

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BAPTIST UNION OF ZAMBIA¹

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BAPTIST WORK IN ZAMBIA

The history of the Baptist work in Zambia dates back to 1905, when two English missionaries of the Baptist faith, serving under the Nyasaland Industrial Mission (Malawi), trekked on foot into Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). These were the Revds W.A. Phillips and H.L. Wildey. They established a mission station at Kafulafuta. The station was named after the river Kafulafuta, some 500 miles north of Livingstone, which was then the terminus of the railway from the Cape (South Africa). It was there that the Baptist work was born, directly supported and controlled from England by and through the Nyasaland Industrial Mission which had sponsored and sent the two missionaries on an exploration assignment in what was then known as North West Rhodesia. Phillips and Wildey built a church and opened a primary school at the station. The two men ran the mission station on their own until 9 July 1913 when they were joined by the Revd Joseph J. Doke and his son Clement Martyn Doke. The Dokes were sent to Kafulafuta by the South African Baptist Missionary Society (SABMS) to investigate the possibility of taking over the mission station so that it could form a link between the Baptist work in the south and the greater work in the Congo.² J.J. Doke and his son together prepared a favourable report. This was presented by Clement Doke to the South African Baptist Missionary Society Board in November 1913, because his father had died on 15 August 1913 at Umatali.³ As a result the South African Baptist Missionary Society took over Kafulafuta Baptist Missionary Station towards the end of that year. The first South African Baptist Missionary Society missionaries to come to the Kafulafuta station were Dr Clement Doke and Mr and Mrs German. Miss Olive C. Doke did not join them until 1916.⁴

Apart from making a link between the south and the Congo, the South African Baptist Missionary Society Board had another reason for taking over the Kafulafuta Baptist Mission Station: the Nyasaland Industrial Mission had sponsored Phillips and Wildey but was not able to maintain adequate financial support.⁵ All this time the country we now call Zambia was a territory under the administration of the British South African Chartered Company (BSCC).

2 THE GROWTH OF THE BAPTIST WORK

The South African Baptist Missionary Society embarked on an intensive programme.

Bible Translation By 1918 the Gospel of John was received in print and a collection of eighty-three hymns was produced in the same year. On Christmas Eve 1921 the first edition of the full New Testament was received with great rejoicing. Later the Psalms were bound with the New Testament. The translation of Genesis and Exodus were achieved by Dr C.M. Doke in 1924. He was by then Professor of

Bantu Studies at Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg. Selections of the Old Testament came into print by about 1945; the full translation of the Bible was received over a long period of years at refresher courses for evangelists and church leaders. The chief translator of these was Olive Doke; she also instructed groups of women and ran an open Bible Class in later years.

Education The school at the Mission Station played an important and significant role in this programme. Projects covered parts of modern North West, Central and the whole of the Copperbelt Province. The Education Programme involved the recruitment of pupils from all over these provinces; they came to Kafulafuta School as boarders. The school curriculum included basic reading and rudimentary arithmetic. The main objective of the education programme was to enable the pupils to read the Bible and assist the missionaries in the evangelization of the people in the area.

Evangelistic Outreach In the continued effort of evangelism in 1931 the Scandinavian Independent Baptist Union missionaries from Sweden, led by Mr Anton Johannesson, came to Kafulafuta Baptist Mission Station. Through consultations with the South African Baptist Missionary Society they established the first Scandinavian Independent Baptist Union Mission Station at Mpongwe.

As missionary work expanded at Kafulafuta, the need to establish another mission station became apparent. Fiwale Hill Mission was opened in 1936. By then much progress had been made in training and equipping local church leaders and evangelists to work alongside the missionaries. Prominent among these local church leaders were the late Revds Paul Kasongo, Anasi Lupunga and Bob Litana. Bob Litana and the late Revd A.J. Cross were the founders of Fiwale Hill Mission. Miss Olive C. Doke continued to serve at Kafulafuta, mainly among women, even after her brother Clement had gone back to Johannesburg in 1921 as a result of his wife's poor health.⁶

In the same effort of advancing church growth an outreach visit was made to Bwana Mkubwa Mine in 1922 and again in 1925 to a growing Christian group. The mission report of 1924 stressed the work of some of the African staff. Paul, the Apostle to the Lambas, developed leprosy, but for very many years he was the only chief guide and counsellor of missionaries and nationals. That year about 2,378 village services were reported, attendances totalling 54,551 with about 344 conversions, of which sixty-three were women and girls.

Another indigenous church was established in the Ndola Compound and, with government help, a church school was built there. Some Christian groupings were already there and they requested to come under the wing of the Mission and the work went on quite well. This work in the town of Ndola was spearheaded by the Revd Arthur Cross. Because of the great need of the growing church there, he shifted from Kafulafuta and settled in Ndola Town. This led to enlarged ministry, even among other denominations and other Christian Europeans who expressed interest and desire to join the Mission. Hence these churches were known as 'Free

Churches'; to this day many of our members claim membership of the Free Church, although they are now more aware of being Baptists.

Meanwhile groups were gathering in other mine compounds, so the Revd Arthur Cross and Miss Duke shared with the Christian mine managers the need for church buildings to meet the spiritual needs of the fast developing Copperbelt. The United Copperbelt Mission was formed and Arthur Cross was seconded as Superintendent to the Mission. Our Free Churches became the basis of the United Copperbelt Mission (UCM) work.

Since the emergence of modern ecumenism from the UCM, and the opening of the Baptist Union of Central Africa work and that of the Southern Baptist churches, most of our members who go to the towns transfer to these two churches. Indeed, most of the pastors in these churches are from Lambaland Baptist Church, trained in the Fiwale Hill Mission College.

SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FACED

Transport means From the early days in Lambaland the gospel was proclaimed by means of itinerating - at first on foot, later on bicycles, and recently by motorized vehicles. Our forefathers or national church leaders used to carry the early missionaries on what we call 'amachila', made of poles like a handy stretcher put on the shoulders of two men or four sometimes on the backs of some of the Machila men'.⁷

Conduct of the people As they went out preaching the gospel, they found some particular strongholds in the people's lives which they fought to break by means of the Word of God. Adultery bound many people, but through the influence of the Word many lives were transformed. Although adultery today remains an issue, against which the Christian Church ought to preach in the strongest terms. Drinking too was rampant; it took time even among Christian leaders to stop drinking beer. The practice of worshipping the spirits of ancestors was very strong among our people. However, through God's grace they overcame that. Polygamy was another problem, for many men had two or three wives and some wanted this practice accepted in the church. In spite of all this, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ was mounting to higher levels of influence.

The work progressed in the towns under the Baptist Union of Central Africa and at Kafulafuta, Fiwale Hill Mission and Mpongwe under the Scandinavian Baptist Union; by 1960 church government was in the hands of the nationals. Fiwale/Kafulafuta had formed a central committee on which the Missionary Superintendent sat as Adviser. Later, on 5 March 1972, this committee was constituted into an Association, which is now called the Northern Baptist Association of Zambia (NBAZ). In the same year churches under the Baptist Union of Central Africa formed an association of indigenous Christian churches, now called the Zambia Baptist Association (ZBA). In 1974 another association was formed, the Mpongwe Baptist Association of Zambia (MBAZ), working in partnership with the

Scandinavian Baptist Union.

When the Southern Africa Baptist Missionary Society left, the Australian Baptist Missionary Society (ABMS) stepped on to the soil of Zambia in 1969 and worked in partnership with NBAZ for twenty-nine years. The Australians always worked closely with the nationals, initially under a three-year agreement, which was renewed as the need continued. Eventually in 28 June 1998 there was a moving farewell handover ceremony.

The three associations (NBAZ, ZBA, MBAZ) decided to form a Union and in 1975 the Baptist Union of Zambia was born. Its objectives were to advance the cause of God's Kingdom in Zambia and abroad through preaching and church planting; to promote Christian fellowship, love and co-operation among member associations; to train and equip church leaders for ministry; to establish social services, e.g. hospitals, various small scale projects, a Baptist university; to produce literature, e.g. writing and translating books.

Since the formation of the Union we have seen considerable growth. Mutual unity has grown between the member associations. The Fiwale Hill Bible College, formally owned and run by NBAZ and ABMS, is now owned and run by the Baptist Union of Zambia. All the member associations support the college. There are about fourteen students and four full-time lecturers (three nationals and one expatriate). We are working towards having the college accredited to the Accrediting Council of Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) to a secondary level. All our lecturers are degree holders.

For many years we had no youth work in our churches but now we are so delighted to the Lord for the way youth work is now coming on. We have a very strong youth wing at both local church and Union level. There is a special annual Youth Leadership Seminar and a biennial Youth National Conference. Plans are under way to begin projects to train young people in various skills, e.g. carpentry, brick laying, welding, etc. Meanwhile the Sunday school work has developed to an advanced stage and the Union is about to employ a co-ordinator for this work among children.

Women are doing great work in Zambia. Many are involved in evangelistic work. They raise funds for church planters. Last year a Baptist Union Women's Fellowship was launched: their vision is to advance the gospel and meet the needs of the whole person. Because we have seen potential in their work, we have organized seminars specifically for them and plan projects to advance them in various skills, e.g. we want some to be trained in primary health care.

There has been growth in evangelistic approach and church planting. The Baptist Union is no longer in the Lamba land. The early missionaries left us in just the Copperbelt Province but now churches are planted in Central, Eastern, Northern, Southern, Northwestern and Lusaka Provinces. Only two provinces remain untouched by Baptist mission, Western and Luapula; we are aiming to begin work in these next year. Also plans are under way to make an evangelistic survey in some

neighbouring countries.

OUR PRESENT CHALLENGES

Leadership development We have not done much hitherto about the quality of leadership but have now embarked on a series of seminars to train our church leaders.

Widows, property grabbing and ritual cleansing This is another issue we are tackling and hope the Lord will help us succeed in this. Most of our Christian widows are mistreated and grabbed off their properties by their husbands' relatives. They are also asked to pay a lot of money for their ritual cleansing. This is an issue we have addressed and continue to address as the church of Jesus Christ. This practice has taken a strong root in the lives of our people, affecting not only the church but also the entire nation.

Giving/stewardship This is our main worry. From the inception of Baptist work in Zambia the issue of giving was never properly addressed. Our forefathers used to pay their tenth or tithe once a year and most of them worked for the church on a volunteer basis. Nationals had their own fields and businesses, while all the missionaries were supported by their sending agencies, so the need to emphasize giving was minimal. As a result from 1905 to the late 1960s giving was very low in our churches and this has affected our work in many areas. In the 1960s much emphasis began to be put on giving but it was very difficult to persuade Christians to change from tithing once a year to tithing monthly or on a regular basis. We thank God now the church has started responding favourably to this challenge. However, it is a battle we still have to fight so that we may hand over to the 21st-century-generation a church that is mature and self-supporting. We hope by the year 2005, when we shall celebrate the 100th anniversary of Baptist work in Zambia, it will be possible to report a positive move in regard to this. At present the Baptist Union of Zambia receives assistance from the Baptist World Alliance, and member bodies respectively from InterAct Sweden, Liebenzell Mission International, and ABMS. 2005 is our target for financial independence. We also want by then to have sent a missionary to Australia, the USA and South Africa respectively.

PREPARING THE CHURCH FOR THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

As we are drawing near to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ we are obliged to begin preparing the church for the return of Christ - psychologically, socially, physically and spiritually. We plan in future to reach out with the gospel to neighbouring countries, to achieve financial independence, to establish a General Scholarship Fund for leadership development, and to employ full-time staff for BUZ work - co-ordinators for youth work, women's work, projects, evangelism, Sunday Schools, and literature. We plan to establish a multi-purpose training centre with conference facilities, an orphans' school, courses to train Christians in different skills, short courses for evangelists, and to print books and booklets. We want to

develop extensive teaching on leadership, marriage, worship, commitment, the second coming of Christ, doctrines, and spiritual warfare. We hope to establish a BUZ Mission Agency, a body within the Union which will be responsible for mobilizing funds and sending out missionaries to various countries. Our present needs include a reliable ministry vehicle, an agriculturalist, Christian doctors and nurses to help in our health institutions, and funding for church planting and for our Bible College and leadership development seminars.

The Baptist Union of Zambia pays tribute to the South African Baptist Missionary Society for laying the foundation and to the Australian Baptist Missionary Society for building great work on that foundation. We also pay tribute to our national leaders who worked tirelessly to see the fruition of this work. Their commitment to the work lives on to be fulfilled.

NOTES

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| 1 This paper was presented to the Heritage Commission of the Baptist World Alliance meeting at Durban, South Africa, July 1998. | 3 Curson, pp.222-33. 4 Curson, p.234; Doke, 1971, p.5. 5 Curson, p.233. |
| 2 Curson, <i>Joseph Doke, "The Missionary Hearted"</i> , Liverpool, London, Prescott, and Johannesburg, 1929, pp.185-6. | 6 Curson, p.234. 7 Curson, p.194-5. |

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REVD BENJAMIN GODWIN DD ON THE WEB

Chris Mitchell of New South Wales, a direct descendant of the distinguished nineteenth-century Baptist minister, has recently edited Godwin's autobiography. This has been published for family interest and also made generally available on the internet web at ><http://www.iniaccess.net.au/~mitchell/benjamin/>< .

CORRECTION

In the October 1998 issue appeared a review of Arthur Thompson's *Living Stones, A History of Vernon Baptist Church, King's Cross*. I understand that the supplier's address changed while the review awaited publication. The book may be obtained from the Revd Arthur Thompson at 87 The Greenway, Ickenham, Uxbridge, UB10 8XL.