

The impact of apartheid on the educational endeavours of two missionary agencies

Frederick Hale

Department of English, University of Stellenbosch,
Stellenbosch, South Africa

Abstract

Numerous studies have shown how apartheid and the struggle against it influenced a range of Christian denominations and missionary agencies in South Africa, but these investigations have tended to ignore smaller denominations and missions. This article focuses on two of these denominations and missions: the Norwegian Mission Covenant and the Scandinavian Alliance Mission of North America (after 1949 called The Evangelical Alliance Mission). Both were historically rooted in the premillennial revivalism of the Swedish-American evangelist Fredrik Franson. Their missionary workers reacted in various ways to the pressures that increased social engineering along racial lines put on their work among black South Africans. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 removed one of the pillars of their outreach programme – education. Some of their missionaries vigorously criticised apartheid, while others assumed a more passive attitude. This article also discusses the role of their eschatology and the rural/urban emphasis in their ministries in influencing their responses to apartheid.

Introduction

Decades of scholarly analysis have shed a great deal of light on how South African churches participated in earlier racial segregation and how they reacted to the implementation of apartheid after 1948. Since the publication, in 1979, of John de Gruchy's seminal *The church struggle in South Africa*,¹ a handful of other South African and foreign scholars have also explored the parallel reactions of various Christian bodies to the overarching racial quandary in which South African society found itself. Prime examples of efforts to redress decades of neglect are Garth Abraham's study of the Roman Catholic Church's mixed record in confronting the implementation of

¹ John W. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979).

apartheid² and Michael E Worsnip's corresponding analysis of Anglican responses.³ One significant historiographical trend during both the disillusioning decade of the 1980s and the watershed 1990s was the insistence that not only the Afrikaans denominations, but also the so-called "English-speaking churches" (many of which were, in fact, multilingual and had a majority of black members), which hitherto had been widely regarded as prophetic voices calling for social and political justice, contributed to the maintenance of racial segregation and white hegemony in South Africa. Particularly notable were detailed studies by James R Cochrane⁴ and Charles Villa-Vicencio,⁵ both of whom cogently challenged the prevailing view of various churches' role in opposing apartheid. The impact of apartheid on many dimensions of the country's complex history of missionary endeavours, however, is less well documented. This article addresses the impact of certain racial dimensions of the National Party's educational policies on two Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American missionary agencies, about which little of a scholarly nature has hitherto been published.

In Southern Africa, legislation concerning race relations first bedeviled missionary outreach in the nineteenth century, first in the rural areas, such as Natal and Zululand, and then in the cities and townships, after indigenous Africans flocked to Kimberley, Durban, the Witwatersrand, and other industrialising and mining areas in search of employment and increasing numbers of missionaries followed them in order to conduct evangelisation programmes and other forms of ministry. Several decades later, the accession of the National Party to power in 1948 and the gradual implementation of its apartheid policies posed further challenges to missionaries, not least to those from overseas, who resided temporarily in the Union of South Africa at the pleasure of its internationally beleaguered government. Initially, many of these men and women criticised apartheid, as did their sponsoring organisations although, during the 1950s, the legally vulnerable missionaries in South Africa generally accommodated apartheid and accepted, however grudgingly, measures such as the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which effectively compelled them to surrender most of their schools to the control of the government.

As I have argued elsewhere, this was clearly the case of the Church of Sweden Mission, which had been active in Natal since the 1870s and which,

² Abraham, Garth, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989).

³ Michael E. Worsnip, *Between the Two Fires: The Anglican Church and Apartheid, 1948-1957* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1991).

⁴ James R. Cochrane, *Servants of Power: The Role of English-speaking Churches in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).

⁵ Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, and Cape Town: David Philip, 1988).

from the very beginning of the twentieth century, had operated extensive ministries in Johannesburg and across much of the Witwatersrand. The apartheid system of social engineering along racial lines squarely contradicted the egalitarian vision of the Scandinavian welfare states and the sensitivities of large numbers of Swedes, Norwegians, and others in the wake of the Second World War.⁶

However, the Church of Sweden Mission and its counterpart, the Norwegian Missionary Society, were by no means the only Scandinavian (or Scandinavian-American) missionary agencies then operating in the Union of South Africa. Among others were the Norwegian Mission Covenant, the Swedish Holiness Union, the Swedish Free Baptists, and the Scandinavian Alliance Mission of North America, all of which had been active in the region since the late nineteenth century. To date, relatively little of a scholarly nature has been published about the history of the endeavours of these societies in South Africa. In this article I shall examine how two of them, namely, the small denomination called the Norwegian Mission Covenant (hereinafter abbreviated DNM, for *Det Norske Misjonsforbund*) and the much larger Scandinavian Alliance Mission of North America (SAMNA, and its successor, The Evangelical Alliance Mission, or TEAM), a non-denominational, para-church organisation (which was then or had been active in not only South Africa, but also China and other countries) responded to the new paradigm in official race relations that began in the latter half of the 1940s.

The two eschatologically inspired missions

The roots of both missions lay in the intercontinental evangelisation initiated by the Swedish-American Fredrik Franson. Born in Sweden in 1852, Franson emigrated to the United States of America while still a teenager and, although lacking formal training in theology, joined the staff of the increasingly well-known evangelist Dwight L. Moody in Chicago, at whose church Franson ministered to Scandinavian immigrants. During this time Franson came under the influence of futurist millenarianism (or premillennialism), popularised on both sides of the Atlantic by the Irish Protestant, John Nelson Darby. Also known as “dispensationalism”, this branch of eschatological thought postulated that none of the biblical prophetic events pertaining to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ had yet occurred but that his return, initially in the “secret rapture”, could be expected “at any time”. After spending most of the 1880s on evangelistic tours in Europe, where he helped to establish non-

⁶ Frederick Hale, “Adapting to Apartheid: The Church of Sweden Mission on the Witwatersrand in the 1950s”, *Journal of Church and State*, L, no. 3 (Summer 2008), pp. 451-474.

conformist evangelistic organisations (which evolved into denominations in his native land, in Norway and in other countries), Franson returned to Chicago. However, he continued to preach internationally and, in 1906, paid a visit to South Africa.⁷

In 1890 Franson established the Scandinavian Alliance Mission of North America, which had its headquarters in Chicago. This was in direct response to the call that fellow millenarian James Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission had issued for increased help to evangelise the Chinese. Franson's organisation would eventually lose much of its Scandinavian ethnic character, especially after its transformation into TEAM in the middle of the twentieth century. Its initial group of thirty-five men and women were commissioned, in 1891, for service in China. Almost from the outset, however, the geographical horizons of the SAMNA were broader. A year later it began to send missionaries to Southern Africa. For several decades its two geographical foci in that region were Natal and Swaziland, and its regional field remained almost completely rural until well into the twentieth century. This differentiated it from the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Church of Sweden Mission, to cite two obvious parallels, which undertook work in Durban and Johannesburg around 1880 and 1902 respectively.⁸

The Fransonian body known as the DNM was organised in 1884 as a fairly typical nonconformist denomination in Norway and became involved in foreign missionary work in 1899. Delegates to its convention that year voted to assume responsibility for the Free East Africa Mission, a small, pan-Scandinavian agency, which had been struggling in Durban and elsewhere in Natal since 1889.⁹ The DNM's endeavours in South Africa continued on a relatively modest scale for the next six decades. Its operations remained entirely rural and were confined during most of this period to the province of Natal, while (in the twentieth century) the SAMNA expanded its operations into what was then the eastern Transvaal. Beginning in the 1920s, the two agencies cooperated fairly closely with each other. Increasingly, the DNM,

⁷ For Franson's intercontinental propagation of the Gospel, see Edvard P. Torjesen, *Fredrik Franson: A Model for Worldwide Evangelism* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1983). His theology and other matters are analysed in greater detail in Edvard Paul Torjesen, "A Study of Fredrik Franson: The Development of His Ecclesiology, Missiology, and Worldwide Evangelism" (Ph.D. thesis, International College, 1984).

⁸ "The Development of Norwegian Lutheran Missionary Endeavours in Durban, 1890-1914," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, XXVI, no. 1 (June 2000), pp. 56-79; Frederick Hale, "Swedish Lutheran Missionaries on the Witwatersrand, 1890-1960" (Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of Pretoria, 2005).

⁹ Frederick Hale, "Launching Scandinavian Urban Evangelisation in Southern Africa: The Free East Africa Mission in Durban, 1889-1899", *Svensk Missionstidskrift*, LXXXVI, no. 2 (1998), pp. 227-250; Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 13, "Årsberetninger 1887-1936", *Referat fra Det norske Missionsforbunds 15de Aarskonferenc i Skien 16de - 19de July 1899* (n. p., Det norske Missionsforbunds Forlag, [1899]), p. 78.

like the SAMNA, relied on the services of Zulu evangelists to complement the work of its European personnel, although the number of these African employees was never large. The number of Zulus baptised by DNM missionaries rose quite rapidly during the 1920s and 1930s, and its congregations grew accordingly, as did those that were affiliated with the SAMNA. Moreover, the DNM became actively involved in educational work during the early years of the twentieth century. By 1937 virtually all the financial support for this pillar of its ministry came from the public coffers.¹⁰

Both of the missionary agencies under consideration sprang from millenarian revivalism in the late nineteenth century, and in accordance with a pivotal dispensationalist principle, Franson awaited the Second Advent of Jesus Christ “at any time”, and probably quite soon. There is no evidence that the missionaries whom the SAMNA and the DNM sent to the Union of South Africa deviated from either this underlying eschatology or their principal goal (which was to effect conversions). However, in their extensive correspondence with their superiors in Chicago and Oslo, the missionaries themselves rarely mentioned the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Nor did their eschatological theology deter them from establishing long-term institutions (e.g. schools) or from insisting on social justice across racial lines. Whether they were generally less concerned about the inherent injustices of apartheid than were, for example, their Scandinavian Lutheran counterparts, is very difficult to ascertain.

Many of the SAMNA and DNM missionaries served in South Africa for two or three generations. However, there were marked changes after the Second World War. A new generation of missionaries arrived, not all of them of Scandinavian provenance or descent. The broader ethnic scope was reflected in many of their names, such as Don Aeschlimann, Willie Bohlmann, and Richard Winchell. Indicative of the partial erosion of its ethnicity, at its annual conference in 1949, the SAMNA changed its name to “The Evangelical Alliance Mission”.¹¹ Furthermore, the South Africa in which they conducted their ministries was undergoing rapid transition in the wake of the accelerated urbanisation experienced during and after the Second World War. This profound demographic change, which helped to propel the National Party into power with the support of alarmed white voters, gave the SAMNA and the DNM new challenges, and the socio-political consequences of these challenges were extremely significant. The SAMNA shifted part of its emphasis to urban areas and, together with other agencies, these two missions took on the task of training black teachers. Furthermore, the post-war era

¹⁰ Knud Salvesen (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to *Misjonsbladet*, 6 September 1937, in *Misjonsbladet*, XXXIV, no. 37 (9 October 1937), pp. 147-148.

¹¹ David H. Johnson, “The Scandinavian Alliance Mission Changes Its Name”, *The Missionary Broadcaster*, XXV, no. 6 (June 1949), pp. 3, 16.

witnessed noteworthy advances in the creation of an autonomous African denomination that was not under white missionary leadership.

Initial reactions to the ascendancy of the National Party in 1948

The ascendancy of the National Party sent shock waves through much of the world and prompted a storm of editorial protest. Even in distant Norway alarms were sounded in the secular daily press and Christian periodicals. The conservative Oslo newspaper *Aftenposten* reported that “Apartheid Defeats Smuts”,¹² while its liberal competitor in the Norwegian capital declared that “Racial Reaction Triumphs in South Africa”.¹³ Indeed, the victory of the National Party caused more Norwegian interest in South Africa than had been the case at any time since the Second Anglo-Boer War. The potential significance of this political change was not lost on Norwegian churchmen, especially those in denominations or para-church organisations which did missionary work in South Africa. To cite only the most immediately relevant example of this, Daniel Brændeland, editor of the DNM’s weekly periodical *Misjonsbladet*, was particularly incensed and tried to place recent events in that country into its history of race relations. “One of the countries where the whites have treated the blacks in the most unchristian way right up to the present is South Africa,” he declared. “The sins of the white race against the native peoples have truly cried out to heaven and must lead to hatred and revenge on the part of the people who are treated unjustly.” Brændeland too optimistically perceived that “much indicates that the days of white domination are drawing to a close”.¹⁴ He did not, however, suggest that the DNM modify its mission strategy in South Africa because of the change of government.

Generally speaking, reactions to the election of 1948 were equally negative in the United States of America. However, the SAMNA, in contrast to the DNM, did not make an official public comment about the election results at the time. Perhaps the fact that the SAMNA’s Southern African field was still primarily in Swaziland made what was obviously a momentous change on the political scene of the Union of South Africa seem less relevant than it soon proved to be. When one of its South African leaders, MD Christensen, described the projected expansion of the SAMNA’s field to industrial areas on the Witwatersrand and in the Orange Free State later in 1948, he emphasised South Africa’s “open door” and did not appear to realise that, within a few years, the government would place more restrictions

¹² *Aftenposten* (Oslo), 29 May 1948.

¹³ *Dagbladet* (Oslo), 28 May 1948.

¹⁴ [Daniel Brændeland], “Ukristelig rasepolitikk i Afrika”, *Misjonsbladet*, XLVI, no. 2 (8 January 1949), p. 1, 4.

on his organisation's activities.¹⁵ This understandable preoccupation with what hopefully could be done to evangelise the rapidly growing urban population was clearly more important than the SAMNA missionaries' concerns regarding the consequences of political change.

Perhaps the fact that most of the DNM and SAMNA missionaries in Southern Africa do not appear to have had serious misgivings about the ascendancy of the National Party in 1948 should be seen as a natural extension of the general lack of involvement and, apparently, interest in political issues – an attitude that had always been characteristic of both missionary groupings. Only rarely had they spoken out in the past, in contrast with, for example, several representatives of the Church of Sweden Mission (especially those who worked on the Witwatersrand).¹⁶ It is at least arguable that both the emphasis on individual evangelism and conversions and the millenarian impetus underlying both the SAMNA and the DNM tended to militate against the development of a keen interest in political issues or attendant social policies in South Africa.

Yet if one digs deeply enough, one can find amongst both DNM and SAMNA missionaries examples of concern about the course of race relations in South Africa during the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, the senior female evangelist Kristine Salvesen of the DNM frequently broached the topic in her correspondence with its leaders. She almost invariably expressed support of black people, despite her occasional condescending remarks about the Zulus at and near the Ekutandaneni station in Natal. In 1940, for example, Salvesen informed her superior in Oslo, Christian Svensen, that the government was reapportioning land in that province and noted approvingly that the vicinity of her station might be designated black. The underlying assumption that land tenure should be based on race did not appear to have been a matter of concern to her.¹⁷ When the National Party came into power in 1948, Salvesen's comments became decidedly more critical. "Our good leader Smuts has been thrown out [of office]", she wrote some six months after the fact. Salvesen seemed most concerned about the plight of the Indians in Natal and feared that Malan's government would simply deport them. The Zulus, she predicted, would at least retain rights in their tribal areas.¹⁸ Before the end of the year, however, she thought Malan was breaking election campaign promises (he had promised to give both

¹⁵ M.D. Christensen, "South Africa's Open Door", *The Missionary Broadcaster*, XXIV, no. 10 (October 1948), p. 13.

¹⁶ Frederick Hale, "The Development of Social Ethical Consciousness in the Swedish Lutheran Mission on the Witwatersrand," *Studia Historiae Ecclesasticae*, XXII, no. 2 (December 1996), pp. 48-67.

¹⁷ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 34, Kristine Salvesen (Zinkwazi Beach) to Christian Svensen, 15 January 1940.

¹⁸ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 34, Kristine Salvesen (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to Christian Svensen, 10 November 1948.

blacks and whites more rights).¹⁹ Curiously enough, after the violent clashes between Indians and Zulus in Durban in 1949, the then ageing Norwegian expressed her belief that the altercations would actually give the latter increased rights on a par with those enjoyed by Asians.²⁰

Christian Christiansen, who was one of the best educated missionaries that either the DNM or the SAMNA ever sent to Southern Africa, and who served both agencies, wrote much more extensively and systematically about race relations and the ethical implications of these relations. In 1927, shortly after arriving in Natal, he began to write about racial oppression in the Union of South Africa and found it especially regrettable that “many forces are at work to convince the natives that the missionaries are allied with all other whites, and that they are working together to make Africa a land for the whites”. Christiansen tempered his remarks, though, by pointing out that “many” Africans were sophisticated enough to distinguish between missionaries, who sought to improve the lot of the indigenes, and those whites who were interested solely in bettering their own.²¹ Later that year he chastised Prime Minister Barry Hertzog’s opposition to the direct representation of blacks in Parliament, their access to certain kinds of employment reserved for whites, and the desire of some to become South African citizens. What particularly irked this neophyte missionary was the hostility of some whites to mission schools. Christiansen related an incident in which a commercial traveller on a train had criticised him and missionaries in general for educating young blacks and thereby making them more competitive in the labour market.²² By the 1940s, however, when Christiansen was teaching at Union Bible Institute and devoting much of his time to administrative matters for the SAMNA, he did not seem to have been especially concerned about political matters. In any case, that organisation’s periodical did not carry anything he wrote about the conservative shift in South African politics. Nor did his eloquent voice join the ranks of ecclesiastical protests against threats to divide the country’s complex society even further apart by implementing apartheid.

¹⁹ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 34, Kristine Salvesen (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to Christian Svensen, 28 November 1948.

²⁰ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 34, Kristine Salvesen (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to Christian Svensen, 2 June 1949.

²¹ Chr. Christensen [sic], “Litt om Syd-Afrika”, *Misjonsbladet*, XXIV, no. 8 (26 February 1927), pp. 60-61.

²² Chr. Christiansen, “Fra et afrikansk utvikstårn”, *Misjonsbladet*, XXIV, no. 25 (2 July 1927), pp. 193-195.

Evangelical Teacher Training College (ETTC)

The brief history of the Evangelical Teacher Training College well illustrates the impact of apartheid on a crucial pillar of these missionaries' educational endeavours. While plans were being laid for the creation of an autonomous African denomination, missionaries in the SAMNA, DNM and other organisations were planning and building an institution they hoped would provide large numbers of sorely needed Christian teachers to serve at mission schools. The need for such a college had long been felt because of dissatisfaction with the moral standards and heterodox religious views of many of the teachers whom the provincial educational departments assigned to those schools. As early as 1935, the seventy-six Scandinavian free church missionaries representing eight societies and denominations who were assembled at their annual Easter conference at Darnall passed a resolution to send a letter of protest to all the pedagogical colleges in Natal. In that document they expressed their regret that teachers were propagating an otherwise undefined "infidelity in the Bible as the Word of God" at some mission stations and their fear that "if the authority of the Bible is undermined, the next step will be the undermining of the authority of the church, and as a result moral standards will not have any basis". The missionaries asked for assurances that the administrators of the colleges did not "sympathise with any instruction which would inculcate doubt in the minds of the people that the Bible is the inspired Word of God".²³

For many years missionaries continued to complain about the quality of the teachers whom the government assigned to their schools. The situation at the Ekutandaneni station, for example, generated many such complaints. In 1939, Kristine Salvesen reported to Svensen of the DNM in Oslo that, as a result of a conflict between some of the teachers at the station, some of the children had been severely beaten. Indeed, she had treated one girl herself, a girl who seemed to be developing blood poisoning.²⁴ Eight years later Salvesen lamented that "the new teachers are not of the good sort. It seems that those schools which the government has taken over get the bad teachers whom the other schools do not want". One of the new men at Ekutandaneni, she wrote, "behaves like a madman whenever he is drunk". The main teacher, moreover, had mistreated some of the children so severely that "rather many" had left the school.²⁵

²³ N. Pinslie, "Fra Darnall-konferansen", *Misjonsbladet*, XXXII, no. 32 (7 September 1935), p. 253.

²⁴ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 34, Kristine Salvesen (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to Christian Svensen, 10 October 1939.

²⁵ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 34, Kristine Salvesen (Vryheid) to Christian Svensen, 19 September 1947.

During the Second World War, Herbert S Barrett of the South Africa General Mission approached the Natal Education Department and proposed the establishment of a specifically Christian teachers' college. The response was favourable, and a promise of financial assistance was forthcoming. Barrett, along with Christian Christiansen and Bertel Pagard of the SAMNA, began to serve as an ad hoc committee to investigate the matter more closely. This "troika" secured a site in Vryheid, despite protests by farmers in the area. The matter was also hotly debated in the Vryheid town council, which voted to approve the sale to the cooperating missions for only £250. The six organisations behind the arrangement were the SAMNA, the DNM, the South Africa General Mission, the Swedish Holiness Union, the Scandinavian Independent Baptist Mission, and the Swedish Alliance Mission.²⁶ Under the terms of their agreement, they jointly owned the property, supplied the staff, and had first right to accommodation for students whom they sent for training. Even though the buildings were not completed, the Evangelical Teacher Training College, as it had been officially named, managed to open its doors in February 1948 with nearly 100 students.²⁷

Initially, the college had eight teachers in addition to Barrett and Balman. It offered a two-year curriculum at secondary-school level that qualified its graduates to teach other Africans up to Standard VII. The first group of ninety-eight students ranged in age from seventeen to twenty-one years. By early 1948, ten of the projected sixteen buildings had been erected, while the headmaster's house and a two-storeyed residence designed to accommodate 150 boys were approaching completion. Balman predicted that the enrolment would rise to more than 200 in 1949 and reach 300 in 1950.²⁸

During its early years, the ETTC, as the institution was universally called and whose motto was, in accordance with those initials, "Every Teacher Teaching Christ", did not fully live up to the academic expectations of its founders. The number of students did not rise as sharply as Balman had predicted; indeed, in 1950 there were only about 200 students – not 300. This may not have been as disheartening as it sounds, though, because one of the chief problems was finding suitable staff. In 1948 – a few months after the ETTC had begun to function – it was still in dire need of personnel for the following year. A call went out for six class teachers, two domestic science teachers, three teachers in pedagogical methods, one carpentry teacher, one

²⁶ J.F. Scutt, *The Story of the E.T.T.C.* (Pietermaritzburg: Shooter and Shuter, 1950), pp. 14-26.

²⁷ Scutt, *The Story of the E.T.T.C.*, pp. 30-41. Scutt claimed that initially the Evangelical Teacher Training College had "over a hundred students"; see *op. cit.*, p. 39. The first principal, however, stated that there were ninety-eight; see Nolan F. Balman, "The Evangelical Teachers [sic] Training College", *The Missionary Broadcaster*, XXIV, no. 7 (July 1948), p. 3.

²⁸ Balman, "The Evangelical Teachers Training College", p. 3.

agriculture teacher, and one art specialist.²⁹ For three years afterwards (1948–1951), the examination results were disappointing, and several students had to be expelled.

The year 1952, however, was a turning point. Enrolment had dropped to 150 students, but that year the ETTC achieved the highest average examination results amongst comparable institutions in Natal, beginning a period during which the institution became known as one of the best of its kind in that province. Eleven buildings had been completed. The staff had risen to fourteen men and women, including at least two sons of African evangelists.³⁰ Other teachers came from elsewhere in South Africa, and from North America and Europe, to join its staff, which meant that students were exposed to a great deal of cultural diversity. As one observer wrote in 1961, “Success at the college came because of the work and love of a staff coming from many different nations. Students enjoyed imitating the speech of Americans, Canadians, English, Norwegians, Swedes, as well as South Africans!”³¹ The ETTC’s “golden age” lasted until the beginning of the 1960s, when the stringency of racial land tenure laws brought its life to an end (after thirteen years).

The impact of the Bantu Education Act

Perhaps no single legal measure proved more traumatic in the history of missionary endeavours in the Union of South Africa than the Bantu Education Act of 1953. This legislation effectively compelled most missions and denominations, which largely depended on public funds to support their schools, to relinquish them to the state. This governmental control of black education (or “training”) soon became one of the principal social foundations of apartheid.

In 1949 the government of DF Malan appointed a Bantu Education Commission to investigate the present state of affairs and propose improvements. Headed by Secretary of Native Affairs, Werner Willi Max Eiselen, a professor of anthropology at the University of Pretoria and whose German parents had served the Berlin Mission Society, Eiselen tabled a lengthy and far-reaching report in 1951. The commission was highly critical of the patchwork of provincial, denominational, and tribal administration of black education.

The report was extremely critical of schools controlled by missionary societies and declared that “the religious bodies engaged in Bantu education

²⁹ “Evangelical Teacher Training College (Staff requirements for 1949)”, *The South African Pioneer*, LXII, nos. 5-6 (May-June 1948), p. 10.

³⁰ Jeannette Eckel, “Every Teacher Teaching Christ”, *The Missionary Broadcaster*, XXIX, no. 6 (June 1952), pp. 4-5.

³¹ “The Life - And Death - of a College”, *Our Africa*, III, no. 7 (March 1961), pp. 9, 20.

are characterised by their multiplicity, their mutual rivalries, their overlap in distribution and function, and their heterogeneity of the school population they serve". In this situation, denominational favouritism in the hiring of teachers, linguistic problems, a wasting of scant resources, a lack of culturally relevant curricula "with a consequent loss of local character and significance", and other difficulties allegedly flourished. Little was said about the achievements of mission schools, and the report did not mention the fact that most black political activists had been educated at these schools.

In its conclusions, the Commission on Native Education expressed its conviction that "it is only by resorting to radical measures that an effective reform of the Bantu school system can be achieved". Amongst those proposed was the creation of "Bantu local authorities" to oversee education. The commission did not call for the immediate surrender of mission schools to these bodies, but suggested that, initially, the societies should be represented in them and that the schools "should gradually be transferred to the local authorities concerned". It recommended, however, that religious instruction be a compulsory subject at both primary and secondary schools.³² The Bantu Education Act of 1953 incorporated many of these recommendations and went into effect on 1 January 1954.

Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American missionary societies, like their Anglophone and other counterparts, reacted in various ways to the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act. There was a great deal of concern in the Norwegian Missionary Society, for example, which, in 1952, administered no fewer than 126 schools in Southern Africa with an aggregate enrolment of approximately 10 000 children. Ingulf E Hodne, who oversaw much of its educational work and had found the 1951 report partly commendable, predictably disagreed entirely that the missionary societies should surrender their educational role to the state. He nevertheless believed that his organisation and others could maintain their schools even with reduced support.³³ TEAM, on the other hand, does not appear to have made any noteworthy response; no more than apartheid in general was the Bantu Education Act discussed at its field conferences at the time.

Within the DNM, however, the prospect of losing its schools caused considerable consternation. At its Glendale station in Natal, Kåre Myre feared (in late 1953) that the government would simply take over all the schools within a few months and, in a letter to Thorleif Holm-Glad, the denomination's mission secretary in Oslo, expressed relief that the DNM had not spent its money on building a new one. Beyond the practical problems the DNM might face under the new educational dispensation, Myre wondered

³² *Report of the Commission on Native Education 1949-1951* (Pretoria: The Government Printer, 1951), pp. 41-44, 102-105, 112-113, 129-147.

³³ I.E. Hodne, "Skularbeidet i Sør-Afrika", *Norsk Misjonstidende*, CIX, no. 18 (29 May 1954), pp. 3-4.

whether education for black South Africans would grind to a halt and their “opportunities for development brought down to the level of fifty years ago”. He emphasised that “as a Christian mission we cannot accept such treatment of the native population. Everyone should have the same human rights, regardless of whether one is black or white”. Like many other missionaries, Myre feared that the DNM would lose its most important contact with young Zulus if the schools were taken away, but he added that relying on them for that purpose had also allowed missionaries to be somewhat passive and not sufficiently aggressive in their evangelism.³⁴ In a rousing letter to the DNM meeting for its seventieth annual conference in mid-1954, Myre and his wife stated that the South African government was beginning to oppose foreign missionaries because of their criticism of apartheid. They assured their fellow Mission Covenanters, however, that “our racial policy is the same one which the Lord Jesus Christ had; we proclaim the forgiveness of sinners to all races”.³⁵

The uncertainty which the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act had unleashed turned into pessimism in August 1954, when the superintendents of state-aided mission schools received, from the government, an ultimatum concerning the future of those institutions. They were asked to inform the secretary for native affairs by the end of the year whether they wished to retain control of their schools as private institutions without public support, retain control of them but with aid from the state reduced to 75 per cent of the teachers’ salaries and expenses, or relinquish them to Bantu community organisations.³⁶ Hagemann sent a copy of this to Holm-Glad in November as an enclosure in a letter in which he stated that the DNM would undoubtedly have to surrender those schools it operated in black locations. The large one at Ekutandaneni, however, was on a white-owned farm and therefore not immediately threatened. Hagemann asked the leadership of the DNM to participate in the process of making a decision by the end of the year and suggested that the denomination seek to mesh its response to the government’s ultimatum with those of other missionary societies in the vicinity.³⁷ Unfortunately, the DNM’s protocols do not indicate precisely how its leaders responded to this crisis.

In any case, the matter apparently stimulated further discussion in Oslo about the possibility of closing the mission field in Natal. In December

³⁴ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 36, Kåre Myre (Glendale Mission Station) to Thorleif Holm-Glad, 8 December 1953.

³⁵ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 36, Gudrun and Kåre Myre (Glendale Mission Station) to DNM, 16 June 1954.

³⁶ Muriel Horrell, *A Decade of Bantu Education* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1964), p. 21.

³⁷ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 36, Nils Hagemann (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to Thorleif Holm-Glad, 15 November 1954.

1954, Daniel Brændeland, the then chairman of the DNM, asked Myre to evaluate the future of the field in the light of the hurdles erected by the South African government. Myre replied that conditions were so unclear that he did not know how to proceed. He was pessimistic, however, and feared that foreign financial assistance to indigenous church work might simply be prohibited. Myre also foresaw the inevitable disintegration of black congregations in white areas, such as that at Ekutandaneni, but thought his flock at Glendale might remain intact. In response to Brændeland's question of whether the congregations which the DNM was aiding would lose anything if the DNM withdrew and transferred them to TEAM, Myre answered in the negative. He did not, however, mention the schools.³⁸ One gains the impression that, by early 1955, Myre, Hagemann, and their superiors in Oslo had resigned themselves to the probable loss of some of their schools in Natal and were giving very serious consideration to withdrawing from the field entirely, but had not yet conclusively decided to do so.

A flicker of hope remained in the provision that "farm schools" could, in theory, be administered by missionaries. Myre informed Holm-Glad in March 1955 that some of the DNM schools might fall under this provision. At Glendale and Kwa Koza, however, the land on which the schools were located belonged to Roman Catholics, so he did not believe it would be possible to arrive at such an agreement with them. Yet Myre hoped that what he perceived as the government's dislike of Catholicism would work in favour of the DNM and that the denomination would thus be allowed to retain their schools there without the permission of the Catholic land-owners.³⁹

No such hope, however, tempered Hagemann's pessimism. He replied to the secretary for native affairs in late December 1954 and sent a copy of his letter to the DNM in Oslo. That document does not appear to have been retained in the denominational archives, so it is impossible to ascertain how the superintendent chose to approach the dilemma which had confronted him for five months. In any case, Hagemann informed Holm-Glad categorically that, "the schools will be out of our hands by April 1, 1955"⁴⁰ A month later he told Holm-Glad that he had received forms from the government regarding the schools at Ekutandaneni, Glendale, and Kwa Koza. "We are struggling to keep them in the same way as before," he wrote, "[but] I doubt that we will

³⁸ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 36, Kåre Myre (Glendale Mission Station) to Daniel Brændeland, 14 January 1955.

³⁹ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 36, Kåre Myre (Paulpietersberg) to Thorleif Holm-Glad, 16 March 1955.

⁴⁰ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 36, Nils Hagemann (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to Thorleif Holm-Glad, 3 January 1955.

manage to keep them ...”⁴¹ Before the end of the year the school at Emuseni, which was in a black area in Zululand, had been taken over by a black school board. The main teacher had left the school; the sole consolation was that his successor was a man from the DNM mission congregation.⁴²

By the mid-1950s, the DNM appears to have simply relinquished control of its other schools. The fairly extensive extant correspondence between the denominational headquarters in Oslo on the one hand and Hagemann and the Myres on the other contains nothing about the schools. One must therefore surmise that they no longer were a matter of significant concern to the missionaries, although some of them continued to function at the stations. Complicating matters slightly, Hagemann was in Norway for several months in 1955 and 1956, and during that time the Myres were pre-occupied with both financial and health problems. Under such circumstances, it is probable that the DNM was not in a position to struggle to retain limited control over the schools which it had established or to assume the increasing financial responsibility that doing so would have required.

The *Report of the Native Education Commission* had been critical of teacher training colleges for blacks.⁴³ The Bantu Education Act did not categorically remove institutions such as the ETTC from the control of missionary societies, although it came close to doing so. Essentially, missions were given two choices. They could either sell their teacher training colleges outright to the government, thereby abjuring all rights to those institutions, or they could rent such facilities to the government and retain the right to carry on limited spiritual activities amongst the students. Neither alternative, of course, appealed to the missionaries in TEAM, the DNM, or the other organisations which had laboured arduously to create the ETTC. Eventually, however, it was not the Bantu Education Act, but the Group Areas Act that finally dealt the death blow. According to a revision of the Group Areas Act, African boarding schools were not permitted in urban areas, but relegated to “native reserves”. In late 1957 the ETTC, whose location thus contravened the terms of this law, received a temporary dispensation and was allowed to remain in operation until 1959.⁴⁴ Approximately a year later this dispensation was extended until the end of 1960.⁴⁵ At then, however, it ceased to exist.

⁴¹ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 36 Nils Hagemann (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to Thorleif Holm-Glad, 7 February 1955.

⁴² Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 36, Gudrun and Kåre Myre (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to Thorleif Holm-Glad, 13 December 1955.

⁴³ *Report of the Commission on Native Education 1949-1951*, p. 102.

⁴⁴ “South Africa”, *The Missionary Broadcaster*, XXXIII, no. 1 (January 1958), p. 24.

⁴⁵ “South Africa”, *The Missionary Broadcaster*, XXXIV, no. 8 (September 1958), p. 25.

Rural apartheid and the closure of the DNM field in Natal

With all its work concentrated in rural Natal, the DNM initially seemed less vulnerable to apartheid legislation than were missions in urban areas. However, before the end of the 1950s rural land tenure legislation nearly brought the DNM's work to a close. Its principal missionary, Nils Hagemann, who worked at the pivotal Ekutandaneni station, informed his superiors in Oslo in 1957 that he was under pressure to remove black tenants from its farm, where they had been ministered to since the late nineteenth century. This shocked the denomination in Norway. At a hastily called meeting, Holm-Glad, Brændeland, and two other leaders of the DNM discussed Hagemann's letter and how to respond to it. The four men in Oslo seemed surprised that their superintendent in Natal was alarmed that the closing of the field was a distinct possibility and claimed that he should have been aware of the fact that the possibility had been discussed periodically, ever since Christian Svensen's inspection of the field in 1947. They also agreed that the denomination had not decided to transfer its field in Natal to any other missionary society.⁴⁶ These findings were communicated to Hagemann. The leaders of the denomination also indicated their concern about the possible forced removals of blacks from Ekutandaneni.⁴⁷

The denomination's missions committee still hoped to keep work going in the mission field in 1958. Heeding Hagemann's suggestion, the committee decided to have Ekutandaneni appraised and possibly mortgaged as a means of acquiring sorely needed funds.⁴⁸ Hagemann reported in April 1958 that the farm was worth approximately £3,000. The missions committee viewed this estimate sceptically, however, and thought that "this appraisal appears to refer to purchase about fifteen years ago". The committee nevertheless decided to offer Hagemann the possibility of "taking over the farm at Ekutandaneni, with the exception of the chapel and five acres around it, in exchange for attending to the interests of the native congregation". Such an arrangement, it was felt, would allow the church to continue and simultaneously reduce the expense to the DNM by eliminating the superintendent's salary. What is unclear from the records, however, is whether by "taking over" the farm an outright sale to Hagemann was meant.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Archives of the Norwegian Mission Covenant, uncatalogued materials, minutes of *ad hoc* meeting, 14 May 1957.

⁴⁷ Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 36, unidentified writer (Oslo) to Nils Hagemann, 13 July 1957.

⁴⁸ Archives of the Norwegian Mission Covenant, uncatalogued materials, minutes of Missions Committee, 16 January 1958.

⁴⁹ Archives of the Norwegian Mission Covenant, uncatalogued materials, minutes of Missions Committee meeting, 23 April 1958.

In any case, the matter soon became moot and the plan of separating the farm from the station at Ekutandaneni was necessarily abandoned after Hagemann informed the leadership of the DNM in June 1958 that, under the terms of a new law, indigenes would not be allowed to reside at Ekutandaneni unless the mission paid a fee of £16 for each of them. This would come into effect in 1960. That the DNM thus had virtually no reason to retain Ekutandaneni was then clear. Hagemann's private hand, by contrast, was stronger than ever. He declared his willingness to purchase the farm there by paying £150 annually for ten years and an additional payment of £1 500 at the end of the period.⁵⁰ Presumably Hagemann believed that he and his family could use the property for lucrative sugar cane farming which, in fact, is what they did.

Conclusion

Much of the struggle of various churches and missionary agencies against the obstacles erected by the apartheid system occurred in urban areas, but the story of the SAMNA/TEAM and the DNM is a useful reminder that social engineering along racial lines profoundly influenced rural endeavours also. The impact of apartheid on their educational work, which had long been a central component of their social ministries, was both swift and devastating. The missionaries employed by these two agencies responded in various ways to the challenges of the post-1948 dispensation, as they had to the racial policies of the previous governments in the Union of South Africa. The factors that determined their responses are difficult to identify in any systematic way. Conceivably, individuals' political and racial views were among them. One is tempted to suggest that the millenarian foundations of both missions made them predisposed to be less interested in contemporary politics than were, for example, their Scandinavian Lutheran counterparts, whose ethnic and national backgrounds had much in common with their own. The eminent South African missiologist David Bosch, among others, argued that owing to their strongly eschatological emphasis, by early in the twentieth century "the evangelicals' interest in social concerns had, for all practical purposes, been obliterated".⁵¹ However, this explanation is too facile and does not account for the fact that *some* of the SAMNA and DNM missionary workers in South Africa did, in fact, express great concern about the social injustices being perpetrated at the time.

What may have been significant in some cases was the fact that, even after 1948, the geographical emphasis of the DNM's endeavours remained

⁵⁰ Archives of the Norwegian Mission Covenant, uncatalogued materials, minutes of Missions Committee meeting, 20 June 1958.

⁵¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 318.

entirely rural; this remained true after the DNM had surrendered its schools. As I have argued elsewhere, during the late 1940s and well into the 1950s the Church of Sweden Mission (a larger proportion of whose missionaries worked in urban areas than those of the Norwegian Missionary Society) spoke with a louder prophetic voice than did the Norwegian Missionary Society. The reason for this appears to have been at least partly due to the greater difficulties the Swedish Lutherans encountered with government racial policies on the Witwatersrand (their Norwegian counterparts worked chiefly in rural Natal).⁵² It is entirely conceivable that similar factors galvanised – and, on the other hand, failed to galvanise – the free-church Scandinavians and Scandinavian-Americans.

In any case, one cannot escape the conclusion that the insistence of the National Party on controlling what had long been the efforts of missionary agencies to educate black South Africans on several levels, together with the rural implications of apartheid, played a crucial in bringing the work of the DNM to an end after six decades. Furthermore, the government's heavy-handed approach to educational policies, these being the "handmaiden" of its social engineering, compelled TEAM to alter some of its strategies and, together with other agencies, give up the ETTC. Apartheid took a heavy toll on missionary endeavours, but its effects differed in the rural and urban areas of South Africa.

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⁵² Frederick Hale, "The Church of Sweden Mission and Apartheid, 1948-1960", *Missionalia*, XXIX, no. 1 (2001), pp. 21-42.

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