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African Studies.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN AN URBAN AFRICAN SOCIETY

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DECLARATION IN COMPLIANCE WITH GENERAL REGULATION G.21

1. The present study is based, in the first place, upon a research plan drawn up by Professor P. Mayer, Head of the Department of African Studies Rhodes University, for the Institute of Social and Economic Research and entitled Bantu Churches and Bantu Christians. Within the broad framework of this plan, actual research was carried out by myself, with the help of an African Research Assistant, under the supervision of Professor Mayer. The analysis and writing up of the material was also done by myself.

2. This thesis has not been published nor have any arrangements been made for its publication. Since, however, the study was undertaken as an officer of the Institute for Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, publication rights are, in the first instance, vested in that Institute. I agree, however, that subject to the agreement of the Board of Management of the Institute, the University may make additional copies of the whole or part of this thesis.

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S Y N O P S I S

This study is based on research carried out in East London, South Africa during the period September 1957 to August 1959 as an Assistant Research Officer of the Institute for Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University.

The study is presented in three parts and its theme, broadly speaking, is the role of the Church in an urban African society. In Part I, some aspects of the African Church in East London are discussed in general terms, and an attempt is made to relate our own material with the findings of other researchers. Emerging from this discussion, we have concluded that the Church could, potentially, play an important part in combating the social disorganisation characteristic of urban locations in South Africa, but that on the whole this potential has not been fully exploited.

Part II, the major section of the study, deals specifically with the African Assembly of God in East London - or as it is popularly known, 'Bhengu's Church'. This church is of especial interest since, despite an apparent general decline in church participation among East London Africans, it has built up, over a period of eight years, the largest active adherence in the location. Furthermore, it is characterised both by the religious zeal of its members as well as by the social and moral improvement which it has brought about in their lives. Bhengu's Church, therefore, stands out as an example of the role which the African Church can play in the urban situation. In order to understand the reasons for its initial success and continued vitality, we have analysed in detail several aspects of the development, leadership and membership of Bhengu's Church.

In the final section, Part III, we have drawn together our findings from Parts I and II in a general statement of our conclusions.

It would appear that the factors described have tended to inhibit the development of a stable social structure to replace the rurally-oriented traditional institutions which have become irrelevant to town life. On the contrary, we find that they have fostered the more severe manifestations of social disorganisation such as adult and juvenile crime, drug addiction and trafficking, moral delinquency, disruption of family life, and disease. It is not surprising, under these conditions, that the East Bank population appears to be an amorphous human conglomerate rather than a stable community.

One of the central theoretical problems with which we are concerned, then, is the role of the Church in this particular urban situation. This has necessitated a somewhat different approach from that of a study of religion in tribal society. It is clear from the abundant literature on African societies that where contact with Europeans has been minimal and desultory, religious systems are relatively homogeneous and are closely interrelated with other social and cultural institutions. Christianity, white rule, and other agencies of westernisation have, however, brought about considerable change in both the function and content of religion. Thus, for example, factors such as the introduction of an improved technology, and the power of white authorities to curtail religious rites which they have found repugnant, have cast doubt on the effectiveness and validity of many traditional beliefs and practices. The conversion of some people to Christianity has broken down the former religious homogeneity and the religious life is now divided among Christians, pagans and the large number of marginal individuals who are neither completely one nor the other. Although both the traditional religion, and even Christianity, are present and maintain some degree of integration with other institutions, religion no longer pervades every aspect of tribal life, but becomes more a matter of individual choice and behaviour. Consequently, deviation from religious

practices is possible beyond the relatively narrow limits previously tolerated.

This individualistic approach is most obvious in urban African populations where integration of religion with other institutions becomes more difficult to define. In fact, as we state in relation to the East Bank location, the emergence of a discernable urban social structure and culture pattern has not paralleled the breakdown of traditional rurally-oriented socio-cultural institutions. The function of religion or, more specifically, of the Church cannot, therefore, be easily related to the society as a whole in such a situation. Rather, religion must be related to individuals and groups of individuals.

For this reason, one cannot speak of 'the Church' in the East Bank as if it were a unit. Individual churches differ in both the nature and scope of their activities, so that the role which they play in the lives of their adherents depends on specific characteristics selected from a wide variety of possibilities. While, of course, this "selection" is largely determined by basic doctrinal and structural characteristics as well as by local leadership, the overall pattern affects the vitality and attractiveness of the church for its adherents. In this study, therefore, we have attempted to define the churches in terms of what we consider to be their most important aspects: race attitudes and policies, leadership, self-expression through worship and church activities, and in terms of the church as a social group. This background is necessary in order to appreciate the special characteristics of the Bhengu movement. In Part I we describe and classify the churches in the East Bank in terms of the characteristics mentioned. In Part II, we analyse in detail the structure and role of the Assembly of God in terms of these same, and other, characteristics.

Another aspect of this problem is the role which the East Bank churches should play if they are to gain any measure of real influence in the life of the township. As this study has progressed we have become increasingly convinced that the churches could play a crucial part in bridging the gulf between rural conditions and the new contingencies of urban life.

Broadly speaking, urban populations may express and meet their common material, social and cultural needs in three ways: through establishment of and participation in a system of local government, the formation of sub-urban communities, and through membership of voluntary associations. In the East Bank location, as in many other African townships in South Africa and elsewhere, Africans have little or no say in local government while neighbourhood groups are rare. The only real expression of common interests and needs, therefore, is within the voluntary associations. Unlike West African cities (see Little 1957), the East Bank population has few associations catering to more than fairly specialised interests (e.g. burial societies, sports and social clubs) and it is in this respect that the Church is in a unique position. Thus, Professor Wilson wrote of the African Church in East London (Hunter, 1936, p.504):

"Christianity, in spite of the failures of its adherents, is one of the few integrating forces in the tumult created by the economic revolution. A strong common loyalty is one of the most powerful binding forces there can be in a community: Christians are bound by their common loyalty to Jesus. Churches are important among the new social groups formed in towns."

If, twenty-five years ago, the African Church in East London was indeed an integrating force, as Professor Wilson suggests, we believe that it has gradually lost the initiative. Nevertheless, it continues to be the one association which could potentially provide the basis for a stable community life. This is not only due to a "common loyalty to Jesus" but mainly,

perhaps, because it is the one basically western institution which had already become, in the rural setting, an intrinsic part of the life of converts. Since by its very nature, the Church lays down widely ramifying standards of behaviour, it could provide the starting point for social, moral and cultural improvement in town, by offering more adequate alternatives to irrelevant traditional institutions.

It is this aspect of the role of the East Bank churches which has largely determined the approach of this study. When field-work began in the East Bank, it was pointed out by two investigators* who had preceeded the author, that reference to 'Bhengu's Church' had frequently cropped up in the course of their own enquiries and that this church might be a useful starting point. It was soon ascertained that 'Bhengu's Church' was a local congregation of a relatively autonomous African section within the Assemblies of God movement. Although it had only been established some seven years before, it had built up the largest active adherence in the township. As research progressed, it was found that members had been drawn largely from the nominal adherence of other churches as well as from the pagan section of the population. The congregation exhibited a high degree of cohesion and solidarity, while members appeared to maintain relatively high standards of living in both the material and non-material sense. As comparative data on other local churches were collected, it became clear that the vitality of the assembly and its hold over adherents stood out sharply against a background of general decline in church influence. The question 'Why has the Assembly succeeded?', led naturally to its corollary 'Why are the other churches losing ground; what is the essence of their failure?'. Our material, we believe, suggests at least tentative answers to these questions.

* Dr. D.H. Reader and Professor P. Mayer, to both of whose work references have been made in this study.

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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

There appears to be an increasing disinterest in Christianity and the Church among urban Africans in South Africa. Despite this, the Assemblies of God, a revivalist movement under the leadership of Zulu evangelist Nicholas Dhengu, has in recent years built up a large adherence in many parts of the country. The present study is a detailed examination of the Assembly of God in the East Bank African location, East London, against the background of the total church situation in the township. Stated in the most general terms, what we are concerned with is the adaptation of religious institutions and organizations to an urban environment.

From the standpoint of its racial ecology, East London has much in common with other South African towns. It is the smallest of the four major coastal cities in the country, with a total population of about 100,000. Of these 100,000 more than half are Africans who, in the main, have come from the Transkei and Ciskei Native Territories and belong to the Xhosa and related tribes.

As is general in South Africa, the Africans in East London are residentially segregated in locations. The largest of these is the East Bank, to which, as we have said, the present study is confined. Housing and sanitary conditions in this location leave much to be desired. Apart from those living in municipal and government housing schemes, a large proportion of the population is housed in wood-and-iron dwellings, most of which are in a chronic state of disrepair and are grossly overcrowded. Sanitary facilities in the wood-and-iron sections are entirely inadequate, since although communal water-taps, ablution blocks and toilets are provided,

these are too few and are in many cases filthy and dilapidated.* This harsh physical environment is both a symptom and a symbol of the social, political and economic colour bar which confronts the African and compounds the universal social and psychological problems of adjustment facing the rural immigrant to town.

In the Reserves (Native Territories) the African has comparatively little contact with Whites, and is minimally affected by discriminatory laws and practices. In town, however, his freedom of movement and action is strictly regulated, while closer contact with Whites and comparison of their living conditions with his own, serve as a constant reminder of his inferior status. Although to many Africans the town represents the mainspring of 'European' culture and has the facilities for the satisfaction of acquired needs and desires, they are constantly frustrated either by law, convention or economics.

Also tending to aggravate problems of adjustment and adaptation are the traditional official policy regarding urban Africans, as well as the latter's own attitudes to town life. On the one hand the migrant is officially discouraged from, or forbidden to bring his family to town; on the other, many Africans themselves regard their stay in town as temporary, while at the same time being reluctant to expose wives and children to the 'evil influences' of urban life. They therefore leave their families in the rural areas to which they look forward to eventual retirement. This, together with the fact that they can be expelled from town by the authorities for a variety of reasons, has given the Africans little real stake in the township.

* A full report of the conditions described, was drawn up jointly by the East London Medical Officer of Health and the Manager of Native Administration, and presented to the African Affairs Committee of the City Council on 6th February, 1958.

CHAPTER ONE

RACE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE AFRICAN CHURCH

Race or colour is a line of cleavage which runs through every aspect of life in South Africa - social, political and economic. In the midst of this highly colour-conscious society, the Church is in an ambivalent position. Based on the belief in 'the universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man', it is the one institution in which Whites deliberately encourage African participation. Yet while White Christians profess to subscribe to these fundamental principles of equality, they uphold racial discrimination in other spheres of life.

This inconsistent attitude, the policy of successive governments not to interfere with the religious life of the people, and the concern with which white churchmen view any threat of African withdrawal from the mission churches, gives Africans a unique opportunity for expressing their dissatisfaction and hostility towards white domination. They may resort to three alternative courses of action; they may pursue their struggle for equality within the multiracial mission churches; they may form independent uniracial sects; or they may withdraw completely from Church life in protest against its ineffectiveness in promoting African advancement.

The Church, as an institution, is thus an important arena for the playing out of the race conflict in South Africa. To an important degree, African support of any church is affected by the extent to which discriminatory practices are absent in the church itself, as well as by the stand which it takes on the race question in South Africa as a whole. We may therefore regard the race attitudes of each church, at a particular time and place, as pro tem. adjustments to the constant struggle between the races.

The dynamic nature of these adjustments has generally been blurred by the traditional classification of churches, in both official and academic writings, into two dichotomous categories: churches established by white missionaries, and which are generally worldwide and multiracial; and independent (or separatist) African churches which have been established through secession. In classifying the East Bank churches, therefore, we find that it is more useful to place them along a continuum which ranges through varying degrees of European control and influence to, finally, the independent syncretistic sects. The advantages of this form of classification are, we feel, that:

- (a) it preserves the dynamic character of a situation which, for convenience, we view as static;
- (b) it allows for the reflection of local variations of general practice;
- (c) it makes it possible to indicate differences, where they exist, between 'real' and 'ideal' patterns of race relations in the administrative structure of any church.

Our discussion of this and other aspects of the East Bank churches, is based on data obtained from interviews with ministers of twenty-four religious organizations*. These organizations represent, roughly, one half of the total number operating in the

*Mission/European connected:
Roman Catholic
Anglican
Order of Ethiopia
Methodist
Moravian
Berlin Lutheran Mission
Seventh Day Adventist
Bantu Presbyterian
Bantu Baptist
Congregational Union
Assemblies of God (Bhengu's)
Full Gospel

Independent/Separatist:
Zion Apostolic Ch. of S.A.
Bantu Independent
Holy Church of Christ
Ch. of Christ United
Ch. of Christ Mission+
Presb.Ch.of Africa (Mzimba's)
African Congregational
Native Independent
Bantu Methodist ('Donkey'Ch.)
Ibhandla leka Krestu (Limba's)
African Ethiopian (Topiya Poqo)
African Meth. Episcopal (A.M.E.)

(+ A mission church, though almost entirely African. In the East Bank the congregation has split and recognition has been withdrawn from the minister included in our sample)

location which, as far as we were able to ascertain from both official records and our own investigations, included some twenty-four government-recognised churches and at least as many non-recognised sects*. Our sample includes a similar proportion of each type and embraces most of the larger churches**.

In Table I, which follows, we have classified the Last Bank churches in terms of their racial composition and control. We shall then describe the various factors which determine the race attitudes and policies of the churches.

* While the Union Government has been reluctant to interfere with the African Separatist churches, it has shared the alarm of white churchmen over the proliferation of these sects. It has therefore promulgated regulations relating to the recognition of churches. These regulations define certain advantages which only recognised churches may enjoy: granting of church sites in urban and Trust areas; licensing of ministers as marriage officers; granting concessions to ministers on the railways; relative freedom of movement for ministers and others engaged on church business; granting of permission to hold church conferences; permitting the purchase of sacramental wine. Recognition may be granted, at the discretion of the relevant State Minister, if certain conditions pertaining to membership, number of congregations, training of ministers, etc., are fulfilled. In practice recognition has been confined largely to the white mission churches, only a few independent African churches having received it. It is the policy of the Government to withhold recognition of independent churches as far as possible and thereby, indirectly, to curtail their activities.

**See Appendix C for tables of Church affiliation.

The Mission Churches

In the mission churches (see Table I, a-g), the extent of European control and influence depends largely on the official policy of each church regarding the amount of responsibility which African members are permitted to assume within its hierarchy. These official policies take one of two fundamentally different forms: that which regards the Church as being non-racial; and that which favours the development of uniracial segments within the same church.

The first point of view does not, theoretically at least, recognise race, colour or culture as a valid basis for differentiation. As such, it officially opposes any form of segregation or discrimination and maintains that, all Christians being of equal status, control of the Church should not be racially determined. The attitudes of these churches emerge clearly from their periodic pronouncements on apartheid and the traditional application in South Africa of the colour-bar, as the following examples illustrate:

" In October 1953, a conference of the Methodist Church stated its belief, that in the application of the principle of apartheid through successive legislative acts, the potentialities of men and women as individuals had been ignored. Differentiation made had been mass differentiation on the ground of colour alone. In such circumstances, injustice was inevitable. Failure openly to recognise the fact that the non-European was already an integral part of our general population and essential to our economy had led to a form of apartheid which operated just so far as it suited the needs of the Europeans."

(A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1953 - 54, p.8.
pub. by The South African Institute of Race Relations)

" In 1952 the Catholic Bishops of South Africa issued a statement on race relations which emphasized the evil of colour discrimination and the injustices which flow from it. This statement maintained that non-Europeans in South Africa had a strict right in justice to evolve towards full participation in the political, economic and cultural life of the country

" Five years have gone by since this statement was issued. During that time there has been no change of direction in South Africa's racial policy....

" To our beloved Catholic people of white race, we have a special word to say. The practice of segregation, though officially not recognised in our churches, characterises nevertheless many of our church societies, our schools, seminaries, convents, hospitals and the social life of our people. In the light of Christ's teaching this cannot be tolerated forever. The time has come to pursue more vigorously the change of heart and practice that the law of Christ demands. We are hypocrites if we condemn apartheid in South African society and condone it in our own institutions."

(Africa South, Jan. - March 1958, page 13. 'Roman Catholic Bishops on the Blasphemy of Apartheid'.)

" Summing it all up, (Archbishop Clayton) declared: 'What I am really concerned with is that no churchman who goes to an Anglican Church in this diocese with the intention of worshipping God there shall be excluded because of his race or colour.'

" This is not to deny that for reasons of convenience, for differences of language, for lack of accommodation, for suitable times and matters of distance, services may be held where at one an attempt is made to meet the needs of the Whites, at another those of the Coloured church-folk, at a third those of the Africans.

" But these arrangements are for reasons of convenience and there is neither compulsion nor exclusion. Following the gallant lead given by our own Mother Church in Cape Town, I can do no better than repeat the words that stand so bravely outside its main entrance: 'This church is open for all services to all people of all races.' "

(Daily Despatch, East London 4/12/1958. Report of Archbishop Joost de Blank's address to the Cape synod of the Anglican Church.)

The second point of view holds that while all Christians are spiritually equal, there is ample justification for physical separation of the races in Church. These churches point out that race differences are a fact of nature - and therefore Divinely ordained, that separation is traditional in South Africa, that each racial group has its own interests which do not specifically affect the other groups, and that each group has the right to develop its

institutions 'along its own lines'. In most cases this attitude has been applied more specifically at the lower levels of church organisation - such as in the Congregational Union and Seventh Day Adventist churches - whereas at the highest levels integration is favoured. In the East Bank, only the Bantu Presbyterian and Bantu Baptist Churches have taken this policy to its logical conclusion. Its most vigorous proponent, however, is the Dutch Reformed Church, whose attitude was summed up by Dr. G.B.A.Gerdener in an article in the Journal of the South African Institute of Race Relations (Vol. XVII, Nos. 1 - 2. 'The Dutch Reformed Church and the Racial Situation in South Africa').

" There certainly is abundant biblical justification for the origin and continued existence, even beyond the end of time, of 'tribe and tongue, people and nation'. As every individual has a sense of calling and responsibility, so is it true of every racial group.....

" In thinking of separate development, it should hardly be necessary to say that the D.R.C. is not thinking of something negative, not of aloofness, neglect or repudiation. The history of our mission and educational work for more than a century should give pause to any such misconception.

" We are, however, fully convinced that any group of our non-European community can only get a square deal if its development proceeds from within, takes account of racial aptitudes, and allows each group to make its full contribution to the common good.....

" In the meantime there must be no doubt on the spiritual equality of all men before God - be they bond or free, man or woman, white, yellow or black. That, however, does not wipe out the natural differences which no time can efface nor spiritual communion obliterate."

The two segregationist churches in our sample - the Bantu Presbyterian and Bantu Baptist - have achieved their goal of

African independence through separate development.* The non-racial churches, however, are still far from being integrated. In these latter churches the implementation of official race policies depends to a large extent on the 'real' values which European members hold with regard to the African's ability to assume responsibility. Although the assessment of this ability is commonly held to be an objective one, it would appear that in practice European attitudes are less an assessment than a justification of existing practices within each church. Opportunities for Africans to attain high positions within the hierarchy of a church appears, rather, to be determined largely by the degree to which incumbency of such positions will entail the exercise of authority by Africans over Europeans. Since the majority of Europeans is unwilling to accept African authority over them, we may expect a high correlation between attitudes to African ability and the extent to which high positions are authoritarian or honorific. Inasmuch as actual opportunities for Africans reflect 'real' attitudes, a comparison between the administrative structures of mission churches and these opportunities, bears out, by and large, this assumption.

We shall first briefly outline the administrative structure of the mission churches. These fall into four broad categories:

(a) The clergy is arranged in a spiritual-administrative hierarchy in which there are clearly defined differences in authority between each level. Thus, for example, in the Roman Catholic hierarchy authority is delegated in decreasing areas of jurisdiction from the Pope, through Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops to, finally,

* We were unable to make any investigation of the Dutch Reformed Church in the East Bank, although this church is the most vigorous proponent of the policy of separate development. This was due to the fact that no congregation had existed, as far as we knew, prior to 1958. In 1958 a White missionary was attempting to establish one but with limited success.

the parish priest. Promotion to each level is by appointment from above, and positions are held for life or until further promotion.

(b) The clergy is arranged in an administrative hierarchy comprising a bishop, or general superintendent, national or territorial superintendents, and congregational pastors, while conference secretaries and treasurers are also appointed. Some or all appointments may be permanent or for an extended period (such as five years), and are generally made by a conference of the church. All appointments within this hierarchy entail the exercise of authority and carry considerable responsibility.

(c) Administratively, the only unit in which day to day authority may be exercised over a pastor, is the circuit. A circuit generally includes several nearby congregations each of which may or may not have its own minister. In any event, the senior minister (length of service is the usual criterion) in the circuit will exercise some authority over the constituent congregations. At the regional and national levels, however, a representative conference is the only real authority. Only the conference may decide on important issues, may appoint, transfer or discipline pastors. Chairmen, moderators and other conference officials are elected for short terms, usually annually, and their positions are largely honorific.

(d) This category is similar to (c) above, differing mainly in that each congregation and minister is entirely autonomous. Where small congregations, without their own ministers, exist near a larger one, the minister of the latter may visit and assist them.

In terms of these categories, we may classify the non-racial mission churches in the East Bank as follows:

TABLE II. Hierarchic Structure of Mission Churches

Name of Church	Pattern of Authority
Roman Catholic	a
Anglican Church	a
Order of Ethiopia (an order of Anglican Church)	a
Moravian	a - b
Berlin Lutheran Mission	a - b
Full Gospel	b
Seventh Day Adventist	b
Order of Ethiopia (internal structure)	b - c
Methodist	c
Congregational Union	c - d
Assemblies of God	d

NOTE: The Order of Ethiopia is an independent African Order of the Anglican Church. Priests and lay officials of the Order hold an annual conference independently of the Anglican Church Synod. Every five years the conference elects a Provincial to superintend the Order. In each diocese, however, the Provincial as well as local priests, must defer to the Anglican Bishop. The Order, therefore, merges with the Anglican church at the diocesan level.

Of these non-racial churches, opportunities for Africans to hold high office are most limited in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Moravian, Lutheran and Full Gospel churches. Although the Roman Catholic Church has, it is true, appointed African Bishops in South Africa, their areas of jurisdiction have been predominantly African. Similarly, in the Anglican Church, the only African appointed to high office is as yet only an Assistant Bishop. On the whole, however, in all five churches, African clergymen rarely go beyond the level of senior ministers over purely African circuits. In the latter three churches, Africans may only participate in synods and conferences as observers.

The Congregational Union, Methodist and Seventh Day Adventist churches, although they verbally favour integration, are divided into White and Black sections at the circuit and regional levels, so that within their own sections Africans may hold all available offices. In the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Africans have little

opportunity to hold office at the intersectional level; these positions are long-term appointments with definite prerogatives and are always held by Whites. In the other two churches, where these posts are largely honorific, Africans are occasionally elected.

As an independent Order within the Anglican Church, the Order of Ethiopia manages its own internal affairs without interference. Having its own conference, therefore, all positions within the Order (except that of Treasurer) are held by Africans. The head of the Order, the Provincial, who holds office for five years is also an African. It becomes subject to the hierarchy of the Anglican Church, however, at the diocesan level.

The greatest measure of equality between Africans and Whites is found in the Assemblies of God. Since, as we shall see, each minister and congregation is entirely independent, there is no person or body exercising authority at the intercongregational level. No formal segregation therefore exists, and Africans participate in Conferences in proportion to their numbers - which exceeds that of any other racial group.

The Independent Churches

All the independent churches in the East Bank see as their raison d'etre freedom from White control and self-determination in their own affairs. Each regards itself in some sense as a 'national church', believing that in South Africa independence from Europeans is the only way in which Africans can freely exercise their own abilities.

Many independent churches (represented in our sample by category (h) in Table I), appear to regard structural independence from Europeans as an adequate solution. All these churches are in fact closely modelled on 'orthodox' Protestant church patterns and are regarded by their members as being 'the same as' one or other mission church - generally those from which they had

originally seceded. Most of the leaders of these churches admit that they believe the creation of uniracial organizations is a backward step since the reunited 'Church of Christ' will be non-racial. They justify their existence, however, by pointing to the 'un-Christian practices' of segregation and discrimination within the multiracial churches. These leaders claim, however, that they are not anti-White: they would admit White members if these would be prepared to accept equal status with Africans, recognize the authority of African officials, and give up all notions of superiority. They also affirm their willingness to reunite with the multiracial churches if discriminatory practices were discontinued. The following statements by two ministers, exemplify this attitude:

" The Africans seceded from the London Missionary Society because they were bitterly segregated. They were regarded as very inferior and could not achieve the highest posts... The church is now purely African and has no connection with Europeans or a European church... Europeans are allowed to join the Church provided that they will agree to be domineered or will accept the minor posts as well in the Church. That they should have the same status as Africans. Europeans have never joined the Church at all for they resent African leadership."

(Minister of the Native Independent Church in East London)

" If Europeans would be one with us in church there would not be much of fuss with us. We are fussy because Europeans do not practise what they preach. They make us two before God. If we were one before God we must be one in church."

(Minister of the Bantu Independent Church in East London)

In one of these churches, however, the leader was more outspoken and, perhaps, less optimistic with regard to the likelihood of Whites granting equal status to Africans in Church. Although his church - the African Congregational - was also modelled on, and said to be 'the same as', the mission church from which it seceded, he paid no lip service to the admissibility of Whites or to reunification. His attitude was somewhat ambivalent: on the one hand, he offered divine justification for

racial segregation, on the other, he slated its existence in the mission churches:

" My Church is purely African and has no connections with Europeans. No European would be allowed to join the Church as there is no need to mix with other nations. God segregated us by differences in culture, skin and ways of living. If we were to mix with them, it would not be Christian to have segregation under one roof as is found with many churches in which Europeans would not even take communion with their fellow Christians. Though they say they are one in God, in practice they are not one."

There are other independent churches (Table I,j), however, whose doctrines and organisation diverge to a marked degree from mission church patterns, and which are often characterised by marked syncretistic and nativistic tendencies. These churches have thus not only sought structural freedom from White domination, but have deliberately Africanized doctrine and practice. What is most relevant to the present discussion, however, is the fact that each of these churches claims to be the only valid one, believing that the mission churches, in particular, stand finally to be condemned for their apostasy. Resentment of Whites is not expressed in terms of unwillingness to grant Africans equal status in Church, but in terms of their departure from Biblical law. A member of Limba's Ibhandla Ieka Krestu ('Church of Christ') thus explained:

" Most of our teachers teach us that our church is the only true one. It is the church which was joined by God... Other churches can never be valid because they do not obey the authority and directions of the Lord... The Bible specifically states that there is only one Church, one faith, one baptism, and only one heaven. A person cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven except by doing what Christ did and what He directed us to do if we wish to attain eternal life."

These churches thus offer not only relief from White domination in the affairs of this world, but exclude even their participation in the 'world-to-come'.

Conclusions

If we regard the African ideal of church organisation and control as being complete integration at all levels, this ideal would occupy a middle position on the continuum described in Table I. The actual positions of the individual churches thus represent a series of compromises, at a particular time and place, in the constant struggle between White desire to maintain their superior status and African aspirations for equality. Because the individual African is free to choose the church to which he belongs, these compromises reflect different attitudes towards the race struggle in the Church and, by extension, in the society as a whole, and may be defined as follows:

(i) The racial struggle can only be carried on and eventual success achieved within the multiracial church.

(ii) There is no hope of achieving equality in the multi-racial church and separation from Whites is the only feasible adjustment. There is hope, however, that the Whites will eventually experience a change of heart - though how this will come about is not specified - and an integrated church will become possible.

(iii) There is no hope of an integrated church at any time. Since the blame for this unChristian situation is the White man's, he will be debarred entry into the Kingdom of heaven. This view thus entails a withdrawal not only from the race struggle but also involves a change of emphasis from the 'temporal world' to the 'eternal life'.

The Church represents only one institution and hence only one front on which racial conflict occurs. It is clear that no compromise in the Church alone can be completely satisfactory - whether it mirrors the situation in the society as a whole, or whether it approaches the ideal of equality. Nevertheless, the stand which any church takes on the racial issue, both within its own context and in relation to South African life as a whole, is an extremely important factor in its efforts to maintain African support and participation.

CHAPTER TWO

AUTHORITY AND LEADERSHIP

Opportunities for Leadership

The Church was the first and, for a long time remained, the only means outside the framework of tribal institutions for the Xhosa of ability to achieve positions of authority and prestige. The clerical and teaching professions were the highest occupational levels to which an African could aspire, while ordinary adherents could exercise their abilities through the various lay church offices. In the East Bank location today more numerous high-status occupations are open to Africans and several organisations offer alternative opportunities for leadership (e.g. political parties, clubs, civic associations). Nevertheless, the Church, as a whole, continues not only to embrace the widest range of associations in which Africans are eligible for membership and positions of leadership, but is also the most widely accepted status-conferring institution.

While the opportunity for leadership which it provides has been an important factor in maintaining African interest in the Church, the evolution in patterns of leadership has tended to exert a disruptive influence on the organisation of some of the churches. In the local congregation there is a tendency (also commented on by Pauw for the Tswana - 1960,p.70) for incumbency of lay positions to become permanent, thereby making opportunities even more scarce. The achievement and maintenance of a position have thus become, for many, tremendously important and active participation in church affairs by such people, often depends on the realisation of their ambitions. Since incumbents are, in general, only replaced on grounds of misconduct, they are

constantly on guard against the efforts of would-be successors to discredit them, while competition for a vacant office is usually marked by keen and bitter electioneering.

While ordinary adherents must confine their ambitions largely within the local congregation, ministers seek to enhance their positions within the wider church body. In the mission churches it is at this level that they become most involved in the struggle against discrimination, and the frustrated desire for higher status and greater responsibility have been the first cause of many secessions. In the independent churches there is a constant struggle for leadership since, although there is no discrimination on grounds of colour, the tendency for incumbency of positions to become permanent is similar to what was observed in the local African congregation. Thus Sundkler (1948, p.139) has observed that every minister of an independent church is the potential founder of a new sect.

One of the most frequent accusations in the struggle for church leadership at the local and, in the case of the independent churches, the national levels, involve money. For most ministers and lay officials church funds represent very much larger sums than they will normally have access to. Because of the relative poverty of the people, therefore, there is a strong temptation for many to convert some of these funds to their own uses. Many of these accusations are, regrettably, well-grounded and during our two years of field-work several instances were brought to our notice, some of which resulted in complete disruption of normal church activities.

In most East Bank churches disputes about money and positions are never far from the surface, and may erupt at any time. In some churches conflict is minimised by the existence of a comparatively large number of offices, or perhaps of a small

unambitious membership, but it is never entirely eliminated. Probably the only major church in East London which is not continuously beset with disputes and accusations of this nature is the Assembly of God in which, as we shall see, officials are explicitly appointed for life by the chief minister, while an elaborate system of handling church finances practically eliminates opportunities for malpractices. The Assembly also divides into small associations for various purposes, and these provide for a large number of temporary offices.

Patterns of Leadership

Church leadership is of two types: lay and clerical. At the congregational level, lay positions include such offices as 'elder', 'deacon', 'steward', 'lay-preacher', 'lay-evangelist', etc., while at the intercongregational level some churches make provision for laymen to hold various administrative posts. Although some lay officials, particularly evangelists, may be trained and remunerated for their work, most are voluntary, unpaid part-time officials who are either appointed or, most frequently, elected to their posts. The clergy on the other hand, are full-time, paid officials of the church and must qualify, according to the conditions laid down in each church, for the ministry. In most churches, too, only the clergy have the right to perform the sacraments.

The roles of lay officials in most of the East Bank Churches are highly institutionalised. Although, office-bearers are appointed to and maintain their positions on the basis of personal qualities, their influence and authority is circumscribed by the prerogatives of their offices. The only occasions on which officials or aspirant officials assume more militant leadership roles are during elections or disputes when opposing factions rally around the central actors, and this may well be one of the less obvious reasons for the frequency with which disputes arise.

It is the minister who has the greatest scope and opportunity for leadership, being both administratively and spiritually the head of his congregation. The actual patterns of clerical leadership which do emerge, however, vary considerably. In the well-established churches - whether mission or independent - appointment to the ministry depends on training and good character, transfers are more or less frequent, and ministerial duties and prerogatives are fairly clearly defined. In these churches the minister's role may also be highly institutionalised and he may wield little personal influence over his flock. At the same time,

however, a minister of initiative and ability may come to occupy an important position in the life of his congregation and be respected far beyond the prestige attached to his office alone. In Port Elizabeth (about two hundred miles from East London) the Anglican church provides an illustration of this. In recent years the church has had three ministers. The first of these, being a man of considerable ability as well as an important political figure, was widely respected and succeeded in fostering tremendous interest in his church. Attendance in church rapidly declined when his successor, in general regarded as an unpleasant person, forbade participation in politics by members. The present minister (i.e. in 1958) is now rebuilding a strong membership through his tolerance towards political activities, and by showing a willingness to assist his people in difficulties.

In the churches which believe in a gifted ministry or which are strongly revivalistic in character - such as the Pentecostals and some separatist sects - much depends on the personal ability of the pastor. In these churches it is not only the minister's task to build up membership but also to maintain it. In many cases allegiance to the church is synonymous with allegiance to the minister himself. Since, too, he is often entirely dependent upon his congregation for financial support, the extent of his influence over them will often determine his economic position. The administrative and religious prerogatives of such pastors are ill-defined, and their ministry is therefore based on their ability to inspire and lead their people. Many of these churches also have a strongly congregational character in that there is little interest in or contact with congregations in other centres.

Turning to a consideration of the churches as a whole - i.e. at the intercongregational or national level - we once again find a wide variety of clerical leadership patterns. As

we have shown in the previous chapter, the scope of church offices differs according to the structure of the particular church. We have also observed that in those mission churches where Africans are in practice able to attain high office, their roles are institutionalised and generally carry little authority. Such positions are, however, prestigious not only to Africans but to Europeans as well. In the independent churches the more general recognition of high status is sacrificed for greater opportunities.

In the older and better established independent churches - particularly where a large proportion of ministers had originally been ordained in a mission church - personal charisma plays an important part although there appears to be a tendency towards the institutionalisation of administrative positions. Often, even when regular elections are held, the tendency is to confirm current office-bearers rather than to rotate personnel. This is particularly true where the president of a church is also its founder, and has maintained his influence over those who followed him in the original secession. There is also a tendency for office-bearers in independent churches to wield more authority over ministers and congregations than their mission counterparts.

Charismatic leadership patterns are most evident in those independent churches which have departed to a marked degree from the confessional pattern of organisation and from orthodox Protestant theology. In these churches the head is generally believed to have been 'appointed by God' either directly or, through revelation, by a predecessor in office, and is often styled 'bishop' or 'archbishop'. These leaders generally claim complete administrative and spiritual control over constituent congregations and ministers: they appoint, supervise and may dismiss ministers, receive and disburse all church funds, and alone may perform certain religious functions. Synods or

conferences in these churches are convened primarily to enable the leader to maintain contact with his ministers and to re-affirm and reinforce his control over them.

Africanisation of Church Leadership

We have already observed that where Africans are largely independent of Whites, such as in the local congregation and in the independent churches as a whole, there is a tendency for incumbency of positions to become permanent. In the same way, we have found that there is also a tendency in the churches for Africans to regard all church positions - both lay and clerical - as being arranged hierarchically. This conception, it seems, is not confined to the East Bank Xhosa, but has been observed among the Tswana by Pauw (op.cit., p.71) and among the Zulu by Sundkler. The latter commenting on the influence on the independent church of the Methodist tradition which emphasises the importance of the lay element, remarks (op.cit., p.138):

" The Methodist tradition with its class leaders, stewards, and so on, is democratic in principle. It is characteristic that in the Bantu independent churches these democratic principles are realigned and transformed into autocratic categories. The nucleus of the church - the office-bearers - becomes the necessary intermediary in a hierarchic system of rank, and intermediary agents of the control by the leader of his followers."

In the East Bank churches this attitude is expressed both in actual behaviour and in the verbal descriptions of church organisation. Even in a church such as the Assembly of God we find that ministers as well as ordinary adherents will describe the structure of the church as hierarchical almost in the same breath as they point out with pride its egalitarian and democratic principles. Interviews with ministers and members of other churches, including the Methodist and Congregational Union, revealed a similar tendency. Neither of these tendencies is difficult to understand. Both Pauw and Sundkler have pointed out that they

closely parallell the political systems of the Tswana and Zulu respectively, and we may add that the Xhosa church is similarly influenced by traditional concepts.

Dealing with the Zulu independent churches, Sundkler (op.cit.,passim) shows how Ethiopian and Zionist patterns of leadership derive, respectively, from the roles and functions of the Zulu chief and diviner. As Pauw observed for the Tswana (op.cit.,p.71), we have not found this close coincidence between church and traditional leaders among the East Bank Xhosa. Although it is possible to isolate traditional elements which have influenced patterns of church leadership, it is not possible to classify these in the same terms as Sundkler. In particular, it may be noted, that in the Zionist churches in the East Bank location local leaders did not exhibit the prophet-type characteristics observed by Sundkler among the Zulu.

Conclusions

In Tables III and IV below, we have attempted to classify the patterns of clerical leadership found in the East Bank churches. One must note the broad correlation between these patterns and the degrees of European control and influence described in Table I. With the notable exception of the Assembly of God (see Table III), we find that both at the local and intercongregational levels charismatic leadership tends to become increasingly evident as European control and influence recedes while, conversely, institutionalisation of leadership roles increases with European influence and control. Opportunities for African ministers to attain high positions at the intercongregational level, may be visualised in the form of a bell-shaped curve: as discrimination decreases in the mission church, so do opportunities increase. They reach their maximum in the independent Bantu Presbyterian and Bantu Baptist churches where all positions are open to Africans while the confessional pattern is strictly adhered to.

Opportunities thereafter gradually diminish in the independent churches as the tendency towards permanent incumbency becomes more marked and charisma plays an increasingly important part.

TABLE III Patterns of Clerical Leadership at the Intercongregational level of Churches represented in East Bank

(a) Offices highly institutionalised. In practice highest positions may be closed to Africans. Offices confer authority and prestige recognised both by Africans and Europeans

Roman Catholic	Moravian	Lutheran
Congregational Union	Anglican	Methodist
Order of Ethiopia	Full Gospel	Bantu Baptist
Seventh Day Adventist	Assembly of God	Bantu Presbyterian

(b) As above, although in practice incumbency of positions tends to become permanent. Recognition of office-bearers usually confined to a limited section of African population.

African Methodist Episcopal	Af. Ethiopian
Af. Presbyterian	Af. Congregational Bantu Independent
Native Independent	Bantu Methodist

(c) Charismatic head of church. Higher offices by leader's appointment and subject to his control. Recognition of all offices generally limited to the particular church.

Holy Church of Christ	Church of Christ United
Ibhandla leka Krestu	Church of Christ Mission
Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa	

TABLE IV Patterns of Clerical leadership in the East Bank Churches within the local congregation

(N.B. This classification applies to East Bank churches and may not necessarily be true of other local congregations)

(a) Highly institutionalised. Personality of leader not important per se

Roman Catholic	Moravian	Lutheran
Order of Ethiopia	Anglican	Methodist
Congregational Union	Bantu Baptist	Af. Presbyterian*
Bantu Presbyterian	African Methodist Episcopal*	

(* Independent Churches)

(b) As above, but personality of leader important as local congregation is not yet well-established

Native Independent	Af. Ethiopian	Af. Congregational
Bantu Independent	Bantu Methodist	

(c) Personality of leader determines to large degree the vitality of congregation. Ministerial functions not clearly defined

Assembly of God ⁺	Holy Church of Christ
Church of Christ Misg.	Church of Christ United
Ibhandla leka Krestu ^o	Zion Apostolic Church of S.A.

(+ Pentecostal Mission church. o This church is closely integrated around the supreme leader, Bishop Limba, who resides in Port Elizabeth)

(d) Not classified: Full Gospel; Seventh Day Adventist

The relevance of our analysis of church leadership to the role of the individual churches in the East Bank location, may be summarised as follows:

(i) The local congregation is the most important vehicle for the lay Christian African of ability and ambition to achieve positions of leadership and prestige. The degree to which an individual church fulfills this role will depend on the number of positions available as well as on the frequency with which incumbency of these positions rotates.

(ii) The opportunity for leadership offered by the church is offset by the tendency for officials to hold office indefinitely. This conflict, which manifests itself in often frequent and bitter disputes, leads to disruption of normal church life. The frequency and severity of such disruption varies to the extent to which the various churches manage to minimise this inherent conflict.

(iii) The vitality of the local congregation and the extent to which its activities prove satisfying to its members often rests on the personality of the minister. As the ministry becomes more institutionalised, so the likelihood of professionally qualified but personally inadequate ministers increases. In such cases the strength of the church may vary considerably with the charisma of successive ministers. On the other hand, in the less bureaucratized churches, a great deal more depends on the personal charisma of pastors and allegiance to the church often coincides with allegiance to the pastor.

(iv) The pattern of leadership in a particular church - i.e. whether it is 'professional' or charismatic - is often correlated with the degree of integration of the congregation. The extent to which the church is, to its members, an association or the association may depend on the type of leadership within it.

(v) The ramification of the teachings of the church into other aspects of its members' lives is often related to the minister's personal influence over the congregation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEED FOR SELF-EXPRESSION

Emotionalism in Worship*

African ministers, including those of mission churches, agree that African congregations tend to show more emotion in church than do Europeans. The expression of emotion, however, varies considerably in the individual churches. In the Anglican Church and the Order of Ethiopia, for example, emotional display is largely confined to enthusiastic singing of hymns, although one may occasionally observe a member weeping quietly. In the Methodist Church, on the other hand, congregants interject frequently with cries of 'Amen', 'Halleluja'; women, 'filled with the Holy Spirit', weep unrestrainedly often rushing to the front of the church to kneel at the pulpit; and spontaneous prayer is an important feature of the service. Finally, in the Zionist sects the most extreme emotionalism is given full reign and is expressed in violent physical movements, hysterical outbursts, and mass trance. In Table V, we have grouped the East Bank churches in terms of the degree to which emotionalism is tolerated and expressed.

* See also Part II, Ch. 7

TABLE V Emotionalism in East Bank Churches

(a)	<u>Emotional display discouraged. Evident mainly in singing and in occasional restrained weeping</u>		
	Roman Catholic Lutheran	Anglican Moravian	Order of Ethiopia Bantu Presbyterian
(b)	<u>As above, but some outlet through spontaneous prayers, prayer meetings</u>		
	Congregational Union Ibhandla Ieka Krestu Native Independent	African Ethiopian Holy Church of Christ	African Presbyterian
(c)	<u>Belief in Holy Spirit possession. Free emotional expression but within congregationally established norms</u>		
	Methodist Full Gospel* Bantu Independent Church of Christ Mission*	Assembly of God Seventh Day Adventist Bantu Methodist	Bantu Baptist Af. Methodist Episcopal
(d)	<u>Extreme emotionalism leading, often, to a state of trance</u>		
	Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa		

N.B. * In the East Bank, these churches may be closer to category (d).

Apart from category (a) in Table V, all the churches allow a fair amount of freedom in the expression of religious emotion. That such opportunities are important to African congregants is illustrated by the suggestion of the local Anglican minister that the austere decorum insisted upon in his church might well be an important reason for the small proportion of adherents actively participating in church services and activities. It certainly appears to be the tendency in independent churches which have seceded from the more austere missions, to show greater tolerance towards emotional behaviour. The African Ethiopian Church which seceded from the Order of Ethiopia, for example, holds regular prayer meetings and revivals of which emotionalism is a feature.

Pauw has also observed the heightened emotionalism of African congregations among the Tswana, and suggests (op.cit., p.221)

"...the hypothesis that a religion of intense emotional or sensual experiences goes with a low standard of knowledge and economic conditions offering a relatively small degree of security. When societies are stratified on the basis of the standard of knowledge and economic success this type of religion may also serve as a form of compensation for those in the lower strata of society."

Our impressions in the East Bank location largely confirm those of Pauw. This is emphasized by the tendency of the East Bank 'elite' (which, in general, refers to the most educated people) to criticise the emotionalism of some churches. We find, for example, that many people found the early revival spirit of the Assembly of God distasteful, and that even though this has been considerably toned down, the surviving emotionalism is still despised. In this respect there is some similarity between the East Bank Xhosa and the American Negro. Frazier (1949, pp. 338, 352), discussing the appeal of the Methodist and Baptist churches among the American Negroes, points out that rural and lower-class urban congregations favour emotionalism in church, and he comes to much the same conclusion as Pauw (Frazier op.cit. p.339):

" In the crowds who attended the revivals and camp meetings were numbers of Negroes who found in the fiery message of salvation a hope and an escape from their earthly woes. Moreover, the emphasis which the preachers placed upon feeling as a sign of conversion found a ready response in the black slaves who were impressed in so many ways."

On the other hand, he states that middle and upper class Negroes, are found chiefly in the churches with a more dignified form of religious service, and that the membership of the Congregational, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches in the larger cities are comprised, in the main, of upper-class Negroes.

Although, as we have shown, most churches in the East Bank location offer their members an emotional outlet, it appears (see Table V) that the most extreme forms are not favoured. Unlike the Zulu, for example, among whom the Zionist-type churches are extremely popular and attract a large membership, the East Bank Xhosa (and those in nearby Port Elizabeth) appear to prefer the more decorous forms of expression. This impression was supported by the Rev. Bhengu (leader of the Assembly of God) who also remarked that on his visits to the United States he found both White and Negro Americans to be more emotional than his African congregations. This apparent satisfaction of the Xhosa with the more moderate forms of emotionalism is probably due to the influence of the Methodist Church - the largest in both the rural and urban areas of the Eastern Cape. It would seem that the Methodist tradition which is a less 'fiery' one than that described by Frazier in America, has set the pattern of religious emotionalism. Unlike the Zulu, as described by Sundkler, the pattern is not markedly syncretistic.

Self-expression in services and church activities

Apart from the emotional tone of services, most churches provide members with opportunities for expressing themselves and demonstrating their talents in a more direct manner. Referring to Table V, churches in categories (b), (c) and (d), for example, feature spontaneous prayer during services. Such prayers are composed extemporaneously by members of the congregation, and allow the composer to give free reign to his thoughts and to exploit whatever talent he may have for inspiring the people. A 'good' prayer will be rewarded with frequent interjections and may even move some of the congregants to tears. In some of these churches, too, ordinary congregants may be given opportunities to preach, lead the congregation in singing or even conduct the whole or part of the service. More or less frequent concerts held by all churches as well as bazaars and other activities,

provide opportunities for showing off talent and ability in other directions.

Another important feature of the East Bank churches is the manyano - or church guild. All the churches have a Women's manyano, and some also have guilds for young girls, young men, and married men. At meetings members teach and expound the Bible, preach, hold testimonies (in some churches), compose prayers and lead in the singing of hymns. The manyanos, as we shall discuss later, are also the most intimate face-to-face groups within the church.

The Traditional Heritage

Since the introduction of Christianity in Africa, there has been a complex process of reciprocal modification between the traditional and the new religion. This has been noted among South African tribes by Wilson (1936), Sundkler (1948), and Pauw (1960) for the Pondo, Zulu and Tswana, respectively. Commenting upon one aspect of this process - the paganisation of Christianity in the local congregation - Pauw observes (op.cit., pp.209 - 210):

" A few Christian rites and usages which are not part of the heritage which Christian churches have brought with them from abroad have developed as substitutes for traditional rites or social ceremonies...

" We have (also) seen... that much of ritual and belief in Taung churches, particularly with the Pentecostal Separatists, bears a magical character (i.e. 'inasfar as a ritual object or act is believed to have a certain direct efficacy').* This is particularly evident in connexion with baptism, healing and rites of purification. This, I suggest, is the most important aspect in which Christianity has been influenced by the traditional background. This traditional background of magic not only influences African converts to attach an 'indigenous' magical interpretation to Christian rites and beliefs which are not generally given in 'western'

*Our brackets. Definition of magic from Pauw p.219.

churches, but it also makes them particularly susceptible to the teachings of the branches of Christianity which tend to attach magical value to their ritual. This has been illustrated with particular reference to baptism."

Although this question was not fully investigated in the present study, our material does give some indication of the degree to which Pauw's observations may be applied to the East Bank churches. We find that in most churches certain traditional elements have, with some modification, already become part of the ritual of the church as, for example, the dinela ('dinner' given after a child has been baptised, and a survival from a traditional Xhosa sacrificial rite), and the ritual washing of hands after a funeral (which was originally to protect participants against evil). We also find that in those sects which have moved farthest from orthodox Protestant tradition (see Table I, category 'j'), great emphasis may be placed on symbolic and ritual behaviour. The sacraments, particularly baptism, are accorded great importance and must be observed with precise attention to detail; certain elements within the service - such as Holy Spirit possession, healing - are highly ritualised; while various taboos as well as positive injunctions concerning dress, insignia, wearing of beards, removal of shoes, etc., must, and are, carefully observed.

Apart from the survival of certain traditional elements, we have not observed any obvious 'africanisation' of ritual and practice in either the mission or mission-patterned independent churches. Our material does suggest, however, the probable validity of Pauw's suggestion that Africans have an underlying magical attitude toward Christianity - i.e. that they ascribe to Christian rites and worship a certain direct efficacy in achieving desired results. We have found, for example, that many joined the Assembly because they had been convinced of the power of prayer, for the convert, to attain all his desires. Demonstrations by

Bhengu of the efficacy of prayer in healing and solving everyday problems provided the 'proof' for his converts that Christianity could have relevance to the daily lives of adherents.

We would hesitate, however, to say whether this magical attitude is predominantly due to the influence of traditional concepts of the supernatural, or whether it is perhaps inherent in 'western' Christianity itself. Nevertheless we agree that traditional concepts do foster such a view and possibly even exaggerate it. We suggest, therefore, that in many cases the degree to which the teachings of a particular church are adhered to is partially influenced by the pragmatism of traditional religious ideas.

Conclusions

The local congregation provides its members with opportunities for expressing their emotions and frustrations as preachers, exhorters, and "possessed". The African congregation has, as a result of the special needs and world-view of its members, also come to diverge from its 'Western' model, and a degree of 'africanisation' may be observed. One example is that the ritual of the church has been enriched by the incorporation of modified pagan rites and ceremonies, while the expression of religious feeling has taken on an emotional tone not usually characteristic of White congregations. There also appears to be a tendency toward a more magical interpretation of Christianity.

The opportunities offered by individual churches in the East Bank and the mode of religious expression in them, varies considerably with difference in doctrine and practice as well as with the degree of resistance to 'africanisation'. No variation can be regarded as the most favoured: each has its proponents and critics. What is important, therefore, is that through these differences the Church can cater for the needs of a wide range of people.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LOCAL CONGREGATION AS A SOCIAL UNIT

Pauw has remarked (op.cit.,p.125) that among the rural Tswana, the "church group is the most important unit in present-day non-pagan religion, and not the family or kinship group. Through its numerous activities the church provides more occasions for group activity and social contacts than any other institution in Thlaping society." Charles S. Johnson has made similar observations among the United States Negroes, and writes*:

" (The Church) is in a very real sense a social institution. It provides a large measure of the recreation and relaxation from the physical stress of life. It is the agency looked to for aid when misfortune overtakes a person. It offers the medium for community feeling, singing together, eating together, praying together and indulging in the formal expression of fellowship. Above this it holds out a world of escape from the hard experiences of a life common to all. It is the agency which holds together the sub-communities and families physically scattered over a wide area. It exercises some influence over social relations, setting up certain regulations for behaviour, passing judgements, which represent community opinion, censuring and penalising improper conduct by expulsion."

In the present chapter we shall attempt to assess how far the East Bank churches fulfill this same role, and we shall examine them in terms of some of the factors mentioned by Johnson: frequency and type of activities, frequency and intensity of interaction between members of congregations, and the influence of the churches over the behaviour of their adherents.

* Shadow of the Plantation p.150. Quoted by Frazier, op.cit., pp. 349-350.

Church Activities

In the East Bank we find a large number and variety of activities organised around the churches. Several churches hold one or more evening services and prayer meetings during the week, in addition to manyanos, Sunday School, and classes, while there are some which organise activities every evening as well as on several afternoons. Concerts, bazaars, revivals and other special functions may also be held from time to time but are, in general, infrequent. In the smaller churches, where it is often impossible to muster sufficient people to warrant more than regular Sunday services, other activities are extremely few. In Table VI we give some indication of the programmes of the various churches, based on information from their ministers. It should be noted that in some of the churches (indicated by *) membership is so small or scattered that it is extremely doubtful whether their programmes represent much more than wishful thinking.

TABLE VI Weekly Activities of East Bank Churches

DENOMINATION	ACTIVITY																				
Roman Catholic	All Churches have from 1 - 3 services on Sabbath Sabbath Service																				
Anglican	d	d	d	2	-	-	d?	d	d	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	2	-	Ev. Service or Prayer Meeting
Order of Ethiopia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Women's Manyano/Guild
Congregational Union	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Young Women's Manyano/Guild
Moravian	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	Men's Manyano/Guild
Lutheran	?	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	Classes**
Methodist	?	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	?	?	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	Probation Classes
Assembly of God	?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	Sabbath School
Full Gospel*																					
Ch. of Christ Mission*																					
Native Independent																					
A.M.E.																					
Holy Ch. of Christ*																					
Ch. of Christ United*																					
African Ethiopian																					
African Congregational																					
Bantu Independent																					
Bantu Methodist																					
Bantu Presbyterian																					
Bantu Baptist																					

NOTE: * Probably in theory only; ** Classes after Methodist pattern; d = Daily; 1 = Once weekly for each member belonging to the guild or class; ? = Unknown or Uncertain; - = Nil.

As the range and frequency of activities differ in the individual churches, so does the extent to which members are obliged to participate in them. In the Anglican Church and Order of Ethiopia, for example, the only obligation upon confirmed adherents is to attend communion a minimum of three times per year. The Congregational Union, on the other hand, expects members to attend every monthly communion, while irregular attendance at weekly Sunday services may also lead to disciplinary action. Finally, in the Assembly of God, members must participate in all church activities throughout the week, unless they can produce a legitimate reason for not doing so.

While participation in church activities is influenced by members' obligations as well as by factors such as distance, illness and family demands, much depends on the interest which these activities engender. The majority of East Bank ministers interviewed admitted that, on the whole, weekday activities were extremely poorly attended and that there was a marked disinterest in these. On the other hand, in the Assembly of God and Seventh Day Adventist churches, all activities are relatively well-attended, while a continuous programme of social and economic activities also helps to maintain adherents' interest. It is significant that in these churches, members' obligations are coupled with interesting and varied programmes.

The churches must also face competition from other forms of leisure-time activity such as cinemas, dances, drinking parties, sporting events and political meetings. Although most East Bank churches forbid some of these, it is extremely difficult for ministers and lay officials to enforce such prohibitions. Where this inability is not due to poor organisation or to the residential scatter of adherents, it is due to the fear of alienating adherents as a result of disciplinary action against them. There are thus only a few churches in the East Bank, such as the Assembly and Seventh Day Adventist, which prohibit all secular

leisure-time activity and which, as we shall see, are able to enforce this.

We must now distinguish between the various categories of church adherents. Most people in the East Bank who regard themselves as Christians, claim allegiance to a particular church on the basis of having been 'born into' or baptized by it. As Table VII shows, however, less than a quarter of these are actually full church members. In the churches listed in the table; as well as in many others, full-membership is conditional to satisfactorily completing a period of probation. During this period the prospective member is instructed in scripture and doctrine, while his behaviour both inside and outside the church is closely observed. At the end of his probation, the candidate must pass a test of religious knowledge and may then be confirmed as a full member. Because of the stringency of these requirements, there are many who eventually give up their attempts, while others do not even make the effort. Since only members may enjoy the full benefits of the church (e.g. communion, burial by a minister, membership of guilds, etc.), 'non-full-members' tend gradually to lose interest. In most churches, therefore, there are three categories of adherents: full members; probationers, together with 'non-full-members' who have maintained interest; and nominal adherents.

* These churches include 76% of East Bank Christians. See Appendix C

TABLE VII Numbers of various categories of adherents in four Major Churches in the East Bank Location

DENOMINATION	TOTAL NO. CLAIMING ALLEGIANCE	FULL-MEMBERS	ACTIVE NON FULL MEMBERS AND PROBATIONERS	II/I%
	I	II	III	
Methodist	8,630	1,673	-	19%
Bantu Presbyterian	4,650	777	150	17%
Anglican	3,560	800	100	22%
Congregational Union	1,880	265	300	14%
Total	18,720	3,515		19%

(NOTE: Col. I Reader (1961), reproduced in App.C; II obtained from ministers; III estimates by ministers)

From Table VII it is clear that about four-fifths of the total allegiance of the churches listed, have little to do with the Church. Of the remaining fifth, ministers estimate that from almost 100% to less than 30% attend Sunday services regularly, while only a small proportion of these participate fairly frequently in week-day activities. It is therefore generally only a small nucleus - the size of which varies in the individual churches - whose social life may be regarded as being church-centred. In the Bantu Presbyterian Church, for example, this nucleus is less than one third of the full-members and only about five percent of the total allegiance. In the Assembly of God, on the other hand, adherents, full-members and nucleus are almost identical.

It appears then that in the East Bank the Church is by no means the focus of the social life of the majority of Christians, and in this respect the situation differs from that among the rural Tswana. We would suggest that as with the urban Negro in the United States (see Frazier, op.cit.,p.366), the Xhosa in the East Bank have lost much of their interest in the Church - because

of an increasingly materialistic outlook, the anonymity of urban life, the scattering of population and the many counter-attractions. Both Pauw's and Johnson's observations would therefore apply to only a small section of Christians.

The Women's Umanyano

In most churches, the nucleus to which we have referred comprises largely the lay officials and members of the various church guilds. Of these, the women's guild - or manyano - is the most common and most active.

The women's manyano is generally regarded as the backbone of the spiritual and financial life of any church. Membership of the manyano is strictly regulated. A probationer must satisfy the manyano that she is a regular attendant at church services, leads a pure Christian life, conducts her home in accordance with Christian standards, and has completely given up pagan practices. Once accepted, the woman wears the special manyano uniform (each church prescribes its own style and colour of blouse, skirt, headgear, waistband, etc.) and may participate fully in all manyano activities. Membership of this guild gives a woman prestige, and her higher status is recognized not only in her own church, but, in general, by all school people.

The manyano meet regularly once a week, and it has become conventional for all churches to hold these on Thursday afternoons. The local president is generally the minister's wife, although meetings may be presided over by an elected chairlady or vice-president. At these meetings, the women preach, give and receive Bible lessons and religious instruction, and are taught how to conduct their homes and influence their families to lead a Christian life. A manyano woman whose daughter becomes pregnant before marriage is liable to disgrace, and even expulsion, for not having looked after her domestic affairs. Manyano women also visit the sick, arrange women's prayer meetings,

play a prominent part in revivals, and help to maintain church discipline by admonishing sinners and reporting them to the church authorities. They are also often responsible for the maintenance of the church building and assist the minister's wife in her domestic duties.

The women's manyano is thus the most active group within the church and members spend a great deal of their time in the various activities organised under its auspices. Because its members engage in frequent joint activity, and because of the value placed on belonging to the guild, there is a strong esprit de corps within the manyano.

Interaction within the Local Congregation

In general our material indicates that friendships are not primarily determined by common church allegiance. In most churches we have found that the 'best friends' of members may or may not include others of the same congregation. At work and leisure, these people interact most frequently with fellow-employees, neighbours, relatives and 'home-boys' irrespective of differences in church allegiance. For many, contact with co-religionists is limited to congregational activities. Since, for most, these activities are infrequent and largely confined to Sunday services, interaction would be neither frequent nor intense. It is the manyano (and to a lesser degree the class) which, as we have seen, provides for the most important face-to-face relations within the church. Thus although manyano members may also have intimate relations outside the church, they nevertheless form a strongly integrated group.

In churches such as the Assembly and the Ibhandla leka Krestu, however, there is a strong tendency for all friendships to be contracted within the congregation and for interaction with outsiders to be maintained at a minimal level. In these churches, members are urged to avoid 'unsaved' people - which applies to all who are not members of the church - and thus avoid falling

into temptation and sin. Most leisure-time is thus spent either in church activities or with other members of the congregation. There is also a tendency for members to cluster residentially and this not only augments friendships within the congregation but also minimises the necessity for seeking the company of non-members. These churches thus form solidary in-groups in relation to the outside world.

The Influence of the Church on Behaviour

Pauw (op.cit., p.218) has observed a marked moralistic trend in the Tswana church, inasmuch as salvation is often believed to be dependent on proper behaviour rather than on the more abstract concept of grace. This is equally true of East Bank churches, much emphasis being placed on morality in sermons, in the manyanos and at class meetings. The majority of Christians, including many regular church-goers, however, pay little more than lip-service to these moral injunctions, and, as we have mentioned in another connection, it is neither always possible nor expedient to attempt to enforce them. In most churches it has become conventional to expect Christian behaviour only from manyano members (whose lapses might occasion expulsion), while ordinary adherents accept with equanimity their own lapses into temptation!

The full force of the moral teachings of the church is felt in those churches whose members form a solidary in-group. It is in these churches that leadership is usually based on personal charisma, so that the pastor's teachings tend to carry the weight of absolute authority. In the field of human relations and general conduct, injunctions and prohibitions are often detailed and complex covering almost every field of activity. This will emerge clearly in our discussions of the Assembly of God. What is important, however, is that the moral code can be enforced. Since most members of these churches spend their leisure time at church or in one another's company, breaches of the code are fairly easily discovered, and the sinner

exposed and disciplined. It is not surprising therefore that it is in these churches that one finds the most effective adjustments to the disorganised social and physical environment, since members face this environment from the social matrix of an in-group characterised by a high rate of interaction between its members and many close relationships.

Conclusions

While the East Bank churches represent the largest number of organised social groups, they do not provide the most important social milieu within which their members or adherents move. For only a nucleus of adherents does the church provide a focus for social activity as well as a moral framework which governs their lives. It is, then, only to this limited degree that the East Bank churches have realised their potential for social and moral improvement. There are few churches which are building stable sub-communities and are providing for all their members an anchor in the tumult of urban life. Of these, only the Assembly of God has a membership of more than a few score. In the following section, Part II, we shall examine the Assembly in greater detail describing its main characteristics and the role which it plays in the lives of its members.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BHENGU MOVEMENT AND THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

The African Assembly of God in East London is one of many established by the Reverend Nicholas Bhengu through his Back to God Crusade. All these assemblies* form a unit which, though officially nameless, we shall refer to as the Bhengu Movement. They are also affiliated to, and the Bhengu Movement exists within, a larger body, the South African Assemblies of God. If we are to understand the East London Assembly, therefore, it is necessary to know something of its founder, as well as of the larger units of which it is a part.

The Rev. N.B.H. Bhengu**

Nicholas Bhengu was born on 5th September 1909 at Entumeni, Zululand, where his father was a pastor of the American Lutheran Mission in South Africa, and of which church two of his brothers also became pastors. He received his early education at the mission, and later at two Roman Catholic schools at Inkumama and Marianhill respectively.

As a young man he came into contact with the newly established I.C.U. - Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union - and was employed in its Durban offices. He later left Durban and went to Kimberley where he joined the Communist Party.

Despite these radical political affiliations, however, Bhengu maintained extreme interest in religion. Without leaving

* i.e. local congregations

** For most of the biographical data in this section, the author has drawn freely on the material in Chapter I of Eingeborenen-Kirchen in Sud-und Sudwest-Afrika by Dr. Katesa Schlosser.

the Lutheran Church, he had contact with many others ranging from the emotionalist Pentecostals to the formalist Roman Catholic, while in Kimberley he simultaneously joined the Watch-Tower movement and a Sabbatarian sect. Explaining this, Bhengu says that since his childhood he had been preoccupied with the fear that, being a sinner, he would suffer eternal damnation. When he found that neither the assurances of his parents and teachers, nor his Confirmation and subsequent participation in the Lord's Supper had brought him peace of mind, he resolved to 'relentlessly seek God in order to find Him somewhere.' (Schlosser 1958, p.22)

It was during his stay in Kimberley that Bhengu, at the age of 21, finally 'found his salvation' at a Full Gospel Church revival conducted by two young American preachers. He immediately severed his political and religious affiliations to other churches and later, after being branded a heretic for preaching his salvation and freedom from sin, also left the Lutheran Church. For a while, he organised street revivals and Bible classes until leaving for Bloemfontein where he had obtained a teaching post.

In 1933, Bhengu returned to Natal where he secured employment as an Inspector in the Department of Health. He gave this up in the following year, however, to attend Rev. Suter's interdenominational Bible School at Dumisa (today, the Union Bible Institute, Sweetwaters, Natal). Having completed the course, he resumed his old job at the beginning of 1937, until he was offered a post as a Court Interpreter. It was during this time that he came into contact with the Assemblies of God and was ordained by a local White pastor. In 1939 he was licensed to act as a marriage officer.

In January 1938, Bhengu gave up his job and decided

to devote himself exclusively to evangelistic work. Making his home in a small Natal village, he proceeded from there to conduct evangelistic campaigns both independently and on behalf of various denominations. During this period he relied for his own support and for the financing of his independent ventures, on freewill offerings. In 1945 he began to concentrate on the large urban locations, and also entered into an agreement to work in closer association with the Assemblies of God. Since that time he has also travelled extensively in Africa and overseas, attending international Pentecostal congresses, conducting revivals, and enlisting support for his South African campaigns.

Bhengu's Evangelistic Work

Two forces which, from the variety of Bhengu's early religious and political activities, appeared to have played an important part in his own development as well as in that of his evangelistic work, were his search for personal salvation and his intimate identification with the national aspirations of his people. Thus his conversion at Kimberley brought Bhengu both religious peace of mind and a new approach to the problems facing the African. Recalling his conversion, he states that although he was impressed by the arguments of the evangelists, and although he subsequently spoke to and was prayed for by one of them, he 'felt' nothing. Nevertheless he accepted their word that he had been granted salvation, and "from then on belief came to my heart. I did not wait for 'feeling', but took the word of God and gave thanks to Him in prayer." (Schlosser 1958, p.23). The day following his conversion he found proof of his salvation: he had overnight developed an aversion for tobacco and drink. From that day he became a "new person", and severed his connections with the various organisations to which he had belonged. It was soon after, that he had another vision from Jesus:

" The Lord explained to me, that I must devote myself to His work, but I did not know how to go about it. He showed me a great ocean to which he brought me. There I heard different voices of people crying in fear of death. They were all under the water and their hands and feet were bound with chains. They were pleading with me to set them free. They all had black faces. When I listened I noticed that one could hear their voices. They were speaking in all African languages and dialects, and I was able to understand them all. They were all pointing to me for I was standing on dry land, and said: "We are dying, we are dying, we are drowning, help us out of here." I felt a great sympathy and wanted to help them all out of there. But they were as many as the sands on the seashore. The more that I tried to help them the more I sank into the water. Bewildered I called on the Lord. Jesus appeared and lifted me out. He showed me an open Bible and said: 'This is the Word of Life, study this Word, and through the words of this book you will break these fetters and free your people from the chains of sin, in which they have been bound for centuries. I wish you to do this.'" (Schlosser op.cit.,p.24)

This vision represents the synthesis of Bhengu's two major preoccupations, a synthesis which is apparent in his conception of his mission. "The studies I had had in school and theology prior to going overseas led me to conclude that the peoples of Africa had had the Gospel from the East before Europe. This can be proved scripturally, historically and geographically."* Being convinced that their present state of degradation was due to their abandonment of the Gospel, Bhengu increasingly felt that for the African, Christianity was not merely the means to personal salvation, but was their only hope for national redemption. "The freedom of the African people is a matter of choice", he asserts, "and not so much a matter of achievement. A nation that honours God, He will honour. A nation that rejects God, He will reject also ... The conception of the 'Back to God Crusade' is ... to bring about a

* Quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from written answers to a series of questions put to Bhengu by the author.

spiritual awakening in the continent of Africa, to bring the whole nation to God, and to cause the African conscience to reach favourably towards God."

Bhengu explains that his decision to undertake missionary work came as a result of the various visions which he had and that, like the Apostles, he had received his commission directly from Christ. Thus, he says, while he considers himself no different from or superior to any man, "I feel that my Lord is great and He does things - not for me - but for my poor African race through me." This mission, as Bhengu conceives it, is embodied in the South African Evangelistic Campaign and its successor the Back to God Crusade.

The broad aims of the Crusade are, according to Bhengu, "to bring the whole of Africa back to God; to foster better race relations; to stamp out crime and anarchism, superstition and illiteracy". As such he insists - and, according to Schlosser, (op.cit.,p.43) many missionaries with whom he has worked agree - that the Crusade is completely non-sectarian. It is neither the aim of the Crusade to work for the benefit of any particular denomination, nor to establish a new one. It is the aim of the Crusade simply to "capture the African people for Christ without disrupting existing church membership."

While the Crusade is directed at the people as a whole, Bhengu is particularly concerned about the youth and their increasing propensity towards crime, vice and immorality. "We present to them their importance to society and to the nation; we show them what they were like before their regression; and we confront them with the decision they must make."

The organisation and control of the Crusade (and, earlier, the Campaign) are entirely in Bhengu's hands, and he is assisted by a body of ministers and converts who have volunteered themselves as co-workers. Although during the first

few years of the original Campaign, Bhengu relied mainly on the sponsorship and financial support of the various denominations on whose behalf he conducted revivals, he gradually became more self-sufficient so that today most of his campaigns are conducted independently. These are supported partially by the congregations established through the Crusade, and partially by various friendly bodies in the United States of America.

The extent of his financial resources and the vast experience gained on his overseas tours have provided Bhengu with the means and the techniques to organise his revivals on a scale and in a manner unprecedented and unequalled in the African Church. The Crusade has at its disposal a large number of vehicles, several evangelistic tents, a public address system, a portable electric power plant and various other equipment. These enable it to be mobile, independent of availability of premises and capable of holding meetings for several thousand people at one time. Bhengu and his co-workers, have thus been able to cover an extensive area of the Union, holding revivals lasting from a few days to several weeks.

The usual procedure when launching a revival campaign is that after obtaining permission from the local authorities and police, a suitable hall is rented or a site obtained for the erection of tents. Local church leaders are invited to co-operate and participate, and also requested to arrange accommodation. The campaign is preceded by an intensive publicity drive, while the 'Gospel Vehicles' converge on the centre, carrying co-workers, converts and trained choirs.

While many people are urged by their churches to attend the revivals, or do so simply out of curiosity, a most effective attraction has always been Bhengu's reputation as a faith-healer, and a large proportion of his audiences are either people who have themselves come to be healed or who wish to see how it is done. Bhengu stresses, however, that

healing is not the main purpose of the Crusade but that it is used as a means of attracting audiences and of demonstrating to them the reality and power of God. In the same way both old and new converts are urged to give testimonies, which Bhengu feels is indispensable since, as he says, "heart answers heart". The main issue, he points out, is evangelisation, and he insists that most converts have actually "experienced salvation, transformation of their lives and peace with God."

While there is no reason to suspect the sincerity of Bhengu's contention that the Crusade is a non-denominational venture, there are certain aspects of its teachings and approach which make it fundamentally unacceptable to many Protestant Churches. Opponents of the Crusade particularly object to Bhengu's central belief, that by accepting Christ as his personal Saviour, a convert is immediately assured of absolute forgiveness, is completely cleansed of all previous sin and can begin his life anew being as 'innocent as a new-born babe'. They also object to the belief in the continuous manifestation of the Pentecostal experience (i.e. Baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues)* while many look askance at his claims and practice of faith-healing.

In addition to these doctrinal conflicts, the terms in which Bhengu demands the co-operation of the churches are also unacceptable to many: "to accept us as messengers of God and not as false prophets; to co-operate in capturing the youth from crime, lawlessness and deterioration; to change the mode of worshipping to suit the present generation; to discard the western conception of Christianity and try an African approach

* Pentecostal sects emphasize that Christians, as proof of holiness, become 'filled with the Holy Ghost'. Outward evidence of this Spirit Possession is an ecstatic state during which the possessed makes strange sounds which are believed to be foreign or heavenly languages. This belief originates from the account in Acts 2:1-13.

and African psychology". It is, of course, the two latter conditions which most churches - and particularly the Mission bodies - are most likely to reject, in view of the complete re-orientation in their approach to Christianity which acceptance would necessitate. Yet Bhengu, considers such changes in the African Church as essential to a militant African Christianity. He regards the reluctance to implement them as one of the reasons for the present decline of interest in the Church. It is his conviction, that while the White missionaries have pioneered the return to God in Africa, they have on the whole failed to bring him into the hearts of the people. The Mission Church is too closely bound up with Western European culture to be fully meaningful to the African or to bear any direct relation to his own way of life, while for the same reason the Christianity of the missionaries has departed radically from the simplicity and purity of Scriptural faith. It is fundamental to Bhengu's belief, that Christianity must be cleansed of the "pollution of western idolatry",* and that the only authoritative guide to doctrine and practice is the Word itself. This, he believes, is not only 'real Christianity', but is the only form in which it can have real meaning to the African, whose way of life is so much closer to that of New Testament times than it is to modern Western Europe.

Because many churches have refused to co-operate with Bhengu, and because many of his converts were condemned for their "heretical Bhengu ideas", he was "driven to start a fold" to cater for those converts who could find no spiritual home in other churches, and to "save the Crusade from oblivion." Thus even the earliest independent revivals resulted in the establishment of congregations, while today this is an almost inseparable part of the Crusade. Nevertheless Bhengu still

* Back to God (Editor-in-chief: Rev.N.B.H.Bhengu), Vol.1, No.2.
'Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God with all its Righteousness
And all Things Shall Be Added' by N.B.H.Bhengu.

claims that although assemblies are almost invariably established following his campaigns the latter remain non-denominational and he continues to urge converts to return to or join existing churches.

Although no exact statistics are available, our information suggests, that throughout South Africa at least fifty assemblies have been established directly or indirectly through the Crusade. These range in size from about thirty to several thousand members and embrace a total of some fifteen thousand adherents.

Bhengu's Association with the Assemblies of God

Although Bhengu undertook his religious training and his earliest evangelistic activities on his own initiative, he later found it desirable to associate himself with some established religious organisation. It was essential, he explains, to obtain Government recognition for himself, the Crusade and the congregations he established, since without it his work would have been severely curtailed.* Such recognition could best be attained by joining an existing mission church, and the Assemblies of God, because of its particular structure and beliefs was ideally suited to his needs.

As part of the world-wide Pentecostal Movement, the Assemblies dates its beginnings to the first decade of the present century when religious revivals took place in various parts of America, England and the continent. Many of these revivals were characterised by the Pentecostal experience of

* As we have said in Part I. Ch.1, government recognition, while almost automatically conferred on the mission churches, is eagerly sought after but rarely obtained by the separatist churches. With this recognition church sites in town and on Trust Land may be secured, sacramental wine purchased, ministers licensed as marriage officers and various other concessions and benefits secured. Recognised churches also enjoy a higher prestige among the Africans than the non-recognised bodies.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit as manifested in Speaking in Tongues.* As a result, small local groups of believers were formed and conferences of Pentecostal assemblies were convened in various countries. The original purpose of these meetings was for religious fellowship, but soon the need was felt to organise local groups on a more definite basis. As a result of different approaches to this problem, three main types of organisation emerged, viz: (i) unification under the leadership of one powerful personality (e.g. the Elim movement); (ii) amalgamation and establishment of an ecclesiastical government (e.g. Apostolic Faith Mission); (iii) retention of local group and ministerial autonomy, with provision for meetings to discuss common problems, enjoy religious fellowship and co-ordinate wide-scale programmes (e.g. the Assemblies of God).

The first Assemblies of God was founded in 1914 in the United States at a conference of three hundred ministers and representatives of independent Pentecostal groups. The purpose of the conference was not "to establish an ecclesiastical body to assume jurisdiction over these Pentecostal churches, but to promote a closer bond of Christian unity and a scriptural basis for fellowship, work and united effort for God. So a constitutional declaration was made, setting forth the principles of equality, unity and co-operation, guaranteeing the rights of sovereignty to each local affiliated church". (A.O.G. 1955)

The formation of Assemblies of God in other countries followed, but although organically independent of the American movement and of each other, they adopted the same name because of similarity of belief and organisation. In South Africa the Assemblies was founded in 1931 by a group of Pentecostal missionaries from America, England and the Continent who had been working independently in the country since about 1908.

* See footnote Part II p.7

As in other parts of the world, it developed out of voluntary agreement to co-operate for mutual benefit, without establishing any form of central church government or in any way limiting the independence of its affiliated ministers and congregations.

In South Africa today, the Assemblies of God is a loose association of independent ministers and local groups rather than an ecclesiastical body in an administrative and legislative sense. The advantages of this association are the provision of a corporate identity for its constituents vis-a-vis the outside world, and the means for unified and co-operative action. Its existence as a movement is expressed through a number of bodies, including a Biennial Conference, a General Executive, Regional Advisory Committees and various affiliated institutions. It is a fundamental principle of association that "the Bible is (their) all-sufficient rule for faith and practice" and that it is not the function of the Church to lay down any further rules and regulations, nor to prescribe any hard and fast doctrine. Ministers and congregations should retain their autonomy and be permitted wide latitude in the interpretation of the Scriptures in accordance with "further light which may be received from the Holy Ghost in the future". (A.O.G. 1955)

In a sense, therefore, the Assemblies may be regarded as an association of convenience - that is, it provides a structural and spiritual home for ministers and groups of more or less widely differing concepts who, by joining can, without relinquishing their independence, enjoy all the benefits of belonging to a world-wide movement. Bhengu's decision to join the Assemblies was thus based on considerations which, though undisguisedly utilitarian, were similar to those which brought the movement into being. Through his association with the Assemblies, Bhengu has assured the respectability and legitimacy of his work, while at the same time maintaining the freedom of a separatist church leader.

The Establishment and Organisation of Assemblies*

The Assemblies of God prescribes no hard and fast rule governing the functions of the ministry or the structure and organisation of the local assembly. There are however certain fundamental beliefs which form part of the basis of association. The Assemblies believes in a 'gifted ministry' rather than in a trained professional clergy. That is to say, recognition of a minister by the movement is based on 'evidence' he has shown in his local assembly of possessing a God-given gift. Training is then optional and additional. The various gifts of ministry, which may be separately or jointly bestowed, are mentioned in various Scriptures,** and the most important are: "Evangelist - the gift of convincing and converting people; Apostle - founder of assemblies (and usually combined with other gifts); Prophet - the gift, not of foretelling, but of inspiring believers; and Teacher - the gift of expounding the doctrines of the Church". One whose gift has been recognised by the movement through its conference is then free to exercise his ministry independently of further control.

Each type of ministry, based on the 'gifts' outlined above may play a part in the establishment and running of the local assembly. A new area is generally opened up by an Evangelist who organises a revival campaign. When a nucleus of converts has been built up the Evangelist is succeeded by an Apostle - or Founder - who takes charge of the converts, teaches them the doctrines and practices of the church and leads them to a fuller religious experience. As he gets to know the new congregation, he selects certain men whom he feels have manifested the ability for leadership and the gifts of 'prophecy' or 'Teaching', and instructs them in the duties of eldership. In these men will later be vested the responsibility for

* This section is based on written responses to questionnaires by a White pastor of the Assemblies of God and an Elder of the White Assembly in East London, respectively. Quotations are taken from the former text.

**I Corinthians XII,4 - 10; Luke XXIV,49; Acts I, 4 and 8.

supervising the assembly, maintaining discipline and caring for the spiritual welfare of the members. At about the same time Deacons are appointed to manage the business side of the assembly and to undertake various routine duties. It is the founder's aim to gradually hand over the control of the Assembly to the elders and deacons until finally they assume full responsibility.

Under the leadership of its elders and deacons, an assembly is regarded as complete both religiously and structurally, since no distinction is made between the ministry of elders and that of the full-time clergy, and since the ministry entails no special prerogatives (i.e. any member of an assembly may organise or lead a service, preach, and administer the sacraments). If, due to the size of an assembly or to any other reason, a full-time minister is appointed, his functions and status do not differ materially from those of an elder.

Within this broad framework, many diverse patterns of leadership and organisation occur. One such pattern is that of a close fellowship of a group of assemblies established by a common Founder. The unity of such a group is expressed through the interchange of ministry within it; more or less regular religious conventions, where members of constituent assemblies have the opportunity of getting to know each other and of worshipping together; and also in sharing the same general pattern of internal organisation. Such groups, however, do not ideally form administrative units, each local assembly retaining its autonomy and structural integrity. The Founder exercises no authority over assemblies or ministers, the whole arrangement being entirely voluntary. At the same time, however, an advantage of belonging to the group is that the Founder and his co-workers may be called upon at any time for assistance and advice.

The pattern described above though narrowing the full range of possibilities within the Assemblies, is in itself only a general framework within which further variations may occur. Although the Bhengu Assemblies are based upon it, therefore, they cannot be regarded as being typical since, as we shall see, the manner in which they have developed has been determined by factors which were in many ways unique and which have resulted in certain significant differences from what may be regarded as the ideal.

The Organisation of the Bhengu Assemblies

The establishment of assemblies by Bhengu follows fairly closely the pattern described, with Bhengu combining the dual roles of evangelist and founder. But, unlike most other Founders in the Assemblies of God, Bhengu has retained a great amount of control over both individual assemblies and their ministers thereby limiting considerably their autonomy.

The reason for this, is Bhengu's keen awareness of certain disruptive features in African church life, which are the result of the paucity of opportunity for achieved status for Africans, in conjunction with the relative poverty of most of the people. On the one hand this has given rise to tremendous and often bitter competition for both clerical and lay positions in church, while on the other there has been a tendency to abuse these positions particularly in the handling of church funds.* Because conflict over positions and money could quite easily

* In this connection it may be of interest to note that during the two years spent in East London, at least four Mission Churches were involved in serious disputes. The results were that in one case the congregation split, in a second the church was closed for several weeks, a third was almost involved in a libel case, while in the fourth the minister was transferred to a smaller congregation and a leading lay official resigned.

lead to disintegration in a church which was entirely independent of external control and authority, Bhengu felt that it was necessary to create a form of internal organisation so rigid that assemblies would be effectively safeguarded against any of these disruptive tendencies.

In the appointment of officials, therefore, Bhengu stresses that the only basis of appointment is his own recognition in certain people of God-given gifts, and that these positions are not subject to periodic election, but are to be maintained for life. At the same time, in some larger centres such as Port Elizabeth and East London, officials have been appointed for an indefinite trial period: final selection and confirmation depending on their honesty, trustworthiness and devotion. He also continually stresses that officials enjoy no special prerogatives or higher status as individuals, but that they simply fulfil special functions. Bhengu particularly insists that assembly funds are to be administered collectively and solely by the deacons - elders and ministers being debarred all access to them - while all transactions must be ratified by the assembly and countersigned by a number of trustees including himself. Ministers are under Bhengu's direct supervision insofar as he determines their selection for training, appointment, transfer, suspension and, at one time, even dismissal. All important matters are referred to him before any action can be taken, appeals against elders and deacons may be brought to him, and regular progress reports and financial statements submitted to him.

Bhengu states that originally he had intended that his own supervision of assemblies and ministers should gradually diminish as officials became more experienced and more familiar with the principles by which assemblies were to be managed. He now complains, however, that both assemblies and their

officials have become too dependent on him, and expect him to solve every minor problem that arises. Thus on the one hand he is afraid to grant them complete autonomy, while on the other hand many ministers are reluctant that he should withdraw his supervision and guidance.* The result of this impasse, is that Bhengu is faced with far more extensive administrative duties than is normally the task of a founder of assemblies.

Bhengu has tried to cope with this problem by establishing four 'centres' which are attached to the largest and most conveniently situated assemblies, at Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban and Johannesburg. These centres each consist of an office staffed by a full-time salaried Secretary, whose duties are to deal with and file correspondence; to keep records and books; to receive contributions for the Crusade; to assist in the organisation of revival campaigns in the area; and to attend to routine administrative matters affecting the assemblies in the area such as arranging Sunday School programmes, local mission work and ministers' itineraries. The secretary is also generally kept informed of Bhengu's whereabouts.

Bhengu has also instituted an annual July Workers' Conference which is attended by all elders, deacons and ministers (the latter being, at any given time, either attached to an assembly or assisting with the Crusade). The purpose of the conference is to meet for fellowship, receive instruction in the Bible and discuss any matters affecting the work. At these conferences all problems to which Bhengu has been unable to attend during the course of the year, or which are of general interest, are dealt with; delegates are informed of future policy and plans for the assemblies and the Crusade; and they are given instructions and directives regarding the performance of their duties. Apart from the Conference, Bhengu also meets

* This question is discussed more fully in the chapter below on Leadership.

ministers and lay officials on Crusades, during the course of his evangelistic tours, on special visit to Assemblies, and at the Movement's Christmas Conventions.

Summary and Conclusions

The Bhengu Movement resembles the independent African sects in many respects: its membership and ministry (apart from a small number of Coloureds and Indians) are entirely African; it is independent of White control and interference in its affairs; its teachings and practices are, to marked degree, determined by specifically African needs; and, the authority of its founder and leader is based upon personal charisma rather than on succession to established office. There are, however, also important differences: its establishment was not the result of secession from another church nor, in fact, does it appear that Bhengu originally envisaged the formation of a new religious movement. It is also significant, as we shall see*, that neither Bhengu nor the movement as such are anti-White, that its establishment was not based primarily on resentment of White domination in Church, and that its doctrine does not reserve the grace of salvation for Africans qua Africans.

Bhengu himself also differs sharply from the majority of independent church leaders. While he shares with Sundkler's** Zulu prophet a belief in his special relationship with and mission from God, and with the chief-type church leader the "aspirations to realize... a group life which is adapted to the situation in the world of the Whites",† both his outlook and approach are different. Unlike these leaders, Bhengu does not appear to have been moved by a desire for power and authority while his teachings, his conduct of the affairs of assemblies, and his personal behaviour exhibit a degree of sophistication

* See Chapter

** Sundkler (op.cit.) Ch.V.

+ Ibid. p. 107

not characteristic of most independent church leaders. Bhengu, in his early years, was primarily seeking his own religious fulfillment while at the same time furthering his religious education. When he found his personal salvation, though he felt impelled to carry the 'good news' to others, he saw his mission not in the establishment of a new denomination, but in the reformation of the existing Church. Even when, as he claims, he was "driven to start a fold", he sought incorporation into a mission church rather than going it alone.

Bhengu is thus primarily a reformer in the tradition of Luther and Wesley rather than a secessionist in the style of Shembe and Limba.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY IN EAST LONDON

In the previous chapter we described the structural flexibility which characterises the South African Assemblies of God. This flexibility applies, too, within the Bhengu Movement, lending a uniqueness to each constituent local congregation. A discussion of any one of these, therefore, must take into account the conditions and circumstances of its development, the quality of its resident ministers, the degree of its reliance on Bhengu's leadership, the size of its membership, and so forth. It is the interplay of these factors which determines the character of a particular assembly. In this chapter we shall describe the establishment and development of the Assembly in East London.

The East London Crusade

In October 1950, Bhengu opened the Back to God Crusade in East London. Its impact on the East Bank location was tremendous: unlike the limited evangelistic efforts of local churches, the Crusade was lavish in scale with its high pressure publicity, huge tent, modern equipment and trained personnel. No collections were taken, while Bhengu and his co-workers were apparently unfettered by the demands of running their own congregations. It was clear that the campaign was intended to continue for a prolonged period.

But while these features helped to arouse initial interest in the Crusade, it was Bhengu's growing reputation as a preacher and healer that attracted the many thousands who attended the meetings. "Everybody was very excited about the new and wonderful preacher and healer", recalls a preacher in the

Methodist Church, "and I, too, was curious to hear this man. In fact I attended one of his first meetings. The tent was packed. I was very impressed with his preachings and, like everybody else, I was emotionally moved. He healed people with ordinary illnesses and converted many."

The ultimate success of the Crusade, however, depended on Bhengu's personality and evangelistic technique. Any evangelist, if he is to be effective, must ensure that his appeal is general enough to be meaningful to the largest possible number of people, while at the same time sufficiently specific for the individual member of his audience to feel its applicability to his own life. To achieve this synthesis the evangelist must have a profound understanding of the people amongst whom he is working, he must appreciate the conditions under which they live, and he must be aware of the problems which give rise to most anxiety. It is clear that Bhengu did have a deep knowledge of and sympathy for his people, as well as the ability to gauge the particular interests and problems of specific audiences. An elder of the East London Assembly, who has accompanied Bhengu on several subsequent campaigns, thus remarks:

" I personally think that Bhengu's preaching is very logical, educative, and well-rendered according to the type of audience. When he comes among the rural pagans, he comes down to their level and convinces them by citing simple examples pertaining to their everyday lives: if an audience is mixed (i.e. pagans and Christians) he tries to preach about common problems and how they effect a man spiritually, physically and mentally."

This assessment is certainly borne out by other informants in their accounts of the East London Crusade, and a frequent comment on his sermons is that "it seemed as if he was referring to me personally."

In his sermons in East London, Bhengu dealt with the problems most common to urban African life, and tried to show

how their solution could be found only through faith in God. But while converts cite the reasonableness of his arguments as having convinced them, there is little doubt that it was the emotional tone of the services which provided the setting for dramatic 'decisions for Christ'. This is vividly illustrated in the following descriptions of the East London Crusade.

" One night converts brought large quantities of stolen goods to the itiphu.^{*} Bhengu collected all the useless and tattered clothing and made a hillock. This he set alight, saying: 'That of the devil, to the devil; the children of God, back to God.' I had a terrible vision of the unhappy end of sinners. The glowing blaze of the stolen property apparently touched the guilty consciences of hundreds, for that night there were more converts than ever before. The people were simply drunk with Holy Ghost just like at the time of the burning [sic] of the tower of Babel."

(Formerly a member of the Presbyterian Church)

" One of my friends urged me to come with him to hear Bhengu ... He preached vigorously that night until all the people were moved, and I heard terrible noises made by them. Praying, crying, beating their chests, some women jumping up and down with their kerchiefs off their heads, some taking clothes, knives, plates, mugs, and other weapons and stolen articles to the platform. My friend became very emotional, and I too was moved."

(Formerly a pagan)

" On one occasion I remember how one of Bhengu's assistants was responsible for the conversion of many tsotsis [juvenile delinquents]. He told the people at length of his own life as a tsotsi; he revealed and described the tsotsi practices which, he said, were condemned by God; he urged that the tsotsis should give up these practices, repent and be saved. The tsotsis in the audience then became very emotional. When the ordinary people saw how

* The garbage disposal site where the Crusade tent had been pitched.

the most aggressive types were being convinced, they simply gave themselves up like defeated soldiers."

(A member and preacher of the Methodist Church)

While these descriptions may differ in detail from those of meetings of other mass evangelists, the technique is familiar: like them, Bhengu depended upon the skillful manipulation of large audiences. Vigorous singing and praying, miraculous healing, fiery preaching, earnest testimonies and confessions, all contributed to breaking down the sense of individual isolation in the audience and building up common emotions and feelings*. Thus many, who under other circumstances, might have questioned Bhengu's arguments, were caught up in the general emotionalism of the crowd, and accepted these arguments as reasonable and logical. Although each convert interpreted his conversion in terms of personal conviction, therefore, it is clear that participation in an increasingly enthralled audience was a most important contributory factor. The same elder quoted above sums up neatly in the following observation:

" Bhengu is a very powerful preacher when he is in spirits. If he wants the people to be inspired, he sings vigorously to cause the already-converted people to be moved. When the converts get the Holy Spirit they are very influential to those who had merely come to see. Holy Spirit is somehow infectious. If the majority of the audience is moved, even the hard-hearted are affected by it."

It is important to note, however, that Bhengu's preaching did include a strong rational element, while the feelings and sentiments upon which he played were closely related to everyday fears and anxieties. If not for this, it is likely that as the emotionalism of the revivals gave way to the routine of ordinary Assembly services, so converts would have gradually drifted away.

* YOUNG, Kimball: Social Psychology. Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York. p.306

The Emergence of the Assembly

No definite date can be set for the closing of the revival campaign and the establishment of the Assembly. From the evidence - and we must rely entirely on the memories of informants - it appears that the latter gradually developed out of the Crusade, rather than having been formally proclaimed at a particular time.

Apart from the inaugural meeting and subsequent Sunday services which were held in the non-European cinema, the campaign was conducted in the tent at the itiphu. In about May 1951 the onset of winter necessitated a more sheltered venue, and the cinema was hired three evenings per week in addition to Sundays.

As the campaign progressed, so its personnel gradually changed. With an increasing number of local converts to provide testimonies of conversion and to assist in the work, converts and ministers from other centres were able to return to their homes. Finally only one minister, the Rev. Masselana, remained in East London and was appointed by Bhengu as his assistant. This man later took over the Crusade in East London when in 1952 Bhengu decided to extend his activities to other centres, and in the following year became the first resident minister of the Assembly.

We have mentioned Bhengu's insistence that the Crusade was non-denominational. Thus although converts in East London were urged to attend his services regularly, he made no overt attempt to woo Christians away from other churches, while pagan converts were advised to join existing religious bodies. Satisfied that he had no sectarian axe to grind nor any intention of starting a new denomination, both ministers and members of many local churches supported the Crusade, and at least one minister informed the author that he had even invited Bhengu to preach from his pulpit. These cordial relations, however, were to last only a few months.

According to an elder of the Assembly, in December 1950 a minister of one of the large mission churches who had been transferred from Port Elizabeth, informed local ministers that Bhengu had founded his own church in that city, and that it was probably his intention to do the same in East London. Incensed, they immediately withdrew their support and co-operation. Bhengu was bitterly disappointed and informed a meeting of about a thousand men that he intended to leave East London as this change of attitude was hindering his work. The meeting, however, urged him to reconsider and suggested that in view of the circumstances it would be better if he did indeed establish his own church. As a result of the meeting, it was agreed that Bhengu should make representations to the authorities for the necessary permission and for the granting of a church site, and a committee was appointed to observe and report on his progress. Despite strong reaction by ministers to this decision and an attempt by them to have Bhengu expelled and banned from East London, the authorities soon after acceded to his requests. Meanwhile Bhengu, having already lost their support, began in his sermons to criticise and attack what he regarded as the shortcomings of other churches.

When we look at data provided by opponents of the Assembly, however, we find that the factual events leading to its establishment are interpreted very differently. These opponents admit that although the information regarding Bhengu's activities in Port Elizabeth had been disquieting, it was the actions which he took locally which led them to withdraw their support. The following statement by a Presbyterian woman reflects clearly the growing suspicion of Bhengu's motives at that time, as well as the decline, for many, of the appeal of the Crusade:

" Bhengu's campaign during the first few months was very interesting, for he only concentrated on preaching about common sins which he knew were a daily practice. His services were attended by the multitudes and he revived a lot of people. He talked only of people being saved. He also said that he belonged to no denomination.

" When he noticed that he had a fairly big group that believed in him, he brought a minister, the Rev. Masselana, and told the people that he was instructed by God to make use of that man to keep the listeners busy while he, Bhengu, was resting.

" What caused many people to stop attending his revivals however was his second step, after he had hired the cinema. He adopted the attitude of attacking all the weak points in the doctrines and practices of other churches. He condemned church dues and collections; he criticised the way ministers thought they were spiritually superior to other people; he condemned sectarian differences which he said were wrong before God; he pointed out that many so-called Christians still committed adultery, got drunk, received stolen property and misappropriated church funds.

" He also made all those who believed in him and had joined his campaign or prospective denomination, carry the Bible and preach everywhere they went. People like myself who had no intention of going to another denomination just left his revival services. His followers became over-zealous, and annoyed people in busses and elsewhere by publicly belittling individuals and churches."

Despite the conflicting points of view and some chronological confusion, it is clear that within a few months of the inception of the Crusade in October 1950, there began a process of sorting out supporters from non-supporters. This was accelerated by Bhengu's attacks on other churches, and the situation was probably well-defined by the time services had been transferred to the cinema. For all practical purposes, then, the emergence of the new church can be placed at some time during 1951, and there are several indications of this. Not only were the terms icawe kamphilisi (the Healer's Church)

and icawe kaBhengu (Bhengu's Church) current by that time, but in a survey of the present membership, 60% stated that they had 'joined the Assembly' during 1950/1951, followed by only 22% between 1952 to 1954, and 12% during the period 1955/1957. The rapid decline in recruitment after 1951 supports the impression that by then the Crusade had increasingly come to be regarded as constituting a definite denomination. As a result, fewer outsiders were being attracted to services, and opportunities for recruitment were therefore decreasing. It is extremely likely, too, that as attendance at meetings was being built around a growing nucleus of supporters, the revivalistic character of the Crusade was undergoing a change - i.e. evangelisation, healing and testimony were gradually being replaced by a more formal order of worship, and the indoctrination of converts. Finally, it is known that when the services were moved to the cinema, Bhengu began to call for financial support, a step which is normally taken - according to Bhengu - only when an assembly is established, since the Crusade itself solicits no contributions from those who attend.

It is interesting, therefore, that Bhengu himself did not formally acknowledge the establishment of an assembly in East London until 1953, when he referred to it publicly as such, and appointed lay officials and a resident minister. Until that time he had not organised his followers into a congregation, but insisted throughout that he was still conducting a non-denominational campaign - despite his attacks from the pulpit on other churches. The circumstances surrounding this line of action are significant: they not only affected Bhengu's future evangelistic work, but were also largely responsible for the fact that the East London Crusade was one of his greatest triumphs and the resultant assembly the largest ever established by him. To understand what occurred in East London, we must look at the factors which differentiated this particular Crusade from others undertaken by Bhengu.

As we have mentioned, Bhengu was ordained by the 'Assemblies of God' in 1937. Nevertheless, for a number of years before and after, he conducted his Crusade either independently or on behalf of a variety of other denominations. In 1945, however, he entered into an agreement with the Rev. J.E. Mullen of the White Assembly of God in Port Elizabeth to co-operate more closely with the movement. While, therefore, the Crusade itself still retained its independence and non-sectarian character, the establishment of an Assembly of God generally followed its subsequent campaigns. Bhengu continued to urge converts to return to their original churches, but at the same time envisaged the formation of an assembly to cater for those who did not.

When Bhengu opened his Crusade at Port Elizabeth in 1945, his association with the Assemblies of God was not clearly perceived. While some churches may conceivably have objected to his preachings on doctrinal grounds, there is no record of any widespread suspicion of his intentions or good-will. Most of his converts did - and this fact is crucial - return to their original churches during the course of the campaign and only a residue of a few hundred remained to form an assembly. In most of the centres which he visited subsequently, however, his association with the movement was or soon became known, with the result that local churches either withheld or withdrew their support.

In East London this withdrawal occurred at the height of the Crusade, at a time when many converts were still very much moved by Bhengu's personal charisma as well as being under the influence of the dramatic changes which he had brought about in their lives. For this reason, many, who may under normal circumstances have returned eventually to their own churches, were prematurely forced into a pro-Bhengu camp forming the nucleus of an assembly. It would seem, then, that while Bhengu's previous campaigns may well have been as successful

as the one in East London, the traceable number of converts - i.e. those who joined the assemblies which were later founded - was considerably less.

The fact that Bhengu did not acknowledge the existence of an assembly in East London until 1953, therefore, was probably due to his attempt to re-establish the non-denominational status of the Crusade. It is clear, however, that many people had already come to regard the Crusade as a sectarian movement and that this impression was reinforced by Bhengu's attacks on other churches.

The Social and Political Background to the East London Crusade

Since religious revival movements tend to succeed most during periods of depression, it is not surprising that many informants attribute Bhengu's success in East London to the fact that he launched his Crusade at a time when the African population was becoming acutely aware of its social, economic and political problems. To members of the Assembly, Bhengu's arrival in East London at that time represents proof of his divine mission; to most non-members it is simply regarded as evidence of good timing.

In the sphere of politics, there is no doubt that by 1950 there was a rising feeling of bitterness and despondency among Africans throughout the Union in response to increasing curtailment of their rights by the two-and-a-half-year-old Nationalist Government, and that in its wake had come a heightened disrespect and disregard for the 'White man's law' in general. Although these feelings were only to reach their peak of overt and violent expression in East London during the 1952 Defiance Campaign and the culminating riots,* informants both within and outside the Assembly say that by the time Bhengu

* The Defiance Campaign Against Unjust Laws was launched in 1952 by the African National Congress. Although passive resistance was the keynote there were outbreaks of violence in many areas, including the brutal burning of a nun in East London.

opened his campaign there was tremendous anti-White feeling, an alarming rise in the crime rate of the location, and a general feeling of apprehension for the future.

When Bhengu arrived in East London, he was, as a Zulu, a relative stranger to the predominantly Xhosa population, except for the rumour that he had come from America. As a number of informants pointed out, this was extremely significant "as the connection of America with his name brought a spark of hope to the Africans, who always think that their help will come from that country (cf. Hunter, 1936, p.570). They believed that this man had been sent there by God to come and bring the African people nearer to Him so that they should get their freedom like the Israelites in the Bible."

Bhengu did, in fact, in addition to preaching personal salvation hold out a promise of national redemption - albeit through non-violence, good relations with Whites, obedience to the laws of the land, and through faith in God rather than in political means. He told his audiences that he himself had been an active member of the leading political movements which strove for African advancement, including even the Communist Party, but that he had finally come to the conclusion that religion and not politics was the answer.

This popularly conceived role of Bhengu as 'saviour of the people' was further enhanced by the nature of his contacts with the authorities and with Whites in general. Despite anti-White feeling, an African who was able to win the confidence of the ruling group and to obtain privileges for himself and his followers was both a valuable asset and an object of admiration. The authorities, who regarded him as a good influence on the Africans, certainly gave him full support for the Crusade, while he also obtained from them pardon for converted criminals, and

other special concessions. In his contact with Whites, it appeared to the people that he was treated with great respect and admiration (as indeed he was by many). It was common knowledge that as a result of his intercession, employers offered jobs to his followers; that a White American woman who was accompanying him on his campaign testified to her healing and conversion by him; that many Whites came to his services in the location for healing; and that a meeting of Whites at the East London City Hall had received him enthusiastically and had yielded many converts.

It is not surprising therefore that there were many Africans who saw in his coming the hand of Providence, and that in explaining why they thought Bhengu had come to East London and established an assembly, they still to-day refer explicitly to his mission of national redemption.

" Bhengu is a man who has love for his nationality. He belonged to many organisations because he was ambitious to contribute something to the improvement of his own nation. He said that religion would be the only resort to bring the nation to prosperity, and to emancipate it from bondage under its oppressive rulers who wanted to divide the people to rule it more easily. He says that history repeats itself. The African people would be united by religion and would improve themselves. The Israelites came close to God and they were emancipated. God has come to his aid and he is achieving his aim."

In addition to the growing despondency in the political sphere, social conditions in the East Bank location during the early nineteen-fifties were becoming increasingly difficult. Due to the large influx of migrant labourers during the post-war years, the gap between available amenities and actual requirements was rapidly widening.* Thus although the situation was probably no worse than in 1957-59 when field-work was conducted, it had certainly deteriorated rapidly from that of the years immediately preceding. Looking back, then, many informants describe 1950/1 as a particularly difficult period in the East Bank.

* See Reader (op.cit.) Ch.2 for full discussion

Another aspect of location life is the constantly rising crime rate. Although it is not our purpose to analyse the causes of African crime, it is nevertheless convenient to discuss certain aspects of the problem at this juncture. In the first place, the multitude of discriminatory laws which have been applied to Africans has created a large number of technical offences. Since in themselves they are not considered to be morally wrong, no stigma attaches to their commission. This attitude has in turn affected criminal behaviour, inasmuch as the risk of imprisonment does not serve as a deterrent to the would-be law-breaker. Since a prison sentence could result from a technical offence in the same way as from an actual crime, even the otherwise law-abiding African faces its constant threat. For this reason, there is also no strong social disapproval of the ex-convict per se. In the second place, African crime is often rooted in resentment, so that certain crimes against Whites who, they claim, are robbing them through unjust exploitation, are regarded as morally defensible*. Finally, the almost universal poverty of the African population in town together with the breakdown of traditional forms of social control, are additional factors contributing to the propensity towards criminal behaviour. Although these observations would apply generally to urban locations in South Africa over a considerable period, their applicability to the East Bank during 1950/1 certainly augmented the general feeling of depression.

It is clear that by 1950/1, social and political conditions had created a tremendous need for a stabilising force in African life. This does not imply that East London was any worse off than the rest of the Union at that time, nor even that these were the most critical years in the lives of Africans in East London. Conditions had, however, become bad enough for such a need to have been keenly felt, and for Bhengu's

* Mayer (op.cit) p.144/5.

message to have provided a timely and satisfying solution for many Africans.

Summary and Conclusions

Bhengu's East London Crusade has been one of his greatest triumphs. As we have shown, although social and political conditions in the East Bank at the time had created an atmosphere of depression and uncertainty, most of his campaigns in other centres and at other times were set against a similar background. In the same way, the scale of the Crusades and Bhengu's ability as an evangelist have, if anything, gradually increased over the years. His success in East London was thus due largely to a fortuitous circumstance - the early withdrawal of local church support and the consequent establishment of an assembly at the height of his influence over converts. Fundamentally, however, acceptance of Bhengu's message by so large a number of people depended on its relevance to their needs: unless his teachings initially held the promise of their satisfaction and, with the passage of time, fulfilled that promise, the Assembly would not have maintained its size or vitality. In the following chapter, therefore, we shall deal with the conversion situation and through it attempt to discover the meaning of his appeal to the individual convert.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSEMBLY : RECRUITMENT

A most important characteristic of the East London Assembly - and, indeed of the Bhengu Movement as a whole - is that its membership is comprised entirely of converts. An examination of the circumstances of conversion and its meaning to the converts themselves will therefore contribute to a fuller understanding of the nature of Bhengu's appeal and the extent of his influence. Furthermore, such an analysis is essential to an appreciation of the present-day character of the Assembly and its role in the lives of its members. To do this, however, we must firstly distinguish between two important categories from which converts were drawn: Red and School Xhosa.

THE RED/SCHOOL DICHOTOMY AMONG THE XHOSA

Mayer (1961, *passim*.) has shown that in both town and country there is a sharp distinction among the Xhosa between Red and School people. Any Xhosa - or even an 'initiated' European - can classify a person as Red or School simply by observing details such as dress, speech, deportment, etc. These easily noticed habits and characteristics, however, are but the external signs of fundamentally different value orientations.

Basically the Red Xhosa is 'tradition-oriented'; the School Xhosa 'western-culture oriented'. The paramount value of the Red is the preservation of, and adherence to tribal customs, traditions and way of life both in his life-time and for future generations. He is thus suspicious of White ways and of Whites themselves whom he regards as menacing his national survival. For this reason, many Reds are still violently opposed to schooling for their children, while none will have anything to do with Christianity and the Church. They regard School people with mistrust, as having 'turned aside' and betrayed

their social and cultural heritage.

The School Xhosa is equally contemptuous of the Red. As 'school' he has ostensibly abandoned tribal customs and traditions, valuing rather education, Christianity and the 'European way of life'. But whereas the Reds constitute a clearly defined social and cultural group, there are degrees of being 'school' ranging from the newly-emergent Red to the educated and sophisticated professional. One is Red, therefore, because one belongs to the Red group and shares its values; one becomes school as one ceases to identify oneself with Reds, adopts certain characteristic overt behaviour patterns, accepts school values and attitudes, and is generally regarded by others as being school. Although the creation of the school pattern was due originally to the influence of the Christian missionaries (who not only insisted on the abandonment of tribal religion by their converts, but also on their adoption of elements of western culture), it has today become so complex that Christianity is no longer the only means to becoming school. It is still, however, the quickest path and, in the last analysis, the final and indisputable criterion for acceptance as school.

The need to supplement a subsistence economy with cash (in order to buy food and other goods from traders, pay taxes, etc.), has forced both Red and School Xhosa to come to town to seek work. While the School person may conceivably miss his rural home and speak of returning on retirement, he is in many ways able to make himself a fuller and more satisfying life in town than the Red Xhosa. In the first place he is closer to the mainspring of western culture patterns to which he already aspired in the country. In the second place, he has in town his church and many other organisations and activities to occupy his leisure time and to provide the opportunity for meeting people. The School migrant may even decide to make the town his permanent home and may eventually send for his wife and

family to join him. Thus although town life and conditions present difficulties of adjustment to the School person, these are mitigated to some extent by the general familiarity of the new environment and its embodiment of 'westernised' life which he has learnt to value but with which he had previously only limited contact.

To the Red person, however, town life is fundamentally an alien and hostile environment, and his attitude towards it is uncompromisingly negative. Coming to town is an unpleasant necessity: apart from the money which he needs and values, the town holds little attraction for him. What is important is his rural home, for this represents not only his material inheritance but the centre of his cultural heritage. It is there, too, that his ancestors dwell, and where his most important relationships, rights and obligations exist. The town, therefore, also constitutes a danger to the Red Xhosa: the unwary may succumb to its temptations and fall prey to the wiles of the town-people, and will thereby be drawn away from the Red way of life and come to neglect his obligations towards his kin at home. To safeguard his cultural integrity, maintain his ties with the people at home and, at the same time, counteract loneliness, the Red person looks to other Red migrants from the same rural home for companionship and friendship. Through these amakhaya - groups of Reds from the same rural location - the Red person is able not only to insulate himself from the dangers of town life, but also to maintain in town, albeit in a modified form, the traditional rural way of life and the rural network of relationships.

While, as Mayer points out, the majority of Reds remain Red in town and regard their stay there as temporary, there are those who decide to make the town their home. Many of these, it is true, still attempt to maintain their 'redness', often becoming hangers-on to the various amakhaya. There are Reds, however, who gradually sever their ties with both their kin at home and with the

amakhaya in town and who may, in addition, aspire to becoming true townfolk. There is thus a small, but continuous, stream of Reds becoming School, although many of these do not actually go as far as seeking conversion to Christianity.

Table I. Red/School Composition of the East London African Assembly by Sex, Compared with the Population of the East Bank Location, East London.*

	EAST LONDON ASSEMBLY			EAST BANK LOCATION, POPULATION			
	RED	SCHOOL	TOTAL	RED	SCHOOL	UN-KNOWN	TOTAL
MALE	84	139	223	494	1157	51	1702
% AGE	11%	18%	29%	15%	35%	2%	52%
FEMALE	136	408	544	246	1309	46	1601
% AGE	18%	53%	71%	7%	40%	1%	48%
TOTAL	220	547	767	740	2466	97	3303
% AGE	29%	71%	100%	22%	75%	3%	100%
MALE % AGE	38%	62%	100%	29%	68%	3%	100%
FEMALE % AGE	25%	75%	100%	15%	82%	3%	100%
TOTAL % AGE	29%	71%	100%	22%	75%	3%	100%

* This and other Tables relating to the membership of the East London Assembly are based on a 1:3 sample survey. Figures for the East London Order of Ethiopia and Port Elizabeth Assembly (e.g. Table IX) were obtained by means of similar questionnaires, though the size of samples is somewhat smaller. A description of the survey is given in Appendix B. Figures for the East Bank population, unless otherwise indicated, are from Reader (1961). The relevant tables are reprinted in Appendix C.

This major division of the Xhosas is extremely relevant to the present study since, as Table I shows, 29% of members of the East London Assembly were brought up as Red, while of these four-fifths had remained Red until their conversion by Bhengu in East London. What is significant, however, is that interviews with ministers of over twenty local churches* suggest that the Assembly has by far the largest proportion of Red converts in its membership**; that of all former Reds now belonging to local churches, the Assembly embraces a proportion considerably in excess of its proportion of the total Christian population; and that it is certainly the only church which has recruited all its Red converts, and in so great a number, in the town itself.

It would appear, then, that Bhengu's Crusade in 1950 was the most important large-scale attack on heathenism in East London in recent years. Certainly most local ministers who were interviewed admitted that what little evangelistic work was being done by them, was directed mainly at 'backsliders' rather than at the conversion of pagan Reds.

Red Converts

Apart from 22% of Reds who had previously belonged to another church, all those who were interviewed insisted that they had been completely Red prior to their conversion by Bhengu, and that their attitudes to the School way of life in general, and to the Church in particular, had followed the normal red pattern. Nevertheless our material indicates certain characteristics of Red converts which suggest that a large number were drawn from categories which tend to yield the greatest proportion of those who eventually become school. Among the factors which Mayer suggests may account for the individual Red's defection are: the absence of physical ties with the country; the desire to escape from the rural home and its people as a

* See footnote at Part I, p.2.

** With the exception of the Roman Catholic Church and some of the smaller independent sects.

result of some traumatic experience, individual abnormality or social maladjustment; and the influence of schooling and School associates during childhood or, later, in town.

As we shall see, a significant proportion of Red converts in the Assembly exhibit one or more of these characteristics. It appears, therefore, that not only were these people probably more susceptible to conversion than 'normal' Reds, but that in many cases Bhengu's Crusade acted merely as a catalyst in bringing about a change, the potential for which already existed.

(i) The Physical Tie with the Country

The Red coming from a Reserve or Trust Land has, in general, a home in some rural location where his family and kin reside, which he can visit from time to time, and to which he can look forward to returning on retirement. The Red person brought up in town*, however, probably has no home in the country, while the ex-labourer from a European farm generally forfeits all claim to his rural home on leaving the services of his employer and migrating to town. Thus the Red from Reserve and Trust Land can and does remain essentially rurally-centered and rurally-oriented. He preserves his 'Redness' in town by elaborately insulating himself from its influences, while satisfying his cultural needs and fulfilling his social obligations by maintaining close associations with the country home. On the other hand, however, town and farm Reds can neither completely satisfy their cultural and social needs in town, nor can they refer these to the country, except idealistically. Thus although many still manage successfully to resist becoming School, there are also many who realise that since they will perforce remain permanently in town it is to their advantage and to the advantage of their children, to adopt School ways if they are to become more adequately adjusted to urban life and to compete more effectively with other town-folk for the better jobs.

* Many of these are children of unmarried mothers, widows and town-concubines, or of Red families who have settled in town. They therefore generally have little or no claim to any home in the country.

It is therefore interesting to note from Table II, that almost half of the Red converts in the Assembly are either from European farms or have been born and brought up in town. This is probably a much larger proportion than these people represent in the total East Bank Red population.

TABLE II Place of origin of Red Converts of E.L.Assembly by Sex

	RESERVE/TRUST	EUROPEAN FARM/ TOWN-BORN	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
MALE %-age	49 58.3%	34 40.5%	1 1.2%	84 100%
FEMALE %-age	59 43.4%	68 50.0%	9 6.6%	136 100%
TOTAL %-age	108 49.1%	102 46.4%	10 4.5%	220 100%

(ii) Deviance and Maladjustment

While we have made no attempt to investigate fully the role of maladjustment in the conversion of Reds, one aspect of this question has emerged clearly from our study. As Mayer (op.cit., Ch.15) points out, married Reds seldom bring their wives to town, so that many of the Red women in East London are widows, divorcees and unmarried mothers. These women have come to town to escape social and economic difficulties in the country arising out of lowered status, homelessness, unhappiness at the home of parents and in-laws, and dependence upon reluctant kin for their own and their children's support. In coming to town they become independent of their families, can support themselves and their children by working for Whites or by trading, while they may even find permanent lovers or husbands to look after them. These women, then, are not only likely to remain permanently resident in town, but because of their weakened kinship ties and social inferiority by Red standards, many sever their connections with Red tradition and seek to become school.

Table I shows that although there are twice as many Red men as women in the East Bank population, in the Assembly the proportions

are almost reversed. We see, too, from Table III, that 41% of Red female converts were either widowed or divorced, while it was found that of the 29% unmarried women, one quarter (or 7% of the total) were over thirty years of age on joining the Assembly - an unusually advanced age for a Red girl to be single, and suggestive of unmarriageability due to premarital pregnancy or other reasons. Furthermore, among the married women interviewed, several instances of unhappy domestic life, including desertion and open adultery by husbands, were disclosed. Thus it would appear that almost one half of Red female converts were maladjusted by Red standards and had little incentive to hold them to their redness. The Assembly, then, offered them a welcome means of escape.

TABLE III Marital Status of Red Female Converts of the East London Assembly

	MARRIED	UNMARRIED	WIDOWED	DIVORCED	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
NUMBER	36	40	53	3	4	136
%-age	26%	29%	39%	2%	3%	99%

(iii) School Influences

Influence of School people and culture, was reflected in the survey in only two respects: school attendance as children, and the category to which parents belonged.

TABLE IV* School Attendance of Red Converts as Children

	ATTENDED SCHOOL	DID NOT ATTEND	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
MALE	42	34	8	84
%-age	50%	40%	10%	100%
FEMALE	50	71	15	136
%-age	37%	52%	11%	100%
TOTAL	92	105	23	220
%-age	42%	48%	10%	100%

* The 22% Reds who had already previously joined a church were found to be fairly evenly distributed.

TABLE V* Reds having one or both School Parents

	SCHOOL MOTHER ONLY	SCHOOL FATHER ONLY	BOTH PARENTS SCHOOL	TOTAL CASES
MALE	2	2	4	8
FEMALE	4	5	4	13
%-age of total Reds	2.7%	3.2%	3.6%	9.5%
Attended School	-	-	-	8

Tables IV and V indicate that about 45% of Red converts had been exposed during childhood to a varying amount of School influence. Interviews with these people, however, gave no indication of the effects of such influences, except in the case of Reds who had already joined some other church before the Assembly. In several instances the latter revealed particularly strong additional influences, such as having been brought up in a predominantly School location or having been reared by School relatives following the death of parents. Nevertheless, despite the lack of supporting evidence, and despite the fact that there is no available basis of comparison with the Red population as a whole, we cannot entirely disregard the possibility that more or less intimate contact with School culture and people may ultimately have had the effect of lowering resistance to conversion.

(iv) Conclusions

Taking into consideration all the factors discussed above, it would appear that Red converts are probably not a representative sample of East London Reds**, but that, as Table VI

* The 22% Reds who had already previously joined a church were found to be fairly evenly distributed.

** Mayer (op.cit.p.194) supports this opinion.

shows, a large proportion possessed some or other characteristic which made them potentially more likely than 'normal' Reds to become School, or, more specifically, to yield to conversion.

TABLE VI Percentages of Red Converts possessing one or more Characteristics potentially leading to becoming School

NO. OF CHARACTERISTICS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
NONE	20%	24%	23%
1	55%	49%	51%
2 plus	25%	27%	26%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Any conclusion, however, must be modified by bearing in mind two important points: in the first place the absence of comparative data on Reds in general is a serious handicap, while in the second place, even if it is true that the majority of Red converts in the Assembly were potentially likely to become School, the fact is that four-fifths of them had not done so prior to their conversion by Bhengu, and that it was only through his efforts that this potential was realised.

School Converts

In general, it can be said that a person usually maintains allegiance to the church into which he was born, and School Xhosa are no exception. An African who, when criticising his church, is asked why he does not join another will therefore reply "that I would do a foolish thing, for the churches are the same and there is no better one. I would be making myself an untrustworthy Christian by changing churches". It is, consequently, not surprising that few School converts in the Assembly claimed to have been staunch and active members of their former churches. The following statement by a non-member of the Assembly, though harsh, is therefore essentially true:

" How many ministers, genuine church members and educated people did Bhengu convince? He convinced

all the failures. They were people who had no chance of becoming prominent in their previous churches because of their disqualifications. Bhengu's church will thrive as long as it is still controlled by the people who ran away from other churches. They want to show their worth to those who know them".

This as we can see from the typical response quoted below, is substantially what School converts say of themselves:

" I was a very untrustworthy non-full member (i.e. adherent) of the Presbyterian church. I was baptised whilst still very young. I attended the church regularly only when I was young and still spellbound. As I grew up I went very sparingly to church. As a young man I went to church only when I knew there were to be many attractive girls. I was a so-called Christian, but not a regular attendant of the church. I attended for leisure only because as a school young man I had nowhere else to go, especially in the country where pleasurable occasions are limited. In town it was better for I attended tea-parties (drinking clubs) and ceaseless beer-drinks. I was mostly prevented by beer-drinks from attending the church, or else I used to be worried by dreadful hangovers on weekends."

The former church status of members of the Assembly is extremely significant since, as we have seen*, it can be both a cause and effect of disinterest in church affairs. It does at the same time provide an additional explanation for School people having joined the new church after conversion rather than having returned to the churches in which they had been brought up. Since in the survey-questionnaires respondents were simply requested to give the name of the church to which they had previously belonged, if at all, we are unable to offer any tabular evidence of their former church status. At the same time, however, from the small sample of School people selected for intensive interviewing, it is our impression that most were merely nominal adherents to their former churches. This is further supported by the insistence of almost all local ministers

* See Part I p.37 f.

that they had lost practically none of their full-members* to Bhengu.

Regarding the former church allegiance of School people, the survey did not yeild reliable results as there was a large number of respondents who either did not answer the relevant question, or whose answers were not clear. Nevertheless, we present in Table VII a comparison between the former allegiance of School converts and the total allegiance in East London to the same churches.

TABLE VII Former church allegiance of School converts

DENOMINATION	% AGE FORMER ALLEGIANCE OF SCHOOL CONVERTS	% AGES ADJUSTED TO EXCLUDE 'UNKNOWNNS'	% AGE ALLEGIANCE OF TOTAL SCHOOL POPULATION
Methodist	24.2%	34.0%	35%
Bantu Presbyt.	16.1%	22.6%	19%
Anglican	15.4%	21.6%	15%
Congregational	0.2%	0.2%	8%
Roman Catholic	2.8%	4.2%	5%
Bantu Baptist	3.8%	5.4%	3%
Other	8.5%	12.0%	15%
Unknown	29.0%	-	-
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

* i.e. Confirmed according to the regulations of the particular church (see Part I, p.37)

THE CONVERSION SITUATION

Former attitudes to Christianity and the Church, and reasons for attending the Revival Services

More than any other aspect of the school way of life, Christianity and the Church are anathema to the Red. Thus while some are prepared to concede the value of schooling, accept the usefulness of certain 'European' material objects, and even go so far as trying to 'pass for School', it is the acceptance of Christianity which finally and irrevocably severs them from the traditional way of life. Not only is Christianity regarded as the ultimate danger to tribal culture, however, but it is also considered to be the main instrument of White domination. We find therefore that former Red converts had been suspicious and often hostile in their attitudes towards Christianity and church people, as the following quotation illustrates:

" The church was of little value to me. It looked like a very bad place. I took Christians to be people who betrayed their nation to the Europeans. This is the general outlook of pagans towards religion."

Reds also found Christianity unacceptable as a religious system. While they believed in the existence of one almighty 'God', their religion was centred around the far more tangible and approachable ancestors, and, as one Red convert remarked, they regarded Christianity as an entirely untenable illusion.

* Pretend to be School by adopting certain overt behaviour patterns. Such people will, however, admit to an investigator that they are in fact Red, and will revert to Red ways when at home on holiday or retirement.

" As a pagan I could not get even a grain of truth from what the street-preachers said about God. I used to say these people were telling lies. Where had they ever seen God? Did they mean to tell us that God wrote that big Book? I could not believe that at all, at all!"

In view of these attitudes it is to be expected that Reds do not normally attend revival meetings. As passers-by they may stop and listen to a street-preacher, but usually move on once their curiosity has been satisfied. In the same way - according to people who had attended Bhengu's revivals - many Reds came to the meetings simply to see what was taking place. It seems, however, that most of those who came purely out of curiosity soon lost interest. Significantly, we find from interviews that almost all who were finally converted had originally attended the revivals in order to be healed.

The decision by these people to come to a Christian preacher for help was not, however, an easy one. Many explicitly state that they went with considerable reluctance, and then only because they had suffered persistently despite the efforts of diviners, herbalists and White doctors. Even then it was only after they had been assured that they would not be required to become converted, and that "many other Reds had been to the revival", that they finally went. The following account by a former Red woman gives some idea of the misgivings and apprehension involved in that decision:

" I heard at home in the country that there was a man who was a great healer. I did not actually know how he healed. Since I heard that he was stationed in East London, I decided to come and stay with my cousin who lived there. I was worried by a very persistent illness. The diviners had smelt out a woman who envied me because of being in the good books of her lover. I approached many herbalists for the prevention and driving away of the impundulu (the 'lightning-bird' - an instrument of witchcraft;

a witches' familiar). They could not drive this bird away, although they all claimed to have done so. I know this because I was not healed, and because my children by my lover all died. When I heard that this healer could even successfully drive out the evil spirits from their victims, I decided to go to East London.

" When I arrived in East London I was told that this man was a preacher. I was reluctant to go as I did not want to be a convert by any means. But the people to whom I spoke all said that the Umphilisi could heal me. I wanted to know if I would have to become his convert, and was told that he forced no-one. I wanted to know if he charged money, and was told that he charged nothing. I asked how he cured or healed the sick because I was afraid of being asked to pray, which I could not do.

" It was the fear of the impundulu which made me go: in fact I would have gone to any person who could help me. My aim was not to hear religious news, and I was encouraged to go and be healed when I heard that many Reds were said to have consulted the wonderful spiritual healer."

The attitude of converts who were already School people, was naturally fundamentally different from that of Reds. Thus although the majority of School converts state that they were not active participants in church affairs, none were suspicious of or hostile to Christianity per se. In fact revival services have always been a favourite activity of School people, particularly if the preacher had the reputation of being a good speaker. With Bhengu's high pressure publicity, the reports of his ability as a preacher and healer, and the ample opportunity provided for attending his meetings, it is not surprising that large numbers of even nominal Christians attended the revival. While many School people, like the Reds, went in the hope of being healed, the majority attended either out of curiosity or because they generally attended such affairs.

Thus one informant explains:

" When I read the circulars I intended going to see this man. I had also read in the newspaper that he had healed many people. I was interested in seeing how he healed and whether people were actually cured. I was born a Methodist where revivals are a favourite. Everybody was talking about this wonderful healer and terribly good preacher. He was said to be just evangelising and was not stealing converts for his church. I was curious to see and hear this wonderful man."

Conversion

From the numerous accounts of the East London Crusade by informants, we can discern two main aspects of Bhengu's approach: what we may call the 'pragmatic' and the 'spiritual'. In the first sense, Bhengu tried to show his audiences the material benefits which would accrue to them if they accepted and prayed to God, by performing demonstrations of healing, and calling upon previous converts to testify to the advantages of their salvation. In these testimonies, converts would tell in lurid and terrifying detail the stories of their former lives, and then explain how, since they had been saved, they had not only found it easy to give up their evil ways but had improved themselves in many respects: they used to be raggedly dressed, they were now neat and tidy; they used to be sickly, they were now in good health; they used not to have money to educate their children and buy good things for their homes, but now that they had given up liquor, bad women and worldly pleasures, they had fine homes with fine furniture and their children were going to school.

In the second sense, Bhengu showed the people how they could become acceptable to God. He taught a simple but stringent Christianity: salvation depended purely on faith so that one had only to accept that Christ had died for the sins of all men, and to resolve to live according to the teachings of the Scriptures. Such a person was then assured of

forgiveness for all his sins - no matter what they were - and could be baptised as a symbol of his rebirth. He would however have to renounce all worldly pleasures and so keep himself far from the temptation to break God's laws. His later attacks on other churches were based on this distinction between what was compatible with a Christian life and what was not. Bhengu maintained that many churches not only condoned the commission of acts contrary to the Scriptures and preached false doctrines, but that even prominent members of those churches were drunkards, thieves and adulterers. He stressed too, that there was no alternative to 'true' Christianity: either one accepted Christ as his Saviour and obeyed His Laws, or one was doomed to eternal damnation both in this world and the next.

Red converts on the whole - whether they attended the revival for healing or out of curiosity, whether completely Red, passing as School, or even recent converts to other churches - cite the "practical facts which Bhengu showed us" as the reasons for their conversion. The following texts show this clearly:

" Bhengu talked about people who ruined their lives in debauchery. They drank intoxicating drinks and fiddled with harlots. He said liquor was like the venom of the snake. It was responsible for the destruction of a lot of lives. He said the heavy drunkards were a shameful lot. He reminded us of what they did in the presence of others, what they looked like and how short their lives were.

" I looked at the saved people whom I knew had once been worse drunkards than myself. I went to my room touched in my heart. I felt as though Bhengu's preachings were referred only to me. I had found the tsotsis humble as lambs; the ragged people as neat as teachers and the dirty drunkards who used to be rough were as clean as young babies and as humble as doves. I felt I could change as well. I decided to join his church because it was so impressive, powerful and practical."

(A Red man)

" I was caused by the facts put before me to decide to join his church. Furthermore, I discovered that all the drunkards who were my comrades were better people. They had reformed. They looked very smart in appearance. They invested their money in the post office and some even bought nice furniture."

(A Red man)

" When I attended the church I wanted to be healed and eased of my worries. When I had attended the church everything came to my favour: my health was restored; my husband returned to me; my worries were relieved. I noticed that God was the only salvation for me. All other means I had tried to solve my problems, had failed. Only God's ways had succeeded in every respect."

(A Red woman)

Bhengu's message thus appealed to Reds on basically practical grounds: they decided to convert because they were convinced that by so doing they could materially improve themselves in some way. They felt that Bhengu had conclusively demonstrated the power and value of God. In doing this, however, Bhengu had also to convince Reds of the fallacy of their previous beliefs and religious practices. This he achieved with extreme tact. Without ridiculing these beliefs or completely denying their validity, he suggested that their perspective was wrong - that is, while the ancestors may indeed watch over their descendants and while evil spirits and influences might indeed do much harm, all these were subordinate to God. They had themselves seen that whereas sacrifices to the ancestors and appeals to diviners for help had been ineffective in restoring them to health, prayer to God had brought immediate results. By accepting God as supreme, they too could have this "weapon against evil".

" Bhengu talked that day about how the African people were attacked by diseases, and wasting their money and their stock doing sacrifices instead of



praying to God who was above even the ancestors. If they believed in God as they did in their ancestors, and did everything that they were told by the preacher, in the same way as they did everything that was told by the diviners, God would easily solve their problems. God knew everything and was everywhere. He was a terror to all evil. Our ancestors could never do anything against His will. They were subject to Him in everything. So even a sick person could pray to Him with a full belief that He would help him, and God would do so. Some people thought they could cheat God and that after their problems were solved they would have nothing more to do with Him. Such people were, however, mistaken; they were inviting the worst."

To the Red man, therefore, Bhengu's teachings and demonstrations approximated his own conception of religion by emphasising its utilitarian nature. It was a matter of convincing him that its full benefit could be attained only by shifting his allegiance from the ancestors to God. The School man, however, had to be convinced not of the supremacy of God, but of the validity of Christianity as a help in his everyday existence. School people, therefore, were also impressed by Bhengu's demonstrations of healing and the testimonies of his converts. But, whereas to the Reds these were evidence of God's superiority over the ancestors, to School people they were a new approach to Christianity, a revitalisation of a religion which had lost its relevance and in which many had begun to lose faith. Thus a School woman remarks:

" That day Rev. Bhengu was preaching about the power of God in many things that were impossible to men; that everything was possible with Him. He further said that if a person believed in Him all his requests would be answered. The people only prayed to God half-heartedly, but if they prayed with all their hearts, belief, strength and might, God would always show His presence. People who took themselves as Christians made prayers a formality and these prayers did not reach God's ears. I found a lot of guilt in myself in this respect.

" I was convinced by what Bhengu said when on the first day that he prayed for me I felt relieved. Eventually all my domestic troubles were settled and my health was restored. I saw too that many others had been healed by Bhengu - yet they had not obtained such results from their own ministers. Also I found apparent reformation and abandonment of sins by Bhengu's people, and I decided to be his convert to learn the new way of living, and to come back to God."

School people were also impressed with the simplicity of Bhengu's teachings. Unlike most of the established churches repentance was not a process involving many formalities and disciplinary measures, while 'being a Christian' did not involve a long period of instruction and trial until final acceptance as a full member of the church. Bhengu preached that as long as one had sincerely repented, God would know, and the person was saved. Thus, when he was baptised he would be reborn and become a full member of the church.

" Bhengu said that a man who accepts God even after having been a horrible and damnable sinner, could be born again. After being born again he was known as 'saved', and as long as he did not indulge in more sins he was as holy as a new-born babe. This satisfied and convinced me to be one of his followers. I was baptised and hallowed, after my sins were cleansed, by being submerged in water. I was then born again and was accepted as a member of the Assembly."

Bhengu also stressed that he preached only what was written in the Bible, and in his attacks on other churches he referred to many practices which he said were unscriptural: he criticised compulsory dues, the idea that some believers were considered to be spiritually 'superior' to others (this reference was to the Roman and Anglican hierarchies), the wearing of special uniforms by ministers, lay officials and women's church guilds, and numerous other things.

" Bhengu taught that the Assemblies of God believed in following the Bible. It has not got uniforms as these are not laid down by the Bible. Special examinations are not undergone to become full members of the church. Everybody is equal in church - there are no people who are like 'man-gods' like bishops. In other churches one was a good member as long as one paid the dues of the church up to date."

We can see now that while Red and School converts viewed Bhengu's teachings from different points of view, and explained their acceptance and conversion by different reasons, there was one basic aspect of his teachings that accounted for their appeal. Bhengu was not simply offering a promise of future paradise, but was showing them that Christianity, or God's powers as represented in definite rules of behaviour, had very real bearing on their lives because these rules were intimately connected with every aspect of their daily existence.

Another interesting aspect of the conversion situation and one which again reflects the differences between Red and School people, is the time taken between 'being convinced' and actually being converted, and the actual circumstances of conversion. Most Reds, with the exception of those who had already previously belonged to some church, took a fairly long time before being converted. Thus although all admitted that they had been convinced by Bhengu almost immediately, they only 'gave themselves up to Christ' after periods ranging from a month to almost a year. The reason for this was the same in almost all cases. As Mayer (op.cit., p.179) points out: "The special nightmare of [Red] Xhosa peasant families, as has been said, is ukutshipa, absconding - the 'vanishing' of a man in town, leaving his kin at home without money remittances and without news of him. Ukutshipa implies that the individual becomes entirely detached from his old network of relations in the country." While the adoption of School ways and even Christianity may not necessarily lead to the severance of family

ties, it is nevertheless regarded with suspicion and contempt as the first step to itshipa. It is therefore understandable that Red converts were initially reluctant to face the probability, if not certainty, of disrupting their most important social relationships, and of laying themselves open to the ridicule and censure of those closest to them. The following quotation is thus a typical explanation of the delay between conviction and conversion:

" The delay in my enrolment as a member of the church was caused by the fear of being called itshipa. In fact I took a long time to repent and leave my ancestor's customs because I was afraid of doing my own things which differed from my completely Red family. When I finally gave myself up to religion, they blamed me and my wife for bringing ill-luck to the family. They said that our ancestors were to be against us."

Because conversion was not an easy step for them to take, it is not surprising that almost all Reds claim that their actual conversion was marked by Baptism in the Holy Spirit and, in some cases by a dream or vision. In other words, their decisions to convert were related to an intense emotional experience, which they interpreted as a sign from God. Only such divine sanction could provide the final self-justification needed for so serious an action.

" The day I gave myself up I was very inspired. I was moved by something which made me weep. I felt drunk, but I was in my senses. Now that I know the power of prayer, I can say that I was baptised by the Holy Ghost."

" My conversion was caused by seeing the repentance of Beauty, my husband's concubine, and the funny visions I saw that night at home. I dreamt that I was sitting at the entrance of Bhengu's tent, and that there was a river. Some people were sitting on the other side and some were in the water. They looked white and were very beautiful. I wanted to cross, but they pointed to

a man whom they said would lead me across. It was Rev. Bhengu. I went to him and he put his hands on me and prayed for me. I then returned to my home where I found my house full of bags labelled like those used by the Post Office. When I read the labels I saw that they named all my sins: adultery, cruelty, envy, cheating husbands, robbing people of their money. When I woke up I was worried and I was converted."

School people on the other hand took a very much shorter time. Most of them became converts after the first revival meeting which they attended, while the rest took from a few days to a maximum of three months. It is significant, too, that although their decisions were also made under highly emotional circumstances, only about half of those interviewed claim that they had been moved by the Holy Spirit or had had a vision. The rest simply stated that after they had been convinced of the reasonableness of Bhengu's preaching, they decided immediately to become converted. The difference here between Red and School people, is striking but not difficult to understand. The Red had not only to consider changing his focus of belief from ancestors to God, but he had also to face a consequent change in every aspect of his life including the likelihood of disrupting relations with those to whom he was most closely attached. The School person, however, was simply called upon to accept a new (and, to the convert, reasonable) interpretation of something in which he already believed, and which was in keeping with already accepted - if not heretofore practised - ideals and values.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSEMBLY: ITS CHARACTERISTICS

In the previous chapter we described the process of recruitment to the Assembly in terms of the Red/School dichotomy amongst the Eastern Cape Xhosa. In the present chapter we propose to examine the membership in terms of specific criteria to determine how far it is representative of the population from which it was drawn and to what extent it differs from that of other local churches.

Qualifications for Membership

As we have already noted (Part I, Ch.4), conversion alone does not generally qualify a person for membership of any of the major churches in East London. The prospective member must first serve a period of probation, complete a special course of instruction and pass a test of scriptural and doctrinal knowledge before his admission to full membership will be considered. The Assembly, however, differs significantly from this approach: the only requirement from a prospective member is his expressed conviction of having been 'saved'. The procedure thereafter is simple. The new convert proves his sincerity by publicly confessing his sins and by giving detailed testimony of the circumstances of his conversion. Prayers are offered on his behalf by the congregation, and he is accepted as a full-member. Until 1952, converts were baptised at mass ceremonies, but although this sacrament is still regarded as an essential stage of conversion, neither mass nor individual baptisms have been performed since that time. No distinction is made, however, between baptised and unbaptised members, although some informants have pointed out that an unbaptised person 'would have shame' to preach or to assist in administering the

sacraments.

The effects of these differences in approach are interesting. In the churches where instruction and examination are prerequisites for membership, there generally exists a considerable body of 'non-full-members'. These include not only probationers, but adherents who have either failed to qualify or have never made the effort*. In the Assembly, on the other hand, there is only one category of membership, and there are therefore few Africans in East London claiming allegiance, who are not also active members. At the same time, since adherence can date only from 1950, this precludes the existence of a large body of adherents who 'were born into the church'. At the present time, then, it may be assumed that all adherents of the Assembly are also full and active members.

Sex and Age

Referring to Tables VIII and IX we find that neither the age nor sex distributions of the Assembly membership are representative of the population as a whole, in that there is a greater proportion of older people on the one hand, and of women on the other. Figures for the Order of Ethiopia, and interviews with ministers of other local religious bodies, however, indicate that in both respects this imbalance is generally typical of the active adherence of most churches. Explaining the predominance of older people in church - or rather the small proportion of young men and women - most informants agree that it can be ascribed largely to the strong counter-attraction exerted on the latter by non-religious activities in town, and by the attitude of many that the Church with its strict regulation of behaviour is for "people who have already had a good time". Thus, in the East Bank at any

* This was illustrated in Table VII, Part I.

rate, it seems that only as a person becomes more mature and settled, does he or she tend to seek the more sober and respectable associational life of the Church.

TABLE VIII Sex structure of membership of East London Assembly

	M A L E S		F E M A L E S		T O T A L		MALES PER 100 FEMALES
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
E.L.Assembly	223	29	544	71	767	100	41
Order of Ethiopia, E.L.	21	23	72	77	93	100	29
Port Elizabeth Assembly	23	30	53	70	76	100	43
East Bank Population, E.L.	-	52	-	48	-	100	106
East Bank School Pop.	-	-	-	-	-	-	88

TABLE IX. Age structure of membership of East London Assembly

	P E R C E N T A G E S															
	16 to 24				25 to 39				40 plus				Unknown			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
MALE	9	17	-	23	52	33	35	45	35	50	56	32	4	-	9	-
FEMALE	25	11	15	29	33	21	23	42	40	62	51	29	2	4	11	-
TOTAL	20	12	11	27	39	25	26	44	38	60	53	29	3	3	10	-

(NOTE: A= East London Assembly; B= East London Order of Ethiopia; C= Port Elizabeth Assembly; D= East Bank Location.)

The greater participation of women in church affairs is explained in similar terms: whereas men are both interested and free to take part in a variety of leisure-time activities such as sport, beer-drinks, political organisations, etc., women are not only less interested in these things but are often prevented by their husbands from participating in them. It is, therefore,

not that women are necessarily more religiously inclined than men, say informants, but that apart from the church they have fewer leisure opportunities which are in keeping with popular concepts of respectability.

Although, as we have pointed out, there is an overall similarity between the age and sex distributions of members of the Assembly and active adherents of other churches, it is our impression through observation that the imbalance is less marked in the Assembly. Thus on several visits to the Methodist Church, for example, we found that although there appeared to be a relatively large number of young people who attended services regularly, less than a quarter of the congregation were men. A visit to the Congregational Union revealed an even greater predominance of women and a far smaller proportion of young people - despite the fact that communion was to be celebrated at the service. Thus while we lack further comparative figures, we suggest that the situation in the Order of Ethiopia, as reflected in Tables VIII and IX, is close to average.

Comparing the Order of Ethiopia with the East London Assembly, we find that the proportion of males is almost 50% higher in the latter, and that this ratio is similar to that in the Port Elizabeth Assembly. The reason for the success of the two assemblies in maintaining a relatively large proportion of active male members has not, however, emerged clearly from the results of the present study, and can only be regarded as further evidence of the universality of Bhengu's original appeal.

The age structure of the two East London churches also differs significantly. The Assembly has 75% more members than the Order in the youngest age-group, 50% more in the middle group, and almost two-thirds less in the oldest. Further comparison between the two churches shows that while 50% of

members of the Assembly are under 35 years old, the median age in the Order is over 45. It is interesting that in this respect, the Port Elizabeth Assembly resembles the Order of Ethiopia more closely than it does its East London counterpart, and it is this fact which suggests a possible explanation of the youthfulness of the East London Assembly.

During the eight years of its existence, the membership of the East London Assembly has neither noticeably declined nor been subject to any marked turnover, as reflected in the fact that we have found few 'ex-members' and few who profess allegiance without also being active members. The Port Elizabeth Assembly has, however, experienced both. In its early years, from about 1945-1949, the Port Elizabeth Assembly had a membership of over five hundred, but today, its adherence is estimated at some two hundred less, while the average adult attendance at Sunday afternoon services is about one hundred and fifty. If the results of a survey, conducted after one of these services, can be taken as representative of the present adherence, we find that about sixty percent had been members during the period 1945-1949 - or, in other words, only about 40% of the original converts are still adherents today. Of these only 8% were under 25 years old when they joined, which - if we accept the probability that Bhengu originally converted a much higher proportion of Port Elizabeth youth - would indicate a marked drift by younger people over the years. It is also significant that of those adherents who joined the Assembly since 1949, only a further 8% were under 25 at conversion. In the Port Elizabeth Assembly, like the Order of Ethiopia, therefore, active membership and adherence do not correspond, while in both cases young adherents are largely nominal.

In the East London Assembly, however, Bhengu has maintained close contact with the congregation throughout its existence. Although therefore active evangelisation is no longer its main activity, it has not entirely lost the

evangelistic zeal which characterised its early days. While therefore, recruitment has declined, the interest of the membership has been maintained, and if we take into account the fact that at conversion approximately 34% of the members were under 25 years old while a further 13% were under 30 (see Table X), it is understandable why the median age of the East London Assembly is considerably lower than those of either the Order of Ethiopia or the Port Elizabeth congregation.

TABLE X Age at conversion X date of conversion: E.L. Assembly

AGE AT CONVERSION	1950 - 51	1952 - 54	1955 - 1957	Total
16 - 24	90	62	85	237
% age	22%	44%	61%	34%
25 - 29	60	17	17	94
% age	14%	12%	12%	13%
30 - 34	68	17	10	95
% age	16%	12%	7%	14%
35 - 39	53	15	6	74
% age	13%	11%	4%	11%
40 plus	147	30	22	199
% age	35%	21%	16%	28%
TOTAL	418	141	140	699
% age	100%	100%	100%	100%

(Present age and/or date of conversion Unknown: 68. Total Sample: 767)

It should be noted, however, that the median age of the East London Assembly is gradually rising. This is due to the decline in recruitment, and to the natural ageing of the present membership, as well as to the fact that a large proportion of members have children who are too young to become members themselves, or are old enough to have adult children who, if they are not already members, are not necessarily potentially so. Thus

while in 1950/1 and 1952/4 the median age of the membership was 33 years, it had risen to 35 by 1957.

Inasmuch as we are able to make any prediction as to the future age structure, we would say that the median age will continue to rise gradually unless the trend is arrested by regular large-scale recruitment of young people, and/or as the number of members' children who themselves become members is large enough not only to replace those moving into the 25 - 29 age bracket, but also to counteract the general effect of ageing on the membership. If, however, the Assembly begins to lose its hold on young people by failing to maintain their interest, its age structure will rapidly come to resemble more closely that of the other churches discussed.

Education

It was found both in East London and in Port Elizabeth that the Assembly was popularly regarded as a 'low-class' church from the educational point of view, and our own survey has tended to confirm this impression. Referring then to Table XI, we see that in East London the Assembly has the third highest semiliteracy/illiteracy rate, the lowest proportion of members having received a Std. III-VI education, and, together with the Bantu Presbyterian Church, the third lowest proportion of members with a secondary school education.

TABLE XI Educational standard of members of East London Assembly - Percentages

Denomination	Standard of Education		
	0 - II	III - VI	VII plus
Assembly (School)	16	65	13
Assembly (Red)	63	18	1.5
Assembly (Total)	30	51	9
Methodist *	20	65	16
Bantu Presbyterian *	20	71	9
Anglican *	16	62	22
Congregational Union *	21	70	8
Roman Catholic *	33	56	13
Bantu Baptist *	25	58	17
Other Recognised *	29	58	13
Non-recognised *	34	62	5
Church Average *	25	61	12
East Bank Reds *	85	15	0.5
East Bank Total Population*	35	53	11
Port Elizabeth Assembly	37	55	8

We must, however, bear in mind that like the Roman Catholic Church and the non-recognised sects, a large proportion of the Assembly's members were formerly Red, a factor which has tended to lower the overall educational standard. If, however, we compare School converts with the adherence of other churches, we find that they rank above average. At the same time, however, there are few converts who have progressed beyond the lowest

* From Reader (1961). See Appendix C.

limit of the highest educational category, while there are no professionals or University graduates. This elite appears to be concentrated mainly in the three largest churches in East London, viz. the Methodist, Anglican and Presbyterian churches, while Bhengu himself admits that he has been unable to influence these people.

Apart from Red converts whom we have already discussed in this connection it appears that education had little to do with joining the Assembly. As the table above shows, each group of converts is fairly representative of the population category from which it was drawn, while the overall educational standard of the Assembly closely resembles that of the total population. As we have mentioned, however, the Assembly has recruited no members from the highest educational levels. This is partly due to the nature of the Assembly and partly to factors independent of it. In the first place, although a large proportion of East London Africans owe what education they have received directly or indirectly to the efforts and encouragement of the mission churches, the better educated Africans have tended to drift away from church life. Not only do they not participate in the activities of the churches to which they claim nominal allegiance, but they have built up a wall of sophistication and indifference to Christianity which is almost impenetrable. Thus not only do the ministers of established churches complain of the apathy of educated adherents, but new churches have little hope of reviving their interest. From the outset, then, it was unlikely that Bhengu would be able to convert any of these people. In any case, however, many educated Africans criticise and ridicule the beliefs and practices of the Assembly. They consider Bhengu's 'social teachings' - which they regard as the only significant difference between the Assembly and other churches - as naive, while his anti-political stand is regarded as a 'sell-out'.*

* See Chapter on Beliefs and Teachings

They also object to the emotionalism of services, the near-deification of Bhengu, and the evangelistic zeal of converts which they find embarrassing and distasteful. Apart from this class of African, however, education does not appear to have affected the likelihood or otherwise of conversion and joining the Assembly.

Occupation and Wages

TABLE XII Employment of male members of the Assembly - Percentages

Type of Employment	Assembly	East London
Unskilled Workers	46.6	75.1
Semiskilled/Skilled Workers	48.6	19.4
Clerical Workers	(0.6)	2.3
Self-employed, managers, officials	5.1	1.6
Professionals	(1.1)	1.6
Total number in sample employed	177	1223

(NOTE: Classification of jobs into Types of Employment according to Houghton (1960), pp.226/7. Figures for East London population from same source, Table 126)

TABLE XIII Weekly wages of male members of Assembly - Percentages

	Under £2.5	£2.5.to £3.9.11	£3.10.to £3.19.11	£4 and over	Unknown	Total Sample
Assembly	5.4	47.1	12.1	20.2	15.2	223
E.L.Population	15.29	71.13	4.82	6.63	-	-

(NOTE: Figures for East London Population from Houghton (1960), Table 129)

Comparing the occupations and wages of male members of the Assembly with that of a sample of the East Bank population (see Tables XII and XIII), it is interesting to note the large proportions of converts in both the higher employment and wage categories. Unfortunately, it was not ascertained whether better employment or wages had been secured after joining the Assembly*, although there is a strong possibility that this was, to some extent, the case. During the early years of the Assembly, Bhengu conducted a large scale programme of obtaining employment for his converts. He was able to convince European employers that his converts would make particularly trustworthy and reliable employees, and his claims were supported by the publicity given to his conversion of criminals and drunkards. At the same time he taught his converts that it was only through honesty and reliability that they could hope to obtain and hold the better paid jobs, which in turn was the only means to greater economic security for themselves and their families. It was also an important facet of his teaching that converts should not drink, or smoke and that stealing, even from a European (which as we saw before, p.31, is not considered by most Africans to be morally wrong) was against the commandments of the Bible. He also advised them against frequently changing employment since they could only hope to advance economically through faithful service to one employer. It is thus highly probable that many members were able to obtain better jobs as a result of his intercession with employers and to maintain them through the application of his teachings.

* Questions on this point elicited vague and contradictory answers from which no valid conclusions could be drawn. It was also not possible to obtain accurate information regarding Bhengu's early employment programme as there were, apparently, no written records, nor could officials of the Assembly give any details.

Summary and Conclusions

Probably the most important fact which emerges from our survey of the membership of the East London Assembly is that the largest proportion was recruited from the nominal adherence of other churches and from the Red section of the population. For most of these people, as we have seen, the decision to become converts and to join the Assembly was based largely on practical, rather than on purely religious, considerations. Thus the numerous personal testimonies quoted, stress their authors' need to escape from unhappiness or ill-health and their belief that Bhengu's message held the promise of a solution. The realization of this promise, however, did not simply entail the shifting of allegiance from one church to another which differed only in detail - as is the case with most Ethiopian-type churches described by Sundkler. Rather, joining the Assembly, like the Zionist and similar sects, meant the acceptance of new standards of living and a new orientation towards Christianity, and just for that reason was rejected by most practising Christians. The fact that the membership of the Assembly was recruited largely from amongst the backsliders and pagans who were seeking desparately a solution to personal problems, has to a large extent determined the character of the East London Assembly: the special reverence and affection accorded to Bhengu, the zeal and devotion with which members conduct their affairs, and the strong sense of communal solidarity.

C H A P T E R F I V E

THE MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE OF THE ASSEMBLY

THE HIERARCHY OF OFFICIALS

All the assemblies of the Bhengu Movement rely to some extent on Bhengu for the appointment and supervision of ministers and lay officials as well as for guidance and advice in dealing with major undertakings or particularly difficult problems. But whereas in most assemblies Bhengu represents external authority, in East London his involvement is far more direct and intimate.

The reason for this is largely circumstantial. Due to the unprecedented size of the East London Assembly, Bhengu initially remained there for considerably longer than usual. For the same reason, he maintained close contact with it and control over its affairs, even after a resident minister had been appointed. For all practical purposes, too, East London became his own headquarters, since most of his time between Crusades was spent there. Nevertheless, it is probable, that had the Assembly had an able and reliable minister, Bhengu would have gradually transferred control of the Assembly to him. The first minister, however, was dismissed for misconduct just over a year after his appointment, while subsequent ministers were clearly unable to supervise on their own so large an assembly.

In East London, therefore, Bhengu has assumed many of the duties of a local minister. When in town, he usually organises and conducts services, presides over meetings of elders and deacons, initiates new projects and introduces any

changes or innovations on which he may decide. He also comes to East London when important services or functions are to be held, may officiate at weddings, and alone may organise baptismal ceremonies or celebrate communion. He must approve all decisions made by the local minister and officials. He is kept informed of all the activities of the Assembly and its progress during his absence, and negotiates with the authorities in matters affecting the Assembly. It is therefore not surprising that Bhengu is regarded as the actual minister of the Assembly and the resident ministers only as his assistants.

The resident ministers have, however, fulfilled an important role in the East London Assembly, since without them it is unlikely that during Bhengu's prolonged absences the lay officials would have been able to control and maintain the vitality of so large a congregation. In fact even in smaller African assemblies (both within and outside the Bhengu movement) the appointment of resident ministers has been considered almost essential, despite the belief that an assembly is religiously and structurally complete under the leadership of its elders and deacons. This is due to the generally low educational level and limited Scriptural knowledge of African adherents as compared with whites, so that although African officials may be as able as their White counterparts, they often lack the necessary background to assume full responsibility for the spiritual and material welfare of their assemblies. This is certainly true of the East London Assembly, most of whose three thousand members were formerly either Red or merely nominal Christians. It is clear that this situation particularly demanded the guidance of men who were not only gifted and trained for the ministry, but who also had a relatively superior education.

It is the resident minister, then, who in Bhengu's absence ensures the smooth running of the Assembly. He organises, conducts and preaches at services; helps congregants to understand the Scriptures and the beliefs of the church; organises revivals in and around East London; officiates at funerals and weddings; arranges special prayer meetings; sees that the sick and bereaved are visited, and makes prayers for them; encourages members who appear to be losing faith; and generally supervises the spiritual life of the congregation. At the same time he presides over meetings of elders and deacons, and over business meetings of the whole Assembly; assists the elders in maintaining discipline and settling disputes; and checks the financial records to ensure that they are properly kept. He also, together with the elders, represents the Assembly at conferences and other meetings, while he is the link between Bhengu and the congregation.

Since, ideally, the resident minister should concern himself purely with the spiritual life of the Assembly, rather than direct its organisational machinery, one of his most important tasks is to train the local lay officials to perform their duties efficiently, since it is they who should constitute the actual and permanent leadership. There is no doubt that both Bhengu and his assistants have achieved a measure of success in this respect. Most of the elders and deacons were appointed in 1953 at about the time when the Assembly was officially established. They were selected by Bhengu, not on the basis of education or experience but for what he regarded as their gifts of leadership, so that only one had previously held a church position, while of the rest several were formerly pagans. At the ceremony at which the officials were appointed each nominee was proposed to the Assembly by Bhengu, who explained the basis of their selection and the necessity for their unanimous acceptance by the congregation. He also

explained that although the Scriptures provided for seven each permanently appointed elders and deacons, he had nominated a large number (in 1957 there were a total of twenty-five) because of the youth and size of the Assembly and because the people were still not well-known to him. They would hold their positions for an indefinite trial period until he felt that a final selection could be made and appointments confirmed for life. When all the officials had been approved, Bhengu preached about the qualities they should possess and admonished them to perform their duties well. He also urged the congregation to facilitate their work by respecting and obeying them. The service was concluded with a prayer for the new officials.

Normally the duty of elders is similar to that which now falls to the resident minister: that is to control and co-ordinate the affairs of the Assembly. In East London, however, they are in effect assistant ministers, helping the minister with the spiritual work of the congregation. They assist in organising, conducting and preaching at services, and substitute for the minister when he is absent; they assist in organising local revivals, prayer meetings and street preaching; and they visit and pray for the sick. The elders do, however, assume the main responsibility for the maintenance of discipline. They are expected to be ever watchful for members who are lax in attending services or those who are losing faith or have fallen into temptation, and for any disputes between members which might have unfavourable repercussions. They visit such people, admonish and pray for them, making every effort to help them. Particularly serious cases, however, are reported to the minister who raises them at a meeting of the board of elders. This board, which comprises all the elders and is presided over by the minister, is supposed to meet regularly once or twice a week. Together with the

board of deacons it should constitute the highest tribunal of the Assembly - although in practice, its decisions are always subject to Bhengu's confirmation.

The function of the deacons is primarily to manage the financial and routine affairs of the Assembly. Although they have no authority to decide on the use of church funds, it is their collective responsibility to receive, count and check all contributions, to ensure that the money is properly banked, and to safeguard it against unauthorised disbursement. Deacons are also responsible for the maintenance and cleanliness of church property and places of worship, for ushering and for maintaining good order during services. In addition to these primary duties deacons also act as aides to the elders: running errands, assisting in the Assembly's office, and reporting anything that should be brought to the elders' notice. They are also required to collect contributions from members who are unable to attend services and to inform them of any important announcements made in church. They must be prepared, too, to offer their services to members who may require help in any way. The deacons' board meets regularly to plan ushering arrangements and the apportionment of other tasks.

Conclusions

Although theoretically the range of each official's responsibility and authority is fairly clearly defined, and the organisation of the Assembly may therefore be assumed to be routinised and well-ordered, in reality this is not so. There is considerable overlap in the activities of the various officials, while it is quite common to find elders performing deacons' duties, and vice versa. Thus one deacon states that he does the work of an elder by visiting and praying for members living in the same area as himself, while an elder listed as part of his duties "to look after the order in church,

see that worshippers were properly seated, open the doors of the church, put the chairs in order and fix up the loudspeakers". In the same way, although each area of the location is the responsibility of a specific elder and deacon, officials operate freely throughout the location.*

The manner in which the Assembly conducts its business is also extremely fluid. Meetings of elders' and deacons' boards are irregular; business meetings of the whole Assembly, which should be held monthly, are infrequent, and often organised without prior notification; disputes and disciplinary cases are dealt with in an unpredictable variety of ways; and programmes for services and special activities are often indefinite and subject to on-the-spot alterations. Although this lack of order is not peculiar to the Assembly, but is to a degree characteristic of most African churches and associations, it does appear to us that in the Assembly it is particularly marked. This is probably due to its dependence on Bhengu, so that his prolonged absences make the smooth running of the Assembly extremely difficult. Furthermore, his visits are often unannounced or at short notice, and demand changes in normal activities. It also frequently occurs that visits are cancelled, postponed or cut short and that Bhengu may at the last moment decide to change previous arrangements made on his instructions. Often, too, implementation of decisions by the board of elders, initiation of projects, and disbursement of funds are held up pending his approval and ratification. Nevertheless, despite the somewhat informal and lackadaisical

* Various parts of the location are known to the inhabitants by different names (e.g. Gomoro, Mekeni, Moriva, New Brighton, etc.). When the elders and deacons of the Assembly were appointed one of their tasks was to look after members living in the same areas as themselves. This will, however, be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

approach and the difficulties occasioned by Bhengu's absence, the organisational machinery of the Assembly does - as we shall see in subsequent discussions - appear to be effective, if not efficient.

FINANCE

As the largest of the Bhengu assemblies, East London is not only expected to be self-supporting, but also to bear the brunt of the expenses incurred by the Back to God Crusade as well as render assistance to newer and smaller assemblies. To give some idea of its monthly budget, the running expenses of the Assembly during 1957 included among other items rental of the local non-European cinema (where services were held), maintenance of various vehicles, stipends to the minister and secretary, bursaries to Bible School students, support of sick and aged members. In addition to this, over a period of seven years, an average of about £150 per month was collected towards the building of the Assembly's £27,000 church (opened officially on Boxing Day 1957), and a farm near Peddie was purchased.* It is not surprising, therefore, that the total monthly collections often amounted to over £500.

As we have already noted, the actual handling of the Assembly's funds is the collective responsibility of the deacons although the books are kept by the secretary and minister. Normal financial procedure is for collections at services to be placed in bags and publicly handed to the deacons who, after counting and checking, announce the proceeds to the congregation.

*The purchase of this farm for settlement by members of the Assembly is also mentioned by Dr. Schlosser (op.cit., p.46), but it would appear that, like myself, she was unable to get any details. Whether the farm and its purpose have been abandoned, or whether they are now a closely kept secret, therefore, I am unable to say.

The money is then entrusted to the minister for safe-keeping overnight, and the following day it is again checked and banked. Once banked - and there are several separate accounts (building fund, expense fund, Crusade) - it can only be withdrawn by the appointed signatories of whom Bhengu is one. Use of Assembly funds is determined by the board of elders and deacons subject to Bhengu's approval, while regular statements are given to the Assembly. The whole Assembly is also consulted before any particularly large expenditure is planned.

Members' Attitudes to the Financial Demands of the Assembly

Unlike most churches, the Assembly has no fixed or compulsory dues, all donations being voluntary and, most, anonymous. Furthermore, while in many churches privileges such as participation in communion and the right to burial by a minister depend to some extent on having subscriptions up to date and entered on a membership card, in the Assembly contributing to church funds bears no relation to membership rights. This is consistent with Bhengu's criticism during the Crusade, that it seemed as if it was the attitude of many churches that entry to heaven could be secured only through payment of fees, and that this had led to the denial of Christian rights to the old, disabled and unemployed.

It is clear, then, that whereas individual attitudes to giving are incidental in churches relying on enforced minimal support, these attitudes are extremely important in the Assembly if it is to meet its financial needs. It is therefore not surprising that its members explain their response to its appeals in the following terms:

" I feel very proud to spend so much money in church, for I use the money for God's work. After all, God gives me all I possess, and is there to help me when I am in difficulties."

" I spend a lot of money in church because the very strength I have is from God, and the money is a gift from Him. The more I give to God's work, the more luck I get from the Creator."

This is particularly significant in the light of the admission by many converts that they had originally received the impression from Bhengu's attacks on the financial practices of other churches, that in the Assembly they would be considerably relieved of the burden of contributing to church funds. It is interesting, therefore, that when Bhengu did eventually appeal for funds, they not only responded willingly, but were prepared to meet even greater demands than were ever made on them formerly.* They explain, however, that the Assembly is justified in making such demands and that, furthermore, they are better able to afford more liberal contributions now, than they were before.

Enlarging on the latter statement, members point out that previously they had spent much of their earnings on liquor, tobacco, dancing, cinemas and other worldly pleasures, while former pagans add to these, the expense of consulting diviners and herbalists, and pagan sacrifices. Since joining the Assembly, however, they no longer wasted their money on these un-Christian things, and were therefore considerably better off financially. They now used it to buy essentials for themselves

* A rough idea of the extent to which members of the Assembly contribute, as compared with contributions of members of a dues-collecting church (the Order of Ethiopia), is conveyed in the table below:

Contributions to Church as percentage of Earnings

	up to 5%	5 - 10%	10% +	Unknown	Total
Assembly	8%	15%	34%	43%	100%
Ord.of Ethiopia	63%	8%	10%	19%	100%

and to support the work of the church whose teachings, they feel, are responsible for their new-found affluence.

" Before I joined Bhengu's church I spent my money on cigarettes, brandy, kaffir-beer, tea-parties (a sort of drinking club), and buying presents for my boy-friends. I consulted witch-doctors and herbalists on whom I wasted too much money. I now spend my money buying good clothes for my family, good things to decorate my house and on church affairs. I give some to my husband who makes a small saving at the Post Office."

" I spend more money at Bhengu's church than what I did at my former church. At the same time I do not feel it, for I have more money since I do not spend it as extravagantly as I did before."

The maintenance of these positive attitudes - which are so essential to the success and stability of a financial system such as that of the Assembly - clearly depends on the degree to which members feel that its demands are justified. While most Christians accept the support of their churches as a religious obligation and practical necessity, there are members of many churches who at times express dissatisfaction with the use to which their contributions are put and with the manner in which money is handled. Although they may demonstrate their displeasure by refusing to donate free-will offerings or to respond to special appeals, they cannot withhold their membership dues, unless they are prepared to forfeit some of their rights. On the other hand similar dissatisfaction in the Assembly, could well lead to financial breakdown. It is interesting, therefore, to compare what members of other churches say about the use and management of funds, with what members of the Assembly say:

(i) The use of Church Funds:

" I cannot say that all monies demanded by the church are necessary, for out of all the big amounts contributed by each member we are not sure how the money is spent. There is money sent to other countries for a reason I cannot tell, instead of being used in improving our own facilities in this southern side of the world."

(An Anglican manyano* women)

" Bhengu's church differs from my former church in the way money is handled and used. In the Assembly, each and every penny is announced in church, whereas in my former church it was very unholy to enquire about money once it was in the hands of the treasurer or minister."

(A female member of the Assembly)

" I have used a lot of money for church affairs: more than ever before. Although I had seen people contributing in my previous church, they had never done it as it is done in our church. This is because in our church members have pride in doing their own things, and can see the fruit of their labour."

(A female member of the Assembly)

(ii) The handling of Church Funds:

" I agree that all the money we contribute in church has its part to play in church affairs. The only snag which makes many a church person to complain about church dues is their abuse by treasurers and higher authorities. This has happened at times in our church. Recently I was dissatisfied by the behaviour of our minister who made our church a centre of laughter. He disappointed everyone by misusing church funds and refusing to submit financial statements to the church committee. Many people nearly left our church as a result."

(A member of the Order of Ethiopia)

* A church guild - in this case the Mothers' Union. Almost all African churches have these guilds.

" Of course I am spending more money at this new church than I did in my previous one. This greater expenditure is necessary to support the projects for which the church aims. In this church there is no squandering of church coffers by officials whereas in my previous church there was a lot of misappropriation of funds, even by the minister."

(A male member of the Assembly)

Fundamentally, then, the financial structure of the Assembly depends on the positive attitude of its membership towards generous giving. This attitude has, in turn, been fostered and maintained by the conviction that the church is engaged in doing 'God's work', and the fact that members consider their financial position enhanced as a result of joining the church. Contributors also feel that they can 'see the fruit of their labour', while they also have complete faith in the honesty and trustworthiness of officials. The extent to which these attitudes are translated into actual support, however, depends on fund-raising methods and techniques.

Fund-raising Techniques

The Assembly raises money to finance its undertakings through tithes, collections and specific economic activities. We shall now describe the various methods employed and the techniques used to ensure that each member contributes his full share.

Because of its scriptural origin, tithes are regarded as one of the most important forms of contribution in the Assembly and, as in the quotation below, members are constantly urged not to neglect this obligation. The following is an extract from a sermon by the resident minister:

" The main contribution for a Christian should be tithes. People who fail to pay their tithes will be very unfortunate. You must remember that tithes are actually mentioned in the Bible. If you are earning two pounds, you must know that four shillings is not yours. If people lose faith in paying tithes, it shows that they have also lost faith in the Word of God. If you stopped paying tithes, the Assembly would very soon dwindle. Pay your tithes and you would not have to blame God for misfortune. Do not be miserly. This makes me think of my location in the country where there was a very rich man. He used to go and pick up the grains of maize where they were threshed so as not to lose any. He would never slaughter for his children, and the only meat they got was from animals that had died. After a while God took away all his possessions for he had no use for them. If you are very stingy, you are the enemies of God who is very generous."

Though there is no compulsion, the majority of members do contribute a tenth of their earnings fairly consistently, despite the hardship entailed, and the proceeds make up a large proportion of the Assembly's income. Contributions are collected weekly, since most of the men receive their pay each Friday, and the name of each donor and his donation are recorded. The money is banked in a special account, which is used to cover the minister's stipend and other normal running expenses.

In addition to the tithes, free-will offerings are also contributed at the services. Offerings are usually solicited for several funds, and these are always collected, checked and banked separately. While occasionally, when there is not much time, collections are taken in bags passed along each row of worshippers, the normal procedure is extremely

lengthy. Elders and deacons take up positions at the front of the church, and for each collection members of the congregation file past depositing their contributions in the bags. The procession is always headed by the young girls, followed by the young men, the married women and finally the married men. Throughout this procedure the congregation chants one or two favourite hymns over and over again, and the procession takes on the appearance of a shuffling single-file dance as the people move and sway to the rhythm of the chanting. After all the collections have been taken, the minister or an elder makes a short prayer of thanksgiving. The proceeds are added up and, later on in the service, the totals for each collection are announced.

This procedure seems to be peculiar to the Assembly, not having been observed in any other church in East London. When the minister was asked why such a time-consuming method was used, he explained that it was the most effective way of ensuring that each member of the congregation actually did contribute. If bags were simply passed down the rows, non-contributors could get away unnoticed, he explained. The system used, however, made this extremely difficult since with each category being called upon separately - i.e. young women, young men, etc. - a person who did not join the procession would be conspicuous and thus be ashamed of being regarded as ungenerous. Furthermore, as the proceeds from each category were separately announced for every collection, a certain amount of competition between them was fostered.

At special services, and particularly when Bhengu is presiding, this spirit of competition is even more openly exploited. Although this type of competitive giving has been

observed in other churches both by this and at least one other investigator,* it is nevertheless extremely interesting, being peculiar to the African Church, and we describe below two examples:

- (i) The 'Exodus' from the Springbok Cinema to the new Assembly Building 27/X/1957

After all the guests had handed over contributions from their assemblies, Rev. Bhengu and Rev. Mxeko took off their jackets and ran from their table towards the audience, each waving a five pound note. Facing the audience they shouted: "This is a challenge. If there is one man who will contribute a pound note we will leave these fivers on the table!" The men literally jumped out of their seats, and even the most raggedly-dressed ran towards the table waving one, two and three pound notes. Meanwhile Bhengu teased and cajoled the congregation, laughing at those who had not come forward. Gradually he reduced the amount to ten shillings, five shillings, half-a-crown, and finally sixpence until practically everyone had somehow met the 'challenge'. When everyone had finished he asked a visiting choir to sing a few hymns while the proceeds were being checked. He later announced that a total of over £400 had been collected during the service.

- (ii) One of a series of special services conducted by Bhengu, to which representatives from other assemblies had been requested to bring contributions towards the local building fund. 24/V/1959.

"Now we have come to the time when we have to hear from our guests from Port Elizabeth what they have in hand for us I request these people to come to the stage." When they had all done so, Bhengu invited each one in turn to address the congregation. The first to speak was the representative of the Port Elizabeth women: "I greet you in the name of the Lord. I have got something entrusted to me by the women of Port Elizabeth. That thing is inside the bag. I do not know what it is. The bag is locked and we will see when it is opened. I have said

* See Pauw (op.cit.), p.p.101f

that the thing in this bag is not known to me. I tried to open this bag but I failed. I do not know who has got the key for the bag amongst us. I am sure what is in here is something good and precious. If I could, I would open it now so that we could see it. But the bag is locked. Anyone who is keen to see it will show himself. Amen."

A succession of speakers followed, all speaking in similar vein and all making reference to the bags which they could not open. Meanwhile the congregation had become increasingly excited as they speculated on the contents of the bags. When all the guests had finished, Bhengu addressed the congregation: "The time is quite limited for we are in a hurry. The minister of the Port Elizabeth Assembly has said that the key to open the bag is with the people. He said this thing is locked and you must produce the key. We will use only silver money and paper money to open it. Now I am making a mistake; he said that there is no silver in here, (he shakes the bag) and that you could hear. There is no silver, there is no copper; there is only paper money. I do not know how much we will have to open it. We must open this bag with money that is more than it contains. (People cry amen). I said that there is paper money here, so let us start by contributing paper money."

After the people had made their contributions, Bhengu asked Rev. Qobo to announce the total contribution for the key. "It is £82. It is not even £100. Let us return the bag to Port Elizabeth." (The people shout No!) Bhengu then said: "This amount is too little. We are only short of £18 to make up £100. We are going to return this bag unopened. Let us leave it now and open it tonight when we have covered a £100. (The congregation protests loudly) We will open it then if there are some with shillings to make up £100. They must put up their hands. (He counts the hands). Where are the men of this place? Please come forward with your shillings." The people were, by then, very excited and began to contribute shillings. When Rev. Qobo announced the total as £86, Bhengu asked one of the men from Port Elizabeth to open the bag. "I greet you again in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," he began. "I am thankful now

because I have got the key. (He starts to open the bag, and Bhengu tiptoes behind him and looks over his shoulder. The people laugh. The man looks behind him and hides the cheque. Bhengu tiptoes quickly back to his place in great excitement. He sits down and laughs. The man continues:) It is two hundred and ten pounds in the bag! (The congregation applauds enthusiastically, some stamping their feet shouting Amen, Halleluja). I am also surprised for I thought you had surpassed us. But I am going to thank you for supplying the key. Here is one pound."

Another direct method of raising money - although no longer in use - was through Group Services, the idea of which was conceived soon after the building fund was launched. Originally Bhengu had suggested the imposition of a monthly levy of £1 for men and 10/- for women. Although this succeeded to some extent, however, many who could not afford it stayed away from church when the levy was collected, while others objected in principle to a fixed contribution. The Group Services were then introduced as an alternative. These were nightly prayer meetings, one each being held for men and women in each part of the location. Because the time and venue of services was arranged to suit the needs of congregants in the area, everyone had the opportunity of participating, while at the same time it was comparatively easy for elders and deacons to check on those who were remiss. Each group had an elected chairman, secretary and treasurer, and these were changed fairly frequently to give as many as possible an opportunity to hold office.* Meetings were opened with a prayer, those who wished could then testify and preach, hymns were sung, and finally the collections were taken. "The advantages of the

* The Group Services and, as we shall see, talents and bazaars also provide numerous opportunities for leadership. This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

group services," explained one member, "were that everybody was able to attend, although normally it may have been difficult for many to come to church every night. In this way the building fund was kept going all the time. Also since contributions were not fixed and even threepence would be accepted, nobody was shy to stand up and contribute whatever they could, whereas previously many people had avoided going to church at month-ends because they had not been able to pay the levies."

The amounts contributed at the Group Services were recorded and the total takings for each were announced weekly in church, so that there existed a keen spirit of competition between men and women and between the various areas of the location.

The Assembly also increases its revenue by means of a system called 'talents', and by holding bazaars. The first of these is a regular activity. A woman who wishes to participate goes to the Assembly's office and receives a sum of money, say five shillings, which she must try to increase by buying and selling, by making articles for sale or by any other legitimate means. After a stipulated period, the capital and profits are returned to the office. In this way, by using her 'talents', a woman may increase an initial outlay of a few shillings to as many pounds.

The bazaars are simply a wider application of the 'talent' system. The location is divided into areas each having a secretary and treasurer. Amounts ranging from £6 to £10 are taken from the office by each group and this is used to buy articles or materials that can be expected to yield some profit. Each area organises its own bazaar at a specific time

and place, according to a prepared plan, at which they offer for sale mineral waters, cakes, cooked meat, vegetables, etc., and all members of the Assembly are expected to come and buy. Payments for purchases are made to the treasurer who records each sale, and the total proceeds are announced in church.

We see now, that although the Assembly prescribes no compulsory dues, its fund-raising activities are designed in such a way as to ensure frequent and liberal contributions from the membership. On the one hand, therefore, competition between groups and individuals is strongly encouraged, although the possibility of conflict is minimised by the fact that each member belongs simultaneously to a number of competing units, each cutting across the other. On the other hand the manner in which funds are raised and collected makes it relatively easy to discern who does and who does not support the work of the church, and is an effective discouragement for the would-be non-contributor. It must however be borne in mind that the efficacy of these methods and techniques depend, in the last analysis, on the fundamental willingness to give, since without this, resentment of the unremitting constancy of demands would have forced the Assembly either to adapt itself to a lesser measure of support, or to face a decline in membership.

Summary and Conclusions

Throughout our discussion we have emphasized the strongly positive attitude of members of the Assembly towards contributing to the church, contrasting this with the more negative attitude encountered in some of the other East Bank churches. In essence, contributions to a church are simply a special form of gift-giving so that, if the arrangement is not to break down, donors must feel that they are receiving something in return. In the Assembly, there is considerable evidence that this essential reciprocity exists. In return for his donations,

the donor believes that he has or will receive favours from God (this being generally illustrated in a 'before-and-after' description of his life), he has the satisfaction of knowing that his generosity will not go unnoticed by his fellows, while he may gain prestige by openly competing with others in giving the most impressive contributions. What is perhaps most important, however, is that his money is spent within and for the benefit of a closely-knit in-group. By contributing he is securing his right to belong and participate, while at the same time he is always aware of the use to which his money is being put. In many other churches, however, this reciprocity breaks down. Apart from the compulsory church dues, in exchange for which the subscriber obtains certain rights and privileges, voluntary contributions often bring nothing in return. One hears complaints, therefore, that control and expenditure of funds collected from the congregation, are in the hands of distant and unknown officials, and that congregants seldom see the fruits of their generosity. Thus even the often heard rationalisation that one 'should willingly return to God what is God's', is cold comfort and does little to mitigate the overall dissatisfaction.

Turning to the fund-raising methods described, we might now consider the attitude in the African Church as a whole towards money. While Whites, for whatever reason, tend to treat money matters with a certain amount of delicacy, particularly inside the church itself, African church people are in general less inhibited in their approach. Thus in a White church, offerings during services are discretely collected, while the type of competitive collection described above would be considered in the worst taste. In African churches, on the other hand, one may hear frequent references to financial matters during the course of a service; appeals from the

pulpit which, to White ears, are perhaps embarrassing and indelicate; and contributors making their offerings in a most ostentatious manner.

To understand this difference in approach, however, it must be borne in mind that Africans, on the whole, constitute the poorest section of the South African population. The struggle for existence leads to a relatively greater pre-occupation with money, while disbursements of even small sums - particularly when unrelated to satisfying basic needs - must be given due consideration. The Church is therefore forced to use every means at its disposal to persuade its members to meet its demands. Furthermore, because the Church and other associations provide the only opportunity for the mass of Africans to handle large amounts of money, contributors tend to be watchful lest opportunists, or even officials who may simply be unable to resist the temptation, succeed in misappropriating funds. It must further be pointed out that traditional Xhosa attitudes to gift-giving are also different from and less inhibited than those of Whites, being often public and ceremonious and reflecting the status and prestige of both donor and recipient.

While most of the well-established mission churches, especially those having a highly-formalised order of worship, tend to make minimal reference to financial matters during services proper, smaller, and particularly independent, churches appear to be constantly pre-occupied with the problem of raising money. The Assembly, with its ambitious financial programme, shares this pre-occupation, and because of the informality of services, which will be discussed later, preachers find ample opportunity to introduce an appeal or a lesson, regarding money. Fund-raising is thus a major factor in the Assembly, and is featured in all its activities.

CHAPTER SIX

LEADERSHIP

PATTERNS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE BHENGU MOVEMENT

While leadership patterns within individual assemblies differ according to the circumstances of their establishment and development, there are nevertheless certain broad underlying patterns which are discernable at the inter-assembly level. The observations on which the present discussion is based, therefore, were made on occasions when the movement as a whole had come together at the 1958 July Workers' Conference* (held in a tent on a white trading station in Pondoland), and at several Conventions (held in the church at East London) during the two-year period ending in September 1959. Each type of gathering gave us an insight into different aspects of the movement's leadership: on the one hand, the Conference threw considerable light on the differences between Bhengu's roles as spiritual and administrative head, and on relations between the various categories of officials; on the other hand, the Conventions provided the opportunity for assessing Bhengu's influence in the movement as a whole, and also for observing relations between the officials and the rank-and-file membership.

Bhengu's religious and administrative authority

As spiritual head of the movement, Bhengu is not simply a minister of higher rank holding his position through appointment or election. Rather his position is regarded both by

* The annual conference of the Bhengu movement and attended by ministers, elders and deacons. All these officials are collectively referred to as 'workers'.

himself and by his followers as a 'natural' right, stemming from his divinely-inspired mission and his God-given gifts. By virtue of his religious leadership, he has also come to assume the role of administrative head, but whereas in the former his authority is unchallenged, in the latter he is susceptible to criticism and even reprimand. Thus we find that at both Conference and Conventions, Bhengu's pronouncements on religious and moral issues are accepted without question, even where they take the form of censure and criticism. At Conference, however, where workers meet to discuss administrative problems as well as to receive religious instruction, they are not reluctant to reprimand Bhengu severely when they feel that he has been guilty of mismanagement. This distinction is brought out clearly in the following description of the Conference proceedings:

Bhengu, with pointed reference to the workers present, began to speak about the question of fitness. There were some people, he explained, who did not understand whether or not they were fit to do a particular thing. He himself, for example, could dress up in pagan costume and attend a pagan dance, but it would soon be obvious to all that he was not fit for that type of thing. It did not help if a person recommended himself for a particular job if he was unfit to do it, since his lack of ability would soon become obvious to all. Sometimes ministers were not fit for their jobs. It was no good that ministers should teach things which they themselves did not adhere to. If they did not set an example by their own behaviour people would not listen to them. Ministers should also not seek to enrich themselves at the expense of their flocks. They should not preoccupy themselves with material matters, neither should they have anything to do with the church funds. If they wanted to be rich, they should leave the ministry and become business men. Ministers should also not regard themselves as superior to their congregants, but should serve their assemblies humbly. Some assemblies were weak because their ministers did not have the right attitudes to their work.

Throughout this address, the workers listened intently, many of them leaning forward in concentration, and some interjecting with an occasional grunt of approval or dismay, or murmuring 'Amen'.

The minutes of the previous Conference were then read by the secretary, and discussion was called for. The atmosphere of the session changed perceptibly. One of the workers began to criticise the composition of the Conference as, he said, there appeared to be no fixed criterion as to who was entitled to attend. He demanded a definition of 'workers' and a list of those belonging to the Conference. This led to a heated discussion about a certain minister who had seceded from the group and then at his own request was re-admitted by Bhengu some time later. Since his re-admission he had neither attended Conferences nor had he submitted progress or financial reports and workers demanded an explanation and investigation. They blamed Bhengu since he had not only re-admitted the minister in question without consultation, but had even secured his election as vice-chairman of Conference: furthermore he had not allowed anyone to question the minister about his defection. The workers were obviously angry with Bhengu, and it seemed that the latter was equally annoyed. Nevertheless he agreed that the minister be invited to attend a special meeting, failing which he would be expelled from the fellowship.

Another discussion during the session also led to heated exchanges between Bhengu and some workers and between workers themselves. In this case Bhengu was taken to task for having sent a minister to a certain assembly without previously informing the elders and deacons and without sending any accompanying instructions in writing. When he had been asked to come and settle the dispute that developed between the minister and the assembly he had told them that he was too busy at the time and had sent the minister down in a hurry without having had time to attend to the formalities. Bhengu reacted strongly to the fact that the matter had been brought up at the Conference since, he said, it was between himself and the assembly concerned. In any case the dispute itself had been resolved by his reply, and if the assembly had

still felt aggrieved they should have waited for a more private opportunity to put the matter straight.

On the whole, the session dealt mainly with complaints and counter-complaints. While some of the discussions were fairly heated and at times both the workers and Bhengu himself were obviously angry, the meeting was orderly, and only a few workers actively participated in the discussions. By the end of the session, however, it seemed that most points had been settled satisfactorily and that there was no apparent residue of ill-feeling. It was particularly noticeable that Bhengu was at all times entirely in command of the situation and that when he was not able to subdue complaints by showing displeasure or by resorting to more subtle tactics, he would accede to their demands with a graciousness which seemed to solicit gratitude rather than triumph.

We see now that the workers differentiated sharply between what they regarded as the prerogatives of Bhengu's religious leadership, and between what was purely administrative in nature. Thus whereas they accepted without protest or apparent resentment his reprimands and, at another session, his instructions and directives regarding future activities and policies, they criticised severely any apparent infringements of the democratic rights of Conference or of congregational autonomy.

The probability must however be considered that the separation of Bhengu's roles is fundamentally the result of his own attitude towards them. It seems certain that had he intended to maintain complete administrative authority he could quite easily have done so, while the manner in which he dealt with complaints at the Conference suggests that he wields sufficient personal influence over the majority of workers to assume such authority even now if he so desired. It does not appear, therefore, that Bhengu had intended acting in an autocratic manner in the instances cited, but that he had simply dealt with what he regarded as matters of secondary importance in the speediest possible way. The same reason, it seems, could account

for his annoyance with complainants: that is, it was not so much that he resented their questioning his authority, but that he was irritated because they attached too much importance and wasted too much time on a 'minor aspect of the work'. These impressions have been supported on numerous occasions when both publicly and privately Bhengu has stated that he finds his administrative tasks extremely irksome, and that they have retarded the progress of the more important evangelistic work.

The reaffirmation of Bhengu's leadership

Whatever the stated purpose of Conferences and Conventions may be, they are both important rites of intensification for the Bhengu movement. It is through them that the existence of the movement as a unit is emphasized and maintained; that independent ministers and far-flung congregations are reminded of their fundamentally common interests. As the focal point of the movement, however, it is not surprising that Bhengu occupies a central position at these gatherings and that an important aspect of the re-enforcement of the solidarity of the movement is the reaffirmation of Bhengu's leadership.

At the Conference there were numerous examples of this. Thus, for instance, in his opening address Bhengu reported on a revival campaign which he had recently conducted. Stressing that over a thousand people had been 'revived' at his meetings, he contrasted his own success with the failure of two other churches who had organised rival campaigns at the same time. This comment together with further detailed description of the 'wonders' of the campaign, were ostensibly a report by Bhengu to the workers on the progress of the Crusade. More subtly, however, he was (whether deliberately or not) showing them that he was still as able and effective an evangelist as he had been when he converted each one of them personally. He was reminding them that "God was still working wonders for his poor African people through him" - a validation of their original acceptance

of his leadership.

This reaffirmation was even more obvious at the Conventions which were primarily religious gatherings attended by a cross-section of the total membership. It was on these occasions that Bhengu's followers were able to recapture some of the atmosphere and emotion of their original conversion. Not only did they see that he had lost none of his power to inspire them and fire their imagination, but they were able also to compare him with the ministers to whom they had become accustomed. At the same time they were also given evidence of his continued success as an evangelist from his lengthy and detailed reports of campaigns both in the Union and overseas, and from the testimonies of some of his more recent converts. So much was Bhengu the focal point of the proceedings at Conventions, that no sermon or address failed to include some complimentary remarks about him, while even in the spontaneous prayers by ministers and others some allusion to him was usually made, either thanking God for sending him or praying that God would continue to support him. At the major Conventions, too, an imbongi* was always invited, and he would compose lofty poems in the leader's honour to the delight of both Bhengu and the audience. On these occasions Bhengu, too, occasionally interpolated remarks relating to his leadership. The following extracts from various Conventions illustrate these points:

(i) A remark by Bhengu at the 1957 Convention:

" The Xhosa people have a saying that a boy is a dog. With them every uncircumcised person

* The imbongi, or praise-singer, traditionally accompanies the chief, particularly on ceremonial occasions, composing poetically extravagant praises. Today an imbongi is usually invited to important occasions such as the opening of a church.

[which would include Bhengu, a Zulu] is a 'boy' and therefore a dog. They said that neither a boy nor a dog could lead men, that is, circumcised people. They said a dog could not be a leader of its own master. But there are dogs which after they have made a kill of a wild beast come to their masters, wagging their tails, jumping about, panting and growling uneasily. The master notices something unusual about his dog, he stands up and the dog begins to run away. The master follows; it leads him to the kill. The dog has led its master! What have they to say today? I as a 'boy' [i.e. an uncircumcised Zulu] have led the 'men' [circumcised Xhosa who predominate in the Cape Province] to such a stage without complaint." (Cries of Glory to God! Amen!)

- (ii) From an address by Mhlambiso, Chief of the Amahlubi tribe in the Amatola basin, at the 1957 Convention:

" Rev. Bhengu, white ministers and Black ones, together with all the officials, I am grateful for this honour. I thank the Convention and the administration for giving you this church site. I am very pleased to have this pleasure of seeing with my own eyes what this is like. When a finger of God points at someone to be a leader of anything nobody can ever turn or bend it. God pointed at Rev. Bhengu to be a leader of this movement. I envy Rev. Bhengu for his gift of being capable of leading the people convincingly. I am given people to lead and rule. They are very stubborn. They do not listen to me as people listen to Rev. Bhengu. [Applause from the congregation, and cries of Hallelujah! Amen! Glory to Jesus!] I think he possesses what I lack. He has a gift I do not have. He has God in him - I do not." [More applause]

- (iii) From an address by a minister of the Clermont location Assembly, Durban, at the 1957 Convention:

" We are very pleased to be in East London today. I wish to honour the East London people for becoming the biggest denomination in South Africa within such a short time. We have been informed of many lives that were transformed in

East London. The word of God was more easily accepted here than anywhere else. We were very curious to see East London and its people. The work you have done here is a very great one. I am unable to describe it. It is clear that Rev. Bhengu was ordained by God. God chose him among many to come and lead the Black nations here. He is another Jesus but he is only born of man."

(iv) Testimony by the East London minister at the 1958 Convention:

" Rev. Bhengu is responsible for what I am today and for the position which I hold. I used to look terrible before my conversion. I was a dagga* addict, I was a cheater and I liked liquor very much. Rev. Bhengu showed me the right way. Praise the name of the Lord!"

(v) Extract from a prayer:

" We thank Thee God for Thy servant (Bhengu) who came here (to East London) just in time. He arrived exactly when many people had actually lost Thy word....."

What is significant about these references to Bhengu is that all imply that his leadership is based on some special relationship with and mission from God. They are not simply praises of an able office-bearer, but are affirmations of what are regarded as Bhengu's God-given right to leadership.

Relations between officials themselves, and between officials and ordinary members

At Conference, which is attended only by the workers, there was no observable distinction between ministers, elders and deacons. They intermingled freely, generally referred to one another as Mzalwana or Brother, ate together and apparently slept together. Where small groups formed they did not appear to be

* An indigenous shrub akin to Indian hemp.

composed only of ministers, or elders, or deacons, nor did they appear to be made up of 'lesser' workers centring around a worker of 'higher' grade. The only discernable difference was that, as a group, ministers were generally better dressed (although they wore no clerical uniform) than many of the elders and deacons.

There was, however, a distinct difference between Bhengu and other workers. He was continually engaged in earnest discussion with one or a group of workers, while others would wait respectfully at a distance for their turn. Although I was not able to note on this occasion the form of address used to and by Bhengu, there was no doubt that they approached him and addressed him with great respect and deference. Bhengu, in turn, generally spoke to workers in a kind, indulgent, almost paternal tone although he would sometimes be short and almost harsh. Both during and between sessions Bhengu would beckon to one or other worker who would immediately approach him and either bend down close or sit next to him, while he would constantly send workers on errands. It was also observed that Bhengu seldom stood up when a worker approached or spoke to him, but that workers always stood when addressing or being addressed by him. Bhengu also did not eat with the rest of the workers; but with his wife and some of the workers, ate in a hut which had been specially prepared as a dining room.

At Conventions, a much finer distinction between the various categories of workers could be observed, and my African assistant pointed out that the rank-and-file clearly differentiated in their behaviour towards Bhengu, ministers, elders and deacons. Bhengu was always referred to and addressed as Umfundisi (Reverend) by workers and members alike, while other ministers, although often addressed in the same way, were also sometimes called Mzalwana (Brother). Bhengu generally

referred to everyone, including ministers, as Mzalwana or Dade (Sister), though he sometimes addressed older people respectfully as Tata (Father) or Mama (Mother). Elders were sometimes called Mdala (Elder) by members, sometimes Tata or Ubawo (a more formal term for Tata) but usually simply Mzalwana. Deacons were also sometimes addressed as Tata or Ubawo, but most frequently as Mzalwana.

In church when a member of the congregation wished to attract the attention of an elder or deacon, he would either beckon or simply call out loudly whatever it was he wished to say, while when talking to them he would rarely stand. On the other hand a person wishing to attract the attention of Bhengu or a minister, would either approach him directly, or stand up and call Umfundisi!, until the latter responded. Outside it was noted that elders and deacons were generally treated by ordinary members as equals, no special signs of respect being shown when hailing, greeting or conversing with them. It was also noted that whereas in many other churches, as for example the Methodists, it was generally easy to single out the lay officials (even when they had taken off their vestments) since they were usually the focal points of small groups, it was difficult to do so in the Assembly. When people were speaking to a minister, however, one could - as in most churches - observe certain forms of respect: women would courtesy, no one would hail a minister from afar or talk to him from some distance, a person would not sit unless the minister was seated, and a person would not slouch or stand with his hands in his pockets. When a person approached Bhengu, these attitudes of respect were particularly evident, as well as were the special signs of deference which were observed at the Workers' Conference. A further distinction between full-time and lay officials was that during services the former sat on the platform, and played a more prominent part in the proceedings.

LEADERSHIP IN THE 'EAST LONDON ASSEMBLY

Bhengu

In a previous discussion it was pointed out that the basis of the ministry in the Assemblies of God is the possession by some individuals of a Divine gift, or charisma.* The concept of the role of charisma in leadership has been developed by Max Weber.** In analysing systems of authority, Weber has suggested three basic categories: legalistic (which is typified by most modern bureaucratic systems of government); traditional (in which authority and leadership are based on heredity, as in many present day 'primitive' societies); and charismatic. McIver and Page⁺ explain the last of these in the following terms:

" Weber used the Greek word 'charisma' meaning a special gift of power restricted to a select few, to designate that quality of certain leaders whose authority is based on the popular conviction that they are divinely inspired and directed in their public undertakings. He distinguished between the power of the office-holder, the 'rational' authority that permeates the large-scale bureaucracies of the modern world, and 'charismatic leadership', which plays a more important role in human affairs 'the further we look back in history'. 'The natural leaders - in times of psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, political distress - have been neither office-holders nor incumbents of an occupation in the present sense of the word, that is men who have acquired expert knowledge and who serve for remuneration'. They have been, like many of the great religious leaders and like Julius Caesar and Cromwell and Napoleon, men of 'destiny', convinced of their 'right' and ability to lead, and sharing this conviction with their followers - the

* Part II, p.12f

** Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Chapter IX

+ McIver R.M. and Page C.H.: Society. Chapter 7, page 149.
(Quotations in this extract from Weber, op.cit.)

'deliverers' or 'saviours', the 'revealers', and usually the exponents par excellence of the mass emotions of group solidarity."

Weber, however, points out that none of the three categories are in reality found in their pure form. With reference to charismatic authority, he shows that any system initiated by the charismatic leader must become 'routinised' if it is to survive. This problem becomes manifest when the leader disappears, retires, or dies and the continuation of the system is in the ideological and material interests of his followers on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of his administrative staff, originally selected by the leader on the basis of their own charismatic qualities, who wish to maintain their positions. Thus charismatic authority must eventually be replaced by a legalistic or traditional system, or else be modified in such a way that although positions may continue to be based on charismatic qualities, they become more clearly defined and occur within a recognised framework.

Examining the Assemblies of God in terms of this concept, we find that while the possession of charisma is the basis of leadership its occurrence and use is regulated by certain fundamental beliefs. The permanent leadership of an assembly (that of elders, deacons and resident ministers) is, as we have seen (Part II, p.12 f.), based on the gifts of 'teaching' and 'preaching' which, in practice, are similar to the abilities which would be demanded from similar types of office-bearers in a legalistic administrative system. Furthermore, the leadership of these officials is collective, they enjoy no special prerogatives as individuals, and their authority is always subject to the control of the assembly as a whole. The emergence of full charismatic leadership at this level is thus extremely unlikely.

While the gifts of teaching and preaching are limited by their very nature as well as by the situation within which they are exercised, the gifts of 'evangelist' and 'apostle' (see also Part II, p.12 f.) are circumscribed only by the beliefs of those who possess them. These gifts - particularly when they are combined in one individual as, for example, in Bhengu - are intrinsically dramatic in nature. Both the evangelist and the apostle exert tremendous personal influence over the members of an assembly. The evangelist is responsible, through his preaching and its accompanying 'signs', for bringing about the initial decision for conversion, while the apostle, through his guidance and teaching, leads converts to fuller religious experience and welds them into a congregation over which he initially assumes complete control. Normally, however, their influence is short-lived since, in the first place, they do not remain with an assembly for a prolonged period but begin almost from the outset, to select and train local elders and deacons to take over leadership. In the second place, they teach converts the principles of equality on which the movement is based - including the belief that no intercessors between the believer and God are necessary, while congregational autonomy is the desired form of organisation - and thus further diminish the extent of their personal influence.

It is clear, nevertheless, that inherent in the gifts and the roles of the evangelist and apostle, there is the seed of charismatic leadership. Thus, for example, a situation could arise where the two gifts are combined in and the dual role fulfilled by the same person. If for some reason such a person assumed and maintained complete control over an assembly for a prolonged period it is certainly possible that notwithstanding his own intentions and convictions to the contrary, he could well

come to be considered an absolute religious and administrative authority.

As we have shown, these conditions have been fulfilled in relation to the East London Assembly. Thus despite Bhengu's own contention that his "position is like that of a father over the homes and kraals of his sons, who run their own affairs in everything material, (and that he) enjoys no special prerogatives either authoritative or religious",* members of the East London Assembly conceive of his leadership quite differently. The allegiance of Bhengu's followers in East London is founded on the belief that he has not only been sent by God to fulfil a particular mission, but that he is continually in contact with Him. As proof of this they cite his phenomenal success in East London and in particular his conversion of red-blanketed pagans as well as criminals. They quote, too, his success as a faith-healer, and the fact that he has often foretold events. Bhengu himself often relates dreams and visions that he claims have come true, and this has added to their belief in his divine connections. As final proof of his 'extra-ordinariness' they compare him with other ministers. There are ministers, they say, both in the Assemblies of God and in other churches who are educated, men of experience and wisdom, who are good and eloquent preachers - and in fact have many of the personal attributes of Bhengu. Nevertheless there are none in whom all these qualities are combined nor are there any who are able to affect people in the same way as Bhengu, since otherwise they too would have built up great followings. Bhengu is thus believed to be not only exceptionally gifted, but possesses the one characteristic that all others lack - a God-given mission. The following is, therefore, a typical evaluation of Bhengu's leadership:

* From a written reply by Bhengu to a series of questions by the author.

" If one wants to know a man who is sent by God, he must listen to Bhengu's preachings. He is a prophet similar to the great leaders of the Bible who took over from Jesus. He has done the same job of bringing the people who were far away from God, to the right path. If he had not come, the thousands that are saved would still be doing their eye-sore practices before God. Rev. Bhengu is indisputably a man with God next to him. I believe that Bhengu is a man who speaks to God somehow in spirit, in dreams or in visions. All that he says to the people is direct from God, thus he appears more wonderful than other preachers."

Bhengu's leadership in relation to the East London Assembly is thus a combination of charisma and 'constitutional head'. From the point of view of the membership, he has all the attributes of the 'absolute' charismatic leader, while on the other hand Bhengu's beliefs prevent him from assuming fully that role. Bhengu has thus never become an object of worship nor has he assumed an aura of mystery or unapproachability. Therefore, although we may conclude that the conditions for true charismatic leadership do exist, we find they have not been allowed to develop fully into the classic pattern by Bhengu himself.

The Resident Minister

Perhaps one of the most important factors in preserving Bhengu's influence in East London has been the initial difficulty with ministers and the personality and ability of the last incumbent. The first resident minister appointed to the East London Assembly was a man whom Bhengu had converted some years previously in Fort Elizabeth. He had accompanied Bhengu during the revival campaign and acted as his assistant until being left in charge of the new assembly. The minister proved to be a powerful speaker with the gift of healing, and many members of the Assembly were converted by him. He was well-liked and respected, and even today many say that he compared in many

respects with Bhengu. It is probable that had this man remained in East London, the Assembly would by now have been independent and Bhengu's influence have waned considerably. As it was, he was eventually accused of misconduct, and dismissed. Many felt that his dismissal was unjust and would have probably followed him out of the Assembly, had Bhengu not arranged with the local Native Commissioner for his eviction from East London.

Following this dismissal, East London had a succession of temporary ministers, and was supervised closely by Bhengu who visited the Assembly frequently. Finally, in 1955, another permanent minister, Rev. Mxeko,* took over but it was still not possible to grant the Assembly autonomy, since although honest and trustworthy, Mxeko lacked the ability to supervise and lead it on his own.

While the minister's authority is limited by the beliefs of the Assembly as well as by Bhengu's control, considerable responsibility rests on his shoulders - particularly in an assembly which today numbers over three thousand members. Thus a man of strong personality and qualities of leadership would be in a position to wield much influence and achieve great prestige and respect. Although this was in fact the case with his predecessor this has not been so with Mxeko, and while the former was considered in many respects comparable to Bhengu the latter is regarded quite differently.

" Rev. Mxeko is a very religious man who impresses one by his religious attitudes and his good-heartedness. He is by no means comparable to Bhengu. He would never be able to form up such a big denomination by himself.

" When he preaches he does not have that hidden weapon that Bhengu has, for he does not impress multitudes like Bhengu. He is impressive only to

* He retained the position until his transfer at the end of 1958 to another assembly.

those people who know how holy he is. This influences the audience accordingly; Bhengu impresses people of all sorts even if they had never seen him before. Truly speaking Rev. Mxeko is just an ordinary preacher.

" Rev. Mxeko has been respected not for his outstanding qualities as a good preacher, but by his position and his high religious temperament. He is a very religious man in every respect. This man has a very good influence on saved people because of his highly religious nature. He has not converted many.

" He is good because he always comes to the aid of people who are in trouble. He gives very good encouragement to such people by making impressive prayers. This man is better in praying than in preaching.

" He is a very trustworthy sort of man. We like him because under him we can be sure that all the converts will be kept in the flock of the Assemblies of God. He influences the people to be holy and soft-spoken.

" He differs from Rev. Bhengu in many respects, however. Rev. Bhengu is an educated man with a lot of experience. He has not got a fear to address any audience. Rev. Mxeko sometimes fears his audience. When the audience has educated people he behaves unusually. Bhengu has very impressive speeches which keep his listeners very interested each and every minute. Rev. Mxeko often becomes very dull and tired-looking. Rev. Bhengu has a good gift of organising and making his listeners understand what he wants them to do, while Mxeko cannot. Rev. Bhengu has a magnetic voice, an interesting and jocular manner and a face which always changes expression; Rev. Mxeko has a coarse voice and a serious disposition. He always looks a little sad which makes one full of sympathy for him, though there is no real cause."

Since Rev. Mxeko is being constantly compared with Bhengu, his natural limitations are bound to be exaggerated.

While there is unanimous agreement among the membership of the Assembly that he is honest, sincere and trustworthy, they also point out that he is a poor preacher - although 'he is very good at funerals' - and lacks personality or any outstanding ability. Thus while they regard him with great affection and find him sympathetic to all their troubles, he is not thought of as a leader. The respect and prestige he enjoys are thus based on the fact that he was appointed by Bhengu, and on the authority and responsibility which his position entails.

Despite this, Mxeko himself describes his career as a minister both in the Full Gospel Church and in the Assembly as a continuous and rapid advancement, and feels that he has always been looked upon with great respect by both superiors and congregants as a man of considerable promise. He states that he is Bhengu's favourite and that the people respect him as Bhengu's second-in-command. He has no doubt that he will eventually succeed Bhengu as supervisor of the Bhengu assemblies. This apparent self-confidence is not, however, obvious in Mxeko's behaviour and he is undoubtedly a humble and simple man, devoted to Bhengu, and accepting his authority without question.

The obvious differences between Bhengu and Mxeko have served to minimise the latter's importance while reinforcing the opinion that members of the Assembly have of Bhengu. Thus while potentially the position of minister of the East London Assembly offers great scope for its incumbent, and the possibility of replacing Bhengu's influence over it to some extent, these potentialities had not been realised by Mxeko. As field work was being completed, however, a new minister had been appointed. A stronger personality and a far better preacher than his predecessor, this man may well lead the Assembly to independence and autonomy.

Elders and Deacons

In accordance with the practice of the Assemblies of God, the Elders and Deacons were appointed by Bhengu with the unanimous approval of the congregation. They were appointed on trial for an indefinite period, final confirmation resting on the manner in which they fulfilled their duties and conducted their personal lives.

Although these officials are not paid and their duties make great demands on their time and energy, they feel that the prestige attaching to their positions is sufficiently rewarding to warrant the effort. Some elders, who say that they would eventually like to enter the full-time ministry, also feel that eldership is a stepping stone to their ambitions and, in fact, ministers are usually drawn from their ranks for further training. All the officials, however, stress that they have a far better opportunity than other laymen to serve God through their work in the church, since by accepting and faithfully carrying out their duties of office, they are doing God's will. Thus an elder explained:

" I accepted the post for I had noticed that the doctrine of the church needed some well-disciplined people and I wanted to give my own hand in modelling the members. I would not refuse any function in the church because it is the work of God. I am continuing to hold the position because I have not finished the duty which I believe was given me by God.

" The very fact that I have managed to save people and they are now back to Jesus, I am satisfied, for I am spreading the word of God.

" This position has surely brought me higher prestige. I am respected by people even though they are not members. Since I am an elder even wrong-doers in the street respect me because I am an elder.

" My ambition in the church is to be a strong saver of souls and be a well-saved man who will please the members till I achieve the highest status in church - the ministry."

On the whole members of the Assembly appear to be satisfied with the lay officials and emphasize the good work done by them.

" The Deacons and Elders of our church are very able people. They are trustworthy. They have been in office for a long period. If there was any wolf in sheep's skin among them he would have shown his colours already.

" They have been handling money for a long time; they have entered people's rooms during their absence for quite a long time now. They have worked together tirelessly and co-operatively without a single complaint. They have worked very obediently under an inexperienced man like Nxeko without any complaint.

" These people have exercised their duties successfully. There has never been any suspicion of converting the church coffers to their own use. These people have proved their worth and they are good men."

What is important, however, is the apparent absence of jealousy, rancour and suspicion involving officials. As we have mentioned*, this is a serious problem in many African churches which are not only frequently disrupted as a result of abuse of authority or misuse of church funds, but also suffer the consequences of bitter competition for official positions. While admittedly one minister has been discharged from the East London Assembly for misconduct, and some officials have - as individuals - been disciplined for sins of a private nature, there has never been any hint during the eight years of the

* See Part I p.15 ff.

Assembly's existence of disputes involving officials, or of conflict over positions in church. Although this is due to a great extent to the safeguards imposed by Bhengu, and the fact that life-appointment of officials has obviated the more patent causes of conflict which are so apparent when regular elections are held, there is another equally important factor which must be considered.

When the elders and deacons were appointed, Bhengu was at the height of his influence in East London. The membership therefore accepted his selection as being, in his wisdom, the best possible, while Bhengu's constant praise of the work of these men, and of their devotion and reliability, has served to confirm members' own confidence in them. It seems, too, that through his teachings Bhengu has been able to impress on his followers the idea that no matter how much one desires to hold a position, the matter is entirely dependent on 'God's will' so that no amount of 'pushing' can help. Thus when ordinary members of the Assembly were asked whether they would like to hold some official post and if so why they did not, no-one replied that he did not because he was not a 'pusher', or because of some unfairness in the selection, or for similar reasons. Even those who admitted a strong desire to hold some post simply explained that they did not hold any at present because 'God had obviously not willed it', but that if they proved good Christians and God felt that they had the qualities of leadership He would perhaps give them the opportunity; otherwise they would know that God did not consider them fit. It is clear that, to a marked extent, the harmony existing in the Assembly is due to Bhengu's continued influence over it. This is also realised by many members themselves who express the fear that when Bhengu retires, the movement in general and

the local assemblies in particular may fall prey to abuse of authority, mishandling of funds and consequent disputes over positions.

From the analysis of the leadership of the East London Assembly, one fact has clearly emerged: Bhengu is, through the influence he exerts, the most important integrating force in the Assembly. The members' conception of his mission and position validate his teachings, and ensure their loyalty toward and co-operation with the ministers and officials.

Other Opportunities for lay leadership in the Assembly

While, in theory, it would seem that because lay officials of the Assembly are appointed for life there would be fewer opportunities for leadership than in churches where regular elections are held, this is not necessarily the case. As we already remarked in Part I Ch.2, the tendency in African churches has been for lay officials to remain in office almost indefinitely: usually, unless they are discredited, they continue until death. Thus the Assembly simply accepts in principle what most churches do in practice. Apart from the permanent lay positions, however, the Assembly does provide additional opportunities for leadership in the rotating membership of bazaar committees, while during the period when Group Services were held an even larger number of people were able to assume responsible and prestigious positions for short periods. It is our opinion, however, that even though there may still not be sufficient important permanent offices to satisfy all those who aspire to them, the Assembly has, as we have described, successfully minimised open competition and conflict.

SUCCESSION

The question of Bhengu's succession is crucial not only to the future of the movement but serves also as an indication of the direction of its present development. Workers and members alike agree that the question is a difficult one. Hereditary succession - a not uncommon practice among separatist churches - is entirely discounted, while there is also no minister in the movement who has been 'primed' for future leadership. At the same time, no method of selection or conditions of eligibility for a successor have been laid down. Some people feel that although Bhengu "was sent by God to fulfil a special mission", his position in the Assemblies of God was through appointment by the "head office of the Assemblies of God in America" or by the South African General Executive, and that his successor will also be appointed by one or other of these authorities. Others maintain that his appointment was "by God alone", and that his succession will be similarly determined. What is important, however, is that while there is uncertainty as to how a successor will be selected or who he is likely to be, there is general agreement that the movement will continue in its present form under the leadership of someone like Bhengu.

Bhengu's own view differs radically from that of his followers. He emphasizes that his real mission is to evangelise the African people. However, he points out that circumstances made it necessary for him to maintain control over the assemblies which he founded and that the "Bhengu Movement" came into existence as a result of the need for a convenient system of administration. His own position as head of this movement was thus based on his role as founder, and not on any appointment. The question of a successor, however, does not arise, since the

movement should dissolve as soon as local assemblies have achieved autonomy, and a centralised organisation becomes unnecessary. This would regularize the Bhengu assemblies in terms of the principles of organisation of the Assemblies of God.

That Bhengu hopes to achieve this goal during his lifetime was clear when, in December 1958, he called a special workers' Conference to discuss the question. He told workers that it was his view that assemblies should assume independence as soon as possible - the larger and older assemblies becoming immediately autonomous and taking temporary charge of the younger and smaller ones. He wanted to see centralised supervision fall away during his lifetime and each minister exercising his own gifts and talents within the assembly under his care. From the attitude of the workers at this conference, it is clear that the movement will continue for some time to come. At the same time, Bhengu is gradually succeeding in bringing home to them the importance of standing on their own feet, by increasingly referring back local problems for decision and action by assembly officials themselves.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Having discussed the development, organisation and leadership of the Bhengu movement, we are now in a position to examine it against a wider background. Dealing with such phenomena as the Ghost Dance, the Vailala Madness and early Methodism, for example, Wallace (1956) has formulated a conceptual scheme for the analysis of what he refers to under the generic term of "revitalization movements". He defines such movements (p.235) as:

"... a deliberate, organised, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture. Revitalization is thus, from a cultural standpoint, a special kind of culture change phenomenon: the persons involved in the process of revitalization must perceive their culture, or some major areas of it, as a system (whether accurately or not); they must feel that this cultural system is unsatisfactory; and they must innovate not merely discrete items, but a new cultural system, specifying new relationships as well as, in some cases, new traits. The classic processes of culture change (evolution, drift, diffusion, historical change, acculturation) all produce changes in cultures as systems ... [but in]* revitalization movements, however, [cultural items]* A,B,C....N are shifted into a new Gestalt abruptly and simultaneously in intent; and frequently within a few years the new plan is put into effect by the participants in the movement."

Elaborating on the process of revitalization, Wallace lists five main stages. Summarizing these briefly, such movements, according to Wallace, emerge when culturally recognised techniques for satisfying needs cease to function efficiently for an increasing proportion of the population. As a result of different responses to this situation, the culture becomes disarticulated: elements are not harmoniously related but are mutually inconsistent and interfering. The complete deterioration of the society is, however, often forestalled or postponed by the emergence of a revitalization movement, which is often religious in character.

The task of restructuring cultural elements into a consistent whole begins with a prophetic vision in the mind of a single person. The prophet undertakes to preach his revelations

* by brackets.

and gradually builds up a nucleus of disciples. With their help, a campaign organization develops and three categories of personnel may be distinguished: leader, disciples and followers. The leader-follower relationship generally follows the concept of 'charismatic leadership' described by Weber. Gradually the movement undergoes modification in response to outside hostility and comes to be more acceptable to the general population. As the whole or a controlling section of the population come to accept the new religion with its various injunctions, a noticeable reduction of symptoms of individual and cultural deterioration occurs. Meanwhile, the organization and leadership of the movement become 'routinized': charisma is 'distributed' to other personnel and the structure of the movement becomes stabilized and institutionalized. The movement also relinquishes its control over non-ritual aspects of its programme as these become established in economic, social and cultural institutions.

Insofar as the Bhengu movement had developed at the time this study was made, our own material parallels Wallace's scheme fairly closely. The Bhengu movement emerged largely in response to the severe symptoms of social disorganisation which have resulted from the breakdown of traditional tribal institutions in the urban areas of South Africa. We have also observed, in the East Bank at least, the changes which have occurred in response to outside criticism and hostility - the modification of the early aggressive revivalistic approach, and the almost complete cessation of the practice of faith-healing and spectacular mass baptisms. Finally, there is certainly abundant evidence (see Chapter 8) of the cultural transformation of members of the Assembly.

The leadership of the Bhengu movement also follows the

pattern described by Wallace. Although, at the time the study was made, a variety of leadership patterns were observed, it is clear that the movement is characterised by the charismatic quality of Bhengu's leadership. At present, however, we have been able to observe the gradual routinization of this charisma and of the organisation of the movement and of individual assemblies. We may expect, then, that this trend will continue, or if it does not, that the movement will eventually break up and dissipate itself.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ASSEMBLY SERVICE

As we have mentioned, the services of the East London Assembly were held at the non-European Springbok Cinema until the congregation moved to its own building in October 1957. At the cinema, only one mid-week service was held in addition to the three Sunday services but, once in their own premises, the congregation met daily for worship. During the two years of fieldwork, it was possible to attend a large number of services, prayer meetings and special functions. These were conducted at various times by elders, the two successive resident ministers, and by Bhengu himself. We shall describe, now, a typical Sunday morning service:

We arrived at the new church shortly before eleven o'clock, when the service was scheduled to begin. The church building itself is impressively situated on a hill overlooking the whole East Bank and much of the town, and is the largest in the location. Its architecture gives no clue as to its function, so that a stranger could easily mistake the huge, cream, cross-shaped structure, with its many windows, for a school or community-centre. In the large churchyard, people were standing in small groups waiting for the children to finish Sunday School, so that they could take their seats in the hall.

Entering the building at the main entrance, we found ourselves in a large T-shaped auditorium (it officially seats 2,500, but can, if necessary, accommodate about one-third more), which impressed us with its airy brightness and immaculate

cleanliness. Facing the leg of the 'T', and covering its full width against the wall, was a platform on which were arranged a few chairs, a covered table and microphones. In front of the platform on the floor of the hall, stood another smaller table. The pews were arranged so that all faced the platform - i.e. those in the leg of the 'T' were parallel to it, while those in the arms were at right angles. From the ceiling were suspended a number of loudspeakers.

Stationed at the entrances and at other convenient spots were the deacons, whose duty it was to direct congregants to seats. The choir occupied the first few rows directly facing the platform, while most of the elders and deacons, not on seating duty, sat near the front in the same block. Members of the congregation sat wherever they wished in the rest of the hall; men, women and children sitting together. Watching the congregants coming into church, we were struck with their general neatness and cleanliness - not always a characteristic of location gatherings, even in church. We also noticed that, apart from members of the choir who were dressed alike, neither lay officials nor the minister wore any distinguishing garb. There was also no distinction between members of the women's manyano who, in most other churches, wear their uniforms at services and sit in a separate block.

At five minutes past eleven the minister, with Bible in hand, mounted the platform and called all those who were still outside to come inside and settle down. The service proceeded as follows:

- (i) Hymn announced by minister. Congregation stand and sing.
- (ii) Member requested to pray.* Congregation sit, bow heads and close eyes. Occasional grunts

* All prayers are spontaneous. People are called upon at random during the service to pray.

- and exclamations of Amen! Halleluja!
- (iii) Minister begins Lord's Prayer and congregation join in. Deacons close doors against interruption.
 - (iv) Hymn announced, congregation stand and sing. Doors reopened to admit late-comers. Time is 11.15 a.m. (Rev. Bhengu, in East London at the time, arrives and takes seat in front pew).
 - (v) Congregation sits, and a second member is requested to pray. He prays most fervently, his voice rising with emotion, arms gesticulating. There are frequent interjections of Amen!, Kunjalo! (It is true!), Hallelujah! Some people moan and sob, a few cry loudly. Gradually the prayer-leader brings himself under control, and the prayer ends. It has lasted five minutes.
 - (vi) Hymn announced and while congregation stand and sing, Bhengu replaces minister on platform.
 - (vii) Bhengu opens Bible, asks an elder to read a Psalm which Bhengu then repeats in English.*
 - (viii) Bhengu requests a member to pray.
 - (ix) Same elder reads another Psalm which Bhengu translates.
 - (x) Bhengu starts a hymn.
 - (xi) Elder requested to read passage from Isaiah.
 - (xii) Bhengu invites anyone who wishes, to lead in prayer.
 - (xiii) Choir begins to chant Siyakudumisa (Te Deum Laudamus.)
 - (xiv) Hymn.
 - (xv) Bhengu sits and minister announces banns of marriage.
 - (xvi) Minister prays.

* At the cinema services were attended by both Africans and Coloureds so that an Afrikaans translation was normal practice. When, however, there were European guests the translations were given in English.

- (xvii) Bhengu announces the collection of tithes and free-will offerings. Appeals to congregation to give freely and then prays briefly that their contributions may be acceptable to God. Time is 11.55 a.m.
- (xviii) The collections begin. A deacon stands in front holding a collection bag and the congregation file past in a long line led by the unmarried girls followed by unmarried men, married women and, finally, married men. Bhengu joins the latter. After the tithes, in small sealed envelopes distributed previously, have been deposited, the congregation files past a second time to contribute their free-will offerings. All the while hymns are sung - many being repeated several times. The collections take almost fifteen minutes.
- (xix) Bhengu blesses the contributions and the contributors, then makes some announcements.
- (xx) Bhengu asks the minister to read from the scriptures.
- (xxi) The congregation is told to bow their heads in silent prayer. There is much moaning and sobbing. After about thirty seconds Bhengu begins to chant slowly and this is gradually taken up by the congregation.
- (xxii) Bhengu prays briefly and then begins the sermon. Time is 12.20 p.m. The congregation listens intently. The sermon lasts just over thirty minutes.
- (xxiii) Bhengu begins the hymn Rock of Ages and the congregation stand and sing.
- (xxiv) Bhengu prays fervently. The congregation becomes extremely emotional. As he ends, the congregation chant Amen, amen, amen.
- (xxv) Bhengu closes the service with the words "Go in peace".

Although we referred to the service described above as 'typical', it is necessary to qualify this assessment. Services of the Assembly do not follow any rigid pattern but vary from one

occasion to the next. No two services are absolutely identical, nor are any hymns, prayers or ceremonies prescribed for all or any services. This flexibility is reflected in the fact that the Assembly has no hymnal nor a Book of Common Prayer with set formulae. At the same time, however, one may distinguish certain 'elements' in each service. These include hymns (generally taken from the Methodist hymnal); 'choruses' (which are religious songs with lively secular tunes, used either exclusively by the Assemblies of God or by other Pentecostal churches); spontaneous prayers by the person leading the service or by members of the congregation; devotional chants used by most denominations (such as the Lord's Prayer, Te Deum Laudamus, psalms and scriptural passages); testimonies and confessions; special prayers for the sick, etc.; sermon; announcements and remarks; collections and blessing of collections; choral items, recitations, etc.; and closing grace (usually the same formula as in the Methodist and several other churches). While some of these elements are present in all services (though their order varies), others may be omitted on some occasions and included on others. On the basis of certain characteristic combinations of elements, however, one may distinguish between three main types of service, though members of the Assembly themselves make no strict terminological distinctions. These three types are: ordinary weekday and Sunday services; prayer meetings (which may be held for the whole congregation or by one of the manyanos, or guilds); and 'special' services. These latter, it must be noted, are not associated with religious ceremonies or holydays, but with some special occasion such as a Convention, the visit of a preacher from another centre, etc. The main features of each type of service are summarised in the following table in which three actual services are compared.

TABLE XIV Comparison of elements making up ordinary services, prayer-meetings and special services of the East London Assembly

Ordinary Service	Prayer-meeting	Special Service
<p>Elder opens with prayer. Lord's Prayer. Chorus. Hymn. Congregant: Prayer. Chorus. Minister: Remarks. Choir: Chorus. Collections. Blessing of collections. Chorus. Choir: Chorus. Proceeds of collections announced. Congregant: Thanks-giving. Sermon. Closing Grace.</p>	<p>Elder opens with hymn. Congregant: Prayer. Lord's Prayer. Hymn. Hymn. Elder: Prayer. Chorus. Elder calls for testimonies. Testimony. Hymn. 6 Testimonies. Elder: Prayer. Collections. Blessing of collections. Hymn. Sermon. Hymn.</p>	<p>Opening with hymns and prayers. Collections. Blessing of Collections. Bhengu explains occasion. <u>Imbongi</u>* praises Bhengu. Devotional chant. Bhengu: Lesson from Scriptures. Bhengu: Prayer. Bhengu explains arrangements for day. (Service ends). Minister opens second part of service with hymn. Prayer by a visiting minister. Bhengu takes over: Recitations by children. Two songs by visiting choir. Bhengu: Lesson from Scriptures. Bhengu: Prayer. Bhengu: Sermon. Interrupts sermon to ask man to give testimony. Sermon continues. Local choir sings 3 songs. Collections (visitors are asked to contribute first. This is done with great ceremony and each prefaces donation with a short speech). Collections (form of competition). 2 songs by visiting choir. Bhengu: Thanks choir; says Grace.</p>

* Praise-singer and poet.

From the Table above, the main differences between the three types of service become clear. The ordinary service thus generally includes the following elements: Prayers; hymns, choruses and devotional chants; the collection; sermon; grace. Although choral items, testimonies, etc. may be introduced, these do not change the overall pattern or atmosphere. Prayer-meetings, however, feature testimonies, public confessions and personal prayers (i.e. for healing, etc.) and the atmosphere is far more emotional. Special services generally include practically all possible elements and are generally the most informal being a combination of ordinary service, concert and general meeting. Special services usually feature numerous addresses and sermons by visiting dignitaries and preachers, choral items, instrumental ensembles, vocal solos, recitations and other entertainments. Collections are held frequently during these services and usually last for a considerable period, people being encouraged to contribute by means of competitions, challenges, and exhortations. There is also often an imbongi present to compose poems of praise about Bhengu, the Assembly and anyone or anything of importance. The three types of service are thus distinguishable both by the elements of which they are composed and by the balance of those elements.

The Atmosphere of Services

In general, the Assembly service has an air of informality. Thus, for example, although the service proceeds smoothly the minister, or leader of the congregation, frequently intersperses the various 'items' with comments and remarks - sometimes devotional, sometimes jocular, sometimes of a personal nature (such as mentioning that he has a bad cold), sometimes in the form of a brief sermon - which are entirely spontaneous. Similarly, all prayers are composed extemporaneously and those who lead in prayer often come forward in

response to an open invitation. Sometimes even hymns are started by individual members of the congregation and taken up by the rest. The sermon itself is never delivered in the solemn tone which has become associated with preachers, but has the flavour of a political harangue, while the preacher may often include personal references. Another factor contributing to the atmosphere of informality is the complete absence of ceremonial, the fact that the hall is devoid of religious symbols and decor, and also of any impressive pulpit. Sitting with the congregation before a service is due to begin, there is nothing to indicate that one is in a church or that what is to take place may not be some sort of public meeting. No sanctity appears to attach itself to the building per se.

Another feature of the services is their emotional tone. When hearing preachers in certain other churches, the complete silence with which the most passionate sermon is received is in sharp contrast to the response which even an indifferent preacher can solicit at the Assembly. One feels that the congregation is keyed to a pitch of emotionalism which finds expression in the interjecting, moaning, crying, screaming and babbling with which the congregation reacts to prayers, hymns and sermons. Even the minister may occasionally be observed to be visibly moved by his own words. Nevertheless, in general, the services remain controlled and one rarely witnesses such extremes as rolling on the ground, fainting or other violent physical reactions.

While we have described both the order of worship and the atmosphere of services in general terms, we shall now illustrate these more specifically by analysing in greater detail some of the elements of which services are composed.

Hymns, Chants and Choruses

As we have mentioned, the Assembly has no Book of Common Prayer, nor even its own hymnal. It has, however, borrowed from other churches certain well-known hymns, prayers and chants either because of their general popularity or because they are considered to be of special importance. In the first category are hymns such as Rock of Ages and Fulfill thy promise, which are taken from the Methodist hymnal. In the last two are devotional chants such as the Lord's Prayer and certain psalms, prayers and Biblical passages, as well as such formulae as the closing Grace. In addition to these there are also numerous hymns, choruses and songs with lively tunes some of which are used by other Pentecostal churches, others being confined to the Assemblies of God.

While it seems that the borrowed and more universal elements of the service are treated with greater reverence, since they are usually sung with bowed heads and closed eyes or whilst standing, Assembly songs* tend to inspire the congregation to a greater degree. Thus while it is rare to find any reaction to a borrowed hymn or chant, their own songs are generally followed by cries of 'Amen', etc., and a general murmur of satisfaction and enjoyment. This is not entirely surprising, since the lyrics are simple and expressive, while the melodies are lively and often accompanied by rhythmic gestures which emphasise the words.** These songs are also often sung when the

* In this latter category are included songs which may have been borrowed from other revivalist churches, and which are of similar type to the Assembly's own songs.

** Some of the songs - mainly those which have been translated from English - are modifications of once popular tunes. Those originally written in the vernacular, however, are similar in style to modern popular Xhosa and Zulu music, though, as far as could be ascertained, they are not parodies of actual hits.

congregation has already been moved by some prayer or comment by the preacher, or else may be introduced by a preacher when he intends to follow up with an impassioned prayer.

Visitors to the Assembly thus do not find the service totally strange, since a large proportion of the hymns and chants are well-known - and a Methodist, particularly, would not feel out of place. At the same time the Assembly's own songs are not difficult to learn since they are generally repetitive with simple melodies.

Prayers

Apart from the Lord's Prayer, the Te deum and the Grace, all prayers are composed extemporaneously. Spontaneous prayers are an important feature of all services, and are said at frequent intervals. These prayers are sometimes made by the preacher or by someone whom he specifically requests, at other times an open invitation to anyone who feels so moved, is issued. The preacher himself generally prays when opening the service, before and after a collection, and when closing the service. He may also offer a prayer in order to heighten the emotional atmosphere, prior to making an appeal or to giving a sermon.

The contents of prayers may be grouped into several broad categories: praise of God and Christ; thanks to God and Christ; appeals to God and Christ for help and guidance; thanksgiving to God for having sent Bhengu, praise of Bhengu and prayers for him; references to the history of the Assembly; prayers for ministers and evangelists; references to the prayer's personal salvation, healing, etc.; special prayers or thanks for collections, etc. The use of particular themes and their development, as well as the length of a prayer and the tone in which it is delivered, depend on each individual. It is

significant, however, that almost every prayer which has been recorded contains some reference to Bhengu. We quote below two examples:

(1) " Hely Father, we are in here at this time, Father who art mighty. We have nothing that we know we can do better than we are directed by you. With all our hearts we have decided never to act without your guidance. You sent a shepherd, Lord God, who came to stop darkness on earth, Father. There was no-one else who showed us the way to heaven our holy Father. Nobody showed us the way to goodness. There were those that preached this way but did not know it, and were very doubtful about it. There is no-one else whom we can serve. Jesus Christ came and said to us 'I am the Good Shepherd'. We heard the voice of our Shepherd, Oh God, and it differed from that of the king of darkness. His voice pierced our hearts and then we came to you, holy Father, because we had heard the voice of the Good Shepherd, our holy Father. You sent him Holy Father that He should look after your sheep.

" Even here in East London, Father who art holy, when we heard your voice we accepted it with great hearts. Your voice Father was heard by a scholar, by a Red man and by those who had thought they were already your followers. The Red people left their pagan dances and joined the flock of God. Your voice came, saying 'I am here', and we all felt that the voice had come.

" We came firstly as just people who were seeking for themselves security, but we had very little hope. We were running away from our bad deeds. We therefore came before you holy Father being afraid of our filth. Yet though we were afraid the voice still called and said 'Come this way kinsmen', and the voice pierced through our hearts. Our souls started to be consoled. You returned us to the right home. You had come with us in difficulties through the thick forests of life. We seemed to be going astray but you were with us holy Father. We were a centre of laughter. We were made to doubt whether we were right or wrong. People with better knowledge of things told us we were getting lost. We stayed like that till we actually

understood what we were doing. We noticed that we were not lost for you were guiding and leading us. We say, holy Father, that you are with us for we can feel that there is something in our consciences.

" This morning we come before you to request you to be with us in the current year. Guide us, great Jehova, for if you lead us we will see for there is light. We thank you God for your servant who came here in time. He arrived exactly when many people had actually lost your word. Bless us Father and pour on us your spirit. Bless all that you have given us through the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen".

(ii) " Yes our beloved Father who is the Father of Jesus Christ. My heart has great love for you. Great, great, you are and very mighty. There is nothing greater than you Oh Lord. Your word found our hearts in darkness and threw light. You chose one whom you entrusted with the spreading of your word. Some of your sheep came here lame. Our hearts meekly praise you.

" My heart becomes great when I think of Rev. Shengu who opens the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, and who releases the bandits. Your word fetched me from far away. I cannot say where I would be to-day if your servant had not come. Our eyes can see now. Our feet are deep in your blood, to be cleansed. We thank you for our minister Rev. Qobe. Our souls are relieved.

" Visit the fallen people with your mercies that are everlasting. Be with us in this place. Be with those in gaol. You can release the guilty from their faults. You released Peter from gaol when he was actually innocent. Visit the churches of all nations that worship you. Visit the schools. Talk to us in your word and quench our thirst for it. We thank you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

The prayers quoted above illustrate most of the themes which we have noted. They also show a fairly typical lack of

internal consistency while in many instances the meaning of a particular phrase is quite obscure. As in the examples quoted, most prayers appear to be built up by an association of ideas which is not always obvious to the listener. Another characteristic of these spontaneous prayers - though naturally this does not apply to those which have been recorded - is that frequently they are delivered so quickly or indistinctly that it is almost impossible to follow them at all. Actual delivery varies, of course, between individuals. In general, however, the person praying begins quietly but gradually works himself up to an emotional pitch, often shouting at the top of his voice, sobbing, and gesticulating. It is interesting, though, that however fervently a person has prayed, we have noticed that once the prayer has ended, no visible sign of emotion remains.

Congregational response to these spontaneous prayers generally seems to depend on two things: the frequent use of pious phrases such as "Holy Father", "Glory to God", "Hallelujah", etc., and the manner in which the prayer is delivered. It is clear from the many services which we have attended, that the congregation will be moved by their own interjections in response to certain key expressions, while the extent to which people moan, sob and cry depends on the ability of the prayer-leader to declaim dramatically. What is interesting, however, is that the actual content of prayers appears to be of only secondary importance, since the words are often indistinct or extremely commonplace and uninspiring in themselves. In any case, as the congregation reacts emotionally to a prayer, it sometimes becomes impossible to hear anything above the general din.

Testimonies and Confessions

Testimonies (in which a person describes how he was converted and the results of his conversion) and confessions (an account of sinful conduct) are an important feature of Crusade meetings. They do not, however, form an integral part of ordinary Assembly services, although they may be included in spontaneous prayers or solicited by a preacher to prove a point. Members of the Assembly do, however, have the opportunity to testify and confess at the umanyanos (guilds) and at the evening prayer meetings held during the week. The following are examples of a confession and a testimony given at a prayer meeting:

(i) Confession

" Brothers and sisters I have been away from church for quite a good spell. I was almost swallowed and eaten by the devil. Many people have discouraged and disheartened me a great deal. I nearly succumbed and gave up this church. Because my home is nearby I had even taken to hiding away behind the door when the saved people passed by on their way to the church of the servants of God. I am thankful to my God who kept on ringing in my heart. I have come to request for your prayers, you chosen ones of God. Please keep me in your prayers all the time, till I am staunch and stable in the Word as I was before."

(ii) Testimony

" I also wish to greet you in the name of Jesus. It is still amazing to me that I find myself praising God. I left Native dances and joined the word of God. I smoked the longest pipe one would ever come across. God is wonderful. He fetched me from there. Who ever thought that I would ever praise God. I had learnt every bad thing in East London - even brandy. I thank God that I am still saved. I can no more commit any adultery. My son wrote me a letter telling me that they have discovered who bewitched his brother and that he now had

a grudge against that person. Now I wish to tell the congregation that I will tell him that I have nothing to do with grudges for I am saved and serve the living God. I will never go back to darkness."

To an even greater degree than the prayer, testimonies and confessions are the opportunity par excellence for emotional display. They are always delivered with great vigour and enthusiasm and are often accompanied by illustrative gestures and mimicry. For the observer it is particularly fascinating to watch a well-dressed, obviously educated young man or woman becoming completely absorbed in their story, contorting their faces, moving their bodies and shouting at the top of their voices. The testimonies and confessions always receive the undivided attention of the congregation who continually interrupt with exclamations of 'shame', 'tsk, tsk', 'Halleluya', as the 'witness' gives picturesque and exaggerated details of each of his horrible sins and then extravagantly praises God for having saved him from eternal doom. It has often been my impression that the testimonies and confessions serve not only as a means of catharsis, but provide the opportunity for exhibitionism and self praise on the one hand, and the vicarious enjoyment of 'forbidden fruits' on the other. I clearly recall the first Assembly service which I attended at which a young man was called by the minister to testify. There was no doubt about the tremendous enjoyment, both for himself and his audience, as he described in great detail, and with appropriate mime how, as a tsotsi, he had seduced many girls.

Interpolations by preachers

Although this occurs to some extent in the Methodist and other mission churches, it is particularly noticeable in the Assembly how frequently preachers intersperse the elements of

the service with remarks. These remarks range from brief exclamations of approval after a prayer or hymn, through to lengthy addresses on some moral or religious issue which may at first be assumed to have been the sermon for the day. They include such topics as the preacher's state of health, a story involving the preacher or someone known to him, a moral lesson, an item of information which occurred suddenly to the preacher, and so forth. It is these interpellations which are chiefly responsible for the informal atmosphere of an Assembly service. These remarks - particularly when Bhengu or one of the ministers is preaching - also throw much light on the beliefs and teachings of the Assembly, and in fact, they are the main means of emphasizing pragmatically these teachings. Remarks are usually made in a conversational or even jocular tone while the preacher will often use mime to emphasize his point. Below we quote a few examples from various services:

- (i) The elder leading the service remarks quite irrelevantly after a prayer:

" Servants of the Lord! Could it be possible that there is a man here who may not have paid his taxes? That would be shameful. People are preventing and obstructing others from paying them by saying that we married people now had to pay £2 - 5 - Od. I would advise you, my friends, to pay what is demanded by the Europeans. The Government has never been nasty to anybody." (He then changes the subject completely, asking anyone who has not attended church for some time to give their reasons).

- (ii) Bhengu takes over the service from an elder and remarks after a hymn:

" I am very thankful to stand here to-day on such a beautiful occasion. You know, there are some ministers who want to oust me from this position. (He says this in jocular tone and the congregation laughs) I wonder if I am mistaken.

Are the West Bank people here? Where are the West Bank people? Don't they come when they know that I am present? (An evangelist, Moyikwa, answers that they are having a revival meeting) There you are, Rev. Moyikwa is one of those who are trying to oust me. (Prolonged laughter) Rev. Moyikwa you must know that this is very bad. We must come together when I am back from abroad. I am always missing my children for a long time. I therefore long to see them all. What do you think I should say when there is somebody who keeps my children away from me. A certain man does not want them to come to me. There he is! See him! It is this very Moyikwa! (Prolonged laughter)"

(iii) After a hymn the preacher remarks:

" Oh, I feel quite sorry and sympathetic for those people who stand distant from Jesus our Saviour and our Redeemer. There are still those people who are in the thicket of darkness of sin. They are not aware of the danger which will befall them if they die in darkness." (The congregation responds with cries of 'Halleluya', 'Amen', and the preacher then asks the choir to sing two songs.)

(iv) The minister is making a number of announcements, during which he says:

" On the 31st of the month, on Sunday we will have a communion service. Do not be mistaken. You must prepare your ways and get ready for the Lord's supper. You must not keep on going about with heaps of abominations till that day. You must be cleansed. You must know that there is internal cleanliness that cannot be falsified. The false pretenders are disgraced and their shame is known and seen by everyone. I say be clean. Say I am understood! Am I understood? Do you hear me? I say take God's ways only. God's way has not got any officious person. All people are equal in God's ways. God's way has no wise man or simple man - all people are equal in it. If a person declares himself clever, God will disappoint and disgrace him. One who eats the body of Jesus Christ and His blood while remaining in his filthiness, is in great danger. Others

have been disgraced in public. Amen. Well if you do not wish me to say this, start to-day and make smooth your way and say I put my finger for the last time against you because you will be holy and free of sin. If you have a bad thing that you do alone without the knowledge of other people, throw it off now. Even if you know that you are a good preacher or a good manyano member, you must be good."

Although interpolations such as those quoted above are a common feature of all services, they are most evident when Bhengu himself is the preacher - and especially if the occasion is a convention or similar special meeting. It is also interesting to note - as is reflected in the last quotation - that announcements are seldom confined to the passing on of exact information, but are always embellished with comments, admonitions and lessons.

We have mentioned that it is during these interpolations that preachers often deal with moral problems. This is in fact their most important function. It is in such addresses that preachers - particularly Bhengu - deal with the attitude of the church to everyday problems, and in which they provide guidance in approaching them. And it is this down-to-earth and direct guidance which Assembly members regard as the most important advantage of the Assembly and its most striking distinction from other churches. We have already quoted one example where the preacher appeals to the people to pay their taxes. Other topics which have been dealt with during various services which we have attended, include remarks on cleanliness and hygiene, the manner in which a 'saved' person should behave among other people, how children should be brought up, etc. These 'lectures' are not simply broad moral lessons but detailed explanations for coping with specific problems or situations.

Sermons

Unlike the interpolated remarks just described, sermons generally deal with broader spiritual and moral issues. They are always preceded by the reading of a Scriptural passage - although preachers often tend to wander from their quotations without fully developing their original themes. Most of the sermons appear to be based on readings from the New Testament, although points are often illustrated by Old Testament stories. Some of the subjects dealt with include: the power of faith; what is meant by 'God's Way'; the futility of good deeds without salvation. Sermons are generally delivered in much the same tone as the interpolations - i.e. informal and conversational - and are also often illustrated with mimicry, stories, etc. Because of the subject matter, however, they are generally more serious than interpolations. Furthermore, although congregants punctuate interpolations with cries of approval they rarely become emotional. Sermons, on the other hand, are often interrupted for some time by passionate emotional outbursts. Also a preacher simply making remarks - however important - may be interrupted for various reasons (i.e. someone may wish to draw his attention to something, a person may wish to make an announcement, etc.) while during a sermon this rarely happens.

There is no obvious difference between the subjects dealt with in sermons by different preachers - whether Bhengu, ministers or elders - except insofar as the more knowledgeable and imaginative may have a wider range of topics and a more original approach.

While a more detailed analysis of the contents of sermons will follow in the discussion of the teachings and

beliefs of the Assembly (see Ch. 8), we quote below from a sermon by Bhengu at an ordinary Sunday morning service:

" We will hear the word of God from the first Psalm. I do not know why we should always be jumping over this psalm. Will Rev. Qobo read the whole psalm for us please. (Qobo reads it. It is followed by an Afrikaans translation for the benefit of some Coloured members and visitors. Bhengu says 'Amen' and leads the congregation in singing two hymns. He continues, preaching in Xhosa, and being interpreted into Afrikaans.)

" 'Blessed is the man who sitteth not in the seat of the scornful' (Ps.1 v. 1). 'I do not go about with the scornful. I do not sit in the seat of the scornful'. This is what a person may say. It is not for one to say so oneself. There are signs which have to show this. The first sign to show is 'delight'. A drunkard is very delighted when one gives him a nip. His delight is in brandy and drunkenness. You know Zulu people are still very backward in comparison with Xhosa people. Xhosas are more civilised. The delight of many Zulu is in women. If a Zulu is walking and he sees a woman he will look at her when she passes until she disappears. [He mimes and the congregation laugh.] Their delight is in the admiration of womenfolk. You know a witch-doctor looks very morose when there are no clients but when some clients come he goes in and out of the consulting hut. He starts chewing bits of roots which he had nipped with his canine teeth in the presence of the clients so that they should praise him as a proper diviner. He takes fat which he smears on his eyebrows. [Bhengu mimes all this and the people laugh.] You will know that he is delighted in witchcraft affairs and dealings.

" The delight of a Christian is in the word of God. A Christian reads other books only for increasing his knowledge and opening his mind - but his delight is in the word of God. His delight is not in Xhosa custom, in Zulu custom, in western civilisation, not in his kinsmen, not in the dead, not in his ancestors."

The Manyano and the Role of Women in the Assembly

Before leaving our discussion of the Assembly service, we should consider another important religious activity - the manyano - and, since they are closely bound up, the role of women in the Assembly.

Although the Assembly insists on the equality of all believers, in common with most churches - White and African - sex does determine to some extent the role which a member may play. All the leading positions in the Assembly are held by men, and it is they who control both its religious life and its administration. The only obvious 'liberalism' with regard to women in comparison with most other African churches, is that they sit together with men at services and participate in congregational meetings.

As in the African Church in general, the superior status of men is validated in the Assembly by reference to the Scriptures and to what is considered to be the nature of women. Men and women agree that the latter's subordination was laid down clearly in the story of Adam and Eve, while they also point out that not only were Jesus and the Apostles men, but that men have taken the lead throughout the history of the Church. Neither do they question the wisdom of this 'divine law' since, they say, women are more prone to temptation, less stable and more emotional than men, and that if positions were open to them there would be constant jealousy and strife.

Nevertheless women do have the opportunity to play an important part in the life of the African Church through the manyano. Practically all churches regard the Women's Umanyano (Church Guild), as an important element of their spiritual and

financial life. To become a member of the manyano a woman must satisfy strict conditions, as we have already described (Part I, pp. 39-40). She must satisfy the manyano that she is a regular attendant at services, leads a pure Christian life, conducts her home in accordance with Christian standards, and has completely given up pagan practices. Once accepted, she wears the special manyano uniform and may participate fully in all manyano activities. Membership of this guild gives a woman prestige among School people in general.

In all churches the manyano meet regularly once a week, on Thursday afternoons. The local president is generally the minister's wife, although a member of the congregation is usually elected chairlady or vice-president. At the meetings the women preach, give and receive Bible lessons and religious instruction, and are taught how to conduct their homes and influence their families to lead a Christian life. Manyano women also visit the sick, arrange women's prayer meetings, play a prominent part in revivals, and help maintain church discipline by admonishing sinners and reporting them to the church authorities. They are also often responsible for the maintenance of the church building and assist the minister's wife in her domestic duties.

Bhengu originally opposed the formation of a manyano in the Assembly. He attacked the wearing of uniforms as unscriptural, saying that the manyano women were only Christians externally, but did not wear the "uniform of Christianity in their hearts". Many staunch manyano women, he said, were known to be illicit liquor dealers, while others engaged in a variety of illegal and immoral practices. Bhengu also pointed out that it was not right that these women should enjoy higher status, since all believers were equal. This latter objection was probably one of the main reasons for Bhengu's

opposition, since it is common knowledge that women who do not or cannot belong to the manyanos, are very much less active in church, and he was probably anxious, therefore, not to differentiate between female members in this respect. When, however, he was finally prevailed upon to allow its establishment he laid down certain conditions: the manyano would not be a closed and select association, but would be open to all women to attend at will; there would be no uniforms; and finally there would be no official differentiation between participants and non-participants.

While to the men the most important function of the manyano is probably its fund-raising activities, to the women it is the means through which they can express themselves most freely. It provides them with the opportunity to hold office, to assume responsibility in the church and, at its meetings, to deal with problems and topics of most interest to themselves. The description below of one manyano meeting will clarify some of the points discussed.

Most of the women were already seated when Mrs. Qobo (the minister's wife) arrived. Mrs. Qobo took the chair and started singing one of the Assembly's hymns. The women joined in with enthusiasm and frequently interjected with cries of 'Amen', 'Glory to Jesus', 'Hallelujah'. The hymn ended, Mrs. Qobo greeted those present and called on one of the women to pray.

" Father of all we come before you. We remember where we came from. We thank you for showing us your way through your servant. We were taken as manyano women making a show-off by wearing red blouses, white blouses, leopard-skin hats.* All these were sinful, they were neck-deep in sin and yet they called themselves your children. We pray you, Oh Lord, to bring those who are on the dark road as we used to be. Bless

* A reference to the uniformed manyano women of other churches.

the women of this church and give them the strength to bring up their children under the influence of your word. Be with Rev. Bhengu and his family. Give them prosperity in whatever they may do. Let us be sure in whatever we do. Let the devil not get a chance with any of us who are already saved. Bless us and increase the number of manyano women and increase the number of saved. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

The women then chanted the Lord's Prayer after which they sang a hymn. The minister's wife then commented that one of the women had been away from the manyano for several months without giving any reasons. The woman then stood up and explained:

" Children of our Lord, I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ. I greet the mothers and sisters of the Assembly of God. I have been missing your company for a long time. I did not report because I was just taken unawares by my husband. I had gone to the home of my in-laws. My children were sick and my mother-in-law as well. There is a small denomination of the Assembly of God there so I never missed the word of the Lord, not a day. We prayed for the sick till the Lord heard our prayer. I pray to the Lord, to prevent the same plague attacking the home of my in-laws to disturb me in my work and in my service of the Lord. Please pray for me and for my family. Do not forget this whenever you make prayers."

Another woman then described "how she stood in the word of God". She said that she had been away in hospital after being pricked by a nail. She had sent many messages to inform the meeting about her absence and that she had asked for prayers from the meeting. When she recovered she thanked God for she knew that they must have prayed for her and that God had heard their prayers.

A third woman then said:

" Sisters I stand up to suggest that all the people who are employed should request Rev. Bhengu that the contributions must not be done weekly but must be done monthly. During the course of the month we have no money. There are so many demands wanting money in an urban location that some people

can lose faith in religion. Even if the amount would be fixed at a pound we could at least afford it. We could even try to make bazaars and this would make more money than the usual collection for the building fund. The talents as well should be received and money would be made quickly."

She was not supported, however, and sat down mumbling to herself.

A woman then asked how a bazaar was run and whether it would not be wasting time if she asked for an explanation.

Another woman stood up and replied:

" Sister, it is good to ask what you do not know so as to know. Some people just keep quiet even when they do not understand. A bazaar is a way of collecting money from the people by selling to them what they wish to buy. Each of us may bring anything that is in great demand and in daily use in the location. You may go to buy anything at the market and come to sell it here. The profit will go to the fund, or all of it if that article was your contribution to the work of God. There is a lot of profit in this. You may buy butter for a shilling at the market and sell it here for 1/6d or 2/--. Do you understand sister?"

Mrs. Qobo then said:

" If we cannot get money from the office for talents, we can as groups collect money from our own pockets and carry on with the work of the Lord, sisters. We cannot sit down and say we have no money. What is the use of that? Let us work hard.

" Since it is late Sisters, I will ask Rev. Ngcangisa (a visiting minister from another Assembly) to say a few words."

The minister said:

" I am rather pleased Sisters to be amongst you today. If there are some of you disturbed by the men's presence today, you must excuse us as we are all sent by God. That man over there [referring to my Research Assistant] is also sent by God on

his own mission. His work or the outcome of it may be very good for you or your children's children. The only mistake with our people is to have very quick results of everything. Others even fail to serve God to the last days of their lives because of the great hurry and anxiety people usually have. Sisters, be tolerant. Never mind whether you have not got fame personally, your children will have it through you.

" The very few words I am going to give are from the book of St. Mark chapter 15 verse 5.

" This was the time when our Lord Jesus was to be crucified. He knew he was to be crucified. He had come to this world for that. He came to die for our sins. He had not a single spot of sin. As the sacred Son of God he chose to be handled by dirty hands so that we should be saved from sin. Who would do that? Would you and I do that? No! Would Satan do that? No!

" Pilate knew that Jesus had no sin at all. He was innocent. The elders and scribes envied Him of great deeds and works. You are also like that. The people envy a man or woman of great works. There are many who scorn Bhengu. Even Christians do that. There were Christians amongst those people. As it was the custom to release a prisoner for one who was to be crucified, Pilate asked if he could instead replace Jesus by Barnabas, a robber and a murderer. They all shouted, 'Release Barnabas'. He asked, 'Not the King of the Jews?' - for he knew the priests had delivered Him out of envy. But they moved the people that he should rather release Barnabas. Pilate asked again for he knew Jesus was innocent: 'What must I do with the King of the Jews?' They all cried out 'Crucify him!'. Do you also say we must release the devil and put Jesus to bondage? You say so if your works are against the commandments of God. You gossip, you lie, you bear false witness for your neighbours though they may be murderers. You still say you do not enjoy the services if a preacher is not the one you favour. Go now and consider who should be released to be amongst you, Barnabas who is a robber, a murderer, Satan; or Jesus Christ."

The minister then made the Benediction and Grace and closed the meeting.

Summary and Conclusions

To summarise the characteristics of the Assembly service, we have found it convenient to compare it with some of the other churches in the East Bank. This comparison will serve both to underline the particular nature of the Assembly service as well as to place it in wider perspective. The churches which we have selected are the Order of Ethiopia (an Anglican Order), the Congregational Union, the Methodist Church and the Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa.

(1) The sanctity of the Church

The Order of Ethiopia, Congregational Union, and Methodist Church

The interiors of all these churches leave no doubt as to the nature of the building, there being an altar (in the case of the Order), pulpits, various religious symbols. The choir and church officials occupy special places in church, and all - including the ministers - wear some distinctive dress. Men and women sit separately, and usually manyano women - distinguishable by their special uniforms - sit as a group in the women's bloc. The church has an air of sanctity - people talk quietly, they do not wander around the hall before the service, while on entering the church they generally kneel facing the pulpit and pray silently with eyes closed. During the service there is complete silence.

The Zionists: They have no proper church building but hold their services in the minister's house, a small hall, or even in the open. Until the service actually begins, congregants gather and converse in small groups either inside or outside the 'church'. No particular sanctity appears to attach to the venue. There is no doubt, however, that the gathering is a religious one, since the Zionists all wear uniforms embellished with crosses, stars, slogans, etc., and many carry

staffs mounted with a cross. The minister has a special staff with a metal cross. The atmosphere of the service itself is completely informal - worshippers interrupt the preacher frequently with prayers, remarks, interjections, etc. while there are frequent conversations between the preacher and members of the congregation. Men and women do not sit together.

The Assembly: The building itself has nothing to identify it as a place of worship, nor does any sanctity appear to attach to it. Before services people converse normally, some wander around the hall to speak to friends, and so on. Those entering the church only kneel in silent prayer when a service is in progress, but do not do so simply on entering the hall. Apart from the preacher who stands on the platform, the choir who wear special uniform and deacons who happen to be on duty, it is not possible to distinguish church officials since neither they nor ministers wear any distinguishing robes of office nor do they occupy any special place in the hall. The manyano members do not sit in a group, nor do they have uniforms. Men and women sit together. The atmosphere of the service itself is also informal: preachers may be interrupted, people may sometimes carry on conversations with one another, etc.

(ii) The Order of Worship

The Order of Ethiopia: The order of worship is fairly rigidly determined by the Book of Common Prayer, and there is limited freedom of choice from among the hymns, chants and prayers prescribed for each type of service. The service is rich in ritual and certain elements must be included. This is the most formal of the churches.

The Congregational Union and Methodists: Certain services must follow a prescribed pattern and order, while others may be arranged by the preacher as he sees fit. There is however greater freedom of choice as to which hymns and chants are used - none apparently being laid down for particular services. Certain elements must however be included. Prayers in these churches are spontaneous - the Methodists tending to have more prayers by members of the congregation than the Congregational Union.

The Zionists and the Assembly: There is no formal order of worship and each preacher decides the programme for himself. No elements appear to be compulsory, although the Lord's Prayer is usually included in most services. Neither church has any prayer-book or hymnal, but use popular hymns from other churches (particularly the Methodists) as well as their own. Prayers are spontaneous and usually made by members of the congregation.

(iii) The Emotional tone of the Service

The Order of Ethiopia and the Congregational Union: The service is completely decorous. Only on rare occasions do worshippers show any emotion - and even then it takes the form of quiet sobbing. There is no visible emotional reaction to sermons or prayers, and there are no interjections. The preacher is never interrupted and congregants seldom alter their expressions of stolid attention. The atmosphere of the service is solemn in the extreme.

The Methodists and the Assembly: Hymns, prayers, sermons usually elicit emotional response, although neither church allows emotional extremism. There is little difference in the

emotional tone of the two churches, although in the Methodist church people may be sufficiently moved to come to the front of the church to kneel and pray. Hymns in these churches are more lively than in the Order and the Union, while the Assembly has many catchy secular tunes. In all services at the Assembly and in the less formal ones of the Methodists, preachers may be interrupted by congregants to make some comment, or by an emotional outburst. It is also characteristic of these churches that the service is interspersed with comments by the preacher on a wide variety of subjects. Services in both churches are thus emotional while in the Assembly they are also extremely informal.

The Zionists: Emotionalism pervades the whole atmosphere of the service and the most extreme expressions are encouraged.

The Assembly service, then resembles most closely that of the Methodist church although it also shares certain characteristics with the Zionists. What distinguishes it from most other churches, however, is the almost complete absence of ceremonial and symbolism. It is important to note, however, that despite this and despite the informality of services, the behaviour of worshippers as well as many of the elements of which services are composed, are highly ritualised. Thus, for example, spontaneous prayers exhibit a high degree of uniformity while congregants' responses to certain stimuli can be fairly accurately predicted.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS

Although the Bhengu movement has no official creed, there are certain beliefs and practices which are unquestionably associated with it. These are discernable from the sermons and remarks of preachers, in the short-lived journal Back to God (of which four issues were edited and published by Bhengu in 1955), from interviews with ministers and members, in services and ceremonies of the assemblies, and in the behaviour of members. These beliefs and practices are based on the fundamental beliefs of the Assemblies of God (see Appendix A) and on their elaboration and interpretation by Bhengu. They are disseminated either directly by Bhengu himself at Crusades and Conventions, or indirectly through workers on the basis of directives from Bhengu at workers' Conferences and other occasions. They may be divided into three main areas, consistent with Bhengu's mission of African advancement and redemption through Christianity: Christian doctrine, social and moral improvement, African advancement.

DOCTRINE

The doctrine of the Bhengu movement is given, in general terms, in the journal Back to God although its specific application and interpretation only became evident through observation and investigation. For convenience, we have divided this doctrinal statement into seven main topics, quoting the relevant items before each discussion. (The numbers preceding each item, indicate, the order in which it appears in the Back to God statement).

The Godhead

- "1. The trinity of the Godhead, i.e. father, Son and Holy Spirit: co-equal and eternally existing in three persons as one God.
- "2. The deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, that he was begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, possessing a sinless human nature; that his death was penal, vicarious and substitutionary; and that He was raised bodily from the dead on the third day.
- "3. The personality of the Holy Spirit, and that as promised, He came down from heaven on the Day of Pentecost, to dwell permanently in the Church and in the body of each believer, and that He is the efficient power for godly living, Christian service, and spiritual worship."

Preachers in their sermons and members during interviews stress that belief in God is the "gateway to life in this world". Prayer is not simply a formality but an effective means of obtaining whatever one needs or desires from the only being who has power to satisfy them. They are taught that every aspect of life is God's concern, and that once one has accepted Him, He is one's constant guide. Thus it is a common observation of non-members of the Assembly that members are "always praying". Our own observations, and the statements made by members of the Assembly, bare out the fact that they are wont to pray several times during the day, either praising God or petitioning Him for help and guidance in some immediate project. In their conversation they constantly refer to what God has done for them.

Although superficially this does not appear to be any different from the attitude of sincere Christians of other churches, there is a subtle distinction. This is mainly a question of degree and intensity. Even ministers of most

'orthodox' Protestant churches appear to regard God's role in human affairs as somewhat more remote than do members of the Assembly, and they do not relate everything directly to God's intervention. With members of the Assembly everything is related to God and His power, and they seem to believe entirely in the effectiveness of prayer. Illness, death, failure to achieve a desired goal do not minimise for them the value of prayer, but are explained either as God's will (which has supercedence over one's personal wishes) or as the result of not 'being right with God'.

The reason for this 'practical' faith is based on what they consider to be irrefutable evidence. At his revival meetings Bhengu constantly stresses the material advantages of Christianity, 'proving' his contentions by demonstrations of healing and testimonies of converts. The convert is thus accepting the interpretation which Bhengu places on certain observable facts. This is, of course, not an intellectual evaluation of the situation, since the hypothesis and proofs are presented dramatically in a highly emotional atmosphere. Once accepted, however, such an evaluation becomes the framework within which everything else is explained. Thus, when as a result of Bhengu's and his ministers' 'social' teachings, converts changed the whole tenor of their lives, this was ascribed to God's power and the effectivity of their prayers rather than as simply the natural outcome of certain practical (and not supernatural) measures.

Another important aspect of their belief in the Godhead is their conception of the Holy Spirit. Most 'orthodox' Protestant churches (except to some extent the Methodists) are cautious in their explanation of the role of the Holy Spirit

in the Church today, and therefore generally do not emphasize it. The Assembly, in common with other Pentecostal movements, however, believes that the possession of believers by the Holy Spirit did not occur once for all on the dramatic Pentecost described in the Scriptures, but still occurs today.* Every believer therefore can and should experience Baptism of the Holy Spirit which is manifested in the phenomenon of 'speaking in tongues' as well as in various forms of emotionalism. Although Bhengu himself does not particularly stress the more emotional aspects of Baptism in the Holy Spirit, he does emphasise its constant manifestation. Members of the Assembly therefore explain any emotionalism during services in terms of Holy Spirit possession, while any unusual occurrence such as a particularly vehement prayer, the sudden intonation of a hymn by a member of the congregation, or an interruption of the proceedings with a prayer or lengthy interjection, is also taken as evidence of Holy Spirit. But although Bhengu teaches that speaking in tongues does occur, he does not especially encourage its practice, so that unlike many other Assemblies of God congregations the East London Assembly does not hold special services during which believers are 'helped' to experience baptism in the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless there are occasional incidents during the course of an ordinary service when a person is particularly moved, that he - or, more frequently, she - will suddenly jump up and begin to babble incoherently as he shows evidence of his baptism by speaking in other tongues.

The Assembly, probably because it is still young and

* See Part II, p.7.

part of a virile revival movement, thus has an extremely dynamic conception of the Godhead and its role in human affairs.

'Prove the power of God while you are still alive' is an ever-recurring statement by members of the church.

Scriptures

"4. The supernatural plenary inspiration of the Scripture, that it is inerrant in the original writings and of supreme, absolute and final authority, in all matters of doctrine, faith and conduct.

"13. That the Gospel of Christ issuing from His death and resurrection should be preached without reserve or qualification to every creature under Heaven."

Ministers and members of the Assembly always explain the absence of a written constitution or formal creed with the words "the Bible is our only constitution". They believe that the Bible - both Old and New Testaments - is divine revelation, without any reservations as to accuracy of transcription, transmission and translation and without any exception. Furthermore, they have no 'official' interpretation of the Bible, nor do they regard any as of greater authority than the Word itself. They do, however, apparently recognise the difficulties inherent in trying to take the Bible literally at all times (admitting that its meaning is often somewhat obscure) and they therefore allow believers a wide degree of freedom of interpretation - except in what they regard as the clearly enunciated fundamentals of Christianity (such as the nature of the Godhead, Salvation, Baptism, etc., and which are incorporated in the 'Statement of Fundamental Truths',*

* This Statement was formulated in the United States soon after the establishment of the assemblies of God, and appears to be generally accepted by the movement as a statement of its basic beliefs. It appears in full in Appendix A.

and in Bhengu's doctrinal belief), 'according to further light which may be given by the Holy Spirit'. They believe not only that everything, whether individual behaviour or the affairs of the church, should be based on the Bible, but that, in fact, in the Assembly it is. It is thus not surprising that in preaching, discussion and conversation, ministers and members of the Assembly constantly refer to the Bible in support of their actions, statements or arguments. In fact in only one other church which we have investigated (the Ibhandla leka Krestu - Limba's Church) have we been equally impressed with the familiarity of members with the Bible. At services members of the Assembly always have their bibles ready to follow quotations (it is one of the rules that everyone should bring his Bible), look up references, or note passages for recommended reading. Most members claim that they read from the Bible every day, and our own observation has shown that when calling unexpectedly at the home of a member if he or she is not engaged in some household chore, he is reading the Bible, while between members the Bible is a popular topic of conversation.

Salvation

- "5. The ruin of the human race is universal, total and irremediable by any human effort whatsoever.
- "6. The shed blood of Christ is the only ground of justification by God, forgiveness of sins, and peace with God.
- "7. The necessity of the new birth as the only ground of entrance into the Kingdom of God.
- "8. Salvation by Grace through faith in the finished work of Christ.

"10. It is the privilege of all who are born again by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ Jesus to be assured of their salvation, and that they are in present possession of eternal life, and delivered from judgement and the wrath to come."

School converts to the Assembly all point out that one of the most important differences between Bhengu's teachings and those of other churches is that Bhengu stresses the belief that a person can be saved while he is still alive and can have knowledge of his salvation. While we are neither qualified nor willing to enter into a discussion of this point, it appears that while Calvinists and Methodists, for example, would not fundamentally differ from this belief, they do not emphasize it since it is a most complex problem. In fact African members and ministers of these churches criticise the Assembly on this point, as the following remark by a member of the Methodist Church illustrates:

"The Methodists do not believe that a person is ever saved and free from sin whilst walking on his two feet. Bhengu could not convince me when he said that after repentance the people were totally saved. This is God's duty. If a person is saved whilst alive, nobody can ever know that, even the person himself. It is after death that one knows that he is saved."

Bhengu, however, teaches very clearly - and makes some reference to it in almost every sermon - that the believer ensures his forgiveness and salvation by accepting that through Christ's death mankind is exonerated from sin. "The mistake which some people make", said Bhengu during one sermon, "is that they believe that people are saved after death. People are saved whilst still alive and their salvation is reflected in their repentance on the one hand, and in their proof of the power of God, on the other." According to Bhengu, therefore, once a

person has accepted Christ's vicarious death for his own sins, he is saved and can know this. Thus the Assembly regards itself as the 'home of the saved', and acceptance of salvation is the only qualification for membership.

In common with other churches, the Assembly believes that only acceptance of the meaning of Christ's death ensures salvation and that good deeds alone are of no avail. At the same time repentance of sin and leading a 'Christian life' are generally believed to be essential conditions to salvation. Concepts of sin and Christian conduct differ, however, in the various churches. In the Assembly it is believed that all sins ranging from a white lie to murder are of the same magnitude and that the mode of repentance is the same in every case. Thus, at the time of conversion, the new convert is expected to confess of his sins (whatever they may be) and to sincerely undertake to lead a pure life thereafter. However society might regard these misdemeanours, is of no concern to the church and has no bearing on his salvation. Some members of the Assembly believe - though this is possibly due to a misunderstanding of the doctrine, and does not necessarily reflect Bhengu's teachings - that once saved, a person cannot commit further sins. Such people will not generally admit that it is possible even to commit sins unwittingly and will counter any query about a particular instance in the Assembly with the retort "I do not know of this". How they explain the fact that disciplinary action is taken against members and that members often admit publicly some sin, one is unable to say. In their own minds they probably reconcile belief with reality by maintaining that the person concerned was not really saved, but only appeared to be so.

Baptism

"9. The observance of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper."

Infants and children, who cannot be expected to make a considered 'decision for Christ', are not baptised in the Assembly. Only adults who have stated their conviction of personal salvation may receive this sacrament as symbolic of their rebirth. The actual baptism is by full immersion and is performed either in a river or in the sea, since - it is said - this was the way in which Christ himself had been baptised.

In East London and, it appears, in other centres too, only Bhengu organises the baptismal ceremonies, which have always been done en masse, rather than individually. Despite the importance of the sacrament, no ceremony has been arranged in East London for several years, although many new converts have since joined the Assembly. The only reason given for this was that no one but Bhengu could perform baptism and that he has been 'too busy' to do so. Since we have not been able to observe such a ceremony, therefore, the following newspaper report* of the 1952 ceremony must suffice to give us some idea of what takes place. There is at any rate no doubt that these mass baptisms have drawn huge crowds of spectators and have often themselves yielded many new converts.

" More than 1,400 Natives in East London on Sunday, stretched their arms to the heavens and pleaded forgiveness at the greatest baptismal ceremony ever held in the Union.

" They were at Second Creek - and this craggy little creek was transformed into a mass open-air cathedral as the young and old were caught up in this mass demonstration of faith.

* East London Daily Dispatch October 15, 1952 (Reprinted in Back to God Vol.I No. 1 April 1955.

" Tears rolled down their cheeks unchecked as the followers of the African evangelist, Mr. Nicholas B.H. Bhengu, of the Assemblies of God Church, begged forgiveness from Him for their sins.

" They had all been sinners - drunkards, thieves, daggasmokers, scoundrels - but they looked upwards with a new light in their eyes, like children asking for another chance.

" And they were truly repentant. Months ago they had returned to the police and owners various pieces of stolen property and dangerous weapons, and were prepared to pay for their sins.

" The symbols of their sins were surrendered and they were now united in a move to righteousness started only a little over a year ago by Mr. Bhengu.

" Mr. Bhengu said: 'Most of them here today have been with us for over a year. We have been watching them and are convinced that they are no longer sinners. Some of them here belonged to the worst possible type of criminal in East London, but today they are leading a straight life. God has been good to us in showing us the way.

" 'Our theme is to tell them to get right with God - when they do that they realise they have to get right with man also.'

" Mr. Bhengu said he had received the utmost co-operation in East London from the police, the City Council, and various citizens, and could not have had the success which was so obvious without the kind assistance which the city had given.

" Crowds of Europeans lined the river banks and watched the moving ceremony as the Natives, most of them garbed in white, assembled for the baptism to begin.

" Some prayed in silence, others just looked straight ahead as though they were to enter a new world.

" Old men held the hands of small boys as though one was passing his strength to the other. But the majority just stood quietly weeping and let the tears flow unashamedly down their cheeks.

" They were just as unashamed when a few minutes previously their leader had asked them: 'How many among you were thieves, drunkards, scoundrels, and not fit for this earth?'

" As they approached the water's edge members of the various families watched and waited nearby with blankets to hurry them home as they emerged dripping from the water.

" Reactions were strange. Some screamed 'Hallelujah' - others shouted with glee, some nearly fainted, old men and women appeared strangely young again but all had a brilliant look in their eyes, a sparkle and clear vision which gave the impression that they could see again - the error of their ways.

" The Europeans lining the banks above, looked down and wondered. They were thoughtful because it was impossible to witness such a scene and not be moved.

" It was impossible not to feel that on this Easter Sunday there was also someone else present at this craggy creek which had never before been honoured with such a scene, transforming the lives of so many Natives. The background of trees and the splash of the water as the sinners emerged seemed to form the perfect setting. Nature herself was helping in this mass demonstration to cure the sick of mind and cleanse their souls.

" Mr. Zhengu looked on with a contented smile, obviously the most happy man at this mass baptismal. For he was probably seeing his life's aim being fulfilled as he said: 'I can visualise the future - the way ahead as a life for Natives without crime. A life that will make South Africa a clean place to live in. It is so obvious that it can be done.'

" 'My aim is to start several Sunday Schools in East London, to have youth camp meetings, and we will go on from strength to strength with the help of God.'

" 'From now on we will be going to different areas in the Eastern Cape and the Transkei, conducting these baptismal ceremonies, but it will only be for those who believe, and repent, and is not a mass baptismal for all.'

" Before the Natives entered the water, Mr. J.E. Mullan, of the Assemblies of God Church, told them: 'Those of you who are going to be baptised today as you enter the water and as you are raised again, will show forth the sign of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.'

" 'May you go forth determined to serve Him with all your hearts.'

" 'May God help us all.'

" Mr. Bhengu added: 'Europe is crumbling today because many people are running away from Christ - but if we go to Him we have no doubt that South Africa will be a great place to live in. Men today place their trust in atomic bombs and arms, but the wise men of the world know that the real power today lies in the hands of God.'

Whether this is the view of Bhengu or not, members of the Assembly seem to regard baptism as more than a mere symbolic ritual. It represents to them the actual rebirth of the convert after he has accepted the message of salvation and before he is regarded as being truly saved. Thus they state that after conversion they had been told that they would be taken to the river to wash away their sins. Before the emersion, prayers were said for them, and after the ritual had been performed they were told that they were now clean of sins and that their past lives had been forgiven. They were reborn and could start life afresh.

Although we are reluctant to invest the Assembly baptism with a magical interpretation (i.e. that it is in itself

considered to be an effective ritual) there is no doubt that the dramatic and spectacular manner in which the ceremony is performed is a fitting climax to the atmosphere of the revivals during which decisions to convert had previously been made. The baptismal ceremony is performed in a manner quite as dramatic as a major initiation ceremony and it is therefore understandable that it is regarded by converts as representing a definite physical and spiritual break with the past and the beginning of a new life.

Communion

"9. The observance of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper."

Although the Lord's Supper is regarded as an extremely important rite which should be celebrated weekly by believers, it has not taken place in the East London Assembly for some years. Despite the fact that Bhengu himself states that any believer may officiate at the communion ceremony - and in fact this does occur in some assemblies - East London people explain that communion has not been celebrated because only Bhengu may officiate and that "he has not had the opportunity to do so for some years".

Recently, at a service in May 1959, the minister announced that Bhengu would hold a communion service at the end of that month. He then appealed all members to attend the service since "one was not a Christian unless he celebrated communion at least once per annum", explained at length the significance of the ceremony, and urged the people to be sure that they had "made themselves right with God" before then. A week before the appointed Sunday, Bhengu announced that the communion would be indefinitely postponed because visitors from the Transkei assemblies were expected and would bring contributions for the East London Assembly's building fund, "which is

more urgent than communion". He then spoke at some length explaining that members must not think that communion was the most important thing for a Christian and that as long as they celebrated communion regularly they were true Christians. True Christians, he said, must lead a Christian life all the time and have faith in God.

Bhengu's attitude to communion and baptism reflects his own generally negative approach to ceremonial and symbolism. This attitude manifests itself in the design and layout of Assembly buildings and in the order and atmosphere of services, described in a previous chapter. It is also apparent in Bhengu's attacks on other churches in which, he says, ceremonies and uniforms have taken the place of Christian conduct. His attitude may be summed up in the following extract from one of his sermons:

" You must not join a church because your children will be baptised, that you will be buried by a minister, that your children will be married by him, that you will receive communion. All these are useless if you are not wise at heart with the wisdom of God."

Satan

"11. Satan is a living personality, a veritable being."

While ministers in sermons, and members during interviews, do occasionally refer to the work and influence of Satan, such references do not materially differ from those made by members of other churches who purportedly take a less literal view of him as a living being. At the same time, it must be noted, that this belief was not specifically enquired into.

The Church

"12. The true Church which is His body, of which Christ is the absolute head, is composed of all regenerate persons."

In its terminology and apparent meaning Bhengu's conception of the nature of the Church does not materially differ from that of other churches. In practice, however, the Assembly has one thing in common (though in a different sense) with the Roman Church - each regards itself exclusively as the only valid Church. Thus although on the one hand the Crusade aims at converting Africans within the existing church framework and Bhengu often rebukes his followers for stating publicly that the Assembly is the only valid church, on the other hand both he and his followers frequently state and apparently sincerely believe that other churches are corrupt human organisations, that their ministers preach false doctrine, that their members are either insincere or deluded, and that the only true church is the Assemblies of God. This attitude is exemplified in the following quotations:

(i) Extract from a sermon by Bhengu:

" My brother who is seven years younger than me looks very many years older than me for he is wasting his time in trying to reform a church which I once belonged to. I have told him that he is wasting his time for a church can never be reformed. Martin Luther, Charles Wesley, John Wesley, and many others tried to reform churches and they failed so they separated and opened their own churches where they could easily discard the wrongs. I joined the Assemblies for I noticed that there is much ground to reform my own people. In the Assemblies one can introduce any good thing that will improve my people. I therefore advise everyone here to join the Assemblies which is a reformatory church. Whether a church belonged to your parents if it does not teach you to be wise at heart forget about it.

You must not say you are following your parents. If they are following a foolish course it does not necessarily mean that you are wise by following them. I personally noticed that my parents followed a wrong course where one could do nothing for his people whereas I chose to help other people. Be wise hearted and follow this church where there are no objections and obstructions and where there is ample room for improvement of every sort. In the course of religion as guided by the Bible it is only God who gives wisdom."

- (ii) Extract from Back to God Vol.I, No. 2, July 1955. 'What is wrong with Christianity in South Africa?' by S.A.Mamadi.

" So corrupt is the clergy and the so-called Christians that we find in Churches peacocks, dogs, pigs, tortoises, snakes, tigers and frogs which are symbolically portrayed in the 'Spiritual Mirror' or 'Heart Book'. From the very bishop right down to a layman, leprous blood is fast beating. It is among the clergy we find jealousy, (and a bitter one too), hatred, thieves, strife and dissensions, false accusers, despisers of those that are good, boasters, blasphemers, traitors, image worshippers, wolves in the sheep skin described so graphically in Second Timothy the third chapter verse five as having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.... As far as the promulgation of the true gospel is concerned, they must acknowledge with all sincerity that they have totally failed in their mission..... South Africa needs a reformer who will make a fresh start, a man who will be Christ-like - a man who will live the Gospel he preaches - whose words will tally with his actions - who will preach the Blood of Christ as the only atonement for sin - a man who will be despised and rejected of his own kindred - whose faith will not be penetrated by the infectious darts of colour prejudice - whose love will be overwhelmingly practical - whose humility will acknowledge the baseness of others - whose motive shall be 'Back-to-God', 'Back-to-the-Bible'."

Latter Days

- "14. That the return of the Lord Jesus will be personal and premillennial, and so far as the Church is concerned it is imminent.
- "15. The literal resurrection of the body of both the just and the unjust.
- "16. The eternal blessedness of the just and the eternal punishment of the unjust."

While the Assembly is far more concerned with the application of Christianity to present conditions than with speculations about the 'latter days', the belief in the reward of the Christian and the doom of the sinner does figure prominently in revival sermons and occasionally in sermons at regular Assembly services. While we cannot hope to recapture the atmosphere which the preacher creates when he describes the fate of the 'unsaved', the following extract from a sermon by the East London minister gives some idea of the beliefs of the movement.

" During the last few days God has been worrying my heart by reminding me of the approaching last days for everyone. You and I shall pass. Our faith, your faith will be forgotten by those who remain behind. Some people who do not know what they are on earth do not think of this. It is because they do not wish to think of that day. It is a shameful thing for one who does not know what he is doing or what his duty is on earth. It is like a dream to some of you that their days will end. It is not everybody who wants or believes in the return of Jesus. If you think you will wait for Jesus to be holy you will die before you have got a chance.

" The word says it is not everyone who will see the Kingdom of God. What will happen then to those who have been judged? Churches believe that good deeds only will enable one to see the Kingdom of God. Jesus says I will come and give each person according to his deeds. You cannot go to

heaven only because you have very good deeds. You must first be saved and then believe. Who are the people who will be rewarded? They are the children of God. The saved. The Bible says the good things will be weighed and examined. We do not talk about people who do not belong and do not follow Christ. Their deeds are firewood and grass. They are like mealie stalks. They shall burn away and perish. Deeds of the children of God are like gold and silver and many other precious stones that are found in the streets of the New Jerusalem. Those will never burn. The examination or trying of our deeds will be done by the medium of the fire where there will be a well of fire and brimstone. Each person shall go through this well where all the bad deeds will be burnt. Those with a big luggage of bad deeds shall remain in this well till they smell of sulphur and gunpowder.

"A person who has been tried shall get the crown of life if he is found having good deeds and being saved. People who will not be acceptable before God will remain in the big well of fire and brimstone where there will be gnashing of teeth and great tribulation.

"A saved person is never liked by the unsaved. Some people when they are saved they are even sent away from their homes. Somewhere a certain king tortured forty Christians by putting them in a cell of ice. The guard who looked after them was in a very nice and warm house nearby. These forty Crusaders were told to give up the living God and praise the idols. When these people were frozen to the state of losing senses the guard saw a very wonderful spectacle. He saw forty angels coming from heaven like a wheel. They carried forty crowns. Whilst he was still looking at this he saw one of the Crusaders crawling almost frozen towards him and said, "I have given up this Christ for he is of no use to me." The guard seeing the thirty-nine Christians receiving the crowns he immediately stripped off his clothes, gave them to the weak-willed person and ran to receive his crown. He went to heaven and the weak-willed Crusader perished. Some of you will go half-way

the journey like that. Those who will tolerate this difficult journey will get the crown of life."

Summary

Two main characteristics of the doctrine of the Assembly stand out: that it is fundamentalist, and that it is a dynamic influence in the lives of converts. Thus although theologically the doctrine of the Assembly differs only in a few details from that of most 'orthodox' Protestant churches, in practice their interpretation follows more literally the Scriptures and are applied with far more vigour to everyday life. This is probably due to the youth of the movement and the fact that it has still not completely emerged from its revivalistic phase, while the fact that Bhengu maintains a particularly strong hold on his followers tends to reinforce the application of his teachings.

SOCIAL AND MORAL TEACHINGS

We have asked a large number of people whether their lives had changed in any way as a result of their conversion and joining the Assembly. "Yes", is the invariable reply, "there has been a tremendous change in my life since I joined the church," and then follows an account of how they had lived before and how they have changed. Thus we have listened to stories of how people who had previously led an existence of criminality, drunkenness, immorality, family disorganisation, ill-health, poverty and filth, have become total abstainers from drink and tobacco, have abandoned promiscuous sexual behaviour, have reunited with their families, have acquired household possessions, dress well, educate their children, have opened post office savings accounts, and maintain cleanliness of their homes and persons.

These accounts may well be exaggerated, since certainly not every member of the Assembly was previously sunken in social and moral delinquency, and certainly they are not all saints today. At the same time these statements also contain considerable truth. Our own observations, at least, have confirmed that on the whole members of the Assembly live well compared with their neighbours - their houses are neatly furnished and extremely clean, while they themselves are cleanly if not well dressed. We have particularly noticed that it is impossible to distinguish between people of Red and School background from their present standards of living. It is true, too, that on the whole members of the Assembly neither smoke, drink nor indulge in illicit sexual practices although even Bhengu admits that there are certainly some secret transgressors. So far is this stringent code of conduct maintained that it is a particular delight of non-members of the Assembly when they can single out a few individuals who have been openly disciplined or who are known to be secretly sinning. There is no doubt, however, that in general members of the Assembly have vastly improved their conditions and standards of living since they joined.

Members and even many non-members agree that an important difference between the Assembly and most other churches is the emphasis placed on social reform and the instruction given in the Assembly to that end. We have already mentioned in a previous discussion how, during services, remarks are frequently interpolated between regular elements of worship and that these often deal specifically with aspects of everyday living. We have also recently found that special meetings are held from time to time to discuss social and moral problems and to provide members with the opportunity of seeking assistance and advice.*

* Although we were present on one occasion, we were respectfully requested to leave as non-members were not admitted under any circumstances. No further reason was given, nor could officials be prevailed upon to let us remain.

The social and moral teachings of the Assembly are regarded by members as being intimately bound up with its religious teachings. They are generally referred to the Scriptures for proof and support, and as such become incumbent upon the believer to fulfill. In other instances they are related to the political and racial situation, and preachers will play on national pride to convince the people of their desirability. We quote below an example:

A remark by Bhengu at a Convention (which was attended by members, as well as guests of all races).

" Africans are very funny people. They are very careless. They like to be equal and sit with Europeans who are much cleaner, neater and more civilised. They leave the church with doors unclosed, with open windows. We must make a good impression in anything we do. In 1935 a very smart lavatory was built for Africans in Pietermaritzburg but in 1937 it was an eye-sore. It was very filthy and unbearable. Here there are private rooms specially built for you but there are still people who go to bushes. When will you people learn to have the sense of cleanliness. Shembe's people carry hoes when they go to the bush. This has been made part of their religion. We will have such a compulsory law as well. Please be careful about everything that is clean and keep it clean as you found it."

Bhengu regards the social teachings of the church as extremely important. He believes that their practice represents the first step to national redemption. He has admitted during several interviews that many of his injunctions and prohibitions are not, strictly speaking, religious requirements. Thus personal hygiene, cleanliness of the home, neatness in dress, total prohibition against smoking and drinking, educating one's children, opening a savings account or insuring one's life are not per se essential elements of Christianity nor in theory the concern of the church. At the same time, however, he maintains that without them the saved person cannot lead a truly Christian life, and that if no other agencies are effective in instructing

the people and assisting them to a better standard of living, then the church must try to do so. But he particularly stresses the fact that the African must first adopt civilised standards before he can insist on civilised rights. The Africans, he feels, have sunk themselves in a morass of social and moral evil, and that instead of doing something positive they blame economic and political conditions for their degradation, seeing no fault in themselves but agitating for better opportunities and even equality. It is Bhengu's contention that even though the Africans live under tremendous difficulties there is still much which they can do to improve their lot. If instead of spending their money on drink, tobacco, women, gambling and entertainments they were to use it to clothe themselves decently, furnish their homes, educate their children and save, they would themselves lead a better, happier and healthier life and, more important, they would give their children a better start educationally, socially and economically.

Although neither Bhengu nor the more realistic of his followers are deluded into thinking that every member of the Assembly has reformed morally and socially, they nevertheless feel that by and large the membership is at least as sincere and lead as good lives as the most devout of other churches, while their standards of living are usually higher. It certainly would seem that the European authorities share this view, since they have always been willing to assist Bhengu in his campaigns and local assemblies in their work, while Bhengu himself travels freely both within the Union and abroad. Local administrators in East London and in Port Elizabeth, at any rate, have always spoken highly of the Assemblies in their areas of jurisdiction, and recall particularly the reformation of many vicious elements in the African population.

Bhengu's success as a social reformer lies in the fact that the end results of his teachings represent a desirable goal, but his ability to enforce them is due both to the personal hold he has over his followers, and to the zeal with which they pursue any means which they believe will ensure salvation. One of the most potent forces, however, lies in the cohesion of the membership as a community, but this will be dealt with in a later chapter.

NATIONALISM

Bhengu has been criticised for his political views by African national leaders as much as he has been attacked on religious grounds by churchmen. He is described by African Nationalists as a 'sell-out' and has earned the doubtful distinction of receiving several threats to his life. Bhengu is quite clear in his approach to politics: making no attempt to white-wash the present conditions under which Africans live, he at the same time believes that it is futile to try to combat them at the political level. The African, he states, is not equal to the white man, nor in fact does he need or want complete equality. What the African needs is not the right to live among whites or move freely among whites or vote with whites, but rather the opportunity to develop his own abilities and talents and to improve his economic position. Even this, however, cannot be achieved through political agitation since the African has no power, and whatever move he may make the European Government always moves two steps ahead. The more they agitate the more they are oppressed and the less they achieve. Bhengu believes that there is no easy way to improvement and that in any case it rests with the Africans themselves rather than with the Europeans. It is for this reason that Bhengu emphasises the social and moral aspects of his teaching. This he believes is the only practical

measure which the Africans can take towards their eventual emancipation.

Bhengu does not believe, however, that in the long run national redemption can be achieved by the people through their own efforts. They may improve their position within the framework of existing conditions and may as a result ease these conditions, but they can never by any means whatsoever attain freedom. This, he believes, rests entirely with God. "We must not despair," he told his followers during a sermon, "we are in a land where we are treated like the Israelites. We may have a Moses amongst us. One day we will be free. We will only be taken to freedom when we have complete faith in God only." This is in fact the basis of Bhengu's mission - the firm conviction that the degradation of the African people is due to their abandonment of God and His Law and that their redemption can be assured only by their return to God. This is the promise he holds out at his revival meetings and this is the promise that he re-iterates in his sermons. The politicians, he once said during an interview, are retarding the redemption of the Africans; if only they would realise that there is no other hope but in God alone. It is because of this belief, says Bhengu, that he forbids his members to belong to any political organisation or to participate in any political activities.

Converts to the Assembly have accepted Bhengu's political teachings as part and parcel of the doctrine of the church and the observer cannot fail to notice the relative resignation with which they accept present conditions, and the sincerity with which they believe in the eventual intervention of God. As Bhengu himself said on one occasion during an interview, the techniques of self-improvement which he has taught them - i.e. to make the most of what is available to them, to accept their legal,

social and economic disabilities, to refrain from participating in (frustrating and futile) political agitation, and to obey the authorities - have served as a drug to make life more bearable. "When one goes to a dentist to have a tooth extracted," he added, "one may as well have an injection to deaden the pain, rather than to suffer unnecessary discomfort." So it is with religion: while it holds out the hope for freedom it must also "provide the cocaine" to alleviate the temporary suffering.

Yet privately Bhengu has admitted to a certain despondency. Probably because he so firmly believes that national aspirations can only be realised through a return to God, it distresses him and gives him a sense of failure when he sees the millions of Africans whom he cannot reach or who oppose him. He has said that he came fifty years too soon for his people to appreciate his message and his leadership, and that his only hope for them now is that they should suffer even greater oppression than they do now so that, like the Israelites, they would finally realise that God alone is their help and hope. He had even thought about going overseas permanently, since he felt that he could do no more in South Africa. At least there he would be able to collect funds for the support of the existing work and for its future extension, while at the same time there were many people overseas who were "hungry for the Word of God". He says that he would not feel that he was abandoning his people, since they were opposing him too bitterly for his work to succeed.

This sense of despair, however, has not been transmitted to his followers nor apparently are they aware of his feelings - since if they were it would not only totally undermine his leadership, but could well result in breaking down the foundations of their faith. As it is, many of his followers consider Bhengu himself to be the "Moses amongst us", and describe him as having

been sent by God to bring the people back to His way and to lead them to freedom. To his followers every improvement in their standard of living serves as proof of the truth of Bhengu's message and evidence of God's promise.

Despite the fact that Bhengu and his followers see in the church the redemption of the African people, it is stressed that theirs is not a nationalistic movement, but that their own freedom is only a part of the greater goal of the unity and brotherhood of all men in Christ. Thus they do not believe that the Church should be for Africans only, but that it should be open to all men. There should not be separate churches for each race, but only one body in which there are "no Blacks, no Whites, no Coloureds, no Indians, but only Christians". They feel that it is only when men have become united in the Church that they can live at peace with one another.

National aspirations seldom form the central theme of a sermon, but at the same time the twofold hope of the Assembly is constantly emphasised - national redemption and unity of mankind. The extract below is an example of such a reference.

An extract from a prayer and sermon by Bhengu on the occasion of the Assembly's move from the cinema to their own building.

" We shall return to the chapter which we read and get the Word of God from it. That is Exodus II:25 which says: 'And it came to pass in process of time that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed by reason of their bondage and they cried and their cry came to God by reason of their bondage. And God heard their groaning and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel and God had respect unto them.' Let us pray.

" Our heavenly Father you are God. Today we come to you in this world of hardships. God of heroes who are most mighty. We are here because of your will. Lead us not into temptation. Give us wisdom that one day we be as mighty as the

Israelites who were serfs and servants. We see by many good signs that we will once have that glorious day in this country of such bondage. Halleluja. Amen!

" My heart was sore when I saw where the vessel Mendi was sunk.* I thought that some of our parents were there fighting for a country where even the law is made for them without them having any say, and where blacks are taxed with no representation....

" I thought that the African people were like other human beings but that their laziness is the cause of their poverty. When I arrived in East London I found many of you not in church, not in work, but in debauchery. Today you have built this big church yourselves. Let us come back to God... The white people usually say a black person has no brains. The Word of God will make them respect us."

RACE RELATIONS IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

Having discussed Bhengu's political attitude, it might be relevant at this point to describe relations between the races in the Assemblies of God in the Union as a whole.

Being essentially a missionary movement, the Assemblies is made up mainly of African congregations, with a very much smaller number of White and other non-white groups. Most of the white ministers are thus missionaries who came to South Africa from overseas and who have, for the most part, concentrated on working among Africans. It has been one of the aims of these missionaries to train African ministers so that African assemblies might become autonomous under their leadership.

The movement is not officially divided into racial segments, although each individual assembly tends to be unracial, while

* A reference to the sinking, during world war I, of a troopship in which several hundred Africans perished.

there are sections of the General Executive dealing specifically with problems relating to each racial group. The Biennial Conference of the movement is, however, completely non-racial with all assemblies and ministers participating on an equal basis. The composition of the General Executive is also not racially determined inasmuch as officers are elected on the basis of personal merit rather than as representatives of groups or assemblies. There are thus people of all races on the Executive and, apart from the positions of Chairman and General Secretary who are always Whites*, anybody may in practice fill any post.

Because ministers and assemblies are entirely independent the question of control of the movement by one or other racial group does not arise. At the local level, there are generally separate autonomous assemblies for each group and while the local White minister may be called upon by the African assembly to assist in dealings with the authorities, neither he nor his assembly have any say in the affairs of the African congregation. Rank and file members of the different assemblies have normally little contact with one another, although theoretically they are free to worship anywhere they wish. Ministers in a particular area do, however, meet more often on their Regional Advisory Committees, where they discuss common problems and plan any co-operative action. Ministers of all races participate, both in their own right and as representatives of independent assemblies.

A most interesting and striking example of racial harmony at the local level occurred between Africans and Coloureds in East London. For over seven years the two groups shared a common

* It is generally conceded that since these posts involve considerable contact with governmental and other agencies it is to the advantage of all that they should be occupied by Whites.

assembly, and an Afrikaans/Xhosa interpreter was constantly in attendance at services. While, often, relations between these groups in the Republic are based on mutual contempt, in the East London Assembly there was, it seems, never any friction between them. The Coloured members accepted the leadership of Bhengu and the successive African ministers while only one of the lay officials was drawn from their ranks. In 1958 the two groups separated and the Coloureds now have an assembly in their own residential area. There are still, however, occasions when they attend the African Assembly, while some, who live in the East Bank location, continue to do so regularly.

As regards separate uniraical congregations, members of the Assembly explain and justify this on the grounds of language, place of residence, and the desire "to be with one's own people". They stress that the Church itself is non-racial and that one may worship where one pleases, but that in normal congregational life people should not be forced to mix. Nevertheless, they add, congregations will eventually become multiracial.

The most intimate contact between the races occurs at the Biennial Conferences of the Assemblies of God, and at conventions. At the 1957 Conference we were able to observe how members of all races participated equally in both the services and business sessions. Bhengu and several other non-white ministers preached, led in prayers and hymns, while it was clear that their views during the business sessions were always seriously considered and often prevailed. Where any matter was put to the vote all ministers were entitled to vote, while assemblies were represented on a pro rata basis (giving Africans an overwhelming majority). In general, however, voting did not appear to be divided along racial lines. There was, nevertheless, segregation in seating, eating and sleeping arrangements. While the first of these was

justified on the grounds that it was more convenient for people of different language groups to sit together so that several interpreters could translate the proceedings simultaneously, the separate eating and sleeping arrangements were made, according to one of the White officials, in deference to "the laws and customs of the country". Apart from this, however, people of all races intermingled freely between sessions, while individuals of one race would often move to sit next to friends of another race. In addressing one another the terms 'brother' and 'sister' were universally used.

These cordial relations between the various racial groups in the Assemblies of God, and the tradition of partnership are jealously guarded. This emerged clearly in the discussion of an application by a predominantly Afrikaans Pentecostal group for en masse affiliation to the Assemblies. The application was finally turned down after the following exchange:

1st African Minister: "The European work is growing and we (the non-Europeans) are likely to become a hindrance..... In the African work we do not accept people fish, hook and sinker. The best thing is to divide conference. Let Europeans have their conference and we will have ours and then we will have no objection."

European Minister: "I have constantly been scolding X for that statement of his. It is like cutting off our limbs, to say let us have separate conferences and part our ways. I ask here for the privilege to say today what I have said so often in the last day or two, that we, the Assemblies of God stand together... If something bad happens to the Black work the Whites must blush, because it is their work; and if anything disgraceful is in the White work, the same thing applies to you because it is your work - we stand together. I want to say this, that the European work in South Africa has a missionary influence, that in my ignorance and lack of experience I think we are most unique in South Africa if not in the world. Now what has taught us to love our brethren? This conference: because here we

see each other, listen to your messages and your prayers and we learn to love you, and I believe the future of the work in South Africa depends on the continuation of these conferences".

2nd African Minister: "I think Brother X spoke this after very good consideration. The European work is growing and it shall be growing; and I cannot blame them if they feel inclined to welcome their brethren into their midst. Surely they should do that. We also want to accept our brethren into our midst We have missionaries who have come all the way from overseas expressly for the African work and they are here to see the promotion of the African work and the African leadership. . . . But let me call the African a 'native' now. Part of the thinking of the people of the soil of Africa is that the natives' place is down and below. No-one could think of an African - I mean a native - taking any leadership in anything. But the missionaries coming from overseas would not feel that their work had been achieved if the Africans did not come to take up leadership. X suggests the dividing of conference between the people of the soil of Africa - the native and the Afrikaner."

It is clear that in its day-to-day affairs the Assemblies, by virtue of its congregationalist structure, has minimised the possibility of tension and conflict between the races. Since in practice, there is generally little contact between believers of different racial groups, the fiction of racial equality (or rather non-racialism) is preserved, while no group has any fear of being controlled by members of another. Thus, in speaking of Whites in general, members of the East London Assembly probably reflect the attitudes of most Africans in the location: that while there is much to be admired among the Whites, they treat Africans badly and regard them as inferiors. On the other hand they regard White members of the Assemblies as an example to other Whites and, as one member remarked, "if all Europeans were like this to us in this country, even if they were segregated from us, our country would be marvelous. I think the Assemblies of God is

paving the way for such oneness for God's sake". To sum up, we quote from one typical interview:

" The only Europeans who are very harsh to us at time are those who stay completely away from our parts and who rarely come into contact with us. Those who stay in town. Those Europeans who stay in town do not even want us near them. They do not want us to stand next to them in buses and at the pavements. The shopkeepers as well ill-treat us at times. They sell things to us at higher prices more especially if they notice that one has got some money with him.

" In general those Europeans who speak our language are the best lot for they talk freely to us. They learn our jokes. They always make us laugh.

" In church as well they are very nice people who have love for everybody. They talk freely like our own people. The churches ought to copy the best way of serving God as one finds from the Assemblies of God. There we are one. If one would see Europeans in our church singing the Xhosa hymns he would see actually that mixed services are the best. We also know a lot of English hymns in our church because we want them to feel at home as well.

" I do not think that the churches must be separated: Africans and Europeans must serve God together. In our church the African people hold all the positions that are held only by Europeans in other churches. Rev. Bhengu is taken as the highest official of our church and Europeans and Africans have the same respect for him. We are even allowed to attend services in town and are not driven away as in other churches so we are all one. If our ministers wish to preach in the European congregations, they do so. All the churches should not be separated but everyone should have equal opportunities."

UNIFORMS

We have mentioned in various connections that apart from members of the choir, no officials or other members of the Assembly wear any special or distinctive garb. Fundamentally this is one aspect of the ideally democratic structure of the Assemblies of God movement. In the same way as they stress the autonomy of assemblies, independence of ministers and absolute equality of all believers, so they emphasize that ministers, local office-bearers and members of church guilds should in no way be differentiated from other believers.

Members of the East London Assembly thus maintain that not only are uniforms a waste of money and an unnecessary ostentation, but that they are intrinsically bad since they make distinctions between members of the church and that this is contrary to the Scriptures. In other churches, they say, uniforms have come to signify that their wearers are closer to God and spiritually superior to others. It is also maintained that manyano uniforms particularly, encourage hypocrisy, since many women only join the manyano in order to obtain them and not because they are really sincere Christians.

Some members of the Assembly are prepared to concede that church uniforms need not necessarily be bad in themselves, however. They point out that traditionally, too, certain people wore distinctive insignia to signify membership of some tribal association as well as differences in status and rank. Thus in church the various officials may be distinguished by their dress and manyano women by their uniforms, while at services these add to the dignity of the proceedings. In the case of manyano women, their uniforms serve to remind them of certain Christian sentiments which are symbolised in the various elements and their colour.

They also make these women conspicuous when they do anything which is wrong. But despite these advantages, "it is more important to be a Christian in one's heart than to have these external signs". We quote below an interview with a woman member of the Assembly:

" Our manyano women wear no uniform nor do the manyano girls. Our ministers have no clerical collars at all. Our belief is that a person is not saved because of the nice uniform. A person should be saved and have faith in God. We reckon that some of the manyano women in other churches joined the association because they liked the uniform. Our leader has only mentioned that the people should wear only what they have so long as it is clean. Some people could not afford to buy uniforms with the money they have.

" He told us it was better that we should have no uniforms because some people missed services because their uniform was not clean or something else was wrong with it. Uniforms were only for showing off, and there is no part in the Bible where they are advocated."

XHOSA CUSTOM

During a discussion with Bhengu, he remarked that he was pleased of the opportunity to clarify certain points since he had been told that, in her book, Dr. Schlosser had stated that he believed in the ancestors.* In fact, he said, he was fighting a constant battle against ancestor worship which he abhorred, and was extremely upset at this misrepresentation of his beliefs. It would seem, too, from conversation with Bhengu, that he would, if possible, like to prohibit the practice of all

* Dr. Schlosser, in fact, did not say this, but on the contrary points out that one of Bhengu's aims is to stamp out Ancestor worship. (See Schlosser 1958, p.27 f.)

those customs and rituals which were once associated with the belief in the Ancestors - even though many of them are today carried out without reference to their former significance. But, like other churches working among Africans, Bhengu has had to face the fact that his followers would not abandon certain traditions and that if he forbade them they would simply continue to practise them in secret. The official attitude of the Assembly and that of its members to some of the more important Xhosa beliefs and rituals is discussed below.

Bingelela

Traditionally a goat was sacrificed soon after the birth of a child and the meat was eaten by members of the family as well as relatives and friends. Although Soga (1931?, p. 293) points out that the custom had long since lost its religious meaning, informants in East London stated that the purpose of the rite was to introduce the child to the ancestors. While, naturally, none of the churches allow the bingelela to be held, most (including many leading mission churches) have substituted the dinela (dinner) which is often held after the child has been baptised. A beast may be slaughtered for the occasion and a party given for friends and relatives by the family.

In the Assembly the dinela is not allowed. The minister explained that the fact that an animal was slaughtered made it the same as bingelela: blood was being spilt in order to introduce the child to the ancestors. Furthermore there was no mention of such a rite in the Bible, and it was therefore forbidden as being a pagan custom.

Circumcision

Probably the most tenacious of the traditional customs is

circumcision. Hutchinson (1957) discusses the difficulties encountered by missionaries in trying to eradicate this 'evil', and points out the widespread opposition to mission policy in this connection from both chief and tribe. He mentions that even boys living on mission stations were being circumcised and initiated in secret.

Although few churches actually allow circumcision and many, in theory, are still strongly opposed to it, none have been able to eradicate the practice. Thus every minister to whom I spoke on the subject admitted that he himself had undergone the operation and would permit his son to do so. None of the churches, however, have made any attempt to bring the custom under their wing, and most ministers take the view that "this is not the affair of the church". Although Christian boys generally have a separate and shorter circumcision school than pagans, no Christian content has been given to either the operation itself or to the ceremonies connected with it. Thus while a minister may visit a boy whilst the latter is in seclusion, he neither interferes with nor participates in the proceedings.

As a Zulu, Shengu was not himself committed to the practice of circumcision and, it appears, originally tried to dissuade members from allowing their sons to be circumcised. Later, however, he suggested that the operation be performed by a medical doctor in hospital so that 'the boy should not be despised', but at the same time would not attend the circumcision school with its pagan ceremonies. While Shengu has succeeded in persuading some of his followers to have their sons operated on at hospital, most members say that they will let their sons go to circumcision school:

" My son would go to circumcision in the traditional way as there are no ancestral ceremonies in this affair. He may go to my relatives in the country or join his comrades here. I would prefer to take him to the country, however, not because I think my ancestors are there, but because he would know the proper way of going through the circumcision ceremony. I would not take my son to the hospital. I do not like that. I want him to have knowledge of his tradition as there may be a time when that knowledge is needed."

What is particularly interesting is that although in general members of the Assembly relate most of their activities to the church, their feeling concerning the role of the church in circumcision is much the same as that of members of other churches.

" The church does not organise any special circumcision school at all. The boys could go and circumcise anywhere according to the wish and desire of the parents. The minister is not bound to visit secluded boys in his capacity as minister. The church has no hand in it. It is a purely domestic and individual affair."

Nevertheless members of the Assembly still feel the need to justify the custom claiming that it is recommended by the Bible:

" The Bible agrees with circumcision. We are said to be clean when we are circumcised. The uncircumcised nations were very unruly before God and thus He said that we should be circumcised. Uncircumcised nations were an abomination and a curse before Him."

Marriage

Marriages are solemnised in church by a marriage officer, while in the event of the resident minister of an assembly not being so licensed, a Methodist minister is usually approached.

The one Assembly wedding ceremony which we did attend at Port Elizabeth did not appear to differ from those between members of other churches. The only apparent difference between it and a European wedding was that the bride and groom did not sleep together until the second night, while the celebrations extended over two days. We did not observe the introduction of any pagan elements, and the only item of interest was that gifts were given ceremoniously, each being accompanied by a short address on its significance.

Marriage between members is encouraged, though not enforced. A woman who marries a man belonging to another church will generally - as is the practice among School Xhosa - leave the Assembly and join the church of her husband. In the case of a man marrying a woman of another church, she will be encouraged to join the Assembly, but will not automatically become a member until she seeks conversion. Polygyny is strictly forbidden, though we were unable to ascertain the position of a Red convert who may already have had more than one wife.

The attitude of the Assembly to lobolo is more positive than that of most mission churches. The minister in East London as well as several members stated that payment of lobolo was insisted upon and that the marriage had to be approved by the families of the couple before the wedding took place. Thus it was explained:

" The church insists on only one custom and that is lobolo. Lobolo is a custom that is done to form a relationship between the families of the bride and groom and between the couple themselves. These lobolo cattle are a vow that the child of the young couple may claim dependence on any of the people who have had a share of the lobolo. The girl who has been lobolo'd is always proud of that, and a young man who has done

it is also proud. He is also sure that his progeny will be safe even if he dies."

Further interviews indicated, however, that payment of lobolo was not in fact compulsory provided the groom could satisfy the minister that the girl's family had waived their right. It is clear, however, that lobolo is regarded as a stabilising force in marriage and that it is encouraged for that reason.

Funerals

Since we had not attended any funerals we are unable to compare what people say with what actually occurs. The minister stated that the funeral service was conducted either by an elder or a minister and that the service was the same as that of the Methodist Church whose hymnal was used. He stressed, however, that while the Methodists would have a special ceremony for a prominent person, with the coffin being brought into the church, the Assembly did not do this. Such practices indicated distinctions between Christians, which did not in fact exist.

After the funeral there was no special dinner at the home of the deceased in his honour. Not only was this a pagan custom but no honour was due to a corpse from the living. Similarly, there were no sacrifices. The Assembly also did not allow people to wash their hands after the burial since this was traditionally done in order to drive away misfortune. There was no ceremony of unveiling the tombstone since this had the same significance as a pagan sacrifice and is not prescribed in the Bible.

Sickness and Healing

Although officially the existence of witches and sorcerers

is denied by members of the Assembly, close questioning clearly revealed the persistence of these beliefs. Both School and Red converts continued to accept the possibility that sickness or misfortune might be due to witchcraft or sorcery. All informants insisted, however, that if they were attacked in this way they would not consult herbalists or diviners. Those who were able to cite actual examples of bewitchment said that, on most occasions, they had been fairly certain of the identity of the witch or sorcerer (usually specifying a jealous neighbour), and that they had then prayed for that person to be saved and thus desist from doing more evil. In no case was another member of the Assembly suspected, as far as we could ascertain.

Not all sickness was automatically ascribed to witchcraft and sorcery, however, but on the whole appeared to be accepted as a natural phenomenon. Members said that in case of illness they would immediately notify the Assembly so that they would be prayed for, and at the same time seek treatment from a doctor, at the hospital, or at a clinic. They would not consult diviners or herbalists since they were not recommended in the Bible, and also because they were often charlatans whose remedies consisted of rubbish and filth.

In view of Bhengu's reputation as a faith-healer, we were extremely surprised to find that, apart from prayers in church and at the sickbed, faith-healing was not practised in the East London Assembly. No explanation for this was offered by the members, while an interview with Bhengu on the subject yielded somewhat vague replies. "We do not emphasize Christian healing", he explained. "We say that it is not provided for within the atonement in the same way as salvation. People are saved by believing in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and they shall never die spiritually. But this does not exonerate them from

physical death. Those who are prayed for may receive temporary healing, or else they may die." We were unable to obtain any further elucidation of his attitude nor any explanation of his reluctance to use faith-healing in assemblies when it was so prominent a feature of his Crusades.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

What is significant about the beliefs of the Assembly is not so much that they differ in detail from any other particular denomination, but that they offer guidance and direction in every aspect of daily life. Thus the assembly is concerned not only with the spiritual welfare of its members, but provides also rules of conduct and behaviour leading to their physical and material well-being. This all-embracing framework, and the dynamic influence which it exerts, is characteristic of most religious revival movements - particularly during the period when the original leader is still in control. As each assembly becomes stabilized, as younger people 'born into the church' replace their parents and as Bhengu's influence wanes, however, it is not unlikely that the zeal with which these teachings are now followed, will gradually diminish. There is no doubt, however, that the solutions which they offer to the daily problems of the present membership is an important factor in the continued vitality of the Assembly.

CHAPTER NINE

'COMMUNITY OF THE SAVED'

In most other local churches we find among the membership a wide variation in degree of Christian commitment. This ranges from the sincerely devout, to those who confine themselves to more or less regular attendance at services and, finally, to the vast body of purely nominal adherents. In the Assembly, however, this range is very much narrower: the typical member would compare most closely with the devout of other churches both with regard to his behaviour and in the degree to which the church represents the focal point of his life. In this respect, the Assembly resembles the separatist sects of Shembe in Natal and Limba in Port Elizabeth,* rather than the other mission churches in East London. Like these two churches, the initial impetus for members of the Assembly to change their way of life was due to the charisma of their leader. As a result of their allegiance to him and of their acceptance of standards which differed from those of the people around them, they have come to form a distinct community. It is this characteristic, in all three churches, which has been important in maintaining the high level of Christian commitment among their members. In the present chapter we propose to describe the community-like character of the East London Assembly.

Friendship and Leisure

During the early months of the Crusade, Bhengu already urged converts not to associate with 'unsaved' people,

* Shembe has been described fully by Sundkler (1948), while Limba's Church is discussed in an article by L. Mqotsi and N. Mkele "A Separatist Church, Ibandla leka Krestu", African Studies 1946.

so that by the time the Assembly had emerged this had come to be interpreted as referring to all non-members. In fact, it is because of this attitude that the Assembly has been severely criticised by members and ministers of other churches, and the following remark by a Presbyterian woman is typical:

" The way the people of Bhengu's church isolate themselves from other people and members of other churches will result in their total suicide. We in other churches see one great sin committed by Bhengu's converts, and that is conceit. They hardly even greet one who does not belong to their church."

Interviews with members of the Assembly do, in fact, clearly indicate that their closest and most intimate social relationships are confined within the Assembly, and that they have as little contact with outsiders as possible. But the reasons for this are largely that, as a result of their conversion, they had become estranged from old friends, and now find most in common with other members of the Assembly. Thus a young School woman explains:

" I was a member of the Bantu Presbyterian Church. When I attended that church I was not aware of the fact that I was still doing wrong things as a church member. Bhengu's church has taught me that if I fall in love and have intercourse, I am sinning, so that I have now stopped making love. Instead, I am always reading my Bible and lead a proper Christian life. I do not get lonely at all now, since the Bible is my happiness and my comfort. I do not use my money for vanity but use it for God's work and to clothe myself. I no longer like to attend concerts and other affairs where sins are committed and where there is a lot of gossip. These things lead one to temptation and one is forced to commit sinful practices. Very silly things are said there and the language which is used sometimes clashes with religion.

" My friends despised me for joining Bhengu's church. They said it was joined by people who were not true Christians and I would still be what I was even at Bhengu's church. My friendship with my previous friends has changed ever since I joined the Assembly. I left them myself because in Bhengu's church when friends meet they talk about religious matters only and do not exchange obscene news. My former friends used to talk about their lovers and how they had spent the night with their boy friends. This news was very bad to be related by a Christian."

In the same way, as the above text also illustrates, members of the Assembly gave up practically all their previous leisure-time activities. While only a few of those interviewed had actually belonged to some association (i.e. a political party, sports club, social club), most had participated in tea-parties (a euphemism for an informal drinking club) or beer drinks, and had attended dances, concerts, cinemas, sports meetings, and, if formerly Red, various pagan activities. Since they joined the Assembly, however, they no longer did these things since, they say, such activities ruin one's health, waste one's money, and cause one to sin or even commit crimes. Now, they claim, they spend most of their free time in one or other church activity, reading the Bible, working around their houses and gardens, and visiting other members of the Assembly. That these generalisations actually reflected the activities of members of the Assembly was born out when, some twelve months after the original interviews, several people were randomly selected and closely questioned about what they had done in their free time during the previous week. The following illustrates the responses obtained:

" I have met and been visited by many members of the Assembly of God. I have visited some as well. This week I have been visited by one of the elders. He visits us about twice each week. He comes to pray for one of the women who lives in this same house, whose husband has recently passed away. He likes to talk to us about religious affairs perhaps because this widow is still young and might be in danger of committing adultery. His prayers are constructive and aim at strengthening us from transgression and temptation. I had other members of the Assembly coming to visit me in my house. They all came only to chat about church matters and to find out whether I was well. I was also visited by some non-members who came to talk about work and life in general, and sometimes to criticise members of the Assembly who, they say, are hypocrites because they are always praying.

" I have attended all the church activities that have taken place, because it has not been so cold this week. Usually, if I don't go to church, I just stay in my room and read the Bible, make prayers and go to sleep."

Residential Arrangements

Plotting the residential addresses of some 700 members of the Assembly, it was found that they formed distinct clusters in various areas of the location. Thus, for example, there were thirty-six members of the Assembly living in one street in New Brighton, while in one house alone there were twelve.*

It would seem that the creation of these clusters has been partly fortuitous and partly deliberate, and explanations

* New Brighton is one of the wood-and-iron sections of the location in which houses are privately owned. The houses are not single family units but comprise several rooms leading off either side of a central passage. In general, each room houses a family. The enumeration of members does not include children under sixteen years of age, while people living in the same house are not necessarily related.

of how they developed are on the whole similar. A woman living at Mekeni (contiguous to New Brighton) explains:

" Yes there are many members of the Assembly who stay in the neighbourhood. I can think of very many in this street. I can recall about thirty now in my mind.

" I cannot say why these people were all collected in this street. Perhaps it's because the owners of these big houses here belong to the Assembly and they chose to accommodate the people of the Assemblies of God. When Bhengu came in 1950, accommodation was not very scarce so when boarders were sent away by the site owners, they did not resist. So many people, when they joined the Assembly, got rid of the boarders who did not belong to the Assemblies of God. This is how people came to cluster here. It is the wish of the Assemblies of God people to live a holy life and to avoid temptations and therefore the site owners chose to accommodate the members of the Assembly so as to be free from troubles.

" The other reason is that the people in Mekeni attended the Bhengu revival campaigns more than others in East London and perhaps by their daily attendance more were converted."

Houseowners who prefer members of the Assembly as lodgers include many non-members as well. The reason, as one of these house-owners explains, is "that they are well-behaved, neat and clean in their rooms, do not make feeble excuses when they are supposed to pay their rent, and are law-abiding". The suggestion that certain areas may have yielded more converts than others, as a reason for the concentration of members in these areas, is shared by most people who were interviewed.

Social Control

Because members confine friendships almost entirely within the Assembly, and because they tend to form residential clusters, it has been relatively easy to maintain discipline and control.

When the elders and deacons were appointed, one of each was made responsible for the members residing in their area of the location. It was their duty to visit members regularly, organise prayer meetings, see that members attended services regularly, and ensure that they were not transgressing the laws of the church. Since large numbers of members lived in one neighbourhood and were in close contact with one another, it was an easy matter for officials to be in constant touch with what was going on, while it was possible to see most people fairly often.

This intense interaction between members of the Assembly and between them and the officials, have had the effect of making it extremely difficult for individuals to break the rules of the church without being quickly and easily discovered. This is clearly illustrated in the following interview:

" There are many members of the Assembly living in the same house. There are many, as well, living in the neighbourhood, i.e. next door, across the street and around the corner. I therefore meet many people belonging to the Assembly every day.

" If I would be tempted to indulge in anything forbidden by the church I am certain, therefore, that it would not be difficult for the church members to see me. There is nothing really concealed or difficult to detect when it is done often. I could take a chance only once and perhaps not be discovered, but my conscience would be there to tell me that God knows all. This is more intolerable than to be known by church members.

" I sincerely say one cannot do anything in our church and not be discovered because the church members are always eyeing each other. They are not reluctant to tell one of what is detected. I do not suspect any member at present, but at Mbonisela Street where I stay, we would discover one for we

are always together in the afternoon and evenings even if we have not gone to church services. If one does things far away it would also be easy to discover, since non-members of our church are always very keen to find fault with our people. Many people who had transgressed in our church were first revealed by non-members of our church. So every member of our church is afraid of people both inside and outside the church."

Discipline

Although on the whole the informal agencies of control are extremely effective, there are occasions where members admit, or are discovered to have committed, some sin and disciplinary action becomes necessary. The form which such action takes differs fundamentally from most other mission churches.

African ministers of most mission churches explain that sins, and therefore their punishment, vary in seriousness, as the following statements by the Congregational and Bantu Presbyterian ministers, respectively, illustrate:

" Sins are graded by the church in order of seriousness, the most serious being adultery, criminal activity, drunkenness. These result automatically in excommunication, and those punished in this way may join the Seekers' Class if they wish to be reinstated. Depending on the particular case, other sins such as swearing, quarrelsomeness, disobedience to authority, non-attendance at communion, refusal to contribute to the church, may result either in temporary suspension or excommunication."

" The most serious sin in the church is to denounce Christ. Other sins are also graded in terms of seriousness. Offenders must confess their sins at a kerk session and in some cases repentance is accepted without further disciplinary action being taken. If, however, a sin is

discovered by someone else and proved by the kerk session then discipline usually follows. It takes the form of either excommunication or temporary suspension."

The attitude of the Assembly is in striking contrast: "a sin is a sin", explained one member, "there is no big or small sin, all sins are big". Thus, whether the sin be murder or a lie, the action taken is the same in all cases. If the sinner himself admits his transgression, he is expected to make public confession in church, he is prayed for by the congregation, and his repentance is accepted. If, however, a person is discovered or suspected, he is approached in turn by the one who discovered him, then by a deacon, an elder, and finally by the minister until he admits his sins and undertakes to make public confession. Where an alleged sinner persistently denies his guilt, his case is discussed by the board of elders and deacons.* If found guilty he is suspended until he acknowledges his guilt and makes public confession. During the period of suspension, the length of which depends entirely on the individual concerned, he may attend all the activities of the Assembly. However, no contributions are accepted from him, he is given no duties to perform and he has no say in the affairs of the congregation. No-one is ever excommunicated nor would an official be demoted unless because of his refusal to confess, his position would have to be filled by someone else.

It would seem that in their own minds, members do tend to grade sins, and that they will more readily confess to less serious transgressions. In the following interviews members describe such occasions and their consequences:

* Whether the accused was invited or obliged to appear before the board in person could not be definitely ascertained.

" Yes, I once succumbed to temptation after I had joined the church of the Assemblies of God. It was when I attended a cricket match. Cricket was my favourite sport and when it was an interesting match I felt like attending. I did it for a few Saturdays and I was discovered by the very landlady with whom I stay. She told me I was doing a wrong thing for I was placing myself at the disposal of temptation if I attended sports. Personally I saw no sin in this but when it was explained that temptation was being invited by such behaviour everything became clear to me. I could properly see the idea of the prohibition. I did not make any public confession but only prayed for peace from God for breaking the law of the church. I was never admonished by the church but only by my landlady. She said if one breaks a small or very minor regulation today, tomorrow he will break a major one and that he will commit a sin which is very serious before God like falling in love and seduction."

" I was once tempted to sin but did not actually succumb to it. Once when I was sick and stranded I nearly sold liquor but fortunately I got employment immediately after I recovered from illness. After I had got employment I went to church and when confessions about temptations were made by the people I felt like making my own confession. After I had done it the congregation made prayers for us all. The elder of our area Mr. Madangatya came to pray for me after I had confessed, and admonished me. He did not admonish me for actually sinning but for nearly succumbing to temptation. He said that I must not even think of doing a wrong thing even when I am in great difficulties. I should have gone to the elders and the minister and they should have found means to put me through my difficulty. If I had not got a job I should have actually sold liquor to make money for myself. If I had done that, I should have disgraced the Assembly and have broken the church rules and thus sinned."

More serious misdemeanours, however, are not always so readily acknowledged, nor are transgressors as easily persuaded to make public confessions. We quote below one such case:

" Mr. X was one of the most trusted and respected members of the Assemblies of God. He held an important position in the church in East London. Nobody could believe that he could commit adultery at all. The person who discovered his ways was a girl who was working at Southernwood [a suburb of White East London]. She slept at her place of employment. Her friend who was working next door to her had hidden the fact that she was in love with Mr. X. But the girl was very suspicious, for Mr. X used to go to that place even during the day to visit her girl friend and they both pretended that they were relatives. Then Mr. X started visiting this girl at night as though he was no more hiding their love affair. The girl said that she soon noticed certain changes with her friend who looked pregnant. She became quite solitary and did not want to be visited by anybody.

" When church people noticed that she was pregnant and she was asked about the matter, she divulged the fact that she was rendered pregnant by X. Mr. X was called to appear before the meeting of the Deacons and Elders of the Assemblies of God, and was questioned about his transgression. He denied flatly that he was ever connected with the matter. The woman persisted, however, and named the girl who was her neighbour as a witness who had seen X there. The girl also mentioned the name of a doctor who was approached by X to get rid of the baby but unfortunately the doctor refused and warned him about committing such practices. When this was investigated it was discovered that the doctor knew about the matter and agreed that X had actually approached him. Mr. X was therefore made to pay a sum of £60 to the parents of the girl. He did so although he would still not admit his guilt. He said it was only because he was pressed by the other members and would abide by their wish.

" Sometime after this his concubine's neighbour saw him whilst he was entering the concubine's room and noticed that he had not gone out when the light was blown off. She called the minister of the Assembly to witness

this with his own eyes. When they knocked at the door the girl did not open the door for a long time. She opened the door at last when they said they were going to call the police. She at first would not put the light on, but she was asked to do so and she did. The elder who was with the minister asked who was behind the screen but she remained quiet and the two officials went to look and they found Mr. X lying on his back with his vest on and the blankets half covering his body. The minister said, 'Oh Brother, is it you who is here?' X replied, 'Have I ever stopped doing so?' They told him that they wanted to make sure, before he was demoted from his position, if he was actually responsible for the seduction of the girl. They had now proved beyond doubt that he was responsible. He told them that now that they had satisfied themselves, they should leave because he wanted to carry on with his mission and he did not care what they did to him. The following morning they suspended him from doing his daily duties and he went to get employment with a former employer. He does not attend the church any more now. He stays at his home. We do not know whether he will come again after a long while when the matter is almost forgotten."

Instances such as these are, of course, relatively rare for the reasons we have already discussed, and though several members have admitted that they have often been tempted to commit similar sins, the fear of discovery and disgrace, as well as their consciences have helped them to resist. The following interview sums up the situation:

" Yes I have been tempted to commit many sins but I have never succumbed to them. I have resisted these because my conscience has always told me that God sees me. I have always been afraid of the prestige and dignity of my church being tampered with. Any church member who does a wrong thing spoils the name of the church more than his own. All this has made me fear to commit any sin. People like Brother X [whose case has been described] make

us to be mocked by those who look at us with scorn. I have heard many people in buses and in the streets mocking at our church more especially when something has recently happened. I do not want to be one of those who have given our church a bad name.

" The members of the Assembly also help one another to resist temptation. They always tell each other not to do anything that puts them to temptation. They avoid attending concerts, sports meetings, bioscopes, and many other non-church organisations which put one to great temptations. They always visit each other and make prayers. They always talk about church matters and the Bible which makes them never to be easily tempted. If they discover another one committing a sin they go to pray for him. They make him to confess the sin in church. Confession is the very strong weapon which works one's conscience. If a person has got a good conscience he is always trustworthy and can never commit sins because he fears God."

Conclusions

In this chapter we have, we believe, described a most important aspect of the Assembly in East London. We have seen how the membership has gradually dissociated itself from those whom they regard as being 'unsaved', and from activities which they believe are sinful and likely to lead them to temptation. But we have also seen how this withdrawal from the life of the location has been compensated by new associations and activities. The Assembly has thus become the nucleus of a community within a community. It is within this community that members have their most frequent contacts and intimate relationships and whose values and standards determine their behaviour. It is within this community, too, that an effective means of social control had been built up.

The importance of this in-group solidarity is two-fold. In the first place it is clear that this has been the most

potent force in maintaining the vitality of the Assembly and of ensuring that the changes in the lives of members which were brought about by their conversion have been sustained. But what is perhaps more important is that the Assembly has provided for its members a satisfying alternative to the disorganised existence of an urban location: it has clearly defined what is good and what is evil, and it has created a web of social relations within which the individual may feel secure. It is in this respect that we believe that the Assembly together with many of the separatist sects (such as the two cited above) fills a tremendous need in urban African life today.

CONCLUSIONS

In the last part of the report we have seen that this larger
quarter of the population did not feel that they were Christians, rela-
tively few had any association whatsoever with the Church.

Fewer still may be regarded as church-members - probably
not more than ten per cent of the population. (The remainder of the
church.) The widespread feeling of alienation from the Church,
is also apparent in the admission of many local ministers that
church membership is either dying or declining.

Although the only concrete illustrations of what I have
said are a growing materialistic outlook among local ministers,
and partly responsible for the drift away from Christianity
and the Church, it is also true that much of the responsibility
rests with the churches themselves. It has discussed the
relevance of many mission churches to grass roots status and
opportunity to African people. The materialism of many
church activities, and the failure of many to address the
concerns of the African people. The materialism of many
mission churches is discussed in detail by E. J. H. Jones
(1949, pp. 26/27), who remarks:

CONCLUSIONS

"... it is not so much that Africans have lost
Christianity, as that they feel it to be entirely
irrelevant to their actual experience of life.
Although the African has, in some ways, rejected
the ways and means of Western civilization, he
has at least accepted superficially the teachings
of Christianity, yet that he has not accepted
the new movement created by Western civilization
and Africa... Christianity and Western civil-
ization were not the main concern of the
African's material needs, social and religious
needs... In what sense, especially did the
African feel that material civilization was the
main concern?"

C O N C L U S I O N S

In the East Bank location we have found that while three-quarters of the population claim that they are Christians, relatively few have any association whatsoever with the Church. Fewer still may be regarded as church-centred people - probably not more than ten-percent of those claiming adherence to any one church. The widespread disinterest reflected in these figures, is also apparent in the admission of many local ministers that church membership is either static or declining.

Although the many counter-attractions of urban life, as well as a growing materialistic outlook among location dwellers, are partially responsible for the drift away from Christianity and the Church, it is also true that much of the responsibility rests with the churches themselves. We have discussed the reluctance of many mission churches to grant equal status and opportunity to African members, the unattractiveness of many church activities, and the lack of concern about the problems confronting the African in town. Our material thus corroborates some of the conclusions reached independently by G.S. Budaza (1948, pp.26/27), who remarks:

".... it is not so much that Africans disbelieve Christianity, as that they feel it to be entirely irrelevant to their actual experience of life. Although the African has, to some extent, learnt the ways and methods of Western civilization, and has at least accepted superficially the teachings of Christianity, yet these do not adjust him to the new environment created by Western civilization and economy. Christianity and Western civilization were from the onset unrelated to the African's immediate economic, social and religious needs... In urban areas especially did the African feel most acutely maladjusted to the new environment."

While we would agree with Budaza that Christianity was originally unrelated to African needs, Pauw's work among the Tswana strongly indicates that in the rural environment the new religion has gradually come into equilibrium with the economic, social and cultural needs of the people. In the urban environment, however, these needs have changed and the Church has not yet generally adapted itself to the new conditions.

Our material indicates that this is certainly true of the churches in the East Bank location. Informants claiming nominal allegiance to a wide range of religious organizations, have pointed out that when they first arrived in town they had been active church members. Church activities had represented a familiar way of spending their leisure, while it was often the only means they had of meeting people and making friends. As they became more familiar with town life, and their circle of acquaintances grew, they began to lose interest in the Church. Many also remark that they found the demands of the Church on their time and money onerous, and the strictures on their behaviour irksome and unnecessary. But what is perhaps most important, though this is generally verbalised only by the more educated Africans, is that the Church and its leaders remained aloof from the problems, interests and needs of the people: it ignored their political strivings, their poverty, and squalor in which they lived, while it offered little guidance in an environment where crime and vice flourished and family life was breaking down. This apparent withdrawal by the Church from the realities of urban life has resulted in the rapid loss of its hold over adherents.

This a-realistic attitude can only be understood in terms of the developmental process within the Church itself.

When Christianity was introduced into the tribal setting it acted as the main agency of far-reaching social change. Its success depended on the charisma of dedicated missionaries and their ability to convince and attract converts. By the time the African Church had begun to establish itself in town, however, it no longer comprised a devoted newly-converted adherence under the leadership of inspired men. Rather, its adherence was already two or three generations deep, while its leadership had become institutionalised and bureaucratised. The Church did not come to the town as a vital proselytising mission, but rather as chapters of an old-established group of associations catering to a dispersing, but already existent, membership. Lacking its former missionary zeal, the African Church, in town, not only lost its initiative as an agency of social change, but failed even to adapt itself to the pressures of external forces.

The strength of the Bhengu movement lies, as we have seen, in the revival of some of the characteristics of the early missionary activities. Bhengu and his co-workers are imbued with a sense of mission, fortified with a belief in the rightness and universality of their message. Their approach is vigorous and aggressive, and they have attracted converts by the sheer power of their own conviction and sincerity. The Bhengu movement represents the indigenous visionary's revolt against what he perceives to be happening to his people. It is in this respect that the movement differs fundamentally from the early mission churches: the missionaries, as foreigners, had little sympathy with the societies to which they had come. They would have, if it had been possible, replaced the institutions which they found with those with which they were familiar and which, they believed, were alone compatible with Christianity. The adaptations which

were eventually made to integrate Christianity into tribal society were, therefore, gradual and involuntary. The Bhengu movement, on the other hand, is an African answer, cast in religious terms, to conditions affecting African life. It does not seek to destroy society but to restore it. It has emerged out of a keen awareness of the problems and needs of the people and out of the belief that it alone can offer a reasonable and effective solution.

In this respect the Bhengu movement shares a common foundation with some of the separatist African churches. It fulfills the same role in the East Bank as the Zionist and Ethiopian sects in Natal and the Transvaal, and Limba's Church in Port Elizabeth. Budaza's analysis of the basic appeal of the African separatist Church as a whole, applies equally, therefore, to the Bhengu movement (Budaza, op.cit. pp.28/29):

" In this state of cultural and sociological maladjustment, the African found that his attempts at adapting himself to the new environment were proving ineffective. He felt more and more like a fish out of water...

" I opine, therefore, that the development of these new religious Bantu organizations in South Africa [i.e. the separatist sects]* is an 'attempt to unify belief and practice, to generate hope and confidence in a state of existence which proved to be conflictingly complex and unstable' ...** Most, if not all, of these independent Native Churches are a reflection of this attitude."

Placing the adjustments and adaptations of the Assembly (and, incidentally, the African separatist churches) to the urban situation in wider perspective, we have already examined them in

* My brackets.

** Quoted from: NORTON, G.R. 'Emergence of New Religious Organisations' p.59 Journal of the Royal African Society, January, 1941.

terms of Wallace's concept of revitalization movements. To recapitulate briefly, these movements, which are often religious in character, emerge at times when, in response to a variety of pressures, the internal consistency of a culture begins to break down and the deterioration of the society seems imminent. The process of revitalization generally begins with a prophetic vision, and with the prophet preaching his revelations. As the number of disciples grows an organization develops, and the relationship between leader and followers generally follows the pattern of charismatic leadership described by Weber. Gradually the movement becomes modified in response to outside hostility and is more generally accepted. As this occurs, the organization and leadership of the movement become 'routinized', its structure institutionalized, and the non-ritual aspects of its programme absorbed into other institutions.

While we have shown that the Bhengu movement parallels Wallace's scheme in many respects, the indications are that no local assembly, however successful, is likely to achieve the revitalization of the whole population. We believe that the final stages of the revitalization process described by Wallace - i.e. the whole population's acceptance of the movement, and the incorporation of its non-ritual teachings into other than religious institutions - is more likely to occur in relatively small and homogeneous societies. In a diversified urban population such as in the East Bank, however, such a movement will probably tend to appeal to specific interest groups. The final stages of the process would therefore differ in the two situations. Initially, in both cases, the leader and his band of disciples would direct their appeal to the whole population. Where this population is relatively homogeneous or where the movement cuts across diverse interest groups, there is a gradual

extension of influence and acceptability until the whole population is embraced. In our particular situation, the sphere of influence and acceptability of the movement rapidly contracts to include a relatively small group of adherents.

The reasons for the limited acceptability of the Bhengu movement in the East Bank or, for that matter, of any other religious revival movements, has emerged clearly from our material. From the point of view of such movements, the East Bank population may be divided into six categories:

- (i) Reds who will have nothing to do with Christianity and the Church;
- (ii) School people, and particularly the elite, whose world-view makes any association with the Church highly improbable;
- (iii) Nominal adherents whose interest in the Church might be revived if sufficient incentive is offered;
- (iv) Reds who might for some reason be amenable to conversion (see Part II, Chs. 3 and 4 for full discussion);
- (v) Adherents who maintain some association with their particular churches and, though their interest and participation is not maximal, would be unlikely to change their allegiance easily;
- (vi) The nucleus of church-centred people of any church.

It is clear that Bhengu's appeal was limited at the outset to those who were not strongly opposed to the church as such and, at the same time, felt no strong sense of allegiance to any existing church. The Assembly's success must therefore be measured in terms of the large adherence it has built up within these basic limitations and the extent to which it has been a revitalizing force in the life of that adherence.

While any new religious movement would be limited to the same categories from which the Assembly's membership was drawn, an existing church could, potentially, also extend its influence within the category of loyal, but backsliding adherents. Returning to the final question posed in the Introduction to this study, namely, what role could the churches play in bridging the gap between rural conditions and the new contingencies of urban life it is clear that much depends on the exploitation of this potential extension of church membership. Taking the Church as a whole, we have seen how its interests and activities cover an extremely wide field: it is an important arena for the playing out of the race struggle, and a potential area of co-operation and, even, integration; it provides the most numerous and varied opportunities in the location for leadership, responsibility and the exercise of special abilities and talents; it offers an outlet for emotion and is the vehicle for religious expression; it organizes many and varied leisure-time activities; it lays down codes of behaviour as moral and ethical guides to its adherents; it provides a broad basis for common interest and community sentiment in an environment where few, if any, other agencies can foster similar feelings.

When, however, we deal with the individual churches themselves, our material indicates that few have combined these elements optimally: many are constantly beset with disputes over positions and money; some mission churches are reluctant to adopt a non-racial approach in their organization and activities; many church activities are uninteresting; church discipline is often ineffective; and, as we have repeatedly commented, little real guidance relevant to urban needs is given. Because of these shortcomings, most churches have failed to realize what is perhaps their most important potential: to provide the basis

for the development of stable, ordered sub-communities in a chaotic and disorganised environment.

The creation of such sub-communities would, we believe, be an important step forward to the solution of the problems involved in urban African settlement. This view is consistent with a recent approach - that of Community Development. This approach was adopted in 1954 by the Ashridge Conference on Social Development (sponsored by the British Colonial Office) as the most useful policy for the development of underdeveloped Commonwealth and dependent territories in both rural and urban areas. At the 1960 Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Community Development was defined as:

"... the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. The distinctive features of community development programmes are the participation by the people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living with reliance as much as possible on their own initiative and the provision of technical and other services in ways which encourage initiative, self-help and mutual help and make them more effective."

The Conference, however, recognised that "urban populations lack the community feeling and discipline that prevail in rural areas",** while many of the amenities and services lacking in the latter (such as roads, sewerage disposal, piped water, electric lighting, etc.) are often provided in urban areas by

* Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration 11th Session 5th-17th September 1960 at King's College, Cambridge. 'The Administrative Aspects of Community Development'. p.6

** Ibid.p. 29.

the civic authorities. As a result, the emphasis in urban areas was placed on the "development of communities rather than by or for communities".* In this task, the Conference pointed out, the churches could play an important role.

As far as we are aware, this approach has neither been applied nor envisaged in the East Bank location. But although the churches are not being used by outside agencies to initiate community development programmes, they are nevertheless capable of bringing about the social and moral improvement of their adherents by exploiting their potential themselves. It is, in fact, the realization of this potential which is the outstanding feature of the East Bank Assembly. Through imaginative leadership and careful organization, it has succeeded in welding its adherence into a solidary close-knit group: it lays down, and is able to enforce, clearly enunciated codes of behaviour; it provides a full and varied programme of activities; it encourages the formation of residential clusters and the limiting of social contacts within the adherence; it provides a basis of common interest and loyalty; it seeks, in fact, to pervade every aspect of the lives of its adherents. In the same way, and on the basis of the experience and techniques of the Assembly and similar movements, other East Bank churches could also come to play this important and crucial role.

* Ibid. p.31

APPENDICES

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. THE CONSTITUTION

The basis of the national government is the Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land. It is the foundation of the government and the rights of the people. It is the source of the powers of the government and the limits of those powers. It is the law that governs the government and the people.

2. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The federal government is the government of the United States. It is the government that is created by the Constitution. It is the government that is responsible for the defense of the country and the promotion of the general welfare. It is the government that is the source of the laws that govern the country.

3. THE STATES AND THE GOVERNMENT

The states are the political entities that make up the United States. They are the source of the federal government's power. They are the government that is responsible for the defense of the state and the promotion of the general welfare. They are the government that is the source of the laws that govern the state.

APPENDICES

4. THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE

The rights of the people are the rights that are guaranteed by the Constitution. They are the rights that are the foundation of the government. They are the rights that are the source of the laws that govern the country. They are the rights that are the source of the power of the government.

5. THE POWERS OF THE GOVERNMENT

The powers of the government are the powers that are granted by the Constitution. They are the powers that are the foundation of the government. They are the powers that are the source of the laws that govern the country. They are the powers that are the source of the power of the government.

6. THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION

The history of the Constitution is the history of the government. It is the history of the people and the government. It is the history of the laws that govern the country. It is the history of the power of the government.

* Source: U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 1. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land. It is the foundation of the government and the rights of the people. It is the source of the powers of the government and the limits of those powers. It is the law that governs the government and the people.

APPENDIX A

THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD: STATEMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS*

1. THE SCRIPTURES INSPIRED

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, a revelation from God to man, the infallible rule of faith and conduct, and is superior to conscience and reason, but not contrary to reason (2 Timothy 3:15, 16; 1 Peter 2:2).

2. THE ONE TRUE GOD

The one true God has revealed Himself as the eternally self-existent, self-revealed "I AM"; and has further revealed Himself as embodying the principles of relationship and association, i.e., as Father, Son and Holy Ghost (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29; Isa. 43:10, 11; Matt. 28:19).

3. MAN, HIS FALL AND REDEMPTION

Man was created good and upright; for God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." But man, by voluntary transgression, fell, and his only hope of redemption is in Jesus Christ the Son of God (Gen.1:26-31; 3:1-7; Rom. 5:12-21).

4. THE SALVATION OF MAN

(a) Conditions to Salvation.

The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, through the preaching of repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ; man is saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, and, being justified by grace through faith, he becomes an heir of God according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 2:11; Rom. 10:13-15; Luke 24:47; Titus 3:5-7).

(b) The evidences of Salvation.

The inward evidence, to the believer of his salvation, is the direct witness of the Spirit (Rom. 8:16). The outward evidence to all men is a life of righteousness and true holiness.

5. BAPTISM IN WATER

The ordinance of Baptism by a burial with Christ should be observed as commended in the Scriptures, by all who have

* General Council of the Assemblies of God: Its Organisation and Beliefs Published by the General Council (U.S.A.), Promotion Department, March 1955. Pp.13 - 18.

really repented and in their hearts have truly believed on Christ as Saviour and Lord. In so doing, they have the body washed in pure water as an outward symbol of cleansing, while their heart has already been sprinkled with the blood of Christ as an inner cleansing. Thus they declare to the world that they have died with Jesus and that they have also been raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Matt. 28:19; Acts 10:47, 48; Rom. 6:4; Acts 20:21; Heb. 10:22).

6. THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements, bread and the fruit of the vine, is the symbol expressing our sharing of the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4); a memorial of His suffering and death (1 Cor. 11:26); and a prophecy of His second coming (1 Cor. 11:26); and is enjoined on all believers "until He comes."

7. THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER

All believers are entitled to, and should ardently expect, and earnestly seek, the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian Church. With it comes the endowment of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31). This wonderful experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (Acts 10:44-46; 11:14-16; 15:7-9).

8. THE EVIDENCE OF THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY GHOST

The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 12:4-10, 28) but different in purpose and use.

9. ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

The Scriptures teach a life of holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. By the power of the Holy Ghost we are able to obey the command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Entire sanctification is the will of God for all believers, and should be earnestly pursued by walking in obedience to God's Word (Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24; 1 John 2:6).

10. THE CHURCH

The Church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfilling of her great commission. Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven (Eph.1:22; 2:22; Heb.12:23).

11. THE MINISTRY AND EVANGELISM

A divinely called and Scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for a twofold purpose: (1) The evangelization of the world, and (2) The edifying of the Body of Christ (Mark 16:15-20; Eph. 4:11-13).

12. DIVINE HEALING

Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers (Isa. 53:4, 5; Mat. 8:16, 17).

13. THE BLESSED HOPE

The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the Church (1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rom. 8:23; Titus 2:13; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52).

14. THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF JESUS

The revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, the salvation of national Israel, and the millennial reign of Christ on the earth is the Scriptural promise and the world's hope (2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 19:11-14; Rom. 11:26, 27; Rev. 20:1-7).

15. THE LAKE OF FIRE

The devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, and whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, shall be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10-15).

16. THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

"We according to His promise, look for new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1).

APPENDIX B

THE COLLECTION OF MATERIAL

One of the major difficulties in the study of an urban African situation, is the inability of the White investigator to live among the people with whom he is working. However often he may visit the location, therefore, he always comes as an outsider and a visitor, while - as in my own case - if he cannot speak the vernacular he is further handicapped. As a result the urban worker cannot expect to establish the same intimate relationships with, nor acquire the same insight into the lives of, the people whom he is studying, as can the fieldworker in a rural area. Of these fundamental limitations I have always been keenly aware.

The data on which the present study is based, were built up from interviews, questionnaires, and observation, as well as by the 'smelling-out' of local scandals, gossip and anything else of possible interest by my African research assistant. Although some interviews were conducted personally, with or without an interpreter, the majority were obtained by my assistant. Similarly, it was on him that I relied for details of services and other functions which we attended and which, because of lack of knowledge of Xhosa, I was not always able to follow. During the course of the investigation a portable wire-recorder was purchased with the intention of recording church services, sermons and important interviews. Frequent mechanical breakdowns, however, limited its use to a few transcriptions.

Soon after fieldwork began, the disadvantages of having to rely so heavily on an untrained assistant became apparent. While it cannot, in all honesty, be claimed that these were ever

completely eliminated, it was found possible to minimise them to a large degree. This was accomplished by various means: all texts were examined and discussed within a few days of their collection, points were clarified and details corrected; several interviews were conducted jointly, written up separately, compared and discussed, as were services and other activities we observed; questionnaires were carefully phrased and translated; and, finally, detailed briefing was given in respect of open interviews. On the whole, therefore, I am satisfied that texts and descriptions are sufficiently accurate and reliable reflections of what was observed and of what informants said.

The Pilot Study

During the first few months of field-work, several people were interviewed at random, as questions of possible importance and relevance occurred. In addition, general background information on the Assemblies of God and other local churches was obtained. A questionnaire was also administered at a service of the Assembly, both in order to obtain basic biographical data and also for later use in selecting smaller samples for interviewing. I was also fortunate, within a month of starting work, in securing an invitation to the Biennial Conference of the South African Assemblies of God. Three months later my assistant and I spent Xmas in the Transkei with a Zionist sect, and a few weeks afterwards attended the Annual Conference of the Order of Ethiopia.

These first few months in the field were extremely profitable: not only did they enable us to make all-important contacts and establish rapport with a number of churches, but the information obtained determined the broad lines of further investigation.

The Questionnaire

At the suggestion of my project director, Professor Philip Mayer, a questionnaire (Form A) was administered on Sunday 20th October 1957 after the 3 p.m. service at the Assembly of God. The particular date was chosen in consultation with Dr. D.H. Reader to coincide with the peak population period in the location*, while a Sunday afternoon service was preferred as being the most accessible to the majority of the membership.

The questionnaire consisted of a single mimeographed sheet comprising 19 questions in Xhosa, 11 being of the multiple-choice type and the remaining 8 requiring written answers. During the service, worshippers were informed that Bhengu had agreed to the questionnaire, and they were requested to remain behind after the service. After the service questionnaires and a pencil were distributed to each member of the congregation aged sixteen years and over. The minister, who had been briefed previously, then explained the purpose of the survey. He also told the congregation that he would read and explain the questions one by one and that they should answer each as he dealt with it. He also requested that all those who could not read or write should move next to someone who could, while any difficulties which arose would be further clarified by myself and my assistant.

Of approximately 1,000 worshippers, well over 800 completed the forms, while almost all of these responded to a special request to write their names and addresses on the forms.

* The African population in East London fluctuates in response to seasonal labour requirements, as well as due to the necessity for men to return periodically to the Reserves for ploughing, sowing and harvesting.

FORM 'A'

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF BASIC QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE E.L. ASSEMBLY

Rhodes University, Grahamstown

Please make a tick on the line next to the correct answer, in pencil

1. I am a man _____ I am a woman _____

A. My Childhood

2. I was brought up on a Reserve _____
I was brought up on a European farm _____
I was brought up in town _____
I was brought up on Trust land _____

3. My father is Red _____
My father is a school person _____

4. My mother is Red _____
My mother is a school person _____

5. I am Red _____
I am a school person _____

6. I went to school _____
I did not go to school _____

B. At the Present Time

7. I am single _____ I am married _____
I am a widower _____ I am a widow _____
I am divorced _____

8. My wife lives in the country _____
My wife lives in East London _____

9. My wife is Red _____ My husband is Red _____
My wife is school _____ My husband is school _____
My wife is a recent convert _____ My husband is a recent convert _____

10. I never attend the umanyano _____
I always attend the umanyano _____
I sometimes attend the umanyano _____

Please fill in the required information

11. My age is
12. I came to East London in 19..
13. I joined Bhengu's church in 19..
14. I formerly belonged to Church
I did not belong to any church _____
15. My wife belongs to Church
My wife belongs to this Church _____
My wife belongs to no church _____
16. I have passed standard.....
17. My work is
18. My wages are.....per week. (OR.....per month)
19. I contribute to Bhengu's church.....per month.

After rejecting those which were completely unusable, and withdrawing those completed by 30 Coloured members of the Assembly, there remained a total of 767 responses. Although all these were finally used in drawing up tables, not all were of equal value inasmuch as some questions were not answered, while others were either incorrect or unclear. The success of the questionnaire may be gauged from the results of an analysis of responses by 84 Red and 139 School Men.

TABLE I QUALITY OF RESPONSES: PERCENTAGES

USABLE		UNUSABLE			TOTAL ^o APPLIC.
		Incorrect*	No Response	Unclear**	
Red Men	1213	28	158	14	1413
% age	86.0%	1.9%	11.2%	0.9%	100%
School Men	2212	45	118	14	2389
% age	92.6%	1.9%	5.0%	0.5%	100%
Average	89.3%	1.9%	8.1%	0.7%	100%
% age

N.B. * Answer inconsistent with internal checks (e.g. unmarried man states that wife lives in country). Whether one or all inconsistencies were discarded were decided on basis of whole questionnaire, so that an incorrect answer would be corrected if this could be done with certainty. The above table, however, includes all incorrect responses.

** Indecipherable; two alternatives ticked, etc.

^o Total number of applicable questions answered. Some questions were either not applicable to men, or applied only to certain categories (e.g. married men).

TABLE II QUALITY OF RESPONSES INVOLVING WRITTEN ANSWERS

	USABLE	U N U S A B L E			TOTAL APPLIC.
		Incorrect	No response	Unclear	
Red Men:					
A. Total	1213	28	158	14	1413
B. Written	540	16	135	14	705
100B/A	42.5%	57.0%	85.5%	100%	50.0%
School Men:					
A. Total	2212	45	118	14	2389
B. Written	1065	29	100	14	1208
100B/A	48.0%	64.3%	84.5%	100%	51.0%
Average Men:					
100B/A	46.8%	61.8%	85.1%	100%	50.2%

TABLE III PERCENTAGE USABLE RESPONSES FOR EACH QUESTION

No.	Subject of Question	written (w) or ticked(t)	% age usable responses
1	Ego sex	t	
2	Where Ego was brought up	t	
3	Father Red or School	t	
4	Mother ditto	t	
5	Ego ditto	t	100 - 95
6	Ego did/did not attend school	t	
7	Ego marital status	t	
11	Ego's age	w	
8	Wife's place of domicile	t	
12	Date of arrival in E.L. of Ego	w	94 - 90
13	Date Ego joined Assembly	w	
16	Educational Standard of Ego	w	89 - 85
15	Wife's church allegiance	w	
17	Ego's Occupation	w	84 - 80
18	Ego's wages	w	
14	Ego's former church allegiance	w	79 - 75
19	Ego's contributions to the Assembly	w	
10	Membership of <u>Manyano</u> - Not Applicable to men		

While responses of female members of the Assembly (who made up 71% of the sample) were not analysed, they appeared to be of similar quality to those of the men - though possibly a higher proportion of the written answers were unusable. On the whole, therefore, we consider that the questionnaire was reasonably successful and that the disadvantages of the method of administration were offset by the time saved and the amount of usable information actually obtained. It may be noted that unusable responses are reflected in all tables in the text as 'Unknown'.

The same questionnaire was later administered to members of the East London Order of Ethiopia and of the Port Elizabeth Assembly with appropriate alterations. While in the latter case satisfactory responses were obtained, it was found that in the former more extensive amendment was necessary. A second questionnaire was therefore administered and figures for the Order of Ethiopia are based on that version. In this connection it may be noted that the two versions were directly comparable in most respects but that the second also included questions of particular relevance to the Order. It is interesting, too, that the questions common to both versions yielded almost identical results in the Order, although there was a lapse of several months between their administration.

Since the questionnaire was not repeated in either the East London or Port Elizabeth Assemblies, its validity has been assumed from our experience with the Order of Ethiopia. As a reflection of the total membership of those assemblies, it is our opinion that the responses are reliable, since in East London the sample represents about one-third of the total, and in Port Elizabeth between one-third and one-fifth.

Processing of the East London Assembly questionnaire was by means of punched cards. All responses were coded from 1 - 84, and each individual's responses recorded on a separate card. The cards were then hand-sorted as required. The other questionnaires, because of their small number, were simply tabulated.

Interviews

From the original sample of 767, a stratified random sample of members of the East London Assembly was selected for

intensive interviewing. The basic division was of 10 each School Males, Red Males, School Females and Red Females chosen at random, while each category also contained at least one representative of each age-group. In other respects, too (i.e. education, marital status, etc.), the samples proved, by chance, to be fairly representative.

Two interview schedules were then prepared covering different areas of interest, and the sample split into two similar groups (i.e. in respect of Red/School and sex). The interviews were tightly constructed and translated into Xhosa, and questions were put exactly as phrased without further explanation. This method proved highly successful in terms of the variety and quality of texts obtained, as well as in providing easily comparable detailed information. Only two of the selected people were not interviewed - one having died and the second having been in hospital for a prolonged period. They were not replaced.

A third schedule was also prepared, dealing mainly with leadership. Three officials of the Assembly were interviewed, in addition to eight ordinary members chosen at random.

These three basic interviews were supplemented by several others, as new questions arose and information on specific points was needed. The supplementary information, however, was generally obtained either from those having particular knowledge of some aspect of the Assembly, or from our most co-operative informants. Some of these interviews were also carefully structured, but most were less formal.

As regards the other two churches, informants were either randomly selected or were chosen from those who had proved to

be particularly co-operative. The basic schedules used were adaptations of those already described, while several of the supplementary ones were also given.

Apart from the three churches in which the original questionnaire was administered, information was obtained about several other churches in East London and Port Elizabeth. A lengthy and detailed questionnaire was drawn up for ministers, and over twenty were interviewed including representatives of both mission and separatist churches. In addition individual members of various churches were questioned on many topics. A more detailed study of an East London Zionist sect and of Limba's Church in Port Elizabeth, was also possible.

Comparative data

For a variety of reasons it was not possible to administer the basic questionnaire to more than the three churches mentioned, so that no directly comparable information on church membership was obtained. This gap was filled to some extent by various ministers' estimates and impressions, but in the main, tables drawn up by Dr. D.H. Reader were used. Those which are referred to in the text, are presented in Appendix C. It should be noted that when Reader began his survey in 1955, the importance of the Assembly had not yet been appreciated so that it was not separately tabulated. Similarly the Red/School distinction had not been clearly recognised at that stage as being significant. With regard to the latter, it was felt that a fairly reliable estimate of the Red population could be obtained by combining Reader's categories 'no religion' and 'ancestor worship', and with this Professor Mayer concurred.

ASSOCIATIONAL MEMBERSHIP*

Religious Associations

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION BY AGE AND SEX, ADULT NETT

LOCATION POPULATIONS

Denomination	15 - 24 yrs		25 - 39 yrs		40 plus yrs		Unknown		Totals	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Methodist	22%	30%	49%	42%	28%	28%			99%	100%
	93(0)	132(0)	207(0)	186(0)	118(0)	125(0)	1(0)	1(0)	419(0)	444(0)
Bantu Presbyt.	23%	34%	49%	36%	29%	29%			101%	99%
	51(0)	82(0)	110(0)	86(0)	65(0)	70(0)	1(0)		226(0)	239(0)
Anglican	23%	30%	49%	43%	27%	26%	1%		99%	100%
	41(0)	54(0)	87(0)	78(0)	48(0)	46(0)	2(0)		176(0)	180(0)
Congregat. Union	19%	30%	47%	36%	33%	34%			99%	100%
	16(0)	32(0)	38(0)	39(0)	27(0)	36(0)			81(0)	107(0)
Roman Catholic	(11%)	(32%)	(60%)	(44%)	(29%)	(25%)			100%	101%
	5(0)	22(0)	27(0)	30(0)	13(0)	17(0)			45(0)	69(0)
Bantu Baptist	(21%)	(28%)	(56%)	(45%)	(24%)	(28%)			101%	101%
	7(0)	8(0)	19(0)	13(0)	8(0)	8(0)			34(0)	29(0)
Other Recognised	31%	29%	38%	35%	31%	36%			100%	100%
	29(0)	38(0)	35(0)	46(0)	29(0)	48(0)			93(0)	132(0)
Non-recognised	17%	29%	41%	43%	42%	28%			100%	100%
	14(0)	32(0)	34(0)	47(0)	35(0)	30(0)			83(0)	109(0)
No Religion	34%	27%	37%	48%	29%	25%			100%	100%
	84(0)	38(0)	92(0)	68(0)	73(0)	36(0)			249(0)	142(0)
Ancestor Belief	9%	11%	40%	50%	50%	39%			99%	100%
	23(0)	11(0)	98(0)	52(0)	123(0)	41(0)	1(0)		245(0)	104(0)
Religion Unknown	19(0)	13(0)	23(0)	30(0)	9(0)	3(0)			51(0)	46(0)
Totals	23%	29%	45%	42%	32%	29%			100%	100%
	382(0)	462(0)	770(0)	675(0)	548(0)	460(0)	2(0)	4(0)	1702(0)	1601(0)

* Although throughout this paper reference is made to The Black Man's Portion by D.H. Reader, it should be noted that the following tables do not appear in that work, but were included by Dr. Reader in an early draft.

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION BY PER CAPITA INCOME PER WEEK BY SEX, ADULT
NETT LOCATION POPULATIONS

Denomination	Up to £1		£1.10-£2		£2.10 +		Unknown		TOTALS	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Methodist	38%	57%	42%	33%	20%	9%	-	1%	100%	100%
	160(0)	253(0)	175(0)	148(0)	84(0)	39(0)	-	4(0)	419(0)	444(0)
Bantu Presbytn.	40%	58%	48%	35%	12%	6%	-	-	100%	99%
	89(0)	140(0)	109(0)	84(0)	26(0)	15(0)	-	-	226(0)	239(0)
Anglican	38%	58%	42%	32%	21%	11%	-	-	101%	101%
	67(0)	104(0)	73(0)	57(0)	36(0)	19(0)	-	-	176(0)	180(0)
Congregat.Union	53%	62%	27%	30%	19%	8%	-	-	99%	100%
	43(0)	66(0)	22(0)	32(0)	16(0)	9(0)	-	-	81(0)	107(0)
Roman Catholic	(47%)	(67%)	(42%)	(29%)	(11%)	(4%)	-	-	(100%)	(100%)
	21(0)	46(0)	19(0)	20(0)	5(0)	3(0)	-	-	45(0)	69(0)
Bantu Baptist	(44%)	(42%)	(27%)	(45%)	(29%)	(14%)	-	-	(100%)	(101%)
	15(0)	12(0)	9(0)	13(0)	10(0)	4(0)	-	-	34(0)	29(0)
Other recognised	60%	75%	29%	21%	11%	3%	-	1%	100%	100%
	56(0)	99(0)	27(0)	28(0)	10(0)	4(0)	-	1(0)	93(0)	132(0)
Non-recognised	70%	78%	24%	20%	6%	2%	-	-	100%	100%
	58(0)	85(0)	20(0)	22(0)	5(0)	2(0)	-	-	83(0)	109(0)
No religion	45%	71%	37%	27%	17%	2%	2%	-	101%	100%
	111(0)	101(0)	91(0)	38(0)	43(0)	3(0)	4(0)	-	249(0)	142(0)
Ancestor Belief	38%	74%	44%	25%	18%	2%	-	-	100%	101%
	94(0)	76(0)	108(0)	26(0)	43(0)	2(0)	-	-	245(0)	104(0)
Religion unknown	20(0)	25(0)	15(0)	14(0)	12(0)	7(0)	4(0)	-	51(0)	46(0)
TOTALS:	43%	63%	39%	30%	17%	7%	-	-	99%	100%
	734(0)	1007(0)	668(0)	482(0)	292(0)	107(0)	8(0)	-	1702(0)	1601(0)

**RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION BY HIGHEST STANDARD OF EDUCATION PASSED BY
SEX, ADULT NETT LOCATION POPULATIONS**

Denomination	No school to Std.II		Std. III to Std.VI		Std.VII plus		Unknown		TOTALS	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Methodist	22%	17%	65%	64%	14%	18%	-	-	101%	99%
	91(0)	73(0)	270(0)	282(0)	58(0)	87(0)	-	2(0)	419(0)	444(0)
Bantu Presbytn.	21%	18%	70%	71%	9%	9%	-	1%	100%	99%
	48(0)	47(0)	157(0)	168(0)	21(0)	22(0)	-	2(0)	226(0)	239(0)
Anglican	17%	14%	58%	66%	24%	20%	-	1%	99%	101%
	30(0)	25(0)	104(0)	118(0)	42(0)	36(0)	-	1(0)	176(0)	180(0)
Congragat.Union	19%	22%	72%	68%	7%	9%	1%	-	99%	99%
	16(0)	24(0)	58(0)	72(0)	6(0)	10(0)	1(0)	-	81(0)	107(0)
Roman Catholic	(36%)	(29%)	(56%)	(55%)	(9%)	(16%)	-	-	(101%)	(100%)
	16(0)	20(0)	25(0)	38(0)	4(0)	11(0)	-	-	45(0)	69(0)
Bantu Baptist	(33%)	(17%)	(44%)	(72%)	(24%)	(10%)	-	-	(101%)	(99%)
	11(0)	5(0)	15(0)	21(0)	8(0)	3(0)	-	-	34(0)	29(0)
Other Recog.	25%	33%	57%	59%	18%	8%	-	-	100%	100%
	23(0)	43(0)	53(0)	78(0)	17(0)	11(0)	-	-	93(0)	132(0)
Non-recognised	39%	29%	57%	67%	4%	5%	1%	-	101%	101%
	32(0)	31(0)	47(0)	73(0)	3(0)	5(0)	1(0)	-	83(0)	109(0)
No religion	75%	83%	24%	16%	2%	1%	-	-	101%	100%
	186(0)	117(0)	59(0)	23(0)	4(0)	2(0)	-	-	249(0)	142(0)
Ancestor Bel.	83%	87%	16%	13%	1%	-	-	-	100%	100%
	204(0)	91(0)	39(0)	13(0)	2(0)	-	-	-	245(0)	104(0)
Religion Unk.	17(0)	10(0)	24(0)	17(0)	6(0)	13(0)	4(0)	6(0)	51(0)	46(0)
TOTALS:	40%	30%	50%	56%	10%	13%	-	1%	100%	100%
	674(0)	486(0)	851(0)	904(0)	171(0)	200(0)	6(0)	11(0)	1702(0)	1601(0)

Other Associations

ADULTS POTENTIALLY AVAILABLE TO JOIN ASSOCIATIONS, BY SEX AND AGE GROUP, NETT LOCATION POPULATIONS

	15 - 24 yrs.	25 - 39 yrs.	40 yrs. +	Unknown	Totals
Male	382(0)	770(0)	548(0)	2(0)	1702(0)
Female	462(0)	675(0)	460(0)	4(0)	1601(0)

Recreational Associations

MEMBERSHIP OF THE GOMPO RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION, BY SEX AND AGE GROUP

	15-24 yrs.	% total	25-39 yrs.	% total	40 yrs.+	% total	Totals	
		Age-group		Age-group		Age-group		
Male	117(0)	31%	154(0)	20%	65(0)	12%	336(0)	95%
Female	5(0)	1%	7(0)	1%	6(0)	1%	18(0)	5%

100%

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