

COUNTER-INTUITIVE LEADERSHIP: REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE AND TIMES OF REVEREND RASEBUSI SIDWELL MOKGOTHU

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ABSTRACT

This essay follows a narrative method of presentation. The novelty of presentations of this nature lies in the fact that they espouse or champion the personality of a person and the impact they have or have had on others, rather than putting emphasis on events. It took me a while to find or search for a theme relevant to a reflection on the life and times of Reverend Rasebusi Sidwell Mokgothu. After an extensive and intensive thinking, I settled for the theme “counter-intuitive leadership.” This essay is unique in the sense that as the narrator I have drawn so many experiences and learned so much from Sidwell’s life and time on the journey of life and faith as a fellow pilgrim.

Keywords: Black Methodist Consultation; counter-intuitive leadership; Rasebusi Sidwell Mokgothu

INTRODUCTION

People of different ages, descent, and background have always, in the context of leadership and management development asked the question, *Are leaders born or made?* And I have heard among many responses that “before anything is said leaders first; they have to be born.” William Shakespeare, in his famous dictum also ascribes to almost the same thinking that “Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them” (Shakespeare 1601–1602). The common characteristic however, is that they were all born. Rasebusi Sidwell Mokgothu was born and bred in a little gold mining town of Odendaalsrus in the Free State province of South Africa. He later moved to Lichtenburg to complete his secondary education.

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In his write up notes for the purposes of this essay, Rev. Bafana Khumalo, a Minister in the Lutheran Church, who met Sidwell before I came to know him (Sidwell), explains that he met Sidwell in the youth structures of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) as they were both involved in youth work from their different denominations. The social and economic conditions during the apartheid era were very hostile, and as such, the struggle for freedom was intensified. At the time many of the mainline church leadership were indifferent to the struggle against apartheid. As a result, half-hearted statements were issued from time to time to camouflage the brutality of the regime of the time. Many of the young activists were not happy with how churches' responded to these issues. Young people at the time called for an approach that was more radical and responsive. Sidwell was part of the youth group, which advocated for such an approach. This radical approach sought by the youth became popular, as the likes of Rev. Mautji Pataki, Rev. Desmond Lesejane, Jake Dikobo, Sox Khanyile, Sekgopi Malebo, Teboho Klaas, and Edwin Arrison, together with Sidwell Mokgothu, through their engagement in the Inter-denominational Christian Youth (ICY), sought through many strategies to challenge the churches to play a more active role in the struggle against apartheid, confronting the system head-on. Sidwell and the group of young people fought many battles to a point of being isolated by church leaders, who felt that this youth group was too radical and was exposing the church to risk at the hands of the regime that was brutal at the time. Common intuitive demands and directs that the young in age should learn and take counsel from elders, but this was not the case with the likes of Sidwell Mokgothu and his peers. They became counter-intuitive and this behaviour ingrained and hardened itself to a culture these young fellows ascribed to.

In 1984 Sidwell was part of the youth who played a pivotal role in preparing for the International Year of the Youth; an event that took place in 1985, organised under the auspices of the World Council of Churches (WCC). This was a landmark era in mobilising the world youth to direct their focus on apartheid. The mobilisation entailed educating the outside world about the importance and value of the sanctions against apartheid South Africa. It was during this time of organising Christian youth in the struggle for justice that Sidwell and his peers were tasked by WCC and the All Africa Conference of Churches to help prepare the youth in Namibia for their imminent liberation. This work entailed working with youth from different political persuasions through the auspices of the Christian Council of Namibia (CNN). Sidwell Mokgothu, Khepi Shole, and Bafana Khumalo went to Namibia as an advance team to prepare the ground and lay a solid foundation for the activities that were to follow as a programme of action. These brothers tell a story of one Sidwell, who would drive kilometres for hours on end to ensure that the youth in Namibia were ready for their liberation, and had systems and structures in place for youth engagement. Part of their mission in Namibia was to teach the youth in that country to sing the National Anthem, *Nkosi Sikelela iAfrika*, composed in South Africa by Enoch Sontonga before they composed an anthem in their own language. It is somehow awkward to imagine Sidwell teaching people how to sing. Sidwell was at that time completing his studies as a telecommunication technician with

Telkom and was working in the former Bophuthatswana homeland. His radical activism soon attracted the attention of the late “Motlotlegi TauTona Kgosi” Mangope’s regime. Sidwell Mokgothu did not escape the jaws of that regime as he ended up becoming a guest in one of the prisons of that regime. While in detention he was tortured and had to be on the run upon his release, as he was under constant surveillance.

On 31 July 1986 Sidwell was issued with a deportation Order from the then Minister of Internal Affairs Minister BLMJ Motsatsi. The Order in my possession reads as follows:

The Commissioner of Police

Bophuthatswana.

WARRANT FOR THE ORDER AND REMOVAL FROM THE REPUBLIC OF BOPHUTHATSWANA UNDER THE ALIENS AND TRAVELLERS CONTROL ACT 1979 (ACT 22 OF 1979)

By virtue of the powers vested in me in terms of Section 65(1) of the above mentioned Act, you are hereby authorised to cause – Rasebusi Sidwell Mokgothu to be removed from the Republic of Bophuthatswana under proper escort.

Given under my hand on this 31st day of July – Minister BLMJ Motsatsi. Ref.No. 4/6/4/2-1720/86.

His deportation affected his employment and impacted negatively on his family as he was the bread winner. He was on the run with no income but remained focused and more committed to the struggle for justice regardless of his circumstances. He continued with his youth activism in the church and was also involved in the mass democratic movement at the time, especially in the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF). During this period, he joined the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT), which was started by the late Oom Beyers Naude, the late Rev. Dr Wolfram Kistner, and the late Father Lebamang Sebidi, Father Allan Nollan, Frank Chikane and others. Sidwell was among the youngest members of the ICT at the time, where he cut his teeth in sharp Contextual Theology skills.

It was during this period that the Kairos Document was developed. Although Sidwell was not among the originators of the document he was one of the foot soldiers that had to mobilise ordinary Christians in the length and breadth of our country to support the Kairos Document. The Kairos Document was a critical piece of material that did not only challenge the apartheid state but also brought a sharp critic of the theology of the Church. Initially, the document was not well received by the leadership of the mainstream church.

In 1987 Sidwell responded to a call of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, but unlike many of us, he decided to go and study theology at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. He paid for his tuition and stay throughout the course of his studies. It should be noted that at the time he was out of employment, with no financial resources. Bafana Khumalo relates that during the holiday break he and Sidwell worked for the SACC. Bafana held a decent job as a

Personal Assistant (PA) to the General Secretary of the Council Rev. Chikane. Sidwell Mokgothu worked at the door as a security guard, a job he did for a while until he was promoted to an office assistant and member of staff. Here he worked with the likes of Saki Macozoma, Jackson Mthembu, Oom Beyers Naude, and Mama Brigalia Bam, as well as many others.

Sidwell continued with his activism at Rhodes. He was leader of the then Black Student's Movement and the South African Tertiary Institute Sports Council (SATISCO), a non-racial sporting organisation, where he also played softball. He was also active in the student political movement of the South African Student Congress (SANSCO). On 7 April 1989 Sidwell Mokgothu was found in possession of unlawful documents by the Security Branch of the Police in his room at 178 Jan Smuts House. The unlawful documents included the following:

1. 2 x South African Council of Churches diaries
2. 2 x Jesus on Trial Today
3. 2 x documents titled Socialism Transformation and the Freedom Charter – by ZP Jordan (12 pages)
4. 2 x documents titled *The two Pillars of our Struggle Advancing or Retarding the Working Class Struggle*
5. 1 x document titled *What is Culture?*
6. 1 x Identity document
7. 1x passport and travel documents.

As a result, he was arrested and detained at St Albans Prison in Port Elizabeth. On 28 April 1989 he was issued with a Banning Order signed by the then Minister of Law and Order, Minister Adriaan Vlok. The covering letter to the Banning Order reads as follows:

Mr Rasebusi Sidwell Mokgothu
C/O The Head of Prison
St Albans Prison
Port Elizabeth

NOTICE UNDER REGULATION 3(8) OF THE SECURITY EMERGENCY REGULATIONS
1988

Under paragraph (8) of regulation 3 of the Security Emergency Regulations, 1988, as amended, I hereby order that Rasebusi Sidwell Mokgothu, who is being detained in terms of regulation 3 of the said Regulations, be released on conditions set out in the Schedule hereto.

Signed at Cape Town on this 27th day of April 1989.
Adriaan Vlok
Minister of Law and Order.

The schedule of the banning order read as follows:

That you shall not, as from the date of release, without the written consent of the Divisional Commander of the Security Branch of the South African Police (SAP) for the Eastern Province Division:

1. Take part in any manner whatsoever in any of the activities of the following organisations—Black Student Movement, South African Tertiary Institute Sports Council (SATISCO);
2. Be outside the boundaries of the magisterial district of Albany at any time;
3. Address any gathering at which ten or more persons are present;
4. Contribute, prepare, compile or transmit in any manner whatsoever any matter for publication in any publication or assist in any manner whatsoever in the preparation, compilation or transmission of any matter for publication in any publication;
5. Take part in any interview with any journalist, news reporter, news commentator or news correspondent;
6. Attend any gathering which has been convened, advertised or is otherwise brought about –
 - 6.1 to attack, criticise or protest against any acts or proposed acts or policies of the Government of the Republic of South Africa;
 - 6.2 to attack, criticise or protest against the system of local government as applied in the Republic of South Africa, or against some or other local authority or local authorities belonging to some or other category of local authorities;
7. Make calls on, or encourage or incite members of the public or members of a section of the public to commemorate or celebrate an incident of riot, public violence or unrest or a protest march which has taken place at some time or other in the Republic, or an event which has occurred in the course of such incident, gathering or march;
8. Address any gathering on or in connection with:-
 - 8.1 the non-compliance with a provision of, or requirement under, any law;
 - 8.2 the non-compliance with an obligation towards a local authority in respect of rent or a municipal service;
 - 8.3 the staying away from work or striking in contravention of the provisions of any law, or the supporting of any stay-away action or strike;
 - 8.4 the non-participation in an election of members of a local authority;
 - 8.5 the attending or the opposition to the attending of an educational institution which provides formal education as defined in section 1 of the National Policy for General Education Affairs Act, 1994 (Act 76 of 1984);
 - 8.6 the non-purchasing of any product or article (*Asithenge edolopini*):

9. That you shall, as from the date of your release, report daily to the officer in charge of the Charge Office at the New Street Police Station, Grahamstown, between 05h00 and 10h00, and between 14h00 and 19h00, subject to such exemptions as the Divisional Commander of the Security Branch of the South African Police for the Eastern Province Division may at any time authorise in writing. In this notice, a word to which a meaning has been assigned in the Media Emergency Regulations, 1988, or the Security Emergency Regulations, 1988, shall have the same meaning.

The Order was clear that this man was totally cut off from the socio-economic and political activities in the Republic of South Africa by then, an Order he had to comply with in order to stay out of trouble. Twenty-one years ago the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) would not have celebrated the life and Ministry of a person under banning Orders from the Minister of Law and Order in the then Republic of South Africa, as well as a deportation Order from the Minister of Internal Affairs in the then Republic of Bophuthatswana.

The BMC has come a long way—drastic measures were taken, which saw us now being protected by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Section 16, subsection (1) of the Bill of Rights prescribes under Freedom of Expression:

- Freedom of the press and other media
- Freedom to receive or impart information or ideas
- Freedom of artistic creativity; and
- Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.

Sidwell, in his own way directly or indirectly contributed to this kind of freedom—thus we have a reason to celebrate his life and Ministry. The Conference of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa met in Cape Town in 1989, under question 3 in the order of business—“Who are now received on trial.” Sidwell Rasebusi Mokgothu was one of those received. It was during the same conference that a decision was taken to station him in the then Northern Transvaal district (now Limpopo province) in Circuit NUMBER 1116, as well as in Makapanstad in the then Republic of Bophuthatswana. Trouble became eminent in this district. It was not long that while ministering in that Circuit Sidwell Mokgothu received visitors from the then Bophuthatswana police—fortunately or unfortunately they found him behind the pulpit, and was pulled out of it to be a guest at the local police holding cells. The church leaders were faced with a mammoth task of negotiating for his release. Upon his release the Church, through its structures, ensured that Sidwell Mokgothu is stationed very far from the borders of the then Republic of Bophuthatswana; in Circuit 1118 in the Soutpansberg district in Louis Trichardt, Venda.

It was upon my return from the Federal Theological Seminary (FEDSEM) that I joined Sidwell and them in the In-Service-Training (IST) under the tutelage of Rev. Timothy Attwel, commonly known as Tim. The unique thing about the IST group at

the time was that we had almost equal representation of black and white probationers. The IST had a tradition and practice of awarding a wooden spoon to a great stirrer, a rabble-rouser a firebrand, troublemaker, hothead in the group, and a wooden egg to a “moegoe” of the group. I have to confess that I was never awarded any of the two. Sidwell Mokgothu, Jimmy Ramage, and the late Norman Hlatshwayo would from time to time be awarded a prize as winners of the wooden spoon.

One Wednesday during the IST, after supper time was set aside to debate socio-political issues of the time. It was on this particular Wednesday night that the topic “Standing for the Truth Campaign”, with special reference to the Compulsory-Military Conscription was discussed. One would remember that during the apartheid era the law forced young white people, particularly males to join the Defence Force for a period of almost two years. At this stage, the Church had declared apartheid as not only a Sin but a Heresy as well. Sidwell added fuel to the fire by encouraging the white probationers in our midst to join other whites who had become conscientious-objectors and refused to abide by the rule of compulsory-military conscription, based on the fact that to fight on the side of the apartheid Defence Force was to reject the Peace of God.

Some of the white probationers argued that the ANC’s armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe was also a military force involved in similar acts as the South African Defence Force (SADF). Sidwell counter-argued that Umkhonto we Sizwe was fighting a fight that God would approve—that is to liberate the oppressed, the poor and the marginalised—that Umkhonto we Sizwe was fighting a just war, a holy war, a *jihad*. I was never motivated like that to join this holy war, I was drawn to fighting for this course, and I dropped all what I was doing. Tim Attwel noticed that something was happening in me and motioned me to speak—and I remember telling all the white folk that “all I needed was an AK 47 to wipe them out all at once.” That is how the night ended; all went to the rooms to sleep. I was not able to sleep—I was thinking of doing all sorts of things in order to get *Umshini wam*—meaning my AK 47. I was led by this friend, Sidwell Mokgothu to thirst for a fight, a just war, a *jihad*; to see it proper to kill people for the freedom of our land.

As a Probationer one always experiences and gets exposed or think that they are subjected to unfair and unjust ways and treatment by the Church. As a group we shared the same sentiments. Under Sidwell’s influence, the whole IST felt that something had to be done. Sidwell suggested that we form a union that would represent us as Probationers. The outcome of that influence was a formation of a body called “PLARC”—Probationers and Lay Agents Representative Council. Guess who became the leader and spokesperson of PLARC? Sidwell Mokgothu and Jimmy Ramage respectively. This group was conceived as non-racial. Upon arrival at the Synod with Father Rev. Levy Masombuka as Secretary of the Department of Education for Ministry (DEM) and Vice Chairman at the time, he looked at our representative and asked a question “Are you boys a pressure group?” Without hesitation and with insubordination,

Sidwell responded “Yes” this is a representation of a pressure group. This is the brave, calm and firm Sidwell that I have come to know and understand.

When he was stationed in Pietersburg (now Polokwane) we would drive together many a times to his SACC meetings at Kgotso House in Johannesburg. For this particular trip, we were driving on the old R101 as N1 North was not in existence yet, and I was behind the wheel. As we approached Potgietersrus (now Mokopane) the traffic officer pulled us aside, with claims that I was over speeding. I stopped and went out of the car to talk to the officer, and while I was busy with the officer my passenger, Sidwell Mokgothu—hijacked our conversation and said to the white traffic officer—“you can write us a ticket but you should know that this car is registered in the Republic of Bophuthatswana we are not going to make any payment as admission guilt and you have no jurisdiction in that place.” At the time the officer had my ID book in his hand—he put it in his pocket and asked that we follow him to the Potgietersrus Police Station. When I looked at this man (Sidwell); he was cool, calm and collected, while I was having “June-July” (a casual township way to suggest that one is apprehensive). To this day I don’t know what Sidwell said to the officer, but within a wink of an eye we were back on the road without paying any admission of guilt. You could have seen me claiming victory—we have won!

There was an SACC office somewhere in Pretoria, where I would often drive him for meetings at night. On this particular night he had a meeting with one Bro Fannie Mnisi, who worked for the South African Red Cross branch in Pretoria. After their meeting they told me they needed to visit some comrades in Themba, Hammanskraal, in the then Republic of Bophuthatswana, with a hip of “unlawful” material in the boot of the car that I had to drive. The trip from Pretoria to Hammanskraal proved to be the longest, as we also went further into Makapanstad to visit Sidwell’s younger brother who was still at school in Makapanstad. Each time we drove past Police patrol vehicles I would be having “June-July”, while Sidwell was so cool, calm and collected, as if we were driving past a shoe-maker or something.

In later years I joined the Law Enforcement Agency as Chaplain—the same year I received training as a Commissioned Officer to bring the brass on my shoulders and get a Deed of Commission signed by the Commander in Chief, the former State President Thabo Mbeki. During the long period of training, which lasted for weeks on end I was taught that Commissioned Officers “in the face of imminent danger – Officers do not run but remain calm – officers don’t complain to a junior rank they can only do that to a senior officer.” Then it crossed my mind that this quality was evident in Sidwell Mokgothu, who would remain cool, calm and collected even in the face of imminent danger.

While Sidwell was still serving in Pietersburg (now Polokwane), news reached me that my beloved friend (Sidwell Mokgothu) is again in trouble with the police—this time the police had set their dogs loose on him—*O lomilwe ke dintja* (“he was bitten by dogs”). He laid a charge against another Minister of Police and was suing for

damages, and accused the men and women “in blue” of being reckless. This time the police had to pay for their actions. While in Pietersburg Sidwell lectured on a part-time basis at Turfloop University, now the University of Limpopo—and some of his students included, among others, Rev. Mautji Pataki of the Presbyterian Church. Through his inspiration and accompaniment, Rev. Pataki responded to the call to Ministry and Sacrament. It was during this time that Sidwell also played an instrumental role in the formation of the School of Church Leadership, which was made up of Rev. Londi Zulu, Rev. Musi Losaba, Rev. Mzwandile Molo and myself. This School of formation played an important and vital role in our district and helped sharpen and strengthen all our Class leaders, society stewards, and Circuit stewards. We still need something like this even today. This was also almost at the time when Sidwell started to be involved in the teaching and formation of our Ministers in training at John Wesley College, Silverton—a place he came to admire and worked at for many years thereafter. Most of the Ministers in our Connexion regard him as their Gamaliel.

SIDWELL MOKGOTHU – CONNEXIONAL CHAIRPERSON OF THE BMC

Rasebusi Sidwell Mokgothu led the BMC for three two-year terms, from 1996 to 2002. One would note that his tenure in office was characterised and punctuated by a plethora of critical issues in the historical epoch` in the life of our Church and the world in general. As the Church, we had just risen from the Convocation of the Journey to a New Land; something which had put the entire Church on a new direction to practise like never before every member ministry of Priesthood of all Believers. We all know and remember the six calls of the Journey to a New Land. The world was preparing for the coming of the new millennium, a time which was characterised by mixed emotions, fear of the unknown, and uncertainties. We all remember the “Y2K” issue and controversy.

It is important for us all to remember that the BMC—Black Methodist Consultation is a formation within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). The BMC sees itself as a catalyst existing for the Transformation of the MCSA into becoming a truly African Church; in character, doctrine, ethos, identity, and practice. This movement has to play an influential role in transforming the church—by this I mean that BMC exists to play a leading role in all key debates speaking to the DNA of who the people called Methodists are, and the reason God has raised them to what they have become. Sidwell Mokgothu came to lead that kind of a movement in the said period in history; a demanding and a daunting task indeed.

As early as 1998 Sidwell Mokgothu, while at the helm of the BMC, came up with a theme seeking to address the challenges of the time. He chose the theme “Hand me your brick-Let us build.” Addressing the Consultation meeting at Sterkspruit Circuit, he analysed the ills happening in our society and communities, which necessitated a moral fibre, which called the Christian Church to think deeply about issues of re-building.

The schools that were run by the BMC in that year were established to forge unity and a network of builders:

- Human Relations—Rev. L Mbete.
- The Role of the Church in Legislation and Government Policy Formulation—Rev. Damon.
- Christian Spirituality, Enculturation and Inter-Faith—Rev. B Mandlate.
- Church Management—Mr Phil Diko.
- Economic Justice and Empowerment—Mrs N Dandala.

In the same year, Sidwell Mokgothu urged the Consultation to look forward at what lied ahead to prepare God’s People for the New Millennium. He said:

An “O Jays” song goes like this “What will the world be like in ... in the year 2000”? In Christian theology the millennium is an important doctrine although surrounded by controversy. In one of his visions from Patmos as recorded in Revelation 20, John speaks of a thousand years as a period in which evil would be crushed. We have a challenge between now and the year 2000 to reflect and take stock of what the history of the Christian Faith has been and what the state of the Church is, before we enter the New Era.

Already Sidwell as Chair was preparing the entire movement to look forward to the new millennium. Part of the preparation was to tackle issues of Human Resource Development and Transformation. It was clear from the minutes of the BMC consultation at the time that a lot of work has gone into developing an African Commentary on the Bible to assist the Black Church in deepening the transformation of the MCSA to be an African Church. This work became a standing point on the agenda of the BMC. Workshops were held on an ecumenical level to ensure that this effort was not only expected from the MCSA, but from the entire body of Christ within the mainline African Churches as well. Running parallel with the writing of the Commentary was the Ministerial Training and Formation Curriculum, where several discussions around this issue took place, as the BMC urged the Church to prioritise the training and formation of its Ministers. These discussions culminated in the decision by the BMC to purchase computers for student Ministers at the John Wesley College.

In 1999, at a Consultation held at Mimosa Gardens in Parys Sidwell Mokgothu came up with the theme “See I Make all things New” as a follow-up theme to the “Hand me your brick- Let us build” theme of the previous year. In his address, one could pick up a clear development and outline from the previous year’s theme of building. In his address, he made a clear call to the Church that it needed to continue and not lose sight of its Prophetic Visioning. His observation at the time was that the changed socio-political scenario in Southern Africa has almost paralysed the church to a situation of near apathy. He made a warning that if the Church is to continue with its prophetic role it must retain its ability to confront issues of injustice and be committed to eradicating poverty and pushing the transformation agenda.

Mokgothu spoke in particular about Public Debt Crisis and referred to this problem as a modern-times leprosy. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in his view, had by that time exacerbated poverty in countries south of the Globe. For him, the church is well positioned to educate, create awareness and mobilise the masses regarding the Public Debt Crisis and Debt Forgiveness. Using his rear view mirror he reminded the Consultation that the Convocation of the Journey to the New Land was an unfinished story, especially concerning the empowerment of women and issues of race relations. He called on the MCSA to consider establishing a Pastoral Commission on Race and Religion within the office of the Presiding Bishop. He further called on the BMC to define clear objectives and positions itself as it moves into the new century. One of the objectives that was clear was for the BMC to begin to think of a programme of training Executive Leadership for the Church. Again, one would note some continuity in the schools set for the BMC that year in Parys:

- Church-State Relations—Rev. McGlory Speckman.
- Debt Burden and Developing Nations—Rev. Malcolm Damon.
- African Culture and Spirituality—Ms. Welekazi Sokutu.
- Role of Women in the MCSA—Rev. Purity Malinga.

In the year 2000, at a meeting of the BMC that was held in the Queenstown District in East London Sidwell Mokgothu came out gun-blazing with a theme “Remember.” He charged that the theme was a public invitation to all members to stop, pause and remember. He made it clear that the theme was both revolutionary and spiritual—revolutionary in the sense that it sought to provoke people’s conscience and engender them to embark on a transformational route that would yield fruits in the socio-political arena—and spiritual in the sense that it required people to stop in their hurried journey into the future to listen to the God of the transformation and allow Him to work in them to make them better people, a royal priesthood. He called on BMC members to remember our stories individually and as a collective, that we are the people of Africa—the Africa that had suffered colonial oppression and subjugation. The story of Africa is that of slavery and genocide, as well as hunger and starvation. He called on us to remember the Mau-Mau, Isandlwana, Thaba Bosiu and the Bambatha Rebellions. He pleaded with us not to forget the Sharpeville, Soweto, Boipatong and Bisho massacres, to remember the merciless SADF cross-border raids on Lusaka, Matola, Maseru, and Gaborone. He dealt with memory as Consciousness, as Subversive, as Celebration, and as Confession. It would be good for one to read for themselves this beautiful piece of art in writing. Like all other BMC consultations, the East London meeting had schools set up for learning and empowerment:

- The Black Church-Mission and Challenges—Rev. J Zihle.
- The Church and Land Question—Mr Andile Mngitama.

- Oral History—Ms T. Hlatshwayo.
- Implications of a Predominantly Black Leadership in top echelons of the MCSA—Rev. AM Mbete.

Sadly I have not been able, while preparing to write this essay, to lay hands on the minutes of the 2001 BMC consultation. Instead, what came to my attention was the controversy at the MCSA annual conference held in Port Elizabeth. The year 2001 was the year in which a Conference Lay Leader was to be elected. The BMC structures had resolved to elect Sister Lindeni Madlala. For the first time in the history and tradition of the movement, the Bishops acted outside the processes and culture of the BMC and decided to elect their own preferred candidate for the office of Conference Lay Leader. Sidwell Mokgothu, together with his Connexional Committee saw it fit to request the late Rev. Dr Mgojo, in his capacity as Past President of Conference, and as an elderly person to intervene by mediating between the BMC and the Bishops, to ensure that they come to an understanding of using a common name as history and culture dictated.

Dr Mgojo's mediation efforts did not yield the expected outcomes as the Bishops refused to step down on their candidate but instead requested the BMC to step down on their candidate. As Chair Sidwell Mokgothu had to give direction and provide leadership. Both names went for the polling and Sister Lindeni Madlala was elected to office. This incident left the Bishops with great dissatisfaction and they labelled the BMC an insubordinate movement with no respect for the authority of the Church. For a long time, Sidwell Mokgothu, as the face of the BMC at the time took the blame and was constantly summoned by the Bishops to parade in their meeting.

During his last year in office in 2001 at a consultation held in Ga-Rankuwa, north of Pretoria, Sidwell Mokgothu saw it fit to come with the theme "Choose Life", a theme which had a lot to do with a wake-up call for the BMC to be aware of its position and responsibility within the ranks of the MCSA. The theme was derived from the Old Testament theology of a God who placed both life and death before the nation of Israel but appealed to the nation to choose life. Some kind of tongue-lashing exercise could be read in the spirit and atmosphere of that consultation. The Listening Committee Report has an item titled "Funniest Moment"—this was when the Chairperson reminded the consultation that it had failed to deal with some critical issues or failed to provide ideas as if it had suffered a mental block. He reminded the consultation that the world out there was facing a mammoth task of dealing with Osama Bin Laden, and yet as the consultation they could not perform simple tasks allocated to them.

The same report of the Listening Committee has an item relating to the 2001 Election of the Conference Lay Leader. According to this report, the manner in which the Chairperson handled issues relating to the election of the Lay Leader deserves applause. Two speakers were invited to render presentations—Dr Molefe Tsele did a presentation on The Millennium Initiative for African Recovery Programme. The records reveal that the consultation dealt with this matter at great length, posing critical questions and

mapped a way forward. The second speaker, Professor Botma's presentation was on "Theology of Life" at Umtata.

COUNTER-INTUITIVE LEADERSHIP

Let me revisit what I said in the introduction—I have titled this essay, "counter-intuitive leadership." My analysis of the personality, gifts, and grace of Sidwell Mokgothu brings me to a place where I see him as a counter-intuitive leader. His life and times are a living testimony that it is possible to be radical in approach, to steer organisations in a certain direction and outcomes without losing respect for the elders and the institutions of society in general. He challenged the Church and its Leaders, including the unjust regimes in a manner that is respectful but with specific outcomes in mind. This is a lesson to be learnt by many of our young leaders today in Church and in society. This view is undergirded by his approach to leadership and the kind of tools he employs informs this kind of leadership. His approach is clearly seen as that of a servant, as opposed to that of being a boss or heartless bureaucrat. Robert Greenleaf (1977: Foreword), one of the proponents of servant leadership argues that:

One of the fundamental, timeless principles is the idea of servant leadership; and the only way you get empowerment is through high-trust cultures and an empowerment philosophy which turns bosses into servants and coaches, structures and systems into nurturing institutionalised servant processes. A low-trust culture that is characterised by high-control management, political posturing, protectionism, cynicism and internal competition and adversarialism simply cannot stand the speed, quality and innovation of those organisations around the world that do empower people through servanthood processes.

Sidwell's tenure between 1996 and 2002 proved that the one on the helm was a servant leader with intentions to serve and to empower.

What strikes me most about Sidwell is the tools he employed from his young age as an activist in the Christian Youth Movements. He is a man of influence like liberation theologians and philosophers or thinkers such as Paulo Freire, Steve Biko, Joseph Cardijn and many more. "See-Judge-Act" is one of the popular tools he used more often in his work as a leader. From these liberation theologians, he learnt that the most important thing for a leader is to look at a situation and be able to analyse it before embarking on an intervention. See-Judge-Act is a three-stage tool he acquired from the Latin American theologians Leonard and Clodovis Boff—the "seeing" is the socio-analytical mediation, the "judging" is the hermeneutical mediation and the "acting" is the practical mediation. It is this tool that maps out for me a true character of the person of Sidwell Mokgothu. A person who, at the core of his being, has the quest to empower people and let them deal with their own challenges and situations towards a well-calculated logical conclusion. This deep-seated quest led him to register with the then Rand Afrikaans University to study Human Resource Development. The most

difficult phenomenon in life is the ability for people to See, Judge and Act in a manner that brings about total transformation or improvement in life's difficult situations.

Let me illustrate this point—German theologians have something they call *Sitz im Leben*, roughly translated as the “setting in life or the setting in people's lives.” Therefore, the see-judge-act for me is a tool that is helpful in delivering people in the right setting in life.

As Chaplain at the Law Enforcement Agency I witnessed a situation where a fit, young white rugby player police official went into the changing room with other colleagues to change, as is usually the case at the end of his day duty. Accidentally a bullet came through the chamber and hit him on the spine and paralysed him—he could not move any part of his body. He was plunged into a difficult situation. Important for me was the way he “Saw-Judged-Acted” out of that situation. When we visited him after some time we found him using a straw that he has balanced in his mouth, typing below his face a devotional material for his colleagues in the police service not to give up in life.

Three months later another fit white young police official who lived with her mother in an apartment came back home on a fateful day, only to find that her mother had been stoned to death and was lying in a pool of blood. The young man stopped eating, taking a bath as life became unbearable without his mother. Three weeks later he died. The notable thing about the situations faced by these two young men is how they perceived and interpreted their situations. The first officer came out alive and used his painful experience to empower others. The other one did not take the situation well and ended up dead. I learned that some people react to situations and some react in situations. A walk with Sidwell taught me that the best way is to react in situations and not react to situations. As individuals or organisations the manner in which we see-judge and act is of paramount importance. We live in a world which is complex and complicated. Therefore, attaching positive meanings to everything that happen to us will help us as individuals, organisations, and as the Church of God to emerge victoriously from such situations, and use our experiences to motivate and strengthen others around us. May God give us the Grace to learn the skills of analysis.

It is worth noting that Sidwell Mokgothu is too trusting. He trusts people with his whole heart and many a times he was hurt and frustrated by the same people he trusted. At the same time, as an individual I benefitted out of the trust he has in people—he trusted me with many tasks that he was unable to carry out, such as asking me to represent him in educational events and many other professional occasions where he couldn't honour the invite. This boosted my confidence in managing events of such magnitude. The only time that he disappointed me was when he was offered an opportunity to take up a mayoral position in one of the cities, which he declined. I was looking forward to having a mayor friend, out of selfish reasons. He was quick to remind me that he has been called to be in the temple courts than becoming anything else—this is Sidwell Mokgothu, my friend for years gone and years to come.

CONCLUSION

It will be remiss of me to conclude without mentioning the lady of the house, a pillar of strength in the Mokgothu household—Mrs Refiloe Mokgothu—who saw all the thick and thin of the life and times of Sidwell Mokgothu. A lifetime partner from 1989. Halala Refiloe Halala!

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