"LATELY, WE HAVE DISAGREED":  
INDEPENDENT CHURCHES IN NATAL AND ON THE RAND, 1910-1930

by

Jennifer Nelson  
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Bachelor of Arts
George Mason University, 2001

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my grandmothers, Marguerite Bird Thursland and Eleanor Johnson Nelson.
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I would like to thank my thesis advisor and mentor Ben Carton, who saw this work through to the end. The faculty and my classmates in the History Department at George Mason University have also introduced ideas and challenged my interpretations in ways that shaped the analysis in this paper. I cannot thank enough Sharon Bloomquist in the GMU Graduate History office – this thesis would not have been completed without her assistance. I must thank Philippe Denis at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, who made my stay in Pietermaritzburg possible and provided much needed advice, and Marie-Chantal Peeters, who provided a home away from home while I was in Pietermaritzburg. The staff at the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, the National Archives Depot in Pretoria, the Yale Divinity Library, and Houghton Library of Harvard University were exceptionally patient and helpful with my research. Finally, I must thank my family and friends for their encouragement and support.
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<td>ABCFM</td>
<td>American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions</td>
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<td>ACC</td>
<td>African Congregational Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>AZM</td>
<td>American Zulu Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>Central Archives Depot, Pretoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>CID</td>
<td>Criminal Investigation Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNC</td>
<td>Chief Native Commissioner</td>
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<td>CPO</td>
<td>Chief Pass Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAD</td>
<td>Native Affairs Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>South African Police</td>
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ABSTRACT

“LATELY, WE HAVE DISAGREED”: INDEPENDENT CHURCHES IN NATAL AND ON THE RAND, 1910-1930.

Jennifer Nelson, MA

George Mason University, 2008

Thesis Director: Benedict Carton

This paper seeks to expand on existing scholarship to elaborate some stories of the independent church movement in early twentieth-century Natal and on the Witwatersrand, when numerous African churches broke away from white mission churches or were spontaneously created without mission sponsorship. Through an examination of the nineteenth and twentieth-century roots of the conflicts between congregations and the missions, with particular focus on the American Zulu Mission in Natal and its conflict with the African Congregational Church, the independent church movement can be placed within the context of the larger African struggle of the time period – a struggle for political rights and representation, economic advancement, and social and cultural identification. The independent church movement represented all of these desires, as well as the desire for spiritual connection that resonated within the local context. The independent churches that grew out of this struggle were not simply a
negative reaction to government and mission regulation but were in fact highly creative, invoking Christianity in ways that resonated in the church community while organizing the congregation to address contemporary problems – dislocation, impoverishment, and the institutionalization of segregation.
1. Introduction

It was the realization of the hopes of the white American missionaries and the African congregations. In 1908, Gardiner B. Mvuyana was ordained a minister in the American Zulu Mission (AZM) churches, one of six African men ordained by the AZM between 1907 through 1912. These ceremonies followed the ordinations of three African ministers in 1901, bringing the total number of ordained African ministers in the AZM to twenty during the more than seventy years since American missionaries arrived in Natal.¹ The turn of the century ordinations were part of a push by the American missionaries to bring African leadership into mission churches. A number of small schisms in the church and increasing signs of African interest in creating their own, independently-led religious movements forced the missionaries to realize that African leadership was necessary if the AZM was to continue to grow and progress. The ordination of Gardiner Mvuyana and others was to be the start of a change in the AZM.

However, less than ten years after his ordination, Mvuyana would start his own church, joined by two of the men also ordained in that period, Zephaniah Ndaweni and

¹ The first African minister ordained by the American Board was Rufus Anderson (previously Ngazana Mngadi) on May 29, 1870. This ordination was followed by the ordinations of Msingaphansi Nyuswa (1870), James Dube (1870), Benjamin Hawes (1872), Ira Adams (previously Nembula; 1872), Nqumba Nyawose (1883), Mvakwendlu Sivetye (1895), Simon Kwela (1895), A.F. Christofersen, Adventuring with God: The Story of the American Board Mission in South Africa (Durban: by Julia Rau Christofersen, 1967), 47-50, 60, 91-94.
Daniel Zama.\(^2\) Mvuyana’s break with the church provoked a strong reaction from the American missionaries who saw such departures from their control as betrayals. The missionary F.B. Bridgman, who had worked with Mvuyana in the Johannesburg area (also known as the Witwatersrand or the Rand), subsequently accused Mvuyana and his followers of being “virulently anti-white”\(^3\) and waged a personal battle against Mvuyana’s African Congregational Church and other African independent churches. Despite this opposition, the African Congregational Church (ACC) found willing congregants both within the AZM and beyond and quickly became one of the most popular and stable churches in Natal.

Although the turn of the century ordinations were a sign that the AZM was willing to accept change, the missionaries clearly did not understand the scope of the changes that were happening around them. In the decades before and after Mvuyana’s break with the AZM, there was an explosion of independent churches in South Africa. In Natal, the numerous independent bodies that drew away members of their congregations frustrated the AZM and other mission churches. It was a tumultuous period in the history of Natal: after the Bhambatha Rebellion (1906-1907), the rights of the Zulu monarchy and Zulu chiefs were further restricted;\(^4\) legislation was passed to reduce African access to land; work in the mines and in urban areas attracted men and women who had lost access to other forms of income and sustenance; and mission churches unapologetically divided the population, drawing hard lines between what could be acceptable and what

\(^2\) Ibid., 94.
\(^3\) CID, Witwatersrand Division to Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg, 27 April 1925; Native Sub-Commissioner, Germiston-Boksburg Area to Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg, 26 June 1925. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
\(^4\) The Bhambatha Rebellion, or Poll Tax Rebellion, will be discussed further in the next chapter.
was not. Living on the mission reserves, educated in mission schools, a growing number of African Christians (known as the *amakholwa*, Zulu for “believers,” and also referred to in the text as *kholwa*; singular is *ikholwa*) fostered expectations of social and economic advancement with the assistance of the missionaries, only to have their dreams poorly represented by missionaries and met with increasingly repressive government actions. Consequently the *amakholwa* of Natal were moved to express their grievances and search for alternate leadership.

But the growth of independent churches was not limited to Natal. After 1910, throughout the new Union of South Africa, African Christians were asserting their independence through separate church bodies. The breadth of the movement is indicative of the growing pressure on Africans as their activities became more restricted and available opportunities became ever more limited throughout South Africa. Any hope that the post-Union government would bring change was quickly curbed. The government definitively opposed the rights of Africans to vote or serve as representatives in the legislature and moved the country steadfastly towards segregation. At the same time, the industrial and urban development of the Rand and the channeling of African labor into specific service and manual labor occupations within the cities defined the limited range of options for Africans for several generations. The Union government, like the provincial government of Natal, continued to operate out of fear and prejudice to keep African autonomy to a minimum.

But it was not simply economic pressure or the desire for voting rights that drove Africans to independent churches. At a time when African culture and community were
being assaulted by government and mission controls in the guise of “civilization,” the independent church provided an alternate structure that linked the past and the future. The independent church introduced African interpretation of the gospel that challenged Western missions’ attempts to own Christianity in Africa. Moreover, the independent churches provided a path for Africans to claim that which they admired and accepted from the West while asserting their own identities. In Natal and areas of the Rand, independent churches offered Africans with opportunities to be leaders, develop ideology, and build community structures to address their hopes and struggles in the early twentieth century.

**Historiography**

This study draws on the works of scholarship that critically evaluate the emergence of African Christianity, both mission and independent, and on dramatic changes in African life and culture in Natal and on the Rand during the early twentieth century. A number of these works served as major sources of inspiration and points of departure for this study, inspired ideas that have guided my work, and raised questions which this study can only begin to address.

Shula Marks’ examination of the Bhambatha Rebellion and subsequent disturbances in Natal proved to be a starting point for this work. Marks shed new light on white fears of “Ethiopianism,” while providing a more elaborate understanding of the roles African Christians, both independent and mission-based, played in the rebellion and in African society in the colony of Natal. Ethiopianism was a term frequently used by
whites in South Africa, and, as Marks notes, the term generally conflated separate ideas and groups, religious and political, cultural and economic. These so-called Ethiopian groups were the manifestation of what Marks calls a “new independent spirit” in Natal. It was the determination to learn more about this independent spirit and the ways African independent churches used Christianity to embody this spirit that led me to this subject. One of the objects of this study is to understand the social and religious elements inherent in the move for independence, and to differentiate the independent church movement from the simultaneous political movements with which the independent church movement was in spiritual harmony, but with which it should not be confused.

To study independent churches, one must understand the beginnings of Christianity in Natal, and that path leads to Norman Etherington’s foundational work. Etherington’s studies of African mission Christianity have been important to understanding African motivations and dynamics on the mission stations and issues facing the *amakholwa* more broadly. Although he focused primarily on mission Christianity in the nineteenth century, Etherington does raise some questions about independent church movements that clearly evolve out of an examination of Bengt Sundkler, who wrote the first comprehensive, non-government, examination of independent churches in Natal. Of particular interest to Etherington is the timing of the

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5 Similarly, John Lambert refers to “Ethiopianism” as a militant movement and uses the term to refer to the independent church movement broadly, despite acknowledging that the government and missionaries applied the term incorrectly, in his study of the homestead economy and African society in colonial Natal. Lambert notes the role of “Ethiopianism as a bridge between the *kholwa* and other Africans,” but he could not escape previous characterizations of the independent church movement. Lambert, *Betrayed Trust: Africans and the State in Colonial Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1995), 183-184.

independent church movement and the question of why the movement did not begin earlier. Etherington concludes that first-generation *kholwa* insecurity kept them tied to the mission stations, while pressures on African society, especially the decrease of available land and the decline in opportunities for educated Africans, led frustrated Africans to seek outlets in independent churches. A purpose of the current study is to expand on the understanding of African motivations and needs which led to the establishment and growth of independent churches. What did independent churches provide that could not be found elsewhere, and what historical conditions developed to propel African Christians to independency – to make independent churches become not only popular but necessary in the early twentieth century?

Bengt Sundkler’s *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* is one of the most thorough examinations of the independent church movement in South Africa, particularly Natal. Having served as a missionary in South Africa from 1937-42, Sundkler was direct in his analyses as well his opinions on relations between independent churches and the missions. Sundkler sought to understand the development of independent churches, but he approached the issue as a “problem” that needed to be addressed by mission church communities. In his examination of the independent church movement, Sundkler stressed factors in mission work that he hoped contemporary missions in South Africa

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9 See for example Sundklar’s introduction, “Addressing the Problem,” as well as pages 295, 300-301.
could overcome, specifically Protestant denominationalism and the deep structural racism, commonly called the color bar, within mission churches.\textsuperscript{10}

A lasting contribution of this work to the field was the stress on two different types of independent church movements – the Ethiopian and Zionist. According to Sundkler, the Ethiopian churches were those that had split from mission churches or other independent churches for reasons having to do with race and power. These churches were considered to run along the same lines as European and American Protestant churches despite having a supposed general feeling of “Africa for Africans,” a revolutionary political concept in Natal. The Zionist type were churches that broke with the missionary church doctrine and instead focused on faith healing, full immersion at baptism, and a millenarian outlook influenced by African-American Zionist and Pentecostal ideology as well as traditional African beliefs.\textsuperscript{11} These churches were formed and run by charismatic prophet figures who may or may not have had any Christian religious training.\textsuperscript{12}

The history of both terms pre-dates Sundkler’s usage and complicates the usefulness of these terms to this study. Missionaries and government officials had taken to calling all breakaway churches Ethiopian, regardless of whether such churches were inclined to politics or not. Indeed some of these independent churches expressed political language, and the introduction of Garveyism in South Africa played no small part in this development. Workers from the West Indies brought to South Africa a prophetic style of Christianity intertwined with a message of “Africa for the Africans” and the promotion of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[10] Ibid., 295.
\item[12] Ibid., 53-55.
\end{footnotes}
black self-sufficiency. The message was personified in Marcus Garvey, with some Africans convinced that Garvey was a Moses-like figure who would come to South Africa to liberate them.\(^\text{13}\) But the conflation of independent churches with political movements was more reflective of government fears than actual intent in most cases.

With the rise of Pentecostal influences in South Africa, African churches that included non-standard practices were grouped among the Zionist type of church by whites in South Africa, distinguishing such churches from the political Ethiopian churches by people unconcerned with the nuances of faith and practice that separated these churches. But the influence of the Zionist and Pentecostal practices had reach beyond those congregations that were clearly identified as Zionist. Indeed, Pentecostal ideas in South Africa certainly led to new practices in many churches, not only those churches known as the Zionist type. Mission Christianity influenced the structures of many independent churches and certainly influenced the heavy interest in founding schools by even the Zionist churches.

Thus blanket terms like Ethiopianism and Zionism, while having a use at understanding the broad strains of development that Sundkler identified, also have the unfortunate side effect of reducing the beliefs and practices of a large number of churches to the lowest common denominators, while frequently being applied inaccurately. It is beyond the scope of this study to undertake a detailed analysis of the range of influences upon the independent church movement. Instead, it is hoped that this study can retrieve

some of the varied influences and motivations that drove the formation of independent church communities.

Deborah Gaitskell’s articles have illuminated Christian women’s activities and actions both on the reserves and in the cities. Particularly illuminating were Gaitskell’s examinations of the way Christian women’s organizations like the *manyanos* mobilized to confront problems in their communities.14 Sheila Meintjes’ study of Edendale skillfully illustrated the pressures and problems facing the Natal mission reserves in colonial times, and has paved the way for an understanding of how these pressures contributed to the development of the independent churches. Michael Mahoney’s emphasis on the broader interpretation of what it meant for Africans to be Christian allowed for a much better understanding of the fundamental struggle between missions and those who formed their own churches.15

Paul la Hausse’s examination of the creation of Zulu ethnic nationalism through the struggles of Petros Lamula, the founder of the independent United National Church of Christ, highlights the position in which many African Christians found themselves at the beginning of the twentieth century. La Hausse notes the rise of a “progressive search for roots” that intensified after the Bhambatha Rebellion.16 The “contradictory nationalism”

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that la Hausse finds develops from this search is comparable to the contradictory Christianity that developed out of the same search. Like la Hausse’s nationalism, this African Christianity was not an outright rejection of the Christianity brought by missionaries, but neither was it blind adherence; rather it is a Christianity embraced and claimed by Africans to serve their communities rather than the purposes of the proselytizing mission.

Robert Houle provided a missing link between the movement of Africans to accept and recast mission Christianity and the independent church movement. As Houle adeptly illustrates, the late-nineteenth century revivals on the American mission reserves allowed Zulu-speaking Africans to take active part in the preaching, interpreting and expressing of Christian faith. In that process, participants created a Christianity that was a distinctly Zulu, in the Zulu vernacular.17 This parallels Lamin Sanneh’s understanding of the primary role of missions in Africa – to create an African vernacular Christianity – although the missionaries own interests and designs often contradicted this end as an “African church, rooted in the vernacular, must inevitably come into conflict with a political system based on the superiority of foreign institutions.”18 It is my assertion that those experiences nourished the confidence of the amakholwa in ways that were necessary for pursuing and taking leadership roles within the church and in interpreting and preaching Christianity independently of white missionaries. This confidence and the

newly developing African interpretations of faith in turn led to the foundation of independent churches.

Finally, I must agree with Houle’s assessment of the Comaroffs treatment of mission Christianity. The Comaroffs asserted the dominance of mission Christianity in *kholwa* understanding, stating, “…the final objective of generations of colonizers has been to colonize their consciousness with the axioms and aesthetics of an alien culture. This culture – the culture of the European capitalism, of western morality – had, and continues to have… a force at once ideological and economic, semantic and social.”

Moreover, the Comaroffs define hegemony as “that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies – drawn from a historically situated cultural field – that came to be taken for granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it…. [H]egemony is habit forming.” The assertion that mission Christianity was dominant and hegemonic denies the *kholwa* full participation in the shaping and adapting of Christian thought in Africa. The Comaroffs’ logic also denies that Africans could have found anything familiar or appealing in Christianity.

Furthermore, the claim that missionaries were able to impose their consciousness upon even the most devout believers vastly overestimates the influence of the missionaries.

Missionaries sought control and the imposition of their demands upon reserve residents, but these attempts were successful only to the degree that Africans were willing to accept these demands. Africans joined missions because the missions offered

19 Houle, 10-11.
21 Comaroffs, 23.
something they desired – security, refuge, a community to join, or spiritual uplift – during a time of intensifying colonial oppression and ecological distress. Africans embraced Christianity because it fulfilled a need, spiritually and/or socially. But a fundamental function of consciousness is the ability to interpret and relate in relation to one’s own understanding. Amongst the **amakholwa**, the terms of acceptance were constantly negotiated and the different adaptations and interpretations led to a great variety in forms of faith and widely differing ideological foundations that were each subject to negotiation, challenge and fracture. This was the reason Ethiopianism so concerned missionaries and government officials – Christianity could simultaneously be accepted, adapted, and reformed to address the needs of the people in ways the colonizing forces could neither predict nor control.

Africans who broke from the mission churches called into question the very ideas of what made one Christian and who could decide what was Christian. Was it only Western missionaries who could judge the African Christian, or could Africans themselves decide what made them Christian and who could belong to their churches? Rather than simply accepting the Christianity brought by missionaries, African Christians brought their own interests and raised these questions to challenge the idea of a hegemonic Christianity in Natal. The struggle over these questions and the right to determine what was Christian, and what was African, formed the backbone of the independent church movement.

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22 Etherington provides a number of reasons, social, political, and economic, that drove Africans to the mission stations, but like Houle, I cannot agree with the extent of his focus on material motivations. Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics*, 180-181; Houle, “‘Today I am delivered,’” 7-8.
The development of independent churches, and indeed the development of Christianity in Natal and South Africa more broadly, was a creative movement rather than a reactionary movement, a lashing out of African missionaries against white missionaries. What was at the heart of the independent church movement was faith – the shaping and limiting of a system of beliefs, tested and defined by trial and tribulation, through starts and stops, through a searching that was both individual and communal, and arose out of a variety of needs and wants. Christianity in Natal was established by a diverse group of people and the forms Christianity took were designed by those people, born of a tumultuous time when causes and effects were interrelated and intertwined. The leaders and the members of these churches defined these creations as they designed churches to both lift and serve the people, to simultaneously be the community and be of the community. While some features of these churches were a direct reaction to facets of mission Christianity, together they addressed a variety of needs and concerns.

Most of the independent churches were not overtly political, nor did most desire to be, but they filled a void of leadership. They represented the social, cultural, economic, and political desires of their membership by necessity and by default, as the communities had very little sources of hope or representation, excluding faith. If these churches took on social and political causes, it was because the communities had come to see churches as a source of reform and improvement – spiritually, intellectually, politically, and materially. This does not mean the independent churches were more African than mission churches or more legitimate than traditional chiefs. It is only that these churches faced problems in postcolonial South Africa in a new way – through an independent
Christianity. Because of this, the government and missionaries feared them and sought to make them irrelevant, but faced with implacable communities, were forced to grant the churches concessions and legitimacy.

From Historiography to Terminology

Ideas of “community,” “Christian,” and the terms in which independent movements were differentiated had varied implications in the context of the early twentieth century and understanding the uses of these terms is crucial in this work. These terms each have multiple meanings and interpretations, and the ways in which these terms are used here are not meant to provide any singular definition. If anything, this study seeks to problemitize and expand the conception of terms like “community” and “Christianity” and their applications in scholarly research.

Community

A church, whether independent or mission, is understood to be fundamentally a community organization. The concept of community, and religious community in particular, has been much problematized in recent years. Benedict Anderson has discussed religious community as one of the precursors to nationalist thought. But Anderson’s characterization of religious communities takes their solidarity as manifest. The individual communities are subverted to the idea of a broadly accepted structure of

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faith and submission to the higher power, both God and the institutions governing in the
name of God. The smaller scale processes of acceptance or refutation of beliefs at a local
level is obscured by the presentation of the world religions as monolithic entities.24
However, Jonathon Glassman has shown conversion to the religion of the governing
power did not mean total acceptance of the offered (or imposed) ideology. Local Swahili
communities accepted facets of Islamic beliefs as displayed by the urban ruling class, but
communities made practices their own. The poorer communities wore Islamic dress,
employed Islamic ritual, and, in particular, embraced Sufism, which tended to be more
egalitarian and less dogmatic. Wealthy Swahili patricians viewed their society as
dichotomously split between those who followed orthodox Islam and barbaric non-belief,
but Glassman notes that non-elite adaptation of religion “made nonsense of the idea of an
absolute dichotomy ….”25 Despite the beliefs of those in power, diversification of
practices and innovations were inevitable. Despite the best efforts of those in power, the
dissemination of religion rarely resulted in monolithic or dichotomous societies but rather
in continually negotiated and contested ideas of faith and practice, which no person or
group could effectively own.

The word community evokes the association of people with shared interests
brought together by real social forces as well as ideological needs. Belinda Bozzoli
suggests that community formation is generally due to a combination of material and
ideological factors, forces ground in reality and in invention. Shared space, similar

24 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism,
25 For an example of how religious communities personalize religious practices, see Jonathan Glassman,
Feasts and Riots: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888
(Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995), 134-145.
economic statuses, and particularly common threats and opposition bonded people together in communities. Likewise, social actors utilizing shared cultural ideas and ideological symbols encouraged people to identify with one another, even across presumed boundaries like ethnicity or economic status, fostering identification as a community.  

Although Bozzoli tends to focus on ideological foundations as consciously deployed by social actors and intelligentsia, the ideological aspect of community foundation was most effective and most interesting when it was embraced and then adapted by the members of the community. It was this climate of contestation and negotiation, within a situation of shared belief and common identification, that ultimately bound communities.

The identifiable unit by which we understand community in this study is the church congregation. In mission church congregations, the members shared space on the reserve, and ideological belief in Christianity, and likely an interest in the economic advancement promised by Western missions. The shared religious faith joined people as surely as shared economic struggle, and simultaneously gave them an outlet for expression of their grievances. These communities gathered around a common message, a common faith, and a common interest. The churches were both an expression of the community’s faith and the vehicle for the pursuit of their needs. Challenges were processed through shared circumstance and a shared understanding of the world, and overcoming challenges and contestation further bonded the congregations. Mission church congregations broke apart when the collective trust was broken, the community

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26 Bozzoli, “Class Community and Ideology,” 25-34.
needs were not met, and/or the ideological distance became too great. Even when the congregations broke apart, however, they generally did not disband completely, but instead reformed in new ways, along lines that indicated members’ interests.

Zulu Christians vs. African Christians

This study focuses primarily on Zulu-speaking people in Natal and on the Rand, but the references to specifically Zulu groups are made problematic due to contemporary issues in South Africa. Mission churches also took pains to bring different ethnicities into their churches, making for churches and social networks that were not uniformly Zulu.27 Etherington notes that the early mission churches were most likely to find followers among the non-Zulu inhabitants of Natal, who were more vulnerable; other Natal mission stations, such as Edendale, were founded by groups from outside Natal who followed their missionary to his new residence.28

Similarly, independent churches could have a diverse membership. In Johannesburg and other cities, independent churches were not necessarily divided by ethnic background. While certain churches remained ethnic conclaves, other churches actively reached out to different ethnicities or were founded by recent arrivals to Zulu-speaking regions. Indeed, many churches referred to their churches as African churches,

27 The AZM sent missionaries, including African preachers, to further their cause in Rhodesia. In Johannesburg, the AZM ministered to the diverse residents at the mine compounds, occasionally conflating in their reports a congregant’s activism or willingness to donate to the church with the person’s ethnic background. PAR IRD 62 IRD557/1907; Annual Report Transvaal, 1918, by F.B. Bridgman. PAR A608 A/3/42.

rather than associate themselves with one ethnicity. Etherington finds that the “melting pot” character of early mission stations led the converts there to define themselves as “African Christians” rather than attach to a single ethnic identity, sowing seeds for the development of African nationalism.\textsuperscript{29} Thus it is difficult to refer to independent church members and leaders as Zulu only. Zulu-speaking congregations in Natal and on the Rand primarily formed the churches in this study. Most of these churches had their roots on the mission reserves in Natal. However, the term African is used to distinguish that many of these churches were multi-cultural entities.

\textit{Amakholwa}

The \textit{amakholwa} became to term commonly used to refer to a mission’s converts and their descendants who remained Christian. The most highly touted by the missionaries were dedicated and devout church members who were well educated and employed in some trade. The more troublesome were those on the margins of society: the less educated, less wealthy, and those perhaps not even official members of the church. As Mahoney has shown, the missionaries and Africans often had different ideas as to what made one Christian. “Adherents” who regularly attended church services but who were barred from full membership in mission churches and still considered non-

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid. When charged with choosing a name collectively identify African churches of the AZM in 1900, those in attendance argued for African Congregational Church rather than Zulu Congregational Church, due to the latter title being too limiting. Houle, “‘Today I am delivered,’” 354-355. Of course, as la Hausse has shown, interest in Zuluness and ethnic pride experienced a renaissance in early twentieth century Natal, inviting African Christians who had been distanced from their ethnic identity to re-discover and re-interpret the meaning and the importance of such identification.
Christians by missionaries due to their refusal to conform to mission rules were still considered Christian by many, if not most, Africans.\textsuperscript{30}

Ultimately, the development of independent churches in Natal and throughout South Africa led to a new definition of Christianity in South Africa, one that was not automatically associated with whiteness, Western culture, or Western values. Christianity became available to a more diverse population, driven by different interpretations of faith and different expressions of need. The independent churches were both a platform and a resource for confronting political, economic and cultural questions within African communities. But while the independent church movement was founded in response to pressures from outside and from within the communities, the movement needs to be understood as a creative movement rather than simply a reactionary movement against the missions or whites more broadly, as many missionaries and officials assumed. This is the story of a diverse group of people coming to terms with sweeping changes in a restrictive society by creating a new kind of community to challenge the establishment, to provide refuge and hope, and to form means of self-expression and self-determination.

\textsuperscript{30} Mahoney, 381-382.
2. Loss, Challenge, and Renewal: the Mission Reserves in the Nineteenth Century

The development of independent churches in Natal and on the Rand must be understood in relation to the changes experienced by Africans in the early twentieth century, but African society up to that period was far from static. The foundations for independent African Christianity were laid in the upheavals of the century before. During the early nineteenth century, the land between the Thukela and Mzimkhulu Rivers, which would shortly become the colony of Natal, was home to African societies experiencing transition economically, politically, socially, and culturally. A series of natural disasters and the advent of European trade in the region led to increasing economic disparity among different African chiefdoms. The collapse of the Ndwandwe and the Mthethwa kingdoms in the 1810s and the rise of the Zulu kingdom in the 1820s shook the region, creating numerous changes in the lives of Africans. The Zulu kingdom under Shaka and Dingane expanded and absorbed a number of smaller chiefdoms and created a new system of customs and tributes to regulate this new social order.31

Historical treatment of these events, particularly the rise of the Zulu kingdom and their relation to subsequent social and political events, is still somewhat controversial in South African historiography. The idea of the mfecane – in Wright’s words “a series of

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wars and migrations which swept over much of south-eastern Africa in the 1820’s [as a] result of the supposedly explosive expansion of the Zulu kingdom under Shaka” – was the widely accepted theory for the disruption and dispersion of African groups in early pre-colonial Natal. In the 1980’s, Julian Cobbing challenged that historiography by putting forth the theory that European traders and settlers were the force behind disruptive changes to the region. Cobbing argued that the incursions of slave traders and settlers in the areas all around Natal put pressures on all of the African kingdoms, including the Zulu kingdom, and the subsequent consolidation of the Zulu kingdom was a defensive reaction. Cobbing also claims that colonial historians used the mfecane theory as an “alibi” for white responsibility for regional disruption. Ultimately, Cobbing discredits all agency in African actions in the time period. While Cobbing’s ideas have been widely discredited by a number of scholars, the debate about the relation between the rise of the Zulu kingdom, the arrival of white traders, and other factors involved in the evolution of the Natal region in pre-colonial times remains lively.32

Signs of Things to Come: the Shepstone System, the Establishment of the Missions and African Impoverishment

The arrival of Afrikaner Voortrekkers, descendents of Dutch settlers pushed west by British colonization of the Cape, in 1836 and their subsequent clashes with the Zulu and Mpondo further destabilized the region and led to the annexation of Natal as a British

32 See Wright, “Political Transformations,” 163; Wright, “Beyond the Concept of the ‘Zulu Explosion’: Comments on the Current Debate,” in Mfecane Aftermath, 108-110; and the rest of the chapters included in Mfecane Aftermath.
colony in 1842.\textsuperscript{33} The British colonial government, were concerned with the question of African governance and order and thus quickly created a commission in 1846 to establish reserve locations for African residence. Not only would this limit Africans to certain undesirable and infertile lands, the colonial authorities also hoped it would lead to the development of an African peasantry along the European agricultural model.\textsuperscript{34}

This commission would have a lasting impact on the development of African rights in Natal for it not only established the mission reserves and Crown lands for African settlement, but it also established Theophilus Shepstone as a force in Natal’s government. As Secretary for Native Affairs, Shepstone shaped the colonial policy for Africans in Natal that became known as the “Shepstone system,” and which would last well beyond the life of the British colony of Natal. Shepstone’s advocacy of “customary native law” to effect indirect rule in Natal was particularly profound in its impact. Using Shepstone’s interpretation of African patriarchal control, “African chiefs… became virtual civil servants” managing day-to-day affairs of their homesteads, maintaining order with regard to youths and women, while the British magistrates managed most criminal cases. Where Shepstone found groups of people without a heredity chief, a population that included an estimated one-third to one-half of Africans in Natal, there would be a commoner appointed chief who would be loyal to the government.\textsuperscript{35} The powers of the

\textsuperscript{33} The Voortrekkers had established the short-lived Republic of Natalia but were never able to sustain stability, raising British concerns for the welfare of their colonies and provoking their intervention. Natal remained a district of the Cape Colony until 1856 when it was established as a separate British colony. Lambert, 7-8.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 10-11.

\textsuperscript{35} Benedict Carton, Blood from Your Children: The Colonial Origins of Generational
Natal chiefs were defined and limited by Shepstone’s dictates. Under Shepstone and afterward, the chiefs became a cog in the wheel of the government, their positions dependent on their deference to white officials.

The growing field of missionaries would benefit from the Shepstone’s desire to set up African reserves. Missionaries first arrived in Natal in 1835 under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Other missions, including the Wesleyan and United Free Church of Scotland missions, which had already begun mission work in the Cape area, soon followed the Americans to Natal. The various mission bodies were quick to involve themselves in government policy in Natal. Two American missionaries, Newton Adams and Daniel Lindley, served on the Commission that set up the first African locations in 1847. Mission bodies were granted Mission Reserves in order to minister to the small population of African Christians, or amakholwa, as well as to convert and work among the Africans living on the assigned mission land. The AZM was granted twelve reserve sites, correlating to most of their established stations. Each reserve had a 500-acre glebe, with additional reserve land allocated; the smallest reserves, at Esidumbini and Itafamasi, contained 5,500 acres and the largest, at Umtwalume, was 12,922 acres. In order to preserve Shepstonian policy on the reserves, in 1864 the designated land came under the guardianship of the Natal

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36 The Commission also included Theophilus Shepstone, the eventual Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA) of Natal; Dr. W. Stanger, the Surveyor General of Natal; and Lieutenant Charles J. Gibbs of the Royal Engineers. Christofersen, 74; Welsh, 12-14.

37 The ABCFM’s Southern African mission became known as the American Zulu Mission in South Africa.

38 The original twelve mission stations were Umtwalume, Imfume, Table Mountain, Mapumulo, Ifafa, Amanzimtoti, Umsuduze, Esidumbini, Amahlongwa, Inanda, Itafamasi, and Umvoti. Christofersen, 78.
Native Trust, a land trust which would keep African lands from being taken by white colonists, but, illustrative of Shepstonian interests, kept the land vested in “tribal titles,” rather than assigned to individuals.39

The twelve mission reserves ceded by the Natal colonial government to the AZM in the 1850’s were a social experiment in the creation of a community of believers who would not only pray together but also live and work together. In the first years, the amakholwa on the stations lived in relatively isolated communities, dependent upon each other and the missionaries for survival. Through the mission reserves, the missionaries and the government intended to provide lessons in the value of hard work, private property, and the benefits of Western civilization. Some Africans undertook the cash crop schemes in sugar and grain following the Western agricultural model, which were developed by the missionaries with varying success. Sugar mills were maintained at a number of stations. Missionaries further employed converts in domestic work, as teachers, and as un-ordained preachers.40 Success was measured by the missionaries in the way Africans adopted Western ideals and practices, and, of course, whether or not Africans adopted Christianity. Unconverted Africans remained on the reserve land, but because of mutual suspicion and objections, the two communities rarely interacted.

On some reserves, freehold titles to land were made available to amakholwa, though this practice was limited and short-lived. Following increasing conflicts with converts who held land reverted to polygyny or otherwise became problems for the

39 Welsh, 39-40.
mission, the AZM missionaries resolved in 1868 that lands should be leased rather than granted freehold to African. “Backsliders” who had acquired freehold titles could not be forced out but instead retained the land, and a foothold in the community, regardless.  

Meanwhile, land outside of the reserves was hard to obtain for Africans, and even those who were able to broker deals often had to forfeit land when they were unable to make payments. The question of granting Africans individual titles on the reserves had been raised but refused with the establishment of the Natal Native Trust.  

By the end of the nineteenth century, the reserves were, as Shepstone and the land commission had designed them, frequently the only choice Africans had for available land. As the number of Christian converts increased, and as Africans were forced onto mission lands, the overcrowding on the reserves led to more frequent interaction between the amakholwa and ‘traditionalist” Africans.

In rare cases, Africans were able to purchase land outside the reserves. Such purchases tended to take the form of land syndicates, with large groups coming together to purchase land that they could break down into individual lots. The amakholwa community at Edendale was one such example. Edendale was started as a mission station led by James Allison, a missionary who had fallen out with the Wesleyan Missionary Society. In 1851, Allison and 99 of his followers bought shares in a 6,123-acre farm near Pietermaritzburg. The village was divided into one-acre plots with fields allocated for farming. The residents of Edendale removed Allison from the village in 1861, and though

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41 Welsh, 251.
42 Ibid., 39-40.
43 Lambert, 82-85. By forcing Africans onto the reserves under chiefs, the Natal government consolidated its control over the people.
they invited the Wesleyan Missionary Society to send a minister who would provide
guidance, the community managed their own affairs. Few groups were able to muster
the shared interest or the financial ability to make such a purchase, however, and
Edendale was certainly made possible by the fact that the congregation already had a
strong community bond.

Additional pressure was placed on Africans with the imposition of a number of
taxes and other indirect fees designed to raise revenue for the colony and possibly to
force Africans to resort to wage and farm labor to fulfill the needs of white employers
and settlers. Indeed, Africans in Natal bore the brunt of taxation, including the hut tax, a
dog tax, marriage fees, and higher taxes on imports most frequently used by Africans.
A series of natural disasters in the last decade of the nineteenth century made paying the
taxes even more difficult for Natal’s Africans. Locusts and droughts ruined crops while a
rinderpest epizootic devastated the region’s cattle, decimating the wealth of many Natal
homesteads. The rinderpest had far-reaching consequences for Zulu traditionalists and the
khulwa communities psychologically and spiritually. On traditional homesteads, the loss
of cattle meant that many patriarchs could no longer pay lobola, the bridewealth payment
that traditionally accompanied betrothal and marriage, causing marriage rates to decline,
and leading to girls with dimming marriage prospects opting not to wait to have sexual
intercourse until marriage. As one Zulu traditionalist related, "[S]ince rinderpest broke

44 Sheila Meintjes, “Family and gender in the Christian community at Edendale, Natal, in colonial times,”
in Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945, Cherryl Walker, ed. (London: James Currey, 1990),
127-130. Africans were locked out of the possibility to purchase land outside of the reserves with the Land
Act of 1913. See Chapter 3 below for a further analysis.
45 The hut tax began at 7s in 1849 and was raised to 14s. in 1875. The dog tax, started in 1875, was 5s.
Ibid., 19-20.
out nearly three years ago, it has become quite common thing for girls...to have become
with child.”46 This behavior was also found in mission communities, causing mothers to
band together in prayer groups, also called manyanos, to contend with their daughters’
premarital sexual rebellions.47 As both traditional and amakholwa communities found
their livelihood destroyed, there was an increase in alcoholism, theft, and fights between
youths, and both traditionalist elders and missionaries struggled to contain the
problems.48

Materially speaking, the rinderpest profoundly disrupted Zulu life. Cattle milk
was a primary source of nourishment for infants, and the decrease in milk supply led to
the increase in infant mortality. Secondly, lobola, when a patriarch could afford it, was
increasingly exchanged in the form of money rather than cattle. While cattle were a long-
term investment and means of support for a Zulu homestead – a source of food, fertilizer,
work (assistance in plowing), and exchange – cash was more likely to be spent, leading to
an increase in economic instability and poverty in rural areas.49 As Africans needed to
raise money to pay their taxes and other fees, wage labor in the cities became a more
popular option for young men and women. Thus while rural society met with continued
crisis, new industrial centers at Johannesburg and on the Rand beckoned to Africans in

46 Cited in Carton, “The Forgotten Compass of Death: Apocalypse Then and Now in the Social History of
South Africa,” Journal of Social History: vol. 37 no. 1 2003, 203.
47 Gaitskell, “Wailing for Purity.” These women’s groups will be discussed further below. The 1913 staging
of the play Joseph in Egypt at the Catholic Mariannhill Mission, near Pinetown in Natal, was another
attempt to spiritually address the fallout of the rinderpest epizootic. Trials had to be overcome and the
people would be tested, but ultimately Christianity would lift the people beyond those trials. At the end of
the play, the non-Christian king’s diviner notes, “Our Gods failed us. It was the God of Israel who saved
our land.” Bhekizizwe Peterson, Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals: African Theatre and
48 Carton, Blood from Your Children, 60-62.
49 Nicholas Cope, To Bind the Nation: Solomon kaDinuzulu and Zulu Nationalism 1913-1933
search of wages. The establishment of Johannesburg and its mine compounds irrevocably altered African life. Some men and women disappeared into the cities, but others retained the links between the homestead and their new urban communities, forming the pathways by which ideas and actions would connect Africans in urban and rural areas in the twentieth century.

Government Policy and African Political and Social Structures

Government policy toward Africans took a decisive turn in late nineteenth century Natal. The Secretary of Native Affairs for Natal, Sir Theophilus Shepstone (served 1856-1876), was acutely concerned with the use of traditional African authority and hierarchies to govern Natal’s African population. As Carolyn Hamilton has shown, Shepstone was particularly interested in the consolidation of Zulu authority in the person of Shaka and subsequent Zulu kings and sought ways in which he himself could harness that authority. As noted above, Shepstone and his successors developed a system by which British law governed the white populace of Natal while “customary law” governed the Africans. This customary law, compiled and codified by the British government, relied upon traditional hierarchies, specifically the chief-client relationship, to govern Africans. However, white magistrates and government officials were placed at the top of the hierarchy, giving the representatives of the British government the ultimate authority.

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50 Although Shepstone started serving as Secretary of Native Affairs (SNA) in 1856, Shepstone had held much influence over British policy in Natal from the time he was appointed Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes in 1846. For more in depth of Shepstonian policy and its consequences, see Welsh, especially Chapter 11.

In addition to misinterpretations and mistranslations, the British also altered African customs to correspond to Victorian morality.\textsuperscript{52} The codification of customary law after 1875 thus confined Africans to European interpretations and definitions of African custom.\textsuperscript{53} Although Shepstone’s efforts were nominally to preserve African hierarchies and traditions, chiefly power and traditional authority was undermined and diminished by the end of the nineteenth century, usurped by government magistrates and Shepstone’s Native Affairs Department. The power of chiefs to try cases was repeatedly eroded, so that by 1896, the decisions of the chief, even in civil cases, were subject to approval by the local magistrate.\textsuperscript{54}

There were a few deviations from the “Native Code” offered to Africans in special cases. Christian Africans on reserves were given the right to elect their own Christian station chiefs (subject to the approval of the missionaries and the government), since by conversion they had disassociated themselves from the traditional hereditary chief. This practice placed competing structures of authority on the same reserve.\textsuperscript{55} And many educated Africans, most often those who were Christian, sought to elude chiefly authority altogether by obtaining exemption from customary law. Common reasons for applications of exemption included adherence to Christianity, a desire to better one’s situation, and the desire to be under British law, for many Africans presumed that being

\textsuperscript{52} Welsh, 5-6.
\textsuperscript{53} Codification was begun with the passage of the Native Administration Law of 1875. The Code was rewritten in 1891. One of the functions of the Code was the designation of women as permanent minors, subject to the authority of men, whether father, chief, or missionary. Ibid., 164-166.
\textsuperscript{54} Lambert, 124-125.
\textsuperscript{55} The Christian chiefs were originally given the status of indunas (advisors) subject to other chiefs; the Code of 1891 gave them the authority of chiefs. Africans coming onto the reserve could choose to be under a traditional chief or the Christian chief. Welsh, 281-282. Including the missionaries, Africans on the reserves did not lack for potential authority.
under British law would allow them greater opportunities and fewer restrictions. In fact, the same restrictions were just reframed and broadened to include exempted Africans.

**Migrant Labor and the Lure of the Cities**

The end of the nineteenth century saw an explosion of urban development and the advent of new possibilities and difficulties for Africans. Durban, southern Africa’s second major port city after Cape Town, was from its establishment a popular destination for Natal’s Africans seeking wage labor. But with the discovery of major deposits of gold on the Witwatersrand in the 1880s, Johannesburg and the industrial centers of the Rand more broadly became a major destination for Africans. Young, unmarried men were the first and most frequent migrants to the city, and the cities became a primarily masculine, though transitory, realm. Most men could be expected to migrate at least once in their lives. As Walker has noted, men returned home to rural areas after a period of service in response to demands of elders who wished to retain control over the young men as well as their wages. But, at the end of the nineteenth century, as the deteriorating situation on the reserves forced Africans to seek money and space elsewhere, men and women traveled to the cities for work, sometimes staying there permanently. Employment was available in the mines but also in households as domestic servants, as hands for

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56 The first exemption was granted in 1876, and more gradually followed. Ibid., 236-237. For example, see also on Gardiner Mvuyana’s exemption application in chapter 4 below.

57 Walker notes that while African society could cope with the short-term absence of young men, due to the decline in importance of hunting and military service and the fact that their periodic return prevented disruption of the reproduction of society, fathers and chiefs were vehemently opposed to the migration of female laborers, who were particularly necessary to agricultural homestead production. Cherryl Walker, “Gender and the Development of the Migrant Labour System c. 1850-1930: An Overview,” in Walker, 173, 176, 179.
construction or manual labor, and as washermen. There were a limited number of
positions as clerks for the mission educated men. And women were drawn to the city by
domestic work in white households, but also found work running canteens or as
prostitutes.  

Those who traveled to and from the cities returned to Natal changed people and
members of rural communities were quick to identify the changes. Different communities
developed new terms to identify those who had been to the mines and the cities, further
setting them apart from their contemporaries who had stayed at home. Family
relationships and social structures in rural communities were strained by the pull of labor
to the cities, putting the family into a “state of crisis,” according to Walker. Rates of
adultery, divorce, desertion, and illegitimate children were on the rise, along with a
marked feeling of resignation by the older generation.  

The transfer of labor from rural areas to urban areas created links between the
rural and urban communities, but it also lured a large number into the cities permanently.
Men and women, sons and daughters, would disappear into the cities; mothers, fathers,
wives, and other dependents inquired at magistrates’ offices or with their ministers as to
the whereabouts of those they lost to the cities. Occasionally the missing person would be
located, but more frequently, the inquiries reached a dead end. For example, one
migrant’s wife contacted the Mapumulo Magistrate seeking to locate her husband, who

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58 For discussions of employment possibilities and labor issues in the cities, see Charles Van Onselen,
York: Longman Inc., 1982); and Keletso E. Atkins, The Moon is Dead! Give Us Our Money! The Cultural
On women’s labor in the city, see Deborah Gaitskell, “Housewives, Maids or Mothers,” 241-256.
60 Walker, 192; See also Deborah Gaitskell, “Wailing for Purity,” 342.
she believed to be working near Pretoria, to force him to return home. The Magistrate was able to discover that the man had subsequently gone into the Orange Free State, but nothing further could be found about him.  

Another woman had the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) looking for her son who had gone to Durban for three years and disappeared. She informed the office that she was a widow and the missing man was her only means of support. The CID responded there was little they could do without any more information. In these cases, the wages that the rural family members depended upon dried up, and the dependents were faced with trying to make ends meet any way they could.

**Social Regulation and Politics on the Reserves**

Mission churches also sought to create new social and political structures and for Africans. The AZM founded their missions on Congregationalist principles, which stressed the rights of individual churches to determine the regulations and decisions of each church, but the missionaries made modifications for the African setting. Rather than have the members of the congregations vote on decisions, the early missionaries themselves determined the rules for the churches they operated. The reserves had been set up so that missionaries had power comparable to feudal lords. They allocated land,

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62 PAR CNC 358 1550/1919.
63 Thus certain missionaries and churches were more liberal in their allowances of African practices than others. The Reverend Daniel Lindley, a man who reportedly “liked some beer with his meals,” did not oppose many of the African practices, despite the more stringent line of his AZM colleagues. Ibid., 46; 67 n. 1 (ed.).
settled disputes, and provided employment and education. Ultimately, the missionaries sought to mediate the relationship between the *amakholwa* and God, acting as the final arbiters of what was Christian or un-Christian. Missionaries used terms of ownership to describe their church members and jealously guarded them against competing missions, as well as “Ethiopian” influences, both types of competition having grown rapidly over the course of the nineteenth century. Although, as will be discussed below, there were competing voices of authority and challenge, and church members were given some decision-making powers regarding their own congregations, ultimately control over the mission community was invested in the missionaries and rarely and cautiously delegated to Africans. Their authority was tested as the missions expanded beyond the mission reserves. As the missionaries sought to gain new converts, mission churches were challenged by their unconverted neighbors.

From the mid-nineteenth century, further deviations from traditional Congregational practice evolved as missionaries came together to establish the first of what would come to be known as the Umsunduze Rules, rules to which all the churches of the AZM would be duty-bound. These regulations banned polygamy, extramarital affairs, the payment of *lobola*, smoking marijuana, and drinking intoxicants, and

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64 Dinnerstein, 238.
65 For example, a letter from the Reverend F. Coillard of the Barotsi Land Mission to the First General Missionary Conference claimed, “Our field of labour has been lately invaded by the Ethiopians…. Our schools are seriously threatened, our Christians partly won over and disturbed….” *Report of the Proceedings of the First General Missionary Conference, held at Johannesburg, July 13-20, 1904* (Johannesburg: Argus Printing and Pub Co., 1905), 14-15.
66 Meintjes, 126.
67 The Umsunduze Rules were compiled in 1879. The ABCFM Home Office was less enthusiastic about the strict regulation of African Christians. A letter from the Home Secretary reminded the AZM missionaries “The proper work of missionaries… is to introduce divine life, not the forms it shall assume…. A morality enforced upon unwilling minds is of little value….“ Christofersen, 57-66.
prohibited members of the church from even attending a beer drink. Richard Sales, editor of AZM missionary Christofersen’s history of the AZM, noted that an increasingly strict and inflexible corps of missionaries developed the rules. From the 1870s and 80s there was large rise in the number of excommunications and a decrease in ordinations by the AZM. One missionary arrived during that period and excommunicated an entire church, receiving them back as they adjusted to his requirements. As the missionary Lindley lamented, “We have in our mission good men, and to me beloved brethren, who are radical purists, whose minds are not satisfied by anything short of perfection. The fault may be mine, but I cannot always see as they see….”

As Meintjes has noted, however, the actual control of the missionaries, as opposed to the control they held theoretically, should not be overstated. From the very beginning, African adaptation of Victorian values was a complex process that involved dialogue and synthesis of African and Victorian values. Even where Africans accepted missionary authority and adopted many of the trappings of Western “civilization” as encouraged by missionaries, there continued a conversation of negotiation. When this dialogue broke down, or failed to adequately address the needs and concerns of the mission communities, there was room created for the development of independent churches. The kholwa communities living on the mission reserves agreed to the Umsunduze Rules, at least in spirit. But, as these rules carried no punishment except removal of full membership from the church, the unconverted residents of the mission

68 “Umsunduze Rules” included in PAR SNA 1/1/372 1932/1907.
69 Ibid., 67 n. 1 (ed.); 61 (emphasis in original).
70 Meintjes, 126.
reserves were able to continue such practices. As noted earlier and as will be discussed further in the next chapter, the traditions prohibited by the Umsunduze Rules were important in Zulu tradition and in the Zulu economy. Cattle were the symbol of ties between families and between patrons and clients. As the most frequent cause for the exchange of cattle, lobola served as a primary way to exchange and gain wealth, and polygamy offered the opportunity for greater accumulation of wealth and homestead productivity.71 Beer drinking was not simply done to achieve drunkenness, but also had ritual significance in Zulu ceremonies. As Berglund reported, beer was known as “the food of men.”72 Furthermore, beer brewing was a traditional and important occupation for women, and one of the few ways women could earn money in the cities.73 Because these practices were crucial to Zulu social and economic interactions, adherence to the rules would remain a source of conflict and controversy on the reserves.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, conflict on the mission reserves arose out of the demand by the educated kholwa for leadership roles within the church, particularly as ordained ministers. Despite the stated intent of the American Board to establish independent churches, the racially discriminatory and repressive politics of colonial Natal in the nineteenth century and the missionaries’ compliance with that structure and assimilation of the rhetoric made full realization of an independent African church in South Africa unimaginable to the AZM missionaries at that time. Missionaries reluctant to relinquish religious authority thus undermined both individuals and

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71 Cope, 26-30; See also Jeff Guy, “The Destruction and Reconstruction of Zulu Society,” in Marks and Rathbone, 170-171.
73 Gaitskell, “Housewives, Maids or Mothers,” 252.
communities confident and strong enough to challenge mission authority and demand 
African leadership in the churches.

More authority was delegated to congregations in the 1880’s with the 
establishment of the Isitupa. This committee was established by the AZM to serve as the 
executive body for each church. Each committee was populated by two representatives of 
the church, of the youth, and of the mission. Two of the representatives were elected each 
year for a three-year term, allowing for staggered terms.74 Furthermore, the AZM began 
ordaining African ministers in 1870, but the number of ordained Africans remained small 
during this period. During the nineteenth century, the AZM only ordained nine men in 
Natal, the majority of these ordained from 1870 to 1872.75 These men were assigned their 
own churches to supervise, though they themselves were under the watchful eyes of he 
missionaries. Additionally, the ordained ministers could be granted the right to serve as 
Marriage Officers and preside over Christian marriages in the church, after an approved 
application to the government. Other African leadership in the churches was mostly filled 
through roles as teachers and lay preachers, though this latter role grew in prominence as 
a new style of worship swept through the reserves.

At the very end of the nineteenth century, a series of religious revivals recharged 
the faith of the amakholwa and opened new doors for African leadership in AZM 
churches. As Houle has noted, early mission Christian faith had founded on the ideal of a 
farming village built around a church, rooted in the morality of industry, shared labor,

74 Christofersen, 47-50. 
75 Ibid., 60.
and shared faith. The mission was invested building the mission community economically through farming and economic ventures while preserving elements of Zulu culture through Zulu language projects, ultimately translating Christianity into Zulu language and Zulu understanding. However, as the next wave of more zealous AZM missionaries arrived in Natal, the focus of the mission’s work shifted and, rather than encouraging faith through Zulu understanding and acceptance of Christianity, their efforts became focused primarily on purity and orthodoxy. The actual faith in AZM Christianity seemed to be comprised of Africans commitments to the AZM rules rather than a spiritual awakening and dedication.

A revolution of faith for the Africans of the AZM missions arrived in the form of an American Pentecostal preacher. The religious revivals inspired by visiting American Holiness preacher William Weavers reinvigorated the Christianity of the mission at the end of the nineteenth century, but the revivals also expanded the roles of the Africans in interpreting and preaching Christianity, encouraging those not ordained to commune directly with God and the Holy Spirit and interpret for themselves the feelings of their faith. Revival also created a more personal relationship between God and the kholwa community and provided new, more appealing ways to profess and demonstrate their faith, diminishing the power of the missionaries to speak for God on the reserves.

77 Sanneh, 110-111.
78 Houle, “The American Mission Revivals,” 224. See also Christofersen, 67 n. 1 (ed.).
79 It has been argued that revival Christianity, and in particular the active role of the Holy Spirit in revival, was more readily accessible and relatable for the Zulu. The acts of seeking out wrongdoers and the act of confession have precedent in Zulu tradition. Diviners would identify evildoers or witches in a trance-like
Particularly after the revivals of 1896-97, Zulu Christians were experiencing and relating Christianity on a very personal level. As the American Board Mission related it, “Entirely selfmoved, or, rather, moved by the Spirit of God, the people, young and old, were bowed down under the burden of their sins. Their convictions were of remarkable depth, and confessions and reformations followed.”  

It was not uncommon for a member of a church to spontaneously confess a variety of sins in the middle of church service. Houle cites the story of a former Christian, “‘known to be a polygamist, thief, liar and seller of love-charms’ and who had been put into prison for fighting, stood up and confessed all, then accepted his sanctification with the promise to give up all his old ways.” During the revivals, congregants would line up to unbind their consciences, bringing with them the objects of their sin and temptation to lay at the church altar, including snuff boxes, beer pots, traditional medicines, and various stolen items. One man at Umvoti confessed to murder, while others confessed to theft and other crimes. At a meeting with young female students at Inanda, the students began crying as Weavers preached to them. When he was finished, the girls’ teachers attempted to break up the meeting, but the girls

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state, not unlike the ecstasy of Christian revival. Confession or speaking out was also a part of traditional Zulu festivities. See Lowe “Ethiopian Fervor: Revivalism and Independent Church Movements in Zulu-speaking Natal, 1890-1910,” unpublished paper; Berglund, 322-327; and chapter 5 below.


81 Houle, “‘Today I am delivered,’” 342.

82 Ibid., 245. The act of confession had a long tradition in Zulu culture. Confessions maintained community harmony, acting as a safety valve for grievances and grudges. In traditional Zulu practice, a person’s sickness might have been caused by the anger of the shades, requiring confession. “He must speak, clarifying everything. If he leaves outs something, then there will be no restoration of health. Everything must be mentioned. Then they become peaceful again.” Berglund, 312-313, 315.
refused to leave and instead stayed to confess their sins, each in turn, continuing the meeting into the night.83

Although missionaries were suspect of the sensationalism of revival and confession, the unburdening and purifying of the spirit through the confession of sins and secrets appealed mightily to the AZM congregations. The AZM Reverend Wilcox noted that “[o]ld standing quarrels and feuds between church members were wiped out and a new spirit of brotherly love evident.”84 Ultimately, as Houle has noted, the revivals sparked by Weavers in 1896-7 were necessary to the construction of a Christianity that was Zulu.85 During the Holiness revivals and the years afterwards, a number of African ministers were ordained by the AZM. From 1896 to 1901, six new ministers were ordained. Another six ministers were ordained from 1904 to 1912, including two of Weavers’ interpreters Mbiya Kuzwayo and Gardiner Mvuyana, which certainly reflected the lasting spirit of the revival.86 But, if the revivals strengthened the faith of the Christians on the mission reserves, they also laid the groundwork for further debate and conflict between the missionaries and the kholwa community, instilling in the faith of the African congregants confidence in their own interpretations.

83 Houle, “‘Today I am delivered,’” 249-250.
84 Christofersen, 126.
85 Houle, “‘Today I am delivered,’” 4, 7.
86 The men ordained during this period were Mabuda Cele (1896), Sunguzwa Nyuswa (1896), Mjwili Gumede (1898), Joseph Gobhozi (1901), Cetwayo Goba (1901), William Makanya (1901), I. Seme (1904), Joel T. Bhulose (1907), Gardiner Mvuyana (1908), Mbiya Kuzwayo (1912), Zephaniah Ndaweni (1912), and Daniel Zama (1912). Christofersen, 47-50, 60, 91-94; Houle, “‘Today I am delivered,’” 342-343.
3. The Imagined Community and its Disharmonious Reality: the Early Twentieth Century in the Mission Churches

The twentieth century began during a period of struggle and frustration for the amakholwa of the Zulu missions in Natal and on the Rand. The opportunities for economic improvement were increasingly limited and then denied outright as the government passed legislation to prohibit land sales and control migration. As Africans were funneled to the cities to work in mines and on docks, mission communities were splintered and then reorganized in new places to meet the needs of community members. As these communities formed in response to and in order to face such challenges, in some cases using the church or other social or spiritual outlet as their anchor, their populations sought creative ways to contend with their problems, even challenging the very structures that brought the communities together in the first place.

Questions of land, urbanization, authority, and gender roles put new pressures on the mission communities in the early twentieth century. Although these communities had been tested before, these new pressures were exacerbated by the closing space between the missions and the rest of the world. By the turn of the twentieth century, it was no longer simply the Americans working in Natal, but also the English, Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, and many others. They came from all denominations with different ideas, different goals, and different levels of organization. The missionaries were no longer
solely white missionaries anymore, either. African Americans came from the United Stated and the Caribbean, and not only as missionaries but also to speak about political rights and political action, promoting a sort of nascent pan-Africanism. The landscape of twentieth century Natal was crowded with new ideas and interpretations that imposed upon African residents but also offered new possibilities.

In rural areas, these groups competed for dwindling land and followers via bureaucratic appeals and angling in magistrates’ offices, but in urban areas they butted heads outright. As the cities grew, they culled from the human and economic resources of the rural areas, crowding the African compounds and locations with a variety of people who held a variety of interests. The same issues that shook rural communities – questions of land, labor, and cultural traditions – led to the organization of political parties, labor and trade unions, social clubs, and educational organizations. But this environment also led to fracture, as the multitudes of interests aligned and broke apart. And with the aid of migrant workers, ministers and community organizers, these ideas and issues were transported back and forth through Natal and the rest of South Africa.

As Meintjes has noted with regard to the Natal *amakholwa* outpost Edendale, “the unity of the community began to break down as economic depression, migration and the influx of new inhabitants altered the composition” of the community.\(^{88}\) The American mission reserves experienced similar problems. Authority of elders eroded, and previously prohibited behaviors and behaviors associated with “heathenism” – beer drinking, the exchange of *lobola*, polygyny, and faith in traditional divination, to name a few – continued to exist widespread on the reserves, even among people who claimed to be Christian.\(^{89}\) The communities themselves were changing from the communities that were originally settled on the reserves, paving the way for a debate over what should define the church communities and who should lead them.

**The Question of Land**

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the missionaries of the AZM and the *kholwa* communities on the reserves were frequently on the front lines of conflicts that resonated throughout Natal. Chief among these debates was the continued struggle over rights to land. The question of land and the right of occupation was a particularly bitter matter for missionaries and residents of the mission reserves as the reserves became crowded with non-Christian Africans who had no other place to go. The Natal government and its legislature, which advanced the interests of the white commercial farmers, continued to support the AZM mission, but the government applied increasing

\(^{88}\) Meintjes, 131.

\(^{89}\) See for example the AZM Annual Report, 1919 and the AZM Annual Report, 1920. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/47.
pressure on the reserves as it sought to achieve its own ends and as white settlers insisted that the government supply their growing demands for land.

For example, the Mission Reserves Act of 1903 reaffirmed the exclusive rights of the missionary bodies holding deeds to provide religious and educational work on their allotted reserves; subsequent regulations asserted that African residents of the reserves could be removed if they challenged the interests of the reserve, while the possible reasons for removal were indicative of missionary complaints, including “notorious” immorality, “willful and continued insubordination,” conviction of a felony, or working as a witch doctor or diviner. However, the power to eject such persons was placed in the hands of the Natal Native Trust upon the recommendation of the local Magistrate, leaving the missionaries and kholwa dependent on the government for regulating the population of the reserves.90 The Act also instituted rents on the reserves – half going toward the missionary bodies granted the reserve and the other half going to the maintenance of the Natal Native Trust, which administered the reserves. It also removed the ability of missions to sell reserve land to Africans, placing control of the reserve land under the power of the Natal Native Trust. But while it barred any religious or educational work not supported by the grantee mission body, the Act did not bar non-Christians from living on the reserves.

As a result of the 1906 Poll Tax Rebellion or “Bhambatha Rebellion,” the Natal government did take an interest in the demographics of the mission reserves. The rebellion grew out of the 1905 tax passed by the Natal legislature on all unmarried men.

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Many young African men resisted payment of the tax and openly defied both patriarchal and government demands with increasing aggression. Random acts of violent resistance broke out in early 1906, and by spring the rebellion was organized under Chief Bhambatha of the Zondi, but the government troops crushed the rebellion in June of the same year, killing Bhambatha and up to 600 others in a large coordinated attack at Nkandla forest, though sporadic violence would continue through 1908. Ultimately, the costs for Africans were very high both in terms of loss of life and in terms of economic and social stability, for a large number of young men were killed or jailed as a result of the rebellion.

The rebellion shocked white officials and raised fears about the politicization of Africans in opposition to Europeans. The kholwa, due to their education and self-sufficient communities, appeared particularly threatening to the Natal government. Due to rampant white fears of “Ethiopianism,” understood contemporarily as the politicization of Christianity deployed to rally Africans against white authority, the roles of amakholwa

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91 As Carton notes, the poll tax of 1905 was unlike previous taxes on Africans in Natal for it taxed young men directly. Previously, it was generally the young men who raised money for the homestead through labor, but the act of paying the tax was seen as a patriarchal duty for the head of the homestead. Young men needed to contribute money directly to help the homestead patriarch pay the tax. It was feared by African leaders that the poll tax would “emancipate all the young men from parental control” thereby undermining patriarchal authority. Carton, *Blood from Your Children*, 91-92.

92 In February 1906 young African men clashed with police and government troops near Pietermaritzburg, leaving a policeman and a trooper dead, leading to the declaration of martial law in Natal. The crowd of fifty young men carried spears and called to the police, “You have come for our money; you can shoot us; we refuse to pay… you’re afraid.” Ibid., 99.

93 Ibid., 102-118. For a more complete analysis of the Bhambatha Rebellion, see Marks, *Reluctant Rebellion*, and Carton, *Blood From Your Children*.

94 All together, between three and four thousand African rebels were killed and between six and eight thousand wounded. Nearly 7,700 young men were jailed for participation in the rebellion and most would be sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labor. In contrast, only two dozen government soldiers were killed and only three dozen suffered serious wounds. Only six white civilians were killed. Carton, *Blood from Your Children*, 123-124.

95 Marks, 76-79; Houle, “‘Today I am delivered,’” 376-379.
in the rebellion were likely exaggerated or overemphasized. But even when African Christians were involved, officials generally misunderstood their backgrounds. As Shula Marks has noted, while many rebellion leaders brought African pastors along during the unrest, many of these ministers and their constituents were members or founders of independent churches rather than mission churches. Moses Mbele, one of the most prominent preachers in the rebellion, was a minister who split from the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1890’s. He was ordained by Mzimba of the African Presbyterian Church and then founded his own church. When Moses was killed during the course of the rebellion, Solomon Malevu, an independent preacher who was also friends with John Dube, took his place. Whites less often noted the fact that diviners also attended to the leaders.96

What is clear from kholwa participation, or non-participation, in the rebellion and its repression, as Marks has shown, is that shared space and shared grievances were bringing “traditionalist” Africans and the amakholwa together. As la Hausse noted, “the rebellion… served to deepen kholwa awareness of their fragility of their status in colonial society.”97 Even though many kholwa refused to join the rebels, neither did most join the government’s forces against the rebellion, and many expressed sympathy, if also regret, with regard to the rebels’ actions. Grievances over lack of land, high taxes, the forced

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96 Malevu was a friend and neighbor of South African nationalist leader and African National Congress founder John Dube. Marks, 328-329; Letter from John Dube to CNC, 21 February, 1924. PAR CNC 96 2155/1912/29. As noted above, Mahoney has noted that the role of African Christians was likely larger than missionaries would have acknowledged as missionaries and Africans often had different conceptions of what made one a Christian. See Introduction of this work; Mahoney, 381-382, 389-390.

97 La Hausse, Restless Identities, 13.
labor system, and the Pass Laws had given Africans common ground despite developing religious and cultural differences.98

As a result of the rebellion, a Native Affairs Commission was appointed to look into African complaints. The question of individual land tenure was raised and widely supported by Africans. In 1908, the Native Affairs Department sent AZM missionary Frederick B. Bridgman and kholwa Africans Martin Luthuli and P.J. Gumede to examine the Glen Grey land scheme in the Transkei as a possible model for Africans in Natal. The plan fell though, however, and apart from the rare granting of titles on mission lands or the few successful African land syndicates,99 Africans largely remained without access to property.

The 1910 Act of Union further darkened kholwa hopes of economic and social advancement. Following the establishment of the Union, government policies in Natal moved determinedly towards segregation, using the foundation set by the Shepstonian system, while liberal government officials and academics attempted to sell the idea to Africans as beneficial to their situations. The realignment of the government enabled the reexamination of policies towards Africans in search of a solution to the “native problem.” Growing interest in eugenics, as well as fears of African advancement and the

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98 Marks, Reluctant Rebellion, 334-336.
99 Africans had been able to purchase land in several areas around Natal up to 1913. The Christian community at Edendale (noted in Chapter 2 above) was one example. In another example, beginning in 1905, Africans in Vryheid in Zululand formed a land syndicate to buy a 385-acre farm creating Vryheid East Township. Cope, 24-25; La Hausse, Restless Identities, 188-189.
decline of “poor whites,” made segregation an attractive option to many white South Africans, not least academics and government representatives.\textsuperscript{100}

The 1913 Native Land Act further increased the stresses on a community with little land. The Act limited the rights of Africans to live anywhere but “scheduled areas,” including the mission reserves. The Act also prohibited Africans from buying land from non-Africans, further restricting the ability of Africans to obtain land of their own. For the amakholwa, who had been taught to value private property despite rarely having the opportunity to obtain land,\textsuperscript{101} the door was being slammed shut on their hopes of land purchase and economic advancement. As Nicholas Cope has shown, land purchase was being refused to Africans at a time when an increasing number of Africans were becoming able to afford land, creating tension within the kholwa community and causing the amakholwa to look beyond mission authority and the government for representation. A case in point was the growth of support for Solomon kaDinuzulu, the son of the Zulu king deposed after the Bhambatha Rebellion. Solomon was able to garner widespread support from both “traditionalist” and Christian Africans in Zululand and Natal. His supporters included John Dube, former AZM minister and founder of the South African Native Congress as well as Gardiner Mvuyana of the ACC.\textsuperscript{102}

Non-believers, lacking alternatives, continued to flock to the mission reserves, while those who already lived on the mission reserves became further entrenched. As

\textsuperscript{100} Saul Dubow, \textit{Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 128-141.

\textsuperscript{101} A number of reserves did allow Africans to obtain individual land plots. By 1902, missionaries had granted free hold tenure plot to Africans at Umvoti (3000 acres), Amanzimtoti (750 acres), Ifume (227 acres), and Ifafa (100 acres). Dinnerstein, 241.

\textsuperscript{102} Support for Solomon kaDinuzulu will be discussed further in Chapter 3 below. Cope, 24-26.
land became harder to obtain, missionaries and *kholwa* alike persisted with increasing and ever more adamant protests against “heathens” living on reserve land. Even before the 1913 Act, a committee of the Ifafa Mission of the AZM, including a missionary and three Zulu clergymen and said to be representing the will of the men of the community, petitioned the government to allow individual land tenure. The petition cited “a great inter-mingling of the Christians & heathen Communities which many of our men consider to be disadvantageous, especially to their children who thereby become more closely acquainted with heathen customs.”

The issue of land on the reserves was to remain a point of contention. In September 1918, missionaries and delegates of the AZM met with the Secretary for Native Affairs, E.E. Dower, and the Chief Native Commissioner, C.A. Wheelwright. Their principle request was for the division of reserve land into freehold plots. In the words of Posselt Gumede of Inanda, “The Reserves were fully occupied and owing to the influx of Natives who had been ejected from private lands the residents were cramped.” Problems would continue into the 1920’s due the resolution of the government to force Africans into rural areas, their “natural” home as opposed to the cities, for which Africans were unprepared. With the election of J.B.M. Hertzog of the Afrikaner National Party in 1924, increasingly aggressive legislation was passed to

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103 One of the signatories of the petition was Gardiner Mvuyana, who would himself become the subject of missionary requests for eviction after he broke with the AZM. Petition of the Ifafa Mission, Nov. 1912, PAR CNC 106 109/1913.

104 Meeting held in the Hall of the Municipal Native Location, Durban, 11 September 1918, PAR CNC 366A 2331/1918.

segregate Africans and to allay white fears of “detribalized” Africans. In addition to the Native Affairs Act of 1920, the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923 and the Native Administration Act of 1927 all served to define the reserves as the location of any and all African political institutions and upheld “tribal” order as the political structures for all Africans, barring exemption from native law. The bills were designed to force all Africans on the reserves or else in designated urban areas. While the rural areas sank further into economic depression, the growing cities and mines required workers, and Africans had come to need the wages offered. But Africans who went to the city mine compounds and docks in search of work and greater opportunity than that on the reserves found the situation in the cities no better.

**Labor Migrancy and the Urban Mission**

The promise of work led many Africans from the reserves to the cities, which would from their inceptions serve as the grounds for political upheaval, social transformation, and cultural innovation. Durban had long been a destination for the Africans of Natal and KwaZulu, and the diamond mines of Kimberley also drew mineworkers and transport carriers once diamonds were discovered in 1867. To add to these lures, the rapid growth of Johannesburg and its gold mines served as a siren call that drew many men and women from the reserves.

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106 Fears of urbanized, militant Africans had been raised during the African miners’ strikes between 1917 and 1920. La Hausse, *Restless Identities*, 21.
107 Cope, 99-100, 191-192.
Into this urban field, the AZM missionaries ventured with great anxiety. When the missions set up work in urban areas, seeking to address the needs of the amakholwa flocking to the cities for work in the mines of the Rand and on the docks of Durban, they faced a series of new challenges. The close quarters of the city slums and compounds meant that converts would be thrust in with an ever-increasing variety of people who nevertheless shared common struggles and complaints. The cities were also a destination for foreign missions looking to entice followers from the compounds, regardless of whether or not the locals already claimed membership to a different church. Whereas in the rural areas of Natal missionaries had sole religious authority on their reserves and could exclude rival denominations from building churches within three miles of their outstations, in the cities, no one denomination could claim any territory except their church grounds.109

The AZM first established churches in Durban in 1891 and established the first church on the Rand in 1894.110 They were joined by an increasing number of European, American, and African denominations of all varieties. The multiplicity of denominations invited comparison and competition for followers. Bridgman noted that the “arrival of the Methodists” at the Johannesburg compounds led to “wrangling and division, to plots and counter plots among the people. The natives say, ‘The question is not now whether you

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109 The imposed distance between churches in rural areas did not keep missions from attempting to recruit members from rival denominations. Caleb Mbhele, a teacher at an AZM school on a private farm, was offered £20 per quarter by a neighboring Catholic mission instead of the £15 he made per quarter working for the AZM. When Mbhele refused, the Catholic mission, or “Romanists” as the AZM missionary referred to them, offered Mbhele £24 plus “keep,” but Mbhele continued to stay with the AZM. Report of the Umzumbe Field, 1925-1926. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/43.

110 The founding of the AZM church in Johannesburg was actually begun on the initiative of Africans in Johannesburg. When missionary H.D. Goodenough was sent to oversee the church, tension between Goodenough and the Rand congregation led to charges being brought against Goodenough. Christofersen, 89-90.
are a Christian, but what church do you belong to?" The competition also raised questions about ritual and faith and provided grounds for comparison of the answers different denominations had for those questions. Faith on the mission had undergone a spiritual revolution, but a practical revolution did not follow. As noted above, the kholwa remained attached to the revival style preaching and the idea of sanctification promoted during the Weavers revivals and by African ministers afterward. But the white missionaries remained cautious of this enthusiasm and unconvinced by the immediate nature of sanctification, rather than the long route through conversion classes and stages of church membership the missionaries preferred. The cities proved a greater challenge, and a greater opportunity, for spreading the faith. African ministers had been responsible for first bringing mission work into urban areas, and they proved the most successful at building church congregations.

The missionaries did not doubt that the cities were the brewing ground for all manner of vice and sin and that their converts, unless carefully guarded, could not but be swayed by the freedom and vice surrounding them. Additionally, the reinterpretation of rural traditions provided new enticements for workers coming from the reserves. The brewing of beer, tied to African custom and celebration in rural areas, gained a new economic importance in urban areas, and it was one of the few ways women could earn a wage in the city while balancing a number of other family and work commitments.112

112 Gaitskell, “Housewives, Maids or Mothers,” 252; As Philip Bonner noted with regard to Basotho women on the Rand, female beer-brewers were not generally supporting stable family life. More frequently, they were women on their own, whether fleeing an unhappy marriage, widows who had no other source of support, or women who had been deserted by husbands who worked in the cities. Indeed, in relating on similar findings in Natal, Helen Bradford noted that many single women who left their
Missionaries feared for their converts in the cities, but lack of resources and problems brewing on the reserves kept them from concentrating further efforts in the urban areas, and led some members of the mission to wonder if efforts beyond the base of the reserves should be abandoned altogether.

Changes and Challenges to Community Order on the Mission Reserves

By the beginning of the twentieth century, it was clear that the results of the mission experiment were highly functional communities with a growing class of educated and wealthy Africans confident in their own self-sufficiency and isolation, contradictorily. Viewed as a threat by the government and white settlers, the amakholwa and their descendants would come into increasing conflict with regulations imposed by the government, which aimed to contain the economic and social advancement of Africans in South Africa. Although the amakholwa embraced much of what was offered to them as Western civilization in religion, education, and politics, the government was much more interested in designing policies for “traditional” Africans through “customary law,” and devising restrictions for the advancement of Africans, while policies for those exempt from customary law, frequently Christian, began being chipped away almost as soon as the right to exemption was granted.113

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113 Much has been written about the frustration of the kholwa in the early twentieth century, as they were denied the hopes for advancement that had been held up to previous generations. In particular, the 1913
Despite the best hopes and efforts of the missionaries, the reserves of the AZM could not become an exclusive sanctuary for Christian converts and their descendants. The model farming community imagined by early missionaries was in fact infiltrated by less devoted converts and those who had no interest in Christianity at all. Furthermore, the *kholwa* communities living on the stations were still tied to their unconverted neighbors, not only by kinship but also by necessity. As Houle has noted, “Daily life meant constant small interactions, whether in collecting water and washing clothes at nearby streams, herding cattle, or gathering firewood; both groups had little choice but to interact....”

Kinship ties remained as did marriages between the two groups, though such matches were met with opposition by missionaries, particularly if the Christian partner seemed likely to conform to the ways of his or her new spouse.

As these sorts of interactions between neighbors continued into the second decade of the twentieth century, missionaries who once imagined isolated communities now confronted the reality (although they never resigned themselves to it) that they could not control who could live on the reserves, let alone those who visited or passed through. Distinctions between Christian and non-Christian became uncertain for Africans, though for missionaries the line of distinction remained clear – those who followed the rules laid out by the mission were believers while any deviation indicated unwelcome heathenism. After the death of Daniel Ndhlovu, a resident of the Impalala station in Zululand, the AZM missionary noted that Ndhlovu “was a polygamist to the day of his death, but he...”

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*Land Act* stifled the hopes of second and third generation *kholwa* to match even the achievements of their parents. See Cope, 22-26. For the rights and governance of Africans exempt from customary law, see Welsh, chapter 13.

114 Houle, “’Today I am delivered,’” 63-64.
was a praying man and one who planned and worked for the progress of the Lord’s work.” Ndhlovu had used his kinship bonds to induce the local chief to allow the mission to build the church and school at Impalala, and he desired his four wives and children to be Christian. Nevertheless, the missionary noted that the church had “lost a real friend… not a member.”115

Although missionaries appealed to magistrates to have more troublesome non-believers removed, the government rarely took action. In his 1915 report to the American Board, Reverend William Onslow-Carleton of the AZM expressed frustration characteristic of his fellow missionaries: “With the exception of Umtwalume all of my churches are distinctly retrograding – both spiritually and morally…. [Umtwalume’s] exception being that it is not so low down as the other churches…. “ Onslow-Carleton ultimately could see no way to isolate the amakholwa from their neighbors in the system provided by the government. He continued, “It might be asked what I am doing to stop the backward movement but I maintain the question is not a reasonable one. I stood against the torrent at first but now I am struggling in it with little hope of staying it unaided. I feel more concerned as to how to get out of it than I am about staying it.”116

Invariably, it fell to the amakholwa to guard their communities against undesirable influences and temptations from non-Christians, whether these temptations meant invitations to “heathen” weddings and beer drinks or the possibility of taking second wives. The mission defined the rules, but the African residents who believed in

116 Onslow-Carleton concluded with the call to go “Back to the Reserves!” Annual Report of the South Coast Churches, 1915. PAR ABCFM A08 A/3/47.
them became the representatives of their enforcement; dissenters were locked out of the process. Church councils governed issues pertaining to the churches, and civic-minded residents formed committees to address grievances and discuss internal issues. In 1912, a committee of men from the Ifafa Reserve passed along a complaint deploring “the great inter-mixing of the Christian & heathen communities” which allowed the Christian children to “become more closely acquainted with heathen customs.”

But while many, if not most, in the Christian communities on the reserves accepted the missionaries’ rules for personal behavior, the communities were often split as to how to regulate their non-practicing neighbors. The commitment of the majority of AZM Africans to the “Umsunduze Rules” had always been tenuous. Beer drinks were a fundamental part of celebration and social interaction in Zulu culture. The brewing of beer was a gesture of good will and a sign of hospitality, a tribute to authority and an occasion to bring people together. Even women who strictly adhered to Christianity in other ways continued to brew beer, though they sometimes faced censure from other women for continuing the practice.

The practice of polygyny was also a constant concern of the AZM missionaries. As long as polygynists interacted with members of the kholwa community and as kholwa who claimed faith in Christianity remained polygynists, the AZM feared that church

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117 Letter from Ifafa Committee to F.B. Bridgman, 11 Nov 1912. PAR CNC 106 109/1913. Bridgman then forwarded the letter to the CNC. The Ifafa Committee letter was signed by B. Sabela, Rev Onslow-Carleton, Joseph Gobozi, and Gardiner Mvuyana. This may have been a personal issue for Mvuyana for his son Gwebu was later said to “be not at all under church influence and dresses… like a heathen” according to A.F. Christofersen (and therefore not considered to be a threat to join his father his father’s church as it appeared his father did not have any influence over him). Letter from A.F. Christofersen to J.D. Taylor, 17 March 1921. PAR ABCFM A608 A/2/31.

118 Gaitskell, “Housewives, Maids or Mothers,” 252.
members, men in particular, would find the option worth renouncing their faith, or at least the rules of that faith determined by the AZM. There was some merit to this concern, as once upstanding church members took another wife after their first wives reached menopause, a not uncommon practice among traditionalists, but which meant their exclusion from the roles of church membership. The AZM also took a hard line with regard to the wives of polygynists, refusing them membership in the church unless they left their husbands. However, it was not uncommon for large parts of the community to band together in support of the wives of polygynists, finding their marriage less important than their declarations of faith. When several wives of a chief wished to join the AZM church at Inanda, members of the Groutville church took an interest in the case. Groutville members held a meeting and concluded that it was unjust for the mission to prevent the women from joining the church. The following Sunday, H.D. Goodenough reported to them that the women could not be made members until they left their husband, despite the protests that the women would be left open to immoral lives without the support of a husband. As it was not a question for their church membership, the Groutville kholwa did not continue on the matter. However, the debate was far from over. The AZM missionary H.A. Stick reported trouble in the North Coast area in 1917 when two outstations separated themselves from the AZM mission because the mission refused to baptize polygamous women. “Renegade preachers” had stepped in to baptize the women instead. Though Stick thought one station was lost completely, he thought it

119 Etherington, Preachers, Peasants and Politics, 97-98.
possible that the other might return to the fold “if we modify our regulation regarding polygamous women.”

Diviners (isinyanga or isangoma) also continued to practice on the reserves against the wishes of the missionaries, often lumped together indiscriminately in the minds of missionaries with ideas of “witch doctors.” The Reverend Onslow-Carleton asked the government for help in dealing with a growing number of so-called witch doctors and diviners on Ifafa Reserve in 1915. The report to the Chief Inspector Locations stated, “There is no reserve without ‘Isanusi’ (diviner),” and listed five diviners and eight headmen who were granted houses or huts for their services. Several years later, the AZM Annual Report announced that “witch doctors” at Groutville “continue to carry on their practice without fear or hindrance.” Although government representatives investigated sent warnings, officials remained noncommittal about taking any action against diviners or so-called witch doctors.

Although the missionaries were vocal in their opposition to traditional healing and divination, associating it with heathenism and witch doctoring, members of the kholwa community were less inclined to take action. In a discussion with the Reverend A.F. Christofersen, men on the Ifafa Reserve acknowledged several diviners were residing on the reserve. They also acknowledge that the CNC had stated in a Durban meeting two

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122 The word here is used incorrectly, as the isanusi almost always referred to male diviners who could smell out evil, particularly those who were related to and diviners for the kings of old. The diviners listed in the report were all women. Berglund, 185. Isangoma could be either men or women. Testimony of Baleni kaSilwana, 18 May, 1918, in Webb and Wright, vol. 1, 48.
years earlier that diviners or “witch doctors” would be removed from the reserves. But the men refused to name any names, telling Christofersen “if the Government wished to expel them they may easily be discovered.” Whether out of fear of possible reprisal or respect for members of their community regardless of belief, the kholwa community of Ifafa and other reserves were tolerant of the practices within their midst.

New ideas were also sweeping through the reserves. The twentieth century saw an upsurge in the formation of organizations created by Africans to serve African interest. Political organizations such as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC, 1912), Inkatha (1924), and the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (ICU, established in Natal in 1925) made headlines for their activities, but numerous other groups formed to support a variety of African needs and interests, including burial societies, social and cultural groups, and athletic teams. The South African Native National Congress, the first African nationalist political organization, was formed largely by kholwa who were seeking political representation and as well as rights. The Zulu political party Inkatha was formed with an interest in self-help projects and the retention of Zulu culture; the party was founded with the support of Solomon kaDinuzulu, the John Dube, and other Zulu leaders, including ministers from both mission and independent

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125 Letter from A.F. Christofersen to J.D. Taylor, Mar 17, 1921. PAR ABCFM A608 A/2/31.
churches.\textsuperscript{128} From 1926 to 1927, the ICU exploded in the Natal countryside, where even “The smallest villages” had branches, and the movement itself went from being a labor organization to a “mass movement for national liberation”\textsuperscript{129} The 1920’s was a period of African identification and mobilization of personal interests which banded people together into larger movements of shared interests.

The question of faith on the reserves remained a subject of negotiation. Increasingly it seemed that Africans could not prove their faith in Christianity to the mission except through staying with the church and following its proscriptions to the letter. In the eyes of the AZM leadership, true faith had come to mean loyalty to the mission and its teachings. Acceptance of Christian faith could no longer be demonstrated through putting on Western-style clothes and building a Western-style house, nor was the experience of sanctification enough to convince the mission of an African’s Christianity, though frequently such a profession was sufficient for the African congregation to accept the person.\textsuperscript{130} Within the mission, there existed doubt as to the loyalty of the congregants, and thus doubt as to the sincerity of their faith, as missionaries believed that their congregants could be easily enticed away. So the missionaries zealously guarded their churches against any outside interests, but failed to adequately address the issues within their own congregations. As a result, even professed Christians had a hard time

\textsuperscript{128} Cope, 104-105, 110-111; La Hausse, \textit{Restless Identities}, 74-76, 86-88. La Hausse notes that the question of a national church was advertised separately among African clergymen in order to drum up interest in the meeting. Ibid., 111
\textsuperscript{130} Mahoney illustrates the discrepancy between those Africans considered Christian – “everybody who worshipped Jesus Christ,” and those the mission considered Christian – communicants who had been baptized by a recognized church and remained in good standing in the church. Mahoney, 390-391.
identifying themselves with the missionaries. As one kholwa man related early in the twentieth century, “I am umuntu and I prefer to remain with the mass of the people. Missionaries are constantly teaching us about the life to come whilst the present is lived without any kind of assistance from them or others.”

**Changing Gender Roles**

Numerous scholars have noted the impact of Christianity on gender roles in South African society. The Victorian division of labor endorsed by European and American missionaries differed in a number of fundamental ways from African practice. Women, active in agricultural labor in African tradition, were confined to domestic space as wives and mothers in the Victorian conception of the feminine and women’s work. Mission endeavors allowed for African women to work as teachers in mission schools or as domestics in white households, but missionaries frowned upon the heavier labor that inevitably fell to women, particularly with the rise of migrant labor among men on the reserves. Missionaries envisioned implementing an economic system with completely different requirements from the traditional African practices, including the use of the plow and following American agricultural methods, and with the patriarch resident full-time in the homestead, the symbolic lord of the house and literal master of his fields. In such homes, missionaries hoped traditional social customs would be replaced with

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131 Testimony of Mbovu kaMtshumayeli, 10 February, 1903, Webb and Wright, vol. 3, 24. Webb and Wright noted that generally umuntu means simply “a person,” but the way it is used here signified specifically “a black person.”

132 See for example Meintjes, 134-137; Gaitskell, “Wailing for Purity,” 254-255; Benedict Carton, Blood from Your Children, 72-75.

Christian customs, from marriage to celebrations. But numerous obstructions converged to thwart the successes of this vision.

A primary problem with the missionaries’ plans was the interdependency of these systems within African life. As has been noted, the brewing of beer for celebrations had traditionally been a woman’s role in celebration. *Lobola* was not only about economic gain but also the security of a woman’s place in her husband’s family. It created relationships of debt and dependence, tying families together to mutually assure honor and respect.¹³⁴ And unlike money, cattle wealth would naturally increase. Polygyny provided economic security and an established division of labor on the homestead. The accumulation of cattle on the homestead through multiple marriages and/or multiple daughters in turn assured the increase of human beings through marriage and birth, and therefore assured that there would be a supply of labor on the homestead.¹³⁵ All of these systems were tied into *ukuhlonipha*, the Zulu system of deference, which instilled respect for the elders among young men and women, and which regulated a person’s relationship to others on the homestead.¹³⁶ Even longtime Christians were concerned about the demise of *lobola* and the changing structures of African society. As one *kholwa* man noted, “The girls are not *lobola’d* with proper numbers. They are called merely

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¹³⁴ Dyer Macebo reported to James Stuart that he considered *lobola* as a gift or “evidence of a pledge which can never be satisfied or discharged by the son-in-law.” Testimony of Dyer D. Macebo, 2 November 1898, in Webb and Wright, vol. 2, 42-43. After the rinderpest crisis at the end of the nineteenth century and as African men more frequently earned wages, *lobola* was increasingly paid with money. Unlike cattle, money was not seen as an investment and was often quickly spent. Testimony of Mahungane and Nkomuza, 8 November 1897, in Webb and Wright, vol. 2, 145.


commoners, and this because the so-called chiefs consider themselves chiefs.”137 The mission’s attempt to replace these traditions with the model of the traditional American homestead, a man in the fields and a woman in the home, was complicated by the demand for migrant and permanent labor in urban areas, leading to economically unstable households where single women ran the entire homestead, looking for money from the cities that often never arrived.

Mission Christianity offered women other new roles, however, sometimes in driving the very salvation of church members. Many of the mission churches had women’s prayer groups, called the Isililo in the AZM churches and manyanos in other denomination’s churches.138 As Gaitskell notes, although the prayer unions were originally formed as a safeguard for their daughters’ sexuality as traditional safeguards and educational methods were abandoned, the women soon used the unions to carry on revivalist gatherings.139 Furthermore, the prayer groups formed a base from which other women’s groups could be formed, even to protest government legislation.140

138 Gaitskell, “‘Wailing for purity,’” 338. The term isililo means “wailing” or “lamentation” in Zulu, and is the term for the ritual keening done after the burial of the dead. The links between the ritual performance and the performance of revival Christianity was likely an influence on the women who chose the name. Although the female representatives of the AZM mission urged members of the Isililo to change the name, they steadfastly refused. Manyano is translated as “union” and comes from the Xhosa word ukumanyana (“to join”). Ibid., 343; 353.
139 Ibid., 344. Gaitskell relates the establishment of the unions to changing roles of mothers in African Christian families. In non-Christian African households, the extended family and peer groups played a larger role in educating girls about sexuality and non-penetrative sexual intercourse, or ukuhlobongo, was widely practiced among Nguni Africans. Amongst the kholwa, mothers were expected to bear responsibility for the education and regulation of their daughters’ sexuality, while any sort of premarital sexual intercourse was expressly forbidden by missionaries. With the shifting social structures of the nineteenth century disrupting societal norms, premarital pregnancy was on the rise amongst African girls, raising concern amongst mothers and missionaries alike. Ibid., 340-342.
140 Bradford, “‘We are now the men,’” 308-309.
Women were often the proponents and leaders of revival Christianity on the reserves. To the missionaries’ dismay, the congregants expressed a continuing interest in the revivalist flavor of preaching, a style the AZM missionaries were unlikely to replicate, and they pointed to the women especially as the parties that perpetuated the revival atmosphere even after it had ceased to be welcomed by the missionaries.

Ironically, considering the concern of the AZM Isililo and other women’s groups for the purity of their daughters, Reverend William Onslow-Carleton blamed the women who attended all-night prayer meetings for “giving their sons and daughters the opportunity for debauchery unspeakable.”

Although the missionaries still saw the woman’s place as the home, the kholwa women who had experienced the revivals now felt a higher calling.

“[T]he hold of our church is nil”: Crisis of Leadership on the Mission Reserves

Like women, the youths of the mission reserves began to challenge the traditional restraints on their behavior, causing grief for missionaries and parents alike. Although both Zulu and Victorian culture reinforced ideas of respect, honor, and duty to the family patriarch, generational tension was growing on the mission stations as it was throughout Natal and Zululand. As post-revival fervor waned, some children of converts opted

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\[141\] Annual Report South Coast Churches, 1915, William Onslow-Carleton. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/47.
\[142\] Although as noted above, the custom of ukuhlonipha was integral to the Zulu society, at the end of the nineteenth century, a number of issues had developed to diminish or challenge the authority of African elders and create generational tension throughout Natal and Zululand. Demand for migrant labor drew many young men away from the homestead while the decimation of crops and cattle by locusts, drought, and rinderpest in the 1890s made homesteads ever more dependent on the money sent home by the laboring younger generation. Encroaching white farmers meant little land available for African youths, and the elders seemed helpless to change the tide. With the future looking so grim, youths were turning away from
against their parents’ religion despite staying on the reserves. AZM missionary Rev. Onslow-Carleton, ever the pessimist, wrote in 1915 that the “hold of the parents on the younger generation is nil, and the influence, so far as I can discern, of our church on the young is also nil. The leaders of these young people in their infamy are sons and daughters of some of our native pastors and preachers, as well as some of our teachers.”

That the second and third generation of kholwa on the reserves, despite having been exposed to the flavors of Christianity and Western civilization as interpreted and espoused by the missionaries, would still engage in illicit behavior caused anxiety in missionaries and magistrates alike. While the missionaries regretted the loss of Christian souls, government officials worried about the consequences of such defiance for the colonial order. Officials were quick to try to associate the development of independent churches with what they saw as increasing immorality. Indeed, the magistrate at Estcourt worried that separatist churches caused “immorality amongst young natives of both sexes, and the engendering of a spirit of defiance to their parents, and to law and order generally.”

The youthful rebellions were a symptom of a larger issue of authority on the Natal reserves. Questions over authority, who could claim it, and whose claims would be

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**143** Annual Report South Coast Churches, 1915, William Onslow-Carleton. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/47. Indeed, in the case of Gardiner Mvuyana’s two oldest sons, Enoch, the elder, was blind and “harmless” while the second son, Gwebu as noted above, was little influenced by his father or the church. Letter from A.F. Christofersen to J.D. Taylor, 17 March 1921. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/31.

**144** Letter from Magistrate, Estcourt to CNC, 5 December 1919, quoted in letter from CNC to Inspector Fynn, Estcourt, 11 December 1919. PAR CNC 350 607/1919.
supported by the people, troubled the amakholwa communities on the reserves.

Missionaries claimed both religious and secular authority, but their decisions were left unsupported or overtly challenged by traditionalist chiefs, the government, the African pastorate, rival denominations, and members of the community. The authority of the missionaries was being broken down by competing claims, while their inability to manage the number of problems that plagued the mission reserve – problems with land, labor migrancy, famine, the delegation of responsibility, and political representation - would come back to haunt them.

Traditionalist chiefs continued to hold influence over the reserve populations, both traditionalist and Christian, and often were a source of frustration for missionaries. Missionaries had to obtain permission from local chiefs to build outstations in their districts and needed to stay on good terms with chiefs in order to work effectively in surrounding districts. A chief who opposed the mission could cause trouble for the efforts of the mission, particularly if he decided to sponsor a rival mission or breakaway faction, thereby becoming a popular figure for opposition. Furthermore, the retention of certain elements of the relationship between the chief and the mission community allowed the kholwa to maintain access to a society, traditions, and loyalties beyond that which was offered by the missionaries. The between chief and community,

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145 Mahoney, 382.
146 Report to the Chief Inspector Locations, Maritzburg from Lower Umkomaas, Nov 8, 1915, “Ethiopian movement – Ifafa Reserve” [sic]. PAR CNC 218 1407/1915. The report notes the growth of “Ethiopianism” on Ifafa, something the missionaries had monitored closely since the ZCC split and particularly after the Bhambatha Rebellion, and links the action to the enmity of two chiefs towards Rev. Onslow-Carleton.
based in kinship and embedded in Zulu tradition, were not easily broken despite the challenge of the mission ideology.

But, traditionalist chiefs also had their authority undermined by the policies of the colonial government. The placement of appointed station chiefs and indunas in positions of power that were comparable or even superceded the powers of the hereditary chief were especially offensive. As Madikane told James Stuart, “(Small men are placed) over their former superiors. They act with disrespect towards their former ‘fathers’…. They do not show us respect for they think themselves chiefs. They say to us, ‘What are they now? The old ways are gone. Let us be raised up.’”147

The decay of the missionaries’ control over the reserve communities became evident in a 1925 incident in the Umzumbe mission field involving a Christian Station Chief. Four years earlier, the AZM orchestrated a coup to prevent the previous station chief’s son, Levi, an alleged drinker and a man of “flagrant immorality,” from becoming station chief as his father had requested to the magistrate before he died. After being inundated with letters and repeated interviews, the magistrate agreed not to appoint Levi and instead commanded the people to “choose someone acceptable to the Mission.”148 But as it turned out, the man chosen would also create trouble for the AZM. Station Chief Shibe was accused of “catering to the heathen element, drinking and dancing at heathen weddings, attending beer-drinks, making himself practically a heathen chief and willfully and against protest marrying a station man into polygamy.” Despite his numerous

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148 The AZM missionary was especially concerned about possible ACC influence on Levi. The ACC was already very active and successful in the Umzumbe District, and the missionary noted that Levi was closely related to Gardiner Mvuyana, to Mziangwe, the ACC’s preacher in the district, and to most of the station residents. Report on Umzumbe District, 1921. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/43.
violations of the “Umsunduze Rules,” and despite being impeached by both station and church committees, the missionaries were unable to remove Shibe from power and had to call the local magistrate to try the chief.

As the government’s concerns about detribalization continued to shape policy, the official preference for “traditional” forms of African practice was evident in the magistrate’s response. According to the report of the missionary, the magistrate “accepted Shibe’s word as against that of our deacon Kumalo and gave us a slap in the face by condoning Shibe’s action in the polygamous marriage.” A subsequent vote called by the magistrate on the question of Shibe’s dismissal found the majority in favor of retaining Shibe. As the missionary reported that “not one single church member voted to retain Shibe, whereas the heathen element was solid for him,” the unconverted outnumbered the Christians on the reserve. The missionary concluded by lamenting “[Shibe] is retained as Chief and probably will be for life.”

Of course, the actual lines between church members and “heathens” are likely murkier than the missionaries would allow, as those the missionaries would accept as Christian were much smaller than those whom Africans would consider Christian. According to Mahoney, the regular church attendance at Mapumulo reported by the AZM was almost seven times the number of members listed in “good standing” within the church. Similarly, as close proximity led many Africans to attend church services and define their faith as Christian without embracing all of the regulations of the mission, the closeness of traditionalist neighbors led some avowed Christians to question whether

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150 Mahoney, 380.
participation in “heathen” customs made them any less Christian. Beer brewing and drinking at celebrations and the exchange of lobola were customs especially difficult to divorce because of their relationship to status and wealth.

These “adherents,” those who regularly attended church services but not be made full members, may have been excluded from the official rosters of church membership, but they developed their own ideas and Christianity and the ways it could fit into their lives. They saw no reason why they could not continue their own customs while maintaining a faith in Christianity and beyond the efforts of the missionaries, there was little to stop them.151 As Africans began to interpret and define Christianity in a way that was personally meaningful, particularly in the period after the Holiness revivals, the adherence to both Christian and traditionalist practices reflected a critique of the missionaries’ narrowness and signified the enduring bonds between African Christians and their unconverted, or at least unorthodox, neighbors. Christianity did not provide answers to all questions, nor did it cure all the ills of the land. Drought and disease still devastated the Natal mission stations as it did elsewhere in South Africa. Evil or “bad people” were present in society despite the inroads made by Christianity, and many amakholwa doubted whether evil could be banished entirely, despite the efforts of the church.152 The continuation of African traditions was not simply a “hedging of bets,” but also a concentration of all that people believed could be good or beneficial that should be

151 Ibid., 380-381.
152 One of Berglund’s sources, a church warden, noted, “There is no place where there is no evil. Do you think that the evil people have become less in numbers since Christianity (amasonto) came to this land? Do you think that evildoers are few like the policemen are few? No!” Berglund, 309.
applied in daily life: to ward off harm or disaster, to gain favor, seek truth and justice, and to celebrate.

While some kholwa expressed dissatisfaction with mission policies and practices through participation in illicit activities, others chose to directly confront or criticize the missionaries for failing to address the needs of the community. Indeed, the critics were just as likely to confront the missionaries about lapses in orthodoxy as they were to support African customs. The Rev. H.A. Stick claimed: “If any missionary wishes to have his work thoroughly scrutinized, minutely criticized, and he severely and yet kindly for his transgressions from the straight and narrow way of pure Congregationalism, then let him take a course as supervisor of the Noodsberg Church for a season.”

Lack of proper supervision, and therefore lack of authority, at the growing number of mission stations and outstations also created problems for the AZM. The understaffed missionaries essentially were circuit riders managing several stations each. Once the missions began to ordain African ministers, more distant mission stations were able to coalesce around a leader. But the reluctance of the missionaries to invest responsibilities to any but those who had completed the educational requirements and met with their approval meant that many communities remained either without a pastor or without a pastor of their choice.

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153 Annual Report of North Coast and Durban, 1917, PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/42. Individual churches and congregations were allowed to decide purely local matters for themselves, “subject to the approval of the missionary supervisor.” In American Congregational churches, individual churches had no higher supervisory authority than the individual church and its committees. “Principles and Usage Guiding the Operations of the American Zulu Mission.” PAR SNA 1/1/372 1932/1907

154 The AZM’s Theological School could not graduate enough ministers to supply the demand of their churches, whether due to lack of interest on the part of educated Africans or disproportionately high standards on the part of the missionaries. For example, in the 1920 Annual Report, the AZM reported eight
Thus the complaints coming from *kholwa* communities frequently expressed the need for more preachers to fulfill the demands of growing communities as former outstations sought to establish their own churches. When African pastors left one church to join another in the AZM (or to join a separatist movement), the missionaries often had trouble filling the vacated post. After the departure of Mbiya Kuzwayo to found an AZM outstation closer to his farm, the Impalala Church in Zululand was left to the care of an “old evangelist and a group of elderly deacons.” The group “hindered rather than helped the work” and aroused “dissension and strife” until a new group of deacons were elected and a new evangelist was called to serve the church. The missionary noted, however, that the work would “not go forward as it should until there [was] an ordained man at the head of the church.”155 Several years later, the report from the Umzumbe field told of a church without a pastor for three months before a man was recruited from the ranks of the church elders. When the missionary sent his report to the ABCFM, the man Kwela had been there nine months and was likely to remain another year and a half until the theological school could graduate its next class and supply an ordained minister.156

Even if the churches were able to obtain ordained ministers, the communities were frequently unable to support them financially. Ordained men, even at larger churches, often had salaries “hopelessly in arrears.”157 At Noodsberg in 1917, a

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of the thirty churches reported on needed new pastors, while five could have benefited from an additional or different pastor. Eight of the churches were noted as being overseen by evangelists or deacons rather than ordained ministers. Annual Letter, 1920. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/47.

157 Annual Report Transvaal, 1917 by F.B. Bridgman. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/42. This was the situation for Rev. Ndaweni of the Pretoria church. Later that year, Ndaweni would become one of the first pastors to join the ACC.
compromise had to be made between the Reverend Daniel Zama and his congregation with regard to salary. As they could only pay £7.10.0 per quarter, Zama would only be required to spend part of his time on church-related work with the rest of his time being available to make money in another way.\textsuperscript{158} At Malukaka, one of the outstation churches, a Christian Chief, Ndunge Gumede, acted as the unsalaried pastor for more than a quarter of a century. The missionaries considered him fit to do so as he had at least received “some training at [the] theological school.”\textsuperscript{159} Other pastors were cautious about going to churches that had previously been unable to pay their pastors, concerned they would have to work off the debt to the previous minister.\textsuperscript{160} Given the instability of certain churches, it is not surprising that African pastors were resistant to relocation, particularly if they had formed bonds with their congregations.

**Personal Faith and Shared Responsibility: Congregations after the Revivals**

Members of the *kholwa* community did not simply leave the leadership of the community, either spiritual or political, to the missionaries or the few ordained African ministers. Individuals within the congregations played active roles in keeping the community in line as well as challenging the ideas of the missionaries. Although the *kholwa* had a hand in shaping African Christianity from its earliest stages, the revivals at the end of the nineteenth century presented and encouraged each member of the

\textsuperscript{158} Report of the North Coast and Durban, 1917, H.A. Stick. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/42. Zama would also eventually join the ACC in 1922.
\textsuperscript{159} Report of the Umzumbe Field, 1925-6. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/43.
\textsuperscript{160} A Pastor Seme asserted his unwillingness to be posted to Mapumulo if he had to work off the congregation’s debt to the previous minister. Letter from Taylor to C.N. Ransom, 11 June 1924. PAR ABCFM A608 A/2/31.
congregation to view their relationship with God simultaneously as a personal
commitment as well as a community responsibility. Bands of amaVoluntiya, volunteer
evangelist groups of both men and women, keeping “Holiness fires burning… ‘drawing
from the heathen population outside a good number of converts’ but also maintaining
‘strictness of discipline, not even snufftaking being allowed in the church members.”161
Confessions and all-night meetings became a regular part of church services, especially
those that were conducted without the supervision of a missionary. The SNA removed
Harry Bulose, a young AZM preacher and revivalist, from a location in 1902 for leading
all-night, open-air meetings. It was the beginning of an SNA policy that attempted to
obstruct African preaching and religious service without the direct supervision of a white
missionary.162

But these attempts to limit such expressions of African faith could not be
thwarted. As the twentieth century progressed, the kholwa of Natal took these ideas from
the revival forward with them, even as missionaries were suspicious and hesitant to
courage them.163 In 1915, the Rev. Onslow-Carleton expressed dismay at his flock’s
“abnormal appetite for anything in the way of frothy or sensational revivalism” and
attendance at all-night prayer meetings that would regularly last into the morning.164 At
Inanda, there were regular fortnightly meetings at different kraals to spread the spirit of
the revival; people would attend these meetings from miles around.165 These services,

161 Houle, “Today I am delivered,” 346-347.
162 Ibid., 361-365.
163 See ibid., 349-351, for further missionary reactions to post-revival fervor.
164 Annual Report of the South Coast Churches, 1915. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/47; Houle, “Today I am
delivered,” 244-245.
165 Christofersen, 125-126.
known as or *umlindele* and typically held on a Saturday night, lasted from nine in the evening until dawn the following day. During the services, according to Sundkler, “[a]ll pray at the same time, and the Spirit is mighty shed abroad in the tense and thick atmosphere. There is speaking with tongues, and the sick are prayed for…. Hymns about the Heavenly Jerusalem are sung to the rhythm of the drum, and swaying their bodies to the tune the faithful are lifted above the frustrations and hardships of this bitter world.”¹⁶⁶ Missionaries were concerned that all-night meetings among their own followers, especially women, considering such meetings to interfere with their other duties.¹⁶⁷ Night meetings also met a practical need in contemporary South Africa. As men increasingly worked for wages and women’s duties expanded, there were fewer daylight hours available to devote to the church. Mission churches experienced the same problems and frequently held meetings in the evening, though as missionaries were generally suspicious of prolonged fervor and religious ecstasy, they were likely to dismiss the meetings before they ran too late. A missionary’s note that one AZM church was in a “chronic state of revival” seems as much a complaint as a point of pride.¹⁶⁸ The Rev. J.D. Taylor wondered “why [the African church members] must always use the old hymn tunes with their rag-time accents and sing them like a heathen beer-drink, and why all night meetings have so much more saving power than those which close in time to give

¹⁶⁶ Sundkler, 198. Night meetings also had precedent in the night work of Zulu diviners. The diviners could not work in the light of the sun, and their work and their powers were associated with darkness. Indeed, the night was traditionally known as the best time for a diviner’s work as it was the time of the shades. “That is the time when they speak clearly, troubling people whom they call.” Diviners also claimed that the night was the best time to communicate with the shades. Berglund, 138, 157, 176-177. It may be inferred that Zulu Christians also found the nighttime best for communing with God and channeling the energy of the Holy Spirit.
¹⁶⁷ Annual Report, South Coast Churches, 1915. PAR A608 A/3/47.
¹⁶⁸ Annual Letter for Year 1919-1920. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/47.
the sinners and the saints a good night’s rest,” but went on to add, “their zeal is unquestionable.”169

Indeed it was with pride that a missionary noted in 1919 that during a contemporary revival at Umzumbe, a woman stood up, “and, coming to the front, started up and down the aisle, vigorously going through the motion of sweeping….” The woman’s actions heartened the missionary for he interpreted the scene as a message to the congregation. According to the missionary, “The old lady’s graphic illustration of what was needed in the Umzumbe Church, expresses what has been attempted during the past three years. Much sweeping has been done, but it is not yet finished.”170 The woman had taken it upon herself to give this message to the church.

The revivals, the secessions, and returns were indicative of a kholwa community beginning to cohere around shared needs, expectations, and desires, and in turn the kholwa community began to flex its muscles in order to achieve its ends. The nature of Congregationalism, even modified by missionaries for Zulu congregations, still vested a certain amount of authority and decision-making with the Zulu congregation.171 The active roles of Zulu preachers in leading and spreading the revivals led to an increased call for ordained Zulu clergy and church leadership.

If they were gaining some ground in affairs of the church community, the amakholwa were losing ground politically, and losing what faith they had in the

171 As noted above, individual churches could decide on local issues pertaining to individual congregations. Congregations could call their own preachers, provided the missionaries agreed to the post. For mission-wide issues, delegates from the churches would meet yearly with missionaries for consideration. “Principles and Usage Guiding the Operations of the American Zulu Mission.” PAR SNA 1/1/372 1932/1907.
representation offered by the government in post-Union South Africa. Many *kholwa*, in accepting Christianity, also accepted the colonial government of Natal and the post-union government of South Africa. Many applied to be under direct government rule rather than under native customary law. But as many of their economic, political, and social hopes failed to realize, and as their position in relation to white society failed to improve, many *kholwa* began to question the benefits of being under white authority. As Madikane ka Mlomowetole, an AZM preacher known as Madikane Cele in AZM circles, noted in 1905, “… now there is a restlessness in the hearts of all the people. What is now clear is that we shall be done harm, we shall die; we shall be done harm by the government…. There are now policemen in the land who go round looking for crime that formerly was not there. In former times it was the chiefs who were the policemen….”

As the forms of authority and leadership offered to them failed to bring about the changes expected, it is not surprising that the *amakholwa* turned to the authority they had themselves chosen – God, as interpreted through a Christianity *kholwa* communities were increasingly shaping themselves. In the revivalist Christianity favored by many Africans, worship of God was simultaneously individual and communal, a personal connection and a group performance. This connection between the individual and the group bonded these communities around a shared faith and a shared identity. But it also made the church communities into a force whose needs and interests the AZM had to address if they were to continue to serve as the representatives to the church communities. Increasingly, members of the church congregations were questioning the place of the missionaries as

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interpreters for them. Following the revivals, one AZM African pastor wrote, “Am I Mr. Harris’s worker? [Harris being the missionary overseeing his church] Am I not God’s servant? Why am I under Mr. Harris?” If the missionaries were not necessary for doing God’s work, and if they were failing to represent the church’s social and spiritual interests, certain members of the church began to wonder what need did the churches have for the missionaries.

The AZM could indeed look back at a number of successes at the beginning of the twentieth century. More than sixty years in the field had yielded a growing population of believers, an expanding field of churches, and the beginnings of a native pastorate. Revivals at the end of the twentieth century had revitalized the kholwa communities, bringing many new members into the fold and strengthening the Christianity of older believers. As Houle has noted, the last years of the nineteenth century saw the transformation of a Christianity that became truly Zulu, and Zulu Christians were themselves taken the initiative to spread the faith.

The Mission had also overcome multiple challenges to its authority by increasingly independent-minded kholwa communities. The secession of Mbiyana Ngidi from the AZM led to the creation of the first independent church in Natal. Then in 1896, two more congregations, those at Table Mountain and Johannesburg, seceded, practically in their entireties. Although the Table Mountain congregation remained

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174 Mahoney, 383-385. Mbiyana went on to form the Uhlanga (National) Church.
separate, the missionaries were able to coax the Johannesburg congregation back into the fold in 1900, though the AZM had to grant a number of concessions in the process, including representation by Africans in the church and the acknowledgement that it was an “African Congregational Church”.¹⁷⁵

The early church secessions, however, were simply to be a sign of things to come. As the twentieth century progressed, numerous breakaway denominations were established from a variety of foreign missions and itinerant preachers roamed the hills. The community struggles on the mission reserves and in the cities, and the emergence of a faith that could neither be defined nor contained by missionaries, created new ways for people to identify themselves and to identify with others. Missionaries unwilling and unable to fully belong to the communities they supervised found their authority challenged by others fully embraced by and embracing of those communities. These communities were in turn appealing to and recognizing an authority they could themselves choose – a Christian god and African ministers.

¹⁷⁵ The two congregations had formed the Zulu Congregational Church after their secession. Simungu Shibe, the leader of the Table Mountain congregation, continued to lead this denomination after the return of the Johannesburg section to the AZM. See Houle, “Today I am delivered,” 329, 352-356.

The early fractures within the AZM were a sign of things to come. The years between 1906 and 1930 witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of independent Christian churches in Natal and throughout South Africa. As David Barrett has noted, in 1906, at the height of governmental and missionary fears about the politicization of Ethiopianism, the government was aware of 15 independent churches in South Africa. By 1913, there were 30 independent churches, and by 1926, there were 130 independent churches. But though these churches sought to declare their independence, they steadfastly asserted their Christianity. What differentiated the independent churches from the mission churches was the assertion that Africans could interpret Christianity in a meaningful way, a way that did not rely on white missionaries for the stamp of approval.

The AZM revivals had illustrated to members of the Zulu missions that they had access to a powerful message, and they had a voice strong enough to carry it. When missionaries and government officials attempted to rein in that voice in the aftermath of the revivals and the Bhambatha Rebellion in the early twentieth century, as questions of land and wage labor were decided by government decree, church members came together to find solace, voice protest, and reaffirm their commitments to their communities and

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their common faith. Churches were a medium for the expression of common frustration and common faith, frequently the only outlet for many Africans. The rise of independent churches is therefore a way to understand the concerns and needs of Africans in early twentieth century Natal and the Rand, particularly those needs the missions and the government could not or would not address.

The African Congregational Church

When the AZM missionary Frederick Bridgman returned to Johannesburg following meetings at the Noodsberg church one Sunday in 1917, he received indication that his Rand congregations were in the midst of a revolution. Bridgman was informed of plans for a large meeting of Rand congregants the following Sunday to propose the formation of an independent church. Rather than investigate the matter, or appeal to the dissatisfied parties to remain with the mission, Bridgman went to his Pretoria congregation the following Sunday. Instead of addressing the grievances of the separatists, Bridgman chose to let the meeting happen without him, for fear of frightening “back into his hole the snake which was now showing its head.” Even after his return from Pretoria, Bridgman opted against seeking out information on the meeting, declaring he had “determined to abide by native usage, i.e. to be ignorant of any event until officially notified.”

177 Thus Bridgman’s later claims to have done everything in his power to understand and prevent the church schism must be taken with a grain of salt. 1918 Annual Report on the Transvaal. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/42.
Bridgman’s decision to let the meeting take its course would have profound consequences for the mission and for African Christianity on the Rand and in Natal. Several days after the meeting, an Evangelist Likumbi reported to Bridgman about the formation of the “African Congregational Church.” Likumbi reported the “watchword of the new body was – no control by or association with white men.” Likumbi worked from the Crown Mines branch of the mission on the Rand, and he claimed that his branch would not have anything to do with the separatists, despite the plans of the leader of the independence movement, Gardiner Mvuyana, pastor of the Doornfontein church, to hold Communion at the Crown Mines church the next Sunday. Many of the other congregations of the AZM, however, found the ACC an attractive and compelling alternative. A month after the ACC announced its secession, the majority of the congregations on the Rand, at Doornfontein, Germiston, and Pretoria, had joined the ACC.

It was not long before the movement expanded beyond the initial Rand congregations. Although it began in Johannesburg, the movement was not isolated to urban areas. Members of congregations at AZM stations throughout Natal and Zululand soon joined the ACC as well, sometimes joining as entire congregations. Indeed, migrant workers traveling between the cities and the reserves in the Natal province maintained the links between the urban and rural communities, and in fact these communities shared similar concerns despite their different daily experiences. As noted previously, the

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179 The Germiston congregation was led by Bangizizwe Ndwanwe who, like Mvuyana, had connections at Ifafa. Pastor Ndaweni, who led the Pretoria, had experienced previous troubles with the AZM. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/42 Annual Report Transvaal, 1918, F.B. Bridgman.
pressure to earn wages, and the cycling home of those wages, became an increasing concern for migrant laborers and their families on the reserves. In the cities and in rural areas alike, problems with youths, including teenage pregnancy and gang activity (amalaita gangs in the cities and “faction fights” on the reserves), threatened the social and economic balance of the communities, though these issues were in fact the result of youths reacting to and attempting to deal with the economic disintegration and social dislocation of Africans in twentieth century Natal.180

The grievances that united the urban and rural churches were clearly articulated. In September 1917, Mvuyana sent a letter to the SNA announcing the establishment of “a new church in the Transvaal and other parts of the Union….” Mvuyana noted that he had been part of the American Board, but “[I]ately, we have disagreed in connection with the name of the church, the right of ownership or the properties bought by our people, and certain new regulations that have been introduced.”181 Shortly after the ACC break, threatened with the loss of his status as Marriage Officer, Mvuyana further explained to the Chief Pass Officer (CPO) his reasons for the separation. According to the CPO, Mvuyana found the American Zulu Mission “too autocratic and retrogressive and did not allow its native congregations sufficient representation.” Furthermore, Mvuyana expressed frustration that certain church properties, which the mission had promised to place under African trustees, remained under the trusteeship of the American Board.

Finally, members of various AZM congregations wanted the name of the church to be the

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181 Letter from Gardiner B. Mvuyana to SNA, 25 September, 1917. CAD NTS 144 54/214.
“African Congregational Church,” a demand that Mvuyana noted rose spontaneously from the congregations themselves. As represented by Mvuyana, the congregations demanded their own churches and were tired of being put off and constricted by the missionaries of the AZM.

Despite Mvuyana’s identification of problems within the AZM, Bridgman and his fellow missionaries repeatedly claimed that lax standards and immorality lay at the heart of the ACC defection. They accused Mvuyana, Ndwandwe and others directly of fostering immorality in the mission churches and founding the new church on the perpetuation of such immorality. Bridgman pointed to Mvuyana’s ordination of M.S. Dube, a man who allegedly had two wives, the most recent of which was said to be approved by Mvuyana, as an example of Mvuyana’s lack of proper morality, though the mission had not sought actively to remove Mvuyana prior to his defection. These accusations, whether grounded in fact or not, had become a sort of “party line” for missionaries in their discussions and fears of independent churches, and these accusations and others like them would color the way the government handled relations with the independent churches into the 1920s. Missionaries and government officials both feared that independent churches were founded only to permit polygamy, lax morality and other forms of deviancy, as well as political radicalization, under the guise of Christianity. Thus missionaries and officials alike generally treated any sort of independent African Christian movement as a threat, though one that had to be at least tolerated, whether it

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182 Report from Chief Pass Officer on Gardiner Mvuyana, 1917 (exact date damaged) CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
183 Statement by Frederick Bridgman regarding the African Congregational Church, African Native Separatist Churches, 1921-22, Native Affairs Department, South Africa. Dube would become one of the leading ministers in the church and later become President of the ACC.
was an organized church along European or American lines or an itinerant preacher with only a few scattered followers.184

Thus it was in part the right to decide what was appropriate for the African Christian community that lay at the heart of the conflict between the AZM and the ACC and for many other independent churches that broke with mission churches in South Africa. Churches held authority over the social interactions of their communities – marriage, reproduction, and economic interactions, particularly on the reserves. For years the missionaries had been the primary arbiters of what was right for the amakholwa, sometimes in concert with the government and sometimes in contest with it. But in twentieth century Natal and Johannesburg, where the distances between Christian and non-Christian and between poor and well-to-do Africans were increasingly broken down, leaders like Mvuyana began to find that the people of their communities did not fit the missionaries’ ideal, nor were they anymore convinced they should.

**Gardiner Mvuyana and the Men of the ACC**

Mvuyana was born in Stanger, Natal in 1866, into the second generation of a prosperous kholwa family. His father had obtained some land on the Ifafa Reserve in the early years of the AZM missions, putting the family in a better position than many of their contemporaries. Young Gardiner became a rising star in the AZM kholwa community. He was educated at Amanzimtoti, became a schoolteacher and then an

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184 See for example letters from the Magistrate: Ingwavuma to CNC: Natal, 15 October 1919 and 23 November 1919, PAR CNC 350 617/1919; Report of North Coast and Durban 1917, PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/42.
evangelist, and finally was ordained by the AZM. In early 1896, Mvuyana was “appointed in charge of native members of the Mission at Johannesburg” under Rev. H.D. Goodenough. Mvuyana noted that he was sent to take charge of the African pastorate shortly after the Jameson Raid. The fact that the AZM sent Mvuyana to the Rand to lead the African pastorate during a turbulent time expresses a particular confidence in his abilities. As noted earlier, Mvuyana has been credited with being very involved with the restoration of one of the ZCC breakaway congregations to the AZM. Mvuyana was ordained as an AZM minister in Johannesburg in October 1908, “the first Zulu minister to be ordained on the Reef.”

Like may of his contemporaries in the kholwa community, Mvuyana did not limit his projects for self-improvement and community outreach to the school and church, but also sought to improve his own station, taking to heart the promises of the missionaries for progress and advancement. In his application for exemption from the Natal Native Code, Mvuyana stated his purpose in seeking exemption: “Because he is under the rule of the English Government, and desires to avail himself of every means for advancement in civilized and Christian life.” In 1887, by the age of twenty-one, Mvuyana had obtained six head of cattle. In a time when obtaining property became a particularly important and sometimes desperate cause for Africans, Mvuyana steadily increased his land holdings throughout his life. In 1904, he was part of a joint stock company that obtained a

185 Statement by Gardiner B. Mvuyana in the report African Native Separatist Churches, 1921-22, Native Affairs Department, South Africa. See also the letter from F.B. Bridgman to CNC, 21 February 1920 PAR CNC 366A 2032/1919.
186 Christofersen, 94, 113.
187 Petition by Rev. W.D. Rood on behalf of Gardiner Mvuyana for exemption from Native law, February 10, 1887. PAR SNA I/1/97 1887/125.
188 Ibid.
lease in his name and opened a store on the Ifafa Reserve.\textsuperscript{189} In 1907, Mvuyana’s brother transferred to him a 15-acre farm that had been granted to their father in 1856.\textsuperscript{190} By his death in 1925, Mvuyana had acquired a number of properties, some of which he left to the church he founded.\textsuperscript{191}

Mvuyana’s work in Johannesburg on behalf of the AZM reflected the changing demands of a society in transition. Mvuyana was sent to the Rand to guide the growing number of \textit{kholwa} working in the mines and elsewhere in the city. But his duties also included traveling many hours by train and foot to baptize and attend to the members of \textit{kholwa} communities as far away as Komatipoort.\textsuperscript{192} The AZM missionaries counted him among their “most trustworthy natives.”\textsuperscript{193} Active in the AZM revivals at the end of the nineteenth century, Mvuyana even served as one of the interpreter for Weavers in later revivals.\textsuperscript{194} Mvuyana also may have been responsible for keeping most of the Johannesburg congregation from joining the ZCC during 1898.\textsuperscript{195}

But having arrived in Johannesburg as the city was exploding at the end of the nineteenth century, and as the African churches of the mission began testing their own strength, Mvuyana could not avoid conflict and controversy. Though Bridgman initially

\textsuperscript{189} The bookkeeper for the store was Ngazana Luthuli, who would later serve as editor of \textit{Ilanga lase Natal}. The missionary in charge of Ifafa at the time wrote in his request for the store’s license, “Personally I can give this enterprise my highest recommendation and I believe I can voice the sentiment of the whole mission in saying that we do not know any parties we would rather see have a store in that place.” PAR SNA 1/1/311 1138/1904, letter from W.C. Wilcox to Clerk of the Court, Umzinto Magistracy, 22 April 1904.
\textsuperscript{190} PAR SGO III/1/228 SG4197/1987.
\textsuperscript{191} Death notice of Gardiner Mvuyana, MSCE vol. 10, 11171/92.
\textsuperscript{192} Annual Report of the AZM 1913. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/47.
\textsuperscript{193} Letter from W.C. Wilcox to Clerk of the Court, Umzinto Magistracy, 22 April 1904. PAR SNA 1/1/311 1138/1904.
\textsuperscript{194} Houle, “Today I am delivered,” 342-343.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid.
liked Mvuyana, he subsequently expressed concerns about Mvuyana’s influence in Johannesburg, growing suspicious that Mvuyana was “building not so much a church as a personality cult.” Certainlv Mvuyana was experiencing greater success on the Rand than Bridgman had previously. Dissidents that had previously left the church rejoined under the leadership of Mvuyana. Sixty lay preachers, all chosen by Mvuyana, spread the gospel on the Rand. When the conflict between Mvuyana and the AZM came to a head, Mvuyana already had a large number of loyal congregants.

Bridgman was wrong, however, in supposing that the breakaway faction was built solely around Mvuyana. Mvuyana may have been the leader of the new church and perhaps its organizing force, but he did not act alone. He was supported by a number of capable ministers from the AZM, and many of these ministers would remain with the ACC and serve as its leaders for several decades. Prior to joining Mvuyana in the foundation of the ACC, Bangizwe Ndwandwe had been a preacher and missionary for the AZM, spending several years in Rhodesia with his wife and children on behalf of the mission. Ndaweni was ordained by the AZM in Pretoria in 1912 and had lead the Pretoria congregations ever since. Upon Mvuyana’s death, Ndwandwe would assume leadership of the church.

Mvuyana also ordained a number of men to lead his new church. Some of these men had been lay preachers or evangelists in the AZM. The most controversial of these

196 Christofersen, 113.
197 Ibid.
198 PAR IRD 62 IRD557/1907.
199 Christofersen, 94.
200 See for example the letter from B.M. Ndwandwe to the Magistrate and Native Commissioner: Pinetown, 9 December 1930. PAR CNC/PMB 54A CNC 45/267 N2/3/3 (37).
ministers was M.S. Dube, due to Dube’s second marriage. Although Dube’s ordination caused a number of the ACC’s initial members to return to the AZM, Dube remained one of Mvuyana’s closest allies and a leader of the ACC. Dube was eventually elected President of the church in the 1930’s, succeeding Ndwindwe, and his term saw the solidifying of the ACC as a stable and influential church.201

Perhaps the minister who best illustrated the complexities of influences on the ACC was Qandeyana Cele. Cele was raised on Inanda reserve, just north of Durban, with attachments to both the traditional and mission African worlds, but his pursuit of education would take him outside of Africa entirely. He was the son of Madikane Cele, an AZM preacher who also served as inceku or body servant to a traditional chief, Mqhawe.202 The chief and inceku both sent their sons to the United States for education, with Cele settling in to study at the Hampton Institute in Virginia, where his path was certainly altered.203 After graduation, he returned to Natal to do mission work funded by

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201 See for example “Extracts of the Minutes of the African Congregational Church (IBandhla lama Afrika) Annual Conference held at Amatata Mission Station, Inanda, P.O. Ndwedwe District, Natal, 10th-26th July 1936,” CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
203 As Vinson and Edgar note, Zulu students who studied in the United States were highly regarded for their close ties with African-Americans, whose social and political agendas were a model for the democratic interests of the amakholwa. Ibid, 56. Qandeyana Cele would himself form personal ties with the African-American community. While studying at the Hampton Institute in Virginia, Cele met married an American woman who returned with him to Natal. It is almost certain that the Qandeyana kaMadikane Cele who became a minister in the ACC is the same person as Madikane Q. Cele referred to in the Vinson and Edgar article “Zulus Abroad.” Qandeyana is possibly also one of “Mqhawe’s sons” referred to in the Washington Post article of 30 January, 1898 cited by Vinson and Edgar, as he first went to the United States with Mqhawe’s son, Mandhlakayise. Madikane told James Stuart in 1903 that Mqhawe’s son and heir had gone with his son to America to learn; Mandhlakayise had stayed seven years and returned, but his own son remained there. If this is the same Cele, Qandeyana took advantage of his time in the U.S. to hone the critique of Americans that would serve him well as an independent minister: the sons of Mqhawe were horrified by American dietary habits while the Madikane Cele at Hampton found American football too
Hampton, but he also gained a reputation for concerning himself with social and political issues, raising fears about his potential interest and attachments to what missionaries considered the Ethiopian movement.\textsuperscript{204} The funding from Hampton had allowed Cele to work independently in Natal, engaging in both church and educational work, but once AZM missionary J.D. Taylor informed Hampton faculty of Cele’s “Ethiopian” sympathies, he was told to align with the AZM and focus on education rather than religious work or lose his funding. Although the missionary attempted to entice Cele to join the AZM, calling him “too good a man to lose,”\textsuperscript{205} Cele joined the ACC, where he quickly became a prominent leader in the church.

From the outside, there was very little uniting these men. The formation of the ACC was not a movement of young men – Mvuyana was fifty-one years old when he broke from the AZM church. Ndwandwe, Ndaweni, and many others who later joined were also longtime members and leaders within the AZM. Daniel Zama had long been a leader at the Groutville Church, and the AZM missionary Catlin reported “very few are the branches that have not suffered some defections to him, and one, Inkwezane, had gone over… building and all.”\textsuperscript{206} Despite their long ties and membership in the AZM communities, however, many of the defectors had not been ordained ministers for long. Mvuyana had only been ordained in 1908, while Ndaweni and Zama were two of the

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“savage to be introduced into Africa.” Vinson and Edgar, 58-59; Testimony of Madikane kaMlomowetole, 8 July, 1903, in Webb and Wright, vol. 2, 47.
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\textsuperscript{204} Cele was paid $400 a year by Hampton, a large sum for an African working in Natal. Letter from J.D. Taylor to H.A. Stick, 31 May 1918. PAR ABCFM A608 A/2/30.
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\textsuperscript{205} Ibid. In the letter, Taylor acknowledged a report that Cele was already “stealing” the AZM outstation at Umngeni.
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\textsuperscript{206} Annual Report Groutville, 1922-23. PAR A608 A/3/43.
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three ministers ordained in 1912.207 On the other hand, Quandeyana Cele had spent many of the years in the United States prior to joining the ACC. On returning to Natal, Cele did independent work but was never ordained as a minister and refused to officially align with the AZM. Nevertheless, he gained influence while working at Amatata and brought many of the faithful there over to the ACC with him.208 Timothy Mate, another minister who would be influential in the ACC, took part in the Bhambatha Rebellion, worked off the penalty for his participation on the docks in Durban, and then became an itinerant preacher before Mvuyana invited him to join the ACC.209 For the elder ministers who had long been denied opportunity to determine their own paths, as well as for young men looking to make their way, the ACC offered many possibilities.

Geographic location and issues of urban and rural divisions also seemed to have little to do with the development of the ACC leadership. Although the movement began in the city, it was not dependent on the close confines of urban living to spread its message. The urban ministers, most notably Mvuyana, had retained links to the rural areas through family ties, business links and property interests, and the movement quickly spread to the mission reserves. There the message also found interested ears, and a number of ordained AZM pastors left to join the ACC, taking pieces of their congregations with them. The dependence on labor migrancy meant that the message of the ACC traveled from work to home and on to new destinations. Almost everywhere it

207 Christofersen, 91-94. The third minister ordained in 1912 was Mbiya Kuzwayo.
208 Letter from H.A. Stick to SNA, 10 September 1918. CAD NTS 1444 54/218.
209 Cope, 244.
traveled, throughout Natal and Zululand and into Johannesburg, Kimberley, and places beyond, the message found a receptive audience.

The ACC’s message was not religiously radical. The tenets of the church followed the same beliefs of the AZM. The covenant of the African Congregational Church committed the community to “[a]cknowledging Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice.” The church further associated its ideology to the principal beliefs of Christianity by acknowledging “this we do depending on our Heavenly Father, who so loved the world that he gave His only Begotten Son for our Salvation, and of Jesus Christ, Who hath redeemed us with His blood, and of the Holy Spirit our Comforter and Guide.” The religion of the missions was fervently endorsed in the constitution of the breakaway church.

But the ACC had a different understanding of the relationship between Christian belief and Christian practice. The revivals seemed to have a profound effect on Mvuyana, so it is unsurprising that the faith embraced by the ACC grew in large part out of the Weavers revivals. Central to this faith was the belief that individual commitment to God was as important, even more important, than a minister’s stamp of approval. The ACC’s message espoused a faith not only in Christian religion but also in African leadership and African commitment to Christianity without the policing effort of the AZM. It was a faith where continued relationship with non-Christians and traditional African practices did not preclude a person from being accepted by the congregation as a Christian. In short, it called for a revival of the personal commitment to and shared community responsibility

210 Constitution of the African Congregational Church [I Bandhla lama Afrika], CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
for the church’s beliefs and community health that fired up the congregations during the revivals.

Missionaries suspected that desire for material gain was a primary motivator for the flowering of independent churches.\(^{211}\) In fact, it was always clear to African men on the reserves that there was not much money to be made in preaching, even in independent churches. By way of their education and position, preachers in the AZM garnered a certain amount of prestige and respect, particularly if they had the support of their congregations. But few economic advantages came along with leadership positions in the AZM, even for the ordained ministers. As notes above, churches struggles to pay their ministers even modest stipends. More often, the means of support for the AZM preachers came from family money or other investments. Mvuyana, with his numerous land holdings and businesses, was one of the more well-to-do and financially independent among the amakholwa. On the other hand, Daniel Zama struggled with debt; as noted above, Zama made an agreement while with the Noodsberg church to work part time as the church pastor and part time in other employment in order to pay his debts. The AZM missionary H.A. Stick complained that Zama did not have the “religious energy” to make the Noodsberg church conform to the AZM vision, calling Zama “meek and easy-going… a man who takes more joy in giving than receiving….\)” In Stick’s opinion, the Noodsberg congregation, like other AZM congregations, needed “a pastor who will

\(^{211}\) In arguing against this idea, Sundkler claims, “it overlooks the fact that to the African prestige matters more than money.” Sundkler, 126. Certainly the desire for prestige played a role in the multiplication of small churches and prophets, but when men who were already leaders in their community broke with mission churches, clearly motivations deeper than prestige were involved.
tactfully, yet fully, exercise every inch of authority legitimately due him.” And yet, when Zama joined the ACC, he took many of the congregants he served with him.

The leaders and the followers of the ACC defied easy categorization or reduction to singular motivations. The church congregants included those who owned land and those who were hoping for ways to obtain it, farmers, miners, and teachers, those who had been removed from several generations removed from traditional Zulu practices, and those who still maintained many traditional beliefs. In short, traditional barriers and new obstructions, evolving out of the changing African world and an increasing urban-rural divide, were overcome in the interest of common pursuit, chiefly the growth of the ACC and all of the possibilities inherent in an independent, African church.

The ACC’s Growing Movement

Following the defection of the Rand churches, the movement spread beyond the urban areas back to the reserves. In a letter to the CNC in 1919, Bridgman reported ACC activity at the Inkwali outstation as well as at Groutville, Umzumbe, Amalongwa, Amanzimtoti, and Inanda. Smaller outstations and further removed locations, such as Noodsberg, Odeke, and Golweni, which had already been operating without much attention from AZM missionaries, were likely to be receptive to the ACC. Places where the increasing number of ACC ministers had ties of family and friendship were particularly successful. Mvuyana was related to many of the people at Umzumbe, while

213 Letter from F.B. Bridgman to CNC, 5 May, 1919 PAR CNC 366A 2032/1919.
both he and Nwandwe both had longstanding ties at Ifafa. To keep the men from maintaining these ties and gaining further converts at Ifafa, Frederick Bridgman and other AZM missionaries sought to have Mvuyana and Nwandwe ejected from Ifafa on the grounds of the Mission Reserves Act of 1903. Both men contested the relocation and the CNC could find no solid reason to have them ejected.215

Complaints continued about the character of these churches. Missionaries claimed that those who were suspended or excommunicated by the AZM were received as members or even made ministers by the ACC.216 Missionaries declared “good riddance” to those they counted as drinkers who joined with the separatists.217 The ACC’s gains also included men and women who had previously been holding independent services “in the hills” – outside the bounds of the mission station. These communities of people who had already detached themselves from the AZM or who never belonged to the mission churches there, now joined with the ACC.218

The ACC attempted to befriend local chiefs and gain access to their kraals with mixed results. At Odeke, despite the ACC’s growing community of followers, Chief Sicapa was resistant to the overtures of the church for a more permanent site to worship. The ACC preacher Sukuzwaya Langa, previously dismissed by the AZM, proposed to raise funds for a memorial to the late Chief Mzingelwa. In order to protect the memorial

216 Annual Report Groutville, 1923. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/43. Bridgman noted one of the men listed as an Evangelist by the ACC, Petros Nkosi, had been excommunicated by the AZM for sodomy. Statement by Bridgman regarding the African Congregational Church, African Native Separatist Churches, 1921-22, Native Affairs Department, South Africa.
217 Annual Report Umzumbe Mission Station, 1919 PAR A608 A/3/42. Langa had been dismissed by the AZM in 1912 for “neglecting his pastoral duties in favour of field cultivation.” Christoffersen, 95.
from cattle, Langa suggested building a church site there as well. Ironically, Mzingelwa, whom the ACC was set on memorializing, had himself opposed ACC preaching. When the ACC attempted to build a church on his lands, Mzingelwa went to the magistrate to have the construction stopped. Members of the AZM church at the meeting protested this attempt by the ACC to gain a foothold in the kraal, and Sicapa forbade the ACC to practice on his land.  

Nevertheless, the ACC grew rapidly. When Mvuyana first broke from the church, he claimed about 400 adherents, including 200 in Johannesburg and the rest on the Rand. When Gardiner Mvuyana and another AZM minister, Francis Majola, called upon the CNC in December 1920 to apply for appointment as Marriage Officers, they announced that there were eight ministers with permanent church sites serving under Mvuyana. By September 1926, when Ndandwe took the helm of the church, there were thirty-three sites listed where the church owned buildings, schools and land for its purposes, including fourteen in the Transvaal, eighteen in Natal, and one in Swaziland. Indeed the influence of the ACC extended far beyond that which the AZM hoped to achieve. In 1926, Seth Pewa applied to be appointed Marriage Officer for the Cape Province, claiming that the ACC had over 300 members in the Cape Province. It was becoming an organization that the government could not ignore.

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220 Report from CPO on Gardiner Mvuyana, 1917. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
221 The sites listed were located at Betrams, Alexandra Township, Volksrust, Nelspruit, Umzinto, Umzumbe, and two in Umsinga. Notes of the meeting between Gardiner Mvuyana, Francis Majola and CNC, 8 December 1920. CAD NTS 14444 54/214.
222 Minutes of Committee Meeting, 6 September 1926. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
223 B.M. Ndwandwe to Secretary for the Interior, 7 October 1926. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
What’s in a Name? The ACC and the Vision of an African Christian Community

Mvuyana and his congregations did not invent the name “African Congregational Church.” The African Congregational Church originally was the designation given by the AZM to the African churches under their supervision in order to distinguish them as belonging to the *kholwa* community.\(^\text{224}\) The name was adopted after the Zulu Congregational Church schism, as a concession to congregants wanting to identify the “African-ness” of their churches.\(^\text{225}\) When the Bhambatha Rebellion led to increased fears of “Ethiopianism” and political activism on the part of independent African religious leaders, the USNA and the Prime Minister took note of and strongly objected to the name.\(^\text{226}\) The AZM missionaries yielded to the government pressure, and the churches of the AZM were thereafter known as the “Congregational Churches of the American Board,”\(^\text{227}\) which failed to resonate in the hearts of their congregations.

The African community clearly did not forget the name, or accept the change. Indeed, when Mvuyana broke with the AZM, Bridgman accused him of falsifying records. After further investigation, it was discovered that the supposed falsifying of records was replacing of the name “American Board Mission” with “African Congregational Church” on church documents.\(^\text{228}\) Ultimately, the matter of the name was

\(^{224}\) “Principles and Usage Guiding the Operations of the American Zulu Mission.” PAR SNA 1/1/372 1932/1907.

\(^{225}\) Houle, “Today I am delivered,” 357-358.

\(^{226}\) Transcript of shorthand notes taken at an interview between the Prime Minister and certain gentlemen from the American Zulu Mission, 29th June 1907. PAR SNA 1/1/372 1932/1907. USNA to Prime Minister, 22 July 1907. PAR SNA 1/1/372 1932/1907. The name change caused the government to scrutinize the AZM’s operations, with the view that the responsibility the missionaries entrusted to the African ministers was itself a threat. For further information, see Houle, “Today I am delivered,” 360-371.

\(^{227}\) “Principles and Usage Guiding the Operations of the American Zulu Mission.” PAR SNA 1/1/372 1932/1907.

\(^{228}\) Acting Director of Native Labour to SNA, 24 November, 1917. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
listed as one of the primary motivations for ACC members to join the church.229 “The name American was no longer suitable for us as Africans of today,” offered an explanation for the break between the ACC and the AZM on a church site application.230 In short, the members of the ACC were seeking to synchronize the way they were identified by the outside world with the way they saw themselves.

The importance attached to the name of the church was characteristic of the growing consciousness of African identity among African intellectuals and the desire to claim and advance that identity. Mvuyana and others involved in the independent church movement envisioned churches that not only reflected the communities they served, but also were clearly identified with those communities. Mvuyana and others were ready to claim these churches, and the Christian religion, as their own and belonging to their communities, and they desired to put the organizations to the work that they knew was needed.

“Mushroom-Like Growths”: The Expanding Field of Independent Churches

The ACC was neither the first nor the last church to separate from the numerous American and European missions in Natal. In fact, by the time of the ACC split, missionaries and government officials were carefully watching the development of independent churches with varying degrees of alarm. Like the ACC, these independent churches, which multiplied rapidly in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, heeded the calls of an increasing urban populace struggling to make its way as...

\[229\] Report from CPO on Gardiner Mvuyana, 1917 (exact date damaged) CAD NTS 1444 54/214
\[230\] Annexures to ACC application for a church site. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
well as a rural populace increasingly alienated by missionary leadership. Some of the churches used political language as a means to address the problems that plagued their communities, seeking to fill the void of leadership created by disinterested or disinclined white missionaries and government officials in mission churches and stations. But more frequently, these churches engaged with their congregations through faith, a shared belief in a religion in which the demands of the white world had no precedence.

The nineteenth century secessions from the AZM in Natal and in Johannesburg were just the beginning of the movement. Mission Christianity did not follow far behind the journey of Africans to the Rand, but the development of Christianity on the Rand did not proceed according to the designs of missionaries. Instead, the atmosphere on the Rand served as one of the catalysts for the independent church movement. The close quarters of the Johannesburg compounds and other urban areas were the places where new ideas about the accessibility of Christianity found Africans who were separated from their old communities and churches or looking to find new connections socially and spiritually, thus creating new communities of believers. While many foreign missions rushed to administer to the growing communities, Africans who did not fit the mold of mission Christianity or who did not find their denomination practicing in the city had ample human resources among the migrants and other urban laborers to form their own meetings.

These churches and meetings grew as the city expanded. Moffat J.R. Caluza reported that from 1898, “there has been a gathering of men in Johannesburg and other

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231 Sundkler considered Pretoria “the birthplace of Ethiopianism” and Johannesburg “the birthplace of independent churches of the Zionist type.” Sundkler, 80.
places on the Rand for social and religious exercise. This gathering has developed into a
good number of men and women who have formed themselves into a Church
Congregation under the name ‘Meeting of Christian Brethren.’” As time passed, this
informal meeting became more regular, more organized, and grew in size. When Caluza
corresponded with the Native Affairs Department in 1932, he reported that his church had
joined with another in 1923, and nine years later reported thirty ministers, forty
evangelists, and 10,000 members in the organization, 6,000 members specifically
associated with the original Christian Brethren.

The rural areas were no less hot spots for independent church activity and
development. Although the Secretary of the ABCFM estimated that Natal had more
missionaries than any other place in the world “two or three times over,” independent
churches were still successful in making headway among populations looking for a more
meaningful message. In 1918, a missionary of the Norwegian Mission’s Empangeni
Mission Station expressed concern that ministers of the ZCC were gaining converts in
their area. These converts included not only members of established mission churches but
also those nearby whom the mission had failed to convert. In fact, chief among the
Norwegian missionary’s concerns was the idea that the ministers baptized “those who
had been persuaded to join, whether they have received any instruction in religious matter

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had connections to Wesleyan and Presbyterian missions before becoming a Pastor in the Zulu
Congregational Church, adopted the ZCC Constitution for the Christian Brethren. Letter to Mr. Clarke,
CAD NTS 1446 62/214.

233 Moffat J.R. Caluza to SNA 6 June 1932. CAD NTS 1446 62/214.

or not.” Of course, the real threat at Empangeni, as elsewhere, was that the independent churches were able to capture the imaginations of these converts in ways the foreign missions could not. Steadily, the messages of the independent churches were taking hold in minds that the missions had been unable to sway.

The battles for the hearts and souls of the amakholwa met on shared ground in the city and in the countryside, and took place among the unconverted and in church congregations. While missionaries could resent the loss of previously unconverted prospects, the most hurtful loss was that of former mission church members. Missionaries who had devoted their lives to their work longed not to build a self-sufficient church in South Africa but to have churches “convinced that they cannot get along without missionary supervision, and when the… supervisor [leaves] on furlough without a successor… despair as to what will become of the work without any missionary to look after them.” As Frederick Bridgman’s response to the ACC illustrated, white missionaries registered what they considered a betrayal with backlash against and prosecution of the independent parties. And missions of all denominations – Congregational, Methodist, Lutheran, and Anglican amongst many other smaller mission denominations – were affected. The growth and spread of independent churches throughout Natal, Zululand, and the Rand, created opportunities for kholwa on the mission reserves and at urban missions, particularly those who found the mission church did not reflect their needs, to break with the mission.

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Their motivations were numerous. Sometimes whole communities broke away to join independent churches or form new churches in acts of protest. The African Methodist Church was formed when “certain Natives resident at the Bluff near Durban and at other surrounding places” became dissatisfied “with the means and ways the [Wesleyan] Church matters [were] being carried by the Church Officers.” Frequently communities rallied around a preferred leader to form a new church. In one case, John Mhlongo, the African missionary in charge of the Wesleyan Mhlangana Mission Station, came into conflict with the missionary and members of his congregation when he refused to release two girls from the school to attend to home duties. The missionary in charge, Reverend File, promised to withdraw Mhlongo to another district. Mhlongo appealed to the CNC to remain at this post through the end of the school year, this appeal being granted by the CNC. After being pressured to change posts earlier than agreed upon, Mhlongo withdrew from the Wesleyan Mission and started his own school, taking many of the Wesleyan Mission children, and likely their families, with him. Mhlongo then aligned himself with the Independent Methodist Church under Joel Msimang, again likely taking many of his church with him.

It should be noted that entire church congregations or large segments of churches rather than individuals carried out many of these acts of separation or creation. There were few opportunities to voice opposition on the mission reserves and outposts, particularly opposition that was critical of missionary decision-making, and there was

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238 Letter from Magistrate, Mpofana to CNC, 27 March 1917. PAR CNC 274 531/1917. As noted above, this string of events is similar to the events that led to the foundation of the Zulu Congregational Church.
even less chance that the opposition would be heard and considered. When a congregation’s needs were not met or important questions not addressed, members of mission congregations had little recourse for change. By joining a different church or forming a new church, the members of a community were able to create change, so that they themselves defined what was considered important and chose whom they would have as leaders in their community. Bonds between community members and shared circumstances and frustrations allied blocs of dissenters with enough strength to break away from parent churches. The two outstations that left the AZM in 1917 over the mission’s refusal to baptize polygamous women felt self-sufficient enough as church units to leave altogether. Such examples frame the independent church movement in a different light than those who would have seen the movement an outlet for an “obsession for leadership in the Church” or an “escape into history.” While there were certainly individuals who flitted from church to church, seeking the right fit or opportunity, the secession of whole congregations illustrates the deeper issues of African organization, identity, and self-assertion that were fomenting in the early twentieth century.

Independent Churches in the Era of Organization Building

It was no coincidence that the number of independent churches exploded in Natal at about the same time as the rapid growth of political, cultural and self-help

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239 Annual Report of North Coast and Durban, 1917, H.A. Stick. PAR ABCFM A608 A/3/42. This was discussed further above in Chapter 3.
240 Sundkler, 100, 102. Sundkler wrote, “In the independent Church history is reborn and redeemed by being projected into an Ethiopian Utopia.” In fact, independent churches seemed altogether more concerned with the realities of the twentieth century and finding a place in it than re-imagining history. Even the appeals to Zulu identity had more to do with twentieth century issues than a desire to return to the days of Shaka. See la Hausse, Restless Identities, Introduction, 1-25.
organizations. The purposes of the ACC, set down by Mvuyana and his compatriots, reflected the interest across Natal and Zululand and on the Rand in the establishment of African independent communities. The ACC was conscious of its place in a growing field of organizations dedicated to the advancement of Africans in South Africa, culturally, politically, and economically, and the church sought to make contributions to that end. Not long after the foundation of the ACC, the church established itself as a private company. This was a financially pragmatic decision, but it also set up the church to fund its stated objects, including the intent to “establish… churches, schools or other religious educational, schoolastic [sic] or charitable institutions and… for the delivery and holding of lectures, classes, conferences, public meeting and other purposes… to advance the cause of religion, education and other charitable work.”

Similarly, the beginning of the twentieth century saw the development of a number of African political, cultural, and self-help movements in Natal and throughout South Africa. The South African Native National Congress and its particularly active Natal branch, Inkatha, and the ICU, quickly drew notice from both Africans and whites for their efforts to empower Africans in Natal through political representation, self-help projects, and labor organization. Mission organizations, particularly the AZM, sought to counter the growing number of independent African organizations by founding their own organizations for Africans. One such attempt was the Bantu Men’s Social Centre, founded in Johannesburg in 1924 as a result of the vision of AZM missionaries F.B. Bridgman and Ray Phillips. As Bhekizizwe Peterson has noted, Africans “were reminded

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that the project was funded ‘almost wholly’ with money supplied by ‘Europeans’ and that ‘it was to be managed wholly for your benefit.’ The ‘noble career facing the [African] intelligentsia was to support the institution and to ‘teach your people how to use it.’”²⁴² Instead, Africans were forming their own organizations, supported with their own funds. The independent church movement was certainly a branch of that organizing spirit, and strong links united the independent church movement and the other organizations that developed in that period.

The ACC was no stranger to the political activism of 1910’s and 20’s. In its early years, particularly the years when Gardiner Mvuyana was at the helm, the ACC assertively intertwined political language and goals with its Christian messages. Mvuyana was known to be “associated with the young native Nationalist crowd and the Batho Bantu [sic]” and was himself involved in the foundation of the Zulu political party Inkatha.²⁴³ Seeking royal support, Mvuyana invited Solomon to lay the cornerstone for the ACC’s new church at Doornfontein in 1918. Although the Magistrate at Nongoma advised Solomon, under the instructions of the CNC and the SNA, not to accept the invitation,²⁴⁴ Mvuyana would remain a part of Solomon’s circle. In 1924, Mvuyana was on the committee that briefly considered plans for the foundation of a Zulu national

²⁴² Peterson, 123.
²⁴³ Cope 96; La Hausse, Restless Identities, 206. La Hausse also cites ACC ministers M.S. Dube and Timothy Mate as active in the foundation of Inkatha. Abantu-Batho was the national newspaper founded by Pixley Seme under the auspices of the South African Native National Congress. Edward Roux, Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man’s Struggle for Freedom in South Africa (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 111.
²⁴⁴ Concerns were expressed by government leaders that Solomon’s association with the ACC would lead to the development of an African political movement while damaging the influence of “bona fide mission work.” Letter from Edward Dower to C.A. Wheelwright, 17 August, 1918, PAR CNC 332 2337/1918; Letter on behalf of CNC: Natal to Magistrate: Nongoma, 22 August, 1918, PAR CNC 332 2337/1918; Letter from C.A. Wheelwright, CNC: Natal to H.S. Cooke, Director of Native Labour: Johannesburg, 27 May, 1919, PAR CNC 332 2337/1918.
church to be called “Chaka Zulus Church.” Mvuyana served on this committee with another independent minister, Petros Lamula. Mvuyana served on this committee with Petros Lamula. La Hausse contends that under the leadership of Lamula, the committee chose the name “African National Church” instead of the Solomon-preferred “Chaka Zulu’s Church.”

Although the idea of a Zulu national church formed under the auspices of Inkatha was eventually abandoned, the ACC did not abandon its support for Zulu cultural revival.

Other church leaders were involved in the numerous organizations growing in Natal and on the Rand. Petros Lamula was involved in the foundation of Inkatha and was an active in the establishment of the ICU in Natal. Henry Ngcayiya, co-founder of the Ethiopian Church of the United South Africa, was also a member of the Executive of the ANC as well as the organization’s chaplain. The ICU took many of its preacher-organizers, union officials, and branch leaders from the ranks of the independent churches, thereby taking advantage of such links to foster union interest in the growing independent church communities. Part of the ICU’s efforts in Natal included encouraging Africans in mission churches to join independent churches.

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247 Ngcaiyiya was also part of the 1919 Congress delegation that met with British Prime Minister Lloyd George and attended the Versailles conferences to voice the grievances of black South Africans. Roux, 110-111.


249 Bradford, “’We are now the men,’” 309.
The development and growth of political organizations meant that churches could focus on faith and spiritual issues in their communities. The religious and political needs of the congregations were motivated by the same needs: the economic and social problems in twentieth century South Africa. Faith inevitably tied into politics as church communities confronted the brutality of the society they lived in as they sought answers and respite from their problems. But despite the accusations cast by missionaries, the independent churches were not merely political organizations masquerading as religion. The crossover between church membership and political organizations indicated that each organization appealed to African membership in different ways. The churches fulfilled a spiritual need for their congregations that political, social, or cultural organizations could not meet.

Clearly the leaders and members of independent churches in Natal shared a larger vision for the development of their communities. Like the other African organizations that developed in the early twentieth century, independent churches were the expression of communities taking responsibility for their own needs and their own faith, as it became clear that support would be hard to find outside of the communities. What ultimately lay at the heart of the independent church movement was the desire of the amakholwa to build and support their own Christian communities. Missions had created the blueprint, but independent African church communities were able to address their own ideas and concerns as to the formation of Christian communities in Natal and beyond.

Developing Categorization of “Ethiopian” and “Zionist” Churches
At this time, categorizations were developing which would define independent churches for decades. As noted in above, the discussion of independent churches has, from the very beginning, frequently relegated the various churches into one of two categories – “Ethiopian” or “Zionist.” The use of the “Ethiopian” label developed to imply a politically motivated African church that was otherwise practicing along the lines of the European churches. The use of the “Zionist” label was adopted to imply a church that was more influenced by Pentecostal practice as well as traditional African practice.

After a period of generalizing all independent churches as “Ethiopian” illustrating the threat they perceived from these groups, government officials and missionaries eventually evolved a slightly more nuanced approach, identifying the churches using one of the two labels as the influence of Pentecostal religion became more widespread. This classification has been taken up and popularized by Bengt Sundkler and scholars following him, the purpose of this approach being to identify the overriding characteristics of a given church and to locate that church on a scale between European influence on the one hand and African tradition on the other. Sundkler claimed, “The more a particular separatist organization in the process of secession loses its effective contact with the Christian traditions and teaching of the Church, the more marked does this Zulu nativistic trend become…. The syncretistic sect becomes the bridge over which Africans are brought back to heathenism…."

250 Shembe’s Ibandla lamaNazareth is generally considered to be a Zionist church (see Sundkler, 49-50, and Gunner, ), but it was first generally referred to as an “Ethiopian movement.” See for example the letter from H.A. Stick to W.T. Davidson, May 3, 1919, PAR CNC 350 589/1919; and the copy of the letter from M. Nonger, Sgt. S.A. Police to the Magistrate, Empangeni, 13 Nov 1922, PAR CNC 96 2155/1912/30.

251 Sundkler, 297, emphasis in the original.
European and American missionaries of a certain, staid tradition. Furthermore, a sliding scale, or in this case a “backsliding” scale, implies a dichotomous view of religion in South Africa, where Africans who leave mission churches will inevitably fall into “heathenism.” As Jonathan Glassman noted with regard to Swahili acceptance to Islam, such a dichotomy is too narrow to understand the way religion works in a community.\textsuperscript{252}

Although the interest was knowledge and understanding in a quantifiable manner, the result of measuring faith on a sliding scale has been a simplified understanding of the churches, their inspirations and motivations.\textsuperscript{253}

Although a number of differences make the labels, particularly “Zionist,” convenient, in fact, the independent churches were all indebted to a variety of ideas. The ACC, perhaps the leading example of the “Ethiopian” type of church, was heavily indebted to Pentecostal ideology and revival-style preaching brought to Southern Africa by Weaver and other Americans. Mahoney notes that “black and white Congregationalist preachers in Natal were still imitating [Weavers’] ‘persuasive’ and ‘emotional’ preaching style 70 years later. This most certainly included ministers who broke away from the AZM.\textsuperscript{254} Gardiner Mvuyana’s role as Weaver’s interpreter during the AZM revivals certainly introduced him to the style and appeal of revival preaching and ideology. The

\textsuperscript{252} Glassman, 134.
\textsuperscript{253} Recent scholarship has attempted to correct these oversights. For a brief historiography of this scholarship, see Elizabeth Gunner, \textit{The Man of Heaven and the Beautiful Ones of God: Writings from Ibanda lamaNazaretha, a South African Church} (Boston: Brill, 2002), 6.
\textsuperscript{254} Mahoney, 387.
revivalist style, with its participatory elements and its focus on salvation through simple faith, was useful and quite successful in reaching out to new congregants.255

Likewise, the millennial rhetoric of the “Zionist” movement was no less indebted to the political language and maneuverings of the early twentieth century. Although he avoided openly engaging in political debate, the prophet Isaiah Shembe was closely associated with contemporary African political leadership. He was friendly with John Dube, leader of the South African Native National Congress (precursor to the African National Congress), who was his neighbor and who would compile the teachings of Shembe in order to “reveal [Shembe] to the world”.256 Shembe further allied himself with Zulu leadership by marrying his daughter Zondi to Solomon kaDinuzulu.257 Shembe professed that he obeyed the government, but where these beliefs conflicted with South African laws, he took a course of passive resistance. Shembe had given up on medicine, traditional and Western, after a religious experience encouraged him to reject medicine.258 The vision and subsequent rejection of medicine became one of the cornerstones of Shembe’s faith. Thus when the government attempted to enforce

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255 In writing on African-American religion in the nineteenth century, Lawrence Levine notes that the appeal of the revivalist style was the promise that “God would save all who believed in him; Salvation was there for all to take hold of if they would.” Furthermore, the slave spirituals emphasized not only choice but also the right to salvation. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 39. Similarly, independent church leaders and congregants frequently expressed faith as a choice and a right that did not require mediation from European or American missionaries.

256 Notes submitted to the CNC, 28 April 1939, CAD NTS 1431 24/214. The CNC was particularly concerned with Dube’s involvement with Shembe. The notes submitted to the CNC remark on Dube’s care in not committing himself to a personal response to Shembe’s religious beliefs. It also is noted that members of Ibandla lamaNazaretha supplied the biographical information to Dube. For a further discussion of the biography and other texts on Shembe, see Gunner, 15-17.

257 Gunner, 35.

258 “A voice full of compassion and power said to me: ‘Verily that medicine man yearns for your being in good health; but you will not be made whole by him – you will be made whole by the word of God.’” Translated passages of John Dube book on Shembe, for CNC. CAD NTS 1431 24/214.
mandatory small pox vaccination, Shembe and his followers refused to participate. As the group remained “law abiding” and “clean living” and committed to a course of passive resistance, there was little the government could do to overcome the group’s refusal. And though Shembe’s policies were rooted in faith healing, the policies also had political implications and created echoes of opposition even among non-believers, causing government officials much anxiety.

The best-documented independent churches, and the churches most likely to raise concern as “Ethiopian” churches, were those who broke from mission churches and were frequently led by literate pastors who were culturally savvy in both European and African domains, and thus took ideas from both domains. These churches, including the ACC

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259 In November 1926, Shembe and his followers were informed that the vaccination was compulsory, but when the District Surgeon arrived to perform the vaccinations, only one person agreed to receive the vaccination. Shembe argued for a conscientious objection to the vaccination on the grounds that “they had taken a sacred oath not to resort to medicines in any shape or form… and to rely entirely on Divine aid for the cure of all their ills.” The government gave up the pursuit of vaccination for Shembe’s followers, but in the years after, opposition to vaccination grew in the areas surrounding Verulam, even among those who were not followers of Shembe. Asst Health Officer: Union to The Secretary for Public Health, 9 Dec 1926; Magistrate: Verulam to Asst Health Officer: Union, 26 April 1929; Magistrate: Verulam to Asst Health Officer: Union, 12 June 1931; CAD NTS 1431 24/214. Another preacher, Paulos Nzuza, reportedly taught followers that “‘the mark of the beast’ referred to in Revelations meant the sign of the cross used in Baptism & also the mark caused by vaccination. He claimed to be a faith healer who could “cast out devils” and heal disease through the “laying on of hands.” Nzuza was also able to quote chapter and verse from the scriptures to support his faith in his abilities. Magistrate, Mapumulo to CNC, 1 August, 1923. PAR CNC 96 2155/1912/28. As Carton has noted, there was a deep mistrust among Africans regarding vaccination, notably among independent ministers. He quotes one “sheep-inspector-turned-inoculator” who, during the 1918 influenza epidemic, “complained ‘that a certain Native minister…is telling people not to believe in Inoculation or medicine issued by Gov [sic] as they are only trying to kill people.’” Carton, “The Forgotten Compass of Death,” 204-205.

260 Magistrate, Verulam to Assistant Health Officer, Durban, 1 October, 1929. CAD NTS 1431 24/214.

261 In many ways, these elite church leaders, like Mvuyana, M.S. Dube, Petros Lamula, Henry Ngcaiyiya and others, present examples of H.I.E. Dhlomo’s idea of “the New African,” who “knows what he where he belongs and what belongs to him; where he is going and how; and what he wants and the methods to obtain it…. [h]e wants a social order where every South African will be free to express himself and his personality fully, live and breathe freely, and have a part in shaping the destiny of his country; a social order in which race, colour and creed will be a badge neither or privilege nor of discrimination.” H.I.E. Dhlomo, “African Attitudes to the Europeans,” The Democrat, 1 December, 1945, pp21, 24; cited in Tim Couzens, The New African: A Study in the Life and Work of H.I.E. Dhlomo (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), 33-34.
and the United National Church of Christ amongst others, were those most often associated with an ideology of “Africa for the Africans” and political agendas. This association was derived from the idea that the churches that split from mission churches did so out of racial and political motivations rather than for religious reasons. While the leaders of these churches were most likely to relate social frustrations to the political structures in place in South Africa, their religious leadership cannot simply be boiled down to reactionary political activism. These independent ministers took the faith and practices that were made available by American and European missionaries and reinvested them in their African communities. Important elements of this faith were founded in the doctrines and ideas brought by those missionaries.

What was revolutionary about these mission-esque churches, and so threatened the white South African population, was not that they espoused a radical Christianity, but that they independently espoused the same Christianity. Indeed, the expression of mission-based Christianity in African churches was revolutionary not only because it put Africans in charge of churches, emphasizing faith in the African ability to achieve and progress along lines of their own deciding, but also because it put Africans in charge of the faith. These churches invested structures and authorities created by white missionaries into African communities and leadership, but it was not only a matter of leadership or community service. The members of the congregation, and specifically the religious leaders, were also charged with preaching and interpreting Christianity for the community. Although Americans and Europeans brought Christianity to South Africa, those who broke from the mission churches challenged the rights of the missionaries to
own the religion and its interpretation. Thus the churches did not have to be explicitly
political to constitute a threat; any challenge by Africans to take roles once belonging
only to whites was inherently political and threatening.

Politics and the independent church movement remained inextricably linked due
to the ever-increasing repression and restrictions of Africans in South Africa; the act of
pursuing an independent church was itself seen as a political act, regardless of individual
motivations. But the political language of even previously outspoken leaders of
independent churches was relaxed in the 1920s. This could have been related to the
increased prominence and activity of the ANC, the ICU, Inkatha, and other groups during
this period, providing a more organized outlet for political agitation. Independent church
leaders and members were involved in these organizations, but they kept these activities
more distant from their church activities and became more careful about open promotion
of political ideology from the pulpit. As a cause or an effect of this separation, the
government became slightly more willing to work with both independent churches in the
1920s, beginning with a small number of official recognitions of independent churches.
The Native Affairs Commission Report of 1925, written by a committee including liberal
segregationist C.T. Loram, advocated a place for government recognition of independent
African churches in South Africa, provided such churches could meet official
requirements.262 As a result, independent churches turned away from political language
and their leaders denied political interests as they sought to receive government
recognition and sites for buildings. For example, in a 1930 application for a church site,

262 Draft copy of the South African Native Affairs Commission Report of 1925, found in CAD NTS 1434
28/214.
B.M. Ndwandwe asserted “our church in no way interferes in political matters and confine ourselves to preaching the Gospel and trying to improve the Natives in their mode of living and if necessary, I am prepared to obtain references from Magistrates and ex-magistrates of districts where we have carried on our work.”

“Content to Hold Aloft and Watch”: Reactions of Missionaries and Government Officials

Missionaries and government officials closely monitored the development of the independent church movement. The analysis of the independent churches by missionaries in the field tended to overestimate the role of opportunistic leaders and underestimate the roles of church congregations in building independent churches. They emphasized the role of looser rules in the appeal of the separatists’ churches, claiming rampant immorality within the churches and stressed the role of charismatic leadership in creating these communities. Missionaries complained that independent churches “stole” their converts, yet when independent churches baptized new converts, it was then claimed that the independent churches had not adequately instructed these converts regarding Christianity.

The concerns of the missionaries reflected a lack of confidence in the strength of the communities they had established. Missionaries and magistrates alike felt that the Africans would “naturally take to [the] teachings” of the independent churches, leaving

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263 Letter from Ndwandwe to Magistrate, Pinetown District, 9 December, 1930. PAR CNC/PMB 54A CNC 45/267 N2/3/3(37).
264 See for example, the letter from H.A. Stick and Sick Msomi to SNA, 10 September, 1918. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
“the principles or morality, education, industriousness, religion and loyalty as taught in [the] mission… little chance of assimilation.” Despite all their years in the field, after the introduction of schools and European models of farming and business, even the most established missions with long-serving missionaries witnessed anxiety over the threat to the congregations. Mission communities had been established, but in communities where the role of the mission leadership remained largely managerial in relation to their congregations, the threat of African independent churches was frustrating and confounding to the missionaries, who took out their frustrations in angry letters to government officials.

The government had long been concerned with the potential for seditious language and action on the part of African churches without proper European control. Any rumor of a church being “anti-European” of “anti-white” prompted an investigation. When the Magistrate, Pietermaritzburg received reports that an “Ethiopian movement” was brewing in the Ixopo and Umzinto Divisions, with a man preaching “the Doctrine of Africa for the Africans” and “instructing the Natives to disregard the European Missionaries,” he forwarded the information to the CNC to direct further investigation. The Magistrate, Umzinto had “a reliable Native Constable” investigate “in as secret a manner as possible.” Even missions had not been exempt from scrutiny. In 1907,

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265 Letter from Empangeni Mission station to Magistrate, Lower Umfolozi, 18 March, 1918.
266 See for example, the letter from F.B. Bridgman to CNC, 5 May, 1919. PAR CNC 366A 2032/1919. Bridgman implores the CNC to take a stand against non-church members holding titles on mission reserves in order to eject Gardiner Mvuyana, Bangizwe Ndandwe and Aaron Jali, a teacher who joined the ACC, from Ifafa Reserve.
267 It should be noted that the Constable Dabula noted no “Ethiopian movement” in Umzinto, but he did report on an independent sect in the area. Unlike many whites, he did not conflate the idea of independent religious movements with Ethiopianism. Memo from Magistrate, Pietermaritzburg to CNC, 25 January,
following the outbreak of the Bhambatha Rebellion, the Minister for Native Affairs advised AZM missionaries that the “conditions that govern congregationalism [church decisions made by the congregation, not the church leaders]… be confined to the European section of your Mission until your Natives have advanced sufficiently to be trusted with complete powers, but at present it cannot be conceded by you, or by us politically.” As noted above, the very name “African Congregational Church” was too suggestive of African independence in the eyes of the Natal government.

Government officials carefully tracked independent ministers and were equally careful in how they handled them. While investigating whether or not Henry Ngcayiya of the Ethiopian Church ought to be issued an inward pass for Natal in 1910, the CNC wrote to the acting SNA citing information from the Transvaal Native Labour Bureau and the Commissioner of Police. The CNC noted that there was no specific evidence that Ngcayiya was preaching sedition, but also quoted the Commissioner of Police stating that Ngcayiya was a “mischievous and dishonest person.” Although the acting SNA was considering granting the pass to Ngcayiya, the CNC advised against it, claiming that it would give Africans hope that “the government had abandoned the previously existing policy and had decided to give the Ethiopians recognition.”

As government recognition was required for ministers to become marriage officers, to secure church and school sites, and to obtain government funds for schools, independent churches were persistent in their applications for recognition. The Union

1918; Magistrate Umzinto to CNC, 25 February, 1918; Report of Dabula, 13 February, 1918. PAR CNC 315 561/1918.

268 Notes taken at an interview between the Minister for Native Affairs and the Revs. Bridgman and Goodenough of the American Zulu Mission, 5 September, 1907. PAR SNA 1/1/372 1932/1907.

269 CNC to acting SNA, 29 July 1910 CAD NTS 384/F243.
government, though it began allowing for the possibility of recognition for independent churches, maintained that the churches must meet certain qualifications to receive recognition. These qualifications, including a large number of adherents, the existence of the church for a number of years, and a history of stability, were subjective and generally left to the discretion of the officials processing the application. As a result, very few churches received government recognition.270

As time passed and the multiplication of independent churches showed no signs of slowing, and as segregationist legislation further restricted the rights and opportunities of Africans, the South African government maintained its attitude of careful observation. The laws and policies already in force were usually enough to inhibit the activities of independent ministers and church communities, and the government was concerned that any further opposition would only strengthen the movement. Instead, officials hoped that careful encouragement of organizations they favored and close monitoring of those they deemed threatening could shape the African independent church movement into something they could understand and contain. As SNA Barrett noted in 1915, “[l]egislation and regulation directed against the Ethiopian Church movement do not exist in the Union, and the Government has deemed it unwise to adopt any policy of repression, having greater faith in the influence for good of sympathetic treatment.” Ultimately, the South African government was, in Barrett’s words, “content to hold aloft and watch.”271

270 By 1925, there were still only 4 churches that had received government recognition, if one includes the American-established African Methodist Episcopal Church. Sundkler, 76.
271 SNA to Secretary for the Interior, 22 March, 1915. CAD NTS 4035/F243.
missionaries had turned to accuse government officials of negligence in handling the independent church movement. In a 1918 letter to the SNA, H.A. Stick and Sick Msomi, representing the “Native Churches” of the AZM, wrote, “We feel, Sir, that this Ethiopian movement has been encouraged and fostered to a great extent in its progress because of the fact that Government evidently has taken no notice of it, whatever, and no effort has been made to interfere with renegade leaders and their religious bodies.”272 Ten years after the government accused the AZM of fostering the independent movement due by failing to impose proper controls on African churches, the mission accused the government of the same irresponsibility.

While missionaries continued to extol at length on the threats of African independent churches, the South African government became less quick to form blanket assumptions regarding the independent churches. If at first government officials were prone to believing missionary tales of debauchery and immorality in independent churches, by the middle of the 1920’s they were more willing to weigh the evidence before them when making decisions regarding independent churches. In spite of the Bullhoek massacre, and indeed perhaps because of it, government officials were willing to give independent churches a certain degree of latitude.273 Indeed, attempts to over-

272 Letter from H.A. Stick and Sick Msomi to SNA, 10 September, 1918. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
273 The massacre of members of the Israelite sect at Bulhoek in 1921 greatly influenced the way South African government handled independent churches. The trouble was linked to Mgijima founded the movement after being excommunicated from the Church of God and the Saints of Christ in 1918. Mgijima quickly gathered a large following, which called themselves the Israelites. In June of 1920, Inspector Nightingale objected to the construction of buildings and the residence of unregistered persons at the site, the result of Israelites moving closer to Mgijima’s home. Mgijima promised to evacuate the site, but a month later, Nightingale returned to find more buildings constructed with more in the process of being
dramatize the threat of African leaders were met with contempt. Similarly, when M.S. Dube applied to be a marriage officer in 1925, government officials took particular precaution in investigating Dube and his church due to reports from Bridgman that declared the ACC “virulently anti-white.” Upon investigation, however, numerous officials had to conclude that they could find “nothing despicable or destructive of their preachings” and that in no way could the adherents of the ACC be considered “anti-white.” This step back on the part of the government gave African independent church communities a chance to grow and to shape their identities and beliefs.

constructed. The Israelites entrenched themselves and the local Magistrate, the Secretary for Native Affairs, and the Native Affairs Commission each in turn visited the Israelites in attempt to convince Mgijima and his followers to depart. On May 24, 1921, a police force detached to arrest Mgijima and a certain number of his followers attached the Israelite camp, resulting in the death, injury or imprisonment of over 300 Israelite followers. After the tragedy, the Native Affairs Commission, A. W Roberts, L.A.S. Lemmer, C.T. Loram, and P. v.d. Merwe, examined the events at Bulhoek and the issue of independent churches more broadly. The Commission concluded that “the separatist movement is an inevitable step in the social evolution of the Native people and that it would be as foolish as it would be impossible to attempt to suppress it by any repressive legislation.” Draft copy of the South African Native Affairs Commission Report of 1925, found in CAD NTS 1434 28/214. For more information on the Bulhoek massacre, see Robert Edgar, Because They Chose the Plan of God: The Story of the Bulhoek Massacre (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989).

274 Although a doctor suggested that the refusal of Shembe and his followers to be vaccinated could lead to second Bulhoek, the CNC dismissed the idea as something that “need not… be taken seriously, and would have been better omitted.” CNC to SNA, 6 January, 1927. CAD NTS 1431 24/214.

275 Bridgman had written the letter to the SNA after reading in Ilanga lase Natal that Solomon kaDinuzulu was to lay the cornerstone of a new ACC building. Letter from F.B. Bridgman to SNA, 18 June, 1919. CAD NTS 1444 54/214. See also letter from F.B. Bridgman to CNC, 5 May, 1919. PAR CNC 366A 2032/1919.

276 CID, Witwatersrand Division to Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg, 27 April 1925; Native Sub-Commissioner, Germiston-Boksburg Area to Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg, 26 June 1925. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
5. Community, Identity, and Gender Roles in the Independent Churches

In November of 1912, N.B. Ghormley, a missionary of the American Free Methodist Mission wrote to the SNA to complain about activities of a separatist body in his area. Ghormley linked the separatist activity to the Cushite movement, which had been pressured out of Natal before the Bambatha Rebellion. In particular, one former Cushite leader, Lanyazima Qoza, had established himself at the mission station at Edwaleni and was having some success at gaining a following. As the missionary related, "For perhaps a year, [Qoza] was quiet, but afterward began to follow our evangelist around, from point to point, preaching their peculiar doctrines, as opposed to those of the white missionary…. About the same time, he began to oppose the teachings of our mission, even in the public services on the Station." It is likely that Qoza’s peculiar practices were taken from Cushite practices, including foot-washing and open-air baptism. Such practices reflected the Pentecostal influence but were foreign and threatening to the staid religion of the traditional Protestant missions.

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277 The Cushites were followers of the preacher “Blind Johannes” Zondi in the late nineteenth century. They had originally belonged to the mission of the Coloured Baptists of America but broke from that church In 1898, the Natal police jailed Zondi for “seditious preaching” and in 1901, he was deported to Ubombo in Zululand. After the deportation of Zondi, his followers lost cohesion and fragmented. Marks, Reluctant Rebellion, 65. As Qoza’s efforts illustrate, however, the followers carried forth Zondi’s ideas and practices, sowing the seeds of new Cushite groups and movements.

278 Letter from N.B. Ghormley to SNA, 6 November 1912. PAR CNC 96 2155/1912/23.

279 Marks, Reluctant Rebellion, 65. Ritual washing had a place in Zulu tradition though it proceeded differently from Christian baptism. The washing was considered to have a cleansing or healing power, but it was meant primarily for the sick or elderly. The washing could be done in what was a usual place of
Even though Qoza subsequently was jailed for three months for breach of the peace, the mission was unsuccessful in its attempts to temper his influence.\textsuperscript{280} Ghormley wrote, “Finding him of such a bad character, we compelled him to leave the farm, and he went back to his former dwelling place, and began the Cushite propaganda, as before.” To the frustration of the Free Methodist missionaries, Qoza did not attempt to convert non-Christians but instead followed Free Methodist evangelists to their outstations as he had before, “opposing and distracting as much as lay in his power to do…”\textsuperscript{281} The missionary’s use of inflammatory terms like propaganda conveyed not only his own concern about African independent thought, but also his need to excite the concerns of government officials to spur action against individuals, particularly in a post-Bambatha Rebellion environment.

What drove Ghormley to write to the SNA, however, was Qoza’s interest in providing for the education of the local community, despite his ignorance of “book-learning in general or of the Scriptures, with no piety to recommend him as a religious leader.” Ghormley claimed that Qoza was attempting to thwart the mission’s plan to establish a school near the chief’s homestead by founding his own school. Qoza recruited Isaac Shalata, the son of another Cushite believer, to teach at the school. Ghormley bemoaned Shalata’s presence on the location, blaming the young local chief for being “too weak to withstand the pressure from the Cushite element.” Ghormley considered the

\textsuperscript{280} Qoza was jailed for attacking an African policeman, perhaps one who had been sent to monitor the man’s preaching.
\textsuperscript{281} Letter from N.B. Ghormley to SNA, 6 November 1912. PAR CNC 96 2155/1912/23.

washing, such as a cattle enclosure, but it was not something that would be done in a river. Indeed, Zulu ritual washing was closer in nature to the foot washing found in the Cushite church as well as Shembe’s Nazareth Church and other similar churches. Berglund 223-224.
Cushite school “the merest farce, as they are without books or other equipment, and there
is no money among the people – even if so disposed – to carry on and adequately provide
for the establishment and maintenance of a school.” As Ghormley would have it, the
entire venture was made illegitimate by the failure of the school and its leadership to
meet mission standards.

The missionary concluded by pronouncing sentiments against independent church
movements echoed by missionaries throughout Natal in the early twentieth century: “The
effect of the Cushite propaganda is to confuse the native Christians, sow sedition and
discord among the surrounding heathen, and discredit European effort for the government
and religious instruction of the people.”282 The SNA was appropriately alarmed and had
the Natal police look into the matter. Even before the Bhambatha Rebellion, police were
tasked with monitoring independent churches, and as the independent church movement
 gained steam, the government routinely sought information on the churches and on
community interests more broadly through police reports from the Criminal Investigation
Department.283 Indeed, in response to a request for information on independent churches
in his district, the Magistrate for Vryheid noted his response was delayed due to his own
lack of knowledge about the churches. The magistrate acknowledged his distance from
the issue at hand, and at the same time he indicated his complete inability to comprehend
the independent churches when he stated, “I know very little about the workings and the
objects of these Separatist bodies or the why and the wherefore of their existence. The

282 Ibid.
283 For example, see the Report of Det. Sergt. Robb, Inspector in Charge, CID, Durban, 19 March, 1924,
CAD NTS 1434 28/214. The report included information on local independent churches with comments on
the church leaders The report was forwarded to the Secretary for Native Affairs in response to his minute
requesting such information.
only practical way of getting at their nature would be to go into the question thoroughly
with the aid of some intelligent and reliable native in Government pay, who could attend
the churches and mix with the followers….” In a similar case, a magistrate
recommended a colleague “send reliable Detectives in mufti, to get friendly local Natives
to attend the gathering” of an independent church.

Despite Ghormley’s negative description, the report of the local police on the
Cushites described a much more functional school supported by the community,
including the young chief. The police report noted “… a native named Isaac J. Shalata
has been engaged by the young chief Makesimani at a salary of two pounds ten shillings
per month to teach him (Makesimani) the English Language, and also teach about
fourteen native children the English Language and to read and write.” According to the
police, the pupils supplied books and other supplies. Although an official school building
had not been built, the children were taught at Makesimani’s kraal in a hut given to them
by the chief free of charge. Shalata had been established there about five months at the
time of the report.

This exchange sheds light on the ways in which independent ministers sought and
maintained a community following, as well as the ways in which a congregation
supported independent churches in their functions. It also exemplifies the
misunderstandings of the missionaries regarding contemporary African community
needs. The Cushite independent church and its community of followers managed a series

285 Magistrate, Pietermaritzburg to CNC, 13 March, 1918. PAR CNC 315 561/1918.
286 Report of S.A. Falecki, Natal Police, Murchison to Sub-Inspector Clifton, Natal Police, 26 November
1912. PAR CNC 96 2155/1912/23.
of compromises to obtain support and gain what they needed. Although Shalata did not have a European education, he could teach English, which made him a compelling figure, particularly because he offered a mission education with fewer strings attached. Although the community was poor, parents were able to supply books for their children’s education. Although the Cushites could not be permitted to build an official school, the chief supplied a hut to circumvent government restrictions. Nowhere in the police report is religious training mentioned, but one can imagine that the interest in the school was accompanied by an interest in the Cushites’ preaching, though the parallel interests did not seem mandatory.

The conceptualization and construction of community in Natal had undergone sweeping changes since the establishment of the mission churches and the development of urban areas. New allegiances had been forged and new identities had become more important than previous identities and associations. People now considered themselves first Christian or African rather than Zulu, or considered such associations of equal importance. If ministers had usurped some of the functions of chiefs in some communities, they failed to fulfill the chiefly roles in other functions. Nor could missionaries make the same claims to kinship and traditional respect in contemporary African society as chiefs had previously; indeed, it was increasingly the case that the chiefs could not claim the same honors. Instead, African communities were finding that independent churches were receptive to their needs and able to meet them. At the heart of this was the ability to compromise and a greater sense of tolerance and fellowship than
was found in the mission churches. In return, congregations and their leaders were more willing to make compromises of their own to support independent churches.

Beyond the community support network found in the churches, the most fundamental and important point uniting the members of these churches was that which marked their differences from other churches – their faith. Each independent church was defined by its beliefs, which grew out of and in turn shaped the community of believers. Unable to merge completely with traditionalist society, yet unable to covert wholly to the brand of Christianity marked by the missionaries, the *kholwa* communities who formed independent churches were brought together entirely by their faith. The choice of a church was not simply a matter of convenience or random selection but a matter of conscious deliberation and decision. The functions of the community bonded by such choices were simply an affirmation of the ideological ties that bound that community together.

The faith and practices each church expressed could be an independent expression of mission Christianity or could include any number of innovations. The freedom from mission Christianity permitted that the common requirement was only an expression of faith in a general Christian conception God and by extension Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, the ideas of which took on new meaning and importance in some independent churches. Beyond that basic unifying belief, there were numerous other common themes or beliefs in independent churches. While links can be found between some of these beliefs and African traditionalism, it would be too simple to say that Africans picked and chose the beliefs they liked best and amalgamated them into their own form of religion,
though that is certainly what many AZM missionaries believed. The developing faith was much more complex, tested and shaped by experience, necessity, and spiritual inspiration. These forms and practices had roots in a number of locations and found expression in a variety of methods, each unique to its situation and alike in its expression of Christian faith.

**The Independent Minister in the Community**

Missionaries and government officials commonly misrepresented independent church members and especially independent ministers as having followed an easy path to power, leading to the creation of church communities without discipline or morals. Missionaries and magistrates accused independent ministers of flitting from church to church, seeking out the most comfortable and promising place to set up their preaching. Superficially, one could find support for the missionaries’ claims. Independent churches were subject to fractures and secessions, though the anger of the missionaries was no doubt due in part to the fact that mission churches suffered from the same problems. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for independent ministers to have belonged to numerous churches, either those already established or creating their own, before settling into a community. Even among the African elite, changing churches did not attach a stigma to a church leader. ANC senior chaplain Henry Ngcayiya joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church before becoming a founding leader of the Ethiopian Church.

But the estimations and generalizations by the European onlookers fail to account for the community interests, the more complicated motivations and decisions, behind
these splits and unions. The Magistrate at Nkandla pointed to a preacher who had moved from work as a sergeant in the Salvation Army to the African Congregational Church. Encountering friction there, this preacher joined the African United Ethiopian Church, an offshoot of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, bringing along his followers within the ACC with him. This minister was searching for the right church, whether this was a church where he could practice as he wished, or among people who understood his beliefs, or where he could make more money. But, he did not simply create his own church. He joined previously existing independent churches, and when leaving one, he took like-minded members of his community with him. In a colonial society where structures for taxation, forced labor, and the regulation of social and cultural traditions repressed and limited their very humanity, Africans found fellowship and identity, and built structures of their own for confronting the increasingly segregationist world. These bonds, once made, were not easily broken, and despite transformations and switches in churches, during years of repression, communities of kholwa came together to define their own world.

Contrary to the allegations of critics, independent ministry certainly offered little for those seeking economic advancement. It can be assumed that some independent ministers sought to take advantage of church followers for personal gain, and indeed some men achieved wealth and influence as independent ministers. However, it is

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288 These examples are rare though, and limited to the best-organized and most popular churches. Sundkler was hard-pressed to find ministers who took exorbitant wages. He notes that the Zulu Congregational Church, with 8000 members, could offer its ministers quarterly wages from £12 to £25. The African Congregational Church offered yearly salaries up to £100, but it was not unheard of for the minister to take a lower salary to apply the funds to other church projects or needs. Perhaps it is unsurprising that prophet
unlikely that the community would tolerate the abuse of their contributions and offerings by the minister, no matter how devout the flock; frequently, it was fears of mismanagement of funds and misrepresentation of the church community that encouraged Africans to seek out new churches. Indeed, Gardiner Mvuyana, like many independent church ministers who had broken from mission churches, expected a decrease in his salaries, but he declared that was willing to accept it as it was the principle not the money that drove him.289

Ministers could not expect unlimited power or monetary gain from their congregations, but they could expect support in return for leadership. Community leadership had suffered a crisis under the mission system. The traditional authority of the chiefs had been eroded to the point that they were primarily government functionaries, primarily settling small local issues, while any larger decisions had to be rubber stamped by the government or risk being overturned. Missionaries had proven they could not represent the congregations they aimed to govern as they were neither of the local community nor subject to its interests. And few Africans ever hoped that magistrates and other government officials could or would address their needs voluntarily.

**Representation of the Community**

Out of necessity and by design, independent church leaders attempted to fill this vacuum of African leadership and community representation. In part, this required a

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289 Report from Chief Pass Officer on Gardiner Mvuyana, 1917. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
revision of the structures of authority and commitment held by the community in question. Promises of change were accompanied by denunciations of what had been ineffective, and the hopes of the congregations were refocused on what independent ministries could provide. People frustrated by unfulfilled promises by missionaries, exploitation by the government, or the ineffectiveness of local chiefs who were constrained by the government or appointed by it, were receptive to these new voices of leadership.

In Natal and on the Rand, numerous figures vied with each other for the loyalty of African communities, each declaring what Africans owed to God, to the government, or to each other. Obligations were omnipresent while returns were few. Accordingly, denunciation of competing figures of authority frequently went hand in hand with declarations of religious independence, creating a platform for ministers to preach and fashioning and appeal to persons who found the current structures of leadership lacking. Such a platform set the realm of minister’s power and clarified the allegiances that would or would not be expected of the congregation. John Mhlongo, a minister of the Independent Methodist Church of South Africa, was reported to have told people in his district that he was planning “to establish a place of his own in the Location, and that all people living there will be under his control, and that all matters concerning them will be enquired into by him, and if necessary brought to the Court by him.” Mhlongo further stated that the Chief would have no power regarding these natives and that he himself
would have entire control of them.²⁹⁰ As Mhlongo himself refused to be under control of
the chief, the Chief then asked the Magistrate to shift Mhlongo out of his tribe.²⁹¹
Similarly, William Sabela of the Apostolic Faith Mission was reported to preach that he
“did not recognise any authority, white or black…”²⁹² Only God could have authority
over humanity.

The preaching of Mhlongo and Sabela appealed to a growing discontent among
Africans in Natal and on the Rand. Both traditional African authority and white
government and mission authority had proven inconsistent and without answer to the
drastic changes experienced by Africans since the end of the nineteenth century.
Independent Christianity, on the other hand, offered a different set of promises. In
rejecting political authority and placing faith in an African Christian religion, churches
communicated their rejection of the structures that defined their daily lives. They sought
to create a new kind of community outside of the structures that had failed them.

Alternately, independent religious movements could align themselves with
traditional authority, an authority likely to be respected by many of their congregants and
that could bring in more followers. The support for the Zulu monarchy, which had
increased in the years after the Bhambatha Rebellion, became a unifying movement,
which many kholwa, particularly those struggling to make their way under segregation,
found strength. As others have noted, the Bhambatha Rebellion was a turning point for
Zulu identity and for the development of the Zulu cultural renaissance. In the words of la

²⁹⁰ Statement of Mazui Mtungwa of Chief Muzucitwayo, Mpojana Dvn. 17 April 1917. PAR CNC 274
531/1917.
²⁹¹ Ibid.
²⁹² Statement by Dabula, Native Constable, Umzinto, Natal, 13 February 1918. PAR CNC 315 561/1918.
Hausse, the “Bambatha rebellion… imperceptibly unpicked the powerful myth of a coherent collective self underlying kholwa identity, and then reintegrated it in impressively new ways…. Out of the trauma of the rebellion emerged the basis for novel forms of elite political identification with Zulu chiefs and commoners, and the Zulu royal house itself.”293 Even among those several generations removed from the traditional kingdom’s hierarchy, there was a renewed interest in Zulu identity, creating a reformed idea of Zuluness and the formation of Zulu cultural societies and political organizations in the decades following the Bhambatha Rebellion. Ethnic Zulus embraced their heritage, the idea of a distinctly Zulu past and culture, in the beginning of the twentieth century, not just through political parties but through the study and promotion of Zulu history, the Zulu language, and Zulu traditions.294 Diverse Africans had renounced their traditional cultures to convert to Christianity and join the communities on the mission stations, but those traditions still continued alongside them, visible and visitable.

The removal of Dinuzulu as the Zulu monarch in 1908, a symbolic end to an era, also practically changed the relationship between the monarch and the Zulu people. The Zulu people, particularly the kholwa who were under elected station chiefs, were now severed from non-government endorsed forms of political representation. Subsequent support for the Zulu monarch became more than ever a conscious choice to embrace a vision of the world that empowered Zuluness and respected the Zulu royal family and the Zulu cultural legacy. At the same time, such a choice implicitly questioned the legitimacy of the South African government and the right of white people to have power over the

293 La Hausse, Restless Identities, 12-13.
294 Ibid., 7-9.
Zulu more broadly. The post-Union government’s move to increasingly segregationist policy beginning in the 1920s further encouraged cooperation between the kholwa and traditionalists as the government isolated African political institutions into rural areas.295

Ironically, it was the educated children of those who had renounced traditional ways who most devotedly set out to retain the cultural legacy that threatened to be lost. Cope considered this “a reflection of [kholwa] cultural disorientation, and more specifically their paradoxical preoccupation with both ‘roots’ and ‘progress’.”296 Certainly such ideas have foundation in the contradictions of mission education and contemporary South Africa’s turn to segregation. In this framework, and among the swell of written and organizational support for the royal house and a Zulu renaissance more broadly, independent churches aligned themselves with ideas of Zuluness and promoted pride in Zulu heritage and Zulu leadership into their congregations, bridging the gap between the kholwa elite and the traditional Zulu elite. In this vein, Gardiner Mvuyana, Petros Lamula, and other independent church leaders allied themselves with the movement to resurrect the Zulu monarchy and promote Zulu unity through the Zulu political party Inkatha.297 The primary objective listed in Inkatha’s constitution was the unification of Zulu people and the establishment of a Zulu homeland. Beyond that, Inkatha was interested in a number of self-help programs including the attainment of land

296 Ibid., 172.
297 Gardiner Mvuyana and Timothy Mate of the ACC and Petros Lamula of the United Native National Church of Christ became involved in the founding of and raising money for Inkatha and the Zulu royal house. In return, they frequently sought support from Solomon kaDinuzulu for their own ventures. Report of Meeting of ‘Inkata ka Zulu’ held at Mahashini on Oct 8,9,10 by Leonard E. Oscroft, 13 Oct, 1924. CAD NTS 7205 20/326. Cope, 96, 139; La Hausse, Restless Identities, 111, 244.
for agricultural cooperatives and the establishment of schools. Although Mvuyana, as a lifelong resident on the mission reserves, had never been under a chief, he nevertheless found Inkatha’s mix of Zulu monarchism and self-help progressivism a compelling cause that he supported in his personal and religious activities. In return, the stature of Mvuyana and others as leaders of the community increased and their reputations spread among the Africans of Natal, *kholwa* and unconverted alike. This involvement created concern among South African’s government officials for it provided the Zulu royalty with already assembled structures of support. Missionaries were threatened by independent church support for the Zulu royal house for it was yet another connection to the people the foreign missions could not provide. It therefore became policy, enforced the government and monitored by missionaries, to limit the interactions between Solomon kaDinuzulu and independent churches, particularly the ACC.

It was not only established and structured churches that aligned themselves with the Zulu monarchy. While the “elite rediscover[ed]... Zulu ethnicity,” the less advantaged, who had always navigated the space between the traditional and the modern,

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298 Cope, 171-172. These purposes were very much in line with the interests listed in many independent church constitutions, as discussed below.
299 Petition by Rev. W.D. Rood on behalf of Gardiner Mvuyana for exemption from Native law, 10 February 1887. SNA I/1/97 1887/125.
300 Despite the fact that Solomon kaDinuzulu did not show at a planned ACC event, a large crowd attended and the church was still able to raise £70 from the crowd. Letter from SNA to CNC, 17 August, 1918. PAR CNC 332 2337/1918.
301 In a 1918 letter to CNC Charles Wheelwright, SNA Edward Dower wrote that missionaries and African members of mission churches related to him that “it would be a great mistake if Solomon comes to Johannesburg for the purpose [of laying the cornerstone for an ACC church]: that his name and position would be used simply for the purpose of promoting what is nothing but a political movement which would afterwards spread to Zululand itself and seriously prejudice bona fide mission work.” In response, Dower gave his assurance that Solomon would not participate and sought Wheelwright’s assistance in convincing Solomon to “publicly disassociate himself from the movement.” Letter from SNA to CNC, 17 August, 1918. See also the letter from the Bishop of Pretoria to CNC, 21 May, 1919; and letter from CNC to the Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg, 27 May, 1919. All letters found in PAR CNC 332 2337/1918.
302 La Hausse, *Restless Identities*, 16-17.
maintained more distant, and perhaps more subversive, support for the Zulu leadership. As Gunner has noted, independent prophet Isaiah Shembe employed stories of the Zulu past and of Zulu kings in his church prayers and hymns, deploying the symbolism in ways different than other overtly nationalist ministers like Lamula or Mvuyana. After being arrested and put on trial for seditious preaching, an itinerant preacher Albert Dhladhla argued in his own defense by calling for support for the Zulu monarchy, using the language of Christianity to support his case: “I want to know to whom we are to be loyal – to the King of England, or Dinizulu [sic]? Dinizulu is at the place where Jesus was baptized.” Dhladhla then read from a book by Colenso but substituted Dinuzulu’s name for Jesus Christ. He concluded his defense by telling those present: “I am showing ignorant people today the way to go, the right path to Dinizulu. We are today feeding the white people with our money – which should be paid over to Dinizulu’s sons. We shall all be in hell if we keep this up any longer.” For this sort of preaching, Dhladhla, at an advanced age, was sentenced to three months of hard labor.

303 Gunner, 32-34. Shembe’s daughter Zondi also became one of Solomon’s wives. Cope, 139.
304 Statement by Albert Dhladhla, 23 April 1924. PAR CNC 344 21/1919. The books Dhladhla had with him were “Amazwi, ka Sobantu kanye na Dinizulu angu Momanga ka Cetshwayo,” the Book of Genesis, and John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. An appeal was made to remove Dhladhla to another prison due to the conditions of the Weenen jail and Dhladhla’s age, but upon inquiry by the CNC, the Magistrate at Weenen defended the incarceration of Dhladhla there, noting that Dhladhla was not too old or feeble to serve his term, having been “stumping all over the country, practicing his ‘gospel’” and declaring Dhladhla “quite sane” and “exceedingly impertinent.” CNC to Magistrate, Weenen, 21 May, 1924; Magistrate, Weenen to CNC, 5 June, 1924. PAR CNC 344 21/1919. As Isabel Hofmeyr notes, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* held particular resonance for African Christians. Bunyan’s text was used not just as a religious allegory but also to discuss a variety of issues concerning contemporary African society, including political, economic, and social problems, and the experiences of the main character Christian frequently mirrored the experiences of Africans. Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 116, 127-136, 141-143, 150.
305 Ordinary Jurisdiction No. 133/1924 in the Court of the Magistrate for the District of Weenen. PAR CNC 344 21/1919.
Ultimately, the Africans in Natal were at a crossroads. Dhladhla’s language might have been more direct and confrontational than many other preachers, but he was not alone in identifying the problems facing Africans and seeking to remedy them. Independent ministers who used political language and support for political figures to communicate to their congregations and to gain further support were generally considered “Ethiopians” by missionaries and government officials threatened by their language, but the word “Ethiopian” as it has been historically applied is too narrow to capture the social functions of these churches. Rather than being propagandists, these ministers were attempting to address real grievances of their congregation dealing with segregation. If they used political language, it was because they were savvy to the language of the state and countering that language. 306 Likewise, support for Solomon kaDinuzulu reflected the growing number of Africans who were locked out of paths for social and economic advancement and locked first by the Shepstone system and then by segregation. Thus if communities were refused representation by the South African government, they would themselves choose who could represent them, religiously and politically.

Nevertheless, the South African government had to be reckoned with in order for churches to operate, and despite rejection of missionary oversight, many churches were conscious of the need to maintain relations with white officials. Many independent church leaders, cognizant of the bureaucracy within which they needed to work in order to obtain the rights of recognized churches, composed appeals to the government’s

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306 Indeed as Peterson notes, Africans quickly understood and employed the bureaucratic English of the state, raising alarms among whites about the able “mimicry” of the Africans. Peterson, 67-68.
authority or advised their members to be obedient to the government’s regulations. The African Methodist Church noted in its constitution, “It shall be the duty of all the Officers of the Church to teach obedience to those in authority whether they be members of the Church or not especially those of the Ruling Race.”\textsuperscript{307} The popular prophet Isaiah Shembe, in counseling his followers to obey the law, said “A person who is a minister…. Must be thorough in teaching people to respect the law…. Taxes need to be paid to rulers….\textsuperscript{308} Furthermore, the number of independent churches seeking official government recognition remained consistently high over the years in acknowledgement of the government’s influence over a church’s freedom to work.\textsuperscript{309} As government officials controlled the assignments that allowed the church to function – travel passes, licenses to perform marriages, and the obtainment of church sites – government recognition provided a measure of stability that was desired by many churches, but bestowed on only a few.

\textit{Qualifications of Leadership}

Independent church congregations were not reckless with regard to assigning positions of leadership within their communities, nor were church congregations tolerant of ministers who would abuse their power. As the chosen ministers would be charged with representing the community to God, the government, and the rest of the world, the qualifications required of church leaders reflected the values of the communities. This is

\textsuperscript{307} Constitution of the African Methodist Church, PAR CNC 96 2155/1912/4.
\textsuperscript{308} Gunner, 73.
\textsuperscript{309} Sundkler discusses the numerous ways in which applications were received, including personal letters, interviews, and recommendations from lawyers, as well as the officially constructed application form. Officials met with such applications with form responses and denials. Sundkler, 74-77.
not to say that these communities were monolithic entities. A function of the church, and of the minister in particular, was to hear the different voices within the community, to create dialogue, and to serve the needs of those differing voices. Unlike the mission churches, which instituted order from above, limiting dialogue between pastor and community to an enumeration of what was “right and moral” and denying representation to those who did not follow these standards, the independent churches were far more likely to be focused on community participation in worship and celebration and therefore defining the culture of the church. The participatory elements gave the average church member a role in the church and channeled the spirit of the community into the worship.\textsuperscript{310} If moral standards in independent churches were not the same as those on the mission stations, they reflected the standards of a community willing to compromise on some issues, but not on faith. These were not European mission standards, but then that was the point.

Churches that developed along the lines of mission churches frequently had stricter standards of education for ministers than other independent churches. Lamula’s United National Church of Christ required that prospective ministers pass an examination equivalent to Standard VI (equivalent to eight years of school\textsuperscript{311}) and an oral and written examination put forward by the Church’s Board of Examiners. Before ordination, the

\textsuperscript{310} The poet B.W. Vilakazi considered the “Zionist churches” appealed to so many Africans because they incorporated “most of the first fruits ceremonial observances in the purification of priest of king, colourful dresses and community singing, mixed with dancing, consisting largely in rhythmical raising of the feet, thundering stamp upon the ground, and a series of grotesque shuffles, interspersed with vigorous leaps by the leaders of the group. This has been an attraction for the average Native, and he eagerly supports such a movement, \textit{for he has an active part to play}, besides the priest.” Vilakazi, “The Conception and Development of Poetry in Zulu,” \textit{Bantu Studies}, 12, 1938, 124, cited in Peterson, 72-73, emphasis in citation.

\textsuperscript{311} Sundkler, 124.
candidate must have served a number of years as an evangelist with three additional years as a probationer. Given the number of appeals every church had to make to the government for recognition, for the appointment of marriage officers, for church sites, and to deal with other issues affecting their communities, it is not surprising that independent church communities put emphasis on training able representatives.

Even the independent churches most dedicated to upholding so-called “European standards,” however, also understood that an effective, educated ministry could not be produced overnight and made provision to ordain ministers who had not yet attained a Standard VI education. The African Methodist Church stated in its constitution “in order to satisfy the needs of the Church it shall be in order to ordain any member of the Church who is a true Christian and knows the Wesleyan Catechism No 2 and can read and write and has been a preacher in the Wesleyan or any other duly Constituted Church for the past five years without a break….” The United National Church of Christ allowed for the ordination of “any member of the Church who has by his straight life proved a fit and proper person to lead the members to salvation. He must be a man of sober habits and able to read and write. He must have some knowledge of the Bible and the teachings of Christ.” These qualifications, while no less stringent, allowed for the development of a pastorate coming out of the local community without compromising the requirement of a literate representative, and who therefore could both preach the word of God and articulate the needs of the congregation to the government. To establish a truly African

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church, congregations were willing to look beyond paper standards set in European churches to employ less educated but otherwise qualified and enthusiastic ministers.

Unlike ministers in mission churches who were ultimately subject to the will of the mission organization and its representatives, independent church leaders who failed to represent their congregation faced consequences from that congregation. These ministers were either removed or the objecting members of the community removed themselves from his church. St. Philip’s Ethiopian Church in South Africa separated from the Ethiopian Church under Henry Ngcayiya after a disagreement with the church leader. As George Mngadi explained it to the CNC, “We have been under H.R. Ngcayiya… and we were not satisfied with his supervision which was not in accordance with the church.” The church polity was upset over an evangelist that Ngcayiya had suspended two years previously, a matter which Ngcayiya refused to discuss. Having found their leader’s refusal to hear the concerns of the community incompatible with the way they believed the church community should be governed, members of the church found it necessary to break with Ngcayiya. Mngadi concluded, “These are the people who have asked me to report them to you sir, as their father. We are now separating ourselves from him, and we would name our denomination as: St. Phillip Ethiopian Church, who established this the Ethiopian community.”

Despite its lineage, as an African church that had broken away from another African church, St. Philip’s could trace its primary beliefs back to the European religious wrangling during the Protestant Reformation. When the church submitted its constitution

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315 Letter from George Mngadi to CNC, 23 September 1925. PAR CNC 96 2155/12/15.
to the Chief Native Commissioner as a sign of their faith, the principles of the church were outlined in the submitted document. The first article of faith listed in the document read: “There is but one living and true God, everlasting without body parts or passions, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things visible and invisible and in the Unity of this Godhead there be three persons of one substance, power and eternity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.”316 This statement, the first in the Articles of Religion designed by Europeans in the Reformation and derived by members of St. Philip’s from their time in Anglican churches, was adopted in many different African church constitutions. It expresses the central tenet of Christian belief, the belief by which Africans asserted their Christianity, and it was the unifying belief for the St. Philip’s Congregation, regardless of which church name they chose.

In another example of congregations who successfully challenged a poor leader, the ministers and evangelists of the Christian Catholic Church in Zion wrote to the Native Affairs Department in 1928 to announce that the Reverend Bern T. Shabalala had been removed from their congregation due to “bad ways,” including trouble with girls, causing trouble “between the people of this society,” keeping “company with bad people” already ousted from the society, and refusing to come to the meetings. Although the letter is vague on Shabalala’s “bad ways” and does not go into details about his “trouble with girls,” it can presumed that Shabalala was having sexual relations with the female members of his congregation, either with or without their consent, raising objections from

316 Constitution and Rules of Conduct of the St. Philip’s Ethiopian Church in South Africa. PAR CNC 96 2155/12/15. The thirty-nine Articles of Religion were originally devised for the Anglican church and adapted by John Wesley for the Methodist church.
the congregation as a whole. Rather than becoming the refuge for all manner of immorality and license imagined by judgmental observers, the Christian Catholic Church in Zion, like many independent church communities, carefully chose and regulated its leaders and was careful to protect the community from threats, even when the threat was a leader of the church. As anywhere, though, power also entices those who would abuse it, and communities shifted, expanding and contracting in response to the interests of the people, creating a changing, though not altogether unstable, landscape of independent churches and church leadership.

**Defining the Community**

If the missionaries sought to create societies that conformed to their own idealized vision of the world, the establishment of independent churches allowed African congregants to set down their visions and intentions for what their ideal community would be, as well as what would be required in such a community. As the AZM and other white missions had qualifications for membership, so too did the independent churches attempted to define the membership of their communities. As missionaries feared, some churches did institute looser requirements for membership, requiring only a profession and dedication of faith. In the community of St. Philip’s Ethiopian Church in South Africa, members were “formed out of an intelligent profession of faith in Christ sustained by a life in unison therewith.” The Christian Church Mission of Africa stated,
“Members are real believers. All who repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus as their savior and Lord are admitted as members by baptism and they are to show their faith by their good works,” while one of the purposes of the church was to create “mutual acquaintance and fraternal unity amongst its members.”319

Certain churches followed the mission example of a probationary period before accepting individuals as full members. The African Methodist Church required a trial period and approval of the Class Leader before the potential member could even meet with a Board of Examiners to be approved as a full member of the church. But, unlike the mission church from which it had sprung, the definitions of the African Methodist Church attempted to be inclusive rather than exclusive, stating that the “object of this Church is to attempt to serve the Lord in a manner that shall be acceptable to all worshippers and that no forcing of any rule or regulation shall at any time apply to any member of the Church but that each and every member shall enjoy the benefits of the Church without favour whether he or she be poor or rich and of whatever nationality….“320

Such a statement could hardly be considered revolutionary within the realm of Christian thought, but missionaries and government officials would surely have found it so, and in a sense they would have been correct. By embracing a basic Christian notion of brotherhood, or in other terms basic human equality, and by renouncing coercion and threats as un-Christian, this statement not only attacks the policies imposed by missions

and the government, especially the color bar, and questions the Christianity of missionaries and officials who impose such regulations.

Likewise, St. Philip’s Ethiopian Church in South Africa included in its constitution a number (though not all) of the thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Anglican Church, including the “rights of the Church,” which stated “it is not necessary that rites and ceremonies be in all places one or utterly alike; for at times there have been divers and may be changed according to the diversities of Countries, times and mens [sic] manners so that nothing be ordained against God’s word…. Every particular or National Church hath authority to ordain change and abolish ceremonies, and rites of the Church ordained by men’s authority…. “321 The church, calling upon the diversity of humankind, thus declared its right to determine policies that were appropriate for its membership while excluding practices that were not deemed appropriate for the community. Thus they indicated that it should be the community and the individual church, not government official or missionary, who should decide what was appropriate.

Ultimately, each church wanted to form a community committed to each other and committed to their faith. The African Congregational Church constitution opened with a covenant “by which [the] church exists as a distinct body, and which every member accepts.” Included in the church’s covenant was “recognizing the privilege and duty… the enjoyment of Christian ordinances, the public worship of God, and the advancement of his Kingdom in the world. We do now, in the sight of God and invoking

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321 Constitution and Rules of Conduct of the St. Philip’s Ethiopian Church in South Africa. PAR CNC 96 2155//12/15. It should also be noted, that the section was referred to as “Rights” of the church, as opposed to “traditions” or “rites” used in the European form.
his blessing, solemnly covenant and agree with each other to associate ourselves to be a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ....” In joining together, the community was not only making a commitment to God and the church, but also to each other. The covenant continued with the members of the ACC making further commitment to each other: “We agree to maintain the institutions of the Gospel, to submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of the Church, and to walk together in brotherly love.”

The act of worship was a shared act, which required the community acting together.

Special clothes were an important signifier in African Christianity to define the church community. Many women’s prayer groups in mission churches had adopted uniforms to distinguish the members of the group, and this idea had spread to the independent churches, as well. The uniforms of the women’s groups highlighted the women’s respectability and commitment to the church. In many independent churches, however, all the congregants wore uniforms or other signifiers of their faith when attending services or for other ceremonies.

The importance of clothes as symbol in the Christian church had perhaps first been ingrained upon the kholwa by the missionaries. From the establishment of the missions, the African adoption of Western style clothing indicated the acceptance of Christianity. Africans who wished to join the AZM acquired clothing in a piecemeal

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323 The idea of clothing as spiritual identifier was not without precedent in African tradition. Zulu diviners were also identifiable by their special attire. Inflated gall-bladders attached to the head of a diviner, as well as uncut hair, signified that the shades were brooding over the diviner. Diviners put away cosmetics and finery, except for the white beads or goatskin that signified their status. Imingwanba skins word crossed over the back also identified the wearer as a diviner. Finally, the diviner wore dark cloth, either black or another dark color, when divining, as divination was associated with darkness and night. To be a diviner, as to be a member of an independent church, gave one a certain status in the community, and the clothing one wore was an outward symbol of that identity and that faith. Berglund, 130-134, 170-171, 176-177.
324 Gaitskell, “Housewives, Maids or Mothers,” 249.
fashion that symbolized the process of their conversion.\footnote{Unconverted Africans often destroyed European clothing acquired by family members, frequently children attending mission schools. Houle, “‘Today I am delivered,’” 77-80.} The wearing of Western clothing symbolized both conformity and distinction – conformity to the beliefs of the Christian mission and distinction from those who kept traditional beliefs. It was the distinctive quality of the clothing that became most attractive, and, to the dismay of missionaries, non-Christians embraced the wearing of Western style clothing. Perhaps for this reason, many independent churches developed uniforms. Robes and sashes in certain colors distinguished a member of an independent church more readily than shirt and pants. As the adoption of Western clothing had once done, the wearing of uniforms illustrated one’s allegiance to his or her community. By wearing the clothes of that community, a person pronounced his or her faith and a commitment to others of that faith.

“to lead the willing Natives spiritually and otherwise”: Self-help in Independent Churches

As Paul la Hausse has shown, and as discussed above, self-help organizations became a vital part of Zulu society in the early twentieth century. Arising in part from independent churches, burial societies, and political organizations, members of Zulu self-help societies, including the Zulu National Association, Inkatha, and the Abaqulusi Land Union, dedicated themselves to the advancement of their community through projects that targeted problems in African communities.\footnote{La Hausse, “So who was Elias Kuzwayo?: Nationalism, Collaboration and the Picaresque in Natal,” in Apartheid’s Genesis 1935-1962, Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel, eds. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1994), 202.} These organizations and the independent churches were grounded in the same communities and connected by shared
membership, and the interest in self-help and community advancement was a designated purpose of many of the new churches.

Independent churches sought to protect their communities not only spiritually, but also through the improvement of their members’ lives and the advancement of their people. In the constitution of the United National Church of Christ, the church took as one of his primary objectives the improvement of conditions for the Zulu community. According to Petros Lamula, the church founder and leader, “certain disadvantages and disabilities are from time to time encountered by Church members of non-European Races through the ignorance of certain European Ministers to gauge the Native traditions and ambitions AND WHEREAS the Founder of the Church has made a careful and proper study of the Native aspirations and needs… having for the last ten years followed the trend of events affecting Natives spiritually and morally has made up his mind to lead the willing Natives spiritually and otherwise and in such manner as will fit them to live honestly and devoutly in this world and prepare their lives for the life to come.”

Lamula saw his vision of self-help fulfilling a need, but he recognized that he could only lead those who are “willing.” Like self-help organizations, independent churches were a voluntary force that depended on the mobilization and support of the community. The funding and personnel to manage self-help projects in African communities came from within the local communities, and the community members guided the operations. Unlike the coercive policies of the government or the mission,

327 Lamula’s constitution for the church is particularly interesting for it focuses almost entirely on the worldly advancement of church members through self-help and dedication to the community. In the entire constitution, God is only mentioned twice and the only reference to Jesus Christ is in the name of the church. Constitution of the United National Church of Christ, CAD NTS 1458 174/214.
African self-help initiatives in independent churches and elsewhere sought and could only function through the participation and guidance of the people they served, giving Africans in Natal and on the Rand another outlet to address local and national problems.

“To teach through reading”: Education in Independent Churches

It was becoming increasingly apparent to Africans in Natal and on the Rand that education was the best path to social and economic advancement. Literate men were widely considered the best able to lead congregations, particularly as the South African government designed a difficult path for church recognition that took into account the educational levels of church leaders. Thus many of the independent churches, regardless of whether or not the majority of the members had experience with mission or government education, put particular emphasis on education for church leaders and members. As noted above, many churches required their ministers to be educated or at least basically literate. Additionally, a number of churches sought to provide for the education of their communities, even to the point of making the establishment of schools compulsory. The African Seventh Day Zulu Chaka Church of Christ held that “[e]very church holding good members also having a good number of children, must start schools and same shall be tried to be under the Government.” 328 Education, and particularly literacy, was recognized as crucial to the advancement of independent churches as well as the growth of church congregations.

Education on the European mode was considered important not only for its value as a status maker, but also for the practical needs that it fulfilled. Through education, churches could identify the skills and knowledge they believed the future generations of African Christians would need to succeed. The independent United Native National Church of Christ sought to open schools in order to provide the youth of their churches with “Industrial and book education,” an idea not unlike the missionaries’ plan for African education and improvement. The Tuskegee and Hampton models in the United States and John Dube’s Ohlange Institute in Natal no doubt influenced this church and other churches seeking to form schools that would focus on industrial and agricultural training with “an ethos of self-help.”

It would be easy to say that the adoption of European-style education indicated the acceptance of European hegemony. But the interest in education went beyond merely getting ahead in segregationist South Africa. Educated Zulu speakers had started writing the history of the Zulu kingdom, while the flourishing African newspaper industry created a forum for discussions of the African past and possible futures. Education was a means of joining this exchange of ideas and knowledge, to form coalitions, and to express alternate ideas in the contemporary modes of conversation. At the same time, the youth had to be taught to read between the lines and challenge ideas put forward by the government and others who would seek to define them. Petros Lamula noted as much

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330 Dube’s school, established in 1901, was itself inspired by Tuskegee Institute. Vinson and Edgar, 56-57.
331 Magema Fuze’s Abantu Abamnyama, considered the first history of the Zulu kingdom, was published in 1922. La Hausse notes the work contained “empathetic account of the loss of Zulu autonomy and an historical understanding often at variance with white conventional wisdom.” La Hausse, Restless Identities, 100-101.
when he included in the UNCC constitution, “[e]ducation was necessary “[t]o teach through reading of good national books the History of the forefathers and so discourage friction and other unreliable books….”332 Church leaders recognized that education gave church members skills to obtain work in the modern world but also provided knowledge of their past, thereby encouraging an interest, and ideally a dedication, to the cultural heritage threatened by an shifting understanding of the world.

Community Care

As traditional social structures changed and European structures were imposed on African communities, innovation was required in caring for more vulnerable members of those communities. Independent churches, functioning without the community structures put into place on mission stations and without the support of the government, had to guard the security and stability of their congregations themselves. While it is certain that these sometimes small and tightly knit congregations shared responsibilities that were not necessarily codified, other churches took care to see that the responsibilities of the community were carefully delineated. For instance, the African Seventh Day Zulu Chaka Church of Christ maintained: “If the member of our religion is dead, leaving his wife and children, member or members are compelled to pay funds for such person or persons…. All widows belonging to this church must be helped by members of said church and be

332 Constitution of the United National Church of Christ, CAD NTS 1458 174/214. Lamula was greatly concerned about the writing of history and the preservation of Zulu past, and himself wrote a Zulu history, UZulukaMalandela, which evoked a pan-African history as well as a Zulu one. In the work, Lamula wrote, “All nations have books which explain where they come from and where they are going…. All unwritten history is quickly forgotten.” La Hausse, Restless Identities, 100-106.
supported accordingly." Shembe also required his followers to care for widows, orphans, the needy, and the homeless. While caring for the vulnerable is an important community function in any society, the care for widows had particular resonance in Zulu society as, traditionally, widows married the brother of their deceased husband (a practice known as unkungena). The Christian rejection of this custom necessitated an alternate approach, so the churches developed their own methods, which were as steeped in patriarchal tradition as the practices they replaced.

In this case, the church was seeking to create new options and cushions for their members as they embraced Christianity and turned away from old beliefs and practices. These new church regulations were also recognition of the instability of South African life in the early twentieth century. In order to provide for their fellowship, many churches developed plans to obtain land for their congregants. Different churches had different methods for obtaining land. In the 1920s, the ACC collected money from its congregants to purchase land in a scheme that was reminiscent of the land syndicates that created communities like Edendale and Driefontein in the nineteenth century. In contrast, Isaiah Shembe obtained large amounts of land, much of it as gifts or donations, and used the land to accommodate his followers. In either case, the land was meant to create homes for the believers, to establish a permanent place for the church community.

334 Gunner, 36.
335 The CNC had the church investigated for fear that congregants were being swindled out of their donations, and though the auditor could find no criminal doing on the part of the ACC, he found the church’s bookkeeping “unsatisfactory” and recommended a complete overhaul of the financial record system. Letter from Victor Woods, Auditor, to CNC, April, 1932. CAD NTS 3255 988/307. For more on land syndicates, see la Hausse, Restless Identities, 160-164.
336 Gunner, 36, 44.
Watchdogs of Morality

While missionaries imagined independent churches to be the locations of all sorts of immorality, independent churches were conscious of the need for order in their congregations and took steps to see that certain behaviors were deemed unacceptable. As the kholwa on the mission stations established practices to define and defend the morals of the mission communities, so too did independent congregations make and enforce regulations that reflected the morals of the independent community. The outlined prohibitions frequently expressed concern over those behaviors that might divide or create conflict within the congregations. In the United National Church of Christ, “[e]ach and every member is expected to live a pious and sober life. Drunkenness amongst members of the Church is strictly forbidden” as well “foul/abusive language.” The African Methodist Church declared, “The Church is determined to stop the members from all vile and mean practices especially drunkenness and vulgar language.” Alcohol abuse and youthful aggression had been problems on the reserves, particularly since the rinderpest and locust disasters of 1893. Although independent churches may have been about as successful as mission churches in preventing this kind of behavior, which is to say not very successful at all, these attempts illustrate the churches’ responses to potentially divisive behavior or escalation of tensions that could break apart their communities.

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337 See Gaitskell, “‘Wailing for Purity,’” for the ways in which the kholwa regulated the morality of the mission congregations.
338 Constitution of the United National Church of Christ, CAD NTS 1458 174/214
Churches also vested responsibility for morality within members of the community and for instilling in the next generation the values of the church. In the United National Church of Christ, it was “the duty of every… Parent to see that his or her child or children are taught at their homes to be obedient (b) the Lord’s Prayer (c) to attend day and Sunday schools (d) to do some manual labour for some time after attending school and to read passages in the scripture before going to bed.” Furthermore, it was the duty of the man in the family “to foster habits of thrift and industry to all members of his family.” As in the mission community, the responsibility for education and instituting morals was extended from the church to the family. But in the African independent churches, the spirit of self-help and independent organization emphasized that the entire community, from the church leaders to the most informal followers, were part of the same community, united in a common cause for the advancement of each member of that community.

The self-help efforts and interests gave independent churches life. The promise of change starting at the congregation; the promise of a better life on earth, not just in the afterlife, gave the amakholwa a reason to rally around independent leaders. The efforts also connected church members to the rest of their congregation, forming close-knit groups that worked with each other for the betterment of the church community. The interests of the church were grounded in the interests of the congregation, reassuring the congregants that the leaders of the church not only understood their problems but also shared them and were working to resolve them.

340 Constitution of the United National Church of Christ, CAD NTS 1458 174/214
Certain churches aimed to promote a purer vision of Christianity than was practiced in the missions. In 1923, a new school was built at the Ifafa Mission Station, a cause for celebration in the mission community. But while the new building was a symbol of the establishment of mission communities in South Africa, during the course of building the school, a new, independent sect was formed. The Annual Report of Ifafa reported, “…the builder, Mr. Greet, in his desire to preach the whole, Simon-pure Gospel, and his faithfulness in pointing out the weaknesses of the Church members at Ifafa, has left his impress upon the people.”341

Mr. Greet found the Ifafa community receptive to his interpretations. The group became known as the “Go-preachers” because their faith required no formal training to preach. Mr. Greet and his followers quickly gained support in the Ifafa community. As the reporting missionary noted, the sect “was likely to gain favour among the people, for the creed is simple: They do not believe in having houses of worship, nor in having paid preachers. All they do need do is go and preach, and the Gospel does not cost them any money….“342 The accessibility of the Gospel of the Go-preachers and similar groups addressed one of the primary complaints of Africans about the mission churches. Although missionaries often mocked African interest in the ceremonial, what they really attacked was the deviation from their own ceremonial practices. Mission churches were exclusive communities, signified by European clothing and architecture, literacy and economic status. To those who had not achieved or embraced these trappings of mission

341 Annual Report Ifafa, 1923. PAR A608 A/3/43.
342 Ibid.
life, mission churches were not inviting and indeed missionaries were suspicious of those they had not accepted.343

Gender Roles in the Independent Church Communities

Gender roles in Christian communities changed considerably from “traditional” forms of patriarchal power in the kholwa community. Women were given a more active public role in community affairs, as well as a foundation to question male decisions and questions of marriage or work. Perhaps because of this, women formed the majority of the first converts to mission churches in the nineteenth century, and they were frequently the most active church members. Early mission station communities were often originally built around “rebellious” girls and women seeking refuge from loveless marriages or other results of the patriarchal order, and by the beginning of twentieth century, women outnumbered men as members of the mission churches.344

Leadership in mission churches was vested primarily in men, however, and this trend continued in independent churches. Much has been made of men and masculinity in Zulu independent churches. Sundkler has called the development of the independent

343 After the revivals, a number of previously unconverted people began to spontaneously profess faith in Christianity. During a Sunday service, a woman starting walking toward the front of the church as F.B. Bridgman was giving his sermon. The woman repeatedly claimed “Ngiketa iNkosi (I choose the Lord).” Bridgman referred her to the enquirers’ class and sent her back to her seat. When the woman stood again and repeated her proclamation, Bridgman again sent her to her seat, and repeated the request when two others made similar proclamations. Bridgman later justified his actions by noting that previous such converts had ended up backsliding. Houle, “‘Today I am delivered,’” 350.

344 Etherington, Preachers, Peasants and Politics, 97-98; and Etherington, “Mission Station Melting Pots,” 596-597; Christofersen 126. Christofersen wondered if it might have been easier for women to convert to Christianity for he considered it easier for women to depart from ancestral worship “without a noticeable effect on home life, whereas men must remain true.” Given the integral roles of women in traditional rituals, I would suggest that it was not easier for women to give up traditional ideas, but in fact the Christian church provided more appealing options to African women at the time.
churches “an escape into… the glorious Zulu history which was brought to an abrupt end by the Whites,” with the leaders of independent churches taking the Zulu kingship pattern as the model for their leadership, the role of nkosi inscribed in “Bishop,” “Overseer,” or “President.”

According to Sundkler, these men, particularly, those “chief type” leaders of the “Ethiopian” churches gained followers because they embodied traits desired in Zulu chiefs – prestige, physical and spiritual heft, and bravery. Interestingly, Sundkler notes that the ideal chief-type minister “need not be a good preacher, he must not be talkative. A Zulu chief is reserved in his speech, and so should the church be.” In fact, enthusiasm for fiery, well-spoken, and charismatic preachers could be found in mission churches and independent churches. Animated revival-style preaching remained the most popular style of preaching in Natal in mission and independent churches. Furthermore, communication was the primary function of independent ministers. It was their very ability as ministers to be impassioned intermediaries between God and the congregation as well as between the government and the church members and not the austere authority figure typically associated with male roles like homestead patriarchs (and with missionaries) that drew followers to the independent ministers.

However, as men flocked to the cities, women took on new roles and responsibilities at home. The roles of women, as wives, lovers, worshippers, and leaders, were increasingly important in both mission and independent churches. The declining patriarchal order and numerous changes in and pressures on kholwa society in the early

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345 Sundkler 102.
346 Ibid., 107-108.
347 Ibid.
348 Mahoney, 387.
twentieth century meant that the roles of women in the churches, and the relationships between men and women in the churches, were constantly being negotiated. Behavior and relationships between men and women were sometimes codified in independent churches, but they sometimes took on a different character from those established by the missions. Practices that were not regulated, including polygyny and lobolo, were also important in establishing relationships between people within the independent church.

In stressing the importance of female decision-making, missionaries had given women the opportunity for new roles in mission communities. The activities of the Isililo, the AZM’s women’s prayer group, and similar women’s groups in other missions gave women a voice and leadership roles they had not previously held. The active participation of female members in church revivals, indeed often sparking and driving the events that unfolded, gave them a power that was easily more attainable than that achieved by either male ministers or traditional female diviners. Those paths required periods of training and testing, but participation in revivals and other forms of female leadership only required a public expression of faith. The dedication of Isililo groups to home visitation and other group activities served to recruit more women into the church fold and established the importance of women in the church.349

Though the roots of these groups were sown in mission churches, the structures that developed were imported into independent churches. Women who had previously been involved in women’s groups in mission churches exported these groups to their new independent churches. There they continued to function as the women’s prayer

349 Christofersen, 126.
associations, groups that allowed women to join together in coming to terms with contemporary changes and instilling proper ideals in the church youth, particularly the adolescent girls. The bonds the women formed through the organizations were strong. There is evidence of at least one attempt by women to maintain connections with their previous mission organization. The African Congregational Church’s Isililo group extended an invitation to the Isililo of the AZM’s Groutville Church to attend their annual convention, though the AZM pastor squashed any interest.

Women frequently served as regulators of church order, and they were not loathe to call to task a church leader who behaved inappropriately. When Rev. F.B. Bridgman took his complaints against the ACC to the government, a deputation of women who had been members of the ACC brought their own complaints, sponsored by Bridgman. Kutie Nyawose, the woman who led the delegation, explained that they had joined the ACC, but left after finding fault with Gardiner Mvuyana’s choice for the leader of the church’s Women’s Christian Association. In many of the independent churches, and mission churches as well, men may have been the voices of authority, but the wives and mothers were vocal in their judgments behind the scenes, and were not reluctant to vote with their feet if they could not affect church policy. With the number of options for Christian worship ever on the increase in Natal and on the Rand, independent church leaders had to be careful not to offend the women in their congregations.

352 The woman in question was the wife of church leader M.S. Dube, but the women alleged that the woman had an immoral part, including an adulterous relationship with Mvuyana. “Complaint against the Rev. Gardiner Mvuyana by the female members of the African Congregational Church” in African Native Separatist Churches, 1921-22, Native Affairs Department, South Africa.
As the “Zionist” independent churches have been called “the refuge and the emblem of the poor and uneducated,” 353 it is not surprising that women found the biggest roles and the greatest power in these churches. Sundkler noted that women outnumbered men in Zionists churches even in heavily male Johannesburg, and women seem to have made up the bulk of congregations of the Zionist type more broadly throughout the growth of those churches. 354

Women also found influence as independent prophets, and the scope of their visions indicated their concerns regarding the contemporary world. Prophet figures were popular in Natal, and the tradition of such figures is extensive in Zulu-speaking areas and throughout South Africa. Although diviners as community healers had a strong presence in Natal, millenarian prophecy had a long history in other Nguni cultures in South Africa. Faith in a number of prophets, including the young girl Nongqawuse, shaped Xhosa resistance to the British in the nineteenth century. As the British increased pressure on the Xhosa, Nongqawuse’s millenarian visions led her followers to kill their cattle to encourage the return of their ancestors to defeat and drive out the British. 355 Zulu diviners were frequently women, and served to identify conflict or evil in the community.

353 Jean Comaroff, Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 255. Comaroff was referring to the modern Zionist church, but the appeal of the Zionist message to the struggling segments of African society was equally true in the early twentieth century.

354 Sundkler, 82. Sundkler also notes that men made up the bulk of the congregations of “Ethiopian” type churches in Johannesburg. Given the concentration of men in the city this is not surprising, though I doubt that this ratio can be assumed in more rural areas.

355 Generally speaking, following the prophets led to a bitter end. The prophet Mlanjeni’s war ended after three years with territorial losses for the Xhosa and many hard feelings. The Xhosa cattle-killing left the followers decimated by poverty and starvation. For more on the early Xhosa prophets, particularly Nongqawuse, see Peires, The Dead Will Arise, : Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1865-7 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), and The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of their Independence (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981).
and cast it out. While the preaching roles of women in the Christian church had been limited, the role of a woman in millennial preaching, social cleansing, and the rejection of Western culture had a long in South Africa. Women working as diviners had long played a role in connecting the physical world with the spiritual world. Contact with Christianity created new interpretations of this role. Jeff Peires has shown that while the prophecies of Nongquawuse were not Christian prophecies, they were likely influenced by contact with Christianity. As Christian language and ideology became more enmeshed in African consciousness, the messages of the religion became public domain, and the ideas and messages were separated from ‘European’ Christianity. The Christian ideology became African ideology, available to anyone to whom the message appealed without the requirement of a church or a European interpreter.

Beginning in 1919, a female prophet, Zandekile Ngcobo, claimed to have visions from God about the end of the world and called on Africans to do away with medicines, stealing, adultery, and lying. Those who did not would end up in hell. Zandekile stated she was “sent to preach the word of God,” claiming that “Natives must throw away the medicines, that the Earth is now dirty from the use of medicine as people are killing each other with medicine, that the Lord made man from wind not from medicine….” Zandekile also called for the cessation of stealing, adultery and lying. Zandekile claimed that she had come to save the world and gave a description of the apocalypse. According to the report, Zandekile preached, “…when the end of the world comes there will be seventeen days of darkness and then the judgment day will come. That the Lord has told
her when he comes to Earth again he wants all sin to have stopped. That those who are still sinners will go to hell.”

The magistrate at Mapumulo further informed the CNC that the woman had been ill for a long time and allegedly awoke perfectly well, claiming she has seen and spoken to God, who had cured her. Zandekile clearly absorbed and accepted many Christian tenets. Her description of the end of the world included Christian themes of darkness with the arrival of the end of the world and of the judgment of humanity. Zandekile’s visions could not be confined to expressions of African tradition or the teachings of Christian missions. The stresses of everyday life, compounded by the destruction of influenza and her own near death experience, inspired Zandekile to identify causes of conflict and suffering and create solutions that were meaningful and available to her community and grounded in the discourses that surrounded them.

Another Zulu prophet, Josephina Zulu, spoke regularly at Natal Native Congress meetings in Natal and on the Rand in 1923. Josephina called herself “a woman of Zululand” and a relative of the Zulu chief Mpande. She claimed to be of a very rich family and was cared for by her own personal servants. Despite having everything she

356 Statement of Ndafimana Ngcobo kaZipuku, 9 September 1919. PAR CNC 350 611/1919. It is unclear whether Zandekile meant European medicine or traditional medicine, though given African fears that the influenza was caused by vaccination, it is likely she meant European medicine. Carton, “The Forgotten Compass of Death,” 203-204.
357 Magistrate, Mapumulo to CNC. PAR CNC 350 611/1919.
358 Contemporary with Zandekile was Nontetha Nkwenkwe, a Cape woman who like Zandekile fell ill during the influenza epidemic and awoke having found inspiration to preach Christianity. Like Zandekile, Nontetha claimed to have died and come back to life, with the mission to preach messages of cleansing against such vices as alcohol and tobacco, as well as traditional dances and adultery. Robert R. Edgar and Hilary Sapire, *African Apocalypse: The Story of Nontetha Nkwenkwe, a Twentieth-Century South African Prophet* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000), 8-12.
could possibly ask for, Josephina attended the Congress meetings to pass along the visions and information because she was commanded to do so by God.\textsuperscript{359}

Josephina chastised the men at the meetings, telling them to put away their liquors, “since by use of strong liquors native peoples were being destroyed.” She advocated that people return to their own native customs but declared that festivities such as beer drinks and tea parties should be abolished.\textsuperscript{360} She advised the Congress attendees to adopt passive resistance, saying “there was no gaol big enough to hold them.”\textsuperscript{361} Josephina asserted that she herself was not afraid of jail, for she had been in prison and had “come out through the power of God.” When speaking in Johannesburg, Josephina claimed that “she was very anxious to be arrested” for then “she and all the other prisoners would come out of prison.”\textsuperscript{362} Through the medium of religious prophecy, Josephina challenged the gathered men to overcome temptations and fears and directly challenge government authority.

Josephina’s messages at the Congress meetings were as much for women as they were for men. The pronouncements regarding alcohol were particularly aimed at women who were generally the brewer of beers, and Josephina held that any wrong deeds done under the influence of alcohol belonged as much, if not more, to the brewer of the

\textsuperscript{361} Report of Detective H.C. Ker, CID, Pietermaritzburg, 4 April, 1923. CAD SAP 41 CONF 6/953/23/3.
liquor. Josephina also issued messages that dealt particularly with the raising of children. She asserted that African children should not play organs, concertinas, or guitars, as these instruments “led to the children being spoilt.” Recognizing the problems plaguing Africans, Josephina felt compelled to call out the transgressors in her society, and she found a receptive audience.

Josephina’s messages had foundation in Christianity and Zulu tradition and addressed social ills, but she also addressed ideas of Christian faith in radical ways. In the same speech, Josephina invoked biblical plagues of locusts and darkness, and referred to her audience to Deuteronomy chapter 28, and then proceeded to tell her audience that “Jesus Christ was a European and the natives should not believe in him… the natives should believe in their own ancestral god, the Amadhlozi.” In another meeting, Josephina claimed she “did not know about Jesus, but knew one God only,” and that “the Word of God had come to her in the form of lightning ordering her to go out and preach to the people.” A police report indicated that “[m]any Zulus have the greatest regard for and belief in Josephine.” In Josephina’s visions, the idea of a God in the Christian model and the messages of the Christian Bible were not incompatible with Zulu traditions.

365 Ibid.
367 SAP report to the District Commandant, Dundee, 4 December, 1924. CAD NTS 7205 20/326.
Love, Abduction, Seduction, and Rebellious Girls

Questions about gender relationships and morality were closely examined in Natal and on the Rand in the years after Union. The breakdown of traditional patriarchal order and the movement of migrant laborers, male and female, had upset traditional relationships and stretched the boundaries of what was acceptable behavior compared to both traditional African and European standards. Relationships between men and women and between leaders and followers formed the foundations of the church community, but these bonds were particularly vulnerable as community structures, whether homestead or mission, changed or disintegrated. Independent churches had to regulate the various bonds between members of their congregations in new ways, while addressing the dysfunctions and stresses of changing times. As relationships between people continued to shift, the church communities attempted to negotiate resolutions without losing their autonomy with varying degrees of success.

Marriage in Independent Churches

Solemnization of marriage was an important function of independent churches as with any community in that it regulated relationships between men and women and between families within the community. As it was a function that was practiced in and witnessed by the local church community but regulated by the state, government officials used attacks on independent ministers’ abilities to perform marriages in an attempt to limit the growth and prestige of independent churches. If the church was not recognized
by the government, officials would generally refuse to recognize the rights of appointed ministers to perform marriages.

A minister who could not perform marriages would not have the prestige and influence of a minister who could perform this necessary social function. Gardiner Mvuyana acknowledged that he would lose this influence when he broke with the AZM.368 Some churches were fortunate enough to have a minister who already had been appointed a marriage officer in a previous connection to a mission church, but this did not guarantee that the right to officiate marriages would not be taken away. Mvuyana had the right to perform marriages while serving as a minister for the AZM. Once he separated and founded the ACC, however, his license was withdrawn by the government after the mission brought attention to his case.369 Mvuyana’s application to retain his license was countered by a negative letter from the missionary Frederick Bridgman as well as unfavorable verdicts from the magistrates of districts where the ACC operated, and was accordingly recommended for denial by the CNC.370

Other churches were let to appeal year after year for the appointment of a marriage officer, only to be told that they lacked the proper numbers, stability, or educational standards required to permit the appointment of a marriage officer. The Reverend S.B. Shibe of the Zulu Congregational Church made numerous applications for

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368 Report from CPO on Gardiner Mvuyana, 1917. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
369 Acting Director of Native Labour to SNA, 24 November, 1917. CAD NTS 1444 54/214. The Acting Director found no evidence of criminality on the part of Mvuyana, but opined “the withdrawal is justified if only on the fact that the man now belongs to a church which has received no measure of recognition....”
370 Report of L.E. Dore, Clerk, Pietermaritzburg, 8 December, 1920; CNC to SNA, 8 July, 1921. CAD NTS 1444 54/214. Ironically, Mvuyana had obtained his marriage officer license six years earlier with a recommendation from Bridgman. Sub-Native Commissioner, Witwatersrand to SNA, 18 January, 1915. CAS NTS 1444 54/214.
a license to perform marriages, but the CNC noted, “in light of his lack of education and the facilities which exist at Port Shepstone for marriages to be solemnized, his request has always been refused.” When Shibe’s son Philemon appealed to the CNC for an appointment as marriage officer in 1926, the CNC this time found the case worthy of recommendation. The ZCC had no marriage officer at the time, and the CNC, employing superficial personal evaluations typical in official correspondence, found Shibe to be “quite… intelligent.” The Native Affairs Commission, however, issued what had become a standard reply to most requests from independent churches: “…I have the honor to inform you that the Native Affairs Commission does not consider that the… organization should receive Government recognition, in view of the comparatively low standard of education of its ministers.”

Despite government obstacles, the rites of Christian marriage remained important for fledgling independent churches, and Christianity and other religions more broadly, as it was a primary way to increase the numbers of the faithful. It also was a major celebration and a reason for the community to come together and reaffirm its beliefs. Customs and regulations of marriage reflected the values of the church community. Consequently, many of the independent churches concerned themselves with regulations and obligations of marriage in their official documents. The constitution of the African Seventh Day Zulu Chaka Church of Christ required all its ministers, evangelists, and deacons to be married. It also stated that “Christians should be married under Christian

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371 The CNC also noted that Shibe had “performed a marriage ceremony between Christian natives without holding a necessary license” in 1915. CNC to SNA, 28 January, 1920. CAD NTS 1443 49/214.
372 CNC to SNA, 11 August, 1926. CAD NTS 1443 49/214.
373 Native Affairs Commission to SNA, 10 February, 1927. CAD NTS 1443 49/214.
rites and be signed by Magistrates” but “If some are not willing to get married under Christian rights they shall not be stopped; official witness shall appear for such persons.”

For a church that sought to unite Zulu ethnicity with Christian faith, as the church’s name indicates, traditional ceremonies did not conflict with Christian commitment.

A common accusation against independent churches was that they permitted, even encouraged, polygamy and adultery. The AZM missionary James Dexter Taylor considered the ACC to be “founded on low moral standards” by ministers living in “gross immorality.”

From the viewpoint of the missionaries, there was less praying and more preying of men upon women in these churches. Many of the churches did not include regulations about marriage and polygamy within their regulations, but it was known that such actions were permissible. For example, although the African Congregational Church had no expressly written regulations for or against polygamy, ministers were reported to marry polygamous men when mission ministers had refused, and reportedly the ACC permitted polygamous ministers, as well. Negotiations within the community made some behavior permissible, if not officially supported.

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375 Letter from J.D. Taylor to CNC, 10 May, 1920. PAR CNC 350 621/1919.
376 Report of the Umzumbe Field, 1925-26. PAR A608 A/3/43. Frederick Bridgman and several former members of the ACC who returned to the AZM accused Gardiner Mvuyana of allowing future ACC leader M.S. Dube to enter into polygamy. Statement by F.B. Bridgman in African Native Separatist Churches, 1921-22, Native Affairs Department, South Africa. However, the CID and the Native Affairs Department could find nothing objectionable about Dube and indeed received reports as to his “good character” when Dube was appointed a marriage officer for the ACC in 1925. Report from CID, Witwatersrand to Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg, 27 April, 1925; Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg to SNA, 2 July, 1925; SNA to Secretary of the Interior, 7 July, 1925. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
Churches and preachers identified as the Zionist type were particularly suspected of questionable relationships with women, whether polygyny or more predatory behaviors, as they generally attracted large numbers of girls and women, married and unmarried. But while certain churches officially allowed polygyny, and others offered no prohibition against it, adultery and or more informal sexual relationships with multiple women were certainly not condoned by any church, and where these actions existed, communities generally sought to expel or punish guilty parties. In the Nazareth Church, men could only take second wives with the permission of the first wife, or barring that, the decision of church elders that there was no valid reason for him not to marry again. In either case, the rights of the first wife to her homestead and the cattle there would be protected.\footnote{Gunner, 66-67. The wife herself must tell the church elders that she approves a second marriage, while the husband, if she refuses, must go to the elders three times, with six months in between the visits, asking for permission to marry again before it could be granted.} Adultery was expressly forbidden. In advising ministers against adultery, Shembe said that in committing such an act, “[y]ou have broken God’s law over that woman, and others will take it as an example.”\footnote{Ibid., 84-85.} Ministers, in serving as an example, had to protect themselves as well as the women of the congregation.

\textit{Rebellious Girls in a New Age}

With the rise of urbanization, women experienced increased mobility and independence as they went to the city to work or as the men in their lives went to the cities. As nineteenth century missionaries had welcomed women fleeing unwanted marriages and community demands onto mission stations, so too did independent
churches, particularly those of the Zionist variety, become refuges for girls and women in the twentieth century. But while some of these organizations empowered their female followers, other churches and church leaders took advantage of community faith and tested the limits of their followers’ loyalties.

The breakdown of traditional patriarchal order, beginning in the nineteenth century but accelerating after the Bhambatha Rebellion, had left a vacuum of leadership in twentieth century African society. Young men flocked to the cities for work, deserting the patriarchal authority of their fathers and leaving the homesteads short of men. Young women also went to the cities, following their husbands or going for work themselves, but many other women stayed on the reserves. These women, widows, young unmarried women, and women whose husbands and sons had gone to the city to work, were particularly vulnerable to the difficulties of contemporary Natal. Dependent upon uncertain money from the cities and without traditional patriarchal structures to support them, these women looked for alternate means of support.

Independent churches, particularly the Zionist type, were a popular option for such women. Independent preachers who gathered their followers around them into closely knit communities appealed to women who had lost other means of support or who were looking for break away from their current situations. When a group of Zionists moved into the Nkandla District, an African minister of the Norwegian Mission reported complaints “from Natives who have had trouble with their wives and children as a result of the mysterious teaching” of the sect.\textsuperscript{379} A representative of the local chief Mlokotwa

\textsuperscript{379} Statement of Petros Majozi kaSilomo, Nkandhla, 14 March, 1922. PAR CNC 96 2155/1912/27.
complained that “the women, instead of attending to their domestic duties are frequently absent from their kraals…sometimes the women are absent for several nights.”

Both African and white authorities were threatened by such behavior. The government was dependent on chiefs to maintain order on the reserves, but the government put laws into place to ensure this order, with particular focus on controlling the behavior of women. Inciting women and girls to wander was considered a crime under the Natal Native Code (Law No. 19/1891, section 289), based on existent Zulu customary laws. Female members of the homestead needed to provide “a good or valid reason” if they were absent from their kraal or guardian. Otherwise they faced government prosecution.

Despite the efforts of the government, missionaries, and African patriarchs, the independent churches held appeal to young girls looking for escape and older women looking for security. Young girls, still considered minors in the eyes of the Native Code, as well as in African tradition, left their homes to join communities of believers. Some found comfort in their religion, but others found a situation worse than that they left behind.

“[A] great deal of immorality is carried on”: Betrayal in an Independent Church

The case of Ezra Mbonambi highlighted the worst fears of missionaries, government officials, and Africans alike. Mbonambi was a preacher who claimed leadership in the Zion Apostolic Church in Victoria County. In February of 1919, he

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380 It would seem that the women who joined the church were from unconverted homesteads. Statement of Mshayankomo kaMagolwane Jiyana, Nkandhla, 14 March, 1922. PAR CNC 96 2155/1912/27.
appealed to the SNA for land to accommodate his church and its growing membership. Mbonambi claimed, “I have and keep in my possession various classes of my followers, including widows, orphans, and destitute children who, in many cases have been thrown away by their recognised guardians and who, in many instances have no parents.” In the same year, H.A. Stick of the AZM wrote to the CNC to complain about Mbonambi preaching on the reserve. Neither the demographics of Mbonambi’s followers nor the complaints of the missionary were out of the ordinary, so the government maintained its policy of staying out of the conflict.

Four years later, allegations were made that Mbonambi was keeping “possession” of girls against the wills of their families. Dyer Nxaba, a resident of the Groutville Mission Station complained in July of 1923 that his daughter Josephina was being kept at the kraal of Mbonambi. Nxaba went to Mbonambi and took his daughter away, noting “I have had many troubles with Ezra Mbonambi for keeping my children in his possession without my permission.” Nxaba followed this complaint with another statement charging that two girls had died at Mbonambi’s residence due to lack of medical treatment. Nxaba stated, “Ezra has people from all over the country staying with him. This man refuses to call a doctor for any sick person with him…. The girls were not doctored as doctoring is against the religious belief of Ezra Mbonambi.” He concluded by asking the authorities to investigate further.

383 Letter from H.A. Stick to W.T. Davidson, for CNC, 3 May 1919. PAR CNC 366B 2085/1919.
385 Statement of Dyer Nxaba, 1 August 1923. PAR CNC 366B 2085/1919. It is unclear whether Nxaba meant the girls required Western-style medicine or traditional medicine.
Tasked with the investigation, the magistrate at Stanger reported to the CNC that Mbonambi’s resident following included a number of young girls and married women “whom he has enticed away from their homes.” The magistrate had reports to indicate “that a great deal of immorality is carried on at the establishment which consists of nearly 100 persons mostly unmarried girls many of whom are wanted by their guardians.” The magistrate concluded, “It is astonishing to find the hold this man seems to have over the people.” ³⁸⁶ But the government did not or perhaps felt they could not take action against Mbonambi. He was exempted from Natal’s Native Law and therefore could not be tried for seduction.³⁸⁷

By 1926, Mbonambi’s hold on his followers was beginning to crack due to internal pressures. One of his ministers, Pompolo Isaiah Nxumalo, confirmed the allegations coming from outside, noting in a statement that “…according to [Mbonambi’s] teachings [girls who came to worship with him] were not allowed to have lovers or even cohabit with any man inside or outside the Mission. Ezra Mbonambi was the only that had connection with the women….” Tension was growing within the group as Mbonambi’s behavior intensified and as girls began to resist. Nxumalo reported “as I was their Leader they would after such cohabitation come and confess before me and on my questioning [Mbonambi] he would say that the Devil had tempted him and at times he used to quote the scripture and say that he was entitled as Leader of the Church to commit these wrongs…. I know that young girls below the age resisted and as he

³⁸⁶ Magistrate, Stanger to CNC, 21 September, 1923. PAR CNC 366B 2085/1919.
³⁸⁷ CNC to Deputy Commissioner, SAP, Pietermaritzburg, 14 July, 1926. PAR CNC 366B 2085/1919.
assaulted them they eventually deserted and reported at their kraals…”

The information from these girls who managed to leave Mbonambi’s farm likely led to an attack on Mbonambi’s stronghold by the parents of girls still there. Though Mbonambi’s followers began to desert him, and as numerous girls stepped forward to testify, the government still was unable to take action against him. Nevertheless, much of Mbonambi’s probably predatory hold on his followers was broken down due to his own transgressions. Though the break up of Mbonambi’s church and the splintering of the mission churches were caused by very different actions and intentions, the lesson taken away from each situation is the same. Churches that could not provide or care for their congregations, led by those who took advantage of the church members or who could not become a part of the community, were subject to crisis and disintegration. Churches that addressed the needs of their members and functioned as an extension of the congregation, not as authority over or predator upon the members of the church, were likely to flourish.

The changes to African society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries allowed for new opportunities for women, but both men and women found themselves vulnerable in the modern world. Church communities offered salvation and stability to individual members, but church members equally had to take responsibility for their communities. With the old support systems crumbling, and with support systems offered

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389 As many of the girls were the children of heathen or illiterate parents who could not provide an exact birth date for their daughters, the officials felt they could not prove that the girls were minors at the time. Despite the parents being able to give approximate birth dates related to events, the word of the girls was not enough, and the Attorney General declined to prosecute. Letter from J. Ray Msimang to CNC, 7 April 1927; Letter from J. Ray Msimang, 4 October 1927. PAR CNC 366B 2085/1919.
by missionaries and the government found lacking, independent church communities devised their own structures for representing and caring for their congregations. In short, the independent church was illustrative of a new structure of community responsibility and representation in Natal and in South Africa more broadly.
5. Conclusion

… we cannot build by forsaking our origin. We must go back to go forward.
- H.I.E. Dhlomo

In Bantu Prophets in South Africa, Bengt Sundkler includes a picture of African Congregational Church President L.M. Makhoba that illustrates the multilayered influences at play in mid-century South Africa. Makhoba’s clothing is lined with leopard skins like Zulu royalty, but he also wears a Western-style suit. By the third decade of the twentieth century, Makhoba’s suit could not be considered indicative of “new,” Western influence, as Africans in Natal had been wearing Western-style clothing for nearly one hundred years, and Western clothing had long been a natural extension of conversion to mission-based Christianity. Furthermore, the wearing of skins and the associated ideas of Zulu ethnic pride had a renaissance in 1910’s and 1920’s Natal, so that by the 1930’s, expressions of Zuluness and alignment with Zulu traditions were not at all uncommon among African leaders in Natal, in part a response to the Zulu cultural revival of the previous decades and in part a distinction of an identity in response to

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391 Sundkler, 297.
392 Though the popularity of Western-style clothing among non-Christians by the twentieth century decreased its value as a signifier of Christianity, at least according to AZM missionaries. Houle, .
For an independent church leader to associate himself with
these ideas was not out of the ordinary, and in fact such ideas were representative of the
roles independent church leaders assigned themselves in twentieth century Natal – as
intermediaries between African beliefs and Christianity, between tradition and change,
and between the establishment of white authority and the establishment of African
dissent.

Makhoba’s picture is symbolic of the ways in which Africans took what appeared
to be contradictory ideas and made them seamlessly their own. What ideas appeared
contradictory or incorrect to Western observers, the faith and practices of the independent
churches serving as one example, nevertheless developed honestly and naturally out of
African needs and beliefs and were not viewed as contradictory by their devout followers.
The churches that were established in the first thirty years of the twentieth century
integrated a number of influences and ideas, consciously and unconsciously. These
churches served their communities and reflected the faith of these communities, creating
a refuge for Africans in Natal and on the Rand. Some of these churches, like the ACC,
were well established by the 1930’s; others were just getting started, and many more
would develop in the years ahead.

For the ACC and a number of independent churches, the 1930’s were years of
growth, but the decade also brought about a number of challenges. In 1934, the church
could claim a membership of approximately 15,000 people with 300 branches, schools,
and other buildings throughout South Africa. The ACC also held land worth

393 La Hausse, 267-269.
£13,000.00. By 1938, the ACC had been officially recognized by the government, realizing a long-sought goal that was rarely achieved by independent churches. The ACC had reached a point of growth and stability that few churches, even mission churches, in South Africa could match.

But the 1930’s were also a time of struggle for the ACC and other churches. Segregation in South Africa had been institutionalized during the previous decade with the passage of the Native Affairs Act (1920), the Natives Urban Areas Act (1923), and the Native Administration Act (1927). In the following decade, radical African politics declined to make way for conservative efforts for recognition. The ICU waned to irrelevance, and the more outspoken independent preachers followed suit. As la Hausse noted with regard to independent church founder Petros Lamula, “In the midst of economic depression, political acquiescence and the increasing threat of state repression… Lamula’s vision of liberation and style of leadership ill served the expanding branches and membership of the church. Amongst independent churches time and convention served as conservative forces compelling a leader to modify his radicalism.”

One effect of segregationist policy that directly affected the churches was the government’s revision of its policy toward the building of new churches. Whereas previously churches could only be built if they were at least three miles from other (mission) churches in the area, starting in 1933 there had to be at least five miles between

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394 Letter from M.S. Dube to SNA, 26 March 1924. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
395 Letter from CNC to Chief Inspector of Native Education, 12 July 1938. PAR CNC/PMB 58A 45/435 n2/3/3 (24). For one recommendation to recognize the church see the letter from Native Commissioner: Johannesburg to CNC: Johannesburg, 5 February 1937. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
396 La Hausse, Restless Identities, 142.
churches.\footnote{Sundkler, 78.} In Natal, an area that was riddled with evangelical outposts, the rule left little ground for new churches. The ACC filed numerous applications for a church site during the 1930’s that were met with rejection, even when there was a broad support for a new church. In 1938, the ACC filed a request to build a church and school Mambedweni in the Umvoti Location of Mapumulo District. The site was only two miles from the boundary of the AZM Mapumulo Mission Reserve and only three miles from the nearest church and school, the Mvozane Church and School on the reserve. But as, the Assistant Chief Native Commissioner related, the location children did not attend the mission reserve school and the mission reserve children did not attend the nearest school in the location, which was five miles from the proposed ACC church and school site.\footnote{Letter from Assistant Native Commissioner to CNC: Natal, 12 June 1938. PAR CNC/PMB 58A 45/435 n2/3/3 (24).} The ACC had already begun services at Mambedweni, but had not yet built buildings to support their work, and so held the services in the open air and at kraals.\footnote{Letter from Acting Native Commissioner: Mapumulo to CNC, 6 July 1938. PAR CNC/PMB 55A CNC 45/435 N 2/3/3 (24).}

At a meeting held at Mushane in June 1938, every recorded comment was in favor of the church. The local chief, Ndhleleni, noted, “We are all in favor of the application. We are in need of a church and school at Mambedweni. The people here are staunch supporters of the (ACC) Rev. Pohlwana…. The application has my whole-hearted support.” Mvumeni Mngoma, the Induna for the area, also voiced his support. Several members of the Church of England expressed the need for a church and school in
the area, while a member of the United Apostolic Church was also in favor of having a school nearby.400

Even government officials were in favor of building a church and school at the site. The Assistant Native Commissioner, when passing the application to the CNC, recommended accepting the application.401 The Inspector of Schools for Mapumulo noted that children in that area “could not be expected to attend any of the schools already in existence” and recommended that the application be granted, a recommendation seconded by the Chief Inspector of Native Education.402 On the support of these recommendations, the CNC recommended the granting of the application is his note to the SNA. 403 However, E. Clark, the SNA, was not receptive to the building of a new church. In response to the CNC’s recommendation, Clark responded only, “In view of the fact that the site applied for is within five miles of an existing church and school site and as the area concerned appears to be well served by other churches and schools, it is regretted that the application cannot be entertained and is accordingly refused.”404 This was typical of the government’s response to applications for new churches. And while church leaders had previously been able to circumvent the opposition to building a

400 At the meeting were G.J. Viljoen (the Assistant Native Commissioner), D.G. Hertslet, Chief Ndhleleni, Mvemeni Mngoma, Rev. Pohlwana, “and about 60 Natives, excluding women and children.” The Rev. B.G.M. Nomvete of the AZM made a point to announce that the site was only 2 miles from the Mapumulo Mission Reserve boundary, but voiced no actual objection. Minutes of Meeting held at Mushane on 18 June 1938, in connection with an application by Rev. Elliott Pohlwana on behalf of the African Congregational Church, for a Church and School Site at Mambedweni in Native Reserve: Mapumulo District, PAR CNC/PMB 55A CNC 45/435 N 2/3/3 (24).
church site by using their own home or building a personal dwelling to be unofficially designated as a church building, by the 1930’s, the government was tearing down any building on reserve or government land that was being used as a church without government permission to use the site.405

Furthermore, the ACC experienced challenges from within its own ranks. In 1932, the Rev. Walter M. Dimba of the Newclare church had been suspended by the ACC for misbehavior and disobedience. When he persisted in holding services, Dimba was excommunicated from the church.406 Dimba then formed his own church, the African Congregational Church (I-Bandhla lika Mvuyana), which, as the name suggests, claimed to follow the true intentions and the spirit of Gardiner Mvuyana.407 Adding some fuel to this claim was the fact that Dimba was joined by Gardiner Mvuyana’s brother John, who had been an evangelist in the ACC.408 Most of the ACC members were not swayed by Dimba’s claim to Mvuyana’s legacy, and by 1937, both of the ministers and most of the other church members who had joined the Dimba split had rejoined the ACC.409

406 Letter from M.S. Dube and the officers of the African Congregational Church to the Undersecretary for Native Affairs, 19 July 1932. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
407 Dimba also objected to the fact that the African Congregational Church Company, Ltd., the company started by Mvuyana and others, held much of the property of the church but was distinct from the church, and it was the company that ejected Dimba’s group from his church. Interview with Revs Walter Dimba, D.K. Mkaywa, Charles Manyisa and Charles Dube and the Evangelists Jonathan Mkize, John Mvuyana, and one George Sibiya. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
409 Native Commissioner to CNC: Johannesburg, 5 February 1937. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
Despite frustrations and conflicts, the ACC was markedly stable during its first twenty years. After Mvuyana’s death, Ndandwe was elected President, and when M.S. Dube was elected President the following decade, Ndandwe remained an officer in the church. Likewise, when Makhoba was elected to the presidency, Dube remained active as a church leader. Other leaders from the church’s early years also remained as the church grew. Of the ministers, evangelists, and lay preachers listed by Gardiner Mvuyana in 1922, ten were still on the regular schedule of assignments in 1936.

The stability of the African Congregational Church and other independent churches and the continued growth of Christianity in a variety of forms in Natal and beyond were a sign of a new set of norms in African life. Like Makhoba’s clothing, like the deployment of Zulu ethnic nationalism in the political party Inkatha, the African independent churches in were an example of Africans making Western ideas their own. They did not wholeheartedly embrace Western ideology, but rather took what was important to them, what made sense to them, and what appealed to them, and made it fit into their own lives. This formation was not the result of a battle between ideologies, a conflict between Western thought and African traditionalism, but the negotiation and integration of influences and ideas from a number of sources, missionary Christianity and education, African traditional practice, and the rise of political, social, and cultural organizations.

410 See the signatories on the letter from M.S. Dube and the officers of the African Congregational Church to the Undersecretary for Native Affairs, 19 July 1932. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
411 See
412 Compare the list by Gardiner Mvuyana in African Native Separatist Churches, 1921-22 (Native Affairs Department, South Africa) with the list from the Extracts of the Minutes of the African Congregational Church (Ibandhla lama Afrika) Annual Conference held at Amatata Mission Station, Inanda P.O. Ndwedwe District, Natal, 26 July 1936. CAD NTS 1444 54/214.
Africans accepted Christianity on certain terms, terms that they themselves devised. If the amakholwa accepted certain fundamental aspects of Christianity, they challenged others, and challenged the rights of missionaries to shape their beliefs. The amakholwa fashioned their worship in ways that were meaningful to them, and popular ideas – such as the process of sanctification, full-immersion baptism and foot washing – spread beyond their initial location of introduction.

The refusal to give up traditional practices, such as lobola and polygyny, in the face of missionary demands, while simultaneously asserting their Christian identity illustrated that Africans were now taking ownership of Christian ideology. The amakholwa were comfortable interpreting Christian ideology and deciding for themselves what made one Christian. Missionaries required obedience and allegiance not only to God and Christ but also to the mission, the missionaries, and the brand of Christianity introduced at the mission. The world the mission created was a small, exclusive world. As the mission’s promises of social, economic and political were blocked by the government and by the missionaries themselves, the amakholwa looked outside of that world to connect into something larger and to find meaning and hope in difficult times.

It would be easy to demonize the mission imperative for the zeal they imposed upon others or for establishing institutions to instill European hegemony. Though they claimed to serve Africans through their religious and practical, it is easy to imagine the missionaries caught up in the authority that they assumed on the mission reserves. Indeed their letters indicate a jealous scramble for followers and machinations to keep those same followers under mission authority. The missionaries understood the precariousness of
their position as did government officials – any competing messages needed to be crushed or driven out or else such messages would be available as an alternative to their authority.

But the ideas and institutions brought by the missionaries, true to the fears of the South African government, introduced new ideas and options rather than instilling hegemony. Furthermore, it gave Africans yet another basis for dissent as well as the tools to build the dissent. A functioning church with schools, land for its congregants, and its own social network employed for community aid and advancement, could distance itself from the missionaries and government officials. As the government could not force Shembe’s followers to be vaccinated, power was lost over such strongly formed groups that could truly function independently.

Most importantly, the religious message that Africans received, particularly after the Weavers revivals, encouraged the belief that salvation was had through individual commitment and therefore empowered the amakholwa to take responsibility for their own lives and for their community. As God’s authority was absolute and each believer’s commitment was a personal interaction sealed in sanctification, the missionaries were primarily needed for social and political functions – as educators, arbiters of the social order, and representatives to the government. When missionaries failed to perform these functions to the satisfaction of members of the congregation, the congregation could challenge the missionaries without risk to their salvation.

No single line or flow chart could break down the lineage of a church’s beliefs and practices. While some might have believed that the independent churches developed
out of varied combinations of mission and African thought, the various ideas that intertwined and took hold in the congregations took on lives of their own in different places, acquiring new meanings or attaching to new rituals. The ideas, once planted, grew in response to the congregations’ needs, shaped by their own interests and concerns, born not out of the past but out of their present conditions. The faith that the independent churches shared, however, was the faith that their salvation, both mortal and immortal, did not depend on the efforts of white missionaries or the government. That faith was placed in their African church community, in African leadership, and in African abilities to achieve salvation on earth and in the afterlife. It was a faith that did not require white men as intermediaries and instead sought to emphasize the ability of Africans to pursue their own interests and beliefs. Living and praying independently, the independent church leaders could proclaim their allegiance to the government and their respect for the missionaries while at the same time promoting spiritual revolution.

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413 Sundkler, 297.
APPENDIX A

Letter from Gardiner Mvuyana to the SNA, CAD NTS 1444 54/214.

AFRICAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
Stark Street, Braamfontein,
Johannesburg.

The Secretary
Native Affairs Dept.,
PRETORIA.

Dear Sir,

As Application — African Congregational Church.

Adverting to our interview of the 3rd instant at Pretoria, I herewith beg to have cause in writing.

In short, I beg to apply for permission to establish a new church in the Transvaal provinces and other parts of the Union, to be known as "The African Congregational Church."

I have been in the "Congregational Church of America Board" for about 30 years. Lately, we have discovered in connection with the work of the church, the right of ownership of the properties bought by our people, and certain new regulations that have been introduced.

I have left this church together with a large number of our people, numbering between 450 and 500.

The framing of the Constitution is in the hands of my assistants. I will supply you with a copy as soon as it is finished.

Thanking you in anticipation,

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient servant,

Gardiner M. Mvuyana
APPENDIX B
Constitution of the African Congregational Church, CAD NTS 1444 54/214.

ARTICLE I

Name
This Church shall be called the African Congregational Church or .................................."If Bahlila lama Afrika?"

ARTICLE II

Covenant.

The Covenant by which this Church exists as a distinct body, and which every member accepts, is as follows:-

Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our Saviour and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice; and recognising the privilege and duty of uniting ourselves for Christian fellowship, the enforcement of Christian ordinances, the public worship of God, and the advancement of His Kingdom in the world. We do now, in the sight of God and invoking His blessing, solemnly covenant and agree with each other to associate ourselves to be a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as warranted by the Word of God.

We agree to maintain the institutions of the Gospel, to submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of the Church, and to walk together in brotherly love. And this we do depending upon our Heavenly Father, who so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son for our Salvation, and of Jesus Christ, who hath redeemed us with His blood, and of the Holy Spirit our Comforter and Guide.

ARTICLE III

Character.

Section I. Policy. Its government is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognises and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and co-operation, which are common among Congregational Churches, and it is in fellowship with all Churches, which acknowledges
acknowledge Jesus the Christ to be their Divine Redeemer and Lord.

Section IV. Membership.

Section I. Qualifications. The membership consists of such persons as profess Jesus Christ to be their Saviour and Lord, and who, after due examination either by the Church Committee or by the Church itself, as to their Christian experience, and, if coming from other Churches, as to their letters of Dismission and recommendation or satisfactory substantiation therefor, and if after proposed from the pulpit on some Lord's Day prior to their reception, if they have been accepted by vote of the Church, and, having been baptized, if enter into its covenant and subscribe to its Eye-Law, and are formally received into its fellowship.

Section II. Reception of members shall ordinarily be upon some Lord's Day, when the Lord's Supper is administered and shall be in the form appended to these Eye-Laws.

Section III. Duties. Members are expected, first of all, to be faithful in all the spiritual duties essential to the Christian life; and also to attend faithfully the services of this church, to give regularly for its support and its charities, and to share in its organized work.

Section IV. Rights. Such persons as are in full and regular standing, and do not hold letters of Dismission and recommendation, and have attained the age of twenty-one years, and such only, may not and vote in the transactions of the Church.

Section V. Termination: The continuance of membership shall be subject to the principles and canons of the Congregational Churches, and especially as follows:

If any member in good and regular standing, who desires a letter...

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of dismission and recommendation to any other evangelical Church is entitled to receive it upon his written request. In case of removal to another community he should promptly make such request. This letter shall be valid as a recommendation for only one year from its date, unless renewed, and this restriction shall be stated in the letter.

(2) If a member desires to join a religious body with which this Church is not in fellowship, or which would not receive its letter, the Church may, at his request, give him a certificate of his good standing and terminate his membership.

(3) If a member in good standing requests to be released from his covenant obligations to this Church for reasons which the Church may finally deem satisfactory, after it shall have patiently and kindly endeavored to secure his continuance in its fellowship, such request may be granted and his membership terminated.

(4) The Church may also, after due notice and hearing and kindly effort to make such action unnecessary, terminate the membership of persons for the space of two years non-resident, or for the same space of time not habitually worshipping with the Church, or for the same space of time not contributing to its support according to the system prescribed by the Church or in some way satisfactory thereto.

(5) Should a member become an offence to the Church and its good name by reason of immoral, or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his covenant vows, the Church may terminate his membership, but only after due notice and hearing, and after further efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment.

(6) The membership of no person shall be terminated (except by letter) at the meeting when the recommendation for such action is made.

Section VI. RESTORATION. Any person whose membership has been terminated may be restored by vote of the Church, if for any offence, upon evidence of his repentance and reformation, or, if on account of continued absence upon satisfactory explanation.
ARTICLE V.
OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES.

SECTION I. The officers and committees shall be as follows:

1. A Pastor to be chosen and called by the Church, whenever a vacancy occurs, and to be installed by Council when the Church and Pastor shall so agree.

2. A Clerk, to be chosen at each annual meeting to serve for one year and until his successor shall be chosen and qualified.

3. Deacons, one of whom shall be elected at each annual meeting to serve for one year.

4. A Treasurer to be chosen at each annual meeting to serve for one year and until another shall be chosen in his stead.

5. A Superintendent of the Sunday School to be chosen at each annual meeting.

6. A Church Committee to act with regard to the spiritual concerns of the Church, which shall consist of the above named officers.

7. If the church property and the support of public worship are to be in the hands of the church, a board of three members shall be elected at each annual meeting to serve for three years and until their successors shall be appointed to hold in trust the property of the church as the state may require, and to manage its financial and business affairs, always under the direction of the Church.

A Prudential Committee which shall consist of three or more as may be determined at the time, to have charge, under the direction of the Church, of its financial and business affairs, to be chosen at each annual meeting and to serve for one year.

8. All the officers and committees named in the above sections shall be elected by ballot, and all elections shall be determined by a majority of the votes cast by the members present who are qualified to vote.

SECTION II. The Pastor shall have in charge the spiritual welfare of the congregation; he shall preach the Word and have in his care the stated services of public worship, and shall administer the sacraments.
Section III. The clerk shall keep a complete record of all business meetings of the Church, which shall be read for approval at the next regular business meeting, and also of the minutes of all the meetings of the Executive Committee or of the Board of Trustees if either of these bodies shall be chosen. He shall record the full names and addresses of all members of the Executive Committee and keep a register of their names with dates of admission and resignation or death, together with a record of baptism. He shall also notify all officers, members of committees and committees of their election or appointment. He shall issue letters of admission and resignation to all members admitted or retained by the Church, preserve or file all communications and written official reports, and give notice of all meetings where such notice is necessary as indicated in these By-Laws. The clerk shall keep all records required by the law of the State.

Section IV. The Deacons shall provide for the Lord's Supper and aid in its administration, and shall care for the poor, calling upon the Treasurer by vote of the board, at their discretion, for any funds in his possession held for these purposes.

Section V. The Church Committee shall examine and propose Candidates for admission to the Church, shall provide for the supply of the pulpit in any absence of the pastor, shall decide on objects for regular or special collections when the Church has not voted thereon, shall have regard to discipline as provided in the article relating to that subject, and shall be useful for the spiritual interests of the Church. It shall make a written report at each annual meeting of the elders under its charge.

Section VI. The Treasurer shall keep separate accounts as follows: (a) of all monies contributed at the Lord's Supper, which shall be primarily devoted to the relief of the poor, and such contributions, together with all other monies given for that purpose, are shall hold subject to the order of the Board of Deacons.

[End of page]
All monies raised for the objects of Christian benevolence, to be paid by him to the several persons or societies entitled thereto. All monies received by him for the support of public worship or any department of Church work to be paid out on the order of the Church or of any person or committee authorized by the Church. All the Treasurer's accounts shall be kept distinct from all other accounts, and all deposits made, and all cheques drawn by him shall be in the name of the Church. He shall make an annual written report in detail of his receipts and expenditures, properly audited by some person previously appointed by the Church.

Section VII The Superintendent of the Sunday School shall have the general oversight and direction of the school, and shall conduct its affairs upon such general plans and in such methods as may be approved by the Church Committee. He shall at the annual meeting of the Church present a written report of the work of the school during the year, with such recommendations as he may deem wise.

ARTICLE VI

- Property and Finances

The Trustees or Prudential Committee shall have the actual care of the place of worship, but shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the Church authorizing such action. They shall provide, under the direction of the Church, for the raising of money for the support of its public services, shall have general charge of its finances other than monies contributed at the Lord's Supper or for any charitable or benevolent objects, shall authorize and direct the Treasurer as to the payment of monies under their control, shall provide for the proper auditing of his accounts, unless the Church shall appoint an auditor, and may, at their discretion, call meetings for matters with which they are concerned. They shall make at the annual meeting a detailed /
detailed report in writing of their transactions during the year. If the Church shall elect Trustees, this body shall hold in trust any property so required to be held by the laws of the State.

ARTICLE VII.

Organization.

The Church regards as integral parts of itself all organizations formed for the purpose of administration and which use the facilities of the Church property. Of all such organizations, the Pastor shall have general oversight, and the Church will expect a report from each at its annual meeting.

ARTICLE VIII.

- Meeting -

Section I. For Worship. Sec. I. Public services shall be held steadily on the Lord's Day and on some regular evening of each week.

Sec. II. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at such regular dates as the Church may, from time to time, determine, and unless otherwise ordered upon the first Lord's Day of each alternate month, beginning with January. The mid-week meeting next preceding, shall be devoted to a Preparatory Service.

Sec. III. Occasional religious meetings may be appointed by the Pastor at his discretion, or by vote of the Church.

Section II. For Business. Sec. I. At any of the regular meetings for worship the Church may, without special notice, act upon the reception of members previously proposed or upon dismissal of members to other churches, or upon the appointment of delegates to councils and conferences or churches, but not upon other business.

Sec. II. The Pastor may, and shall, when requested by the Church Committee, call from the pulpit special business meetings, the particular object of the meeting being clearly stated in the notice. Special meetings of the Church shall also be called by the Clerk upon written application of five adult members specifying the object thereof, which notice shall be read at the public services or the Lord's Day meeting preceding the day fixed for such meeting to special meeting, shall be held on the same day on which the notice is given.
The Annual Meeting of the Church shall be held on 1st... at which time the annual reports shall be presented and officers elected, and such other business transactions as may be specified in the call or authorized by the By-laws.

This meeting shall be called by the Clerk in the manner specified in the paragraph next preceding.

If at all meetings for business called by the Clerk, a chairman shall be chosen by vote of the Church, but at all other meetings the Pastor shall preside except that in his absence, or when the business relates to himself, the Church shall elect a chairman.

If at the annual and all special meetings... members shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

ARTICLE XII.

- Disciplining -

Section I. Should any unspiritual differences arise between members, the affected member shall follow, in a tender spirit, the rule given by our Lord in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew.

Section II. Should any case of gross breach of covenant, or of public scandal, occur, the Church Committee shall endeavour to remove the offence, and if such effort fail shall report the case to the Church.

Section III. If the Church vote to entertain a complaint which must be made in writing it shall appoint a reasonable time and place of hearing and notify the person in question thereof, furnishing him with a copy of charges.

Section IV. At such hearing the accused member may call to his aid any member of the Church as counsel. If he shall not present himself at the time appointed, or give satisfactory reasons for his absence so to do, the Church may proceed in his absence.

Section V. All such proceedings should be conducted in a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance, but should an adverse decision be reached, the Church may proceed to admonish or to declare the offender to be no longer in the membership of the Church.

Section VI...
Section 6. In case of grave difficulty the Church will be ready, if requested, to ask advice of a mutual Council.

AZTILIS, A.

Amendments

These Bye-Laws may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members present voting at any annual meeting of the Church, or at a meeting specially called for that purpose, the proposed amendment being inserted in the call but no change shall be made in Articles II and III, entitled "Obedience" and "Character" except at an annual meeting, and by a three-fourths vote of all the members of the Church entitled to vote, said, proposed change having been laid before the Church in writing at a business meeting not less than one month before the time of the proposed action and read from the Pulpit on the Lord’s Day next succeeding such proposal.
APPENDIX C
Letter from B.M. Ndwandwe to Magistrate, Pinetown, PAR CNC/PMB 54A 45/267
N2/3/3(37)

Box 1799,
Durben,
December 9th, 1930.

The Magistrate & Native Commissioner,
Pinetown District, Natal.

Sir,

In compliance with Circular letter No. 3/15/351 dated 22nd July last, from the Chief Native Commissioner, Natal, I hereunto respectfully beg to submit on behalf of the African Congregational Church application in triplicate for a church site at Iziitzwini on Chief Vika's location in your district.

In support of the application I beg to state that we have been working in this locality for about 8 years. At the end of 1929 we applied for a site at Isamungu but on inspection, the Magistrate considered that it was too near the site occupied by the American Board Mission and suggested that a site further distant be chosen. We therefore selected this site on the suggestion of the Chief Vika and we reported to the Magistrate, and I understood he approved, but now find I should have submitted an application to occupy the site.

All the natives residing in the locality contributed money and a stone church was erected which is attended by a large number of people and is under the charge of one of our ministers named Aaron Ksewa.

I may say our church in no way interferes in political matters and confines ourselves to preaching the Gospel and trying to improve the Natives in their mode of living and if necessary, I am prepared to obtain references from Magistrates and ex-magistrates of districts where we have carried on our work.

I sincerely pray, Sir, that this our application will receive your favourable consideration as a refusal would be a great hardship to the people residing there. I put up herewith a copy of our Constitution.

I am Sir,
Yours respectfully,
LIST OF REFERENCES
LIST OF REFERENCES

I. Archival Sources

a. Central Archives Depot, Pretoria
   i. Secretary for Native Affairs, Correspondence (NTS)
   ii. Commissioner of South African Police, Confidential Reports and Correspondence, select (SAP)

b. Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository
   i. Chief Native Commissioner, Correspondence (CNC)
   ii. Chief Native Commissioner, Correspondence, second series (CNC/PMB)
   iii. Records of the American Zulu Mission (ABCFM)
   iv. Secretary for Native Affairs, Correspondence, select (SNA)
   v. Master of the Supreme Court – Estates, select (MSCE)
   vi. Box 62 (IRD)
   vii. Surveyor General’s Office, Correspondence, select (SGO)

c. Houghton Library, Harvard University
   i. Records of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (HL ABC)

II. Government Reports

_African Native Separatist Churches, 1921-22_, Native Affairs Department, South Africa.
III. Other Reports


IV. Books


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IV. Articles and Chapters from Edited Collections


V. Theses and Unpublished Papers


CURRICULUM VITAE

Jennifer Nelson received a BA in History and English from George Mason University.