

THE DEVELOPMENT OF METHODISM
IN NATAL WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO THE 'INDIAN MISSION'
BY
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To Elaine Audrey, my wife
and especially for
Donnette Rene, my daughter
and Craig Erwin, my son
and their generation .

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ABSTRACT

This study on the development of Methodism in Natal with particular reference to the Indian mission records the most significant events in the history of the mission from its inception in 1862 until its dissolution as the 'Indian Mission' in 1972. This study indicates that the growth in the initial period was substantial and this must be attributed to Revd Ralph Stott and his son Revd Simon Horner Stott who were appointed by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to pioneer the mission. Equally significant is the role played by Indian pioneers who in no small way aided the development and consolidated the Indian Mission. Among them was Mr John Choonoo, a catechist who having served with the Church Missionary Society for some fifteen years in Mauritius came to Natal in 1881. Revd Theophilus Subrahmanyam, a Brahmin converted to Christianity came from Madras, India and served the mission between 1908-1911. Mr John Thomas, who later became an ordained Methodist minister, arrived in Natal in 1883 and pioneered the Indian mission in Pietermaritzburg. In addition the mission was fortunate in having a dedicated group of lay Indian members who rendered unstinting service to the mission.

The period that followed the pioneering phase reveals that once a worshipping community had been established, numerical growth became less important and concentration shifted to nurturing new converts. In the first half of this century the emphasis of the Indian Mission was on the planting of the various churches while in the second half development took place in newly proclaimed

Indian townships created through the implementation of the Group Areas Act.

This study reveals that the Indian Mission pioneered Indian education in Natal and was responsible for the erection of some sixteen schools. In addition the churches of the Indian mission led in creating non-racial circuits and thus proved that such circuits can function effectively. The Indian mission played a key role in breaking down racial barriers and eliminating racial prejudices in this way.

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INTRODUCTION

The central aim of this study is to record the development of Methodism in Natal with particular reference to the Indian Mission. This mission came into being in 1862 and continued until 1972. In this study attention has been given to its development and the reasons for the various divisions and merges that occurred with other Indian and White Methodist churches.

The study was prompted firstly by two comments made in Christian Indians in Natal 1860-1911 (1983) where Prof J.B. Brain mentions '... the need for the various denominations to undertake research on their early history ...' and her hope that '... an Indian Christian ... will provide more information on the contribution made by individual Christians ...' (p.248). This study attempts to provide some insight into the history of the Indian Mission and does justice to those who pioneered the mission by detailing their life and work. Secondly, what also prompted this study is the paucity of documentary historical sources on the subject of the Indian Mission. Where literary references are made they are either brief or merely incidental, for example, Revd Joseph Whiteside's monumental work on the History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa (1906) dispenses with the Indian Mission in a couple of pages although the book contains some 475 pages. Similarly Revd William C. Holden's work on A Brief History of Methodism and of Methodist Missions in South Africa (1877) mentions the Indian Mission in two paragraphs in a book of approximately 650 pages. Prof Leslie A. Hewson's work, An Introduction to South African Methodists (1950) deals with the

Indian Mission in a paragraph only. In attempting this study many insights were gained through interviews and through discussions with people who have at some stage been involved with the Indian Mission over the years and whose forebears have been instrumental in the development of the mission and in it's contribution to the Indian community in Natal.

In the second half of this century the original Indian Mission, because of unwieldiness, began to relinquish societies and negotiated for their incorporation into circuits nearest to them so that more adequate pastoral care could be maintained. This led to the subsequent formation of non-racial Methodist circuits in accordance with the Church's stance of being 'one and undivided'.

The first chapter is a brief survey of the situation in the colony of Natal prior to the arrival of the Indian immigrants, from 1860 onward. Mention is made of the response of the various Christian denominations as they sought to minister to the immigrants. The second chapter details the beginnings of Methodism in eighteenth century England following the industrial revolution, the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (hereafter referred to as W.M.M.S.), the arrival of Methodists and commencement of Methodist missions in Southern Africa, as well as the arrival of the Revd Ralph Stott, the pioneer of the Indian Mission in Natal. The third chapter focuses on the Durban area and details the role of the other pioneer missionaries. Special mention is made of Mr John Choonoo who served as a catechist and Revd Theophiluis Subrahmanyam, the

first Indian Methodist minister appointed to Natal. Chapter four focuses on the mission as it extended its activities to the Natal South Coast while chapter five concentrates on the establishment of missionary work on the Natal North Coast. Quite independently of the Durban and Coast Indian Methodist Mission was the establishment of missionary work in Pietermaritzburg and chapter six traces the beginning of that mission. Mention is made of the role of Mr John Thomas who pioneered the mission there and became the first Indian minister to be ordained in South Africa. The missionaries of the Indian Mission, were pioneers of Indian education and chapter seven mentions the schools that were started and the unique contribution the mission made in the realm of education.

The final chapter assesses the factors that impeded growth, the impact of Indian missionaries, the role of women in the mission and the drastic effects that the implementation of the Group Areas Act had on the Indian Mission. Mention is made of the manner in which the mission rose to the challenge and developed work and erected churches in newly proclaimed Indian residential areas.

CHAPTER 1

THE ARRIVAL OF THE INDIANS INTO NATAL

1.1 Natal prior to Indian Immigration

The occasion for the arrival of Indians was provided by the development of the sugar industry in Natal and the serious need to overcome difficulties in obtaining labour. Natal was annexed as a British Colony in 1843¹. Following the annexation, the Dutch, fearing the threats of the Zulus, uncertainty over land claims and general dissatisfaction with the British authorities, decided to leave Natal². This exodus of Dutch inhabitants reduced the number of Whites of Dutch extraction in Natal. The remaining White population in Natal was by now so small that it necessitated the inauguration of various schemes to attract more Whites to the region. Under the scheme introduced by Joseph C. Burne³ an Irish speculator about 2500 British immigrants came to Natal and took to farming and the cultivation of sugar cane. The first census of Durban in 1852, shows a White population of 7500⁴.

In 1850 a British immigrant Edmund Morewood planted some sugar

¹Lacor-Gayet, R.: A History of South Africa, Translated by S. Hardman, 1977, Cassell Printers, London, p.102

²Muller, C.F.L.: Five Hundred Years, A History of South Africa, 1971, National Book Printers, Cape Town, p.214

³Brookes, E.H. and Webb, C de B.: A History of Natal, 1960, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, p.66

⁴Muller, p.217-218

cane on his estate at Umhlali on the Natal North Coast and a year later reaped his first crop¹. Following Morewood's success other farmers took to cultivating sugar cane and by 1858 the sugar industry was producing approximately 5 tons of sugar annually². The climate on the Natal Coast proved ideal for sugar cane cultivation and the entire industry held out good prospects, provided adequate labour could be secured.

Although there was a sizeable indigenous Black population in Natal at that time, the White farmers experienced difficulty securing their labour. Historians have documented a number of reasons for the White farmers being unable to tap this vast labour resource³.

Suggestions were made to introduce foreign so-called Coloured labour, immigration of labourers from England, Chinese labour, labourers from Java and Malaya, recruiting Amatonga labourers from Portuguese East Africa, 'Negroes' from the Northern states of America, and even boys from the orphanages in England⁴. The inability of the authorities to successfully implement these

¹Thompson, L.M.: Indian Immigration into Natal 1860-1872, 1952, Archives Yearbook for South Africa, Cape Town, Vol. 2, p.4

²Pachai, B.: The International Aspects of the South African Indian Question 1860-1971, 1971, C Struik (Pty) Ltd, Cape Town, p.3

³Palmer, M.: Natal's Indian Problem, n.d. Society of Friends of Africa, Johannesburg, p.4. See also Brookes and Webb, p.81, and Burrows, H.R.: Indian Life and Labour in Natal, 1943, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, p.1

⁴Ferguson-Davie, C.J.: The Early History of Indians in Natal, n.d, South African Institute of Race Relations, Durban, p.3-5. See also Pachai, p.4, Brookes and Webb, p.82, and an article in The Natal Mercury, 5 April 1860.

suggestions led to the White farmers becoming desperate. They now argued that the only way to avert a major labour catastrophe in the Colony of Natal was to exploit the "inexhaustible reservoirs of the East...'¹, that is, India.

Favourable reports had been received by the White farmers of the successful introduction of Indian labour into Mauritius in 1834². Similar reports were obtained of Indian labour in use from the British colonies of Jamaica, British Guiana and Trinidad, as well as from the French colonies of Reunion, Martinique, Guadelope and French Guiana³.

As a result of these reports and in view of the other suggestions not being implemented, the farmers began to give serious consideration to the possibility of securing Indian labour and by 1855 sought the assistance of Sir George Grey, the Governor of the Cape, to negotiate on their behalf. Grey, recognising the advantages that successful sugar cane cultivation would have for the Colony of Natal, instructed his Colonial Secretary to negotiate with the Indian Government. Simultaneously, Grey sought the assistance of the British Government to influence the Indian Government to sanction his proposal for labour. This tripartite negotiations culminated with the British Government, who was the dominant partner in that it had political control over the governments of Natal and India signing an agreement in 1859

¹Pachai, p.4

²Muller, p.220

³Brain, J.B.: Christian Indians in Natal 1860-1911. An Historical and Statistical Study, 1983, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, p.3

permitting Indian emigration into Natal¹.

The first group of 340 immigrants sailed from Madras on board the 'Truro' and anchored off Durban on 16 November 1860. The 'Belvedere' having sailed from the port of Calcutta arrived shortly afterwards with 304 immigrants. The majority were agricultural labourers in India and because of the socio-economic deprivation after the emancipation of slaves in 1833, chose to emigrate from India when such opportunities presented themselves². There were two groups who emigrated, namely, the indentured labourers and a group who came as 'free' or 'passenger' Indians³. The latter came at their own expense under the ordinary immigration laws of the colony.

On their arrival in Natal an advertisement appeared in the local newspaper, *The Natal Mercury*, on the 27 November 1860, requesting estate owners desirous of employing immigrants to contact the Immigration Agent, Mr M.E. Tatham, for the purpose of selecting those whom they wished to employ.

The majority were contracted to various tea and sugar estates along the coastal belt of Natal such as Empangeni, Amatikulu, Stanger, Darnall, Kearsney and Mount Edgecombe in the North and Illovo, Sezela and Port Shepstone in the South. Others were

¹Pachai, B and Bhana, S.: A Documentary History of Indian South Africans, 1984, David Philip Publishers, Cape Town, p.2

²Pillay, L.V., Marimutoo, V.E., Singh, I.D., Chengalroyen, Y.: History 2000, 1986, Nasou Ltd, Goodwood, p.163

³Pachai, B. and Bhana, S.: p.2

employed in the coal mines in Northern Natal and on the railways¹. Immigration continued until 1866 when it was temporarily stopped because of an economic depression in Natal. There was also a slump in the sugar industry following the American Civil War. This slump impoverished the estate owners and consequently the Indian immigrants were also hard hit. Many of them became unemployed and those immigrants returning to India after completing their period of indenture complained bitterly about the violations of conditions of their contracts. One of the conditions, for instance, stipulated that those who desired to return to India after their ten year period of indenture would be entitled to a free passage back, and those choosing to remain would be granted Crown Lands equivalent to the cost of the return passage. In effect only 53 of about 13000 'free' Indians received their grants of Crown Lands².

Allegations were made of wages being withheld and gratuities not being given³. General living conditions left much to be desired in that some estate owners provided barracks-type houses; the number of rooms were insufficient; no electricity was provided; no adequate provision was made for unmarried women; little privacy existed for married people; no consideration was given to caste distinction in the allotting of accommodation; water was obtained from communal taps; sanitation was poor; there was lack

¹Choonoo, A.J.: A Retrospect of the Activities of the Durban and Coast Methodist Indian Mission in Centenary Souvenir Brochure, 1962, Standard Printing Press, Durban, p.7

²Pachai, B.:p.8

³Brain:p.xvi, xvii, 4

of medical care; complaints of being flogged and compelled to work when ill were also made. On some estates no accommodation was provided as the immigrants were expected to construct their own dwellings and these turned out to be huts made of dried cane and mealie stalk¹. In addition complaints of police brutality and strict curfew regulations, and that their grievances were never redressed were also made. No provision was made for the erection of schools nor for the provision of education for Indian children². It was the Indian Mission that took the lead in making educational facilities available as we shall see. Due also to the dishonouring of the conditions under which immigration was introduced and the treatment Indians received from Whites, it is not difficult to understand why the Hindu tended to resist Christianity and this made the task of the Methodist pioneer missionaries of the Indian Mission that much more difficult as subsequent chapters will show.

The Natal Government, recognising that through the introduction of Indian labour sugar production increased, (from 1173 tons in 1859 to 7622 tons in 1870 and to 10172 tons in 1874)³, pleaded for the resumption of immigration. Immigration resumed in 1874 and continued until 1911 when the Indian Government finally forbade further emigration. In the 43 years of immigration a total of 152184 Indians arrived of which 2150 were of Christian

¹Ibid. See also Kuper, H.: Indian People in Natal, 1960, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, p.24 and Pillay, Marimutoo, Singh and Chengalroyen: p.164-165

²Lazarus, A.N.: The Story of Indian Primary Education 1860-1910. The Teachers' Journal, Vol xv, No 2, 1966, Standard Printing Press, Durban, p.18

³Muller:p.220

persuasion, that is 1.4%¹, 90% were Hindus, 8.5% were Muslims and the rest were Parsees, Jains and Buddhists. It is estimated that 80% of the immigrants settled in Natal², where the Indian Mission was initiated.

1.2 The Churches' Response to the Arrival of the Immigrants

By 1860 Christianity had taken root in the colony already³. Some denominations had even started congregations in smaller towns. The Dutch Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church concentrated their efforts mainly on the White population, whereas the Methodists, Anglicans and the Catholics exercised a ministry to both Whites and Blacks. At the time of the arrival of the Indians the major denominations were already engaged in mission work and were not in a position to minister to the newly arrived immigrants. Attempts to extend a ministry to the Indians would have added too much of a burden to an already heavy work load⁴. Most of the denominations worked on the assumption that once the initial contract expired the Indians would return to India and hence their reluctance to do mission work with the new immigrants.

¹Brain, p.4, 5, 244 and 247

²Pachai, p.29

³Ibid, p.193-194 see also Whiteside, J.:History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in South Africa, 1906, Juta and Co, Cape Town, p.357 and Burnett, B.B.:Anglicans in Natal, n.d., Fako Limited, Durban, p.5

⁴Ibid

1.3 The Response of Christian Denominations

Father Sabon, the resident Roman Catholic priest in Durban, was the first to make contact with the newly arrived immigrants. In a letter to his Bishop he wrote:

'...Among the Indians who are lately arrived from the Indies to be workers in Natal, there are about 50 CatholicsThey appear very intelligent and are much respectful towards a priest...Among the 350 immigrants, 50 are Catholics, 5 or 6 are Protestants. Before they leave D'Urban I will try to get the names of all the Catholics and the names of their masters¹.'

This letter by Father Sabon is obviously in marked contrast to the writings of Methodist writer Joseph Whiteside², who spoke of the immigrants as:

'...Worshipping, as they did, gods whom their books spoke of as guilty of laying, thieving and fornication, it could not be expected that their morals would be otherwise.'

The immigrants found Sabon warm, unassuming and seemingly unaffected by colour or class prejudice. He enjoyed the support of the estate owners in that they readily allowed him access to their employees³. Although it was never the intention of the Roman Catholics to evangelise the immigrants, conversion of Hindus did take place and by 1892 the number of Indian Catholics had risen to 300⁴. Many came into Catholicism as a result of

¹Allard M.J.F., :Registre de la Correspondance, p.304 Quoted by Brain, Christian Indians in Natal 1860 - 1911, p.195

²Whiteside, p.367

³Brain, p.196

⁴Jolivet, C.C.:Rapport sur le vicariat de Natal in Missions, 1893, p.481. Quoted by Brain in Christian Indians in Natal 1860 - 1911, p.199

mixed marriages (Catholic and Hindu mostly); Indian Catholic catechists were appointed and they were instrumental in effecting many conversions as they were able to relate to their fellow Indians effectively; the commencement of Roman Catholic mission schools also spread Catholicism and the ritual and symbols embodied in Roman Catholicism tended to attract Hindus.

The Anglican Church under Bishop Colenso concentrated on the conversion of the Blacks to Christianity and because of this little evangelism on the part of the Anglicans took place among the Indian immigrants¹. As a rule, in the Anglican Church, it was up to the individual priest to establish contact with the immigrants working on the sugar and tea estates, which fell within their respective parishes. Although the Anglicans were not extremely successful in effecting conversions their major contribution to the Indian community at that time was in the sphere of education. By 1886 fifteen schools for the children of immigrants and a medical clinic at St Aidans had been established².

The Lutherans did not immediately engage in any missionary endeavour among the newly arrived Indians. They only commenced missionary work in the last decade of the 19th century. Their efforts appear to have centred around their own members who had come into Natal from Kamavaipallam in the Guntur district³ of

¹Brain, p.212-220

²Ibid, p.215

³Ibid, p.220

India. Almost all of them had been converted by Hermannsburg Lutheran Missionaries in India.

Between 1860 and 1900 the Baptists who arrived in the colony of Natal joined other Protestant churches because there was no Baptist minister in Natal. A large group of Baptists arrived in 1900 and settled on Sir Liege Hulett's tea estate at Kearsney. Hulett arranged for Revd S.H. Stott to provide pastoral care for them until they were able to secure their own minister¹. Stott also ministered to another group of some 40 Baptists who sought membership in the Methodist Church on the death of their minister. After obtaining permission from the Baptist minister in Durban, Stott provided pastoral care for them until their own minister arrived in Natal². In response to a request from the Baptist community in Natal, the Telugu Baptist Home Missionary Society in Madras appointed Revd John Rungiah, who arrived in Natal in 1903. Rungiah established the first Telugu Baptist Church at Kearsney on 27 December 1903. Later churches were established at Durban, Verulam, Darnall, Stanger, Tinley Manor, Amatikulu, Dannhauser, Dundee, Hattingh Spruit and at Pietermaritzburg³. In 1911 a second minister arrived to assist Rungiah. He was the Revd V.C. Jacob and served at Kearsney and in Durban. Revd N.E. Tomlinson established churches at Park Rynie and Port Shepstone. Tomlinson, being a fluent Telugu linguist was

¹Brain, p.222

²Stott, p.110

³Rungiah, M.: Natal Indian Baptist Association. Golden Jubilee Souvenir Brochure, 1914-1964, 1964, Mercantile Printing Co., Clairwood, p.6-9

of great assistance to Rungiah. The first Baptist school was opened in Kearsney in 1904. Later schools were established at Stanger and Tinley Manor. Due to dissension the Indian Baptist Mission split. Revd Rungiah and his followers formed the Natal Telugu Baptist Association and the group under Revd V.C. Jacob continued as the Indian Baptist Union. Both groups continue to be active in Natal.

1.4 Conclusion

What emerges from the above outline is that the major Christian denominations became involved with the immigrants and each chose to work independently. It is unfortunate that little along the lines of an ecumenical venture was planned. Had this been done presumably greater success would have been achieved. The main difficulty encountered by the missionaries was their wide distribution throughout the coastal belt as well as in the Midlands of Natal. This hampered missionary efforts as the Churches lacked efficient personnel to adequately minister to the immigrants. The wide distribution entailed an itinerant type of ministry in that the missionaries were required to visit all the estates. Consequently the work was very demanding and yielded limited results. Wherever possible lay agents were appointed to nurture the new converts and to maintain the new fellowships. The strong Hindu leadership firmly entrenched Hinduism¹ among most Indians. What also emerges is that the major denominations

¹Stott, S.H.:A Nonagenarian's Experiences and Observations in Many Lands, 1927, The Epworth Press, London, p.116

having established themselves prior to the arrival of the Indians were not keen to extend their ministry to include the immigrants. The task of the missionaries was made more difficult as they were attempting to evangelise a community firmly entrenched in their own religious practices¹. To compound the problem of the missionaries was the attitude of the White farmers who as Revd Ralph Stott observed had no care for their own souls, let alone for the souls of the Indians and the indigenous population². Having surveyed the major denominations operative at the time of the arrival of the Indians into Natal, the section that follows traces briefly the emergence of Methodism in eighteenth century England and the religious revival that occurred there through the ministry of John and Charles Wesley and George Whitfield. Their zeal for evangelism led to the formation of the W.M.M.S. in 1813 and it was to this Society that an appeal was made for ministers to be sent out to South Africa in the early nineteenth century. In the second half of the century a similar appeal was made for a minister to serve the newly arrived Indian immigrants in Natal who came in response to a labour crises in the sugar industry. The appeals made from South Africa resulted in the W.M.M.S. eventually sending Revd Ralph Stott in 1862 to pioneer the Indian Mission in Natal.

¹Mears, G.:Methodist Missions to the Indians of Natal, 1957, Methodist Missionary Department, Cape Town, p.5

²Brain, p.203

CHAPTER 2

PIONEER METHODIST MISSIONARIES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter details the beginnings of Methodism in eighteenth century England. Mention is made of the effects that the industrial revolution had on the poorer section of the community and their migration from the countryside in search of labour in the newly developing industrial area. The inability of the Church of England to respond effectively to the emerging social problems led to a religious revival initiated by John Wesley, his brother Charles and George Whitfield. The experience of John Wesley as a missionary to the American colony of Georgia and his association with the Moravians paved the way for his 'evangelical conversion' at Aldersgate in 1738. Methodist zeal for evangelism led to the formation of the W.M.M.S. in 1813 primarily to monitor missionary activity. The eventual separation of the Methodists from the Church of England occurred in 1795, the year that some British troops (among whom were a few Methodists), arrived at the Cape.

The arrival of George Middlemiss in 1806 and Sargeant Kendrick in 1812 at the Cape led to the establishment of Methodist missionary work in Southern Africa. Mention is made of the role played by them as well as by Revd Barnabas Shaw in Namaqualand. The arrival of Revd William Shaw with the 1820 settlers at Delagoa Bay and the chain of mission stations that he established

is mentioned. Also mentioned is the arrival of Revd James Archbell and the commencement of Methodism in the Colony of Natal. The arrival in 1860 of the Indian indentured labourers resulted in the W.M.M.S. appointing Revd Ralph Stott to initiate the Indian Mission. The ministry that he initiated in Natal culminated in the erection of the first Methodist Church building for the Indian community and his efforts paved the way for the future growth of Methodism among the Indian community.

2.2 Eighteenth Century England

England in the eighteenth century was mostly farmland pocked with small towns and scattered population¹. Every nook and cranny was made a public convenience and the stench of human waste and rotting garbage was not uncommon. Houses were one or two roomed hovels constructed of weatherboard and pitched roof and placed back to back. Refuse was generally thrown into the streets to mold and decay; filth and disease was everywhere to be found². Debauchery was epidemic and affected every echelon of society. Contrasted to the bare subsistence level of the poorer masses were the upper classes, who occupied positions of power, lived in comfort and benefitted by exploiting the poor.

Eighteenth century England witnessed a massive migration of people from the rural areas to the urban areas as industries

¹Tuttle, R.G.:John Wesley - His Life and Theology, 1982, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, p.31

²Ibid

developed. Coal and steam were the major factors that made for change and the population clustered around the great coalfields. New industries were created and old ones developed. China and porcelain, iron and coal, wool and cotton goods began to be produced in quantities unknown in England at that time and areas such as Lancashire, Yorkshire, Staffordshire and Northumberland become major industrial areas¹.

The industrial revolution had begun, the dawn of the inventive age had arrived and the names of Hargreaves, Arkwright, Crompton, Newcomen, Watt and Brindley became associated with the marvels of machinery and engineering. Migration of people occurred at a tremendous rate. People began to settle in larger towns in search of employment. This large influx of people created grave social and economic dangers. The changes that occurred in the urban areas were of such magnitude that the Church of England was unable to minister effectively to the newly emerging challenges.

The contrast between the rich and the poor, influx of the masses, indifference to religion, the close church-state relationship and the Church's inability to meet the challenges that arose as a result of the Industrial Revolution paved the way for a religious revival in the eighteenth century and it was the Methodism of John Wesley that met this need.

The life of John Wesley (1703-1791), nearly spanned the entire eighteenth century. Wesley's spiritual rebirth and the rise of Methodism occurred during the years 1738-1740. These years marked

¹Fitzgerald, W.B.: The Roots of Methodism, n.d., The Epworth Press, London, p.7

the period of his most intimate contact with the Moravians. During this period four major crises occurred, namely, his sense of failure on returning from America in February 1738; his heart-warming experience on the 24 May 1738; his confrontation with field preaching in April 1739 and Wesley's break with the Fetter Lane Society in July 1740¹. These events set the direction of his life and shaped his understanding of his own ministry.

Wesley was ordained a deacon in the Church of England in September 1725 and priest in July 1728². Between 1729-1735 Wesley was at Oxford studying, tutoring and teaching. While at Oxford he became the leader of the 'Holy Club'. The major aim of the Club was the spiritual development of it's members. The Club comprised young earnest High Churchmen with evangelistic views and members pledged to be regular in their private devotions, to participate regularly in the Sacraments, to attend to their ethical and religious conduct, to read books of sacred learning daily and to engage in Bible study. In addition the members of the Holy Club visited prisoners and poor families, helped the needy financially and began to educate poorer children.

2.3 Georgia

In 1735 James Oglethorpe, an adventurer and philanthropist who was organizing a group to settle in his new colony in Georgia,

¹Snyder, H.A.:The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal, 1980, Inter-Varsity Press, Illinois, p.13

²Ibid

invited John and Charles Wesley, and their friends Benjamin Ingham and Charles Delamotte to accompany a group of people intending to settle in Georgia¹. John Wesley accepted and was sponsored by the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. The two years he spent in Georgia were frustrating years. He returned to England in 1738 and on reflection viewed his missionary efforts a failure. He had been unable to evangelize the Indians, had stirred up opposition and controversy among the Anglican settlers and lacked inward peace². However, his stay in Georgia created in him a zeal for holiness and this resulted in a desire to revitalize the Church and recover the spirit and form of early Christianity.

About the time that John Wesley was struggling over his failure in Georgia, his lack of peace with God and a feeling of condemnation in the eyes of a righteousness God, he met Peter Bohler, a young Moravian missionary. This encounter enabled Wesley to clarify his theological reasoning. What Wesley lacked was 'the faith whereby alone we are saved'. His search after holiness had been ineffectual because he lacked a simple personal trust in Jesus Christ. Peter Bohler urged Wesley to 'preach faith till you have it, and then, because you have it, you will preach faith'³.

¹Snyder, p.19-20

²Ibid p.22

³Davies, R.E.:Methodism, 1963, Cox and Wyman Ltd, Great Britain, p.57

2.4 Aldersgate

Wesley's struggle for faith continued and it was on the 24 May 1738 that he went, as he put it, 'very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street .. about a quarter to nine ... I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ ...'¹. Wesley's Aldersgate experience has been considered as his 'evangelical conversion' and proved to be a turning point in his life, releasing his spiritual and mental energies toward his fellow men, who stood in need of the same liberation he had received.

Following on the Aldersgate experience John Wesley, his brother Charles Wesley and George Whitfield began field preaching. Emphasis in their preaching was placed on 'salvation by faith alone'. Their preaching had popular appeal and huge crowds flocked to hear them. Being evangelical in approach, John Wesley maintained that all must hear and respond to the 'convicting and converting Word of God' and that the 'new birth' must produce faith, hope and love or else it cannot be true conversion².

The industrial revolution had produced a new class of urban poor and Wesley's preaching was directed to those who were victims of industrialization. Wesley worked tirelessly for both the spiritual and material welfare of his hearers - conversions were numerous, free dispensaries were opened, schools and orphanages

¹Ibid, p.58

²Snyder, p.86

were established, social issues such as slavery, child labour and corruption were challenged and gradually reformed.

Wesley formed his converts into close-knit fellowships where they could be shepherded and where leadership was developed. Discipline within these close-knit fellowships was strict, yet it produced a growing body of earnest adherents. By 1768, Methodism had 40 circuits and 27341 members; in 1778 there were 60 circuits and 40089 members and in 1788 there were 99 circuits with 66375 members¹.

The Methodist movement was not only confined to England. Thomas Coke was ordained by John Wesley and was sent to America to spearhead evangelical work there. He was authorized to ordain other preachers and together their ministry was so successful that it led to the formation of the W.M.M.S. in 1813 to monitor and control all missionary activity.

John Wesley died in 1791 only a few years before the first British occupation of the Cape in 1795. Up to his death he had protested vigorously that he had no intention of leaving the Church of England or of creating a rival denomination. He urged his followers to remain within the Church of England, yet step by step the separation became imminent. By 1795, the year of the first British occupation of the Cape, Methodism was virtually another Church.

¹Ibid, p.54

2.5 Methodism in South Africa

Among the British troops that were stationed at the Cape in 1795 were a group of four or five Methodists. Utilizing a hired room for two hours a week they held their prayer meetings there. This little room became known as the Methodist Chapel¹. These informal prayer meetings continued until they were transferred with their regiment to the East Indies. Among the soldiers in the 72nd Regiment that occupied the Cape in 1806 was George Middlemiss who, as a Methodist layman, openly shared his faith. In 1812 Sargeant Kendrick, one of the non-commissioned officers of the 21st Light Dragoons, a British regiment, arrived at the Cape. Kendrick was a Methodist and had been converted at Leeds under the ministry of Revd George Morley². Being a class leader and a local preacher, Kendrick began Methodist services solely for the benefit of the members of his regiment and within a relatively short time 120 soldiers became devout Christians.

In 1812, Kendrick wrote to the W.M.M.S., on behalf of the members of the Cape society saying:

'In the name of the Methodist Society at the Cape of Good Hope, I request that my letter may be laid before Dr Coke ... that a Preacher may be sent to be stationed at the Cape, if he conceives that is practicable, and that it will tend to the glory of God ...'³

¹Hewson, L.A.:An Introduction to South African Methodists, 1950, The Standard Press, Cape Town, p.1

²Whiteside, p.35

³Ibid, p.36

In response the W.M.M.S. sent the Revd John McKenny in 1814 with instructions to preach to the soldiers, the white inhabitants and the large indigenous population. For McKenny to exercise a ministry at the Cape permission had to be obtained from the Governor. The Governor at the time was Lord Charles Somerset who refused. McKenny waited several months in the hope that permission would be granted, but when it was continually refused he left for Ceylon¹.

The soldiers at the Cape were greatly disappointed at McKenny's departure and made a second request to the W.M.M.S. On the 14 April 1816 the Revd Barnabas Shaw landed in Cape Town. Like his predecessor, Shaw² sought permission from Lord Charles Somerset and resolved that,

'... having been refused the sanction of the Governor ... on the following Sunday I commenced without it ... the congregation was at first chiefly composed of pious soldiers and it was in a room hired by them that I preached Christ crucified in South Africa'.

Shaw, discouraged by the persistent opposition from the authorities, began to turn to the 'heathen' for whose conversion he maintained 'he had been chiefly sent out'. Shaw left the Cape in 1816 to commence the Methodist mission to the people of Namaqualand. By June 1817 the first two converts from among the Namaquas were baptized, one of whom was Jacob Links; two marriages were performed and the Lord's Supper celebrated³. In 1826 Shaw was requested to return to Cape Town and the Methodist

¹Ibid, p.36

²Ibid, p.37

³Whiteside, p.45

Missionary work in Namaqualand was left to Revd E. Edwards with Jacob Links as his assistant.

The arrival of the 1820 settlers in the Eastern Cape launched Methodist missionary work in that area. Among the 1820 settlers was a young Methodist Minister, the Revd William Shaw, who came as a chaplain to the Sephton party¹. These emigrants arrived in Algoa Bay and settled at Salem. Shortly after Shaw's arrival at Salem, he wrote:

'This station will be the key to Kaffirland. Whilst steadily pursuing the work of the day my eye is constantly fixed on Kaffraria as a great field for future missions. I thought about it, talked about it, read every scrap of intelligence I could obtain concerning it and often prayed and engaged others to pray with me that a wide and effectual door might in due season be opened before us into the region beyond².'

2.6 Chain of Mission Stations

From 1823 Methodist missionaries under Revd William Shaw moved to the north of Grahamstown. Chief Kama of the Ciskei was converted and the first of the Methodist mission stations was Wesleyville, established in 1823. Then followed Mount Coke in 1824, where the New Testament was printed into Xhosa in 1846. In 1859 the complete Xhosa Bible was printed and bound³. Shaw's dream of a chain of mission stations from Grahamstown to Natal was bearing fruit with the establishment of Butterworth in 1827.

¹Ibid. p.95

²Garrett, A.E.F.:South African Methodism - Her Missionary Witness, n.d., Methodist Publishing House, Cape Town, p.6-7

³Ibid, p.8-9

The fourth station on the western coast of Pondoland was Morley established in 1829. A year later came the establishment of Clarkebury among the Tembus, followed by mission stations at Buntingville in 1835, Shawbury in 1839 and Palmerton in 1844. By 1864 mission stations were also opened at Maclear, Fletcherville and Tsitsana.

While William Shaw continued with establishing mission stations in the Transkei, Revd Samuel Broadbent founded a mission at Makwasi just north of the Vaal River where work was also done in putting the Tswana language into written form¹. In 1833 Chief Moroka, Revd James Archbell and Revd John Edwards moved nearly 12000 people of the Barolong tribe from the arid area north of Kimberley to the more fertile land at Thaba'Nchu which was purchased from Moshoeshoe I of Lesotho. Five mission stations were established at Thaba'Nchu in 1833 and in the same year other stations were established at Platberg, Lishuane, Mpukane and Mpherane.

2.7 Methodism in the Transvaal

Methodism in the Transvaal owes its origins to David Magatha. He first heard the gospel preached by American missionaries in 1836 at Masega. While he was there he escaped a Voortrekker commando and reached the Methodist Mission Station at Thaba'Nchu. It was here that he received from Revd William Shaw a 'note' to preach. Returning to the Magaliesberg he learnt of 'so-called' Coloureds

¹Ibid p.25

and Black people in Potchefstroom and, eventually settling there, he proclaimed the message of salvation to all¹.

David Magatha experienced many a hardship - his home was destroyed when Mzilikazi and his warriors attacked the Tswana tribe in 1830. He was taken as a slave to Mosega. When a Voortrekker commando attacked Mzilikazi in 1838 he was compelled to flee to Thaba'Nchu. When he was at Potchefstroom, the Boers were offended that a Black man preached 'their' religion and had Magatha whipped and banished. Although he received no salary nor stipend he served faithfully and successfully as a missionary².

In 1873 David was joined in the Transvaal by George Blencowe and George Weavind who were able to build on Magatha's pioneering work. The Anglo-Boer war almost brought Methodist Missionary work in the Transvaal to an end but fortunately the Methodists who remained and those who returned after the war were able to continue Methodist missionary activity there.

2.8 Methodism in the Northern Transvaal

Samuel Mathabathe began Methodist missionary activity in the Northern Transvaal in 1869. Mathabathe was converted under the influence of the Revd James Allison in Natal. He desired to engage in missionary work in Sekhukhuneland but encountered

¹Hewson, p.68-69

²Ibid, p. 68-69. See also Balia, D.M.: Black Methodists and White Supremacy in South Africa, 1991, Madiba Publishers, Durban, p.16-17

opposition from Chief Pahlala. It was only after the latter's death that Mathabathe was instrumental in erecting church buildings and a school. In addition two of his converts were sent to Basutoland for ministerial training and together with them the work progressed. It was almost a decade later that White Wesleyan missionaries discovered that Mathabathe had been labouring as a Wesleyan missionary in the Northern Transvaal¹ unknowingly.

2.9 Methodism in other areas

Michael Bowen faithfully served as a Methodist missionary in the Orange Free State for nine years. Bowen was instrumental in establishing two or three mission stations along the Vaal River. He accompanied the Revd Owen Watkins on his pioneering trip to Mashonaland. Watkins described him as a 'first class native evangelist who speaks several languages and is a bright, happy Christian'².

In Swaziland an unsuccessful attempt was made to start a mission by Revd James Allison in 1846. It was only in 1882 that Daniel Msimang and Mangena Mokone successfully established Methodist Missionary work in Swaziland. By 1883 Msimang had succeeded in constructing a chapel with a seating capacity for 150 people and a manse. Through their itinerant ministry from village to village Methodism became firmly established in Swaziland.

¹Ibid, p.69-70 See also Balia, p.17-18

²Balia, p.18

Methodist missionary work in Portuguese East Africa will always be associated with Robert Mashaba. He belonged to the Ronga tribe and with his uncle sought work in Durban. It was here that his education began and this led him to Port Elizabeth eventually. Here he met Penny Pickasana who introduced him to Methodism. He was also influenced by Revd James Dwane who urged him to return to his own people and evangelize them. By 1885 Mashaba had begun a school in Lourenco Marques. Writing to the 'Imvo' newspaper at King William's Town he stated that he had 200 converts awaiting baptism and that unless the Methodist Church came to his help he would be compelled to cede these converts to the Anglicans. The Methodist Church responded by sending William Mtembu, who baptized the converts and thus the first Methodist Church in Delagoa Bay came into being¹.

2.10 Methodism comes to Natal

Methodism in South Africa was under the control of the W.M.M.S. In 1842, a year prior to the annexation of Natal, the Revd James Archbell accompanied a small British force under Captain Smith, who, instructed by Sir George Napier, entered Natal and occupied Durban². Revd Archbell was the first Wesleyan minister to settle in Natal. His first task was the erection of a church which Whiteside describes as 'a walled building, with a verandah all round, a thatched roof without any ceiling and an earthen

¹Hewson, p.57-59 See also Balia, p.18-19

²Whiteside, p.358

floor'¹.

When the first group of indentured Indians arrived in 1860, Methodism was firmly entrenched with a number of church buildings erected and worship services were held at Durban, Verulam, Maritzburg, York, Greytown, Riet Vlei, Caversham, Mooi River, Ladysmith, Newcastle and Wakkerstroom². In 1847 Revd James Allison accompanied a party of refugees from Swaziland and settled in Natal. Labouring chiefly among the Black population he was instrumental in establishing a mission at Indaleni and at Edendale³. In 1861 Methodism in Natal was further strengthened by the arrival of several missionaries from England - among them were the Reverends John Allsopp, James Langley, William Nullward, Daniel Eva and Charles Roberts. Their arrival led to the mission stations at Verulam and Edendale acquiring additional ministers while the other ministers commenced new mission stations⁴.

In 1860 the first group of indentured Indian immigrants arrived at Port Natal in response to the aforementioned labour crisis in the sugar industry. Their arrival was to give Methodism the one feature which renders it unique in South Africa, namely the 'Indian Mission'⁵. At the time of their arrival, Methodist

¹Ibid, p.358

²Ibid, p.361

³Holden, W.C.:A Brief History of Methodism and of Methodist Missions in South Africa, 1877, William Nicholas, London, p.533 and Whiteside, p.362-363

⁴Whiteside, p.365

⁵Hewson, p.44

missionaries in Natal concentrated on the White and Black indigenous populations. Although presented with the opportunity of evangelizing Indians, the Methodist missionaries in Natal experienced problems in communicating with the newly arrived immigrants, who knew little English but were fluent in the Indian vernacular languages of Tamil and Hindi¹. This was the first encounter local Methodist missionaries had with Indian religions. Here was a new cultural group with a community who possessed a different philosophical outlook².

The missionaries' inability to communicate effectively, the wide distribution of Indian immigrants throughout the Colony, their small numerical status compared to the indigenous Black population and the general knowledge that on completion of their contracts the indentured immigrants would return to India, led the missionaries to conclude that it was pointless undertaking any concentrated effort to effect conversions. The feeling was that on their return to India the Indians would relinquish Christianity and embrace Indian religious beliefs again³.

2.11 Revd Joseph Jackson

Under the ministry of the Revd Horatio Pearse and Revd Frederick Mason there was a religious revival in the Maritzburg area in the second half of 1856. This revival resulted in the membership

¹Whiteside, p.366

²Mears, p.4

³Brain, p.194

figures for that area doubling. In addition to the increase in membership, two young White men candidated for the ministry, these were the Revd Joseph Jackson, and the Revd William Shaw Davis¹.

It was the Revd Joseph Jackson, who became the first Methodist Missionary to make contact with Indians. In 1861 he began distributing tracts among Indians in the Verulam area and through an interpreter communicated with them². But Revd J. Jackson ministering to the large Black population mainly was not able to engage in effective pioneering work among the Indian immigrants. The W.M.M.S. recognizing that their missionaries in the Colony of Natal were unable to adequately minister to the Indians but desirous to evangelise them appointed the Revd Ralph Stott in 1861 to pioneer their Indian Mission in South Africa.

2.12 Revd Ralph Stott

Stott was born in the village of Woodale in Netherdale, Yorkshire, England on November 15th, 1801³. Of his early life little is known. According to his son, Revd Simon H. Stott there is no record of his father's ancestors in the Court of Heraldry and that it is unlikely that they held any high official position

¹Whiteside, p.363-364

²Brain, p.201

³Irving, W.H.:Unpublished papers, 1949 and Russel, G.: The Amazing Stott Family of Natal, Unpublished notes, 1990 (In the possession of Dr. H. Stott, Hillcrest, Natal).

in the early history of England¹. Writing of his father he says:

'Nothing more is known of my father's early days or of the pundit at whose feet he sat; probably it was some aged spinster who, not having been able to win some village swain's heart, took to the pedagogic art and, as to her curriculum, probably it reached to the end of the Fourth Reader².'

In an Obituary dated 7 June 1880, Revd Ralph Stott's early life was characterised as being deeply religious and this influenced his general conduct³. The ministry of Revd David Stoner and the Revd John Smith had a tremendous influence upon his life leading to his conversion. Shortly afterwards he commenced preaching and candidated for the ministry in 1828⁴. Of his father's candidature, Simon Horner Stott maintains that his father possessed 'Yorkshire grit' and this strength of character enabled him to qualify to preach and later, he continues became,

'.... so qualified that the officials of the Wesleyan Church in that part and their Superintendent passed him as a candidate for the Wesleyan ministry⁵.'

Ralph Stott's theological study entailed rigorous training, being subjected to oral and written examinations 'some of them rather testing'⁶. After successfully completing these examinations Stott was accepted and appointed to serve initially in the Peterborough

¹Stott, p.10

²Ibid, p.12

³Minutes of the Third General Meeting of the Chairman and Representatives of the Five South African Districts, Queenstown, 1880, p.15

⁴Irving, Unpublished papers

⁵Stott, p.12

⁶Ibid

Circuit and then as a missionary to the North Sri Lanka Mission¹.

Prior to his leaving for Sri Lanka, Ralph Stott met Mary Campbell. On completion of his probationary period, Mary Campbell was informed by the Secretariat of the W.M.M.S. that they were prepared to arrange her travel to Sri Lanka (Ceylon). It is recorded that those who saw her, said that Ralph Stott had chosen 'a very comely and fitting partner for life'². Simon Stott³, humorously captures her arrival in Sri Lanka,

'The ship reached Sri Lanka, the long anticipated and long looked for union took place and true love reigned in one home at least.'

From this union came three children - Simon H. Stott born on the 1 February 1836, Mary their only daughter born in 1838 and Ralph (junior) born on the 1 August 1839. The children received their education while in Sri Lanka from their parents and like them became proficient in Indian dialects⁴.

Ralph Stott's ministry was at two mission stations on the east coast of Sri Lanka - Trincomalie and Batticaloa⁵. Presenting the elementary truths of the Christian faith, Stott was successful in effecting the conversion of many in Sri Lanka. Of Stott's preaching it is reported that,

'... His preaching was full in it's exposition, earnest in its spirit and clear and practical in its aims; he strove

¹Ibid

²Ibid, p.13

³Ibid, p.13

⁴Russell, Unpublished notes

⁵Irving, Unpublished papers

always for the salvation of his hearers¹.'

At Trincomalie a Church was built² and being an able and ardent educationalist he was able to establish a system of elementary schools throughout the mission³. Trincomalie was noted as a port where war ships called for supplies and here he was instrumental in establishing a Total Abstinence Society⁴.

From Trincomalie, Stott moved to Batticaloa. The Mission house that he occupied was on a small island connected to the mainland by a strip of land⁵. Here Stott came into contact with the Vedahs who were considered to be the earliest of the races to inhabit Sri Lanka. Stott paid regular visits to the neighbouring jungles inhabited by the Vedahs and 'having secured their confidence he conversed with them upon some of the elementary truths of religion'⁶.

After a period of eighteen years in Sri Lanka, the W.M.M.S. recalled Ralph Stott to England in 1848. His initial appointment was to Exeter, the capital of Devonshire. In the fourteen years that Stott spent in England he served a number of Methodist Churches.

¹Minutes of the Third General Meeting, of the Chairman and Representative of the Five South African Districts, Queenstown, 1880, p.15

²Ibid

³Irving, Unpublished notes

⁴Stott, p.14

⁵Ibid, p.15

⁶Ibid, p.17

2.13 Commencement of the Indian Mission

The W.M.M.S. appointed the Revd Ralph Stott in 1861 to pioneer the Indian Mission. He was considered an ideal choice because of the experience he had gained in Sri Lanka as a missionary. He had learnt the Indian vernacular languages becoming a fluent Tamil linguist and an acceptable communicator in Hindi¹. In appointing Ralph Stott, the W.M.M.S. recognised that he 'had great taste and capacity for the study and acquisition of languages'²; he was a man of considerable intellectual attainment³, and through study had acquired a knowledge of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Mathematics and Astronomy⁴. His appointment to Natal having been made in 1861, Ralph Stott accompanied by his family arrived in the Colony of Natal on the 6 January 1862⁵. Stationed in Durban, Ralph Stott took charge of Methodist missionary work among the Indian immigrants and served the entire coastal belt of Natal. He purchased a horse and this was his means of transport⁶. Revd Simon Stott⁷ says of his father,

'He always travelled on horseback and took with him a number of Scripture portions in Tamil, Telugu, Hindustani, Hindi and Gujarath. His appearance when on his journeys was well known, for he rode a tripping horse, and had a white umbrella strapped across the front of his saddle.'

¹Mears, p.5. See also Hewson, p.44 and Whiteside, p.366

²Brain, p.201

³Mears, p.5

⁴Stott, p.18

⁵Brain, p.201

⁶Ibid

⁷Stott, p.103

Ralph Stott's missionary work was mainly among the immigrants in the Durban area. Those immigrants further away from Durban necessitated him being away from home often for as long as a week¹. Stott regarded the entire Indian community as his congregation and in visiting the immigrants he always 'was a welcome visitor in many homes'². On these visits he distributed tracts and portions of scripture. Possessing 'rare tact' he easily made friends with the immigrants and sugar cane farmers³. On these visits he rarely conducted worship services, he preferred instead to adopt the informal conversational approach that led to spiritual truth⁴. Frederick Mason in describing Stotts' visits says, 'he would warn the erring, cheer the sorrowful, pray with the sick'⁵. In presenting the claims of Christ he endured many insults and reproaches but experience had taught him that personal appeal was the only hopeful approach to 'a people so deeply entrenched in their ancient religion'⁶. Ralph Stott was forced to undertake visits to the sugar estates and his missionary approach was different from that of Father Sabon. The latter was fortunate in that there was a sizeable Catholic contingent among the early immigrants, whereas there were only

¹Ibid

²Mason, F.:A Funeral Sermon on the Late Rev. R. Stott, 21 March 1880, 1880, P. Davis and Sons, Pietermaritzburg, p.10

³Mears, p.6

⁴Ibid

⁵Mason, p.10

⁶Hunt, W.:Faith Marches on - 150 Years of Methodism in Southern Africa, 1956, The Methodist Missionary Department, Rondebosch, n.p.

half-a-dozen Protestants that were identified¹. In view of this Father Sabon was able to act as a pastor whereas Ralph Stott was compelled to serve as a evangelist. The visitation that was undertaken was primarily to form a nucleus of persons whom he could instruct and nurture in the Christian faith. These visits afforded him an opportunity of meeting people. The work by its very nature demanded humility and patience and although it was demanding, Ralph Stott displayed a 'cheerful optimism' as he recounts one of his journeys:

'... I had to cross a river, deep and full of quicksands and got a dipping. When I reached the bank I pulled off my shoes and stockings. My stockings I wrung and tied on my saddle to dry, and after pouring the water out of my shoes, I put them on again....²'

The success of his visitation programme can be gauged in that in 1863 a year after his arrival, Stott reported that 2000 Indians were attending public worship in the Durban area and along the North and South Coasts, there were 35 preaching places but no children were attending the Sunday Schools³. By 1864 Stott was visiting 39 sugar estates and this number in the next twelve years increased to 80. His area of missionary activity extended from Umzinto on the South Coast to as far as Kearsney on the North Coast. Although a number of sugar estates were visited Stott was able to identify only five sugar estate owners as Methodists. Of the sugar estate owners he wrote,

'... I fear that many of them have no care for their own

¹Brain, p.202

²Whiteside, p.366

³Brain, p.202

souls, much less for the souls of the Indians and Blacks...¹'

A notable exception was Mr Parsons of Wentworth who brought his Indian labourers to hear Stott preach and six of them were baptized by Simon Stott in 1881². Although the work for one minister was tedious and yielded few results, Stott never lost hope. He was confident that the Indian population would grow and eventually equal that of Mauritius. In 1865 he requested the British Conference to send his son, Simon Horner Stott from Sri Lanka to help him in the mission. This request was repeated in 1866 and in the same year, the request, having been granted, Simon Stott joined his father in Natal.

In a letter to a relative dated 13 August 1866, Ralph Stott wrote:

'... My work is continually increasing. We have now 6438 Indians and many more are expected. I hope some good is being done amongst them; but like all work amongst Hindus and Muslims it is slow. We want a mighty outpouring of the Spirit...³'

In view of the slow progress being made in evangelising the Indians, the W.M.M.S. indicated their desire to close the mission. Stott was urged to retire but he refused maintaining that,

'... having been called to preach, I thank God that I love my work, nay enjoy it and am confident that I cannot labour in vain... I believe I am where God would have me be...⁴'

Stott believing that he was where God wanted him to be, was

¹Ibid, p.203

²Ibid

³Out going correspondence from Ralph Stott to his cousin. (Letter in the possession of Dr. H Stott, Hillcrest, Natal).

⁴Brain, p.203

confirmed, in a letter by him to his cousin Mr James Stott dated 20 September 1869. In it he writes,

'... I am still going on with my work amongst the Indians, and have some encouragement. Last week I baptized an Indian man, and I hear today that 25 more are talking of embracing Christianity. I hope they will come to Christ by the thousands ... We preach this Word in the languages which they understand, and it shall prevail. I have always had implicit confidence in the preaching of Christ crucified and have never been disappointed ...'¹

Stott's letter to his cousin does indicate the impact he was making among Indians. As the Mission was poised to take off, a sad feature was the first group of indentured labourers electing to return to India in 1871 on completion of their contracts. Among this group were six Methodists, three of them having been baptized in Natal and a further five who were being prepared for baptism². The departure of this contingent was a loss to the Mission but Stott believed firmly that those who returned to India would take back with them their faith and that 'Natal may thus become a missionary for India'³.

Subsequent reports from India show 'that not a few Hindus returned from Natal and bore their witness for the Christ they had found there'⁴. In another letter dated 17 January 1872 to his cousin, Mr James Stott, Ralph Stott writes,

'... You will see in the October Missionary Notice in a letter from Revd Babzell that he has baptized six persons who were candidates here ... Two other families he also mentions who returned with the one before mentioned ... we

¹Personal correspondence from Ralph Stott to his cousin, Mr James Stott. Correspondence in the possession of Dr. H Stott, Hillcrest, Natal.

²Brain, p.203

³Ibid

⁴Mears, p.7

expect soon to join themselves to us. So you see our labour is not in vain...¹

Meanwhile the situation in the Colony of Natal changed. Immigration had ceased from 1866 because of the economic depression. This led to a slump in the sugar industry and consequently many Indians became unemployed. Their desperate need to secure employment compelled some Indians to leave Natal and seek employment in the Transvaal². Immigrants returning to India on completion of their contracts complained of poor working conditions in Natal³. In addition the discovery of gold and diamonds, compounded matters as Stott wrote,

'... The diamond fields which are about 500 miles from us are making a great stir and taking away our population. We have also another gold-mania. Let us seek the gold that perisheth not ...⁴

The effect that these discoveries had on the mission was that it attracted the immigrants to the Transvaal in search of employment as the result of the depression. Because of the relatively small number of Indians remaining in the Colony of Natal, the W.M.M.S. decided to close the Mission. Stott was adamant that the Mission must continue and acknowledged, 'A few Indians have completed their ten years service and are returning home, but the Government has sent for 1200 more. So, I shall have plenty of

¹Personal correspondence from Ralph Stott to his cousin Mr James Stott. (Letter in the possession of Dr. H. Stott, Hillcrest, Natal).

²Muller, p.371

³Brain, p.203

⁴Personal correspondence from Ralph Stott to James Stott, 17 January 1872. (In the possession of Dr. H. Stott, Hillcrest, Natal).

work'¹.

Responding to the suggested closure of the Mission by the W.M.M.S., he wrote:

'... If you drop the mission my engagement with the Missionary Committee is at an end... I came out solely for the Indian mission. Under the circumstances I shall request the Conference to put me down as a supernumerary which they cannot refuse to do since I shall be nearly 71 years of age ... I consider the mission of such vital importance that I will stick at it whether you support me or not².'

Stott argued that in the decade that he had been in Natal he had learnt to read Telugu, Bengali, Hindi, Arabic and Persian. He specifically learnt to speak Hindi so that he could preach to the 6500 Indians and 'I shall not give up now. No never.'³ He accused the W.M.M.S. of lack of faith as well as lack of responsibility - 'you sin against 7000 Indians and against all India'. Stott's letter had the desired effect and the Mission continued⁴.

2.14 Erection of First Indian Church

Stott, confident that the Mission would grow and increase in usefulness, assisted his converts to acquire a piece of land in Queen Street in 1876. On this site the first Indian Church was erected. Funds for the purchase of the land and the erection of the Church came through appeals made to his own converts and to the Hindu and Islamic communities. In the local press a public appeal was made for funds. This public appeal was signed by the

¹Ibid

²Brain, p.204

³Ibid

⁴Ibid

four Catechists of the Missions namely C. Stephen, H. Nundoo, Mr Josiah and Mr Bessor. The total cost of the project amounted to two hundred and thirty five pounds and the building was erected debt free¹. It had a seating capacity of 150 although the numerical strength of the Mission in 1883 was 38². Stott was confident that the mission would grow and that the building would serve its usefulness in the future.

By 1878 Stott requested that he become a supernumerary and in 1879 retired from active service³. Of his work, he said,

'... the work of one minister was tedious and yielded few results. Some, however, were won to Christ, and returning to India, held fast their Christian profession and others, who remained in Natal, joined the Methodist Church, and honourably kept the faith⁴.'

Ralph Stott died on the 7 March 1880 at the age of 79 having served the Methodist Church for 51 years.

2.15 Conclusion

The beginnings of Methodism in England in the eighteenth century has been briefly outlined. The formation of W.M.M.S. served to monitor foreign missionary activity and to the W.M.M.S. must go the credit for sending pioneer missionaries to South Africa. The beginnings of Methodism in Southern Africa has also been briefly traced and particular reference has been made to Revd Ralph Stott

¹Ibid, p.206

²Mears, p.8

³Brain, p.206

⁴Mears, p.7

and the Indian Mission that he pioneered. Stott had no congregation except for a few Protestants who were among the immigrants. In effect this meant that he had to function as an itinerant evangelist and this involved extensive travel rather than a settled ministry. Stott possessed great determination and maturity in the face of the most severe setbacks and it was these qualities that sustained the mission. His natural gifts as preacher, teacher and pastor came to the fore and his flair for languages made him highly acceptable to the immigrants. Stott's compassion became evident as he championed the cause of the immigrants in the evidence he gave to the Collie Commission appointed to inquire into the conditions of Indian Immigration. He was also noted for the role he played in establishing educational facilities for the children of immigrants. Stott laid the foundation of the Indian Mission, established a congregation, erected the first Indian Mission church building and initiated education for the children of the Indian immigrants. The Indian mission was left to his successors to continue and build from this solid foundation.

CHAPTER 3

THE INDIAN MISSION IN THE DURBAN AREA

3.1 Introduction

On the advice of Revd Ralph Stott, the W.M.M.S. sent his son, Revd Simon Horner Stott to Natal. A brief history leading to his call to the ministry is given. Mention is made of Simon Stott's ministry in Sri Lanka. The role played by catechists and other laity is surveyed. The reorganising of the Indian Mission under the ministry of the Revd Theophilus Subrahmanyam is detailed. The establishment of Committees appointed by the Conference of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa is given and also noted in this section is the erection of church buildings and manses. The candidature, leading to the ordination of John Choonoo's sons, Arthur and Reuben provides a glimpse of the role that the Choonoo family were to play in the Indian Mission.

The intolerable situation in Natal as it pertained to the Indian community compelled Revd Subrahmanyam to return to India. The role of the laity and the subsequent events in the Indian Mission after his departure are mentioned. The establishment of Methodist Societies in Mayville and Cato Manor indicates zealous evangelism and the value of house-Churches.

The decade of the 1960's saw the Durban and Coast Indian Mission relinquish all Indian societies beyond the Umhloti River to the Stanger-Umhlali Circuit. In 1973 a further sub-division of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission led to the creation of two new

Indian Circuits namely the Durban North West Circuit and the Durban South West Circuit. This sub-division effectively brought to an end the 'Indian Mission' as we shall see.

3.2 Revd Simon Horner Stott

Simon Horner Stott was born on the 1 February 1836 at Trincomalie, Sri Lanka¹. In 1848 Ralph Stott was recalled to Britain resulting in Simon Stott spending the remainder of his teenage years in England. In 1853 he completed his schooling and worked for a carpenter and subsequently was apprenticed to an ironmonger, a Mr Kimberly, at Oldbury near Birmingham². His stay at Oldbury had a profound impact upon his life. It was here that he came under the influence of a Temperance lecturer John B. Gough and the Revd W.L. Watkinson³. Describing a revival service conducted by a Wesleyan missionary from Western Africa, Simon Stott writes:

'... A mighty, divine influence moved the hearts of many to surrender themselves to Christ as their Lord and Saviour. I was one of those, and from that time I began to work for Christ⁴.'

Simon Stott's candidated for the ministry in 1860⁵ and appeared before an Examination Committee in London⁶. He spent the next

¹Stott, p.14

²Ibid, p.23

³Ibid, p.26

⁴Ibid, p.27

⁵Minutes of the Conference, 1883, p.80

⁶Stott, p.28

three years at Richmond College preparing for the ministry. He excelled at Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Logic, Butler's Analogy and Animal Physiology. Reflecting on his college days, Stott acknowledges that Butler's Analogy and Logic aided him greatly 'in dealing with the subtle Indians in my work among them in Natal'¹.

On completion of his three year study programme at Richmond, the British Conference appointed him to Trincomalie, on the east coast of Sri Lanka in 1863. After a period of two years in Sri Lanka Stott was informed of the request made by his father in 1865 and again in 1866, to the British Conference, that is recalling him from Sri Lanka for an appointment in Natal, for 'with his knowledge of Tamil he will be able to enter the field at once'². The British Conference acceded to this request and Simon Stott arrived in Natal on 17 October 1866³.

Initially Simon Stott assisted his father in the Indian Mission. Encouraged by his father that knowledge of Hindustani would enhance his ministry, Simon Stott began to study the language and within a relatively short period had translated the four Gospels into that language⁴.

Almost coinciding with his arrival was a serious depression in Natal. The economic depression brought to a stop further

¹Ibid, p.34

²Brain, p.206

³Ibid

⁴Stott, p.107

immigration. Indian immigrants began to move out of the Durban area into the midlands of Natal, Zululand and the Free State¹. Although Simon Stott was having limited success in the Indian Mission - in that there were nine baptisms in 1867 and another in 1868, he described the work among the Indians as,

'... It is still sowing and watering, but there are very few indications of any harvest... It would be a relief to the mind to be able to point to one sincere example of conversion...²'

The W.M.M.S. recognizing that the Indian population had diminished in the Durban area and in view of the limited success that the missionaries were enjoying, felt that it could not justify the appointment of two missionaries in the Indian Mission and subsequently transferred Simon Stott to Verulam to take charge of a Black Circuit. Between 1868-1880 Stott laboured solely among Blacks. In 1880 a request from the Natal District to the Third General Meeting read,

'... A vacancy having been caused in the Indian Mission by the death of the venerable Ralph Stott, this meeting earnestly recommends that a suitable man be sent immediately to take charge of this work. It is expedient that the man so sent should be acquainted with one or more of the Indian languages³'

In response to this request and since Simon Stott was the only minister acquainted with Indian languages, he was appointed to succeed his father in 1880.

Returning to the Indian mission and aware of the demands that would be made on him, he immediately applied to the Wesleyan

¹Brain, p.207

²Ibid

³Minutes of the Third General Meeting of the Chairman and Representatives of the Five South African Districts 1880, p.8

Indian College in Madras for a catechist¹. In his memoirs Simon Stott says of this catechist:

'... I received a Tamil man called Emmanuel, but before long found that the meaning of that name could not be applied to him and he was dismissed ...²'

Still eager to secure the services of a catechist a second application was made to the same College and Stott records,

'... another Emmanuel was sent out but he too was no more worthy than Emmanuel the 1st, and he collapsed in the same way³.'

The decade of the 1880's brought changes to the Indian Mission. The Mission was now in the hands of Simon Stott; catechists were being employed, the Queen Street Chapel was reorganized and its activities were extended to other centres⁴. The numerical returns for 1881 indicated that 21 were full members. A year later the membership rose to 38 full members with 5 members on trial. By 1883 the returns reflected 47 full members with 7 on trial⁵. On a broader level Natal no longer formed part of the British Conference but was now under the jurisdiction of the South African Conference of the Methodist Church, which met for the first time as an autonomous conference in 1883. In the same year a large group of Indians from Mauritius arrived and Stott reported that 60-70 attended services each week⁶.

Prior to the 1880's Methodism was the only denomination that

¹Stott, p.107

²Ibid, p.111

³Stott, p.112

⁴Brain, p.208

⁵Minutes of the Conference, 1883.

⁶Brain, p.208

undertook mission and evangelical outreach work among the Indian inhabitants. The Methodists began to realize that the stance of the Roman Catholic missionaries changed from a pastoral approach to an evangelical one¹. The Anglicans who initially concentrated on the White and Black populations, began missionary work among the Indian people and St. Aidans was opened by Dr. L.P. Booth in 1887². Dr Booth relinquished his medical practice, and having gained considerable experience attending to the medical needs of the Indian people, engaged in Mission work. The entry of other denominations prompted Stott in 1889 to appeal for financial assistance, so that the Wesleyan Mission could expand its activities³.

The South African Conference recognizing the value of evangelizing the Indian community in Natal appealed to the W.M.M.S. and the British Conference stating:

'... We respectfully request the Committee and the Conference to appoint and send out ministers to supply the following vacancy among others:-
D'Urban, Indian Mission - A Superintendent⁴'

The need for another minister arose in Durban. Simon Stott was transferred to Verulam in 1883, where he had pastoral responsibility of the Black Circuits at Verulam and Ndwedwe and at the same time served as Superintendent of the Durban Indian Mission. Pastoral care, in the Durban Indian Mission, became the

¹Ibid

²Burnett, p.103

³Brain, p.208-209

⁴Minutes of Conference, 1883, para XIV, p.41

responsibility of a Mr John Choonoo.

3.3 Mr John Choonoo

John Choonoo was born in 1834 in a village near Calcutta. Simon Stott¹ provides details of how John Choonoo was kidnapped in his youth and sent to Mauritius. There he was indentured to a clergyman and this contact led to his conversion. John Choonoo first received a call to the ministry and served the Church in Mauritius for 15 years as a catechist² prior to his arrival in Natal. In Mauritius he had served the Church Missionary Society and under them received training to serve as a catechist.

Shortly after arriving in Natal in 1881, John Choonoo and his family attached themselves to the Indian Mission and were of great assistance to Simon Stott. The latter employed him as a catechist and being a fluent preacher in Hindi and Bengali, Choonoo was instrumental in drawing many Hindi speaking families into the Mission. When Stott was transferred to Verulam, John Choonoo assumed pastoral responsibility of the Durban Indian Mission until he was transferred to Verulam in 1894³.

¹Stott, p.112

²Mears, p.8 cf Choonoo, A.J.: A Retrospect of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission in 90th Anniversary Brochure, 1952, Acme Printing Press, Durban, p.5

³Choonoo, p.8

3.4 The Appointment of a Local Committee of Management

The last decade of the nineteenth century evidenced further development in the Indian Mission. For the first time the Conference appointed a Local Committee of Management for the Durban Mission¹. The Committee comprised the Chairman of the Natal District, the Superintendent Ministers of the Circuits of Durban, Stanger, Verulam and Indian Mission together with Mr J.W. Garland, Mr A.A. Smith, Mr T. Groom, Mr C. Stephen and the Hon. J.L. Hullett, MEC. The Convener was the Superintendent of the Indian Mission.

Except for one change in the composition of the Committee, when in 1893 Mr J.A. Polkinghorne replaced Mr C. Stephen², the Committee remained the same throughout.

Its function was to guide the affairs of the Mission and submit reports through the District Committee to the Methodist Conference. The Committee continued to function until 1896, when that Conference, having received their report, resolved that the Committee's work should cease³.

3.5 Erection of Buildings

One other feature of development of the Mission in this decade was its building programme. A church was erected with a seating capacity, for forty people in the Umgeni area. The records

¹Minutes of Conference, 1891

²Minutes of Conference, 1893

³Minutes of Conference, 1896

reflect that the cost was twenty seven pounds and that on completion the mission incurred a debt of four pounds¹. In 1900 a wood and iron cottage was purchased for the catechist at a cost of forty eight pounds and with this acquisition the Mission was again in debt, this time for forty pounds².

3.6 The Involvement of the Laity

The removal of Simon Stott and later of John Choonoo to the Verulam Circuit drained the Durban Indian Mission of trained personnel. Their transfers encouraged lay involvement however. Amongst those who came to the fore were Mr Victor Rowley who laboured effectively in the Umgeni area; Mr Jacob Lutchman in the Umbilo area and Mr Moses Subrayan in the Durban central area. These men were ably assisted by a dedicated band of Local Preachers - Mr C. Stephen, was the first Local Preacher in the Indian Mission. Other Local Preaches were Anboo Royeppen, J.L. Stephens, J. Balagarn, V. George, V. Vinden, J. Powys, E. Royeppen, I. Veerasamy, G. Ramrack, A. Sooriah, P. Sooriah and W. Woodenberg³. Their boldness in preaching and the open-air evangelical rallies conducted brought many into the Church particularly in the Umbilo and Prospect Hall area⁴. Between 1906-1908 Mr Zechariah Lucas Pillay served as Local Preacher and

¹Minutes of Conference, 1898

²Minutes of Conference, 1900

³Thomas, E.: 'Our Local Preachers' and Royeppen, E.J., 'Our Evangelists' in the Centenary Souvenir Brochure, 1962, Standard Printing Press, Durban, p.14-15

⁴Royeppen, p.15

returned to India just prior to Revd Theophilus Subrahmanyam's arrival in the Mission.

3.7 Revd Theophilus Subrahmanyam

With Zechariah Pillay's return to India and in view of the 1883 resolution from the Natal District to the Conference¹ urging them to negotiate with the W.M.M.S. and the British Conference, an invitation was extended to the Revd Theophilus Subrahmanyam, an ordained Methodist minister, to take charge of the Indian Mission in Durban.

Just as Ralph Stott was the first missionary appointed to pioneer Methodism among the Indian community, Revd Theophilus Subrahmanyam will always rank as the first Methodist Indian minister in the country. Subrahmanyam came from Madras, India², and was of the Brahmin caste³. He arrived in Natal in 1908 and remained in the province for three years.

Initially he encountered a schism in the Durban mission, when one of the catechists rejoined the Swedish Lutheran mission and took with him a Local Preacher and a group of Methodists⁴. The second difficulty Subrahmanyam experienced was the distribution of anti-Christian literature by a Hindu religious teacher in the Durban area and this resulted in a lack of interest by Hindus for

¹Minutes of Conference, 1883, para xv, p.41

²Choonoo:90th Anniversary Brochure, p.5

³Stott, p.144

⁴Brain, p.211

Christianity. The third problem that he had to contend with was the social and political situation in Natal particularly with its 'inhuman colour prejudice' and it was this problem that eventually led to his decision to return to India.

Nonetheless, Subrahmanyam was able to exercise an effective ministry. New preaching places were established to cater for the widely distributed congregation; through his charisma a new enthusiasm was generated and an education programme started to better equip Local Preachers, Class Leaders and Sunday School Teachers. His ministry created a reawakening resulting in 'lost members being reclaimed'¹. Numerically the Durban Indian Mission increased from 88 to 148 in 1908². He initiated an extensive visitation programme and in 1908, 460 Hindus were visited in their homes and figures recorded for the same year indicate that 3670 Hindus attended his evangelical meetings³. Gordon Mears reports that several baptisms took place in the Durban area, including that of a man condemned to death⁴. Unable to accept the social and political position of Indians in Natal, Subrahmanyam, elected to return to India in 1911⁵. His departure was a great loss to the Mission, but he had succeeded in completely reorganising the Mission and of making its ministry more effective⁶.

¹Choonoo, p.8 and Mears, p.11

²Brain, p.211

³Ibid

⁴Mears, p.11

⁵Stott, p.114

⁶Choonoo, p.8

3.8 Developments After Subrahmanyam's Return

The departure of Subrahmanyam meant that the Mission was without a minister. Between the years 1911-1916 the Stations of Conference read:

'Durban Indian Mission - One to be sent, Indian Minister'¹. The task of continuing the mission fell to the laity. Among those who distinguished themselves in the Durban Mission were Reuben Choonoo, Daniel Nair, Moses Subrayan, C. Stephen and Zechariah L. Pillay².

Reuben Choonoo completed his education at the Boys' Model School and for a while was employed by a firm of printers as a book-binder. In 1908 he came to be greatly influenced by Subrahmanyam and become actively involved in the work of the Mission. In 1911 Reuben was received as a fully accredited Local Preacher and in the same year was employed in the Mission as a catechist³. Reuben served the Mission in this capacity for seven years and he candidated for the ministry in 1917. Daniel Nair's involvement in the mission led to the creation of many new preaching places⁴. Mr Moses Subrayan is considered to be the first Tamil Evangelist associated with the Indian Mission⁵. Mr C. Stephen is regarded as

¹Minutes of Conference: 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915 and 1916

²Mears, p.11, Royeppen p.14 and Thomas, p.15

³Minutes of Conference, 1959, p.12

⁴Choonoo:90th Centenary Brochure cf Royeppen E..J.: Centenary Brochure, p.15

⁵Mears, p.11

the first Local Preacher in Mission¹. He was employed as an interpreter in the Supreme Court and his ability to communicate in English, Tamil and Telugu made him a very effective preacher². His preaching career began in 1876 and in addition to preaching he rendered valuable assistance to Ralph Stott in the erection of the Queen Street Chapel³. Mr C. Stephen died in 1911, the year that Subrahmanyam returned to India⁴.

Among the women who distinguished themselves in this period was Mrs Grace Christina Martin, who became the first Bible-women to be appointed in the Mission in 1911. Her loyalty and devotion endeared her to the hearts of many in the Durban area. Mrs Martin served the Mission in this capacity for three years⁵.

An immensely significant development in the life of the Mission during this period was the departure of Arthur J. Choonoo to India for theological training. Choonoo studied at the Wesley Training College, Guindy, Madras⁶.

Of Arthur Choonoo's stay in Theological College, Revd S.M. Devadas writes:

'... New as he was to the place and its' surroundings he

¹Thomas, p.14

²Royeppen, E: The Work of Our Local Preachers, 90th Anniversary Brochure, 1952, Acme Printing Works, Durban, p.15

³Ibid

⁴Ibid

⁵Mears, p.13 cf Choonoo, p.9

⁶Rev. S.M. Devadas, Vice Principal, Wesley Training College, Guindy, Madras - Testimonial written for A.J. Choonoo, dated 15 July 1914. (In the possession of Revd. Harold Choonoo, Cape Town).

accommodated himself very well and although his food, the climate and other conditions were quite new experiences to him, and sometimes very trying too - he always maintained a cheerful countenance ...¹

While at College, Choonoo served as prefect in Lamplough Hall, was the centre of social life at the Institution, was the Guild Secretary and 'always helped in our singing by presiding at the Organ for our meetings'². Choonoo distinguished himself as a good student, and always obtained good grades in his examinations. In addition to his College subjects, Choonoo's one desire was, 'to acquire a sound knowledge of Tamil ... He can now preach fairly well in Tamil'³.

The significance of Choonoo's departure in terms of the history of the Indian Mission is that for the first time 'one of its' own sons' volunteered for theological training. In 1914 Choonoo, having successfully completed his training returned to Natal, with his wife, the only daughter of Revd and Mrs T. Subrahmanyam.

The erection of the Lorne Street Church in 1914 was another significant development during this period. Revd Ezra Nuttall and Reuben Choonoo, then a catechist, were instrumental in drawing the attention of Lady Greenacre (the daughter of Revd Stott) to the needs of the rapidly expanding work of the Indian Mission⁴. This resulted in Lady Greenacre donating substantially towards the building costs of the Lorne Street Methodist Church which was

¹Ibid

²Ibid

³Ibid

⁴Minutes of Conference, 1959 p.12 cf Mears: p.18 and Choonoo: p.9

handed over to the Indian Mission, in memory of her father, the late Revd Ralph Stott, the founder of the Mission. The Lorne Street Methodist Church was opened on the 11th September 1914, at 7:45 p.m. by the then Chairman of the District, the Revd Ezra Nuttall, in the presence of a large gathering of ministers and friends. The Revd S.H. Stott read the lesson from 1Kings 8:22-61 and the unveiling of the Stott Memorial Plaque was performed by Mrs Meg Laughlin, grand daughter of Revd Ralph Stott on behalf of her mother Lady Greenacre¹. The property on which the Queen Street Church stood was sold and with the proceeds, two cottages were purchased in Cross Street for the use of the Ministers in the Mission².

The last decade of the nineteenth century evidenced the re-establishment of a Conference appointed committee to oversee the Indian Mission. The initial Local Committee of Management was appointed in 1891 and functioned until 1896. The Indian Mission had passed the gruelling pioneer stage and it's ministry had extended to three areas - Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Verulam. Although no reference appears in the Minutes of Conference in 1910, the Minutes of Conference of 1911 indicates that the Conference received and adopted the Report of the Committee of the Indian Mission³. The Conference of 1911 established three Sectional Committees - the Durban Indian Mission, the

¹Lee, H.L.:Order of Service marking the 60th Anniversary of the Lorne Street Methodist Church, 15 September 1974.

²Choonoo, p.9; cf Mears, p.13

³Minutes of Conference, 1911, p.84

Pietermaritzburg Indian Mission and the Verulam Indian Mission. The Conference directed that the three Sectional Committees combined would constitute the General Committee of the Indian Mission and the Revd J.R. Saunders was appointed Convenor¹. The Durban Mission Committee comprised Revds E. Nuttall, J.R. Saunders, J.H. Roberts, L.S.H. Wilkinson, Messrs A.A. Smith, T. Corbishley, H.B. Hulett, H. Payne, J.A. Polkinghorne, E.J. Fowler, C. Clarkson, J.W. Rycroft and C. Stephen².

The Minutes of Conference between the years 1911-1916 list the three Sectional Committees. However the Minutes of 1917 does not list the Committee because in that year Revd Charles S. Lucas, the Superintendent of the Indian Mission, amalgamated the Verulam and Durban Indian Mission Committees to form the Durban and Coast Methodist Indian Mission³. The numerical returns as reflected in the Minutes of Conference between the years 1904-1916 indicate that from 1904 separate figures were recorded for the three Missions. The Minutes of 1917, however, provide a combined figure for the Durban Indian Mission. The Minutes, for instance, of the Conference of 1916 indicate that the numerical strength of the Durban Indian Mission as 91 and the Verulam Indian Mission as 79 full members. The Minutes of 1917 merely shows the Durban Indian Mission having 166 full members, indicating the amalgamation of the two Indian Missions.

The 1917 Minutes of Conference, lists an enlarged Indian Mission

¹Ibid

²Ibid

³Mears, p.13

Committee, comprising some thirty members, of whom eight were ministers¹. In addition the Conference established an Executive Committee and the President of Conference, Revds J. Pendlesbury, C.S. Lucas, together with Messrs H.W. Payne, W.H. Dyer and F.C. Brokenshaw served on the Committee². A conspicuous absence from the Committee were the members of the Indian Mission. Bearing in mind that both Arthur and Reuben Choonoo were officially appointed as Probationer Ministers by the Conference, they too, were surprisingly not on the Committee. Their names, however, appear as members of the Committee only after their Ordination. Within the decade of Revd Subrahmanyam's return to India, Arthur John Choonoo and Reuben Choonoo offered as candidates for the Methodist ministry in 1917. Their names appear among the seven candidates from the Connexion that offered that year³. The Conference of 1917 appointed Arthur Choonoo to the Verulam Mission and Reuben Choonoo to the Durban Mission. Both served under the Revd Charles S. Lucas as their Superintendent⁴. The Indian Mission staff comprised a further four catechists and two evangelists⁵. Arthur and Reuben Choonoo remained in those appointments until their Ordination in 1921. Their names being among thirteen others who ordained the same year⁶. In 1922 Arthur was appointed to the Durban Mission and Reuben to the Verulam

¹Minutes of Conference, 1917, p.78

²Ibid

³Ibid, p.4

⁴Ibid, p.18-19

⁵Ibid

⁶Minutes of Conference, 1922, p.32

Mission.

The Revd E.H. Hurcombe¹ aptly captures the occasion of the ordination service of the Choonoo brothers:

'... Sunday, 17 July, 1921 was a noteworthy day in connection with the Indian work of our Church, the occasion being the ordination of two Indian ministers, who had been raised up among their own people, and could be counted among the 'first fruits' of our Indian work. The Revds. Reuben and Arthur Choonoo had passed a most successful period of probation, taking 'honours' in their examinations each year, and approving themselves as 'workmen that need not be ashamed'. In the large congregation that assembled for this unique occasion sat the father of the two candidates, a man over eighty years, who was formerly a Catechist among us, speaking six languages and highly respected by Europeans and Indians alike ...'

The period following the ordination of the Choonoo brothers in the Indian Mission indicates that the gruelling pioneer stage, which until now characterized the Mission, was over. The Mission had attained maturity and stability and settled down to face the future with more certainty².

The Durban Indian Mission was fortunate in that the Superintendents that were appointed were deeply interested in the development of the Indian work and devotedly served the Mission³. From 1925 until the Mission divided into two separate Circuits in 1973, the Superintendents who served were: Joseph Metcalf, W.H. Stanton, C.J. Lander, A.G. Rooks, D. Adendorff, J. Barrow,

¹Hurcombe, E.H.: The Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa, Our Missionary Story, 1928, Methodist Publishing House, Cape Town, p.62-63

²Mears, p.14

³Choonoo: 90th Anniversary Brochure p.7

R. Yates, J. Minty and H.Lee¹. Each made their own contribution and brought to the Mission their own gifts and talents.

3.9 Schism in the Mission

With the emergence of Pentecostalism in the Durban area under Pastor J.F. Rowlands in 1931², the Indian Mission suffered a schism, when a number of their founder members left the Mission and joined the Bethesda³ movement of Pastor Rowlands. This schism robbed the Mission of a large part of it's leadership and growth for a time was hampered in the Durban area.

Following this schism a great deal of consolidation had to be done. Extensive pastoral visitation was undertaken, home fellowship groups came into existence and through these efforts the Mission again became revitalized with members on the periphery being incorporated⁴. A new spirit of evangelism began to emerge and this led to many conversions. The pastoral visitation and home fellowship groups were augmented in that by 1935 the Durban Mission had engaged the services of three full-time Evangelists: Isaac Chinsamy, M. Boloo and C. Hastibeer. These evangelists were supported in their work by eight fully accredited Local Preachers and six other Preachers in training.

¹The 'Framework of the Mission', Centenary Souvenir Brochure, p.28

²Oosthuizen, G.C.:Moving to the waters, 1975, Bethesda Publications, Durban, p.20

³Singh G:Private Communication, 4 July 1985

⁴Rev Gordon Moosamy:Private Communication, 25 August 1993

Fasting and prayer was encouraged throughout the Mission and a real spirit of love, care and zeal for evangelism was evident throughout.

Two of the fellowship groups that came into being under the ministry of Revd C.J. Lander need special mention because these led to the birth of Methodist Societies in the Mayville and Cato Manor areas.

3.10 Mayville

At Mayville a home fellowship group commenced under the leadership of Mr Rajah Namaraine and Mr Lal Matthew¹. This group soon attracted other Methodists and Hindus living in the area. In addition to the Namaraine and Matthew families others that were associated with the Mayville group in the initial stages were the Jimmy Murugan, Martin Matthew, Joseph Murugan, Dorrie Matherai and the Gavin families².

Within a relatively short time the need for a large venue became necessary. The venue that was available at the time was an outbuilding at 39 Villa Road, Mayville. This building belonged to Mr & Mrs S.A. Stevens, who was a watch repairer, conducting his business in Victoria Street, Durban³. Mr Stevens and his family were members of the Telugu Baptist Church. During the period of their occupation, Mr Stevens removed the interior

¹Ibid

²Ibid

³Ibid

separating walls of the various rooms creating a 'hall' like structure to be called 'Rani Hall' after his daughter¹. The monthly rental paid by the Mayville Methodist Church was two pounds and ten shillings. Under Revd Dr. A.G. Rooks, with a membership of nearly a hundred, Mayville became a Methodist Society attached to the Durban Indian Mission².

3.11 Mayville and The Group Areas Act

Revd Desmond Adendorff recognised that Mayville and its surrounding areas had potential for evangelism. A number of Methodist families had moved out of the city area into the Springfield area and the latter area was becoming a major Indian residential area. Desmond Adendorff subsequently began as early as 1956 to explore the possibility of acquiring land in Springfield³. Revd Glass reported to the Indian Mission Committee that the premises at Mayville now proved to be inadequate because of the numerical growth evidenced in the Mayville Church⁴. Although the Mission recognized the need to develop the Methodist work in the area no suitable property could be found. The properties that had been identified were either for business or residential sites with flat-rights. No religious sites were available. Under the Group Area Act, (the Act was introduced by the Nationalist Party in the decade of the 1960's and brought

¹Ibid

²Ibid

³Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 8 February 1956

⁴Ibid

about racial and residential segregation) Mayville was declared a White area and the predominantly Indian Methodist congregation were compelled to move¹. The final service at Rani Hall was on the 13 April 1975².

For a number of years the Mayville Methodist congregation utilized the Anglican Church in Overport as a venue for their worship services and only on 27 May 1990 moved to their own building in Alpine Road, Springfield, Durban.

3.12 Cato Manor

The Church at Cato Manor also had its inception from a home fellowship group that Revd Lander encouraged during his ministry. This group began meeting in 1935 at the home of Mr Alfred Milan when he and his family lived at Etna Lane Durban³. Associated with this house-church was Mr Benjamin Royeppen and his family. This little group met regularly and took seriously the discipline of fasting and prayer. Both Milan and Royeppen exercised a very effective healing ministry which was experienced particularly among the Hindus, as this home-church grew. A number of exorcisms were reported and those 'delivered' became members of the Mission. The Etna Lane house-church did not develop as a Society because of its close proximity to Lorne Street and those who were converted at Etna Lane preferred having their membership at Lorne

¹Ibid, 14 May 1954

²Vestry Journal - Mayville Methodist Church

³Rev Gordon Moonsamy: Private Communication, 25 August 1993

Street¹.

In 1940 the Milans moved to Cato Manor. They retained their membership at Lorne Street and this move entailed a great deal of transport to and from the Lorne Street Church. The transporting of the family proved to be expensive. Since Cato Manor was a predominantly Indian area Mr Milan took the initiative and relying on the experience he gained at Etna Lane, began a house-church in Cato Manor². Again through a powerful healing ministry including reported exorcisms, the membership grew and the Cato Manor Methodist Society, with its own Sunday School was formed. On Tuesdays prayer meetings were held in the homes of the members attached to the Society. As at Mayville and Etna Lane, Cato Manor too could boast a number of conversions. Among the families that were converted were the Daniel Maharaj family, the Matthew family and the Desrath Maharaj family³.

Services at Cato Manor were held fortnightly because the Milan family wanted to maintain their links with Lorne Street. All the ministers who served the Mission preached regularly at Cato Manor and administered the sacraments there. The first service took place on the 2 September 1945 at 11:00 am, the preacher being Mr B. Royeppen⁴. The last service held at Cato Manor was on 25 February 1973 and was conducted by Mr J. John⁵. By this time the

¹Ibid

²Ibid

³Mr Edward Milan:Private Communication, 23 August 1993

⁴Vestry Journal - Cato Manor Society

⁵Ibid

viciousness of the Group Areas Act had been experienced and Indian families were compelled to move to other Indian residentially proclaimed areas. For 28 years the Cato Manor Church served as a 'satellite church' for Lorne Street.

3.13 Lay Assistants

Under the Superintendency of Adendorff an attempt had been made to secure an evangelist from India¹. At the same time Conference agreed to approach the Government for permission to engage a minister from India to assist with evangelism². However, by the following year the Mission had learnt that it had not been possible to secure the services of Dr Edwin Orr and the possibility was being explored of engaging ' a suitable man passing our shores'³. Negotiations were also in progress to employ Mr Walter Felgate as an Evangelist⁴. When these proved futile, Mr N. Paul, formerly from the Assemblies of God Church was approached⁵ but he declined. It was only in 1956 that the Mission was able to secure an Evangelist and Mr David Murugan was employed on a part-time basis with remuneration of ten pounds per month⁶. A year later Charles S. Balli, who later candidated for

¹Minutes of Conference, 1952, p.165

²Ibid

³Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 3 August 1953

⁴Ibid

⁵Ibid, 28 February 1955

⁶Ibid, 4 May 1956

the ministry, served as a Lay Agent¹. With the retirement of Mr Isaac Chinsamy on the 1 January 1965², Mr Billy Christopher commenced as an Evangelist on 1 October 1965³.

3.14 Bursary Fund

To cater for the needs of those seeking tertiary education the A.H. Smith Bursary Fund was launched in 1954⁴. Mr A.H. Smith launched the fund with a contribution of twenty five pounds. The first recipient of a portion of this bursary was Ms Shirley Murugan, the daughter of one of the Mission's Local Preachers, Mr Jimmy Murugan. This monetary assistance enabled Ms Murugan to proceed to Springfield Teacher Training College⁵.

3.15 Appointment of Delegates

In 1957 for the first time since the commencement of the Indian Mission, the Church's Conference appointed an Indian Lay Representative. Up until this time the other racial groups had their own representation. Mr J.D. Royeppen was appointed in 1957 for a period of three years⁶. Another significant appointment in 1966 was that of Mr M.D. Nair who represented the Methodist

¹Ibid, 24 July 1957

²Ibid, 13 May 1965

³Ibid, 16 November 1965

⁴Ibid, 8 March 1954

⁵Ibid

⁶Minutes of Conference, 1957, p.89

1966 was that of Mr M.D. Nair who represented the Methodist Church of South Africa at the World Methodist Conference¹.

3.16 Division of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission

The Durban and Coast Indian Mission that came into being in 1916 experienced it's first subdivision in 1960, when by a resolution to the Synod, Indian Mission work beyond the Verulam River became part of the Stanger-Umhlali Circuit². Three years later, 1963, the Indian Mission Committee received a request from the Umkomaas Leaders Meeting requesting permission for them to become part of the South Coast Circuit. The Indian Mission in a letter dated 29 June 1963 were informed that the Renishaw Circuit were eager that the Umkomaas Society be part of their Circuit³. The District Synod and Conference of that year agreed to the realignment of the Renishaw Circuit and on 1 January 1964, Umkomaas officially became part of the Renishaw Circuit.

The Durban Mission acquired and disposed of a number of properties as well. In addition to acquiring property for the erection of Churches, manses were also bought to accommodate ministers. The sale of the first Church in Queen Street made possible the purchase of two manses in Cross Street⁴. In addition the Mission owned a manse in Claribel Road and rented a house in Seaward Road, Clairwood. Manses were in need of renovation and

¹Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 16 November 1965

²Ibid, 2 June 1960

³Ibid, 2 July 1963

⁴Choonoo, p.9

maintenance and funds for these improvements were obtained through assessment of the Societies.

In 1966 the Mission received an offer of R28500 for the Cross Street property, but the sale did not materialize¹.

In the same year the Mission sold the Claribel Road property for R10000 and purchased a manse in Cowey Road, which belonged to the Durban Metropolitan Circuit for R11000². The Cross Street property was eventually sold in March 1973 for R100,000³. The proceeds of this sale enabled the Mission to settle all outstanding debts - the Mission owed R5000 on the Cowey Road property and R10000 for a manse in Chatsworth. When these debts had been settled Revd H.L. Lee reported that for the first time in the history of the Mission it was free of all debt⁴.

3.17 Further Subdivision of the Durban Mission

Due to the development that was taking place in the South Coast, particularly in the Chatsworth area and to the immediate north of the Umgeni River (in the Newlands - Phoenix area), the Indian Mission Committee decided that the time had come to form two Missions each with its own Superintendent. This division took effect from 1 January 1972.

The North Durban Mission comprised Lorne Street, Mayville, Cato Manor, Avoca, Phoenix, Newlands and Mount Edgecombe with 413

¹Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 29 February 1966

²Ibid, 17 November 1966

³Ibid, 8 August 1973

⁴Ibid, 8 August 1973

members. The South Durban Mission comprised Clairwood, Merebank, Chatsworth, Umbogintwini and Isipingo Societies with a membership of 429¹.

Despite the division the Indian Mission Committee continued to function as one and in March 1973 name changes to the two newly created Missions were proposed to Synod. The North Durban Indian Mission was to become the Durban North West Circuit and the South Durban Indian Mission became the Durban South West Circuit².

The Indian Mission Committee at a meeting on the 13 March 1973 requested the Superintendent, Revd H.L. Lee to investigate the continuance of the Indian Mission Committee in view of the recent developments that had taken place. At the Indian Mission Committee meeting on the 8 August 1973, Lee reported that the two Indian Circuits were fully developed and recommended that the Indian Mission Committee cease to meet as from the end of 1973³. All monies that were held in Trust, particularly after the sale of the Cross Street property was divided and each Circuit received R49250⁴.

On the 3 December 1973, the Revd Dr D.C. Veysie informed the Indian Mission Committee that Conference had agreed to terminate the Indian Mission Committee and this brought to an end the Indian

¹Ibid, 13 September 1972

²Ibid, 13 March 1973

³Ibid, 8 August 1973

⁴Ibid, 24 July 1972

Mission that was formed a 111 years earlier.

3.18 Conclusion

The Indian Mission in the Durban area under Simon Stott does indicate that much pioneering work still had to be undertaken. The arrival of an Indian group from Mauritius added numerically to worship attendance. The role played by John Choonoo helped the Mission establish a firm foundation. The arrival of Revd T. Subrahmanyam and his charismatic ministry boardened the mission of the Church. His evangelical approach led to new inroads into the Hindu religious community. The lay involvement after Subrahmanyam's return to India reveals that they were able to continue his ministry. The candidature of Arthur and Reuben Choonoo and their eventual ordination indicates that the Indian Mission 'had come of age'.

With the establishment of house-Churches under Revd Lander's ministry, two new Methodist Societies came into being, namely, Mayville and Cato Manor. The success of both these Societies must be attributed to the initiative of the laity.

The introduction of the Group Areas Act greatly affected the Indian Mission as members were uprooted and resettled in Indian proclaimed areas. The Indian Mission, was as a result forced to buy property and erect new worship centres at a time when the Mission could ill-afford such building programmes. The Mission rose to such challenges, nevertheless.

The itinerant - style ministry that categorised the pioneer stage

was replaced by a more localized - settled ministry. The transfer of Simon Stott from Durban paved the way for John Choonoo to assume pastoral responsibility in Durban. Together with Subrahmanyam a new dimension was introduced into the mission - Indians were now ministering to Indians. Being converts, they were able to relate the Gospel to the Indian cultural situation and this resulted in numerical growth. The building of the Lorne Street Church, the ordination of the Choonoo brothers, and the creation of 'satellite churches' firmly established the Mission in Durban and provided a much needed base for the development of Methodist missionary work along the Natal Coastal belt, especially the Natal South Coast, to which we now turn.

CHAPTER 4

THE INDIAN MISSION ON THE NATAL SOUTH COAST

4.1 Introduction

This chapter surveys the efforts of the Indian Mission on the Natal South Coast with regard to their missionary activity. The assistance given by the laity and other full time evangelists employed by the Mission is indicated. Mention is made of the first converts in particular areas and of how the missionary work evolved around them to effect other conversions. The main centres of mission development is examined and the separation of Umkomaas from the Mission to a White Circuit is mentioned as well.

4.2 Pioneering Days

Ralph Stott paid regular visits to Sugar Estates on the South Coast. Although he visited some 80 estates along the Natal Coast only five were owned by Methodist members. Among the five was a Mr Parsons of Wentworth who brought Indian labourers to hear Stott preach and six of them were baptized¹. Labouring under difficult conditions and covering a vast area Stott was unable to consolidate the work on the South Coast, Stott's ministry there was mainly of an itinerant nature.

It was only during Subrahmanyam's ministry that the Indian Mission began to have an impact on the South Coast. Under his

¹Brain, p.203

ministry a strong lay leadership developed and he was able to employ as evangelists Reuben Choonoo and Daniel Nair. Though these evangelists were attached to the Durban Mission they were successful in consolidating missionary work at Rossburgh, Sea View, Merebank, Reunion, Umbogintwini and Umkomaas¹.

4.3 Rossburgh

According to Choonoo² the Church at Rossburgh was originally the Umbilo Church and associated with this congregation was Mr Jacob Lutchman³. J.L. Stephen, Jacob Lutchman's son provides information of his fathers' first encounter with Ralph Stott and another Evangelist, Mr C. Stephen:

'My father arrived in the Colony in the latter part of 1878 and was indentured to Mr C.F. Parson of Wentworth. On his arrival he was influenced by a Godly Roman Catholic lady and become a follower of that denomination. One Sunday in the same year whilst going through the usual ceremonies of the Church he was questioned by the late Revd R. Stott and the late Mr C. Stephen on this form of worship, and was told by them that this form of worshipping would not save him from his sins, and they had an argument over it. At the close of that argument my father proclaimed himself to be a Methodist, and has been a Methodist ever since⁴.'

Lutchman worshipped at Durban and after some instruction became a Local Preacher in 1879. He began preaching to his fellow shipmates and colleagues and through this was able to gather a group of ten men to accompany him to worship services in Durban.

¹Choonoo, p.9

²Ibid

³Ibid

⁴Letter written by J.L. Stephen to Rev C.S. Lucas, 4 April 1921. (Is in the possession of Mrs Ruth Lee, Durban).

In a relatively short time Lutchman had amassed a sizeable congregation and began to insist that a regular service be held at the South Coast Junction¹.

The first venue utilized was an old canteen, which was situated near the South Coast Junction station. Lutchman was given responsibility over this congregation². Soon the numerical growth was such that a larger venue became necessary. With the assistance of Mr C. Stephen a wood and iron church was erected near the South African Sugar Refineries' Manager's house³. This church was constructed on leasehold land at a cost of forty five pounds and no debt was incurred⁴.

Extension to the Refinery resulted in the Church being demolished and during the ministry of Revd S.H. Stott a new church was erected on the property of Mr Jacob Lutchman. The Lutchmans played a prominent role in the church's upkeep as they lived next door⁵. In 1910 the Mission appointed Jacob Lutchman as a catechist, a position he occupied until his death in 1921. He received a remuneration of ten shillings per month.

On the death of Jacob Lutchman, his son J.L. Stephen, continued the work at the South Coast Junction, Clairwood, Wentworth and the surrounding areas. J.L. Stephen was born in 1891 and by 1905

¹Ibid

²Ibid

³Ibid

⁴Minutes of Conference, 1899, p.198

⁵J.L. Stephen's letter 4 April 1921

was assisting his father with open-air preaching¹. By 1909 J.L. Stephen and R. Choonoo were among the youth who, 'stood out and offered themselves for training with a view to serving the Church'². J.L. Stephen served as a Sunday School teacher and later as a Local Preacher, a position he occupied until his death in 1939.

Through the role played by the Lutchman family and later the Stephen family, the Methodist work became firmly established and with this Church as a base spread to surrounding areas such as Sea View, Bayhead and Clairwood.

The church building in Rossburgh served the congregation until 1953 when a sub-Committee of the Indian Mission Committee recommended the wood and iron structure be demolished and a hall be erected³. The Church at Rossburgh was to be relocated to Clairwood and by 1954 the area was designated industrial. At that stage it appeared unlikely that permission would be given for the erection of a Church at Clairwood. The suggestion was made that the building be erected in such a way that it could easily be converted for industrial use⁴. By 1955 permission to erect the Church at Clairwood was being sought from the District Trust Property Committee, although the securing of a loan from the Methodist Connexional Office had not been confirmed. However, by

¹Choonoo A.G.:Obituary Funeral J.L. Stephen 1939. (In the possession of Mrs Ruth Lee, Durban).

²Choonoo R:Obituary J.L. Stephen, 5 May 1939

³Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 3 August 1953

⁴Ibid, 8 March 1954

1958 the building of the Church with a flat had commenced and was completed in the same year at a cost of four thousand and five hundred pounds¹.

4.4 New Appointments to Indian Mission

Revd H.F. Lawrence, who had offered for the ministry in 1945, completed his Theological Training at Fort Hare and joined the Mission in 1948, assuming pastoral responsibility for the South Coast. Together with P.K. Jacob and Anthony Gnanamuthoo, he worked throughout the South Coast. Lawrence, Jacob and Gnanamuthoo were commonly referred to as the 'Three Musketeers' of the Methodist work on the South Coast². For twelve years they laboured in Merebank, Umbogintwini, Isipingo, Umkomaas and the Clairwood areas - preaching, conducting evangelical services, visiting and caring for Church members. Lawrence³ in recalling his initial appointment says:

'It was not unusual for us to spend half the night speaking to a prospective convert, counselling troubled persons, or resolving domestic problems. Like some of the early missionaries we too had to take off our socks and shoes and wade through shallow streams to reach our people and administer to them...'

By 1957 the Mission had secured the services of Charles Suraj Balli, a convert from Hinduism⁴. Balli was born of orthodox Hindu parents and was converted in 1953. He was appointed to assist on

¹Ibid, 22 July 1959

²Lawrence, H.F.: Extracted from a tribute to P.K. Jacob, 7 August 1983

³Ibid

⁴Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 24 July 1957

the South Coast and resided at Merebank. By 1957 he had become a fully accredited Local Preacher and offered for the ministry in 1959¹. As a Probationer Minister he was appointed to the South Coast in 1960 and was able to exercise an extremely effective ministry among Hindus, particularly in the Merebank area. His ministry, however, was short, for as the Conference was in session in 1962, designating him to College, he died in a road accident.

4.5 Merebank

The Methodist work at Merebank had its origins in 1909 and was initiated by Subrahmanyam². The original congregation met at Reunion, just south of Durban. The Indian community that resided there lived in dwellings that resembled barracks. Eventually these were demolished and the community moved to the Merebank area. In 1926 worship services were held at Mere Street at the house of Mrs Aidi Lutchmee³, her home served as a venue until 1930, when, through the efforts of Mr D. Devamoney permission was obtained from a Mr Wade to use a Church that was previously occupied by a White Methodist congregation⁴. This was referred to as the 'Bush Church' because of its surroundings. Mr S. Manasseh and Mr D. Devamoney were amongst the laity who played a prominent role in the Church.

¹Minutes of Conference, 1962, p.17

²Mrs M. Govindsamy: Private Communication, 25 July 1993

³Ibid

⁴Ibid

The 'Bush Church' was used until 1939, when the congregation were able to build their own Church on property acquired in Mere Street during the Superintendency of Revd C.J. Lander. The foundation stone was laid by Revd Arnold Nichols, then Chairman of the Natal District on the 29 January 1939 and in the same year the official opening was performed by Mr and Mrs J.M.L. Baumann¹. The first recorded marriage was that of Mr and Mrs Bernard Pillay and the first baptism was that of Priscilla Nadasen.

From 1939 until 1962 the Mere Street Church served the congregation and the present Church is in Junagarth Street.

4.6 Umbogintwini

Methodism began in this area during the ministry of Revd W.H. Stanton and the first convert in the area was a certain Mr John David, who was a Tamil linguist. Mr David was given a Tamil Bible and through reading it became converted. He and his family sought baptism², and their commitment and enthusiasm led to the conversion of Mr Samuel David and James Kisten³. Through the evangelical zeal of these families other Indian families in that closely-knit community at Umbogintwini were converted. Among these were John Chengan, Paul Murugan, Subbans and the P.T. Thomas families⁴. These were all families in the employ of

¹90th Anniversary Brochure, p.22

²John David: Private Communication, 23 August 1993

³Ibid

⁴Ibid

African Explosive and Chemical Industries (AECI).

On the advice of Mr John David (Snr), who was a Supervisor at AECI, the Company allocated a site and erected a Church for the Methodist congregation in 1925 in an area referred to as the lower part of the 'Indian village'. This building served its purpose until 1952 when a new Church, with a seating capacity of 200, was again erected by the Company nearer to their office complex. The pews that are used in the Church were constructed by the Society's Men's League under the Supervision of Mr D. Devamoney¹.

The success of the work at Umbogintwini is attributed to the interest shown by all those who served the Indian Mission. Mr Isaac Chinsamy, while serving as an Evangelist visited the area regularly and through these visits many Hindu families were converted. Evangelistic campaigns, lantern services, slide shows and ministry to the sick helped develop Methodism in the area². The Church continues although a number of the members now reside further away in Lotus Park, Isipingo. (It is currently envisaged that when the Isipingo Church is erected the Umbogintwini Society would cease and amalgamate with Isipingo).

Originally the Umbogintwini Society was part of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission. When the Mission divided in 1973, this

¹Annual Report of Durban and Coast Indian Mission, 30 June 1955

²Mr John David: Private Communication, 23 August 1993

Society became part of the Durban South West Circuit. In 1984 the Church Council at Umbogintwini chose to become part of the Amanzimtoti Circuit.

4.7 Isipingo

The Methodist work in Isipingo began in 1948 when the James Govender family moved into the area from St. Winifreds. Mr Govender was regularly visited by Methodist members in Bally Road, Isipingo. This contact led to the establishment of a Preaching Place and from this small beginning the work grew through conversions. With the implementation of the Group Areas Act the White community moved out and the Indian community move in, among whom were Methodists as well.

In 1963 the Durban Central Circuit offered their Church at Isipingo to the Mission¹. In exploring the possibility of missionary work at Isipingo, the Indian Mission Committee chose to work jointly with the Anglicans² and advised the Central Circuit accordingly. The Anglican Church is still being used and attempts are currently being made to purchase a site for the Methodist congregation. The possibility exists that a Church site might be allocated in Orient Park, Isipingo and if this materializes the Umbogintwini and Isipingo Societies may merge. Presently the Isipingo membership is about one hundred and fifty.

¹Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 29 November 1963

²Ibid, 28 May 1964

4.8 Umkomaas

Reuben Choonoo and Daniel Nair were the two Evangelists responsible for initiating Methodism in the area. Mr James Naidoo, a convert from Hinduism built a church on his farm, and this served as a venue for many years¹. During the ministry of the Revd C.J. Lander and Revd A.J. Choonoo the Methodist work at Umkomaas was discontinued. However, in 1948 with the appointment of Revd H.F. Lawrence to the Natal South Coast, regular visits were made to the area. To Lawrence's surprise he discovered a group of loyal Methodists in the area meeting in the home of Mr and Mrs R.C. David and rendering support to this work was the Jack McClue family². With Lawrence's visits the Methodist work gained momentum. During Adendorff's ministry, the Annual Report that he presented indicated the work at Umkomaas being characterized by real evangelical zeal, a massive township development scheme was envisaged and the possibility that Methodist families would be affected³. In view of this Adendorff was of the opinion that Methodism could benefit 'from some sort of resettlement and rural community-centre scheme'⁴. At the Indian Mission Committee, Adendorff reported on the availability of 46 acres of land near Umkomaas and presented a scheme depicting how the land, if acquired, could be utilized. The

¹H.F. Lawrence:Private Communication, 8 April 1984

²Ibid

³Annual Report of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission, 30 June 1955

⁴Ibid

scheme included a site for Youth camps, part of the property was to be sub-divided for residential purposes and made available to the poorer members of the Mission and to the community. The area was a proclaimed Indian area and an 'ashram' was to be erected where, 'men and women could go to discover God's plan for their lives, for their Churches and for the world in which they live'¹.

The land was offered to the Mission by Mr London at a hundred pounds an acre. The Mission really needed approximately six acres for their needs and in view of this the Methodist Connexional Office suggested that the Mission explore the possibility of a developer purchasing the land. Negotiations then began with a Mr Naidoo of Naidooville. Part of the negotiation involved Mr Naidoo donating six acres to the Mission². However, these negotiations did not succeed and by 13 April 1961, the land had been sold for five thousand and three hundred pounds and the Mission retained only three acres. In June 1963 the Umkomaas Church Council requested that they become part of the South Coast Circuit and a letter dated 29 June 1963 from that Circuit indicated their willingness to receive the Indian Society into their Circuit³. The following year the change had been effected⁴. The three acres of land that the Mission retained was sold to the South Coast

¹Mears, p.16 cf Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 8 February 1956

²Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 31 July 1956

³Ibid, 2 July 1963

⁴Ibid, 25 February 1964

Circuit for R300¹.

4.9 Chatsworth

Chatsworth is an Indian residential area situated just to the south of Durban. The Government's policy of separate development resulted in this township being developed. In line with the Group Areas Act, Indians were compelled to move from areas such as Cato Manor, Clairwood, Mayville, etc to this newly proclaimed Indian area. This forced migration of the Indian community affected Methodist families and plunged the Indian Mission into a financial crisis, as it was forced to erect new worship centres.

Towards the end of 1963 the Indian Mission Committee began negotiating with the City Council to acquire a site². It was reported to the Mission that the City Council had identified such a site in Unit 7, Montford, Chatsworth and at a Joint Meeting of the Indian Mission Committee and Circuit Development Committee, it was agreed that should a second site become available the Mission must attempt to secure that as well³. The site was to be Unit 4, Mobeni Heights.

Recognising that the acquisition of sites and erection of buildings were not likely to be finalized in the immediate future, the Indian Mission secured the services of Mr Billy

¹Ibid, 28 May 1964

²Ibid, 29 November 1963

³Joint Meeting of Indian Mission Committee and Circuit Development Committee, 1 July 1965

Christopher from 1 October 1965 as a full time Evangelist to concentrate in the Chatsworth area¹.

By 1969 the Indian Mission had acquired the two sites in Unit 4 and Unit 7. Plans were in an advanced stage for the building of the church in Unit 4 and tenders of between R10000 - R13500 were received².

In the 1971 Annual report Revd John Minty³ writes:-

'The highlight of the year has been the opening of the Wesley Church, Chatsworth, by the President of the Conference, Revd D. W. Timm on 6 September 1970 ... Steps ought to be taken to proceed with our second Church building in Unit 7 ...'

It was only on the 11 November 1979 that the Unit 7 Church was opened. By this time, as already mentioned, the Durban and Coast Indian Mission had dissolved and two separate Circuits came into being, namely, Durban North West and Durban South West Circuits.

4.10 Conclusion

The many areas on the South Coast where Methodist work existed reveals that missionary work did not only centre in the greater Durban area, but extended as far south as Umkomaas. The South Coast was fortunate in that the calibre of laity that served the Indian Mission in that area was exceptional. Men like Jacob Lutchman, J.L. Stephens, P.K. Jacob, Antony Gnanamuthoo, S. Manasseh, D. Devamoney, John David, James Kisten, R.C. David and

¹Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 16 November 1965

²Ibid, 10 June 1969, 25 November 1969 and 24 February 1970

³Annual Report of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission, 1971

Jack McClue were men of initiative and could function without ministerial guidance. Their devotion and loyalty to the Mission was paramount and in this they were ably supported by their respective families. Each was an evangelist in his own right and were never afraid to confront Hindus with the Christian gospel. The impact that the mission had on the South Coast must be attributed largely to lay involvement. The South Coast, like so many other areas, did not escape the viciousness of the Group Areas Act. The implementation of this Act proved to be very disruptive and extremely costly for the mission but it is to the credit of the mission that inroads were made into newly proclaimed Indian areas with tremendous success.

The other major area that formed a constituent part of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission was the Natal North Coast which is the focus in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE INDIAN MISSION ON THE NATAL NORTH COAST

5.1 Introduction

The focus in this Chapter is on Methodist activity among the Indian community north of the Umgeni River. Special mention is made of the missionary work undertaken at Verulam, Mount Edgecombe, Avoca, Cornubia, Tongaat - Fairbreeze and the Umhlali - Stanger area.

5.2 Verulam

As already mentioned in Chapter 2, initial contact with the Indian indentured labourers was made in Verulam by Revd Joseph Jackson, Revd Ralph Stott and later when Revd Simon Stott was stationed there in 1868. Appointed primarily to evangelise Blacks, Simon Stott preached regularly to the White congregation and recalling this period, he wrote:

'During my time on the Station, Verulam was in its heyday of Methodism¹.'

Because of his long association with the Indian community both in Natal and in Sri Lanka, he continued to maintain contact with them and this paved the way for missionary endeavours on his reappointment to Verulam in 1884. Mr John Choonoo joined Stott at Verulam in 1894. Weekly services were conducted in Hindi and

¹Whiteside, p.366

Tamil and the meeting place was a school room¹. The congregation at Verulam became accustomed to the beating of an Indian drum to signal the commencement of worship services².

Stott and Choonoo did not enjoy much evangelical success at Verulam because of strong Hindu and Islamic religious leadership. Stott describes vividly opposition encountered when a young Indian man desired baptism. He says, 'the young man did not come, and I found he had been threatened and hence he failed to come'³.

Verulam was referred to as the 'City of Saints'⁴, and John Whiteside calls it 'the Holy City', and goes on to say that, 'the influx of Muslims into the town threatened to turn it into a Natal Mecca'⁵. It was this strong leadership that hampered the ministry of both Stott and Choonoo and weakened the interest of the people toward Christianity. Stott superannuated while at Verulam in 1906. Choonoo remained at Verulam and was joined by his son Arthur Choonoo on his return from India. Arthur served as a catechist between 1914-1917 and in the period 1917-1921 as a Probationer Minister. After Reuben Choonoo's ordination he was appointed to the Verulam Indian Mission and the work at Verulam gained new impetus. Diligently tutored by Revd T. Subrahmanyam⁶ and the experience he had gained in the Indian Mission as an

¹Choonoo, p.8

²Ibid

³Stott, p.116

⁴Ibid, p.109

⁵Whiteside, p.375

⁶Minutes of Conference, 1959, p.12

evangelist held him in good stead as he faced the daunting task of ministry in the Verulam area. Reuben, described as 'a man of fine quality and gentle spirit' together with his gift of being 'a preacher who was always simple in speech but forceful and evangelical in his appeals' was able to exercise a useful ministry in the Verulam Mission. According to Mr Gunpath Singh¹, Reuben was instrumental in converting many young people into the Christian faith. Among those converted was Mr Joe Sewpersadh. The latter after his conversion proved to be of great assistance to Reuben Choonoo. He accompanied him as he visited Hindu homes in the area, assisted with open-air evangelical services, transport and made his home available as a venue for Church services². The Sewpersadh home was popularly known as the 'Hospital Home' - for in the past it served as a hospital and housed a doctor. According to Mr G. Singh the relationship between the Indian Mission and the White Methodist community at Verulam left much to be desired. Each group operated separately as was the case in most of the other areas. Mr Singh recalls that between 1937 and 1960 the Indian Mission held no services in the area and when Joe Sewpersadh sought permission to use the White Church for his wedding in 1948, it was refused³. The relationship between the members of the Indian Mission and the Verulam Society eased in the decade of the 1960's. During this period the Group Areas Act was enforced, Verulam was declared an Indian residential area and with this declaration the majority of White residents moved to

¹Mr. G. Singh: Private Communication, 4 July 1985, Avoca.

²Ibid

³Ibid

White proclaimed areas.

During the ministry of Revd Robert Richardson the members of the Indian Mission were invited to join their White counterparts at their worship services. By 1971 Revd Derrick Jolliffe stationed at Greenwood Park had pastoral oversight of Verulam and during his ministry the Verulam Society became part of the North Durban Circuit. By 1977 an evangelist, Gabriel Chinsamy, was employed by the North Durban Circuit and assumed pastoral care of Verulam, Avoca and the Phoenix Societies.

5.3 Mount Edgecombe

The Church at Mount Edgecombe was started by Isaac Chinsamy. As a young boy he came to Natal from India with his father Ramsamy Reddy who was indentured on the sugar estates at Mount Edgecombe. Ramsamy was a high-class Hindu and a priest. Isaac assisted his father in the little temple that was erected at their home. The presence of some 50 Hindu deities prompted Isaac to ask his father, 'Father which is the True God? - one of them must be the True God!'¹. His search for the one True God led to his conversion in 1916 while at Mount Edgecombe². Desiring baptism he sought the assistance of Mr John Choonoo. He was, however, baptised by Revd Arthur Choonoo who had shortly returned from India. To Arthur's surprise, Isaac Chinsamy had gathered together a group of about 30 people, among them his own father and all

¹Chinsamy, I.:Why?, 1962, Missionary Department of the Methodist Church of South Africa, Cape Town, n.p.

²Royeppen, p.15

sought baptism¹. The Superintendent of the Indian Mission at the time, Revd Charles S. Lucas, offered Isaac the position of Evangelist² in 1918. Isaac accepted and served the Indian Mission until his retirement in 1965³. Within a year of his appointment as an Evangelist, Isaac Chinsamy was requested to serve on the South Coast. With his removal the Mount Edgecombe Church tended to be neglected. Abraham Sooriah, a convert of the ministry of John Choonoo and Billy Christopher, who also later became an evangelist, maintained the Mission work in the area. They undertook regular visits to the homes of Church members, conducted prayer meetings and attended to the pastoral needs of members⁴. Mr Peter Paulus and Mr D. Devadas, who were later appointed Evangelists also played a major role in maintaining the Methodist witness at Mount Edgecombe⁵.

Two other prominent lay men at the time were Mr Jimmy Isaac and Mr John Maistry. Through the influence of Mr Jimmy Isaac the Mount Edgecombe Sugar Company erected a Church building for the Methodist Community, most of whom, were employed by the Sugar Company⁶.

¹Lesson Notes: 'From Hindu to Christianity', Methodist Youth Department, Cape Town, n.d.

²Royeppen, p.15

³Minutes of the Indian Mission Committee Meeting, 13 May 1965

⁴Mr G. Singh: Private Communication, 4 July 1985

⁵Choonoo: 90th Anniversary Brochure, p.9

⁶Mr Jimmy Isaac: Private Communication, 6 February 1984, Phoenix

The Indian Mission Committee appointed on Action Committee and in their report mention is made of Natal Estates, who owned the Church building and indicated that the Church would have to vacate within five years¹. The development with regard to Indian Mission work to the north of Durban was such that the Indian Mission Committee sought to link Mount Edgecombe with the new society that was to be established at Newlands. Meanwhile in 1973, David Thomas prior to offering for the ministry served as a lay agent and conducted a mission at Mount Edgecombe which resulted in an upsurge of interest among the Methodist community there.

The Church that was placed at the disposal of the Mount Edgecombe Society was utilized until 1978². About this time there occurred the realignment of Methodist Societies and Circuits. The Verulam Society was already a part of the North Durban Circuit which now began to explore possibilities to incorporate Mount Edgecombe. Initially Mount Edgecombe feared that such a move would result in a loss of identity. Realizing that Conference was impressing upon Circuits to form geographically, the Mount Edgecombe Society became part of the North Durban Circuit, under Revd A.F. Learmonth in 1975. With the establishment of the Phoenix residential complex the society merged with the newly formed Phoenix Society and worship services were conducted at Clayfield, a unit in Phoenix.

¹Report of Action Committee to the Durban Indian Mission, 13 September, 1972

²Mr Jimmy Isaac: Private Communication, 6 February 1984, Phoenix.

5.4 Avoca

Methodism in this area owes its origins to the initiative of Isaac Chinsamy. He was a fluent preacher in Tamil and Telugu and his ability to communicate in the vernaculars enabled him to effect the conversion of many Hindu families. One such convert was a certain Mr Solomon Shunmugran¹, who after his conversion made his home available for prayer meetings. Chinsamy led many of these prayer meetings and having the 'gift of healing' prayed for those in need. A number of 'exorcisms' were reported and invariably those who had been 'delivered' joined the Church. In 1954 the Chinsamy family moved from Mount Edgecombe and settled in Avoca. The prayer meetings held in the Shunmugran home now moved to the Chinsamy home. Chinsamy set aside a room within his home as a Church. On extremely hot days worship services were held in the yard. A bamboo structure with a 'tent' cover was constructed and this provided shelter from the sweltering heat².

The warm hospitality, the informal nature of the service, the simple surroundings and effective evangelical preaching led to the conversion of many Hindus in the Avoca area. From an initial membership of some 25 in 1954 the Church grew to about 80 full members within a relatively short period³. In the same year the Indian Mission Committee permitted the erection of a church at Avoca on land that did not belong to the Church. The cost of

¹Mr G. Singh: Private Communication, 4 July 1985

²Reddy, Dass: Private Communication, 6 October 1992

³Singh, G: Private Communication, 4 July 1985

erecting this Church amounted to thirty pounds and the money was made available from the Durban Indian Mission Funds¹.

This Church on the Chinsamy property continued to serve the needs of the Methodist people in the area until 1972. In that year changes began to take place within the Indian Mission and in the North Durban Circuit. The Minutes² indicate that the then Superintendent Minister, Revd H.L. Lee, discussed the question of the need for more adequate accommodation for the Avoca Society. The suggestion of the Synod was that an approach be made to the Greenwood Park Society for the use of their premises and that the same suggestion be discussed with the Avoca congregation³. At the Indian Mission Committee Meeting⁴ Lee reported that Avoca and Greenwood Park had agreed to the suggestion and Avoca would relocate with effect from 1 January 1973. The Annual Report of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission, reads,⁵

'The Avoca Society now meets in the Greenwood Park Church, and we express our gratitude to the Trustees of the Church for making their premises available to us.'

Although Avoca met in the Greenwood Park Church building both Societies continued to function separately. The Greenwood Park

¹Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 28 July 1954

²Ibid, 24 July 1972.

³Ibid

⁴Ibid, 22 November 1972

⁵Annual Report of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission, 30 March 1973

Society remained part of the North Durban Circuit and Avoca a part of the Indian Mission. Desirous of still maintaining their independence, the Indian Mission Committee began to negotiate for the purchase of land in the vicinity of Bailey and Bahmo Avenue at a cost of R9000¹. The events, however, in the Indian Mission in the same year were such that further negotiation regarding the acquisition of that property did not materialise. The 1973 decision to close the Indian Mission meant that Avoca as a Society would join the Greenwood Park Society in 1974 and become part of the North Durban Circuit.

5.5 Cornubia

Cornubia was regularly visited both by Ralph and Simon Stott. Reports indicate that a mission school was established in the area². For some time after the ministry of the Stotts no contact existed between the Indian Mission and the Cornubia members³. With the lack of contact the original members of the Cornubia Society joined the Anglicans and the Roman Catholic Churches⁴. The Methodist work revived in the mid 1930's when Reuben Choonoo was appointed to the Verulam Indian Mission. Paul Chandrika Singh, a convert through the ministry of John Choonoo, learnt that Reuben had been appointed to Verulam and extended an invitation to him to visit the area and establish Cornubia as a

¹Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 13 March 1973

²Brain, p.209

³G. Singh:Private Communication, 4 July 1985

⁴Ibid

Methodist Preaching place. Again Reuben Choonoo's simple, yet evangelical preaching moved his hearers and more and more came to hear him¹. The success that Choonoo enjoyed did not go unnoticed for a great deal of antagonism was generated from Hindu religious leaders in the area. The main objectors were Pundit Dwarika Maharaj, a certain Mr Gokhal and from Mr Rambally².

The confrontation led to a meeting of the main objectors with Reuben Choonoo at Pundit Dwarika Maharaj's home and in an open religious discussion on what each group stood for, differences were resolved and greater tolerance on the part of Hindu religious leaders was displayed. Arthur Choonoo, who succeeded Reuben Choonoo continued the Cornubia services. The Revd C.J. Lander was highly supportive of Cornubia remaining a preaching place. The Indian Mission were witnessing a number of conversions and according to Mr G. Singh the full membership at Cornubia was 35 with another 50 regular adherents³. Unfortunately Revd Lander's successors felt otherwise and Cornubia as a preaching place was discontinued in 1947. The arguments advanced were that it was a small society; travelling was a problem for preachers and that there was a shortage of trained personnel. Cornubia members were encouraged to link with Mount Edgecombe, but many were lost to the Pentecostal Churches that were rapidly developing in the area.

¹Ibid

²Ibid

³Ibid

5.6 Tonga

When Simon Stott and John Choonoo were appointed to the Verulam Indian Mission they made regular visits from there to other preaching places on the North Coast. Stott¹ recalled the conversion of an Indian jeweller, a certain Mr Sakichand². Mr Sakichand's conversion led to the conversion of his entire family³. Their home was made available to the Mission for use as a venue for worship services. According to Simon Stott⁴ a small number gathered weekly for worship but their work in the area as missionaries mostly involved visiting the Indian labourers on the sugar estates and those employed at the sugar mill.

John Choonoo's sons who succeeded their father and Simon Stott continued to maintain Tonga as a preaching place. After their transfer from the Verulam Mission, Isaac Chinsamy was appointed for a year and his move shortly thereafter to the South Coast was detrimental to the Methodist work at Tonga. No successor was found to replace Chinsamy and Methodist activity in the area ceased.

A little to the north of Tonga lies the village of Fairbreeze. It was here that Captain Hastibeer was converted and joined the Mission. Hastibeer was an influential member in the local

¹Stott, p.116

²Singh G:Private Communication, 4 July 1985

³Stott, p.166

⁴Ibid, p.116

community, owned a store and was a sugar cane farmer¹. He served the Mission as the evangelist who succeeded Mr John Choonoo. He was a very able communicator, preached boldly in Hindi and Tamil and through his ministry Fairbreeze became a preaching place within the Indian Mission. The inability of the Mission to secure the services of another evangelist in the area resulted in the closure of Methodist witness in Fairbreeze².

However, certain changes that occurred in the Mission had a bearing on the Tongaat situation for at the meeting of Indian Mission Committee³ the following resolution was accepted:-

'... That with effect from 1 January 1961 the section of the Mission north of the Umhloti River be placed under the control of the Stanger-Umhlali Circuit ...'

The Natal District Synod which met at Dundee in 1960 accepted the resolution and the Synod's recommendation and subsequent approval by the Conference of that year meant that all Indian Methodist work north of the Umhloti River became part of the Stanger Umhlali Circuit.

Immediately this Circuit began exploring the possibility of employing an evangelist and David Thomas served this Circuit until just prior to his candidature for the ministry. Samson Thomas succeeded David in 1971 and being resident in Tongaat was instrumental in reviving Methodism in the area. Extensive missionary activity, miraculous healings and through the ministry

¹Choonoo, p.8

²Massey, A: The North Coast Mission, Centenary Souvenir Brochure, 1962, Standard Printing Press, Durban, p.23

³Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 2 February 1960

of exorcism, Samson was successful, within a short period to draw together approximately a hundred converts. His vision and the evangelical success that he enjoyed resulted in a joint Trust being established between the Methodists and Presbyterians in 1977 and the erection of a church building in 1979 re-establishing Methodism in the Tongaat area.

5.7 Stanger-Umhlali Area

In 1865 five families namely the Lutchmansings, Hastibeers, Lalbeers, Balbhadurs and Bhibans arrived in Durban¹. These families originated from the vicinity of Darjeeling in India and settled in Umhlali. This group comprised Hindus who spoke Nepali. In 1874 S.H. Stott moved from Verulam and took up residence at Umhlali, where he concentrated on White and Black missionary work². It was here that he was approached to minister to an Indian Baptist congregation on the death of their Pastor³. It was also at Umhlali, in Sir L. Huletts home that Stott and an Indian Brahmin dialogued upon religion and this led eventually to the conversion of the Brahmin⁴.

Stott attributes much of the success of the work at Umhlali to John Choonoo. Of Choonoo's efforts, he writes:

'... Each time he went in that direction he spent two or three days in houses of the Indians, read to them and taught them to sing, and prayed with them and on the

¹Samson Balkission:Private Communication, 4 May 1970

²Stott, p.110

³Ibid, p.113

⁴Ibid, p.111

Sunday, preached in the Church...¹.'

This intense effort by John Choonoo led to the conversion of Mr Paul Lutchmansing in 1894. Mr Lutchmansing was a storekeeper as well as a farmer. Through the influence that Mr Lutchmansing was able to exercise his family, relatives and friends too were converted. In 1897 Lutchmansing erected a church building on his farm and services were held there regularly². He served the Umhlali Church as a Local Preacher and his fluency in Nepali made him an acceptable preacher. His son, Nicodemus, played an equally vital role in the Umhlali Church as a steward and Local Preacher.

In 1902 the wood and iron church building was destroyed by gale and a new church building was erected in 1903. This building was utilized until 1942, when a bigger Church building became necessary. On the 3 June 1943 the then Superintendent Minister, Revd C.J. Lander opened and dedicated the new Church building³. The erection of this Church can be attributed largely to the efforts of Mr Paul Lutchmansing and Mr Samson Balkisson. Other prominent families that played a role at Umhlali were the Lalsinghs and the Moses family. The Church building continued to serve the Indian Methodist community until 1971 when the Indian congregation amalgamated with the White Methodist Society.

At Chaka's Kraal near Umhlali, Daniel Lutchmansing became an ardent Christian and his home was used for worship services. Later the home of Mr Moses Boloo, who was an early convert at

¹Ibid, p.112

²Samson Balkisson: Private Communication, 4 May 1970

³Massey, p.23

Umhlali served as a venue for worship services¹. For many years he had worked for the Bible Society and later served the Indian Mission on the North Coast as an Evangelist. His ability to preach in Hindi proved to be of great assistance in his ministry².

John Choonoo in the 1920's paid regular visits to the village of Vlakspruit, where two brothers Edward and John Lalsingh with their families settled. Some Hindu families were converted in the area and in 1923 Vlakspruit became a preaching place attached to the Umhlali Church. It was here that Mrs Margaret Lalsing donated a plot of ground for the erection of a Church³. Not far away at Tinley Manor a house church was started in the home of Mr Isaac Athman which became associated with the Umhlali Church⁴. Mr Samuel Papiah proved to be a very effective preacher in Telugu and together with Mr Moses Boloo served the Melville area, visiting sugar estates at Gledhow, Mandini, Felixton and Ntumeni. Indian Methodism at Stanger goes back to the period when Ralph Stott made journeys up to Kearsney on the North Coast. When his son succeeded him and with John Choonoo's appointment at Verulam, Stanger continued to be a part of their pastoral responsibility. Due to the vast area and their inability to provide adequate pastoral care, the Stanger Indian Mission came into being only in 1910. Between that year and 1916 the Stanger Indian Mission

¹Choonoo, p.8

²Royeppen, p.15

³Royeppen, p.29 cf Massey, p.23

⁴Choonoo, p.8

appears in the Minutes of Conference as a separate Mission and separate numerical returns are recorded for this Mission¹. The amalgamation sought by Revd C.S. Lucas brought the Stanger Mission into the Durban and Coast Indian Mission². The 1917 Minutes of Conference provided no numerical return for the Stanger Indian Mission, but indicates that the amalgamation had been accomplished. After the ministry of Simon Stott and John Choonoo, sons Arthur and Reuben Choonoo continued to provide pastoral care for the Stanger congregation. Travelling by train from Durban, they faithfully kept their preaching appointments in the Stanger area. The Choonoos were fortunate that there resided in Stanger, a Mr E.D. Williams and Mr J. Williams. They had been converted in India and made their home available for worship services. The Williams together with the families of Subramoney, Parbidoo, Josiah and Kaligan played a major role in developing Methodist work in Stanger³.

Under the Superintendency of Revd Desmond Adendorff the work on the North Coast began to gain momentum. His enthusiasm for the progress of the Indian Mission resulted in a ministerial appointment being made to the North Coast. Among those that served the Indian Mission on the North Coast were Revd I. Glass(1955), Revd J. Rist(1957), Revd Athol Jennings(1958), Revd

¹Minutes of Conference:1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915 and 1916

²Mears, p.13

³Massey, p.23

C.B. Cookes(1959) and Revd M.L. Mackintosh(1959)¹. In 1960 under the Superintendency of Revd A. Massey the resolution to Synod resulted in the incorporation of the Indian work at Stanger into the Stanger - Umhlali Circuit².

5.8 Conclusion

The missionaries who pioneered Methodism among the Indians did not confine themselves solely to the Durban area. Realizing that Indian immigrants were employed on sugar estates north of the Umgeni River, the missionaries endeavoured to exercise an effective ministry to them. From 1862 until 1916 the Indian Methodist work functioned under two distinct missions - namely the Durban Indian Mission and the Verulam Indian Mission. For a relatively short period there existed the Stanger Indian Mission 1910-1916. Revd Charles S. Lucas in 1916 amalgamated all three Missions to form the Durban and Coast Methodist Indian Mission. In 1960, due mainly to the enormous distances from the Durban area and the financial position of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission, all Indian Societies north of the Verulam River were incorporated into the Stanger-Umhlali Circuit. The establishment of Indian Methodism along the North Coast entailed a great deal of travelling, the lack of trained personnel led to the utilization of evangelists and inroads made into Hinduism generated much antagonism.

¹Minutes of Conference:1955, 1957, 1958, and 1960, cf Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes:8 February 1955, 31 January 1957, 19 March 1958, 22 July 1959 and 2 June 1960

²Minutes of Indian Mission Committee Meeting, 2 June 1960

The missionaries who worked on the North Coast adopted a particular methodology and this entailed securing the conversion of some prominent person in the particular locality and then utilizing that person's influence to effect other conversions. This methodology proved effective in that through the conversions of a jeweller in Tongaat, cane farmers and storekeepers in Fairbreeze and Umhlali and a farmer at Chaka's Kraal, the Indian Mission became established in these areas. In other instances the missionaries sought the co-operation of those who were already Christians and with their assistance Hindus were converted as happened at Stanger, Tinley Manor and Melville. Almost always the homes of these 'influential converts' became the venues for worship services and when there was evidence of numerical growth, churches were built mainly through the initiative of the local membership.

The sturdy efforts of those that pioneered this work resulted in the permanent establishment of a Methodist presence stretching all along the Natal North Coast from Avoca through to the Stanger - Melville area.

While Methodist missionaries continued to establish and consolidate the Indian Mission in the Durban and Coastal areas, mission work in Pietermaritzburg developed independently and the focus in the next section will be given to this endeavour.

CHAPTER 6

THE PIETERMARITZBURG INDIAN MISSION

6.1 Introduction

The Indian Mission in Pietermaritzburg developed independently of the Durban Indian Mission. The latter mission became operative a mere two years after the arrival of the indentured immigrants. The Pietermaritzburg Mission commenced 33 years after the first group of indentured Indians had arrived in Natal.

This chapter traces the history of the Indian Mission from its inception in 1895 to 1967 when it became a circuit. The role played by Revd John Thomas, the ministers who succeeded him and the laity who were active in the Mission are highlighted. The contribution that this Mission made in the sphere of primary education is specially mentioned and the relocation of the Mission to an Indian 'group area' is discussed as well.

6.2 Mr John Thomas

Just as the Durban Indian Mission attributes the commencement of the work there to Ralph Stott, the Pietermaritzburg Mission attributes the commencement of the missionary work here to John Thomas¹. The Thomas family accept that it was their father who started the Mission and that White Methodist laymen in the

¹Members of the Thomas family, Mrs P. Lawrence and Mrs R. Royeppen, maintain that it was their father Revd John Thomas who started the Indian Mission in Pietermaritzburg. They maintain those who attribute the commencement of the work to White Laity are biased. Revd Lawrence, a grandson of John Thomas, recalls many conversations where his grandmother spoke of having started the Indian work.

persons of Mr C.T. Varley, W.J. Christie and J. Andrews assisted him¹. This is a radical departure from the view held by F.P. Evans, R. Choonoo, Wesley Hunt, Gordon Mears and S. Jacob², who all attribute the beginnings of the Mission to Methodist White laymen. Simon Stott, who superannuated to Pietermaritzburg, mentions the opportunities he had of preaching in the Mission. No mention, however, is made of any White laity associated with the mission, but Stott does mention John Thomas³.

John Thomas was born at Mackey's Gardens, Madras, India, on 22 October, 1892⁴. He was educated at Wesley College, Royapettah, Madras and arrived in Natal in 1883⁵. Thomas a fluent Tamil

¹Revd H.F. Lawrence: Private Communication, 8 June 1993

²Evans, F.P.: 'What Hath God Wrought' Golden Jubilee Pamphlet, 1897-1947, City Printing Works, Pietermaritzburg, 1947, see also Choonoo, R.: Our Sister Mission in Maritzburg, 90th Anniversary Brochure, p.33, Hunt W.: Faith Marches On, Methodist Missionary Department, Rondebosch, 1956, n.p., Mears, p.18, Jacob S: 75th Anniversary Souvenir Brochure, National Printing Works, Pietermaritzburg, 1972, n.p.

³Stott, p.120

⁴Minutes of Conference 1922 p.6

The year 1892 is clearly a misprint. S Jacob, G. Mears and R. Choonoo give the year of his birth as 1871. The same three authors state that Thomas arrived in Natal in 1890. This means that Thomas was 19 years when he arrived. The entry in the Anglican records give the year of Thomas' marriage as 1886. The Minutes of Methodist Conference for 1922 gives the year of his arrival as 1883. This year of arrival makes sense in terms of the year of his marriage and in this regard the Minutes must be correct. Bill Burnett sites the same year of Thomas' association with an Anglican School in Durban. If the year of his birth as given by Jacob, Mears and Choonoo is accepted, then Thomas would have married at the age of 15. Working backwards from the Minutes, Thomas died in 1921 at the age of 59. Jacob, Mears and Choonoo concur on the year of his death. It is unfortunate that Jacob, Mears and Choonoo do not state the source of their information. It does appear that the Minutes instead of recording 1862, in error recorded 1892 as the year of his birth.

⁵Minutes of Conference, 1922, p.6

linguist, trained in India as a teacher and on arrival in Natal offered his services to the Anglican Church and taught at one of their schools in Durban prior to settling in Pietermaritzburg¹. Here his marriage to Grace Naga Almal on the 23 June 1886 was the first recorded marriage at St Paul's Anglican Church in Pietermaritzburg². D.R. Laban writes in the St Paul's Eightieth Anniversary Brochure:-

'... In retrospect we acknowledge with gratitude the pioneering work of the Revds. George Brooks and Joseph Nullathumby, together with Messrs. John Thomas, V. Samuel, Anthony Shouerie and P. Jesudean ...³'

It is evident from these two entries that Mr John Thomas was an Anglican and had been actively involved in the establishment of the Anglican work in Pietermaritzburg, where he was a teacher in one of their Mission Schools⁴. Revd Lawrence maintains that the first Anglican School in Pietermaritzburg was started by his grandfather Mr John Thomas and it was at this school that he served as teacher. He further maintains that at that time there was no Indian Anglican priest resident in Pietermaritzburg and Thomas assisted by conducting Anglican worship services and also preached at these services. Sacraments were, however, administered by visiting White priests. Later the Anglicans appointed Revd Joseph Nullathumby who came from India as priest to Pietermaritzburg. The privileges that Thomas enjoyed of conducting services and preaching were now denied him and through

¹Burnett, p.103

²Eightieth Anniversary Brochure 1894-1974, St Paul's Church, Kendall and Strachan Printers, Pietermaritzburg, 1974, n.p.

³Ibid

⁴Mears, p.18

disagreements and personality clashes between Nullathumby and Thomas, the latter withdrew to return to Durban. His wife, however, was unwilling to settle in Durban and hence Thomas joined the Methodists and become the Methodist Mission's first catechist and voluntary lay-pastor¹.

In this task he was assisted by Mr C.T. Varley, who began to study Tamil and Hindustani, so that he would be able to communicate effectively with the Indian people. Mr John Andrews, who served in the army in India and gained some knowledge of Indian dialects also assisted the infant Church and the third person who rendered assistance was Mr W.J. Christie².

Varley, Andrews and Christie exhibited tremendous interest and enthusiasm and were convinced that great possibilities existed in evangelising Indian people. Together with John Thomas they began open-air preaching in the Indian section of the city and Thomas acted as interpreter.

John Thomas has been described as a preacher who possessed great evangelical power and 'many were led to embrace the truths of the Christian faith as a result of his powerful, lucid and winsome ministry'³. The open-air evangelical services and the cottage meetings conducted in Indian homes resulted in him winning many

¹Lawrence, H.F.:Private Communication, 7 November 1993, See also Jacobs S.:75th Anniversary Souvenir Brochure, n.p.

²Evans F.P.:Golden Jubilee pamphlet

³Minutes of Conference, 1922, p.6

converts to Christianity¹ and aiding the commencement of the Indian Mission in 1895².

Those converted were placed in the care of John Thomas. This group of converts initially worshipped in an old kitchen. Of this accommodation the Revd Andrew Graham wrote:

'... Their pews consisted of paraffin boxes, logs of wood and low stools. Their first home was a kitchen of an old building, but though it was poor and inadequate, so earnest were the few believers that it became a beloved Sanctuary - a place where God met with his people ...³'

6.3 Day School Established

Showing enterprise Mr Thomas, being a trained school teacher, opened a day school for children. A single classroom, of simple structure, constructed of wood and iron served as the first Methodist School in Pietermaritzburg. Of this structure, Revd H.F. Lawrence⁴ says:

'... it was a most peculiar structure of its kind in the city, but it served as an educational centre from 1890 to 1935... Some of the leading Indian citizens of the city received their grounding in the three R's in this peculiar edifice ...'

To this structure, as the need arose, extensions and additions were made. It eventually was able to accommodate 200 pupils. Revd

¹Jacob S.:75th Anniversary Brochure n.p.

²Lawrence H.F.:An Account of the Growth and Development of the Pietermaritzburg Methodist Indian Mission, Centenary Souvenir Brochure, 1962, p.24

³Andrew Graham, quoted by G. Mears, p.18, H.F. Lawrence p.24 and S. Jacob n.p.

⁴Lawrence, p.24

Reuben Choonoo¹ in his description of this first Methodist School, says,

'though the building was humble - in fact, it defied description - within it's walls thousands of boys and girls received an education...'

John Thomas served this school as the first headmaster and occupied this position from 1890 until 1918².

John Thomas' evangelical work both in open-air preaching and in homes influenced many people profoundly. Simon Stott commenting on these open-air meetings says:

'... his boldness of speech at one time caused such a stir among the heathens so much so that it was reported, he once had a company of 2000 to hear him ...³'

6.4 Erection of the Thomas Street Church

With numerical growth came the need for better and bigger accommodation and as early as 1896 the idea of building a Church gripped the minds of both John Thomas and his congregation⁴. In 1897 the first Indian Church was built at the corner of Church and Thomas Streets, Pietermaritzburg⁵. The foundation stone of that building was laid by Mrs Charlotte Pechey⁶.

¹Choonoo, R.:p.33

²Ibid

³Stott, p.120

⁴Evans: Golden Jubilee pamphlet

⁵Mears, p.18 cf Lawrence, p.24

⁶Lawrence, p.24

In 1898 John Thomas offered as a candidate for the Methodist Ministry and after a successful probationary period was ordained on 16 June 1902 by the Revds W. Wynn, W. Cliff, D.T. Fraser, J. Pendlebury and Simon Stott¹. Simon Stott² writes of the ordination:-

'... Some years after I came to the city I had the great satisfaction of ordaining him in the Tamil language before a large congregation of his own nationality ...'

This significant event in 1902 was a milestone in the annals of the Indian Mission. The ordination was the first of an Indian minister by the South African Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, but even more was the fact that he was the first Indian Christian to be ordained in South Africa³. Also significant for the Indian mission was the acquisition of three cottages in Thomas Street on property adjoining the Thomas Street Church in 1904. The total cost was five hundred pounds⁴. In 1906 the Mountain Rise property was purchased and a Church erected there by the Pietermaritzburg Methodist Circuit at a cost of eight hundred pounds⁵. When Mountain Rise was declared an Indian area this Church was donated to the Indian Mission. In the Mission Thomas served in a dual capacity - as minister and headmaster of the Methodist Indian School. This dual role continued until 1918 when Mr Vincent Vinden succeeded him as the headmaster of the school. Thomas thereafter was able to devote

¹Ibid

²Stott, p.120

³Mears, p.18

⁴Minutes of Conference, 1904, p.147

⁵Minutes of Conference, 1906, p.146

all his energies to the Mission. John Thomas extended the sphere of his ministry beyond the local congregation. Regular visits were made to the local jail where he had the opportunity of preaching and distributing scriptural tracts. In this ministry he was assisted by Simon Stott, who recounts that between 60 to 80 attended the services at the prison. The ministry that they exercised led to the conversion of a number of inmates, who after further instruction were brought into the Christian faith through the Sacrament of Baptism¹.

6.5 Appointment of the Pietermaritzburg Mission Committee

Meanwhile, in 1911, the Conference appointed Sectional Committees to guide and advise the three Indian Missions - Durban, Verulam and Pietermaritzburg. The Pietermaritzburg Committee comprised: Revds W.J. Christie, G.F.Foss, J.C. Hill and W. Jackson². This Committee continued to function until the amalgamation of the other two Missions into the Durban and Coast Indian Mission. In 1917 another Committee was appointed by Conference to guide the Mission in Pietermaritzburg especially after the death of John Thomas. This Committee comprised: Revds. A.J. Clarke, J. Metcalf, S.H. Stott, J.H. Roberts, J. Thomas and Messrs G.H. Chick, W.J. Christie, G.P.Foss, J.C. Hill and J.H. Crowder³.

Thomas served the Indian Mission for twenty four consecutive

¹Stott, p.120

²Minutes of Conference, 1911, p.84

³Ibid, 1917, p.78

years, during which time many were led to embrace the truths of the Christian faith. He was highly respected by both those within and outside the Church and described as a man of 'sound sense, a hard worker, an educationalist and a preacher'¹. On the 11 August 1921 after a relatively short illness he died.

Between 1921 and 1925 the Mission was run by the laity - the most prominent of whom were Mr Jonas Ebenezer and Mr Vinden. The Mission was fortunate in that the first fully accredited Local Preacher, appointed in the Indian Mission in Natal, Mr C. Stephen, was serving as an Interpreter in the Supreme Court in Pietermaritzburg, at the time. Revd Evans described Mr C. Stephen as a 'man of good education, sterling character and fine spirit, was greatly interested in and gave valuable help to this work in its early stages'².

The Pietermaritzburg Indian Mission appeared in the Minutes of Conference³ as follows in 1923:

'Pietermaritzburg Indian Mission - One to be sent, Indian Minister.'

In addition to the laity attending to the pastoral needs, clergy in the area rendered valuable assistance, among those being the Revd S.H. Stott⁴ and Revd A.J. Choonoo⁵, who paid monthly visits from the Durban Indian Mission and assisted mainly with the

¹Ibid, 1922, p.6

²Evans: Golden Jubilee pamphlet

³Minutes of Conference, 1923, p.36

⁴Stott, p.119

⁵Choonoo R.:p.35

administration of the sacraments.

In 1925 Arthur Choonoo was appointed to the Mission. In the 12 years that Choonoo served the mission several improvements had been effected. The Mission purchased and installed an organ. To the Church building proper a porch was erected at the front and a large vestry was built and furnished at the rear of the Church¹. A day school was also erected in 1935. It was a double-storey building erected at a cost of two thousand pounds and was regarded as one of the finest among Indian State-Aided Schools in Natal². It's first headmaster was Mr Vincent George and in 1940 Mr M.G. Daniels succeeded him and remained until the closure of the school in 1972.

For the period between 1938 - 1945 Arthur Choonoo was succeeded by his brother Reuben Choonoo. In the sixteen years that Reuben served the Mission all the various departments and organisations were reorganized and the ministry became community orientated. During Reuben's ministry the Church celebrated it's Golden Jubilee in 1947. The Local Preachers and Society Stewards at the time of the celebration were Jonas Ebenezer, M.G. Daniels, F. Choonoo and S. Ebenezer - all Local Preachers with G.K. Naidu, S. Ebenezer and J. Isaiah as Society Stewards³.

In 1955 Arthur Choonoo was reappointed to the Mission for a second term and during this period Choonoo undertook an extensive

¹Lawrence, p.25

²Choonoo R.:p.35

³Evans: Golden Jubilee pamphlet

outreach programme to the so-called 'Coloured' community. While serving in the Mission, Choonoo became a Supernumerary in 1958. In 1959 Revd T.E. Metcalf became the first White minister to be appointed to the Mission. A year later, in 1960, he was succeeded by the grandson of Revd John Thomas, Revd H.F. Lawrence, who offered as a candidate for the ministry in 1945.

The decade that Revd Lawrence served the Mission was a period of consolidation. The implementation of the Group Areas Act drastically affected the Mission and with the movement of members from the city area into declared Indian residential areas this necessitated the creation of house-churches to cater for the needs of the people who no longer could participate in worship services because of transport difficulties. The movement of the White community from Mountain Rise to White residential areas meant that their Church no longer served a need. This building, already alluded to earlier in this chapter, was given by the Pietermaritzburg Methodist Circuit to the Indian Mission. In 1967 under the ministry of Revd Lawrence the status of the Mission changed. Having adequate resources to maintain itself financially it became a fully fledged Circuit called the Pietermaritzburg Indian Circuit. Mountain Rise was established as a Society in the new Circuit and in the decade of the 1970's all the property owned by the Mission in the city area was disposed of and the proceeds utilized in developing other buildings, for example, a multi-purpose complex at Northdale and a Church Hall at Mountain Rise.

6.6 Conclusion

The history of the Pietermaritzburg Indian Mission has been discussed above in detail. The role of Revd John Thomas and other laity who played a part in the Mission has also been outlined. As part of its ministry to the community the Mission made a contribution in the primary educational sphere, particularly through the erection of a double-storeyed school complex. Mention has been made of the contribution of the ministers who served the Mission over the years.

The vision of the pioneering fathers of the Mission in acquiring property paved the way, through the sale of these properties, for the Mission to develop in an area proclaimed 'Indian' by the Group Areas Act. Growth in the Mission in the 1960's was such that no further financial assistance by way of grants were necessary and this led to the birth of the Pietermaritzburg Indian Methodist Circuit.

The advances since the inception of the Indian Mission in the Pietermaritzburg area was not spectacular in terms of numerical growth. The mission initiated by the pioneering missionaries, however, continued despite the active opposition from Hinduism. To assist working parents the mission established a creche in 1975, the first to operate in an Indian residential area in Pietermaritzburg and also, the first that catered for children of all racial groups. The creche still operates and has shown significant growth both in the facilities that it boasts and in enrolment. Through the creche this mission continues to make a

contribution to education. The Pietermaritzburg mission and the Durban and Coast Indian Mission have for decades played a substantial role in education. That contribution will now be detailed and assessed.

CHAPTER 7

METHODIST MISSION SCHOOLS FOR INDIANS

7.1 Introduction

The primary reason for Indians coming to Natal was to provide labour in the tea and sugar estates. The Governments concerned, namely, Britain, India and Natal formalized conditions under which immigration would be permitted. Unfortunately no conditions regarding education for the children of immigrants were formalized. In the Colony of Natal laws were promulgated pertaining to indenture, but again none stipulated provision for education. Even in the contracts entered into between the estate owners and the immigrants there were no undertakings by the employer, that the latter would make provision for the education of the children on the estates.

In 1869, Mr Warwick Brookes, the Superintendent of Education in Natal, describing the plight of the Indians said,

'... They have no means of education save such as are supplied by the zeal of religious bodies ... and yet these people should be educated as well as the Native race if only as a matter of policy ...'¹

By 1877, seventeen years after the arrival of the first group of immigrants the question for the responsibility of Indian education had not been resolved. The Indian Government, perturbed that the Colony of Natal had made no provision for the education

¹Lazarus, A.N.:The Story of Indian Primary Education 1860-1910, The Teachers' Journal, Vol XV No 2, Standard Printing Press, Durban, 1966, p.18

of the Indian children wrote to the Duke of Argyll, expressing the Indian Government's concern that no instruction in the 3 R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) were being given¹.

For almost two decades the entire question of the provision of education was not resolved. Against this background Christian missionaries came to the fore in providing education and amongst those who led in this sphere was Ralph Stott and the Indian Mission that he represented. The Indian Mission became responsible for some sixteen schools extending from Umbilo in the south to Fairbreeze in the north.

7.2 Stott's first School

In 1867 Stott established a day school and an evening school. The Day School was situated near a barracks belonging to the Durban Corporation and the Evening School for Indian adults was in the vicinity of the Railway Station². Robert Russell, a School Inspector described the building that housed the day school as a wood and iron building (in size 21ft x 17ft x 9ft) adjoining the Corporation Barracks³. Stott spent three evenings a week teaching in this Evening School. He was assisted by a teacher named Balagdoroonada⁴. Instruction was given in three languages,

¹Lazarus, p.18

²Harris, A.S.:The Contribution of the Mission to Indian Education, Centenary Anniversary Brochure, p.12

³Lazarus, p.19

⁴Brain, p.202

namely, English, Tamil and Hindustani. The school was attended by both Indians and Whites¹. Stott taught the Whites Indian languages in the hope that they would assist him educate the Indians. Mr Coster was one of those who responded and after attending Stott's school began to teach English to the Indian immigrants at the Evening School². This Evening School continued to serve the adults in the Durban area until 1884 when it was closed because of curfew regulations³ imposed by the government to regulate the movements of Blacks in the Colony.

The Day School that Stott had initiated was given a grant-in-aid of twenty five pounds in 1869 by the government. By that year the school had a roll of 32 pupils, all of whom were boys. Commenting on the roll Mr Warwick Brookes said that the immigrants simply 'refused to have their girls taught to read'⁴. Describing the school building proper, Brookes⁵ stated

'... that the room occupied by the day school is small and utterly void of furniture, desks, forms, blackboards, etc ...'

The Government grant-in-aid given to Stott's Day School in 1869 would remain in the annals of Indian education as the origin of the Government-Aided School system. Three years later, 1872, Stott established a further two schools - one at Sea Cow Lake and the other at Lower Umkomanzi. In terms of enrolment, Stotts' Day

¹Ibid

²Ibid

³Ibid

⁴Lazarus, p.18

⁵Ibid, p.19

School had 40 pupils (33 boys and 7 girls), Stott's Evening School - 12 boys; Lower Umkomanzi 10 pupils (7 boys and 3 girls) and at Sea Cow Lake the roll was 26 pupils (21 boys and 5 girls)¹. What must be borne in mind was that in 1872 the number of children of school-going age had exceeded 900 and approximately a tenth were attending Stott's schools. The grant-in-aid received in that year was 60 pounds. This amount was made up as follows - Stott's Day School received 36 pounds; Lower Umkomanzi received 16 pounds and the Sea Cow Lake school received 8 pounds².

As indicated the one major problem was the exclusion of conditions pertaining to education of the children of immigrants. The other problem was the inability to secure trained teachers for the needs of the children. The Report of the Government's Coolie Commission³ stated,

'... in view of the difficulty in finding qualified teachers, we recommend the early establishment of a training school at Durban. The Revd Mr Stott has already a small night-school for this propose, but it is quite inadequate to meet even present requirements ... '

Evident again is the initiative of Revd Stott in that while the authorities were debating the training of teachers, he had already started as early as 1867 training and equipping adults to serve as teachers, for example, Mr Coster.

In 1873 Lieutenant Governor Musgrave appointed an Education

¹Lazarus, p.19 cf Harris, p.12

²Ibid

³Report of Coolie Commission appointed to Inquire into the Conditions of the Indian Immigrants in the Colony of Natal, P. Davis and Sons, Government Printers, Pietermaritzburg, 1872, p.7

Commission and in the following year recommended¹, inter alia

'... that the Protector of Indian Immigrants should correspond with the proper authorities with a view to securing for the Colony the services of efficient trained teachers, capable not only of conducting a central school but also of preparing young men to become teachers on the plantations ...'

Although the problem of securing trained teachers existed, Stott was fortunate in securing three Indian teachers for his schools. At his evening school was Mr Henry Nundoo, a printer by trade, who was educated at Benares. His remuneration was ten shillings a month. In 1886 Mr Nundoo, published a book, 'Light of Knowledge' in Hindi and English to assist immigrants learn English². In 1876 Mr Francis D'Vaz was appointed to Stotts' Day School. Mr D'Vaz was educated in India and taught there prior to coming to Natal. He received a salary of two pounds per month³. At the Sea Cow school, Mr Chinnah Villay was appointed.

The Report of the Coolie Commission indicated that a strong desire existed among the immigrants for the education of their children. In this respect Stott⁴ informed the Commission

... he knows of nothing more likely to keep Coolies on estates and satisfied than the establishment of schools ...

Taking the recommendation of Stott seriously for the promotion of education among the children of Indian immigrants, Law 20 was passed in September 1878⁵. This brought into existence the Indian

¹Ibid

²Lazarus, p.20

³Ibid

⁴Report of the Coolie Commission, p.6

⁵Lazarus, p.21

Immigration School Board with Stott as it's first Secretary¹.

Succeeding his father Simon Stott became equally active in educational work. He immediately embarked upon a programme of building schools at various places along the North Coast². Chapel-schools were erected at Verulam, Ottawa, Saccharine and Cornubia³. These schools were placed under the management of Revd Ezra Nuttall⁴. In 1881 a day school commenced at Sydenham while in 1882 schools were opened at Verulam and Tongaat, and in 1883 at Umbilo, Springfield and at the Point, Durban⁵.

In 1884 a school was established at Clare Estate, in 1892 another school opened at Umhlali and in 1894 schools were established at Prospect Hall, Red Hill, Mount Edgecombe and Verulam⁶. A number of these schools did not remain in existence long and by 1885 the only schools that remained were those at Durban, Point, Clare Estate, Springfield, Ottawa and Umbilo⁷.

The Indian Mission was responsible for the establishment of some sixteen schools - extending from Umbilo in the south to Darnall in the north. The schools were at Umbilo, Point, Sydenham, Springfield, Clare Estate in the Durban area; immediately to the

¹Harris, p.12

²Ibid

³Brain, p.209 cf Choonoo E.J.:Our Day Schools in 90th Anniversary Brochure, p.25

⁴Harris, p.12

⁵Ibid

⁶Ibid, p.12

⁷Ibid

north of Durban schools were established at Prospect Hall and Red Hill; further up the coast there were schools at Cornubia, Saccharine, Mount Edgecombe and Ottawa and on the North Coast proper there were schools at Verulam, Umhloti, Tongaat, Fairbreeze and Darnall¹.

The maintenance of the schools proved to be a huge drain on the finances of the Mission. Although Government grants were received these were grossly inadequate. The Durban school opened by Stott continued until 1892, while the school at Ottawa and Sydenham closed shortly after being opened, because they were poorly attended. The schools at Verulam and at Tongaat were more successful in that in 1893 enrolment at these schools averaged sixty pupils². The withdrawing of Government grants and the inability of the Mission to finance schools led to the closure of some of the others.

It must be borne in mind that education was accepted generally as the responsibility of the state. Churches found the financial burden too heavy and whenever the opportunity arose, handed over or sold schools to the state. During the nineteenth century the majority of the best White schools were church founded schools eg Kingswood, St Andrews, Epworth, Kearnsy etc. These church schools were maintained through high school fees that were levied and only the affluent could afford to attend. The Indian Church Schools on the other hand were mostly 'charitable' in that the fees charged were minimal and thus understandably the facilities

¹Harris, p.12 cf Choonoo, E.J., p.25 and Brain p.209-210

²Brain, p.210

provided were poor. This aspect is clearly brought out in the Annual Report of Revd D. Adendorff¹ where the point is made that Mission schools were only partly subsidised by the Government and the schools rely on fees charged to meet expenses. Many children, the Report states, 'in needy circumstances have been admitted free of charge or for reduced fees'.

The subsidies received and the fees paid by pupils were such that Anglicans, for instance, reduced all their schools in Natal to eight to make them viable economic propositions. Some of these 'poorer' Anglican schools were taken over by the Methodists, for example, a girls school in Cross Street, as well as schools in Mayville, Springfield and Port Shepstone².

7.3 Mayville Day School

The Mayville School was one of the Anglican schools which the Indian Mission took under it's wing. The school had been in existence from 1905. By 1954 the school building had deteriorated to such an extent that a major fund raising effort was launched so that a new school could be built³. The School Principal, Mr Bernard Barnabas, at a meeting of the Indian Mission Committee, indicated that four thousand pounds had been raised and that failure on the part of the Mission to proceed with the erection

¹Annual Report on the Durban and Coast Indian Mission, 30 June 1955

²Choonoo, E.J:p.25

³Minutes of Indian Mission Committee Meeting, 8 March 1954

of a new school would be a great disappointment to the Mayville Community, the Mission would suffer he said, 'as there was still much room for evangelical work there and for missionary collections to be made'¹. Hesitancy on the part of the Mission stemmed from the fact that the Group Areas Act had declared Mayville as a White group area and it seemed the 'Government might yet remove the school from their (Mayville Building Committee) and our (Indian Mission) control'². In addition a School Inspector had indicated that the school was likely to close. In the Annual Report³ mention was made of Mayville Schools' Golden Jubilee. The report stated that 'this notable event is also the signal for the relinquishing of Mission control in the Schools ... negotiations now being conducted with a view to the Natal Education Department taking the School over from us'⁴. The Indian Mission Committee were prepared to sell the Mayville School for three thousand, two hundred and fifty pounds, and by 1957 the Administrator of Natal on behalf of the Education Department, purchased the school⁵.

¹Ibid, 14 May 1954

²Ibid

³Annual Report of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission, 30 June 1955

⁴Ibid

⁵Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 4 November 1957

7.4 Centenary Road School

Centenary Road State-Aided Indian School was another Anglican school which the Mission took over. Originally it was situated in Cross Street with an enrolment of 76 pupils¹. The Indian Mission, under the Superintendency of Revd J. Metcalf negotiated for the site in Centenary Road on lease from the Durban Council for thirty pounds a year. The school was officially opened on the 4 August 1927 by the Honourable Strinivasa Sastri².

Under the Superintendency of Revd Adendorff a Platoon School commenced in 1952. This occurred after an urgent request had been received from the Indian Education Committee. The need arose because there were insufficient schools in the Durban area to accommodate Indian children of school-going age. In attempting to alleviate the shortage the Centenary School made available three classrooms³. Two years later the School Committee and the Indian Mission Committee, recognising the dire need for accommodation of pupils, combined the Principal's Office and the store-room, thus creating an extra class room. The Annual Report of the Indian Mission indicates that the roll in 1955 at Centenary Road School was 300 for the day school and 230 pupils in the platoon school. The point is made that had it not been for

¹James, K.C.: A Brief History of the Centenary Road Government Aided Indian School, Thirtieth Souvenir Brochure, Acme Print Press, Durban, 1957, p.14

²Ibid

³James, p.14 cf Report of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission, 30 June 1955

the Indian Mission, many would not have received schooling elsewhere¹.

By 1954 the Durban City Council began decentralizing public transport terminals and placed one of these terminals right next to the school. Because of this the City Council had given an undertaking to re-site the school but by 1957 nothing had been done and the Mission hoped,

'that the conscience of the City Council may be stirred concerning the miserable conditions under which nearly 600 children have to attend school and under which seventeen teachers have to conduct classes².'

At the Indian Mission Committee Meeting on the 19 April 1958 the proposal to dispose of the Centenary Road School was accepted³. Negotiations began in 1961 with the Durban Indian Child Welfare Society who requested an option to acquire the property for R14000⁴. But by March of the following year the Welfare Society had not taken up the offer. In 1964 the name of the School was changed to Methodist Government Aided Indian School because the Mission School was being confused with Centenary High School⁵. The Indian Mission Committee in 1970 noted that with the movement of people away from the Warwick Avenue complex the roll at the school had dropped from 600 to 300 pupils⁶. The Indian Mission

¹Durban and Coast Indian Mission Annual Report, 30 June 1955

²Adendorff, R.D:Superintendent's Message in Thirtieth Anniversary Souvenir Brochure of Centenary Road School, p.7

³Indian Mission Committee Meeting Minutes, 19 April 1958

⁴Ibid, 13 April 1961

⁵Ibid, 25 May 1964

⁶Ibid, 6 October 1970

Committee noted that the M.L. Sultan Technical College were eager to take over the school at a rental of six hundred rands a year but were prevented from doing this by the Department of Indian Education, who wished to retain the school¹. In the Annual Report of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission mention was made that the roll at the school had fallen further and that the Department of Indian Affairs were to take the school over².

This brought to an end the involvement and contribution of the Indian Mission in the educational sphere which had begun as early as 1867.

7.5 An assessment of the Mission's role in Indian Education

The contribution made by Indian Mission Schools has been described as 'immense' by L.J.T. Biebuyck, a former Director of Education in Natal³. Furthermore, besides regarding the Indian Mission as being in the forefront throughout in provision of educational facilities, Biebuyck points out that the 'Mission's contribution has been all the more greater because children of all religions had been admitted and many thousands have benefitted though the years'⁴. What is perhaps noteworthy is that these 'immense contributions' had been achieved in spite of the

¹Ibid, 6 October 1971

²Annual Report of the Durban and Coast Indian Mission, 10 April 1971

³Biebuyck, L.J.T.: Centenary Souvenir Brochure, p.4

⁴Ibid

fact that it was always a struggle to finance the projects. Although it is not the intention here to cast a doubt on Biebuyck's statement in respect of the role played by the Church in education, due consideration needs to be given to other related developments.

The Indian Methodist Mission's provision of facilities for education had significant and positive effects in that other organisations - including the Hindu and Muslim organisations as well as individuals - began to establish schools for Indian children, for example, the Springfield Hindu-Aided Primary School was opened in 1903, the A.I. Kajee Government-Aided School opened in 1950, the W.A. Lewitt Primary School opened in 1963.

Mission schools tended to concentrate on the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic as well as religious education. The last aspect involved teaching pupils to read the Catechism and the Bible. Because of this programme of instruction many non-Christians might have contributed to the low enrolment figures of Indian pupils of school going age. For instance in 1872 less than 10% of pupils of the school going age were at school.

Although the Indian Mission undertook to provide bursaries to graduating primary school pupils who enrolled at secondary and tertiary institutions, the role of the Mission in education was limited solely to primary school level. Furthermore, the record of the schools established in the Durban area, the North Coast and in Pietermaritzburg indicates that the primary focus of the

Mission in terms of education remained in the urban area. Although several factors account for this particular aspect - for example, the depopulation of the rural areas, the effective use of human-power resources, and financial constraints. This remains a serious criticism especially when one considers that the Anglican Church undertook initially to provide schools for Indian pupils in rural areas like Howick, Lidgetton, Sutherlands and Estcourt.

A further criticism is that the Mission was content to provide separate educational facilities to the separate racial groups in Natal. There is no indication that the Church attempted to integrate it's schools. In retrospect, this appears as a major failure on the part of the Church. This failure also manifested itself later when the State undertook to centralise the education of the Indian community under it's wings. While the Church responded to this pressure by establishing and maintaining private schools amongst the White population, no such attempt was made for the Indian population. Consequently the church schools were either taken over by the State or they ceased to function. The opportunities that the Methodist Church had within the context of 'Indian Education' to press for non-racial education in South Africa were lost.

7.6 Conclusion

With the movement of the Indian community to proclaimed Indian areas, the increase in the Indian population and the need for more modern facilities at school, the Methodist Indian Mission

concluded that the task of providing these additional facilities was not possible.

The Mission had made it's contribution at a time when the Colony of Natal made no provision for the education of the children of the immigrants. The Mission can boast that thousands of men and women today, who, as boys and girls, had received their education in one or another of the many Methodist Mission Schools.

Credit must be given to the Mission for the magnificent achievements attained in the realm of education in the face of many obstacles. The Indian Mission's role in education extended over a hundred years. It would not be an exaggeration to say that possibly without this assistance, progress with regard to general Indian advancement would have been severely retarded and that an entire generation of Indians may have remained illiterate.

CHAPTER 8

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE INDIAN MISSION

8.1 Factors that Staggered growth

When the first South African Methodist Conference met in 1883 the membership given after 20 years of the existence of the Indian Mission was 38¹. Various factors contributed to this slow growth. Between 1866-1874 no immigration had taken place. This was due to the economic depression of 1866 which affected Natal. After the American Civil War there was a collapse of world markets and a slump in the sugar industry². This resulted in the Indian Mission being hard hit and many immigrants became unemployed. Some left Natal for the Transvaal in search of employment³. Others on completion of the period of indenture returned to India and among them was a group of six people who were being prepared for baptism in Natal. While this was a loss for the Indian Mission the encouraging feature was that they sought baptism from Revd Babzell, a Wesleyan Methodist minister in India and that there existed the possibility that a further two families from Natal were seeking baptism⁴.

Immigrants on their return to India complained, as already

¹Minutes of Conference, 1882 see also Mears, p.8

²Report on India Comes to Natal an article in 'The Settlers', p.59

³Muller, p.371

⁴Correspondence from Ralph Stott to his cousin James Stott, 7 January 1872

mentioned, of ill-treatment, police brutality, poor living conditions, biasness on the part of magistrates and the dishonouring of the conditions under which immigration was introduced. In view of these and other hardships that the immigrants had to endure it is easy to understand why the average Hindu resisted Christianity. Had the farmers been a little more considerate and had they demonstrated that Christianity was a religion of love and that it took seriously the ethical imperatives of the Gospel, the missionaries might have succeeded in effecting the conversion of more Hindus.

A further drain on the Indian population in Natal was through the discovery of gold and diamonds and some immigrants, as a result of the slump in the sugar industry, moved to the Transvaal in search of employment¹. It does appear that the depression, movement of immigrants in search of employment within the country and the departure of some immigrants to India created a very volatile situation in Natal thus contributing to the slow growth in the first two decades of the mission's existence.

The pioneer Methodist missionaries had to contend with problems of their own. These related to the wide distribution of the immigrants which meant that the missionaries had to travel great distances; the relatively small contingent of Protestants compelled the Methodist missionaries to function as itinerant evangelists as opposed to a more settled ministry; and the other problem was the attitude of the estate owners and the insults that the missionaries had to endure from them.

¹Ibid

The missionaries had to compete against a large contingent of Hindu religious leaders who accompanied the immigrants. On board the 'Belvedere', which docked at Durban five days after the 'Truro' had arrived, were 61 Brahmins who constituted 20% of the immigrants on that ship¹. Such a large percentage indicates that Hinduism was able to consolidate its hold on its devotees. The Brahmins were the highest caste in the Indian social system and they were able to exercise a powerful influence on their members as well as perform all the Hindu rituals.

The unimpressive results experienced by Methodism can also be attributed to the methodology adopted by Stott. Within two years of his arrival he was visiting 39 sugar estates throughout the Natal Coastal Belt. The rapidity with which these visits were undertaken suggests that thoroughness was being sacrificed to speed. Had he spent more time on fewer estates, greater and more lasting successes might have been achieved. He might have been able to share the basic tenets of the Christian faith more fully with the immigrants, as this was vital in a pioneering situation, for the immigrants were mostly ignorant of the Christian faith. Ralph Stott unfortunately moved rapidly from one estate to another and in so doing produced minimal results. It is also unfortunate that Stott did not adopt the strategy that William Shaw adopted in establishing mission stations, which he then used as a base for further expansion. Had this been done, Methodism in the Indian community might have developed differently.

¹Report on India Comes to Natal in 'The Settlers', p.52

While Ralph Stott's methodology can be criticised, he considered it beneficial to visit as many estates as possible to share the 'Good News' in the belief that if more people heard the Gospel message, the greater would be the rate of conversion. Unfortunately this was not the case. The itinerant ministry that he opted for did not provide stability nor did it provide continuity and in some ways contributed to the slow growth.

In addition to his strategy, his resources in qualified personnel was another inhibiting factor. The clergy of the various denominations who were in Natal at the time of the arrival of the Indians were already fully engaged in ministering to Whites and indigenous Blacks and could not assist Stott¹. He was unfortunate, as men of the calibre of Choonoo, Thomas, Pillay and Devamoney arrived only later. Lacking laity of similar stature forced Stott to manage on his own.

Inadequate financial resources equally contributed to the slow rate of growth². Barnabas Shaw arrived after the second occupation of the Cape and commenced missionary work amongst the people of Namaqualand. This missionary effort had to be funded. While this was taking place, the real period of growth for Methodism began after the arrival of the 1820 settlers. William Shaw settled at Salem and he began a chain of mission stations

¹Brain, p.193-194

²Ibid, p.203

along the east coast of the continent¹. By 1860 the year the Indian immigrants arrived there were 132 Methodist missionaries at work in the area² and funds were needed to be found for them as well. In addition to these there were other missionaries at work in other parts of the country and it was not possible for the W.M.M.S. to make more funds available for the Indian Mission. This fact is borne out in that the W.M.M.S. indicated to Stott that they wished to terminate the Mission, but it was only on his insistence that the Mission continued³.

Ralph Stott's failure to indigenise the Gospel message was another contributory factor to the staggered growth of the Indian Mission. The use of imported foreign liturgies stifled free religious expression and did not enhance the Christian faith among the Hindus. Had attention been paid to the relationship between the Gospel and the Indian social-cultural system, the impact of Methodism might have been greater. Choonoo and Subrahmanyam, both from India and converts from Hinduism, were able to exercise a very effective ministry in Natal attributable no doubt to the manner in which they were able to relate the Gospel to the Indian cultural ethos.

In Methodism there is very little that is congruent with Hinduism. Methodist Christianity requires a total change - a complete break with the old. Being in a foreign country the only

¹Hinchliff, P.: The Church in South Africa, SPCK, London, 1968, p.31

²Ibid, p.33

³Brain, p.203

link the immigrants had with their motherland was their religion, language and culture and they clung to these, as it offered them security in a hostile country. Initially the Roman Catholic Church attracted many immigrants partly because various symbols and ritual in Catholicism appeared to be congruent or continuous with Hinduism - symbols such as statues, vows, offerings, candles, incense - were very much a part of Roman Catholicism. In Hinduism virtually all the ceremonies are performed with pictures of Hindu deities, the lighting of the prayer lamp, burning of camphor and incense. In addition, vows and offerings are frequently made to Hindu gods and goddesses. In Roman Catholicism vows and offerings are made to their patron saints. The symbols and ritual in Roman Catholicism must have appealed to Hindus and gave them the impression that at least one Christian denomination was prepared to accommodate the Hindu ethos. None of these symbols or rituals are embodied in Methodism and this deficiency in failing to discern the significance of pictorial, visual and dramatic forms in Hindu worship may have contributed to the failure of Methodists to attract more Hindus.

Methodism, emphasizing scriptural holiness, new birth, grace, faith, salvation, justification, perfection, obedience and assurance had nothing that was congruent with Hinduism. On the other hand, Hinduism emphasises the human's inner-being rather than the external world, which in Hinduism is considered to be an illusion¹. The aim in Hinduism is to become one with God and

¹Nicholls, B.J.:Article on Hinduism in The World's Religions, Edited by N. Anderson, Inter-Varsity Press, Great Britain, 1975, p.140

to attain this, humanity must live according to dharma (law). Unlike Christianity where the emphasis is on a personal relationship with Christ, in Hinduism the concept of the divine is more an entity which is indivisible, formless and eternal. The promise of eternal life makes little sense to the average Hindu because Hindus find difficulty in accepting the concept of the resurrection against their belief in reincarnation and the cycle of karma¹. In the light of the above the call by the missionaries for a complete radical change possibly met with little response from ardent Hindus who found their message foreign.

The stance of the W.M.M.S. did not help the cause of the Indian Mission. Ralph Stott laboured under the constant threat of the Society's desire to close the Mission². The reason advanced was lack of finance and insufficient growth. The impression created appears to be that the W.M.M.S. expected rapid results and mass conversions and seemed to have lost sight of the fact that the immigrants were deeply religious people with their own beliefs and convictions. Their attitude is further reflected in their initial hesitancy in appointing Simon Stott to the Mission³. After some persuasion from Ralph Stott they relented and Simon Stott joined his father. Unfortunately his stay in the Indian Mission was short-lived in that after only two years the W.M.M.S. decided that the situation in Natal did not warrant the services of two missionaries and Simon Stott was transferred to a Black

¹Ibid, p.144

²Brain, p.203

³Ibid, p.206

Circuit in Verulam¹. This move may have had far reaching implications since Simon Stott had no experience of Black work but possessed vast experience of missionary work among the Indians, having served as a missionary in Sri Lanka. Had the W.M.M.S. retained him in the Indian Mission the eventual outcome in terms of missionary expansion might have been totally different.

8.2 Impact of the Indian Missionaries

The Indian Mission in the last two decades of the 19th century was dominated by the combined ministry of Simon Stott and John Choonoo. Simon Stott aimed at conversion rather than at a reasoned, intellectual discussion with non-Christian Indians. He nurtured his converts by using the Methodist system of class meetings. These classes served an evangelistic as well as a discipling function. In this he followed the pattern adopted by the Wesleys. He was aware that many conversions took place in the class meetings and these meetings suited the Natal situation because the Indian community was dispersed over a wide area and the meetings brought together people within a certain locality. William Shaw also opted for the class meeting and used it with great effect along the east coast of the continent. That the class meeting could work with Simon Stott indicates that Ralph Stott failed to delegate as well as train lay leadership.

As the mission grew new preaching places were established - for

¹Stott, p.108-110

example at Umgeni, Umbilo and the North Coast. Using Local Preachers, services were held at all the preaching places. There was too a dramatic increase in the number of estates visited - from 39 in 1864 to 80 in 1886. There was a corresponding increase in the membership of the mission. By the turn of the century the membership reported for the Durban and Coastal area exceeded 200 full members and in the schedules for 1906 it was stated that there were 8 Churches, 27 Preaching Places, 1 Minister, 3 Evangelists and 12 Preachers¹.

While this development was taking place in the Durban area identical progress was taking place in Pietermaritzburg among the Indian community. Pietermaritzburg was fortunate in that Mr John Thomas volunteered his services to the Church. Like Choonoo in the Durban area, Thomas proved to be highly successful as a lay agent and by 1902 was instrumental in converting 16 Hindu families².

The more effective utilization of the laity resulted in further development throughout the Coastal Belt of Natal. On the North Coast a number of preaching places were established and where Methodism was able to make greater penetration into the Indian Community, church buildings were erected - for example at Avoca, Mount Edgecombe, Umhlali and at Stanger. Similar progress was noted on the South Coast with Church buildings erected at Clairwood, Merebank, Rosburgh, Umbogintwini and at Umkomass. Considering the low wages paid to the Indian employee in the

¹Mears, p.10

²Brain, p.210

first half of this century the erection of church buildings was a major achievement. Oosthuizen¹ mentions that on average those employed in factories were earning R52 per year in 1915-1916 and by the middle of the century this had increased to R539 p.a. for males and R299 for females.

Erection of Church buildings meant enormous personal sacrifices for Methodist members. Many of the buildings were erected through financial assistance from the controlling body of the church and these were in the form of loans. Lack of adequate financial resources within the Indian sector of the Church almost always meant that the clergy had to undertake major fund raising efforts sometimes at the expense of adequate pastoral care of their members.

The Indian Methodist community at Umhlali on the Natal North Coast warrants special mention - the area was populated by a community that originated from India comprising mainly Gurkhas. Simon Stott describes them as:

'... a tribe in India, a sturdy warlike people noted for their fierce onslaught upon their enemies with a peculiarly shape formidable knife ...²'

As a community they were very closely knit and for decades maintained the Umhlali mission. Being closely knit, outsiders were never attracted and because of this the Church at Umhlali did not grow numerically.

¹Oosthuizen, G.C.:Pentecostal Penetration into the Indian Community in South Africa, Interprint (Pty) Ltd, Durban, 1975, p.25

²Stott, p.112

Indian Methodism received a real boost under the ministry of Revd T. Subrahmanyam. He was resident in Durban and although in the initial period of his ministry various problems had to be overcome, his stay of three years proved to be very effective. The membership within the Durban church increased from 88 to 148 full members¹.

During the ministry of Choonoo, Thomas and Subrahmanyam there was evidence of growth in all facets of the mission - more lay people were involved, the Methodist class system functioned, educational programmes were launched so that the cardinal beliefs of the faith could be taught, extensive visitation was undertaken both to Christians and to Hindus and attempts were made to incorporate members who had 'lapsed' into Hinduism.

The impact of the Indian missionaries can be attributed to the fact that for the first time in the history of Christianity in Southern Africa, Indian Christians ministered to their own community. This meant that they were able to identify with the community and relate better to them. The missionaries belonged to the higher caste in the Indian social system and because they were converts from Hinduism, were able to influence many Hindus to rethink their religious affiliation. Many became convinced that Christianity must possess some significant ingredient to have attracted high caste Indians.

So forceful was this impact that it produced a corresponding anti-Christian feeling from Hindu religious leaders. They reacted

¹Brain, p.211

by spreading anti-Christian literature. In response the Church initiated an education programme to equip the laity to cope with objections to the Christian faith. Whenever the Church is under persecution it thrives, the Indian mission in Natal was no different. The spread of anti-Christian literature proved to be counter-productive in that the Church now had equipped laity who could handle Hindu objections and simultaneously spread their faith with the aim of leading others to commitment.

Methodism was fortunate in having experienced Indian Christian leaders from the very beginning of the 20th century and it was through their charisma that Indian Methodism got off to a good start in the early decades of this century. They were familiar with the vernacular languages, being converts from Hinduism they could also articulate from their own experiences the supposed advantages that Christianity offered as opposed to Hinduism - for example the resurrection as against the reincarnation. Choonoo, Thomas and Subrahmanyam came into Natal as Christians after having been converted in India. They were familiar with the way in which the gospel was presented in the Indian context and having had that experience they were able to indigenise the Gospel to suit the Indian cultural situation. Their ability to do this elicited from the immigrants a better response to the Christian faith than the earlier pioneers were able to achieve.

Much of their success can also be attributed to their complete identification with the immigrants. Like the latter they too suffered the same insults and because they championed the cause

of the underprivileged Indians this enhanced their reputation and for once the immigrants saw that Christianity embraced more than just the religious dimension.

The presence of a strong lay leadership equally helped the cause of the mission. In this regard Choonoo, Thomas and Subrahmanyam were far more fortunate than their predecessors.

Another advantage that they had was that they could concentrate on specific areas - Choonoo on the North Coast, Thomas in Pietermaritzburg and Subrahmanyam in Durban. Concentrating on one area enabled them to initiate, organize and to undertake follow-up programmes. Their predecessors on the other hand, lacked trained laity and were compelled to exercise an itinerant-type of ministry.

It was a great loss to the mission when Subrahmanyam returned to India. Living with the immigrants he witnessed at first hand the social and political conditions under which they were subjected and realizing that he could no longer cope with the situation chose to return to India. Lay agents whom he had equipped during his ministry continued to serve the mission. The phase that followed was dominated by John Choonoo's sons Reuben and Arthur as well as by the grandson of John Thomas, Herbert Lawrence - all three were later to be ordained.

The Indian mission realizing that it's own members were now entering the ministry began to plan for their accommodation. The Queen Street property, on which the original Church was built, was disposed of and the proceeds used to acquire cottages in Cross Street, Durban in 1914. Property transactions such as these

within the mission particularly at this time were very significant because it indicated that the mission had come of age. It was consolidating that which happened previously and was planning in advance for the future needs within the mission.

8.3 The role played by the women in the Indian Mission

In assessing the role of women in the Indian Mission it must be stated that they are seldom mentioned in Church brochures and historical documents although their contribution has been substantial. The pioneering missionaries would have had difficulty in succeeding had it not been for the support and encouragement they received from their spouses. Credit must go to them for leaving the security of their own countries and the close proximity of their families for foreign countries, of which they were totally ignorant. Mention has already been made of Mary Campbell (born 1799) who married Ralph Stott and of their children. The struggles of her stay in Sir Lanka are mentioned by Simon Stott¹. Mary Stott in addition to her other roles played the role of teacher and Simon Stott recalling this period says 'our education depended upon our parents personal teaching'². Her stay in Natal was strenuous as she adapted to a new lifestyle here. Ralph Stott's missionary endeavours meant that he was away from home for many a night and on her fell the dual role of mother and father to her children. In a pioneering situation the 'mission house' is 'everybody's house' and this would have

¹Stott, p.14, 15 and 17

²Ibid, p.21

entailed extending hospitality both to members of the fledgling mission and to well-wishes. Ralph Stott provides some indication of the role that his wife played in the Mission:

'Mrs Stott feels the infirmities of age, more than I do, yet she continues very energetic. She meets two classes and visits a great deal¹.'

Three years later in a letter dated 20 September 1869 again to his cousin a further glimpse is provided:

'Mrs Stott is tolerably well and very active. She still meets two classes'.

The role of Ann Emma Newey born 1837, the wife of Simon Stott was no different from that of her mother-in-law. She too endured the rigors of being the wife of a missionary. Simon Stott² in his memoirs provides some hint of what was entailed in the mission:

'When I visited the Umgeni part of my Indian work I nearly always went on the Saturday afternoon and returned home on the Monday.'

On such visits it was his wife that kept the family intact providing security needed for their five children³. Revd Lawrence reports that Ann Stott gathered children at her home, 'Trincomallee' and taught them to pray, to sing and led them in Bible study⁴.

Ann Stott died on 17 March 1917 and the epitaph embodies her role - 'A loving wife, a devoted mother and a true Christian of a

¹Letter dated 13 August 1866 from Ralph Stott to his cousin James Stott

²Stott, p.110

³Russell, p.8

⁴Lawrence:Our Youth Work in 90th Souvenir Brochure, p.21

specially gentle spirit'¹.

It is unfortunate that no documentary evidence exists of the roles played by the wives of Subrahmanyam and Choonoo. Of Mrs Subrahmanyam in particular no mention is made whereas of Mrs Choonoo indirect reference is made of her. Nonetheless their contribution as wives of Indian men who aided to pioneer the mission must have been both immense and sacrificial. For Mrs Subrahmanyam, her relatively short stay of only three years in a foreign country where people of her own race were victims of scorn, humiliation and discrimination was no doubt painful for her to endure; more so as she belonged to the higher caste of Brahmins and was totally unaccustomed to such treatment. The changes that occurred in the Mission in that relatively short period indicates the supportive role she played.

The Choonoos had a large family and Stott mentions the missionary visitation programme of John Choonoo, 'each time he went in that direction he spent two or three nights in the houses of Indians, read to them, taught them to sing and prayed with them, and on Sundays preached in the Church'². The role that Mrs Choonoo played must surely have been critical for who would tolerate on a regular basis the absence of a husband and a father. Her role as a Christian mother and wife to an evangelist is evident in the nurturing that she gave her family in that two of her sons candidated for the Methodist ministry. The wives of all the

¹Stott, p.122

²Ibid, p.113

evangelists and ministers must therefore have played a vital role in the mission. For many of them their role has been quiet and unassuming, they were there as 'husband's helper' and rendered the necessary encouragement through many a difficult passage in the history of the mission.

Many women in the mission have helped enhance worship by the contribution they have made through music. Doreen Samuel, Lois Vinden, Priscilla Lawrence, Ruth Lee, Prema Singh and Margaret Matthew are among many who loyally and faithfully trained Church choirs and provided the necessary musical accompaniment at worship services. The far greater majority of members in Church Choirs have been the women and among those who would always be remembered for their ability in the choir are Amy Ebenezer and Milly Soodayall. Sunday School teachers in the main have been the women from the various Churches and whenever the need arises for fund raising or for catering the various Women's Groups have been the key people involved.

In recent decades three of the Mission's women have become fully accredited Local Preachers. Mrs Jessie Lawrence was inducted in the Pietermaritzburg Indian Circuit in 1965; Ms G.A. Jacob of the Durban South West Circuit in 1984 and Ms M Jacob in the South Durban Circuit in 1991. Recently the Methodist Conference has accepted women into the ministry, and a number of Whites and Blacks and at least one 'Coloured' have entered the ministry over the years, but as of now none have offered from the Indian community.

The various racial groups within the Methodist Church have opted

for their own Women's Groups. The Blacks have their Manyano's as well as their Young Women's Manyano - each with their distinctive uniform; the Whites have the Women's Auxiliary and the 'Coloureds' the Women's Associations. The Indian women, however, have not opted for their own organisation. Instead they have always been part of the Women's Auxiliary and have made their contribution in this group. This is due to the fact that Indian Methodist work is predominantly in Natal where most Indians live and for over a century White ministers have been their Superintendents. Due to the latter's knowledge and association with the Women's Auxiliary, they would have encouraged Indian women in their churches to naturally join the Women's Auxiliary. Over the years many Indian women have served in various capacities on the District Executive of the Women's Auxiliary and all Indian Women's Auxiliaries are represented at District meetings.

The women have contributed in a pastoral role as well - visiting members of the local society, praying with them and listening to their problems has had therapeutic value. Such contact has also served an evangelical purpose as many were led 'to surrender their lives to Christ' in this way. Among the many who provided this ministry was Mrs Govindmah Govender, affectionately known to many on the South Coast as Mrs Jimmy. Originally from Fynnland, she was influenced by a Methodist lay preacher Mr J. John and was baptised by Revd H.F. Lawrence in 1959. Through her ministry her family, relatives and many friends 'came to know the

Lord'¹. Mrs Lilly Singh (originally from Cato Manor) settled in Chatsworth in 1968, and though a victim of the Group Areas Act, performed a vital pastoral role in the Chatsworth area as she worked closely with Revd H.F. Lawrence and Pastor Billy Christopher. Her home was made available for worship services and prayer meetings. Possessing the gift of healing she ministered to and prayed for people of other faiths and through her influence many were converted. In recognition for her contribution she was given the honour of 'turning the first sod' in 1979 on the site where the Montford Church now stands. She died a month prior to the official opening of the Church on the 11 November 1979².

8.4 The effects of the Group Areas Act

The White election of 1948 brought to power the National Party. This was to have a profound effect on the various Methodist Indian Churches. The National Party committed themselves to a policy of racial segregation in all facets of South African life. The Group Areas Act came into effect at a time when racial tension was rife in the country. Tension existed between Whites and Blacks, Whites and Indians as well as between Indians and Blacks³. The 1949 riots between Indians and Blacks in Durban is an indication of such tension at that time. The Act was interpreted by the Indian leaders as an attempt to curtail the

¹Mrs G. Govender:Private Communication, 22 October 1993

²Mr W. Reuben:Private Communication, 2 November 1993

³Hansard, 1950 Col 7745

progress of the Indian community. Indians were not regarded as part of the country's population by the South African government and frequent suggestions were made of the fact that they were aliens and as such ought to be repatriated¹. Many were excellent traders and they were considered undesirable, even seen as a constant threat to the White traders.

The Nationalist Party believed the Act was necessary to gather people of the some racial group together in order to avoid racial points of contact and friction, and secondly, to allow each group to develop along their own ethnic lines - according to language, culture and religion². In effect the implementation of the Act meant that the Government now had complete control of all property transactions as well as the occupation of land and it became their prerogative to determine where the different racial groups could live.

The Act brought hardship to both the Indian community and the Indian Church. Indian Methodism suffered. The Church erected at the corner of Lorne Street and Grey Street became affected. Until recently the Church continued under the constant threat that the entire Grey Street Indian trading area would be declared a White trading area. Because of this no new developments nor improvements to the Church building were undertaken. The creation of new Indian townships in accordance with the Group Areas Act meant that many Methodist members were compelled to vacate their homes to take up residence in the townships. This movement of

¹Ibid col 7534, 7593-4, 7616, 7719

²Hansard col 7793, 8264-5

Methodist members reduced the size of the congregation because people experienced difficulty commuting from the townships to the city church. The Lorne Street Church was even more affected when Cato Manor and Mayville ceased to be an Indian area since Methodist members in these areas also moved to the newly created townships.

The declaration of Overport, Springfield Flats, Clare Estate, Sea Cow Lake and Reservoir Hills as Indian areas equally affected the attendance at Lorne Street. This has, in a sense, made the Lorne Street Church redundant and by 1972 discussions were held and suggestions made to dispose of this property and to erect a Church building in an area that would be more accessible to their members.

With Methodist members living in virtually all the Indian townships, new church buildings had to be erected to cater for Methodist families in the townships. This had already happened in Merebank and the Chatsworth areas. Clairwood has always been an Indian residential area, but had until recently been declared an industrial area. However, various high-level deputations had been made to have the area rezoned. These deputations have been successful and a portion of Clairwood has only recently been rezoned residential. Clairwood as a society has over the years suffered a decline in membership as families moved to the declared Indian residential areas.

At Umbogintwini moves are afoot to resettle the Indian population at Isipingo. Should this happen the Church at Umbogintwini would

have to close and as a congregation they would amalgamate with the Isipingo society, who presently hold services in the Anglican Church building.

Methodist witness to the north of Durban also became affected by the Group Areas Act. The Churches at Avoca and at Mount Edgecombe no longer exist. The Avoca Society have combined with the Greenwood Park Society and the Mount Edgecombe Society has been absorbed into the newly created Phoenix Society.

On the Natal North coast, the declaration of Umhlali as a White residential area has resulted in the majority of the Indian residents moving from the area to other Indian areas - such as Shaka's Kraal, Tinley Manor and Stanger. The Methodist Society that started in 1865 at Umhlali closed, and the few families in and around the Umhlali area have now joined the White Methodist congregation.

The Indian Circuit at Pietermaritzburg did not escape the viciousness of the Act. Indians in the city area were gradually moved to Allandale, Raisethorpe, Mountain Rise and Northdale. The city church erected in 1897 together with a huge tract of property was sold in 1971, and new buildings had to be erected in areas that were more accessible to the people in Indian areas.

Uprooting and the relocation of Indian families brought pressure on Methodism to develop societies in areas specifically set aside for Indian occupation. Virtually every Methodist Indian Circuit was affected by the Act and many Churches were plunged into debt as new properties had to be acquired and new buildings erected.

Resettling of the community not only meant that they were removed from their homes and their churches but also meant that they were further removed from their places of employment. Whereas prior to their removal many could commute to work using one bus, now they were compelled to use two buses. Living in municipal townships meant that some, within the community, had to pay rent whereas previously they had lived on free hold property. Distances from shopping centres equally contributed to hardship in that increased costs had to be incurred on the purchase of household commodities from mobile fresh produce vendors. Inadequate shopping centres meant that many people had to purchase essential commodities in supermarkets in the city area and in addition to increased costs in transport, a considerable amount of time was spent in travel to and from supermarkets as well as from work.

The entire economic situation completely altered the Indian life style, many of the bigger children had to curtail their education and seek employment. In many cases it became necessary for both parents to be employed to meet the increased costs thrust upon them by the Group Areas Act. Due to the economic and social situation the Methodist Church explored other forms of ministry to aid people adjust to a new life style. The Church assisted in finding employment opportunities for those in need. To further aid people the Church moved away from conventional 'church-type' buildings and opted for multi purpose buildings that could be used as care centres as well. This happened at Chatsworth and at Northdale. A similar multi-purpose complex has been erected at Phoenix, the most recent Indian township outside the Durban area.

The erection of multi-purpose buildings as a venue for worship services is a radical departure from tradition in Indian Methodism. To allow religious property for secular use was anathema in the Indian community, but in the situation that confronted the Church, no other venue was possible. The buildings are used for worship and during the week are utilized for self-help programmes, literacy classes and leadership training. The community is allowed use of halls particularly in townships where this facility does not exist. To cater for pre-school children, especially where both parents had to be employed (a marked trend in Indian family households), the Church commenced creches. These creches serve a dual purpose for in addition to providing care, a proper foundation is laid for day school proper.

8.5 Realignment and Future of Methodist Circuits

The implementation of the Group Areas Act and the movement of the Indian community to Indian declared areas resulted in the establishment of new societies in various areas. Once the people were settled in these areas it became imperative for the mission to redefine Circuits and establish new boundaries.

From its inception in 1862 to 1960, Indian mission work along the Natal Coastal Belt was administered from Durban and became known as the Durban and Coast Indian Mission. The mission comprised Churches at Lorne Street and Mayville (in the Durban area); Merebank, Clairwood, Umkomaas and Umbogintwini (on the South Coast) and Mount Edgecombe, Avoca, Verulam, Umhlali, Stanger and Melville (on the North Coast).

In 1960 the Natal Methodist Synod recommended that all Indian Churches north of the Verulam River be incorporated into the Stanger-Umhlali Circuit. This recommendation was accepted and implemented the following year. The acceptance of the Natal Synod's resolution by the Methodist Conference was a milestone not only for Indian Methodism but also for Methodism as a whole. In effect this meant that an Indian segment of the Church now formed part of a previously White Circuit. With the acceptance of this resolution the Stanger-Umhlali Circuit became the first non-racial circuit in Natal. While this is laudable, it took an entire century for the Church to remove the partitions that tended to separate Indian members from White counterparts within the same Church.

A decade later there was a further sub-division, this time between the Churches in the Durban central area and the Churches on the South Coast. This division resulted in all assets being divided - the mission property in Cross Street was sold and the proceeds divided between the two newly created Circuits - namely the Durban North West and the Durban South West Circuits.

The Durban North West Circuit retained the societies at Avoca and at Mount Edgecombe and subsequently they were incorporated into the North Durban Circuit. The latter incorporation came as a result of the Church's restructuring of circuit boundaries on geographical rather than on racial lines. The various sub-divisions has meant that the original mission now comprises the Durban area and it's immediate suburbs - Overport, Clare Estate,

Springfield and Reservoir Hills.

The challenge confronting all circuits involved with Indian Methodist work remains evangelism. Within the borders of the North West Circuit are many elite Indian townships and these have yet to be evangelized. The Lorne Street Church seems no longer suited to the needs of it's members and this Society in particular must explore the possibility of erecting Church buildings within easy reach of it's members. In the Durban South West Circuit, Indian growth points like Chatsworth, Merebank and Isipingo need to be evangelized. The Phoenix township and the Indian residential area of Avoca within the North Durban Circuit may require new patterns of ministry as well as evangelism. Verulam, Tongaat and Stanger are huge Indian populated towns and are continually growing and the same is true of the Indian areas in Pietermaritzburg. Methodist Circuits in all these townships have the potential for growth.

The tragedy with the Indian Mission is that while there is the potential for growth, as a denomination Methodism has not grown. Partly because of the strong Hindu leadership, antagonism between Hindu leadership and the Christian denominations, but also because Methodism in the Indian sector of the Church has lost the enthusiasm for evangelism. Another major inhibiting factor is lack of financial resources which has a bearing on human power in that lay workers cannot be employed to assist particularly in the huge townships.

Considering that the Methodist denomination was the first to commence missionary work among the Indian community, substantial

growth compared to the Pentecostal Churches has not been evidenced. The Pentecostal Churches have succeeded in making massive inroads into the Hindu community. The following figures indicate how static the Methodist Church has become in outreach among the Hindus. Between 1911-1921 there were 225 adult baptisms - an average of 20 per annum, from 1933-1942 there were 249, an average of 22 per annum and from 1955-1972 an average of only 6 per annum¹.

8.6 Pentecostal Success

After 120 years there are only 4320 full members in the Indian sector of the Methodist Church whereas the Full Gospel Church has a membership of 22840². The Full Gospel Church commenced their missionary endeavours in 1925³, 65 years after the arrival of the immigrants. Its growth has been phenomenal to say the least. The Full Gospel Church established itself quickly in new residential areas and in this way had a head start over other Churches for example the Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists. Pentecostal Churches stress tithing and because of the availability of their funds were able to establish Churches in the new areas quickly. In addition they possess a zeal for evangelism and implement with great tenacity the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and use every opportunity to proclaim the Gospel message to people with whom they come into contact

¹Oosthuizen, p.181

²Census 1980, compiled by Central Statistical Services

³Oosthuizen, p.72

daily. House to house visitation, tent meetings, services for healing and exorcisms are all used as a means in evangelism. G.C. Oosthuizen¹ describes their laity as a 'spiritual proletariat' and as a 'spiritual labour class'. On the other hand Methodism was slow to move into the townships and lacked the financial resources to employ lay agents in the townships. Methodists in the Indian sector tend to be apathetic to evangelism and because of this it has not made a substantial impact on the community.

Pentecostals have succeeded in retaining many aspects of Indian culture², whereas Methodism tended to disregard non-Western culture and labelled it 'heathen'. Methodist liturgy has sometimes been labelled as an 'hymn sandwich', the strict adherence to the Methodist liturgical format has had little appeal to the Hindu, who might prefer some ritual in line with the Indian ethos. Traditional Methodist services hardly allows for congregational involvement whereas in Pentecostal Churches participation by the laity with open prayer and testimony times makes for free expression and community spirit. There are no foreign liturgies³ and the Church structure is simple. This simplicity appealed to Hindus and also made semi-literate people feel at home.

Pentecostals have established a deep sense of community spirit and have succeeded in forming close-knit societies where each

¹Oosthuizen, p.201

²Ibid, p.193

³Ibid

cares for the other, in this way lapsing back into Hinduism is minimal. Although there is a deep sense of togetherness, there is at the same time a genuine openness and it is because of the latter that outsiders are made to feel wanted¹.

Indian Methodists on the other hand can also boast a close knit community, but they were often so close and introspective that outsiders were made to feel unwanted.

Methodism concentrated on the middle and upper class of Indians and generally ignored the lower, illiterate, poorer section of the community. In doing so it became a very middle-upper class community and those in the lower echelons have been made to feel unwanted. The Pentecostals concentrated on the poorer section within the Indian community and did this with tremendous success². The section of the community that the Methodists concentrated on offered the greatest opposition to Christianity and in some way accounts for their lack of growth.

8.7 The Challenge of the Future

If Methodism is to make any significant impact it must engage in evangelism and this is not going to be an easy task particularly in a community that already has a multiplicity of religious beliefs. Added to this, recent decades has witnessed an emergence of new Hindu religious movements - for example the Divine Life

¹Ibid, p.196

²Oosthuizen, p.115

Society and the Rama Krishna Movements. In an attempt to stem the impact made by Christian denominations, these religious movements are structured on lines very similar to Christian denominations. Classes are run for Hindu children, similar to Sunday Schools, Hindu youth clubs have come into being and the format of their worship services are almost identical to Christian worship services, except that in the Hindu services, Hindu Scripture is read and Hindu sacred songs are sung in the vernacular languages. Over recent years a number of Indian religious leaders have been invited into the country for the purpose of conducting seminars and for public meetings. The Christian community has sometimes viewed all this as an attempt to revive Hinduism and to hamper Christian missionary efforts. This neo-Hinduism has attracted considerable appeal mainly from the intellectual section of the community and this renaissance within Hinduism represents a real challenge to the Indian Christian community.

The revival of Hinduism implies that Christian denominations would need to reassess strategies to be employed for effective Church growth. Methodism has been hesitant in opting for mass evangelism, whereas Pentecostal movements, particularly among the Indians, have held mass campaigns effectively. A glance at the history of Methodism among Indians reveals that when mass evangelism was undertaken fairly substantial growth was evidenced. During the ministry of Subrahmanyam for instance the numerical growth almost doubled in the Durban area, the success of mass evangelism in the mid 1970's at Tongaat was so overwhelming that within a period of only five years there has been 150 conversions from Hinduism resulting in the erection of

a Church and a manse in the area. A similar undertaking at Phoenix in the mid 1970's launched Methodism in that township. The future of Methodism in the Indian community may depend on how effectively evangelism is undertaken. The Church may have to consider as a matter of urgency the training of an evangelical team solely for undertaking tent campaigns in co-operation with Indian Methodist Churches on an itinerant basis. Unless evangelism is taken seriously there may be a gradual dwindling of numbers within Indian Methodism and the future of the Church in the Indian community will be lost to the Pentecostal Churches.

8.8 Conclusion

Methodism in the Indian community has shown minimal growth since it's inception in 1862. The major obstacle is that in Natal the predominant religious groups are the Hindu and the Muslim, not the Christian. The Hindu worshippers vary from those who continue to hold a superstitious understanding of Hindu scripture to the intellectual exponent of Hindu philosophy. The Mission field that confronts the Indian Methodist today is vastly different to that which confronted the pioneering missionaries. The task today entails proselytizing men and women of other faiths, who in their turn, are seeking to convert Christians to their faith. This study reveals that growth of Methodism among the Indian population in the initial period was substantial and this can be attributed to the zeal of the Stotts, John Choonoo, Subrahmanyam, John Thomas and their stalwart helpers. The period that followed these pioneers indicates that once a worshipping community had

been established, numerical growth was of lesser importance. Concentration was mainly on nurturing rather than on outreach. In addition during, the first half of this century the emphasis was the planting of various Church buildings while in the second half development took place in townships created as a result of the Group Areas Act.

The Indian mission made a major contribution in the sphere of primary school education. The mission maintained under difficult circumstances some sixteen day schools in various parts of Natal. With the gradual take over of mission schools by the state, the Church began informal education in the form of pre-primary school training.

In outlining 'Indian Methodism' as it exists today, two of the Church's resolutions are pertinent to the discussion. As early as 1958 the Methodist Church declared that it was to be 'one and undivided' and in 1984 urged all its members to unite into multi-racial circuits and societies. In line with this decision the Indian Mission took the lead in gradually eliminating its racial connotation and, as already mentioned, divisions and amalgamations over the decades occurred with the last remaining section of the original mission ending with the creation of the Durban North West and Durban South West Circuits in 1973. The Indian Mission as such no longer exists. All Methodist Indian churches are now within circuits that have been formed along non-racial lines. The Pietermaritzburg Indian Circuit merged with their White counterparts and formed the Pietermaritzburg Metropolitan Circuit in 1986. The Durban North West Circuit

joined the Durban Central Circuit and became the Durban Metropolitan Circuit in 1989. The only remaining Indian Circuit was the Durban South West Circuit and they merged with the South Durban Circuit in 1990. With this merger all Indian Methodist Churches are now within non-racial circuits. In view of political events that have occurred since 2 February 1990 the creation of non-racial circuits has promoted contact across racial barriers and has enabled the Church to demonstrate what it means to be the alternative society. In addition non racial circuits have provided the opportunity for open discussion and the elimination of racial prejudice. While other racial groups in virtually all areas in the country continue to debate the merits and demerits of non-racial circuits Indian circuits have been in the forefront in creating these circuits.

Since the inception of the mission the following have candidated for the Methodist ministry from the Indian community: John Thomas (1898), Arthur Choonoo (1917), Reuben Choonoo (1917), Herbert Lawrence (1945), Charles Balli (1960), Solomon Jacob (1967), David Thomas (1971), Harold Choonoo (1973), Vivian Seethal (1975), Emmanuel Jacob (1977), Gabriel Chinsamy (1980), Daryl Balia (1982), Samson Thomas (1988), David Moodley (1989), and Emmanuel Gabriel (1989). Three Indian ministers were received by the Methodist Church on transfer from the Church of the Nazarene in 1992. These ministers are Krish Govender, Roy Govender and Tibbs Naidoo.

The focus of this investigation has been primarily on the Indian section of Methodism. An area that has fallen outside the scope

of this study is the relationship between the Indian and a few other population groups within the Methodist family and how these relationships have influenced the direction and development of Methodism among the Indians.

Sociologists of religion might like to explore for example why the Nepali congregation at Umhlali on the Natal North Coast remained a closely-knit community and made no attempt to proselytize any who were not of Nepali descent.

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Balkisson Arnold	Verulam	4 May 1984
Balkisson Samson	Umhlali	8 July 1970
Chinsamy Gabriel	Verulam	6 July 1985
Christopher (Mrs)	Chatsworth	4 August 1991
Choonoo Harold (Revd)	Pietermaritzburg	8 June 1976
Choonoo Nellie (Mrs)	Verulam	22 August 1986
Daniels Rosa (Mrs)	Pietermaritzburg	10 March 1993
David John	Isipingo	28 August 1993
Govender G. (Mrs)	Chatsworth	22 October 1993
Govindsamy Marion (Mrs)	Merebank	25 July 1993
Isaac Jimmy	Phoenix	6 February 1984
John Agnes (Mrs)	Phoenix	2 March 1983
Lawrence. H. F. (Revd)	Chatsworth	8 April 1984
Maistry John	Mount Edgecombe	6 February 1984
Milan, Edward	Silverglen	23 August 1993
Moodley Maurice	Chatsworth	18 September 1991
Moonsamy Gordon (Revd)	Merebank	25 August 1993
Pillay Dennis	Chatsworth	12 April 1990
Reddy Dass	Avoca	6 October 1992
Reuben Wilfred	Chatsworth	2 November 1993
Singh Gunpath	Avoca	20 July 1985
Thomas Samson (Revd)	Tongaat	24 April 1982

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