

Tiyo Soga (1829–1871) at the intersection of ‘universes in collision’

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Tiyo Soga, the first black minister ordained in Scotland by the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1856, was, by any standards, a conflicted character. He stood both in and between two worlds and suffered from the vulnerability that emerged from his dual allegiances. Yet he made a significant contribution to the mission history of South Africa, particularly through his early influence on the development of black consciousness and black nationalism, which were to make significant contributions to black thinking in the 20th century. Soga’s life and ministry are set in the context of Michael Ashley’s concept of ‘universes in collision’.

Introduction

When Dr Gideon Khabela (1996) wrote his book on Tiyo Soga, *The struggle of the gods: Tiyo Soga, a study in Christianity and the Africa culture*, it was an attempt to challenge the mainline churches ‘for having misrepresented the African culture’ (Khabela 1996:1) in a context where it was assumed that ‘in the inner character of the African lurked the thief and the recidivist criminal, the dangerous and the potentially mad’ (Crais 1992:138). He used Tiyo Soga as a foil to such views:

Tiyo Soga was to be the most famous of all Xhosa converts ... He was to be the first black ordained minister to be educated overseas, the first black missionary among his own people, and the first translator of an English classic (*Pilgrim’s Progress*). (Mostert 1992:1023)

By any standards, the name of Tiyo Soga stands out in the mission history of the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Born a son of the soil and raised in the traditional faith and practice of his people, he became an outstanding example of the transformation/conversion of an African as one who ‘had pride in his church, his race, and in the history and culture of his people’ (Switzer 1993:162).

I consider Tiyo Soga to have managed to maintain a balance of contradictions within himself – neither black nor white, neither African nor European, neither a slave nor a master, neither arrogant nor humble, neither British nationalist nor African nationalist, neither an admirer of the British way of life nor a despiser of his own African culture. He lived in a time and context where the confluence of two cultures collided, and throughout his life ‘he wrestled in the deep waters of conflicting cultures’ (Williams 1983:10) and came to be viewed among his own people as ‘one who had bridged over the apparently impassible gulph’ between black and white (Soga in Williams 1983:73).

The purpose of this article is to examine the life, work and witness of the Rev. Tiyo Soga in order to understand the tensions within which he lived, within himself and within the wider community in whose lives he participated actively. The article will examine the context of his life’s work, his lineage and early history, along with the periods he spent in Scotland and in the mission stations at Mgwali and Tutura. From a reading of his available writings, an understanding of his role as an agent and early protagonist of negritude, African consciousness, African nationalism and black consciousness.

Lineage

Konwana was the nickname of Soga, son of Jotelo of the Jwara clan. Konwana was the father of Old Soga (Tiyo’s father) and grandfather of Tiyo. He was an adviser of Chief Ngqika (Brownlee 1977 [1896]:184; Hodgson 1980:20; Williams 1978:1). Old Soga had adopted a form of Christianity and some of the aspects of modern Western agriculture (Millard 1999:62). Therefore, he was born into the political arena of dispossession in the Eastern Cape and the expansion of the white settler community with its colonial administrative and missionary resources. His awareness of and response to this material (land) and existential crisis would eventually develop into black

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consciousness and protest. Old Soga was Chief Ngqika's, and his son Tyhali's, eyes and ears throughout the eastern frontier region. He had become a Christian prior to the war of dispossession in 1834 as the result of the prophet Ntsikana's influence and had witnessed the destruction of his people's land; Old Soga challenged William Chalmers, affirming that his property housed a school and a church. This placed the missionaries in an invidious position being caught between the colonial authorities and people they claimed to serve. So Old Soga was also a transitional soul who prefigured his son Tiyo's role as a person caught between two worlds. This signalled the agonism arising out of a deep rupture with the past as he adopted a reversal of roles concerning the use of modern agricultural implements, like the plough, and developed an individualistic approach. Only his authority allowed him to remain connected to both the world of the colonist and that of his traditional life (De Kock 1996:59). Suspicion and adherence to values that did not align with tribal morality prevented large scale conversion. Yet John Cumming was clear that the authority of the chiefs had to be terminated if the gospel was to progress (Cumming to Secretary, FMC, 02 June 1846, *Caffrarian Messenger of the Glasgow Missionary Society*, xviii, November 1846:285).

Old Soga was a conflicted nominal Christian whose father had been influenced by the prophet Ntsikana, an example of evolutionary change. He instituted family and morning prayer in his household. It was his decision that Tiyo should not be circumcised according to custom: 'he was a man of two worlds, vulnerable in both' (Williams 1978:7). This decision is a reflection of the influence Christianity had on him. The Soga family were drawn towards mission Christianity and served the missionaries in their search for new sites for mission stations. They interacted in the sensitive area between traditional life and Western culture in a dynamic South African *milieu*.

The South African context

The context for the early life of Tiyo Soga as 'an educated Black mind torn between two worlds – that of the Western Christian civilisation on the one hand and African tribal culture on the other' (Williams 1978:xvi) was characterised by the Wars of Dispossession, which raged for 100 years from the late 18th century. The area affected was the Eastern Cape, which was under pressure from the encroachments of white settlers expanding their territory eastwards from the Western Cape and from Algoa Bay with the arrival of the 1820 settlers. This destabilised African societies because of the assault on the authority of the chiefs, who had traditionally exercised stewardship of the land (Duncan 2015:92–96). This was expressed in wars against the colonial authorities and accommodation with Christianity.

Further, Tiyo Soga existed in two worlds and experienced the direct impact of 'universes in collision' (Ashley 1980), where:

... two divergent worlds of belief competed for the minds of the indigenous peoples living in the frontier region of the Cape Colony during the first half of the nineteenth century. Formal

education was a critical spearhead in the British Evangelical missionary effort to convert native minds to share their own views of reality. Until the 1850s their efforts met with little success and it was only in later decades, when the world of the Xhosa began to collapse due to colonial pressure, that they enjoyed widespread success ... (p. 38)

This experience made their religious and political sensitivities more malleable. In Tiyo's case, he was exposed from birth to these conflicting forces.

'Universes in collision'

Michael Ashley's concept of 'universes in collision' was applied mainly to the field of education in 19th century South Africa. Ashley employs Berger and Luckman's (1967:110–122) concept of 'symbolic universes' as 'the integration of all meanings attached to individual biographies and social institutions into one overarching body of theoretical explanation'. Yet these concepts have a far wider application as a 'clash of ideologies' (Ashley 1980:28), where radically differing power interests encounter and engage one another, in this case British imperial power and the 'mythical' Xhosa universe of the Eastern Cape in the 19th century (Ashley 1980:30). The clash was the result of the inability to understand, communicate, control or integrate the 'opposing' ideology. The missionary universe was diverse and was represented by the British imperial universe and exemplified in the religious domain by the Evangelical Christian universe, which enjoyed divine approval. He emphasised his detestation of liberalism: 'we spurn and utterly repudiate ... liberal modern biblical criticism' (Williams 1983:183). This divine approval, however, was far more comprehensive, for it embraced the orbit of the European, economic, political and cultural universes.

This is evident from a lecture Tiyo Soga gave in Cape Town to the Young Men's Christian Association on 07 June 1866 on the theme 'Some of the current popular religious opinions and tendencies of our time' (in Williams 1983:186–187). Soga points out the dangers of despising 'ecclesiasticism', expressed in 'the horror of creeds, confessions and orthodoxy and the desire for a "world more free", so soon as a new revelation, with better creeds, confessions and with a less rigid orthodoxy, is announced to the world! Side by side with this, there is 'the demand for a more liberal interpretation of the Bible' (in Williams 1983:185–186):

You are aware that this liberal biblical interpretation, the demand for which is one of the marked features of our day, is in opposition to what is called 'the theology of the Reformation' – the theology upon which our evangelical Protestantism is based. (In Williams 1983:187)

Here he is indicating his allegiance to the tenets of the religious side of the British imperial paradigm. He presents the new thinking as a threat to Christian orthodoxy. He only relates this European problem to his own context in one comment:

In the view of those religious tendencies of the age that go to weaken the authority of the Bible, and to modify its doctrines,

would anyone venture to give an opinion as to what those who have been commissioned by the Church of God to proclaim the truth of that Bible to benighted men and nations ought to do and to say. (In Williams 1983:187)

Soga continues by laying responsibility for the threats to religious observance on the spirit of capitalism, which has its domicile in Europe:

It lies at the door of the commercial world! Nothing, it appears, must stand in the way of its interests. Its laws are as unchangeable as those of the Medes and Persians. (In Williams 1983:187)

He expresses grave concern for the victims of:

... that civilisation, [which] ... moves along at a tremendous sacrifice of poor human life. I would ask my African-born friends here present to go to London, to Edinburgh, to Glasgow, and other great cities of trade. Let them visit there the great manufacturing establishments – let them watch their breakfast, dinner, and closing hours, when their thousands of labourers are relieved of their toil – let them see the stream of pale, sickly careworn factory girls who have no hope of life but in that imprisonment, and they will thank God for having been born in this free air of the desert! (In Williams 1983:190)

Soga was clearly deeply touched by the plight of native Britons, who he deemed to be less 'free' than his own people. The outcome of Soga's address is 'that thousands care nothing about moral responsibility' (in Williams 1983:190). There is no sense of deep inculturation of the gospel in the South African context, rather the application of Reformed evangelical theology. While he challenges the British capitalist system, he is silent on the South African context, except to praise its 'free air', perhaps being discreet in relation to the sensitivities of his listeners, who also earn their wealth through participation in the same capitalist system. The challenge to his audience was to reject out of hand the influences of modern theological tendencies. While he appears to be ambivalent regarding the theory of development, Soga:

... cannot comprehend how, according to the law of natural progress, they with other degraded, despised dark races of this vast continent should have been left so far behind in civilisation and Christian enlightenment. I am not sure about the impartiality of progress; and I hope that when its next tidal wave comes, it will correct its manifest irregularities. (In Williams 1983:192)

Soga challenges his listeners to defend the Christian faith from all manner of attack that may be levelled against it as a matter of responsibility:

... there is a struggle going on for life and death between Religion or Christianity and the various forms of sceptical and liberal opinions, unfavourable to its progress and development. ... You must step into the ranks of those who stand for defence and confirmation of the truth of God. (In Williams 1983:192)

During the period under review (1829–1871), the African context was dynamic because it had for some time been accommodating itself to an ever-enlarging cosmic domain. The geographical area affected was the Eastern Cape, which was under pressure from the encroachments of white settlers

expanding their territory eastwards from the Western Cape and from Algoa Bay with the arrival of the 1820 settlers. This destabilised African societies because of the assault on the authority of the chiefs, who had exercised stewardship of the land (Duncan 2015:92–96). This was expressed in wars against the colonial authorities and accommodation with Christianity. As the result of settler and military encroachments and the arrival of refugees from the *Mfecane* [forced migration] in the north, the amaXhosa had incorporated the refugees, the amaMfengu and the amaGqunukhwebe, who became intermediaries of the novel Western symbolic universe. Lovedale Institution was one such site where the amaMfengu were settled and where they impacted the new universe as it impacted them. Despite this, the amaXhosa inhabited a hitherto stable world where aliens were incorporated into a stable community. With the coming of the white people, proselytisation became evident within a symbolic universe, leading to nihilation (a means of denying the validity of a rival universe by promoting the values of the intruding dominant universe) (Berger & Luckman 1967:130). Education was a critical means of incorporating blacks into the missionaries' universe; they also employed 'native agents' in this process. Christianising was the overt curriculum; civilising (through character formation, see Duncan 2003:188–197) was the covert agenda. This was both a religious and a political agenda, as many missionaries became government agents and advisers. This made the process ideological and the outcome of the 'collision' was determined by military power (Ashley 1980:36), against which the Xhosa could not maintain their universe intact. This produced the response of therapy, which aimed to keep the victims within the boundaries of their new universe; deviant or innovative interpretations of the new universe needed to be contained as in the incorporation of misfits of Xhosa society into mission stations. The initial success of mission education was presaged by the war of dispossession (1850–1853) and the cattle killing movement (1856–1857). This led to education becoming the main tool in the destruction of the African universe, as children were taught to regard 'their customs as obnoxious to Christianity and civilisation' (Ashley 1989:38). This is the context into which Tiyo Soga was born and raised.

The young Tiyo Soga

Born at Gwali in the Tyumie Valley on the frontier of the Eastern Cape in 1829, Tiyo was promoted by Rev. William Chalmers, whose son John became a lifelong friend through the combination of Tiyo's susceptibility to Westernisation and John's penchant for Africanisation (Williams 1978:xiv). From the age of 15 in 1844, he was educated at Lovedale under Rev. William Govan (1841–1870). At this time Lovedale was non-racial, non-denominational, gender inclusive, emphasised Christian character, high intellectual standards and equality of opportunity (Duncan 2003:102–108). Govan's approach was far more equity driven than the later James Stewart's (1870–1905) paternalistic racist approach to education. All of this affected Tiyo, who proved to be a talented scholar.

The War of the Axe (1846)

This frontier war caused the Lovedale Institution to suspend its educational programme. Lovedale became a military centre and the institution was evacuated; some moved to Fort Armstrong. It was there that a woman named Nosuthu arrived with her son, Tiyo, who was studying at Lovedale. At the end of the war, which the British won, the amaXhosa were removed from their land, which was settled with amaMfengu. The amaMfengu were traditionally loyal to the British, which made them suspect among their black compatriots. Missionaries returned to their posts 'under government protection' (Shepherd 1971:18). The war sealed Tiyo's fate, as he committed himself to a new lifestyle. His biographer, Chalmers, wrote that Tiyo's mother told missionary James Laing: 'My son is the property of God; God goes with him: he is the property of God's servants, wherever they lead he must follow' (Chalmers 1877:38–39).

On the way to Scotland

Just prior to the outbreak of war, Govan had resigned as principal of Lovedale as the result of a dispute that arose between him and the Free Church of Scotland. He resolved to return to Scotland, taking four of his pupils with him. Clearly, the young Soga impressed William Govan to the extent that Govan believed he could benefit from an education in Scotland, when Lovedale had to close during the War of the Axe (1846), one of the regular century-long Wars of Dispossession. Following the war, Lovedale was reopened and Govan was invited to return as principal.

Soga was supported throughout his education at school and seminary. He was befriended by Dr William Anderson, who baptised him in the John Street UP church in Glasgow on 07 May 1848 and with whom he developed a 'fellow feeling' (Chalmers 1877:45). This testifies to Soga's ability to understand those from both white and black contexts. The sermon on the day of his baptism was based on the story of the Ethiopian eunuch and presaged the development of black nationalist ideas throughout Africa and particularly in Soga's mind. He longed to return to Africa and left Scotland on 24 October 1848.

Uniondale

Uniondale, near Keiskammahoek, was Soga's first teaching post on his return to South Africa. There he had to endure school boycotts, which were a part of the national resistance to colonial and missionary pressures. He began his hymn writing career at this time. Under pressure, Soga declared in favour of European culture and values, though he would later identify with the struggle for national identity. Soga's uncircumcised status marked him as an African nonconformist and became a serious issue at Uniondale. Williams (1978:19) claims that this represents a 'reversion to nativism', which was replicated during his time at Mgwali. As a result, schools were boycotted as part of the resistance to colonial and missionary pressure: '[t]hus Tiyo Soga was forcibly detached from his people early in his career' (Williams 1978:20).

However, there is no evidence that he himself resisted such force. He had grown away from his own culture, yet 'he was still of them and in due course would identify himself with their search for "national" identity and consolidation against White territorial and cultural encroachment' (Williams 1978:21). He was regarded as a renegade missionary who refused to assist his own people during the 1846 war when Chief Maqoma asked him to translate letters that had been retrieved from white people. Subsequently, he fled to avoid punishment.

Theological education and ordination

In June 1851, Soga returned to Scotland (Thompson 2000:16), intent on becoming a promoter of Western values to consolidate civilisation. Here he was assimilated into Western civilisation. Later that year he matriculated as a student at Glasgow University and after one session moved to the Divinity Hall of the United Presbyterian Church.

Govan's early assessment of Tiyo's ability was correct because he not only completed his education in Scotland but also the requirements for ordination in the United Presbyterian Church (UPC) of Scotland, one of the Scottish churches that pursued mission in South Africa. He made such a positive impression that he was well supported by the UPC John Street congregation in Glasgow. During this time he absorbed the values of the middle class in Scotland, which offered a counterpoint to his African value system. This has led to charges of betrayal of his African heritage. However, the truth is somewhat more complex than this initial evaluation. By this time, he was already suffering from tuberculosis. Soga was ordained in Glasgow on 23 December 1856, having been licensed on 10 December. Soon afterwards, on 27 February 1857, Soga married a Scottish lady, Janet Burnside; this was symbolic of his integration into Western culture. On 13 April 1857, the Sogas left Scotland to return to South Africa. Soga was never to return to Scotland.

Return to 'normality'

On his return to South Africa with a Scottish wife, Soga was exposed to the full pressure of racism. He commented: 'I would not be surprised if, to some, there was something absurd in the fact of a black man walking side by side with a white lady' (Chalmers 1877:137). This was the 'curse of colonial prejudice' (Williams 1978:32). Soga appeared to face this with a certain equanimity and in general tended to avoid situations where confrontation was possible or inevitable. Yet this may have been the cause of a tendency towards a sense of nationalism (Khabela 1996:21) and a source of depression.

In terms of political loyalty, Soga's loyalty to the crown was demonstrated on the visit of Prince Alfred to South Africa in 1860 (Stapleton 1994:198), when he exclaimed '[m]y loyalty knows no bounds now!' (Chalmers 1877:256). This loyalty was most likely nourished at the mission stations where he

was educated, imbued with the Scottish Presbyterian ethic of subservience to the state. For Soga this involved trying to discern the Christian ideal of sanctification in the context of Western imperialism and racism.

There can be no doubt that Soga participated in the 'transculturation and transvaluation of the aims and instruments of the civilising mission' (Attwell 1995:45), which was grounded in the Enlightenment. De Kock (1996) describes him as a transitional agonistic figure:

Soga exhibits the 'permanent provocation' of one who is drawn into power relationships as a voluntary subject, but who shows 'recalcitrance of will' in his own 'free' adoption of the values governing such relationships. (p. 184)

However, a few years later, in the 1860s, he had begun his conversion to black consciousness and perhaps even nationalism. Yet he remained a loyal monarchist. In 1864, he foresaw a future with:

... all the natives brought, in God's providence, under the influence of the English government, to smooth all causes of irritation and heartburnings, and to approve themselves the faithful subjects of the best friend of all men, *Queen Victoria!* (Chalmers 1877:307–308)

Here again, Soga expressed support for European culture as he adopted the general missionaries' view, which considered the colonising forces as God's providence to help in their process of Christianisation of Africa.

This was the time when Soga advocated the consolidation of British control in order to prevent further disruption in the Eastern Cape. Khabela (1996:30) claims that, alongside these views, he was deeply opposed to the British attempt to destroy the power of the chiefs. Yet he also strongly supported the territorial and moral integrity of blacks and this caused an internal conflict of loyalties. This was the 'untenable ambivalent position' (Saayman 1991:59) that black and white missionaries had to navigate. Soga gradually became convinced that negritude was acceptable, though it would lead to racial purity and territorial integrity (this became the justification for the homelands policy!). His ministry (1861–1871) was carried out at two mission stations. These stations were considered by the chiefs to be:

... symbols of colonial encroachment which had already deprived them of land. Tiyo Soga was sensitive to all this; he was conscious of the necessity of abolishing the grosser practices of traditional Xhosa society while inculcating Christianity with its handmaiden, Western civilisation, under the umbrella of British rule. Yet he strongly believed in traditional Black values and tried to reconcile them with the best aspects of Western civilisation. Traditional society, thus purified, would then have intrinsic and desirable worth. In this was Tiyo Soga sought to reconcile his two worlds. (Williams 1983:3)

Mgwali

Founded in 1857 by Soga, the church building was completed and opened on 23 July 1861 (Brownlee 1977 [1986]:395). He remained there until 1868. The context was one of resentment

and suspicion. This seriously hampered his work, because the missionary task had virtually been subsumed under the colonial project. His ministry began in the aftermath of the cattle killing tragedy, which had a particularly devastating effect on the Mgwali area (Soga to Somerville, 09 February 1859, in Williams 1983:46–50). The 'national suicide' was an attempt to counter the invasion by alien forces. Life was further complicated by Sir George Grey's (governor of the Cape) settlement of veterans and civilians in the Eastern Cape during the 1850s in an attempt to integrate black and white people, thus creating a buffer between settlers and settled through the introduction of industrial institutions at missions. Yet Soga was filled with hope as he established this new missionary outpost in the midst of opposition from supporters of traditional culture. Those who gathered at mission stations were far from the normal inhabitants of society – they were the misfits and displaced peoples and included the amaMfengu (Duncan 2003:18–26), witches, single women, blind women, albinos, lepers and cripples (Khabela 1996:12). This raised the question regarding the extent to which native agency was responsible for the advance of the mission.

Then there were Soga's objections to a too-facile definition of and approach to civilisation, which appeared to betray a distrust of his own indigenous civilisation:

My faith in civilisation alone, if it does not follow in the wake of Christianity, is gone. The civilisation of civilised men, who care nothing, and do nothing, for the moral, physical, and intellectual improvement of ignorant men in barbarous countries, with whom they come into contact, is destructive. No man needs to talk about civilisation, apart from Christianity, when I see the native here, rushing to ruin by drunkenness, and other vices of civilised ungodly men. Civilisation is the handmaid of Christianity. (Chalmers 1877:288)

But was such a coalescence of civilisation and Christianity necessary for Africans? A crisis arose between Christianity (i.e. Victorian Christian morality) and culture at Mgwali relating to the traditional rite of circumcision, which caused Soga much distress. This was expressed by young men in the form of nativism as they challenged any resistance to the traditional rite of passage marked by circumcision. The response of the chiefs has been termed 'nativism': 'rejection of assimilation and the restoration of aspects of traditional African religion and tribal life' (Williams 1978:83). The challenge of Christianity and colonial aggression, territorial and spiritual dispossession produced the response of Xhosa (Black) nationalism.

Soga left Mgwali for Tutura to the east in the Transkei on 04 June 1868. He had been worn out by the truculence of the local boys and their promotion of circumcision in solidarity with their black culture. This highlighted Soga's lack of solidarity with his own culture. Mgwali was considered to be an unhealthy place, and it was alleged that many who worked there suffered from 'distressing effects of asthma and other kindred complaints' (Williams 1978:69). In addition, this was a difficult period for the mission.

The Mfengu had left the mission, migrating to the east, denuding the mission of members.

Tutura

The Tutura mission was founded in 1867. Missionary development by this time had been made easier by the continued expansion of colonial authority. Soga deemed it necessary to move into the area of Chief Sarili, who had already lost much of his authority over his land, as it had been given to the AmaMfengu and the Tambooki tribes. The assumption in this decision was that the people preferred to be under the influence of missionaries rather than traditional leadership. The threats to the missionary advance were witch-finders and rainmakers, lobola, polygamy, the levirate and initiation. Williams (1978:81) correctly states that '[t]here was little, if any attempt to understand the social significance of these "immoral" features of Xhosa life and their value for society'. In one sense the chiefs were the authors of their own demise with regard to missionary relationships, for they entertained their presence with mixed motives. However, the missionary motive was clear – 'cultural conversion' (Ashley 1974:201).

Soga made a sensitive and potentially controversial decision at this time, to send his sons to Scotland to be educated: 'To bind my boys down permanently to this Institution [*Lovedale*], admirable as it is, would curb the natural bent or inclination of their minds with reference to the future' (Chalmers 1877:289). From his extant comments, it is difficult to evaluate the perceived effect this decision would have on them. While they would avoid the indignity of attending colonial schools, would they fit back into South African society, divided as it was, when they returned?

Soga's ministry at Tutura was hampered by ill health. Yet he led a busy life with 'evangelising, church building, Bible translating, hymn writing, though he did not live to see much of the harvest' (Lennox 1911:42), although he did leave behind a substantial legacy, which will now be explored.

Black consciousness

Tiyo Soga stands in the forefront of the development of black consciousness on the African continent during the 19th century (Williams 1978:xix; 2001:66, 211). He went beyond white missionaries, who saw their mission advance only at the cost of the destruction of black culture and society. In consequence, most missionaries saw the positive consequences of the great Cattle Killing (1856–1857) as a means towards this end. Soga by comparison could see this as an aid to the ultimate salvation for mission in this catastrophe, although also here he was in a contradictory position. Williams (1978:60) comments that Soga 'saw divine purpose in the catastrophe. Affliction was good for the soul (note the typical Pietist emphasis); the scattering of the tribes would bring them into contact with Christianity, both in the colony and at mission stations in Caffraria, to which they would flock'. Soga's equivocal position with regard to Xhosa

traditions and customs is clear from this and his dispute with the *abakwetha* at Mgwali regarding circumcision.

This is evident from two significant events that occurred in 1865, which impacted on Soga's missionary outreach and presented him with an opportunity to clarify his mission and vision as well as his position regarding black consciousness and black nationalism. The first was an article by Rev. John A Chalmers on 'What is the destiny of the Kaffir race?' in the *King William's Town Gazette and Kaffrarian Banner* on 03 April.

Chalmers argued that black people either had to resist their natural tendency towards indolence to become civilised according to missionary values and participate in the life of the colony or face extinction. This carelessness was demonstrated in their rejection of a European education:

Imperceptibly, by their disregard to education and its advantages, they are going headlong to ruin, rising only to the unenviable position of wagon-makers and grooms. Neither this generation nor the next may witness this extinction, but it is a law that wherever education is at a low ebb the mass of the people must sink. (Chalmers 1865)

These critical views were expressed by Soga's friend and colleague at Mgwali. Clearly, they held widely divergent views on the state of the black population. Chalmers commented, 'when a Kaffir youth has a smattering of knowledge ... his ambition then is to be a gentleman, a sort of peacock bedizened with ornaments of the gaudiest hue' (Chalmers 1865). Was this his view of Soga and his experience? Soga would not agree.

The second event was the declared intention of the colonial government in March of that year to force the Ngqika people to cross the Kei River into Gcaleka's land. The chiefs refused after consultation, and the Mfengu were settled there instead. This occasioned a response from Soga, who became the first South African writing on black consciousness, which promoted the idea of negritude. Soga was furious with the proposal to move his people and wrote to the editor of the *Gazette*. Here he replied to Chalmers' article under the pseudonym of Defensor in an article entitled 'What is the destiny of the Kaffir race?' published on 11 May 1865.

He begins with an interesting observation: 'the writer passes over in silence the results of missionary labours among the Kaffirs for the past fifty years' (Williams 1983) and makes an apposite comparison:

Take a nation – any nation in the exact circumstances of the Kaffirs of South Africa – compare the Kaffirs with that nation (for it is futile and unfair to compare him to a European with the advantage of a civilisation and Christianity of 15 or 18 centuries), give that nation the same number of years – fifty – during which the experiments of civilising and Christianising have been tried ... and he will find that the Kaffirs, or rather the results of Christian labours among them, will stand nobly the test of the comparison. (p. 179)

He then developed another argument:

Africa was of God given to the race of Ham. I find the negro from the days of the old Assyrian downwards, keeping his 'individuality' and 'distinctiveness', amid the wreck of empires, and the revolution of ages. I find him keeping his place among the nations, and keeping his home and country. I find him opposed by nation after nation and driven from his home. I find him enslaved – exposed to the vices and the brandy of the white man. I find him in this condition for many a day – in the West Indian Islands, in Northern and Southern America ... I find him exposed to all these disasters, and yet living – multiplying 'and never extinct'. Yea, I find him now as the prevalence of Christian and philanthropic opinions on the right of man obtains among civilised nations, returning unmanacled to the land of his forefathers, taking back with him the civilisation and the Christianity of those nations. (See the Negro Republic of Liberia). I find the negro in the present struggle in America looking forward – though still and with chains on his feet with chains in his hands – yet looking forward ... I believe firmly that among the Negro races of South Africa events will follow the same law, and therefore neither the indolence of the Kaffirs, nor their aversion to change, nor the vices of civilisation, all of which barriers the gospel must was different from overthrow, shall suffice to exterminate them as a people. (Williams 1983:180–181)

From this it is evident that Soga had internalised the predominant contemporary European Christian ideological perspective.

This indicates the existence of a spirit of the Africanist movement, derived from the African diaspora in the US. Soga firmly, but with considerable restraint, responded and emphasised that black people had been gifted their land by Godself – that it is their right to occupy it. Then he displays a degree of Africa consciousness (Saayman 1991:63) by referring to the existence of black people beyond the bounds of the continent. Williams (1978:97) describes this as a novel contribution to the development of black nationalism. This Africa consciousness was a vital component of black consciousness and later nationalist thought. This was a continental perspective whose seed lay in southern Africa. This was significant, for Africa not only occupied a vast land space and supported massive numbers of people but it also had a substantive history, as can be evidenced in the history of Egypt, northern Africa and Ethiopia. What is clear is that Africans can only be incorporated into the wider community on the basis of their distinctiveness, and this gives us the first indication of the development of race consciousness. Their adaptability was stressed as a counter-charge to Chalmers' critique of African indolence. For Soga, this involved the restructuring of the symbolic universe of Africans as they blend their culture with modernity.

Consequently, we do not agree with Trevor-Roper's assessment (1963) that:

Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian America. And darkness is not a subject for history. (p. 1)

Soga's conflicted struggle between two worlds led to the paradox:

Determined to free his people from the tyranny of obnoxious tribal rites and customs which should crumble with the advance of Christianity and civilisation, he nevertheless saw tribal society as worthy of preservation because it was different from western societies and their mores. And Nationalism, even in diluted form, feeds on the uniqueness of societies. (Williams 1978:99)

It was evident from Soga's recourse to the history of early African Christianity, as recorded by Rev. William Thompson in Cape Town in September 1865, that Soga:

Suggested to me the names of Cyprian, Tertullian and Augustine, and others of Northern Africa, embalmed in the memory as among the noblest men of the primitive Church, and as the first fruits unto God of the rich harvest this continent has yet to produce. (Chalmers 1877:215)

This view was shared by other pan-Africanists, Wilmot Edward Blyden and James Africanus Horton. Returning to Soga's article:

'Ethiopia shall soon stretch her hands to God!' The total extinction of a people who form a large family of races to whom the promise applies, shall not, surely precede its fulfilment. In this matter, I for one shall adhere to the declaration of the 'old book' before I accept the theories of men. (Williams 1983:181)

The biblical aspect was vital to Soga's thinking. Here he saw the Ethiopian prophecy as integral to his vision for his people. He resented the negative influences of colonial rule, especially corruption in the form of excessive alcohol consumption, whose effect on morals caused the people to deteriorate and lose their humanity (Williams 1983:167). Hence, Western influences brought both beneficial and destructive influences. However, in the face of these evils Soga stressed their essential nature, which was distinguished by integrity, nobility of nature, conversation, sense of humour, weakness for exaggeration and hospitality. These he viewed as composing a purified tribalism (Williams 1978:101) marked by the Christian values of 'decency and order' (1 Cor 14:40). This involved maintaining the authority of the chiefs, whose authority was derived from God (good Calvinistic thinking) as a means to provide a structure that guaranteed black confidence. Despite his encouragement of his own people to demonstrate due deference to white people as a mark of respect, he was also influenced by his belief that:

God ha[d] made from creation no race of men mentally and morally superior to other races. They are all equal in these respects; but education, civilisation and the blessings of Christianity have made differences among them. (Chalmers 1877:421)

By 1870, Soga was a prophet of negritude: 'the refinement of black consciousness to a positive doctrine which saw virtue in Black society and sought strength and comfort there' (Williams 1978:103). When he sent his children to be educated in Scotland, the advice he gave them was clear regarding their distinctiveness:

You will ever cherish the memory of your mother as that of an upright conscientious, thrifty, Christian Scotch woman. You will ever be thankful for your connection by this tie to the white race. But if you wish to gain credit for yourselves – if you do not wish to feel the taunt of men, which you sometimes may well feel – *take your place* in the world as *coloured*, not as white men, as *Kaffirs*, not as Englishmen ... For your own sakes never appear that your father was a Kaffir, and that you inherited some African blood. It is every whit as good and as pure as that which flows in the veins of my fairer brethren. (Chalmers 1877:430)

Soga never disparaged black society despite its weaknesses. He became the early icon of black consciousness and Pan-Africanism. Saayman (1991:63; cf. Khabela 1996:7) presents the view that these sentiments express a form of nascent 'Nationalist militancy'. Soga was considered to be in the vanguard of Africans pressing towards their destiny, in which Africans embrace modernity. He was, therefore, a transitional figure in Xhosa history, standing at the confluence or collision point of two universes. The 1856–1857 cattle-killing movement signified this clash as a millenarian syncretistic pagan process of reception of Christianity.

Yet he was clear regarding his own identity:

I am one of you – a Kaffir as well as you – One of your own tribe and nation – Why is it that I have not on a painted blanket like you – or have not my ankles & wrists ornamented with those tinkling chains that ornament your own? – Simply because, I have been taught to see the utter uselessness of such things to an immortal being like me – I would not for the world exchange positions with you be[cause] I know that to live like you are now living, is sure and certain future ruin. (*Journal*, 24 July 1862, in Williams 1983:89)

Here, Soga is referring to the difference brought about by his conversion and subsequent growth in the Christian faith as a Xhosa man. He later refers to the power of God to redeem: 'even in the bosoms of men accounted savages, God has implanted the noblest instincts of our nature' (*Journal*, 24 July 1860, in Williams 1983:28). He testifies to the success of his mission in the aftermath of the cattle-killing movement and famine:

'The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, *light is sprung up!*' It is this way that the Lord is showing his mercy to this land, that so Ethiopia may soon stretch out her hands to God! (*Journal*, 08 February 1864, in Williams 1983:102)

Here is a link between God's purpose and Soga's nascent nationalism. Yet Soga makes an interesting comment about mission: '... the gospel must be introduced into a heathen land by *foreign* agents, it is by native agents that it must be propagated so as to *reach* and *pervade* the *masses of the people*' (*Journal*, 15 August 1864, in Williams 1983:105). The question that naturally arises, in the light of Soga's earlier statement regarding his identity, is why he was introducing the gospel as a self-defined 'Kaffir'.

On the subject of land, Soga was clear that there were significant differences in understanding regarding the integrity of property:

The chief maintains that, as both these stations got even the English government to confirm the grant made by him to them, by appealing to his name and deed, the missionaries should, when they received the lands of those stations from Government, have done so with the understanding that they still belong to him, and that they still consider themselves as his missionaries, as indeed they were. Instead of this, he says they got the land for themselves, and he was excluded from the stations. (*Journal*, 01 October 1867, in Williams 1983:129)

The truth of the matter regarding land is that 'much of it was acquired under false or misleading circumstances as well as different understandings of the ownership of land' (Duncan 2015:92).

Arising out of his views on black consciousness, Soga's views on African nationalism need to be examined. His marriage to a white woman and the subsequent experience of racism was doubtless a factor in his development in this regard, much of it based on his personal experience in family life:

As a Black man with a White wife in the colour-conscious imperialist society, he certainly encountered racism daily. Inevitably this had to influence his view of Black nationalism. It is equally important to keep in mind that his training in Scotland made him part of the new educated elite in the Colony and established him firmly as a member of the middle class. This fact also would influence his view of Black nationalism. (Saayman 1989:97)

Then his advice to his children as he despatched them to Scotland to be educated:

... take your place in the world as *colored*, not as White men, as *Kaffirs* not as Englishmen ... For your own sakes never appear ashamed that your father was a Kafir, and that you inherited some African blood. (Soga in Williams 1983:6)

However, he could have educated them in South Africa. He defended his decision and said in this connection (Chalmers 1877):

In our various colonial towns, there are Government aided schools, which may be attended by the children of all, Black and White, without distinction; but it is a question whether the higher class of schools in these towns may be attended by coloured children, even though their parents are respectable. I do not wish to be the first to raise this delicate question about my children, as it might lead to a controversy which might injure their prospects for life. God has enabled me to live down these prejudices so far as they concerned myself; but I would never think of subjecting young natives [*sic!*] to an ordeal such as I have passed through ... (pp. 410–411)

Here is an example of Soga's ambivalence. His dedication to the black cause is too evident, for example in his view of the place of black people in Africa. Saayman (1989) highlights Soga's recognition of the existence of many blacks in the Americas, which:

... provides early evidence of *Africa-consciousness* on the part of a Black in southern Africa, and is Tiyo Soga's unique contribution to the origins of Black nationalism. Indeed, it seems that this is the first manifestation of this aspect of Black consciousness

anywhere on the continent ... Africa-consciousness must be regarded as a basic ingredient of Black consciousness, and later nationalist thought, throughout the continent. (p. 98)

All in all, the way in which positioned himself demonstrated that he had a double consciousness in which he was ensnared between two worldviews, which he failed to problematise within the situation in which he found himself. In a sense he was involved in an inner struggle between the challenges of his own distinctive culture of origin and his adopted Scottish/European culture. It was a struggle in which he was unable to achieve the impossible and reconcile the two opposing universes that he inhabited.

Literary work

Soga's time in Scotland allowed him to develop a love of Western culture, literature and history. Bunyan made the deepest impression on him, and in 1867 his translation of the first part of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was published in isiXhosa, *U-hambo Lomhambi*. It laid the foundations for the rise of Xhosa literature.

He then participated in the translation of the Xhosa Bible. Another project that occupied Soga's attention was the Xhosa hymn book. His inspiration came from his contact with Ntsikana, who had written *Olu Thixo omkhuku ngosezulwini*. He produced 31 hymns for the Presbyterian hymnbook *Incwadi Amaculo AseRabe* [Bantu Presbyterian Church]. In addition, we have access to some of his letters written to the Mission Board of the United Presbyterian Church and a selection of sermons. His teachings were revered among his own people (Brownlee 1977 [1896]:254).

Soga was intellectually acquisitive and this stimulated his desire to reflect his black consciousness and black nationalism. Williams (1978:119) acclaims him as 'an exceptional first of the new Black elite'.

Health

Recurrent family illness among the Sogas was attributed to eschewing tribal practices. From an early age it was assumed that Tiyo had inherited a predisposition to a 'chest ailment, probably tuberculosis, endemic to his family' (Williams 1978:xv), which would plague his life until his death.

As early as his return voyage from Scotland to South Africa in 1858, we become aware of his morbid Victorian preoccupation with death. On the Sabbath, 03 May 1857, Soga recorded:

There is scarcely any place or situation in which incidents do not occur, that remind us very strikingly that here we have no abiding city – & that in the midst of life we are in the midst of death – The dark shadow of death, like the shadow of our own bodies follows us whither we would go – This sabbath day was rendered very impressive & solemn by the funeral of an infant who died last night – aged fourteen months – Coffin – two holes – to let in the water – Revulsion of feelings – The deep plunge ... (In Williams 1983:13)

In modern parlance we might say: 'Too much information!'

Later, at Mgwali, we note that:

He lived in a miserable cottage which had been erected as a temporary building on his first arrival there and it was doubtless because of cold and damp then experienced that the germs of the disease – laryngitis – from which he suffered most acutely during the last two years of his life were laid. But Mr Soga was not the man to complain; he bore his trials patiently and without murmur. (Chalmers 1872:11)

In addition, this incapacity, *inter alia*, led to frequent bouts of depression (morbidity, melancholia; De Kock 1996:175):

When injured, he repressed his anger but indulged his grief, and was accustomed to conduct himself rather like a person wounded than offended. He possessed that gentleness which shrank with an instinctive recoil from contention. Added to this a tome of sadness which pervaded his whole life; the cause was difficult to find, and only occasionally, when in conversation on questions affecting the native population, he gave utterance to the words 'My poor countrymen', did one get, as it were, to the secret of this depression. Yet, this characteristic sadness was balanced by a deeper sense of happiness and liveliness and mirth, which welled up when in the company of kindred spirits and whilst conversing on subjects congenial to his nature. His merry joyous laugh showed a soul full of inward tranquillity, and it was always observable to those who knew him best that the despondency which overclouded his being was owing to something altogether foreign himself. (Chalmers 1872:12)

He himself admitted in a letter he wrote in 1862:

I have sometime great regrets that I ever went to Scotland and entered the ministry – Not alone for its *trials* here but for its solemn responsibilities and yet had I not would I have been a better – less responsible man to Government in another profession? I wish sometimes I could go to some dark spot of earth – live and reside there alone. (Soga to Cumming, 18 September 1862, Cumming papers [Folder 10] SA Library)

As a result of his dispute with the young men at Mgwali, he was exhausted 'mentally and physically, plunging him into gloom about the prospects of missionary work in Caffraria and forcing him to take a furlough to recuperate' (Williams 1978:71).

On the other hand:

He often took for his text such words as 'I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh'. On such occasions roused to the highest pitch of excitement ... (Chalmers 1872:16)

During the last years of his life, he struggled against great physical weakness ... His own brethren implored him to cease from active work, but he resolutely refused. He struggled on. (Chalmers 1872:23)

This indicates some form of bipolarity in his personality, which was stimulated by his regular periods of physical ill health.

Soga was a person who displayed 'solitude amid a crowd' (Chalmers 1872:7) along with an 'exquisite sensitiveness' (Chalmers 1872:12).

Evaluation

Soga experienced the challenge of the collision of two universes; his marriage was a constant reminder of the commitment he had made to Western culture. His traditional loyalty lay with the system of government in which chiefs played the most significant role, yet he loved and admired the British system of administration and justice, and the royal family. He also lived in the Eastern Cape, where he could not avoid the 'entanglement between mission and colonialism' and occupied an 'almost untenably ambivalent position' (Saayman 1989:96). His subsequent life was devoted to mediating between these two universes. This gave him the impetus to initiate black consciousness and negritude. He was used to conflict, confrontation and compromise in a context of destabilisation. He was a devoted servant of Queen Victoria despite what she stood for and promoted (the source of the threat of dispossession), as he was devoted to maintaining the authority of tribal chiefs to whom he was also committed. He was a proponent of justice and its administration in both quarters. His project aimed at adapting Christianity to black society – the process we now know as 'inculturation'. 'He was committed to purifying black culture through the civilising effect of British authority for the salvation and elevation of blacks', which he considered 'a vehicle for civilisation ordained by God' (Williams 1978:123). Though he remained firmly within the mission, his work was a potential source of encouragement for the development of African initiated churches in the context of territorial and spiritual dispossession, as well as a desire for exclusiveness as Soga had experienced it during his time at Uniondale and Mgwali when the circumcision dispute arose. Tile's Tembu Church and Mzimba's Presbyterian Church of Africa, both formed towards the close of the 19th century, demonstrate some traits of Soga's thinking regarding indigenisation, which also integrated the Victorian idea of self-help as expressed in his *The inheritance of my children*:

As men of colour, live for the elevation of your degraded, despised, down-trodden people. My advice to all coloured people would be: Assist one another; patronize talent in one another; prefer one another's business, shops, & c., just for the reason that it is better to prefer and elevate kindred and countrymen before all others. (Chalmers 1877:433–434)

Another influence was his contribution to hymn singing, which was associated with developing cohesion and an early form of nationalism. The Great Hymn of Ntsikana was used by Soga on significant occasions as a generator of black solidarity.

Only an African could understand the close relationship between the two cultures he inhabited. Perhaps in his attempt to defend his own society and advance the cause of black consciousness, he eschewed the dynamic nature of his culture of origin within a fluid political dispensation.

There can be no doubt that he suffered many indignities at the hand of white people and 'he had to be ambivalent about important matters' (Saayman 1991:63). He even has to bear the incredulity of his own people when on his return to South Africa from Scotland in 1858: 'they did not even believe that I was one of themselves' (in Williams 1983:73). Soga provides an even more telling comment recorded by Chalmers (1865):

You should have been with us this day to witness the wonder and amazement with which a black man with a white lady leaning on his arm seemed to be viewed by all classes! We were 'a spectacle unto all men!' In walking through the streets, black and white turned to stare at us, and thus was the case as often as we went out. It seemed to some to be a thing which they had not only never seen, but which they believed impossible to take place. From the remarks of some of my countrymen as they passed us, I at once understood that the report of our presence had gone far and wide. The day has really been one of the triumphs of principle. Mrs S evinces far more indifference to these prejudices against colour than I can do. My rule of conduct among the colonists is never to force myself into their company. (pp. 131–132)

This indicates that in his awareness of racist responses, Soga actually 'appeared' to be gratified! Yet he reacted with dignity and a considerable measure of restraint in the face of colonial prejudice. He further challenged racism in a letter to the *King William's Town Gazette* (23 October 1863) in which he complained bitterly regarding the treatment he had received at the hands of drunken white people who operated a river ferry:

... if Mr Hall and his assistant possess a monopoly for insulting quiet individuals without reason, but because as a black man, ... the sooner they are informed of the danger of this self-assumed right the better. (Williams 1978:123–124)

This demonstrated clearly that Soga was well aware of the depth and ubiquity of racism.

By the 1860s he was advocating and actually spoke out against racist white behaviour and challenged his people to be proud of their heritage. He himself lived at the point where the universes collided both territorially and psychologically. Chalmers (1877), his close friend and colleague, expressed Soga's dilemma thus:

A tone of sadness pervaded his whole missionary life. It was impossible to get at the cause, and yet, perhaps, it was the fact that he stood *alone*. His social position, as an educated man, made him tower above his race, yet he must have felt that there remained an unbridged gulf between himself and the white race. The fact that he was conscious of, and deeply mourned over, the degradation of his nation, showed itself in the oft-repeated sentence, 'my poor countrymen'. Yet the characteristic sadness did not make him morose, or sullen, or uncongenial as a companion. Deeper than his sadness was a well of happiness, liveliness, and mirth, which bubbled forth with unrestrained freedom when in the company of kindred spirits, and in conversation with congenial subjects ... Those who knew him best, therefore, felt that his despondency had its origin in something foreign to himself. (pp. 441–442)

Soga's was a lonely, isolated and alienated liminal existence despite the support he received from white missionary colleagues. He was different and, despite his education, manners and Scottish wife, he remained a black person unable to 'escape the cultural radiation from them' – his missionary colleagues (Williams 1978:5). This was an existence marked more by solitude than solitariness but, nevertheless, the solitariness did overcome him at times.

Saayman (1991) poses, and seeks to answer, an important question with regard to Soga's ultimate allegiance, particularly following his despatch of his sons to Scotland to be educated. Was he:

A political coward, or a consummate political realist in the context of contemporary colonial society. I think in the light of all that he said and did, we cannot condemn Soga without further ado for his apparent ambivalence. His dedication to the Black cause is too evident, for example, in his view on the place of Blacks in Africa. In this respect he believed that God had given Africa to the descendants of Ham. God himself would therefore establish and maintain Blacks in Africa, also in the southern portion of the continent; *nothing* would break this link between all Black people and Africa. (p. 62)

Conclusion

Being black for Tiyo Soga could be taken as having the advantage of knowing his people but the disadvantage of being regarded as a traitor by them. From the point of view of being black in a white context, he was subjected to all the racial indignities that black people continue to suffer today under the guise of acceptance, overt or covert. The Sogas lived too close to mission Christianity not to be affected by it. However, it was the assault on his homeland that presented him with the opportunity to explore and develop his latent capacity for the struggle of identifying with two conflicting contexts. However we view the success or failure of this life venture, racism is universally endemic to the human personality. While black people are regularly promoted, as Soga was as a black missionary, they are actually being set up for failure. Soga's conflicted, paradoxical, transformative and conflictual existence as the result of 'universes in collision' placed a heavy burden in this regard on him through self-doubt and depression. Yet he overcame these hindrances for the sake of and in the service of the kingdom. To God be the glory!

Lizalis' idinga lakho,	Fulfil your promise,
Thixo, Nkosi yenyano,	Lord, God of truth!
Zonk' intlanga zalo mhlaba	Let all the nations of this earth
Mazizuze usindiso	Receive salvation.
Amadolo kweli Lizwe	Let all knees in this world
Makagobe phambi kwakho.	Bend before you;
Zide zithi zonk' ilwimi,	Until all tongues
Ziluxel udumo lwakho	Confess your glory
Lawula, lawula, Yesu Nkosi,	Rule! Rule! Lord Jesus;
Koza ngawe ukonwaba;	Through you will come happiness,

Ngeziphithipithi zethu,	Through our confusion,
Yonakele imihlaba.	Lands have been corrupted.
Bona Izwe lakowethu,	Behold my fatherland;
Uxolel' izono zalo;	And forgive all its sins.
Ungathob' ingqumbo yakho	Don't release your wrath,
Luzeluf' usapho lwalo.	Let all its people die.
Yala singatshabalali,	Warn, so we do not perish.
Usiphile ukhanyiso;	You have given us light;
Bawo ungasibulali	Father, don't destroy us,
Ngokudela inyaniso.	For slighting the truth.
Nkosi, khawusikelele	O Lord, bless
Iimfundiso zezwe lethu;	The teachings of our land;
Uze usivuselele,	Please revive us,
Siphuthume ukulunga.	That we may restore goodness. (BPCSA, 1929:313)

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