

Integrated Pentecostal Ministry of Richard Ngidi in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, 1921–1985

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Abstract

Previous studies on the life and ministry of Richard Ngidi only present historical data on his achievements and to some extent his failures. This paper is a socio-historical analysis that not only reveals historical data but also aims to problematise the data in relation to social problems like racial segregation. A socio-historical analysis is a method that finds synergy between historical and social factors. The socio-historical analysis in this paper juxtaposes the history of Ngidi with racial segregation. The analysis of the ministry of Ngidi in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of South Africa demonstrates that his ministry was an integrated one amid a segregated society. Integrated ministry refers to a ministry that is able to bring unity in the midst of various divisions in society. The AFM of South Africa, like many other denominations, was a segregated society because of the influence of South African politics on ecclesiastical politics during apartheid. Similarly, many pastors adhered to the racial policies of that time or broke away to start their own ministries. Ngidi was an exception because his ministry was multi-racial, non-political, gender-inclusive, interdenominational and international. Therefore, this paper contends that Ngidi serves as a model for social cohesion and unity in diversity.

Keywords: Pentecostal; integrated ministry; segregated society; Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM); Richard Ngidi

Introduction

Before democracy in 1994, South Africa was segregated into different racial groups. Racial segregation was an economic policy for societal advantage through political, ideological and administrative strategies. Sibeko and Haddad (1997, 83) add that the system of apartheid guaranteed that the white minority controlled political, economic and cultural power. Social deprivation was heightened even further by the policy of



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separate development, resulting in the forced removal of millions of people from their homes. A restrictive urbanisation policy directed towards African people was implemented through pass laws and influx control measures. According to De Wet (1989, 164), the laws and policies of racial segregation influenced the church in a negative way. In the Apostolic Faith Mission (hereafter AFM) of South Africa, a paternalistic policy, undergirded with racial overtones, was sometimes forced upon the church by the state. To a certain extent leaders in the AFM were stimulated by societal and racial mind-sets in addition to practices in the country at that time, and they self-generated separation for reasons of language and cultural differences (Venter 2009, 319). The socio-political context of South Africa at that time caused the leaders of the AFM to take decisions that were not biblical, but political.

The AFM was not alone in following racial segregation during apartheid in South Africa. Other Pentecostal denominations followed suit and were racially segregated. Within the AFM, most pastors followed the racial policies of apartheid in South Africa. In this paper the argument is that the ministry of Richard Ngidi (1921–1985) in the AFM was different from other ministries. It was an integrated ministry amid a segregated society. The argument will be demonstrated by the study on the early life of Ngidi in order to understand his family background, work and church affiliations. The ministry of Ngidi in and outside the AFM is studied in detail. However, special attention will be given to his participation and leadership roles in the AFM; enrolment at the Bible school; and his ministry of divine healing, signs and wonders. Ngidi was not a lone ranger in ministry, therefore it is equally important to look at the influences around his life like William Duma and Nicholas Bhengu. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that the ministry of Ngidi was an integrated one. The outcome of this article has implications for church history today because it helps historians to not only study history from historical data alone, but to also consider social factors.

Methodology and Framework

This paper uses a socio-historical analysis to demonstrate that the ministry of Ngidi was an integrated ministry. Socio-historical analysis is interested in the historical experiences of the past and the social aspects of that historicity. In addition, it is interested in the social groups of that history such as family, church, army, nation or any other group. In this context, it is interested in not only the life and ministry of Ngidi, but also the churches he operated in like the AFM and the American Board Mission. Thus, it is interested in the social conditions in a specific community or society. Socio-historical analysis links the social aspects of history with the historical data of the specific field. Moreover, the use of socio-historical analysis can help us to reach a more in-depth understanding of the nature of historical aspects discussed within the paper (Costa-Souza, Vieira-da-Silva, and Pinell 2018, 1). Therefore, the socio-historical analysis of this paper will go a long way to studying the life of Ngidi through the lenses of social aspects. The analysis will also assist in combining the history of Ngidi with the challenges of racial segregation that did not only exist then, but are still problematic

today. The socio-historical analysis will direct this paper in arriving at the conclusion that Ngidi's ministry was an integrated one. However, before this is done there is a need to explain the essence of integrated ministry.

Integrated Ministry

Integrated ministry is a ministry whereby people from different backgrounds are able to come together and are able to work with situations and people they are not familiar with. This requires people to come out of their comfort zones in order to enter unfamiliar territories. The challenge of integrated ministry is cultural differences that exist among communities. In order to deal with cultural differences, an integrated ministry uses tools like "unity in diversity" to unite people of different backgrounds to come together in life. Thus, the challenges of integrated ministry can be addressed by the coming together of people who—even when they have differences—agree because of their common vision (Rubinstein, Keller, and Scherger 2008, 1). Therefore, while challenges like racial segregation are real and factual, integrated ministry is a well-grounded tool that is able to have an impact on negativity in ministry. Integrated ministry overpowers problems of dividing people according to their race, skin colour, ethnicity, and other forms of divisions. Nonetheless, the attempts of those who are negative in order to keep the people divided in the world cannot be ignored in life. Hence, integrated ministry endeavours to improve on its efforts to minimise the challenges of divisions and to keep people united at all costs (Harmer 2008, 1). In this paper, integrated ministry is not only about unity in diversity but includes other aspects like multi-races, gender-inclusivity, inter-denominationalism, multi-nationalism, and the welcoming of different political views.

The Early Life of Ngidi

Family Background

The Ngidi family played an important role in the AmaQadi clan, which forms part of the Zulu Kingdom. After King Shaka's assassination they became second on the list, so they migrated to S'bubulungu in an area to the north of Durban, within KwaZulu-Natal. The other families in the clan respected the Ngidi family so much that they were involved in the decision-making body of the clan. According to Khathide (2010, 26), Richard Ngidi's father, Bhekinyanga Ngidi, was the son of Mbali Ngidi, who was one of the people who fetched chief Mqhawu during the time when the AmaQadi (clan) did not have a chief. This action of Mbali Ngidi and others endeared them to the hearts of the clan. In the clan, the Ngidi family was held in high esteem. Richard Ngidi (hereafter Ngidi) was born on 6 January 1921 at UMzinyathi in the district of Emaqhadini, Natal. Ngidi's mother gave him the name, Sihlobosenkosi (the friend of the Lord), seven months before he was born when she dedicated her son to the Lord for his service. Ngidi received his primary and secondary education at Inyoni and Inanda, Natal. His father died when he was 17 and as the eldest son, he became responsible to care for his family (De Wet 1989, 139). Ngidi was proud of his cultural heritage.

The poor family background of Ngidi did not deter him from seeking an education. Ngidi placed the value of education at the forefront and he pursued it at all costs. Ngidi attended Sastri College in Durban before being employed as clerk by African Explosives. On 30 July 1943, he married Regina Mtwana Mbambo. However, some time after their marriage she became ill and suffered from severe attacks of asthma for 12 years. Eight of their children also died while young. During 1952, Ngidi surrendered his heart and life to Christ. According to Khathide (2010, 29), Ngidi was converted to Christianity during one of Nicholas Bhengu's evangelistic crusades (Back to God) in 1952 in Lamontville, Durban. He was then baptised in water by the man of God, William Duma, whose gift was also that of faith in signs and wonders. Ngidi was then baptised in the Holy Spirit and had a Pentecostal experience of speaking in tongues. The practice of speaking in tongues was common among Pentecostals during Ngidi's time. Consequently, Ngidi had to face challenges in his local church because of the hand of God that was upon his life and the exposure to ministries that demonstrated the power of God.

American Board Mission

Ngidi and his family were part of the American Board Mission (ABM). The ABM was started in South Africa when the Rev. Daniel Lindley and his wife, Lucy, came to South Africa in 1835, as one of six couples sent by the ABM to start mission work in the country. Working at first in what is today the North-West Province the Lindleys joined the Grout and Champion families who had opened ABM stations in Natal (ENanda 2013). There was a mission station of the ABM, a satellite of the main Inanda mission station, where the missionaries encouraged parents to have their children educated. Realising this opportunity, Ngidi's parents sent him to primary and higher primary school (Burger and Nel 2008, 252). Ngidi, as a young convert full of the Holy Spirit, was given an opportunity to minister the word of the Lord to the congregation. According to De Wet (1989, 140), each time Ngidi was given an opportunity to preach at the ABM church, he would make use of the time to preach salvation and deliverance in Jesus Christ and he would challenge his fellow parishioners to turn from the works of darkness and wickedness to the kingdom of light. He told the people that as "followers" of Christ their deeds had to conform to the standards and teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Not only did Ngidi preach morality and encouraged the congregants to repent from their evil ways, he also preached Pentecostal messages and prophesied to the congregants. According to Khathide (2010, 35), what intensified the matter was that Ngidi was beginning to experience the stirrings of the Holy Spirit within his soul. To him it was not a shame to flow in the leading of the Holy Spirit, even at the conferences of the church. In one of the conferences in 1954, Ngidi started to speak prophetically to the people. The Spirit of the Lord was dealing with people in an amazing way. According to Burger and Nel (2008, 254), given these experiences in the ABM, the leadership of the church accused Ngidi and his nephew Alpheus of unorthodox ways of preaching and their family ultimately left the church in 1956. New wine could not be contained in

old wineskins and the family started a new church without naming it, as they were looking for a church to which they could affiliate. The ABM asked the local chief to compel this new church to disband, but the chief and his *indunas* (tribal leaders) resolved that it was unethical for the church leadership to take their members to the traditional court.

The Ngidi family had overstayed their welcome in the ABM. The treatment they received at the ABM demanded their departure. Khathide (2010, 38) explains that the reason why Ngidi and Alpheus stayed longer in the church of the ABM was that they hoped that renewal would come from within. However, at times, it does not help to stay in the hope that the situation will change. Like many leaders in church history who had hoped to renew their churches from within but had failed, so Ngidi and Alpheus had slim chances of renewing their local church from within. They finally decided to leave in 1956. Khathide (2010) continues to say that the new decision was not without challenges. First, the leadership issue had to be resolved. By this time, the group had grown to be large in number. Though the core was still the Ngidi family, the group had attracted quite a number of followers. Ngidi was more gifted but younger than Alpheus and felt that it was traditionally correct for Alpheus to take the lead of the body of believers. The feeling was that Alpheus, being older, was more experienced to lead them.

Influences on Ngidi

Ngidi was not a lone ranger in ministry, but believed in collaboration with other ministers of gospels that upheld a similar vision. The life and ministry of Ngidi were influenced by many personalities. Among those who had a positive influence on the life and ministry of Ngidi, is Nicholas Bhengu. Bhengu was one of the most successful twentieth-century Pentecostal church leaders in South Africa. Many scholars recognise him as one of the generals of African Pentecostalism. While living in Lamontville in Durban in 1956, Ngidi attended a gospel crusade of Bhengu's "Back to God" gospel team. Bhengu was not very demonstrative in his preaching, but when he prayed for people, the power of God was demonstrated with sick people being healed and the spiritually oppressed being set free (Burger and Nel 2008, 253). Bhengu introduced Ngidi to the power of the Holy Spirit. He lectured him on the working of the Holy Spirit. He told him that anyone filled by the power of the Holy Spirit was capable of doing works of power. It was this meeting with Bhengu that catapulted Ngidi into evangelistic and healing ministry, in which he became the greatest evangelist in the AFM (Lephoko 2005, 97).

The healing aspect of the ministry of Ngidi comes from one of the African Pentecostals who featured mightily in the area of healing miracles, namely Rev. William Duma. Duma was one of the most dynamic Baptist preachers in South Africa, as well as being renowned for his healing and prayer ministry. What amazed Ngidi was that Duma was not educated like pastors Bhengu, Letwaba and others, yet miracles and healings in his ministry took place regularly. Even today, there are many ministers of the gospel who

fall in the category of Duma, that is, they are not educated but they proliferate in signs and wonders. However, this aspect should not be used to discourage ministers from studying or being educated in their life. What surprised Ngidi further was that even white people and Indians would flock to the Baptist Church in Lamontville to listen to Duma preaching his famous sermons in “broken” English. Thus, the ministry of Duma to some extent was also inclusive of all races. Ngidi realised that it was not language proficiency that was needed to perform miracles but the anointing of the Holy Spirit, since he was also encouraged to go out there and demonstrate the same power of the Holy Spirit (Khathide 2010, 54).

The Ministry of Ngidi in the Apostolic Faith Mission

Ngidi joins the AFM

After the Ngidi family had been excommunicated by the ABM in 1956, the family fellowshiped together without a church name or denominational affiliation. According to De Wet (1989, 140), one day—after a time of fasting and prayer—Ngidi had a dream of a golden road leading to heaven, with the letters AFM written on it. Ngidi looked for such a church, but was unsuccessful because the AFM had only a small membership among blacks in Natal. The family then sent a delegation, where they met pastor Amos Mthiyane, who led an AFM assembly in Durban with several satellites. Mthiyane visited UMzinyathi and welcomed the new church of the Ngidi family into the AFM. At last, Ngidi and his family were happy to join the AFM after a long time of struggling. After this welcome, the Lord’s Communion was served. Ngidi, together with the whole family, attended their first AFM district conference (Khathide 2010, 54). It must be noted, however, that at that stage the AFM in Natal had strong Zionist tendencies with unorganised meetings and customs derived from the Old Testament. The liturgy was not appealing to Ngidi, but he believed and was convinced to join the AFM. Besides, the Zionist tendencies were not peculiar to the AFM in Natal but were part of the black section of the AFM and evident in many assemblies (Burger and Nel 2008, 255).

Ngidi Joins the Bible School

In response to his calling, Ngidi was admitted in 1962 to the Leratong Bible School in Lady Selborne. He completed his training, was accepted as a pastor of the AFM during 1963, and was ordained on 19 March 1965. He served the church loyally, faithfully and uninterruptedly until he was called to glory (De Wet 1989, 140). At the college, Ngidi always wore a tie as a sign of respect for the ministry, and his wife and he studied Scripture with great seriousness. While still attending classes, he was elected as secretary for the Natal District Council, showing the confidence of his people in his abilities (Burger and Nel 2008, 255). Ngidi knew that God’s work could be done effectively only if he was thoroughly trained. Under the able tutorship of pastor Cooksey, Ngidi was prepared for a ministry that would change and bless countless numbers of people across this country and beyond. It was at this Bible college that his Pentecostal convictions were consolidated (Khathide 2010, 45). This is amazing with regard to the ministry of Ngidi, because he was already used by God but was willing to

sit and be taught by others. The failure of many anointed men of God is that, unlike Ngidi, they cannot sit under other leaders and be thoroughly trained and equipped for the work of ministry.

Leadership roles of Ngidi

When Ngidi had completed his studies at Leratong Bible School, he needed to find a church where he could pastor on a full-time basis. The normal practice is that after the completion of one's qualification, the minister is now ready to pastor a local assembly on a full-time basis. According to Khathide (2010, 51), after prayer and consultation, the AFM Natal district officials resolved to send him to one of the underdeveloped places of Pietermaritzburg. At times, superiors in denominations have a propensity of sending unqualified pastors to assemblies that cannot support them. This was the case with Ngidi. He was assigned to an assembly that had no existing structures and was expected to hit the ground running. There was no groundwork there to support him. Ngidi and his wife had to find a congregation with the help of God. The Ashdown assembly was started with only one believer. On the first Sunday, only four people were present in the mud building where the service was held. Ngidi was not deterred. He preached from well-prepared notes. He preached from his heart as if preaching to thousands. At Bible College, he had been taught that if he could not preach to one he could not preach to a multitude.

However, it seems that God had bigger plans for Ngidi than the challenges he went through in his first assembly with the AFM. Contrary to AFM church rules at that time, Ngidi was elected as secretary of the Natal district council. The reason for this assertion is that Ngidi was still very much at the beginning of his career in ministry and was actually still expected to lead at an assembly level. The confidence shown by the people in electing him, really amazed Ngidi but this did not make him arrogant. He was determined to serve the church and the Natal region with everything he had. In addition, Ngidi was a member of the executive council of the AFM for five years and was re-elected as such during March 1985, just a little less than two months before he died. He became the first black vice-chairman. Because of his fatherly portrait in the church, Ngidi withdrew from the church court, a body that dealt with discipline in the church. In Natal, Ngidi was vice-chairperson, eventually becoming chairperson of the work there. Under his supervision, the work grew in leaps and bounds (Burger and Nel 2008, 255).

The significance of Ngidi's ministry and leadership in the black section of the AFM is especially evidenced in the following. Firstly, the emphasis he placed on evangelism and his successful evangelistic campaigns, especially tent-campaigns, enthused the black pastors of the AFM and a new wave of evangelism swept all over South Africa. Secondly, Ngidi's teaching and example of regular fasting and prayer inspired other pastors to follow his example. Thirdly, Ngidi's practice and success in praying for the healing of the sick caused many pastors to model themselves after him. Fourthly, Ngidi never allowed any discussion about politics, of any nature, in any meeting in which he

was present (De Wet 1989, 140). Ngidi was a very humble leader. He was a model of servant leadership to other pastors in and outside the AFM. In addition, Ngidi was an accessible leader and full of love. One of the stunning things in Ngidi's character, according to Khathide (2010, 85), was that he seemed to have a perennial capacity to love people. He made sure that he knew his congregants by name. He had room for each one in his big heart. His welcoming heart was so big that many pastors felt accommodated in his life. Even those people who tried to give him a tough time in the congregation were always sure of his forgiveness and unconditional love.

Fasting

Many perceive fasting in Pentecostalism as one of the ways to access greater power, after which the minister of the gospel is able to perform greater works. In addition, fasting is perceived as a form of receiving direction, especially when one is about to take major decisions in life. Therefore, fasting is a tool to give a minister a major spiritual boost to operate at a higher level in ministry. Sensing the tremendous spiritual need among his people, combined with his desire for more frequent manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in his ministry, Ngidi fasted and prayed for 40 days (Khathide 2010, 85). He felt called to fast for 40 days when he was 49 years old. He started just before Christmas in 1970. He withdrew to UMzinyathi "to dig for gold," as he described his fast. On the tenth day, he saw a vision of a ball of fire coming from the east at a very high speed. It hit him so hard that it knocked him to his knees. Even his brother's wife, sleeping in the next room, was carried out of her bed due to the impact. After that experience, Ngidi knew he was a different person (Burger and Nel 2008, 255).

For some time, the Lord had been speaking to Ngidi to isolate himself for a period of fasting which would last 40 days and nights. He had not heard of anybody, except Jesus, who had done this before. The fasting and prayer life was taken as part of every Christian then. In the black churches of the AFM in Natal, fasting was emphasised from the pulpit. Fasting was taken as a symbol of dedication to the Lord. Every Christian was expected to fast at least once a week. The idea was to humble oneself in order to get more power to serve the Lord (Khathide 2010, 56). This is one of the distinct aspects of Ngidi's ministry, given the fact that it is not everyone who can fast for 40 days. Even in the Bible, few individuals ventured successfully on this kind of fasting. According to the Bible, only three people fasted for 40 days. The first was Moses; the Bible explains very clearly that in the period he was with the Lord, he did not eat and drink water (Exodus 34:28). The second is Elijah, who received food from the angel of the Lord and after eating, spent the next 40 days and 40 nights without eating (1 Kings 19:8). The third was Jesus Christ, who was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and there He did not eat for 40 days (Luke 4:1-2).

Signs and Wonders

In the days that followed the fast, God performed extraordinary miracles of healing; the success reports state that in one of Ngidi's healing ministries, 10 blind people received

their sight. The success of his campaigns is clearly demonstrated by the fact that when Ngidi entered the ministry in Natal and KwaZulu, there were only nine assemblies. This increased under his ministry and leadership to 212 assemblies (De Wet 1989, 140). The full-time workers increased from 13 to 175, the blind saw, the deaf heard, cripples walked and hundreds were filled with the Holy Spirit. Among those healed, was Ngidi's wife Regina who was delivered from asthma (De Wet 1989, 141). Ngidi's wife had been suffering from severe attacks of asthma for 12 years. Regina was healed instantaneously in answer to the prayers of Ngidi. This miracle of the healing of his wife spurred Ngidi on to seek a greater manifestation of God's power (Khathide 2010, 53). God continued to perform miracles in Ngidi's family. One day he had to bury one of his children and he had no money for the coffin and other funeral expenses. He went to a nearby hillock to pray for money. He prayed and when he opened his eyes, he found enough money for funeral expenses on the surrounding ground (Khathide 2010, 42).

Many scholars and pastors regard Ngidi as a miracle worker and the man who moved in power. In the words of Molobi (2014, 9), Ngidi of the AFM was known as the stylish preacher amongst the black people, especially township dwellers. His messages of healing, baptism and conversion, had an emphasis on the Holy Spirit, and they became prominent in the white residential districts. Apodaca (2016) adds that when he went to a new area, he set up a tent. He prayed for God to show His power. It was said of his ministry: they do not advertise services over there. They do not have magazines or radio in that part of the country. So first, Ngidi trusts the Lord to heal a sick person. Soon the people hear about this man praying for the sick. Since they are a needy people, they come and God starts to heal. After preaching, Ngidi would pray for people individually and God would touch them. Different people with their various challenges like blindness, deafness and lameness received their healing. Thus the blind saw, the lame walked and the deaf could hear. The miracles happened because Ngidi trusted God in his ministry and God never disappointed him (Bonnke 2009, 237).

Testimonies in Pentecostalism play a big role in authenticating the miracles that a minister performs in the lives of the people. Thus, repeatedly, people who are healed or have received any kind of a miracle would be asked to testify in front of the congregation. This type of testimony encourages those who are still hoping for a miracle or healing in their lives. One of the testimonies of the people healed in Ngidi's meetings is that of a crippled man, known as Shezi. This man tormented Ngidi for a long time. Ngidi then organised a big healing service at Umkhomazi where Shezi stayed and where he would demonstrate God's power by praying for him. He invited people to bring the sick for prayer and promised that God's power would be available to all. Hordes of people turned up and Ngidi preached a short sermon. He then prayed for all the sick before turning to Shezi, laying his hands on his head he commanded him to walk in the name of Jesus. Shezi stood up and walked. The crowd was amazed and glorified God because this was happening for the first time in their area. Many people gave their lives to Christ because of this miracle (Burger and Nel 2008, 256).

Integrated Pentecostal Ministry

Multi-racial

The ministry of Ngidi was a multi-racial one. This, according to Khathide (2010, 68), is demonstrated by the fact that when Ngidi needed a tent for his evangelistic ministry, two white pastors, Du Toit and Gschwend, played an important role in helping Ngidi obtain the tent and the necessary equipment. These pastors helped raise finances for this great task from other sources, especially from white AFM churches. Khathide continues to say that the meetings in the new tent were multiracial. Some people rolled in the dust. Others stood up to praise God with their hands held high towards heaven. Most of these people, including whites, were crying. In a few other places, people witnessed Ngidi's sense of timing God's power (Khathide 2010, 105). In many other instances, Ngidi continued to work well with people of other races. One of the co-workers in Christ was Reinhard Bonnke who worked with Ngidi for a long time. Ngidi assisted Bonnke in establishing his work in Botswana. Moreover, in the Executive Council of the AFM, Ngidi occupied a leadership position as the only black pastor; the rest of the leaders were white. This demonstrates that the ministry of Ngidi integrated races rather than to segregate them. What is more amazing is that this happened during apartheid in South Africa.

Non-political

There was an influence of South African politics which seeped into ecclesiastical politics during apartheid. However, Ngidi hardly permitted any discussion about politics in the meetings he attended. He knew that such political discussions would hurt white missionaries in the midst of the black church. People like Pastor Edgar Gschwend and a few others would have been able to accommodate such discussions, but the general feeling was that the rest of the missionaries and some older pastors would have found it difficult to go along with (Khathide 2010, 100). Ngidi was not the first AFM black pastor to be silent on politics. Elias Letwaba was also a humble man and remained silent on the politics. Clark (2007, 42) explains that Letwaba was one of the first black leaders of the AFM, a man whose ministry in the northern parts of the country led to the establishment of a large African church. Letwaba was a humble man who accepted the racial indignities imposed upon him by the white church leaders. His influence in the church was his powerfully charismatic evangelistic ministry, and the (mostly ignored) fact that it was his vision that established the first Bible School in the AFM in 1930, namely Patmos Bible School, for the training of African pastors.

Change in the AFM came with the third generation of black pastor Frank Chikane. Chikane was more vocal regarding issues of politics. Anderson (1992, 49) explains that if Letwaba belonged to the first generation of the black Pentecostals of the AFM, and Ngidi to the second, Chikane is an outstanding example of the new third generation of black Pentecostal leaders in South Africa. In this respect, Chikane is in stark contrast to Letwaba and Ngidi, and in fact in contrast with many African Pentecostals in South Africa. Unlike them, Chikane was not raised in a rural environment. He was born in

1951 and raised in the home of an AFM elder, Pastor James Chikane in Soweto, Johannesburg. The silence of Ngidi on politics was informed by his perception that such involvement would cause divisions in the church and affect his ministry. Ngidi did not see a connection between ministry and politics. This worked in his favour because all people, including those who were perceived as anti-black, supported his ministry. However, the context in which many people lived at that time did not work in their favour. Yes, they were saved, healed and delivered in the ministry of Ngidi, but still lived in tough economic and social conditions.

Gender-inclusive

The ministry of Ngidi included women, especially at leadership level. Ngidi was the first to use black women-workers. With 30 well-trained women-workers under his supervision, several new assemblies were established. The AFM in Natal became known as the “Church of Ngidi” because of the impact of his ministry and leadership in Natal (De Wet 1989, 141). The women were supported mainly by free-will offerings taken at conferences in Natal. There were no statutory contributions that could be used, because this was a novel idea in the AFM. These women became a force in the AFM in Natal, fanning revival fires in many regions (Burger and Nel 2008, 258). To Ngidi, women were not just “assistants” in the ministry of evangelism. He accorded them full status of ministry long before the AFM could think of ordaining women. These women would at times conduct gospel crusades alone. They were requested to go to rural places to establish congregations. Under Ngidi’s supervision and protection, these women gave their all for the extension of the kingdom of God. These women would start an assembly and Ngidi would come and receive the new converts into fellowship (Khathide 2010, 111).

Inter-denominational

Denominational refers to a ministry that is affiliated or is a part of a well-established denomination. There are well-established denominations in South Africa from both mainline churches and Pentecostal churches. However, the majority of para-churches in South Africa are non-denominational. Non-denominational refers to a ministry that is not affiliated to a specific denomination. Inter-denominational in this context refers to ministry that crosses one denominational boundary into the other without terminating affiliation with the former. The ministry of Ngidi is considered inter-denominational because while at the AFM, Ngidi was also able to work with Christ for all nations. According to Bonnke (2009, 98), “Christ for All Nations” was birthed after he had seen God’s miracle-working power in the life of Ngidi; that kick-started the powerful ministry of “Christ for All Nations,” which is now known all over the world. Khathide (2010, 111) adds that when Bonnke launched the “Christ for All Nations” church, he felt a great need for the manifestation of the power of God in his evangelistic crusades. As a Pentecostal preacher, he felt that people must not only be preached to at gospel meetings; they were also to be prayed for, for healing from their diseases.

Although Ngidi worked with other churches like “Christ for All Nations,” Khathide (2010, 95) argues that most of Ngidi’s work took place within the AFM. This could be attributed to several factors. Firstly, Ngidi was a very loyal person; although he connected with other churches he remained loyal to his church and made sure that he served the church with diligence. The researcher believes that further opportunities could have arisen in the ministry of Ngidi to join other ministries or churches, but he remained loyal to his church. It must be noted that Ngidi remained loyal when many black pastors in the AFM were undermined and could not take leadership roles. Second, it could have been his educational and theological background that limited him from expansion. However, this reason is somewhat problematic, given the fact that many during Ngidi’s time expanded their ministries, regardless of their education. One obvious example is William Duma, who touched many people but was not as educated as leaders like Nicholas Bhengu. Third, there would have been tremendous administrative constraints. Fourth, it could be that Ngidi was convinced beyond reasonable doubt that his calling was in the AFM and in Natal specifically.

International

An international ministry refers to the ability of the minister to cross the borders of his country to a level of going overseas into the global north countries. It is not every minister who has this ability or grace to cross the borders or even go overseas into Europe, Asia, America and other continents. The ministry of Ngidi crossed the border of South Africa. This illustrates that his ministry was an international one. It was not only concentrated in Natal, but rather went beyond its original locality. He ministered in several other parts of southern Africa as well as in Europe (De Wet 1989, 141). In order to take the ministry of Ngidi to an international level, the first step, it was agreed, would be to take Ngidi to Zimbabwe. Pastor Gschwend, the AFM director, arranged with the AFM in Zimbabwe for Ngidi to minister at the Rufaro national conference (Khathide 2010, 95). In addition, Ngidi and Gschwend, together with their wives, set out for Europe to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. They conducted meetings in Switzerland (Zurich) and France (Reins and Strassburg). The gospel meetings were successful, especially in France (Khathide 2010, 117).

The Last Days of Ngidi

On Friday 4 May 1985, during the early afternoon Ngidi became unconscious. The nursing sister in his congregation who had been alerted of his condition advised that he be rushed to the hospital. When he arrived at the Edendale hospital, he was diagnosed to be in a diabetic coma. At 13:00 Ngidi answered the Lord’s final call. Leaving his wife, three daughters, one son, and four grandchildren, Ngidi was no more. More than 8 000 people attended his funeral. This number indicates how many people loved and followed the ministry of Ngidi until his death (Khathide 2010, 84).

Ngidi made a significant contribution as a minister and an evangelist within the AFM in areas of church planting, pastoring, mass evangelism, prayer movement, healing

ministry, the encouragement of women participation in ministry, and the growth of Pentecostalism (Mathole 2005, 184). Ngidi never believed in a large congregation for himself. Because of the blessing of the Lord on the Imbali congregation, people came from all over to be its members. Ngidi could have easily led a congregation of several thousand at the time of his death, but he decided against it because he believed in empowering other leaders, especially women (Khathide 2010, 84).

Conclusion

This paper studied the life and ministry of Ngidi by using a socio-historical analysis. The life and ministry of Ngidi have been juxtaposed with one of the problems that are persistent in society, namely racial segregation. The AFM was a segregated society because of the apartheid policies of that time. The AFM was not alone; other denominations followed suit and supported racial policies prevalent at that time. Many pastors in the AFM succumbed to the South African politics during apartheid. Through a socio-historical analysis, this article has demonstrated that the ministry of Ngidi was an integrated one in a segregated society. The ministry of Ngidi was multi-racial because both black and white people attended his services. He was non-political because he perceived politics as a divisive mechanism during apartheid. Ngidi was the first AFM pastor to recognise the ministry of women. Moreover, the ministry of Ngidi crossed denominational boundaries. Lastly, Ngidi went as far as Europe to preach the word of God. The ministry of Ngidi remains a model for social cohesion and unity amid diversity. This study on the life and ministry of Ngidi changes the way we study church history, because history was studied here by also considering underlying social aspects such as racial segregation and discrimination against women.

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