

# Beaufort West Morkels

## Part 3. Reverend I.D. Morkel Church Founder and Activist

By André T. Morkel and Margaret Thebus

*My co-author, Margaret Thebus, niece of Rev I.D. provided information, photos and clippings, valuable comments and much encouragement. Margaret's mother, Margaret Lodewyk and Rev. I.D.'s sister, was a wonderful source about the family. Thank you both.*

*A.T.M.*

Isaac Dawid (I.D. or *Boetie*) Morkel 1910 – 1983 (1) was born in Beaufort West, Cape, the oldest of eight children of Samuel Morkel 1882 – 1957 and Dolphina Augustus. His father Samuel was a successful businessman with three butcheries. Family remember Samuel as a loving, compassionate and caring person who enjoyed his children and grandchildren. Being of mixed race he was an elder in the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (Sendingkerk) whose minister was *eerwaarde* (reverend) Adam Barnard, the father of heart transplant pioneer, Dr. Chris Barnard. In his autobiography Dr. Barnard tells that the whole Morkel family sang beautifully in church (2). After World War 2, Samuel and Dolphina moved to Crawford, a suburb of Cape Town where they lived with their son *Boetie*.



Rev. I.D. Morkel

*Source: Margaret Thebus*

Isaac David (I.D.) left school after standard 6 because he had to help in the family butchery. At 18 years he was already managing one of his father's two butcheries. He also started and managed his own business. Already in his childhood I.D. felt a calling to join the church. His Sunday School teacher, miss. S. de Villiers guided him and at 16 years he was already preaching sermons (3). However, his duties in the family business prevented undertaking the necessary religious studies. He taught in Sunday School from 1928 to 1931 and from 1931 to

1936 was organist in his church and Superintendent of the Sunday School. By 1938 he decided to take his studies further. He completed high school studies by correspondence and obtained his Senior Certificate in 1940 (3). He studied at the Stofberg Theological School (for Africans) in the Orange Free State (its website says it is located at Turfloop near Vereeniging, on the border of the O.F.S. and Transvaal) where he was the best student in his class (4). He was able to fund himself as a student with income from his business activities. By the late 1940s he was a minister (*eerwaarde*) and manager of the DRM School at the Cape Town suburb of Crawford, and chairman of the Wynberg Ring.

Reverend I.D. Morkel was a dedicated man of strong principles. He demanded much from himself and his flock, but he also cared and ministered to the needs of his people who endured racial discrimination and widespread poverty. He spoke out against alcohol abuse and immorality with similar fervour as he campaigned against government regulations.

He spoke out against discrimination, particularly as it applied to mixed-race communities at the Cape. He felt they had strong cultural bonds with Whites. In September 1948, 116 members from 28 congregations met in Crawford and unanimously supported a motion tabled by Reverend Morkel to oppose apartheid on scriptural grounds. They protested against the proposed legislation and appealed to the National Party government not to implement these laws (4). Morkel was supported by a young white minister Ds. David Botha, but relations with the White Mother Church (*Moederkerk*) deteriorated. Frustrated by the lack of support from the *Moederkerk*, Morkel became increasingly political. During the inauguration of the *Voortrekker Monument* on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1949, he called a day of prayer in supplication that the Lord deliver the land from the affliction of apartheid (5,6). He also had a daily column in the Cape Times newspaper, focusing on racial discrimination (5).

On 30 September 1950, some days before the meeting of the DRCM synod, Morkel announced that he and 26 members of the Rondebosch congregation were leaving the DRCM to form their own church, *Die Calvyn Protestantse Kerk* (Calvin Protestant Church or CPC). It did not practice discrimination on the grounds of colour, but apart from this, did not differ in its teachings and rites from the DRCM or the *Moederkerk*. In practice most of its members were of mixed race. Morkel gave his farewell sermon 8 October 1950, in Athlone from the back of a lorry (truck). He had been forbidden by the DRMC to use the Rondebosch church building (4,6). On 15 October 1950 the CPC was established.

Five years after its inception, the new church had grown to six branches and over 2,000 members. By the end of the 1950s it had about 13,000 members, mainly in the Cape Peninsula, Western Cape, and Northwestern Cape.

#### **The CPC Presbytery Divisions are (7):**

**Athlone:** Athlone, Diep River, Grassy Park, Lansdowne and Mitchells Plain.

**Paarl:** Atlantis, Calvinia, Malmesbury, Mossel Bay, Newton and Paarl

**Sarepta:** Eersterivier, Hawston, Kraaifontein, Macassar and Matroosfontein

**Komaggas:** Buffels Rivier, Concordia, Komaggas, Nababeep, Rehoboth and Steinkopf.

The CPC came into conflict with the Government over access to Komaggas, one of the Coloured Reserves in Little Namaqualand, in the Northwest Cape. The Church was welcomed enthusiastically by the locals. On 8 December 1956 Reverend Morkel visited Komaggas and held a service in the open. Nearly a third of the population of the Reserve attended this service, while only 26 people were at the service in the DRMC (4).

During the first fourteen months after Reverend Morkel was invited to Komaggas, 256 children were baptised and 90 young people confirmed. By 1960 there were about 600 confirmed members and a large number of baptised members who have not yet been

confirmed. On 5 May 1957, a petition containing more than 700 signatures was presented to Dr I. D. du Plessis (Commissioner for Coloured Affairs) asking for permission to acquire land on which to erect a church. The request was refused.

Reverend Morkel and his congregation at Komaggas continued in their pleas and were always assured by Dr du Plessis that he was prepared to treat their case sympathetically and that after the passing of new regulations in October everything would be settled to their satisfaction. When the regulations were finally issued, they were a major disappointment. For meetings of more than five persons, special approvals from the Commissioner were required. The regulations did allow for events such as funerals, weddings and religious services, but only if held by an established church. The churches active in the area sought approval, but only the DRCM was allowed. The others, including the Calvinist Protestant, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches were not approved, and had to obtain permission for every service they held (4). *(Author's note: I remember Dr. I.D. du Plessis as a decent person with sympathy for the plight of the coloured community. He had written extensively about their culture and problems. This fits with the account of his meeting with Reverend Morkel. But he worked within a harsh system, and it is likely that he was out-manuevered by bureaucrats and overruled by his political masters. A.T.M.)*



BEGRAFNISDIENS VAN  
DR ISAAC DAWID MORKEL

1 - 12 - 1910

26 - 5 - 1983

The first prosecution took place on March 7, 1958. Three members of the Calvinist Protestant Church were found guilty of holding a meeting of more than five persons in the Komaggas Reserve. At the meeting a prayer was said, a hymn sung and a short sermon was delivered. The three men were fined £3 each, suspended for three years.

Reverend Morkel then applied for permission to send four ministers to spend eight days in the Reserves of Komaggas and Concordia (which also had a small CPC congregation) from April 16 to 23. On April 17 he was finally told that permission would be granted to only one minister to work for only one day in each Reserve. The minister and an elder who accompanied him arrived the night before at Komaggas and were welcomed by 700 people. Before dawn the next day about 600 people were waiting for the first service. They had walked miles to be there; many had children on their backs. The minister had to attend 40 baptisms, officiate at confirmations and confirmation

classes, a Church Council meeting, a woman's auxiliary meeting, hold two full services, one with communion, and travel many miles visiting the sick and the aged all in one day. It began at 4:30 a.m. and ended late at night.

I.D. Morkel's youngest brother, Henry, was also a minister in the CPC and in later years emigrated to Canada. In 2011, at the time of writing, the CPC is still active, with websites for several of its presbyteries.

I.D. Morkel married Sarah (Sally) Isaacs, a teacher at a school in Kimberley, on 1 April 1936. They had three children, Sylvia, Lionel and Augustine. I.D. passed away on 26 May 1983.

In 1968 he was awarded an honorary doctorate of divinity from the International Free University of London for his work in upholding the ideals of Christian, social and moral practices and for furthering goodwill among men of all races.

In 2007 the Order of the Disa was awarded to Dr I.D. Morkel in the premier Rasool award ceremony (8). The award citation read:

Dr Isaac Morkel quit his leadership position and church in order to retain the integrity of his Christian faith at a time in the 1940s and '50s when the church was under increasing pressure to either conform to apartheid theology or stand for Christian justice.

On October 15, 1950, he officially founded the Calvin Protestant Church of South Africa. His courage and conviction against apartheid's determination to sue the church as part of its propaganda machinery served as a path breaking step for others to emulate as the inevitable process of peace and justice unfolded in the ensuing decades.

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#### **Sources and Notes:**

- 1 Other spellings of his name include Izak and David. We standardized on the spelling in his funeral service notice. In most documents he is referred to as "I.D."
- 2 Christiaan Barnard & Curtis Bill Pepper, 1969. *One Life*. Howard Timmins. Cape Town.
- 3 G Foster, 1975. *Dr. I.D. Morkel, Stigter en Moderator van die Calvyn Protestantse Kerk van Suid-Afrika*. Siver Jubileum 1950 – 1975. Calvyn Protestantse Kerk.
- 4 W.P. Carstens Undated, (from the context probably 1960) *The Dutch Reformed Church Militant*. <http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/asjan59.7/asjan59.7.pdf>
- 5 J.C. Pauw. 2007. Doctor's Thesis Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam *Anti-apartheid Theology in the Dutch Reformed Family of Churches* p172 <http://dare.uvu.vu.nl/bitstream/1871/10880/4/7757.pdf>
- 6 James Buys, Moderator. 1997. *Submission Of The Uniting Reformed Church In Southern Africa To The Truth And Reconciliation Commission*. <http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/ricsa/commiss/trc/urcsa.html>
- 7 Pamela Elizabeth Kierman. 2009. *Community Brass*. Thesis Master of Music. Stellenbosch University. <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10019.1/2593/Kierman.%20PE.pdf>
- 8 Email from "Kammie", (Moghamat Kamedien). SA Genealogie. July 2011.

## Appendix.

### Family Line for Reverend I.D. Morkel

- a1 Philip MORKEL 1677 - 1735 x Catharina PASMEN 1691 - 1764
- b3 Willem MORKEL 1718 - 1788 x Helena Catharina MALAN 1736 - 1825
- c7 Hercules MORKEL 1767 - 1808 x Helena MUNNIK 1772 - 1818
- d3 Gerhardus MORKEL ~ 27.10.1799 † 8.7.1826 x Johanna Frederika BRAND
- e1 Hercules (Herklaas) MORKEL \* Caledon 22.2.1821 ~ 15.4.1821 x Flora SIMON
- f5 Gert Thomas MORKEL 1857 - 1933 x Maria THERON \*Paarl 2.10.1812 † Beaufort West 28.8.1878 xx Jane HORN
- g1 Samuel MORKEL 1882 - 1957 x Dolphina AUGUSTUS † 1974 (Beaufort West)
  - h1 **Rev. Izak David MORKEL** \*1.12.1910 †26.5.1983 x Sarah (Sally) ISAACS
    - i1 Sylvia MORKEL
    - i2 Lionel MORKEL x Vivien Butler
    - i3 Augustine MORKEL
  - h2 Gerhard MORKEL x Frances
  - h3 Samuel MORKEL x Vivienne LA VITA
  - h4 Elizabeth MORKEL x Harold EHRENREICH
  - h5 Mary MORKEL x Henry PETERSEN
  - h6 Dolphina MORKEL
  - h7 Daniel MORKEL x Carrie EHRENREICH
  - h8 Hercules MORKEL x Isabel ROBERTSON (from St Helena) xx Anne PIETERSE
  - h9 Margaret MORKEL x William LODEWYK
    - i1 Carol LODEWYK x Cecil ACKERMAN
    - i2 **Margaret LODEWYK x Brian THEBUS (co-author)**
  - h10 Henry MORKEL x Elizabeth STEENKAMP

#### Sources:

1. P.W.Morkel 1961. *The Morkels. Family History and Genealogy*. Published privately
2. GISA (Genealogical Institute of South Africa) *South African Genealogies*. Vol 5, p684.
3. <http://family.morkel.net/wp-content/uploads/Beaufort-West-Morkel-familyline2.pdf>





Dr Isaac Morkel

# Church leader to be buried on Wednesday

**CONTROVERSIAL** church leader Dr Isaac David Morkel, 73, who died on Thursday morning at his Crawford home after a long illness, will be buried on Wednesday from the Calvinist Church in Athlone.

He was the first moderator and founder of the Calvinist Church of South Africa, which he established after leading a breakaway faction from the Dutch Reformed Church in 1950 over the question of apartheid.

Since then, he has been leader and policy-

maker, often ruling his congregation with an iron fist. When he left the DRC, he had 1 200 followers. Today, the church has 32 branches and 40 000 members.

Dr Morkel was a forceful campaigner against promiscuity and juvenile delinquency, and often his conservative views hit the headlines.

On the other hand, he was uncompromisingly against apartheid. He leaves his wife, Sally, a daughter, Sylvia, and two sons, Lionel and Augustine.

## LAASTE EER AAN MODERATOR

# Vd Ross: 'Hy was soos 'n Martin Luther'

Van ABRAHAM BRUINIJES

**MALMESBURY.** - Duisende belangstellendes het Woensdag die laaste eer betoon aan die eerste Moderator van die Calvyns Protestantse Kerk van Suid-Afrika, dr. Isaac Dawid Morkel, op die kerkterrein van die Moedergemeente in Springbokstraat, Kewtown, Athlone.

Wyle dr. Morkel was sedert 1950 - met die stigting van die kerk - Moderator en leraar van die Moedergemeente tot verlede jaar. Die stoffike oorskot het in staatsie in die kerk gelê totdat die diens om twee-uur begin het.

Ds. John Draai, leraar van Landsdowne, wat die skriflesing en rede in die kerk gehou het, het gesê dat wyle dr. Morkel 'n kind van die Here was. "Dr. Morkel was 'n geloofsheid wat veertig jaar gelede na die Kaapse Skiereiland 'gestuur' is. Hy het hom sterk teen die euwels van die tyd - dronkenskap en maatskaplike probleme - uitge-

spreek," het ds. Draai gesê. Ds. W.A. September, huidige Moderator en leraar van Ravensmead, het hulde namens die Calvyns Protestantse Kerk gebring. Met 'n vol gemoed het hy gesê dat dit 'n voorreg was om 42 jaar as vriend saam wyle dr. Morkel die lief en leed van die kerk te deel.

### GELOFTELIED

"Hy sal altyd onthou word as Godsman, gebedsman, leier, raadgewer en 'n prediker met 'n onwrikbare persoonlikheid. Só 'n persoon word net eenkeer in 'n leeftyd geskenk. Met hom as kerkleier en vriend het ek nooit gevrees nie. Sy

roeping was die redding van siele," was sy woorde.

"Hy het die gesangboek help opstel en die Kerk se geloftelied self gekomponeer. Die Kerk se handleiding is ook deur die ontslape opgestel. Hy het 'n vol lewe gehad en elke minuut nuttig gebruik," was ds. September se afskeidswoorde.

Prof. Richard van der Ross, Rektor van die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland, het namens die gemeenskap huldeblyke gebring. Hy het wyle dr. Morkel as 'n Martin Luther, stigter en hervormer van die Protestantse geloof, beskryf.

"Hy was bereid om vir sy geloof te sterf. Hy was 'n kampvegter vir die onderwys en leraars opgelei waarvoor vandag professore nodig is. As Godsman was hy uitgesproke oor die sosiale en maatskaplike euwels. Hy het hom sterk uitgesproke oor dinge wat hom in sy werk teengestaan het," het prof. Van der Ross gesê.

### EREWAG

Die gesamentlike kerkkooor en die Gebedskring van Athlone het in die kerk gesing. Die oudste seun, Lionel, het die bedankings namens die familie gedoen.

Die jeugbrigade van die Kerk het 'n erewag buite langs die graf voor die kerkgebou gevorm. Ds. Solie Engelbrecht van die gemeente op Nabsbeep het die gebed by die graf gedoen. Familie en leraars het in en uit die kerk as sippodraers opgetree.

Hoogwaardigheidsbekleërs wat 'n laaste eer aan wyle dr. Morkel betoon het, was onder andere di. I. Mentor, Moderator van die NG Sendingkerk, en Nick Olivier, voorsitter van die Konvensie van die Rynse Kerk van Suid-Afrika, wat van Suidwes-Afrika gekom het.