

Prayer Women and Biblewomen: A Comparison of Two Indigenous Ventures among South African Methodists

Deborah Gaitskell

As female fervour and solidarity are such a strong continent-wide feature of African Christianity, any consideration of indigenous religious movements in Methodist missions must acknowledge the striking way in which women responded to the new faith. This paper looks at two indigenous ventures in religious empowerment, one more collective, the other targeting individuals; the prayer women of the uniformed so-called Manyano and the likewise uniformed and modestly paid, officially employed Biblewomen. The first venture comes out of black congregations to foster group prayer, the second is conceived by local white women church members to facilitate preaching and Bible teaching by lone black women in their own, possibly distant, domestic or social settings. The scale and chronology and fate of the two initiatives are fairly different also, but these contrasts may raise more general questions about why and how indigenous religious movements take off at particular moments, why they spread or dwindle, and why the mission or church establishment accommodate some and harass or debilitate or even eject others.

The paper uses examples from my published research¹ on the Transvaal and Swaziland District (which remained a direct mission concern until 1931-2), but tries to keep in mind also the changing countrywide context of Methodist female Christianity in the first half of the twentieth century. Four aspects of these two movements are considered: their origins; their particular characteristics; the internal response of the Methodist Church to their development; and the impact of each movement on other Christian bodies in South Africa.

Origins

In both cases, Transvaal women were copying initiatives from elsewhere, but putting their own stamp on them. First, as regards the manyano, it drew on well-established strongholds of black converts further south, in the two British colonies of Natal and the Cape, with their longer Methodist history. Thus, after attending a women's convention at Edendale in Natal in 1907, Mrs Stephen Gqosho, wife of a Cape-born African minister in Potchefstroom, started the Wesleyan Methodist Prayer Union there, in the south-western Transvaal, in 1907. According to a fiftieth-anniversary

¹ Particularly 'Mediating Methodist mission in the early twentieth century: Black and white women leaders in South Africa's Transvaal', in Norma Virgoe (ed.), *Angels and Impudent Women: Women in Methodism. Papers given at the 2005 Conference of The Wesley Historical Society* ([Oxford]: Wesley Historical Society, 2007), pp. 186-208. This draws in turn on 'Praying and preaching: The distinctive spirituality of African women's church organizations', in Henry Bredekamp and Robert Ross (eds), *Missions and Christianity in South African History* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995), pp. 211-232; 'Power in prayer and service: Women's Christian organizations', in Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (eds), *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers; Berkeley: Univ. of California Press; Oxford: James Currey, 1997), pp. 253-267; and 'Hot meetings and hard kraals: African Biblewomen in Transvaal Methodism, 1924-60', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, XXX, 3 (2000), pp. 277-309.

booklet, she brought a small group of women together to pray ‘for their families and for the common unity and for their sins,’² as well as for the safety of husbands and sons working on the mines, and for the uprooting of witchcraft and superstition. What became known from the 1920s across South Africa as the *Manyano* (from the Xhosa word for ‘union’) started here, they said, in order ‘to cultivate the habits of praying and to consolidate Christianity among the folks.’³ Mrs Gqosho spread the movement by holding revival services throughout the District, followed by a convention in 1908. To the admiring surprise of the white male superintendent, the women had arranged the whole thing themselves, bringing ‘their own food or money, and many of them slept on the floor of the church.’⁴

Biblewomen emerged later in the Transvaal, after the First World War, and as a project of the white Women’s Association (later Women’s Auxiliary or WA), which had only become a consolidated movement a decade after the black women began. In their financial support and mentoring of independent black female evangelists-cum-pastoral visitors, dubbed ‘Biblewomen,’ the white WA was echoing a tradition traceable both to nineteenth-century India and China as well as to the London slums.⁵ But copying their near neighbours was the immediate spur, as with the manyano women. Mabel Allcock, wife of the Transvaal District chairman appointed in 1922, was crucial to the introduction of Biblewomen there soon after arriving from Britain. When she discovered that the white Women’s Auxiliary of the independent South African Methodist Conference was not only supporting two white ‘lady missionaries’ in the eastern Cape but also as many as ten Biblewomen, she obviously felt the Transvaal District was being shown up as seriously lagging behind. She successfully appealed to the Women’s Association to follow suit in similar support of an African woman worker.⁶

Thus Edith Mgabhi was appointed a Biblewoman ‘in a simple but impressive dedicatory service’ at the 1924 Manyano Convention held at Mahamba in Swaziland. Mrs Allcock described her as ‘a fine upstanding Swazi woman, pleasing of face and manner,’ with ‘a humble spirit that is yet sincerely eager to work for her Master.’⁷ She was a childless teacher whose husband had agreed to her taking on this responsibility.

Characteristics

Both indigenous movements have a revivalist spiritual style to them at particular moments, as well as a domestic aspect also. The Transvaal manyano story is complicated by the fact that Mrs Gqosho somehow fell out with her peers after the

² Methodist Church of South Africa, Transvaal and Swaziland District African Women’s Prayer and Service Union, *Manyano-Kopano, Jubilee Celebrations*, 1959 (hereafter *Manyano Jubilee*), p. 4. This short fiftieth-anniversary pamphlet is largely devoted (pp. 4-14 out of a total 16pp.) to ‘The Story of the Manyano’ by Mrs A.E.N. Bolani (President 1944-6) and Mrs J. Duiker (General Secretary 1956-9).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴ *Transvaal Methodist (TM)*, Oct. 1938, pp.3-4. This section draws partly on Gaitskell, ‘Power in Prayer and Service’, pp. 256, 264-5.

⁵ See Gaitskell, ‘Hot meetings’, pp. 280-281; also Deborah Gaitskell and Wendy Urban-Mead (eds), special issue on Transnational Biblewomen: Asian and African Women in Christian Mission, *Women’s History Review*, 17, 4 (September 2008).

⁶ *WMC Tvl Directory*, 1924-5, p. 38.

⁷ *TM*, Sept. 1924, pp. 22-3.

1909 conference – three African minister’s wives complained to the synod secretary - and as a result had her movement taken away from her, a further consequence being that this helped fuel her husband’s later departure from the Wesleyans for the Primitive Methodists in 1915. Nevertheless, a taste of the fervour of the first prayer union and its preaching tradition come through in a precious, African-authored document from 1919.⁸ A group of seven black women made an impressive round trip of a thousand miles by train from Johannesburg to Aliwal North, the Primitive Methodist regional headquarters, and Zastron, to thank the Primitive Methodist church for taking them in after the split.⁹ They had promised Mrs Gqosho, who had died during the war, to make this journey and had raised £25 to pay for it. They also held revival services to recruit members for their association. Their secretary described with zest the effective female preaching after meetings had duly been ‘opened’ each time by male evangelists:

Mrs Kumalo took the first chance, she sang Hymn No 175 in Xosa, then Mrs Tsewo was asked to pray; after the prayer Mrs Kumalo read from St John the 3rd Chapter (about Christ teaching Nicodemus the necessity of regeneration). This became a very strong sermon. Mrs Soni prayed, after her prayer Hymn No 27 was sung in Xosa. Here 8 joined...On Sunday the 23rd...Mrs Tsewo took the turn and read from St Luke the 13 Chapter 24 verse. This sermon became a piercing sword to the people. In this morning service six joined...On the 24th, we took another Sermon...here many people were moved. 3 repented as new members, 7 joined. Total from Saturday evening to Monday morning we got 33.

At their biggest assembly on the Sunday afternoon, 789 people were present, yet the Prims in the Transvaal, located mainly in Johannesburg, remained a small concern in the 1920s - though nevertheless lively, organising inter-church women’s rallies, for example. Their fervent revivalist strand of course re-entered the mainstream after Methodist union in 1932, and in fact Katie Kidwell, wife of the British ex-Prim minister in Johannesburg, had oversight of the combined movement, as the District Chair’s wife in the 1930s (who would have been deemed the natural head) allegedly would not touch the manyano. Eventually, the Transvaal prayer union acquired a black president once again, after nearly three decades, in 1937, when Mrs H.D. Hlabangane was chosen. White financial oversight of the black movement was only relinquished a couple of decades later.

This was because, in the meantime, the indigenous Wesleyan African movement had been brought under white direction and supervision. Though there is no indication whatever that a *white* leader was wanted instead of Mrs Gqosho, this is actually what transpired. In 1910, the Wesleyan District synod, on ‘petition from a number of Christian women, and after consideration in the Native Committee...approved of a Union of Native Christian women for devotion and Christian work.’¹⁰ It instructed the Native Affairs Committee to frame a suitable constitution in line with Wesleyan

⁸ For the indented quote which follows in the text, see SOAS, MMS 1180, File of Rev. A.A. Kidwell, unsigned letter, 24 August 1919.

⁹ 280 Africans followed the Gqoshos in their change of denomination and thereby gave the Prims their most significant membership boost.

¹⁰ SOAS, MMS 346, Synod Minutes Transvaal, 1910, p. 8.

Methodist polity, and ‘requested Mrs Amos Burnet, the wife of the British chairman of the District, to become the first President of the Native Women’s Association.’¹¹

In fact, despite titular white control until the late 1930s, the real local leadership was in the hands of black ministers’ wives. It was crucial that their numbers were growing precisely at this time: ordained African Wesleyan ministers in the Transvaal, invariably married, increased in number from 17 to 35 in just the short period from 1902 to 1908. Their wives were invariably assumed to be the appropriate leaders of female ventures in their congregations. Social change put strain on mothers; but fervent praying and preaching seemed to some to provide a way forward. A generation earlier, in the late 1860s, there had been an electric encounter between African orality and Western Christian revivalism. This had spurred African *male* converts into volunteer evangelistic movements in various Protestant missions. Now that more black *women* were acquiring authentication of vocation as part of a ministerial couple, they themselves took to evangelism and expressive spiritual solidarity.

But, having seen the manyano’s origins in prayer and revival, we now see the home focus come to the fore, as Esther Burnet proceeded to sharpen the focus on the domestic virtues of the devout wife and mother. Black women had come together as praying and preaching mothers, but now the first Manyano constitution stressed the need to keep house and family clean, to clothe children and instruct them in the Christian faith. The Burnets’ daughter, Lilian, set out the Union’s aims more formally in 1913 with an almost Victorian emphasis on moral self-improvement: the movement aimed, she said, to inculcate the duties of industry, honesty, cleanliness and kindness by example and precept in the home, and to train younger women and girls to take their place as Christians in national life.¹² Typically Mrs Burnet urged delegates at the 1915 convention ‘to show the power of their religion in the way they care for their husbands – many of whom are not Christians and in an increased effort to train their children for the Lord.’¹³ Yet, to be fair, encouraging missionary effort among the unevangelised remained a goal, together with a wider social concern to consider any questions affecting the life of the native home and the morals of the people. Thus, while there were conference sessions covering ‘Health in the Home’ and ‘Duty of a Christian Mother to Her Children’¹⁴ in 1923, for instance, the women also devoted a whole day to temperance advocacy, tightening their rules to forbid members to brew beer or other strong drink.

For, despite white input strengthening explicit domestic goals for the manyano, prayer and evangelism remained central. Indeed, the enthusiastic response of certain white leaders to expressive African spirituality lauded and validated this distinctive aspect of the indigenous movement. Esther Burnet found the singing at the week-long Manyano conferences ‘indescribable,’¹⁵ while her daughter acknowledged that ‘these

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Lilian Burnet, ‘The Transvaal Native Women’s Prayer Union,’ *Foreign Field (FF)*, April 1913, p. 251.

¹³ Report by Mrs Fred Cox on the Prayer Union Conference at Mahamba, Swaziland, *FF*, Feb. 1916, p. 133.

¹⁴ *TM*, Nov. 1923, p. 30.

¹⁵ Attending the triennial Manyano convention in Swaziland in 2005, I likewise found the group singing of a thousand black Methodist women produced a most heavenly choral sound!

native women have a wonderful power in prayer and they use it to the full.’¹⁶ But it was a younger colleague, Ellen Cox (again the wife of a British missionary), who wrote especially enthusiastic reports in *Foreign Field*. Aware of how differently faith was expressed in the white churches, she commented, as a conference got going with the African women giving themselves to prayer for three hours, that this was ‘the supreme business for which the delegates have come.’¹⁷ Beginning with dawn prayer, the Manyano women continued through a daily schedule of inspiring evangelistic, temperance and testimony meetings along with memorial and communion services. She was struck by how ‘unlike many Christian friends of a lighter hue, there was no unwillingness to speak. On the contrary, no sooner did one sister finish her story, than two or three were on their feet.’¹⁸

The enterprise, vitality and self-confidence of a new female evangelistic endeavour, which was there at the start of the Manyano under Mrs Gqosho, seem to have been entered into with gusto by Ellen Cox. At the 1915 conference in Swaziland, the women all dispersed for two days to preach in the countryside to what were described as ‘the heathen women in the kraals [homesteads].’¹⁹ A band of some one hundred women, led by Mrs Cox and five African ministers’ wives and bearing a banner sent by the ladies of Nottingham (perhaps in the mining tradition?), sang hymns at various settlements, gave testimonies, prayed with the people, and invited those who ‘cried for mercy’ to the evening service.²⁰ She found it difficult to describe the 1921 gathering ‘in sufficiently picturesque language’ to enable those at home ‘to see the significance of it, or to feel the throb of its spiritual vitality.’²¹

Indeed, annual conference numbers rose steadily, from 200 in Johannesburg in 1911 to 600 at Evaton in 1920. Attendance subsequently had to be reined back, with official, proportional limits on delegations - one of the three key organisational efficiencies introduced by Mrs Allcock, in the face of some resistance; she also standardised the red, black and white uniform, and stressed that the manyano was answerable to the local church. The 6,241 Transvaal Manyano members of 1933 grew to 9,421 by 1940. Membership in the old heartlands of Methodist conversion in the Eastern Cape and Natal was even greater, while the Manyano movement nationally has some 100,000 members in South Africa today. Regular weekly meetings, and later huge triennial national conferences, proved a mainstay for black female Christian solidarity and an invaluable resource for the church.

So, among the characteristics of the manyano were participatory praying and preaching, for both personal empowerment and evangelisation, a focus on strengthening Christian motherhood, and the leadership of African ministers’ wives. What of the characteristics of the Biblewomen movement? It is important to note that South African Methodist Biblewomen were appointed and paid by virtue of their own individual spiritual authority – as notably devout women, gifted preachers, sympathetic visitors - NOT any marital link to a minister. A number were widows. For a time, it also came to be assumed that they would be older women, at least in

¹⁶ *FF*, April 1913, p. 253.

¹⁷ *FF*, Sept. 1921, p. 232.

¹⁸ *FF*, Feb. 1916, p. 132.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 132-3.

²¹ *FF*, Sept. 1921, p. 231.

their forties or fifties, receiving an allowance for part-time employment. But, just as Biblewomen in Victorian London were working-class women paid and overseen by middle-class well-wishers, so African Biblewomen in the Transvaal were answerable to their sponsors and mentors, the white WA. Their pioneer employee, Edith Mgabhi, betrayed an ambiguity about her racial positioning in her characteristically emotionally heightened and fervent account of her response to the call. Spiritual intensity and uneasy racial dependence on her funders mingle in her testimony. When her ministers first mooted the job, she ‘thought of it for nearly two months, fighting against it’ and praying ‘with hot tears asking God not to let me take this work.’ Its ‘greatness and holiness’ still made her tremble while she was also afraid because she was ‘the first woman the white people have chosen, ... their first-born.’²²

The first three Biblewomen in the Transvaal seem to have done campaigning evangelism among the unchurched as well as exhorting men to leave off drinking, i.e. they did not only work among women and children, although it was largely in domestic settings – preaching in various kraals or homesteads – as well as some public places (but not especially the church as such). Although Edith’s reports could be formulaic, quite frequently they were vividly personal, conveying the highs and lows of doing spiritual battle in active evangelism, gauging the extent of the presence of God and carefully monitoring the people’s responsiveness. At one kraal in February 1925, the meeting was ‘so very hot, we felt that the Spirit was working in their hearts,’ while at another, the ‘service was nice and very hot indeed. We felt the power of the Holy Spirit. Two men gave themselves to the Lord.’²³ She was often accompanied by Bremersdorp Manyano women, a good sign of joint ownership of this venture.²⁴ Yet again, at Mambhatweni Royal Kraal, she noted, ‘We held a very hot meeting here. Every eye in the hut was full of tears and we did feel that the power of the Holy Spirit was working in our hearts. One woman gave herself to God. Present 26 heathens.’²⁵ She also noted opposition from ‘hard’ kraals and sceptical or suspicious men.

Whereas spiritual warfare was waged and patriarchal power confronted in Swaziland, the demon drink seemed the biggest problem faced by Elizabeth Patosi, at work as a Biblewoman in Mafeking, at the opposite end of the Transvaal and Swaziland District, from the end of August 1927. Hers was a more urbanised setting with ‘traditional’ religion less in evidence. The challenge to Methodist piety and temperance was exacerbated by unexpected diamond discoveries drawing crowds to makeshift mine encampments and claims. After visiting houses in the location, she proceeded with some girls to sing and hold open-air services at the Mafeking Diggings:

The work is very hard. Many people do not want to hear the Gospel. They are very fond of beer and they do not care to listen to preaching. But in the mercy of God I have got eight people.²⁶

²² Ibid.

²³ *TM*, May 1925, p. 27.

²⁴ *TM*, Aug. 1925, p. 24.

²⁵ *TM*, Feb. 1926, pp. 25-6.

²⁶ *TM*, Nov. 1927, p. 21.

She preached, did home and sick visiting, attended the Thursday women's Manyano, and had the children crowding round her on a daily basis, but no quick fix was possible, she contended: 'The people of the place are too much in beer, but when they saw me they all run and hide the beer.'²⁷ Injunctions to attend church coupled with fearless biblical denunciations of drunkenness became her stock in trade over nearly two decades of service.²⁸

However imposing a figure, for she was a big, strong woman physically, Elizabeth Patosi also encountered sexual discrimination, as Mrs Mgabhi had done. She met a condescending downplaying of female spiritual potential,²⁹ coupled with resentment where such potential was too obviously displayed. When Elizabeth 'managed by her perseverance to establish a preaching place at her own settlement' it 'required a great fight and much tact' from the white superintendent to have this listed on the plan for Sunday evening preaching, 'because of the extraordinary jealousy of male leaders in the location church.'³⁰ (Nevertheless, it might be even more difficult for African women Methodists *outside* the Biblewomen structure to get their preaching gifts officially recognised by black male clergy, as seen in the disheartening experience of Mrs Somngesi in the Orange Free State and Rosalina Kumalo on the Witwatersrand in the period 1917-21, just before Mrs Allcock initiated Transvaal Biblewomen.)³¹

Claudia Nkosi, a Biblewoman working in Swaziland after Edith Mgabhi, visited 50 kraals in her first three months, and made return visits to 30, gaining twelve converts. Beer was again to the fore:

Sometimes a 'beer drink' is going on [it was reported] and she can do little, but even then she is able to speak to the children and the old women and those who have no money with which to buy the beer, and to those she tells the good news of the water of life, without money and without price.³²

Tales of battling to win a hearing from men recur there, along with Claudia's vivid confrontations with wild and noisy (male) drunks, for alcohol was an increasing social problem in Swaziland at the time.³³

The urban Biblewomen appointed after 1934, however, developed a routine of home visits and prayer meetings which suggested they were less engaged in the pioneer evangelism and temperance crusading of the past (which had been directed at men as much as women), and were more involved in pastoral visiting and follow-up of backsliders. Theirs was a daytime world of women and the elderly, with many men at work and children at school.

Internal Response of the Methodist Church

For the manyano, we have seen that the white hierarchy was both admiring and wary, hence repeated talk of how the movement needed guiding and supervision, coupled

²⁷ *TM*, Sept. 1928, p. 15; Oct. 1928, p. 19.

²⁸ *TM*, Mar. 1929, pp. 19-20.

²⁹ For examples, see *TM*, Dec. 1929, p. 23; Mar. 1930, p. 18.

³⁰ *TM*, Aug 1931, p. 18.

³¹ See Gaitskell, 'Hot Meetings', p. 280.

³² *TM*, June 1929, p. 19.

³³ Allcock Papers, 'Bible Woman's Report, 1st June to 30th September, 1929'. For further detail, see Gaitskell, 'Hot Meetings'.

with frequent enthusiastic endorsement and publicising of their zeal and eloquence. African women were keen to join, though over time the movement might struggle to draw in younger women or appeal to the more educated and sophisticated.³⁴ The African clergy too could be ambivalent – seeing the women as an invaluable financial and social and spiritual resource, but also uneasy if they became too independent-minded. In the last decade or two, political change within both South Africa and the Methodist Church has increased pressure on the three racially distinct women's organisations in the church to merge – something all the women's groups have struggled with, but the manyano has clung to its historic identity.

These political and inter-racial tensions have had an impact on the Biblewomen too. By 1952, the Transvaal had ten Biblewomen at work,³⁵ while across South Africa as a whole, the numbers grew from 66 that year to 91 by 1961, some of whom had received residential training at Lovedale Bible School.³⁶ By the 1990s, over 200 Biblewomen were working across the country under Women's Auxiliary auspices as their pet missionary project. In the new South Africa this unequal partnership came to be seen as outmoded and with seeming distress on both sides, the link was officially severed at the end of 1996. Funding had become a problem anyhow, with Biblewomen numbers growing while the white WA was shrinking and ageing, making it harder to remunerate the black women appropriately or fairly across all Districts.

To be fair, the separateness of these two indigenous female religious phenomena should probably not be overstated. They sometimes merged and intertwined, not just because of the regular brief visits to each other's conferences by manyano and WA women. In Attwell's history of the WA, there are intermittent examples of manyanos supporting a Biblewoman (or jointly funding her with the WA), or a black circuit requesting one, so this evangelistic venture was never entirely a white project,³⁷ even though there were sometimes difficulties as to exactly under whose authority such a woman worked.

Impact on other South African Churches

For manyanos, it would appear that their praying and preaching style has spread across the denominations, whether through intermarriage, interdenominational female rallies or a shared revivalist culture, so that the black Anglican Mothers' Union groups analysed in 1980s Cape Town, for example, were far more like Methodist manyanos than like MU groups among Anglican of other races.³⁸

As regards Biblewomen, a nun in the Transkei in 1916 said that Anglican congregations there had no need for paid Biblewomen as all the women wanted to

³⁴ This became clear in the 1950s, as highlighted in Mia Brandel-Syrier's study, *Black Woman in Search of God* (London, 1962).

³⁵ Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, MS 15,604 Biblewomen, Box: Natal & Tvl Districts, File: Transvaal, 'Transvaal Biblewomen' (1p. Ts.).

³⁶ Cory MS 15,604 Biblewomen, Box: National & Cape District, File: 'Sundry Correspondence,' 2, 'List of Biblewomen 1960-61.'

³⁷ P. Attwell (ed.) *Take our Hands : The Methodist Women's Auxiliary of Southern Africa 1916-1996* (Cape Town, 1997), ch. 6, 'Partners in Mission'.

³⁸ Claire G. Nye, 'The Mothers' Union: A Case Study of African Branches in the Anglican Diocese of Cape Town' (unpublished BA Hons dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1987).

preach 'either to the heathen or to each other',³⁹ so that although Biblewomen in Britain had been an evangelical Anglican creation, Anglicans in South Africa did not replicate the model. Just as Methodist women's groups had more contact with each other across the apartheid divide than seems to have been the case in other denominations, so the partnership in mission (which is how the WA described it) represented by the Biblewomen project appears to have been unique in South Africa.

Conclusion

Both these homegrown Transvaal ventures (and their South Africa-wide equivalents) stayed within the church rather than being forced out or choosing to leave on account of their radicalism or idiosyncratic spirituality, as happened with many other indigenous movements – for example, the ex-Methodist prophetess, Nontetha, in the Eastern Cape in the early 1920s.⁴⁰ The Manyano movement remains huge and powerful and linked into international Methodist women's networks, but the smaller indigenous venture, the more explicitly cross-racial Biblewomen phenomenon, was in the end wound up by the reshaped church in the new democratic era. For the WA, there was a 'painful, traumatic process' of 'letting go' when their 'long journey together' had been 'deeply enriching to the women of the Auxiliary'. But they hoped that this held out for the Biblewomen, now under a new Connexional committee, the vision of

increased recognition in the Church at large for their invaluable ministry; of more equitable remuneration and status; of upgrading of training and equipping for their task; of the shedding of maternalism or patronage, however loving, appropriate to the new South Africa.⁴¹

This underlined how complex and sensitive the notion of indigeneity might be within South Africa's racial hierarchies. Power relations under apartheid could taint well-meant ventures, so that, as the indigenous population took on political majority rule, Biblewomen could no longer be dependent on white women for their status, training and pay, but had to be further indigenised to enjoy the recognition of, and indeed become the responsibility of, the whole church.

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³⁹ St Cuthbert's Mission in the Diocese of St John's, Kaffraria, *Report for 1916*.

⁴⁰ See R.R. Edgar and Hilary Sapire, *African Apocalypse: The Story of Nontetha Nkwenkwe, a Twentieth-Century South African Prophet* (Athens, Ohio, 2000).

⁴¹ Attwell, *Take our Hands*, pp. 82, 90-95.