

The Tomlinson Report and the third wave of Dutch Reformed mission: context and content

ABSTRACT

The author describes and analyses the congruencies and correlations between DRC mission history and Afrikaner history. He focuses in this paper on the reciprocal effects of the findings and recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission who researched the socio-economic development of Bantu Reserves within white South Africa. The Tomlinson Report had a significant influence on DRC mission in the so-called Bantu homelands within South Africa. There were specific congruencies in the area of researching and finding solutions to the “native problem” in both church and state. The preferred approach for both was to be found in the adoption of an approach based on racial separation, with language and culture as the main indicators of difference. Nevertheless the relationship cannot simply be described as collusive.

INTRODUCTION

In a previous publication presenting an overview of DRC mission history (Saayman 2007), I argued that in the more than 350 years of DRC mission history in Southern Africa four waves can be distinguished. The use of the concept of “waves” specifically in analysing and characterising mission history was introduced in a paper read at a congress in Stellenbosch in 2001 (Kritzinger *et al* 2004). It originates in the social analysis of M Weber referring to the “systematisation, routinisation or rationalisation” of the *charisma* which generally inspires a social movement in its earlier phases. These processes can and indeed do tend to lead to stagnation, which then in turn calls forth renewal movements “that seek to restore the original dynamics of the religious tradition” (:260). Such movements can best be described as “‘waves’ welling up from within the religious community itself re-embodiment its founding vision in response to societal challenges” (*ibid.*). My goal with the previously mentioned study was especially to attempt to write Afrikaner history into DRC Christianity, and *vice versa* (Saayman 2007:1). I did this because I am convinced that it is impossible to understand the past and the present of DRC mission history without taking into account the salience of Afrikaner history (:2). I distinguish four such waves in DRC mission history clearly correlated to important events in South African and specifically Afrikaner history.¹ It is my contention that mission enthusiasm has always been present in (at least some) members of the DRC, but that this enthusiasm sometimes reached plateaus or even troughs, until some event caused the rise of a new wave of mission enthusiasm. This study dealt mainly with periodisation and establishing the outlines of the four waves, and I argued that a really intensive analysis along the lines of a social history about what exactly it was that gave rise

1 The four waves are: First Wave 1779-1834 – In the beginning; Second Wave 1867-1939 – Crossing borders; Third Wave 1954-1976 – Crossing inner boundaries; Fourth Wave 1990- - To the ends of the earth (Saayman 2007).

to each new wave is a task still awaiting us. This present paper is meant to be a first step in filling in the particulars of the third wave, which lasted from 1954 to 1976, and which led to exponential growth in “home mission” (i.e. mission within the borders of SA) by the DRC². It was initiated mainly by the Tomlinson Report, the report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Socio-economic Development of the Bantu Reserves within South Africa (Tomlinsonverslag 1955). The historical context and the specific content of this report is therefore of great importance, and it is this topic I wish to address in this paper³.

POLITICO-ECONOMICAL CONTEXT

To gain a proper understanding of the context of the Tomlinson Report it is necessary first to consider what Ashforth (1990) calls the “grand discursive tradition” of South African commissions of inquiry to deal with the central issue of state and society formation in South Africa in the first half of the twentieth century: the “native question” (:1). “The ‘Native Question’ was the intellectual domain in which the knowledge, strategies, policies, and justifications necessary to the maintenance of domination were fashioned” (ibid.). The National Party victory in the 1948 election had brought about a realignment of strategies, policies and justification of white domination. The nature of the NP victory (the NP won the majority of parliamentary seats but not an overall majority of votes) meant that the party was still uncertain of the degree of support among the white electorate for its programme (:152). The Tomlinson commission therefore, premised as it was “on the preconceived and unquestionable assumption” of the practical feasibility of the apartheid doctrine (:151), had as an important goal to prove that the “Bantu Areas” were adequate “to the task of constituting national homes for the Bantu peoples, while showing how the labour requirements of the ‘European’ economy could be met by labour migration” (:160-161). This analysis by Ashforth helps us to understand the uniqueness of the Tomlinson Commission, but also very importantly situates Tomlinson in a historical tradition of Commissions of Inquiry; in other words, it helps highlight the continuities and discontinuities. Ashforth (:3) identifies the main pillars of this discursive tradition as being the South African Native Affairs Commission (1903-1905); the Native Economic Commission (1930-1932); the Native Laws Commission (Fagan – 1946-1948); Tomlinson (1950-1954); the Manpower Utilization Commission (Riekert – 1977-1980); and the Labour Legislation Commission (Wiehahn – 1977-1981). This indicates that Tomlinson should be understood as part of an ongoing tradition in white politics; as part of a tradition employed by more than one ruling party; and as part of a tradition which sometimes (Riekert and Wiehahn) introduced the seeds of genuine transformation. It also indicates the reality that apartheid was not a completely new creation of the National Party and the DRC, but a policy with deep roots in the history of the structuring of race relations in SA (cf Keegan 1996).

To set the historical, social and religious context more specifically for the Tomlinson Report and the third wave of DRC mission, one has to go back to 1938. That year was considered

2 So, for example, at the Theological Seminary of the University of Stellenbosch the number of mission vocations among DRC students went up from 10% of the total number of students to 30%. In 1957 alone 33 new (ordained and lay) missionaries started working in the Xhosa “homeland” of the Transkei, while the budget for the work there tripled between 1956 and 1959. In the Northern Transvaal (today Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces) the number of DRC missionaries nearly doubled (from 44 to 80) in the two years from 1956 (Saayman 2007:75).

3 I will not concern myself with the aftermath and consequences of the Tomlinson Report in this paper. I am concentrating specifically only on the context and content of the Report itself.

to mark the centenary of the mythological founding event of Afrikaner history, the Great Trek. Afrikaner religious and cultural organisations decided to celebrate the centenary with a symbolic ox wagon trek from various points across South Africa, with festivities at various Voortrekker landmarks such as Blood River, to culminate in the laying of the cornerstone of the planned Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. At this time Afrikaner political life was actually marked by quite strong divisions and disunity⁴. This disunity had arisen since union in 1910, and was so serious that it resulted in the spilling of blood (Malan 1959:11). For this reason Malan (:227) could describe Afrikaner disunity during the first four decades of the twentieth century as a “true *via dolorosa*” (:227 – my translation). The two main political groupings were embodied in the South African Party (with Gen JC Smuts as leader) and the more conservative and exclusive National Party (with first Gen Hertzog and later Dr DF Malan as leader). Preparations for the celebration of the symbolic ox wagon trek gave rise to the enthusiastic growth of a feeling of Afrikaner pride and unity at the grass roots (cf Malan 1959:178-179; Giliomee 2003:432).⁵ The National Party succeeded (with the help of “cultural” organisations such as the Federation of Afrikaner Cultural organisations [FAK] and the Afrikaner Broederbond) to take the lead in planning and preparing for the festivities (Davenport 1977:323) and, although the festivities were said to be “above party politics”, the NP turned out to be the major beneficiary (Giliomee 2003:433). The feeling of pride and new self-worth was experienced the stronger as it followed on the traumatic experiences of the aftermath of the great drought and depression of the early 1930s, with the uprooting accompanying the influx of poor white Afrikaners to the urban centres, especially the mining centres of the Witwatersrand. The preparation for the festivities and the trek itself helped Afrikaners grow in confidence (:325), experience a sense of pride and self-worth again, which was expressed in many instances as a sense of taking their rightful position as rightful “owners” of South Africa, heirs of the Voortrekkers who bought the land with their own blood (Malan 1959:181). In Malan’s words (:179) it expressed the Afrikaners’ longing for a free, independent South African republic, with no ties whatsoever to the British Crown. This emotion was later articulated very clearly by the ideological architect of apartheid (Dr H Verwoerd) in a statement to parliament claiming “for the White man (sic) his freedom and the right to retain domination in what is his country, settled for him by his forefathers [a clear reference to the Afrikaner section of the white population]” (Mervis 1972:73).

This upsurge of Afrikaner pride and self-consciousness would eventually contribute greatly to the election victory of Dr Malan’s National Party in the 1948 parliamentary elections. As is well known today, this victory was built on the policy of apartheid, which had as its goal complete racial segregation and white supremacy. In this way the NP promised to solve, once and for all, South Africa’s perennial “native problem” – since the time of colonisation the central reality of political organisation. The social and religious contexts actually intersected exactly at

4 Two of the definitive landmarks of Afrikaner disunity in the early 20th century, were the Afrikaner Rebellion (led by former Boer generals) of 1914 at the Smuts government’s decision to join Britain in the First World War; and the split between the “Fusionists” (Smelters) under Hertzog and the “Purified” (Gesuiwerdes) under Malan in 1933 (cf Davenport 1977:318-321). A good overview of the disunity characterising the Afrikaner body politic can be found in Malan 1959. Something dramatic was needed, therefore, to change Afrikaner fortunes around. This event materialised in the 1938 Trek, a watershed event without which the NP probably would not have come to power in 1948 (Giliomee 2003:440).

5 To gain appreciation for the incredible change brought about in the Afrikaner psyche by the 1938 Ox wagon Trek, one should read D Mostert’s account titled, “Die Ossewaens van Agt-en-dertig” (Mostert 1949) in the memorial publication issued at the occasion of the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in December 1949.

this point – the “native problem” – to the extent that the Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches had its own “Natuurlikesakekommissie” (Commission for Native Affairs)⁶. As could be expected, therefore (since Afrikaners formed the main constituency of both the National Party and the DRC), there was great affinity between church and political party about the policy of apartheid. As I stated previously (Saayman 2007:69-70) in terms of the origins of apartheid the NP and the DRC are locked in a kind of “chicken-and-egg-situation”. It is very difficult to conclude firmly where the (idea of the) policy originated. As far as published sources are concerned, the term “apartheid” was indeed first used in a paper read at a DRC mission conference at Kroonstad in 1929. By the end of the 1920s the DRC mission secretary for the Free State could indeed characterise apartheid as “the DRC’s missions policy” (ibid.). Given this congruency, the DRC would therefore obviously have welcomed the election victory of the NP. The church had indeed approached the Smuts government on several occasions before 1948 in order to request the implementation of measures which would later become centrepieces of apartheid policy (Adonis 1982:81-82). The SAP government responded that it had no objection to racial segregation, but that it would be practically impossible at the level the DRC requested. The ideal of complete racial segregation living in both party and church at the time was actually unattainable. The inescapable truth was that “economic integration in the White area [was] deep-rooted and irrevocable”, as the black presence in so-called “white South Africa” (a dreamland existing only in white minds – cf Saayman 2007:110) was permanent and irreversible (Mervis 1972:68). Not only was there nowhere realistic for these black South Africans to go, but the white economy depended totally on their permanent involvement. It is clear that neither party nor church had by this time learnt the lesson “that policies, edicts, warnings, promises, threats and regulations are powerless against economic and sociological forces when these really get to work” (:70). The other important misconception at work was the assumption that the urbanisation of black South Africans could be reversed by creating attractive conditions in undeveloped rural areas with which most of the urban Africans had no historical connection.

I sketch the interaction between political party and church briefly not in any way to apportion blame, but rather to indicate to what extent Afrikaner socio-political thinking and planning was religiously motivated (and *vice versa*). Once the NP had won the election and taken over government, close interaction and co-operation could indeed be expected. With reference to my topic here, one such instance of ecclesiastical influence on political policy was the result of a decision taken at a congress organised by the Federal Mission Council of the DRC at Bloemfontein in 1950. It called on the newly-elected NP government to establish a commission of enquiry to investigate all aspects of native life (Adonis 1982:94-95). The Malan government agreed to the request and the minister of Native Affairs, Mr Jansen, appointed “Die Kommissie vir die Sosio-ekonomiese Ontwikkeling van die Bantoegebiede binne die Unie van Suid-Afrika” (The Commission for the Socio-economic Development of the Bantu areas within the Union of South Africa)⁷. The Commission had Prof FR Tomlinson of the University of Pretoria as chairman. A leading DRC mission planner and practitioner, Prof CH Badenhorst, was appointed as member of the commission. It is very important to point out that the church asked for an investigation

6 When the Federal Mission Council of the DRC was constituted in April 1942, this council indeed took the place of the Native Affairs Commission, thereby confirming that for the DRC at that time mission was indeed a “native affair”.

7 It is important to point out the underlying assumption of the National Party that if the homelands could be changed into a success story, the whole “native problem” would thereby miraculously be solved – showing no awareness of the enormity of the problem around the future of the majority of black people, the urban Africans (cf. Mervis 1972:73, 79).

into native life in general, while the NP narrowed the terms of reference to socio-economic life only in the “Bantu areas”. By doing this, the NP prejudged the issue by making its apartheid policy the foundation of the investigation and thereby precluding the possibility of putting the policy itself under the spotlight (Davenport 1977:375). Another important and relevant event was Dr H Verwoerd replacing Mr Jansen as minister of Native Affairs soon afterwards. Deciding what the government’s response should be to the eventual findings of the Commission would therefore be the responsibility mainly of Dr Verwoerd, who was not very enthusiastic about the appointment of the Commission in the first place⁸.

MISSIONARY CHRONOLOGY

The missionary chronology of the topic under review starts with the adoption of the first mission policy for all synods of the DRC in 1935⁹ (at that stage a general synod of the DRC had not come into existence yet, so the four provincial synods determined their own policies). This policy grew out of a request of a mission congress of the Free State DRC in 1929 at Kroonstad to the Free State synod to formulate a clear policy on native education, language, social and religious desires. The synodical report, released in 1931, served as basis for the 1935 policy drawn up by the Native Commission of the Federal Council of the DRC (Adonis 1982:78-79). In line with the dominant contemporary understanding of mission as something done by white Christians to and for “native” (read black) pagans, the mission policy thus grew out of “native policy”. This seems to establish an obvious link to the preoccupation in white politics with the perennial “native problem”, thus contributing to the perception that DRC mission policy is a dimension of NP “native policy” (and, to a smaller extent, *vice versa*). In April 1942 the Native Commission of the Federal Council was reconstituted as the Federal Mission Council of the DRC. This seems to strengthen the above mentioned perception, especially as one of the first priorities of the new Council was to meet the Minister of Native Affairs of the Smuts government in October 1942 to discuss aspects of the “native problem” such as mixed residential areas, mixed marriages, etc. In the following years the Federal Mission Council interacted with government in various ways to convey the DRC conviction that racial separation (apartheid) was the only guarantee for Afrikaner survival in South Africa (:81). The organic link between the NP policy of apartheid and the DRC policy of racially separated churches (as cornerstone of its mission policy) is therefore obvious. It is also quite natural since both NP and DRC were existing organically in the Afrikaner body corporate.

It seems fair to expect, then, that the DRC would be quite positively inclined to an NP victory in the election of 1948. In the previous section I have already pointed out the DRC’s affinity for the policy of apartheid. It would also be fair to expect that the DRC would be enthusiastic not only to help implement apartheid, but also to attempt to influence policy formulation. It was in this context that the Federal Mission Council convened another congress in April 1950 in Bloemfontein, again with the popular topic: the Native Question.¹⁰ The native question was analysed from the religious, educational, social, economic, constitutional and medical

8 Ashforth (1990:152) refers to “ideological and factional differences between Verwoerd and the more ‘visionary’ Commissioners”.

9 The text of the 1935 policy can be found in Gerdener 1951:85-92.

10 The congress was attended by delegates from all three Afrikaans Reformed churches (NG Kerk, Gereformeerde Kerk, Hervormde Kerk) as well as observers from the Christian Council of SA and the WCC (Adonis 1982:92).

viewpoints. Apart from many important recommendations, Congress recommended to the NP government to appoint a commission of enquiry into the socio-economical development of the native reserves and planned homelands, very much along the lines of the categories analysed at the congress. Government accepted this recommendation and the already mentioned Tomlinson Commission was the result. The report of the commission was handed to government in 1954. A summary of recommendations was published soon after, and in 1956 government issued its official reaction in the form of a White Paper.¹¹

CONTENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT

1. On Christian mission

The Tomlinson Report was wide-ranging in its analysis as well as its recommendations. In this paper I will limit myself only to a brief reference to the findings and recommendations. I start with findings and recommendations related generally to Christian mission (in other words, relating to the broad phenomenon of Christian mission in SA, not to any specific confessional incarnation of that phenomenon). Apart from any analysis by outside observers like myself, these findings and recommendations serve to state very clearly the correlation between the Tomlinson Report and Christian mission. In Gerdener's words (1958:218-219) the report "gave ample consideration to the place occupied by Christian mission in the whole South African set-up, as also the need for further campaigning towards the total evangelization of the sub-continent". It is extremely interesting that the evangelisation of the whole sub-continent was stressed. Was there a subconscious desire to spread the South African prototype of "native" socio-economic development over the whole subcontinent? For a long time the incorporation of the High Commission territories of Lesotho, Swaziland and Bechuanaland (Botswana), as well as the Protectorate of South West Africa (Namibia) had indeed been an NP ideal.

In the second place the Commission had come to a very positive evaluation of the "beneficent results" of what can rightfully be described only as paternalistic mission work (ibid.): "It is fully admitted that Mission work has brought beneficent results and will continue to do so, *provided Europeans make the right use of their leadership and train the Bantu to take their due place*" (italics mine). As this finding is made in the context of a report setting out to prove that and how apartheid could work as a political economy, one must note the unquestioning assumption of the correlation between state policy and Christian belief; after all, both dealt at heart with the "Native Question"! What came as a surprise, if not a shock, to members of the DRC, though, was the extent to which the DRC lagged behind other churches (especially the Roman Catholic church and either South African or foreign Protestant English-language churches and mission societies) in the provision of mission ministries in the reserves and conceptual "homelands". In this regard it is important to note that I argue (Saayman 2007:45-68) that the Second Wave of DRC mission was especially focussed on foreign mission, especially in the British colonies of South and North Rhodesia and Nyassaland (nowadays Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi). The native reserves within South Africa were in a real sense *terra incognita* for the DRC (:58-59). Now that the Tomlinson Commission, requested by the DRC and appointed by the NP, had highlighted the situation in the reserves so clearly, the seriousness of the situation suddenly had a huge impact

11 The text of the report was produced in 51 chapters, arranged in 17 volumes, totalling 3,755 pages with 598 tables and 66 maps. Even the Commission itself realised that this would produce a serious handicap for researchers, as the volumes were mainly typewritten and cyclostyled. So an official summary of the research, findings and recommendations was produced and printed by the Government printer to assist researchers (Tomlinsonverslag 1955:17). I also made use of this authorised summary version.

also on the DRC. There was a very real sense (which I pointed out also in the previous section) in which Afrikaner (NP) understanding was that if the planned homelands failed as a policy option, then apartheid itself was in danger of failure. There was a strong realisation that the three Afrikaans Reformed churches had a very important role to play in co-operation with the state in ensuring the success of the policy (Adonis 1982:93). The Commission indeed acknowledged that much “enlightenment work” needed to be done to convince white voters of the need for and possibilities of the proposed NP policy. The state “would have to play a prominent part ‘in this process along with the churches...’” (Ashforth 1990:165; Tomlinsonverslag 1955:19-22, 55-59, 155-162, 202-203).

2. On the “Natives”

I have mentioned above that within the grand discursive tradition of commissions of enquiry, we find both continuities and discontinuities. One of the very important discontinuities reflected itself in the Tomlinson discourse on the use of the term “natives”. Earlier reports always used the term “native” for the indigenous black African population of SA, and always assumed that there was to be found “a fundamental homogeneity within African society” (:153). Tomlinson broke with both of these. The term “native” was replaced by the term “Bantu” (Tomlinsonverslag 1955 *passim*), and it was accepted that African (“Bantu”) society consisted of distinct cultural (ethnic) units (:1)¹². Ashforth (:155) sums up the Commission’s conclusions as follows:

The correct way of addressing the reconstructed ‘Bantu Question’ in this version, then, required recognizing the diversity of ‘Bantu’ cultures and speaking of these cultures as distinct identities with essential characteristics and distinct potentials.

The commission was convinced that the term “Bantu”, meaning “human”/“people”, was also the term Africans would use to describe themselves. It was also considered to be scientifically more accurate, identifying people in terms of the innate human characteristics of language and culture, and not simply in terms of a geographic area where they happened to reside. Taken together, these two considerations seemed to unify “scientific accuracy” with “authenticity of self-expression” (:158). “Native” affairs therefore henceforth would be “Bantu” affairs. The division in terms of language and culture implied the existence of at least four discrete Bantu groups in SA: the Sotho-Tswana, Nguni, Venda and Shangaan-Tsonga. This opened the way for the argument in favour of separate homelands, separate universities, etc., and also implied that all ethnic (read “racial”) groups in SA were minority groups. On this basis the conclusion was drawn that not only the whites, but indeed a majority of all groups of the SA population desired social separation (:160; Tomlinsonverslag 1955:105)¹³. And since there were no true “natives” any more, another very important conclusion could be drawn about ownership of land: that “all inhabitants of South Africa [black and white] started with more or less equal entitlement; none had any greater right to be there in the first place than any others” (Ashforth 1990:162). This would later have very serious implications for the findings and recommendations on the vital issue of the distribution of land.

12 The influence of a new generation of Afrikaans-speaking Anthropologists (“Volkekundiges”) is reflected in this development. This point of view of Tomlinson eventually provided the preamble and ideological justification for the all-important Promotion of Bantu Self-government Act (no. 46 of 1959) in which the apartheid policy was given legislative form.

13 This is a very questionable assumption, as the ANC had by then been in existence for around forty years, and the ANC logo read: “Parliament of the people”, to express the idea of the ANC as a “broad church”, political home for all South Africans. The most significant African political institution of the time thus did not in any way reflect support for the Tomlinson assumption.

3. On patriarchal and paternalistic “European” guardianship

It is widely accepted today that the first European colonists arrived at the Cape already with a well-developed sense of ethnocentrism and cultural-religious superiority (cf Saayman 2007:20); it was simply self-evident to them that “European Christian” culture was vastly superior to “native heathen” culture. The Tomlinson Commission was careful not to come across as overtly ethnocentric, but attempted rather “to treat ‘Bantu’ culture simply as different from, rather than inherently inferior to, other cultures” (Ashforth 1990:157). This did not in any way change the basic conviction among white South Africans in general and Afrikaners specifically, though, that it was divine providence which brought them to the southernmost tip of Africa to serve as guardians to “these wild and barbarous people” (as Van Riebeeck put it in his formulary prayer), considered as no more than little children. The Commission concluded that this conviction¹⁴ was based not simply on political, social or economic considerations. It was, according to the Commission, expressly informed by the attitude of the Christian churches on God’s providence in the life and being of nations and peoples (Tomlinsonverslag 1955:59).¹⁵ In terms specifically of the Kuyperean and Neo-Calvinist theological understanding of the Afrikaans Reformed churches, God’s providence and his calling have to be understood in terms (also) of election. Afrikaners therefore had a responsibility to God to carry out the high purpose of his calling and their election, which implied that they had to maintain their existence as a Christian people in order to carry out God’s task (as guardians and evangelisers of black South Africans). Prof PJ Schoeman, well known Anthropologist at Stellenbosch University, stated it thus (in Giliomee 2003:467), “The Afrikaners were called not only to ensure the development and survival of an *eië volk* but also help backward and less developed people to help themselves and rehabilitate themselves”. Afrikaners could only maintain themselves by not destroying racial boundaries in South Africa, as racial intermingling would imply committing suicide – and this would be disobedience to God (Retief 1954:86 ff). It would, however, equally be disobedience to God if white South Africans, through a policy of integration or nonracialism, ended up destroying “Bantu” culture, for that was also God’s gift in his grace and providence. So the goal could never be to create “white men in black skins”, but rather to affirm people in their divinely ordained place in the bosom of their own people. The aim of apartheid policy should therefore be directed to “the advancement of the culture as a whole according to its inherent qualities and capacities. It should not subvert that God-given identity” (Ashforth 1990:157-158). The Commission concluded that much enlightenment needed to be done for this self-evident truth to gain general acceptance, and the churches would have to actively support the state to achieve this ideal (:165; Tomlinsonverslag 1955:202-203). For the Commission this conclusion indeed incarnated an idealistic eschatology, for:

When the ‘Bantu’ cultures develop into fully-fledged nations in their own areas ... with consequent rights to their own states, and the goal of national self-determination is secured on all sides, only then will the ‘Native Question’ be solved finally and justly. For the present, however, the promise of a brighter future serves

14 This conviction was not exclusive to Cape colonists. Termed “manifest destiny”, in one form or another, it was a characteristic of all Anglo-American and European colonisation.

15 This conviction is expressed clearly in an article by Dr M W Retief (DRC clergyman prominent in mission circles) in the DRC mission magazine, *Op die horison* (On the horizon) of September 1954. He summarises the Biblical foundation for apartheid under six points, one of which states that “We whites are convinced that we are the guardians of the non-whites, that we have to protect them against dangers and that we must promote their best interests. The first duty we have towards them is to bring to them the blessings of the gospel”. This task is nothing less than a calling from God (pp.86 ff).

to legitimate state policy to the extent that it can be seen as hastening the dawn of that destined day. Ashforth 1990:167

4. On socio-economic development

The socio-economic development and the “carrying capacity” of the “Bantu areas” represented the focal point of the Tomlinson enquiry. There does not seem to have been any difference of opinion on the reality that the reserves were not able to sustain the “surplus” native population (i.e. those not needed for labour in the “white” economy). The fundamental question of the political-economic viability, sustainability and justice of the migrant labour system itself was not addressed. The only question was: what must/can be done to accommodate as far as possible all “surplus” natives in the future black homelands. The first obvious reality the Commission had to face was that the land set aside for exclusive Bantu settlement was completely inadequate to accommodate the population. So the settlement patterns and use of the land had to be reviewed and revised (Tomlinsonverslag 1955:153). The Commission concluded that “the first task of development would be to create a class of viable farmers; from this all else would flow” (Ashforth 1990:173; Tomlinsonverslag 1955:153-154). In order to achieve this two fundamental changes would have to be introduced: the forms of land tenure would have to be changed from the communal (under control of the chief) to individual tenure; and the large numbers of people desperately struggling as subsistence farmers on inadequate plots would have to be resettled. According to the Commission’s calculations, even under the best circumstances only 51% of the native population according to the 1951 census would be able to be accommodated in this way on the available area. The other 49% would have to be resettled, at an estimated cost of more than £46 million – in those days a massive expenditure. Hopefully the support of the residents could be acquired, but where that was not forthcoming, the scheme had to proceed anyway foreshadowing the numbers of forced resettlements which would come to characterise apartheid social engineering (:174). The total cost over the first decade was estimated as £104 million.

CORRELATIONS, CONGRUENCIES, INTERSTICES

I have already referred to the reality that the relationship between NP political policy and DRC mission policy at the beginning of the Third Wave can be described in terms of a chicken and egg situation: they are intimately intertwined, it is difficult to say which came first, and it is difficult to indicate a clear boundary between them. It is equally difficult, though, to simply conclude that they existed in an unambiguous symbiosis or collusion. The situation can be compared rather to the entanglement between Christian mission and colonialism, where clear correlations can be indicated, but it is impossible to conclude that they existed in a collusive relationship. As I now wish to analyse and discuss specifically the correlation between Afrikaner social, economic and political history and DRC mission history in the light of the context and content of the Tomlinson Report, I wish to reflect the ambivalences and the preliminary and varied nature of my evaluation by referring to correlations, congruencies and interstices. At least the following must be mentioned:

1. As indicated above, the Commission came to a widely positive conclusion about the contribution of Christian mission in solving the “Native question”. This was most clearly reflected thus in the Tomlinson Report (Tomlinsonverslag 1955:161; my translation):

Church and state in South Africa do not form an antithesis. On the contrary, they

are team-mates. In South Africa they are undoubtedly dependent on each other, especially in terms of the spiritual and temporal upliftment of the Bantu. Good mission policy in South Africa is good state policy. It forms the basis of a good race policy.

The NP apparently wholeheartedly agreed with this conclusion, for as a leading NP politician and later member of Cabinet, Mr D De Wet Nel, stated (quoted in Saayman 2007:89):

An aspect which ... is one of the main reasons why many people are still cold and indifferent to mission work is its political significance ... If the Afrikaans churches succeeded in bringing the Blacks over into a Protestant- Christian context, South Africa will have a hope for the future. If this does not happen, our policy, our programme of legislation and all our plans will be doomed to failure... Our sons and daughters should realise that mission work offers the most wonderful opportunity to serve God, but also the most glorious opportunity to serve the fatherland.

This corresponded with the basically positive synergy which Reformed theology saw between church and state. Based to a large extent on their interpretation of Romans 13, the DRC viewed the role of state authority in a positive light, as given by God. This required that Christians' first response to state intervention should be positive, except where such intervention was openly in opposition to the requirements of the Gospel. The DRC therefore in its mission had always adopted a co-operative rather than a confrontational stance. Where the DRC had problems with aspects of state policy, it preferred to follow the route of behind-the-scenes negotiations rather than open opposition. As there was such a clear synergy and correlation between DRC and NP government on the basics of the apartheid policy (which underlay the Tomlinson Report), it would therefore have been unrealistic to expect serious opposition or open difference of opinion about the findings and recommendations. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that "the ideological, theological philosophical (call it what you will) continuity between the DRC and the National Party reached its apex during the Third Wave" (Saayman 2007:98). Van Schalkwyk (1990:71) indicates the sea-change in the wake of the Tomlinson Report. Until 1935, she argues, when the first official DRC mission policy was formulated, there was a certain ambivalence in terms of the course of race development in SA. Segregation was emphasised, but at the same time there was an emphasis on the biblical teaching that the whole humanity was created "from one blood". Now, however, this emphasis disappeared and was replaced by a "dogmatic emphasis on separation", and "eventually a comprehensive apartheid policy". It was thus in the wake of the Tomlinson Report during the Third Wave that the perception was established that the DRC was not much more than the apartheid government at prayer – a perception that was to cost DRC mission dearly in the long run.

2. There was an undeniable dimension of idealism in the findings and recommendations of the Tomlinson Report.¹⁶ I have referred above to differences of opinion between Verwoerd and "the visionary commissioners" (cf Ashforth 1990:152). A South African social scientist, L Schlemmer (in Berger & Godsell 1988:9), states that, "the most significant event in the failure of grand apartheid was the rejection by the Verwoerd government of those aspects of the report of the Tomlinson Commission (1955) which estimated the extent of the resources which had to be

16 Giliomee (2003:515) refers in this regard to "the Tomlinson vision" which was, however, rejected.

deployed to make grand apartheid succeed”¹⁷. This was where the real problem arose, because as Giliomee (2003:517) argues, Verwoerd was not going to allow scientists and technocrats to set National Party policy priorities. One reason why Verwoerd reacted this way was that “he was under fire from hard-core racists in his support group for ‘doing too much for the Bantu’. His government was extremely reluctant to make any sacrifices that would hurt its electoral support” (ibid.). This (rejected) idealism resonated well with general missionary idealism. If one keeps in mind then the rapid and exponential increase in DRC missionaries and mission stations in the wake of the Report (cf Saayman 2007:75), one can conclude that DRC missionaries and mission administrators were one of the very few groups of white civil society who were willing to embrace the findings and recommendations wholeheartedly. Another reason why the DRC in mission reacted so positively to the findings was the similarity in views on Afrikaner patriarchal guardianship over the indigenous population. If one were sincere in one’s claim to be a paternal guardian, then one could not balk at what proper development would cost. So far I have discussed this development under the rubric of “idealism”; there are of course those who would rather evaluate such a reaction as inspired by pietistic naïveté. So which is the more accurate evaluation of this post-Tomlinson development: idealism or naïveté? It is undoubtedly true that very often in mission history in general, and also in DRC mission history in particular, missionaries did not consciously account for the hegemonic tendencies of dominant political economies (Saayman 1996:94). Therefore the missionary idealism would in the long run not be a match for the harsh realities of the apartheid political economy. Yet one cannot in all sincerity conclude that the mission enthusiasm of the Third Wave was naïve imitation of a political economy; the element of vocational idealism, of wishing to fill the political form with specific Christian content, undeniably played a role, especially initially (cf Saayman 2007:96-97).

3. As I indicated above, the Tomlinson Report worked with the assumption that there was no one homogenous African group in SA; there were, rather, discrete “Bantu peoples”. The reserves, which had to be developed, should eventually constitute the national homes for each of these “peoples”. As Ashforth (1990:161) clearly indicated, the Commission considered that national citizenship was supposed to be exclusively culturally bound. For this reason even the African people born and bred in urban areas, could still be considered as citizens of such national homes, and as having no claim to citizenship in “white” SA. This correlated very well with the growing missiological desire to create culturally autogenous churches (“eiesoortige kerke”) for each *ethnos*. The various *ethne* were especially defined in terms of language and culture. So not only national citizenship would eventually be culturally determined – so would church membership also. The missiological concept was inspired mainly by German missiologists such as Christian Keysser (missionary in Papua New Guinea) and Bruno Gutmann (missionary in Tanzania).¹⁸ The academic study and teaching of Missiology in SA by the DRC had always taken German Missiology very seriously. The same was true of the thinking of these innovative missionaries and missiologists. The very first student from Stellenbosch Seminary to enrol for study for a doctorate in Missiology at the Free University of Amsterdam, Willem Krige¹⁹, chose as

17 The Report concluded that an amount of £104 million (R10 billion in today’s terms) had to be spent over the first 10 years to accomplish the economic viability of the proposed “homelands”.

18 Keysser articulated his approach in his classic, *Eine Papuagemeinde*, published in 1929 (and in English translation as *A people reborn* in 1980). Gutmann published his main theses in *Gemeinde-Aufbau aus dem Evangelium* in 1925.

19 Krige can be called a “born missionary”. He was born on the main mission station of the Free

his thesis topic: *Die probleem van eiesoortige kerkvorming by Christian Keysser* (“The problem of autogenous church formation according to Christian Keysser”). The very first doctoral thesis to be written in Theology of Mission by a South African student therefore dealt with this very topic at the same time as the research by the Tomlinson Commission took place.²⁰ This was indicative of the strong contemporary emphasis on “Bantu cultures” (plural) in DRC mission, influenced strongly by a new interest in Anthropology. The correlation, congruencies and interstices of DRC missiological thinking and the findings and recommendations of the Tomlinson Report are again too striking to be ignored or bypassed.

SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

A full statement and analysis of the influence of the Tomlinson Report on DRC mission has to be the subject of a later paper. What I want to present here are just a few unrelated instances of the findings and recommendations of the Report already showing its influence shortly after the publication of the Report and the White Paper.

In *Die Kerkbode* (official organ of the DRC) of 24 October 1956 appears a short article on mission planning for Transvaal (presentday Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga – Boshoff 1956). It was written by Rev CWH Boshoff, pioneer missionary in the Mpumalanga Lowveld, son-in-law of Dr Verwoerd, and later Professor of Missiology at the University of Pretoria. He bases his planning explicitly on statistics supplied by the Department of Native Affairs and the Tomlinson Report (:754). But more than this, it is clear that he uses basically a similar methodology to promote better informed mission planning. He deals with the numbers of black people (the traditional DRC “mission objects”) in the cities, the rural agricultural (in other words white) areas, and the Bantu Reserves. He points out clearly that the numbers of available ordained and lay DRC missionaries are totally inadequate. Therefore he proposes that an overarching board be appointed to plan and co-ordinate the work in the cities and the Reserves. The various DRC congregations in the rural towns should take responsibility for the black people on the farms. On 28 November 1956 *Die Kerkbode* published an article by Dr GC Oosthuizen, entitled: “Die sending: wat is die betekenis en doel daarvan?” (Mission: what is its purpose and goal? – Oosthuizen 1956: 1018-1019). Oosthuizen, missiological expert on African Indigenous Churches (AICs) and a critic of racially separated churches, obviously felt uncomfortable of some possible implications of the findings and recommendations of the Tomlinson Report. He therefore raises the question: In the light of the prominence of mission in the Tomlinson Report, what is our mission motive? Oosthuizen mentions various historical motives, one of which is the motive of self-maintenance. People who promote this motive believe that the eventual continued existence of the nation (“volk”) depends on their involvement in mission. Indeed, once they become aware of this motive, they express far more obedience than simply in response to the Great Commission. Oosthuizen reckons that this motive is very strong in South Africa in the mid-fifties, and considers this a dangerous phenomenon. For him mission should simply be motivated by obedience, even obedience unto death. The mission motive may therefore never be maintenance of self; neither should mission be motivated by propagation of “Western civilisation and culture”. Mission means obedience in selfdenial, short and sweet. Finally, *Die*

State DRC at Madzimoyo in Zambia, son of a veteran missionary and church leader. After completing his doctoral studies in 1954, he returned to Zambia as missionary. Later on he served as Mission Secretary of the Free State DRC and Professor of Missiology at the University of Durban Westville.

20 Krige’s thesis serves to confirm the absence of a simple collusion between church and state, politics and theology, as he firmly rejected the proposed culturally based racially separated churches – cf Saayman 1993.

Kerkbode of 12 December 1956 carried a resolution of the General Missions Commission of the Cape Synod of the DRC (Algemene Sendingkommissie 1956:1127). With reference to a resolution of the Volkskongres in Bloemfontein (referred to above) the Commission reiterates the necessity and importance of mission. Therefore the intensification of DRC mission action is regarded as an important requirement for the successful completion of the comprehensive programme of the socio-economic development of the Bantu Reserves (with reference to the Tomlinson Report). Therefore the members and congregations of the Cape Synod of the DRC are exhorted to more intensive mission action, giving, and personnel recruitment. This comes as no surprise, though. The Tomlinson Report (1955:213; cf also Potgieter 1956:10; my translation) itself actually ends with a prayerful wish, again underlining the congruencies between Tomlinson Report and DRC mission policy: "The Commission is convinced that the development programme which has to be undertaken has to be undertaken as a deed of faith, in the same way that many other big undertakings have been grasped in the Union as deeds of faith with minimal prospects of success...". This is so because a huge change would have to take place also in the hearts and minds of South African blacks. And the greatest aid in this respect would come from the spread of Christian influence (i.e. mission – Potgieter 1956:16).

Within the first few months of the publication of the findings and recommendations of the Tomlinson Report it therefore already showed its influence on DRC mission thinking and planning. What is especially noteworthy is the way in which the DRC had adopted the planning and policy approach of the Tomlinson Report, as well as the presupposition of the Report that separate development is the only moral and practical solution. This is not surprising, given the close symbiosis of church and political party since 1938, and the call by the church to the new NP government to appoint a commission of enquiry. Two of the examples mentioned above are unreservedly positive, while the third shows greater critical reserve. A proper statement and analysis of the influence of Tomlinson on DRC mission is urgently necessary, both to come to a better historical understanding as well as to be better able to evaluate contemporary developments.

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