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The end of Mission Councils: A case study of the Church of Scotland South Africa Joint Council, 1971–1981

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This article will investigate why Mission Councils continued to exist for so long after the so-called autonomous churches were established in South Africa following the upsurge of Ethiopian and other types of African initiated churches at the close of the 19th century in opposition to the European sending churches. It will also examine how the emerging Partnership in Mission policy affected the process of integration of church and mission. Using the closing years of the Church of Scotland South African Joint Council (1971–1981) as a case study, the author examines primary sources to uncover the exercise of power demonstrated through racism manifested in the disposition of personnel, property and finance to control the development of authentic autonomy.

Introduction

The Church of Scotland South African Joint Council (CoSSAJC) was finally laid to rest on 01 May 1981, 58 years after formation of the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa (BPCSA) on 04 July 1923 (BPCSA GA 1923:6). During this intervening period, the Mission Council exercised control over the affairs of the Church of Scotland (CoS) mission with varying degrees of effectiveness. This hampered the opportunity for the development of indigenous leadership, polity, liturgy and theology. This history has already been investigated (Duncan 2012:217–234; Duncan 2016: forthcoming SHE, 42[2]). The continued existence of a Mission Council hampered communication between the BPCSA and the CoS and did not contribute to God's mission, particularly through the agency of black Christians, despite some senior black ministers being co-opted on to the CoSSAJC which continued to exercise power and control through the means of personnel, finance and property. Integration of the work of the Mission Council and the church was planned to take place in 1971. Yet, inexplicably, new constitutions were approved for the CoSSAJC (BPCSA 1972:40–42) and the Missionaries' Committee (BPCSA 1972:43–44) in 1972. Incidentally, a new Scottish member of personnel was about to arrive who was to represent and foster the maintenance of the *status quo*. However, it is first necessary to understand the position of the CoS regarding integration and partnership in mission from the 1910 World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh.

Partnership in mission

Following the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, the International Missionary Conference (IMC) was established, and from 1928 at its Jerusalem meeting, the concept of partnership in mission was placed firmly on the agenda. The Church of Scotland was an active participant in all of the IMC meetings. It had led the way in the 1920s by beginning the process of integration in Nagpur, India (Lyon 1998:44), but this was the exception – the rule came much later. By the 1930s, there was an awareness that change in mission policy was imminent though the conservative Church of Scotland could not openly admit this: 'neither the Mission Councils nor the Foreign Mission Committee as such have any acknowledged part in the control or administration of Church affairs' (CoS GA 1935:615). This implies the opposite of what was actually true for considerable power was exercised over mission churches' affairs (Duncan 1997:104ff.) for there was still a belief that indigenous nationals were not yet capable of managing their own affairs unaided. Further, CoS policy stated the following: 'Any policy of forced precipitate severance of missionary work from the churches in the field comes into conflict with obstinate facts and with a true conception of the church and its work' (CoS GA 1935:616). No further elucidation was given to what were the 'obstinate facts'; at best, they were most likely missionary interpretations. At the end of the Second World War, the time was ripe for integration that would facilitate a new form of partnership. Hence, a special committee was established in 1945 by the Foreign Mission Committee to investigate possibilities for change in India. This was achieved by the formation of the Church of South India in 1947 and perhaps because of it, there

could be no doubt regarding ownership and responsibility within a united church. It was 'the precursor of attempts at practical partnership' (Duncan 2008:113). Mission Councils in India were terminated because they were no longer 'an integral part of the life and work of the indigenous church' (Lyon 1998:43). Lyon (1998) made the position absolutely clear. The development of policy:

> meant in practice continuing to exercise the control from which it had seemed to be saying it wanted to withdraw. No rhetoric of partnership could conceal the reality that the Church of Scotland through its missionaries and its grants of money, still exercised an inappropriate control. (pp. 46, 47)

In Scottish mission, 1947 was an important year because it culminated in integration resulting from the formation of autonomous churches globally. In this process, the Rev James Dougall, Secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee of the CoS, played a significant part in promoting integration. Dougall often quoted the Foreign Mission Committee Minute of 1947 that stated:

> The Church of Scotland has from the beginning regarded its foreign missionary enterprise as an integral part of the life of the Church, springing of necessity from the nature of the Church itself. It has in the same way placed at the centre of its concern the bringing into being of living branches of the Church in other lands which should accept for themselves the same missionary obligation, the discharge of which is one of the essential marks of a living Church. (Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, Minute 8799, April 15, 1947: CoS GA 1957:453)

Lyon (1998:276), however, pointed out the risks of integration: 'being seen by sending churches as a branch of colonialism, and by the proponents of nationalism, it was interpreted as liberation from foreign hegemony'. Despite this, the 1947 General Assembly of the CoS noted that 'The Presbyterian churches of the Dominions are all of them the offspring of the Church of Scotland and delight to acknowledge their parentage' (CoS GA 1947:421). Mutuality and interdependence still had to battle with paternalism and trusteeship for supremacy.

However, the rapidly changing global context was drastically requiring a change in mission policy. Dougall liked to quote the new definition offered by Lesslie Newbigin, who described the missionary as 'the agent of the help which one part of the Church sends to another for the discharge of the common missionary task' (quoted in Dougall 1963:93; Newbigin 1958:47). Dougall stated clearly:

> Enquiry starts from the assumption that the world in which the Church lives has so changed that the particular form of the mission of the Church to the world has to be re-examined and restated … It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the missionary task for this generation involves new perspectives, means and methods if we are to be faithful to the Truth which marches on. (CoS GA 1952:352)

This enquiry was marked by the following:

1. Changes in global economic, social and political conditions.
2. Growth and development of younger churches and their desire for self-government.
3. Establishment of the World Council of Churches and its relationships with these churches.
4. Declining financial support from older churches.

In addition, policy had to respond to rapid change in Africa because: 'Strife for political power has tended to embitter race relations' (CoS GA 1951:371).

In the African context, the rise of nationalism was a potent force in the drive towards ecclesiastical independence. Duncan (2008) had the following opinion:

> ... the integration of Church and Mission meant that the Younger Church had become a responsible partner to be consulted in all decisions, and its resources in personnel and experience now more clearly defined and limited the direction and scope of missionary activity. The Foreign Mission Committee had to ask of every undertaking how far it could enlist the interest and increase the vigour of the church on the field and how much that church could now and in the future make itself responsible for a significant share in the undertaking. (p. 115)

The Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952 caught the spirit of the time when it pronounced that 'we should cease to speak of missions and churches and avoid this dichotomy not only in our thinking but also in our actions. We should now speak about the mission of the Church' (IMC, Willingen 1952:40).

A meeting of missionaries held in Nagpur in January 1959 summed up the situation:

> We think that 'the mission' (and we consider that this, in the senses we use it, continues despite integration) with its impressive organisation and structure of institutions, its foreignness and its influence closely connected to financial power stands counter to mission. As things are, the Church does not know itself (always it has its eye on what 'the mission' expects it to do or say) and cannot act or speak in freedom. We are still far from a free and equal partnership. The situation is bedevilled by what is sensed as imperialism, spiritual, moral and financial, on the one hand, and by humiliation and a simmering rebelliousness on the other, this despite every effort we make in personal ways on both sides. (in Lyon 1998:333)

In 1962, Neil C Bernard, Africa Secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee of the CoS, offered a definitive standard for integration (Cory PR10432, South Africa Mission Council 'Integration in South Africa', 22 June 1962). With regard to South Africa, his approach was contextual, drawing on past experience in other lands:

> integration of the Mission into the Church should be in accordance with government policy. On the other hand there seems to be doubt as to how far government will give responsibility to these tribal areas [*homelands*] … the establishment of a joint council as the first step' towards integration 'taking account of' the total situation in South Africa at the present time. … It should be stressed that where joint councils have been established in the past they have never been regarded as of other than temporary duration.

Bernard's integration standard marked the beginning of power sharing by involving the BPCSA as a temporary but necessary partner in the context of apartheid whose *Group Areas Act* was a hindrance to integration, particularly with regard to hospitals, educational institutions and farms and other lands.

Additionally, the concept and theory of partnership in the Gospel was regularly developed. Under the annual Overseas Council report theme 'Together in a Divided World' (1976), it was defined as 'the mark of mission' (CoS GA 1976:324) that is 'that which defines mission and it would indicate that it is partnership which constitutes the church in its missionary and ecumenical relationships. It provides hope in a sadly divided world'. The role of the sending church is 'to respond costingly to the demands partnership makes' (CoS GA 1976:324), that is kenotically. The diminishing direct control over mission is not the end of missionary responsibility in a context of the:

> growing and already enormous demands the opportunity for mission world-wide lays upon the whole Church of God … At the same time we hear them say to us that we must be prepared to receive from them what we need, so that together we may be better equipped to share the Gospel, and to participate in God's mission of healing and saving to the end of the world. (p. 324)

Then there was a constant stress in the Overseas Council on openness to receive 'what our fellow Christians can give to us for our strengthening' (CoS GA 1977:330). The sending church never defined what it needed and this has always been a problem in partnership. Receiving churches needs are blatant – personnel and money. But what exactly do sending churches need, and who determines those needs? Had it been possible to answer this question, many of the subsequent misunderstandings might never have arisen. Again, the need for sensitivity is stressed but it is never clear how this worked out in practice and how receiving churches viewed this approach. The reciprocity of mission was in its infancy in the Church of Scotland. Apart from a few overseas bursars and Operation Faithshare, a 3 month programme for the CoS to receive members of partner churches, little else happened. The Bantu Presbyterian Church was involved in both of these schemes.

Certainly, good communication was vital with the necessity of being 'sensitive to the issues and problems facing its partners, and must be ready to respond with understanding, a process that often involves not just long correspondence, but consultations and visits' (CoS GA 1976:325). Personnel continued to play a pivotal role: 'The Churches want missionaries and ask unequivocally for them' (GA 197:325). However, the Overseas Council acknowledged that 'Even the word "partnership" has been suspected to be a hypocritical camouflage for unwarranted interference' (CoS GA 1977:330) despite the emphasis on its laudable aim which it saw as 'to strengthen the Churches overseas … and to encourage members of the church here [*Scotland*] to appreciate that the mission to which all are committed is one mission whether at home or abroad' (CoS GA 1978:316). The CoS mission policy constantly faced the Scylla of paternalism and trusteeship and the Charybdis of integration and partnership.

The last decade

The Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland replaced the Overseas Council in 1964 at a time when Mission Councils were disappearing globally (Duncan 2008:123). The prime focus on partnership was the result of the development of national leadership in African and Asian nations and the transfer of membership and ministry by many missionaries to younger churches 'who by this time were directing their own work' (Duncan 2008:123). Further, the global political scene had undergone significant changes in every continent. Two-way relationships were emerging, and younger churches had begun a conversation with each other, as in the formation of the All Africa Conference of Churches in 1963. This ecumenical development had the potential to become a mutually enriching experience (CoS GA 1963:427). During the 1960s, it became Overseas Council policy to make block grants to mission churches which:

> allowed churches to draw up their own budgets based on their own discerned needs. However, there was no involvement in the decision-making process concerning the amounts given. This was inimical to the development of partnership relations. (Duncan 2008:123–124)

The BPCSA (Min 504, CoSSAJC 04–05 July 1971) recommended the local appointment of 'Treasurer of the Joint Council and Treasurer of the BPC'. This appointment was probably proposed to facilitate the transfer of Joint Council finances and integration. A local person was interviewed and 'found unsuitable'; however, an offer of a candidate from Scotland was received and agreed (Min 558, CoSSAJC ExCom 21 November 1972).

On 06 November 1973, it was reported to the Business Committee of the BPCSA 'that the Church Accountant, Mr Matthew I Stevenson, had arrived' (BPCSA GA 1973:40) and filled an important vacancy in the church. Matt Stevenson played a significant role in the last years of the CoSSAJC. He presented his first report of the Joint Council in 1974 (BPCSA GA 1974:19–21) and demonstrated his command of the complex affairs of the Joint Council. From this point, there was a certain tightening of arrangements as to the disposition of Ellesmere Farm at Gordon Memorial Mission at uMsinga in Natal: '… it was decided that this matter should be dealt with by the Secretary/Treasurer … That all future correspondence should be between the Council and the appropriate department of the KwaZulu government' (Min 629, CoSSAJC 21 May 1974). This arrangement, in part, would lead to a difficult situation with the Missionary-in-charge, Rev. James Gossip. The Treasurer was urged to progress the transfer of Joint Council funds to the BPCSA and report diligence to the executive (Min 654.5, CoSSAJC 23–24 July 1974). The BPCSA was effectively removed from having an effective opinion or interest in the matter. Then, an unfortunate personnel situation involving two missionaries arose at Nessie Knight Hospital in the Transkei. This situation

was taken up by the Joint Council which is unprocedural because it was neither part of its remit (Min 668.5, CoSSAJC 23–24 July 1974; cf. BPCSA GA 1972:40–44; Min 693, 702, 743 CoSSAJC 26 November 1974) nor even that of the Missionaries' Committee. This interference became the norm as in the case of Rev. James Gossip at Gordon Memorial Mission in 1976 (Mins. 784, 800 CoSSAJC 07 April 1976). The Secretary was given powers to act with others. If the personnel were members of a presbytery of the BPCSA then it would have fallen to them to deal with the matter; otherwise it would fall to the Kirk Session of the congregation of which they were members. As far as can be ascertained, this issue never came officially to the notice of the BPCSA. Failing all else, it was for the Overseas Council to resolve. The Secretary of the Joint Council seemed to arrogate himself, or was given powers which were not rightly his. This was an innovation in procedure and led to an unfortunate escalation involving more personnel than was necessary.

At this juncture, Rt Rev. Gladwin T Vika gave his Moderatorial Address at the 1974 General Assembly entitled *Whither Bantu Presbyterian Church?* based on a question that was posed earlier by a representative of the Church of Scotland in a time of crisis. Vika examined the question from the point of view of the role of the church in terms of government action in removal of church lands, as well as church personnel, particularly in a period of integration as responsibility was being transferred from a white to a black body. In such a situation, he affirmed 'the Christian at its most demanding and at its most uncompromising' in its promotion of God's kingdom in the world (cf. Matt 10:34–39) (BPCSA GA 1974:50). Vika cited a comment from a founding document of the BPCSA:

> So the 'mission' from Overseas fosters a new Native Church, and as the latter increases in strength, the work of the 'mission' reaches completion, and a time comes when the Native church is able to take upon itself its full responsibilities. … However, a two-fold problem faces the BPC in the advent of integration: Increased responsibility and a lack of man-power to meet the increased responsibility. (BPCSA GA 1974:53)

Vika, who was also Convener of the BPCSA Integration Committee, concluded his address with a challenge to lay and ordained alike to sacrifice in the name of and for the sake of Christ through service within the BPCSA. Neither of the two problems enunciated by Vika were of substantive importance. The whole point was to increase responsibility within the black *corpus*, and there would have been no shortage of able manpower if the missionaries had performed their work effectively. White missionaries were holding on to senior posts instead of empowering successors as was conceptualised in authentic partnership.

On 26 November 1974, the Secretary of the Joint Council presented a report 'for information' as if this was not of substantial importance to the BPCSA (BPCSA GA 1974:19) and its future planning. He reported that transfer of funds was progressing, while on 27 May 1975 a portfolio of trust funds was handed to the Rt Rev. Gladwin T Vika, Moderator of the General Assembly of the BPCSA. A further schedule of grant balances was presented later in the same year. Monies from the sale of congregational lands were transferred as they became available (Min. 717.g, CoSSAJC 27 July 1975). During 1975–1978, the takeover of mission hospitals at Nessie Knight (Sulenkama), Donald Fraser (Gooldville) and Tugela Ferry (Msinga) was planned. However, the 'homeland' governments adopted a different approach to take over. They wanted the land to be donated to them, as was the case with Lovedale Institution and Ellesmere (Gordon Memorial) Farm (BPCSA GA 1974:19). This take over raised the sensitive issue of who historically owned the land, and how and why the church acquired it, other than to benefit the local people. With regard to integration, it was noted that despite progress made it 'will take time to implement' (BPCSA GA 1974:20).

By 1975, Joint Council funds had been transferred to the BPCSA except for travel expenses, secretarial expenses, assembly expenses and estates (Church of Scotland Trust). It is not clear why these funds were retained but this was *Noted with satisfaction* (BPCSA GA 1975:19), such was the trust in which the Joint Council Treasurer was held. These funds could easily have been operated by the BPCSA except perhaps for the estates that could have been administered by the church attorneys. Then, the Joint Council could have been dissolved, and the church lawyers, Hutton & Cook, in consultation with the Church of Scotland Overseas Council could have transferred properties. However, fund retention allowed the Joint Council Treasurer considerable latitude in their use without supervision, especially when he was travelling on business which was outside the remit of the Joint Council (e.g. performing work as financial adviser to the Federal Theological Seminary in seeking compensation that had been expropriated from its site in Alice in 1974) (Denis & Duncan 2011:5). Rev. Ian Moir stated that 'I only wanted to open the way for you to cut down your travelling' (correspondence, Moir to Stevenson, 15 July 1976, Cory, File 02/5) that was considered excessive according to Stevenson. He continued with this work after he left the BPCSA and worked as Financial Manager of the South African Council of Churches in 1979.

It was reported in 1976 that 'the Council continues to serve both Churches in the sphere of land and property, together with the important matters of people and personnel' (BPCSA GA 1976:20). In the meantime, personnel were further reduced by the refusal of permits to the Revs James Gossip and Ewan Campbell. A replacement was sought for Mr Campbell (BPCSA GA 1975:44). Rev. James Kincaid resigned as Missionary-in-Charge at Cunningham Mission in July 1976 (BPCSA GA 1976:16); Mr Victor Crawford, missionary printer, also resigned (BPCSA GA 1976:17) as did Miss Fiona Hamill and Dr AT Cameron at Tugela Ferry Hospital (BPCSA GA 1976:19). The following people were left:

> Miss EJ Phillip at Tugela Ferry, due for UK leave in August, 1977;
> Mr HA Kingcome at Lovedale, due for UK leave in August, 1978;
> Mr MI Stevenson at Umtata, due for UK leave on 4 November

> 1976. Agreed that Mr Stevenson be invited to come back. Dr AM Sammon at Tugela Ferry, will complete his contract on 21st January, 1977. … Assembly agreed to ask missionaries going on leave to return if conditions permitted and that replacements be found possible and that replacements be found for those whose contracts had expired. (BPCSA GA 1976:20)

In the event, seven missionaries were lost in a very short time because Ms Phillip (BPCSA GA 1977:20) and Dr Sammon did not return to missionary service and the only replacement already requested was for the post of Missionary-in- Charge at Lovedale.

Rev. James Gossip was 'relieved of his duties at Gordon Memorial on 30 April 1976' at the request of the Business Committee (BPCSA of this Assembly' (BPCSA GA 1976:19). Gossip's departure had its origin in a dispute that involved the local magistrate and a land issue. Gossip, being a missionary, was responsible to the Overseas Council. It is not clear how the matter came to the Business Committee without reference from the Presbytery of Natal. It came to Stevenson's notice because Gordon Memorial Mission was a property of the Church of Scotland. From then, the situation deteriorated rapidly. Stevenson took grave offence on behalf of the Joint Council and the BPCSA and concluded that this had precipitated an 'irrevocable breakdown of relations between the Church of Scotland and the BPC' (correspondence, Stevenson to Moir [Joint Africa Area Secretary of the Church of Scotland Overseas Council], 28 June 1976, Cory, File 02/05). There was no supporting evidence for Stevenson's assertion and relations continued normally. Stevenson was upset because he was not party to the confidential correspondence between Moir and Gossip. Moir responded with the following:

> My last letter to Jim was an attempt at a pastoral letter. There is nothing in this letter which you do not know about. To send copies of this personal letter to other people would have destroyed the effect. The other reason for not sending you a copy was to try to show Jim that the BPC and the Overseas Council are not involved in a conspiracy against him. (correspondence, Moir to Stevenson, 15 July 1976, Cory, File 02/05)

Moir further pointed out that 'the Overseas Council concurs with the recommendation of the BPC'. There is no evidence to suggest a rupture in Overseas Council and BPCSA relations apart from Stevenson's claim. This lack of evidence suggests that Stevenson fomented a breach because he needed to be in control of the situation and speak for both the Joint Council and the BPCSA without authority.

The Overseas Council stated the following about their future: 'It has been the hope for some time that the Council would be dissolved and that its responsibilities pass to this Assembly' (BPCSA GA 1977:21). The council proposed arrangements for the transfer of the management of Impolweni Farm and Lovedale Press. This was referred to the Integration Committee. It is difficult to understand why the process of integration was not completed at this time as had been the case in other countries. The BPCSA moved towards establishing a finance department (BPCSA GA 1977:40) with MI Stevenson as potential Treasurer. This would become a source of dissent that eventually led to Stevenson's resignation (BPCSA GA 1978:37–38; cf. Min 936 CoSSAJC 22 August 1979). Clearly, there were financial problems in the denomination, but a greater difficulty arose out of a poor personal relationship with the new General Secretary, Rev. SB Ngcobo who had replaced Rev. GT Vika on his resignation to join the Transkeian homeland government on 01 January 1978. Of note was the close relationship Stevenson and Vika enjoyed as colleagues over the period since Stevenson arrived in South Africa. It is difficult, otherwise, to explain Stevenson's resignation as he was about to occupy one of the most senior positions in the BPCSA, and he had the support of the denomination.

The General Assembly in 1978, agreed to change the name of the BPCSA to the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA) with effect from 01 January 1979 (BPCSA GA 1977:33). Prior to the appointment of a Missionary-in-charge at Lovedale, it was agreed that the person appointed would take care of the linked Lovedale District and Institution congregations (BPCSA GA 1977:41). Subsequently, it was noted that 'The Revd GA Duncan was ordained to the Holy Ministry on 12 March 1978. He is Moderator of the linked Lovedale congregation' (BPCSA GA 1978:17). It was further noted in the Joint Council report of 1978 that Duncan accepted his role as Missionary-in-Charge at Lovedale Institution and was elected Chair of the Joint Council (BPCSA GA 1978:19, 20).

In April 1979, Revs Ian Moir and Iain Paterson, representing the Overseas Council, visited South Africa to hold a consultation with the Joint Council to consider how to allocate the funds derived from the sale and transfer of Church of Scotland properties in South Africa. The basic premise of the discussions was that funds would not be transferred to the Church of Scotland but allocated to projects of the RPCSA. A number of funds were subsequently established for this purpose. No reference to this consultation was made in the subsequent General Assembly of the BPCSA until 1980 and only some of the funds established are mentioned:

> The Overseas Council has agreed to the transfer of R196 000-00 (this being compensation from the sale of Nessie Knight Hospital) to the Reformed Presbyterian church. The Overseas Council has accepted the RPC's request that R100 000-00 be allocated to the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund, and R96 000-00 be allocated to the Training of ministry Fund. (RPCSA GA 1980:20)

By this time, Matt Stevenson had left the service of the RPCSA without leaving an updated report on the work of the Joint Council: 'The Rev GT Vika in the absence of the Secretary of Joint Council submitted the report' in 1979 (BPCSA GA 1979:17). Stevenson's resignation was not unexpected. On 24 November 1978, the Business Committee received a letter from the General Secretary of the South African Council of

Churches that requested Matthew Stevenson be seconded to the South African Council of Churches as Deputy General Secretary. This appointment was refused on the grounds that the BPCSA's need was greater at that time. Stevenson submitted his letter of resignation with immediate effect. Business Committee requested Mr Stevenson to remain until November to give a special committee time to meet with him (BPCSA GA 1978:44–45). The Joint Council received the letter of resignation from the Overseas Council on 22 August 1979 with its request that Stevenson be released on 22 September 1979. The Chair was requested to contact the Overseas Council to make transitional arrangements. Rev. GA Duncan was appointed Secretary/Treasurer 'subject to the approval of the OC' (Mins. 936, 937 CoSSAJC 22 August 1979).

On 19 July 1979, at a meeting of the Business Committee, Mr Stevenson informed attendees that he resigned as a missionary of the Church of Scotland and requested to be relieved of his post as General Treasurer. This resignation was accepted with regret. The General Secretary along with the Joint Treasurers was appointed to fill the vacancy (BPCSA GA 1979:41). Notably, at the subsequent General Assembly in 1978, the first following Stevenson's resignation, a minute was passed:

> Recognising the important role that the Joint Council, and its predecessors, the Mission Councils have played in the past, it was unanimously agreed to recommend to the Overseas Council and to this General Assembly that Church of Scotland Joint Council be dissolved effectively from the 1st January, 1980, or as soon thereafter agreed. (BPCSA GA 1979:18; cf. Min 935.c CoSSAJC 22 August 1979)

No further obstacles to integration remained. Remaining business was to be assigned to a Property and Assets Holding Committee (Church of Scotland) that would attend to matters relating to impediments arising out of the *Group Areas Act* and incomplete negotiations for compensation and realised assets not transferred. The committee was to consist of an equal number of Overseas Council and RPCSA nominees and was to be reappointed annually if necessary (BPCSA GA 1979:18–19). At the Business Committee in November 1979, an attempt was made to rescind the minute regarding the dissolution of Joint Council on the grounds that all land assets had not yet been transferred. This was rejected on the basis that 'dissolution, whenever, it takes place does not stop the envisaged transfer of Assets' (BPCSA GA 1979:44).

In 1980, Rev. Ian A Moir, Partnership/Africa Secretary of the Overseas Council attended the General Assembly and 'handed over to the Church, through the Moderator, the certificates of Assets totalling R196,000-00. These were received with thanks. Mr Moir said that the interest would follow in due course'. The date for dissolution was set as 01 June 1981 (BPCSA GA 1980):

> Anticipating that this will be the last report of the Joint Council to the General Assembly, the council wishes to place on record its thanks to those ministers and elders who have served and contributed to its work over the years. (p. 20)

However, Joint Council matters were not yet complete. In November 1980, financial irregularities were reported to the Business Committee arising out of the audit of the 1979 Joint Council accounts; the 1979 Overseas Council grants had not been paid to the RPC; the second, third and fourth quarter grants were used to pay accounts without the RPC's authorisation; the first quarter grant 'has not been used to pay accounts yet it has not been paid to the Church either' (BPCSA GA 1980:42). These irregularities were inexplicable apart from the poor relationships in the General Assembly office. The outcome included the following:

> After a lengthy discussion, the Joint Council Treasurer agreed to investigate this disturbing matter further and was prepared to pay what was due to the Church once it was ascertained what the position was.
>
> Further to that, the Business Committee agreed to note the situation with grave concern and await the outcome of the consultation of the Church auditors and the Joint Council auditors.
>
> It was, further, agreed that the Church of Scotland should be informed about this disturbing situation. (BPCSA GA 1980:42)

Mr Stevenson refused to account for the irregularities and the CoSSAJC auditor, Mr Gordon L Laurence, Brandt, Bowling and Tagg (auditors), Grahamstown, resigned immediately after he received queries regarding his audit. The 1979 grants were paid before the Business Committee met on 30 July 1981 (BPCSA GA 1981:34). Subsequent to this, the Overseas Council approved the dissolution of the Joint Council (Min1001 CoSSAJC 01 May 1981). This momentous event took place without ceremony on 01 June 1981, and after 58 years of existence, the RPCSA took full responsibility for its own affairs.

One of the first matters that required attention following the dissolution of the Joint Council was a report which arose out of the ongoing matter of the disposition of Lovedale Institution. The report was submitted by Milton M Khala, a senior sales representative of Lovedale Press who had had a meeting with Chief DM Jongilanga Minister of Education in the Ciskeian Legislative Assembly on 22 May 1981. The Chief expressed his frustration with the 'Lovedale authorities' for delaying a resolution of the disposal of Lovedale and accused them of waging a 'cold war' against the Ciskeian government. The 'Lovedale authorities' asked for R1 500 000 for the property, yet they had recently offered it to the University of Fort Hare for R100 000 (Cory, PR 0432, L6, 27 May 1981). This issue was sensitive because it placed the BPCSA in a potentially vulnerable situation. It was one of the legacies Stevenson left behind to be resolved. Days after Khala wrote this report, the CoSSAJC was dissolved and the matter was expedited by Robert DN Stanford, of the churches' attorneys, Hutton and Cook, King William's Town, in consultation with the General Secretary of the BPCSA, Rev. SB Ngcobo. Stanford had dealt with the sale and transfer of Church of Scotland properties for some years and was best qualified to finalise the sale and transfer. This demonstrated that there was no need for an intermediary body to effect integration.

Conclusion

Partnership in mission was the broader context in which integration occurred. Yet, it only marginally affected the process of integration whose aim was to develop independence and strengthen the integrity of churches derived from the missionary movement. This led to a constant struggle with meaning of partnership in practice and also to a paradoxical situation of integration by guaranteeing the continuing involvement of the CoS and at same time promoting the right of independent churches to exercise prime responsibility for mission in their own areas. Looking at the global context, it appears that in countries with higher levels of racism there were higher degrees of control exercised externally. In South Africa, much delay occurred due to the existence of apartheid. However, CoS policy played into the hands of those who believed that black Christians were incapable of dealing with their own affairs or of determining their own political future. The CoS and Joint Council attitudes were tantamount to collaboration rather than the presentation and promotion of an alternative way of demonstrating Christian witness in the South African context. There was a sufficient cadre of beneficent white Christians with legal and financial expertise who could have facilitated integration and allowed the BPCSA to stand on its own feet and demonstrate that they were indeed capable of doing so. What is of concern in terms of partnership is that there was a lack of partnership between the Joint Council and the BPCSA. By listening to and being guided by one missionary in the closing years of the Joint Council, the CoS refused to initiate and participate in this act of faith in the future of African Christianity and became reactionaries in the original sense of the word.

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Competing interests

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