Jesus Christ, through critical and dynamic leadership in our Zion, and through our involvement in community concerns.

According to the Concerned Alliance the mission of the AME Church should have as its main objective the following:

- To be relevant to the community of its membership.
- To radicalise leadership on all levels of our Zion to be sensitive to and respectful of aspirations and concerns of its members.
- To embrace our beautiful heritage of liberation, the warm personal interaction through Conferences and Conventions, the ideal of democracy and transparency, corporate decision-making, and the secure feeling of being in control of our own destiny.⁷⁸

As a separate entity to the vision and mission statement, the Concerned Alliance unconditionally committed itself to the doctrine of the AME Church by re-affirming its belief in the Apostles Creed, the sharing of the Holy Communion and the baptismal sacrament. The meeting furthermore acknowledged the right of existence of African Methodism as a living protest against any form of racism and with its unique mission of advocating liberation, reconciliation, equality and justice.⁷⁹

The Concerned Alliance in addition worked through a policy document that should be suitable for the AME Church, such as church structure, leadership within the church,

⁷⁸ File no. 14.3 of AC Booyse: *The Bloekombos Deliberations*.

⁷⁹ File no. 14.3 of AC Booyse: *The Bloekombos Deliberations*.

church growth, training and development, ministerial conditions of employment, finances, and new structures for Conferences and Conventions, processes for reconciliation and the structure of the Board of Examiners where prospective ministerial studies are trained.⁸⁰

Although the Cape Annual Conference never afforded the Concerned Alliance an opportunity to submit its Bloekombos Deliberations, since it regarded it as a group effort that was never sanctioned by the church, the Concerned Alliance gradually implemented these decisions into a policy document for the use of interested local congregations.

8.9.3 The Llandudno consultations: final prelude to the schism

The Alliance met at Llandudno over the weekend of 15 to 16 June 1997. This meeting will be remembered as a watershed event since this was the last time the Alliance officially met. It was a weekend of praise, worship and song as never before in the history of the Alliance. Since no official documentations of the deliberations were made available, I had to depend on my memory to recall what happened. To substantiate my arguments, I had interviews with some of the members present.⁸¹

At intervals certain groups gathered together and those present could feel that the atmosphere was not conducive for constructive deliberations about the progress of the AME Church in the Cape Annual Conference. The issuing of the working document only contained the highlights to be discussed for the weekend, as in the past. In this instance the working documents failed to supply the detailed discussions. As the week-end progressed it became clear that certain members had a hidden agenda. The theme for the week-end was very suspicious: “The Road Ahead”. This theme was presented at least four times on 16 June 1997. The question that was constantly posed was which would be the best ecumenical road to take.

To understand what the organisers had in mind, an in-depth study of the cover-page of the programme was made. The four arrows on top are an indication that the

⁸⁰ File no. 14.3 of AC Booyse: *The Bloekombos Deliberations*.

⁸¹ Interviews with Daniel Jacobs, 2006; David Moses, 2006; Anthony Jacobs, 2006; Abraham Brooks, 1997; Jacobus Coetzee, 2001; Andrew Josias, 2002.

Concerned Alliance was at that time not certain which denominational way to go. Even the chosen scriptural text as found in Isaiah 42: 16: “And I will lead the blind in a way that they know not, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are things I will do, and I will not forsake them,” became clear that the Llandudno meeting was to set the pace for a new era in the life of the Concerned Alliance. To interpret this text one is obliged to believe that the metaphors “blind, paths”, “darkness” and “rough places” refer to a group that is seeking new direction in their church lives.

The presentation of the topics clearly stated that certain members of the AME Church in the Concerned Alliance had come to the end of their AME journey. Even at the last session an uncommon instruction was given that the treasurer of the Concerned Alliance should hand over the financial records to the chairperson. This act led to the termination of the Concerned Alliance. After this Llandudno gathering the Concerned Alliance never met again.

Six months after the Llandudno gathering the Rev. Lionel Louw, an executive member of the Concerned Alliance, and Rev. Anna-Marie Cloete resigned from the AME Church, at the Cape Annual Conference of 1997.

In 1998 the Reverends Louw and Cloete established the Community of Faith Church with the vast majority of members from St. Matthews AME Church, Elsie's River. A number of members from the AME congregations in Tulbagh and Kylemore also joined. In 2002, approximately twenty members of the Stellenbosch AME congregation joined this newly established church.

8.10 Conclusion

The fifth schism within the Cape Annual Conference of the AME Church was due to irreconcilable agendas from the American bishop and what the South African church believed to be priorities. For the South Africans the priorities of the 1990s were the centenary celebrations and reform of the structures of the AME Church to accommodate the aspirations of local people. For bishop Young, the priorities were a

new residence and a car. His inability to fully understand the local conditions led him to make ill-considered decisions such as the one about fulltime ministers.

The personality of the presiding bishop played a significant role in the conflict in the Cape Annual Conference. His autocratic leadership style is evident in the pastoral assignments he made. Furthermore, his administration was characterised by unilateral decisions. He was disliked by a certain section of ministers in the Cape Annual Conference apparently because of his personality.

The fifth schism was also characterised by fierce inter-group conflict between the Peace and Reconciliation Committee and the Concerned Alliance. Members of each group were guilty of stereotyping those of the other group. Each group took the high moral ground while experiencing the negative and lower moral standing. What was also significant was the extent to which differences between the groups were exaggerated. The ministers of the Cape Annual Conference had for years cooperated in numerous forums and on many projects. Yet, when the groups formed the differences suddenly became irreconcilable.

When inter-group conflict emerged in the Cape Annual Conference, Young was unable to bring about reconciliation between the two disputing parties. The Supreme Court case not only increased further division, but became a costly exercise for both parties involved.

Chapter 9

Addressing the underlying causes of schisms

9.1 Introduction

Despite the fact that many attempts have been made by a number of leaders in the AME Church in Africa to address the question of inclusiveness in the total programme of the general AME Church, the impression was given that the American-districts did not grasp the importance of this plight. Since 1981 several proposals were made (e.g. the Modified Episcopal District, the African Jurisdictional Conference) and summits held (e.g. Nairobi Consultation) to convince the American districts about the importance of an inclusive church structure for all its members.

Johnson (1977: 16 - 17) notes that after 1950 the AME Church in Africa did not grow as swiftly as some other denominations did. He bases his opinion on two major factors in the organisational structure of the AME Church in America: the inability to provide sustainable social services in the AME Church in Africa to needy people which other denominations were providing and an inability to secure proper ministerial training for its African adherents. Johnson (1977: 16) furthermore comments that the reluctance on the part of the AME Church in America to properly develop the AME Church in the African context reinforced the belief that the American districts were not serious, nor concerned about constructive social and economic developments in the African districts. For several decades Africa's plea for improved strategic planning went unnoticed by the American districts.

Ming (2000: 28 - 29) in his Episcopal Address at the General Conference of 2000 comments that although the General Conference of 1996 had given a mandate to the African constituency to conduct an African Summit for the purpose of discussing developmental programmes for the AME Church in Africa, the time to seriously embark on an all inclusive Church in partnership with indigenous leadership was long overdue. His argument was based on the message of liberation, hope and justice which forms an integral part of the mission statement of the AME Church. Ming furthermore emphasised that inclusiveness and the development of indigenous leadership should be regarded as a genuine and sincere action on the side of the American districts to include the African districts in all facets of the church. The time

to acknowledge that the African district was an equal partner in the total programme of the church was long overdue and the American districts had to seriously commit themselves to regard the African districts as authentic members of the AME Church connection.

It is against this background that the General Conference of 2000 seriously embarked on a programme to address the development of the AME Church in Africa.

9.2 The African Summit

Ming's observation must be understood against the background of the General Conference of 1996, which introduced the African Summit and the General Conference of 2000, which ignored the findings of the summit.

The General Conference of 1996 voted in favour of an African Summit to be held by the leaders in the African district. It furthermore instructed the most senior bishop that would be assigned to Africa to convene the first meeting until such time that a proper organisational structure had been set in place. At the close of the General Conference of 1996 Bishop Harold Ben Senatlé automatically became the convener as he was assigned to the 15th Episcopal District.

The General Conference of 1996 approved a working document which required that the African Summit be held during 1997 and that its findings be tabled at the General Board meeting of 1998; that all bishops assigned to the African Districts be part of the organizing committee and that two representatives of each Episcopal District within Africa be elected on this committee. The purpose of these consultations was spelled out as follows:

- To determine the potential, resources, programmes and time lines for the maximum development of the Episcopal Districts in Africa.
- To develop leadership activities which will provide for more indigenous administrators, General Superintendents and bishops for the Episcopal Districts in Africa.
- To determine workable solutions for the inclusion of all Episcopal Districts that can serve in the total programme of the General Church.

- To ensure that connectionalism be visible in the life of the entire AME Church, a special proposal should be submitted on the 23rd Article of Religion which excluded all countries outside the boundaries of the United States of America. The Doctrine of the AME Church is vested in its 29 Articles of religion, e.g. which states that the AME Church belief system is based upon the Apostles' Creed, the Canonical Books of the Bible, the two sacraments of the Eucharist and Baptism, etc. The 23rd Article of religion however states that all members of the AME Church worldwide should obey the laws and regulations of the United States (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church, 1996 pg. 15 – 20)

9.3 Meeting of the *African Summit*

The meeting of the African Summit was held from 24 to 25 November 1997 in Berea, Johannesburg. The following matters that were discussed at the General Conference of 2000 formed the agenda for the deliberations of the summit:

9.3.1 Evangelism⁸²

Since evangelism was regarded as the life-blood for church growth, the summit agreed upon the establishment of a network on the African continent that would ensure equality and proper accommodation for every Episcopal District on African soil. The network should work in conjunction with the AME Church in the USA. An Episcopal Director of Evangelism should be appointed to co-ordinate seminars in leadership training in evangelism that should suit the particular context of each Episcopal District in Africa. The programme of the Director of Evangelism should make provision for evangelistic programmes on Annual Conference level and local congregation level and the Director should work with all bishops assigned to Africa to ensure that the programme is sustainable. Furthermore, it should ensure that evangelistic programmes be implemented in prisons, hospitals, and among the homeless, and should address the rehabilitation of children, young adults and the unemployed. At the same time a programme on skills development especially for the young adults had to be implemented.

⁸² File 22.2 of AC Booyse under the heading *Evangelism* on the African Summit

Apart from the funds that are received from the General AME Church, a financial budget should be drawn up for each Episcopal District in Africa to ensure quality services.

The African Summit must ensure that the budgetary allocations, together with the legislation on evangelism be distributed to all Episcopal Districts for discussion and that legislation be tabled at the General Conference of 2000 for approval.

9.3.2 Education⁸³

The group that constituted the African Summit discussed the question of education in detail. It drew attention to the fact that all levels of educational institutions in the African districts should be upgraded. The plight of existing theological institutes in Johannesburg and the University of Liberia, which struggled to survive due to a lack of proper and contemporary resources, was of particular concern. It was felt that the American districts should seriously address these shortcomings. Furthermore the committee discussed the importance of a student exchange programme between the American and African districts in order to expose students to the various cultural and educational differences between these two continents. Another point of discussion was the continued educational programmes for both laity and ministers as was the case in the American districts. Such continued educational programmes are imperative for members on local level to respond positively to the needs within their local communities. The importance of distance learning for members aspiring to become ministers should be introduced through the theological seminary in Johannesburg and financial assistance provided to streamline such a programme.

At the time of the meeting in November 1997 the issue of the confusion between lay preachers, local preachers, local deacons and local elders was not yet properly addressed by the General Conference. The committee therefore drew the attention of the AME Church to these confusions and requested that clear direction be given to the church at large.

⁸³ File 22.2 of AC Booyse under the heading *Education* on the African Summit.

9.3.3 Polity⁸⁴

The discussion on polity was based on the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church, especially the 23rd Article of Religion. Although the global AME Church is regarded as a connectional church, this article only makes reference to the sovereignty of the USA and requires that all members should obey and respect the rules and regulations of the government of the USA. The article makes no reference to the sovereignty of other countries where the AME Church is situated (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 1996: 17). The committee emphatically rejected this as unwarranted on the part of the AME Church to expect allegiance to the USA since Namibia attained independence on 21 March 1990 and South Africa on 27 April 1994. Since the entire world recognised the sovereignty of these countries and other independent African countries, the committee drafted a resolution to the effect that recognition be given to all countries where the AME Church exists since the conclusion drawn from this article was that all members in Africa were compelled to owe loyalty to the USA even though they were not citizens of that country. The committee therefore proposed that Article 23 be reviewed and proper legislation be formulated to encourage allegiance of all members to their respective countries.

9.3.4 Ownership of real estates

All property on local-, District-, Episcopal- and Connectional level within the AME Church is registered or incorporated in the county of Philadelphia, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the USA on behalf of the General Church. This Corporation owns all property of the AME Church worldwide and this means that no entity within the AME Church can claim ownership of any buildings. Properties are kept in trust by the various bodies on behalf of the AME Church.

The law of the AME Church furthermore states that any kind of property held by any institution may not be alienated, encumbered or sold without the written approval of the Board of Incorporators⁸⁵ which is situated in the USA (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 1996: 47-48). The committee also addressed this issue since it was of the opinion that it undermined the basic rights of its members in all countries

⁸⁴ File 22.2 of AC Booyse under the heading *Polity* of the African Summit.

⁸⁵ The *Board of Incorporators* deals with property matters of the church. All church properties must be registered in the name of AME Church in America.

to own property, which they had erected and paid for. The committee of the African Summit therefore resolved that the articles dealing with property be scrapped.

9.3.5 Economic development

The committee of the African Summit drafted a resolution to the General Conference of 2000 that a Budget and Finance Committee be established in Africa for the purpose of economic development. The income generated should be utilised to establish educational institutions, health clinics, homes for the aged, etc. in Africa wherever the need warranted the erection of such facilities.

A Budget and Finance Committee will also have the potential to intervene in situations where economic development plans are uninitiated, based on a fiscal income driven programme, to reduce the heavy financial constraints placed on local churches and Episcopal Districts.⁸⁶

9.3.6 Administration⁸⁷

One of the major objectives of the African Summit was to present legislation to the General Conference of 2000 which would ensure greater participation in the overall structures of the General Church and to design a programme that would financially develop the African Church.

In order to reach these goals the committee proposed that the AME Church:

- “Assists the Church in Africa to grow numerically.
- Makes provision for the total involvement of the people of Africa on all levels of Church structure and organisation.
- Facilitate greater communication between all Episcopal Districts on the continent of Africa.
- Make contributions to the growth and development of the Church in Africa.
- Allow the members of the Church in Africa the opportunity to identify and redefine its needs from its own perspective and context.

⁸⁶ File 22.2 of AC Booyse under the heading *Economic Development* of the African Summit.

⁸⁷ File 22.2 of AC Booyse under the heading *Administration* of the African Summit.

- Foster a deeper understanding of the inter-regional needs and problems of the Church in Africa” (African Summit 1997: 2).

9.3.7 Indigenous leadership

Since the African districts had an extremely low representation in leadership positions in the AME Church, the committee on the African Summit resolved that greater recognition should be given by the AME Church to the ability of indigenous people to become leaders. This concern was driven by the fact that the mode of election⁸⁸ as well as the numerical advantage of the American districts made it impossible for members from Africa who aspire for leadership positions to stand for election against the members of the American districts. To address this issue it was proposed that whenever vacancies occur, a proportion of those vacancies should be reserved for African members.

Although the committee on the African Summit had forwarded the necessary legislation for discussion at the General Conference of 2000, its proposals were only acknowledged by the General Conference as a study document. Instead, the General Conference decided to introduce the African Jurisdictional Council as a mechanism to properly develop the African districts.

9.4 The African Jurisdictional Council

9.4.1 Introduction

Since the African Summit was regarded by the General Conference of 2000 as a vehicle to address the needs and aspirations of the members of the AME Church in Africa, the African Jurisdictional Council was established to become the permanent structure for the development of the AME Church in Africa. It had to build on the foundations laid by the African Summit. This in effect meant that the findings of the African Summit had to be used as a vehicle for on-going discussion and the formulation of legislation for the constructive development of the African districts. The main purpose therefore of the African Jurisdictional Council was to present legislation to the General Conference of 2004 which would ensure greater

⁸⁸ The mode of election refers to the fact that the Americans with their vast membership have an advantage against it African adherence in canvassing for any leadership position.

participation of the members residing in Africa and to work on a financial plan for the economic development of the AME Church in Africa.⁸⁹

9.4.2 Purpose and objectives

The purpose and objectives of the African Jurisdictional Council were to ensure that legislation be tabled at the General Conference of 2004 on:

- “How to increase the growth and development of the AME Church in Africa.
- To design a sustainable plan that ensures greater leadership participation and opportunities for the members of Africa in the general structures of the AME Church.
- To ensure continuous communication between all Episcopal Districts on the Continent of Africa.
- To provide for the members in Africa the opportunity to identify its own needs and aspirations for economic and church growth.
- To persuade AME members in Africa to become self-reliant.
- To guarantee effective and continuous Episcopal Supervision.
- To foster a deeper understanding of inter-regional needs and problems of the Church in Africa.
- To consult with the leadership in Africa on methods on how to make the Church more visible on the Continent of Africa.
- To give consideration for the election of Bishops and other officers for Africa at a special Conference held by the African Jurisdictional Council.
- To investigate the possibility that candidates to the Bishopric and other offices be endorsed by a local church, the Presiding Elder District and the Annual Conference in which such candidate is resided.
- To work out the mechanics on how to conduct the elections of bishops and other officers at the seat of the conference of the African Jurisdictional Council.
- In order to maintain Connectionalism, Bishops elected in Africa, should be assigned by the Episcopal Committee of the General Conference to the various Episcopal Districts” (African Jurisdictional Council 2004: 15-16).

⁸⁹ File 22.4 of AC Booyse under the heading *Proposed legislation for the African Jurisdictional Council*.

9.4.3 The composition

The General Conference of 2000 had resolved that the composition of the African Jurisdictional Council should be all bishops assigned to Africa, Episcopal Presidents of organisations residing in Africa and two ministerial- and two lay representatives from each Annual Conference within the Episcopal Districts of Africa. The election of the Annual Conference delegates should take place one year prior to the first meeting of the African Jurisdictional Council and each Annual Conference would bear the cost for its delegates attending the meetings of the African Jurisdictional Council. Furthermore, the most senior bishop assigned to Africa, shall convene the first meeting until such time the organisational structures had been set in place.

9.5 First Conference of the African Jurisdictional Council⁹⁰

This first conference of the African Jurisdictional Council was held from 17 to 19 January 2001 in Harare, Zimbabwe. It should be noted that although the General Conference of 2000 had decided that the most senior bishop serving on the Continent of Africa should convene the first meeting, it also endorsed a proposal that Bishop Cornal Henning on behalf of the General AME Church be given the responsibility to ensure that the mechanism to organise the first meeting of the African Jurisdictional Council be set in place and that he should attend all meetings of the African Jurisdictional Council.

In his opening address Bishop Henning made it clear that although he was not a member of the African Jurisdictional Council, he was elected by the General Conference of 2000 to ensure that the work of the African Jurisdictional Council gathered momentum as soon as possible. He further stated that the primary purpose of the meeting should be to determine the way in which the African Summit reached its goals, to clarify the definitions and meaning of the African Jurisdictional Council, to determine the road ahead for the African Jurisdictional Council and to elect the leadership.

⁹⁰ File no. 22.18 of AC Booyse. Abstracts from the minutes of the African Jurisdictional Council held from the 17-19 January 2001 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Bishop Gerald Ingram, of the 15th Episcopal District emphasised the need for a strategy to ensure the smooth running of the work of the African Jurisdictional Council. In this regard he proposed that ample time be given for thorough group discussions. He maintained that common ground should be established with regard to legislation that would be forwarded to the 2004 General Conference. A point of concern was that nobody should try to tamper with Connectionalism for it was seen as the binding factor for the AME Church.

Bishop Adam Richardson of the 19th Episcopal District was elected as the chairperson and the Rev. Willem Hanse of the 15th Episcopal District as the secretary. Various committees e.g. Economic Development, Youth Concerns, Research, History and Development, Conference Boundaries and Redistricting, Health, Educational Institution, Educational Literature, Church growth and evangelism, Chaplain and Prison Ministry, Budget and Finance, etc. were established and members on these committees elected. At this meeting the executive committee was also elected which comprised of all bishops serving in Africa and all chairpersons of the various committees.

The various committees elected met separately during special sessions to discuss and design plans that would be recommended to the joint meeting of the African Jurisdictional Council. It was recommended that the findings of the committees only be utilised as guidelines until such time that the African Jurisdictional Council had deliberated, debated and had come to a conclusion on whether the recommendations would be accepted and formulated into legislation to be forwarded to the General Conference of 2004. After lengthy group discussions of the various committees, its recommendations were discussed at the joint meeting.

9.6 Recommendations of the First Conference of the African Jurisdictional Council

9.6.1 Economic development

This committee recommended that each Episcopal District in Africa should design an economic plan which would enable all Annual Conferences, Presiding Elder Districts and local congregations to actively participate in its developmental programmes. Furthermore, it recommended that the Economic Development Committee on

Episcopal levels must develop an inclusive, practicable and strategic plan for all financial projects and programmes.

9.6.2 Youth development

The committee expressed concern that nothing was done by both the AME Church in Africa and the USA to implement a scholarship programme for students in Africa to further their education. Furthermore, the AME Church remained silent about issues such as street kids and child abuse. It recommended that programmes be implemented to address the social issues that affect children and young adults. Another issue of concern was that no constructive youth development programmes and youth exchange programmes between the AME Church in Africa and the USA had been put into operation.

9.6.3 Research, history and development

The need was felt that a central office be opened for the Episcopal Districts in Africa for the purpose of research and the accumulation of historical data on the African Episcopal Districts, Annual Conferences, Presiding Elder Districts and local congregations. The committee argued that in as much as secular governments had population censuses for the purpose of planning of resources and needs, the AME Church in Africa should follow similar scientific processes that would assist prospective historical researchers and at the same time have resources available to determine the growth and shortcomings within the church. This would enable the AME church to determine where improvements should be made.

9.6.4 Conference boundaries and re-districting

This committee recommended that the following boundaries for Episcopal Districts in Africa be introduced:

- That the 14th Episcopal District comprises of Sierra Leona, Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana, the Ivory Coast and Togo.
- That the 15th Episcopal District comprises of the Cape Province, Namibia and Angola.
- That the 17th Episcopal District comprises of the Southern part of Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi and Mozambique.

- That the 18th Episcopal District comprises of the Northern part of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Central and East Africa.
- That the 19th Episcopal District comprises of the Gauteng, Polokwane, Free State, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Lesotho and Swaziland.

9.6.5 Health matters

Since health is a dynamic process that includes the physical, psychological and spiritual components of human life, the committee recommended that all Episcopal Districts in Africa embark on a programme to address the health issues in a holistic manner. Special attention should be given to sustainable programmes on HIV/Aids, cholera, malaria and diabetics, which are fatal diseases.

9.6.6 Educational institutions

The committee was of the opinion that this was an extremely neglected, yet an important domain to empower the disadvantaged people of the African Districts. Furthermore, the committee called for a continuous improvement plan for education and training and the prioritisation of efforts to upgrade educational institutions. Reports should be obtained on the educational levels of all schools administered by the church in Africa in order to improve the standard of existing schools and to also make a need assessment where new educational institutions should be erected.

9.6.7 Educational literature

Literature for the Sunday school, as well as periodicals such as the *AME Review*, *Christian Recorder* and *Missionary Magazine* are all printed in the USA and do not make provision for the various cultural and language differences of the African churches. It was recommended that information and material distributed by the AME Church be improved to accommodate the needs and aspirations of the Africa church. Furthermore, the committee recommended that a writing ministry for the church in Africa be implemented and that an operational office similar to the Sunday School Union be established in Africa to address the cultural and vernacular needs of the African Church. As was the case in America, a joint Christian Education Conference should be implemented in Africa too.

9.6.8 Church growth and evangelism

In its report this committee emphasised that evangelism is the lifeblood and pulse of the church especially in Africa where the AME Church was minimally involved in evangelism. The committee was of the opinion that serious consideration be given to this neglected area through training and the availability of resources. It furthermore recommended that the African Jurisdictional Council should make deliberate efforts to elect a Director of Evangelism to serve the Continent of Africa.

9.6.9 Chaplain and prison ministry

This committee spelled out the urgency of seminars and workshops to train chaplains to serve in prisons, hospitals and the armed forces. The limited number of chaplains from the AME Church in Africa was a grave concern and the African Jurisdictional Council had to give serious attention to commence with this neglected entity within the church.

9.6.10 Budget and finance

The following proposals were tabled by this committee:

- That each Episcopal District in Africa is encouraged to develop Internet Websites for information dissemination, and that a Director is elected by the African Jurisdictional Council to assist all Episcopal Districts in designing its one website.
- That the financial budget to be drawn up for the implementation of the websites be the responsibility of the executive commission of the African Jurisdictional Council and that currency discrepancy also be taken into consideration.
- That the African Jurisdictional Council works on a plan to merge some of the committees in order to cut the expenses for future meetings.
- That the committee design a newsletter and distribute the same to inform both the African constituency and the Connection about the developments within the African Jurisdictional Council.
- That the African Jurisdictional Council should seek to establish ecumenical relationship with the All Africa Council of Churches.

9.7 Concluding remarks on the First Conference of the African Jurisdictional Council

It should be noted that the first general meeting of the African Jurisdictional Council was held to deliberate on issues affecting the life of the AME Church in Africa and that the work of the different committees was actually regarded as a working document for further discussions. It was against this background that the first general meeting of the African Jurisdictional Council at its closure adopted a resolution that each Episcopal District must hold its own meetings to further discuss the proposals made during the general meeting. The intention was to review, amend and even reconstruct the work of the various committees if necessary. It was further proposed that its findings should be tabled at the first executive meeting of the African Jurisdictional Council to be held in 2002.⁹¹

9.8 Second Conference of the African Jurisdictional Council

9.8.1 Setting the scene

The first conference of the Executive Board of the African Jurisdictional Council was held from 26 to 28 August 2002.⁹² The task of this conference was to discuss the proposals offered by the various Episcopal Districts in Africa; to deliberate on the proposals entertained by the various committees at the first conference of the African Jurisdictional Council; to work on the mission and purpose of the African Jurisdictional Council and to design a budget for the continuity of the African Jurisdictional Council. It should be noted that the General Board upon discussing the findings of the first African Jurisdictional Council elected Bishops Garnett Henning, McKinley Young, Larry Kirkland and Dr. George Flower, Director of Global Missions, Dr. Richard Lewis and Dr. Dennis Dickerson, Director of Research and Scholarship as representatives of the executive committee together with all bishops assigned to Africa, the corresponding secretary and the financial secretary of the Global Development Council as constituted body of the executive committee of the Global Development Council.⁹³

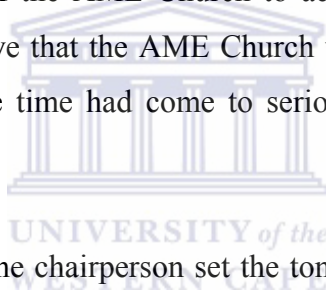
⁹¹ File no. 22.22 of AC Booyse under the heading Meeting of the African Jurisdictional Council held from 17 – 19 January 2001 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

⁹² File no. 22.5 of AC Booyse – *minutes of the first executive Board of the African Jurisdictional Council*.

⁹³ File no. 22.16 of AC Booyse under the heading *Minutes of the Executive Board of the African Jurisdictional Council*, dated 26 – 28 August 2002.

The chairperson, Bishop Adam Jefferson, refreshed the memory of the meeting on a resolution taken at the General Board meeting of 1981 that a task force under the leadership of Bishop Hamilton Brookins be organised to start a process of dialogue with the leadership of the Episcopal Districts in Africa which took place in Nairobi, Kenya. Regrettably, the AME Church never acted upon the findings of that meeting. Furthermore, the findings of the African Summit conducted under the leadership of Bishop Herald Senatlé produced legislation for the development of the AME Church in Africa. Unfortunately, the General Conference of 2000 only acknowledged that information as a study document. Instead the General Conference decided to introduce the African Jurisdictional Council as a mechanism to properly work on the development of the AME Church in Africa.

The reluctance on the side of the AME Church to act in an amicable spirit made the AME Church in Africa believe that the AME Church was not interested in its plight for development and that the time had come to seriously address the needs of the people in Africa.⁹⁴



The introductory speech of the chairperson set the tone for further deliberations and debate. Workshops were organised to first and foremost deliberate on the mission and purpose of the African Jurisdictional Council in conjunction with the mission and purpose of the AME Church that should be presented to the General Board of 2003.

9.8.2 Mission and purpose of the African Jurisdictional Council

The meeting was divided into smaller groups to work on the mission and purpose of the African Jurisdictional Council. This had to be aligned with the overall mission of the AME Church, which reads as follows: “The mission and purpose of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ’s liberating gospel through word and deed. It shall be the duty of the AME Church to seek out and

⁹⁴ File no. 22.16 of AC Booyse under the heading *Minutes of the Second Meeting of the African Jurisdictional Council*, dated 26 – 28 August 2002.

save the lost, and to serve the needy through a continuing programme of preaching the gospel, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the homeless, cheering the fallen, providing jobs for the jobless, administering to the needs of those in prison, hospitals, nursing homes, mental institutions, and encouraging thrift and economic advancement” (Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2000: 16).

It is against this background that the African Jurisdictional Council had to draft its mission statement.

The reports of the various groups were condensed into the following statement:

In humble submission to God, we the people of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Africa hereby declare that there is a need to create a new order in which the members of Africa will be entitled to govern themselves. In order to secure the achievement of this goal, the members of the Church in Africa should be mandated to adopt a new legislation in accordance with Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The mission and purpose of the African Jurisdictional Council should therefore be to:

- Implement the mission and purpose of the African Methodist Episcopal Church as stated in the Book of Discipline, page 16 of the year 2000.
- Organise itself as the highest body in Africa and should be amenable to the General Conference, together with the African Methodist Episcopal Church organisational structures.
- Unite all African Methodist Episcopal Churches in Africa under one umbrella body representing African interests.
- Develop Bishops of African descent.
- Function as a semi-independent wing under the General Conference with the following division: A Council of Bishops for Africa; A General Board; A Judicial Board and an All African Conference.
- Elect representatives to the General Conference in accordance with the AME Doctrine and Discipline.
- Ensure that the General Board follows the structure of the General Board of the Connectional Church.

- Ensure that the Judicial Board serves as the Judicial authority in Africa under the auspices of the Judicial Council of the Connectional Church.
- Authorise the bishops serving in Africa as the executive branch of the African Jurisdictional Council with general oversight of the church in Africa during the interim of the Africa Conference and the General Conference.
- Secure that representatives to the Africa Conference be according to the rank of election, and that an equal number of ministerial and lay representatives be elected by each Annual Conference in Africa. Other official representatives to the Africa Conference shall be the General Officers serving in Africa, college and University Presidents in Africa, Deans and Presidents of Theological Seminaries in Africa and Presidents of Episcopal organisations in Africa.⁹⁵

9.9 Recommendations of the Second Conference of the African Jurisdictional Council

The committees established at the first general meeting of the African Jurisdictional Council were reduced in order to ensure that the work be streamlined. Furthermore the committees were renamed as *commissions* to fall in line with the vocabulary used in the AME Church.

The executive body during its first session changed the name of the Health Committee to that of The Commission on Health and Social Action in order to make its services available to the entire community where the AME Church is situated. The Commission recommended an approach where the AME Church should be seen as a vehicle for promoting health in totality and endorse a holistic Christian health ministry. It also highlighted its responsibility for biblical motivations and planned actions as prescribed by the mission statement of the AME Church.

The Commission on Youth Concerns emphasised that it should remain its duty to investigate the concerns of the youth on the continent of Africa. It therefore recommended that the African Jurisdictional Council should not be disbanded after

⁹⁵ File no.22.16 of AC Booysse under the heading *The Executive Body of the African Jurisdictional Council*.

2004 in order to carry out the mission of the Church in Africa. It furthermore recommended that young people between the ages 14 – 19 be given the opportunity to serve as connectional officers.

The Commission on Chaplaincy reported that the African Jurisdictional Council should be perceptive in addressing the empowerment and skills development of chaplains in Africa. It also recommended that should the president be elected from the USA, the vice-president should be elected from Africa and vice versa to maintain equality.

The Commission on Conference Boundaries and Redistricting acknowledged the need to re-organise some of the Episcopal Districts in Africa. However, no work on this could be done due to the unavailability of exact statistics as well as the economic strengths of the Episcopal Districts. The commission therefore felt that the re-organisation of Episcopal Districts as presented in Harare, Zimbabwe be suspended until correct information is available.

The Commission on Finance presented a funding model for the work of the African Jurisdictional Council. In terms of this model the various Episcopal districts had to make annual financial contributions as follows: 14th Episcopal District (US \$1,000), the 15th Episcopal District (US \$3,500), the 17th Episcopal District (US\$2, 000), the 18th Episcopal District (US\$2, 000) and the 19th Episcopal District (US \$5, 000).

The Commission on Education, Training, Christian Education, Research and Development focused on Episcopal Districts that had been neglected and proposed a programme that would bring all Episcopal Districts on par. The commission noted the wide disparity in education between the American and African churches and recommended that serious attention be given by the General Church to expand the educational facilities in Africa.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Information on the various commission reports has been taken from the minutes of the *Executive Board of the African Jurisdictional Council* dated 26 – 28 August 2002. File no. 22.16 of AC Booyse..

The Executive Board of the African Jurisdictional Council noted that eight bishops would retire at the General Conference of 2004, which would leave the church with eight vacancies. It therefore resolved that a resolution be formulated that four of the vacancies be allocated to candidates for the bishopric from Africa. To streamline the process of election, each Episcopal District in Africa should only present one candidate for bishop in 2004. In the event that an Episcopal District had more than one candidate running for the office, the African Jurisdictional Council recommended that the Episcopal District hold a primary election to reduce the number of candidates to only one.

It furthermore recommended that at least 25% of General Officers be elected from Africa since no General Officers had ever been elected from Africa. In order to achieve those goals the Executive Board proposed that all African Districts increase their contributions to the General Budget of the General AME Church.

The Executive Board also entertained the 23rd Article of Religion as prescribed by the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Executive Board resolved that the 23rd Article of Religion be so designed to include all countries where the African Methodist Episcopal Church has been established.⁹⁷

9.10 Third Conference of the African Jurisdictional Council

This conference took place from the 15 to 16 January 2003 in Cape Town.⁹⁸ Although this was an open meeting for all members of the AME Church in Africa, and everybody was allowed to participate in all discussions, only the official representatives had the right to vote on matters affecting the life of the African Jurisdictional Council. The purpose of this conference was to report the findings of the Johannesburg conference and also to structure preliminary legislations that should be presented to the General Board meeting of June 2003 which should have been held in the USA.

⁹⁷ File no.22.16 of AC Booyse under the heading Minutes of the *Executive Board of the African Jurisdictional Council*, dated 26 – 28 August 2002.

⁹⁸ File no. 22.21 of AC Booyse under the heading African Jurisdictional Council, Cape Town, 15 - 16 January 2003.

The chairperson, Bishop Adam Richardson, addressed the conference by putting emphasis on the uniqueness of Africa with its capacity and the great opportunities it presented for the developmental growth of the AME Church. He reiterated that the time was long overdue to recognise the potential of African leaders and expressed the willingness of the General Church to embark on such an endeavour. He furthermore emphasised that Africa was characterised by a youthful population with untapped resource potential and that the AME Church could not afford to ignore the challenge to embark on a programme that would ensure maximum expansion and growth. Africa also faced enormous challenges such as HIV/AIDS, poverty, suffering and economic injustices which afford the AME Church the opportunity to expeditiously implement the schematic programmes endorsed by previous conferences.⁹⁹

This Conference dealt with all the commission reports from the Second Conference of the African Jurisdictional Council. After lengthy deliberations on the reports of the commissions, the conference elected a committee to study, revise, redraw and rephrase the commissions' reports with the purpose of formulating appropriate legislation.

The Conference was under the impression that the name African Jurisdictional Council placed a limitation on the work of the Council in that it is restricted as a law making body for Africans. It therefore resolved that the name be changed to the African Development Council which would have greater autonomy to address both legislative issues and developmental planning for the church in Africa. All committees working on legislation for the July 2003 General Board meeting had to change their language to the African Development Council.

9.11 The African Development Council (ADC)¹⁰⁰

9.11.1 Mission and purpose

It was decided to retain the mission and purpose for the *African Development Council* as presented at the Johannesburg meeting without any amendment, but that a section on the historical background of the AME Church in Africa be included in the book of

⁹⁹ File 22.21 of AC Booyse under the heading *African Jurisdictional Council* held in Cape Town.

¹⁰⁰ File 22.21 of AC Booyse under the heading *African Jurisdictional Council* held in Cape Town.

law (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2000: 5 - 9).

9.11.2 Conference- and Episcopal boundaries

At the Harare Conference a preliminary report was tabled in connection with the proposed Conference- and Episcopal Boundaries. The Conference held in Cape Town resolved that the boundaries presented by the Harare Conference should remain, unless either the General Board of 2003 or the General Conference of 2004 made any changes.

9.11.3 Election of four indigenous bishops

As has been discussed previously, eight bishops had to retire from active Episcopal service. The African Development Council retained the previous resolution of the African Jurisdictional Council that four bishops from Africa be elected at the General Conference of 2004.

9.11.4 Field representatives

A decision was made by the African Development Council at the Cape Town Conference that the commissions on Youth Concerns; Research, History and Development; Budget and Finance, Health and Social Action, Educational Institutions; Educational Literature and Church growth and development be deleted, but be placed under the auspices of the already existing commissions of the Global AME Church. This in effect meant that field workers from Africa be assigned to perform the same duties as the Commission chairpersons, but within the framework of the African context. These commission chairpersons are elected every four years at the General Conference and are referred to as the General Officers of the Global AME Church.

The Treasurer of the AME Church Finance Department for instance must compile a budget and allocate funds as prescribed by the General Conference to all General Officers to perform their duties properly and according to the guidelines of the AME Church. The General officers are answerable to the General Board, the Bishops' Council and the General Conference. General Officers are eligible to run for re-

election after the four-year term has expired (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church, 2004: 136).

It is imperative to offer a brief summary of the General Officers and their duties in order to understand the objectives of the African Development Council to present legislation on field representatives for the continent of Africa in order to ensure inclusiveness within the total programme of the Global AME Church.

- The Executive Director of Research and Scholarship also referred to as the historiographer of the AME Church, shall administer the historical research programme of the church on a continuous basis. He/she is furthermore responsible to appoint persons to quarterly produce the AME Review, an educational publication on the history of the church and relevant worldwide concerns that have an impact on the life of the AME Church. He/she is also responsible to establish a resource centre and an archive for prospective researchers on the AME Church history (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 153 - 154).
- The Treasurer of the AME Church Finance Department is responsible to compile a budget for the overall work of the Global AME Church and to ensure that all Episcopal Districts make annual contributions in order to meet all expenditures of the global AME Church (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 142).
- The Secretary of the Sunday school Union is the chief executive officer for the publications of journals, souvenir brochures and books published by the various commissions of the church. No publication without the sanction of the secretary of the Sunday school Union shall be distributed (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 149).
- The Secretary-Treasurer of Global Witness and Missions is responsible for the educational programmes of the church and to ensure that mission schools and churches throughout the connection are financially and otherwise supported (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 169).
- The Secretary-Treasurer of Christian Education has the responsibility to ensure that programmes are developed that is comprehensive and unified for Christian Education. Among his/her duties is to produce quarterly

programmes for the Sunday school and Youth Departments for the Global AME Church and to ensure that these publications are distributed throughout the connection (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 184).

- The Executive Director for Church Growth and Development has to ensure that all churches within the AME Church be trained in evangelism in order to enhance church growth and to design programmes that develop congregations financially and to implement community programmes and projects that are sustainable (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 151).
- The Editor of the Christian Recorder is in charge of the AME newspapers by supervising and preparing publications concerning the AME Church (cf Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2004: 148).

However, in order to ensure participation in these commissions a resolution was adopted that field representatives from Africa be elected that would work directly under these various commission chairpersons.

9.11.5 The 23rd Article of Religion

The ADC formulated a proposal for adoption to the General Conference of 2004 that the 23rd Article of Religion of the African Methodist Episcopal Church be changed to give recognition to all countries where the AME Church exists.

9.11.6 The Commission on Health

The African Development Council stressed with deep concern the negligence on the part of the Global AME Church to embark on programmes that would assist Africa with its enormous health problems. In this regard a resolution was tabled that a Commission of Health for Africa at the General Conference of 2004 be elected to address the needs of health issues and to implement health facilities.¹⁰¹

9.12 The General Board meeting of 2003

This meeting was held from 26 to 27 June 2003 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The report of the African Development Council which included among others the

¹⁰¹ File no. 22.21 of AC Booysse under the heading *African Jurisdictional Council* held in Cape Town.

proposed legislation to commence with the development of the AME Church was tabled. After discussing the impact it would have on the life of the AME Church, the General Board proposed that all legislation concerning Africa be forwarded to the General Conference of 2004.¹⁰² It should however be noted that although the General Board meeting adopted all legislation proposed by Africa, the General Conference as the highest decision-making body makes the final decision.

With the positive approach of the General Board meeting of 2003 the Executive Board of the African Development Council decided to conduct as many meetings as possible to advocate the importance of the passing of the proposed legislation at the General Conference to be held in 2004. In Africa meetings were held in Cape Town, Lusaka, Gaborone, Johannesburg and Harare.

9.13 The General Conference of 2004

The General Conference of 2004 was held from 30 June to 7 July 2004 in Indianapolis, Indiana. Among others, the legislation forwarded by the African Development Council was dealt with at length. After the third reading of all the legislation will have a direct bearing on the growth and development of the AME Church in Africa, the General Conference of 2004 approved a number of important resolutions. These are discussed in the sub-sections below.

9.13.1 The election of indigenous bishops

A motion was passed that instead of electing four bishops from Africa, only three bishops should be elected (cf Minutes of the General Conference of 2004: 154). The General Conference furthermore resolved that the three indigenous bishops be elected on a separate ballot apart from the elections of the American candidates and that before the election procedure candidates from Africa should sign a covenant which entailed the following:

- That indigenous bishops elected be assigned to Africa,
- And that the remuneration of African elected bishops be less than the salaries of the American bishop.¹⁰³

¹⁰² File no.22.20 of AC Booyse under the heading *Legislations to the General Board meeting in 2003*.

¹⁰³ The covenant signed by the African bishops must be read in conjunction with the budget proposal.

To fully understand the content of the covenant signed by the African candidate for the bishopric, it is imperative to describe of the covenant or oath in its full context which reads as follows:

“Each indigenous leader who is elected to the episcopacy covenants to serve in Districts 14 – 19 until the time of replacement. This unique arrangement does not in any way violate the principle of the General Superintendency. The conception of the General Superintendency preserves the principle that each bishop elected to the office by the General Conference has equal status, equal function, equal responsibility, and is consecrated with equality at the same status with other elected bishops. It must be noted that where a bishop is assigned does not materially compromise the inherent validity of the General Superintendency. Each assignment is to be understood as an administrative action recommended by the Episcopal Committee with the concurrence of the General Conference, and in the interim by the Council of Bishops.

I hereby sign this covenant.

Signature” (Minutes of the General Conference 2004: 636)

In connection with the discrepancy of salaries the General Secretary-Treasurer of the AME Church made provision in the budget for eighteen American bishops each receive a monthly salary of \$4 952 and the three African bishops each receive a monthly salary of \$2 129 (Minutes of the General Conference of 2004: 331). The difference in monthly salary is due to the fact that the African bishops were elected on a separate ballot to allow the inclusion of African bishops.

The bishops elected for Africa at the General Conference of 2004 were Wilfred Messiah (from the 19th district), Paul Kawimbe (from the 17th district) and David Daniels, Jr (from the 14th district) (cf Minutes of the General Conference of 2004: 217).

9.13.2 The 23rd Article of Religion

Although the General Conference acknowledged the discrepancy of this article, it resolved that the article remain in its original form since any changes to the article would constitute an attempt to tamper with the doctrine of the AME Church as set forth in the 29 Articles of Religion. However, to accommodate and recognise civil obedience in countries outside of the United States, the General Conference adopted a resolution that a footnote be formulated to include civil obedience in countries where AME Churches exist outside of the USA. The footnote reads as follows:

“It is acknowledged that the African Methodist Episcopal Church was organised in the United States. However, the AME Church is an international Christian body with constituents around the world, and with a Christian witness that is both parochial and global. Article 23 presumes the duty, loyalty and patriotism of our constituents, as citizens of sovereign nations, to obey just laws, to recognise and respect the organisational structure, and to uphold the Constitution of the country or nation-state in which our members hold the rights and privileges of citizenship. Furthermore, obedience to Civil Government is one of the principal duties of all persons, and was honoured by our Lord and His Apostles. Though differing in form and policy, all just governments rightfully command the obedience, loyalty, support, and defense of all Christian men and women as they control and protect” (Minutes of the General Conference of 2004: 363-364).

9.13.3 Field representatives

The legislation of Field Representatives from Africa to assist the General Officers in their duties in Africa was adopted by the General Conference of 2004 provided that it should be done without fiscal remunerations until such time that the budget of the General Church makes provision for salaries paid to them. The General Conference furthermore legislated that the respective General Officers assign their own field workers in Africa (cf Minutes of the General Conference of 2004: 137).

9.13.4 The African Development Council

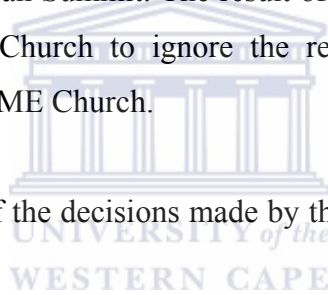
It was approved that the African Development Council continue with its work, but that the name be changed to accommodate all Episcopal Districts outside the borders

of the United States. The General Conference resolved that the named be changed to the Global Development Council in order to include the 16th Episcopal District which comprises of the Suriname-Guyana-, Windward Islands-, Virgin Islands-, Dominican Republic- Haiti-, Jamaica- and London Annual Conferences (cf Minutes of the General Conference of 2004: 183).

9.14 Conclusion

As can be ascertained from the above information, the AME Church leadership in Africa has made concerted efforts for the inclusion and constructive participation of the African districts in the overall programme of the global AME Church. The meeting of the African Summit in 2000 paved the way for constructive debates on the development of the districts of the AME Church in Africa. Furthermore, the African Jurisdictional Council and the African Development Council streamlined the resolutions made by the African Summit. The result of all these deliberations made it impossible for the General Church to ignore the recommendations made by the African constituency of the AME Church.

In chapter 10 the outcomes of the decisions made by the General Conference of 2004 will be evaluated.



Chapter 10

Conclusion and recommendations

10.1 Introduction

The focus of this study was to identify, describe and assess the configuration of factors which contributed to such tensions in the relationship between the South African and American districts of the AME Church, which led to five schisms. In this chapter the common causes for these schisms will be discussed, parallels between these schism drawn and the consequences and impact highlighted. The chapter will be concluded with a contemporary view of the schisms and certain recommendations made.

10.2 Critical questions on the schisms

10.2.1 What were the common causes for the tensions?

Based on the evidence presented in Chapters four to eight, it appears that the common causes for the tension between the American and South African districts are unfulfilled expectations and inappropriate leadership styles.

The South African socio-economic reality was that blacks were educationally and economically disadvantaged when compared to their white counterparts. Blacks were denied proper education and excluded from economic empowerment. Out of this disadvantaged position black Christians in South Africa found the AME Church of America appealing as a vehicle to assist them in their aspirations of an own identity and religious freedom. The AME Church in America was already well established and advanced at the time of the inception of black churches in South Africa. The AME Church in America already possessed quality church buildings, community projects, primary and secondary schools and colleges, universities and theological seminaries. This is the reason why Charlotte Manye and a disbanded group were overwhelmed when they made contact with the AME Church in America.

The black South African Christians assumed that affiliation with the AME Church in America would enable them to achieve the prosperity the AME Church in America already enjoyed. These expectations were fuelled by the belief that the South African

government and white missionaries regarded them as unable to govern, lead or care for themselves.

The antecedents for the various schisms that created the unfulfilled expectations could be described as follows:

- Bishop Turner's promise to erect the proposed college for blacks in South Africa caused much dissatisfaction and a perception that the AME Church in America is not trustworthy.
- The denial of indigenous leadership opportunities by Bishop Coppin which led to the second schism.
- The expectation of being treated as equals and the experience of unacceptable attitudes of superiority by the African Americans lead to the third schism.
- The expectation of economic empowerment and being able to manage economically sustainable projects came to naught when the AMEC Printing and Publishing House was declared insolvent due to Bishop Ming's interference in the matter.
- The expectation that liberation after years of apartheid would be paramount on Bishop Young's agenda led to the fifth schism.

The personality of the presiding bishops has been identified on a number of occasions as the key contributing factor towards the schisms. Turner misrepresented the economic strength of the AME Church to the South African districts which exacerbated the disappointment with the American districts. Bishop Coppin's decision to appoint African American members to represent the South African district was a motion of no confidence in indigenous leadership. This leadership style could be described as patronising and disempowering.

Bishop Smith's public views espoused after his first African trip and prior to his assignment to South Africa should have made him ineligible for the missionary field. However, his views on the inferiority of African blacks could hardly qualify him as a good leader. Both Ming and Young could be described as autocratic leaders who

continued to push through unpopular decisions without properly consulting the affected parties.

Applying Kreitner and Kinicki's (2004: 490-494) typology of conflict in organisations, the most common cause of the conflict that led to the schisms is personality conflict. This personal disagreements between the presiding bishop and either an individual or group manifested in inter-group conflict as was the case with the third, fourth and fifth schisms.

10.2.2 What are the parallels between the different schisms?

The most notable parallels between the different schisms were that:

- The African Americans regarded themselves as superior in relation with citizens of African countries.
- The South African districts failed to build a unified force and therefore made very little contribution to set the agenda for the church.
- The districts of the AME Church in South Africa regarded the African American emigrants who took up leadership positions as opportunists that did little to empower the church in South Africa.
- The districts of the AME Church in America assigned bishops who seldom consulted with the constituency of the AME Church in South Africa to the effect that programmes were enforced on the latter. Should members and ministers not support such programmes, they were either suspended or demoted.
- The districts of the AME Church in America in most cases failed to fulfil their promises towards the AME Church in South Africa, e.g. the erection of the college and elections of African born bishops and General Officers.
- There was no conflict resolution mechanism to deal with conflicts throughout the years of schism.

10.2.3 What were the consequences and impact?

The most common consequences and impact of the different schisms were that:

- The AME Church in South Africa lost thousands of members. Among them were leading politicians who would guarantee the visibility and identity of the church in South Africa.
- The South African authorities and white missionaries doubted the legitimacy of the AME Church and therefore failed to recognise its existence in the infant years of the church. Furthermore the church was harassed since the government and white missionaries accused it of proselytising and interfering with the politics of the country.
- The development of indigenous leadership was stunted through the assignment of American bishops over consecutive terms.
- Through its missionary endeavours the AME Church expanded into a number of African countries.
- Tension and insensitivity to acknowledge the leadership skills of Africans in the AME Church is another cause of the broken relationships.

10.2.4 A contemporary reflection on the different schisms

The American districts initially questioned the leadership abilities of the indigenous people of South Africa, hence their reluctance to elect African born bishops. After many years of consultations the American districts began to grasp the idea of the election of indigenous leaders, hence the election of three African-born bishops in 2004.

It was during the 2000 General Conference that the church seriously considered the vital importance to develop the Africa districts. The main objectives of the African Jurisdictional Council was among others, to develop a structure that would address the needs, aspirations, beliefs and cultures of the members of the AME Church on the continent of Africa. It also had to establish a process for developing both clergy and laity leadership activities. Furthermore, the AJC had to negotiate with the Episcopal authorities to secure leadership positions within the hierarchical structures of the church for persons from Africa. An initial four-year timeframe was allowed to achieve these objectives.

The establishment of the Global Development Council is another positive outcome. The Connectional church is now constantly engaged in discussions with the Global Development Council, which was officially established at the General Conference of 2004 on the way forward, and although it will still take a long time, more bishops and other officers will eventually be elected to bring about parity within the global AME Church.

10.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that careful consideration be given to the assignment of bishops to the African districts due to the cultural, ethnic and socio-economic differences with the American districts. A serious effort must be initiated to identify indigenous leaders with high potential and to implement development programmes to transform the potential into capabilities. Whenever a bishop is assigned to a country of which he / she is not a citizen, it should be made compulsory for the assignee to study the social, cultural and economic conditions of that country.

All church leaders, including bishops, Presiding Elders and Pastors should be trained in conflict resolution mechanisms. In particular alternate dispute resolution methods should be included in this training programme.

A needs assessment should be done by the assigned bishop to determine the key programmes and the priorities. There should be consultation with the local leaders in determining the pressing needs and to establish priorities.

The spirit of self-help that was so successfully implemented by Bishop Robinson should be revived to empower local churches to develop their own economic programmes. This approach should be formalised and extensive training should be given to all church leaders.

Communication should be improved between the Episcopal office and the rest of the church members. A formal communication plan should be made compulsory for each bishop. This plan should not only make provision for the different stakeholders of the church, but also take cultural differences in communication into consideration. A concerted effort to improve organisational communication in the AME Church will

greatly reduce suspicions about motives of role players and contribute towards ensuring that the entire church is united around a common vision.



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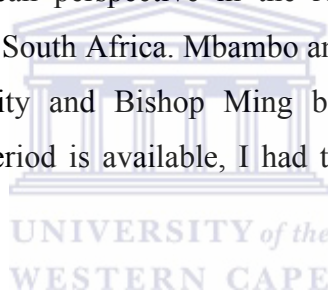
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The interview with Coan was conducted to determine the growth and difficulties experienced from an American perspective in the AME Church in South Africa during his nine year tenure in South Africa. Mbambo and Warner were key-persons in the debacle between the laity and Bishop Ming between 1976-1980. Since no documentation during that period is available, I had to rely on the oral analysis by these leaders.



Interviews with the rest of the group were conducted to determine whether the Concerned Alliance was planning to secede from the AME Church during the administration of Bishop Young. Although I was a member of the Concerned Alliance, it was difficult to establish the way forward for the Concerned Alliance since it pledged at all times its loyalty towards the AME Church.

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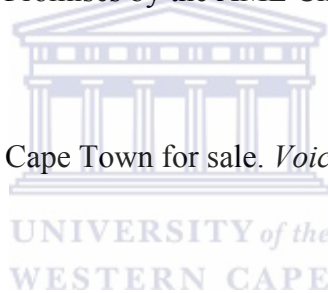
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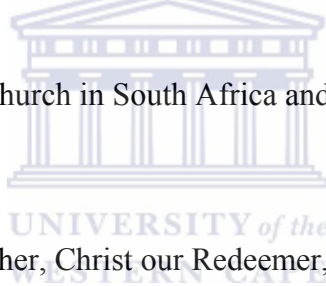
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