

**THE HISTORY OF THE
RHENISH MISSION SOCIETY IN
NAMIBIA WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH SCHISM
(1946-1990)**

By

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**Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities,
School of Religion and Culture at the
University of Durban-Westville.**

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2003

ABSTRACT

This dissertation takes up the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) schism in 1946 in Namibia from the Rhenish Mission Society (RMS), due to a protest against the inhumane treatment that the Nama leaders were forced to accept from the German missionaries belonging to the Rhenish Mission Society. The agitation movement of 1946 organized a church separated from the RMS which was started in response to the Africans' need for opportunities for self-expression, fuller involvement in the Church of God, and in society as a whole. It was the answer to a cry for social recognition as human beings, and the means through which a group of people started on a programme which gave them a growing sense of dignity and self respect.

The underlying and longer term problems of this first schism in Namibia come out above all in the correspondence between the missionary Christiaan Spellmeyer and Petrus Jod, Markus Witbooi and Zacheus Thomas. These documents shed some light on the policy and attitude of the RMS in Namibia and in Gibeon in particular, mainly during the 1930's and early 1940's.

This thesis records the significant role played by the Nama leaders to voice their grievances against the RMS. The involvement of the RMS missionaries in colonial politics has contributed to the subjugation of the black people. By concentrating their efforts on pioneering incentives in education, social care and ordination, the Nama leaders made an outstanding contribution to the establishment of AMEC in Namibia, the church which responds closely to the needs of the Nama people.

This study should be of interest to those who are doing research on the history of Christian missions in Southern Africa, and in particular in Namibia.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will bring a local perspective on the activities of the AMEC in Namibia, as up to the present, much available information has been

written by German missionaries. A complete history of the indigenous clergy in Namibia, is unwritten. Much that would be most interesting and valuable went to the grave with those who had no possible means of transmitting it except by the uncertain and unreliable method of tradition.

What made Zacheus Thomas, Markus Witbooi and Petrus Jod different from the Rhenish Mission Society's staff was the fact that they were from the IKhobesin clan, who understand and respect the culture of the Nama people. They could see and appreciate the structures of the Nama society and planned a development project from the African perspective. The researcher presents this work as a tribute to these pioneering Nama leaders whose lives and relationships are a true reflection of their Christian faith.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In conducting this study, I have received assistance and encouragement from a number of people.

I wholeheartedly thank Professor Isabel Apawo Phiri, and Professor Johannes Andreas Smit for their academic support and guidance. I acknowledge their scholarly thoughts from the very first day which greatly guided me during the course of my research and writing. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Prof. Smit, who guided me in editing my thesis. Prof. Smit has not only been my promoter, but he is also a fellow-Namibian.

I am also indebted to Pastor Rudolf Wessler from Düsseldorf, Germany whose assistance with the German literature and advice was invaluable.

I also acknowledge the financial assistance rendered by the university of Durban-Westville for two years towards my study.

I am also indebted to my classmate and colleague Dr. Drea Frochtling for translating some of the classical German texts, and explaining them to me in clear English.

I thank my colleagues, friends and relatives, Mrs. Augustinus Johannes Mungunda and Dirk Hendrik Conradie for their assistance and moral support. Revds. Willem Matthys, Julieth and Petrus †Khariseb for creating a crucial social environment. Special thanks also goes to Rev. Petrus Van Zyl who always keeps me informed of events at home, in particular at Mariental, in Namibia.

I extend a special word of gratitude to Mrs. Ade for typing my work. I am also indebted to all my interviewees for their cooperation, and in particular to my

most reliable source of information, the late Rev. P.A. Schmidt. I am sad that he could not witness the completion of my study. May his soul rest in peace.

Finally, I would like to thank very special people in my life: my wife Erica for encouragement and support, our two sons Francis and Frank, for their patience, understanding and being so wonderful throughout my study of eight years in South Africa. Their love, patience and encouragement helped me to achieve the goal I had set.

H.R. Tjibeba

Pietermaritzburg

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, the late
Daniël Tjibeba (1935-1975) and Magdalena
Tjibeba (1940-)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
CCN	Council of Churches in Namibia
DELK	Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Kirche (German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia)
ELCIN	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia
ELCRN	Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia
FMS	Finnish Mission Society
LMS	London Missionary Society
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
RMS	Rhenish Mission Society
SWA	South West Africa
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
USA	United States of America
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH DESIGN

1.0 Introduction to the study

This study is being approached from a Lutheran perspective in reference to the issues of the Rhenish Mission Society, and the AMEC schism. Historically, the role of the indigenous clergy in Namibia has not been adequately acknowledged within the RMS documents. Contemporary RMS research and literature is still confused concerning white missionary history and their role in the establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN). Those courageous black leaders who pioneered the 1946 African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) schism in Namibia are often ascribed the secondary role and sometimes not mentioned.¹

In 1842, the RMS had already established a flourishing mission society in Namibia when Heinrich Klein Schmidt and Jan Bam arrived in Windhoek. By 1900, however, this picture has changed completely. During that year, two new missionaries were sent, namely Wilhelm Anz of the Evangelical Church in Germany to serve the whites and Carl Wandres from the Rhenish Mission to serve the black population. This was the beginning of the two separate churches in Namibia: one to serve the Germans and the other to serve the blacks.²

As the number of converts increased, particularly in Southern Namibia, enthusiasm for the missionary work grew stronger among the RMS. Consequently they established mission stations at main centres such as Gibeon, Maltahöhe, Berseba, Bethanie and Hoachanas. The sacrificial aspect of the RMS among the Nama people of Namibia has unfortunately been linked to the colonial politics which have contributed to the subjugation of the black people. The involvement of the RMS in the political matters of Namibia were frequently detrimental to the black people of the country whom they are supposed to serve.

¹ W.S. Hanse. Lay Think Tank. (Unpublished AMEC Conference Notes). Gibeon. 1995. p. 3.

² G. Gurirab. A Brief Historical Survey of the ELCRN, in The ELCRN in the 21st Century. Edited by P.J. Isaak. Windhoek: Gamsberg Publishers, 2000. p. 19.

The focus of this work is on the history of the RMS in Namibia, as it was instrumental in the establishment of the ELCRN with an estimated membership of 250 000. It was also the Church under the German leadership who ordained the first indigenous pastors in 1949 after the historical AMEC schism of 1946.³ The AMEC schism in 1946 in Namibia was a great blow to the RMS and the colonial government. What did take place was a decisive shift in their attitude towards the RMS and the colonial power.

1.1 The Split in the Mission Congregation in Windhoek

Shortly before the start of the Herero revolt of 1904, the mission saw the need to erect another station for the work amongst the Herero. In 1904 Missionary Meier came to Windhoek, but a congregation for Herero and Ovambo only followed in 1908. The Herero were mainly freed prisoners of war. Because the colonial government punished them by confiscating their common remaining cattle, their traditional culture collapsed and many of them became Christians.⁴

The Ovambo were travelling labourers, who entered cities to find their means of support. Because of their related languages both ethnic groups were combined to one congregation, just as in the other congregation, Namas, Damaras and Coloureds were combined. Not only the numbers but also their differences in language were the reasons for this separation that was extended later on. In 1931 the Ovambo asked for their own church service, not only because of the language difference, but also because they were set back by the Hereros from the church benches.

After the Second World War, the Coloureds also wanted their own congregation and consequently came together for church services and prayer meetings in the house of one of the church elders.⁵ In 1955 this took place under the guidance of Missionary Bitzer. They founded their own congregation with their own church council and church books.

³ G.L. Buys and J.J. Kritzinger. Salig die Vredemakers. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria 1989. p. 140.

⁴ W.A. Wienecke. "Lutherische Kirche in Windhoek". In Namibia, Nr 12. Windhoek. 1993. p. 147.

⁵ W.A. Wienecke. p. 147.

Apart from these four congregations, another Ovambo congregation came into being due to a tripartite agreement between the Rhenish Mission Church, the Finland Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church. This Church had to care for the contract labourers from Ovamboland. It had guest status in the Rhenish Mission Church, but was closely related to the home church in Ovamboland.

The three churches namely Rhenish Mission Society, Dutch Reformed Church and Finnish Mission Society had to do something if these contract workers mostly from the North were to be helped. The matter was discussed in 1920, but without any concrete steps towards action being taken. Four years later a preliminary agreement was reached at Engela in Ovamboland when Potgieter S.H. Van der Spuy and Schutte went to Ovamboland for that purpose. The final agreement among the three churches, FMS, RMS and DRC was reached at Karibib on 9 May 1947. It was called the *Driehoek* (triangle) agreement because of its three representatives.⁶ It was to undertake responsibility for spiritual care to tens of thousands of contract workers from Ovamboland working in the south. Dr H. Vedder represented the RMS at this meeting. The FMS took the responsibility to provide literature and Ovambo Bibles to the workers, with the possibility of in-service training of indigenous evangelists from the workers themselves. The RMS provided buildings free of charge to the workers for conducting services, while the DRC took care of salaries, accommodation and transportation. This cooperation continued after the constitution of ELCIN and ELC as independent churches in 1954 and 1957 respectively. With the view of starting its own independent mission among the blacks, the DRC Synod of 1969 decided to break the Driehoek agreement. The breaking of this agreement had racial undertones, because the DRC could no longer handle the political crisis prevailing in the country. Most of the DRC ministers were white Afrikaners, who closely cooperated with the government of the day. The workers on the farms were subjected to the most cruel, inhumane treatment, but they never raised their pastoral concern. This is still a widespread problem in southern Africa despite some significant attempts made by some agricultural departments, unions and farmer cooperatives to change this legacy.

These congregations of the Church in Windhoek separated according to language and

⁶ Shekutaamba Nambala. History of the Church in Namibia. New Jersey: Collingswood Publishers. 1994. p. 148.

tradition, generally became the pattern for smaller congregations which only had one missionary. Because the preaching of the biblical message in the former mother language had been essential in the common construction period, no other way of working had been possible. This had nothing to do with apartheid practiced by whites, but it was necessitated by the pastoral need to accept the people as they were in respect of their different traditions. In the period between the two World Wars, the central issue was the preaching of the gospel.

1.2 Windhoek as Centre of the German Congregation

The first World War had strongly affected not only the development of the German congregation in Windhoek, but also other congregations in the country. The following repatriation affected not only farmers, business people and government officials, but also ministers. Between 1917 and 1926 there were two types of German ministers. There were missionaries of the RMS who cared for their countrymen. In the course of this period they established in several places their own congregations. When in 1924 Pastor Ebers arrived in Windhoek, he soon started to combine those separate and independent congregations. So, in 1926 the synod of the German Evangelical Congregations was established, which granted the chairman the title Landespropst.⁷ Then they crossed the national borders and united with the Cape and Transvaal Synod in the German Church Union, and Landespropst Ebers was appointed as the first chairman. To release him from his many duties, Windhoek got an assistant preacher who concentrated especially on the religious education in the three German schools at Windhoek.

During the two World Wars, the indication “Lutheran” for the German congregations and synods was not used. What motivated Germans in this country was not a confessional orientation but the expectation that one day South West Africa would revert back and become a German colony in the future. That is why pastor Dr Schünemann founded Boy Scouts and Landespropst Ebers’ wife the “German Girls’ Union”. The meeting point for these youth movements was the minister’s house in Windhoek. It is part of the history of this country and of the German church that these two unions were incorporated into the ‘Hitlerjugend’ (HJ)

⁷ G.L. Buys and J.J. Kritzinger. 1989. p.141. The title ‘Landespropst’ is the German term of office equivalent to Bishop. In some German circles they are addressed as Präses.

and in the 'Bund Deutcher Mädel' (BDM) after 1930. In 1934 they were prohibited as a danger for the nation because of their national socialistic activities. Landespropst Wackwitz, on purpose a "Deutscher Christen" and member of the party, had been sent to South West Africa by the church department for foreign affairs in order to direct the German congregations onto the new line of the home country. But instead of unity and concord, quarrels, fights and frictions resulted in the congregations. In 1939 in Berlin the need was seen to call Landespropst Wackwitz back and sent K.F. Höflich as his successor to bring the church from the political stream back on a pure church-line. In this time of German nationalistic or even national socialist aspirations, there was hardly any interest in confessional matters, also not in the church opposition by the Bekennende Kirche in Germany. This period ended with the beginning of the Second World War and the imprisonment of German ministers and missionaries or at least the restriction of movement of some of the missionary personnel who were not interned. This latter issue proved to be quite detrimental to the ministry by German Christian organizations in Namibia.

1.3 Missionaries and Politics in Namibia

It was unfortunate for the image of the church and the credibility of the Gospel that the expansion of missionary work throughout the world coincided with a period of imperialistic conquest by the colonial powers of Europe. The correlation between these two events inevitably fostered the concept of supremacy over the darker races.

Many Christians in Europe, who were ignorant of other cultures, believed that the people on other continents were not only culturally and technologically inferior, but that even their religions were spiritually debased. The travels of Speke, Stanley and Livingstone in the interior of what was known as Darkest Africa had excited not only the evangelistic interest of Christians in Europe but also the cupidity of traders and industrialists looking for new markets and cheap sources of raw materials. Above all, it aroused the imperialistic ambitions of rulers and politicians like Napoleon III, Bismark and Disraeli.

The scramble for Africa which culminated with the Berlin Congress in 1878 marked the beginning of a struggle for hegemony between Britain and France, which were the two major

colonial powers. Both Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries often acted in support of their respective countries thus adding a political dimension to their already bitter religious enmity.

The involvement of the missionaries in colonial politics was often accidental although in the case of Lavigerie's "white fathers" their aim of expanding Catholicism in Africa was coupled with their boosting of the imperialistic ambitions of Napoleon in that continent.⁸ Several political incidents involving missionaries which occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century gave credence to the cliché that the missionary was followed by the trader who was followed by the conquering soldiers.

In 1842, the Rhenish Mission Society had already established a flourishing mission field in the Southern part of Namibia. Gerdener, a leading South African church historian said:

There can be but few missionary societies round the world whose task has been more aggravated by wars and other trials during the first half of the twentieth century than that of the Rhenish Mission in Southern Africa. Especially does this pertain to the former German colony of South West Africa which today is by far the largest and almost the only field of the Barmen Mission.⁹

The ensuing feud between the Nama leaders and the German colonial forces caused such hatred between their followers that it erupted in wars between 1903-1905. Due to the instability in the country and hatred among the people, the Rhenish Mission Society continued its work under extremely difficult circumstances. German superiority and the greediness of the Victorian era probably aggravated conflicts which would have been averted by missionaries of other nationalities. The African converts who witnessed these unedifying situations were likely to have judged the actions of the missionaries with some degree of cynicism. It is not surprising therefore, that at a later stage, African nationalists and others accused the missionaries of conniving with European colonialism in the subjugation of Africa.

⁸ J.M. Cuoq. Les Musulmans en Afrique. Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose. 1975. p. 123.

⁹ G.B.A. Gerdener. Recent Developments in the South African Mission Field. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott. 1958, p. 83.

From the point of view of the indigenous Namibians, Christianity came as the religion of the invaders of their land. For the indigenous people land is the means of survival. The dispute for this land began with the coming of Europeans. The Rhenish Mission Society came to the southern part of Namibia as part of the colonial project of Germany. In my opinion the Rhenish Mission's staff were not the only preachers who brought the good news to the Namibians, but also soldiers and army captains. All went after the pagans and attempted to bring them to the light of faith and salvation. With this concept, there is no place for the distinction between the task of the Rhenish Mission Society and the Germany colonial government. As the Germans understood it, the colonial expansion of their country meant at the same time, the spreading of the Kingdom of God. With this idea they justified their dominion of the indigenous people of Namibia, as well as the enslavement of the Africans, as necessary steps in the path of the salvation of the 'pagans'.

At the time of the politics of expansion of the Second German Reich, especially after Bismarck's fall, the marginal situation in which the German descendants lived, meanwhile joined by the English immigrants, was largely exploited by German diplomats. Through substantial aid towards press and school and intensified visits to German settlements by the German troops, an attempt was made to secure markets for the German economy. Among the theorists of German colonial politics we find some who even advanced to the point of elaborating a plan for the creation of "Deutsche Südwest Afrika". One of the fathers of these ideas was Friedrich Fabri, inspector of the Missionary Society of the Rhine German diplomacy. He intended to reach Germany's foreign policy goals chiefly by preserving the German character of Germans in foreign countries. The mission too, was to preserve Germanism.

So it is easy to understand that in 1900 a church law was published that allowed German religious communities in foreign countries to enter as members of the superior Ecclesiastical Council of Berlin. If they became members, they would receive financial support as well as personnel. This support from the church was seen as a fraternal Christian service. Nevertheless, we have to admit that the autonomy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) was rendered more difficult and delayed thereby. Until today the church suffers the consequences of the fact that its identity was more orientated towards

Germanism than towards Lutheranism.

When the two World Wars broke out, the congregations were the ones to suffer the most. Financial difficulties manifested and pastors were sent to prison camps. But even though these were periods of great difficulties, the years of the two world wars strengthened the mobilisation of nationalism - which had lost its purpose through the ties to the Rhenish Mission authorities.

As the number of converts increased, particularly in Africa, enthusiasm for the missionary cause grew to the extent that some theologians optimistically predicted that once the gospel was preached throughout the world, Christianity would soon triumph everywhere. This triumphalism sustained itself uninterrupted until the second decade of this century and was characterised by some extravagant claims like the one mentioned by Bosch.

Typical is a calculation which Lars Dahle, a Norwegian, made in 1900. Comparing the number of Christians in the Third World in 1800 and 1900 respectively, he was able to develop a mathematical formula which revealed the exponential growth rate of the church in the nineteenth century. He proceeded to apply this formula to successive decades of the twentieth century and calmly predicted that by the year 2000 the entire human race would be won for Christianity.¹⁰

Needless to say, the provisions did not materialise in Asia where only 3.2% of the population is Christian but a considerable numerical growth was experienced in sub-Saharan Africa. How much this success was due to missionary work and how much to other factors is still a topic for debate.

1.4 The RMS and the Nama Leaders

An article in the *Burger* of 31 October 1945, stated that the blacks in South West Africa were not yet able to independently lead a church of their own. This was the situation after one hundred years of RMS missionwork among the Nama in the South of Namibia. On the one hand, one could blame the Nama for this situation. The problem, however, is that it was RMS policy to not allow the Nama to take leadership positions in the church and the mission.

¹⁰ D.J. Bosch. Witness to the World. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott. 1980. p. 6.

Officially, they continued with this policy in spite of critical voices from among the Nama. This caused the whites to lose respect among the Nama.

Another point is that the loss of prestige suffered by the whites during the time of white colonisation is undeniable and occurred due to a discrepancy between the individual conduct of life and the Christian ethics as preached by the white missionaries. The employment of many, sharply observing Nama in the white households contributed to the knowledge of the human weaknesses of the whites. Petrus Jod once remarked to Mayer: "At an earlier stage, we used to consider all whites as angels. But after having observed their ways of living, we revised our opinion."¹¹

Spellmeyer's long standing aim has been the establishment of a black church, independent of the white mission church, according to the motto: "A missionary should not become a pastor"¹². The Europeans were to continue to work as missionaries, while the blacks provided the pastors. In order to educate the blacks to become an independent church, also in financial terms, Spellmeyer led the congregation in Gibeon towards financial independence. This proved its worth especially during the time of inflation after the First World War and World War II when the RMS was cut off from the financial support of the Germans. Contributions of parishioners would be used to further reconstruction. Moreover 10% of the obligatory contribution by parishioners was used for the maintenance of the Paulinum, a seminary for evangelists, since 1946, also for pastors.¹³ It was founded for the education of blacks. Normally, the obligatory contributions by parishioners, with the exception of the above mentioned 10% were solely used to support the evangelist, for especially the mortgage payments.

The demand for a stronger participation in the right of decision making process grew during the war. Most of the evangelists got accustomed to being rather independent. In charge of their own congregations, they grew accustomed to making decisions and being the leader to which their parishioners looked up to. Due to the restrictions the missionaries suffered during

¹¹ R. Kössler. The Persistent Theme of the Great Rising: Witbooi Leaders and the RMS. Namibia Scientific Society Journal 47. Windhoek. 1999. p. 23.

¹² R. Kössler. 1999. p. 24.

¹³ G. Gurirab. 2000. p. 22.

this time, also meant that they could not move around as they wish. This caused the missionaries to seldom made contact with the remote congregations and hardly issued guidelines during this period.

Spellmeyer was a full proponent of the full ordination of blacks who were talented and educated in terms of theology.¹⁴ He writes in his memorandum with specific reference to Petrus Jod: "Because of the work he did in establishing the station at Maltahöhe, he was appointed evangelist by the mission conference in Luderitz Bay in 1926." It was not him, Spellmeyer, who had applied for this kind of promotion. At the time Petrus Jod had not yet been offered an education that would qualify him for the job. He suggested to his conference to postpone appointment and to treat Petrus Jod and Johannes Dâusab, who was appointed at the same time, as equal to the missionaries till the stage when they had passed a preparatory course. But then they should be ordained. Spellmeyer's request was turned down as the mission was afraid to offend the German pastors in South West Africa by ordaining blacks. Further, they thought that they had to take into consideration the racial prejudices of those whites who partly financed the missionaries who were responsible for the German congregations. Spellmeyer added:

Mission inspector Driessler confirmed during his inspection journey in 1931 that such a kind of consideration would be wrong, but at the same time indifference towards the important spiritual uplifting of black colleagues to be pastors.¹⁵

The three main evangelists (including Zacheus Thomas) knew very well why they were not ordained like the Ovambo pastors who, when visiting the Nama churches, conducted the services with their fellow countrymen while wearing a gown. Furthermore, they were well aware of other native pastors in South Africa and elsewhere. For this, our main evangelists have campaigned for 20 years, finally with folly, instead of waiting and being silent.

It has already been mentioned that the RMS established pastoral courses for blacks at the Paulinum at Karibib. The first pastors were ordained in 1949.¹⁶ By the end of 1957, the

¹⁴ K. Schlosser. Eingeborenenkirchen in Süd-und-Südwestafrika. Ihre Geschichte and Sozialstruktur. Kiel: Kommissions Verlag Walter G. Mührlau. 1958. pp. 77-78.

¹⁵ W.A. Wienecke. 150 Jaar Sendingwerk in Namibia. Windhoek. 1992. p. 2.

¹⁶ G. Gurirab. 2000. p. 22 and S. Nambala. 1994. p. 75.

number of non-white pastors had reached fifteen (six Bergdama, four Herero, three Nama, two Coloureds). In October 1957, a new constitution of the RMS was decided upon.¹⁷ It represented an important step towards the establishment of a purely native church without any supervision by the whites. The young church was named the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa. The RMS claimed that they wanted to lead this church in ten years' time to entire independence.

Missionary Toetemeyer, a generally well-liked missionary from Keetmanshoop, was kept in Germany, during the second World War, after a holiday at home. His position had only been filled on a provisional basis. The missionaries present were threatened with expulsion from South West Africa. It was discussed that, should this happen, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) would take over the congregations of the RMS. But the Nama objected to that. They were not open to decisions they were not party to.

Petrus Jod was a very influential Nama leader. In my view he was ahead of his time. In this context he was praised with the following words at the AMEC annual conference: "Truly the AMEC is the Church of the people, truly the AMEC is the Church of Petrus Jod."¹⁸

Petrus Jod was born 22 October 1888 during Hendrik Witbooi's famous trek to the North. Hendrik Witbooi has bid farewell to his father in Gibeon, Captain Moses Witbooi, and left with his supporters to search for better grazing grounds in the North in 1884.

Petrus was the eldest child of Petrus Jod who became magistrate/municipal authority of Gibeon under the Witbooi regime. When Spellmeyer was transferred from Gochas to Gibeon in 1903, he was Petrus' school teacher for one year.¹⁹

The revolt of the Nama (1904-1906) started. Being a Christian, Petrus' father refused to enter the armed struggle against the Germans. In order to support his tribe nevertheless, he supported those supplying water and ammunition. He and his wife lost their lives during the

¹⁷ G.L. Buys and J.J. Kritzinger. 1989. p. 139; G. Gurirab. 2000. p. 22.

¹⁸ W.S. Hanse. Lay Think Tank. (Unpublished AMEC Conference Notes) 1995. p.3.

¹⁹ R. Kössler. 1999. p. 26.

process. After the death of Hendrik Witbooi, many Nama surrendered themselves to the German army. In one of the first of these groups, Spellmeyer spotted Petrus Jod. He asked the German commander who was accompanying the groups of Nama to hand the orphaned boy over to him and he employed him as a house and kitchen boy at his place. Petrus joined the Spellmeyers in the transporting of the Witboois who were taken prisoner at Gibeon, to Windhoek. Because Spellmeyer's negotiations with the military authorities Petrus was allowed to return to Gibeon with the Spellmeyers. Other captured Witboois were brought to Shark Island close to Luderitz Bay.

Spellmeyer educated Petrus to become an assistant for the school. In 1908, Spellmeyer started to work on the chronicle of the congregation at Gibeon. The first twenty one pages were compiled by Petrus Jod. He had asked Petrus to describe the historical relationships between the mission and the Witboois. It is *inter alia* mentioned that the mission station at Gibeon was founded in 1863.²⁰ Petrus was perfectly fluent in reading, speaking and writing German, and was well able to correctly use foreign words which are common in German, and was well able to correctly use foreign words common in German. Furthermore, he displays an equal perfection in Nama and Afrikaans. Meyer called Petrus Jod a particularly nice and fascinating personality. The farmers too held him in high esteem and allowed him into their homes to join them at their meal tables - a very specific honour for a black person in South Africa and South West Africa. Another significant fact is that, often, when farmers had quarrels with their farm labourers, they preferred to have the quarrels with their blacks decided upon not by the white courts but by Petrus Jod. He used to substantiate his decisions by saying: "As Christians, you have to act in such a manner/ way." In his Memorandum, Spellmeyer describes Petrus Jod as the most diligent and influential mission worker in Namaland. He was not very well schooled, but very committed to his work and well respected by RMS personnel, the white community and the congregations.²¹

1.5 New Outlooks on Missions

It is unfortunate that the work of the missionaries has been too often associated with

²⁰ J. Baumann (ed). Van Sending tot Kerk: 125 Jaar Sending Arbeid in Suidwes Afrika 1842-1967. Windhoek: John Meinert. 1967. p. 101.

²¹ R. Kössler. 1999. p. 33; K. Schlosser. 1958. p. 106.

colonialism and the social economic hegemony of the affluent West. In the aftermath of the Second World War, nationalist politicians from the colonial territories, often themselves the product of mission schools, denounced missionary activities as another facet of colonialist domination.²²

Another factor that militated against the work of the Christian missions was that the western powers had twice plunged most of the world into destructive warfare. The many atrocities committed during these wars tended to discredit the alleged moral and cultural superiority of the West and the spiritual teachings of Christianity. These events greatly influenced missionary thinking in the Western countries. At the International Missionary Council held in 1958, the German Missiologist Walter Freytag, who had attended all the meetings of the IMC since 1928 in Jerusalem, summed up the difference between 1928 and 1958 by saying that in 1928 missions had problems; by 1958, however, missions had themselves become a problem.²³

For the first time in more than one hundred and fifty years, the missions were on the defensive. Their activities were questioned in the light of new theologies and this became even more apparent when the IMC was integrated into the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961. Up to that time the theology of mission mainly focused on the church's traditional basis of mission, the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). Two contrasting interpretations to mission subsequently developed.

The first interpretation, held mostly by Evangelical Protestants, viewed missions as an attempt to draw mankind out of a sinful world into a totally spiritual transformation within the church. In this spiritualized interpretation of the Great Commission, the conversion of non-Christians became the immediate and even the only aim of missions. Education and medical work, although desirable as a means of conversion, were not essential to the missionary outreach.

²² R.J. Cozziol. A Comparative Study of Christian Missions in Swaziland. PhD. Dissertation. University of Natal: Pietermaritzburg. 1989. p. 16.

²³ D.J. Bosch. 1980. p. 2.

The second interpretation, favoured by ecumenical Protestants and some liberal Roman Catholics, viewed mission as a movement that would absorb the church, its faith and its message into a totally secular transformation of the world, this being a secularized interpretation of Jesus' sermon in the synagogue (Luke 4: 16-21). This interpretation stressed God's own activity in the world ('Missio Dei') and came to be regarded both in the World Council of Churches and in some circles of Vatican II as 'humanization'. This was a process in which the church took a leading role in social, economic and political development. One report of the International Conference at Jerusalem in 1928 stated:

in his endeavour we realised that man is a unity, and that his spiritual life is indivisible rooted in all his conditions - physical, mental and social. We are therefore desirous that the program of missionary work among all peoples be sufficiently comprehensive to serve the whole man in every aspect of his life and relationships.²⁴

In this introductory chapter an overview of the RMS is given, followed by a comprehensive exposition of the research design for the thesis.

1.6 Research Design

Babbie explains research design as "designing a strategy for finding out something", adding that:

although the special details vary according to what you wish to study, there are two major aspects of a research design. First, you must specify precisely what you want to find out. Second, you must determine the best way to do that.²⁵

Various methods have been employed in this research. Because of the theoretical nature of this thesis, most of the information has been obtained from primary sources such as documents, letters, accounts by eyewitnesses and secondary published sources, that is, the works of the scholars who contributed to the Rhenish Mission Society's literature. In order to enhance my understanding, I read about the RMS history, anthropology and diaries of the RMS missionaries. The archival research was conducted in the archives of the Evangelical

²⁴ J.J. Bavinck. An Introduction to the Science of Missions. Michigan: Reformed Publishing Company. 1960. p. 108.

²⁵ E. Babbie. The Practice of Social Research. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishers. 1992. p. 89.

Lutheran Church in Namibia, Windhoek and the state Archives in Namibia. I also acquired a few documents from the RMS archives in Wuppertal, Germany. The fieldwork was conducted in Windhoek, Swakopmund and mostly in the Southern part of Namibia. An advantage was that the people in this area knew me and therefore readily volunteered most of the information for which I was looking. This was extremely helpful because of the kind of trust these people soon showed in me. Most of the details about the African Methodist Episcopal Church schism (1946) were already known to me before the fieldwork, but the research enabled me to collect greater detail that I would otherwise have omitted. As such, I have made extensive use of the interviews because of the lived experience and memories of my interviewees.

Personal interviews enabled me to listen to oral accounts of some of the pastors who witnessed the actual AMEC schism. This method also enabled me to have first hand information about how the indigenous church workers have been treated inhumanly by the RMS missionaries. The language barrier was non-existent as it was my own cultural group, the Nama (Ikhobesin) that I was studying.

It should be stated, however, that the inclusion of historical method,²⁶ and the use of various methods in the search for information here does not imply any pretence of special expertise on my part since my studies in historical studies have mostly been of a non-specialist nature. In my efforts to cope with this handicap I have availed myself of the advice of experts in various disciplines during the different stages of inquiry.

1.6.1 Problem Formulation

The main problem of this thesis is to analyse the context in which the 1946 secession from the RMS took place, the main events of the schism, and the impact of the schism in the following years, 1946 – 1990. This is broken down in terms of the different chapter focuses that can be analysed in terms of the following questions.

- 1) What is an appropriate historical understanding of the RMS and the context in which

²⁶ F.L. Whitney. The Elements of Research. New York: Prentice Hall. 1942. p. 187.

it founded and developed its work in Namibia and how can the research design be developed in terms of these perspectives?

- 2) How can one provide a brief overview of the history of the RMS in the context of its influence on political and social development in Namibia? What are the major themes that can show how the German colonization and conflict were closely linked to the subjugation of the indigenous people?
- 3) What was the central issue for the indigenous staff of the RMS that prepared the way for the 1946 schism and what could we learn of the historical background of the AMEC in the USA and Namibia in order to understand the schism?
- 4) How can we analyse the historical-chronological developments of the schism as far as it can be traced in terms of major influences and the events during 1946?
- 5) What are the important issues that emerged in the aftermath of the schism – in the first decade and later?
- 6) How was the AMEC formed among the Nama people of Namibia in response to the dissatisfaction with the RMS?
- 7) What was the impact of the schism on religious and political institutions in Namibia and what was the role of the different churches in Namibia?
- 8) How could one reflect on the AMEC's continued journey along the path for self-determination in the wake of the Namibian independence of 1990?

1.6.2 Background Motivation

The motive for the study is more historical than theological. It has grown out of a concern to rekindle interest in the present generation, to be familiar with the local history of the church. The objective of the thesis is to promote historical interest especially among fellow Namibian people. Secondly, this study should be of some interest to those who are doing research in the

history of Christian missions in Namibia by providing grounds for a modified and more informed estimate of the work and the influence of RMS in the Southern part of Namibia with particular reference to the 1946 AMEC schism.

This study intends not only to help one to gain knowledge about the RMS activities, but also to appreciate and acknowledge their life and work among the people of Namibia. The study simultaneously acknowledges the vital role the black clergy in the Southern part of Namibia played in their quest for self-determination and ordination in their own lifetime. It is worth mentioning that these black clergy were not well educated during the time of the 1946 AMEC schism. Even so, they were very influential among the Nama people and also articulate. They were leaders who understood what the main challenges of the day were.

In similar context the prominent Namibian historian Katjavivi²⁷ said:

Even after a century of religious work in Namibia, most of the schools established by the RMS could offer only basic education, not exceeding Standard III (about five years education). This was a major grievance, which led to many people leaving the RMS to form their own church, and to attempt to take control of their own affairs.²⁸

I agree with Katjavivi because the RMS has long been heavily involved in services of education and health, and increasingly in development and relief work in Namibia. The colonial government employed calculated agenda to keep the African at a low level of education. As far as I can determine, those who were articulate in the German language were employed as interpreters by the staff of the RMS. The work of evangelization was not exclusively aimed at conversion of non-Christians. The nurture of the mission field necessitated instructions in the beliefs, the practices, German language and the discipline of the Church. There was also a need to stress the material support for the Church, but this was exclusively controlled by the German missionaries. The work of evangelization among the Nama people of Namibia was based on power relations. If Christianity was to take root in Namibia and eventually establish autonomous Namibian Churches free from control of foreign missionaries, it was imperative to train indigenous people for positions of leadership

²⁷ P. Katjavivi. Namibia during the Liberation Struggle in Justice and Reconciliation. Edited by Jochen Motte and Thomas Sandner. Wuppertal, Germany: Foedus-verlag.

²⁸ P. Katjavivi. p. 15.

in the Church.

1.6.3 Aims of the Dissertation

The hypothesis guiding this dissertation is that the authorities of the RMS were not prepared to develop the theological skills of the indigenous staff, ordain them, and give them equal responsibility in the church while treating them on an equal footing with white missionaries. The research demonstrates that the missionaries of the RMS in Namibia have implemented with considerable success, the delaying of the indigenous people's ordination. On the other hand the 1946 AMEC schism resulted in a Church responding to the African need for opportunities for self expression and fuller involvement in the service and worship of God, and in serving society as a whole. It was the answer to a cry for social recognition and respect, and the means through which a group of people started on a programme which gave them a growing sense of dignity and self respect. The blacks found themselves in an inferior position to their white colleagues and their colour a barrier to promotion in the Church. They also found that they had very little say over how the funds they raised for the Church were spent, and were often hampered by the church authorities in their attempts to take part in political affairs. A number of these Africans responded by breaking away to form the AMEC in Namibia, in this way asserting African independence from white control.

A set of questions (see above) related to the aims of the dissertation has been formulated to guide the unfolding of the investigation. An attempt has been made to address them in the various chapters of the study and by way of summary in the concluding chapter. The aims could be formulated as follows:

- 1) To provide an appropriate historical understanding of the RMS, the context in which it founded and developed its work in Namibia and explain the research design can be developed on the basis of this basic information.
- 2) To provide a brief overview of the history of the RMS in the context of its influence on political and social developments in Namibia. This includes the identification of the major themes which can show how German colonization and conflict were closely linked to the subjugation of the indigenous people.

- 3) To study the central issue for the indigenous staff of the RMS which prepared the way for the 1946 schism and what historical backgrounds of the AMEC are in the USA and Namibia. In other words, the aim is to study the information from the USA and Namibia, which is necessary for the understanding of the schism.
- 4) To do a close analysis of the historical-chronological developments of the schism as far as it can be traced in terms of major influences and the events on both the Nama and RMS sides during 1946.
- 5) To study the important issues which emerged in the aftermath of the schism – especially the first decade.
- 6) To study the way in which the AMEC was formed among the Nama people of Namibia in response to the dissatisfaction with the RMS.
- 7) To study the impact of the schism on religious and political institutions in Namibia as well as the role of the different churches in Namibia.
- 8) To attempt a reflection on how the AMEC continued its journey along the path for self-determination in the wake of the Namibian independence of 1990.

The main point of criticism is that the RMS missionaries who came to Namibia during 1842 were the standard bearers of the German colonialism. Although missionary work started as early as 1842 they failed after 100 years to ordain indigenous clergy. The RMS work was an integral part of the penetration of German culture and later, colonialists, into Namibia. The European infiltration into Namibia resulted in the subjugation of the indigenous people. The brutal takeover of most of the Namibian lands by German settlers took place at almost the same time that the missionaries arrived.²⁹

²⁹ Siegfried Groth. Namibia. The Wall of Silence. Wuppertal, Germany: W.B. Druck Reiden. 1995. p. 186.

The RMS support for colonial rule was expressed in its policy of establishing separate ecclesiastical structures for black and white Christians. Long before the imposition of apartheid by South African authorities, this mission chose to establish distinct congregations on the basis of race and language. Unlike the Roman Catholics and Anglicans, the RMS also created totally separate administrative ministries for blacks and whites at local, regional and national levels. In practice the mission saw the colonial system as a divinely-created policy. The RMS were spreading colonialism deliberately among the indigenous people, instead of the liberating Word of God.

1.6.4 Significance of the Research

This historical study is a contribution to the history of the AMEC schism in Namibia. It shows how indigenous clergy in the white-controlled and dominated RMS, independently and successfully established the AMEC for the Nama people of Southern Namibia. The research also demonstrates how the indigenous clergy initiated, developed and sustained many AMEC congregations in Southern Namibia. It is hoped that the findings of this study will bring a local perspective on the activities of AMEC in Namibia.

1.6.5 Sources of Information

Existing published material (e.g. books, records, theses) and interviews with retired missionaries and indigenous clergy were the two main complexes of information in producing this study. Unpublished material, e.g. letters, manuscripts and diaries which had some relevance to this study have also been consulted and occasionally utilised as references.

Among unpublished material, the most useful sources of historical information is Mission and Colonialism in Namibia, a doctoral thesis by J.L. de Vries. It deals with the establishment of the RMS in Namibia. The work of Elfriede Strassberger, Die Werk van die Rynse Sending Genootskap in Noordwes - Kaapland 1830-1855, met besondere verwysing na die Instituut Wupperthal, is a Master's thesis which deals with the historical facts and developments of the RMS. The other source in this category is the work of Dr Heinrich Vedder Die Voorgeskiedenis van Suidwes Afrika, a doctoral thesis which in length only deals with the positive aspects and achievements of the RMS in Namibia. This missionary history was

written from a white perspective. Most missionary history has been propagandist and unanalytical.³⁰ It is generally designed to boost the morale of the missionaries in the field. It is a kind of history which focuses on how the gospel was brought to a particular area, the difficulties and joys experienced by these missionaries. It over-emphasized the role of the missionaries and ignores local communities. In this sense, it contributes towards enhancing the ethnocentrism of missionary achievements. Regretfully there is no source which deals specifically in detail with the 1946 AMEC schism. This dissertation aims to fill this gap.

In addition to the State Archive in Windhoek, there are records of missionary work in the ELCRN archives in Windhoek, Namibia and the RMS archives in Wuppertal, Germany. Some of the older missionaries who have retired also have valuable documentation in the form of reports, diaries and manuscripts which have been made available to the researcher.

Yet the most useful source of information was the *vive-voce* interviews with some of the older RMS missionaries who are still in Namibia. Notable among them are Präses H.K. Diehl (90 years old) who was the leader of the RMS till 1972, and Dr. Wienecke (72 years old) who was a youth pastor of the RMS in the late 1950's, and Rev. Dr. N.C. Christiaans (78 years of age) who was a teacher and AMEC pastor who served the AMEC Trinity Congregation (Keetmanshoop) for more than 40 years.

The late Rev. P.A. Schmidt, whom the researcher had interviewed four years ago, provided some useful information on the work of the RMS in Namibia, and the 1946 schism. He was the person who personally handed over the grievances of the indigenous clergy to the management of the RMS. He was branded by Dr. Vedder as a traitor and outcast.

Many ELCRN and AMEC leaders, ministers, teachers and laity who have worked or are still working in institutions founded by the missionaries have also provided useful information. Informal conversations with some of my colleagues concerning the work of the RMS missionaries, have provided new insights and some feedback for producing a more balanced and impartial view of the work of the RMS in Namibia.

³⁰ Ogbu K. Kalu. *Church Presence in Africa*, in A. Kubi and S. Torres (eds). *African Theology en Route*. New York: Orbis Books. 1983. p. 14.

1.6.6 Scope and Limitations

This study was conducted in the Southern part of Namibia. Most of the Nama people in the South joined the AMEC in 1946. This group is the first group of indigenous Namibians with whom the German missionaries came into contact as early as 1842.

The study findings may not be generalised to other regions and areas of Namibia where the political and ecclesiastical situations of the time may have been different.

Collection of data for this study necessitated the translation of the questionnaires from English to Afrikaans, which is understood and spoken by most people. Limitations in the data collected may have occurred, due to inaccuracies in the Afrikaans language for some technical terminologies or unintended errors in the translation exercise.

The researcher was personally involved in the collection of data through face to face interviews. The levels of enthusiasm and style of interview may have differed slightly and thus affected the way respondents answered some of the questions. In maintaining historical criticality, I treated all the information gathered objectively. I had to compare it with the information from other respondents and also from original sources and archival material.

Oral evidence has its problems, which should be acknowledged. People remember only significant things, i.e. information that fits and mould experiences into their personal frame of understanding.

In summing up, I did my best to win the favour and cooperation of my respondents, in particular that of black ministers. My respondents freely conversed with me about their experiences under the RMS. As a Namibian pastor doing research about an African church, I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to all interviewees and respondents.

1.7 Ecclesiastical Departing Point

The most important question concerning a study such as this is that of my own ecclesiastical

point of departure and the implications of my research.

I write this thesis as a black Lutheran Pastor. In this, I empathized with the experiences of my fellow black pastors. I also write as an indigenous Namibian Lutheran. This means, I approach the humiliating experiences of black clergy in Namibia from a Namibian perspective and not from a missionary perspective. It was the tradition of missionaries to write histories with a view that they were the first people to preach the gospel to the lost nations of Africa. As such they wrote about their own histories and experiences and in these missionaries were at the center of the stories and as main players. In this context Brigitte Lau said: "Vedder's studies have centered on the role and responsibility of the white race as the carrier of Christian Western civilization, in which the German settlers of Namibia had a special place".³¹

In order to strengthen my argument, I will employ the contribution of liberation theology. Liberation theology has developed as an important part of struggle for a means of greater self-awareness and self-esteem, and of liberation theology from a state of poverty, suffering, humiliation and family disintegration.³²

As a Lutheran, I find that the theme of the death and resurrection of Christ is really a liberating one. Through his death and resurrection, God is gracious to us by offering us liberation as a gift. this liberation is a challenge to any church organization and societal structure. The understanding of liberation as a gift helped Luther to free the church of his time from the oppression of the church organization and the theology of his time. The idea that liberation theology by God is for all, not for a few. but God has created us as Africans. He wants us to liberate us as Africans. I regarded the AMEC schism of 1946 as God's act. "Let my people go that they may serve me" (Ex 4:23).

Steve Biko expressed the approach of black theology succinctly:

³¹ Brigitte Lau in Namibia 1884-1984. Readings on Namibia's History and Society. Edited by Brian Wood, London. 1988. p. 93.

³² Peter Katjavivi. The Role of the Church in the Struggle for Independence, London: Pluto Press. 1989. p. 1-26.

What of the White man's religion – Christianity? It seems the people involved in imparting Christianity to the black people steadfastly refuse to get rid of the rotten foundation which many of the missionaries created when they came. To this date black people find no message for them in the bible simply because our ministers are still too busy with moral trivialities... They constantly urge the people to find fault in themselves and by so doing detract from the essence of the struggle in which the people are involved... Obviously the only path open for us now is to redefine the message in the bible and to make it relevant to the struggling masses. The bible must not be seen to preach that all authority is divinely instituted. It must rather preach that it is a sin to allow oneself to be oppressed. The bible must continually be shown to have something to say to the black man to keep him/her going in his/her long journey towards realization of the self. This is the message implicit in black theology. Black theology seeks to do away with spiritual poverty of the black people ... while basing itself on the Christian message. Black theology seeks to show that Christianity is an adaptable religion that fits in with the cultural situations of the people to whom it is imparted.

Black theology seeks to depict Jesus as a fighting God who saw the exchange of Roman money the oppressor's coinage in his Father's temple as sacrilegious that it merited a violent reaction from him –the son of man.³³

1.7.1 The Sources of Black Theology in Namibia

An important center for the development of a black theology has been the united Lutheran Theological Seminary at Otjimbingwe. The author of this thesis was also a student at the Seminary between 1982-1985. What follows, therefore is a brief attempt by the author of this work to determine what he thinks to be more or less the source of black theology in Namibia. In the dark days of apartheid and colonialism, the current Bishop Rev Dr Z Kameeta of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia said:

The struggle in our land has to do not only with the liberation of Namibia, but it goes further and deeper than that. The presence of the South African Government is not just a political question, but it is a threat to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, I see it as the task of every Christian to see to the knocking down of this government. The South African Government and its supporters proclaim ... especially by what they do ... a message diametrically opposed to the gospel. While God tells us that Jesus Christ has broken down the wall of separation between himself and us, and between us and fellow men, the South African Government proclaims and builds the wall of separation which brings about alienation, mistrust and prejudice, fear, hatred and

³³ Steve Biko, I Write what I Like. London: The Bowerdean Press. 1978. p. 31-32.

enmity.

Therefore, I see the struggle in Southern Africa and especially here in Namibia, not merely as a political struggle, in which all Christians are called to participate and if this should happen, an armed struggle can be avoided, because the word of the cross is enough for us to be able to tackle this task... or should God withdraw from the history of this world, hand it over to the Devils, and restrict himself to the temples and church buildings.³⁴

1.7.2 Scripture

The scriptures would be primary source of black theology in South Africa and Namibia. Its message is the record and proclamation of the liberation of God. The bible demonstrates God's will for justice, peace and freedom against injustice, exploitation and oppression among people. There is judgment upon the rich and upon those who oppress the poor and weak. There is a tendency in the bible against sin that is exercised in social, political, economic and religious oppression. Theology which takes the scriptures seriously in self-examination and in critical reflection on the present situation in society and on church life will have a sharp axe. It was scriptures that enabled the oppressed to affirm the idea of God that is radically different from that of the oppressor. For black theologian, God is the freedom made known in history, "the freedom that calls us out of our chains of oppression into a wholeness of life."³⁵

Through reading scriptures, the oppressed have come to realize that white oppression and white pretence at Christianity are incompatible with the message of the scriptures. The scriptures speak of Jesus Christ as the center of Christianity, as the liberator from all forms of oppression, the proclaimer of the Kingdom and rule of God and the savior of the world. In his becoming human in Jesus Christ, God has disclosed his will to humanity in concrete material realities. Through Jesus as Messiah, he chose to suffer with those who suffer and to set free those who are oppressed. Jesus was oppressed, but he was also a liberator of the oppressed. He identified with the oppressed of his day, was with the oppressed and belonged to the

³⁴ Gerhard Töttemeyer. South West Africa/ Namibia. Facts, Attitudes, Assessment and Prospects, Johannesburg: Fokus Suid Publishers. 1977. pp. 221-2

³⁵ Sabelo Ntwase and Basil Moore. "The Concept of God in Black Theology", in The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa. Atlanta: John Knox Press. 1974. p. 27.

oppressed. Through the scriptures and through his present presence, this man, oppressed and liberating, represent the gospel of good news and has also today a word of hope and a promise of freedom for the oppressed people. This gospel and hope is not a mere spiritual reality but have effects in the improvement of the oppressed's physical existence as they are liberated and work and hope for the improvement of their conditions. Salvation includes the whole person.

In similar context, but in different vein, Bishop Kameeta said:

It is the task of the church to tell the people that they are free to stand up and speak for themselves. The church should speak out in the desert of silence where people are quiet. It has the task of helping those who cannot speak out. This is what Jesus did. He opened the mouths and loosened the tongues of those who could not speak. This is the task of the Church and this relates to our structures. How do our church structures look? Do they encourage the people to write their own agenda? For 106 years, the people of Namibia were not allowed to write their own agenda. They were told what they needed. The church must liberate itself and the people to write their own agenda.³⁶

1.7.3 History of Missionary Work

Black theology will also take time to study the history of the missionary work through which the churches in Southern Africa have grown and through which the church tradition has come to Africa. Black Theology would ask: What was the motive that made missionaries to leave their countries and come over to Africa? Were their goals to preach western civilization or to proclaim the gospel of God in Jesus Christ? Was there anything in their teaching and preaching which has distorted the Gospel? Why have missionaries unconsciously and consciously contributed to the oppression of black Africans and undermined the will of the people to resist exploitation, oppression, colonialism?

1.7.4 Concluding Remark on Liberation Theology

Liberation Theologians maintain that God is present and active in history. In this history, people experience divine liberating activity. God is a liberating God who revealed himself in

³⁶ Z Kameeta. CCN Messenger. September 1991, Windhoek.

the concrete historical context of the liberation of the oppressed and exploited. It is in this history that people experience the divine liberating presence and activity. God's revelation in history is to save and to liberate people from that which enslaves and oppresses them. His liberating events include the Exodus of Israel from slavery in Egypt and Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. But throughout the history of humanity, men and women, poor and oppressed, have experienced and re-experiencing God's liberating power and presence.

The Christian Church is that community of people called into existence by the life, death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the only Lord. Nowhere is the church's identity found than in Jesus Christ. The church has its beginning in Jesus Christ and its end in Jesus Christ. In this context, the liberation theologian Walter Altmann of Latin America said:

Theology of liberation describes this process as a rebirth of the church from the bottom, for example; in Leonardo Boff's writing, like Luther, it does not mean to say that the church of Christ did not exist before. On the contrary, liberation theologians acknowledge again like Luther that they have received the gospel from and through the church of the past, but that church had a distorted worn-out face. The renewed church is the happy face of an infant and children are also, as we know, among the privilege objects of God's love.³⁷

This means that without Jesus Christ the Church has no identity. For this very reason Apostle Paul speak about the church as the body of Christ (Col 1:24.) The church proclaims Christ who is the word because flesh (John 1:14) and he is the embodiment himself of the mission of the church in this world. In its missionary call, the church receives the power and authority from Jesus. There is for every generation of Christians the important question of asking themselves what it is that constitutes their identity and for that matter empowers them to live that identity out in the world. Cone's answer would be to focus on the institutional and ethical activity that validates the ecclesiastical confession of Christians and whatever else the definition about "church" might be, the doctrine of the church should not be separated from its historical embodiment in our congregational life nor should we ignore the social and political significance of our credal formulation.³⁸

³⁷ Walter Altmann, Lutherans in Brazil: History, Theology, Perspective. Edited by G. Brakemeier. Sao Leopoldo. 1989. p. 75.

³⁸ James H. Cone. Speaking the Truth. Grand Rapids: WB. Eerdmans. 1986. p. 111.

The church cannot, in light of its very credal formulation, where it confesses God as the creator of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ as the Son of God and only Lord and the Holy Spirit and as the Sustainer, isolate itself from its mission to be present in the context that is in opposition to the divine life in order to reveal the nature of the power and authority of Jesus Christ.

Of the principalities and powers that are active in this world, Christ's Lordship over it not only frees persons from bondage to these powers but the church both corporately and through its individual members is set free by the Lordship of Christ to contribute toward the restructuring of these powers. The church witnesses in the midst of these principalities and powers. This witness brings both critical judgement upon the failure of the powers to serve human purposes and creative contribution to the structure of social and cultural life. The church by the power and authority commissioned to it, presents itself in the social and political environment in this world even if that environment in this world is in opposition to divine life. Such a presence of the church in such a context reveals the very nature of Jesus' power and authority. This means that in the name of the historical Jesus which we confess as Lord of the church and as Lord over the world, and on the basis of our credal confession, the church can and should represent a life where its faith is socially and politically relevant, and where it is prophetic and praxis-oriented instead of merely just words. This is the Prophetic faithfulness of the church. Kameeta refers to that:

The true prophetic of the Lord sees and judges the situation and the events in this world, but on the basis of God's word. That is the word of truth, justice and love.³⁹

In faithfulness to this the church should declare that as the one to whom divine power and authority have been committed to proclaim, not its own will but God's will, it has a responsibility for the social and political problems and how the society is governed. Power is an inevitable and necessary reality, but is also ambiguous. Jesus' life, death and resurrection allow for the use of power in theological terms, but it does not eliminate the ambiguity. To talk of power in relation to those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord who died on the cross and was resurrected from the dead and is seated at the right hand of God, means to reflect on the power that the church has in relation to the truth which has been committed to it to proclaim

³⁹ Z Kameeta, Why O' Lord? Geneva: The Risk Book Series. 1986. p. 51.

to the world. In proclaiming this message, the church would be brought into confrontation with the worldly rulers (state) and in such confrontation the church realizes that it is powerless in the sense that it does not possess physical means to protect itself. However the church possesses the power of the divine word and sacrament that have been entrusted to the church. Because of the power of the word committed to the church the church's task is to interpret and proclaim the truth set forth in the word of God, namely the law and gospel regarding the reality of the power of the world as well as its limits.

The Church's role is one of proclaiming and reminding that the work of God alone is the basis and foundation of all authority and alone from the divine word do we come to learn and understand secular power and know its purpose. It is also a Lutheran theological interpretation that the divine word of God establishes and preserves secular power and by that subjects it to the word of God. The divine word, therefore can instruct, judge and rebuke where abuse of authority prevails, where the will of God is contradicted and violated.

As Cone rightly states, black theology derives its inspiration from scripture, and Luke 4:18, may be said to be its liberator's creed. It also derives inspiration from the old Testament story of the Exodus, which is often cited as proof that God as the liberator of the oppressed who freed the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt, would surely hear the cry of the black people in America (South Africa) and deliver them from their anguish. The fact that Jesus' gospel was addressed to the poor in this world, the people he identified with in this world, was also a source of inspiration for black theology.⁴⁰

Moses was sent to liberate all the people of God enslaved in Egypt. From the beginning, liberation by God was concerned with the liberator of a community. And when community is talked about, the issue of selfhood comes to the fore.

Selfhood was the main issue for Israel when they were enslaved in Egypt. Pharaoh ruled over their life and disposed of it as he liked to do. We Africans do have a good grasp of the fate of

⁴⁰ Lebamanga Sebidi. In The Unquestionable Right to be Free. Edited by Itumeleng J. Mosala and Buti Thlhagale. New York: Maryknoll. 1986. p. 42.

Israel because we also have experienced this loss of identity. My Lutheran heritage informed me that we are dealing with a gracious God, who could liberate from the grips of the law. The point lies in God's graciousness that is there to liberate. Our kind of liberation bears other dimensions even though still connected to Luther. For us the graciousness of God is shown through our liberation from personal, political and social sins.⁴¹

1.8 Thesis Structure

This thesis contains eight chapters. It begins with a historical chapter giving the overview of the RMS, its early beginnings and influences, including the exposition of the research design. This chapter is significant in that it gives a context within which issues in Chapter 2 and 5 are done.

Chapter 2 is a reflection on the history of the RMS in the context of its influence on political and social development in Namibia. The major themes of this chapter are to show how the German colonization and conflict were closely linked to the subjugation of the indigenous people.

Chapter 3 discusses the central issue of the indigenous staff of RMS, the issue of ordination. The chapter also gives the historical background of the AMEC in the USA and Namibia.

Chapter 4 discusses the historical-chronological developments of the schism as far as it could be traced at present. (More information may become available if the archives of the Dutch Reformed Church in Namibia becomes operational again – especially as this concerns the meetings between the DRC and the RMS since the late 1920s.)

Chapter 5 discusses the aftermath of the schism. Several issues are discussed such as property, the wider impact on other congregations of the schism, political decisions, whether the AMEC was to be seen as a sect, issues from inside and outside the ranks of the Nama leaders, self determination and RMS ideological sentiments, the institutional effect of schism and the AMEC in Namibia and its external black leadership.

⁴¹ Martin Luther. Luther's Works. (American Edition). LW 26, 37.

Chapter 6 deals with the formation of AMEC in Namibia among the Nama people of Namibia in response to dissatisfaction with the RMS.

Chapter 7 is the impact of the schism on religious and political institutions in Namibia. This chapter also shows the role of the different churches in Namibia.

Chapter 8 is a concluding chapter. It is a reflection on AMEC's continued journey along the path for self-determination in the wake of the Namibian independence of 1990.

1.9 Conclusion

In this first chapter, I have attempted to provide a historical understanding of the RMS, the context in which it founded and developed its work in Namibia, and the research design I have developed for the thesis. The most significant is that I was able to briefly look at the split in the mission congregation in Windhoek, Windhoek as centre for the German congregation, the relationship between the missionaries and politics, the RMS and the NAMA leaders, and a few new perspectives on missions. This provided the basic information in terms of which I developed my research design. The design was developed in terms of a further seven chapters which deal with the Rhenish Mission Society (1842-1946) in context, the quest for the ordination and leadership among the indigenous staff of the RMS, the historical-chronological development of the schism, 1908 – 1946, the Aftermath of the schism, the African Methodist Episcopal church work among the Nama people Namibia, and the impact of the schism on the activities of the Rhenish Mission Society and the Government.

Finally, since I am not from the AMEC, I also provided a brief ecclesiastical departing point for my research. In this, I reflected on the sources of black theology, scripture, the history of missionary work, and a concluding remark on Liberation Theology. The next chapter will address the issue of a brief overview of the history of the RMS in the context of its influence on political and social developments in Namibia. It also looks at the major themes which can show how the German colonization and conflict were closely linked to the subjugation of the indigenous people.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RHENISH MISSION SOCIETY (1842-1946) IN CONTEXT

2.0 Introduction

In order to effectively analyse the activities of the Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia between 1842 and 1946, it is important to put this study in its proper social, historical and political context. This chapter examines the environment in which the Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia operated since its arrival in Namibia in 1842. Emphasis is on the examination of efforts by the Rhenish Missionaries to educate and evangelise the indigenous people of Namibia.

The following elements which form part of the context of this study are discussed in the subsequent sections: general considerations, German colonisation and conflict, the Mandate Era, the Bondelswarts rebellion, the period of Black Mobilisation in the 1940's and 1950's, the History of the RMS in Namibia, the London Missionary Society, Education under the RMS, separate development of the Congregations and critique of RMS policies.

2.1 General Considerations

Namibia is a vast country of 823 145 square kilometres on the Atlantic Seaboard of the Southwestern portion of Africa. It is bordered by Angola in the North, Zambia in the northeast, Botswana in the east, and South Africa in the south and southeast. A description of the geography of Namibia is not complete without mentioning the Caprivi Strip (the Caprivi Concession, the Caprivi Zipfel - "Zipfel" in German means "tip or point"), which measures some 482 kilometres in length and between 30 and 105 kilometres in breadth. The Caprivi strip is named after Georg Leo Graf von Caprivi di Caprara di Monteruccoli, a distinguished German soldier and Bismark's successor as Imperial Chancellor between 1890 and 1894. Great Britain ceded the strip to Germany in 1893. The aim of the German government was to get access to the Zambezi River, to link Namibia to Tanzania (former German East Africa),

and probably to prevent the Englishman Cecil Rhodes from penetrating northwards into the interior of Africa.¹

Most of the land consists of a high plateau with an average altitude of 1,080 metres above sea level. The climate of Namibia is hot and dry due to the fact that Namibia has in general, a low rainfall figure. The low rainfall has a serious impact on the productivity of the farming community. More than 60% of Namibia's population live in the northern part of the country. A further 10% live in Windhoek, the capital city of the country, leaving the remaining 30% of the population scattered across the vast arid and semi arid land.

The Rhenish Mission Society worked among the Nama people who occupied tribal areas of Namaland. Namaland comprises part of the Hardap and Karas regions close to the South African border in the South. The total population of the Nama people was estimated in 1842 at 20 000. The Nama, also known as Ikhobesin, are the famous "red people" (lawa-khoin) of Namibia. In the mid nineteenth century the Nama people could be found almost throughout Namibia, from Sesfontein in the Northwest to the Orange River banks in the South. No other group of people in Namibia at that time could claim a wider access to the country than the Nama and the San people. The San could be found in parts of Southern Angola, Namibia, Botswana and South Africa.²

During the nineteenth century, most Nama tribes developed permanent centres where the chiefs resided and the tribal government was established. An inclination towards centralisation, which already existed in pre-colonial times, was further encouraged by missionary interest. The Nama tribes had independent governments before the start of the colonial era. Despite the disastrous effects of the colonial wars, the traditional political system survived. The Nama people were very reluctant during the mandate period to recognise the so-called police zone. It is worth mentioning that the Herero and the Nama peoples were the first indigenous groups who challenged the German colonial authorities.

¹ Shekutaamba Nambala. History of the Church in Namibia. New Jersey: Collingswood Publishers. 1994. pp. 6-8.

² Shekutaamba Nambala. p. 22.

Chief Hendrik Witbooi 'The Great' (ca 1825-1905) was one of the impressive Namibian leaders of this group. Witbooi was everything from progressive statesman, advocator for national unity, first guerilla leader to church leader, evangelist and accomplished diarist. In many Namibian circles, he is regarded today as a national hero. According to J.S. Malan: "One of the most effective administrations is that of the Ikhobesin under Chief Hendrik Witbooi. A tribal government consists basically of a hereditary chief and an elected council".³

Traditionally the Nama people were nomadic cattle farmers, consisting of groups such as the Rooi Nasie, Veldskoendraers, Fransmanne, Groot Dode, Bondelswarts and Topnaars, functioning separately under chiefs and counsellors. Later they were joined by the Oorlams who moved back from the Witboois, Amraals, Berseba group, Bethanie group and Afrikaners. The Nama language contains traditional clicks. The language is characterised by click sounds produced with an ingressive air stream when the tongue is drawn sharply away from various points of articulation at the roof of the mouth. The four clicks used in Nama are as follows:

/ Dental click

≠ Alveolar click

! Alveopalatal click

// Lateral click⁴.

In the Nama grammar, the clicks precede the verb. The pioneer of the Nama language who conducted substantial research as early as 1851 was a Rhenish Mission Society's staff member based at Berseba. He was missionary J.A. Krönlein. The Nama people of Southern Namibia were the first who came into contact with the missionaries of the nineteenth century. They were exposed since that period to intensive Christianisation and missionaries' endeavours. From the outside, the German missionaries were mostly in conflict with the Nama people. I would argue that there was suspicion on both sides, and consequently, the

³ J.S. Malan. Peoples of Namibia. Pretoria: Rhino Publishers. 1980. p. 119.

⁴ H. Vedder. Die Voorgeschiedenis van Suidwes-Afrika. Windhoek: John Meinert. Drukkery. 1937. p. 64.

indigenous people's culture, religion and world view was not fully understood. The Nama people were mainly regarded as heathens and uncivilized.

As stated earlier, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, German missionaries entered the Nama territory, with the intention of bringing the Christian message and European colonialism to the area.

Like missionaries elsewhere, however, they brought in their wake first traders, then settlers, and finally soldiers, administrators and politicians, most of them Germans seeking a share of Africa. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 set the ground rules for colonial expansion in unclaimed or challenged territories. The German officials in South West Africa promptly induced or forced most of the tribes in the territory to sign protection treaties. On that basis the Imperial German Reich proclaimed a protectorate over the entire area except "the port and settlement of Walvisbaai (Whale Bay)". (That enclave of 434 square miles had been claimed by Britain some ten years before)⁵. Because of systematic alienation, the people - first the Hereros and later the Nama - rose in rebellion against the German government. Unfortunately, the Hereros and the Namas were not united in their fight against the colonial government. As a result they were defeated by the settlers' superior weapons and organisation and by Teutonic ruthlessness. They were no match for the ruthless exploitation that accompanied settler violence and the expropriation of land and the suppression of indigenous culture.

2.2 German Colonisation and Conflict

The colonial status of Namibia, like that of many African countries, was decided by the European powers at the Conference of Berlin in 1884-1885. With the exception of Walvisbaai, the territory was allocated to Germany. The boundaries of German South West Africa, as Namibia was then known, were formalised over the following few years, cutting across existing patterns of settlement. During the time of colonisation, the famous slogan

⁵ G.M. Carter and P.O'Meara (eds). Southern Africa: The Continuing Crisis. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1982. p. 142.

was, “where trade is, there the flag will soon follow”.⁶

Bismarck was merciless in his foreign policy. The process of German colonialisation was cruel, in the sense that the colonizers were guilty of the most terrible crimes. They had a desire for an unrestricted materialism, and would not hesitate for a moment to destroy the African people.

Heavily armed German colonists moved into the Southern and Central parts in 1890, depriving the indigenous people of land on which to graze their cattle and sheep. This led to a continued struggle between the residents among themselves and between them and the colonizers. Resistance was hindered by disunity, although, in 1858, African leaders came together at Hoachanas, and signed a peace treaty which set out procedures for resolving differences. It is very interesting to note that the peace treaty of Hoachanas was introduced in the name of the Triune God. I will only cite the introduction and the last paragraph of the treaty.

In the name of the Holy Trinity,
the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost,
we the undersigned have resolved to unite in the following treaty:

....

No chief may permit copper being mined in his territory without the knowledge and agreement of all other chiefs, or to sell a farm or site within his territory to a white person from the Cape Colony. Whoever, despite this makes such a deal shall be heavily fined, and the purchaser himself will have to bear the cost if he has been acquainted with this law beforehand.⁷

The above mentioned peace treaty of Hoachanas is dated 1858 and was signed by seventeen Namibian leaders from the South and Central parts of Namibia. A closer look at the peace treaty reveals that the signatories were believers, and above all, law abiding citizens. From this treaty it is clear that the aim of the leaders was to protect the interests of the people. In

⁶ J.L. de Vries. Mission and Colonialism in Namibia. Johannesburg: Ravan Press. 1978. p. 9.

⁷ H. Vedder. Archival material. Berigte oor Suidwes Afrika. Windhoek, Namibia: ELCRN Archives. 1938.

my opinion this treaty was mainly aimed at regulating material gain or profit from such transactions. Its main inspiration came from a desire to cultivate patriotism among the different groups.

The German government established control over the entire territory except the sector north of the "Red line", which marked the area believed fit for white settlement. With regard to the treaties, the Germans only made a partial exception for the Rehoboth Basters, a community of persons of part white ancestry who had migrated from the Cape in the mid-nineteenth century. The German representatives signed a treaty with their leaders which gave that community substantial autonomy in their own area under the laws they had brought with them. However, Africans in the territory were kept in economic and political subservience.⁸

Africans became sojourners in their own country, whereas migrants such as the Rehoboth Basters from the Cape Colony exercised autonomy in their own affairs. Africans could no longer tolerate the situation. Many Africans whose traditional livelihood had been undermined, were forced to take up wage labour for the colonists, usually on a temporary or migrant basis. The hostility on the part of many white colonists to Africans increased. The message was clear. Africans should not aspire to social equality. Their proper role was to be a labouring class on a meagre wage. Legislation was introduced, depriving Africans of the right to own land or cattle. Despite this situation, the seizure of land, most Africans were still able to survive through traditional farming and herding activities.

According to Tilman Dederling, the 1840's mark a crucial period in pre-colonial Namibia. For the first time in the history of missionary and Khoikhoi interaction, trade relations between Namibia and the colonial market began to take off⁹. Although it was a crucial period in the trade market, the colonists had a hidden agenda with the indigenous people. The Germans effected divisions by making and breaking military and economic agreements with the various communities. This meant that only temporary and limited unity was achieved against

⁸ G.M. Carter and P.O'Meara (eds). Southern Africa: The Continuing Crisis. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. p. 143.

⁹ Tilman Dederling, "Khoikhoi and Missionaries in Early Nineteenth Century Southern Namibia: Social Change in the Frontier Zone." In Kleio, Vol., XXII., UNISA.1990. p. 39.

German domination. The Germans never honoured the treaties signed with the indigenous people. The indigenous people were very desperate to trade with the Europeans, mainly to exchange their livestock for firearms and ammunition.

The build-up in cattle stocks and the availability of wage labour provided the settlers with the opportunities to control the entire region. By 1903, more than half of the herds previously owned by the Herero people for example, who lived in the central areas of Namibia, had passed into the hands of settlers.

In August 1884, a German protectorate was formally declared over the areas surrounding Lüderitzbucht. On 28 October 1884 a defence and friendship treaty was concluded between the German government and the headman of Bethanie, Joseph Fredericks, by the Consul General and Commissioner for South West Africa, Dr. Nachtigal.¹⁰ The said agreement was executed, and resulted in the building of roads and the establishment of mines. In the surrounding area the economy was booming, and the German flag had been hoisted in Lüderitzbucht. Soon afterwards the Germans entered several treaties with the indigenous people. In October 1884, Namaland was also declared a protectorate. In the following year, on the 2nd September 1885, German agreements followed with the Nama, and on the 15th September with the Basters of Rehoboth. On the 21st October of the same year the Herero accepted German protection.

These treaties were politically driven. After Europe recovered from the convulsions of the American war of independence (1775-1783), the French Revolution (1787-1799) and the Napoleonic wars (1796-1815), a period of romantic adventurism dawned. Treaties paved the way for travelers, adventurers, traders, soldiers, politicians and literary men who began for various reasons, to interest themselves in Africa and its people. This was for Europe the romantic age of exploration.

The European governments did not lag behind these explorers and adventurers. They

¹⁰ J.L. de Vries. Mission and Colonialism in Namibia. Johannesburg: Ravan Press. 1978. p. 16.

supported their nationals, consolidating the gains and establishments made by them. For example, the shores of the Atlantic coast were soon dotted by English, American, French, Spanish and Portuguese factories and firms. As a result, at the foundation of the International Association for the exploration of Africa (1876) in Brussels, and later at the Berlin Congress (1885-1886), Africa was divided into colonies allotted to different European governments. The missions were, however, not forgotten in this dispensation. The relevant governments undertook to protect and favour all religious, scientific and charitable institutions. In doing that, they gave special protection to Christian missionaries. For obvious reasons, missionaries, protected and encouraged by the governments of their home countries, did not delay in following explorers and colonizers.

S.C. Saxena observes the situation of Namibia as follows: "The period between 1893 and 1903 occupies an important place in Namibia's history because it was during this period that the people of the territory, especially the Herero and the Nama, lost their land and cattle at the hands of German settlers."¹¹ This situation of continuing seizure of their lands, provoked the Hereros and they rose against the Germans in 1904. Lacking firearms and unable to move quickly because of their large herds and cattle, they were defeated by the Germans and driven eastwards into the waterless Kalahari desert. In August of 1904, the Nama, who lived mainly in the South of the country, joined the war under the leadership of Hendrik Witbooi. Hendrik Witbooi was the most powerful African leader in Namibia at the time the Germans began to colonize Namibia. By adopting guerilla tactics, a Nama commando under Jacob Morenga was able to continue fighting until 1906.

The German colonial authorities, determined to wipe out resistance, resorted to genocide, poisoned water-holes and machine-gunning refugees. It was their intention, through such cruel methods, to reduce the population of central and southern Namibia, by more than half. Survivors were forced into prison labour camps on the coast, where thousands more died. It took the full resource of German colonialism in Namibia to subjugate the Herero and Nama.

¹¹ S.C. Saxena. Namibia and the World : The Story of the Birth of a Nation. Delhi: Kalinga Publications. 1991. p. 28.

The genocide of 1904-1907 left the countryside in ruins. The country was bleeding.¹² To sum up, the uprising of 1904 is a prime example of a suppressed people's overwhelming desire for freedom. The legendary leader of the Nama people at the time, Hendrik Witbooi, was inspired by the Old Testament and Luther's doctrine of God's twofold governance of the world.

According to Per Frostin, Witbooi used, *inter alia*, theological arguments when rejecting the claims of the German colonists. Writing to the German governor, he stated:

The Lord God has placed various kingdoms in the world, thus I know and believe that it is neither a sin nor a crime that I should wish to remain independent chief of my own country and people... but you talk of power and justice, and by your own admission you deal with me because you are powerful in weapons and the comforts of civilization, and I must agree that you are truly powerful, and that I am as nothing in comparison to you.¹³

It has often been pointed out that the majority of African nationalist leaders have a Christian background. Given the missionary emphasis on education, this is understandable. Contrary to this perception, a certain Dr. B. Schwartz, a visitor to Witbooi's residence in Hornkranz in 1888, complained about what he described in his report as a confusion of religion and politics.¹⁴ Dr. B. Schwartz, an intellectual of Germany was of the opinion that Hendrik Witbooi brought religion into disrepute. Hendrik Witbooi the great, was involved in war with the Germans most of the time. He was fatally wounded on 29th October 1905 during an attack on a German transport column near Vaalgras. The leadership of the Nama people was entrusted to the deputy chief Samuel Isaak on the 2nd December 1905, and after a period of unrest and conflict, the people could start rebuilding the Gibeon congregation.¹⁵

¹² L. Benjamin and C. Gregory (eds). Southern Africa at the Crossroads. Rivonia: Justified Press. 1992. p. 108.

¹³ Per Frostin. The Theological Debate on Liberation. Church and Liberation in Namibia. Edited by Peter Katjavivi, Per Frostin and Kaire Mbuende. London: Pluto Press. 1989. p. 71.

¹⁴ Per Frostin. The Theological Debate on Liberation. Church and Liberation in Namibia. Edited by Peter Katjavivi, Per Frostin and Kaire Mbuende. London: Pluto Press. 1989. p. 71.

¹⁵ Julius Baumann. Van Sending tot Kerk. Windhoek: John Meinert. 1967. p. 108.

2.2.1 *The Mandate Era*

The country now known as Namibia experienced turbulent times. It remained under German Rule until after the outbreak of the First World War. On the 9th July 1915, the German troops in the territory surrendered to the South African forces who had joined the allies in the war against Germany. From that date until the 31st December 1920, the territory was under South African military government.

Under the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 Germany relinquished her territories in Africa, including Germany South West Africa. In terms of that Treaty, South West Africa was declared a C Mandate and entrusted to the Union of South Africa. On behalf of the League of Nations South Africa received full power of administration and legislation over the territory. As an integral part of the Union of South Africa, it had the power to apply the laws of the Union of South Africa to the territory. South Africa misused the situation of the Mandate. There was clear evidence from the beginning that South Africa wanted to absorb the territory as a fifth province. There was no intention to treat the mandated territory as a sacred trust of civilization.¹⁶ It regarded the permission to treat Namibia as an integral part of its own territory as a licence to establish its system of race discrimination, 'segregation', 'apartheid', or 'separate development'. Those Africans despoiled by German rapacity did not regain their lost land or cattle. Instead, they were treated as vagrants and pressed into labour in the mines and on the farms of new South African settlers or of the many Germans who remained and did not leave.¹⁷

South African rule soon proved to be almost as oppressive as that of Germany. The League of Nations mandate (a 'sacred trust of civilisation') promised to promote to the utmost, the material and moral well-being, and the social progress of the inhabitants of the territory. Gradually, the Native Trust and Land Act was applied to the new territory. It ensured that the

¹⁶ P.J. Isaak. Religion and Society A Namibian Perspective. Windhoek: Out of Africa Publishers. 1997. p. 45.

¹⁷ G.M. Carter & P. O'Meara (eds). Southern Africa: The Continuing Crisis. 1982. pp. 142-143.

best land and stock went either to white South African settlers or in many cases to the original German occupiers. By contrast, land set aside for the indigenous people was generally of poor quality.

The Namibian labour force is divided along racial lines by the apartheid regime. Discrimination exists in the work situation, in wages, in the right to organize in trade unions and the types of jobs available to the different races. The vast majority of black Namibians have become dependent on wage labour for survival. The total black force is estimated at 481 000 of whom 240 000 are engaged in unproductive subsistence agriculture and, 241 000 are employed in the white-owned sectors of the economy. Nearly all black Namibians are dependent on the wages earned by this second group.¹⁸

2.2.2 The Bondelswarts Rebellion

Internally, borders were shifted continuously to the detriment of the indigenous people. Africans were moved to poor, inadequate reserves by land-hungry whites. The Bondelswarts, a Nama tribe residing in the Southern part of Namibia, revolted against this seizure of the land, and were among the first of South West Africa's indigenous people to suffer the consequences of settler expansionism. Having often fought against overwhelming odds, to defend their possessions against German and South African settlers, they had become a landless people, depending almost entirely on hunting for survival. The Bondelswarts learned that they had exchanged an overseas tyrant for one from next door.

The Bondelswarts rebellion was lead by two courageous leaders, Jacobus Christian and Abraham Morris in 1922. During the German colonial period they fled to South Africa to escape detention or killing, but were arrested when they returned to the territory. The primary source of their grievances was the dispossession of the land, and they were forced into wage labour. As stated earlier, there was an essential similarity between German and South African

¹⁸ A.W. Singham and S. Hune (ed). Namibian Independence: A Global Responsibility. Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill and Company. 1986. p. 56.

land policies. The Bondelswarts were furious, and more furious when their two leaders were captured. The South African government responded with a military expedition and bombing of the Bondelswarts community with the use of aircraft. In the attack, 100 people were fatally wounded, of whom the majority were women.¹⁹ The enemy forces pursued the Bondelswarts males who fled into the mountains, by the order of Gysbert Hofmeyr, the administrator of South West Africa. When the Bondelswarts resisted, the South African Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, sent an aircraft to machine gun and bomb them into submission. Abraham Morris and over a hundred other men, women and children died in the attack, which was one of the first recorded examples of the bombing of a civilian population by military aircraft.²⁰

According to James Brown, a historian and journalist of many years standing, Smuts later told a gratified Parliament in Cape town: A great bloodletting has been averted by prompt action.²¹ Although like other uprisings in the past, the Bondelswarts rebellion was quickly put down, the cost incurred by South Africa was considerable.

Finally, an important historical legacy that was to have an influence on the politics of Namibia well beyond the period of German colonial rule, was the pattern of black resistance that evolved as a direct consequence of foreign domination. German colonial rule gave rise to a heroic tradition of resistance. This resistance was not only limited to the Nama and Herero, but also extended in the latter part of German colonialism, to the North. It produced legendary leaders such as Jan Jonker Afrikaner, Hendrik Witbooi, Jacob Marengo and Samuel Maherero, to name but a few. These leaders provided the inspiration for resistance during the South African period of colonial control.

2.3 The Period of Black Mobilisation in the 1940's and 1950's

These uprisings were very useful because they kept the flames of traditional resistance to

¹⁹ André du Pisani. SWA/Namibia: The Politics of Continuity and Change. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball. 1986. pp. 93-95.

²⁰ Bryn O'Callaghan. Understanding History. The World and Africa. Windhoek: Longman. 1997. p. 337.

²¹ *Mail and Guardian*, Johannesburg. 30 April to 7 May 1998. p. 19.

foreign domination burning. Black mobilisation in the 1940's and 1950's coincided with the National Party's 1948 victory over the United Party in a South African election. After coming to power, the National Party Government in South Africa refused to place Namibia under the United Nations Trusteeship system (as happened in the case of all other B and C Mandates, such as French Togo Land, Nauru, and New Guinea) and in 1949 discontinued annual reports to the UN on its administration of the territory. This move was condemned both internationally and within the territory itself. Due to the refusal of South Africa to comply with the guidelines of trusteeship, Namibia has been an explosive international issue in the United Nations since 1946.

The National Party government who came to power in 1948 adopted a hardline stance from the outset by refusing any cooperation with the United Nations, and gradually introduced '*baasskap*' (lordship), also interpreted as 'guardianship'. It was typical of the colonial era.²² The newly elected National Party government under Daniel Malan extended to South West Africa also some of its recently introduced apartheid laws including the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act.²³ The aim of South Africa was to incorporate South West Africa as a fifth province. The introduction of administrative structures in the various ethnic homelands was a further manifestation of the transformation of Namibia into an apartheid society. One of the many legacies of South Africa's administration of Namibia institutionalised inequality in terms of education, social welfare and labour. The indigenous inhabitants' education was left almost entirely to the missionaries and the churches and was subsidised scantily by the local administration.

The migrant workers who spent years away from home, were more acutely aware of the oppressive effects of foreign domination than most other sections of the Namibian population.²⁴ Due to the interaction with other people, this group of Namibian workers became more politically conscious than the contract workers. The contract workers especially

²² L. Benjamin and C. Gregory (eds). 1992. p. 110.

²³ M. Hope and J. Young (eds). The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation. New York: Orbis Books. 1983. p. 32.

²⁴ S. C. Saxena. Namibia and the World: The Story of the Birth of a Nation. Delhi: Kalinga Publications. 1991. p. 60.

recruited from Northern Namibia were economically exploited with heavy taxes being imposed upon them. The recruitment and control of migrant labour was conducted by the SWA Native Labour Association (SWANLA), which allocated workers to employers regardless of their skills or preferences. Workers signed contracts of 6 to 24 months. In the event of breaking the contract it was a criminal offence. They were forced by the pass laws to return to the Bantustans after the expiry of their contracts. No African was allowed to spend more than 72 hours in a 'white' area without official approval.

The growing political consciousness among workers led some of them to found a workers organisation, the Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC) in Cape Town in 1957 under the leadership of Andimba H. Toivo ya Toivo. The aim of the OPC was to fight against the hated labour system. In 1959 the OPC moved to Namibia under the new name of the Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO). The OPO, under the leadership of Sam Nujoma (who is now President of the Republic of Namibia), developed into a powerful workers' organisation. It mobilised thousands of contract workers throughout the country to wage struggle against the contract labour system which was deeply resented by them. So the contract labour system proved to be the most important cause to rally Namibians against apartheid.²⁵

During the apartheid era, the workers of Namibia as a united force, could compel the employers to listen to their plea, although no industry-wide bargaining structures existed. The official policy of the South African installed administration in Windhoek was that wage determination should be a function of market forces.

On the one hand the spiritual upliftment conducted by the missions and churches among the contract workers in the country strengthened the workers in their inhumane working situations. The missionaries and church workers did not use the scripture and theology to challenge exploitation and oppression of contract workers in the country. It seems as if they thought that the work was more important than the people who suffered. The analysis of Dr Philip who was the Superintendent of the LMS (1829-) and an advocate of the freedom of

²⁵ S. C. Saxena. Namibia and the World: The Story of the Birth of a Nation. Delhi: Kalinga Publications. 1991. p. 61.

slaves is applicable here. According to Philip the missionaries and church workers emphasised the dignity of work and not the worthiness of workers.²⁶ They neither challenged the inhumane contract system nor proposed the transformation of the working place.

Except that the missionaries benefitted financially from the contract system, they considered the white employers as their equals with whom they shared and kept secrets. Issues were negotiated and agreed upon between themselves before being cautiously translated to indigenous people. Unlike the indigenous people the missionaries, the colonist and the employers understood each other. They maintained their unity in whatever situation in order to prevent any possible insubordination in this regard.²⁷ Missionaries acted in the spirit of betraying the indigenous people as it is evident in the words of Rev. P.A. Schmidt who refers to the relation between the German colonist and Rhenish missionaries that the church must rather - even in individual instances offer herself as the spokesman for the blacks, since she is by her very nature in a better position to gain their confidence.²⁸

The church neglected its prime responsibility to teach the victims their rights to participate fully in decision-making processes, to regain their social dignity to resist a system where the workers had no bargain privileges and no access to an industrial court, where the workers were foreigners in their own country who served the needs and interests of the privileged white communities in industrial and urban areas. As other employees in various governmental departments and private sectors, the workers have a right to participate in the equitable distribution of wealth in the country and to receive solidarity and support from the church in this regard. It is obvious that such negligence indirectly supported the contract system in the country, and thus in spite of the fact that the contract workers supported the church continuously and faithfully.

It was at this point, in 1946, that the British clergyman Michael Scott (the UN representative

²⁶ Seoka, J.T. "Towards a Theology of Work: Black Perspective". In Seoka, J.T. (ed). Industrial Mission. Turffontein; Theological Education by Extension. 1994. pp. 73-88.

²⁷ J.C. Scott. Domination and Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1990. p. 158.

²⁸ Interview with Emeritus Rev. P.A. Schmidt, Maltahöhe, Namibia, 4 February 1997.

of Herero Chief Hosea Kutako), Mburumba Kerina and Samuel Witbooi based themselves at UN headquarters in New York, where they worked tirelessly to expose the nature of South Africa's rule. The year 1946, is also significant in the history of Namibia because the African Methodist Episcopal Church schism occurred in the South of Namibia. During this schism approximately 3000 members organised a massive secession from the Rhenish Mission Society in South West Africa. They revolted against dependence on the RMS and contemplated forming their own independent church, with African leadership and clergy.²⁹

2.4 The History of the Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia

The Rhenish Mission Society originated on 3 July 1799 in a prayer group, from laymen in Elberfeld, Germany. Similar circles arose in neighbouring towns and these small mission societies effected a union in 1828, the United Rhenish Mission Society. Dr John Phillip of the London Mission Society was approached to take the first four missionaries Von Wurmb, Leipoldt, Zahn and Lückhoff with him to South Africa under his care. As their ideas of mission work differed from Dr. Phillip's in that they wanted to live on a subsistence from agriculture and handicrafts alone, they parted and established their own mission stations.³⁰

In the 1840's the Rhenish missionaries moved north to South West Africa. In 1840 they entered little Namaqualand, when Franz Kleinschmidt joined Schmelen, the veteran missionary of the London Missionary Society, at his station Komaggas. Kleinschmidt subsequently occupied Kookfontein, which was later renamed Steinkopf. During this time, Hugo Hahn and two companions attempted to establish a mission in Great Namaqualand. In Namibia Mission history, Hugo Hahn is known as the pioneer. Therefore, I will briefly give an account of his life and career.

Carl Hugo Hahn was born on 18 October 1818, on the farm Aahof, in the Eastern part of Germany. His parents gave him the best education they could afford. He was never exposed to religious instruction in his early youth, and he also mentioned that he had never listened to

²⁹ David B. Barrett. Schism and Renewal in Africa. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1968. p. 224.

³⁰ Elfriede Strassberger. The Rhenish Mission Society in South Africa 1830-1950. Cape Town: Rustica Press. 1969. p. xiii.

a minister.³¹

He qualified as an engineer in 1835.³² A very remarkable event happened in his life when he saw a little girl praying during a meal. It made a tremendous impact on him. In 1838, he joined theological training centre in Germany, and study under the guidance of the two renowned Richter brothers for two and half years.

On the 19th January 1841 Hahn experienced a call to missionary work: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded to you". The mission board officially assigned Hahn to work in South West Africa among the Herero people. He successfully completed his theological examinations on the 2nd April 1841, and was ordained on the 6th May 1841 at Barmen in Germany. In 1864 Carl Hugo Hahn settled in Otjimbingwe and started a new mission.

The purpose of the Rhenish missionaries in Namibia was the propagation of Christianity to the heathen. But besides spiritual activity, the missionaries also had to take part in many practical affairs, such as house construction, trade, aiding of the poor, health care, etc. Much time and energy was also consumed in travelling, especially in the time of ox-wagons. However, in most instances they interfered with the political situation of the country according to De Vries:

One of the mission's indirect means of conversion was to gain political power. The mission had in fact prepared the way for the coming of a European power to South West Africa. The political power of the mission was concentrated at the so-called mission colonies, of which Otjimbingwe was the best example. Here Hugo Hahn, the pioneer missionary of the Rhenish Mission Society, erected his own kingdom of which he was the undoubted ruler.³³

³¹ Hans - Hartmut Diehl. Carl Hugo Hahn in Suidwes Afrika 1842-1872. M.A. Verhandeling RAU. 1973. pp. 8-18.

³² G.L. Buys and J.J. Kritzinger. Salig die Vredemakers. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria. 1989. p. 82.

³³ J.L. de Vries. Mission and Colonialism in Namibia. Johannesburg: Ravan Press. 1978, pp. 127-128.

The Rhenish missionaries worked together with the London Mission Society and the Methodist Church in Namaqualand and successively encountered Namas, Damaras and Hereros as they penetrated into the empty stretches of Great Namaqualand. To the north, the station at Rehoboth was founded by Kleinschmidt after a futile attempt to start missionary work at Windhoek. The progress of the Gospel among the Hereros was hampered after 1850, when Jonker Afrikaner raided the territory towards the North. The war caused disease, drought and famine, and the very existence of the mission was threatened.³⁴

Schmelen was invited by the Nama people of Bethanie to come and establish a mission station. At that time Schmelen was working at Pella in the Cape together with other missionaries. In 1814 Schmelen decided to go to Namibia and established a mission station there the following year. Bethanie became an important mission station in the Southern part of Namibia. It became the connection centre for the Rhenish Mission Society.³⁵ Very early prior to the arrival of Schmelen, a number of Nama chiefs were already settled here, due to the fertility of the soil. The huge presence of the inhabitants of Bethanie was also an attraction for the missionaries. Chief David Christian was the leader of the Bethanie people.

In 1842 an artist and missionary of the Rhenish Mission, Hans Christian Knudson, a Norwegian by birth, came to Bethanie, Schmelen's former station. When he arrived, these people rejoiced at having their own missionary again since Schemlen had left eighteen years earlier. Severe droughts soon struck the area, with serious economical implications.

Most of the pioneer work was carried out from 1842 by members of the Rhenish Mission Society. Hugo Hahn and Heinrich Kleinschmidt settled in Windhoek with Jan Jonker, and two years later went further and founded the mission station of Barmen (Otjikango). Hahn endeavoured to impart the message of the Gospel to the Hereros who were at or near Windhoek. He also held services among the Afrikaners, but talked earnestly to Hereros who

³⁴ G. Gurirab. The Failure of the RMS to Ordain Indigenous Clergy in Namibia (1866-1949): A Historical Critical Analysis. B.Th. (Hons) dissertation, University of Natal: Pietermaritzburg. 2000. p. 18.

³⁵ Johan Jakob Kritzinger. Sending en Kerk in Suidwes –Afrika. D.D. Verhandeling Vol. 3. Pretoria. 1972. p. 122.

came and went away from the mission station, and at the very beginning he allowed Jonker to conduct services.

2.5 The London Missionary Society

It is worth mentioning the presence of the London Mission Society in Namibia at this point. They were not in Namibia for very long. This missionary society was established in London in September 1795. This was the same year Britain took control of the Cape Colony for the first time. It was known as 'The Mission Society' until 1818, when it became known as 'The London Missionary Society'. The organisation of the society was the immediate result of William Carey's Bengal Missions in India. Carey was a missionary of the Baptist Missionary Society who, through his correspondence with friends in Europe invited evangelicals other than Baptists to undertake their own missions overseas.

The LMS began as an interdenominational organisation including Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians and Independent Congregations. However, in due course, the Episcopalians, Methodists and Presbyterians formed their own missionary societies.

The main object of the LMS was the spreading of the knowledge of Christ among the heathen and other unenlightened nations. On 31 March 1799, four London Missionary Society missionaries arrived in South Africa. They were J.J. Kicherer, Dr. J.T. Van der Kemp, John Edmonds and William Edwards.³⁶ To a certain extent, these missionaries were ahead of their time, because they didn't cooperate with the colonial laws of the day. Prof. J.W. de Gruchy a South African theologian states:

Some LMS missionaries, including Van der Kemp, who married a Coloured woman, were accused of immorality, and others of treason. The trouble was that they were not serving the apparent needs of the white settlers and farmers, but striving to be relevant to the conditions and struggles of the Coloureds and Africans.³⁷

³⁶ M. Hope and J. Young (eds). The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation. New York: Orbis Books. 1983. p. 14.

³⁷ J.W. de Gruchy. The Church Struggle in South Africa: 2nd Edition. Claremont. David Phillip. p.12.

The LMS entered Namibia from South Africa into Southern Namibia. They worked mainly among the Bondelswarts in Warmbad. Due to instability among the indigenous people in the South of Namibia, and the destruction of the missionary station in Warmbad in 1811, the LMS handed over the mission work to the RMS. The Nama Chief, Jager Afrikaner was responsible for the destruction of this mission station at Warmbad. The mission work of the LMS was not effective. They therefore requested the Rhenish mission to take over Warmbad and the surrounding mission stations. The LMS suffered tragic losses of personnel because three of their staff, William Threlfall, Jacob Links and Johannes Jager were murdered. Eight years later at a mission conference in Simonstown, this tragic occurrence so impressed the chairman, James Nisbet, that he donated £300 to enable a missionary to be sent to the region. Edward Cook was sent out and worked most successfully for nine years among the Bondelswarts.

2.6 The Significance of the Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia

By the 1840's, the Rhenish Mission Society and others had more than one objective in Namibia. In addition to evangelization, the missions began to engage in trade with Africans.³⁸ The Rhenish missionaries became very powerful in these communities. They ruled the indigenous people with an iron fist. The Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia dominated the scene for 115 years (1842-1957). Having stayed for so long their history was surrounded by controversy and inter-relational conflicts, in particular with the indigenous people among whom they laboured. The cause of this conflict can be traced back to the power relations between the Rhenish missionaries and the indigenous people, who played the role of helpers, evangelists and interpreters. One of the immediate apparent advantages of the Rhenish Mission Society was that it cooperated with the colonial government, who could not personally become involved in mission work. In addition, the Rhenish Mission Society and German colonial government both hailed from the same country, although the relations between them soured at a later stage.

³⁸ Donald L. Sparks and December Green. Namibia: The Nation After Independence. San Francisco: Westview Press. 1992. p.7.

In similar context, De Vries said:

The German missionaries' initial enthusiasm for the arrival of the German colonial government turned to disappointment in later years. This was largely due to the colonial government's refusal to listen to the repeated warnings of the missionaries concerning the relationship between the colonial government and the original inhabitants.³⁹

The history of the Rhenish Mission work is so intricately involved with its colonial history, that it later turned out that some missionaries actively worked together with the colonial officials. Far from living up to their mission objectives however, the Rhenish Mission Society got heavily involved in the political situation of the country. The missionaries, in particular those of the German Rhenish Mission, believed in their own 'civilizing' mission which centred on the promotion of European culture as much as the Bible message itself.

The director of the Rhenish Missionary Society in the late nineteenth century, F. Fabri, saw mission work as useful for trade or colonial annexation and one particular missionary, C.G. Buttner, strove zealously to promote German colonial government in South West Africa. When German colonial rule was formally established, many missionaries therefore took cover under it, and on the whole, kept silent about German brutalities in Namibia and the harsh regime later imposed by South Africa.⁴⁰

2.7 Education in the Rhenish Mission Society

An important undertaking was the building of a road between Windhoek and Walvis Bay, as the transport of supplies from Cape Town by ox-wagon was too laborious. In 1849 Otjimbingwe, an intermediate station, was established on the Swakop River. It developed into a mission colony where German artisans and colonists trained the blacks in handicrafts. The Augustineum, a training school for teachers and evangelists, was opened in Otjimbingwe in 1866. Education took place under the leadership of the Missionary F.W. Viehe from

³⁹ J.W. de Vries. Mission and Colonialism in Namibia. Johannesburg: Ravan Press. 1978. p. 85.

⁴⁰ Peter H. Katjavivi. A History of Resistance in Namibia. Paris: UNESCO Press. 1988. p. 6.

Menninghüfen, Westfale province in Germany.⁴¹ The teaching was in German and was very elementary, focusing more on German language and culture and on Bible study, than anything else.⁴² It was a deliberate attempt by the missionaries to give elementary education to the blacks, in order to exclude them from any leadership position and decision making. Early missionary records claim that missionary education constituted the foundation of a higher civilisation. On the contrary, it was tailor-made to produce subservient leaders. The main objective of their training was to indoctrinate the blacks, claiming that the German culture was superior to theirs, and also to make them good helpers and obedient interpreters. The German missionaries were very suspicious of everything that was happening around them. The German missionaries wanted to block the black surge for independence. Anxiety increased in the Rhenish Mission Society. It caused havoc, because the white missionaries did not fully understand the black people.

The most disturbing factor at that time, was the point that the blacks did not have any platform in terms of which they could assert their aspirations. I am of the opinion that the Rhenish missionaries knew the strengths and weaknesses of the black people. It was vital for them to win the trust and faith of the people. In most instances the local chiefs of Namibia fell into the trap of missionaries requesting the allocation of land for mission stations. The most significant aspect is that the Africans were God fearing people, who would heartily welcome everybody who came with the good news.

The missionary doctrines of heavenly rewards, whatever suffering on earth might be, were misleading. This was a matter of deliberate policy. Very late the indigenous people realised the danger and consequences they faced - they became poor and landless.

Herero Chief Frederick Maharero described the German attitudes towards African education as follows :

⁴¹ H. Vedder. Die Voorgeschiedenis van Suidwes-Afrika. Windhoek: John Meinert Drukkery. 1937. p. 538.

⁴² Peter H. Katjavivi. A History of Resistance in Namibia. Paris: UNESCO Press. 1988. p. 27.

The Germans fought us and took away our land, that is why they do not want to see any good in us. They converted us to Christianity but did not want to give us any education or to help us to advance. They only preached to us. The Hereros did not learn anything from them except the word 'God'. The Germans were afraid of the Herero people. They did not want them to learn and to become civilized as we want today. I was taken to Germany with the others to be shown to the Kaizer because he did not know his black subjects, and also to be taught.... we were there one year (about 1894). We were not taught anything. Only we rode on horses and dressed and drilled as soldiers.⁴³

The entire method used in missionary work based on the spoken words, particularly the sermons held in the services and devotional gatherings were a failure. The handicraft mission, which should teach handicraft skills to the Africans and so prepare them for a Christian community, proved to be unrealistic and was soon abandoned. In education the emphasis was on its practical usefulness. In the Herero schools German was introduced as a school subject after 1905.

The reason behind this policy was to produce many interpreters for the German missionaries. The German missionaries experienced difficulties with the black languages, and in particular with the click languages. When talking to the less acculturated, they heavily relied on interpreters. Even when a missionary was present, far more of the actual work of evangelization would have been carried out by the indigenous helpers in the earliest days than was the case later on.

The Rhenish schools were the first schools for the indigenous people in the central and the southern parts of Namibia. Elfriede Strassberger, a well-known authority on the Rhenish Mission Society in South Africa claims that the Rhenish missionaries attached great value to their educational work.⁴⁴ I strongly disagree, with Strassberger. For the few Africans in schools the standard of education was very low, up to standard III (it is equivalent of five years of basic schooling). The missionaries maintained this education level deliberately. Their strategy was to exclude the indigenous people from leadership roles. Leadership

⁴³ Peter H. Katjavivi. A History of Resistance in Namibia. Paris: UNESCO Press. 1988. p. 11.

⁴⁴ Elfriede Strassberger. The Rhenish Mission Society in South Africa 1830-1950. Cape Town: Rustica Press. 1969. p. 96.

responsibility was only for the missionaries. By contrast, in the neighbouring country South Africa, Tiyo Soga was the first ordained African minister in South Africa in 1856, after his return from studies in Scotland.⁴⁵ Tiyo Soga was from the Presbyterian Church and served in the Eastern Cape till his untimely death in 1871. During this period in Namibia, there was no training for indigenous pastors - to take leadership roles in the church.

Hugo Hahn, the father of missionary work in Namibia, realised that the Northern part of Namibia was too large for him. The northern part was largely inhabited by the Ovambo people. Hahn invited the Finnish Missionary Society to join him there, which it did in 1870. The early Finnish missionaries were undoubtedly severely puritanical, but they had no colonial interest in Namibia. From Cape Town the Finns travelled by ship to Walvis Bay, where they landed on 14th February 1869. From there they continued to Hahn's mission station in Otjimbingwe. At this station, the group stayed for a year to study languages: Herero, Dutch and English and practical missionary work. Herero, which is a Bantu language like Ovambo, was hoped to be a bridge to familiarization with the Ovambo dialects.

Early, the activities of the Finnish Missionary Society were very closely linked to the Rhenish Missionary Society and particularly with the person of missionary Hugo Hahn. On 17th October 1867 the Board of the Finnish Mission Society had accepted an agreement to cooperate with the Rhenish Mission Society. In it they had also agreed to the division of labour in such a way that they will work among different peoples.

By 1870 the Finnish Mission Society was established in Ovamboland.⁴⁶ The Finnish made a great effort to translate the New Testament into the Ovambo language in 1903, and by 1954 the Bible was completed. The church was independent by 1954, when it was recognised by the government. The Finnish started with training for pastors and evangelists in 1922 at Oniipa, northern Namibia. The first ordination of the local pastors, who constituted the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church took place in 1925. In the real sense of the

⁴⁵ Phillipe Denis. The Making of an Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 1994. p. 42.

⁴⁶ G.L. Buys and J.J. Kritzinger (eds). Salig die Vredemakers. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria. 1989. p. 117.

word, the Finnish empowered the indigenous people of Northern Namibia. In 1911, the first hospital was built in Onandjokwe, and since 1913 the church has had its own printing press at Oniipa.⁴⁷ Since 1963 the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church was under the leadership of the late Bishop Leonard Auala, with their headquarters at Oniipa.

During that time, more than half of the population of Namibia, some 200 000 were Ovambos. Special mention is made of Martti Rautanen who in his life-long work of 57 years also translated the Oshindonga Bible. In 1928 work started in the Okavango areas and in the late thirties a futile attempt was made to enter Angola. At first, progress was slow, but during the first half of the 20th Century rapid progress was recorded. In 1913 the first training school was opened at Oniipa and until 1945 the Finnish Mission piloted the whole educational programme. At Oniipa the Finnish Mission erected its printing press where school books and the church paper, Omukuetu (One of us) was published. After World War I the work of the Rhenish Mission Society among the Oukuanjama was taken over and in 1925 the first seven black pastors were ordained. Pastors were trained at Elim and evangelists, Sunday School teachers and others at Engela. After the independence of Evangelical Lutheran churches in South West Africa the training of pastors was coordinated and merged at the Paulinum. The Ovambokavango Lutheran church was one of the first Lutheran Churches to become autonomous and to have an African bishop.⁴⁸

In my assessment, there was such a great difference between the Finnish Missionary approach and the Rhenish Missionary approach. The Rhenish Mission Society's policy was to enslave the indigenous people among whom they laboured. The Rhenish Missionaries did not think of recruiting local people for ordained ministry. Their unwillingness to recruit indigenous clergy to ordained ministry was also based on the prejudices typical of those days - that blacks were not ready for responsible positions. In fact, the Rhenish missionaries purposely delayed the ordination of the indigenous people. It was generally believed by missionaries that the indigenous people were to be civilised and evangelized. This is because the culture of the

⁴⁷ Shekutaamba Nambala. History of the Church in Namibia. New Jersey: Collingswood Publishers. 1994. p. 87.

⁴⁸ G.L. Buys and J.J. Kritzinger. Salig die Vredemakers. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria. 1989. p. 161.

people in missionary territory was considered to be inferior. The Rhenish missionaries failed dismally in improving the quality of life of the people. They made the indigenous people dependent on the Mission Society. The people have been indoctrinated that only the missionaries from Europe have the right to preach and administer sacraments.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa, arising from the work of the Rhenish Mission Society was founded in 1957. It was under the missionary leadership of Rev. K.H. Diehl. The theological Seminary Paulinum at Otjimbingwe was established in 1963 to train pastors and evangelists. After Namibia's independence on 21 March 1990, the Synod changed the name to the present name, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia. This is the second largest church in Namibia, with an estimated membership of 250 000. As counter reaction to the African Methodist Episcopal Church Schism of 1946, the Rhenish Mission Society ordained its first indigenous pastors in 1949. This was not a voluntary act on the side of the missionaries, but ascribed to the pressure and breakaway of the Nama people in the south of Namibia, from the Rhenish Mission Society. The Rhenish Mission Society only handed over leadership to indigenous people in 1967. Dr. Johannes Lukas de Vries, a graduate of the Brussels University became the first black leader of the church graced with the title Präses.⁴⁹ Dr. de Vries was the second indigenous clergy with a doctorate. In many circles his research topic was regarded as an outstanding academic work.

As a result of the schism and the consequences of the exodus of members of the Rhenish Mission Church into the African Methodist Episcopal Church, very few black pastors have been ordained by the Rhenish Mission Society. The Rhenish Mission Society was very reluctant to ordain the indigenous people. They thought that something needed to be done, to restore the trust in them, of the local people. The Rhenish missionaries, although witnessing the consequences of their education, still persisted in treating Africans as minors, not capable of receiving a fully fledged education conducive to the full development of the self and leading to self government and political independence.

⁴⁹ Hendrik R. Tjibeba. The Episcopacy and its Implications for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia 1985-1993. Unpublished B.Th dissertation. Pietermaritzburg: UNP. 1995. p.7. Präses is a title equivalent to Bishop which is used by the Rhenish Mission in the Rhineland, Germany.

In 1963 there were 68 schools with 4 439 boys, 4 659 girls and 238 teachers. These schools were under the Rhenish Mission Society, although it was partially subsidised by the government. The colonial authorities allied with the missionaries by giving grants in aid for the improvement of education. The so-called education of missionaries and the government was below the average curriculum standard of any educational system in the world. There is no traceable record during this period for an African in Namibia, who matriculated. Even today, Namibia remains one of the most educationally disadvantaged countries in Africa. The Rhenish Mission Society and the colonial government did not know that their oppressive school system contributed to the emergence of African nationalism.

2.8 Separate Development of the Congregations

As I stated earlier, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) originated from the Finnish Mission Society. The present headquarters of ELCIN is at Oniipa in Northern Namibia. Rev. Dr. Kleopas Dumeni is the current Bishop of ELCIN. The official language of the church is Oshivambo.

The German community did not feel equal to the black community. Therefore, they preferred to stay as a white church, whatever name they were going to adopt in the future. In 1926 the German community established a synod and formally constituted themselves the "German Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa". In 1960 the various congregations of the white German community joined forces and formally constituted an exclusively identifiable church, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church (Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Kirche, DELK), whereas the black converts of the early missionaries and their descendants got their 'own' church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa (the Rhenish Mission Church, abbreviated from the German name as the ELK), the latter becoming constitutionally independent in 1957. Thus, although along different paths, the South African Dutch Reformed Church and the South West African Lutheran Church seem to have attained the same result: a church clearly divided along racial lines.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Paul John Isaak. Religion and Society. A Namibian Perspective. Windhoek: Out of Africa Publishers. 1997. p. 43.

After the Namibian independence in 1990 the German church became known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (DELK). The present headquarters of DELK are at Windhoek, and the official language of the church is German. Their current leader is Bishop Reinhard Keding. The statistics of the Lutheran World Federation of 1986 shown the DELK membership as being 12 000. The church has a contractual relationship with the foreign office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), which is comprised of the Lutherans and the Reformed Churches. In most instances, their pastors are from Germany. I am of the opinion that they are also receiving their salaries from Germany. In the case of the two black Lutheran Churches, their pastors are receiving their salaries from the congregations. There is a big difference between a white pastor's salary and that of their black colleagues.⁵¹

To sum up this section, it is clear that the Lutheran churches in Namibia had developed along racial lines. In a small country such as Namibia with an estimated population of 1,7 million people there are 3 Lutheran Churches, even today in an independent Namibia. There is no significant doctrinal difference between the mentioned churches. Efforts to produce a more organic union between white and black Lutherans have so far failed.

2.9 Critique of the Rhenish Mission Society's Policies

The missionaries thought that they had made progress in teaching Africans to read the Bible. Unknowingly, they also sowed the seeds of Ethiopianism, for some converts found much in the Old Testament that negated the gospels.⁵²

In similar vein, De Vries noted:

The missionaries reported the use of texts from the Old Testament by the Witbooi soldiers in their struggle against white domination. This stirred up bitter opposition and condemnation among the missionaries. They accused Witbooi of twisting the

⁵¹ Interview with Bishop P. Diergaardt, head of ELCRN Windhoek, Namibia, 7 July 2000.

⁵² M.J. Chirenje. Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa 1883-1916. Louisiana State University.

Gospel and his followers of a lust for plunder.⁵³

In his personal reflections Witbooi thought that he launched a justified war against the German colonial government.

The missionaries thought that the indigenous people was primitive and inferior and would not cope with the study of languages and mathematics. Thus, schools were to basically prepare people to be trained as labourers. Unfortunately, the Rhenish Mission Society's schools did not emphasise secondary and higher education. They allied deliberately with the colonial government in order to train people who supported the colonial administration such as clerks, policemen, soldiers and teachers. They emphasised Christian values, and also included practical work and technical training in their curricula. To a certain extent this education also alienated Africans from their traditional roots. In my opinion, schooling was not unknown to Africans. From a traditional point of view each tribe had a method of introducing the youth to the various systems of initiating, that includes productive positions and responsibilities. The difference however, was that the European teaching model was based on reading and writing and most importantly, to master a language.

The encounter between the missionaries and the indigenous people were not always smooth, but the indigenous people were receptive of the Gospel. To a certain extent the Africans tolerated social subordination, because the emerging society was still unfamiliar, and because it was believed that it would have a short life-span, until Africans became more politically aware and educated. By the end of the nineteenth century, those Africans who attempted to be exposed socially begun to resent the social and political constraints on their full and free participation in the new society.

The Africans started to challenge the Rhenish Mission Society, which had been led by Germans, on the crucial issue of ordination and entrusting black leaders with responsibilities in the church. Through this awakening and challenge the most significant schism in the

⁵³ J.L. de Vries. Mission and Colonialism in Namibia. Johannesburg: Ravan Press. 1978. p. 157.

history of Namibia took place. The Rhenish Missionaries did not even allow the black staff to administer the sacraments. They could only preach among their own people and perform certain minor duties under the watchful eye of the white missionaries.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter comprises of a general study of the Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia. It is against this background that the Nama people took an active part in the African Methodist Episcopal Church Schism of 1946 in Namibia. Undoubtedly, it challenged the intellectual core of white supremacy in a non-violent manner on ecclesiastical level.

In July 1946 a huge movement of Nama people turned away from the Rhenish Mission Society. Two thirds of the staff of the mission and a quarter to a third of the congregations left the RMS. They became part of the AMEC.

This move was initiated by Zacheus Thomas and Petrus Jod, both of them being considered as highly reliable people. They had many experiences under the missionaries prepared them for this demanding task. With this step they have taken a very important task.

Why were the leaders of the movement so keen to be considered for ordination? According to missionary reports, they believed that they have proved themselves successful in their responsibilities. They therefore felt that they should have already been ordained. The German missionaries were themselves divided on the issue of the ordination of the indigenous leaders.

In 1946 one of the leaders of the schism from the RMS expressed the following words: "A human being cannot just crawl in between the cliffs for ever and ever. A human being will one day have to get up and walk upright". This means those who joined AMEC want to be autonomous.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Katea Schlosser. Eingeborenen Kirchen in Südwest Afrika. Kiel. 1953. p. 86.

CHAPTER THREE

THE QUEST FOR ORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP AMONG THE INDIGENOUS STAFF OF THE RMS

3.0 Introduction

In view of the socio-political factors and the German colonial society in Namibia, it is useful to explore the quest for ordination and leadership among the indigenous people. This chapter therefore discusses the ordination and leadership among these people. In doing so, it focuses on the historical background of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. It also explains the factors that led to the 1946 AMEC schism. Furthermore, leading figures within the AMEC in 1946 and the issues of ordination pertaining to the African clergy in Namibia are explored. The conclusion contains my evaluation.

3.1 The Historical Background of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

3.1.1 The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the USA

The African Methodist Episcopal Church has its origin in Philadelphia in the United States of America. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the small seed of religious independence sown by Richard Allen and his comrades in Philadelphia blossomed into a great institution. By the beginning of the civil war, membership exceeded fifty thousand.

The history of AME Church is closely bound up with the history of American slavery. The AME Church is the oldest and the largest church in black America. From its establishment, the AME Church was consumed by African issues, by debates on emigration, mission and the meaning of enslavement itself. The African American slaves were bitter about the agony and humiliation of captivity. In the midst of such circumstances, through the AME Church, they drew strength from the Old Testament in which, they encountered a God who was immanent in the world, who loved justice and cherished the lowly.

Richard Allen was born in 1760 in Philadelphia, the slave of a prominent lawyer and planter.¹ His parents were slaves and at the age of eight, he was sold, along with his mother and siblings, to Stokely Sturkis, a Delaware planter. Richard was converted at the age of 17. After his conversion he experienced moments of confrontation with the Word of God. In the wake of such restlessness, he describes his experiences in the following way:

One night I thought hell would be my portion.

I cried unto Him who delighteth to hear the prayers of a poor sinner, and all of a sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and, glory to God, I cried. My soul was filled.²

Richard Allen's reference to dungeons and chains came directly from a popular Charles Wesley hymn. It also teaches, simultaneously the significance of salvation and freedom for a slave. The immediate tasks that lay ahead for Richard were to get freed from the bondage of slavery and serve his God in his own sight and own time as circumstances permitted. Most religious groups had their origin in some theological, doctrinal or ideological dispute or concern. But the AME Church in the USA originated as a protest against the inhumane treatment which the helpless people of African descent were forced to accept from the white people belonging to the St George Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This fact says to us that the organisation of the AME Church was the result of racial discrimination rather than of any theological or doctrinal concern.

The movement to organise a church separated from the white people's church was started in response to the Africans' need for opportunities for self-expression and fuller involvement in the service of worship of God, and in society as a whole. It was the answer to a cry for social recognition as human beings, and the means through which a group of people started on a programme which gave them a growing sense of dignity and self-respect.³

To foster this programme, Richard Allen considered it important to conduct night school

¹ N.C. Christiaans. Afrikaanse Metodisme. Keetmanshoop: Trinity A.M.E. Kerk. 1957. p. 2.

² James T. Campbell. Song of Zion. The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1995. p. 6.

³ G.S. Wilmore. Black Religion and Black Radicalism. Second edition. New York: Orbis Books. 1983. p. 128.

classes in which his people could learn how to help themselves. Out of these night school classes came the church's philosophy of education with its strong emphasis upon self-help. The general emphasis continues to this day. In addition to the educational programme of the local church, the AME Church operates eleven institutions of higher education. Allegedly, Richard Allen appointed himself as a bishop in 1816. He died in 1831. Today the AME Church has 18 active bishops and more than a million members scattered throughout the 50 states in the USA, Canada, South America, West Africa, South Africa and the West Indies.

Already by 1820, the African Methodist Episcopal Church started mission work in Liberia.⁴ By 1866, when emigration had virtually ended, just less than 12 thousand freed slaves had gone to Liberia. Half of the slaves had been freed on condition that they return to Liberia. Many died within a year of arrival in Liberia. They were joined by 5700 slaves who were freed on the high seas. The American Colonisation Society was supported largely by white slave owners, who feared the existence of a free black population, while most blacks preferred to struggle for a place in the sun in America. They expressed their feelings in the following way:

America is more our country than it is the whites'. We have enriched it with our blood and tears... and will they drive us from our property and homes, which we have earned with our blood.⁵

After the abolition of slavery the Afro-Americans felt a messianic calling to assist the peoples of Africa in their struggle against white rule.⁶ Correspondence eventually took place between the Africans in South Africa and Bishop H.M. Turner in the United States of America.

3.1.2 The African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa

In 1898 Bishop H.M. Turner visited South Africa. The AME Church first took root in cities - in Marabastad, outside Pretoria, and on the Witwatersrand. Bishop Turner brought literature

⁴ Shekutaamba Nambala. History of the Church in Namibia. New Jersey: Collingswood Publishers. 1994. p. 104.

⁵ Elizabeth Isichei. A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present. London: SPCK. 1995. p. 165.

⁶ G.C. Oosthuizen. Post Christianity in Africa. London: C. Hurst & Co. 1968. pp. 32-33.

on the African Methodist Episcopal Church to South Africa. During his visit Turner ordained sixty-five African ministers.⁷ The leader of this black congregation, Rev. Mangena Maaka Mokone, declared in his inaugural sermon that the establishment of an African Church is to be understood as the fulfilment of biblical prophecy concerning the final liberation of the African people. Referring to the words of Ps. 68:31 (Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God), he pointed out that Ethiopia has not only a Panafrican connotation, it has also a theological meaning, expressing the hope for liberation of the African people who had been for too long the victims of slavery and white domination.⁸ Ethiopianism was a direct expression of resistance to the missionaries, white settlers and the colonial government. Obviously, the missionaries, white settlers and the colonial government forces became hostile to the Ethiopian movement. They accused Ethiopianism of a highly organised political agenda, but this could not be proven. Religion and politics are inextricably mixed in all history and Africans are no exception to this rule. Black consciousness among these groups of indigenous people derives from the burning desire that the community might control its own affairs. They were in favour of a black church free from white domination. I believe the white missionaries feared Ethiopianism because it was capable of simultaneously handling the ecclesiastical problem and the power relations between them and the missionary societies.

Missionaries were well aware of the strengths of Ethiopianism, because its aim was to plant a self-supporting, self-governing African Church. Ethiopianism was at this stage mainly a movement of ministers, who were the closest in contact with the needs of their own people. The missionaries counteracted in the following words: "Africans lacked the capacity to maintain institutional order and standards."⁹

Dwane, a leader of the Ethiopian Church which had left the Wesleyan Church, went as a representative to America to have his Ethiopian Church officially accepted into the Federation of the AMEC. The need for educational opportunities was considered the greatest and most urgent need for Africans. Practical plans were formulated and partially implemented to meet

⁷ G.C. Oosthuizen. 1968. p. 33.

⁸ Erhard Kamphausen, "Unknown Heroes ...", in P. Denis (ed). The Making of an Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 1995. p. 88.

⁹ James T. Campbell. 1995, p. 141.

this need. While he stayed in the United States of America, Dwane also emphasised the uniqueness of the South African work and its need for African leadership. After his return Dwane succeeded in causing the other Ethiopian Churches to also join the AMEC. The basis of the solid organisation of the AMEC in South Africa was laid by the Black American, Bishop Turner when he visited South Africa in 1898. Because of the inclusion of quite a number of dissatisfied groups from missionary churches, the number of South African members grew to more than 10 000 at the end of his five week visit. Dwane himself was the first to leave the AMEC again in 1900 because they did not appoint him as a bishop, but only as an assistant bishop. He considered this as a humiliation of Africans. In addition, he had suddenly discovered that a connection with the American Negroes would contradict the slogan of the Ethiopians "Africa to the Africans". But his, and many others, leaving the church could not stop the permanent growth of the AMEC in South Africa.¹⁰

In 1900, the AMEC in America sent Bishop Levi Jenkins Coppin as their first bishop to reside in South Africa. In the same year the Wilbeorce Institute was founded in the Transvaal for the training of teachers and pastors. The Cape government acknowledged the AMEC in 1901, and agreements were entered into between the American Bishop Coppin and the Colonial Secretary of the Cape government, that at a given time the number of pastors acknowledged as marriage officers of the AMEC should not exceed 12. In 1909 the number was increased to 16. Being acknowledged by the government was a specific honour as up to 1909 only 3 independent African churches had been acknowledged by government. In 1938, the AMEC had 75 000 members in South Africa, 35 000 of them entitled to receive the Eucharist, and 215 pastors. They owned 279 church buildings. The first annual conference of the AMEC took place in 1897 in Queenstown, in the Eastern Cape.¹¹

The AMEC in South Africa constitutes two districts of the American African Methodist Episcopal Church. One district comprised the Cape, Orange Free State and Namibia. The Vaal river constitutes its northern border. The other district ranges from the Vaal up to the Congo. Yet, there were hardly any members of the AMEC in Congo. Once every four years the World

¹⁰ Katea Schlosser. Eingenborenen Kirchen in Süd und Südwest Afrika. Kiel. Germany, 1953. p. 111.

¹¹ N.C. Christiaans. 1957. p. 9.

Conference of the AMEC is held. At these conferences the bishops for the next four years are elected for the respective districts. Between 1950 and 1953 none of the bishops had visited South Africa. Nevertheless, the congregations were growing in numbers.

3.1.3 The African Methodist Episcopal Church in Namibia

South West Africa was ruled as an integral part of South Africa during the colonial period. The Rhenish Mission Society's work continued to be stable for a long time. But stability does not mean the absence of injustice and discrimination. The RMS leadership remained solely reserved for the missionaries, whereas Africans served at best as evangelists and workers of the mission.¹²

In 1946 the African leaders in Namibia, under the chairmanship of Evangelist Zacheus Thomas invited Dr Francis Gow, who served as General Superintendent of the AMEC to Namibia. Zacheus Thomas got all the information on church related issues from a Mr Jonas Katjirungu, a talented policeman in Keetmanshoop, who later trained as a translator in South Africa and was employed at the magistrate's office at Keetmanshoop. The contact in South Africa was made through Jonas Katjirungu. Zacheus Thomas was concerned about the ordination and education of his fellow people. As a chief evangelist he travelled in the South in order to perform his ministerial duties on farms and surrounding areas. Zacheus Thomas and his colleagues were well aware of other African pastors in South Africa and elsewhere who were ordained. He did an enormous amount of work in the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Namibia. He was highly respected as a leader of the Nama people especially at Keetmanshoop. Therefore, the AMEC Church in Keetmanshoop which is known as the Zacheus Thomas AME Trinity Church, is named after him.

On numerous occasions, Zacheus Thomas challenged the Superintendent of the RMS Dr H. Vedder by asking him why they were delaying the ordination of Africans. Dr Christiaans recalls how Thomas would encourage people to further their studies by saying that: "You are regarded as lazy, without any goals and vision, therefore I urge you to study, so that the RMS

¹² W.S. Hanse. Lay Think Tank. (Unpublished AMEC Conference Notes). Gibeon. 1995. pp. 4-5.

can ordain you.”¹³

Since he was very keen on the social teaching of the church he read extensively about it. That made him aware of the importance of developing the AMEC. He laid a foundation for the building of the local church by giving two principles:

- (i) the necessity of teaching the Christian doctrine to the people, so that Christians may understand Christianity in their own culture, and to be able to appreciate and inculcate it;
- (ii) economic development so that people may be able to earn a living and raise their quality of life.

The above thoughts were strongly expressed during a meeting held on 5 May 1946 in Keetmanshoop. The first thing which he did when he was ordained by the AMEC was to empower people so that they would be able to build a church which did not depend on foreign aid. He tried to purge the mentality which was incarnated in the minds of the local people - that only German missionaries were to obtain money from Germany and elsewhere, and give it to the people in the country. Since training local leaders was a priority during the schism, he asked for help from overseas and from the AMEC in South Africa, so that they could help in the training of pastors, teachers and other members of the laity. The clergy were sent to Wilbforce Institute in South Africa for pastoral training.

We could say that as the first ordained AMEC Nama pastor, Thomas was involved in many associations and he was also determined to help farm workers employed under miserable conditions on the white farms.

The AMEC has several schools, including a newly established private school at Gibeon. This school was founded in 1978 and is headed by the Rev. Hendrik Witbooi, who is also the chief of the Nama people. The African Methodist Episcopal Church is a member of the Council of Churches in Namibia. The Namibian AMEC is part of the AMEC in South Africa. Namibia is one of the five conference districts. However, the Namibian district was divided into three

¹³ Interview with Dr. N.C. Christiaans, Keetmanshoop, Namibia. 1 July 2000.

sub-districts, each under a presiding elder.

3.2 Investigation into the Factors which led to the 1946 African Methodist Episcopal Church Schism in Namibia

Dr H. Vedder was the Superintendent of the Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia during the 1946 AMEC schism. He was an autocratic leader with no vision for the church. It later happened that he was appointed by the late Dr. D.F. Malan in the South African Senate. This is concrete evidence that he was a loyal supporter of the apartheid regime. There was racial discrimination within the Rhenish Mission structures. Only the missionaries were entitled to administer sacraments. They were the only ones who had been ordained in the circles of the Rhenish Mission Society. Above all, Dr. Vedder strongly opposed the ordination of black pastors.¹⁴ From 1938 the indigenous staff requested him to upgrade their education with the likelihood of ordained ministry, but it was of no avail. Katesa Schlosser argues: "This apostasy or schism of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Namibia was not based upon dogmatic, but rather social and political arguments."¹⁵ Contrary to her views, Pastor Schmidt, who was my most reliable informant, informed me in the same interview that the central issue was ordination of the indigenous staff. The Rhenish missionaries could only promote the indigenous staff to the rank of chief evangelist.

On 12 January 1946, a group of black staff of the Rhenish Mission Society in Southern Namibia gathered in Keetmanshoop and, adopted a paper summing up a number of severe grievances against the mission. This document, known as the "Agitasie teen blanke sending Genootskappe" was to prove the starting point for a development that resulted in the establishment of the first large church in Namibia led exclusively by black people. The authors pointed in particular, to the different situation created under the aegis of the Finnish Mission in Ovambo. This was the first open challenge to the mission's authority, and concrete grievances further included the failure to ordain indigenous pastors and the paltry level of schooling administered by the mission society under administrative supervision. In defence of the level of schooling, the former Präses of the Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia, Präses

¹⁴ Interview with Emeritus Rev. P.A. Schmidt, Maltahöhe, Namibia. 4 February 1997.

¹⁵ Katesa Schlosser. 1953. p. 71.

H.K. Diehl noted.

The Rhenish Mission Society was interested in raising the level of education in the missionary schools especially in the higher grades, but there were not enough black pupils to fill the classes and justify government subsidies to school, in accordances with regulations.¹⁶

It was a strange phenomena that the indigenous people requested the missionaries to upgrade the educational facilities, but on the other hand failed to send their children to school. I should also point out that Präses H.K. Diehl contradicted himself in the same interview wherein he clearly spelt out the official policy of the Rhenish Mission Society, initially to train the indigenous staff as evangelists and teachers. The thrust of the "Agitasie" was directed in this way especially at the discriminatory practices of the mission society which were felt not only in spiritual matters but in the general forms of asserting particularly cultural and linguistic dignity as well, and finally, in the more practical issues of education and secular advancements.

Dr H. Vedder also wanted to please his South African political colleagues by becoming a member of the South African Senate in 1950. In pursuing his gratitude for the appointment to the Senate, he secretly entered an agreement with the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa to take over 23 congregations from the Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia. The reasons for this development were to secure the salaries of the German missionaries. He was fully aware that the Dutch Reformed Church was perceived as a state Church.¹⁷

In similar vein, but in different context the liberation theologian A. Boesak stated:

It is reformed christians who have spent years working out the details of apartheid, as a church policy and as a political policy. It is reformed christians who have presented this policy to the Afrikaner as the only possible solution, as an expression of the will of God for South Africa, and as being in accord with the gospel and the reformed tradition. It is reformed christians who have created Afrikaner nationalism, equating the reformed tradition and Afrikaner ideals of the kingdom of God. It is they who have devised the theology of apartheid, deliberately distorting the gospel to suit their

¹⁶ Interview with former Präses of Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia, Emeritus Rev. H.K. Diehl, Windhoek, Namibia. 4 February 1997. He served as Präses from 1947-1967.

¹⁷ Interview with Rev. P.A. Schmidt, Maltahöhe, Namibia. 4 February 1997.

racist aspirations. They present this policy as a pseudo-gospel that can be the salvation of all South Africans.¹⁸

At the same time the white missionaries and in particular, Dr. H. Vedder, wanted to block the black surge for independence. During this period, there was only chief evangelists in the districts, under the supervision of the German missionaries. What mostly angered the blacks was the fact that there was no consultative district meeting. Consequently they did not have another platform to assert their aspirations. The RMS in Namibia didn't want to ordain African clergy, and that was the main grounds for dissatisfaction among the black people. In their daily dealings with the Rhenish Mission Society's staff, it was clear that they were deliberately kept back from ordination and leadership.

3.3 The Leading Figures in the African Methodist Episcopal Church Schism of 1946

The African Methodist Episcopal Church schism took place under the guidance of two major evangelists of the Rhenish Mission Society, Zacheus Thomas in Keetmanshoop and Petrus Jod in Maltahöhe, both of them being considered as highly reliable persons. The events of the drafting of the manifesto meeting commenced at Keetmanshoop on 11 January 1946 (Letter attached in the Appendix). Nama teachers and evangelists played a prominent role, and Evangelist Petrus Jod opened the meeting on request. He was emotionally moved by the events of the conference. This time the meeting concentrated only on the aspect of ordination within the RMS.

During the meeting, where the indigenous staff gathered to discuss their grievances, Zacheus Thomas was elected as the chairman.¹⁹ Zacheus Thomas was a Nama, like all the current leaders of the schism group. He came from a family which maintained close connections with the Rhenish Mission Society, and he was the eldest son of Abraham Thomas who used to work as an elder and a translator for the missionary Fenschel in Keetmanshoop. Zacheus was attending the teachers' seminary in Gaub which was headed by Dr. Vedder. After a three year course he became principal at a mission school in Keetmanshoop. In addition to his work as a

¹⁸ A.A. Boesak. Black and Reformed. Apartheid, Liberation and the Calvinist Tradition. New York: Orbis Books. 1984. p. 86.

¹⁹ N.C. Christiaans. 1957, p. 13.

principal, he also performed the duties of an evangelist. Later he became a chief evangelist in Keetmanshoop. It was the highest level of appointment under the authority of the Rhenish Mission Society. It was there that, via Jonas Katjirungu, a Herero, he had his first contact with the AMEC. Zacheus was also a regular reader of the South African newspapers and followed current socio-political events in both countries.²⁰ According to the report of Spellmeyer, the Missionary Superintendent in the South of Namibia:

Zacheus was a highly gifted school principal, and was supposed to have taken up a more demanding task already long ago. When the RMS missionary Nyhof died in 1937, I suggested to appoint Zacheus as a manager of the mission station in Warmbad, but Dr Vedder refused.²⁰

The immediate spark which set off the church split was reported in *Die Burger* (an Afrikaans newspaper of the Cape) dated 31 October 1945, which requested the leadership of the RMS in Namibia to hand over its stations and congregations to the Dutch Reformed Church. The article stated that the blacks in South West Africa were not yet able to independently lead a church of their own. This was the ground from which both sides deducted the charge of betrayal of good faith. Whereas the missionaries bemoaned the failure of the evangelists to trust them and come back to them for enlightenment, the authors of the “Agitasie” felt that the alleged plans amounted to selling them out behind their backs like slaughtered cattle. (The article of the Burger is attached in the appendix.)

The RMS always complicated matters, and defended their case to the utmost. With reference to the work of the Finnish missionaries under the Ovambo, and the bad reports the Rhenish Mission got in comparison, Mayer wrote in 1948: “it was natural that amongst a rather united tribe like the Ovambo progress will be much faster than in a country inhabited by six different tribes which used to fight each other and were only unified by the work of the Rhenish Mission at a later state”. Encapsulated in the six tribes in the South of Namibia mentioned by Mayer were the Namas, Damaras, the Coloureds, the San people, the Herero and the Ovambo. Another bone of contention, however focused on financial issues.

Being accused of the financial administration of the congregation is nothing ‘original’

²⁰ Archival material: ELCRN Spellmeyer’s report. Gibeon, 1938.

²⁰ Archival material: ELCRN Spellmeyer’s report. Gibeon, 1938.

but rather along the line of common reproaches against mother churches which are made by separatist movements in South Africa. In nearly all the cases, besides the striving for higher positions, financial problems are of major importance.²¹

The mistrust, especially on financial matters, caused increasing bitterness and frustration among the indigenous evangelists and staff, which, if not corrected, would have caused many of the ablest men to withdraw from the RMS and join the AMEC. The RMS was very tactful to sideline the indigenous staff on financial issues. The major cause of conflict was money-related, because the white missionaries accused the locals of mismanagement. The management remained solely reserved for the missionaries, whereas Africans served at best as evangelists and workers of the mission.²²

After the publication of an article in *Die Burger* of 31 October 1945, the most experienced and renowned chief evangelists and teachers had left the mission society. They were Zacheus Thomas, Markus Witbooi, Johannes Dâusab, Jacobus Jod, P.A. Schmidt, Markus Kooper and Petrus Jod. Dr. Vedder as well as Pastor Milk, the former principal of Paulinum Seminary, considered the extremely strong loyalty between family members amongst the Namas as one of the major aspects for the spreading of the schism. According to Spellmeyer's "Memorandum", a large part of the congregation at Bethanie left because it consisted of relatives of Zacheus Thomas' wife.

A 74 year old chief evangelist of the RMS, Johannes Dâusab, was sent by the committee members of the schism from Keetmanshoop to his home Hoachanas by the AMEC in order to motivate his relatives there to leave the RMS. He was successful. His brother Daniel Dâusab, a principal in Rehoboth, caused a part of the people to leave. Those still remaining loyal to the RMS were excluded from the ethnic community on a psychological level by branding them as "sell outs". Rev. H.S. Isaak remained faithful to the RMS in Maltahöhe. He strongly condemned the action of schism, and was of the opinion to give the RMS more time. In some circles of the schism, he was regarded as a traitor. In my opinion he was a faithful servant of God, and did not want to cause any trouble in his ministry. In fact, he was one of the first

²¹ Katesa Schlosser. 1953. p. 90.

²² Interview with Mrs. Johanna Bikeur, member of the Lutheran Church, Maltahöhe, Namibia. 4 February 1997.

ordained by the German missionaries in 1949 as a counter action against the AMEC Schism.²³

There was internal friction because the Damara people refused to leave the RMS. They did not want to associate themselves with the objectives of the schism. Spellmeyer tried to prevent the schism from happening by issuing a pastoral letter on 18 June 1946. The motto of the letter is John 6:67-68: "So Jesus asked the twelve: "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him "Lord to whom can we go? You have the words of the eternal life."²⁴ In similar context Kössler said: "whereas in Spellmeyer's mind, religious salvation and loyalty to the missionary society as an institution were mingled into each other to the point where he could not conceive of either one separately, Jod drew a clear distinction between his personal relation to God and the Lord Jesus on the one side and the institutional form of religion, the society on the other."²⁵ The society, he stressed, never was 'my Saviour'. In this, he turned, by implication, against any church as long as it tended to monopolise the path to God. Strictly speaking, this was much more modern and independent thinking than was the corporatist approach of the RMS which even Spellmeyer apparently would not dream of transcending.²⁶

During all the meetings with the RMS board, Petrus Jod was present and his fascinating personality dragged nearly all of the RMS church workers with him. Two thirds of all mission workers left the RMS in Gibeon as well as one third of the congregation. The following figures of other congregations are mentioned by the Gibeon chronicle. Maltahöhe: only 1 teacher remained with the RMS, 80% of the congregation left. Mariental: Only 1 teacher who is now in retirement and over 80 years of age remained. Rev. Willem Mungunda remained with the RMS, but almost the whole congregation, consisting predominantly of Damara people, remained faithful to the RMS. Rev. Willem Mungunda was a softly spoken and influential person in the region of Mariental.²⁷

²³ Interview with Rev. P.A. Schmidt, Maltahöhe, Namibia. 4 February 1997.

²⁴ Archival material. Correspondence between Nama leaders and RMS. ELCRN archives, Windhoek, 1946.

²⁵ Reinhard Kössler. "The Persistent Theme of the Great Rising: Witbooi Leaders and the RMS", in *Namibia Scientific Society Journal* 47, Windhoek, Namibia. 1999. p. 35.

²⁶ Reinhard Kössler. "The Persistent theme of the Great Rising: Witbooi Leaders and the RMS", in *Namibia Scientific Society Journal* 47, Windhoek, Namibia. 1999. p. 35.

²⁷ Interview with Rev. Willem Mungunda, Mariental, Namibia. 04 February 1997. Rev. Willem Mungunda is a retired pastor of ELCRN, and is 87 years old, but still works freelance as a preacher.

The missionaries styled this as the schism of men whose talents and achievements they had revelled in only a short while ago to demonstrate their own success in Southern Namibia.²⁸ For their own endeavours, they saw what happened as a selection between the faithful and those who had gone astray. This meant to turn factual questions into problems of piety. Again, these were accordingly dealt with in the language of God confronting Satan, faith struggling against syncretism and church against sect. In more secular terms the missionaries rationalised what befell them as being a result of outside instigation, clandestine activity and race hatred on the side of the AMEC which was stigmatised as a mere sect, and also of communist propaganda.²⁹

In certain circles the RMS circulated the news that the newly established AMEC had links with communist ideologies. It was certainly true that leaders such as Zacheus Thomas had already established certain connections with the members of the newly founded independent African Churches in neighbouring South Africa. As a regular reader of newspapers, Thomas was well informed about the political developments in South Africa as well as in Namibia. In Southern and Central Namibia the AMEC had great appeal. The majority of the people in the South and many in the central part of the country became members and supporters of the church. Those who left the Rhenish Mission Society and followed the AMEC were Namas, especially family members of the leaders and some teachers and evangelists who were not part of the original leadership. The spirit of solidarity was very strong among the Nama people, especially those who participated in the AMEC schism.

The RMS and the colonial government failed in their attempts to label the church as sectarian with political agendas. The membership of AMEC included people with wide ranging experiences and skills, such as Revds. H. Witbooi, E.S. Tjirimuje and B.G. Karuaera amongst others.³⁰

²⁸ G. Gurirab. The Failure of the RMS to Ordain Indigenous Clergy in Namibia (1866-1949). A Historical Critical Analysis. B.Th. (Hons) dissertation. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal. 2000. p. 28.

²⁹ Reinhard Kössler. 1999. pp. 21-22.

³⁰ Per Frostin. The Theological Debate on Liberation, in Church and Liberation in Namibia. Edited by Peter Katjavivi, Per Frostin and Kaire Mbuende. London: Pluto Press. 1989. p. 6.

3.3.1 The Feeling of Loyalty of the Nama-speaking People Towards the AMEC in Namibia

It is an established fact that the Nama-speaking people of Southern Namibia had a special loyalty towards AMEC. One could trace back the origin of this loyalty to the origins of the Nama revolt in the spring of 1904. There was a certain prophet named Stuurman, who arrived in Namibia from the Cape Province. He proclaimed that he had been sent by God to drive the white man, and in particular the Germans, from Africa. It seems that Stuurman exercised a powerful influence over Hendrik Witbooi. Witbooi was clear from a letter the old chief wrote to several Nama captains explaining his decision to take the field against the Germans.

To my sons and brothers and Captains Goliath at Berseba and Paul Fredericks at Bethanie:

Because I have little paper I wrote to my dear friends on a single letter which our noble Christian must read and then send quickly on to Paul. My sons, as we all know for a long time I have lived under the law, and in the law, just as we all have in the hope that God the Father would determine the time to free us from the difficulties of the world. For I have borne everything with peace and patience and I have endured everything that oppressed my heart because I waited for the Lord. Now I will not waste many words. Therefore I will speak about two points in the hope that you will understand me. First my arm and shoulders are lame and I recognised that the time is now full for God the Father to free the Earth. So I give this letter for my dear ones to read as quickly as possible and then send the letter on to Paul. The second point is: I have now stopped walking submissively and will write a letter to Captain von Burgsdorff saying that I have put on the white feather (the sign for commencing hostilities) and that the time is over when I will walk behind him. The time has expired and the Saviour himself will now act and He will free us through his grace and compassion.³¹

Hendrik Witbooi, the guerilla leader was also an elder of the mission. The rumours of German invasions in Namaland during the middle of 1904 disturbed Hendrik Witbooi and tempted his faith. He could already sense the hostility and hatred of the Germans towards the indigenous tribes. It was reported that during this period 300 German troops arrived in the Southern part of Namibia. As the German population grew, there were demands for land and

³¹ J.M. Bridgman. The Revolt of the Hereros. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1981. p. 134-135.

greater security from African raids. After the Hereros had been defeated, Hendrik Witbooi collided with the Germans, who could not defeat him. He was skilled in guerilla war tactics. In the ensuing war the Herero killed ± 120 Germans, mainly traders in January, 1904.

In July 1904 Jacob Morenga and Abraham Morris again appeared with about a thousand armed Namas. Hendrik Witbooi, who was strongly influenced by the prophet Stuurman, attacked the Germans and in October 1904 military magistrate Henning von Burgsdorff at Gibeon was killed. This was immediately followed by widespread killings on both sides. Hendrik Witbooi withdrew into the Kalahari and from there launched attacks. After October 1904, the rebellion spread into the South led by Hendrik Witbooi. At this stage he was branded as the enemy number one of the settlers. After fierce resistance, Witbooi was killed in 1905.³²

The appeal of the Governor on 1 December 1905 and the activities of the RMS missionaries persuaded some 20 000 starving Hereros to report to the missionaries at the camp. As a consequence of the war, nearly all Herero lands were confiscated and converted to crown lands.³³ After they had recovered a little, they were taken to prison camps and were sent out from there as labourers to all parts of the country. Their governing institutions were destroyed and their captains and chiefs lost all power. The casualty rate must have been relatively high as nobody knew exactly how many lives had been lost. This seems to be true also for the war prisoners and the livestock which could not be accounted for. On top of this were the very sick, disabled and all who suffered in one way or another from the repression measures undertaken by the colonial forces. The German governor Von Trotha was ruthless and merciless. Consequently the population decreased in Southern Namibia due to losses of life during the rebellion and more so because of the repression measures which included destruction of food. The colonial forces inside Namibia and the civilians in Berlin strongly believed that only by the total elimination of the indigenous people from Namibia could the country be opened for white settlement and civilization.³³

³² M.M. Niewoudt. Bakermat van Kerkverband: Mariental-Eeufees. Goodwood: Nasionale Boekdrukkery. 1998. p. 107.

³³ L. Benjamin and C. Gregory (eds). Southern Africa at the Crossroads. Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing. 1992. p. 108.

³³ L. Benjamin and C. Gregory (eds). Southern Africa at the Crossroads. Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing. 1992. p. 108.

Against this historical background and reality, the Nama people of Southern Namibia strongly believed that their forefathers such as Hendrik Witbooi and Jacob Morenga did not fight in vain, but for a good cause. Before the German protectorate was established, Hendrik Witbooi fought long and bitter wars with the Hereros. His objective was the establishment of Nama hegemony over the whole of the central parts of Namibia. In honour of Hendrik Witbooi, a special song was composed by his great grandson Rev. Dr Hendrik Witbooi. It is a very emotional song and is only sung at big occasions such as the anniversary of the death of the late Nama Captain and Witbooi clan-related festivals.

I would argue that the Nama tribe under the guidance of the Witbooi clan was successful in laying firm foundations for the AMEC in Southern Namibia. The Witbooi clan was from the very beginning, opposed to German colonisation. They made prime sacrifices and had been defeated in the face of the superior firepower of the Germans. The Germans had also taken advantage of the then prevailing political situation, to isolate the Nama group from the rest of the indigenous peoples.

The Chief, Hendrik Witbooi, who dominated the political scene in the early 1900's, also had a vision for an African Church where the African people could feel at home.³⁴ Throughout the generations his vision and influence remained with the Nama people of Southern Namibia. It is notable that the AMEC had tremendous appeal in Southern Namibia. In this part, the majority of the people, including the most influential people of the community became, AMEC members. One prominent AMEC member was Chief Samuel H. Witbooi, successor to Chief Hendrik Witbooi, the guerilla leader who fought the Germans in the war of resistance 1904-07. Up until today the Witbooi family (Ikhobesin clan) continues to provide community and church leadership in the South. The RMS leaders were very hostile to the Witbooi group. In one of their pastoral letters, the Germans clearly said that it is very difficult for them to address the Nama rebels as "dear brothers in Christ". Through such irresponsible and degrading comments the rift between the Namas and the Germans grew. The German oppressors never confessed their active role in promoting and defending colonialism and apartheid. Their attitude was evidence enough of viewing black humanity as inferior and not able to walk on their own. In my observation, the old Hendrik Witbooi, who was only an

³⁴ S. Nambala. 1994. p. 105.

elder, was very knowledgeable in the Old Testament. He regarded himself as the liberator of the Nama people.

From the time of Hendrik Witbooi, up to today, the AMEC propagate for justice and equal opportunities in all walks of life for their members. The AMEC is a true Namibian Church particularly in the South of the country. It is one of the few churches which has the credibility to speak out against injustices, because it has been speaking all these years.

All the Nama leaders who participated in the 1946 AMEC schism belonged to the Witbooi clan. Nama congregations in and around Keetmanshoop and Maltahöhe joined the schism. They revolted against dependence on the RMS and contemplated forming their own church. They successfully formed their own church in the Southern part of Namibia, but the question of indigenous leadership remains a crucial one. So far, all the AMEC bishops govern in absentia. The AMEC leadership in America and Cape Town had overlooked the importance which Nama society attached to their traditional and indigenous leaders. The Nama (Ikhobesin people), especially leaders, were expected to behave in a manner traditionally proper to the society, each receiving from the members of the society certain respects and honours. In the context of the Nama people, a political leader as well as church leaders, for instance, had to be respected and could not be publicly condemned, though he could be privately or indirectly warned after which he could be removed from power. But when the Germans came they punished anybody under them, political leaders notwithstanding. For this the Germans were feared and hated by all people.

On the religious side, the German missionaries were looked upon as disruptive elements not only to the existing religious customs, but also to social status. After the 1946 AMEC schism, the RMS sent unsubstantiated propaganda that the moral life among the Nama people of the Southern part was declining. The RMS argued that there was less discipline in the AMEC, because their leadership was very far from the congregations. In that way the RMS undermined the authority and leadership of the Witbooi clan chief.

It is only a question of time before one of the Nama leaders takes over the Bishopric of AMEC in Namibia by the next elections in 2004. The process that they have set in motion

during the 1946 schism, is not yet completed. Rev. Dr. Hendrik Witbooi who is presently the chief of the Witbooi clan and Rev. Andreas Biwa from Keetmanshoop are two suitable candidates for this position. Both of them are active in political circles and good orators. Dr H. Witbooi is currently the deputy Prime Minister of Namibia and Rev. A. Biwa is the mayor of Keetmanshoop town in Southern Namibia. The AMEC congregation members in Namibia should see to it, that their church should be led by an indigenous leader. This process should be initiated from above as well as from the Namibians themselves, through official deliberations in church meetings and annual conferences.

Dr Gow, the AMEC Bishop made a promise 57 years ago to the leaders of the 1946 schism that he would help them until such time that they could be independent. It transpired throughout the years that the Mother Church in the USA played a delaying tactic on this issue. It would be a disgrace not to honour the noble intentions of Bishop Gow who is credited with successfully negotiating with the country's administration to get permission to establish the church. It seems the external leadership of AMEC monopolised everything for much too long. The positive aspect on the side of the AMEC in Namibia, is that they do not depend on foreign funds. When the 1946 AMEC schism took place, the RMS also drastically cut funds when the German missionaries gave way to indigenous leaders. So far, in Namibia, the AMEC is one of the few churches in Namibia, which is practising self-supporting ministry. In monetary terms, whatever they have, they raise locally from the congregation members and self- help projects such as the garden and clinic in Gibeon.

3.4 The African Methodist Episcopal Church Schism of 1946

In a further encounter of the Mission with the African people, after the brutal wars between 1894 and 1905 of course, Christianity began to gain some influence among Africans, particularly the poor and the destitute. It appears, the faith became effective, after the Africans were minimized, and their culture was eliminated in accord with the mission's complaints and obstacles. Vedder writes emphatically in this regard:

In spite of this one chief after the other turned Christian. The communities grew larger and many were earnest about their Christianity. Here and there, however, the holy fire still burned and they still have cattle herds; but the war of 1904 extinguished all their

holy fires... At the right time, just when the tribes had been domiciled to a certain extent by the mission, the occupation of the country by the German Empire set in, and colonisation of the country by white farmers began.³⁵

Of course, Africans began to become Christians in greater numbers after the wars. Nonetheless, Christianity remained basically foreign to the Africans and their culture. Firstly, the Mission's role towards the Africans was not revised or changed. Secondly, the time which followed after the wars, and the destruction of many Africans, revealed the reluctance of the Mission to integrate Namibian Christians fully into the faith. Yet by the 1930's, for instance, the RMS still refused to ordain Africans. Some missionaries, however, like F. Pönninghaus favoured integration, he stated in 1937:

Why are there not indigenous pastors in South West Africa, or is there only indignation in South West, for I had spoken for that aim, that we should allow the natives in South West Africa to become pastors.³⁶ (Own translation from German).

Apparently, the RMS had no interest. In response to Pönninghaus suggestion, Vedder, who was the Präses, said, "If our Black brothers receive albs (togas), then I will undress them."³⁷ The topic of the ordination of Africans was fairly emotional, Vedder opposed any attempt to allow the ordination of Africans. Alternatively, with a shortage of missionaries, the Society asked South Africa's white Dutch Reformed ministers to minister to its congregations.

However, this venture of the RMS could not succeed, for the accumulation of the Society's activities were too much for the Namibian Christians. Also Namibian Christians asked for the independence of the church, and control. But all these requests were refused. It was only in 1949, that the RMS began to ordain Africans. Nevertheless, the society's role and attitude towards church integration remained inflexible, until the church had completely come under African leadership and administration in 1957.

In addition, it must be added that the major schisms of the AMEC in 1946, and of the Herero

³⁵ Archival material: Box 1423: A. 216/6 RMS General.

³⁶ T. Sundermeier. Wir aber Suchten Gemeinschaft. Witten: Luther – Verlag. 1973. p. 18.

³⁷ T. Sundermeier. Wir aber Suchten Gemeinschaft. Witten: Luther – Verlag. 1973. p. 18.

people in 1955, are proof of the RMS reluctance to integrate the faith. The RMS literature attempts to disguise and falsify the reasons why Namibian Christians in the south and central broke away. Some report as if other motives, like a return to heathenism and paganism, or political motives, were the causes.³⁸

On the contrary, these schisms were mainly caused by the RMS unwillingness to ingrate Christianity, unpreparedness to evaluate African culture, and its unacceptable role in the political situation. In view of above developments, missionaries had to face resistance. Many congregations rejected the missionaries who were sent to them, former graduates of the Augustinum, teachers and evangelists under the leadership of Zacheus Thomas and Petrus Jod started to organize themselves in order to demand self-determination for the church. Since the German leadership did not meet their demands they broke away from the mission church and joined the AMEC, an American based church with exclusively black membership.³⁹

Therefore, though the RMS contributed some positive things, like the schools, the introduction of medical care, and the christian faith as such the faith remained foreign to the African and his/her culture. On this ground one Namibian theologian Z. Mujoro stated:

It is about time that we in Namibia and the rest of Africa, once realize that it was not the missionaries that brought God to Africa. God was in Africa before European missionaries arrived, just as He was elsewhere in the world. Instead God brought them to Africa.⁴⁰

The newspaper article in the "Suidwester" dated 24 August 1945 angered the Nama leaders. (See the letter of the Nama leaders in the appendix). They expressed their disappointment about this agreement. Although both news articles expressed the intention of the RMS, DRC theologians are of different opinion. In the words of M. M. Niewoudt the following:

Unfortunately, the newspapers got hold of the confidential decision of the synod, and report as the RMS could no longer continue with the mission work. This particular article portrayed Dr Vedder as a leader who sold his flock. They did not mention that

³⁸ E. Kandovazu. Die Oruono Beweging. Karibib: Rynse Sending Drukkery. 1968. p. 13.

³⁹ H. Lessing. Material on Namibia. Windhoek: Paulinum Seminary. 2000. p. 13.

⁴⁰ Z. Mujoro. Unpublished Lecturer notes. Otjimbingwe. Paulinum. 1983. p. 23.

it was only a preventative measure. Consequently, this caused the schism and unrest under the Herero speaking people.⁴¹

3.5 The Issue of Ordination and the African Clergy in Southern Namibia

The RMS was fully responsible for the AMEC schism of 1946. They did not want to cooperate with their indigenous staff. The starting point for the agitation of the AMEC in Namibia which finally led to the schism from the RMS, was already seen in Luderitz where a branch of the AMEC of the Cape Province was established about 1930-1932.⁴² At a later stage, government realised that the AMEC was also operating in Windhoek. It was Lüderitz which was the first centre of dissatisfaction with the RMS. Up to the schism in May 1946, none of the people who left for the AMEC had indicated their intention to do so, although connections had been established long ago. Although the main aim 'away from the whites could have been fulfilled for those leaving without joining another church questions of church law' and also the striving for progress made it necessary to join an already existing, strong church. There was no choice taken by those leaving the RMS which church they should join.

The urgent necessity to join another church was mainly based upon two reasons:

1. The ordination of pastors, as well as a seminary for pastoral training were needed. The irony of the matter is the blacks constituted the majority membership in the RMS, but were still excluded from the decision-making body. None amongst those who left the RMS carried the title, because the missionaries blocked them from ordination. By permission of the missionaries a Chief Evangelist like Petrus Jod had been entitled to administer the sacraments.
2. Provision had to be made to ensure the acknowledgment of marriage officers within their own ranks. Otherwise those who left would either not have had a chance to get a church wedding or would have had to approach pastors of acknowledged churches,

⁴¹ M.M. Niewoudt. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Siudwes Afrika. Windhoek: SWA Drukkery. 1979. p. 285 and Box SWAA 1851: A 396/8. Native Unrest. Gibeon. (1915-1954).

⁴² G.L. Buys and J.J. Kritzinger. Salig die Vredemakers. Pretoria. 1989. p. 122.

who would have demanded the conversion to their churches before performing the marriage ceremony.

Joining the AMEC solved both problems. The AMEC appointed the leaders of the schism as pastors, including Petrus Jod, Zacheus Thomas, Markus Witbooi and Jacobus Jod. While Petrus Jod was ordained in the Cape Province by Gow, Markus Witbooi's ordination ceremony took place at Gibeon. The Witbooi clan put a special request to the bishop in the Cape Province to travel to Namibia for the ordination. His ordination was regarded as a triumph for the Nama people and secondly would boost the morale of his followers. In doing so, it would also encourage the younger generation to join the AMEC ministry.⁴³

Markus Witbooi was in favour of a black church free from white domination. He was very sympathetic to the national aspirations of the Nama people. He could no longer tolerate the white control in the RMS. He established a big church in Gibeon, and composed one of the favourite songs to the honour of the Nama king, Hendrik Witbooi.⁴³

On local level, the AMEC was growing in numbers, although they faced some practical problems. A disturbing issue was also the fact that the General Superintendent of the AMEC, Dr Gow, was residing in Worcester in the Cape Province, and from there inspected the AMEC congregations in Namibia once or twice a year. The Nama congregations were required to keep Dr Gow permanently informed about their organisational questions. Secondly, the English language was not widely spoken in Namibia during the colonial period, and Afrikaans was the official language of correspondence. It was a serious impediment on the side of the congregations in Namibia for effective communication. In view of the apartheid policies, sometimes Dr Gow would not be allowed into Namibia. His father was an Afro -American, his mother a South African Coloured.

3.5.1 Opponents of the 1946 AMEC Schism

In the first position amongst the opponents of the schism was the Rhenish Mission Society, in

⁴³ W.S. Hanse. Lay Think Tank. (Unpublished Conference Notes). Gibeon. 1995. p. 12.

⁴³ W.S. Hanse. 1995. p. 12.

the second position the majority of the Damara people of the RMS. The white farmers in the affected areas also rejected the AMEC. The colonial government of South West Africa is rather a critical observer of the AMEC. The RMS regarded the AMEC as a hostile movement towards the Germans.⁴⁴

The purpose of the AMEC in Namibia was to evangelise, educate and encourage their African followers in the habits of hard work.⁴⁵ It was a serious blow for Dr Vedder who claimed that the Africans were not yet ready after 100 years of mission work, to take responsible positions, like looking after the welfare of the people and managing finances of the church. The main aim of the AMEC was to make the people self reliant and self supporting. This meant that people were becoming aware of the responsibilities in the church. In certain white circles, rumours spread that the AMEC was propagating the ideology of communism.

The opposition of the majority of the Damara people was based upon the fact that in former times they used to be servants of the Namas and thus did not desire to accept Namas as leading strata. Some of the farmers withdrew their permission for AMEC people to have their livestock on the farms, because of the AMEC's hostility against whites. Thus, these people accommodated their livestock in the reserves, often by using a pseudonym.

The AMEC was a response to white power arrogance in the Rhenish Mission Society. This church was operating during the great awakening of black people in a period of total white domination. The critical position of the government was based upon the AMEC's anti-white agitation as well as in the Namibia AMEC's desire to change the current political and social status quo. The AMEC convened a meeting on 24 August 1948 and compiled a memorandum and sent it to the government. The demands are as follows:

1. The right to vote.
2. Inclusion in the decision-making process concerning the allocation and selling of land within and outside the reserves.
3. The right to purchase land in the cities and in the rural areas.
4. Better educational facilities, for example for secondary, technical and higher

⁴⁴ Interview with Rev. Willem Mungunda, Mariental, Namibia. 04 February 1997.

⁴⁵ Interview with Rev. Dr. N.C. Christiaans. Trinity AMEC, Keetmanshoop, Namibia. 01 July 2000.

- education.
5. Abolition of pass laws, abolition of the favouring of Coloureds when it comes to free movements.
 6. Higher wages to facilitate economic development.
 7. Own delegates to the constitutional assembly.
 8. Better personal treatment in Magistrate offices.
 9. Better sanitary facilities in the locations.
 10. Better treatment in hospitals.
 11. Clarification of the rights of the captains.
 12. Participation of captains, headmen and council members in the reserves and the locations when it comes to issuing alcohol license for Blacks.
 13. Strict intervention against alcoholism and the illegal selling of alcohol to blacks by whites.⁴⁶

3.5.2 External Political Factors that Influenced the Schism

In the mid forties and late fifties, representatives of the Namibian population expressed their hopes and aspirations to the United Nations. A new generation of indigenous leaders emerged - bitterly opposed to South Africa's continued presence in the territory.⁴⁷

The First Namibian Student Organisation was formed in 1952 under the influence of political events in South Africa. In 1952 the liberation movement there had organised the Defiance Campaign to protest against the racial laws and practices of the dominant white minority. Shortly after the creation of this student organisation, its General Secretary, Mburumba Kerina, went to study in the United States of America. He was also secretly instructed by the Herero Chief Hosea Kutako to assist the Reverend Michael Scott in his petitioning at the United Nations, as some members of the Chief's Council wished to have an indigenous Namibian involved in the task. Reverend Michael Scott was an Anglican priest, among the Africans.⁴⁸

When the General Assembly of the newly formed United Nations recommended that Namibia be placed under the trusteeship system, the South African government refused, preferring

⁴⁶ Archival material. Correspondence between Nama leaders and RMS. ELCRN archives, Windhoek, 1948. Box SWAA 489. A 50/227. This document is treated more fully in Chapter Five.

⁴⁷ Olga Levinson. *South West Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers. 1976. p. 70.

⁴⁸ Olga Levinson. 1976. p. 90 and *The New Nation*. Windhoek. 1990. p. 4.

instead to incorporate the territory into South Africa. Shortly after coming to power in 1948, the National Party took steps to incorporate Namibia into South Africa by providing white Namibian representation in the South African parliament. The South African government controlled and manoeuvred elections which were boycotted by the majority of the Namibian people and condemned by the United Nations and the world community at large.⁴⁸

In view of the above demands the Nama people also wanted to be included in the political decision-making of the country. Grievances were heightened further in the aftermath of the Afrikaner National party's ascendancy to power in South Africa in 1948. Despite its critical approach to the AMEC, government's position towards the AMEC was rather inconsequent when they appointed some of the pastors of AMEC as marriage officers. The appointment of Petrus Jod as a marriage officer in Maltahöhe was somehow balanced by government when Hendrik Isaak, a pastor of the RMS was also appointed as an officer.

3.5.3 Problems Between the German Leadership and African Staff

The German leadership was outrightly hostile to the leaders of the AMEC. The AMEC leaders wanted to restore the dignity of all their fellow black citizens in the country. The Rhenish Mission and AMEC mutually recognised their baptisms. School attendance had risen because of the AMEC activities in the South of Namibia. Hoping that a high school attendance would result in the government's acknowledgement of the AMEC schools, Petrus Jod, for example, forced his followers to send their children to the school in Maltahöhe. In the meantime, government has proclaimed the nationalisation of the confessional schools. The leaders of the AMEC were constantly looking for work relationships with the RMS, but the authorities of the Rhenish Mission were reluctant. The missionaries feared that those who had remained in the RMS could easily be indoctrinated to follow the others. The personal relationship between Missionary Mayer and what used to be his closest colleagues for quite some time deteriorated increasingly, especially because the AMEC claimed congregational property, buildings, music-instruments, etc.

The struggle for property was finally decided by the government in favour of the RMS.

⁴⁸ Olga Levinson. 1976. p. 90 and The New Nation. Windhoek. 1990. p. 4.

Relationships between the AMEC and those who remained loyal to the RMS in Gibeon district were and are extremely bad. In Keetmanshoop the return of Missionary Totömeyer after World War II, seemed to have calmed down the hostility of the AMEC to a considerable extent. It seems that Totömeyer was liked by his congregation members. The old hatred between the Damara and Nama stirred up to such a degree that Missionary Mayer had to intervene twice in order to avoid bloodshed. The Damara in Mariental intended to attack those Namas who had left the RMS. Fortunately, they shared their intentions with the missionary beforehand. The Damara regarded the 1946 AMEC schism as a sign of weakness on the side of the RMS. The schism of 1946 demonstrated an outcome of a desire on the part of the Nama people for ecclesiastical self-support and self control. In Mariental congregation, Mr Wilhelm Mungunde who was a teacher with the RMS, rescued the situation to the benefit of the RMS. He remained with the majority of the Damara people in the RMS.⁴⁹

3.5.4 The Present Structure of the AMEC in Namibia

The motto of the AMEC is “God our Father, Christ Our Redeemer, man our Brother”. The Rt. Rev. Senatle is the current Bishop of the AMEC. In Namibia, the Bishop’s representative is the Rev. Dr. Hendrik Witbooi who also serves in the Namibian government since independence in 1990.

The AMEC in Namibia is divided into five Conference Districts, each headed by a Presiding Elder.

- a) Windhoek District : Rev. Bartholemeus Karuaera.
- b) Gibeon District : Rev. Dr. H. Witbooi.
- c) Keetmanshoop District : Rev. Dr. N.C. Christiaans.
- d) Hoachanas District : Rev. Markus Kooper.
- e) Luderitz District : Rev. Albert E. Koopman.

The AMEC runs schools, clinics, old-age homes, self-help projects, kindergartens and

⁴⁹ J.J. Kritzinger. Sending en Kerk in Suidwes Afrika - ‘n Ondersoek na die Kerk onder die Nie-blankes van Suidwes Afrika. D.D. Dissertation. Vol. 1. Pretoria. 1973, p. 88.

numerous other activities in Namibia. AMEC is a member of many ecumenical bodies in the world, including the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches in the United States, and the Council of Churches in Namibia. The AME Church is one of the few churches in Namibia which is practising the tent-making ministry. Tentmaking ministry means a pastor who is theologically fully trained and ordained and employed in a secular or non-church capacity in addition to being a recognised pastor of the AMEC. Presently some of the pastors of the AMEC are, amongst other things, school inspectors, teachers, business people, farmers and politicians.

3.6 Conclusion

The AMEC was established relatively late in Namibia, yet, by the mid 1940's it was growing very rapidly. Part of its appeal was the AMEC's clear political agenda. In addition to providing self-help projects, it hosted nationalist sentiments. It produced people such as Rev. Markus Kooper who was among the first to petition the United Nations on behalf of Namibia. Because of its active role in the anticolonial movement and their criticism of apartheid, the AMEC was targeted as a communist inspired church. In the entire history of Namibia, it was the first who challenged the colonial government and the RMS on the bad treatment of the indigenous people. The AMEC church took a lead in advocating for change. The AMEC fully associated themselves with the liberation struggle fought in Namibia for 24 years. Most of the AMEC members were supporters of the SWAPO liberation movement. Some of their clergy now hold senior posts in the ranks of SWAPO. The AMEC is still a thriving church, currently led by Rev. B.G. Karuaera along with Revds. H. Witbooi and E.S. Tjirimuje. Rev. H. Witbooi is SWAPO president.

To the embarrassment of the RMS, the second schism followed in 1955.⁵⁰ The Herero Oruano church was founded in 1955. It was originally headed by Rev. Leonard Ruzo. It also led another big exodus from the RMS, and many Herero members of the AMEC moved to join the *Oruano*. The Oruano members were not in favour of being led by a person who was considered a stooge of the apartheid government, in the person of Dr. H. Vedder. Heinrich Vedder officiated as a Präses from 1937. Vedder most explicitly saw the future of

⁵⁰ P. Katjavivi, P. Frostin and K. Mbuende (eds). 1989. p. 55.

the congregations under his charge as subordinate to the fate and interest of the German state, a state that was engaged in the most ruthless campaign for the conquest of the world that has been recorded in history. The next chapter focuses on the aftermath of the schism.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISTORICAL – CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF THE SCHISM – 1908 - 1946

4.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the historical – chronological developments of the AMEC schism in Namibia. In this chapter we will, apart from some background points, concentrate specifically on 1946, in order to chronologically describe and uncover the main events and perspectives during and immediately following the schism. In the background section, the study will look at the significance of Mangona Maake Mokone for the independent church movements in Southern Africa, the RMS and its activities especially in southern Namibia in the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, and the RMS during the first and second world wars in Namibia.

The phenomenon of the rise of the independent church movement in South Africa signaled the coming into being of an ever-increasing number and variety of separatist churches under indigenous leadership and control.¹ Kamphausen a renowned church historian described the said period as follows:

The making of an indigenous clergy in the last century and in the beginning of this century has to be understood in terms of a conflictual process which in many cases led to the establishment of African Independent churches and which found its first expression in the historical movement called Ethiopianism. The underlying conflict arose out of the fact that the missionary enterprise was interpreted by African Christians as an integral part of western colonialism, which was very often uncritically supported by European and North American missionaries.²

With its primary focus on the schism itself, this chapter hopes to augment the thesis on events of the African Methodist Episcopal church schism of 1946 in Namibia. In this, I shall make use of archival information and attempt to piece together the significant events and perspectives leading up to, during and immediately following the schism.

¹ J.R. Coan. The Expansion of Missions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in South – Africa, 1896-1908. Hartford: Connecticut. 1961. p. 418.

² E. Kamphausen. “Unknown Heroes ...”, in Phillippe Denis (ed). The Making of Indigeneous Clergy in South Africa. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publictations. 1994. p. 83.

4.1 The Rise of Ethiopianism in South Africa

The Ethiopian church spread rapidly in southern Africa as more Black ministers and laypersons identified with this independent church during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In my view Mangena Mokone played a significant role in the rise of Ethiopianism in South Africa. He was born in 1851 in Bokgaga, in the Pedi area.

He left his home in the wake of a war with the Swazi's during which his father was killed.³ In Natal he found employment as a domestic worker in the household of a pious woman, Mrs. J. Steele. At Durban he was in the service of the Methodist Church. He became a local preacher and applied for the Methodist ministry. The leader of this black congregation, Rev. Mongena Mokone, declared in his inaugural sermon that the establishment of an African Church is to be understood as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy concerning the final liberation of the African people. He referred to the words of Psalm 68:31 (Princess shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God).⁴

Mokone received his theological training at the Kilnerton training College in Pretoria. He also worked there as a teacher. Why did the Ethiopian church come into existence? On this point Coan observed:

Unfortunately with the lapse of time this band of early missionaries was being replaced by a crop of young men who had failed to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors. The native preacher could no longer sit with his white brethren in the same gathering. The native preacher was to have his own black conference where he and his kind could convene and not always report proceedings for approval or rejection.

On calling on his white brother, the native preacher could no longer enter by the front door as he was wont - the back entrance was good enough for him, no matter what the nature of his business. Many among the native ministers began to question the attitude by their white brethren. There grew a spirit of discontent, which eventually showed itself.⁵

³ Mokhele Madise. From Mokone to the Black Methodist Consultation: Challenging Racism in the Methodist Church of South-Africa, in Morality, Memory Past. Edited by P. Denis. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

⁴ Phillipe Denis. 1994. p. 88.

⁵ J.R. Coan. 1961. p. 86-87.

Many Black Ministers began to question the discrimination practices in the church. Discontent was widespread. Mokone decided to break away from the white controlled Methodist Church. On 24 October 1892 he handed his resignation letter to Rev. George Weavind the supervisor of the Methodist Church in the Transvaal. In it he stated:

I hereby give notice that at the end of the month I will leave the Wesleyan Church ministry and serve God in my own way. It is no use to stop for I won't change. If you like I can pack up all I've got and leave tomorrow morning before breakfast.

Your grumbling servant
Mangena Maake Mokone.⁶

In his resignation Mokone was very clear to start his own church. He indicated that he wants to serve God in his own way. He asked the General Superintendent for a Certificate of ordination in the Wesleyan church, and that he was leaving on his own accord.⁷

The following is a list of grievances that Mokone sent to the Head of the Methodist Church and which also served as his "declaration of independence." In analyzing the grievances one could detect the tone of resentment with the Methodist Church.

1. Our district meetings have been separated from the Europeans since 1886. And we were compelled to have a white chairman and secretary.
2. Our district meetings were held in a more or less barbaric manner. We were just like a lot of Kaffirs before the landrost for passes. What the white man says is infallible, and no black can prove or dare prove it wrong.
3. This separation shows that we can't be brothers.
4. The wife and children of Native ministers have no allowance from the Society whatever. Only the whites have it. This is not doubt one of the reasons for the separation of the district meetings.
5. The Native ordained minister is of no use to his people. He cannot exercise his rights as a minister or be placed in a position of trust as one who is a fellow labourer in the Lord. But the candidates of the whites will be placed over the black man as superintendents.
6. Native ministers get from L24 to L50 per annum, while the white ministers get L300 per annum.
7. In the Transvaal, no Native minister has the right to use the Mission property, moveable or immovable. All the whites are supplied with ox-wagons and furniture from the Society.

⁶ Mokhele Madise. 2000. p. 267.

⁷ J.R. Coan. 1961. p. 89.

8. It is a great shame to see the homes of Native Ministers and teachers. A stable is preferable. At Waterburg I was obliged to build my own house, and, at Makapanstad I spent L3/12/0 on the house for reeds and skins, etc.
9. The Native minister holds class meetings and prayer meetings, visits the sick, pray for them, preach, bury and teach school, while the white minister's work is to marry, baptize, and administer communion. They will never go to visit the sick or pray for them, and when they die, your Native minister must go to bury your own people. This is not Christianity, nor brotherly love, nor friendship. If this is true, then white ministers are unnecessary among the black people.
10. The white ministers don't even know the members of their circuits. They always build their homes one or two miles away from the congregation.
11. No Native minister is honoured among the white brethren. The more the Native humbles himself, the more they make a fool of him.
12. We have been in the Wesleyan Ministry for 12 years, and not one of us has ever received the Minutes or the Annual Report. We are simply ignorant of our own work. We are called "Revs" but we are worse than the boy working for the missionary, for the will now and then see the missionary notices. What advantage is to be obtained by remaining in this Society?
13. As Principal of Kilnerton Institute, I was not esteemed as one who belongs to and has any say in the school. A student may be discharged, or may leave school, and no one would tell me anything about it until I hear it from someone else not in any way connected with the Institution.
14. When a student is sick, the poor nigger will be sent for to come at once to the classroom, shivering under his blanket. He is then asked in the classroom what is the matter, and is then told that he is lazy, not sick, and to hurry and get better. The boy who speaks rather straight will be considered a bad one. If all this is so, where is justice? Where is brotherly love? Where is Christian sympathy? God in heaven is the witness to all these things.⁸
- Mangona Mokone
Kilnerton, October 23, 1892

Mokone was convinced that unchristian discriminatory practices existed throughout the church. It included his own experiences and the little experiences of individual ministers and pupils as well as structural practices. For instance, the two synods, black and white, with the continuing presence of white ministers in leadership positions, was for him an indication of discriminatory practices in the Methodist Church. He continued to fight discrimination in the church. He felt that he had no other option but to resign from his post. He had come to the conclusion that the Methodist Church was not prepared to change.⁹ In November 1892 while the white Wesleyans were having their missionary congress in Pretoria, Mokone and his followers held a protest meeting outside. It was then that he decided to break away from the Methodist Church and form an independent church, the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion.

⁸ Mokhele Madise. 2000. p. 268-269

⁹ Mokhele Madise. 2000. p. 270.

The first church, an old tin shanty, was dedicated on 2 November 1893, by Rev. J.W. Underwood.

He preached from Genesis 28:19, the same text Francis Asbury used in July 1774, when Bethel A.M.E. Church, Philadelphia in the United States of America was dedicated.¹⁰

4.2 The RMS and the Growth of the Christian Church among the Nama People in the South

In this section, I shall focus on the church planting and church growth activities of especially the RMS under the Nama people in the South of Namibia, in the second part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. I shall also again use archival material to provide information about possible influences from this period, on the schism in 1946.

By 1889 the Rhenish Mission Church had 3 300 members on 10 mission stations, which increased to 6 500 by 1902.¹¹ The church at Warmbad flourished under the ministry of missionary Carl Wandres. This church was seriously influenced by the 1904 revolt of the Bondelswarts tribe against the German colonial government. In 1922 a second revolt occurred, this time against the South African authority, due to a dog tax.¹²

The work however continued. In 1922 the Warmbad church had 804 members. Missionary Nyhof worked at Warmbad for a period of 29 years (1907-1936). Apart from the work of the Rhenish Mission, the Roman Catholic mission bought the farm Heirachabis in the South-East in 1898. Many of the Bondelswarts moved to the Catholic mission, while a strong work-force guaranteed rapid growth.

Windhoek became the headquarters of the German government in 1890, causing many people to Converge at Windhoek. Originally the Rhenish Missionaries served the whole community, but in 1895 the Germans obtained their own minister, Pastor Siebe. In 1904

¹⁰ C.J. Pillay. Founders Declaration of Independence. Cape Town. Undated. p. 1.

¹¹ G. Buys and S.V.V. Nambala. History of the Church in Namibia. Windhoek: Gamsberg. 2003. p. 83.

¹² Tony Emmett. Popular Resistance in Namibia 1902-5. London: Namibia Publications. 1988. p. 224.

missionary Meier arrived to minister to the Herero, and related groups. In 1903 the Peace church of the Rhenish Mission Church in Windhoek was inaugurated, with its 526 members.¹³

Many members of this church died in 1918 due to the worldwide flu pandemic. In 1923 this work was further hampered when many Hereros turned their back on the Rhenish Mission Church. They returned to their traditional roots as part of the Ethiopian movement, which flooded many parts of Africa during these years.

The Roman Catholic Church experienced rapid growth, after finally succeeding in 1896 to establish a mission in Windhoek. Their first effort was to put up military hospitals and schools for the German settlement. The arrival of the first five mission sisters from Nonnenwerth, belonging to the order of the Holy Cross of Menzingen, started a nursing ministry in Windhoek, in 1904, at first only in the military hospitals.

Later the Roman Catholic mission established Roman Catholic hospitals in Windhoek, Mariental and Swakopmund. In 1931 the well-known Catholic Cathedral was inaugurated on the Roman hill (today known as Stübel street).

The people of Berseba did not partake in the 1904-1907 Nama revolt with the result that the growth of the church was not disrupted.¹⁴ Disagreements between the Goliath and Isaaks families erupted from time to time. Still the church developed gradually and later became a well-known conference center in the South of the country. Missionary Eisenberg worked at Berseba for more than 30 years.¹⁵

The church at Hoachanas, which was the main center of the Rhenish Mission amongst the Nama people at one stage, was not re-established after the Nama resistance in 1904. The people were divided into two camps on the issue of Hendrik Witbooi's position. The church

¹³ Archival material. ELCRN archives, VII. 7.19. Windhoek 1946/1947. H. Vedder. Die Rynse Sending in die Geskiedenis van Suidwes Afrika. *Die Suidwester* 18 April 1946. Windhoek. p. 19-22.

¹⁴ Alfred. T. Moleah. Namibia. The Struggle for Liberation. Wilmington D.E. 1983. p. 14.

¹⁵ Archival material. ELCRN archives, VII. 7.19. Windhoek. 1946/1947.

was at times totally deserted. In 1920 it received a missionary, but by 1922 it became an outstation of Gibeon.

Gibeon was evacuated by the Rhenish Mission after the departure of Hendrik Witbooi in 1887, and then served the people from Berseba. In 1894 Witbooi returned and started to rebuild the church. The first reserve proclaimed by the German authorities was in the vicinity of Gibeon, at Rietmond – Kalkfontein. This received much attention from the missionaries. During the second resistance war of the Witboois in 1904 Gibeon became the focus point of the Witboois' war effort. The builder and supervisor of the Rhenish mission at Rietmond – Kalkfontein was shot in 1905. As a result the reserve was cancelled.

Although only 65 Christians remained by 1906, missionary Spellmeyer continued the ministry. He trained evangelists by accommodating them in his house.¹⁶

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Church in Gibeon was running smoothly again. It had a beautiful church building and a new parsonage had just been completed. Evangelists served a wide area up to Kub, Maltahöhe, Kalkfontein, Mariental and Hoachanas. Petrus Jod ministered in Maltahöhe and Jakobus Jod in Mariental. Stampriet and the old mission station at Gochas became outposts of Gibeon. At Kranzplatz a masonry school was established by the Rhenish mission in 1926. At the handing over of this large district to missionary Fritz Meyer in 1939, the Gibeon Church had 5815 members with 2748 communicants in the Church.

In 1866 a men mission was established at Keetmanshoop for the first time. Missionary Tobias Fenchel served at Keetmanshoop for 33 years (1877-1910). The local Christian Chief had a strong influence on the people and succeeded in staying clear of tribal conflict. After the first church building was washed away in a flood in 1890 a new building was inaugurated in 1895. Gradually this town became the Southern headquarters of the government, resulting in many people of all kinds assembling at Keetmanshoop. By 1903 the Church had 1400 members, the largest congregation in Namaland at the time, maintaining a high standard of Christian living. In 1907 missionary Niemeyer was appointed for a hundred Herero people in

¹⁶ Reinhard Kössler. The Persistent theme of the Great Rising: Witbooi Leaders and the RMS. Namibia Scientific Society Journal 47. Windhoek. Namibia. 1999. p. 25-26.

Keetmanshoop. By 1910 the congregation had 3500 members.¹⁷ The Rhenish mission continued to grow. Evangelist Zacheus Thomas was the minister of the Word at Klein-Karas.

4.3 The RMS in Namibia During the Period, World War I - II

In the period 1922-1957, the Rhenish Mission Church experienced severe decline due to two factors: war and secessions, followed by times of steady growth.

After suffering severely during and after WWI (1914-1919) the Rhenish Missionary Society suffered many hardships again during the period of WWII (1939-1945).

During WWI, most of the Rhenish Church Centres were replaced or closed down. The Augustineum training College at Gaub was closed in 1914, only to reopen again at Okahandja in 1923. Vedder's plan to establish missions for Kaokoland were terminated. Missionary Nyhof of Warmbad was moved to Otjiwarongo and Grootfontein, which destroyed the Church center at Warmbad. Many congregations had to move around during the war and at times lost all property. There was no support from Germany and no normal growth of work was possible. The only support came from the DRC, helping out financially.

Martial law during WWII, after 1939, disrupted the early efforts of church development of the Rhenish Mission. 6 missionaries were detained, while another 6 were under house arrest. They could not make or receive pastoral visits. No meetings could take place, not even of the church executive. Ministry on farms was also prevented by the mentioned military regulations. The closing down of the Paulinum Seminary for the training of Evangelists and pastors immediately after completion of the first three year program (1938-1940) came as a severe blow to the Rhenish mission.¹⁸

Paulinum was closed after its principal, missionary Fritz Pönnighaus was detained by the South African military. The Rhenish Mission Church, which already had a backlog with

¹⁷ Julius Baumann (ed). Van Sending tot Kerk: 125 Jaar Rynse Sending Arbeid in Suidwes-Afrika 1842-1967. Windhoek: John Meinert. 1967. p. 11-119.

¹⁸ Interview with Dr. Pastor W.A. Wienecke, Windhoek, Namibia. 20 November 2002.

(Dr. Wienecke is a retired Pastor of the RMS.)

respect to the training of indigenous leaders, would have to wait for another 8 years before pastoral education could resume. The financial needs of the Rhenish mission were severe. It was only partially relieved by donations from South Africa and the U.S.A. This financial crisis during the war motivated deliberations between the Rhenish mission and the DRC about the possibility of the DRC taking over the Rhenish mission in Namibia, in a similar way to a take-over of Rhenish Congregations in South Africa.¹⁹

4.4 The RMS and the Nama Leaders Before 1946

In his 1946 document to Dr Vedder and the other “revered elders of the Rhenish mission”, where he reflected on his service of 37 years in the RMS, Petrus Jod made a few important points on his experiences. Reflecting on how he was treated, both negatively and positively before the year of the schism, he said:

Through God’s grace I have been working in the service of Rhenish Mission of 37 years.

In the year 1909 old missionary Spellmeyer referred me to the missionaries’ conference at Warmbad and took me there for the former Präses Missionary Fenchel from K’hoop to examine me in front of the conference. At that time Präses Missionary Fenchel said, “I cannot accept a Nama teacher from the tribe which rebelled against our German Government as a school teacher. Anyhow, all my experiences with Nama teachers have been bad.”

Because of this remark I went back home from Keetmanshoop. And so it came to be that up to today I carry this label: “never had an education.” But I as a young guy of 21 years, I had to bear these difficult words the Präses said. Only because of old Missionary Spellmeyer I stayed in this service.²⁰

He then reflects on how he had to start his teaching and ministry work without any infrastructure or support, i.e. except of that of Rev. Spellmeyer. Such conditions continued throughout his career. He also asserts that he has been “neither a hindrance to a missionary nor a counter-worker”. He then says:

¹⁹ G. Menzel, Die Rheinische Mission Aus 150 Jahren Missionsgeschichte. VEM: Mission Press. 1978. p. 356.

²⁰ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Letter by Petrus Jod addressed to Präses Missionary Dr. Vedder. 1 July 1946.

But today I see that it does not help to take part in the Rhenish Mission and so wear down one's whole lifetime. If you are not white, then all this will not help. But we, myself and other men (in the service of the congregation), we do not serve the human beings at all. Together with the whites we serve the Lord, whom they serve and whom they taught us to know, but in the right way. For the time which the Lord will still give me, I will stand together with those men, who are of the same will and who serve this Lord in our people, in all weakness, through His grace.²¹

He then reflects on a 1939 Nama-evangelist conference, how white people the Nama treat, and that if the Nama would do the same towards whites, this would be a serious problem for the missionaries. He also says that the problem continues, namely that they are not given higher and better education. This, he says includes himself, because if there was a school to improve his education, he would like to do that. He also says that with regard to the practical school that they had, that the missionaries closed it without consultation. They did this despite all the work that they have put into the school. His reaction is then:

As far as my strength went I had wanted to serve together and I know that my colleagues have the same longing. We only want us and our people to get on. All we got, however, was promises and our own hope, all those years. So I ask myself: With that enthusiasm should I still work on?

Therefore such a kind of working together does not help. I would like being very surprised if there was a congregation, which did more than Maltahöhe to take this school as far. But my brothers and I do not do this work (the work for this) because of some white missionary pushing us but to help our people to advance whether you believe this or not. Now the school has been closed again, without us getting to know this. We were not even told a single word about it, but nevertheless, it will be us whose fault it is that it has been closed.

Even with all this I was committed to the work of the Rhenish Mission. But what does all this help me?....

This is why – in the time, which I will still, live, if the Lord will give me this – I am looking for my people and me somewhere else for the things (+gona-!gû: I will go and beg for them) you have promised to me, to us, to our people, but which you have not kept until today.²²

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Except for someone like Rev. Spellmeyer, there has developed a big gulf between the white missionaries and the Nama missionaries and teachers. It appears that the white missionaries

²¹ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Letter by Petrus Jod addressed to Präses Missionary Dr. Vedder. 1 July 1946.

²² Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Letter by Petrus Jod addressed to Präses Missionary Dr. Vedder. 1 July 1946.



had a different agenda than enhancing the lives of the Nama, or to do so only up to a point.

Apart from this general impression that Petrus Jod experienced from the RMS throughout his thirty-seven years of service, we also see that there were also political undertones among the Nama, with regard to their relationships with the government of the day. This is so because the Ethiopian movement was already well-known in Namibia by the beginning of the twentieth century. In the brief attempt to the historical survey of the AMEC, it is stated:

It was in fact, about 1900 that the Ethiopian Movement was felt in Namibia. The missionary review of April 1905 reported that the leader of the Nama insurrection, Hendrik Witbooi was a Christian that they trusted. But he had been convinced that the Ethiopian Movement leader in that region was a prophet sent by God to free the blacks from white domination. Hendrik Witbooi had thrown himself heart and soul into the plans of those who are preaching a Black church for black people in Africa. Although at one point Witbooi was excommunicated from the RMS, secession did not take place. He was readmitted into the church by sympathetic missionaries. The Namibian mission work continued to be stable for a long time. But stability does not mean the absence of injustice and discrimination. Black church members continued to be discriminated against by the missionaries. The church leadership remained solely reserved for the missionaries, whereas Africans served at best as evangelists and workers of the missions.²³

On Petrus Jod and his collaboration with the revolt, we read:

These ideas were not without effect on the missionaries. Many of them had become strong representatives of the German colonial establishment. In 1909 Präses Fenchel rejected the employment of Petrus Jod as a teacher in a mission school, because he was part of the revolt against German occupation, 1904-1907.

From government documents, we see that indigenous resistance is usually referred to as “Native unrest” and that the pass law system, suspicion of people and their movements, and the possibility of acquiring weapons, were related to this. In a report of the 19 January 1925, we read:

Native Unrest Gibeon, 1915-1954. (NAN), Windhoek

²³ Box SWAA 1423: A216/6. Rhenish Mission General. A brief unknown attempt at a historical survey of the AMEC with a focus on education and a few perspectives on white rule in SWA/ Namibia. Since the document quotes from the Windhoek Observer of 26 January 2002, it is of recent origin.

Office of the Magistrate,
Maltahohe, 19th January, 1925.

1851/1396/8

The Secretary for South West Afrca,
Wndhoek

Native Unrest. Re

With further reference to my report of 5th instant, I beg to inform you that I have now interviewed Mr. Kirsten who states that Noasip wanted a pass from him to see his parents who are residing in the Rehoboth District, and that as the boy had worked well for him he granted him such a pass, but because he has two bastards also working on the farm he gave the note to Noasip addressed to Richter so that the boy would leave, immediately without getting in touch with these two bastards, and as far as I am aware he did not speak to the two boys before leaving. Noasip never came to this office to get permission to enter the District of Rehoboth. I have warned Mr. Kirsten that in future he may not give passes of this description and he has promised to comply with the law in future. I attach no political importance to this matter.

On the 9th instant I had a Hottentot before me named Hendrik Zaal who was charged with being found without a pass in this District. This boy pleaded guilty to the charge and after evidence was taken he was duly convicted. Accused stated to me in Court that he came from the Keetmanshoop District that he had no pass to come here, and that when he got his ticket at the Railway Station, Keetmanshoop, he was not asked for his travelling pass by the Railway Authorities before issuing to him his ticket. I enclose a statement made by this boy to the Police prior to his arrest, and the reply received from the Police, Keetmanshoop, as regards the allegation made by Zaal that he had been issued with a pass. This boy was found on Farm Nomtsas, on the border of the Rehoboth District. As soon as this boy completes his term of imprisonment, I shall have him escorted out of the District.

On the 12th instant, whilst investigation Const. Ogden's matter, it was brought to my notice that an European, who stated his name was Wilhelm Graf von Meurs, who stated he was a resident of the Rehoboth District, was travelling in the District of Gibeon. He first of all stated that he was looking round for a farm and when a farm was offered to him, he suddenly changed the subject, and stated he was looking for a place where he could open a store. This man also told my informant that he was a Spy for the Republics during the Boer War in Holland, that he brought out papers to the Republics through the British Lines during hostilities, but that when he did this he stated that he was a Belgian. That during the Great War he was a Spy for Germany in London. He also stated to my informant that he was proceeding to my district, but so far I have not heard anything of him in this District. Later I heard that it is believed he was trekking in the direction of the Berseba Native Reserve. There may be absolutely nothing in this matter, but I consider that it is my duty to bring the report made to me to your Notice.

On 17th instant two Hottentots arrived here with passes issued by Chief Cris. Goliath of the Berseba Native Reserve. One pass was issued I think by the Chief himself but the other was written.²⁴

We read about the suspicions of carrying weapons as follows.

The Magistrate
Maltahöhe

In reply to your confidential Minute No. 2/19/21 of the 28th ultimo, I am directed to acquaint you that it is impossible to provide a store of arms and ammunition at Maltahöhe nor can a free issue of such to members of a Rifle Club be contemplated.

The question of the establishment of a Rifle Club at Maltahöhe is under consideration.

I am to add that rumours of native unrest have been persistent some time now among the German population. Investigations have been made in every possible direction but nothing has been found to substantiate this and the Administration is satisfied that there is not the slightest reason to fear any trouble with the natives.

You should do all in your power to prevent the spread of such rumours and to allay the unrest among the Germans.²⁵

We read about further developments as follows:

Extract of a letter from the magistrate of Maltahöhe, dated 28 May 1921 to the Secretary for South West-Africa, Windhoek

“ALLEGED UNREST OF NATIVES IN SWA”

“This meeting assembles for the purpose of securing arms and ammunition for the European population of the town and district as the police have become nervous of news received of a contemplated Native Rising. Informed them that their fears were groundless and whatever intentions natives had or contemplated the government was fully alive to the conditions.”²⁶

²⁴ Box SWAA 1851/ 1396/8. Letter on “Native unrest in Gibeon” by the Magistrate of Maltahöhe to the Secretary of South West Africa. 19 January 1925.

²⁵ Box SWAA 1851/ 1396/8. Response by the Secretary of South West Africa. Undated.

²⁶ Box 1851: A396/8 Native unrest in Gibeon (1915-1954). Letter by Maltahöhe magistrate to Secretary for SWA. 28 May 1921. The insightful document, Box SWAA 489. A50/227, Letter by the Superintendent of Krantzplatz, Gibeon, addressed to the Native Commissioner, Mariental, on “Native unrest” of 14 November 1948 is also headed by: “Onrus en Propaganda onder Nie-Blankes in Namaland”.

Finally, the next quotation provides a sample of the kinds of issues which the Nama felt as being political problems. It is these, and how they relate to farms and property, that is important for understanding the general condition which the Nama evangelists and teachers trained by the RMS and who would become the leaders in the schism, shared.

We beg to submit our grievances and needs to you. And first of all we wish Your Honour to pardon if perhaps we address a wrong word to you.

We WITBOOI BEOPLE desire and request that farms be given us for our own property, for life. We have already submitted this request to Major Herbat at Windhoek. Whereupon he answered: "Very well! I have heard. Now go and meet together and choose unto yourselves farms and ground which satisfy your ideas, for you were the first in the country (landsvorlingen?) and know better the nature of the country, therefore choose for yourselves such farms and contain them in your hearts. When the Land Commission comes, I shall direct them first to Gibeon and shall come personally with them and help you to get the farms." Therefore we again today request Your Honour for these farms which we have chosen and retained on Major Herbat's word that the farms will be given to us. This interview we had with Major Herbat on the 15th May. And we have also submitted our request to the Magistrate on the 22nd September 1922. The following are the farms which we have chosen:

I. GIBEON as capital.

II. RIETMOND, as the promised legacy of our late Father and Chief Hendrik Witbooi.

III. JAKALSFONTEIN.

IV. VISRIVIER, from KAMEELHAAR to JAKALSFONTEIN

These are the farms which we as natives know and about which there will be no dissatisfaction on our side, as they are all capable of yielding the necessities of life, for human beings and animals, for a lifetime.

II. GRIEVANCE: We all wish that the Chief may have only one branding iron with his mark and that all his people may use this iron for branding. This is easier.

III. GRIEVANCE: This is a hard country for labourers and also for those wishing to sell their stock to white people. When the month is past the labourer comes to his master to receive his wages. The master answers that he has no money and the labourer must take in place of his wages stock, cattle, clothes and drink. This applies to those who do contract work for white people, with their own wagons and oxen, also. The same answer is given to anyone wishing to sell for money cattle, stock, etc. The master says: "if you demand cash, take your pass and go and look for a master who will give you cash". This labourer continues to ask for his money and the master gets annoyed, beats the servant or dismisses him; the servant gets annoyed and beats the master, whereupon he is brought before court by this master and is arrested and put in prison. Now, Your Honour, what are we to do in these hard times? The Government taxes us and when the time comes and we cannot pay we are put in

prison and punished. Wherewith shall we pay these taxes? Will the law accept our taxes in cattle, goats, clothes and drink with which we are paid our wages at the store? We have no cash, only the white people have this. We can only get it by working and now we cannot even get it in that way. Our money is valuable but now the white people have reduced the prices. (Onse geld is de waarde, maar die is ook van witte menschen afgezet de prys).

These are the main grievances. This is our intention of going to Windhoek, the seat of Government, as we are not satisfied to deal with this matter in such a hurry and on paper, as it is very important. Therefore, when we hear that Your Honour is again at home we will come there.

In conclusion I still wish to say something about the branding irons. We thank Your Honour that you have said "Open your mouths and tell me everything that you are dissatisfied about" and it is well that you have come. So now we submit the matter of the branding irons to you. We have heard from trustworthy men that the Government makes no difference between white and black and we believe that this law says all are equal. White shall not laugh and the black man cry, all shall be happy. And how beautiful it is that children of different colour but one father shall be treated as the children of one father! The white people buy their irons with their money and we also buy our irons with our money; why then are the irons given to the white people and our irons retained? If one man buys from another a wagon, horse or something else he gives to the owner of the article money, and he goes home with his wagon, horse or article that he has bought and the other sits on his stoep with his money and so peace prevails. How many persons would be found by the law, who have marked for their own the cattle, and horses of other folk? These then should be punished for their wrong doing. But then we also often see that white people commit theft and are punished by the law. No, Your Honour, I do not say that we are just and do not thief, theft takes place everywhere where there are people. And therefore the law is there and the law is more subtle and wise than those that imagine they are subtle and commit theft. Therefore do not guard the irons, give us the irons which we pay for and then guard and watch over us. And then you will find out who is the thief. White people think all black people are dishonest (schelm), but those who steal will be judged by the Heavenly King one day at the final judgement. No, Your Honour, we do not order you --- we are weeping --- regard our tears in our hearts --- and give us the irons in our keeping and keep watch and guard over us. And punish anyone that is caught in thieving such punishment as he shall have deserved.

ON BEHALF OF THE MEETING

Isaak Witbooi, Hendrik Witbooi, Petrus Witbooi, Christof Lambert, Josofat Witbooi, Jeftha Kuhanga, Andreas Keister, Jakob Stebe, Filleppus Karigumab, Niklas v.d. Westerhuis, Didrik Keister, and Jakobus v.d. Westerhuis.²⁷

²⁷ Box SWAA 1122A158/6 Native Reserves (1918-1931). Memo by Nama leadership addressed to an unidentified senior official in the SWAA Administration. This memo deals with the grievances of the Nama leaders relating to farms and property and is signed by Isaak Witbooi, Hendrik Witbooi, Perus Witbooi, Christof Lambert, Josofat Witbooi, Jephtha Kuhanga, Andreas Keister, Jakob Stebe, Filleppus Karigumab, Niklas v.d. Westerhuis Didrik Keister, Jakobus v.d. Westerhuis. 22 September 1922.

It is definitely true that it is due to the fact that they did not experience political independence or collective governance, that such sentiments also fed into the schism as it was actively initiated in January 1946. We can say this because many of the religious leaders who initiated the schism were also politically active at some point in their careers.

4.5 The RMS and the Nama Leaders: January – April 1946

1946, former graduates of the missionaries, under the leadership of Zacheus Thomas and Petrus Jod started to organize themselves in order to demand self-determination for the church. At a meeting in Keetmanshoop, the leaders of the schism developed a Protokoll über die bei der evangelistenzusammenkunft festgelegten Punkte”, which outlined the procedures they would follow for the schism if the RMS does not allow black leadership amongst other concerns they had. The in summary, items in the “Protokoll” are:

1. Prayer
 2. List of those present
 3. Discussion of the report by the Zacheus Thomas on 7 May 1945 that the Southern RMS congregations would be handed over to the DRC and the article in the “Burger” of 31 October 1945, reporting that RMS – Congregations will be given over to DRC.
 4. We will resist such an act. We will not be guided any more by a white church, if the missionaries continue with this without consulting us and treating us with such contempt.
 5. What we agree on must be kept secret.
 6. When we are being sold out we are treated as live animals that are to be slaughtered.
 7. We will only stay with the RMS if the style of leadership changes, and they incorporate our guidelines for leadership.
 8. We will tell the congregations about the DRC sell-out.
 9. We will clarify what rightfully belongs to whom.
 10. Cooperation between missionaries and us is non-existent, we are only informed after they decided. In case one of us is retrenched, he must inform the secretary or the chairman.
 11. There are some who are not present, but we know they go along with us, and they need to be informed of the contents of this “Protocol”.
 12. The Evangelists from Warmbad can only speak for themselves, but as far as they are concerned they go along with us.
 13. The Std.2 children are in need of a textbook for their mother tongue classes. So we will compile stories from our tradition for the book. It will also be illustrated.
 14. Do not let your letters and reports lie around!
- Signatures.²⁸

²⁸ Archival material. “Protokoll über die bei der evangelistenzusammenkunft festgelegten Punkte.” 12 January 1946. (This document is signed by Zacheus Thomas as chair, Petrus Jod as co-chair, and Markus Witbooi as secretary and assistant scriba among others. These are: Johannes Dausab, Jakobus Jod, Daniel Dausab, Johannes Josob, L. Snewe, E. Jager, and Hendrik S. Isaak.)

The letter which was made public, was titled, "Agitasie teen die blanke Genootskappe." It has six paragraphs. In the first, it states:

Namens die nie-blanke gemeentes en die nie-blanke gemeentelede van die suidelike deel van SWA wat tot dusver onder die geestelike bearbeiding van die RSG was, wens ons hiermee te kenne te gee, dat die gemeentes weier om verder onder die bearbeiding van enige blanke Genootskap te wees, die RSG of die NGK. Uit die volgende beskrywings sal die redes duidelik blyk.²⁹

The document then refers to the fact that the Nama has been served by the RMS for nearly one hundred years, and that the RMS has failed to make them independent, and that the social and moral condition in which both the Nama and white people find themselves, are due to the policy of the RMS in SWA.

The third paragraph shows why the policy will never bring about upliftment and development (opheffing en ontwikkeling). It refers to the evangelists' and teachers' own experiences of the RMS missionaries, the difference in policy with the Finnish Missions in Ovamboland (which encourage independence), and RMS "books" in which it is explicitly stated that it is not policy to uplift and develop the Nama people. The most serious however, is that the funds the church members provide are not used for church reparations and other expenses, and also that they are not spiritually served. It closes with the sentence: "Gevolglik sien ons nie meer kans om verder onder die beleid van daardie Genootskap te staan nie.

The fourth paragraph focuses on the humiliating attitudes of the whites towards non-whites. In the most important part, it says:

Dan die rede waarom dit geweier word om onder enige blanke Genootskappe te wees is: as volg van die veragtended en vernederende houding van sommige blanke, ingesluit ook sommige teenswoordige leraars en predikante, oor die algemeen teenoor die nie-blankes. Alhoewel ons nie begeer om blankes te wees of om gelyk met hulle te staan nie, besef ons darem dat ons ook mense is, mense met onsterflike siele, mense wat, wat die tydelike betref, definitiewe deel van ons samelewing uitmaak.³⁰

²⁹ ELCRN archives. The actual letter of the notification of the breakaway from the RMS, signed by the Nama leaders in Keetmanshoop. Pastor P.A. Schmidt handed the letter to Dr Vedder. 12 January 1946.

³⁰ ELCRN archives. The actual letter of the notification of the breakaway from the RMS, signed by the Nama leaders in Keetmanshoop. Pastor P.A. Schmidt handed the letter to Dr Vedder. 12 January 1946.

The last two paragraphs and the conclusion focus on the fact that the governance policy must be based on the congregation and the church board. It says:

Ten laaste, as die RSG voort bestaan om ons onder sy geestelike bearbeiding moet bly, weier ons om verder saam te gaan, tensy die beleid en bestuur wat voorheen was, verander word. In die geval eis ons dat die gemeente en kerk vir die gemeente deur die gemeente bestuur word. Die mag berus by die gemeente, d.i. die Kerkraad, en daar is nie alleen-heerskappy van die predikant nie.

Evangeliste, ouderlinge en kosters vorm die Kerkraad, met die predikant as voorsitter. Alle kerksake moet in halfjarige kerkraadsvergaderinge bespreek en beslis word. Daar kan sekretaris en tesouriers gekies word wat verantwoordelik is van alle verrigtings en besluite van die inkomste en uitgawes. Geen inkomste en uitgawes geskied sonder die medewete en toestemming van die Kerkraad nie.

AS DIE KERK VOORTAAN OP HIERDIE SISTEEM
BASSEER WORD, DAN GAAN ONS SAAM.
Anders nie³¹

The document is stamped with the stamp of the Evangeliste- en Onderwysersbond, Namaland.

It is signed by Z. Thomas, J. Dausab, D. Dausab, J. Jod, and M. Witbooi.

For the AMEC which would come into existence later this year, it is significant that this policy proposal in the last two paragraphs effectively takes the decision making power out of the hands of the white missionaries (and also ministers), and puts it in the hands of the congregation. It is also important to note that the same is done as far as money is concerned.

From this time forward, Zacheus Thomas and some of the congregations in the South, especially Keetmanshoop, Mariental and Maltahöhe opposed the appointment of white ministers or chairs for meetings. This is evident from a letter by Dr. Vedder to Zacheus Thomas and his co-workers in the RMS – congregation Keetmanshoop. He responded to their rejection of such leaders during February, March, April and May, i.e. on the committed Evangelist from Lüderitz and also other white missionaries appointed in the South (for example Neumeister in Keetmanshoop), in his letter dated 6 May 1946. Here he argues that the Nama must be grateful for such leadership, because it is sponsored from Germany!

³¹ ELCRN archives. The actual letter of the notification of the breakaway from the RMS, signed by the Nama leaders in Keetmanshoop. Pastor P.A. Schmidt handed the letter to Dr Vedder. 12 January 1946.

Nou vra ek vir julle: Waarvan het jul leraars en susters hierdie tyd gelewe? Het hulle lastig geword vir die gemeente? Weet julle dan nie wie in vroeëre tyd daardie hulp gestuur het? Sendingvriende in Duitsland het dit gedoen.³²

The RMS was fully supported from Germany. After the first World War the Rhenish Mission was almost bankrupt, and the funds available were spent for German personnel rather than for institutions for the education of Namibians. Even so, the RMS continued to reject the request for equal Nama and German leadership.

Further, the missionaries under the leadership of Vedder did not show any reluctance to enter into the agreement with the South African government, which ensured government funding for the mission schools for the price of the government control. The agreement ensured that schools for Africans should not offer more than four years of education.³³ This meant that such basic schooling which prevented further education, and only produced Namas with a basic schooling, fit for farm labour.

One needs to also point out and appreciate the pioneering nature of the early missionary endeavors as well as that of the church. Such work represented a breakthrough and success in many respects. Initially, there not only was the need to have parsonages and churches, but also very soon there was also strong desire to train the indigenous people as co-workers. In this context Kössler observed:

The missionary stationed in Gibeon from 1903-1939, Christian Spellmeyer, occupies a quite special place in mission annals. At a very early date, Spellmeyer advocated financial autonomy of the mission congregations as well as a largely independent role for the "eingeborene" evangelist and teachers. In particular, he had made considerable efforts from the mid 1920's onwards to push the missionary society towards consenting to ordain as pastors suitable persons among the chief evangelists. These efforts were frustrated by his superiors but appreciated by the locals.³⁴

Another positive effect of training was that the local ministers were better acquainted with the customs and traditions of their fellow believers. They not only spoke the same language they could also easily speak to the hearts of the people. Training and equipping the local

³² Archival material. ELCRN Archives. Letter of Dr. Vedder. The content is in Afrikaans. Windhoek. 6 May 1946.

³³ Hanns Lessing. The History of Paulinum Seminary. 2000. p. 13.

³⁴ R. Kössler. 1999. p. 20.

people were very important in the history of mission work. This makes it even more difficult to understand why the RMS prevented the ministers to take full control of their ministry.

Missionary work was also accompanied by increased infrastructure and facilities. Pastors, evangelists and teachers received training. Seminaries were built to produce capable co-workers to serve the community better. The church acknowledged her responsibility in the fields of education and health. In short, the church sounded her voice in all spheres of Christian life.

Despite such positive events in mission history, the missionaries were not prepared to accept African Christians as equals. For example, for many missionaries it was unthinkable that black Christians were capable of being in charge of their congregations, without any assistance from the missionaries. For this reason, two independent churches seceded from the RMS. First, in 1946, the AMEC broke away from the RMS. They revolted against dependence on the RMS and the missionaries' refusal to ordain Africans as pastors. In 1955, the Oruaano church seceded from the RMS. The causes and eventual founding of the Oruaano cannot be understood without an understanding of the tribal structure and traditional religion of the Herero, but also their concerns on their own leadership – which had similar characteristics in the RMS as to the Nama leadership. I address this briefly towards the end of this chapter.

4.6 The RMS and the Nama Leaders: May – July 1946

The seed that was planted by Mangena Mokone in South Africa spread over to Namibia. There is also evidence that Rev. Gow who was sent from America to South Africa and who was stationed in Cape Town visited Namibia shortly after the schism. From this it seems as if the leaders of the AMEC schism had contact with him but no evidence could be found of this. In his report to the Native Commissioner of Mariental, the Superintendent of Krantzplatz near Gibeon wrote on 14 November 1948.

Op 3 Julie 1946 het die skeuring in die Rynse Sendng-gemeente amptelik plaasgeving. Daarna het 'n sekere Dr. Gow Suidwes besoek. Hy is 'n leier van die AME-beweging in die Unie en vermoedelik 'n kleurling uit Amerika afkomstig. Hy sou dan ook besoek aan Sy Edele die Adminstrateur gebring het. Van die leiers van die beweging sê dat die Dr. Gow daarna aan hulle gesê het: "Ek sal julle ophelp tot

julle kan loop en kan sterk word. Dan, as ek sien julle kan mooi loop, sal ek julle los dat julle self verder aangaan.” Dit word gesê dat hy tans in Amerika kuier.

Hulle (die leiers) dink dat van al die kerke en goed die AME hulle help. Een van hulle het gesê: “Dr. Gow het al tweekeer aan ons geskrywe deur ons voormanne”. Op ‘n vraag aan een van die leiers waarom hy by die AME aangesluit het was die antwoord: “’n Mens kan nie altyd tussen die klippe rondkruip nie; mens moet ook eendag opstaan en regop loop.”³⁵

Despite such possible contacts, it is certain that the grievances of the Nama leaders were authentic and focused on local experiences and concerns. From the available correspondence the events and perspectives around the four months of May – July 1946 can be listed according to these documents. This is as follows.

4.6.1 May 1946

Above, we have seen what Vedder’s response was on the Nama RMS rejection of the white missionaries. He tried to make a case that they are there to help, and that since they are being paid from Germany, such money is only for them and not for the indigenous people.³⁶

Since the schism leadership has also already communicated their intention to break away from AMEC already on 12 January 1946³⁷, the RMS leadership knew about their intentions. In order to address this, Superintendent Rust who was stationed at Luderitz wrote a general letter to RMS personnel and church members when it became evident that the schism is imminent.³⁸

³⁵ Box SWAA 489. A50/227. Letter by the Superintendent of Krantzplatz, Gibeon, addressed to the Native Commissioner, Mariental, on “Native unrest”. 14 November 1948. This document contains information which the Superintendent must have received from a RMS informant, which means that by this date, more than two years after the secession, it was accepted as the date of schism.

³⁶ Box SWAA 489.A50/227.

³⁷ The actual letter of the notification of the breakaway from the RMS, signed by the Nama leaders in Keetmanshoop. Pastor P.A. Schmidt handed the letter to Dr Vedder. 12 January 1946.

³⁸ The documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Letter by F. Rust addressed to the RMS members in Namaland. 9 May 1946.

The newsletter of Missionary Rust to the brothers and sisters in Namaland heated the debate of administering the congregation. His newsletter from Lüderitz complains about the Nama evangelists' and the teachers' rejection of missionary Neumeister. Rust thinks the Nama leaders complained because they want to have Zacheus Thomas as their pastor, but none of the Evangelists is yet ready to guard the legal right of RMS in such a big place with such a high number of administrative problems.

He also mentions the DRC-article in the "Burger" and the RMS's work among the "heathens". They say, if they are still heathen after 100 years of RMS, then they can well live without the RMS, and that the missionaries would not be able to bring them any further anyway. In other places they already have indigenous pastors such as in Ovamboland. Rust commented: "Why did they not talk to us?" but he ignores that the Nama had a history in which they already sporadically complained about this issue.³⁹

Rust met a delegation of 20 men: "We do not want any white missionary anymore, neither Neumeister nor Eisenberg." He quotes Zacheus Thomas who said to him (without being asked), "There is a thing that is called communism, that goes through the whole world, and maybe it will also come to us".

Rust considers it would be good if Zacheus Thomas were to serve Warmbad Congregation and Töttemeyer (when discharged from the camp) to serve Keetmanshoop congregation. This was the full report of Missionary Rust, during his visit to Keetmanshoop.⁴⁰

In my opinion Missionary Rust wants to diffuse the hostile environment, which was prevailing. He also wants to restore the situation to calmness. After receiving his report the Nama leaders sent the following letter to missionary Rust from Keetmanshoop:

Die Superintendent

Mnr. F. Rust

³⁹ Rust addresses the issues stated in the document, "Agitasie teen die blanke Genootskappe", ELCRN archives. The actual letter of the notification of the breakaway from the RMS, signed by the Nama leaders in Keetmanshoop: Pastor P.A. Schmidt handed the letter to Dr Vedder. 12 January 1946.

⁴⁰ Archival material Berlin. 0098-0102. Newsletter: Rust to the brothers and sisters in Namaland. 09-05-1946.

Lüderitz

Geagte Superintendent

Ons het die laaste poging gemaak met die gemeente om die gemeente van sy standpunt te beweeg tot terugkering, dit het egter op mislukking uitgeloop.

Die gemeente verklaar duidelik dat sy onder geen onstandighede onder die bestuur van die Rynse Sending sal staan nie. Die Kerkraad het saam gekom en die brief van Mnr. Rust deurgelees en die saak oorweeg.

Na die grondige samepreskings het die saak in ander rigting beweeg, ooreenkomstig die stemme. Die Kerkraad het besluit om die pad van die gemeente te kies. So gee ons, die Ouderlinge en die Evangeliste hiermee ons finale antwoord te kenne, aangesien ons die pad van meerderheid volg. En verklaar duidelik dat ons vanaf hierdie datum onherroeplik uit tree en sal hulp by enige ander kerkgenootskap soek.

Ons sal die gemeente bedien met die Evangeliese Christelike bediening soos ons opgevoed is.

Geteken

J. Eippinge, Z. Hange, S. Pietse, E. Thomas, D.V. Neel, J. Jantse, J. Cloete, John Dausab, Th. Windstaan, Jakobus Februarie, Zacheus Thomas, P. Bantam, A. Murine, and P. Gertze⁴¹

From the perspective of the AMEC, this letter should serve as the historical one, indicating the date that the Keetmanshoop congregation broke away from the RMS. The others would later follow. The official recognition of the break was only acknowledged on 3 July by the RMS.

There are two further communications from the Nama leaders in Keetmanshoop. The first letter is dated 27 May 1946 and is signed by five Nama leaders, including Zacheus Thomas.

Keetmanshoop

27/5/1946

Aan die Superintendent

Mnr. Dr. H. Vedder en leraars

Plaaslik

⁴¹ Archival material. ELCRN archive. The letter is in Afrikaans. Windhoek 13 May 1946. 377. The letter is also available in Box SWAA 1423: A216/6. Rhenish Mission General. Letter by Nama leaders to Mr. F. Rust, Superintendent of the RMS based at Lüderitz, stating that they are breaking away from the RMS.

Geagte Mnre

Nadat ons samespreking deeglik gehou het, het ons op ons vorige besluit neergekom.⁴²

Ons sien nie moontlikheid om verder op beloftes saam te gaan nie dus sal ons bly bestaan daarop, aangesien ons glo dat die Here ons sal help.

Ons bedank egter die Rynse Sending vir dit wat sy aan ons gedoen het.

Met beste groete.

Geteken: Salomon Pieters, Zach Thomas, John Dausab, Th Windstaan, and Dirk van Neel.⁴³

Op hierdie brief van die Nama leiers het Dr. Vedder as volg gereageer. Die brief is gedateer 1946, geen maand en dag van skrywe.

Geliefde medewerkers
Van ons Rynse Sending-gemeente
Keetmanshoop!

Hierdie brief is my laaste woord aan julle, voordat ek weer vertrek. En met hierdie brief gee ek nogeens vir julle my hand en bid: "As julle wil, dat ons hier in die Rynse Sending-gemeente moet bly, dan kom en werk saam met ons onder die bestuur van die Rynse Sending"!

Laat julle werk vir julle wys! Kyk na die klein kudde! My ore het in hierdie tyd ook die woorde gehoor van gemeentelede wat sug en treur oor die dinge wat tot afbreuk van die Sending lei.

Die eenvoudiges, die weemoediges moet julle versterk, hulle wat Gods woord alleen soek, wat nou die regte leiding nie kan sien nie. Sterk vir hulle, saam met ons, julle leraars, en keer hulle wat weg wil dwaal. Julle kan tog nie van hulle op die dwaalpad lei nie. Daar was dinge wat julle harte beswaar het. Ek het herhaaldelik vir julle gesê, hoe staan dit met die posisie van ons Sending en die woorde wat van ander kant gepubliseer is. Baie slegte gedagtes is geuit teen ons, ook in julle harte het julle slegte gedagtes laat opkom.

⁴² This is the one of 13 Mat 1946.

⁴³ Box SWAA 1423: A216/6. Rhenish Mission General. Correspondence between the Nama Leaders and Dr. H. Vedder. The letter by the Nama leaders is signed by five Nama leaders including Zacheus Thomas. The others are: Salomon Pieters, Johannes Dausab, Th Windstaan and Dirk van Neel. 27 May 1946. It is also present in: ELCRN correspondence between the Nama leaders of the 1946 AMEC Schism and Dr. Vedder and Superintendent Rust. Letter by Nama Leaders to Dr. Vedder. 27 May 1946.

Laat ons op albei kante dit vergeet en vergewe wat die ander mag nie reg gedoen het nie en in vertroue 'n nuwe begin maak.

Julle het nog meer dinge gesoek: julle wens vir die evangeliste meer gesag en kan nie verstaan nie dat ons nie die administrasie van die groot gemeente Keetmanshoop in Sakeus se hande kan laat lê nie. Ek sê vir julle evangeliste-broeders: soek tog nie nog meer en swaarder verantwoording as die wat op julle gelê is nie.

Daardie amp wat julle bedien, bedien dit getrou; die sending het julle van haarself aan 'n plaas gestel wat julle vroeger nie verwag het nie.

Ons leraars waardeer jul dienste, maar optyd sien ons nog nie, dat ons in die hande van een van julle die groot administrasie van die groot gemeente Keetmanshoop kan gee nie.

Sien julle nie almal wat in gang is nie? Dat die gehele Rynse Sendingwerk uitmekaar sal gaan nie? Julle moet nie vir afbreuk werk nie, maar na jul beroeping gaan en weer help, om van die klein kudde af miskien, as die mense hulle nie wil laat keer nie, die gemeente van Christus op te bou. "Vrees hulle glad nie en wees ook nie ontsteld nie, as julle terwille van die geregtigheid ook gesmaad sal word nie" (1 Petr. 3:14).

Ons sien 'n ding wat aan die gang is. Die "leuenaar van die begin", die Satan, wil Christus se Kerk omstoot. Eers sê hy:

"Julle het die sending nie nodig nie, julle moet self die leierskap van die gemeentes in hande neem". Op die oomblik gebruik hy nog evangeliste en ouderlinge wat die meerderheid na hom toe moet bring. Later sal die vyand van die waarheid openbaarlik ontstaan teen die kerk en teen God's Woord, nie net teen 'n Sending-Bestuur nie.

In die Here wees hartlik gegroet van julle oue leraar.

H. Vedder.⁴⁴

Similar to Rust above, Vedder interprets the decision to break away as only the wish of Zacheus Thomas, to control the congregation. This is a blatant and conscious mis-interpretation. It does not take into consideration the actual proposal for a policy change as found in the last two paragraphs of the 12 January 1946 "Agitasie" document.

In a confidential letter of 31 May 1946, Vedder nevertheless identified eight points or rules in terms of which the RMS should deal with those who participate in the schism. These are

⁴⁴ Box SWAA 1423: A216/6. Rhenish Mission General. Correspondence between the Nama Leaders and Dr. H. Vedder.

summarized in a document that Mayer prepared for a “deputation” meeting in Keetmanshoop on 4 September 1946. These rules are as follows:

1. Every person who wants to leave must hand in his congregational membership card in person to the missionary of the station; the members of the congregation were baptized and confirmed one by one, have received Holy Communion one by one and promised faithfulness towards God and the congregation one by one. So they can leave this commitment only one by one. If membership cards are collectively handed in this is not a declaration of leaving. Membership contribution cards and baptismal certificates will not be handed in.
2. Like before, services will take place regularly in the church. It is the property of the Rhenish Mission, which will not allow resigned preachers to take services therein. If numbers are small we will think of Jesus’ word, in which he promised those who come together in his name to be near them, even if there are only two or three.
3. Only faithful members of the congregation will be allowed to take part in baptism and Holy Communion, not those who resigned.
4. The membership cards, which were handed in, will be kept safely and will be given back to those who ask for them, if they admit they did wrong to leave.
5. From the day of his declared resignation an evangelist will not receive a salary any more.
6. Teachers who have resigned will stay employed. The education administration (school board) will not permit the mission to dismiss them. The children of members who have left will stay in school as long as their parents send them; as even the children of heathen are accepted in our schools.
7. Our teachers will continue their teaching as usual, likewise our nurses. They are not to ask whether somebody is a member of Rhenish Mission or not. Their service is for everybody.
8. Churches, schools and living quarters, which are not on land that is registered in the name of Rhenish Mission, will stay the property of this society in every respect.⁴⁵

These rules were obviously used in practice. They could also serve to prevent some from leaving.

⁴⁵ Archival material, Wuppertal. Mayer’s summary of the main events on the schism, from 13 May 1946 to Vedder’s recommendations as to how to deal with members who broke away from the RMS, 31 May 1946. He made the summary for a “deputation” meeting in Keetmanshoop on 4 September 1946.

4.6.2 June 1946

The preparation for the schism since January 1946 triggered the growing consciousness among black people to control their own affairs. This was the schism from within the church, although political undercurrents were active. It was the first time that a voice of protest was heard from the indigenous church in Namibia, to gain independence from mission control.

The most significant communication during June 1946 is the letter by Dr Vedder of 3 June 1946 in which he repeats his request of late May 1946. It is as follows.

Geliefde medewerkers van Ons Rynse Sending-gemeente Keetmanshoop.

Hierdie brief is my laas woord aan julle, voordat ek weer vertrek. En met hierdie brief gee ek nogeens vir julle my hand en bid: As julle wil, dat ons hier in die Rynse Sending Gemeente moet bly, dan kom en werk saam met ons onder die Bestuur van die Rynse Sending. Julle het nog meer dinge gesoek: julle wens vir die Evangeliste meer gesag en kan nie verstaan nie dat ons nie die administrasie van die groot gemeente Keetmanshoop in Zacheus Thomas se hande kan laat nie. Ek sê vir julle dat julle as Evangeliste nie 'n swaarder verantwoording het as wat reeds op julle gelê is nie.

Daardie amp wat julle bedien, bedien dit getrou. Julle moet nie vir afbreuk werk nie.

Jul ou leraar

Dr. H. Vedder⁴⁶

The spiritual leaders of the Nama speaking Rhenish Churches in the South (at Keetmanshoop, Mariental, Maltahöhe, Gibeon, Hoachanas and Bethanien, together with a large number of members severed their association with the Rhenish mission, and seceded. They soon joined the AME church. Katjavivi observed: In Namibia the AME had a tremendous appeal in Southern Namibia, the majority of the people, including the most influential portion of the community, became its members and supporters.⁴⁷ Another figure who appeared on the scene during the 1940's and 1950's proselytizing for the AME church

⁴⁶ Archival material. ELCRN archive. Letter of Dr. H. Vedder is in Afrikaans. Windhoek. 03-06.1946.

⁴⁷ Peter Katjavivi (ed). Church and Liberation in Namibia. London: Pluto Press. 1989. pp. 1-29.

in the central part of Namibia, with his headquarters in Windhoek, was Rev. M.M. Sephula. Many people joined the AME as a result of his efforts.

Most Herero members, however, left the AME church when the Oruaano church was established later.

Alfred Moleah observed: Christian churches complicity in colonial policy and practices and white paternalism and racist arrogance towards Africans, caused resentment, which at times flared into revolt and rejection.

Continued refusal by the Rhenish Mission Society to train black pastors led, in 1946, to a breakaway and the formation in South of the Nama Onderwysers en Evangelistebond (Nama teachers and Evangelists Union) at Maltahöhe. The Herero identified the RMS with German colonialism, and after. The German loss in the First World War, its influence among them simply melted away. RMS was later able to make a partial recovery among the Herero, but without significantly mending its ways.⁴⁸

The missionaries bemoaned the failure of the Evangelists to trust them and come back to them for enlightenment, the authors of the agitatie felt that the alleged plans amounted to selling us behind our backs like slaughter cattle. Kössler observed: An examination of the record shows that the break of trust was indeed one-sided. The correspondence between the RMS directorate in Namibia and their headquarters in Wuppertal, Barmen, Germany as well as that with representatives of the DRC reveal without the shadow of doubt that the transfer of the RMS stations to the DRC was a strategy that had been developed over many years. A central figure in the plan was Dr. Heinrich Vedder who officiated as Präses from 1937. Whilst the transfer may not have been the missionaries preferred option, given financial constraints it was treated as realistic possibility. The possibility of independence for (or even consultation with) the Namibian congregations apparently did not even enter the minds of the missionaries. This attitude is connected closely to a line of thinking that seems to have been self-evident to the missionaries.

⁴⁸ Alfred. T. Moleah. 1983. p. 103-104.

They situated their work quite naturally and unquestioningly within the framework of a German cultural calling, set in nationalist and colonial terms.⁴⁹

Missionary Spellmeyer understood the problems of the Nama leaders very well. He often came up with original views, he looked beyond the conventional, and he was original in his thinking and reacted in that way to many problems. One of his greatest advantages is that it was very easy for him to live in two different cultures that is the African culture and the culture of the Europeans. He appreciated the two cultures. Spellmeyer was very much interested in the Nama culture and was very enthusiastic. The Western culture was appreciated by him, he would give Western views. This made him to be able to bring the two cultures together in his mind and this played a major role in this comprehension and communication. On this point Pauly said: The 1946 AMEC schism among the leaders could be avoided, if Dr. Vedder seriously listened to the advice of Missionary Spellmeyer who work most of his ministry among the Namas. In short Spellmeyer's wish was to ordain the Nama leaders.⁵⁰

There was also another missionary F. Pönninghaus who favoured integration; he stated in 1937:

Why are not indigenious pastors in SWA, or is there only indignation in South West, for I had spoken for that aim, that we should allow the natives in South West Africa to become pastors.⁵¹

Missionary Pönninghaus ministered for 30 years as spiritual leader of the RMS. In 1921 he joined the RMS and came to Namibia. He committed one full year to language studies in Karibib, before taking up the pastorate in the Nama speaking congregation of Windhoek (1922-1933).

⁴⁹ R. Kössler. 1999. p. 23. and Archival Material. Berlin. Memorandum dated 20-11-1946. Missionary C. Spellmeyer. 0042-0044. The memorandum is addressed to Petrus Jod, Jacobus and Markus Witbooi.

⁵⁰ Interview with Pastor. P. Pauly, 20 November 2002, Windhoek. (Pastor Pauly is a retired minister of the RMS.)

⁵¹ Theo Sundermeier. *Wir aber suchten Gemeinschaft*. Witten: Luther-Verlag. 1973. p. 18.

In 1934 he was established in the Okahandja congregation for 4 years until 1938, before the mission's executive to start the training of Evangelist at Paulinum in 1938 called him. He was therefore the founder and first principal of the Paulinum Theological Seminary at Karibib in 1938.

The training of the first class of evangelist candidates at Paulinum had barely finished, when WW-11 broke out, with Germany as the main offender. As a German citizen the South African military forces interned missionary Pönninghaus. While in the internment camp, he utilized his time by publishing series of sermons for every Sunday of the year, as well as catechism handbook for use in Christian Education and Sunday Schools.⁵²

After his release from the intern camp in 1947, missionary Pönninghaus continued with theological training. He completed the second class of evangelist candidates. Two years later (1949) he started with the first class of pastoral candidates for the Evangelical Lutheran church. Until 1953, when he returned at the age of 68, he was the sole lecturer at Paulinum. In 1953 Pönninghaus returned to Germany, but continued his ministry by preparing a new translation of the Bible into the Nama language.

This task lasted for a period of 14 years (1953-1967). It was completed in 1967, when it was published and inaugurated festively by the Bible Society at Berseba.

The University of Bonn awarded missionary Pönninghaus an honorary doctorate for his gigantic work. In 1975 he died at the age of 90 and was buried at Otjiwarongo.⁵³

4.6.3 July 1946

For July, Petrus Jod wrote an important letter to Dr. Vedder. Most of the letter was already quoted under 4.4 above. This was in connection with how he reflected on how he and other Nama people have experienced the RMS and its missionaries. What is important for July, is that he wrote this about 17 days after the final break from AMEC perspective in the letter from Keetmanshoop and two days before the final recognition by the RMS that the schism

⁵² Julius Baumann (ed). 1967. p. 187.

⁵³ Immanuel, nuusblad van die ELKRN. July 1975. p. 10.

has indeed take place. The final recognition of the break by the RMS could be due to the fact that Vedder and others still thought that he would not join the secession.⁵⁴ From this letter, however, it is clear that he has joined it, and that there is no hope for reconciliation. This is so because he lists all the issues which he found wrong in the RMS from personal experience.

The issues include Präses Missionary Fenchel's statement: "I cannot accept a Nama teacher from the tribe which rebelled against our German Government as a school teacher. Anyhow, all my experiences with Nama teachers have been bad." Others are that he has given all his time and energy in situations where there was no infra-structure without adequate appreciation, that, if you are not white, it does not help you to work for a white organisation, that Vedder did not treat him right, and that he could not further continue his work only on the basis of promises. On the last two issues, he said:

As I said so and did not answer he [Vedder] jumped at me and threw words at me like: "You are an Evangelist and in our service, and when you are asked you must answer, and you must do what you are told. And this is the southern synod, and you as an evangelist should help to bring God's flock together, but you cause division. Instead of helping to build up you pull down, and you take the missionary's work away from him. This is not what an evangelist should be like.

In case I would stay in the service of the Rhenish Mission after these words, I would hear these same reproaches and have to answer these same questions after every incident, which would eventually happen. What kind of help do I still have here?

As far as my strength went I had wanted to serve together and I know that my colleagues have the same longing. We only want us and our people to get on. All we got, however, was promises and our own hope, all those years. So I ask myself: With that enthusiasm should I still work on?⁵⁵

Jod then denies that he made it difficult for the missionaries to do their work. He also denies the fact that he is one who destroys the church or functions as counter-worker (Gegenarbeiter) and gives examples of his commitment and work. Every time he comes back to the racial distinction that is made by the RMS – that Nama missionaries are not treated on

⁵⁴ See documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Mayer's summary of the main events on the schism, from 13 May 1946 to Vedder's recommendations as to how to deal with members who broke away from the RMS, 31 May 1946. He made the summary for a "deputation" meeting in Keetmanshoop on 4 September 1946.

⁵⁵ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Letter by Petrus Jod addressed to Präses Missionary Dr. Vedder. 1 July 1946.

an equal footing with the whites. He also points out time and again that they as Nama evangelists and teachers are never consulted with regard to their own affairs but only have decisions forced on them. He concludes again by referring to the promises of the missionaries, but say that he will now look for their fulfillment somewhere else. This paragraph, because of its different meaning could be quoted again.

Even with all this I was committed to the work of the Rhenish Mission. But what does all this help me?

This is why – in the time, which I will still, live, if the Lord will give me this – I am looking for my people and me somewhere else for the things (+gona-!gû: I will go and beg for them) you have promised to me, to us, to our people, but which you have not kept until today.

So take my thanks for all the good what you did for me and what you did for the sake of our people. May the lord reward you for all this!
As for us, we serve the LORD with al those who serve HIM. But I and all of us with all our people do not feel any enmity against you. The Lord may help us with this!

HE will not leave us, when we don't leave our faith, and we are only leaving Rhenish Mission.

I greet you as your pupil (student)

Petrus Jod⁵⁶

4.6.4 The Immediate Aftermath of the Schism in 1946

From available documents, the most significant events are the September meeting the RMS organized in Keetmanshoop and that Pastor Mayer compiled the information for, and the minutes of the meeting of the Commissioner of Native Affairs with Captain David Witbooi and the Council members and inhabitants of Gibeon in October 1946.

In the first document, Mayer says that Brother Eisenberg, (more than 70 years old) serves there together with the evangelist Zachäus Thomas. He also explains that there are “a Nama-Bergdama congregation, a Herero-ovambo congregation and a Coloured congregation (Bastards)”. He then explains that Brother Neumeister was called to Keetmanshoop because Brother Eisenberg wanted to retire. He says that the Nama leaders objected to this “in a long

⁵⁶ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Letter by Petrus Jod addressed to Präses Missionary Dr. Vedder. 1 July 1946.

letter". He replied to this letter and they did so in turn, giving reasons why they object. He then says:

It reported the illegal grazing of a Nama's horses, the dismissal of an unfaithful elder, the further discharging of another elder, who was ready to collect his salary but not ready to do the work he was told to do – all cases from Berseba. I instructed the Präses of the Nama Synod to investigate these cases. On two trips to Keetmanshoop Brother Rust did so. His investigation proved that the facts had been totally distorted by the accusing men, but is also showed that the leading men of the congregation were fiercely and persistently in opposition, that is those that are incurably dissatisfied, that must get their own way.

Brother Rust sent me this letter wishing for a board conference in Keetmanshoop. I immediately sent telegrams to all members of the board (i.e. the four Präses of synods) and also asked Brother Brockmann as Treasurer and Brother Spellmeyer as former Präses of the South synod to come to Keetmanshoop. Unfortunately I got a telegram Brother Pardey, who was ill), Brother Brockmann was also ill, Brother Spellmeyer first intended to come, but then he cancelled, and Brother Wemer was on a visit to farms. So I could only expect Brother W. Diehl and Brother Rust. We did not constitute a quorum as board. So I invited all the brothers from Namaland to a synod conference. We were to meet at Keetmanshoop on Sunday Rogate (26.5). On Monday the first meeting with the signers of that letter and the Brothers W. Diehl, W. Lind, Fr. Mayer, F. Eisenberg, W. Neumeister, W. Peter and F. Rust took place. "Hauptevangelist" Petrus Jod, to whom Missionary Spellmeyer had drawn our attention, also came.

In this second paragraph he continued to refer to the letter of 13 May 1946 to Superintendent Rust and then reports what the sequence of events were on RMS side. He further observed:

It soon turned out that the representation of the case in the letter – that the signers had tried hard to change the mind of the congregation – had been misleading. The writers had stirred up the congregation. (On Sunday Rogate I took the Herero service. There were many participants. In the afternoon Brother Rust took a service for the Nama and Coloureds. Only the Coloureds came. Those Namas and Bergdamas, however, who would have come, were cut off from going to church by posted demonstrators). We were curious to know which complaint would be voiced, to justify writing such a letter, like it was reported above.⁵⁷

On the issues involving himself, he says:

⁵⁷ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Mayer's summary of the main events on the schism, from 13 May 1946 to Vedder's recommendations as to how to deal with members who broke away from the RMS, 31 May 1946. He made the summary for a "deputation" meeting in Keetmanshoop on 4 September 1946.

The issues then stated were really scanty. Brother Neumeister's transfer to Keetmanshoop was not mentioned any more at all.

The following accusations were made against me: I had not seen to it that the evangelists got the gown – which had never been promised to them. I had not improved the school education. Their children were still not able to go on to Standard 6. They totally forgot that most parents take their children from school before Standard 4. In 1926 I had stated in a letter to him that it would not be wise to wake up sleeping dogs.

This I had indeed written. I had told him at that time that – if the higher Standards were introduced by government law – our teachers would get into a scrape because they would have to be dismissed and new teachers would get their posts. Soon enough they will demand higher qualifications from the schools. We, however, should be careful not to wake up sleeping dogs.

Further, I had not seen to it that the girls got a center to train them as nursing sisters. This is correct. Nevertheless, we don't even have a real hospital, except for the hospital in Rehoboth, which was opened last year. In another letter I had written: "Wait for another century, and then many wishes of today will be fulfilled." He, however, did not want to wait for 100 years.⁵⁸

Mayer then turned to Petrus Jod.

Petrus Jod of Maltahöhe, whom we had expected to oppose Zachäus Thomas' arguments and to help us, agreed to all of them. There were no additional complaints. The declaration of leaving/resignation was repeated. The schism had happened. They were not impressed when we explained to them what the consequences would be. All buildings of the stations plus church and school belong to the Rhenish Mission Society. Their declaration of leaving/resignation meant that they would resign from their work and not get any salary any more. They just withdrew silently. Oh, if they had accused us to not to give them freedom enough to evangelize, but to do everything without them, or that the salaries were not enough, then we would have co-operated with them. But they did not want to co-operate. They wanted to stick to the decision they had taken. To justify it, they had searched in the old letters for points to use as a weapon. Zachäus had a whole bundle of such letters.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Mayer's summary of the main events on the schism, from 13 May 1946 to Vedder's recommendations as to how to deal with members who broke away from the RMS, 31 May 1946. He made the summary for a "deputation" meeting in Keetmanshoop on 4 September 1946.

⁵⁹ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Mayer's summary of the main events on the schism, from 13 May 1946 to Vedder's recommendations as to how to deal with members who broke away from the RMS, 31 May 1946. He made the summary for a "deputation" meeting in Keetmanshoop on 4 September 1946.

He then elaborates on Zacheus Thomas:

What were the reasons for such a course of action? A tree has many roots, not only one. This schism (Abfallbewegung) did not come out of a congregation but started with the evangelists, especially Zachäus. He drew the other two evangelists to his side and was in union with Petrus Jod of Maltahöhe. Even the teachers of Keetmanshoop and the elders of the congregation came under his influence and leadership. The gown plays an important role. The letter of 1926, in which I explained to him, that the gown is only for those who had passed certain exams, and that a person who had not passed them, would be ridiculous in the gown, had been accepted at that time. He wrote me in answer to this letter, that I should not believe, that he really aimed for it, it was only the elder from Lüderitzbucht, who is not among the living any more.⁶⁰

He then makes the following judgement:

The influence of communist propaganda is affecting the indigenous people. Either the indigenous man must be on the same level as the white man; or the white man, also the white missionary, must leave the country. They will not suffer the patronizing of the white men any more, not even the patronage of the church through the white missionaries. In Keetmanshoop they themselves noticed that there are many church fellowships among the whites. There are more than ten church buildings of several denominations in Keetmanshoop. In the South African Union there are more than 510 different denominations officially registered among the indigenous people. New names for few denominations are hard to find. The indigenous people manage all these. All this confuses our people. If then something happens that excites them, the ball is set rolling, like in Keetmanshoop with the transfer of Brother Neumeister. This however, is only an excuse, to cover the real reasons which they would not name.⁶¹

Mayer lists these reasons in brackets:

(Zachäus has a car and drives around a lot. This costs a lot of money. Petrus has a car, but he finds it too small. He wants to buy a big, new one. To do so money is needed. It is already certain that Petrus withheld money, which belonged to the congregation. Maybe this is the same with Zachäus).⁶²

⁶⁰ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Mayer's summary of the main events on the schism, from 13 May 1946 to Vedder's recommendations as to how to deal with members who broke away from the RMS, 31 May 1946. He made the summary for a "deputation" meeting in Keetmanshoop on 4 September 1946.

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He then turns to the issue of the AMEC:

On top of this the African Methodist Episcopal Church dedicated their first church in Lüderitzbucht a short while ago, and it seems as if there are close connections to Keetmanshoop. A teacher's union is to be founded in Walvisbay in the holidays in our congregation of Gibeon a similar meeting is to take place. We must be prepared for a good deal.⁶³

The text closed with eight points Dr. Vedder stated in a letter of 31 May 1946 (see above), in terms of which the different RMS congregations should deal with members who wanted to join the schism.

The other event took place in October 1946. According to the minutes of the meeting of the Commissioner of Native Affairs with Captain David Witbooi and the Council members and inhabitants of Gibeon in October, the meeting addresses six issues.

These six issues are: livestock, grazing money, the further supplying of water, the feeding of children and older people, the appointment of a welfare official, and the problem caused by the closing of the industrial school. Then follows two letters and statements by Captain David Witbooi, Johannes Jakob and Diedrik Keister, with a response from the Commissioner. These are as follows.

David Witbooi

Handig brief "A" in en se: Ons kollekteer vir doodskiste en kos vir ou-mense, net soveel soos mense kan gee. Almal het gee. As iemand sterf betaal ons vir die kis.

Die onderwysers en andere het afgeskei van die Predikant, d.w.s. van die Rynse Sending.

Ek het klipkaffers gevra of hul nog my bevele sal uitvoer. Hulle het geantwoord: "Ons het maar altyd jou bevele eers geweier maar darm weer uitgevoer". Hulle was ontwykend. Ek sal maar later weer self kom na Mariental om oor die saak te praat.

Johannes Jakob: verklaar.

⁶³ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Mayer's summary of the main events on the schism, from 13 May 1946 to Vedder's recommendations as to how to deal with members who broke away from the RMS, 31 May 1946. He made the summary for a "deputation" meeting in Keetmanshoop on 4 September 1946.

Die antwoord van David Witbooi vir my en Diedrik Keister was:

“Dit was almal se vergadering, onderwyser Markus Witbooi is die leier van die hele afere, leier van geld kollektering en van vergaderings”. Hy het afgeskei van die Rynse Sending asook David Witbooi. Ons klipkaffers bly by die Rynse Sending. Ons was dus sonder leier (d.w.s. Markus Witbooi) en het vergadering bele om te hoor wat die moeilikheid is.

Fritz Lambert en David Kamakura het gese: “Moenie vir Markus vra nie, hoor eers by kaptein David. Hy het nie ‘n leier aangewys nie, so moet ons ‘n leier vir ons kry.” David het gese: “Diedrik Keister sal antwoord gee.”

Ons wou antwoord van Markus he. Markus het gese: “Ek praat die waarheid, hy het afgeskei van die Rynse Sending en hy is te bang om terug te kom.”

Ek het kaptein David gese ek werk saam met hom en dis nie nodig om met hom te praat nie maar vandat hy afgeskei het het hy nog nie met ons gepraat nie en gese waarom nie. Daarop het hy gese as ?? beveel ?? dit sal uitvoer. Ek het geantwoord: “Wat reg is het ons altyd gedoen ons sal nie sy bevele weier nie, al die moeilikheid is oor die afskei van die Kerk”.

Diedrik Keister: Verklaar

Handig brief B in en se: “Ek was nie by die vergadering nie. Daarna het ek brief “A” geskryf. Afskeiers moet hul eie kollekte maak en ons sal ons syne maak, ons sal gelei word deur witman en staan waar ons is.”

Naturelle Kommissaris: Antwoord

Aangesien kollektes namens Kerk gemaak word, kan elke kerk genootskap sy eie kollekte insamel en kontroleer. Elkeen van die inwoners is vry om sy eie geloof te volg of by watter Kerk hy verkies aan te sluit en in hierdie opsg mag geen dwang deur die hoofman of enige Raadslid uitgeoefen word op enige nwner nie. Wat aangeleenhede van die reserwe betref moet die Hoofman en Raadslede gehoorsaam word.

Vergadering sluit.
Naturelle Kommissaris⁶⁴

The significance of these interactions is that they mainly reflect the impact of the schism on the Nama people, the divisions it brought about, and how the issue of collected money by the church is to be treated. This is well summarized by the Commissioner, and also explained to the magistrate of Mariental in his accompanying letter as follows:

⁶⁴ Box SWAA 1192/ A158/98. Minutes of the Annual Meeting between the Native Commissioner and the Nama leadership, at Krantzplatz, Gibeon. 4 October 1946.

19/10/1946
Hoof natuurlike Kommissaris
WINDHOEK

Krantzplaats Natuurlike Reserwe Jaar vergadering:

Ek het die eer hierby deur te stuur, vir u inligting, afskrif van die notule van hierdie bovermelde vergadering.

Die verklarings van David Witbooi (Hoofman), Johannes Jakob en Diedrik Keister het ek letterlik afgeskryf, soos aan my oorgetolk.

Die moeilikheid het sy ontstaan in die afstigting van 'n aantal inwoners vanaf die Rynse Sending kerk na die AME Kerk wat hier, soos ek verstaan, op die been gebring is deur 'n sekere natuurlike, Dr. Gow.

Magistraat⁶⁵

4.7 The 1955 Secession and the Oruano Church

The 1946 and 1955 secessions lead to a serious decline of the membership of the Rhenish Mission Church. These secessions must be seen in the light of the Namibians' quest for healthy independent church structures, and church governments, which were lacking in the Rhenish Mission Church for many years. The process of growth to independence of the Rhenish mission church was nevertheless very slow.

The topics of the ordination and leadership of Africans were main concerns of Africans and fairly emotional. Apart from other events, in 1937, Vedder opposed another attempt to allow the ordination of Namibians, saying:

“The moment our black brothers will be allowed to wear the pastoral robe, I will be taking off mine.”⁶⁶

Vedder was not flexible in his approach and viewpoint on African ordination. In similar context, Millard observed:

⁶⁵ Box SWAA 1192/ A158/98. A letter from the Magistrate of Mariental, to the Head of Native Affairs, Windhoek, which is attached to the minutes. 19 October 1946.

⁶⁶ Theo Sundermeier. Wir aber Suchten Gemeinschaft. Kirchentrennung in Südwest Afrika. Witten: Luther-Verlag. 1973. p. 18.

This raises the question as to why these men felt that they were frustrated with the mission church. The lack of responsibility given to African leaders was a problem, especially during the latter years of the nineteenth century.⁶⁷

This was so in South Africa as is also evident from Mokone's "declaration of independence" in 1892 as well as from events in Namibia.

To some extent, the issue among the Herero was different.

As a result of the Herero Resistance war, the German colonial authorities destroyed the traditional community structures of the Herero people in the years 1904-1905, here by ending any possibility of social political and religious self-expression. In order to regain at least some remnant of tribal community life the Herero joined the Rhenish mission church in great numbers in the years following 1905. For the period 1905-1923 the RMS became then the political, social and religious home of the Herero people. However, the mission did not fully perceive the deeper covert needs of the Herero people, i.e for land and political independence. They refused to get involved in the political and social aspirations of the Herero Community. This was in stark contradiction to the approach of Hugo Hahn and Krönlein in the period of tribal authorities, and was surely created by the radical influence of colonialism on the Rhenish missionaries.

After obtaining some areas for communal land from the South African administration, independent tribal authorities were re-installed. Possession of land and cattle and independent tribal authority were always bound up with the Herero religion, namely communication with the ancestors at the Holy fire (okuruwo). The Herero worldview is a particular example of African 'Holism'. Sundmeier explained it as follows:

African religion knows no separation between the visible and invisible, between body and soul, between the individual and tribe, between tribe and tribal land. The whole universe exists in one great harmony, where the invisible is just as near as the visible and the dead as the living.

A faith, which does not also care for physical welfare, is of no value. Life, also spiritual life, manifests itself in physical welfare.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ J. Millard. Training of Indigenous Clergy. Pretoria: UNISA. Undated. p. 2.

⁶⁸ T. Sundermeier. 1973. p. 87.

In similar vein Vedder observed:

In respect of land and ground, communism holds sway among the Herero. Land and ground are tribal property and not property of a chief and still less that of an individual. Every one grazes his cattle where there is grass and water, and his cattle where he can find water. The separate chieftainships have indeed got their capitals where the holy fire burns in proximity to the ancestral graves, and have come to terms with regards to definite pasturelands. Disposal of land or ground for payment or as a gift is unknown to the Herero, for as the tribal territory is tribal property, no chief may dispose of it; less still another individual.⁶⁹

The tribal chiefs, under the leadership of Chief Hosea Kutako, were the driving force behind the founding of the Oruaano as a Herero Independent Church in 1955.

4.8 Conclusion

The motive for the Nama secession was the search for greater independence and acknowledgement of the authority of the indigenous leaders. In this regard it is remarkable that those mission congregations who had no missionaries, where only Nama Evangelists worked, remained loyal to the mission church. The name of Pastor Hendrik Isaak is worthy to be mentioned in this regard. We have already highlighted the causes and inner motives for the 1946 AMEC secession. Only two immediate causes are referred to here, namely the possibility of the transfer of the Rhenish mission congregations to the Dutch Reformed Church and the placing of the new missionary at Keetmanshoop. In this context Sundkler, an authority on independent churches in Africa observed: “The German missionaries tried a difficult balancing act between concern for the African population and a conformation with South African ‘Native’ policy.”

This showed particularly when government in Pretoria appointed the greatest of their missionaries, H. Vedder, as Senator with responsibility for African affairs – a great honour from the point of view of Pretoria. Herero reaction was sharp: “He, who after all is our father, goes to government in South Africa” they felt.

The Herero, deeply injured and almost annihilated by their colonial masters at the beginning of the century, hesitated for years until in 1955 they took the definite step. They joined the

⁶⁹ Kaire Mbeunde. Namibia, the Broken Shield. Sweden: Liber Förlag. 1986. p. 42.

Oruaano church. Oruaano means fellowship – what they had been looking forward to in the mission church but had not found there. The Nama further south criticized the programme of the missionaries and instead joined the AMEC in 1946.⁷⁰

An underlying motive, which became clear only after the merger with the AMEC was the desire for political emancipation and independence, especially in Gibeon and Maltahöhe, the old tribal area of the Witboois. The ideals of political liberation of Chief Hendrik Witbooi against German Colonisation after 1890 was revived during this secession. Evangelist Petrus Jod was honoured as a resurrected Hendrik Witbooi.⁷¹ The voice of the indigenous Christians of Namibia was heard clearly during the Nama secession of 1946. It revealed shortcomings in the practices of the RMS. It was unfortunately the exclusive domain of the missionaries, even after such a long period of missionary control.

⁷⁰ Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed. A History of the Church in Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000. p. 842-843.

⁷¹ G. Buys and S.V.V. Nambala. 2003. p. 177.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE AFTERMATH OF THE SCHISM

5.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to investigate issues related to the immediate and longer term aftermath of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Schism of 1946 in Namibia in the context of the developments in other church denominations. It was motivated by the fact that I found a few important documents which provide information about the immediate aftermath or the first decade after the schism. Further, although indigenous clergy contributed significantly to the establishment of the AMEC in Namibia, criticism suggests that the Africans lacked the skills which could enable them to take over the leadership from the Rhenish Mission Society. On the contrary, as chief initiators of the 1946 Schism in Namibia, the indigenous clergy have been recognised by the Rhenish Mission Society as opponents to the Mission policy. It is therefore important that this study will highlight the aspirations of the indigenous clergy and political leadership. Factors that impact on the country's development will also be ascertained. Identifying these factors enables this study to prove beyond reasonable doubt that some developments would not have happened if it was not for the schism and the founding of AMEC. It is also possible that the RMS would not have ordained indigenous clergy in Namibia without the pressure that resulted from the 1946 AMEC schism. The expressed aim of the schism was to build indigenous clergy, to be trained to become effective church leaders and pastors of the flock of Christ and also to further the responsible indigenous government by the people of Namibia for themselves.

5.1 The First Decade after the Schism

There are four communications in the decade after the schism from which we get an idea of the issues addressed by the leaders. This section deals with these issues chronologically. The communications deal with property, the effect of the AMEC schism on the RMS congregations, the general political decisions by the Nama leadership (including both AMEC and political leaders), and the issue of whether the AMEC should be seen as a sect or a church by other established denominations.

The first communication is a declaration by Pastor Mayer who was the Superintendent of the RMS in the South, based at Gibeon. In this, Jakobus Jod is requested to leave the property of the RMS shortly after the schism. He is however still given some materials in exchange for what he contributed to the building of the RMS house, to build his own house.

VERKLARING

Ons, die geondertekendes doen hiermee ooreenkomstig die volgende besluit vir alle tye:

- 1) Die huis, langs die Filialeierhuis, wat tot nou toe deur Mnr. J. Jod bewoon is, word met die datum van besluite aan die Rynse Sending gemeente teruggegee.
- 2) Omdat die dakmateriaal, soos Jakobus Jod beweer sy eie is, word aan hom met die oogmerk op sy dienste in die Rynse Sending, die volgende hulp verleen.
 - a) Om 'n nuwe huis te kan bou, kry Jakobus Jod hout van die Rynse Sending gemeente as eiendom oorhandig.
 - b) As dakmateriaal word aan hom die blikhuis gegee, wat hy destyds as 'n kombuis van die gemeentelid Abraham Xamseb gehuur het.

As teenvergoeding laat hy die dakmateriaal op die huis van die Rynse Sending, waar hy tot nou toe ingewoon het.

- 1) Die huis staan op Mariental.

Gibeon – Mariental, de 26.1.1947.

Geteken deur:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) Jac. Jod
Voormalige Evangelis van Rynse Sending | 3) Willem Mungunda
Onderwyser |
| 2) Abraham Xamseb
Lid van Rynse Sendingsgemeente | 4) Jakobus !!Gowaseb
Onderwyser |
| | 5) Fr. Mayer
Leraar, Gibeon Bus 8. ¹ |

The second communicatin is a letter which refers to the effect of the AMEC schism on the RMS congregations. It is a report of Mr. W. Mungunda one and a half years after the schism. He rescued the situation at Mariental during the time of the schism. Mr. W. Mungunda did not join the AMEC schism: It is the full version of his report to Dr. H. Vedder.

¹ Box SWAA 1423: A216/6. Rhenish Mission General. Agreement between Pastor Mayer, superintendent of the RMS in the South, based at Gibeon, and Jakobus Jod concerning the latter's property. It was co-signed by Jacobus Jod, Abraham Xamseb, Willem Mungunda, Jakobus !!Gowaseb and Pastor Mayer. 26 January 1947.

Berig van gedane werk van 1947

Belewinge in die gemeente op Mariental in die jaar 1947 en ook die besoeke van Godsdienste.

1. Belewinge: Na die afbreek van AMEK het ons baie moeilikhede gehad in die gemeenskap. Orals was daar spanning. Maar dit het met die tyd afgekoel. Die AMEK skeuring het ook baie steuring en tweedrag in die gemeente gebring.

Meestal in die goddelike sake. Die gemeente van Mariental het in meerderheid by die Rynse Sending Kerk gestaan. Maar God het sy seën op ons swakkes laat rus om die werk verder op te bou. Besoek van godsdienste was bevredigend. Ons het 3 keer nagmaalsviering gehad in die jaar.

- 1) 4.5.1947
- 2) 27.7.1947
- 3) 19.10.1947

Kerkdienste was goed besoek. Op die laaste kerkdag is omtrent 26 nuwe lede aangeneem. Net die trou besigheid was skaars, alhoewel daar baie jongmense is wat kan trou. Baie wat na die AMEK gegaan het, het teruggekom na die Rynse Sending.

Verder is daar nog baie lede wat na die Rynse Sending wil terugkom. Maar sommige is skaam en bang om verskoning te vra. Maar die deur is oop vir elkeen wat berou en terugkom na die Rynse Sending.

Met die groetwoordjie (Bid die Here dat Hy werkers na sy oes stuur).

Willem Mungunda
Mariental
Bus 16.²

The third communication is a comprehensive report of the Superintendent of Krantzplatz, Gibeon, and provides his evaluations and judgments of the AMEC, its political activities, as well as a report on the decisions of a NAMA leadership meeting (which included he religious and political leaders) on 28 August 1948. The Superintendent's evaluation and judgment of the AMEC reads as follows:

Gaandeweg het dit duidelik geword dat die AME-verband nie 'n kerk wil he in die sin van die bybel nie, maar dat dit onder die dekmantel van godsdiens besig is om 'n

² Box SWAA 1423: A216/6. Rhenish Mission General. Report by Mr. W. Mungunda who rescued the situation at Mariental during the time of the schism. Mr. W. Mungunda did not join the AMEC schism. It is the full version of his report to Dr. H. Vedder about one and a half year after the schism. 9 January 1948.

politieke spel te speel en met die bybel die nie-blankes te verlei. Die dryfveer agter die hele optrede is die strewe om van die leierskap van die witman los te kom. Daar hulle dit by die Rynse Sending die maklikste kon probeer is daardie Sending aangeval en die sondebok gemaak. “Die Rynse Sending wil nie ons kinders verder as standaard twee laat leer nie!” “Ons wil uitkom onder die verdrukking van die Rynse Sending!” “Ons wil AME-Kerke gebou hê en ook AME-skole vir ons kinders!” Die wat in die Rynse Sendingverband gebly het is met “Witvoet” gebrandmerk terwyl hulle deur sommige AME-lede as verraaiers bestempel word. Nie-lede van die AME kom slegs gewere en ammunisie kort om “al die AME’s vrek te skiet”. Die oorgrote meerderheid van die Damaras het in die Rynse Sendingverband gebly. Hulle onthou die verdrukking wat hulle jare gelede onder die Hottentotte moes verduur het, toe laasgenoemde baas gespeel het in Namaland. Hulle se:- “Ons lewe onder die witmense. Die witmense gee vir ons kos. Sal die Hottentotte vir ons kos gee as ons van die witmense af weggaan?”³

He says the following on the political aspects of the AMEC:

Toe dit voor 3 Julie 1946 duidelik geword het dat ontevredenheid onder die nie-blankes aan broei is, het hulle die raad gekry om hul wense en eise met die bestuur van die Sending te bespreek sodat die geskille besleg kon word. Hulle wou egter nie gegryp dat, deur die oorlogstoestand, die skole nie verder uitgebrei kon word nie en dat uitbreiding eers na beëindiging van die oorlog moontlik was nie, maar ook alle skoolarbeid. Dat hulle nie kon verstaan nie was slegs voorwendsel – hulle het ander planne gehad. Die hoofklem het hulle laat val op die skole wat hulle graag uit die hande van die Rynse Sending wou speel en dit dan sonder die leiding van die witman wil beheer. Dit probeer hulle bewerkstellig met die welwillendheid van die Administrasie wie hulle dan later ook in die rug wil steek. Onlangs het hulle propageer dat hulle hul kinders uit die Rynse Sendingskole sal neem om sodoende die Administrasie te dwing om vir hulle eie skole te gee.

Hierdie boikotbeweging het al tot op die plase uitgebrei en die boere kla baie oor steigende arbeidsnood. Ongehoorsaamheid en weerspannigheid is aan die orde van die dag onder diene wat nog op die plase werk, en as mens na die kerklike verwantskap van diesulkes vra dan is hulle in 95% van die gevalle AME-aanhangers. Opvallend vanjaar is die wegbly van baie van die skeerspanne. Baie boere moet met hul een of twee volk die skape skeer. Dit kom voor of dit die plan is om die boeregemeenskap moedeloos te maak in die hoop dat die boere die plase sal prysgee en hulle (die nie-blankes) inbesit daarvan sal laat, want aanvanklik is aan hulle deur die AME-leiers alles belowe soos plase, skape, motorkarre en selfs vliegtuie. Dit alles sou bereik kon word as hulle maar net in die groot saak enig was en bly.⁴

On agitation and political activities, the Superintendent reports:

³ Letter by the Superintendent of Krantzplatz, Gibeon, addressed to the Native Commissioner, Mariental, on “Native unrest”. 14 November 1948.

⁴ Letter by the Superintendent of Krantzplatz, Gibeon, addressed to the Native Commissioner, Mariental, on “Native unrest”. 14 November 1948.

'n Ander kwessie wat ontstaan is vrystellings onder die paswet. 'n Vrystellingsertifikaat word gewoonlik uitgereik aan diegene wat nie 'n gevaar vir die land is nie en onberispelik in elke opsig is. Daar gaan van die leiers van die AME-beweging rond met so 'n vrystelling in die sak. Dit stel hulle in staat om makliker hul ondergrawende bedrywighede teen die blanke gemeenskap voort te sit – en ook teen die Administrasie wat die vrystelling uitgereik het. Die AME het die fasiliteite wat 'n vrystelling bied reeds in die begin (op 12.1.46) op 'n sitting op Keetmanshoop erken en die gebruikmaking van sulkes en meide (wat nie nodig het om 'n pas te dra nie) as boodskappers en draers van briewe in die vooruitsig gestel. 'n Berugte meid in hierdie opsig is 'n sekere Annemarie Nero wat eintlik haar tuiste in die reservaat Hoachanas (Distrik Rehoboth) het, maar ewig op pad is. Sy word dikwels in Mariental aangetref by Jacobus Jod, een van die leiers van die AME-beweging.

'n Verdere vraag wat opduik is of dit in die landsbelang toegelaat moet word dat AME-lede in Suidwes-Afrika in die vervolgt konferensies van daardie beweging in die Unie bywoon, en omgekeerd. By verskeie geleenthede was afgevaardigdes van Suidwes na konferensies in die Unie en het altyd weer met nuwe stukkies propaganda teruggekeer. Daaronder was: “Wag, die Indiërs sal ons help!” “Wag, Amerika kom en dan sal dit anders word!” Blykbaar het hulle daar verneem en geleer van boikot en passiewe weerstand soos deur die Indiërs toegepas.⁵

The Superintendent's report on the decisions of the political meeting at which both religious and political leaders participated reads as follows:

Op 24 Augustus 1948 word 'n vergadering van AME-lede te Gibeon gehou. Onder sowat dertig wat teenwoordig was, was:-

- (i) Zacheus Thomas van Keetmanshoop,
- (ii) Petrus Jod van Maltahöhe,
- (iii) Jacobus Jod van Mariental,
- (iv) Markus Witbooi van Gibeon,
- (v) Willem Moses Jod van Gibeon,
- (vi) Dawid Witbooi (Hoofman, Reservaat Kranzplatz),
- (vii) Salmon Witbooi (Raadslid, ' ' '), en
- (viii) Willem Frederik (' ' ').

Voortvloeiende uit besluite wat op die vergadering geneem is, word 'n versoekskrif van dertien punte deur Markus Witbooi opgestel en aan Hoofman Dawid Witbooi voorgelê vir ondertekening. Dawid sê hy het dit onderteken en aan u op 3 September 1948 te Gibeon oorhandig. Hierdie stuk is nie onder die aanhangsels nie, maar die dertien punte wat hier volg is afkomstig uit 'n afskrif wat nog in besit van David Witbooi is:-

⁵ Letter by the Superintendent of Kranzplatz, Gibeon, addressed to the Native Commissioner, Mariental, on “Native unrest”. 14 November 1948.

1. Gee vir ons a.u.b. stemreg, die enigste menslike reg waarsonder geen nasie kan bestaan nie.
2. Gee ons deelname in uitdeling en verkoping van grond, binne en buite die reservate.
3. Gee ons ook reg om grond te koop, binne die stedelike gebied, sowel as platteland.
4. Gee ons beter onderwysgeriewe soos sekondêre, tegniese en hoër onderwys.
5. Wysig die gevaarlike paswet, en gee ons vrye beweging in ons land, sodat ons van vrees gedeeltelik ontslae raak, want die pas maak van ons net tronkvoëls. Ons sien ... dat die kleurling wat volgens sy oorsprong nie 'n landman is nie, hom vry beweeg, en op elke gebied meer voorregte het.
6. Verwyder die lae loonpeil, en betaal elke arbeider ooreenkomstig sy werk, want die beperkinge benadeel die ekonomiese vooruitgang.
7. Verleen ons eie manne toegang tot die wetgewende vergadering en verteenwoordiging in parlement.
8. Skep vir ons beter behandeling en bediening in magistraatskantoor, polisie, pos, spoorwegkantore, sowel op treinreise, sodat ons nie meer afjakke en beledigings verduur nie.
9. Verbeter die swakke sanitere onstandighede in dorpe vir die inwoners van lokasies.
10. Gee ons hospitale waar nodig met beter hospitaaldienste vir inboorlinge.
11. Laat ons weet, hoeveel seggenskap ons Kapteine, Hoofmanne, en raadslede in reservate, sowel ook in lokasies het, en watter regte ons mag uitoefen, en watter nie.
12. Aangaande uitreiking van dranklissensies aan ons mense buiten uitlanders word versoek, dat ons Kapteine, hoofmanne en raadsmanne in reservate en lokasies geraadpleeg moet word want aldie onheile en onbehoorlike dinge wat die gevolg daarvan is moet ons en hul families dra.
13. Dit word dringend versoek om meer strenger op te tree teen die drinkery, veral teen verkoop van drank deur private blanke persone.

In 'n onderhoud met Dawid Witbooi op 7/10/48 na aanleiding van die versoekskrif (ek het toe reeds inligting gehad dat so 'n dokument opgestel en ingehandig is) is vooraf aan hom verduidelik dat die Administrasie graag verneem of hy enige klagte het in sover dit die behandeling van hom en sy volksgenote deur witmense betref. Hy het geantwoord dat die witmense hom en sy volksgenote nog altyd goed behandel het. Hy het laat volg: "As ek witmense op straat of elders groet het hulle my nog altyd beleefd teruggroet. Deur die amptenare by die kantore van die Administrasie word

ons altyd goed behandel. Die enigste is as mens by die Polisie kom moet hy so lank staan. Daar is nie 'n bankie vir 'n ou mens om op te sit as jy daar lank moet wag nie.” Herdie antwoord strook nie met punt 8 hierbo nie en dit wil voorkom dat die Hoofman bearbei word deur politieke agitators en aanhitters. Markus Witbooi het die versoekskrif aan hom vir ondertekening voorgelê. Dawid het dit onderteken en oorhandig blykbaar sonder om homself behoorlik bekend te stel met die inhoud daarvan.⁶

The fourth communication deals with the question of whether the AMEC must be seen as a sect or a church. G. Menzel who worked at the *Berichte der Rheinische Mission*, responds to a letter from an eighty one year old Wesleyan minister in which the question is asked why the RMS referred to AMEC as a sect in one of its communications. The letter by Schmidt is dated 14 January 1958⁷, and the letter by Menzel, 30 January 1958. In his response, Menzel draws on an analysis of this question by H.G. Scholz which was published in the *Berichte der Rheinische Mission* of June/ July 1955.⁸ Menzel writes:

Brother Schmidt

Your letter of 14 January was passed to me by Brother de Kleine. Since I am well acquainted with Africa through my work here and my trip through Southwest last year I am probably the best-suited person to answer your letter. In general I am careful not to have AMEC called a sect, but of course I cannot prevent my brothers who are currently in altercation with this church, from sometimes using this word in connection with AMEC, because in Southwest it does have some sectarian qualities. I believe that in Southwest and to the young church over there and to our brothers who are in service there the situation in Southwest Africa can be equaled to an argument between a church and a sect.

⁶ Letter by the Superintendent of Krantzplatz, Gibeon, addressed to the Native Commissioner, Mariental, on “Native unrest”. 14 November 1948. Box SWAA 489. A50/227. This letter also includes a summary of the thirteen points made by the Nama leadership to the Commissioner. 3 September 1948.

⁷ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Letter of K Schmidt to Dr. Hans de Kleine in Wuppertal-Barmen. 14 January 1958.

⁸ I do not have access to this article but there is a copy of the original typed text in the RMS files for the AMEC. Archival material. Wuppertal. Letter by Menzel (no date) in answer to a letter from Brother Schmidt of 14 January 1958, in which the question is asked why the RMS referred to AMEC as a sect. AMEC is normally not a sect but some people have asked this question because it broke away from the RMS. The situation in SWA is compared to a fight between church and sect. Menzel quotes from a speech delivered by Pastor Hendrik Isaak (a Nama): “We want to bring the ‘Abgefallenen’ back to their first love’. Menzel expresses the same hope, but feels questioned by the whole movement (AMEC), which he thinks is good. (The original text was in German).

Maybe you still have the “Reports of the Rhenish Mission” of June/July 1955. In this, our missionary Scholz published an article with the topic “What is the AMEC?”⁹

He closed his first paragraph (titled “Early History”) with the sentence: “Concerning its distribution AMEC is a worldwide church which is officially recognized and quickly spreading further.”

In his second paragraph Scholz deals with the dogmatic profile of AMEC and writes:

1. Concerning its teaching one can say that AMEC is not a sect but a church.
2. Its profile is Methodist.
3. The article of faith of the Communion of Saints has a special character as it is stressed that race or colour must be of no regard.¹⁰

Then, however, missionary Scholz went on about the current relationship between the congregations in Southwest Africa to AMEC. He posed the same question: “What is AMEC?” and because of encounters and the short history in Southwest Africa (from 1946) he summarises:

Because of these facts it can only be said that AMEC - even though it is a respectable church theoretically - took a turn into politics and has started on a way that can only cause confusion among the people. It must even be said that it encouraged false hopes in the people and that it does not really bring them the Gospel but something, which will not take anybody to heaven. It is dangerous that AMEC fell into syncretism and fused right issues with wrong ones.

At last year’s synod of the young church I listened to a lecture of Pastor Hendrik Isaak (a Nama) about the relationship of his church to the other churches. At the end he summarized his speech in theses and at this stage the sentence was said, “We cannot work together with AMEC and Oruaano. We want to bring the separatists (“Abgefallen”) back to their first love”.

This is how our indigenous people see the members of AMEC in Southwest Africa. They who stayed in their old church feel them to be separatists, and they don’t really understand the reasons for that. But they are looking for a modus vivendi (a way to live Levi with) and there is hope.

⁹ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Letter of Giz Menzel to Rev. IRK Schmidt. 30 January 1958.

¹⁰ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Letter of Giz Menzel to Rev. IRK Schmidt. 30 January 1958.

That most of those who belong to AMEC, will not be happy there and that the lost unity will be restored in the end. I hope I was able to give you some information with these lines. I will continue trying not to call all of AMEC a sect. Conditions in Southwest Africa have only become critical since 1946. There had already been an AMEC congregation in Lüderitzbuch to which our congregations had good relations some years before that. This was because at that stage AMEC was not proselyte members of the Southwest African church.

On the other hand we also felt questioned by the whole movement, and I think I may say that in this, critical stocktaking was good for us.

Yours sincerely.¹¹

The main points that Menzel drew on for his argument that AMEC is a church and not a sect, comes from Scholtz's article¹², where he argues that it has all the characteristics of the church as it is understood in reformed circles. These include "righteousness through faith and not works", that AMEC is not sectarian because it does not preach that the Christian does not sin any more after conversion, that it regards the Holy Scriptures as that it "contains all things necessary to salvation", that it practices of the sacraments as "signs of grace", and that its perception of the church come directly from the Augustana. He then asks the question as to what is unique of the AMEC, and answers, by quoting from their catechism:

Why were they led to organize a separate denomination? Because they were denied equal privilege in worship and communion with the white Christians. What is the distinctive feature of African Methodism? Its exaltation of the Brotherhood of Man. What is meant by the Brotherhood of Man? That oneness and equality of Christian feeling and association which is implied in the saying of Christ: "All ye are brethren", and from the enjoyment of which no-one is to be excluded on account of race or colour. Does the African Methodist Episcopal Church practice this? It does, welcoming to its communion and fellowship all who desire to come.¹³

These four communications then give some idea of the issues at stake in the first decade after the schism both inside and outside AMEC. The issue of education will be addressed in one of the points below.

¹¹ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. Letter of Giz Menzel to Rev. IRK Schmidt. 30 January 1958.

¹² Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. H.G. Scholz. Wer is der AMEC? 1955.

¹³ Documents on the AMEC in the holdings of the RMS archives, Wuppertal, Germany. H.G. Scholz. Wer is der AMEC? 1955.

5.2 Self-determination and RMS Ideological Sentiments

One needs to point out and appreciate the pioneering nature of the early missionary endeavours in Southern Africa. Such work represented a breakthrough and success in many respects. Not only was the need to have infrastructure and churches stressed but very soon there was also a strong desire to train the indigenous people as pastors. In this way, missionary work began to be appreciated by the locals. Another positive effect of training was that the local ministers were better than other whites acquainted with the customs and traditions of their fellow believers. They not only spoke the same language, but also understood the world view of the Africans. Training and equipping the local people were, therefore, the most important milestone in the history of mission work. In similar vein, but in a different context, the leading church historian in South Africa, Oosthuizen said:

The church should stop planning within the context of the church; her mission and her obedience should be in the context of society and the world. Finally, the priesthood of all believers should receive a fresh emphasis, and the church must realise anew what it means to be one family in Christ.¹⁴

The missionaries refused to recognise that African culture had a contribution to make towards the enrichment of Christianity. African Christians have argued that: “it is not true that the missionaries brought the pure gospel to us the Namas. We worshipped our deity Heise-Eiseb. Therefore we reject their claim that we were heathens when they arrived on our soil.”¹⁵ Those who propagate Christianity should inculturate and evangelise themselves before seeking to inculturate and evangelise others. In this regard the Rhenish Mission Society failed. When reading between the lines, we find that it was illogical for the Rhenish Mission Society not to ordain the indigenous pastors. Although there was hostility from both sides and emotions ran high, there is no recorded incident of violence recorded during the schism and after the 1946 schism. It shows a high level of maturity and responsibility on both sides, the Nama leaders and the authorities of the RMS.

¹⁴ G.C. Oosthuizen. Post Christianity in Africa. London: C. Hurst & Co. 1968, pp. 21-22.

¹⁵ Interview with Mrs. K. Kaoses, Gibeon, Namibia, 4 July 2000.

The RMS had established institutions for the education of indigenous people and particularly to train evangelists, but never had the willingness to ordain them to become leaders and administrators of the church. Under extreme pressure, and through various meetings, the effects of the first and second world wars, they partially agreed to promote the indigenous people to the rank of Chief Evangelists. The Chief Evangelists could only perform duties assigned to them by the German missionaries. Only some of them could administer the holy communion under the supervision of the German missionaries.

There was an urgent need for the indigenous helpers after 1914 because of problems that the RMS was facing at this time. During 1914-1918 the RMS missionaries were cut off from their home base and encountered heavy financial difficulties.¹⁶ It was extremely difficult to get new missionaries and finance out of Germany. During and immediately after the wars no missionaries could be sent to the field. Since 1914 there had been an acute shortage of staff. Many missionaries who were trained for the work died in the wars and it was only gradually that training could again be undertaken. The Union of South Africa had strict policies that also restricted the actions and activities of RMS. Many missionaries were interned during the First and the Second World Wars. Some missionaries were not interned but restricted in their movements and were not allowed to come into contact with the indigenous people. In the 1920's the RMS resumed its activities gradually and gained recognition and subvention from the Union of South Africa. At the turn of the century one tenth of the indigenous people were listed as members of Christian Churches and the optimistic opinion was that the whole country would soon be evangelized.

Spellmeyer was a well-known missionary from the RMS based at Gibeon. He was very much aware of the great demand for a stronger participation in decision-making from the side of the indigenous people. However, Spellmeyer's aim was to divide the Herero and the Nama people. This is reflected in his memorandum in which he explained and said that: "it has been the aim of the RMS since the mid 1930's to subdivide the Herero and Nama Conferences in Synods and thus contribute to a gathering and cooperation between parishioners and

¹⁶ G. Gurirab. The Failure of the RMS to Ordain Indigenous Clergy in Namibia (1988-1949). A Historical Critical Analysis. B.Th. (Hons) dissertation. University of Natal: Pietermaritzburg. 2000. p. 25.

clergy.”¹⁷ The RMS missionaries were influenced by Paul Rohrbach on the issue of inferior races of Africa. For him the indigenous people were of unbridled sensuality, wallowing in idleness and lacking insight about the future. Therefore, according to him, the white race would always be superior and that earned them the right to govern and dominate the black people. According to Rohrbach, the black people were worthless to humanity and had no right to existence. At most, they could earn the right to be servants of the dominant race. He stated that indigenous people were savages and meant to be animals. The view of Rohrbach was achieved under the cloak of human defence treaties, peace policies and development aid. The colonial regime viewed the indigenous people in terms of potential labour in the industrial development of the country. Their land had to be occupied, the tribal structure was crushed and their powers of defence removed for all time.¹⁸

Rohrbach’s sentiments exposed the dominant ideology prevalent within the Rhenish Mission Society’s structures. This ideology writes history from a missionary perspective and sees blacks as not being capable of any ministerial leadership on their own, except under the white missionary leadership. The blacks are seen as the objects, rather than the subjects, of evangelization. Nothing is said about their strength and contribution to the mission of the church. Therefore, this ideology is of mutual interest to both the missionaries and the African clergy especially of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Namibia. On the one hand, it safeguards the pursuits and interests of the white missionaries who brought the gospel to “dark Africa” and at the same time provided spiritual and leadership guidance to the black people. On the other hand, this missionary ideology was adopted by the uncritical and biased Rhenish Mission Society’s historians who continuously reproduce it in the German literature.

An important factor in the situation was the attempt of Germans to control a large colony with too few officials. For even when the German colonial administration had gained a measure of authority it lacked sufficient manpower to effectively implement its policy of suppression and colonization. There was, therefore, the question of manpower and resources.

¹⁷ H. Vedder. Archival material. Berigte oor Suid-wes Afrika. Archives, Windhoek, Namibia. 1938.

¹⁸ P. Rohrbach. Deutsche Kolonial Wirtschaft. Kulturpolitische Grundsätze für die Rassen und Missionsfrage. Berlin, 1909, p. 20.

The German colonial administration had realised the importance of involving missionaries in colonial politics and saw such working together helpful and suitable.

5.3 The Institutional Effect of the Schism

Gibeon and Keetmanshoop were particularly hit by the schism of 1946. The people who left the RMS and followed the AMEC were basically Namas, especially family members of the leaders of the schism. The Nama tribes of the Witboois and of the Red Nation comprised the majority. In addition, there was a small number of Damaras and Coloureds. Men and women, and all age groups ranging from youth to elderly people were equally represented.

The Rhenish missionaries also worked among German-speaking Namibians. However, “they did not consider their work among the whites as missionary work in comparison to their work among black people.”¹⁹ The early missionaries were saddled almost overnight with the spiritual care of the German garrison namely farmers and business people. These were the very same people who exploited the indigenous people on their farms. They now had to play the dual role of missionaries to the blacks on the one hand, and of spiritual shepherd to the growing white community on the other hand.

The Ovambos who were working in Southern Namibia did not join the AMEC schism in 1946. Neither did the schism spread to the Catholic indigenous people and the Coloureds who formed a tiny minority in the South of Namibia. From a historical point of view, Finland was not a colonial power. In 1870 the Finnish Mission was established in Ovambo land, and in 1928 in the Okavango region. The New Testament was published in the Ondangua language by the Finnish in 1903 and the complete Bible in 1954. The church among the Ovambos was independent by 1954, when it was recognised by the government. The first ordination of indigenous clergy under the Finnish Mission Society took place in 1925. Dr Leonard Nangolo Auala, a Namibian born becomes the first black Lutheran bishop under the mandate of the Finnish Mission Society in 1963. Against this background there was no motivation for the Ovambos to join the 1946 AMEC schism.

¹⁹ K.H. Herz. Two Kingdoms and one World. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishers, 1976, p. 252.

5.4 The African Methodist Episcopal Church in Namibia and its External Black Leadership

From the start the AMEC had the idea of a self supporting church. Projects aimed at helping people develop their skills were pursued. There was an urgent need of empowering those people who were poor and disabled to develop their skills. It was hoped that it would boost their self-esteem for they were also created in the image of God. The leaders of the schism understood the importance of integrating some aspects of holistic salvation in their working with people. They did not only teach church discipline and catechism, but also how to read and write.

Although the AMEC church was based in South Namibia, the Bishop was residing in South Africa. Most of the AMEC Bishops were Black Americans. They seem to have come from middle to upper class backgrounds, and were sympathetic to the newly established AMEC in Namibia. The Bishops could only visit the region during the annual district meeting, when the Bishop was informed about the development of the entire church, by the presiding elder. The focus at the meeting revolved around worship, prayer and Bible study. The participants at the annual general meeting experienced communion and their oneness in Jesus Christ. They worshipped, shared meals and worked together, and interacted with one another at a personal level. At this meeting the church also looked for possible candidates for the ministry.

The last five decades formed a high point for the AMEC. They had become numerous enough to be self-sustaining and self-confident enough to move out from under missionary sponsorship and paternalism. Despite their progressiveness, the AMEC failed to produce an indigenous bishop after 54 years. P.A. Schmidt gained prominence in 1946, because he handed over the letter of secession from the RMS to Dr. H. Vedder. He thus became a pioneer in the AMEC, founding a stable and successful church that was able to win over the majority of Nama membership. Until his death in 1999, he served as the Presiding Elder of the Gibeon district. In his own lifetime he was also the principal of the AMEC School, and he also played a prominent role in politics. During his term in office, as Presiding Elder, he always encouraged members to be self supporting financially. This was due to the poor

fundraising style of the church on a local level. It was the dependency syndrome that Schmidt had to deal with during his years as Presiding Elder.

The AMEC in South Africa played a major role in supporting the AMEC in Namibia. Most of the staff of AMEC got further education in the Wilbeforce Institute run by the AMEC in Evaton, in the vicinity of Johannesburg. Their financial obligations were covered by the AMEC in South Africa.²⁰ Quite a few AMEC pastors from South Africa were also working on a voluntary basis in Namibia shortly after the schism.

There was a reluctance on the part of the AME churches in America to support the development of the AMEC in Namibia. They had not set up any funds for their African pastors to further their pastoral education abroad and elsewhere. In the existence of the 54 years of the AMEC in Namibia, no clergy in Namibia received training in America. There was no loyalty on the part of the AME Churches in America, towards their Namibian brothers and sisters. During the time of the schism, the leaders always remarked: "Wait Americans will come and then everything will be different."²¹ The Americans referred to by the leaders and the Nama people were the "black Americans" who were represented by the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

How should the contribution of AMEC in Southern Africa be evaluated? Without doubt they played a major and influential role with far reaching ideas about the rights of people, and also about their dignity. Another important aspect that should be taken into consideration is the fact that English as a medium of communication was not well developed during that time in Namibia. The AMEC in South Africa were prepared to overcome these obstacles. They committed themselves openly to work with their new sister church in Namibia.

5.5 The AMEC and Resistance

Between the two world wars, the Christian churches became the main socializing factor for

²⁰ Interview with Rev. Dr. N.C. Christiaans. AME Trinity Church, Keetmanshoop, Namibia. 01 July 2000.

²¹ Archival material: Correspondence between Nama leaders and RMS. ELCRN archives, Windhoek, 1946.

the Namibian people. Gradually, Namibians gained positions of minor leadership, authority and expertise in Christian communities, always under the strict and unquestioned authority of the European missionary. The relegation of Namibian black workers to being nothing more executive than assistants to the white missionaries without the right to express their personal views, led to mistrust and hostility between Europeans and Africans in Namibia.

The mission churches also accepted the general structure of racial separation between black, Coloured and white congregations. Between these racially segregated communities there was no link whatsoever. The RMS's support for colonial rule was expressed in its policy of establishing separate ecclesiastical structures for black and white Christians. Long before the imposition of apartheid by the South African authorities, the RMS chose to establish distinct congregations on the basis of race and language. Unlike the Roman Catholics and Anglicans, the RMS also created totally separate administrative ministries for black and white at local, regional and national levels. In practice, the RMS saw the colonial system as a divinely created policy - the Kingdom of God would be effective within it and not in opposition to it.

It should be noted that in dealing with the Roman Catholic Church, racial lines were less emphasized. They were emphasized much more in the RMS. The Roman Catholic Church came to Namibia from Angola in 1878 and established itself at Omaruru. Important milestones were the founding of the Okavango mission in 1910 and the beginning of the missionary work in Ovamboland in 1925. Development was remarkably quick. For example, Roman Catholic Churches and schools sprung up throughout the country in the first half of the 20th century. This church gained a membership of 60 000, with 54 800 blacks, 2350 whites, and 2400 Coloureds in 24 congregations. In this short time, two schools for whites, three for Coloureds and 66 for blacks were established. In addition, a training college at Döbra for teachers was also established. In the Namibian context, during the German colonial period, the Roman Catholic Church played a neutral role and did not clearly express its true position with regard to racial issues.

After 1946, the self-awareness of the Namibian people increased rapidly, but the European-controlled churches, influenced by the high tide of anti-communism and the cold war saw in the movement for African liberation the work of world communism. The fight for the rights

of Namibians waged by priests like Anglican Michael Scott were the heroic efforts of individuals who were frequently shunned by their own churches.

But, independently from world politics, the Indigenization process of churches was pushed forward. Seminaries for Namibian pastors were established and more responsible positions were filled with Namibian personnel. In 1957, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa, serving central and South Namibia, became the first Lutheran Church in Namibia to be independent from its mother church, the Rhenish Mission Society.

5.5.1 Early Ecumenical Actions in Namibia

In 1963, the church leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and Evangelical Lutheran Okavango Church took an early ecumenical initiative in deciding to use the Otjimbingwe pastoral centre for the training of Lutheran pastors from both churches. This act of unity between two different Lutheran traditions, working in different parts of the country, was an important step in building awareness within the churches of "One Namibia, One Nation".²²

In May 1964, the leaders of the two Lutheran churches signed the first joint memorandum to the South African government. They denounced the hardships that would result from the Bantustan programme envisaged by the Odendaal Commission, which involved huge population movements and forced resettlements. In 1967 the two Lutheran Churches sent a further memorandum to the South African government protesting the population removals, rent rises, the denial of freedom of movement. In the face of a country torn apart by the racially-oriented colonial policy of South Africa and its international supporters, the welfare of the country at large became the pivotal point of the churches' ministry. The unity of the church became more and more an expression of the unity of the Namibian people.

During this time, the German Roman Catholic Church, influenced by the second Vatican Council and the ecumenical example set by Pope John XXIII, established a closer relationship with the German Evangelical Lutheran Church which had been formed in 1960 to keep its own white German identity and views separate from the black Namibians. The

²² Interview with Rev. Prof. P.I. Isaak. Windhoek, Namibia. 07 July 2000.

Roman Catholic and German Lutheran leadership claimed they were looking for a spiritual, non-political ecumenism and accused the Namibian Lutheran Churches of mingling politics with faith and worship. Since their political views were basically identical with those of the white administration, they presumed they were not involved in politics and interpreted any opposition to the *status quo* as opposition to the mission of the church.²³

The AMEC was deeply touched by the political situation in Namibia. A politically awakened Namibian clergy in the South of Namibia, H. Witbooi, started to protest against Bantu Education and mobilized the teachers in 1976. Education in Namibia was based on racial and ethnic classifications. The African learners followed the syllabus of the Department of National Education, which was, in essence, the old Bantu Education system.²⁴

5.5.2 The Open Letter to the South African Government

The one single ecumenical action that has had the most lasting effect in Namibia was the open letter written in 1971 to Prime Minister Vorster by the leaders of the two black Lutheran Churches, Bishop Leonard Auala and Pastor Paulus Gowaseb (letter attached in the Appendix). It was written following the decision of the International Court of Justice to support the United Nations' termination of the mandatory right of South Africa to administer Namibia. South Africa was declared an illegal occupier of the country and asked to leave. Governments were requested not to deal with South Africa in affairs that would imply its authority in the territory. The Namibian population was overjoyed and church bells were rung throughout the country.²⁵

In their open letter, the church leaders identified with the verdict of the International Court, denounced the system of apartheid and Bantustan system forced upon Namibia by South Africa as violating the fundamental human rights of the people, and offered their mediation to negotiate a dismantling of the apartheid policies. The open letter was the first act of what has proven to be a new ecumenical era in Namibia.

²³ Olga Levinson. 1976. p. 79.

²⁴ H. Hunke. *The Church in Namibia* (Unpublished notes). Geneva. LWF. 1986.

²⁵ Olga Levinson. 1976 p. 91 and P.J. Isaak. Religion and Society: A Namibian perspective. Windhoek: Out of Africa Publishers. p. 37.

The white minority and its government had to recognise a growing political awareness and consensus among the black population, the myths of the “apolitical native” and the “outside instigator” had suffered a severe blow. The black majority in Namibia, heard for the first time their basic concerns voiced in clear, unequivocal terms by recognised leaders who could not easily be labelled ‘communist’ or opportunistic politicians. Black Namibia had gained a strong representative voice.

The churches became recognised by the South African government as a force to be reckoned with and were invited for a discussion with Prime Minister Vorster. Even though the resulting meetings ended in failure, the church leaders were able to give detailed reports of the systematic violations of human rights and to report back to the people the government’s refusal to give serious consideration to compliance with international standards of law and justice.

This new form of Namibian ecumenism had started to take the whole of Namibia and its people seriously as an integral part of the church’s mission for salvation, not only for individual souls, but for the oppressed, exploited, alienated, and deprived people of Namibia. This new ecumenism also brought with it reprisals from the South African government. Following publication of the open letter “Several Finnish missionaries working among Ovambos were expelled from Namibia. On numerous occasions the AMEC bishops have been refused visas to visit Namibia”.²⁶

The open letter was warmly welcomed by the Roman Catholic Church and fully endorsed by the Anglican Church. At the same time the German Evangelical Lutheran Church openly disassociated itself from the letter and one Dutch Reformed Afrikaner declared that it was evil.²⁷

5.6 The Organisation of the Local AMEC Schools in Southern Namibia

The schism was based on ideals of solidarity and the working for a common goal among the

²⁶ H. Hunke. The Church in Namibia. (Unpublished notes). Geneva. LWF. 1986. P. 35-36.

²⁷ H. Hunke. 1986. pp. 37-40.

Nama people of Southern Namibia. As in other places, there was also an AMEC school in Gibeon. After the 1946 schism, the AMEC school enrolled 85 learners, staffed with three teachers, William Jod, Josef Vlees and Johannes Links. William Jod was the first graduate with a teacher's training certificate from the Wilberforce Institute in South Africa. He was also acting as the principal of the school. The teachers worked towards creating conditions that would allow the acknowledgement and support of the school by the government. To this aim, William Jod was keeping the necessary records. It was basically the congregation who had to come up with the living expenses for the AMEC pastors and teachers. During the apartheid period, the AMEC schools in Namibia were not acknowledged by the government.

The following two documents provide some indication as to how the AMEC struggled for recognition, while it had to cater for its own expenses. The first document shows eight issues the RMS regarded as important on the eve of the nationalizing of mission schools in South Africa and Southwest Africa by the South African government in 1953. It also shows that at the time of the meeting in 1950, there has not been any decision on the AMEC schools as to their recognition by government (see point 5). The document is condensed so that the government response follows immediately on each of the eight points.

A216/6 (A179/1) - No. 846.

KANTOOR VAN DIE ONDERWYSDEPARTEMENT,
WINDHOEK.

Die Sekretaris van Suidwes-Afrika,
WINDHOEK

RYNSE SENDIGGENOOTSKAP: BESPREKING VAN
BELEIDSVRAAGSTUKKE

Op 16 Augustus het die Rynse Sending 'n lys van 9 vrae voorgelê vir bespreking met Sy Edele die Administrateur. Die Departement het geantwoord dat die vrae deur die nuwe Uitvoerende Komitee behandel sal moet word en dat 'n bespreking miskien nie gereël sal kan word nie sodat voorgestel word dat die bespreking met die Direkteur van Onderwys kan plaasvind wat dan aan die Uitvoerende Komitee kan rapporteer.

Die bespreking het gister, 31 Augustus 1950, plaasgevind. Teenwoordig was Eerw. Diehl, Mnr Esslinger, Eerw. Lind, die Rynse Sendingsinspekteur uit Duitsland, mnr Mienzl en Eerw. Kühirt.

Volgende is die vrae wat bespreek is:-

- (1) Wat sal die houding van die Regering wees teenoor Sendingskole in die toekoms?

Die Sending is bekend met die bestaande beleid waarvolgens die Administrasie beoog om alle nie-blanke onderwys sodra prakties moontlik uit die hande van die Sendinggenootskappe te neem en in alle opsigte self te beheer.

Die Sending wil weet of die beleid gaan bly, en indien ja, wanneer die Staat die skole gaan oorneem, want die Sending wil nie, en kan nie bekostig om onnodige koste ten opsigte van die nuwe geboue vir uitbreiding of vervanging van swak geboue aan te gaan nie.

* Dit bly die beleid van die Administrasie dat nie-blanke skole sodra moontlik oorgeneem word. Indien die Uitvoerende Komitee hierdie aanbeveling sou aanvaar, sal dit waardeer word as 'n aanduiding aangaande die waarskynlike tydstip verstrekkend kan word, want die Sending vra baie mooi dat dit gedoen moet word.

(2) Watter moontlikhede bly daar vir die Sending om in sy skole die karakter van 'n sendingskool te bewaar?

Die Administrasie betaal onder andere die salarisse van onderwysers in erkende Sendingskole en onder meer is die tugregulasies vir blanke en nie-blanke onderwysers dieselfde. Die nie-blanke onderwyser beskou hom dus in diens van die Administrasie en kan slegs afgedank word as sy skoolwerk minderwaardig is of as hy hom skuldig maak aan wangedrag soos in die onderwysproklamasie omskryf.

Die Sending wil hê (hul sal byvoeg; uit die aard van die saak) dat die Sendingskole "'n instrument van die Christelike Gemeente" waarin die Sending werk, moet wees. So ook sê die Sending dat die onderwyser as lid van die gemeente onder die wette van die gemeente moet staan en as hy met daardie wette bots, moet die Sending die reg hê om nie net gemeente- of kerktog op hom toe te pas nie, maar desnoods ook om hom te ontslaan.

Die onderwysproklamasie maak voorsiening vir gewetensbesware teen opsigte van godsdiensoortuiging en godsiensonderrig, maar die Sending wil hê dat 'n onderwyser wat tot ander oortuiging geraak of vanweë gewetensbesware nie langer godsiensonderrig wil gee nie, ontslaan moet word.

(3) Kan nie die regte en die pligte van 'n bestuurder verduidelik word nie?

(4) Het 'n bestuurder die reg om invloed uit te oefen op die lewe van 'n onderwyser aan 'n sendingskool, of is die onderwysers net staatsamptnare?

* (3) and (4) are taken together: Die Departement simpatiseer met die Sending waar sy bestuurders taamlik magteloos staan teenoor onderwysers wat hul belangstelling in die doen en late van die onderwysers onder hul bestuur as onwelkome inmenging beskou, en wat die skool nie daadwerklik en sonder voorbehoud as 'n instrument van die Christelike Gemeente aanvaar nie. Terselfdertyd mag die Administrasie, volgens die beskeie mening van die Departement, nie toesien dat die gewetensvryheid van 'n onderwyser, wat, reg of verkeerd, meen dat hy in die diens van die Staat staan, omdat hy deur die Staat betaal word en onder die tugwette val, geweld aangedoen word nie.

Die Administrasie uit die moeilike posisie kan kom, skyn die volgende te wees:-

Vanaf 'n gegewe datum staak die Departement die besoldiging van nie-blanke onderwysers aan Sendingskole en subsidieer hy elke erkende skool met 'n bedrag wat presies sal ooreenkom met die salaris(se) waarop die onderwyser(s) ens. geregtig sou gewees het. Die Sending kry dan volle seggenskap oor diegene wat hy employeer en besoldig.

Die Departement moet egter daarteen waarsku dat as dit gedoen word,

- (a) baie onderwysers die stap sal wraak en hul uit die onderwysdiens sal onttrek;
- (b) die Sending dit miskien moeilik sal vind om mense aan te werf vir opleiding as onderwysers;
- (c) groot gedeeltes van die kleurling- en naturelle bevolkings mag voel dat hul vir skooldoeleindes aan 'n liggaam oorgegee word wat hul vandag so min moontlik mee te doen wil hê;
- (d) die A.M.E.-Kerkgenootskap moontlik sal floreer soos nog nooit tevore nie.

(5) Wat is die houding van die Regering teenoor AME-skole en -onderwysers?

Die Sending wil weet wat die houding van die "Regering" teenoor A.M.E.-skole en onderwysers is, want hoewel daar geen skole sover erken is nie laat die Departement kwekelinge met A.M.E.-oortuiging tot die Augustineum Opleidingskool toe.

* Die kwessie van die A.M.E.-Kerk se versoek om die erkenning van skole wag nog op aandag deur die Uitvoerende Komitee omdat oor die Administrasie se houding teenoor daardie genootskap nog nie besluit is nie.

(6) Hoe kan die groot tekort aan klaskamers aangevul word? Kan nie 'n stelsel soos die £ vir £ stelsel ingevoer word of miskien rentelose lenings toegestaan word nie? Kan nie vir die klaskamers huurgeld betaal word nie sodat die nodige reparasies uitgevoer kan word?

As die Administrasie nie die Sendingskole binnekort gaan oorneem nie, en die Sending derhalwe verdere klaslokale moet bou, wil die Sending weet of hul nie hulp op die £ om £ stelsel, of anders rentelose lenings kan kry nie. Dit maak die Sending ook seer as daar oor die toestand van geboue en onvoldoende ruimte in skoolrapporte gekla word, en hul wil weet of daar nie huurgeld vir die klaskamers betaal kan word waaruit die nodige reparasies uitgevoer kan word nie.

* Die Sending se houding kom, oor die algemeen, tot 'n aansienlike mate op die volgende neer:

Die Sending wil volle seggenskap oor Sendingskole hê, maar die Administrasie moet so goed as moontlik, al die koste daaraan verbonde dra.

Die Departement se aanbeveling in verband met hierdie vraag hang vanselfsprekend af van die Uitvoerende Komitee se besluit oor (1) hierbo. Gestel egter dat die skole wel oorgeneem gaan word, dog eers na baie jare, dan word aanbeveel dat die

beskikbaarstelling van rentelose lenings gunstig oorweeg word, maar nie die bydrae op die £ om £ basis nie.

(7) Sal in die toekoms geen blanke leerkrigte as prinsipales van groot sendingskole meer toegelaat word nie wat tog eintlik net tot nut en vooruitgang van die skoolwese van natuurlike skole kan wees? Hul pleit vir die verdere aanstelling van blanke onderwysers en prinsipale aan groot skole.

* As dit toegelaat word dat nie-blankes so ver leer as hul wil, met of sonder ondersteuning deur die Staat, dan behoort blankes nie sulke betrekkings aan nie-blankes skole te vul indien geskikte opgeleide nie-blankes, veral vir nuwe poste of vir die opvulling van vakatures, gevind kan word nie. Die woord, geskikte, word opsetlik onderstreep. Die Departement beveel ooreenkomstig aan en doen dit onder andere op grond daarvan dat die apartheidsbeleid dit skyn te veronderstel. Ander gronde is natuurlik dat dit meer ekonomies uitwerk en die trots van die nie-blanke gemeenskap streel.

(8) Kan nie 'n pensioenskema vir natuurlike onderwysers ingevoer word nie? Kan nie die voorreg van 'n jaarlikse vry reiskaartjie toegestaan word aan alle ondersysers, ook die oues wat nog in die diens staan en wat al baie gedoen het vir die vooruitgang van die skole nie?

Hul vra om 'n pensioenskema en jaarlikse vry reiskaartjies vir natuurlike onderwysers.

* Daar word lank reeds aandag geskenk aan die moontlikheid van 'n pensioenskema. Wat betref vry reiskaartjies eenmaal per jaar beveel die Departement aan dat die versoek sonder meer van die hand gewys word. 'n Dergelyke versoek deur die Naturelle-Onderwysersvereniging is reeds gedurende die loop van die jaar van die hand gewys. Die nie-blankes wil die voorreg hê omdat die blankes dit geniet. Die meeste blankes het hul wortels in die Unie, die nie-blankes hier, en die uitsonderings kry wel vrykaartjies een maal per jaar tot op De Aar.

(9) Die Sending wens om te beklemtoon dat hy altyd gereed en gewillig is vir samewerking met die Regering ten gunste van die natuurlike onderwys soos hy dit deur baie jare bewys het. Baie tyd, krag en geld is daarby vir die skoolwerk opgeoffer. Die Sending doen hiermee beleefd navraag of nie sy direkte onkoste wat hy met die bestuur van skole het, vergoed kan word, soos die onkoste wat bestuurders het om eksamens by vêr afgeleë plekke te kan afneem, om die verplasingkoste van onderwysers terug te betaal en veral die koste te dra van die vervoer van skoolmeubels en –materiaal na buitenskole.

Ook vra die Sending vergoeding van sulke uitgawes soos reiskoste in verband met die afneem van eksamens, verplasingkoste van onderwysers en koste aan vervoer van skooluitrusting.

* Hierdie vraag is gedeeltelik onder (4) afgehandel. Die Departement beveel aan dat die versoek insake vergoeding van

(a) reiskoste tydens afneem van eksamens en

(b) verplasingskoste van onderwysers van die hand gewys word omdat (a) gereël kan word om saam met Sendingsinspeksiewerk te val en (b) nie net in belang van die Staat geskied nie. Wel word aanbeveel dat die Administrasie tot 2/3 van die vervoerkoste aan die skooluitrusting na skole wat weg van 'n stasie of busroete afgeleë is vergoed. Dit kan geskied op voorwaarde dat daar nie ten opsigte van meer as een besending uitrusting per jaar vergoeding sal geskied nie behalwe in die geval van 'n nuwe skool wat geopen word wanneer vergoeding vir die vervoer van alle besendings sal geskied. 'n Verdere voorwaarde kan wees dat indien 2/3 van die vervoergeld per motorvoertuig op meer as 1/- verantwoordelik sal wees. In die geval van ander as motorvervoer sal die Departement nie meer as 4d. per myl betaal waar 2/3 van die koste op meer as daardie syfer uitwerk nie.²⁸

These nine points and the government response provide insight into the kinds of issues that mission schools considered as important before the nationalisation of the schools. It is significant that there is a clash of opinion between a more secular approach and the religious approach which looked for moral control of teachers. In addition, the money issue is pertinent and then, with regard to AMEC, that no clear answer is as yet available but that it is regarded as threat, i.e. that, if the freedom of conscience of the teacher is limited, the AMEC will gain: "die A.M.E.-Kerkgenootskap moontlik sal floreer soos nog nooit tevore nie."

From a communication in 1954, it is also evident that the AMEC was still struggling for some recognition of their schools.

By beantwoording vermeld a.u.b.
No. E. 1404/4/5.
216/6/2
SUIDWES-AFRIKA

Kantoor van die Bestuurder,
Rynse Sendingskool,
Posbus 13,
KEETMANSHOOP.

3 Februarie 1954

Die Direkteur van Onderwys,
WINDHOEK

²⁸ Box SWAA 1423: A216/6. Rhenish Mission General. Questions of the RMS (SWA) to the Department of Education (SWA). Please note that these questions are only available in the Department's response. 16 August 1950.

IN SAKE AMALGAMASIE A.M.E.C. EN RYNSE
SKOLE TE GAINACHAS.

Met verwysing na u skrywe No. E.1404/4/5 Jan. 1954 is ons genoodsaak om 'n paar opmerkings te maak.

Ten eerste het die A.M.E.C. Kerk in S.W.A. tot nou-toe geen erkende skole nie. Daar word privaat skool gehou, soos ook op Gainachas, waar en van die Rynse Sending afgetrede onderwysers, Joseph Kahuika, die werk waarneem.

Die politieke beleid van die A.M.E.C. is dit wat vir ons werk baie moeilikhede besorg en wat ook vir die moeilikhede op Gainachas aanspreeklik gemaak moet word.

Daar kan geen sprake van amalgamasie van skole of Gainachas wees nie. Dit staan nog altyd vir die kinders van die A.M.E.C. vry om die Rynse Sendingskole te besoek en ook die skool van Gainachas staan vir hulle oop.

Dit word nie verstaan, dat daar geen samesprekings tussen die Magistraat en die Bestuurder in hierdie aangeleentheid plaasgevind het nie, geen aanduidings van planne aangaande Gainachas se skool is na die Bestuurder gedoen nie.

Ongelukkig sal in hierdie eerste Kwartaal die skool te Gainachas nie geopen kan word nie, aangesien geen bekwame onderwyser beskikbaar sal wees nie.

E. 1404

Namens Bestuurder:
(Get.) Suster K.A. Firtze.²⁹

We further know that the white farmers in the affected areas rejected the AMEC. The colonial authority was very hostile and critical of the AMEC, and stirred up all the farmers against the newly founded church and its schools.

It is through solidarity that the AMEC has been able to survive many calamities. Thus, despite financial assistance, the children continued to go to AMEC schools without any assistance from the colonial government. Acknowledged schools received a 50% discount on textbooks. In addition, the government paid the teachers' salaries. The AMEC was cut off from these benefits. In the everyday life of the church, pastors would strive for a self-supporting ministry. It is particularly intriguing to note that during the schism, an ad hoc committee was set up to study culture. Zacheus Thomas was the chairman of this committee.

²⁹ Box SWAA 1423: A216/6 .Rhenish Mission General. Response by Suster K.A. Firtze on behalf of the Office of the RMS School at Keetmanshoop, to a request for information by the Chief Native Commissioner on the possible integration of RMS and AMEC schools. 13 February 1954.

He believed that before any changes could be made to the liturgy, the culture of the Nama people should be understood. As a result, some people were encouraged by the leaders of the schism to attend traditional Nama ceremonies such as Namastap³⁰ to learn more about its music. Music was a priority amongst their goals. The AMEC clergy believed that in liturgy, music should be Nama and African. They wanted people to sing their own music. AMEC members epitomised their church as a singing church. They regarded playing musical instruments, singing in the choir and all other kinds of worship activity as essential to any Christian gathering to praise God. Rev. Willem Moses Jod translated the original AMEC hymnal from English into the Nama language. The AMEC schools played an important role in establishing this culture of indigenous worship. At present, their hymnal consists of English and Nama songs.

In the AMEC schools, physical education, sports and games were emphasized more than required by the governmental syllabus for the acknowledged schools. According to Jod's commands which he gave in English, the children performed rather difficult gymnastics in three groups, small girls, girls between the age of 12 and 15 and boys. The little girls were graceful and also the older ones were astonishingly agile. The boys often lost the beat. At a later stage the girls were amazingly good at scoring in basketball, and the boys developed some enthusiasm for playing soccer. The new tennis court was the pride of the school. Willem Jod coached the senior boys in tennis. Until the time of the schism in 1946, all the Rhenish Mission Schools only went to Standard III but the AMEC managed to upgrade the schools to Standard VI. The missionaries always argued that schooling would not be extended further because of war-related legislation. The restrictive legislation only applied to the black schools in the country. The Nama people also put in a request to the RMS and government that their girls get training as nurses. The RMS had ignored this request. It is worth mentioning that up to 1960, there was no Nama nurse in Namibia. The leaders of the schism pointed to the scarcity of nurses in the Gibeon district where whites as well as blacks had to travel for 200km and more to get medical services from a German missionary nurse or an Afrikaner general practitioner.

³⁰ Namastap: Traditional Nama dance performed at weddings.

5.7 The Necessity for Cooperation during the Apartheid Era

There are many reasons why the Namibian churches and political leaders needed cooperation during the dark period of apartheid, especially after the 1946 AMEC schism. In 1948 the National Party defeated the United Party in the South African election, and immediately announced that it wanted South Africa to officially incorporate Namibia as a fifth province of South Africa. It was a matter of historical record that all attempts from 1945-1948 by the United Nations failed to resolve the deadlock. In the midst of hot debate, Daniel Malan extended some of the recently introduced apartheid laws - including the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act to Namibia. In 1959, with the NP policy of divide and rule, thousands of residents of Windhoek's old location were ordered to move to the newly established township of Katutura, without their consent.³¹

Thousands had been forcibly resettled to create a black ghetto which complied with the racial segregation scheme of the South African government. In Katutura the various peoples lived strictly separately according to their ethnic membership, with different settlements for the Namas, Hereros, Ovambos and Damaras. African men and women had demonstrated outside the office of the administrator for South West Africa, the highest representation of the South African government. After negotiations with the government failed, the African people began boycotting buses in the township. The police started to fire at the unarmed crowd, killing 11 people and wounding 55. This was the first in a series of conflicts and thus a turning point for the country. The African people were no longer prepared to accept the racial policy of the white regime. From this time onwards, their resistance began to grow. More and more Namibians left their country to live in exile. The brutalities of the regime led to the founding of the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) in 1960. The satellite town of Katutura was a workers' colony where people were only permitted to stay if they found employment with white people. The black townships were shanty towns that were intended to disappear again one day. Anyone who went to black Katutura from Windhoek was made painfully aware of the huge gulf between the peoples and races. It was a segregation between black and white, rich and poor, free and unfree. Blacks

³¹ O. Levinson. South West Africa. Cape Town: Tafelberg Uitgewers. 1976. p.81. Katutura is a black township outside Windhoek city. It is a Herero name meaning "place where we do not want to stay."

and whites were living at close quarters, but in two totally different worlds. The pass laws were the order of the day. In such a hostile situation, the Namibian churches faced a serious challenge to be the voice of the voiceless.³²

5.7.1 The Namibian Churches' Alliance and the Rise of SWAPO

In the 1950's a new generation of indigenous leaders emerged. They were bitterly opposed to South Africa's illegal occupation of the country. In another important development, British clergyman Michael Scott, Herero Chief Hosea Katuko, Mburuma Kerina and Samuel Witbooi based themselves at the United Nations headquarters in New York where they worked tirelessly to expose the nature of South Africa's rule. Throughout the 1960's, the Namibian churches, except the Dutch Reformed Church, took part in discussions and sent memorandums to the South African government to take a stand against the unjust and inhumane treatment of blacks. In the meantime, South Africa's Odendaal report in 1964 recommended the extension of the Bantustan programme into South West Africa. Out of the Odendaal report emerged ten African homelands, constituting 41 percent of the territory's total land area.³³

Two years before the Katutura protest, Toivo ya Toivo had started in Cape Town as a lobbyist for SWAPO formation. He and Nujoma put enormous pressure on the South African government for the inhumane treatment of the indigenous people. The governments of the frontline states (Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana, Angola and Mozambique) also tried to produce a solution, but they were unsuccessful. It bears repeating that South Africa was unqualified to negotiate for the African people of Namibia, as their troops had been involved in war with SWAPO. The South West African administration on its own was equally unqualified to resolve the problem to the advantage of the Namibians since, aside from being representative of the South West Africa white minority, its main purpose in bringing in the Cuban withdrawal from the Namibian territory was to prevent the establishment of majority rule in Namibia.

³² The World Book of Encyclopedia. N.O. Volume 14. Chicago: World Book, Inc. 1989. p. 10.

³³ Richard W. Hull. Southern Africa: Civilizations in Turmoil. New York: New York University Press, 1981. p. 156.

While an activist of SWAPO *inter alia* Sam Nujoma was organising opposition to the South African presence in Namibia, the United Nations continued condemning South Africa's rule of the country. In 1960, Ethiopia and Liberia, the only two members of the General Assembly who had also been members of the League of Nations, took the matter to the International Court. The judges took five years to hand down a verdict - and even then it was not a unanimous one. With the Australian president of the Court, Sir Percy Spender, exercising his casting vote, the Court ruled that it had no power to decide the dispute. Although reaction to the decision was predictable, ranging from joy on the National Party side to anger from the Namibian lobbyists, the most significant response came from SWAPO and the churches. At this point, I should mention that SWAPO leadership was based in exile. The SWAPO leadership said they had no other alternative but to rise in arms and bring about liberation in the country. It was the beginning of the war against South Africa on 26 August 1966.³⁴ Katjavivi says:

In Their 70 years of rule, South Africa exercised one of the worst forms of human domination ever in history, characterized by the marginalization of black people, the extension of land appropriation, forced labour and the apartheid policy. Swapo officially embarked on an armed struggle against the South African regime in August 1966.³⁵

5.7.2 The Armed Struggle

Twenty-five years of external talks on the independence of Namibia failed. So did the initial attempts at an internal solution. The internal solution of South Africa was to establish a puppet government which was accountable to South Africa, and not the electorates. The war between the freedom fighters and the South African forces, comprising both black and white soldiers, had been long and bitter. Both sides had fought with equal determination. Both sides had justified their respective causes on moral grounds. Both sides had called upon the same God to give them victory. Of major concern to the South African government was the fact

³⁴ The World Book of Encyclopedia. N-O Volume 14. Chicago: World Book, Inc. 1989. pp. 10-11.

³⁵ Interview with Peter Katjavivi, Vice-chancellor of the University of Namibia, Namibia. 23 August 2002.

that despite mounting losses, SWAPO continued to spread its influence among the indigenous people.³⁶

The armed struggle in Namibia had killed many people of both races. It had destroyed many African homes. It had seriously disrupted family life in African communities. Many young Namibians between the ages of 12 and 35 went into exile, scared of the persecution by the security police. It made deep inroads into the national economy, which had led to insecurity and unemployment. Many Namibians in the border areas had entered Angola and Botswana as refugees. As the war escalated, so did the elements of fear and insecurity enter more and more hearts of the black man, the white man and the Coloureds.

5.7.3 The Response of the Churches

The South African government was very hostile towards the black churches in Namibia. For the first time in history, two black churches dared to describe apartheid as inhumane and detrimental to the peace and stability of the country,. Not only did the churches condemn individual acts of discrimination and the brutalities of the South African police, army and security forces, they also rejected the entire system of racism. The churches reiterated their call that South Africa's presence in Namibia was against the will of peace-loving and law-abiding citizens.

In the Namibian context it was not easy for the church to take a neutral stand in the face of injustices and maltreatment. The apartheid society which has been inflicted on the Namibians violated every single principle of the universal declaration of human rights. While the pressure was mounting from the Namibians in exile, the Namibian churches played an ever greater role in the liberation of the country. As a consequence of this, many clergy and church workers were victimized by the apartheid colonial regime. Clergy were harassed by the regime. Travel documents and visas of pastors had been refused by the government, preventing them from travelling outside the country. Clergy were harassed by the regime, their houses were burned down, and they experienced many untold sufferings.³⁷

³⁶ *The New Nation*. 1990. pp.10-14 and Olga Levinson. 1976. pp 90-91.

³⁷ Interview with Bishop P. Diergaardt. Windhoek, Namibia. 07 July 2000.

The church, on the basis of her faith, was called to participate as the church in the struggle to freedom and to the establishment of an independent country. Often, the church was accused by the colonial regime that it supported SWAPO as a political party. The active involvement in the struggle, however, did not transform the church into a political organisation. The individual Christian had the full right to participate in party politics and to be a member of such a political party. The individual Christian, therefore, is both a member of a political party and a church, and on both counts, Christians can participate in the church and political activities.

The Namibian churches, especially the black churches had been very concerned with the political situation of the country. More than 90% of Namibians were Christians, and on that basis, the church had spoken out clearly for an end of apartheid, for an end to foreign control over Namibia. The South African government that was imposed on Namibia did not like the church when the church criticized them and spoke out against their violations of human rights. They felt pressure from the church and recognised that the church was a force in society. They attempted to manipulate the church and its leaders, and attempted to divide the black churches. When the black churches spoke out for the oppressed, it became a threat to the white minority government. The Namibian historical context has shown that God's Spirit and the voice of the church strengthened the people and helped frustrate the occupation of Namibia. As people were able to resist and survive, Christian faith was very important in Namibia. God's people were alive and the churches remained the conscience of society. The church was called to be prophetic, to identify injustices, to speak the word of hope, to promote the well-being of the poor, needy and the oppressed. It always promotes dialogue throughout the society among Christians and between Christians and those of other faiths and of no faith. In the midst of suffering the aim was to promote a community of people working together for justice and the common good. The gospel message sums up the situation of the church in the following words:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has appointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:17).

On the basis of this it was evident that the church only fulfilled its prophetic task. The church did not propagate any political ideology to its followers. There was uneasiness among the white minority regime that the black churches in Namibia were under the influence of communism.

5.8 The African Methodist Episcopal Church Leadership in Namibia

After a period of more than 100 years of mission work in Namibia, the RMS had established institutions of education for indigenous people. The RMS could only offer basic education up to standard three, i.e. about five years of education. This was a major grievance that led to the indigenous people getting disillusioned with the RMS, leaving the Church and attempting to take control of their own affairs. These grievances were heightened further by the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism in 1948 in South Africa and the extension of racist ideology and practice in Namibia.

Shortly after the schism in 1946, the AMEC had to operate in a rather difficult political era in the history of Namibia, as the apartheid policy of the minority white population took hold of the political development in the country. The government was openly hostile to churches in Namibia. From the mid 1950's onwards, the number of deportations, passport and visa refusals, withdrawal of temporary residence permits, and bannings steadily increased. The authorities never gave reasons. Perhaps more than anything else, these expulsions and visa refusals focused attention on the church-state conflict and confirmed the suspicions of the majority of the blacks, that these actions were taken simply because the people concerned were sympathetic towards the injustices they were suffering.

In order to paralyse their activities, the government refused visas for AMEC pastors residing in the USA. Under the Bantustan policy, even ministers and bishops, unless resident in the Homeland areas needed permits to visit members of their churches there. Due to this situation, the churches of AMEC in Namibia were in the hands of a few pastors and three Presiding Elders, according to district conference regulations.

I contend that the AMEC also faced serious financial constraints in Namibia, because they did not depend on any donor aid. It established self-help projects to help meet the basic social

and educational needs of its members. Secondly, the strength of the AMEC in Namibia was also weakened by the Oruano Schism of 1955. In this context, the leading Namibian historian Katjavivi said:

Many Herero members of the AMEC moved to join the Oruano. The Oruano retained many of the general practices of the present church in matters of worship, but injected a new and lively element. It has since suffered because of political differences within the Herero community and today only has a small following.³⁸

In addition to propaganda against progressive churches, the apartheid government also sowed the seeds of hatred and division among the indigenous members. The major threat for the South African government during that period was the fear of communism. In South Africa, geopolitics implies that the notions of a red and a black peril are fused together in the dominant ideology. In the conflict between East and West, the South African government understood itself as a bulwark of Christianity and Western civilization on the continent of Africa.³⁹ They regarded the Pastor title as indication of German mission superiority. They considered themselves through their title equal to the members. It is evident that they wanted to break the power relations that were dominating the scene during the reign of the RMS.

5.9 Conclusion

It is historically true that the AMEC was the forerunner of self-determination and empowerment of African clergy in Namibia. The AMEC was founded as a result of growing consciousness among the indigenous people, under the influence of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, in the USA. Its burning desire was that the community should control its own affairs and be independent of foreign domination. The indigenous people were united in opposition to these inequalities and racial discrimination. After the 1950's the wind of change also entered the recently ordained indigenous clergy and encouraged them to see themselves as capable people to lead an autonomous church.

³⁸ Peter H. Katjavivi. A History of Resistance in Namibia. Paris: UNESCO Press. 1988. p. 32.

³⁹ Eerwaarde: Title of some AMEC clergy in Namibia. It means a Reverend, Pastor or a Minister. He should also have the authority to solemnize marriages.

Most of the work was through the initiative of the leaders of the schism, which supported and sustained AME Churches in Namibia, financially and otherwise. This church established self-help projects to help meet the basic social and educational needs of the indigenous people. Pressure came from the Namibians who remained with the RMS after the 1946 schism and they demanded a greater say in the church's affairs. They addressed the gross inequality between the indigenous clergy and the missionaries. The missionaries had total control of affairs in the church. It was difficult for the evangelists to make ends meet.

In summing up, the research provides an agenda for discovering AMEC history from both inside and outside the church. In the history of Namibia, the black people form part of the underside of this history, for they were marginalised from the official accounts of the Rhenish Mission Society's and the accounts of official historians and reporters. The next chapter will look at the Nama people and the AMEC since 1946. It will also analyse the failure of the AMEC to produce an indigenous Bishop in Namibia, and critically assess the work of the Church.

CHAPTER SIX

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH WORK AMONG THE NAMA PEOPLE OF NAMIBIA

6.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the AMEC in Namibia, after the 1946 schism from the RMS. It is now obvious in the AMEC that we are dealing with an aspect of the total transformation of the Nama society. Much of the evidence already presented in this study points to a reaction of Africans to European missions as one of the important factors in the formation of new Ethiopian movements. The reactionary element features far too prominently for it to be relegated to the background. It is with similar conviction that Neill concludes that

at the heart of this whole movement (of independency), directly or indirectly, will be found the sin of the white man against the black. It is because of the failure of the white man to make the church a home for the black man that the latter has been fain to have a church of his own.¹

In his extensive study of the phenomenon of independence on the continent of Africa, Barrett has postulated a representative theory for the rise of independent churches, which gives expression to Neill's observation and to the arguments of this study. He discovered the one theme that was commonly important for many tribes to be the major Christian attribute of God and man, namely the complex biblical concept of love.² Barrett maintains that missions had exemplary records in regard to most of the components of love - service, sacrifice, forgiveness, caring, compassion, charity and peace. But on the point of love as listening, sharing, sympathizing and sensitive understanding in depth between equals, missions seem to have failed. There was no close contact, no dialogue, no comprehension and no sympathy extended to traditional society and religion.³

¹ S. Neill History of Christian Missions. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964, p. 498.

² D.B. Barrett. Schism and renewal in Africa. London: Oxford University Press, 1968 p. 269.

³ D.B. Barret. 1968, p. 267.

6.1 The Establishment and Growth of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Namibia (1946-1990)

From its initial establishment in 1946 the AMEC found a home among the Nama people of Namibia. The Nama people of Southern Namibia regarded AMEC as their spiritual home. Attaining independence in church matters was already a priority on the agenda of the Nama leaders during the war years.

The RMS and the Witbooi leadership representatives in Gibeon negotiated independence in church affairs, but it all failed. In the concrete, immediate post-war setting in Namibia, this meant the opportunity to articulate a response to the South African government's sustained campaign for incorporation of the country as a fifth province of the Union, but also the pursuit of quite down-to-earth interest such as wages, freedom of mobility or land rights. In addition the continuous demand for better schooling had been raised already before the church schism.

According to archival records, the RMS leader based at Gibeon, Reverend Spellmeyer,⁴ had a good working relationship with Evangelist Petrus Jod. The entries in the chronicle indicate that Petrus Jod was an extraordinary active person. He was perfectly fluent in reading, speaking and writing in German. Furthermore, he displayed an equal perfection in Nama and Afrikaans. Spellmeyer, in his memorandum, described Petrus Jod as the most diligent and influential mission worker in Southern Namibia. Spellmeyer was the one exception from the RMS board, who had always approved the full ordination of blacks who were talented and educated in terms of theology. Spellmeyer wrote in his memorandum with specific reference to Petrus Jod, that, due to his excellent performance he was appointed as Chief Evangelist by the mission conference in Luderitz in 1926. His wish was to upgrade Petrus Jod to the stage that he could pass a preparatory course for full ordination.

Spellmeyer's request was turned down as the RMS was afraid to offend the German pastors in Namibia by ordaining blacks. Further, they thought that they had to take into consideration

⁴ Archival material: Box SWAA 1851: 1 396/8 Native Unrest. Gibeon, 1915-1954.

the racial prejudices of those whites who partly financed the missionaries who were responsible for the German congregations.

On 3 July 1946, a conference of all church workers of the district took place at Gibeon. Those who had left the RMS already at Keetmanshoop had developed the following plan: All mission workers should publicly declare that they were leaving the Rhenish Mission Society. The congregation members were supposed to follow their example, leaving the missionary in an isolated position.

During 1947 and 1948, a further number of people left the RMS, while some rejoined the mission. The overall number of members increased again until 1950 as the figures below show. Members of congregations in the districts of Gibeon, Maltahöhe and Hoachanas.

1946	8348	1947	6178	1948	6422
1949	6654	1950	6832	1960	8500
1970	15 000	1980	25 000	1990	40 000
2000	45 000. ⁵				

In 1949, AMEC people embarked on a systematic boycott of the mission schools and attracted about 270 children in the Nama congregations. The districts Gibeon and Keetmanshoop were particularly hit by the 1946 schism. Those who left the RMS and followed the AMEC were basically Nama people, especially family members of the leaders of the schism, teachers and evangelists. The Witbooi tribe better known as the IKhobesin, comprised the majority in the region.

The districts Gibeon and Keetmanshoop were particularly hit by the apostasy movement. Those who left the RMS and followed the AMEC were basically Nama, especially family members of the leaders of the apostasy movement. The Nama tribes of the Witboois and of the Red Nation comprised the majority; in addition, there was a small number of Bergdamaras and Coloureds. Men and women, and all age groups ranging from youth to the elderly people were equally represented.

⁵ Statistics given by Rev. W.S. Hanse, AMEC Secretary. 15 November 2001.

The social milieu in which the apostasy movement occurred can, according to Mayer and my own observations, be sketched in the following way. Most of the Nama people earned their living as workers, especially as shepherds for the whites. Those who were staying on the premises of bigger places like Gibeon, went for seasonal work in shear groups. They owned some livestock and they sold the skin of their goats and oxen. They baked charcoal and sold it in bags. Although their cash income was not particularly high, they could live on it. But most of them were strongly addicted to alcohol and invested all their money in sugar and peas to brew the illegal sugar beer. Illegitimate children were a frequent occurrence. The living conditions were poor.

According to my observations, the Witbooi clan displayed strong family ties and family solidarity. Above all, the sense of belonging was very strong among the Witbooi people. They were striving for a sense of brotherhood among all. Its worth mentioning at this juncture to say that women also play a supporting role. This supporting role is very evident on church related festivals and clan occasions, such as the late Captain Hendrik Witbooi Day that they celebrate annually in October.

Immediately after the schism, the new church faced many challenges. The colonial government, and the white farmers were not very receptive and friendly towards them. In government circles, they had been accused of spreading or propagating communism in a country where most of the inhabitants claimed to be Christians. Gradually, in 1953 a permit was granted to the AMEC in Namibia by the government and the Cape-Namibia Annual Conference was held at Keetmanshoop.⁶

Bishop Frederick D. Jordan convened the first separate annual conference at Windhoek in 1954. Namibia is one of the five Annual Conference districts. However, the Namibian district is divided into three sub-districts each under a presiding elder. In 1972 the districts were: Keetmanshoop under Presiding Elder N.C. Christiaans, Maltahöhe under Presiding Elder P.A. Schmidt, and Windhoek under Presiding Elder Bartholemeus Karuaera.

⁶ S. Nambala. History of the Church in Namibia. New Jersey: Collingswood Publishers, 1994, p. 106.

The AMEC had several schools, including the newly established private school at Gibeon. This school was founded in 1978 and was headed by the Rev. Hendrick Witbooi, who was also Chief of the IKhobesin clan and the Vice-President of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO). The AMEC is a member of the Council of Churches in Namibia. The AMEC is the only church in Namibia, from its establishment, which allowed their clergy to practise self-supporting ministry. Most of their clergy were involved in government services as teachers, school inspectors, politicians, and in non-governmental organisations as consultants and managing directors. This is a clear signal that they wanted to break the past syndrome of dependency on the missions.

6.2 Rhenish Mission Society Reactions to the Newly Established African Methodist Episcopal Church

The RMS never fully accepted the responsibility for the indigenous people of Namibia. The RMS response was thus by no means sympathetic. The self assertive and independent spirit of the AMEC was offered no encouragement. If the chief evangelists had been treated as equals with the whites of the RMS, and allowed to take their full share in meetings, the result would be that they would have outvoted the Germans. This might have further strengthened the necessity of ordaining black evangelists. The Germans were very cautious about black ordination. The ordination of indigenous evangelists would have jeopardized the balance of ecclesiastical power. In my view, the method of promotion from teacher to chief evangelist was a mechanism of safeguarding control in the hands of the German missionaries.

The AMEC got acquainted with methods of passive resistance and boycotts, following the example of the Indians in Natal, during conferences in the Union. The Nama people also boycotted work on the farms of the whites, because they were hostile to them. The relationships between the missionaries and the leaders of the schism deteriorated increasingly, especially because the AMEC claimed congregational property (buildings) and musical instruments. The struggle for property was finally decided by the government in favour of the RMS.

The Board of the RMS under the leadership of Dr. H. Vedder went to a retreat, to scrutinize the 1946 schism. It was also shortly after World War II, during which more than 80 missiona-

ries and a few pensioned missionary workers were cut off from their financial sources. The strong argument of Dr H. Vedder and his associates was that the indigenous evangelists were given relevant education to work among their own people. The question of debate was: How was the education, formation and shaping of the indigenous insufficient to ordain them? The hidden agenda of the RMS was now publicly exposed. For the RMS, the indigenous people were not yet able to govern themselves, after constant interaction with Christianity for more than a hundred years. It was also clear that Dr. Vedder wanted to secure the positions of the white missionaries, at the expense of the local people. The white missionary should be the pastor, and the local clergy should serve as evangelists or helpers. The RMS was in a serious dilemma. In a very short period, they were to rectify the problem.

At the meeting that followed the schism, the RMS missionaries decided to establish a theological seminary in Karibib for the training of evangelists and pastors. In training the indigenous evangelists to become leaders in various congregations the missionaries had drawn up certain functions for the pastors.

- 1) His authority is stronger than that of the evangelist. The pastor becomes the leader of the congregation with full responsibilities. He has to depend on the help of the church councils, and has control over confirmation and baptism education of the congregation.
- 2) He has total control of the administration of the congregation with the specific responsibility on church registers and writing of membership cards.
- 3) In case of the affiliate congregation, he is responsible for independent leadership.
- 4) The pastor has to show under all circumstances strong pastoral behaviour and good character in respect to all members of the congregation.⁷

On a closer look at the above four functions, the RMS wanted a trial period. It was claimed by some that the African would not be able, for an indefinite time, to undertake the onerous duties of the ministerial office; this seeming want of confidence had a repressive and deferent effect. On the side of the RMS, there was also the element of fear. This fear was coupled with suspicion and power relations.

It is true that little encouragement was at that time given by the mother church based in

⁷ Archival material: RMS minutes. ELCRN archives. Windhoek. 1956.

Wuppertal, Germany for an ordained black ministry. It was left to the discretion of the missionaries in Namibia. That the mission has been a disastrous failure is nowhere more evident than in the history of colonialism in Namibia. The force behind the RMS was German national awareness. German colonialism strengthened this, and it goes without saying that once Germany became a colonial power in 1884 the feeling was strengthened further. When there was criticism of the intervention of nationalism in the work of the mission, RMS missionaries were hesitant to take the matter up since they felt that it was a sensitive issue.⁸

The Gospel the RMS brought, was aimed to enslave. It was couched in a Western institutional framework and cultural embodiment, foreign to Namibian culture and religious heritage. The RMS, whether they were aware of it or not, were used by the colonialists to justify their own position and psychologically enslave the colonizing peoples. A lot of money was invested by the RMS in missionary work, but, simultaneously, it served two purposes, to enslave and to convert. Having been subjugated, the African was declared a pagan, incompetent, a member an inferior race who always needed the support of the Europeans. This was the arrogance that caused serious tensions between Dr H. Vedder of the RMS and the indigenous evangelists. The indigenous evangelists were now forced to create new alternatives for growth.

The RMS ordained the first black evangelists as pastors in 1949. The ordination happened three years after the schism. The context in which this ordination took place was coupled with suspicion and mistrust on both sides. It was clear that the RMS could no longer tolerate the pressures from below. The pressures from below sent clear messages to the RMS that they wanted change and recognition as partners in their own conversion.

The indigenous people were united in opposition to these inequalities and racial discrimination. After 1950 the wind of change also entered the recently ordained indigenous clergy, and encouraged them to see themselves as capable people to lead the autonomous church.⁹ Due to the above pressures, on the 4th October 1957, the RMS constituted ELCRN as an autonomous church. The first elected President of the ELCRN was Pastor H.K. Diehl.

⁸ J.L. de Vries. Mission and Colonialism in Namibia. Johannesburg: Ravan. p.199.

⁹ P. Katjavivi. Church and Liberation in Namibia. London: Pluto Press. 1989, p.10.

He served the church for 15 years, that is to 1972. Again, this is clear evidence that the RMS was reluctant to hand over the church to black leadership. However, preparations for an effective leadership takeover by indigenous people were not made until 1967, when the church celebrated its 125th anniversary at Okahandja. In that year, a system of moderators, overseers was introduced by the synod in which five moderators assumed leadership on an alternating basis. This practice remained in operation until 1972, when the first black Namibian succeeded President Diehl as an elected head of the church. This new leader, Dr J.L. de Vries served from 1972 to 1979.¹⁰

The position of the pastors was not the same as that of the missionaries. There was a huge disparity in the wages of the black pastors and white missionaries. The black pastors were living far below the breadline, especially those without livestock who lived under severe constraints. According to the RMS, the salary scale of the workers was for the evangelist five British pounds, for head evangelist, 6 pounds and for the indigenous pastors 7 pounds. The salary scale of RMS was based on ethnicity and cheap labour. The greed of the RMS caused misery and suffering among the black pastors. In similar context, in an article of a Lutheran church publication the Rev. Dr. Manas Buthelezi of South Africa had reported on the great disparity between the wages of white and black pastors. The same rates were then also applied in Namibia. He stated:

The naked fact is that the present salary system in our church has made pastors victims of poverty even by the standards of the unhappy economic conditions in the communities they serve... This is a matter of deliberate policy rather than something that can be explained solely on the basis of economic factors.¹¹

6.3 The Decline of the Work Started by the AMEC in the Rest of Namibia

As I spelt out earlier, the schism of 1946 was particularly strong in the Southern part of Namibia. The most influential leaders of the AMEC schism concentrated their mobilisation among the Nama people of the South because they belonged to this group of people and

¹⁰ G. Gurirab. (A brief historical survey of the ELCRN in The ELCRN in the 21st century. P.J. Isaak (ed). Windhoek: Gamsberg Publishers. 2000, p. 22.

¹¹ Sunday Tribune (Durban) 9 March 1969 and H. Lessing. Unpublished Lecturer notes: Paulinum 2000. p. 12-13.

understood their plight. The AMEC had been expanding physically in the South of Namibia, and one could also observe the spiritual growth among the members and clergy. It is a common fact that the Witbooi revolt against the Germans and the AMEC schism are sandwiched together. The 1946 AMEC schism among the Nama people could be traced back to the great rising of 1904-1907.

There was no support for the AMEC from the Ovambo-speaking people, because the Finnish Mission Society did remarkable work among them. The Roman Catholic Mission began to work at the beginning of the twentieth century in Namibia. The Roman Catholic Mission like all the mission societies in Namibia established schools, clinics, hospitals and mission stations all over the country. These institutions were useful for the extension of the Roman Catholic Mission. The Roman Catholic Church in Namibia ordained the first indigenous clergy in 1942, seven years before the Rhenish Mission Society. The first ordained priest was Gerard Molekwa and the second Edward Kangooutui in 1946. The Roman Catholic Mission was in constant disagreement with the Imperial German government and the racist South African government about the running of its institutions and development of locals along the lines of racial harmony.¹²

What may well be argued here, is that in the Finnish Mission Society and Roman Catholic Mission in Namibia, there was no schism recorded based on ecclesiastical superiority. Both these missions seem to be more focused with their mission work among the indigenous people. They want to empower the locals and witness in their life time the spiritual growth of the people. The Roman Catholic Church emphasized education in its mission work. Abraham states:

Education, however, was something more than means of gaining converts, more than mere book-learning and the acquiring of technical skills. Indeed, it occupied a vitally important position within the Catholic scheme of things. It was the means by which a child acquired a philosophy of life, a way of thinking about time and eternity, a code of values, a tradition of culture... the aim or goal of Catholic education, therefore, was seen as being inextricably linked to the Catholic philosophy of life.¹³

¹² P. Katjavivi. 1989. p. 6.

¹³ Garth, Abraham. The Catholic Church and Apartheid. Braamfontein: Ravan Press. 1989, p. 62-63.

Therefore, nowadays, the Roman Catholic Church numbers are large among the Ovambo-speaking people from Namibia. The Roman Catholic Church in Namibia has an indigenous Bishop, Bonifatius Haushiku. It is divided in two vicariates of Keetmanshoop and Windhoek. Their membership is ± 128,566. This church ran several institutions, a press at Döbra, publisher of church literature and papers in several indigenous languages, fourteen creches and four advanced schools and a pastoral centre. They are well advanced on agricultural projects operating in the Okavango region. The Namibian Roman Catholic Church is a member of the Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops for Southern Africa, established in 1952.

I would argue that the membership of the AMEC could grow steadily in other parts of Namibia, due to the fact that they want to strive for independence and self-reliance. Quite clearly their membership has declined in the Central and Western parts of Namibia. This entire scenario must raise the questions: Why was the AMEC not appealing to other Namibians? And why was it so completely tied to the Southern part of Namibia? The pass-laws of the country at the time, under the colonial administration were an impediment for the free movement of the people, especially the Ovambo-speaking people. The homeland policy of the apartheid government was in full force. This policy was designed to keep Black Namibians separate under the so-called development programme of the whites. Unfortunately, the second schism of 1955 occurred. Most of the Herero-speaking people who initially joined the AMEC seceded from the RMS and the AMEC and formed the Oruano church in 1955.

The political climate of the time was very hostile. The RMS and the colonial government kept a watchful eye on the activities of AMEC. The young church was faced with financial challenges. The colonial government was pleased that the AMEC literature and writings were published in English. During that period English was not widely spoken in Namibia. They thought the AMEC literature could indoctrinate the indigenous people. Dr Gow who was residing in Worcester in the Cape inspected the work and development of AMEC in Namibia once or twice a year from 1949. The AMEC congregations were required to keep Dr Gow permanently informed about their organisational questions. The question the management of

the RMS asked was, how is it possible that the AMEC people who broke away from RMS allow themselves to be supervised from such a long distance? There might be some truth in this question. The AMEC in Namibia failed after 54 years of intensive church work to produce an indigenous bishop.

In 1955 the Herero formed their own 'Oruaano' (fellowship) church, a strength for the nationalistic movement oriented both to the Herero people's past and their future. The Oruaano movement wanted to restore their communal practices and rituals that were discouraged by the German missionaries of the RMS. Pastor Reinhardt Ruzo, a Rhenish Mission ordained pastor joined this body in 1955. It was very active in the central and Eastern part of Namibia, especially among the Herero speaking people.

I contend that the Oruaano schism of 1955 was not successful. It was not so much based on ecclesiastical autonomy for the followers, but concentrated more on the community issues of the Hereros. The Oruaano movement has not shown any growth since 1955 in Namibia. Some of the Oruaano followers converted back to the Rhenish Mission Society. Nowadays most Herero speaking people belong to the mainline churches such as the Roman Catholic, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the AMEC, the Anglican and the Dutch Reformed Churches.

6.4 The Question of AMEC Membership

Those who left the RMS and followed the AMEC were basically Nama, especially family members of the leaders of the 1946 schism and also some fairly educated people such as teachers and nurses. The economic milieu in which the schism occurred was not very conducive for the breakaway group. The people were paid poor salaries by white employers, with the result that the income of the church declined. Most of the Nama people earned their living as workers, especially as domestic and temporary workers. Their living conditions were poor.

Since the establishment of the AMEC in 1946, the leaders encouraged the members to be self supporting. All this could be reached if they were united in their cause. They had cultivated

the culture of regular generous offerings to the church especially in Mariental, Keetmanshoop and Maltahöhe. Bazaars were held for specific purposes. Those who could not make a financial contribution, could contribute in the form of livestock. Furthermore, cows and goats had to be handed in for the purchase of a vehicle for the congregation. The purpose of this vehicle was very important. The leaders could visit the congregation members on the farms for holy communion, weddings and counselling. Since the AMEC congregation members were very talented in singing, music performance took a first priority. Although their cash income was not high, they could live on it.

Women had been taught how to bake bread and sell it at social functions of the church. The garden project at Gibeon was not very successful due to the low rainfall. During a flood disaster caused by the Great Fish River in 1948, the people suffered heavy losses. First of all, they had to raise money from their own meagre income to assist the flood victims. Petrus Jod was responsible for the management of this flood disaster. Fortunately no loss of life had been recorded. The small stone church wherein the people gathered for prayer had been destroyed by the flood. The men from the congregation rebuilt the church with their own means. Petrus Jod was a hardworking leader. He found the Gibeon congregation in a terrible state. Without a properly organized congregation, just a weak beginning could be sensed. However, through his hardworking efforts, he managed to make the Gibeon congregation a model congregation.

The Coloured community around Gibeon was also hostile to the AMEC members. It was heavily under the influence of the colonial government's propaganda - that the AMEC was a communist-orientated church. The AMEC schism did not spread to the Ovambo Catholics and Coloureds in Gibeon. They formed a tiny minority in the South of Namibia. Roman Catholic Coloureds in Gibeon were not even included in the advertising done by the AMEC. Though there was hardly any Catholic congregational life existing in Gibeon, and the work of the Catholic Mission was more or less restricted by a school for Coloureds and caring for the sick. The fact that the Coloureds felt superior over the Nama, accounts for the little influence which the 1946 AMEC schism had on Coloured people. The Coloureds also refused to stay on the same premises with the Namas. Because of this distancing from the Namas, the Coloureds of Namibia usually stayed away from the AMEC.

The AMEC school in Gibeon was an attractive place for the entire community. They owned a big building made out of air dried bricks and a corrugated iron roof on one of the premises. The school consisted of a single, huge room which served as worship place on Sundays, because the old church building was too small. The walls were decorated with educational materials. In any AMEC church a piano takes a very prominent position, because the AMEC is a singing church. Singing is highly cherished and cultivated. From earlier times only AMEC students could sing songs in three languages such as Nama, English and Afrikaans.

6.5 Poverty and Disease Among the Nama People

The white farmers in the neighbourhood of Gibeon did not want to employ AMEC members. The diet in the Gibeon reserves was chiefly mealie meal and milk. The land was so overgrazed that the people could not rely on farming. To the large majority of black inhabitants, meat was a very occasional luxury. The government laws were very strict and for hunting, people required permits from the government. The diet of the ordinary family was thus, starchy, almost completely deficient in protective food substances. Suffering from diseases and poor nutrition due to poverty increased in Southern Namibia. There was no medical doctor based at Gibeon which was the main settlement for the Namas. The Namas had inadequate medical and hospital provision. Only those who could afford it, could travel to Mariental for medical attention.

Neither the RMS nor the FMS opposed the expropriation of land, livestock and other property from the indigenous people. According to the proclamation of 1922, blacks in the centre and south of the country were given 10% of the land which was five million to two million hectares. The proclamation of 1923 reduced the five million to two million hectares.¹⁴

Instead of challenging General von Trotha's policy of the extermination of the Hereros, some of the German missionaries justified it "as a terrible but just punishment for the Herero attack of the divinely ordained government of the Protectorate."¹⁵ The RMS campaigned for the concentration of converted war survivors in mission stations, where they would be given

¹⁴ P. Katjavivi. 1988. p. 14.

¹⁵ P. Katjavivi. 1988. p. 15.

social assistance and were expected to be humble and loving. The RMS benefitted from the consequences of war.

6.6 Problems with African Leadership after the Schism

After 54 years there is no indigenous AMEC bishop in Namibia. It only has presiding elders in Namibia. That the establishment of the AMEC was intended to provide a field where Africans could develop their ideas and express their own personalities without having to suffer the constant interference of white missionaries who claimed superiority is without question. The original aim of this establishment was to produce highly involved church leaders from the indigenous clergy. During the 1946 schism, the AMEC propagated and preached the idea that black churches needed to be self supporting.

Financially, the AMEC was self supporting from the beginning. Moreover, it was even capable of supporting its newly founded and established churches around Gibeon and Maltahöhe. Its financial independence is evident from the fact that it built a big modern church at Gibeon under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Hendrik Witbooi. This church building was made possible by the contributions made by the congregants themselves.

The AMEC members in Namibia, were very eager to pay the necessary dues required of any member of the church. At local level, the AMEC members made the church self reliant and self supporting.

At national level, the AMEC in South Africa and the USA failed to help the newly found church in Namibia. Very few Namibian pastors were given training at Wilbefore Institute in South Africa, but none have been given the opportunity to pursue their theological studies in the USA as assumed. On the failure of training of AMEC pastors, one prominent young AMEC pastor in Windhoek said:

You know it and I know it that not a single Namibian, over a fifty year period, has been an alumni of Wilbefore University, of Edward Waters College, of Paul Quinn College, of Turner Theological Seminary, of Morris Brown College. All of these and many others are institutions of higher learning owned by AMEC in the USA; yet not

two and not one Namibian AMEC has graduated from these institutions. We have not even awarded a full scholarship for one student locally¹⁶

The old generation pastors of the AMEC were quite happy with ordination. Judging from the above extract of Rev. Hanse, the new generation go beyond the point of ordination. They fully propagated for tertiary education in theology. The tertiary education in theology will definitely equip them to deal with the new challenges. In similar context, but in different vein Father Skhakhane, a Roman Catholic historian who had a very strong opinion about this, said:

The formation of the indigenous clergy is that penetration of the mind, heart and soul of the people is evangelized. This recognizes that an indigenous pastor is the most suitable person to evangelize his people, he knows them and will find suitable methods of penetrating their souls and injecting faith into the depth of their souls. It is this total penetration of faith which remains our challenge. This is a challenge to the African clergy, for it is their task and no one else can do it for them.¹⁷

On the contrary, ELCRN, the offspring of the RMS managed to send some of their pastors to the USA and Germany, and the Paulinum Theological Board succeeded in calling the Rev. Dr. J.L. de Vries, Prof. P.J. Isaak and Rev. G. du Toit as lecturers. The Lutheran Church and the Paulinum Theological Board pressed for more African lecturers, realising that white lecturers would not have the same possibilities in relating their theology to African students.¹⁸

6.6.1 The Paulinum Theological Seminary in Namibia

The Paulinum Theological Seminary in Namibia was established by the RMS in 1866.¹⁹ This was the very first institution which in 1963 was moved to Otjimbingwe to occupy the land and buildings of the United Lutheran Theological Seminary. Paulinum is the combined institution of the two Lutheran Churches - ELCIN (Finnish tradition) and ELCRN (Rhenish

¹⁶ W.S. Hanse. Laythink tank. (Unpublished conference notes). Gibeon. 1995. p. 4.

¹⁷ Phillipe Denis. The making of an indigenous clergy in Southern Africa. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 1994. p. 123.

¹⁸ Interview with Bishop P. Diergaardt, head of ELCRN Windhoek, Namibia, 7 July 2000.

¹⁹ J. Baumann Van Sending tot Kerk: 125 jaar Rynse Sending arbeid in Suidwes-Afrika 1892-1967. Windhoek: John Meinert, 1967.

tradition).²⁰ Before Paulinum came to be located in Otjimbingwe, the two churches trained their theological students separately: ELCIN at Oniipa and later at Elim and ELCRN at Karibib. The theological seminary of ELCRN at Karibib was called 'Paulinum'. In 1963 the joint Paulinum - ULTS at Otjimbingwe was inaugurated and the first students registered.

6.6.2 *By-laws and Code of Conduct*

The Paulinum governing board is the Executive Committee of the seminary and consists of the two bishops, two general secretaries, one member from each church council, and the treasurers of the two Lutheran churches. The governing board meets ordinarily at least twice a year. The seminary only trains students for the Pastoral Certificate and/or Diploma in theology courses. Only pastors for the ordained ministry are trained at Paulinum. Until the late 1970's evangelists were also trained here, but this programme was stopped.²¹

6.6.3 *The Curriculum*

Courses which are offered over the period of four years are Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Philosophy, Systematic Theology, Christian Education, Church and Society, African theology and Greek. These courses are divided in Pastoral Certificate and Diploma for theology courses and are taught accordingly. Some of these courses are not required by the Joint Board for the diploma in theology, but are a requirement for the respective churches in Namibia, and are therefore taught at Certificate level. The Certificate courses are also for those students who are not academically advanced to qualify at diploma level. The internship is in the fifth year, after the students have completed their four years of theological training.²² Paulinum has also developed a proposal for a B.Th. Syllabus, which is under discussion.

6.7 The Relations Between the Newly Established African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Government

The Germans in general opposed the AMEC in Namibia. Most of the farmers were still in

²⁰ G.L. Buys and J.J. Kritzinger. *Salig die Vredemakers*. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria. 1989. p. 152.

²¹ Interview with Bishop P. Diergaardt, Windhoek, Namibia. 07 July 2000.

²² Interview with Rev. Prof. P. Isaak. Windhoek, Namibia. 07 July 2000.

concentration camps of the South African Union at the time of origin. The Witboois had tried twice to get rid of European rule in the Nama wars against the German colonial power in 1893-1894 and 1904-1906. The German missionaries, right after the end of the war, were restricted in their freedom of movement to a town or a district. Viewing the post-schism period in its entirety, there were many developments in Namibia, especially on the political front.

South Africa's policies were opposed by Namibians, especially the country's annexation. Namibians were not only against white resistance. They were also backed against South Africa by fellow Africans - initially the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa and Chief Tshekedi of Botswana, later by the newly independent African states. Namibians studying in South Africa during the 1940's and 1950's established links with the South African organisations, especially the African National Congress (ANC). On their return to Namibia some of these students formed a political party, the South West African National Union (SWANU) in 1959. Some of these students were also advisors to the leaders of the AMEC who led the 1946 schism. With a base amongst the intelligentsia, SWANU presented an articulate case for Namibian independence and gained support in the early 1960's.²³

The colonial government was under the impression that AMEC would collapse due to the strong propaganda against it. It tried smear the AMEC as a communist agent, but in vain. Gradually, it had to recognise the church. Prior to the schism only white missionaries could solemnize marriages, but now a marriage licence was issued to Rev. Petrus Jod at Maltahöhe. In the meantime, the government also appointed Rev. Hendrick Isaak who was a pastor of the RMS, as a marriage officer at Maltahöhe.²⁴ It wanted to create an impression that they were still in control of affairs, and tried to diffuse the impact of the schism. While the reactionary nature of AMEC cannot be denied, it was in a more positive sense a movement of renewal attempting to create a genuinely indigenous church on Namibian soil.

²³ P. Katjavivi, P. Frostin, K. Mbuende (ed). Church and Liberation in Namibia. London: Pluto Press. 1989. p. 111.

²⁴ Archival material. AMEC and RMS. ELCRN Archives: Windhoek, Namibia. 1949.

6.7.1 *The Consequences of the 1946 AMEC Schism*

The RMS and the AMEC mutually recognized their baptisms. With confirmation, it was different. School attendance had risen because of the AMEC activities in the South of Namibia, especially that of Rev. Petrus Jod who encouraged children to go to school. In Gibeon, relationships deteriorated because, to a certain extent the German missionaries stirred up the hatred between the Nama and the Damara-speaking people after the 1946 schism. Because of the schism, marriage relationships also deteriorated.²⁵

The United Nations organisation seemed to consider the AMEC in Namibia as an organisation of the suppressed blacks after having requested a representative of the Nama via Markus Witbooi. Rev. Markus Kooper stayed twenty years in exile in the USA and returned to Namibia during the early 1980's. He is still actively involved in community and church matters in Hoachanas.²⁶

6.8 **The Relationship Between the Newly Established AMEC and other Denominations in the Context of Ecumenism**

Christianity, brought by the colonial mission societies, spread rapidly amongst Namibians during the first half of the twentieth century. "The vast majority of Namibians were Christians. An estimated 80 percent of the population belonged to one or other of the Christian denomination."²⁷ Since it's establishment in 1946, the AMEC was stretching out it's wings for closer cooperation with the other denominations in Namibia. On this issue Dr Christiaans of the AMEC in Namibia said:

The AMEC in Namibia should try by all means to have healthy and sound cooperation with all churches in the country, and above all to contribute to the development of the entire Namibia²⁸

²⁵ Interviews with Rev. P.A. Schmidt, Maltahöhe, Namibia. 4 February 1997 and Rev. Willem Mungunda. Mariental. 4 February 1997.

²⁶ Olga Levinson. 1976. p.91.

²⁷ Piet Meiring. Die Kerk in die Nuwe Afrika. Kaapstad: Tafelberg. 1979, p. 87.

²⁸ N.C. Christiaans. Afrikaanse Metodisme. Keetmanshoop, Namibia: Trinity AME Kerk. 1957, p. 14.

In its formative years, the AMEC's major activity was the planting and assisting of new churches. The AMEC had been responsible for many projects and developments which no single church could shoulder. Some amongst many are: the AMEC private school in Gibeon, the private school in Hoachanas and the famous kindergarten in Windhoek. In addition to these institutions, they also run old-age homes.

The AMEC is a member of many ecumenical bodies in the world, including the World Council of Churches, the All Africa Conference of Churches, the World Methodist Council, the South African Council of Churches, and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States. It is also a member of the Council of Churches in Namibia. The AMEC representatives on the Council of Churches in Namibia Executive Committee are Mr Francis Kooper and Rev. Petrus Schmidt.

No other person than the renowned former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, W.A. Visser'T Hooft defined ecumenism as follows:

The World Council of Churches is that sector of ecumenical movement in which the churches as such meet and work together. As the well-known Toronto statement of 1950 states clearly, it is not a super-church, it does not force churches to unite with each other, it does not propagate one particular conception of unity. It is rather a fellowship of churches which acknowledges Jesus Christ as God and Saviour and which desires to enter into constructive relations with each other. It is a platform for serious conversations about the issues of unity, a means of cooperation in matters of common concern, an organ of common witness when it is given to the churches to speak together to the world.²⁹

How does Visser'T Hooft's dictum relate to the activities of the AMEC in it's ecumenical context? For many years especially shortly after the schism, the AMEC also wanted to restore healthy relations with the RMS. It had also become obvious that they were reconciliatory in their approach. They did not harbour any ill-feelings towards the RMS. Although there was a gap between the RMS and the AMEC, the members of the AMEC joined progressive forces inside the country to strengthen unity and solidarity among the oppressed blacks. It also coincided with the time that the indigenous people began to think of national unity. The

²⁹ W.A. Visser'T Hooft (Ecumenism) in A Handbook of Christian Theology. Arthur A. Cohen and Marvin Halverson (ed). Abingdon, Nashville, USA. 1958. p. 95.

concept of a common church where they could rediscover their humanity together would have had a wide appeal.

When the winds of change began to blow on the political front, the churches played a significant role. Some individual church leaders such as Michael Scott played a prominent role in the international struggle for Namibian independence. A turning point came in 1971 when the major churches combined in sending an open letter to the South African Prime Minister demanding Namibian independence. In the 1970's the church leaders such as Anglican Bishops Colin Winter and Richard Wood helped to expose the brutal South African clampdown which followed the 1971-1972 general strike. Both bishops were expelled from Namibia by the authorities. All the main Christian denominations were united in the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN). The government could not silence the ecumenical voice of the church in Namibia.

The AMEC re-affirmed its membership to the CCN, at its annual conference held in Windhoek, from 3-6 October 1991. To this effect a statement was signed by the AMEC's Namibian Annual Conference Secretary, Rev. Peter S. Kooper, which stated that his church reaffirmed its membership and participation in all the programmes of the CCN. The AMEC, Rev. Kooper said:

will participate in all ecumenical matters, and will especially support the campaign against the AIDS disease and against racism, economic disparities and alcohol abuse.³⁰

6.8 Conclusion

It is not true that the AMEC in Namibia was under the influence of communist ideology. It started as early as 1930 under the initiative of the indigenous evangelist based in the Southern part of Namibia. It then spread to Gibeon and Maltahöhe. Most of the work was through the initiative of the local evangelist, who raised funds and sustained these black churches, financially and otherwise.

³⁰ AMEC annual conference minutes. Windhoek, Namibia. 03-06 October 1991.

The evidence presented in this study points heavily to the reluctance of the RMS to ordain indigenous clergy. I contend that if the 1946 AMEC schism had not occurred, the RMS could have continued to play a delaying tactic with ordination. The RMS never acknowledged their fault in this matter. Most of their excuses evolved around the fact that they needed sufficient time to groom the indigenous evangelist for ordination. There does not seem to be adequate evidence to support the missionary stance in relation to African ordination. On the other hand, the evidence asserts that the RMS were training African evangelists only to become helpers and domestic servants of the German missionaries.

The findings indicate that the AMEC schism restored back the dignity of the indigenous clergy. These included raising the level of education, training in theological subjects and raising the levels of income through self-supporting ministry to eradicate poverty. It is implied by these opinions that indigenous clergy within the AMEC circles needed to be liberated economically and socially for them to be able to participate in the leadership of the church.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE IMPACT OF THE SCHISM ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE RHENISH MISSION SOCIETY AND THE GOVERNMENT

7.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the impact of the 1946 AMEC schism on the activities of the Rhenish Mission Society and the government. An attempt is made to demonstrate how the RMS and the colonial government worked together to counter the 1946 schism. Under the influence of the colonial government, the RMS was successful for a hundred years with their inhuman dealings with the indigenous clergy. Amidst this close cooperation, I want to show how the first recorded schism in Namibia changed the course of history on political as well as Ecclesiastical levels. This historical turning points to the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Namibia in 1946. In a study concerning missionary activities and African response, Chirenje said: "Their weakest point was their failure to promote an indigenous clergy."¹ It is clear from our previous discussion, that the RMS in Namibia, was everything. The RMS influenced the government of the day in many respects. The reactionary elements within the AMEC took the RMS by surprise, because they have been used to the blacks of the country who never questioned issues especially on church related matters. The AMEC protested against the German domination within the RMS. One could regard it also as a protest against political domination.

7.1 The Arrival of the Missionaries

By the time the present borders of Namibia were defined by the colonial powers, the territory had already been subjected to missionary activity for over half a century. The Christian churches originally came to Namibia with the early European explorers and traders and were soon followed by German colonizers.

The pioneer missionaries in Namibia were those of the London Missionary Society, whose

¹ J.M. Chirenje. Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa. Louisiana State University. 1987. p. 18.

express purpose was “to civilize the natives and to save their pagan souls in accordance with the command of the gospel.” They were succeeded by the RMS from Germany, when Pastors Hahn and Kleinschmidt² arrived in 1842 at /Ai-11Gams, a settlement that was later seized by German colonial troops and renamed Windhoek. At the request of the RMS, Finnish Lutheran missionaries arrived in 1870 to assist with the missionary endeavours. They concentrated their work in Ovamboland, the more densely populated north of the country.

Nineteenth century missionary outreach contributed to the history of oppression and exploitation of Namibia. Missionaries with the greatest religious ideals and zeal understood salvation in terms of conversion to Christian civilization under the ‘protectorate’ of the German Emperor (or the British Crown). The missionaries intervened not only locally to regulate conflicts between the various peoples of Namibia, but also internationally to persuade first Britain, and then Imperial Germany, to annex Walvis Bay and Hereroland and finally to declare the whole territory a ‘protectorate’ or colony. They also requested troops for the defence of the interest and property of the mission, which had developed into a powerful trading company.

The kings and chiefs of the Namibian peoples became disillusioned by this power game played by the missionaries and few conversions were made during the whole of the 19th century. German Roman Catholic missionaries began their work in the country in 1896 after fierce resistance from German Lutheran pastors. However, despite the Confessional competition between the two churches, their missionary outlook was the same. Patriotic feelings and filial faithfulness towards the Kaiser were part of German Catholic ethics and had to be instilled in the indigenous people.

7.2 The Herero and Nama Wars (1904-1906)

The exploitation practices of the traders and the racist bias of the colonial judiciary system forced the Herero into a desperate rebellion between 1904-1906. The genocidal retaliation of the German troops under General von Trotha resulted in the decimation of the Herero and

² M. Hope and J. Young. The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation. New York: Orbis Books. 1983. p.14.

later the Nama population. The Herero people were reduced from 80 000 to 15 000.³

The Christian churches during this time stood on the side of the colonial power. The RMS shared the belief of the church in Germany that the rebellion of the Namibians was an expression of infidelity, first towards the Kaiser but therefore also toward God and the God-given law and order. The ensuing destruction of the people was interpreted and preached as God's chastisement for their refusal of obedience to the God-given law and order. The Catholic missionaries went a step further in endorsing the authority of the colonial power and by joining the colonial army.

The total destruction of the social structure, the confiscation of all land and property, the pauperization and the dispersion of the people into labour camps and farm shacks enabled the RMS and the Roman Catholic churches to deploy their resources in charitable work.

7.3 The Invasion of Afrikanerdom

In 1915 German colonial rule was overturned by South African troops. With the new occupation power came two additional Christian churches: the Anglican Church with the English element of South African business and administration, and the Dutch Reformed Churches with the many Afrikaners, who came both as farmers and as part of the administration and police.

Having lost their political power to the Afrikaner regime, the RMS and Catholics concentrated on missionary and social work. In this regard the Catholics were quicker than the RMS. Missionary schools and hospitals were built all over the country, teachers, catechists and evangelists were trained; linguistic studies were developed with the translation of the Bible, hymn books and catechism. The Lutheran, Roman Catholic and later Anglican Churches rendered important services in the fields of health care and education to which generations of missionary personnel, priests, pastors, sisters and lay leaders dedicated their lives.⁴

³ O. Levinson. 1976. p.24.

⁴ G. Gurirab. 2000. p. 31.

The Afrikaner element in the new colonial administration tried to control, check and hinder these and other services that was the responsibility of the South African government - taken up solemnly in receiving the mandate of the League of Nations to develop Namibia towards independence. In theory, the mandate meant that South Africa, under the League supervision, was supposed to govern Namibia in the interests of its people. In practice, the South Africans treated Namibia as part of South Africa and oppressed and exploited its people in the same way that the Germans had done. They increased the size of the Police Zone; they continued the Pass Laws and other oppressive 'Native Regulations'; they brought thousands of Afrikaner settlers into the country, and took away more Namibian land to provide farms for them.

7.3.1 Resistance and Repression

The Namibian people did their best to resist this continuing colonial oppression. In 1921, for example, a veteran of the 1904-1908 War of National Resistance named Abraham Morris led the Bondelswarts group of the Nama people in a rebellion against a new tax on dogs. The South Africans intended the dog tax to force the Bondelswarts to work for white farmers, by making it impossible for them to support themselves by hunting. Since the Bondelswarts used dogs to make a living from hunting, they were hard hit by the tax.

When the Bondelswarts resisted, the South African Prime Minister, Smuts, sent an aircraft to machine gun and bomb them into submission. Morris and over a hundred other men, women and children died in the attack, which was one of the first recorded examples of the bombing of a civilian population by military aircraft. This attack took place on 4 June 1922. Smuts later told a gratified Parliament in Cape Town: A great bloodletting has been averted by prompt action.⁵ Unarmed civilian people, including children with their leader Abraham Morris were killed in the Bondelswarts rebellion.

7.4 The Contemporary Situation and the Rhenish Mission Society

Like Hendrik Witbooi, when he started the rebellion in October 1904, when the fighting

⁵ *Mail and Guardian*. For land and freedom. Johannesburg. 30 April to 7 May 1998.

between the Germans and the Herero people had lasted for 4 years and the power of the German forces had become questionable, the leaders of the AMEC schism had chosen a moment of German weakness in 1946 for their defection from the Rhenish Mission Society. Pastor H.K. Diehl is of the opinion that the schism can be rather explained by a general hostility towards the Europeans than by a specific hostility against the Germans or German missions. But the leaders of the AMEC schism chose the Southern part in order to demonstrate their hostility against the Germans. Right after the end of the war, the German missionaries were used to be restricted in their freedom of movement to a town or a district. To a certain extent, they were cut off from the outside world, and could not closely monitor the final outcomes of the 1946 schism.

Missionary Totömeyer, a generally well-liked missionary from Keetmanshoop, was retained in Germany after a holiday, and his position had only been filled on a provisional basis. The missionaries inside the country during the second world war were threatened with expulsion from Namibia.⁶ It was discussed, that should such a case occur, the Dutch Reformed Church would take over the congregations of the Rhenish Mission. But the leaders of the 1946 schism objected to that move. In 1946, one of the prominent leaders of the schism from the RMS expressed this with the following words: "*mens kan nie altyd tussen klippe rondkruip nie; mens moet ook eendag opstaan en regop loop*"⁷ (A human being cannot just crawl among stones for ever and ever. A human being will one day have to get up and walk upright). The management of the RMS was not fully aware of the fact that the leaders of the AMEC schism was following newspaper reports of the time. The leaders were informed about the fact that Germany was defeated with the help of non-white American troops.

The history of Namibia, throughout the colonial period, is one of exploitation both of the country's vast natural resources and of its human potential- which has been used by all its conquerors as cheap labour. The indigenous population had been forcibly disposed of their land and cattle, and over 80 000, including 60 000 of the Herero people, had lost their lives at the hands of the German army. The political element of the day was hostile. Many strikes had taken place since World War II. Some of the workers who had been involved in the strikes also supported the AMEC schism of 1946. The Rhenish Missionary Society was quiet when

⁶ K. Schlosser. 1958. pp. 98-100.

⁷ Zacheus Thomas. ELCRN archives schism 1946, Windhoek, Namibia.

the German Schutztruppe annihilated Hereros and Namas in 1904-1907 wars. Between the world wars no public protest in favour of the indigenous people was heard either.

7.5 The Role Played by Churches in Namibia

Two thirds of Namibians are members of a Christian Church.⁸ The role of churches, of the missionaries, in bringing the indigenous Namibian peoples into contact with the gospel has been touched on in a previous chapter. Since the beginning of permanent missionary work in Namibia by the RMS in 1842, European religions exerted an influence in the everyday lives of Namibians at home, school and the workplace. The RMS missionaries were accompanied by tradesmen who were Dutch, German and British. The missionaries were a vital link for providing Orlams with guns, ammunition and horses which together gave them a military advantage. The Orlams were the light skinned people who crossed into Namibia from South Africa, because of the white oppression, exploitation and outright slavery.

The first missionaries were from the London Missionary Society, arriving in 1802. Missionary Schmelen established a station at Bethanie, near the Orange River in the South. British influence, however, did not persist. The German Lutherans under the Rhenish Missionary Society established a really lasting impact through the work led by Hugo Hahn.

The Finnish Mission Society started its activities in Ovamboland in 1870. The missionary endeavours of the Finnish Mission Society were a success story. The policy of the Finns was to train indigenous pastors as soon as possible and let them run the church organisation themselves. The first seven black pastors of ELCIN were ordained in 1925, and Bishop Auala became the leader of the church in 1960. Since then, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN), as it is called today, has had only Namibian workers on its payroll. The Finnish missionaries had no colonial ambitions although they worked in close liaison with the Germans of the Rhenish Mission Society. That created a certain distance to both German and South African colonisers which helped their work among Ovambos. The great importance the Finns laid on education, health work and people's welfare contributed to their success and irritated the colonisers.

⁸ Marjorie Froise (ed.). World Christianity Southern Africa. California. Marc. 1989. p. 48.

The colonial administration required the churches to comply with the general outlines of their policies towards blacks, especially the ones related to migration of labour from the northern parts of the country. The colonial authorities also designated specific areas for the missionary work of each church. The obvious intention was to strengthen particular ethnic identities, combining them with particular religions.

The Dutch Reformed Church was a showpiece for the growing political power of the Afrikaners in Namibia. This all-white church wanted to participate in the missionary field, but could not do that on its own. The Dutch Reformed Church in Namibia was known among the populace as advocating the cause of separate development. On the issue of the DRC, apartheid and separate development, Professor C. Villa-Vicencio a leading South African theologian stated:

Shortly after the election of the National Party to power in 1948, *Die Kerkbode*, the official newspaper of the DRC, noted with pride: As a church we have always worked purposefully for the separation of the races. In this regard apartheid can rightfully be called a church policy. In 1970 Dr J.D. Voster, the then moderator of the DRC in the Cape, defended apartheid thus: Our only guide is the Bible. Our policy and outlook on life are based on the Bible. We firmly believe that way we firmly believe that way we interpret it is right. We will not budge one inch from our interpretation to satisfy any one in South Africa or abroad. The world may differ from our interpretation. This will not influence us. The world may be wrong. We are right and will continue to follow the way the Bible teaches.⁹

As I already said, Dr Vedder of the RMS secretly wanted to hand over some of the congregations of the RMS to the DRC. In this regard Dr Vedder released a newspaper article in *Die Burger* of 31 October 1945. The article mentioned 23 identified congregations of the RMS that should be handed over to the DRC.¹⁰ Some of the progressive Nama leaders got hold of this article in *Die Burger*, and the news of dissatisfaction spread rapidly across the Southern part of Namibia.

The AMEC in Namibia. Let me start off with the mission of the AMEC. "The mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical and

⁹ J.W. de Gruchy & C. Villa-Vicencio (ed). *Apartheid is a Heresy*. Cape Town. David Philip Publishers. 1983. p. 59.

¹⁰ Interview with Rev. P.A. Schmidt, Maltahöhe, Namibia, 4 February 1997.

emotional needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating gospel through word and deed. Each local church of the AMEC should engage in carrying out this, the spirit of the original Free African Society."¹¹

The AMEC in Namibia established large church buildings throughout the Southern part of Namibia. Usually, the churches were built in close proximity to a school and self-help projects such as gardening and sewing. The AMEC went out to reach the people while the RMS expected the people to come to them. The AMEC pioneered health and education in Namibia. Whenever a new school or clinic was inaugurated by Dr Hendrik Witbooi, the audience was always reminded about how the leaders of the 1946 schism protested against the Germans for autonomy and self-governance. The whole purpose of their agitation was to achieve equality with the dominant missionaries, and to participate in the decisions that governed their lives and aspirations.

The indigenous people were excluded from participation in the political and economic life of the country. Namibians, especially the Africans, found in the church an institution they could participate in and which they could claim as their own. In this process, the RMS provided a limited means of social mobility whereby people could receive some training and achieve status as ordained ministers of the church. The RMS missionaries preached the gospel in the light of their interest in the political and economic situation of Namibia.

For quite a while, Dr. Vedder negotiated with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, about the possibility of taking over the RMS congregations, due to a lack of financial resources. Black RMS leaders read in a South African newspaper at the end of the second World War that their churches would be taken over by the Afrikaner Church. There had been no consultation.

The planned ecclesiastical incorporation paralleled the staging of a referendum by the administration, seeking a mandate for the political incorporation of the territory itself within South Africa as a fifth province. It is argued by Kritzinger that some of the staff members of the RMS, especially the younger ones, did not support him on the handover of the

¹¹ Church Constitution AMEC: Keetmanshoop, 1946.

congregations to DRC.¹² Many of the black preachers and teachers at RMS stations in Southern Namibia decided to leave the mission and joined the AMEC. The local leaders were rejecting the presumptions of racial hierarchy that they perceived as a common feature of both the RMS and the Dutch Reformed Church.

The meetings of the breakaway group of blacks did not only focus on church-related issues, but they also analysed the political situation of the country. Issues discussed there included unfair labour practices, the need for skilled manpower and the lack of ordained ministers and leadership positions within the RMS. It is interesting to note that in the African context, religion and politics have reinforced each other. The RMS branded the leaders of the AMEC schism as political agitators. But the leaders were led by their consciences, to challenge the RMS with its racial policies. The RMS had agents who were ready to fan the flames of discontent not only among the members, but also among the evangelists and teachers who remained faithful to the mission. The attitude of the RMS was correctly voiced by the African intellectual and writer, Ezekiel Mphahlele:

For that matter, the Christian faith has lost its original enchantment, because it seems to us that it has become the very expression of the dishonesty of the West. We have become disillusioned in missionary teaching, because while we were being evangelized and taught to tolerate our oppressor, very little, if any similar evangelizing was being done among the whites.¹³

The criticism levelled against the missionaries was that they introduced to the gospel. On the other hand, they expanded the strength of the colonial forces. In doing so, the missionaries contributed to the entrenchment of colonial power in Africa. In a small country like Namibia, it taught the blacks the theology of heavenly reward. Whatever suffering they endured here on earth, as long as they were law abiding Christians, there would be a heavenly reward. The aim of the missionary gospel was to enslave the blacks, and to empower the colonist in their endeavours. In this undertaking, they met great opposition from the black people, especially the educated class, who constantly petitioned for fair treatment on all levels of society. Not considering the demands of the blacks, the missionaries and the colonists regarded their

¹² J.J. Kritzinger. Sending en Kerk in Suidwes Afrika. D.D. Verhandeling Vol. 2 Pretoria 1972, bladsy 441.

¹³ Ezekiel Mphahlele. The African Intellectual, in Africa in Transition. P. Smith (ed). London: Max Reinhard Publishers. 1958, pp. 157-148.

demands as misplaced ambitions. We can also mention educational marginalisation. The school system was in a state of abandonment in the areas where the German colonists settled. For this reason, they created their own schools, and, of course, these schools were influenced by the culture that the colonists brought with them. In this way integration into a true Namibian culture, in fact, was not facilitated. In such a situation of marginalisation they stressed the preservation of their ethnic identity and lived in a certain isolation.

7.5.1 The Deutsche Evangelische Lutheran Church in South West Africa (DELCA)

When South West Africa became a German colony, with occupation troops and colonists, the administration was extended, and in 1896 the first ecclesiastical parish was established at Windhoek. At the outbreak of the first World War there were 10 parishes and, although the numbers diminished during the war conditions after the war soon improved to such an extent that on 1 October 1926 these parishes formed a synod. They constituted themselves as an independent church on 30 May 1960.¹⁴ This church is closely affiliated with the Lutheran Churches in Germany and since 1963 has been a member of the Lutheran World Federation. In the field of education, the church has nursery schools and 2 hostels. After the Second World War the church took the initiative in restoring mother-tongue education in German in the government schools which resulted in the establishment of German-medium schools.

7.5.2 The Anglican Church

The first Anglicans came to South West Africa in 1914 as part of the the South African forces and later as government and railway officials. Parishes were established after the war and in 1924 the military chaplain became the first bishop of the newly established Diocese of Damaraland.¹⁵ The diocese was under Bishop Fogarty. The church does not make any clear distinction between work done among blacks and whites and the same clergy ministered to both groups. This is still the case today. The church also controlled the St. George's Junior High School in Windhoek.

¹⁴ G.L. Buys and J.J. Kritzinger. Salig die Vredemarkers. Pretoria, Universiteit van Pretoria. 1989. p.141.

¹⁵ M. Froise (ed). World Christianity Southern Africa. California: Marc. 1989. p.52.

7.5.3 *The RMS and Politics*

As pointed out in the previous chapter of this study, the RMS have often been criticized for interfering in colonial politics. Undoubtedly, some missionaries identified with the politics of the colonial power, particularly when they entered land deals with the local chiefs such as Frederick of the Bethamen Nama clan. After purchasing such lands at cheap prices from the local chiefs, the RMS staff invited traders and explorers from Germany with the sole intention of alienating people from their land. The possibility of independence did not even enter the minds of the German missionaries. The RMS positioned their work quite naturally and unquestionably within the framework of a German culture, set in nationalist and colonial terms. In other words, continuing the conservative RMS work in Namibia was linked directly to the possibility of the country being recovered by Germany as a colony and moreover, to the current Germans, i.e. the Nazi government's political intentions. The RMS, with the help of the German colonists wanted to help Germanise Namibia. The archival records revealed the fact that the RMS was also not so much in favour of Catholic missionary activity in Namibia. The RMS staff regarded themselves as the only ones who could defend the ascendancy of Protestantism in the country with the external help of the colonial German forces. At the same time as the RMS staff penned their determination to help keep Namibia Protestant and make it German, missionary Spellmeyer provided an early version of what was to become his credo and trade mark. In 1907 he faced unusual difficulties at a mission station largely depleted of its former inhabitants and congregation, with the influx of Herero people deported from the North. He propagated a vision that was to set him off from his colleagues both in the short and in the long run. Spellmeyer developed a fairly sophisticated concept, linking reliance on black collaborators to the principle of self-taxation to be adopted by the congregation, at the insistence of the missionary. This implied substantial regular payments in excess of the usual and statutory church dues. Spellmeyer, acting as a patriarchal pedagogue aspired towards educating his charges towards attitudes of self-help and willingness to sacrifice. At the same time, collaborators took over most of the daily operative routine, leaving the missionary to officiate at occasions like weddings and holy communion, to supervise and give general directions. For his concept which was quite successful in the large region of his church district around Gibeon, Spellmeyer only earned disdain of his brethren. In spite of these frustrations, when his closest students stood at the head of the 1946

AMEC schism, the retired missionary did not hesitate to choose sides, coming out strongly for the RMS and its directorate.¹⁶

Most of the black collaborators Spellmeyer had groomed during more than three decades came out in leading positions during the AMEC schism in 1946. Others, such as Zacheus Thomas, were linked to them partly due to the yearly conferences Spellmeyer had started, to encourage dialogue between mission workers in Southern Namibia. Personal relations between the missionary and a number of these men were particularly close on account of the system of recruitment Spellmeyer had developed during the difficult situation after 1905. A promising youth and possible future collaborator would be taken into the mission house, first as a house and kitchen aid to receive preliminary schooling in housework and gardening, and then to be educated in terms of colonial government and the politics of the time. Spellmeyer would never raise the level of schooling of these black men. As far as Namibia was concerned, there was no evidence of an advocacy from the side of the RMS to include the blacks in political affairs and making decisions on various issues. This was probably due to a combination of patriotism and arrogance and misplaced evangelical zeal.

We can speak here of mental colonialism in the mission and the church. These divisions were not there when the first missionaries arrived. They were brought to the indigenous people. Long before the apartheid government of South Africa introduced apartheid laws in Namibia, the RMS divided the indigenous people on an ethnic basis. The unifying message of the Bible was ignored due to a preoccupation with these divisions. Colonization had a major impact on the church. A church under the colonial authority of another church is not free to decide what is necessary for its context. By all means, the attitude of the RMS was to enslave the indigenous people, and make them obedient as so-called law abiding Christians. The RMS never spoke up against the socio-political evils of colonialism and apartheid existing in the country. The RMS, and certain officials of the mission wanted to suppress the political conscience of the Namibian people. To a certain extent the RMS also managed to succeed in the divide and rule policy among the co-workers of the mission. Through this divide and rule they also created animosity between the black co-workers.¹⁷

¹⁶ R. Kössler. 1999. pp. 24-34.

¹⁷ Interview with Rev. Prof. P.I. Isaak. Windhoek, Namibia. 07 July 2000.

7.5.4 Namibia and International Status

After the International Court of Justice at The Hague had, on 11 July 1950, given an advisory opinion to the effect that South Africa continued to have international obligations regarding the mandate, including the obligation to submit annual reports to the United Nations, and after the refusal of the Union government to accept this decision, the General Assembly of the United Nations appointed in 1953 the Committee of South West Africa to report on conditions in the territory. In 1954 this committee deplored the fact that the Department of Bantu Affairs had been transferred from the portfolio of the Prime Minister to the Minister of Bantu Education of the Union without consultation with the indigenous people of the territory, and made various other allegations, while insisting on equal rights, privileges, protection and obligations for all inhabitants of the country.

On 10 December 1959 serious rioting occurred in the black township at Windhoek, following attempts of forceful removal of the blacks to the apartheid designated township called Katutura. In the Herero language, Katutura means “who have no permanent dwelling place of their own”. When the people refused to move, heavily armed troops dispersed the rioters and shot dead 11 people and 50 were wounded. This incident angered the local people as well as the international world. On 17 December 1959, nine African states appealed to the United Nations secretary general to take appropriate action on the killing of many innocent and unarmed persons at Windhoek. At an inquiry into the riots on 11-15 January 1960, to no surprise, the apartheid judge president of South West Africa, Dr C.G. Hall, found the police had been justified in their action, and that the opposition to the removal from the old location had been organised by Herero tribesmen at the instigation of their champions in New York.

This event was a milestone, and an eye-opener for many black Namibians. Soon after the Katutura shooting many prominent leaders of the progressive parties, groups and organisations went into exile in order to petition to the outside world and United Nations for the independence of the country. Namibia had been the special concern of the United Nations from its earliest days. Indeed, the mandated status of Namibia was a product of the League of Nations. Every principle organ of the United Nations had been engaged with the Namibian

issue. SWAPO was engaged in war with South African forces from 1966-1989¹⁸ The Security Council adopted the landmark resolution 435 which provided the basis for Namibia's independence. After 105 years of oppression Namibia gained independence on 21 March 1990. Namibia became the one-hundred-and sixtieth member state of the United Nations. SWAPO became the first democratically elected government in Namibia under the auspices of the World Body. President Sam Nujoma became the first President of Namibia.

7.5.5 Summary Perspectives on the African Methodist Episcopal Church Schism in Namibia

The AMEC was founded in 1946 in Keetmanshoop, Namibia by a group of progressive Nama leaders and teachers who were dissatisfied with the inhuman treatment received from the missionaries of the RMS. They broke away from the white dominated RMS especially in Southern Namibia. It was subsequently promoted on a big scale by the progressive leaders originating from the Witbooi clan. In breaking away from the RMS, they were protesting growing racial feelings and treatment in the broader society. In various meetings and discussions they raised their dissatisfaction with the RMS but they were ignored and treated as minors who could not think for themselves especially on the ecclesiastical sphere.

Reverend Zacheus Thomas played an important role in the Southern part of Namibia, by mobilizing Nama people to join the AMEC separating themselves from the German orientated RMS. Significantly, the religious character of the mobilisation was submerged and its efforts were concentrated on caring for the sick, homeless and dead. They also took a particularly keen interest in the education of the children and the social upliftment of the Nama people. The AMEC quickly adopted an important social role in the Nama community. "Already in the 1940's the progressive Nama leaders put a request to the RMS to train indigenous girls as nurses, but they refused".¹⁹ All the nurses around the mission stations and in the towns were affiliated to the RMS and of German origin.

¹⁸ Marjorie Froise (ed), World Christianity Southern Africa. California: Marc. 1989. p.46.

¹⁹ Interview with Ms. Katrina Isaak, Swakopmund, Namibia, 04 July 2000.

Those evangelists who had some formal education, in addition to supervised pastoral work, taught in the mission schools but were restricted from performing the duties reserved for ordained ministers, e.g. administering Holy Communion and baptizing. The RMS limited the functions of evangelists to those of interpreter and catechist in charge of the religious instruction of children. Visiting the surrounding mission stations on ox-wagon and the offertory collection were also minor duties performed by evangelists. Preaching and sacramental duties were the prerogative of the German pastors, but an evangelist was allowed to baptize a dying person in an emergency and when a white pastor was not available. Even today, despite the innovations introduced by empowering the laity, and a greater participation by the laity, the pastor is still largely in control of all church activities.

The decades of the 1950's and 1960's were years of expansion for the AMEC in Namibia. During the 1960's, it became one of the largest and most active Christian denominations in Southern Namibia. There was great joy and excitement among the Nama people to have their own church. This church belonged to the people. In the true sense of the word the church belonged to Africa. The people were very generous with their offerings. They brought cattle and other goods. The people gave gifts and made sacrifices. It was the people's first time to see an African minister. A minister who knows their context and social needs. The carriers of the AMEC in Namibia were themselves African. They could understand and respond better to the needs and demands of the congregation.

The towns in close proximity of Keetmanshoop, Mariental, and Gibeon started new congregations in virtually all of the towns and in some villages in Southern Namibia. Indeed, the presence of the AMEC in Namibia boosted the esteem and dignity of the indigenous pastors. Through the initiative of the AMEC the indigenous pastors realised that they could also fill the leadership positions in the church.

During the period of accelerated social change, the demand for education among Africans was very great. The RMS was not interested in raising the level of schooling among the indigenous people. Until the time of the AMEC schism in 1946 all the RMS schools only led to Standard III. But they wanted the schools to lead up to Standard 6. After the schism, the teachers were educated in Okahandja to teach up to Standard 6.

According to governmental orders at that time, after the introducing of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, schools for Nama were only supposed to lead up to Standard 2. But there had been 5 students who had indicated the wish to study further, government would have paid for a teacher and would have created such a class. It was Markus Witbooi's wish that the Nama girls got training as nurses. The RMS had ignored this wish. Markus Witbooi pointed to the scarcity of nurses in Gibeon district where whites as well as blacks had to travel for 200 kilometres and more to get medical support by an RMS nurse or a general practitioner.

The RMS argued that the Second World War had seriously impeded the training of the indigenous pastors. Their main argument was that most of the missionaries were interned during and after the war. For instance, a certain missionary Poninghaus who was supposed to lead courses at Paulinum Seminary was interned shortly after the beginning of the second world war. So the courses were put off till the end of the war. In 1946, the first course started at Paulinum. It is interesting to note that the course coincided with the pressure of the schism.²⁰

The Missionary Superintendent Spellmeyer had always approved the full ordination of indigenous evangelists who were talented and educated in terms of theology. He singled out Petrus Jod for the remarkable work he did in establishing the mission station at Maltahöhe. He was appointed as chief evangelist by the mission conference in Luderitz, Southern Synod in 1926. Spellmeyer had applied for a special kind of promotion for Petrus Jod for ordination. In the meantime he wanted to upgrade him with a preparatory course in view of ordination. Spellmeyer's request was turned down as the RMS was afraid to offend German pastors in Namibia by ordaining blacks. Further, they thought that they had to take into consideration the racial prejudices of those whites who partly financed the missionaries who were responsible for German congregations. Spellmeyer added: "Mission Inspector Driessler confirmed during his inspection journey in 1931 that such kind of consideration would be wrong, but at the same time indifference towards the important spiritual uplifting of our native colleagues cannot be ignored."²¹

²⁰ G. Gurirab. 2000. p. 33.

²¹ Archival material: Spellmeyer's Chronic. ELCRN archives. Windhoek. 1946.

The three main evangelists of the RMS, Petrus Jod, Zacheus Thomas and Marks Witbooi knew very well why they were not ordained like the Ovambo pastors working under the Finnish Mission Society, who when visiting the Nama congregations, conducted the services with their fellow countrymen while wearing a gown. Furthermore, they were well aware of other indigenous pastors in South Africa and elsewhere. The main evangelist had campaigned for more than 30 years and was accused of racial hatred and silenced.

The article in *Die Burger* 31/10/1945 stated that the blacks in Namibia were not yet able to independently lead a church of their own. The loss of prestige suffered by the Germans during the time of white colonization is undeniable and occurred due to a discrepancy between the individual conduct of life and the Christian ethics as preached by the white missionaries. The employment of many gifted Namas in the white households contributed to the knowledge of the human weaknesses of the whites. During the hot debate of schism, Petrus Jod once remarked to Missionary Mayer, "at an earlier stage, we used to consider all whites as angels. But after having observed their ways of living, we revised our opinion."

The striving of the main Evangelist including *inter alia* Markus Witbooi, to be accepted on an equal level with the white missionaries, had its predecessors in a number of hardly perceivable hierarchical fightings of the respective Nama leaders against the missionaries, as in Gibeon district for example, Petrus Jod and Markus Witbooi against Missionary Mayer. There seems to be parallels between the change of the attitude between Hendrik Witbooi and the old missionary Olpp and his successor Rust and Markus Witbooi and Petrus Jod's change of attitude towards the Missionary Spellmeyer and Missionary Mayer who started his work in 1939 in the Gibeon district. Hendrik Witbooi as well as Petrus Jod and Markus Witbooi grew up and were promoted under the guidance of the first mentioned.

These three Nama leaders had gained sufficient knowledge superior to the knowledge of the average parishioners, and after they were employed in respected positions within the congregations while working as teachers, they received new German superiors after the retirement of the old missionaries. The new missionaries displayed little knowledge about the country and the situation in the local congregations deteriorated. The little knowledge which these new missionaries displayed concerning the country and especially the world view of the Nama might have contributed to a feeling of superiority.

Although Hendrik Witbooi never broke with the mission, he nevertheless would not be influenced by Missionary Rust when it came to major decisions. Mayer was facing a situation where not a single person was heading for a higher position but the majority of the Nama intelligence, educated by the RMS. In addition the self-confidence of the Nama people had grown considerably since Hendrik Witbooi's time. It once happened in Gibeon that Markus Witbooi started a different song to the one announced by the missionary who had just descended from the pulpit. Once Mayer had to act against Markus Witbooi who had darkened the church during Lent without prior consultation in order to increase the effects of his melancholic harmonium music. The mystical atmosphere created by Markus was rejected by Mayer because he believed that human beings should find their way to God via faith and not via emotions. The missionaries were very quick to condemn things that were close to the hearts and minds of the people such as music, art and worship. But on the other hand they never questioned the injustices suffered by the indigenous people. The RMS upheld the theology that people should not worry too much about earthly things, because everything would be fine in heaven.²²

7.6 Consequences of the AMEC Schism

The RMS and the AMEC mutually recognised their baptisms. A different practice could be found when it came to confirmations. There was a general hostility among the Nama people especially in Gibeon and Maltahöhe district. The opposition of the majority of the Damara people was based upon the fact that in former times they used to be slaves of the Nama, and thus did not desire to have to accept Namas again as leading strata. Their argument was, "we live amongst the whites, the whites feed us. Will the Namas feed us when we leave the whites?"

It is obvious that there were no dogmatic reflections and ultimately no gratitude, but a mere consideration of material advantages and disadvantages. Some of the farmers withdrew their permission for AMEC people to have their livestock on the farms, because of the AMEC stance towards the RMS and against German missionaries. Thus, these people accommodated their livestock in the reserves, often by using a pseudonym.

²² Interview with Rev. Prof. P.J. Isaak. Windhoek, Namibia. 07 July 2000.

The impact of the schism was also felt among Nama family members. School attendance had risen because of the AMEC activities in Namibia. Hoping that a high school attendance would result in the government acknowledgement of the AMEC school, Petrus Jod for example, requested his followers to send their children to the school in Maltahöhe. In the meantime, government had proclaimed the nationalization of the confessional schools. Although little was done, the implementation of the law was unlikely to further Jod's cause.

While on the one hand the AMEC managed to increase school attendance, on the other hand an increasing number of AMEC members faced impoverishment because of the multifold demands for financial or livestock contributions. Relationships between the AMEC people and those who remained loyal to the RMS in Gibeon district were extremely bad. Within the separated congregations, family and marriage crises increased because of the break-up of the church community.

Conflict was visible in the Maltahöhe district between the followers of the AMEC and those who remained loyal to the RMS. Pastor H.S. Isaak, a gifted teacher and minister in Maltahöhe wanted to diffuse the flames of hatred and division but in vain. He was known as a person who was prepared to try new things and his aim was to convince the AMEC followers to establish a working relationship with the RMS. He loved people and showed it in his deep care on the one hand, and his ability to put them at ease on the other. Perhaps his greatest asset was his remarkable wisdom. Frequently, in the aftermath of the deliberations on the schism, he would help his colleagues to look at the issue in a totally different way. He was trying to heal the wounds and reconcile the people in Maltahöhe.

There was extremely strong solidarity between family members amongst the Nama as one of the major aspects for the spreading and establishment of the AMEC in Southern Namibia. According to Spellmeyer's memorandum, a huge part of the congregation in Bethanie left because it consisted of relatives of Zacheus Thomas' wife. During the 1940's Bethanie was the stronghold of the RMS. "Those still remaining loyal to the RMS were excluded from the community activities on a psychological level by branding them as traitors."²³

²³ Interview with Ms. Katrina Isaak, Swakopmund, Namibia, 04 July 2000.

The supply of pastors for congregations which had become independent from the RMS was thus secured. In future, pastors to be ordained were to be trained at the Wilbeforce Institute. The AMEC also provided the Wilbeforce Institute to their new members as a teachers' college. Willem Jod, a Nama from Gibeon was the first from Namibia who was sent there for education. The Wilbeforce Institute was named after William Wilbeforce (1759-1833), a British protagonist for the abolition of the trading of Negroes as slaves, a member of a Methodist-related revivalist movement.

According to the registrar of the Institute, the Institute comprised a primary and a high school and a school for craftsmen's education such as carpenters, dressmakers and shoemakers. Seminaries for teachers and pastors are associated. In 1953, the Institute was government granted, meaning that it was mostly financed by the government. The government paid for the teachers and contributed to maintenance of the building etc. The mother church in the USA supported the Wilbeforce Institute with financial and material donations. The financial state of the AMEC became obvious by the fact that from May to July 1953, eight leading people of the Wilbeforce Institute had gone to Chicago to attend the AMEC World Congress; five men and three women, including Mrs Oppermann who was then the registrar of the Wilbeforce Institute.

The management of the AMEC within the South African Union had succeeded in getting Windhoek's government to officially accept Zacheus Thomas, Petrus Jod and Markus Witbooi as marriage officers. In this context, marriage officers meant they had to indicate births, marriages and deaths to the main registration office in Pretoria and to provide an annual statistical report for the magistrate. The missionaries claimed that they did apply for the Africans to become marriage officers, but it was declined by the government. The reason given for that was insufficient formal education.

The United Nations organisation seemed to consider the AMEC in Namibia as an organisation of the suppressed Africans after having requested a representative of the Nama via Markus Witbooi. The Nama people were protesting against the injustices committed by the German missionaries and the government. Markus Witbooi was sent £2000 from Europe in order to send a Nama representative to the UNO. The colonial government prevented the carrying out of this plan. During this time it was very difficult for black people to obtain a

passport and visa to travel abroad. Because his freedom of movement was limited, Markus Witbooi could only send the Nama grievances through correspondence to sympathetic organisations in Europe and the USA.

Dr Gow, the AMEC Superintendent declared moral support to the indigenous leaders, by saying: "I shall help you until you are able to walk yourselves and have gained strength. As soon as I see that you are well able to walk on your own, I will let you go so that you may walk on your own."²⁴ Thus, the AMEC promised them independence. But there was another disturbing aspect identified by the Nama leaders, that Dr Gow was 1000 kilometres away in the Cape region. The new established church needed at that stage, direct supervision on all aspects of the church and growth. The RMS criticized the Nama leaders, how they had allowed themselves to be supervised by somebody residing in Cape Town, and secondly who was not from their clan. According to all my available information, Dr. Gow was from a mixed parenthood. Dr Gow could only speak English, and during that period English was not widely spoken in Namibia. The dominant language was Afrikaans. In dealing with church issues in Namibia, Dr Gow mostly relied on the assistance of interpreters. Most of the Nama leaders displayed an equal perfection in the Nama and Afrikaans languages. It is worthy at this juncture to mention the name of Rev. Dr. N.C. Christiaans of Keetmanshoop, who played a vital role especially on the part of interpreting for Dr Gow and the indigenous leaders. Dr N.C. Christiaans was fluent in English as well as Afrikaans. He was South African born but had resided in Namibia since the 1950's as a teacher and AMEC pastor.

In my opinion the management of AMEC under Dr Gow was a bit slow to empower the indigenous leaders to fill the posts of leadership in Namibia. For a long time the AMEC in Namibia were administered under the 15 episcopal districts of the Cape Province. In 1900, the AMEC in America sent their first bishop to reside in South Africa. He was Bishop L.J. Coppin. The Cape government acknowledged the AMEC in 1901 and agreements were entered into between the American Bishop Coppin and the Colonial Secretary of the Cape government, saying that at a given time the number of pastors acknowledged as marriage officers in the AMEC should not exceed 12. In 1909 the number was increased to 16.

²⁴ Archival material. Correspondence between AMEC leaders and Dr Gow. ELCRN archives, Windhoek. 1946.

I earlier stated that the World Conference of AMEC was held once every four years. At those conferences the bishop for the ensuing years was elected for the respective districts. Between 1950-1953 none of the bishops had visited South Africa and Namibia, due to refusal of travel documents by the colonial government. Nevertheless, the congregations were growing in numbers. According to my analysis, that should have been the right time to identify a Namibian pastor to take over from Dr Gow. The Nama congregations were required to keep Dr Gow permanently informed about their organizational questions and relevant issues. Sometimes Dr Gow would not be allowed into Namibia. Then he had to send a representative. The RMS spread rumours that the representative of Dr Gow was extremely ill-treated by AMEC members in Gibeon district as people feared that he might substitute Petrus Jod. It was not true, because the AMEC operated on the same hierarchic order of the AMEC in South Africa.²⁵

7.7 Conclusion

In the introduction of this chapter, one of the scholars said, the weak point of the missionaries was their failure to promote indigenous clergy. This chapter also shows the role played by various churches in Namibia. The far sighted Nama leaders had during this period encouraged congregation members to work toward self-determination. They helped in the development of the AMEC in Namibia and in the propagating of ordination.

When missionaries came to Namibia, they received a lot of land from local chiefs. Since they knew how to manage land, they ended up possessing great material wealth. The material wealth has drained some prophetic and moral power from the missionaries. The Christian Church in Namibia is one of the most important and representative institutions within the country.²⁶

Individual clergy have been for many years opposed to the oppression of the black people in Namibia, one thinks of Rev. Markus Witbooi and Markus Kooper, and many of the founders of the liberation movements were Christian. Many members of SWAPO belong to the church.

²⁵ Interview with Rev. P.A. Schmidt Maltahöhe, Namibia. 04 February 1997.

²⁶ P. Katjavivi, P. Frostin and K. Mbuende. 1989. p. 187.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1 The AMEC after the Independence of Namibia in 1990

Namibia became independent on the 21 March 1990. The AMEC in Namibia was the fifteenth Episcopal District led by the South African born leader Bishop Harold Ben Senatle. The people of Southern Africa had been praying that the fathers in America would listen to their cries for more indigenous leadership. Partially, the American Church responded favourably to this request. By appointing Bishop Senatle, they demonstrated that the Africans had the ability to be leaders of their own destiny. Africa had been enslaved in more than one way for too long.

Prior to independence, the AMEC also suffered from the absence of a trained ministry. Due to the absence of training opportunities, many AMEC pastors occupied other occupations to supplement their income. Increasingly the church did not attract the bright young men because it did not provide opportunities for higher education and because it offered no financial security. Most of the pastors who were presently serving in the AMEC were the older generation pastors. The concern was that in the event of the older generation of pastors passing away, who would fill the vacancies? Since its inception in 1946 in Southern Namibia, most of the congregation members of AMEC were Nama-speaking people. The AMEC was also an autonomous church. It had a self-supporting ministry, and encouraged its members to give their offerings generously.

The AMEC church organisation reflects its orthodox Methodist origin. The largest administrative unit is the Episcopal district. Each episcopal district is sub-divided into Annual Conferences which in turn are composed of Presiding Elders Districts. Each Presiding Elder district is composed of a number of circuits or local congregations (See Appendix). Each of the structural units within the church has its corresponding head. The Episcopal Districts are supervised by bishops - one for each Episcopal district, who has almost complete authority over its affairs. Bishops are elected by the general conference in the United States

every 4 years and remain bishops for life. Only in one case has an African been elected to the rank of bishop in the person of Francis Herman Gow. His mother is a South African while his father is an Afro-American.

As far as Namibia is concerned, however, the bishop has almost always governed in absentia. As already stated, the bishop who had jurisdiction over Namibia resided in Cape Town. The deputy of the bishop in Namibia was Rev. Dr. Hendrik Witbooi. He was the one who administered the Episcopal district in place of a bishop.

After the bishop, the post of the Presiding Elder was the next highest position provided for in the normal AMEC hierarchy. Presiding Elders were ordained elders of the church, appointed annually by the bishops to supervise districts within the Annual Conference. The bishop makes these appointments, however, in consultation with the other Presiding Elders. In fact, there is a Presiding Elders Council which advise the bishop on most matters and which assumes increased power when the bishop is frequently absent.

The leadership positions in the church were held by men, but the Women's Missionary Society was a major force in church affairs, particularly in the circuits. It is organised at the Episcopal District Annual Conference, Presiding Elders District and circuit levels. The bishop's wife is automatically the Episcopal Supervisor of the Women's Missionary Society in her husband's Episcopal district.

Like the larger church organisation, the structure of the local circuits follows the established Methodist pattern. The head of the circuit is the pastor. According to the AMEC discipline, one must have completed secondary school in order to be eligible to enter into the ministry. However, because of apartheid and Bantu Education policies, the level of education was low. The only requirement was that the candidates should be fluent in languages such as Nama and Afrikaans. Most of the older generation pastors of the AMEC were bilingual. From the point of view of attracting members, the plural character of the society gave the AMEC some relatively distinctive membership advantages. There were advantages for African clergy who belonged to the AMEC. Of most importance, perhaps, was the fact that the AMEC ministers were ordained. For a man pursuing a career in the ministry, opportunities to become ordained

were essential. With ordination came the rank, prestige and authority that a successful minister must have. In the early 1950's the AMEC was one of the few denominations in which an African was likely to become ordained and where the ministry would have long-term career prospects of a profession.

In Southern Namibia AMEC had a tremendous appeal. It included leaders such as Rev. Dr. Hendrik Witbooi, Andreas Biwa and Rev. G. Kauraera. In the Namibian context the AMEC participated in political activities under the leadership of Rev. Hendrik Witbooi. After independence, the AMEC continued to work together with the government with special skills in teaching or in developing new projects (e.g. rural water projects, medical clinics). Quite a number of AMEC personnel were involved in these projects.

The AMEC in Namibia is now 57 years old, but still has not produced a Namibian born bishop. The question remains "why"? The training of their pastors is still at R.R. Wright Theological College in South Africa, and after 1980 a number of young men from the AMEC joined the ministry. The time has come for the AMEC to produce a Namibian born bishop by the year 2004 when the next bishop election takes place. Although the AMEC in Namibia is slow in their effort to have an indigenous bishop, their success in establishing viable and dynamic Nama churches is a credit to their determination, hard work and love for their own people.

Their outstanding contribution to the development of the modern Southern Namibia is undoubtedly appreciated by the Nama people. Whenever a new school or clinic is inaugurated by Chief Hendrik Witbooi, the audience is always reminded how the Witbooi clan pioneered health and education in the Southern part of Namibia.

The RMS missionaries successfully established mission work in Namibia since their arrival in 1842, but failed in all their endeavours to empower the indigenous people with whom they came into close contact. The RMS was very much opposed to ordination of the indigenous church workers. The aim of this dissertation as outlined in the introductory chapter (Chapter 1) is to substantiate the claim of the researcher that the black leaders pioneered the 1946 African Methodist Episcopal Church in Southern Namibia against this background.

The mission work of the RMS in Namibia was quite different from the mission work of the Finnish Mission Society in Northern Namibia, especially on the aspect of empowering the indigenous people and the issue of ordination. The RMS worked successfully for over 100 years, without even considering for a moment the ordination of black church workers. The Finnish Mission Society was able to offer better schools and medical facilities (the main attraction for the Ovambo speaking people) than the Rhenish Mission Society. That was also one of the reasons why the Ovambo-speaking people never joined the 1946 African Methodist Episcopal Church schism. The main reason for such a loyalty was the very closely-knit relationship that Finnish missionaries had developed with their flocks, the Ovambos in the Northern Namibia.

In Namibia, one is continually reminded of the fact of the brutal colonisation of the entire country by Germany. In addition to this fact the missionaries of the RMS also came from Germany. In his book *Mission and Colonialism in Namibia*, J.L. de Vries noted that the RMS had never come to grips with a theology that opposed colonialism, thereby they were spreading the doctrines of colonialism instead of liberating the Word of God.¹ This assessment was accurate and had historical roots as well as theological causes. This chapter is an attempt to produce a conclusion to the entire dissertation which is based on the analysis of particular issues identified in the research questions in Chapter 1.

In July 1946, the leaders of the AMEC schism declared officially that they had to part with the RMS. The desire of those who left the RMS were not only related to their rights within the church but it has to be assumed that they also hoped that a linkage with a big organisation like the AMEC would further their political desires. The crucial political issue at this stage was the right to vote. Some of the congregation members gathered in Gibeon on 24 August 1948, and compiled 13 demands including the right to vote and the right to purchase land in the cities and rural areas and hand them over to the colonial administrator.

The RMS by all means wanted to block the 1946 AMEC schism, but they didn't make any concessions to meet their colleagues half way. It was very difficult for the indigenous leaders

¹ J.L. de Vries. *Mission and Colonialism in Namibia*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press. 1978, p. 75.

to negotiate with the RMS management. As the RMS management were by no means prepared to compromise it is likely that the compromising suggestions by the Nama leaders were not considered as indications of goodwill but rather as a sign of weakness which led to begging. This might have increased their feeling of superiority.

During the conference a conflict between Dr Vedder and Petrus Jod occurred when Petrus did not answer the questions of the church leader in a way which would have been suitable for a person in the service of the RMS. At the end of the conference Petrus also handed in his declaration to leave the RMS. Although being fluent in German and Afrikaans, he wrote it in Nama, thus stressing the nationalistic background of his act.

Petrus Jod took full responsibility for leaving the RMS and starting to work on the expanding of the AMEC. After the schism Petrus Jod collected all the membership cards issued by the RMS on the farms around Gibeon. By such an act, the linkage to the mission was discarded for those people. The people had been indoctrinated by the missionaries that the membership cards were regarded as letters to heaven. Therefore, in the everyday life of the church, parishioners would search for lost membership cards because they believed the doctrine of the missionaries. If there were outstanding contributions to be made by deceased members, relatives would settle the amount vicariously so that the membership card was in correct order and could be left with the deceased in the grave to ensure access to heaven. Petrus Jod fought strongly against this false indoctrination.²

Most of the RMS leaders acknowledged Petrus Jod's fascinating personality. How much bigger must the impact of Petrus on the Nama congregation have been. In addition, the congregations were used to seeing him administering the sacraments prior to the AMEC schism. Thus, there was no major change except for the change of the building and the absence of the German missionary who used to supervise the ministering of the sacraments and chaired meetings. It is quite amazing that the religious feeling operated independently from traditional church buildings, particularly in Gibeon with its imposing church buildings. The linkage to the church leaders proved to be much stronger than the attachment to a

² W.S. Hanse. Lay Think Tank. (Unpublished AMEC Conference Notes.) Gibeon 1995. pp. 7-12.

religious place. Most of the Nama church leaders were much better known amongst the flocks than the white missionaries. It is so because they had a personal interest in the people, and because they spoke the language and also knew the people and families by name. Except for Spellmeyer and a few others, the missionaries were not interested in identifying with the people to the same extent. This also applies to the people staying at Hills farm at Klein-Karas where Zacheus Thomas used to head a small congregation with a school. People from the farm unanimously converted to the AMEC.

Some time before the schism, most probably in 1945, a black preacher of the AMEC in Lüderitz was ready to give up his work and to leave for the South African Union as he felt that his work was in vain. Through Jonas Katjirungu a contact was made with the AMEC in the South African Union. Zacheus Thomas undertook to handle the issue of the schism in Keetmanshoop and surrounding places. It has to be assumed that at that stage a couple of relevant AMEC representatives from the Union had approached Thomas and made promises in case he should join them. Zacheus Thomas succeeded with his agitation.³

During the second half of 1945 it became increasingly obvious to the missionaries in the South of Namibia that the main evangelists were working towards a defection from the RMS. The missionaries did not respond to the correspondence of the Nama leaders. Thus, it was obvious that they were not really interested in getting the conflict solved. As already mentioned, the first pretext for the schism from the RMS was an article in *Die Burger*, an Afrikaans newspaper in Cape Town, in October 1945. As precautionary measures, Dr Vedder had asked the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) whether, in the case of a forced repatriation of German missionaries, they would be ready for the RMS congregations. The main evangelist and congregation members were not consulted about this arrangement. Due to an indiscretion a news clip on the matter was released in *The Burger* of 31 October 1945 (See the attached news clip in the appendix). The main evangelists were angry about the fact that they should be sold like animals for slaughter, especially as they were opposing the apartheid Dutch Reformed Church. Their anger was exacerbated by a lacking statement of the management of the RMS on the article. In no uncertain terms the Nama leaders vehemently opposed the

³ Interviews with Rev. Dr. N.C. Christiaans, Keetmanshoop. 01 July 2000 and Rev. Willem Mungunda, Mariental, 04 February 1997.

involvement of the Dutch Reformed Church even if the missionaries regarded it as a precautionary measure.

The second pretext is rooted in the struggle for a replacement of the missionary post in Keetmanshoop. Missionary Totömeyer who used to be responsible for Keetmanshoop had been on leave in Germany, when the Second World War started and had been held back there. During the war, this post was filled by missionary Eisenberg. He was about to retire, and missionary Neumeister was supposed to succeed him. The congregation in Keetmanshoop rejected this, arguing that the time should have come for the congregation to choose their own missionary. They strongly refused Neumeister on the grounds of being racist. The RMS management did not want any input from the indigenous people even with the transfer of the missionaries. The management of the RMS under the leadership of Dr Vedder identified those missionaries who had been sympathetic to the needs of the indigenous people, and deliberately transferred them to other congregations.

On 26 May 1946 the annual conferences of the RMS staff took place at Keetmanshoop. Zacheus Thomas addressed his declaration of leave from the RMS, written in Afrikaans to the Superintendent of the Southern Synod, Missionary Rust in Lüderitz. The congregation strongly declared that under no circumstances would they be ready to remain under the leadership of the RMS. What ensued was a meeting of the church council, they read the letters by Rust and discussed them. After a thorough discussion the whole matter took a different direction. After a vote of the church council decided to join the road of the congregation. Therefore, herewith we, as elders and evangelists, give our final answer. Out of consideration for our congregations from which we cannot be separated, we acknowledge it is thus our duty to jointly proceed on the road which the majority has opted for. I hereby tell you straight that as from today we will irrevocably leave the RMS and look for the help of one of the other churches.⁴

In conclusion, the researcher wishes to point out that despite their strong growth only in Southern Namibia, the AMEC has by all means embraced the ecumenical spirit, and attempted

⁴ Archival material. Z. Thomas' speech. ELCRN archives. Windhoek. 1946.

to work closely with all the mainline churches such as the Roman Catholics, Lutheran and Dutch Reformed Churches. In doing so, they demonstrate that regional growth could not be a stumbling block in spreading the gospel.

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4. **Interviews and Oral and Written Communications**

Biwa, Rev. Andreas. Presiding Elder of the AMEC and Conference Coordinator.
Keetmanshoop, Namibia. 01 August 2001.

Bikeur, Mrs Johanna. Leader and Member of the Lutheran Women's League, Maltahöhe.
Namibia. 04 February 1997.

Christiaans, Rev. Dr. N.C. Emeritus Pastor of the AMEC. Keetmanshoop. Namibia. 01 July
2000.

Diehl, Rev. H.K., Former Präses of the Rhenish Mission Society in Namibia. Windhoek,
Namibia, 04 February 1997. He served as Präses from 1947-1967.

Diergaardt, Bishop Petrus. Head of ELCRN. Windhoek. Namibia. 07 July 2000.

Isaak Ms Katrina. A retired ELCRN co-worker. Swakopmund. Namibia. 04 July 2000.

Isaak, Rev. Dr. Prof. P.J. He is currently the chairman of the ELCRN Synod. Windhoek.
Namibia. 07 July 2000.

Kaoses, Mrs. K. A prominent ELCRN Women's League member and a church elder.
Gibeon. Namibia. 04 July 2000.

Mungunda, W. Rev. A retired ELCRN pastor. Mariental. Namibia. 04 February 1997.

Schmidt, Rev. P.A. Emeritus Pastor of AMEC. Maltahöhe. Namibia. 4 February 1997.

Sundermeier, Rev. Dr. Prof. T. Lecturer at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. He was
a former principal at Paulinum Theological College, Namibia (1968-1975).

Wessler, Rev. Rudolf. He is from Düsseldorf, Germany. He was a missionary of the RMS in the late 1950's. He was stationed in Mariental and was in contact with the members of the AMEC.

Wienecke, Rev. Dr. W.A. He is a retired missionary of the RMS who was a youth pastor in the 1950's. He is presently based in Swakopmund, Namibia.

5. Archival Sources

A Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), Windhoek, Namibia

- 1 ELCRN correspondence between the Nama leaders of the 1946 AMEC Schism and Dr H. Vedder and Superintendent Rust.
 - 1.1 Letter by Vedder to Nama Leaders in response to their rejection of white missionaries. 6 May 1946.
 - 1.2 Letter by Nama Leaders to Superintendent Rust. 13 May 1946.
 - 1.3 Letter by Nama Leaders to Dr. H. Vedder. 27 May 1946.
 - 1.4 Pastoral Letter by Dr. H. Vedder. 3 June 1946.
- 2 The actual letter of the notification of the breakaway from the RMS, signed by the Nama leaders in Keetmanshoop. Pastor P.A. Schmidt handed the letter to Dr Vedder. 12 January 1946.
- 3 Präses Vedder/ Diehl 1931-1947, correspondence mainly related to the second World War and the interned German pastors.

- 4 Correspondence of Missionary Christiaan Spellmeyer and his loyal helpers such as Petrus Jod and Zacheus Thomas, 1946-1958.
- 5 Correspondence and memo of Rev. Dr. N.C. Christiaans shortly after the 1946 AMEC schism. He claimed that the relationship between the Nama leaders and RMS was sound and good. On the contrary, I found that it was hostile on both sides, 1947-1957.
- 6 RMS minutes. Windhoek. Original version in German, 1956.
- 7 AMEC annual conference minutes. Windhoek, Namibia. 03-06 October 1991.
- 8 Carl Hugo Hahn, Diaries part 1, 3 and 5. Archives services division of the Department of National Education. SWA/Namibia. Windhoek, 1984.
- 9 Chronic (Nama) der Rheinischen Missions Gemeinde zu Windhoek seit 1842, Archives ELCRN V. 36, Windhoek.
- 10 ELCRN VII.7.19. Windhoek 1946/1947, including information on RMS 1890-1903.

B Archives of the Namibian Government (Previously, SWA Administration)

- 1 Box SWAA 1423: A216/6 Rhenish Mission General.
- 1.1 A brief unknown attempt at a historical survey of the AMEC with a focus on education and a few perspectives on white rule in SWA/ Namibia. Since the document quotes from the Windhoek Observer of 26 January 2002, it is of recent origin.
- 1.2 Correspondence between the Nama Leaders and Dr. H. Vedder. The letter by the Nama leaders is signed by five Nama leaders including Zacheus Thomas. The others are: Salomon Pieters, Johannes Dausab, Th Windstaan and Dirk van Neel. 27 May 1946.
- 1.3 Correspondence between the Nama Leaders and Dr. H. Vedder. This is Dr. Vedder,s response. Only the year is provided, 1946.
- 1.4 Agreement between Pastor Mayer, superintendent of the RMS in the South, based at Gibeon, and Jakobus Jod concerning the latter's property. It was co-signed by Jacobus Jod, Abraham Xamseb, Willem Mungunda, Jakobus !!Gowaseb and Pastor Mayer. 26

January 1947.

- 1.5 Letter by Nama leaders to Mr. F. Rust, Superintendent of the RMS based at Lüderitz re-iterating their resolve to break away from the RMS. It is signed by J. Eippinge, Z. Hange, S. Pietse, E. Thomas, D.V. Neel, J. Jantse, J. Cloete, John Dausab, Th. Windstaan, J. Februarie, Zacheus Thomas, P. Bantam, A. Murine, and P. Gertze. 13 May 1946.
- 1.6 Report by Mr. W. Mungunda who rescued the situation at Mariental during the time of the schism. Mr. W. Mungunda did not join the AMEC schism. It is the full version of his report to Dr. H. Vedder about one and a half year after the schism. 9 January 1948.
- 1.7 9 Questions of the RMS (SWA) to the Department of Education (SWA). Please note that these questions are only available in the Department's response. 16 August 1950.
- 1.8 Response by the Department of Education to the questions. 31 August 1950. (Both these two documents are present in a report dated 11 September 1959.
- 1.9 Response by Suster K.A. Firtze on behalf of the Office of the RMS School at Keetmanshoop, to a request for information by the Chief Native Commissioner on the possible integration of RMS and AMEC schools.
- 2 Box SWAA 1192/ A158/98
- 2.1 Minutes of the Annual Meeting between the Native Commissioner and the Nama leadership, at Krantzplatz, Gibeon. 4 October 1946.
- 2.2 A letter from the Magistrate of Mariental, to the Head of Native Affairs, Windhoek, which is attached to the minutes. 19 October 1946.
- 3 Box SWAA 1851/ 1396/8
- 3.1 Letter on "Native unrest in Gibeon" by the Magistrate of Maltahöhe to the Secretary of South West Africa. 19 January 1925.
- 3.2 Response by the Secretary of South West Africa. Undated.
- 4 Box SWAA 489. A50/227
- 4.1 Letter by the Superintendent of Krantzplatz, Gibeon, addressed to the Native Commissioner, Mariental, on "Native unrest". 14 November 1948.
- 4.2 This letter also includes a summary of the thirteen points made by the Nama leadership to the Commissioner. 3 September 1948.
- 5 Box SWAA 1122A158/6 Native Reserves (1918-1931)

- 5.1 Memo by Nama leadership addressed to an unidentified senior official in the SWAA Administration. This memo deals with the grievances of the Nama leaders relating to farms and property and is signed by Isaak Witbooi, Hendrik Witbooi, Perus Witbooi, Christof Lambert, Josofat Witbooi, Jephta Kuhanga, Andreas Keister, Jakob Stebe, Filleppus Karigumab, Niklas v.d. Westerhuis Didrik Keister, Jakobus v.d. Westerhuis. 22 September 1922.
- 6 Box 1851: A396/8 Native unrest in Gibeon (1915-1954)
 - 6.1 Letter by Maltahöhe magistrate to Secretary for SWA. 28 May 1921.
 - 6.2 Letter by Nama leaders to Chief Native Commissioner. 11 August 1945.
- 7 Speeches by Willem Simon Hanse in 1995.
 - 7.1 A Speech at the Annual Lay Conference, Maltahöhe. 4 August 1995.
 - 7.2 A Speech at the Lay Think Tank, Gibeon. 1995.
- 8 Challenge article
 - 8.1 Article by Rev. A.J. Richardson. Indigenous Africans must Take Charge of the Church. *Challenge* of February/ March 2001.

C Documents on the AMEC in the Holdings of the RMS Archies, Wuppertal, Germany

- 1 "Protokoll über die bei der evangeliezusammenkunft festgelegten Punkte." 12 January 1946. (This document is signed by Zacheus Thomas as chair, Petrus Jod as co-chair, and Markus Witbooi as secretary and assistant scriba.)
- 2 Letter of Giz Menzel to Rev. I.R.K. Schmidt. 30 January 1958.
- 3 Letter of K. Schmidt to Dr. Hans de Kleine in Wuppertal-Barmen. 14 January 1958.
- 4 Letter by F. Rust addressed to the RMS members in Namaland. 9 May 1946.
- 5 Letter by Petrus Jod addressed to Präses Missionary Dr. Vedder. 1 July 1946.
- 6 Mayer's summary of the main events on the schism, from 13 May 1946 to Vedder's recommendations as to how to deal with members who broke away from the RMS, 31 May 1946. He made the summary for a "deputation" meeting in Keetmanshoop on 4 September 1946.

APPENDICES

Box SWAA 1423: A216/6 Rhenish Mission General.

It was in fact, about 1900 that the Ethiopian Movement was felt in Namibia. The missionary review of April 1905 reported that the leader of the Nama insurrection, Hendrik Witbooi was a Christian that they trusted. But he had been convinced that the Ethiopian Movement leader in that region was a prophet sent by God to free the blacks from white domination. Hendrik Witbooi had thrown himself heart and soul into the plans of those who are preaching a Black church for black people in Africa. Although at one point Witbooi was excommunicated from the RMS, secession did not take place. He was readmitted into the church by sympathetic missionaries. The Namibian mission work continued to be stable for a long time. But stability does not mean the absence of injustice and discrimination. Black church members continued to be discriminated against by the missionaries. The church leadership remained solely reserved for the missionaries, whereas Africans served at best as evangelists and workers of the missions.

The mission colony in Otjimbingwe already was the second attempt of the German based Rhenish Mission Society to do mission work among the Herero people in Namibia.

When in 1842 the first missionaries arrived from Wuppertal they built their first centre closed to the hot springs at Gross Barmen. But the cattle-breeding Herero were not impressed by the missionaries and their gospel message.

The letters of missionary Hahn and his wife Emma are full of frustration. After almost ten years in Namibia Emma writes to her mother in England:

“All is very dull here. To the missionaries it is peculiarly a waiting time, a time for the full exercise of patience, and that is sometimes on the wane, when they see that the word of God is, so to say daily preached to them in their language, the people still are as death adder stoppeth the ear.”

(**Letter** from November 1857: in Dorothy Guedes (ed). The letter of Sara Emma Hahn, Windhoek, 1993.127.)

After a long leave of four years of fund raising and planning in Germany, the Hahn family returned to Namibia in 1863 with a new project in mind. Since the traditional nomadic life style of the Herero was so stable that the missionaries could not penetrate with their ideas they now hoped for the attraction of Western civilization.

Hahn was accompanied by five craftsmen, a smith, a farmer, a wagon maker, and a carpenter. Otjimbingwe soon developed into a settlement of European fashion and became the first centre of production in Namibia.

It was Hahn's idea that lead to the foundation of the Institute of National assistants in 1866. This school which he later called Augustineum, was the first institution of formal

education for Blacks. Supported by a grant of Princess Elizabeth Von Lippe from Germany, Hahn wanted to train the elite of the Namibian nation. From a visit to Ovamboland in northern Namibia he came back accompanied by two sons of important chiefs and he also convinced influential Herero and Nama families to send their sons to him. The training at the Augustineum followed three objectives: the young men should be educated to become Christian leaders of their people, preachers of the gospel and teachers of the children in order to carry the message along.

In the early years the Augustineum indeed gathered students from the most prominent families in Namibia: Wilhelm Maherero, Josophat Riarua, Petrus Tjeetjo and Manasse Zeraeua.

Hahn and his Institute of National Assistants have been very much influential in the formation of the consciousness of the churches in Namibia, but in practical terms his venture was a failure. On the long term Hahn and his successors could neither succeed in attracting a substantial number of students from the elite of the Namibian peoples, nor could they convince their own missionary society or other donors to guarantee sufficient funding for the school.

After the establishment of South West Africa as German colony in 1884 the white settlers and wide areas of the colonial administration increasingly attacked Hahn and his approach to education. In the beginning the German department of education tried to introduce German standards of primary education also to so-called schools for Africans in the colony, which were mostly administered by the missionary societies.

The German Settlers needed unskilled labour for their farms and in their mines and put pressure on the administration to lower the standards for native schools. In the colony the position of Paul Rohrbach, one of the leading ideologists of German imperialism, became more and more influential. Rohrbach criticizes the educational policy of the colonial administration most aggressively:

“It does not correspond to the economic necessities of the colony. It only makes sense to uplift the cultural stage of Africans and to civilize them, if this serves the true purpose of colonization – the economic exploitation of the colony in favour of the colonizing nation.

In Southern Africa this is not the case. For what purpose does an indigenous shepherd or domestic servant need education? On the contrary education could become very dangerous for the colonizers, because it could strengthen the political consciousness of the Africans.”

(Source: Henning Melber, *Schule und Kolonialismus: Das formale Erziehungsweisen Namibias*, Hamburg. 1980. 19).

These ideas were not without effect on the missionaries. Many of them had become strong representatives of the German colonial establishment. In 1909 Präses Fenchel

rejected the employment of Petrus Jod as a teacher in a mission school, because he was part of the revolt against German occupation, 1904-1907:

“I cannot accept a teacher who belonged to the group of those who were part of the revolt against our German government.”

(**Source:** Theo Sundermeier. *Wir aber suchten Gemeinschaft. Kirchwerdung und Kirchentrennung in Südwest Afrika*, Witten. 1973, 17.)

As late as 1961 the missionary K.F. Hocflich still wrote about the objectives of the education of Africans in the following way.

“Since the country for its development need efficient and intelligent workers rather than... miseducated Negroes, the emphasis of education should be put on obedience, orderliness, punctuality, cleanliness, honesty, efficiency, and sobriety, and only in a second step on school education.”

(**Source:** Henning Melber. 1980. 20.)

From this background it is hardly surprising that the educational ideas of Hahn did not survive long. The Augustineum at Otjimbingwe closed its gates already in 1901 and the effort of the Rhenish Mission to introduce higher education for native Namibians ceased for almost 20 years. The occupation of South West Africa by South African forces in 1915 did not help to improve the situation. After the First World War the RMS was almost bankrupt, and the funds available were spent for German personnel rather than for institutions for the education of Namibians. The missionaries under the leadership of Heinrich Vedder did not show any reluctance to enter into an agreement with the South African government. Heinrich Vedder was the central person in the plan of handing over the congregations.

He carried on negotiations with the DRC during World War II. An extract from his letter to his counterpart, DS. J.G. Olivier reads as follows:

“Kry Duitsland Kolonies, dan sal Suidwes nie daarby behoort nie, en die Duitse sendelinge sal dan in ander Kolonies moet gaan. Die oorgawe van die werk van die Rynse Sending in ander hande sal dan nodig wees. Ons sal dan met groot vertroue ons gemeentes aan u graag afgee.”

(**Letter** of Dr. Vedder to Ds. J.G. Olivier, Cape Town. SWAA A216/6).

“In 1914, the white population of the then South West Africa was slightly more than 13000 and that number inclusive of 12000 German-speaking people. After the First World War, 67374 were deported from South West Africa of whom 1619 were soldiers and their families. About 6000 German speaking people remained in the territory.”

By 1926, the white population was estimated to be 26000 in comparison with 90000 so-called natives in the police zones. In 1929 the government of the Union of South Africa brought about 19000 Angolan Boers to South West Africa and settled them here with

financial aid by the S.W.A. administration. A census in 1936 revealed that out of a population of 30000 whites about 3300 mainly German-speaking people were not naturalized.

In 1937 the white population figures were given as:

“18 128, Afrikaans-speaking people. 9 632 German-speaking residents. 2 395 English-speaking. The non-white population group was given as a total of 330 000. That is to say the whites represented 8,37 per cent of the total population.”

(Source: J.W.F. Pretorius, chairman Monitor action group. *Windhoek Observer*, 26 January 2002).

“In Their 70 years of rule, South Africa exercised one of the worst forms of human domination ever in history, characterized by the marginalization of black people, the extension of land appropriation, forced labour and the apartheid policy. Swapo officially embarked on an armed struggle against the South African regime in August 1966.”

(Source: Professor, Peter Katjavivi, Vice-chancellor of the University of Namibia, Namibia 23 August 2002).

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE NAMA LEADERS AND Dr. H. VEDDER.

- 1 This letter is dated 27/05/1946 and is signed by five nama leaders including Zacheus Thomas.

Keetmanshoop
27.5.46

Aan die Superintendent
Mnr. Dr. H. Vedder en leraars
Plaaslik

Geagte Mnre

Nadat ons samespreking deeglik gehou het, het ons op ons vorige besluit neergekom.

Ons sien nie moontlikheid om verder op beloftes saam te gaan nie dus sal ons bly bestaan daarop, aangesien ons glo dat die Here ons sal help.

Ons bedank egter die Rynse Sending vir dit wat sy aan ons gedoen het.

Met beste groete.

Geteken: Salomon Pieters
Zach Thomas
John Dausab
Th Windstaan
Dirk van Neel

- 2 Dr. Vedder responded to this letter by the Nama leaders as follows. The letter is dated 1946, but with no indication of the day and month of writing.

Geliefde medewerkers
Van ons Rynse Sending-gemeente
Keetmanshoop!

Hierdie brief is my laaste woord aan julle, voordat ek weer vertrek. En met hierdie brief gee ek nogeens vir julle my hand en bid: “As julle wil, dat ons hier in die Rynse Sending-gemeente moet bly, dan kom en werk saam met ons onder die bestuur van die Rynse Sending”!

Laat julle werk vir julle wys! Kyk na die klein kudde! My ore het in hierdie tyd ook die woorde gehoor van gemeentede wat sug en treur oor die dinge wat tot afbreuk van die Sending lei.

Die eenvoudiges, die weemoediges moet julle versterk, hulle wat Gods woord alleen soek, wat nou die regte leiding nie kan sien nie. Sterk vir hulle, saam met ons, jul leraars, en keer hulle wat weg wil dwaal. Julle kan tog nie van hulle op die dwaalpad lei nie. Daar was dinge wat julle harte beswaar het. Ek het herhaaldelik vir julle gesê, hoe staan dit met die posisie van ons Sending en die woorde wat van ander kan gepubliseer is. Baie slegte gedagte is geuit teen ons, ook in jul harte het julle slegte gedagte laat opkom.

Laat ons op albei kante dit vergeet en vergewe wat die ander mag nie reg gedoen het nie en in vertroue ‘n nuwe begin maak.

Julle het nog meer dinge gesoek: julle wens vir die evangeliste meer gesag en kan nie verstaan nie dat ons nie die administrasie van die groot gemeente Keetmanshoop in Sakeus se hande kan laat lê nie. Ek sê vir julle evangeliste-broeders: soek tog nie nog meer en swaarder verantwoording as die wat op julle gelê is nie.

Daardie amp wat julle bedien, bedien dit getrou; die sending het julle van haarself aan ‘n plaas gestel wat julle vroeger nie verwag het nie.

Ons leraars waardeer jul dienste, maar optyd sien ons nog nie, dat ons in die hande van een van julle die groot administrasie van die groot gemeente Keetmanshoop kan gee nie.

Sien julle nie almal wat in gang is nie? Dat die gehele Rynse Sendingwerk uitmekaar sal gaan nie? Julle moet nie vir afbreuk werk nie, maar na jul beroeping gaan en weer help, om van die klein kudde af miskien, as die mense hulle nie wil laat keer nie, die gemeente van Christus op te bou. “Vrees hulle glad nie en wees ook nie ontsteld nie, as julle terwille van die geregtigheid ook gesmaad sal word nie” (1 Petr. 3:14).

Ons sien ‘n ding wat aan die gang is. Die “leuenaar van die begin”, die Satan wil Christus se Kerk omstoot. Eers sê hy:

“Julle het die sending nie nodig nie, julle moet self die leierskap van die gemeentes in hande neem”. Op die oomblik gebruik hy nog evangeliste en ouderlinge wat die meerderheid na hom toe moet bring. Later sal die vyand van die waarheid openbaarlik ontstaan teen die kerk en teen God’s Woord, nie net teen ‘n Sending-Bestuur nie.

In die Here wees hartlik gegroet van julle oue leraar.

H. Vedder.

3 The following is a full letter of Pastor Mayer who was the Superintendent of the RMS in the South, based at Gibeon

In hierdie verklaring word Jakobus Jod versoek om die eiendom van die Rynse Sending te verlaat, maar nog steeds kry hy materiaal om sy eie huis op te slaan.

VERKLARING

Ons, die geondertekendes doen hiermee ooreenkomstig die volgende besluit vir alle tye:

- 1) Die huis, langs die Filialleierhuis, wat tot nou toe deur Mnr. J. Jod bewoon is, word met die datum van besluite aan die Rynse Sending gemeente teruggegee.
- 2) Omdat die dakmateriaal, soos Jakobus Jod beweer sy eie is, word aan hom met die oogmerk op sy dienste in die Rynse Sending, die volgende hulp verleen.
 - a) Om ‘n nuwe huis te kan bou, kry Jakobus Jod hout van die Rynse Sending gemeente as eiendom oorhandig.
 - b) As dakmateriaal word aan hom die blikhuis gegee, wat hy destyds as ‘n kombuis van die gemeentelid Abraham Xamseb gehuur het.

As teenvergoeding laat hy die dakmateriaal op die huis van die Rynse Sending, waar hy tot nou toe ingewoon het.

- 1) Die huis staan op Mariental.

Gibeon – Mariental, de 26.1.1947.

Geteken deur:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Jac. Jod
Voormalige Evangelis van Rynse Sending | 3) Willem Mungunda
Onderwyser |
| 2) Abraham Xamseb
Lid van Rynse Sendingsgemeente | 4) Jakobus !!Gowaseb
Onderwyser |
| | 5) Fr. Mayer
Leraar, Gibeon Bus 8 |

4 The following is the full letter of the Nama leaders to Mr. F. Rust, Superintendent of the RMS based at Lüderitz.

Keetmanshoop
13/5/1946

Aan die Superintendent
Mnr. F. Rust
Lüderitz

Geachte Superintendent

Ons het die laaste poging gemaak met die gemeente om die gemeente van sy standpunt te beweeg tot terugkering. Dit het egter op mislukking uitgeloop. Die gemeente verklaar duidelik dat sy onder geen omstandighede onder die bestuur van die Rynse Sending sal staan nie, soos deur die Kommisie aan u gesê. Na die grondige samesprekings het die saak 'n ander rigting ingeslaan, oorkomstig die stemme.

So gee ons, die ouderlinge en Evangeliste hiermee ons finale antwoord te kenne. Ons gaan die pad van meerderheid, en verklaar duidelik dat ons vanaf hierdie datum onheroepelik uit tree en sal hulp by enige ander kerkgenootskap soek.

Ons sal die gemeente bedien met die Evangeliese Christelike bediening soos ons opgevoed is.

J. Eippinge
S. Pietse
D.V. Neel
J. Cloete
Th. Windstaan
Zach Thomas
A. Murine

Z. Hange
E. Thomas
J. Jantse
John Dausab
J. Februarie
P. Bantam
P. Gertze

- 5 The following is a report of Mr. W. Mungunda who rescued the situation at Mariental during the time of the schism. This report is dated 9.1.1948. Mr. W. Mungunda did not join the AMEK schism: It is the full version of his report to Dr. H. Vedder.

Berig van gedane werk van 1947

Belewinge in die gemeente op Mariental in die jaar 1947 en ook die besoeke van Godsdienste.

1. Belewinge: Na die afbreek van AMEK het ons baie moeilikhede gehad in die gemeenskap. Orals was daar spanning. Maar dit het met die tyd afgekoel. Die AMEK skeuring het ook baie steuring en tweedrag in die gemeente gebring.

Meestal in die goddelike sake. Die gemeente van Mariental het in meerderheid by die Rynse Sending Kerk gestaan. Maar God het sy seën op ons swakkes laat rus om die werk verder op te bou. Besoek van godsdienste was bevredigend. Ons het 3 keer nagmaalsviering gehad in die jaar.

- 1) 4.5.1947
- 2) 27.7.1947
- 3) 19.10.1947

Kerkdienste was goed besoek. Op die laaste kerkdag is omtrent 26 nuwe lede aangeneem. Net die trou besigheid was skaars, alhoewel daar baie jongmense is wat kan trou. Baie wat na die AMEK gegaan het, het teruggekom na die Rynse Sending.

Verder is daar nog baie lede wat na die Rynse Sending wil terugkom. Maar sommige is skaam en bang om verskoning te vra. Maar die deur is oop vir elkeen wat berou en terugkom na die Rynse Sending.

Met die groetwoordjie (Bid die Here dat Hy werkers na sy oes stuur).

Willem Mungunda
Mariental
Bus 16

A216/6 (A179/1) - No. 846.

KANTOOR VAN DIE ONDERWYSDEPARTEMENT,

WINDHOEK.

Die Sekretaris van Suidwes-Afrika,

WINDHOEK

RYNSE SENDIGGENOOTSKAP: BESPREKING VAN
BELEIDSVRAAGSTUKKE

Op 16 Augustus het die Rynse Sending 'n lys van 9 vrae voorgelê vir bespreking met Sy Edele die Administrateur. Die Departement het geantwoord dat die vrae deur die nuwe Uitvoerende Komitee behandel sal moet word en dat 'n bespreking miskien nie gereël sal kan word nie sodat voorgestel word dat die bespreking met die Direkteur van Onderwys kan plaasvind wat dan aan die Uitvoerende Komitee kan rapporteer.

Die bespreking het gister, 31 Augustus 1950, plaasgevind. Teenwoordig was Eerw. Diehl, Mnr Esslinger, Eerw. Lind, die Rynse Sendingsinspekteur uit Duitsland, mnr Mienzl en Eerw. Kühirt.

Volgende is die vrae wat bespreek is:-

- (1) Wat sal die houding van die Regering wees teenoor Sendingskole in die toekoms?
- (2) Watter moontlikhede bly daar vir die Sending om in sy skole die karakter van 'n sendingskool te bewaar?
- (3) Kan nie die regte en die pligte van 'n bestuurder verduidelik word nie?
- (4) Het 'n bestuurder die reg om invloed uit te oefen op die lewe van 'n onderwyser aan 'n sendingskool, of is die onderwysers net staatsamptnare?
- (5) Wat is die houding van die Regering teenoor AME-skole en -onderwysers?
- (6) Hoe kan die groot tekort aan klaskamers aangevul word? Kan nie 'n stelsel soos die £ vir £ stelsel ingevoer word of miskien rentelose lenings toegestaan word nie? Kan nie vir die klaskamers huurgeld betaal word nie sodat die nodige reparasies uitgevoer kan word?
- (7) Sal in die toekoms geen blanke leerkragte as prinsipales van groot sendingskole meer toegelaat word nie wat tog eintlik net tot nut en vooruitgang van die skoolwese van natuurlike skole kan wees?
- (8) Kan nie 'n pensioenskema vir natuurlike onderwysers ingevoer word nie? Kan nie die voorreg van 'n jaarlikse vry reiskaartjie toegestaan word aan alle ondersysers, ook die oues wat nog in die diens staan en wat al baie gedoen het vir die vooruitgang van die skole nie?

- (9) Die Sending wens om te beklemtoon dat hy altyd gereed en gewillig is vir samewerking met die Regering ten gunste van die naturelle onderwys soos hy dit deur baie jare bewys het. Baie tyd, krag en geld is daarby vir die skoolwerk opgeoffer. Die Sending doen hiermee beleefd navraag of nie sy direkte onkoste wat hy met die bestuur van skole het, vergoed kan word, soos die onkoste wat bestuurders het om eksamens by vêr afgeleë plekke te kan afneem, om die verplasingskoste van onderwysers terug te betaal en veral die koste te dra van die vervoer van skoolmeubels en –materiaal na buiteskole.

Aangesien die vrae nie in ligiese volgorde opgestel is nie en die een vraag soms een en meer ander vrae oorvleuel, word hul nie seriatim behandel nie; ook word die probleme slegs kortliks gestel.

- (1) Die Sending is bekend met die bestaande beleid waarvolgens die Administrasie beoog om alle nie-blanke onderwys sodra prakties moontlik uit die hande van die Sendinggenootskap te neem en in alle opsigte self te beheer.

Die Sending wil weet of die beleid gaan bly, en indien ja, wanneer die Staat die skole gaan oorneem, want die Sending wil nie, en kan nie bekostig om onnodige koste ten opsigte van die nuwe geboue vir uitbreiding of vervanging van swak geboue aan te gaan nie.

- (2) Die Administrasie betaal onder andere die salarisse van onderwysers in erkende Sendingskole en onder meer is die tugregulasies vir blanke en nie-blanke onderwysers dieselfde. Die nie-blanke onderwyser beskou hom dus in diens van die Administrasie en kan slegs afgedank word as sy skoolwerk minderwaardig is of as hy hom skuldig maak aan wangedrag soos in die onderwysproklamasie omskryf.

Die Sending wil hê (hul sal byvoeg; uit die aard van die saak) dat die Sendingskole “n instrument van die Christelike Gemeente” waarin die Sending werk, moet wees. So ook sê die Sending dat die onderwyser as lid van die gemeente onder die wette van die gemeente moet staan en as hy met daardie wette bots, moet die Sending die reg hê om nie net gemeente- of kerktug op hom toe te pas nie, maar desnoods ook om hom te ontslaan.

Die onderwysproklamasie maak voorsiening vir gewetensbesware teen opsigte van godsdiensoortuiging en godsiensonderrig, maar die Sending wil hê dat ‘n onderwyser wat tot ander oortuiging geraak of vanweë gewetensbesware nie langer godsiensonderrig wil gee nie, ontslaan moet word.

- (3) Die Sending wil weet wat die houding van die “Regering” teenoor A.M.E.-skole en onderwysers is, want hoewel daar geen skole sover erken is nie laat die Departement kwekelinge met A.M.E.-oortuiging tot die Augustineum Opleidingskool toe.

- (4) As die Administrasie nie die Sendingskole binnekort gaan oorneem nie, en die Sending derhalwe verdere klaslokale moet bou, wil die Sending weet of hul nie hulp

op die £ om £ stelsel, of anders rentelose lenings kan kry nie. Dit maak die Sending ook seer as daar oor die toestand van geboue en onvoldoende ruimte in skoolrapporte gekla word, en hul wil weet of daar nie huurgeld vir die klaskamers betaal kan word waaruit die nodige reparasies uitgevoer kan word nie.

- (5) Hul pleit vir die verdere aanstelling van blanke onderwysers en prinsipale aan groot skole.
- (6) Hul vra om 'n pensioenskema en jaarlikse vry reiskaartjies vir natuurlike onderwysers.
- (7) Ook vra die Sending vergoeding van sulke uitgawes soos reiskoste in verband met die afneem van eksamens, verplasingkoste van onderwysers en koste aan vervoer van skooluitrusting.

Die Departement doen die volgende aanbevelings saam met verduidelikende opmerkings. Die paragraafnommers verwys na die nommers van die vrae wat onmiddellik voorafgaan:

- (1) Dit bly die beleid van die Administrasie dat nie-blanke skole sodra moontlik oorgeneem word. Indien die Uitvoerende Komitee hierdie aanbeveling sou aanvaar, sal dit waardeer word as 'n aanduiding aangaande die waarskynlike tydstip verstrek kan word, want die Sending vra baie mooi dat dit gedoen moet word.
- (2) Die Departement simpatiseer met die Sending waar sy bestuurders taamlik magteloos staan teenoor onderwysers wat hul belangstelling in die doen en late van die onderwysers onder hul bestuur as onwelkome inmenging beskou, en wat die skool nie daadwerklik en sonder voorbehoud as 'n instrument van die Christelike Gemeente aanvaar nie. Terselfdertyd mag die Administrasie, volgens die beskeie mening van die Departement, nie toesien dat die gewetensvryheid van 'n onderwyser, wat, reg of verkeerd, meen dat hy in die diens van die Staat staan, omdat hy deur die Staat betaal word en onder die tugwette val, geweld aangedoen word nie.

Die Administrasie uit die moeilike posisie kan kom, skyn die volgende te wees:-

Vanaf 'n gegewe datum staak die Departement die besoldiging van nie-blanke onderwysers aan Sendingskole en subsidieer hy elke erkende skool met 'n bedrag wat presies sal ooreenkom met die salaris(se) waarop die onderwyser(s) ens. geregtig sou gewees het. Die Sending kry dan volle seggenskap oor diegene wat hy employeer en besoldig.

Die Departement moet egter daarteen waarsku dat as dit gedoen word,

- (a) baie onderwysers die stap sal wraak en hul uit die onderwysdiens sal onttrek;
- (b) die Sending dit miskien moeilik sal vind om mense aan te werf vir opleiding as onderwysers;

- (c) groot gedeeltes van die kleurling- en natuurlike bevolkings mag voel dat hul vir skooldoeleindes aan 'n liggaam oorgegee word wat hul vandag so min moontlik mee te doen wil hê;
- (d) die A.M.E.-Kerkgenootskap moontlik sal floreer soos nog nooit tevore nie.

- (1) Die kwessie van die A.M.E.-Kerk se versoek om die erkenning van skole wag nog op aandag deur die Uitvoerende Komitee omdat oor die Administrasie se houding teenoor daardie genootskap nog nie besluit is nie.
- (2) Die Sending se houding kom, oor die algemeen, tot 'n aansienlike mate op die volgende neer:

Die Sending wil volle seggingskap oor Sendingskole hê, maar die Administrasie moet so goed as moontlik, al die koste daaraan verbonde dra.

Die Departement se aanbeveling in verband met hierdie vraag hang vanselfsprekend af van die Uitvoerende Komitee se besluit oor (1) hierbo. Gestel egter dat die skole wel oorgeneem gaan word, dog eers na baie jare, dan word aanbeveel dat die beskikbaarstelling van rentelose lenings gunstig oorweeg word, maar nie die bydrae op die £ om £ basis nie.

- (3) As dit toegelaat word dat nie-blankes so ver leer as hul wil, met of sonder ondersteuning deur die Staat, dan behoort blankes nie sulke betrekkings aan nie-blankes skole te vul indien geskikte opgeleide nie-blankes, veral vir nuwe poste of vir die opvulling van vakatures, gevind kan word nie. Die woord, geskikte, word opsetlik onderstreep. Die Departement beveel ooreenkomstig aan en doen dit onder andere op grond daarvan dat die apartheidsbeleid dit skyn te veronderstel. Ander gronde is natuurlik dat dit meer ekonomies uitwerk en die trots van die nie-blanke gemeenskap streel.
- (4) Daar word lank reeds aandag geskenk aan die moontlikheid van 'n pensioenskema. Wat betref vry reiskaartjies eenmaal per jaar beveel die Departement aan dat die versoek sonder meer van die hand gewys word. 'n Derglike versoek deur die Naturelle-Onderwysersvereniging is reeds gedurende die loop van die jaar van die hand gewys. Die nie-blankes wil die voorreg hê omdat die blankes dit geniet. Die meeste blankes het hul wortels in die Unie, die nie-blankes hier, en die uitsonderings kry wel vrykaartjies een maal per jaar tot op De Aar.
- (5) Hierdie vraag is gedeeltelik onder (4) afgehandel. Die Departement beveel aan dat die versoek insake vergoeding van
 - (a) reiskoste tydens afneem van eksamens en
 - (b) verplasingkoste van onderwysersvan die hand gewys word omdat (a) gereël kan word om saam met Sendinginspeksiewerk te val en (b) nie net in belang van die Staat geskied nie. Wel

word aanbeveel dat die Administrasie tot $\frac{2}{3}$ van die vervoerkoste can die skooluitrusting na skole wat weg van 'n stasie of busroete afgeleë is vergoed. Dit kan geskied op voorwaarde dat daar nie ten opsigte van meer as een besending uitrusting per jaar vergoeding sal geskied nie behalwe in die geval van 'n nuwe skool wat geopen word wanneer vergoeding vir die vervoer van alle besendings sal geskied. 'n Verdere voorwaarde kan wees dat indien $\frac{2}{3}$ van die vervoergeld per motorvoertuig op meer as 1/- verantwoordelik sal wees. In die geval van ander as motorvervoer sal die Departement nie meer as 4d. per myl betaal waar $\frac{2}{3}$ van die koste op meer as daardie syfer uitwerk nie.

DIREKTEUR VAN ONDERWYS
11 SEPTEMBER 1950

By beantwoording vermeld a.u.b.

No. E. 1404/4/5.

216/6/2

SUIDWES-AFRIKA

Kantoor van die Bestuurder,
Rynse Sendingskool,
Posbus 13,
KEETMANSHOOP.
3 Februarie 1954

Die Direkteur van Onderwys,
WINDHOEK

IN SAKE AMALGAMASIE A.M.E.C. EN RYNSE
SKOLE TE GAINACHAS.

Met verwysing na u skrywe No. E.1404/4/5 Jan. 1954 is ons genoodsaak om 'n paar opmerkings te maak.

Ten eerste het die A.M.E.C. Kerk in S.W.A. tot nou-toe geen erkende skole nie. Daar word privaat skool gehou, soos ook op Gainachas, waar en van die Rynse Sending afgetrede onderwysers, Joseph Kahuika, die werk waarneem.

Die politieke beleid van die A.M.E.C. is dit wat vir ons werk baie moeilikhede besorg en wat ook vir die moeilikhede op Gainachas aanspreeklik gemaak moet word.

Daar kan geen sprake van amalgamasie van skole of Gainachas wees nie. Dit staan nog altyd vir die kinders van die A.M.E.C. vry om die Rynse Sendingskole te besoek en ook die skool van Gainachas staan vir hulle oop.

Dit word nie verstaan, dat daar geen samesprekings tussen die Magistraat en die Bestuurder in hierdie aangeleentheid plaasgevind het nie, geen aanduidings van planne aangaande Gainachas se skool is na die Bestuurder gedoen nie.

Ongelukkig sal in hierdie eerste Kwartaal die skool te Gainachas nie geopen kan word nie, aangesien geen bekwame onderwyser beskikbaar sal wees nie.

E. 1404

Namens Bestuurder:
(Get.) Suster K.A. Firtze.

Chief Native Commissioner,
WINDHOEK, S.W.A.
Copy for your information, please.

13-2-1954

Box SWAA 1192:A158/98 Native Reserves, Krantzplatz-Gibeon Reserve Board vl. (1929-1952).

Notule van jaarlikse Algemene vergadering gehou te Krantzplaats op Vrydag, 4 Oktober 1946, om 4 n.m. ooreenkomstig Art. 5 van Proklamasie No. 9 van 1942.

Teenwoordig

M.J. du Plessis: Naturelle Kommissaris
Sersant Swarts: Polisie Welsynbeampte
David Witbooi: (kapt) Hoofman
41 Raadslede & inwoners.

Deel I

De Naturelle Kommissaris groet die vergadering en dra groete oor van Sy Edele, de Administrateur en de Hoofnaturelle Kommissaris. Hy verdudelik die doel van die vergadering en le voor en verduidelik die finansiële posisie van Reserwe.

Hy wys daarop dat veestapel gedaal het van 3515 kleinvee en 479 grootvee in Desember 1945 tot 2302 kleinvee en 424 grootvee einde van September 1946, as gevolg van die ernstige droogte en vermaan die inwoners eens weer dat dit in hul eie belang en die van die reserwe is dat hul gereeld bemerkbare vee verkoop wanneer dit gereent het om sodoende oorstokking en gevolglike veeverlies te voorkom.

De weigelde uitstaande aan end van September 1946 was 3/18/8 en de klein bedraggie en die feit dat hul nie gebruik maak van enige konsessie tot opskorting van betaling van weifooie gedurende die heersende droogte, is 'n prysenswaardige blyk van hul belang in hul reserwe.

Soos hul weet is die daarstelling van verdere water voorsiening tydelik opgeskort weens gebrek aan masjienerie, ens. En is die voornemens intussen om te konsentreer op de instandhouding van bestaande werke tot toestande in hierdie rigting verbeter. So is dit die plan om die belangrike Herero dam te versterk en bes moontlik tegelykertyd die klein dam onder die kalk te versterk en dieper te maak.

Om hul deur die heersende moeilike tyd te help het die Administrasie oorgegaan tot die voeding van alle naturelle kinders en behoeftige ou mense, maar hul moet ook hulself help en word hul gewaarsku dat liggaamlike geskikte leegleers in die Reserwe nie geduld sal word nie.

Die aanstelling van 'n Welsynsbeampte word nog oorweeg: intussen moet hul handel deur die Sersant van Polisie Gibeon wie tans optree as Welsynbeampte.

Na die naturelle kommissaris sy kommer uitgespreek het dat die Ambagskool as gevolg van gebrek aan ondersteuning gedurende die jaar moes gesluit het, word 'n kans aan die inwoners gegee om enige klagtes of vertoe te rig.

Deel II

David Witbooi

Handig brief "A" in en se: Ons kollekteer vir doods-kiste en kos vir ou-mense, net soveel soos mense kan gee. Almal het gegee. As iemand sterf betaal ons vir die kis.

Die onderwysers en andere het afgeskei van die Predikant, d.w.s. van die Rynse Sending.

Ek het klipkaffers gevra of hul nog my bevele sal uitvoer. Hulle het geantwoord: "Ons het maar altyd jou bevele eers geweier maar darm weer uitgevoer". Hulle was ontwykend. Ek sal maar later weer self kom na Mariental om oor die saak te praat.

Johannes Jakob: verklaar.

Die antwoord van David Witbooi vir my en Diedrik Keister was:

"Dit was almal se vergadering, onderwyser Markus Witbooi is die leier van die hele afere, leier van geld kollektering en van vergaderings". Hy het afgeskei van die Rynse Sending asook David Witbooi. Ons klipkaffers bly by die Rynse Sending. Ons was dus sonder leier (d.w.s. Markus Witbooi) en het vergadering bele om te hoor wat die moeilikheid is.

Fritz Lambert en David Kamakura het gese: "Moenie vir Markus vra nie, hoor eers by kaptein David. Hy het nie 'n leier aangewys nie, so moet ons 'n leier vir ons kry." David het gese: "Diedrik Keister sal antwoord gee."

Ons wou antwoord van Markus he. Markus het gese: "Ek praat die waarheid, hy het afgeskei van die Rynse Sending en hy is te bang om terug te kom."

Ek het kaptein David gese ek werk saam met hom en dis nie nodig om met hom te praat nie maar vandat hy afgeskei het het hy nog nie met ons gepraat nie en gese waarom nie. Daarop het hy gese as ?? beveel ?? dit sal uitvoer. Ek het geantwoord: "Wat reg is het ons altyd gedoen ons sal nie sy bevele weier nie, al die moeilikheid is oor die afskei van die Kerk".

Diedrik Keister: Verklaar

Handig brief B in en se: "Ek was nie by die vergadering nie. Daarna het ek brief "A" geskryf. Afskeiers moet hul eie kollekte maak en ons sal ons syne maak, ons sal gelei word deur witman en staan waar ons is."

Naturelle Kommissaris: Antwoord

Aangesien kollekte namens Kerk gemaak word, kan elke kerk genootskap sy eie kollekte insamel en kontroleer. Elkeen van die inwoners is vry om sy eie geloof te volg of by watter Kerk hy verkies aan te sluit en in hierdie opsig mag geen dwang deur die hoofman of enige Raadslid uitgeoefen word op enige inwoner nie. Wat aangeleenthede van die reserwe betref moet die Hoofman en Raadslede gehoorsaam word.

Vergadering sluit.

Naturelle Kommissaris

Suidwes-Afrika – South West African

Kantoor van die
Magistraat
Mariental
19/10/1946

Hoof naturelle Kommissaris
WINDHOEK

Krantzplaats Naturelle Reserwe Jaar vergadering:

Ek het die eer hierby deur te stuur, vir u inligting, afskrif van die notule van hierdie bovermelde vergadering.

Die verklarings van David Witbooi (Hoofman), Johannes Jakob en Diedrik Keister het ek letterlik afgeskryf, soos aan my oorgetolk.

Die moeilikheid het sy ontstaan in die afstigting van 'n aantal inwoners vanaf die Rynse Sending kerk na die AME Kerk wat hier, soos ek verstaan, op die been gebring is deur 'n sekere naturel, Dr. Gow.

Magistraat

Box 1851/1396/8

Native Unrest Gibeon, 1915-1954. (NAN), Windhoek

Office of the Magistrate,
Maltahohe, 19th January, 1925.

1851/1396/8

The Secretary for South West Afrca,
Wndhoek

Native Unrest. Re

With further reference to my report of 5th instant, I beg to inform you that I have now interviewed Mr. Kirsten who states that Noasip wanted a pass from him to see his parents who are residing in the Rehoboth District, and that as the boy had worked well for him he granted him such a pass, but because he has two bastards also working on the farm he gave the note to Noasip addressed to Richter so that the boy would leave, immediately without getting in touch with these two bastards, and as far as I am aware he did not speak to the two boys before leaving. Noasip never came to this office to get permission to enter the District of Rehoboth. I have warned Mr. Kirsten that in future he may not give passes of this description and he has promised to comply with the law in future. I attach no political importance to this matter.

On the 9th instant I had a Hottentot before me named Hendrik Zaal who was charged with being found without a pass in this District. This boy pleaded guilty to the charge and after evidence was taken he was duly convicted. Accused stated to me in Court that he came from the Keetmanshoop District that he had no pass to come here, and that when he got his ticket at the Railway Station, Keetmanshoop, he was not asked for his travelling pass by the Railway Authorities before issuing to him his ticket. I enclose a statement made by this boy to the Police prior to his arrest, and the reply received from the Police, Keetmanshoop, as regards the allegation made by Zaal that he had been issued with a pass. This boy was found on Farm Nomtsas, on the border of the Rehoboth District. As soon as this boy completes his term of imprisonment, I shall have him escorted out of the District.

On the 12th instant, whilst investigation Const. Ogden's matter, it was brought to my notice that an European, who stated his name was Wilhelm Graf von Meurs, who stated he was a resident of the Rehoboth District, was travelling in the District of Gibeon. He first of all stated that he was looking round for a farm and when a farm was offered to him, he suddenly changed the subject, and stated he was looking for a place where he could open a store. This man also told my informant that he was a Spy for the Republics during the Boer War in Holland, that he brought out papers to the Republics through the British Lines during hostilities, but that when he did this he stated that he was a Belgian.

That during the Great War he was a Spy for Germany in London. He also stated to my informant that he was proceeding to my district, but so far I have not heard anything of him in this District. Later I heard that it is believed he was trekking in the direction of the Berseba Native Reserve. There may be absolutely nothing in this matter, but I consider that it is my duty to bring the report made to me to your Notice.

On 17th instant two Hottentots arrived here with passes issued by Chief Cris. Goliath of the Berseba Native Reserve. One pass was issued I think by the Chief himself but the other was written.

The Magistrate
Maltahohe

In reply to your confidential Minute No. 2/19/21 of the 28th ultimo, I am directed to acquaint you that it is impossible to provide a store of arms and ammunition at Maltahohe nor can a free issue of such to members of a Rifle Club be contemplated.

The question of the establishment of a Rifle Club at Maltahohe is under consideration.

I am to add that rumours of native unrest have been persistent some time now among the German population. Investigations have been made in every possible direction but nothing has been found to substantiate this and the Administration is satisfied that there is not the slightest reason to fear any trouble with the natives.

You should do all in your power to prevent the spread of such rumours and to allay the unrest among the Germans.

SECRETARY FOR SOUTH WEST AFRICA

AJW/MR

Box SWAA 489. A50/227

Die volgende is 'n brief gerig deur die Superintendent van Kranzplatz reservaat wat handel oor die onrus en propaganda onder nie-Blankes in Namaland. Die brief was gerig aan die Naturelle Kommissaris, Mariental, gedateer 14 November 1948. Die brief was heimlik en vertroulik beskou.

AFSKRIF/SvN.

2/10

HEIMLIK EN VERTROULIK

Superintendent
Reservaat Kranzplatz
GIBEON
14 November 1948

Die Naturellekommissaris
MARIENTAL

ONRUS EN PROPAGANDA ONDER NIE-BLANKES IN NAMALAND

Met verwysing na u diensbrief No. 2/10/2 van 25 laaslede en die vier aanhangsels daaraan, wens ek laasgenoemde hiermee terug te stuur en u as volg mee te deel:-

Die Rynse Sending het met sy arbeid in 1842 in Bethanie begin en die verstrooide inboorlingstamme in 'n volksgemeenskap saamgesluit. Met elke stamoorlog of opstand is die goeie werk vernietig en moes dit daarna van nuuts af aangepak en die gemeentes bymekaargebring en onderrig word. 'n Vergelyking met die vooruitgang in die sendingveld onder ander inboorlingrasse wat verenig staan, kan nie getrek word nie, daar dit by laasgenoemde baie gouer voorwaarts gaan as in 'n land of streek waarin ses verskeie stamme woon wat mekaar voortdurend beveg en die een nie kan sien dat die son in die ander se water skyn nie. Dat dit tog tot eenwording gekom het is te danke aan die gesag van die bybel, waartoe almal tot gehoorsaamheid geroep is deur die diens van de Rynse Sending.

Sedert die verskyning op die toneel van die African Methodist Episcopal Church het daar 'n kentering gekom en het die posisie in die laaste jare nie alleen vir de Rynse Sending nie, maar ook vir die inboorlinggemeenskap in Namaland wesenlik verander en versleg. Gedurende die tweede wereldoorlog is baie sendelinge van die Rynse Genootskap geïnterneer en is daar gevrees dat as die tempo van internering onder hulle nie sou afneem nie, die bearbeiding gestaak sou moes word. Vir die geval dat dit gebeur is dan vroegtydig reëlings getref met die Nederduits Hervormde of Gerevormeerde Kerk, waarvolgens sendelinge van laasgenoemde kerk die diens intussen sou oorneem tot na afloop van die oorlog en tot ander reëlings getref kon word. Hierin het propagandiste van die AME-Kerk

‘n geleentheid gesien om tweedrag te saai en het die kreet gehef: “Kyk, hulle wil ons soos slagvee verkoop!”

Reeds in die jaar 1892 het ‘n inboorlingprediker hom van die Wesleyaanse Methodistekerk onttrek en die Ethiopian Church gestig. Twee jaar later stuur hierdie liggaam afgevaardigdes na die AME-Kerk in die Verenigde State van Amerika en smelt saam met laasgenoemde kerk. Van toe af ontvang die AME-Kerk in Suid-Afrika hulp uit Amerika met betrekking tot finansies en onderrig en in beperkte mate ook sover dit sendelinge betref. In 1897 hou die AME-Kerk sy eerste konferensie in Suid-Afrika en laat hom later selfs as kerklike genootskap in die Unie registreer en brei sy werksaamhede uit na al vier die provinsies, Suid-Rhodesia en Nyassaland. Sy opleidingstasie, die sogenaamde Wilberforce Institute het hy in Evaton, 30 myl buite Johannesburg. Volgens statistiek van 1938 is in hul instituut 500-600 leerlinge, in hul gemeentes 75,000 lede, 35,000 wat op nagmaal geregtig is, 215 leraars en 279 Kerke.

Op 3 Julie 1946 het die skeuring, wat toe reeds lankal in Namaland gedreig het, gekom. Ouderlinge, evangeliste en lede van die Rynse Sendinggenootskap het weggebreek en by die AME-Kerk, of liever AME-beweging aangesluit. Die wat weggebreek het is hoofsaaklik Hottentotte, Witboois, Kleurlinge en lede van die Rooinase, asmede ‘n klein groep Damaras. Die Rynse Sending het pogings aangewend om die skeuring te heel en sy verlore lede terug te wen, maar slegs enkeles, veral Damaras, het teruggekeer. Die kloof bestaan vandag nog en word erger gemaak deur haat aan beide kante.

Gaandeweg het dit duidelik geword dat die AME-verband nie ‘n kerk wil he in die sin van die bybel nie, maar dat dit onder die dekmantel van godsdiens besig is om ‘n politieke spel te speel en met die bybel die nie-blankes te verlei. Die dryfveer agter die hele optrede is die strewe om van die leierskap van de witman los te kom. Daar hulle dit by die Rynse Sending die maklikste kon probeer is daardie Sending aangeval en die sondebok gemaak. “Die Rynse Sending wil nie ons kinders verder as standaard twee laat leer nie!” “Ons wil uitkom onder die verdrukking van die Rynse Sending!” “Ons wil AME-Kerke gebou hê en ook AME-skole vir ons kinders!” Die wat in die Rynse Sendingverband gebly het is met “Witvoet” gebrandmerk terwyl hulle deur sommige AME-lede as verraaiers bestempel word. Nie-lede van die AME kom slegs gewere en ammunisie kort om “al die AME’s vrek te skiet”. Die oorgrote meerderheid van die Damaras het in die Rynse Sendingverband gebly. Hulle onthou die verdrukking wat hulle jare gelede onder die Hottentotte moes verduur het, toe laasgenoemde baas gespeel het in Namaland. Hulle se:- “Ons lewe onder die witmense. Die witmense gee vir ons kos. Sal die Hottentotte vir ons kos gee as ons van die witmense af weggaan?”

Toe dit voor 3 Julie 1946 duidelik geword het dat ontevredenheid onder die nie-blankes aan broei is, het hulle die raad gekry om hul wense en eise met die bestuur van die Sending te bespreek sodat die geskille besleg kon word. Hulle wou egter nie gegryp dat, deur die oorlogstoestand, die skole nie verder uitgebrei kon word nie en dat uitbreiding eers na beëindiging van die oorlog moontlik was nie, maar ook alle skoolarbeid. Dat hulle nie kon verstaan nie was slegs voorwendsel – hulle het ander planne gehad. Die hoofklem

het hulle laat val op die skole wat hulle graag uit die hande van die Rynse Sending wou speel en dit dan sonder die leiding van die witman wil beheer. Dit probeer hulle bewerkstellig met die welwillendheid van die Administrasie wie hulle dan later ook in die rug wil steek. Onlangs het hulle propageer dat hulle hul kinders uit die Rynse Sendingskole sal neem om sodoende die Administrasie te dwing om vir hulle eie skole te gee.

Hierdie boikotbeweging het al tot op die plase uitgebrei en die boere kla baie oor steigende arbeidsnood. Ongehoorsaamheid en weerspannigheid is aan die orde van die dag onder diegene wat nog op die plase werk, en as mens na die kerklike verwantskap van diesulkes vra dan is hulle in 95% van die gevalle AME-aanhangers. Opvallend vanjaar is die wegbly van baie van die skeerspanne. Baie boere moet met hul een of twee volk die skape skeer. Dit kom voor of dit die plan is om die boeregemeenskap moedeloos te maak in die hoop dat die boere die plase sal prysgee en hulle (die nie-blankes) inbesit daarvan sal laat, want aanvanklik is aan hulle deur die AME-leiers alles belowe soos plase, skape, motorkarre en selfs vliegtuie. Dit alles sou bereik kon word as hulle maar net in die groot saak enig was en bly.

Gepaard met die AME-beweging het die daling van die moraal gekom. Losbandigheid, onsedelikheid, dronkenskap, familiegebrek, huweliksmoeilikhede neem in skrikwekkende mate toe. Waar die kerkgenootskap waartoe hulle vroër almal behoort het, 'n ring om hulle gesluit het, is die ring nou gebreek, die gemeenskapslewe uit verband geruk en die laere instinkte soek en vind vrugbare bodem.

In sommige reservate, maar veral in die lokasies en om die dorpe stroom die saam wat nie wil werk nie. Daar is hulle tot die bedelstaf gedwing en teer op die bietjie wat 'n kind of vriend verdien. En seer sekerlik kom die Administrasie se nie-blanke voedingskema hier ook in die gedrang. Hulle sou dan nie werk kan kry nie of ly aan een of ander kwaal wat dit vir hulle nie moontlik maak om werk te aanvaar nie. Andere wat wel werk gaan gebuk onder die hoe afgifte wat hulle aan die voorbokke van die AME-beweging moet doen. In Maltahohe, byvoorbeeld, vind 'n verarming plaas daar die mense selfs van hul vee wat hulle so bitter nodig het om te kan lewe, moet afgee sodat 'n Petrus Jod met 'n motorkar kan rondry en ondermynende progaganda onder plaasvolk in die distrik kan voortsit. Dit is bekend dat hy sy bedrywigheide tot in die Reserwaat Neuhof, sestig myl van Maltahohe af, voortsit, en dat hy reeds met die Hoofman van daardie reservaat, Elias Kauaria, gekonkel het. Terloops het hy met al die geld wat hy kort voor die skeuring namens die Rynse Sending gekollekteer het, in sy sak na die AME oorgegaan. 'n AME-lid in Maltahohe het al gekla: "Julle van die Rynse Sending sit bo-op die rots, ons egter onder in die modder!": Hierdie totaalverarming sal ook 'n las vir die staat word as dit nie betyds gekeer word nie.

'n Ander kwessie wat ontstaan is vrystellings onder die paswet. 'n Vrystellingsertifikaat word gewoonlik uitgereik aan diegene wat nie 'n gevaar vir die land is nie en onberispelik in elke opsig is. Daar gaan van die leiers van die AME-beweging rond met so 'n vrystelling in die sak. Dit stel hulle in staat om makliker hul ondergrawende

bedrywighede teen die blanke gemeenskap voort te sit – en ook teen die Administrasie wat die vrystelling uitgereik het. Die AME het die fasiliteite wat 'n vrystelling bied reeds in die begin (op 12.1.46) op 'n sitting op Keetmanshoop erken en die gebruikmaking van sulkes en meide (wat nie nodig het om 'n pas te dra nie) as boodskappers en draers van briewe in die vooruitsig gestel. 'n Berugte meid in hierdie opsig is 'n sekere Annemarie Nero wat eintlik haar tuiste in die reservaat Hoachanas (Distrik Rehoboth) het, maar ewig op pad is. Sy word dikwels in Mariental aangetref by Jacobus Jod, een van die leiers van die AME-beweging.

'n Verdere vraag wat opduik is of dit in die landsbelang toegelaat moet word dat AME-lede in Suidwes-Afrika in die vervolgte konferensies van daardie beweging in die Unie bywoon, en omgekeerd. By verskeie geleenthede was afgevaardigdes van Suidwes na konferensies in die Unie en het altyd weer met nuwe stukkie propaganda teruggekeer. Daaronder was: “Wag, die Indiërs sal ons help!” “Wag, Amerika kom en dan sal dit anders word!” Blykbaar het hulle daar verneem en geleer van boikot en passiewe weerstand soos deur die Indiërs toegepas.

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Op 3 Julie 1946 het die skeuring in die Rynse Sendng-gemeente amptelik plaasgeving. Daarna het 'n sekere Dr. Gow Suidwes besoek. Hy is 'n leier van die AME-beweging in die Unie en vermoedelik 'n kleurling uit Amerika afkomstig. Hy sou dan ook besoek aan Sy Edele die Adminstrateur gebring het. Van die leiers van die beweging sê dat die Dr. Gow daarna aan hulle gesê het: “Ek sal julle ophelp tot julle kan loop en kan sterk word. Dan, as ek sien julle kan mooi loop, sal ek julle los dat julle self verder aangaan.” Dit word gesê dat hy tans in Amerika kuier.

Hulle (die leiers) dink dat van al die kerke en goed die AME hulle help. Een van hulle het gesê: “Dr. Gow het al tweekeer aan ons geskrywe deur ons voormanne”. Op 'n vraag aan een van die leiers waarom hy by die AME aangesluit het was die antwoord: “'n Mens kan nie altyd tussen die klippe rondkruip nie; mens moet ook eendag opstaan en regop loop.”

Gewoonlik word die konferensie van die AME in die Unie in Junie van elke jaar gehou. In die lopende jaar was egter nog geen konferensie gehou nie en daar word gemeen dat dit in Desember in of naby Kaapstad sal plaasvind. Daar was darem so 'n konferensie gehou in Keetmanshoop op 5/6/48. Kaptein Dawid Witbooi en Salmon Witbooi, onderskeidelik Hoofman en Raadslid van die Reservaat Kranzplatz, Gibeon, was ook teenwoordig. Hulle en Raadslid Willem Frederik is almal aanhangers van die AME-beweging.

Die Leiers van die AME-beweging in Suidwes-Afrika is:-

Windhoek: ene Molahloe. Hy is 'n bruinman”

En sal dan een hoër wees as 'n Pastor.

Keetmanshoop: Pastor Zacheus Thomas.

Maltahöhe: Pastor Petrus Jod.

Mariental: Pastor Jacobus Jod.

Wie herdie sondaars as Pastors gesalf het kon nie vasgestel word nie. Twee opperste platjies in de beweging is;

- i) Markus Witbooi, n onderwyser in diens van die Departement van Onderrig en verbonde aan die Rynse Sendingskool te Gibeon. Hy is n soort van sekretaris in sy wyk en ? gedugte opstoker en aanhitser, veral van Dawid Witbooi, die Hoofman van die reservaat Kranzplatz.
- ii) Willem Moses Jod van Gibeon. Vroeër was hy onderwyser by die sendingskool te Kranzplatz, maar het sowat twee jaar gelede bedank en is na die Unie om verder te studeer. Voordat hy sy kursus kon voltooi het sy geld opgeraak en moes hy na Suidwes terugkeer. Nou le hy vir kwaadgeld op Gibeon rond.

Op 24 Augustus 1948 word ? vergaderng van AME-lede te Gibeon gehou. Onder sowat dertig wat teenwoordig was, was:-

- (i) Zacheus Thomas van Keetmanshoop,
- (ii) Petrus Jod van Maltahöhe,
- (iii) Jacobus Jod van Mariental,
- (iv) Markus Witbooi van Gibeon,
- (v) Willem Moses Jod van Gibeon,
- (vi) Dawid Witbooi (Hoofman, Reservaat Kranzplatz),
- (vii) Salmon Witbooi (Raadslid, ' '), en
- (viii) Willem Frederik (' ' ').

Voortvloeiende uit besluite wat op die vergadering geneem is, word ? versoekskrif van dertien punte deur Markus Witbooi opgestel en aan Hoofman Dawid Witbooi voorgelê vir ondertekening. Dawid sê hy het dit onderteken en aan u op 3 September 1948 te Gibeon oorhandig. Hierdie stuk is nie onder die aanhangsels nie, maar die dertien punte wat hier volg is afkomstig uit ? afskrif wat nog in besit van David Witbooi is:-

1. Gee vir ons a.u.b. stemreg, die enigste menslike reg waarsonder geen nasie kan bestaan nie.
2. Gee ons deelname in uitdeling en verkoping van grond, binne en buite die reservate.
3. Gee ons ook reg om grond te koop, binne die stedelike gebied, sowel as platteland.
4. Gee ons beter onderwysgeriewe soos sekondere, tegniese en hoër onderwys.

5. Wysig die gevaarlike paswet, en gee ons vrye beweging in ons land, sodat ons van vrees gedeeltelik ontslae raak, want die pas maak van ons net tronkvoëls. Ons sien ... dat die kleurling wat volgens sy oorsprong nie ? nie 'n landman is nie, hom vry beweeg, en op elke gebied meer voorregte het.
6. Verwyder die lae loonpeil, en betaal elke arbeider ooreenkomstig sy werk, want die beperkinge benadeel die ekonomiese vooruitgang.
7. Verleen ons eie manne toegang tot die wetgewende vergadering en verteenwoordiging in parlement.
8. Skep vir ons beter behandeling en bediening in magistraatskantoor, polisie, pos, spoorwegkantore, sowel op treinreise, sodat ons nie meer afjakke en beledigings verduur nie.
9. Verbeter die swakke sanitere onstandighede in dorpe vir die inwoners van lokasies.
10. Gee ons hospitale waar nodig met beter hospitaaldienste vir inboorlinge.
11. Laat ons weet, hoeveel seggenskap ons Kapteine, Hoofmanne, en raadslede in reservate, sowel ook in lokasies het, en watter regte ons mag uitoefen, en watter nie.
12. Aangaande uitreiking van dranklissensies aan ons mense buiten uitlanders word versoek, dat ons Kapteine, hoofmanne en raadsmanne in reservate en lokasies geraadpleeg moet word want aldrie onheile en onbehoorlike dinge wat die gevolg daarvan is moet ons en hul families dra.
13. Dit word dringend versoek om meer strenger op te tree teen die drinkery, veral teen verkoop van drank deur private blanke persone.

In ? onderhoud met Dawid Witbooi op 7/10/48 na aanleiding van die versoekskrif (ek het toe reeds inligting gehad dat so ? dokument opgestel en ingehandig is) is vooraf aan hom verduidelik dat die Administrasie graag verneem of hy enige klagte het in sover dit die behandeling van hom en sy volksgenote deur witmense betref. Hy het geantwoord dat die witmense hom en sy volksgenote nog altyd goed behandel het. Hy het laat volg: As ek witmense op straat of elders groet het hulle my nog altyd beleefd teruggegroet. Deur die amptenare by die kantore van die Administrasie word ons altyd goed behandel. Die enigste is as mens by die Polisie kom moet hy so lank staan. Daar is nie ? bankie vir ? ou mens om op te sit as jy daar lank moet wag nie." Herdie antwoord strook nie met punt 8 hierbo nie en dit wil voorkom dat die Hoofman bearbei word deur politieke agitators en aanhitters. Markus Witbooi het die versoekskrif aan hom vir ondertekening voorgelê. Dawid het dit onderteken en oorhandig blykbaar sonder om homself behoorlik bekend te stel met die inhoud daarvan.

XX

Sedert 3 Julie 1946 toe die skeuring met die Rynse Sending voltrek is, het in die Reserwaat Hoachanas (Distrik Rehoboth) waar meer as die helfte van die gemeente weggegaan het, 'n groot verandering gekom. Die Sending was nie verras deur die wending wat die skeuring in gemeenskapslewe aldaar meegebring het nie, daar jare tevore reeds teen die sinking van die moraal gestry moes word. Tans is sake veel erger en kom lê die jong volk, veral na die skeerseisoen, leeg in die reserwaat waar hulle verslaaf raak aan alkohol en onsedelikheid. Die tug van die Kerk was vir hulle lastig en daarom was die vervreemding daarvan en die opkoms van die AME-leiers vir hulle 'n uitweg.

Onlangs het 'n velkoper met die grootpad deur Hoachanas daar aangedoen en verneem of die inwoners velle het om te verkoop. Een van die inwoners het geantwoord dat hulle hulle velle by Kalkrand se winkel gaan verkoop waar hulle brandewyn daarvoor kry.

Erenst Tâseb, vroeër evangelis van die Rynse Sending, is vandag 'n arbeidskrag van die AME-beweging te Hoachanas. Hy behoort tot die bedelstaf en lewe in verbittering. Hy kan urelank uitwei teen die Rynse Sending. As hy werk sal hy sy familie kan onderhou.

Johnnes Dausab was tientalle jare evangelis van die Rynse Sending in Keetmanshoop. Na die skeuring in Keetmanshoop, wat hy gehelp bewerkstellig het, is hy na Hoachanas omdat daar in Keetmanshoop reeds genoeg propagandiste was, en hy vir hom in Hoachanas 'n oop arbeidsveld gesien het. Hy sou dan na Hoachanas gaan om te rus, maar hy is vandag die grootste belhammel van die AME-beweging aldaar. Sy broer, Daniel Dausab, is uit die skool diens te Rehoboth geneem omdat die ouers nie meer hul kinders aan hom wou toevertrou nie. Hy is nou ook in Hoachanas waar hy as propagandis vir die AME-beweging optree. Onlangs het hy aan Timotheus Tseitseib gesê: "Wag, Amerika sal kom."

'n Slegte invloed op die hele gemeenskap word uitgeoefen deur die twee onderwysers wat verbonde is aan die Rynse Sendingskool aldaar – Adam Stewe en Jeremiah Vlermuis – altwee geesdriftige aanhanger van die AME-beweging. Dat hulle sterk drank gebruik is bekend. Op 27/10/48 het Eerwaarde Mayer van die Rynse Sending daar skoolinspeksie en eksamen gehou. Na afloop van sy werksaamhede het hy 'n onderhoud met genoemde onderwysers gehad en op onreëlmatighede gewys en versoek dat veranderinge aangebring moet word. Adam sowel as Jeremiah het 'n astrante houding aangeneem. Daarop het die Inspekteur beveel dat die skool, wat ook die kerkgebou is, op Vrydae en nie op Dinsdae nie, skoonmaak moet word. Die skoolkinders doen die skoonmaakwerk en die onderwysers moet slegs toesien dat dit gedoen word. Hulle (Adam en Jeremiah) het daarop gestaan dat die skool Dinsdae skoonmaak moet word. Die doel om die skool op Vrydae skoon te maak is dat dit dan vir Sondae se godsdiens in orde is, maar Adam en Jeremiah gun die voordeel van Vrydae se skoonmaak nie aan die Rynse Sending nie. Daarop het die volgende woordewisseling plaasgevind:

Adam Stewe: Meneer moet maar sy eie lede aansê om die kerk Vrydag of Saterdag Skoon te maak.

Eerw. Mayer: As julle dit nie doen nie sal ek julle moet rapporteer, maar spaar my Liewers die onaangenaamheid.

Adam Stewe: Meneer kan maar rapporteer.

Jeremiah Vlermuis: Alle wraak word op ons afgelaai.

? Strafverplasing vir beide hierde onderwysers word aan die hand gedoen vir onmiddellike deurvoering. Hulle behoort onder strenge beheer geplaas te word.

Hierdie vyftal maak die leiding van die AME-beweging in Hoachanas uit. Deur hul uitinge en optrede word ander wat soos skape volg, op verkeerde pad gebring.

Afskrifte hiervan word gepos aan

- (i) Die Naturellekommissaris, Rehoboth, en
- (ii) Die Naturellekommssaris, Maltahöhe.

(Get.)

SUPERINTENDENT.

Teë PETISIE DEUR DE KERKRADE VAN DIE
RYNSE SENDINGGEMEENTES VAN GIBEON
DISTRİK INVERBAND MET DIE AFFCAN
METHODIST EPISCOPAL KERK.

? Brief, gedateer Augustus 1948, met bylaes (vlaggie 1 is van David Witbooi hier ontvang). Op 22/8/48 is ook ? petisie van die Rynse Sendinggemeentes in Gibeon distrik (vlaggie 2) ontvang waarin sekere aanleidende oorsake van die skeuring in die Rynse Sendingkerk in 1946 en die stigting van die “African Methodist Episcopal Church” aangegee word.

Beide dokumente is na die Magistraat, Mariental, vir navraag en kommentaar verwys en konfidensiële rapport (vlaggie 3) gedateer 14 Nov. 1948, is deur die Magistraat van die Welsynsbeampte, Gibeon – Krantzplatz, ontvang wat breedvoerig die verskillende aspekte en implikasies van die ontstaan en doelstellings van die A.M.E. Kerk behandel.

Met betrekking tot sommige van die gevolgtrekkings van die Welsynsbeampte wil ek graag U Edele se aandag vestig op ? versoekskrif (vlaggie 4 op aangehegte lêer No. A.158/6) sowel as die voorgestelde konstituse van die “Organisasie vir opheffing van die Nama Volk” – (vlaggie 5 op aangehegte lêer No. A.50/227).

Dit blyk asof daar ? noue verwantskap bestaan tussen die doelstellings soos vervat in hierdie gemelde twee dokumente en die algemene aktiwiteite van die A.M.E. Kerk, wat bepaald meer dan suiwer kerklike aangeleentheid beoog.

Aangesien die A.M.E. Kerk reeds aansoek gedoen het om ? perseel vir ? privaat Naturelleskool in Maltahohe Lokasie, saam met ? Kleurling-onderwysers, S.W. Coetzee vanaf die Unie daarvoor in te voer. (Vlaggie 6 op aangehegte lêer A.489/25/2) word die hele aangeleentheid nou na U Edele verwys vir oorweging en instruksies.

SEKRETARIS.

.... / / 1948.

Box 1122 A 158/6 Native Reserves Gibeon (1918-1931)

This memo deals with the grievances of the Nama leaders relating to farms and property.

We beg to submit our grievances and needs to you. And first of all we wish Your Honour to pardon if perhaps we address a wrong word to you.

We WITBOOI BEOPLE desire and request that farms be given us for our own property, for life. We have already submitted this request to Major Herbat at Windhoek. Whereupon he answered: "Very well! I have heard. Now go and meet together and choose unto yourselves farms and ground which satisfy your ideas, for you were the first in the country (landsvorlingen?) and know better the nature of the country, therefore choose for yourselves such farms and contain them in your hearts. When the Land Commission comes, I shall direct them first to Gibeon and shall come personally with them and help you to get the farms." Therefore we again today request Your Honour for these farms which we have chosen and retained on Major Herbat's word that the farms will be given to us. This interview we had with Major Herbat on the 15th May. And we have also submitted our request to the Magistrate on the 22nd September 1992. The following are the farms which we have chosen:

- I. GIBEON as capital.
- II. RIETMOND, as the promised legacy of our late Father and Chief Hendrik Witbooi.
- III. JAKALSFONTEIN.
- IV. VISRIVIER, from KAMEELHAAR to JAKALSFONTEIN

These are the farms which we as natives know and about which there will be no dissatisfaction on our side, as they are all capable of yielding the necessities of life, for human beings and animals, for a lifetime.

- II. GRIEVANCE: We all wish that the Chief may have only one branding iron with his mark and that all his people may use this iron for branding. This is easier.
- III. GRIEVANCE: This is a hard country for labourers and also for those wishing to sell their stock to white people. When the month is past the labourer comes to his master to receive his wages. The master answers that he has no money and the labourer must take in place of his wages stock, cattle, clothes and drink. This applies to those who do contract work for white people, with their own wagons and oxen, also. The same answer is given to anyone wishing to sell for money cattle, stock, etc. The master says: "if you demand cash, take your pass and go and look for a master who will give you cash". This labourer continues to ask for his money and the master gets annoyed, beats the servant or dismisses him; the servant gets annoyed and beats the master, whereupon he is brought before court by this master and is arrested and put in prison. Now, Your Honour, what are we to do in

these hard times? The Government taxes us and when the time comes and we cannot pay we are put in prison and punished. Wherewith shall we pay these taxes? Will the law accept our taxes in cattle, goats, clothes and drink with which we are paid our wages at the store? We have no cash, only the white people have this. We can only get it by working and now we cannot even get it in that way. Our money is valuable but now the white people have reduced the prices. (Onse geld is de waarde, maar die is ook van witte menschen afgezet de prys).

These are the main grievances. This is our intention of going to Wndhoek, the seat of Government, as we are not satisfied to deal with this matter in such a hurry and on paper, as it is very important. Therefore, when we hear that Your Honour is again at home we will come there.

In conclusion I still wish to say something about the branding irons. We thank Your Honour that you have said "Open your mouths and tell me everything that you are dissatisfied about" and it is well that you have come. So now we submit the matter of the branding irons to you. We have heard from trustworthy men that the Government makes no difference between white and black and we believe that this law says all are equal. White shall not laugh and the black man cry, all shall be happy. And how beautiful it is that children of different colour but one father shall be treated as the children of one father! The white people buy their irons with their money and we also buy our irons with our money; why then are the irons given to the white people and our irons retained? If one man buys from another a wagon, horse or something else he gives to the owner of the article money, and he goes home with his wagon, horse or article that he has bought and the other sits on his stoep with his money and so peace prevails. How many persons would be found by the law, who have marked for their own the cattle, and horses of other folk? These then should be punished for their wrong doing. But then we also often see that white people commit theft and are punished by the law. No, Your Honour, I do not say that we are just and do not steal, theft takes place everywhere where there are people. And therefore the law is there and the law is more subtle and wise than those that imagine they are subtle and commit theft. Therefore do not guard the irons, give us the irons which we pay for and then guard and watch over us. And then you will find out who is the thief. White people think all black people are dishonest (schelm), but those who steal will be judged by the Heavenly King one day at the final judgement. No, Your Honour, we do not order you --- we are weeping --- regard our tears in our hearts --- and give us the irons in our keeping and keep watch and guard over us. And punish anyone that is caught in thieving such punishment as he shall have deserved.

ON BEHALF OF THE MEETING

1. Isaak Witbooi
2. Hendrik Witbooi
3. Perus Witbooi

4. Christof Lambert
5. Josofat Witbooi
6. Jeftha Kuhanga
7. Andreas Keister
8. Jakob Stebe
9. Filleppus Karigumab
10. Niklas v.d. Westerhuis
11. Didrik Keister
12. Jakobus v.d. Westerhuis

Box 1851: A396/8 Native unrest Gibeon (1915-1954)

Extract of a letter from the magistrate of Maltahöhe, dated 28 May 1921 to the Secretary for South West-Africa, Windhoek

“ALLEGED UNREST OF NATIVES IN SWA”

“This meeting assembles for the purpose of securing arms and ammunition for the European population of the town and district as the police have become nervous of news received of a contemplated Native Rising. Informed them that their fears were groundless and whatever intentions natives had or contemplated the government was fully alive to the conditions.”

Box 1192: A158/6 Native Reserves, Gibeon v.2 (1912-1947)

The following is an extract of the letter of the Nama leaders dated 11 Augustus 1945 to the Chief native Commissioner.

Hooggeagte kommissaris vir natuurlike sake Windhoek

“Ons lewende hawe het meer deur die dors omgekom, as deur honger. Ons versoek u om vir ons een boorgat op die kalk vir ons te laat boor. En een, naby die grenslyn in die weste. Op versoek aangaande vergroting van ons reservaat is ons toenmals die raad aan die hand gegee, om vergaderings te hou, en ander regeringsgronde, waarmee die regering ons kan help, te vra soos gronde in die noorde. In die vergaderings wat daarna gehou is, het ons na lang oorweging liever die besluit geneem, om u te smee, om liever in die ou reservaat te bly met sy moeilikhede. As u maar net die water moeilikheid vir ons oplos. Want dit sal ‘n groot skeuring in ons volk en gemeente lewe meebring wat van ouds af as een voel, behoort, en ook lewe.”

Sluitend met alle hoogagting bly ons uwe dienaars namens Witboois.

Kaptein David Witbooi

Raad Salomon Witbooi

Raad Welem Frederik

Johannes Jakob

Krantzplaats

Gibeon-Reservaat

AMEC

15 Episcopal district

Namibia Annual Lay Conference

Malthahöhe from August 04-04, 1995

The following is an extract from the speech of Rev. Willem Simon Hanse.

Indigenous leadership

“Let me introduce this heading by thanking the Namibian Pioneers for their courageous and visionary move that brought us into the AME familyhood some 50 years ago. But we forget that the church is a human-based institution, dynamic in the sense that it must continually evaluate and re-evaluate strides made in a given period. Yes, we are proud to have initiated the move that say that Blacks can be ordained not only in the AMEC, but also in the former Rhenish Mission Society.

However, long before Namibian independence have we witnessed the elevation and consequent consecration of Namibians as Bishops in sister churches in Namibia. We started that cycle, yet we are not able to conclude it. Yes, they have long before us experienced ownership of their various denominations.

Our connection to the AMEC under current structures as provided in the book of Discipline and Doctrine, is viewed rightly by many as neo-colonialism.

How can the Namibian AMEC develop a sense of ownership, when the highest Legislative sessions are held in a far-away continent; when the election of bishops are based on hidden capitalistic and chauvinistic principles, when denominational development aid hasn't been forthcoming for 50 years, when American AME's think that we are not as yet “ready” to host WMS and YPD Conventions, whereas Africa has recently hosted the Miss Universe competition and the Rugby World Cup!”

People are not loyal to anything they view as foreign. Namibians have experienced the pain of foreign occupation and are healing from these wounds. This is not only true on the political level, but also on the religious level.”

In-subordinate leadership

“One of the dangers facing the life of the AMEC is In-subordinate leadership on all levels. We have, for instance, children who do not want to be subordinate to the leadership of their Sunday school teachers, members who think they are above and over

their pastors; we have pastors who wish to guide and lead us, but who do not want to subordinate and subject themselves to the Presiding Elders and the Bishops. Yes, we have on all levels of our church leadership who want to be seen, leaders, but who do not give the same to those over and above them.

A leader should not be far away up front for the followers to be covered by his dust, nor should the leader be far away in the back to be covered by the followers' dust. We need both the leaders and the followers to go hand in hand to undertake the multi-complexed task of Evangelisation in Namibia”.

AMEC

15 Episcopal district

Namibia Annual Conference

Held at St. Mark's AME Church

Gibeon on 21/10/1995

The following is an extract from the paper of Rev. W.S. Hanse, titled "Lay Think-tank – through the eyes of the third generation"

Understanding the present position

"The point of departure is the historical condition stated by our late fathers, that we (or at least they), will join the AMEC for an initial period of five years, and that the fruits of this periodical association will indicate to us the "raison d'être" how we should continue. But let me be very clear: I am not propagating the complete severance of ties with the Connectional Church, but I am in favour that we embark upon a pilgrimage to illuminate our people on why we are and where we are.

An Appeal of Understanding: The mere fact that such a discussion is taking place at this important point in time of history of the AMEC, is a recognition and acknowledgement that all was and is not well in the church.

My appeal is simple. I want us to find a common ground of understanding of the present before we go any further and that we have not yet own the church; that we have not yet abandoned the condition that we are still evaluating the treatment meted out to us by our fellow AME's from the American continent.

The AME Church is truly the church of Richard Allen, "but no bishop has yet impressed it at least on you, if not me, that the AME Church is also truly the church of Petrus Jod, of Zacheus Thomas, of Markus Witbooi, of Jakobus Jod, of Daniel Dausab, of Jonas Topnaar!"

History tells us that it was not an easy decision, that our parents and grandparents were persecuted for having joined the AME Church.

The road we have travelled through trials and tribulations, has reached the cross-roads; there is a challenge that we can no longer postpone: Namibia's AME's are expected of, pastors are expected of, Presiding Elders are expected of – history demands from us that we, once and for all, affirm and consolidate our position in a modified fashion within the Connectional church. We can't afford to continue this way indefinitely.

The following is an extract of the article in : *The challenge* Feb/March 2001. The title of the article is: “Indigenous Africans must take charge of the church”.

The church belongs to the local people, and so the AME, or the African Methodist Episcopal Church has developed a programme that will ensure that local bishops, and not foreigners, take charge of the episcopal oversight of the church in Africa.

The current 19th Episcopal district bishop, the Right Reverend Adam J. Richardson Jr., spoke to Joe Mdhlela about how this plan would unfold.

The Right Rev. A.J. Richardson

“For more than hundred years the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Africa has been under the episcopal oversight of American bishops. Newly elected bishop of the 19th Episcopal district, the Rev. A.J. Richardson, would like all this to come to an end when his term ends in 2004, when an African indigenous bishop is elected.” The 19th Episcopal district consists of the provinces of Gauteng, Northwest, Northern Province, Mpumalanga, Free State and Kwazulu-Natal.

Election of indigenous Africans as bishop

“We have been in Africa since 1891, and in South Africa since 1896, and in all this time the church elected only two indigenous Africans to the bishopry. This must change, and the important legislation passed at the African jurisdiction Council in 2000 will ensure that the leadership of the church in Africa is in the hands of local people”, the bishop told *Challenge* in an interview at his Johannesburg office recently.

It will no longer be possible for the election assembly in America “to have our African brothers and sisters being neglected for the high office of the church”. And that being the case, Bishop Richardson believes he will be the last American to serve as bishop in the AME Church in Africa as it was important that local people run the church”.

(Source: *Challenge* Feb/March 2001).