

Chapter 14: Conclusion to Part 2

14.1 Definition of Mission in Action

The three missionary projects described in the previous chapters had several characteristics in common. They were all situated in the southern part of the Midlands in what is now KwaZulu-Natal. All three projects flourished during the period between roughly 1843, the incorporation of Natal into the Cape Colony of the British Empire, until 1948, the implementation of the Apartheid Policy by the South African Government. During this period, the Government supported the projects as educational institutes situated in Zulu living areas. However, with the introduction of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, the projects lost their Government Subsidies and collapsed as missionary educational institutes.

As proponents of different European denominational churches, the three missionary projects were more or less exponents of the colonization of Natal. All three projects involved the purchase of vast tracts of land already more or less occupied by local people. Although initially meant for agricultural training and for farming to provide a living for the missionaries, the land owned by the missions was predominantly used to settle displaced people.

The intentions of the three projects can be summarized in the following definition of 'mission': the sharing of the Gospel in a structured way with people in need, across cultural barriers. Moreover, each of the projects was part of the introduction and expansion of a European denominational church with the objective of establishing a church presence and maximizing the number of baptized people. However, the projects hardly contributed to an increase in the number of active church members and were unable to function without external support. The importance of the projects can best be described in terms of 'mission' as an intrinsic aspect of Christianity, as its outreach to and orientation in a non-Christian environment. The projects were started by missionaries born in Europe who spent several years of their lives in a predominantly Zulu surrounding sharing the Gospel and attempting to improve the living conditions of the local population according to their missionary ideals.

14.2 Missionary Projects in Retrospect

Since about the middle of the 20th century, the understanding of what constitutes 'mission' has changed substantially. Generally speaking, major missionary projects in the previous period can be described in terms of the following characteristics: they were supported by or at least protected by local governments; they were representatives of established denominational churches; they settled in different parts of especially the southern hemisphere to share the Gospel with the local population.¹ Although generally correct, this description does not

¹ D.J. Bosch 1991, p.1: "Until the 1950s 'mission', even if not used in a univocal sense, had a fairly circumscribed set of meanings:. It referred to (a) the sending of missionaries to a designated territory, (b) the activities undertaken by such missionaries, (c) the geographical area where the missionaries were active, (d) the agency which dispatched the missionaries, (e) the non-Christian world or 'mission field', (f) the center from which the missionaries operated on the 'mission field'... (g) a local congregation without a resident minister and still dependant on the support of an older, established church, or (h) a series of special services intended to deepen or spread the Christian faith, usually

fully fit many missionary initiatives for at least two reasons. Firstly, a number of missionary projects cannot be characterized as church denominational projects. For example, during the 18th century, many projects were undertaken by individuals who held a pietistic conviction that they were personally called by God to share the Gospel in another culture with people in distress.² Also the late 19th and early 20th century 'faith missions' cannot be called 'denominational'.³ Secondly, it cannot be stated that all missionary projects were supported or protected by local governments. Nevertheless, it can be maintained that the three mission projects discussed in the previous chapters fit the following general description: supported or at least protected by the Government, representatives of established denominational churches settled in different parts of the southern Midlands in the present KwaZulu-Natal to do 'missionary' work.

Since the middle of the 20th century, 'mission' has become difficult to define and because of this, it is difficult to evaluate the three missionary projects in retrospect.⁴ Probably, their intention was most likely to share the Gospel with people in need, across cultural barriers. To realize this goal they established churches and other services which facilitated the spreading of the Christian Gospel, the improvement of living conditions for the target population and the change of their traditional way of living. Especially the last aspect, the intention to change a traditional way of living, has become a major source of criticism of missionary projects.⁵

By the middle of the 20th century, independent churches were established all over the world and the need for overseas missionary projects was generally questioned (par.19.5). It became suspect to make a principle difference between sending missionary churches and receiving mission churches, and the foundation, motives and aim of overseas missionary projects became increasingly difficult to define. Since the International Mission Conference in Willingen (1952) the frequent use of the term *missio Dei* made clear that 'mission' was no longer seen as

in a nominal Christian environment."

² As examples of early 18th century missionary projects often opposed by denominational churches, the projects among slaves and among the Khoikhoi in Genadendal, east of Cape Town, can be mentioned. Many of these projects had a Moravian pietistic background (par.15.10; E. Elbourne & R. Ross, 1997, p.32-39).

³ D.J. Bosch (1991, p.332-333): "Many of the newer type of [late 19th century] Protestant missionary agencies belong to the category usually referred to as 'faith missions'. The pioneer and prototype of all these societies... was the China Inland Mission, founded in 1865 by J. Hudson Taylor... Here the eschatological motive dominated."

⁴ According to D.J. Bosch (1991, p.3-4) missionary work by Western churches is in a crisis: "As far as the Christian church, theology, and mission are concerned, the crisis manifests itself, inter alia, in the following factors: The advance of science and technology and, with them, the worldwide process of secularization...; the reality that the West... is slowly but steadily dechristianized...; we now live in a religiously pluralist[ic] world...; the West - and also Western Christians - tends to suffer from an acute sense of guilt...; the younger churches refuse to be dictated to and are putting a high premium on their 'autonomy'. In addition, Western theology is today suspect in many parts of the world."

⁵ E. Elbourne & R. Ross (1997, p.47): "From the very beginning, the idea of converting the 'heathen' was... inextricably linked to that of 'civilizing' them... changes in consciousness could both lead to spiritual salvation and provide the 'secondary blessing' of social and economic progress." C. Villa-Vicencio (1995, p.59): "Despite the fact that individual missionaries championed the cause of the African people, they simultaneously helped undermine the African social fabric and therefore the base from which resistance could be launched against colonisation... African society... was condemned by both missionaries and colonists as a life of laziness and indolence. They both agreed that the African should be taught the dignity of labour."

the responsibility of certain churches or missionaries, but that it was God's own initiative. At present, 'mission' is either seen as an aspect of the church as a 'global missionary community', or it has been absorbed into other terms like 'church growth' or 'ecumenical movement'.⁶ What remains is the critical function of mission, its prophetic task to remind people that, while there are still people in need and while there are barriers dividing people, there is a good reason to share the Gospel beyond the boundaries of local churches. 'Mission' is not in the first place an extension of or an outreach by the church. By actually crossing the barriers, 'mission' becomes a criticism on the church, reminding the church that it is not identical with the Kingdom of God, that God's priorities are not automatically the same as those of the church and that as a consequence, the church needs to continue crossing its own boundaries.⁷

14.3 People in Need

The three missionary projects described in the previous chapters targeted people in need. Most of the time, the needs were defined by the missions, but sometimes the needs were highlighted by a local community itself, which approached a mission with the request for the establishment of a mission station in its area. When the need was indicated by a community, the target population, it functioned as an argument for the Mission to extend its working area. On request of the local population, the Springvale Mission opened an outstation in East Griqualand, Clydesdale. In a similar way, Catholic outstations were opened in Reichenau, Amandus Hill, and Richmond Village. The request for help originated from a local leader, an *inkosi* (in the case of Reichenau), an evangelist expelled by another church (in the case of Richmond), a political leader (Adam Kok III; or the local Magistrate, Donald Strachan, in the case of Clydesdale), or even a farmer (in the case of Amandus Hill). When the request was done by a local leader, it might be assumed that it was well considered. In all cases, lack of educational possibilities for local children was one of the needs that contributed to the request for help. Another reason to ask for help, was the assumption that the presence of a Mission would offer contact with the wider world, especially with the Government. In the eyes of local communities, missions would offer education, communication, protection and an improvement in material living conditions.

The needs defined by local communities were not necessarily in line with its needs as understood by the missions. When missions defined the need of the local populations, they were formulated in spiritual terms, or in terms of the lack of civilization, education, or development from which the local people were deemed to suffer. The 19th century missions were deeply influenced by the Enlightenment philosophy that people differed in terms of the level of development, that people strived for a better life, and that the missions were able to release them from obstructions such as war, superstition, idleness, lack of knowledge, sickness etcetera. For example, the Springvale Mission was established with people from Pietermaritzburg, most of whom were displaced in the wars that raged during the first half of the 19th century. Rev. Henry Callaway firmly believed, subscribing to an utopian idea, that bringing them together in a

⁶ J.A.B. Jongeneel & J.M. van Engelen, 1988.

⁷ J.Verkuyl, 1981, p.553: "De missiologie zal mensen moeten leren alert te zijn voor de wisseling der prioriteiten, maar tevens zal altijd ook gelet moeten worden op het geheel van het heil."

Christian rural community with opportunities to develop and grow spiritually, would make them leaders of development. In a similar way, Rev. James Allison brought a mixed group of people, including several people from Swaziland, to an undeveloped area, forming with them a new, Christian 'household' and a centre for industrial training. Like other Methodist Missions, the Indaleni Mission put strong emphasis on the 'saving of souls' as the principle need in the community. It believed that people were not victims, or outcasts, but human beings with God-given potential and with the promise of forgiveness and eternal life. Through proper education and training, it was believed that they would grow to their full potential and be evangelists themselves. By granting land and subsidies for education and training, the Government supported the missions as institutions that were able to communicate with local communities and to possibly assist them in their basic needs.

The Catholic Mission Stations Einsiedeln and St Bernard highlight another aspect of the needs which led to the establishment of missionary projects. The place, where Einsiedeln Mission was established, was chosen because the Church needed it there. There was a need for a 'halfway-house' between Mariannhill and Reichenau. In general, Mission Stations did not only serve the needs of the local population, they also served the needs of the Church. They were centres from where surrounding areas became 'occupied' and were thus affirmations of the belief that the church was expanding in the world and that the church was truly catholic.

The needs defined by the local communities differed, even clashed, with the needs as defined by the missions. The missions used to formulate the needs in spiritual, educational, medical, or socio-economic terms offering the Gospel and a church community, educating, training and providing medical care, shelter and poverty relief. On the other hand, local communities and inhabitants of mission stations, especially after the missionary projects had been in existence for some time and a local leadership had been raised, defined their needs in terms of lack of power and lack of land. The *Unzondelelo* movement at the end of the 19th century illustrates the clash in priorities between the Methodist missionaries and the local church leaders. The local evangelists were convinced that they were more fit to spread the Gospel than the missionaries, and criticized them for not properly equipping local leaders and not ordaining them as ministers in their own right. After the missions' capabilities to run their own educational institutes were undermined by the Bantu Education Law of 1953, the symbiosis between missions and local communities faced its most serious threat, as the missions were no longer able to provide the communities with that which had led to their long-term relationship: primary and secondary education. In the struggle against Apartheid, many missionary projects became the targets of criticism. They were seen as repressive institutions opposing the fulfilment of the needs of local communities and local leadership. By the end of the 20th century, the Springvale Mission was seen as a landlord, who did not care for the people. The Indaleni Mission was seen as an obstacle in the process of taking ownership of the location eNdaleni by the local political parties.

By the beginning of the 21st century, all aid projects initiated by the three missionary projects described in the previous chapters had collapsed, leaving behind parish churches with less than 200 members per congregation. The 'School for the Deaf' in eNdaleni, is the only example of a mission initiated project that is still alive, although it presently falls under the legislative Department of Education.

14.4 Sharing the Gospel in a Structured Way

Around the end of the 19th century, there was a strong belief that mission was about preaching the Gospel, “announcing the tidings of eternal salvation”, as formulated in the encyclical *Maximum Illud* (par.13.1.1). In reality, the announcement came in a specific, structured way. The Gospel had to be translated into the vernacular, as was done by Rev. Callaway, not only in his Bible translation work, but also in his ethnological studies. The Gospel was proclaimed in the context of a denominational church’s liturgy, or in the form of more or less spontaneous revivals. Apart from holding church services in private houses, church buildings were erected, not only at the mission stations, but also in the surroundings. Permission to do so was needed from local communities, farmers or the Government. In some cases, the local communities had already been introduced to the Gospel and saw themselves as Christians. For example, Rev. Callaway established the Clydesdale Outstation to offer common worship and pastoral care to Christian Griquas and European settlers.

For educational purposes schools were erected, often in combination with church buildings. In Springvale, a clinic was also established. Large farms were bought to maintain the mission projects, sometimes in areas already occupied by local communities, who became labour tenants or tenant farmers to the mission stations. Missionaries defined the rules at their stations and by doing so, they set patterns of authority. It may be assumed that in many cases, the missionaries did not reflect on the relationship between the way they preached the Gospel and the way they ran their stations. Nevertheless, for local communities the pattern of church-school-clinic-shop-fields in all its variations was the form in which the Gospel was shared at the stations.

The content of the Gospel thus came in a specific structured form, often in combination with a message about civilization, development or deliverance. Rarely, was it offered in line with local customs such as bride’s price, polygamy, and the communication with ancestors. Typically, local traditions were opposed at the stations. However, the common factor was that many of the 19th century mission projects were there to stay serving the communities on a continuous, structured basis, often with the support of the colonial Government.

14.5 Crossing Cultural Barriers

What was probably most specific about the mission projects, described in the previous chapters, compared with Church work in general, was the crossing of cultural barriers. These barriers might have been ethnic, linguistic, or social, but crossing them was an essential element of missionary work. For example, James Allison moved from England, via the Cape, Orange Free State and Swaziland to the amaKhuze in eNdaleni, where he established a Christian community. Henry Callaway, a General Practitioner from London, shared the Gospel with people of different backgrounds in a rural area south of the uMkhomazi River: amaKhuze; English speaking commercial farmers; Dutch speaking Griquas. Trappist monks from Germany and Poland settled amongst commercial English speaking protestant farmers and predominantly isiZulu speaking farm labourers. By doing so, they made clear that the Gospel is not for a specific group of people and that the Kingdom of God is not restricted by human barriers nor that the

sharing of the Gospel is under the monopoly of people with a common cultural background but that God overcomes limits which seem impossible to overcome to human beings. Often, missionaries were opposed in this process of crossing barriers. Commercial farmers closed their farms to the missionaries of Einsiedeln Mission and St Bernard Mission. Methodist evangelists were of the opinion that they were better enabled to preach the Gospel, than overseas missionaries. The Government subsidy for Springvale's mobile clinic was withdrawn, because it crossed 'white' farms on its way to a Zulu outstation. Even by the end of the 20th century, the Indaleni Mission was attacked and looted, partly because it was seen as a 'white' institute. Nevertheless, in all these examples, the missions fulfilled their critical, prophetic task of showing people that human boundaries are not decisive in the Kingdom of God.

Around the beginning of the 20th century, many African Independent Churches were established, often serving a specific ethnic group of people. At the same time, the main denominational churches were organized in separate congregations divided along ethnic lines. During the first half of the 20th century, ecumenical initiatives by, for example, the Christian Council of South Africa, were opposed by a growing nationalism. Yet, the number of Missionary Organizations working in South Africa grew rapidly: "The forty-three mission societies in 1911 had increased to fifty-eight in 1925 and eighty-five in 1957."⁸ Especially, after the introduction of Apartheid, the South African Government stimulated the Afrikaans speaking Churches to start missionary projects, which led to new initiatives by especially the Dutch Reformed Church in what is called 'the Great Missionary Revival of 1955-60'.⁹

14.6 Reformed Mission under Question

When, in 1959, the Kampen Mission established itself in the Richmond District as the 'Reformed Mission' and opened its Mission Station in eNkumane, the local community was already aware of the phenomenon 'mission'. In 1847, in eNdaleni, near the Richmond Village, about 35 kilometres west of eNkumane, a Methodist Mission had been established; in 1858, about ten kilometres to the south, on the other side of the uMkhomazi River, an Anglican Mission; and in 1910, about five kilometres to the east of eNkumane, a Catholic Mission had been established. It may be presumed that the eNkumane community had well-founded ideas about what to expect from a new mission station in their area. They might have assumed, on the basis of what they knew from the other mission stations, that the foreign missionary would try to make them come to his church (*ukusontisa*), that he would have his own means of existence, probably by farming (*ukulima*) and that he would be there to help the people (*ukusizabantu*).

⁸ B. Sundkler & C. Steed, 2000, p.824.

⁹ B. Sundkler & C. Steed (2000, p.825-826): "This awakening directed its energy especially at the Transkei. Surprisingly, the most important factor in bringing about this change was the publication of a national Commission report in 1955, the so-called Tomlinson Report, for social and economic development of the Bantu Areas... It is rare for an official report on economic problems, even in South Africa, to include missiological perspectives of such magnitude... Tomlinson felt there was need to change an arrangement common to all missions. They were no longer to be hampered by the five-mile radius rule, and the Commission recommended the abolition of that rule... the object being 'to ensure thorough attention to the spiritual needs of the Bantu. Churches and State *must* go into action with closed ranks'."

Apart from these expectations, the question can be raised, in accordance with the definition of 'mission' formulated earlier in this chapter (par.14.1), how the Reformed Mission Enkumane shared the Gospel in a structured way with people in need, across cultural barriers? To answer this question, the Mission must be queried about: its origin; its motives; the contents of its message; the way it was spread; the needs it found; the way it offered help; its actually crossing cultural barriers. In order to evaluate this information and describe the Mission's position in the local community, an analysis must be made of local church life in eNkumane.

In Part 1 of this research, it was found that the eNkumane community was not a static entity but consisted of differing population strata some of which consisted of people in constant migration over several generations. In Part 2, it was found that the missionary projects in the direct surroundings of eNkumane were also involved with people who led transient lives and that even the projects themselves were in a process of constant adjustment to stay in contact with the local communities. Common aspects of the three missionary projects, described in Part 2, were the involvement in the following activities: proclaiming the Gospel; offering training and education; establishing churches; helping to people in need; maintaining a position in the surrounding community.

The missionary projects, described in Part 2, entailed Government-subsidized training and education, which not only provided the projects with opportunities to be in contact with the surrounding communities and to share the Gospel, but also with a substantial financial basis for their operations. The withdrawal of Government subsidies proved to be disastrous for the functioning of the projects and led to a downscaling of their activities. The projects also led to the establishment of European Initiated Churches and indirectly, to the establishment of African Initiated Churches. Although the size of the congregations meeting at each of the former mission stations at present is up to about 200 members, it is difficult to assess what the lasting effects of these projects on a broader scale have been. Moreover, the projects had an aspect of helping people in need. The help was offered in the form personal assistance and structurally, in the form of refuge, educational or medical facilities. Finally, a common aspect of the projects was their complex relationships with the surrounding communities. In certain cases, the members of these communities were concurrently fellow-Christians, employees and tenants. The material sources under control of the missions, including the authority over land, were a continuous source of friction and underlined the inequality of missionaries and local population. Their presence as foreign entities became a stumbling block especially after they lost Government Subsidies for training and education.

In the next chapters, in Part 3, the specific case of the Reformed Mission Enkumane will be described. These chapters will deal with the motivation and aim of this missionary project, its integration into the eNkumane community and the way in which it dealt with the issues of marginality and transition. Part 4 will deal with its prospects.